

The Glory of God

December 6, 2023

Preface

I put this together to help flesh out the diagram I made of the internal glory of God, *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* that has *shone* into our hearts. There are many doctrines that are confirmed by or are reasonably consequent to this understanding of God's glory and our being conformed to his image in the manner described in 2Cor. 4:6 & 2Cor. 3:18 and in other places, by the communication of his glory to the elect (John 17:22). Some of these doctrines are the limited atonement, our radical or total depravity, Original Sin, the doctrine of God and God's sovereignty. A thorough understanding of God's glory will enlighten your mind to those doctrines and others, giving you a deeper understanding of them, and in doing so, of God, all of which should put more of a reverential awe and holy fear upon our hearts to excite us to our duty to do God's will and approach him daily in a due manner as instructed in the scripture - *by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*, Heb 12:28. For without a due apprehension of God, we will not obey, worship or esteem him as we ought! Hence Psalm 47:7, *Sing praises with understanding*. Our prayer ought to be like that of the David in the Psalm 119:18, *Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law*, the law being the mind and will of God, and then, Ps 119:27, *Make me understand the way of your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wondrous works*. This should be our delight! And it is by this means, by growing in knowledge and contemplating his glory and the wisdom of the way of salvation, that we are transformed into his image from glory to glory, 2Cor3:18, to the glory of God's grace.

First some background on this diagram of the glory of God - here is the history behind the idea of making it.

After going to a particular church for about 6 years, I heard a rumor that one of my good friends, the asst. pastor there, was going to leave this church. I was dumbfounded; I thought, "If this is such a good church, why is he leaving!?" Well, the idea of legalism was bantered about and as I thought about it, I had some checks in my spirit that I didn't have answers for, so I decided after much thought, to break from this church too. The first thing that I decided I must do was to get some answers; I needed to understand what was at issue which led me to a search on getting answers to doctrine in general so I could bring this whole affair to an intelligent conclusion. So, I said to myself, I need to read the whole bible; it took me about 3 months. While I was doing that, I googled *legalism*. I got several answers, one of which I found very striking and very refreshing, by Anne Murchison, on legalism. It was a huge eye opener and very revealing. It appealed to my spiritual senses or palate that had been starved for so long! This was *strong meat*. Finally! She wrote many discourses on several subjects arguing against legalism, not at all appealing to the *old man* in me, which is good, but to the *new man!* This was opposite to the doctrine espoused at the church (prosperity church) from which I left and from other churches that I had attended.

These teachings most appealed to me in that they glorified God as opposed to man - God was at the center of it all, *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves,*

but our sufficiency is from God. After I had finished reading/studying that person's writings, I inspected the list she had compiled for further study, about 30 of 'em, so I picked John Piper! I'd never heard of him before. He was excellent! I actually ordered some of his books (I was not a reader at the time, but now I am!) I had never heard of him, but when I listened to his sermon's I was really astounded and amazed - it greatly appealed to me (again), not my flesh as I said before, but the *new man*. I wanted to know more, so I listened to his sermons twice a day for about 2 years. And then on a camping trip, I was reading his book in a canoe on a gorgeous sunny day out in the middle of nowhere and in it he said that the person that influenced him the most was Jonathan Edwards. So, I said to myself, Who is Jonathan Edwards? I've got to order his book, too - but for 80 bucks! Yikes. That was costly, but I said, I gotta do it. Then about 2 weeks later I get this huge box on my front doorstep and I'm thinkin', What in the world is this big box? - I didn't order anything that big. So I opened it up and there were 2 volumes of Jonathan Edwards' works! Two big, big_volumes with little, little print. For the next 3 years I read and studied it (3 to 7 hours a day) and am re-reading it while reading other reformers along with it like Owen, Shepard, etc. I find re-reading is vital. After about 3 years I was told that Edwards was a reformer - so that's when I learned that word - lol. Anyway, all those doctrines, those of free grace and the sovereignty of God, election, etc., were beautiful to me even though I didn't understand all of them to the extent that I do now - but I thirsted for more and still do and am finding out that this divine fountain is infinite!

So, getting back to why I did this diagram; I wanted to put down in a mosaic or like a painting, an image of all that happens at conversion, the "whys" and the "wherefores" the "means" so that when one gazes at this *glory* spoken so often in the scriptures, one can see it all here or at least a portion of it and have it explained so that people would get an idea of the ultimate end of God's purpose in the earth and get an idea of what happened to them when they were converted. And this goes a long way in one being able to examine themselves in a due manner to see if they be in the faith! And then I thought it would be nice to attach some text to help further explain things giving more definition to all the terms, their application, purposes, etc., so that these things that angels desire to look into will become more clear and evident.

One vital point to all this: the scriptures are clear on this point - the mysteries of the Kingdom are difficult to understand (2Pet3:16) in that it takes much time and effort, i.e., diligence to grow into this knowledge of which we are commanded to do (2Pet1:10). But I also believe the scripture says that his ways are not burdensome to those who have a love for the truth. I am very fortunate, that by God's grace and providence, I am single and don't need to work. So I have all day to read and contemplate these things; then re-read and contemplate more - most people either don't have that much time or they are negligent in this duty or both in varying degrees. With that in mind, read on! I quoted many key excerpts from John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Shepard, David Brainerd and John Flavel and others on many key doctrines, all to flesh out the heart and mind of God depicted on this diagram as best I could - it's a work in progress; I keep adding pages! I started out with about 10 pages; now it's over 2800 pages. I made my comments in [\[blue\]](#) to help explain things and I highlighted in [red](#) key passages of the writers for emphasis. The links are provided in case you want to read before and after these excerpts which is very helpful in gaining a fuller understanding of the context.

Have you ever wondered what is the glory of God? What is the image of God? In what does it consist? Why is that important to know and for what purpose? I remember 30 years ago these words would be thrown around a lot but I didn't really know what they meant and no one explained it to me or ever really tried to explain it to me. So here you go!

Jonathan Edwards said that it is vital that we understand the wisdom and the way of God's salvation for this very purpose of creating that proper demeanor in our souls – a reverential awe as I just mentioned. These excerpts lead you in that direction. - G. Clark

[To be read to help explain the diagram of God's glory.](#)

Here is what follows (and reasonably so) from the doctrines exhibited in the diagram when one considers God's sovereignty and man's total depravity. I add these excerpts and explanations to add more brush strokes to this grand work of art, so that you can have a greater depth of understanding in these glorious things and have a deeper understanding of key terms like the image of God, love/faith, fullness of Christ, graces of Christ, glory of God, spiritual deadness, the need for regeneration, the first cause or efficient cause of regeneration and hence have a much greater appreciation for what happens at conversion - that it is not of ourselves.

“...he communicates to them of his own condition and nature; “the glory his Father had given him, he gives to them,” John 17:22, and notwithstanding their former and natural baseness, he reckons them now as one with himself; and according to what he will make them at last. A tincture thereof he gave them here in regeneration, which also he carries on from glory to glory, and at his appearing it shall be perfected: they “shall be like him” indeed, 1 John 3:2. Elisha Coles, Ch 3, *A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty*

All I Need is My Bible?

Regarding the many books on theology and the many people that say, *All I need is my bible*, they speak against the Holy Spirit; for God uses means, i.e., teachers, in order for us to grow in knowledge (Jer. 3:15, Eph. 4:11, etc.) without which one can and most likely will twist the scriptures as Peter warns in 2Pet3:16 - *as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.* It is a clear sign of spiritual pride (or at least sloth) to refuse to study these great theologians on that groundless pretense. I quote John Flavel on this subject: “**Objection**. If any say, The world is even cloyed with books, and therefore though the discourse be necessary, yet the publication is needless. **Solution**. ...if you be so highly conceited of your own furniture and ability, that such books are needless to you; if you let them alone, they will do you no hurt, and other poor hungry souls will be glad of them and bless God for what you despise and leave.”

The Two-fold Image of God

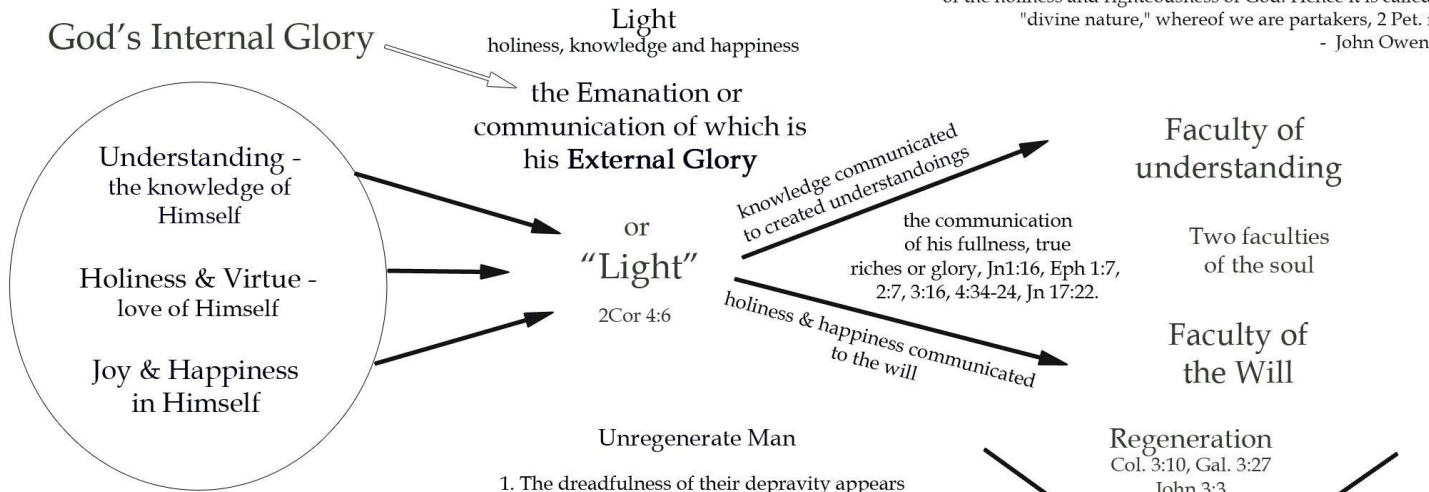
As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes—strength, knowledge, &c. — that constitute his greatness; so there is a twofold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency; (which image was lost by the fall; and God's natural image, consisting in man's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes. Jonathan Edwards

The Image of the Glory of God

1. When God first created all things, the heavens and the earth with all that is contained in them, he left such footsteps and impressions of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, on them, that they might signify and declare his perfection, -- his eternal power and Godhead; yet did he not, he is not said to have created them in his own image. And this was because they were only a passive representation of him in the light of others, and not in themselves; nor did they represent at all that wherein God will be principally glorified among his creatures, namely, the universal rectitude of his nature in righteousness and holiness. But of man it is said, peculiarly and only, that he was made in the image and likeness of God: and this was because, in the rectitude of his nature, he represented the holiness and righteousness of God; which is the only use of an image. This was lost by sin.

Man in his fallen condition does no more represent God; there is nothing in him that has any thing of the likeness or image of God in it; all is dead, dark, perverse, and confused. This new nature, whereof we speak, is created of God for this very end, that it may be a blessed image and representation of the holiness and righteousness of God. Hence it is called the "divine nature," whereof we are partakers, 2 Pet. i. 4.

- John Owen



Prior to conversion we are in the likeness and image of Adam (Gen 5:3), a natural man (1Cor15:46-49), who is blind, naked, having no saving knowledge of God, is God's enemy, full of dead man's bones, rotten from his head to his toes, nothing good in him, as opposed to a spiritual man. We are missing the moral image of God that was lost at the fall, hence we have no tendency to good or holiness (love to God). So this image must be restored to enable us to see God (Jn 3:3) and to obey God by the re-stamping of God's image, the image of his holiness and knowledge, upon the soul, incorporating a new principle of life: faith, grace and truth. - G.C.

The reason why the moral image was erased at the fall, not just severely damaged, is because in unregenerate men there is no love for God at all. There is no tendency to do or think or delight in holy things. If there was a little of this holiness left in some form, then there would be a little love for God, hence, a *little strength* or spiritual strength; but there is none! After all, what does a damaged image of holiness look like?? It is a meaningless expression and implies a contradiction. If it is severely damaged then it is not an image of anything but an image of a wreck; it would not look like God's image of his holiness, nor have the beauty of holiness nor would it serve any function! For if there is a little holiness left, then there is a little life left, hence not dead in sins, etc. For, as David Brainerd comments, "for God must, I think, deny himself, if he cast away his own image, even the soul that is one in desires with himself." - G. C. see also Ps 73:18-20

1. The dreadfulness of their depravity appears in that they are so sottishly blind and ignorant. God gave man a faculty of reason and understanding, which is a noble faculty. Herein he differs from all other creatures here below.

He is exalted in his nature above them, and is in this respect like the angels, and is made capable to know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things. And God gave him understanding for this end, that he might know him, and know heavenly things, and made him as capable to know these things as any others. But man has debased himself, and has lost his glory in this respect. He has become as ignorant of the excellency of God as the very beasts. His understanding is full of darkness; his mind is blind, is altogether blind to spiritual things. Men are ignorant of God, and ignorant of Christ, ignorant of the way of salvation, ignorant of their own happiness, blind in the midst of the brightest and clearest light, ignorant under all manner of instructions. Romans iii. 17. "The way of peace they have not known." Isa. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding." Jonathan Edwards

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings primarily and most essentially consist in their moral excellency or holiness. Herein consists the loveliness of angels, without which, notwithstanding all their natural perfections, they would have no more loveliness than devils. It is moral excellency alone, that is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings: it is this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of, their natural perfections and qualifications. Moral excellency, if I may so speak, is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not. Jonathan Edwards

And though all these things, which seem to be so various, are signified by that glory, which the Scripture speaks of as the ultimate end of all God's works; yet it is manifest there is no greater, and no other variety in it, than in the internal and essential glory of God itself. God's internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God's glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God's external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will. God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fulness called in Scripture, the glory of God. The first part of this glory is called truth, the latter, grace, John i. 14. "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jonathan Edwards

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Everything found in this document in brackets in blue [like this] is my insert. The titles for the excerpts in most cases are my own. Also, several Hebrew words or phrases I deleted because they didn't copy over that well. The Greek did.

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Cornelius Van Til

Van Til puts many doctrines together in a beautiful fashion.

This is to the next level!

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from J Edwards, On Religious Affections p 278 on the subject of God's two-fold image
<http://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/works1.vii.iv.iv.html>

SECT. III.

Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the moral excellency of divine things. Or, a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the spring of all holy affections.

HERE, for the sake of the more illiterate reader, I will explain what I mean by the moral excellency of divine things.—The word moral is not to be understood here, according to the common acceptance, when men speak of morality, and a moral behavior; meaning an outward conformity to the duties of the moral law, and especially the duties of the second table. Nor is it taken for mere seeming virtues, proceeding from natural principles, in opposition to those that are more inward, spiritual, and divine. The honesty, justice, generosity, good-nature, and public spirit of many of the heathen, are called moral virtues, in distinction from the holy faith, love, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of true Christians; but the word moral is not to be understood so in this place.

In order to a right understanding of what is meant, it must be observed, that divines commonly make a distinction between **moral good and evil, and natural good and evil**. By moral evil, they mean the evil of sin, or that evil which is against duty, and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By natural evil, they do not mean that evil which is properly opposed to duty; but that which is contrary to mere nature, without any respect to a rule of duty. So the evil of suffering is called natural evil, such as pain and torment, disgrace, and the like: these things are contrary to mere nature, hateful to wicked men and devils, as well as good men and angels. If a child be monstrous, or a natural fool, these are natural, but not moral evils, because they have not properly the nature of the evil of sin. On the other hand, as by moral evil divines mean sin, or that which is contrary to what is right; so by moral good, they mean that which is contrary to sin: or, in other words, that good in beings who have will and choice, whereby, as voluntary agents, they are, and act, as it becomes them to be and to act. And, it is obvious, that is becoming, which is most fit, suitable, and lovely. By natural good, they mean that

good which is entirely of a different kind from holiness or virtue, viz. that which perfects or suits nature, considering nature abstractly from any holy or unholy qualifications, and without any relation to any rule or measure of right and wrong.

Thus pleasure is a natural good; so is honour; so is strength; and so is speculative knowledge, human learning, and policy. **Thus there is a distinction to be made between men's natural and their moral good; and also between the natural and moral good of the angels in heaven.** The great capacity of angelic understandings, their great strength, and the honorable circumstances they are in as the great ministers of God's kingdom, whence they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, is their natural good. But their perfect holiness and glorious goodness, their pure and flaming love to God, to the saints and one another, is their moral good. **So divines make a distinction between the natural and moral perfections of God: by the moral perfections of God, they mean those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent, or whereby the heart and will of God, are good, right, infinitely becoming, and lovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or, in one word, his holiness. By God's natural perfections, they mean those attributes wherein his greatness consists; such as his power, his knowledge, his being from everlasting to everlasting, his omnipresence, his awful and terrible majesty.**

The moral excellency of an intelligent voluntary being, is more immediately seated in the heart or will. That intelligent being whose will is truly right and lovely, he is morally good or excellent.—This moral excellency, when it is true and real, is **holiness. Therefore holiness comprehends all the true moral excellency of intelligent beings: there is no other true virtue, but real holiness.** Holiness comprehends all the true virtue of a good man; **his love to God, his gracious love to men, his justice, his charity, his bowels of mercies, his gracious meekness and gentleness, and all other Christian virtues, belong to his holiness.** So the **holiness of God**, in the more extensive sense of the word—the sense in which the word is commonly, if not universally, used concerning God in Scripture—is the same with the **moral excellency of the divine nature; comprehending all his moral perfections, his righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness.** [That's the sense I mean in my diagram that is communicated to the elect – on page 4 above] As in holy men, their Christian kindness and mercy belong to their holiness; so the kindness and mercy of God belong to his holiness. **Holiness in man, is but the image of God's holiness;** and surely there are not more virtues belonging to the image, than are in the original. Has derived holiness more in it, than is in that underived holiness, which is its fountain?

As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes—strength, knowledge, &c.—that constitute his greatness; **so there is a twofold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency; (which image was lost by the fall); and God's natural image, consisting in man's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes.** From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that **love to divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency, is the spring of all holy affections.**

It has been already shown, under the former head, that the **first objective ground of all holy affections is the supreme excellency of divine things as they are in their own nature**. I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that the kind of excellency which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their holiness. Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness; they love God, in the first place, for the beauty of his holiness, or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the saints, in the exercise of gracious affections, love God only for his holiness; all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their eyes; they delight in every divine perfection; the contemplation of the infinite greatness, power, knowledge, and terrible majesty of God, **is pleasant to them**. But their love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love. **Here it is that true love to God begins**; all other holy love to divine things flows from hence. Love to God for the beauty of his moral attributes, necessarily causes a delight in God for all his attributes; for his moral attributes cannot be without his natural attributes. Infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and infinite greatness; and all the attributes of God as it were imply one another. [Delight in God is a grace!]

[This is key!]: And therefore it must needs be, that a sight of God's loveliness must begin here. **A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute**; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving God) it derives its loveliness from this. Therefore, it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, **until this is seen**: and it is impossible that any perfection of the divine nature should be loved with true love until this is loved. If the true loveliness of all God's perfections, arises from the loveliness of his holiness; then the true love of all his perfections, arises from the love of his holiness. **They that do not see the glory of God's holiness, cannot see any thing of the true glory of his mercy and grace**. They see nothing of the glory of those attributes, as any excellency of God's nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them, and love them, as they concern their interest. For these attributes are no part of the excellency of God's nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his holiness, more largely taken; or as they are a part of his moral perfection.

[It is this love for God, his holiness, that is communicated to the elect that causes them to love God for who he is...for the excellency and true beauty of his holy nature, raising them to life – Deut. 30:6 – “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” This is not communicated to reprobates or else they would see and believe. So they are kept blinded – but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded – Rm11:17] I encourage the reader to continue with this writing by Edwards by going to the link above. Also, regarding this glory communicated that quickens, makes alive, etc., see Rms 6:4, “... that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Next, a General comment by **John Owen** on the duty of Christians to grow in Christian knowledge, the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (see also pg. 706, 401)

- John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews, vol 23 p 178

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Everything found in brackets [like this] is inserted by me.

2. He [Paul] takes occasion from hence to declare the great mystery of the redemption of the church by Christ; of the office that he bare, and the work that he performed therein. This was that which he principally designed, as being indeed the sole foundation of Christian religion. Wherefore, we have in this epistle, as a clear exposition of the **first promise**, with all those which were given in the explication or confirmation of it, so also of **the law and its worship**, which were afterwards introduced; that is, in general, of the whole old testament, or God's instruction of the church under it. Hence that blessed light, which now shines forth in the promises and legal institutions of the old testament, is derived unto us through the exposition of them given unto us by the Holy Ghost in this epistle. We are therefore to remember, that in our inquiries into these things, we are conversant in the **deepest mysteries of the wisdom and counsel of God**, —those which animated the faith and obedience of both churches: which calls not only for our utmost diligence, but for continual reverence and godly fear.

This following preface is comprehensive of the importance of doctrine, in understanding the glory of Christ and the way of salvation, much of which is illustrated by the diagram on page 4.

A Preface by David Brainerd

https://books.google.com/books?id=dmRiAAAACAAJ&pg=PA30&lpg=PA30&dq=A+Preface+by+Thomas+Shepard,+November+25,+1640&source=bl&ots=3xW5tQw_mX&sig=aKkEFelOUYPz8CA8hsB97KzNAv4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewj2h_mUh-PRAhVYzmMKHYHwChwQ6AEILzAF#v=onepage&q=A%20Preface%20by%20Thomas%20Shepard%2C%20November%2025%2C%201640&f=false

Meditations and Spiritual Experiences Vol. 3 by Thomas Shepard, pastor of the Church of Christ in Cambridge, in New England from November 25, 1640 to December 27, 1641
pg. 385

This preface was also in J Edwards' works: <http://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/works2.ix.xii.html>, with this comment preceding it:

Besides what has been already related of Mr. Brainerd's sentiments in his dying state concerning true and false religion, we have his deliberate and solemn thoughts on this subject, further appearing by his preface to Mr. Shepard's diary, before mentioned; which, when he wrote it, he supposed to be (as it proved) one of the last things he should ever write. I shall here insert a part of that preface, as follows:

Preface

It is always a matter of the highest importance, both with regard to the honor of God and the interests of the souls of men, that true religion be justly delineated; that it appear in its own native excellency, worth, and beauty, with all its goodness and virtue,

as that which conforms the soul to the image of the blessed God, the conversation and practice to the rules of his word, and the example of Christ, and qualifies the man for the glorious employments and entertainments of the heavenly state, as well as for a faithful discharge of the duties assigned him by divine Providence in this present world.

When the nature, the properties, and effects of this divine religion, which our Lord has taught and exemplified to us, are thus clearly opened, and duly represented, this tends to rectify the mistakes of many persons in religious matters; to prevent and remove many prejudices persons are disposed to receive and entertain against religion, through mistakes, either in themselves or others, (although it will still remain a sad truth, that men's hearts are naturally averse to the power of religion, though represented in the most agreeable light). It likewise tends to convince rational and thinking persons, who are not given up to vice and prejudice, (especially if withal they see it duly exemplified in the lives of those who profess it), that of a truth, God is in this religion. By this means also the false hopes of hypocrites are like to be detected and discovered to their view, and thereby an opportunity given them to escape out of the snare, that would otherwise have proved fatal to their souls. [[see Van Til on hypocrites at codehypo1](#)] Nor can it fail of affording comfort to those who are truly godly to find their own religion exactly described, and proved to be the religion of God's word. Hereby some of that number, who are under grievous doubts about their own spiritual state, and ready to reckon themselves among the most poor and miserable, may be brought to see themselves possessed of the pearl of great price.

And as it is always a matter of the highest importance to have true religion justly represented and described, so there are some times in special, wherein those means that have the greatest tendency to give persons **right notions of it**, and show them **wherein its essence does indeed consist, in distinction from all delusive appearances**, are, in a peculiar manner, seasonable and necessary.

Such are the times wherein a diversity of sentiments in religion greatly prevails among the professors of it, when many are disposed to lay the stress of religion on those things which the word of God makes little or no account of, or perhaps wholly rejects, and to neglect and wholly pass by those things wherein the soul and essence of it are really contained.

How far this is the present state of religion in some places, and how much stress is laid by many upon some things, as being effects and evidences of exalted degrees of

religion, when they are so far from being of any importance in it, **that they are really irreligious, a mixture of self-love, imagination, and spiritual pride, or perhaps the influence of Satan transformed into an angel of light**; I say, how much stress is laid upon these things by many I shall not undertake to determine. But it is much to be feared, that while God was carrying on a glorious work of grace, and undoubtedly gathering a harvest of souls to himself, (which we should always remember with thankfulness,) **numbers of others have at the same time been fatally deluded by the devices of Satan and their own corrupt hearts.** “It is to be feared **that the conversions of some have no better foundation than this**, viz., that after they have been under some concern for their souls a while, and, it may be, manifested some very great and uncommon distress and agonies, they have on a sudden imagined they saw Christ in some posture or other, perhaps on the cross, bleeding and dying for their sins, or it may be smiling on them, and thereby signifying his love to them; and that these and the like things, **though mere imaginations**, which have nothing spiritual in them, have instantly removed all their fears and distresses, filled them with raptures of joy, and made them imagine they loved Christ with all their hearts, when the bottom of all was nothing but **self-love**. For when they imagined that Christ had been so good to them as to save them, and, as it were, to single them out of all the world, they could not but feel some kind of natural gratitude to him [often mistaken for divine love for God], **although they never had any spiritual view of his divine glory, excellency, and beauty, and consequently never had any love to him for himself.** Or that, instead of having some such imaginary view of Christ as has been mentioned, in order to remove their distress and give them joy, some having had a passage, or, perhaps, many passages of Scripture brought to their minds with power, (as they express it,) such as that, ‘ Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee,’ and the like, they have immediately applied these passages to themselves, supposing that God hereby manifested his peculiar favor to them as if mentioned by name; never considering that they are now giving heed to new revelations; there being no such thing revealed in the word of God as that this or that particular person has, or ever shall have, his sins forgiven; nor yet remembering that Satan can, with a great deal of seeming pertinency, (and perhaps also with considerable power,) bring Scripture to the minds of men, as he did to Christ himself. And thus these rejoice upon having some Scripture **suddenly suggested** to them, **or impressed upon their minds**, supposing they are now the children of God; just as did the other upon their imaginary views of Christ. And it is said that some speak of seeing a great light which filled all the place where they were, and dispelled all their darkness, fears, and distresses, and almost ravished their souls; while others have had it warmly suggested to their minds, not by any passage of Scripture, but, as it were, by a

whisper or voice from heaven, that God loves them, that Christ is theirs, etc.; which groundless imaginations and suggestions of Satan have had the same effect upon them that the delusions before mentioned had on the others.

“And as is the conversion of this sort of persons, so are there after experiences; the whole being built upon imagination, strong impressions, and sudden suggestions made to their minds; whence they are usually extremely confident, (as if immediately informed from God,) not only of the goodness of their own state, but of their infallible knowledge and absolute certainty of the truth of everything they pretend to, under the notion of religion; and thus all reasoning with some of them is utterly excluded.

“But it is remarkable of these that they are extremely deficient in regard of true poverty of spirit, sense of exceeding vileness in themselves, such as frequently makes truly gracious souls to groan, being burdened; as also in regard of meekness, love, and gentleness toward mankind, tenderness of conscience in their ordinary affairs and dealings in the world; and it is rare to see them deeply concerned about the principles and ends of their actions, and under fears lest they should not eye the glory of God chiefly, but live to themselves; or this at least is the case in their ordinary conduct, whether civil or religious. But if any one of their peculiar notions which their zeal has espoused be attacked, they are then so conscientious they must burn if called to it, for the defense of it. Yet, at the same time when they are so extremely deficient in regard of these precious divine tempers which have been mentioned, they are usually full of zeal, concern, and fervency in the things of religion, and often discourse of them with much warmth and engagement. And to those who do not know or do not consider wherein the essence of true religion consists, viz., in being conformed to the image of Christ, not in point of zeal and fervency only, but in all divine temper and practices; I say to those who do not duly observe and distinguish, they often appear like the best of men.”

Now, as all proper means are to be used to cure the errors of men’s minds, especially in things of religion, and as something of this nature may therefore seem peculiarly needful, especially in some places, so it is hopeful that the publication of the following small piece of the **Rev. Mr. Shepard’s** will be made in some measure serviceable in that respect. For as it is a journal of the private experiences of that excellent and holy man, designed for his own use, so it contains, as it were, this true religion for a course of time, delineated to us in a very exact manner; whence we have opportunity to see with utmost plainness what passed with him for religion, what he

labored after under that notion, and what were the exercises and difficulties he met with in pursuance of a religious life. And those who have any savor for the name and piety of that venerable man, it is hoped will read his experiences with care and attention, and as they read, consider whether there be any manner of agreement between his and theirs. And whoever reads attentively, I am persuaded, must own that he finds a greater appearance of true humility, self-emptiness, self-loathing, sense of great unfruitfulness, selfishness, exceeding vileness of heart, smallness of attainments in grace; I say, he must needs own that he finds more expressions of deep, unfeigned self-abasement in these experiences of Mr. Shepard's than some are willing to admit of. And it is hopeful the reader will further observe that when Mr. Shepard speaks of his comforts in religion, as he frequently does of his satisfaction, and sweetness, and desire to die and to be with Christ, he always, gives a solid account of the foundation of these comforts, and mentions some exercises of grace from which they proceeded. So that they are wholly different from those groundless joys that arise in the minds of poor deluded souls from a sudden suggestion made to them, that Christ is theirs, that God loves them, and the like. The reader will further observe that he valued nothing in religion that was not done with a view to the glory of God, as appears by many of his expressions, especially that under April 15, where he says, "When I looked over the day, I saw how I fell short of God and Christ, and how I had spent one hour unprofitably. And why? Because, though the thing I did was good, yet because I intended not God in it as my last end, and did not set my rule before me, and so set myself to please God, therefore I was unprofitable." **O that others from this example would learn to lay the stress of religion here, and labor that whether they live they might live to the Lord, or whether they die they might die to the Lord.**

There is something in these papers of the Rev. Mr. Shepard's that seems excellently calculated to be of service to those who are in the ministry, in particular. His method of examining his aims and ends, and the temper of his mind, both before and after preaching, whether he had met with enlargement or straitening, is an excellent example for others that bear the sacred character. **By this means they are like to gain a large acquaintance with their own hearts**, as it is evident he had with his.

*May the blessing of Heaven attend the following pages, that he who has long been dead may yet speak by them to the instruction, conviction, and saving benefit of many souls.

David Brainerd. August, 1747.

A Short Comment on Theology

and its Value to Believers

Hermon Bavinck

[my comments in blue]

“The knowledge of God is the central, core dogma, the exclusive content of theology. From the start of its labors dogmatic theology is shrouded in mystery; it stands before God the incomprehensible One. This knowledge leads to adoration and worship; to know God is to live.” [John 17:3, *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God,...*] “By pursuing this aim, dogmatics does not become a dry and academic exercise, without practical usefulness for life. The more it reflects on God, the knowledge of whom is its only content, the more it will be moved to adoration and worship.” Herman Bavinck, a Dutch Reformed Theologian, 1854-1921 Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2, p 27, 29

On a similar note on this subject of the mystery of God’s works, The Remonstrants (in particular, Episcopius an Arminian) argued that

“the worship of God is much more necessary than the knowledge of God.” Rationalism considered itself sure of God’s existence and attached but little value to knowledge of his being. It is as if people had lost all sense of the majesty and grandeur of God. Bavinck, RD, p41 vol. 2

So, God being the incomprehensible God, we only know him analogically, not how he actually is. God is an infinite distance from us in that sense, transcends all our capacity of understanding; and it is this that should produce a reverential awe over your whole soul. His ways are past finding out; “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.” Ps 139:6; and then Romans 11:33-35, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

This causes us to lay down in the dust before him in adoration and humility, with a higher sense of esteem for Him and a more fervent love and worship of Him.

This mystery cannot be comprehended; it can only be gratefully acknowledged. Bavinck, p49 Ps110:3

Incomprehensibility does not imply agnosticism but an ingredient of the Christian claim to have received by revelation a specific, limited, yet well-defined and true knowledge of God. In the words of Basil, “The knowledge of God consists in the perception of his incomprehensibility.” pg29 Vol.2

Involved here is a matter of profound religious importance, to which Augustine gave expression as follows: “We are speaking of God. Is it any wonder if you do not comprehend? *For if you comprehend, it is not God you comprehend.* Let it be a pious confession of ignorance rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To attain some slight knowledge of God is a great blessing; to comprehend him, however, is totally impossible.” (Augustine, *Lecture on the Gospel of John*) God is the sole object of all our love, precisely because he is the infinite and incomprehensible One. pg48 vol. 2

Do you wonder why we don't get excited or moved in a due manner toward our primary business in this life on earth? It's not only due to the hardness and deadness of our hearts but also due to a lack of knowledge of God; a lack of getting a right sense of his majesty, his glory; that's it; a main part of it anyway.

General Comments On The Theology and The Doctrine of God

Taken from James Dolezal's book *All That Is In God*

code415

Simple God Chapter 3

F.J. Sheed (1930), writing around the same time as Berkhof, offers a similarly sobering assessment: "A study of what is happening to theology in its higher reaches would almost certainly take as its starting point the attribute of simplicity, and show that every current heresy begins by being wrong on that."

[This is specifically addressed to the subject of divine simplicity but is applicable to all other doctrines and theology in general.]

Throughout the course of church history, theologians have sought to coherently communicate both the explicit teachings of scripture and the doctrines that emerge as a necessary consequence of what the Bible as a whole teaches. These truths rightly ordered form an internally consistent system of Christian doctrine. We might liken the work of the theologian to that of a builder, who first gathers materials for the construction of a building and then proceeds to erect the structure. Some of the materials are easily collected, while others are obtained with much difficulty. But the work is not finished when one has gathered the various resources. There remains the difficult job of arranging them in their proper order so that the building holds itself together. The task of theology proper is similar. After gathering the various truths about God that are spread throughout nature and Scripture, one is faced with the challenge of intelligibly arranging the doctrines so as to form a single coherent doctrine of God.

Of course there must be rules to govern this task, just as there are blueprints governing the construction of a builder. Otherwise, the project proceeds without rhyme or reason, and certain parts may be at odds with other parts, compromising the integrity of the whole. Paul Helm observes that **classical Christian theism** (see [note](#) below) has offered just such a set of rules, a "grammatical template," by which we are enabled to coherently hold together the diversity of biblical statements about God. He explains:

The data regarding the essence and nature of God , as revealed in Scripture, have by and large an occasional and unsystematic character to them. But because Scripture, as God's word, is self-consistent, the varied data must be self-consistent, and when properly appreciated must

also be *seen* to be. Or, at the very least, it may be recognized that alleged inconsistency cannot be proven. The classical conceptual shape of Christian theism offers a template in terms of which that consistency may be appreciated. For it provides rules, drawn from the varied data of Scripture, in terms of which the varied language of Scripture about God, not only in his unity but also in his trinitarian glory and his actions in the economy of redemption, can be learned and use without falling into inconsistency or serious error. It is not so much an explanatory as a *grammatical template*. [Paul Helm, foreword to James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness*

My Side note on natural theology, **brute facts** and *classical* or traditional theism by Greg Bahnsen

My paraphrase from Greg Bahnsen's teaching on the problem with natural theology, the traditional or classical as opposed to Christian theistic proofs:

Brute facts are isolated assumed self-evident arguments, data in a void or *uninterpreted raw data* (Bahnsen: min-mark 27: <https://youtu.be/YmKKC70GIC4>) The unregenerate will only interpret these facts according to his [erroneous] presuppositions which is the error of natural theology (the traditional method of theistic proofs) as opposed to Rom. 1, a theology based upon revelation, where the whole of nature pictures God all at once, not by piecemeal increments of brute facts, that, in the natural mind (who naturally suppresses the knowledge of God), will only lead him to the probability of a finite God, not the God of Scripture; facts should not be isolated from the framework in which they come. Bahnsen explains this very well in that video on *Natural Theology and the Proofs*.] search: **brutefactdef** for Dr. Strange's explanation.

This grammar establishes an acceptable framework for our God-talk and sets certain controls on what theological proposals we should and should not regard as sound. The goal is not to enable us to comprehend God in some scientific sense or to dispel the mystery of His being. Indeed, classical Christian theism insists upon the absolute incomprehensibility of God throughout its entire formulation. The Puritan **Stephen Charnock** offers sage counsel when he states, "Though we cannot comprehend him as he is, we must be careful not to fancy him to be what he is not." The Swiss theologian **Charles Journet** proposes that "the aim of the theologian dealing with mystery is to do away with phrases which diminish the mystery." Our theological grammar functions in part to preserve the integrity of the revealed mystery of God at precisely those points where human reason may be tempted to diminish it in an effort to render God more easily understood by the human intellect.

This is a good explanation by Thomas Weinandy in his book, *Does God Suffer?*, of how to approach the study of theology. The footnotes are excellent. Weinandy does a very good job in describing the doctrines of God's nature such as divine impassibility,

simplicity, etc., but him being a Roman Catholic priest, the errors of Roman Catholicism come out in his soteriology and what seems to be, his coming on the side of the universalists. Nevertheless, his insights on the Doctrine of God in his book, *Does God Suffer*, I thought were very good.

He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

The Right Approach to Theology

Code445

e.g., On the Holy Trinity

A Problem vs. A Mystery

By Thomas Weinandy

Pg 31

Having briefly enunciated some of the ingredients which cultivate theological understanding and doctrinal growth, it is now important to examine how theologians, in the light of these elements, should approach and foster such understanding and development. What is it that the theologian does, as a believer seeking understanding within the historical and communal setting, to help bring about new theological focus and advance authentic development? It is here that I believe there is a great deal of confusion among theologians, and the issue of God's impassibility illustrates this confusion.

Gabriel Marcel, in his Gifford Lectures of 1949 and 1950, and later Jacques Maritain, who borrowed the distinction from Marcel, spoke of two contrasting attitudes a person may possess when approaching questions. **Marcel points out that we can approach a field of inquiry as either a *problem* or as a *mystery*.**⁶ He was critical of the modern mentality which is, as if one were always examining some detached state of affairs which could be coldly dissected and systematically analyzed to as to produce complete and comprehensive knowledge. [that's the problem! This led many via the enlightenment in Europe, away from true Christianity, to rationalism and science to answer their deep soul searching questions, which it failed to do. The Christian concept of mystery is vital to our attitude toward the God and the things of God, to excite us to a due adoration, praise, reverential fear of God, and wonderment of him, etc.] This was being done, he believed, not only within the natural sciences, where it may be legitimate, but also within the humanities, specifically within his own discipline – that of philosophy.⁷

⁷Jacques Maritain states: “The problem aspect naturally predominates where knowledge is least ontological, for example, when it is primarily concerned with mental constructions built around a sensible datum – as in empirical knowledge, and in the sciences of phenomena.” A *Preface to Metaphysics*, 1939 p6.]

Marcel argued that some fields of human enquiry cannot be properly understood, and in actual fact they become distorted, when approached as problems. Rather, they must be approached under the rubric of *mystery*, which ‘by definition, transcends every conceivable technique.’ Human beings are, for Marcel, a mystery and the fundamental concerns of human beings are mysteries – personhood, identity, friendship, family, good and evil, etc. By mystery then Marcel meant that while one could say a great deal about human beings and the central issues that surround them, yet no matter how much one said and no matter how true it may be, there is always more to be understood and articulated. There is no comprehensive, complete, and final answer. We may come to a greater understanding of the mystery of human life, but we never come to a complete comprehension of it. Maritain states that where there is mystery ‘the intellect has to penetrate more and more deeply the *same* object.’⁹

⁹Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, p. 7. Maritain also states: Where the problem aspect prevails one solution follows another; where one ends, the other begins. There is a rectilinear progress of successive views...Where the problem aspect predominates I thirst to know the answer to my problem. And when I have obtained the answer I am satisfied: *that particular* thirst is quenched.

...In the second case where the mystery aspect predominates I thirst to know reality, *being* under one or other of its modes, the ontological mystery. When I know it I drink my fill. But I still thirst and continue to thirst for the same thing, the same reality which at once satisfies and increases my desire. Thus I never cease quenching my thirst from the same spring of water which is ever fresh and yet I always thirst for it. A *Preface to Metaphysics*, pp. 7-8

The mystery, by the necessity of its subject matter, remains.

While Marcel and Maritain were primarily concerned with distinguishing the problems of scientific enquiry from the mysteries of philosophic enquiry, I believe that such a distinction between problem and mystery is relevant to how theologians ought to approach issues of faith and theology.

Marcel and Maritain were well aware that, arising out of the **Enlightenment**, there grew the mentality that intellectual advancement consisted in solving problems that had hitherto not been solved. The former ‘mysteries’ of the physical universe were being resolved by approaching them as scientific problems to be decoded and unraveled. The scientific and physical laws of nature became transparent and unmistakable. The new

enthusiasm and success of the scientific method was the major contributing factor to this mentality. Science became the means of resolving all kinds of problems and issues concerning nature and how nature worked. All this was done in a concise, rational, mathematical, and experiential fashion. It was equally eminently practical. Scientific knowledge could solve a host of practical problems, **and everyone gloried in its success.** [that's the key that draws people away from the mystery rubric and hence its invaluable spiritual benefits] **This mentality is illustrated in the contemporary belief that technology, one of the fruits of science, can solve almost any problem.** In the realm of science and technology this mentality, that intellectual advancement consists in solving theoretical and practical problems, may be legitimate.¹⁰

¹⁰ However, even in the field of science there remains a sense of 'mystery' and, I believe, many scientists are coming to this awareness. The more science unlocks the 'mysteries' of the universe, the more mysterious it becomes. New knowledge always leads to new and baffling questions. Science may solve *problems*, but its solutions often create even greater *mysteries*.

However, I want to argue that this mentality, to disastrous effect, has colored how many philosophers and theologians approach questions of faith and theology.

Many theologians today, having embraced the Enlightenment presuppositions and the scientific method that it fostered, approach theological issues as if they were scientific problems to be solved rather than mysteries to be discerned and clarified. However, the true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of theological *problems*, but the discernment of what the mystery of faith is. Because God, who can never be fully comprehended, lies at the heart of all theological enquiry, theology by its nature is not a problem solving enterprise, but rather a mystery discerning enterprise.

This can be seen already in the early stages of God's revelation of himself to the Jewish people. God manifested himself to Moses in the burning bush (see Exod. 3). Moses, in the course of the conversation, asked God, 'What is your name?' Since names, for the Israelites, both revealed the character of the person so named and allowed the knower of the name to call upon the person so named, Moses, in asking God to tell him his name, wanted to know God as well as have the power to call upon him. Moses was attempting to solve, what was for him, a theological problem. God must have chuckled¹¹ to himself as he replied to Moses, 'I am Who Am' or 'I Am He Who Is.'¹²

¹¹ It was obviously (?) an 'impassible' chuckle!

¹² Scholars debate as to the exact translation of the name *Yahweh*. Scholars agree that it comes from the Hebrew root word meaning 'to be.' Some translate it in the causative sense of

‘he causes to be,’ but the more likely and traditional translation is ‘I am who am’ or ‘I am the one who exists,’ or ‘I am he who is.’ For a concise treatment, see *The New Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), Exodus 3:13 fn. g.

God did reveal to Moses his name and so Moses now knew more about God than he knew before. He now knew that God is ‘He who is.’ However, Moses must have quickly realized that, in knowing God more fully, God had become an even greater mystery (problem) that he was before. Previously Moses in calling God, for example, El Shaddai – God of the Mountain – may not have known a great deal about God, but the little he did know was at least somewhat comprehensible. God was he who dwelt on the mountain, which was the home of the gods. However, Moses now knew much more about God. He actually knew that God is ‘I Am Who Am,’ but what it means for God to be ‘He Who Is’ is completely incomprehensible. Moses, nor we today, can comprehend that God’s very nature is ‘to be,’ that he is the one who is the fullness of life and existence.

Here we learn a primary lesson concerning the nature of revelation and theology. The more God reveals who he is and the more we come to a true and authentic knowledge of who he is, the more mysterious he becomes. Theology, as faith seeking understanding, helps us come to a deeper and fuller understanding of the nature of God and his revelation, but this growth is in coming to know what the mystery of God is and not the comprehension of the mystery.¹³

¹³ Christians believe that Jesus revealed God to be a trinity of persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christians now know more about God than did Moses, but in coming to a greater knowledge of God, God has become even more mysterious than he was for Moses.

[\[Go to codeTrin for more on the Trinity\]](#)

Examples from the History of Theology

Let me further illustrate the difference between approaching questions of revelation as problems to be solved rather than as mysteries to be clarified by examining a couple of theological controversies that arose within the church.

In the early fourth century, Arius, a priest in Alexandria, took up the issue of how god could be one and how simultaneously the Son could be God. this is an authentic theological concern, and one that had been percolating in the early church for a long time. Arius, having examined all of the previous attempts at explaining this ‘problem’ concluded that there was no way to resolve the issue rationally. If God was one, then the son, Arius concluded, could not possibly be God and, therefore, he must be a creature. Arius resolved the ‘problem’ of how god could simultaneously be one and the

Son be God by denying one of the truths that the church had previously held, that is, the divinity of the Son. Arius provided an answer. It was very clear and understandable. The problem was solved. However, in solving this theological 'problem' Arius also dissolved the faith of the church which believed that not only was the Father God but also equally the Son.

In response Arius, the church held its first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325. The majority of the church Fathers probably did not know how to answer fully or satisfactorily Arius' arguments, but they did know what the church believed, and so proclaimed that Jesus is God as the Father is God and that he was *homoousion* (one in being) with the Father.

It was Athanasius, in the ensuing controversy after the council, who grasped the real significance of Nicea's *homoousion* doctrine. Athanasius reconceived what it meant for God to be one. Where in the past all Christian theologians conceived the one God to be the Father (this understanding included Arius), and then attempted to show how the Son shared in the one nature of God, an attempt that Arius realized was doomed to failure, Athanasius recognized that Christian revelation completely shattered this view of God. Athanasius' great insight was to perceive that the one God is not just the Father, but rather that the one God is the Father begetting the Son. This is the very nature of the one God. This is what God is. What the one nature of God is, is the Father eternally begetting the Son. Therefore, the Father and Son are the one God, one in being, for the one God is the dynamic inter-relationship between the Father and the Son.

Athanasius approached the issue of how God can be one and the Son be God not as a problem to be solved, but as a mystery to be discerned. With Arius all becomes comprehensible. With Athanasius a new clarity is achieved as to what the mystery is, but the mystery itself does not become completely comprehensible. We know more precisely and clearly what the mystery is, that is, that the one God is the Father begetting the Son. That remains a mystery and has become, in a sense, even more a mystery, but one that has obtained new depth of clarity.¹⁴

¹⁴ One could also cite the example found in the fifth century with regards to the Incarnation. The Council of Nicea had proclaimed the full divinity of the Son, and equally the church later condemned Apollinarius for denying the full humanity of Jesus. There then arose, with greater intensity, the question of how the one Jesus could be both fully God and fully man. Nestorius upheld the full divinity and the full humanity. The problem for him was how to conceive of them as one without jeopardizing either the humanity or the divinity. He rightly argued that some in the past, for example Apollinarius, in order to make Jesus one denied the full humanity of Jesus. Apollinarius denied the human soul of Jesus, and thus the divinity was united to the

body alone so as to form the one reality of Jesus, after the manner of the human soul and body forming the one reality of man. Apollinarius had resolved the problem of Jesus' oneness by denying the full humanity. Nestorius knew that this was erroneous. The incarnation demanded the fullness of divinity and the fullness of the humanity. However, Nestorius himself solved the problem by ultimately denying the ontological union between the humanity and the divinity, that is, that Jesus is really one. The divinity and the humanity were only united by a moral union, that is, the Son assumed the humanity in love or by 'good pleasure.' Nestorius proposed this because he could not conceive how God and man could be truly one without destroying either the divinity or the humanity. Nestorius solved the theological problem, but again he equally dissolved the mystery. The mystery of the Incarnation is that the Son of God, in the fullness of his divinity, did actually, *come to exist* as a full man.

Cyril of Alexandria, Nestorius' arch-opponent, who himself had some of his own theological ambiguities, nonetheless realized that the Son of God did actually become man. He began to discern, what the council of Chalcedon in 451 would later affirm, that the Incarnation is not the union of natures, which would demand that either or both the humanity and the divinity be transformed in the process and so produce some third kind of being which was neither God nor man, but rather that in the Incarnation it is the *person* of the Son who takes on an entirely new mode of existence. He comes to exist as man. Thus Jesus is the one person of the Son existing as God and as man. The Council of Chalcedon declared that Jesus is one and the same Son existing as fully God and fully man without destroying either the divinity or the humanity. Within the Incarnation the identity of Jesus, who he is, is the eternal divine Son but the manner of the Son's identity is as man. Again, Cyril and Chalcedon did not solve a theological problem. What they did was clarify the mystery of the Incarnation. We now know more clearly that the mystery of the Incarnation is that the one person of the eternal Son actually exists as a complete man, but we do not comprehend the mystery. That remains, and is, in a sense again, even more mysterious.

Theology – Problems and Mysteries

An example of a more contemporary nature may be also helpful. Kenotic christologists ask the question: How can a God who is almighty, all-knowing, and all-powerful become man, and so take on human limitations – weakness, lack of knowledge, etc.? It would appear that we are faced, within the Incarnation, with contrary and irreconcilable attributes. Kenotic christology, both past and present, solves *the problem* by having the Son of God either give up (empty himself –*kenosis*) those divine attributes which would be incompatible with his human limitations, or holding them in abeyance or restraint. The problem is solved. However, again the mystery is also equally dissolved. No longer is the Son of God, in the fullness of his divinity, existing as man. Rather, a truncated and lesser 'humanized' form of divinity

now exists as man. Kenotic Christology always proposes that someone less than fully God exists as man and not that God, in all his wholly otherness, exists as man.

Kenotic Christology misconceives the nature of the Incarnation. It is not a union of incompatible natures with the ensuing conflict of incompatible attributes. Rather, within the Incarnation the person of the eternal Son, while remaining fully divine, takes on a new life as man, and so assumes a fully human life in all its human frailty and weakness. The mystery is that one and the same person or subject, who actually is all-powerful as God, is equally weak and frail as man, for it is in that manner that the same Son now also exists.

The Contemporary Theological Mindset

Examples of how theologians have treated theological questions as either problems to be solved or mysteries to be clarified could be multiplied throughout the history of theology. Hopefully, the above examples make it evident that true Christian theology has to do with clarifying, and so developing, the understanding of the mysteries of faith and not the dissolving of the mysteries into complete comprehension. The point at issue here is that this distinction between solving problems and elucidating mysteries has, since the Enlightenment, become almost completely lost within theology. While multiple examples again could be given to illustrate this, the question of God's impassibility is the subject of this book, and itself well exemplifies the point.

As we saw in the first chapter, many theologians argue that God's impassibility, as traditionally believed by Christians through the centuries, cannot be compatible with his being a loving person who cares for and interacts with human beings within time and history. Thus, they deny that God is impassible, and instead assert that he must be passible, and so suffers. Again, the problem is solved, but is it solved at the expense of maintaining the great mystery of God and his relationship to the world and human beings? An affirmative answer to this question will be given in the course of this study. However, this study will not solve this theological *problem*. This study only hopes to clarify the *mystery* of God's impassibility in relationship to the passible lives of human beings within the ever-changing world of history. In so doing the mystery, it is hoped, will come into sharper focus and so become more deeply known and appreciated, but it will not become comprehensible. As Pope John II has stated: 'In short, the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the more, showing how necessary it is for people's lives. [Fides et Ratio, n. 13] For Maritain, God is the fundamental mystery, and our thirst can only be satiated when we see him face to face. See *Ibid.*, pp.5 and 8-9.

[My comments:](#)

Romans 11

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Paul comes to end of himself in this final statement regarding the mysteries of the kingdom, that they are too wonderful for him; you can see his reaction: a due manner of worship. The bottom line is that this attitude tends to a reverential awe to come over our hearts in holy admiration, holy esteem and worship of God in a due manner. If we can put God in our hip pocket, which is the result of the use of the *problem* rubric, then we are throwing cold water on this effect which in a sense is idolatry. Man thinks that God is like himself as the Psalmist notes in Psalm 50:21, *you thought I was altogether like you!* But God is not like us. And so by maintaining the mystery, we thirst for more of this living water that comes from an infinite fountain of good, to come to clearer and clearer understandings of God; and it all ends up in pure ardent flame of worship.

“The aim of the theologian in dealing with mystery is do away with phrases which diminish the mystery.” Swiss theologian, Charles Journet:

Ps. 139:6 *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*

For more on the Trinity go to [codeTrin](#)

The Glory of Christ

code10

This is a superb grand summary of the communication of the glory of Christ, the image of his himself, his glorious excellency of his holy nature, to his church.

by John Owen in *The Glory of Christ*.

Chapter X.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.i.xiii.html>

The glory of Christ in the communication of himself unto believers.

Another instance of the glory of Christ, which we are to behold here by faith, and hope that we shall do so by sight hereafter, consists in the **mysterious communication of himself**, and all the **benefits of his mediation**, unto the souls of them that do believe, to their present happiness and future eternal blessedness.

Hereby he becomes theirs as they are his; which is the life, the glory, and consolation of the church, [Cant. Vi. 3; ii. 16; vii. 10](#), — he and all that he is being appropriated unto them, **by virtue of their mystical union**. There is, there must be, some ground, formal reason, and cause of this relation between Christ and the church, whereby he is theirs, and they are his; — he is in them, and they in him, so as it is not between him and other men in the world. [[hence, particularity in redemption later to be addressed](#)]

The apostle, speaking of this **communication** of Christ unto the **church**, and the **union** between them which does ensue thereon, affirms that it is “**a great mystery**;” for “I speak,” saith he, “concerning Christ and the church,” [Eph. V. 32](#).

I shall very briefly inquire into the **causes, ways, and means of this mysterious communication, whereby he is made to be ours**, to be in us, to dwell with us, and all the benefits of his mediation to belong unto us. For, as was said, it is evident that he does

not thus communicate himself unto all by **natural necessity**, as the sun gives light equally unto the whole world, — nor is he present with all by a ubiquity of his human nature, — nor, as some dream, by a diffusion of his rational soul into all, — nor does he become ours by a carnal eating of him in the sacrament; but this mystery proceeds from, and depends on, other reasons and causes, as we shall briefly declare.

But yet, before I proceed to declare the **way and manner** whereby Christ communicateth himself unto the church, I must premise something of divine communications in general and their glory. And I shall do this by touching a little on the harmony and correspondence that is between the **old creation** and the **new**.

1. All being, power, goodness, and wisdom, were originally essentially, infinitely in God. And in them, with the other **perfections of his nature**, consisted his **essential glory**.

2. **The old creation was a communication of being and goodness by almighty power, directed by infinite wisdom, unto all things that were created for the manifestation of that glory.** This was the **first communication of God unto anything without himself**; and it was exceeding glorious. See [Ps. Xix. 1](#); [Rom. i. 20](#). And it was a curious machine, framed in the **subordination and dependency of one thing on another**; without which they could not subsist, nor have a continuance of their beings. All creatures below live on the earth and the products of it; the earth, for its whole production, depends on the sun and other heavenly bodies; as God declares, [Hos. li. 21, 22](#), “I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.” God has given a subordination of things in a concatenation of causes, whereon their subsistence does depend. Yet, —

3. In this mutual dependency on and supplies unto one another, **they all depend on and are influenced from God himself, — the eternal fountain of being, power, and goodness.** “He hears the heavens;” and in the continuation of this order, by constant divine communication of being, goodness, and power, unto all things, **God is no less glorified than in the first creation of them**, [Acts xiv. 15–17](#); [xvii. 24–29](#).

4. This glory of God is visible in the matter of it, and is obvious unto the reason of mankind; for from his works of creation and providence they may learn his eternal power and godhead, wherein he is essentially glorious.

5. But by this divine communication, God did not intend only to glorify himself in the essential properties of his nature, **but his existence also in three persons, of Father, Son, and Spirit**. For although the whole creation in its first framing, and in its perfection, was, and is, by an emanation of power and goodness from the divine nature, in the person of the **Father, as he is the fountain of the Trinity**, whence he is said peculiarly to be the Creator of all things; yet the **immediate operation** in the creation was from the **Son, the power and wisdom of the Father**, [John i. 1–3](#); [Col. i. 16](#); [Heb. i. 2](#). And as upon the first production of the **mass of the creation**, it was under the especial care of the Spirit of God, to preserve and cherish it unto the production of all distinct sorts of creatures, [Gen. i. 2](#), — so in the continuance of the whole, there is an especial operation of the same Spirit in all things. **Nothing can subsist one moment by virtue of the dependence which all things have on one another, without a continual emanation of power from him**. See [Ps. Civ. 29, 30](#). [[Go to codeTrin for more on the Trinity](#)]

By these **divine communications**, in the production and preservation of the creature, **does God manifest his glory**, and by them alone in the way of nature he does so; and without them, although he would have been for ever essentially glorious, yet was it impossible that his glory should be known unto any but himself. Wherefore, on these divine communications does depend the whole manifestation of the glory of God. But this is far more eminent, though not in the outward effects of it so visible, in the new creation; as we shall see.

1. All goodness, grace, life, light, mercy, and power, which are the springs and causes of the new creation, are all originally in God, in the divine nature, and that infinitely and essentially. In them is God eternally or essentially glorious; and **the whole design of the new creation was to manifest his glory in them, by external communications** of them, and from them.

2. **The first communication of and from these things is made unto Christ, as the Head of the church**. For, in the first place, it pleased God that in him should all the fullness of these things dwell, so as that the whole new creation might consist in him, [Col. i. 17–19](#). And this was the first egress of divine wisdom for the manifestation of the glory of God in these holy properties of his nature. For, —

3. This communication was made unto him as **a repository and treasury of all that goodness, grace, life, light, power, and mercy, which were necessary for the constitution and preservation of the new creation**. They were to be laid up in him, to

be hid in him, to dwell in him; and from him to be communicated unto the whole mystical body designed unto him, — that is, the **church**. And this is the first emanation of **divine power and wisdom**, for the **manifestation of his glory in the new creation**. This constitution of Christ as the head of it, and the treasuring up in him all that was necessary for its production and preservation [hence, for the conversion & perseverance of the elect], wherein the **church is chosen and preordained in him unto grace and glory**, is the spring and fountain of divine glory, in the communications that ensue thereon.

4. This communication unto Christ is, (1.) Unto his person; and then, (2.) With respect unto his **office**. It is in the person of Christ that all fullness does originally dwell. On the **assumption of human nature into personal union with the Son of God** [aka, the hypostatic union, the God-man], **all fullness dwells in him bodily**, Col. li. 9. And thereon receiving the Spirit in all fullness, and not by measure, **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** were hid in him, Col. li. 3, and he was filled with the unsearchable riches of divine grace, Eph. lii. 8–11. And the office of Christ is nothing but the way appointed in the wisdom of God for the communication of the treasures of grace which were communicated unto his person. This is the end [purpose] of the whole **office** of Christ, in all the parts of it, as he is a **priest, a prophet, and a king**. They are, I say, nothing but the ways appointed by infinite wisdom for the communication of the grace laid up in his person unto the church. The transcendent glory hereof we have in some weak measure inquired into.

5. The **decree of election** prepared, if I may so say, the mass of the new creation [that mass of clay taken from the same lump noted in Romans 9:21]. In the **old creation**, God first prepared and created the mass or matter of the whole; which afterward, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was formed into all the distinct beings whereof the whole creation was to consist, and animates according to their distinct kinds.

And in order unto the production and perfecting of the work of the new creation, God did from eternity, in the holy purpose of his will, prepare, and in design set apart unto himself, that portion of mankind whereof it was to consist [Romans 9:21]. Hereby they were only the peculiar matter that was to be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, and the glorious fabric of the church erected out of it. What was said, it may be, of the natural body by the Psalmist, is true of the **mystical body of Christ**, which is principally intended, Ps. Cxxxix. 15, 16, “**My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my**

substance yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” The substance of the church, whereof it was to be formed, was under the eye of God, as proposed in the **decree of election**; yet was it as such imperfect. It was not formed or shaped into members of the **mystical body**; but they were all written in **the book of life**. And in pursuance of the **purpose of God** [aka, the good pleasure of God or his secret will which is always accomplished, never frustrated; this is in opposition to this prescriptive will which can be violated, e.g., thou shall not murder – yet people murder all the time.], there they are by the Holy Spirit, in the whole course and continuance of time, in their several generations fashioned into the shape designed for them.

6. This, therefore, is herein the glorious order of divine communications. From the infinite, eternal spring of wisdom, grace, goodness and love, in the Father, — all the effects whereof unto this end were treasured up in the person and mediation of the Son, — **the Holy Spirit, unto whom the actual application of them is committed, communicates life, light, power, grace, and mercy, unto all that are designed parts of the new creation.** Hereon does God glorify both the essential properties of his nature, — **his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and grace**, — as the only eternal spring of all these things, and also his **ineffable glorious existence in three persons by the order of the communication of these things unto the church, which are originally from his nature.** And herein is the glorious truth of the blessed Trinity, — which by some is opposed, by some neglected, by most looked on as that which is so much above them as that it does not belong unto them, — made precious unto them that believe, and becomes the **foundation of their faith and hope.** In a view of the glorious order of those divine communications, we are in a **steady contemplation** [2Cor3:18¹, Phil 4:8, etc.] of the ineffable glory of the existence of the **nature of God** in the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

7. According unto this divine order, the **elect** in all ages are, by the Holy Spirit moving and acting on that mass of the new creation, **formed and animated with spiritual life,** light, grace, and power [that new principle of life, of faith, truth, and grace, as opposed to the natural principle of self-love], unto the glory of God. They are not called accidentally, according unto the external occasions and causes of their conversion unto God; but in every age, at his own time and season, **the Holy Spirit communicates these things unto them in the order declared, unto the glory of God.**

8. And in the same manner is the whole new creation preserved every day; — every moment there is vital power and strength, mercy and grace, communicated in this divine order to all believers in the world. There is a continual influence from the Fountain, from the Head, into all the members, whereby they all consist in him, are acted by him, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And the apostle declares that the whole constitution of church order is suited, as an external instrument, to promote these divine communications unto all the members of the church itself, [Eph. iv. 13–15](#). [This continual emanation of life preserving power (grace) to keep one from falling spiritually was not promised in the covenant of works under which Adam was in the garden, consequently he fell at the first temptation of Satan. But in the new covenant, this continual effusion of grace is promised making it a better covenant built on better promises. See Christ as our surety; also 1Pet1:5 – we are *kept by the power of God.*]

This in general is the order of divine communications, which is for the substance of it continued in heaven, and shall be so unto eternity; for God is, and ever will be, all, and in all. (see pg 1484) But at present it is invisible unto eyes of flesh, yea, the reason of men. Hence it is by the most despised; — they see no glory in it. But let us consider the prayer of the apostle, that it may be otherwise with us, [Eph. i. 16–23](#). For the revelation made of the glory of God in the old creation is exceeding inferior to that which he makes of himself in the new.

Having premised these things in general concerning the glory of divine communications, I shall proceed to declare, in particular, the grounds and way whereby the Lord Christ communicates himself and wherewithal all the benefits of his mediation, unto them that do believe, as it was before proposed.

We on our part are said herein to receive him, and that by faith, [John i. 12](#). Now, where he is received by us, he must be tendered, given, granted, or communicated unto us. And this he is by some divine acts of the Father, and some of his own.

The foundation of the whole is laid in a sovereign act of the will, the pleasure, the grace of the Father. [from the council of his will – [Eph. 1:5](#)]. And this is the order and method of all divine operations in the way and work of grace. They originally proceed all from him; and having effected their ends, do return, rest, and centre in him again. See [Eph. i. 4–6](#). Wherefore, that Christ is made ours, that he is communicated unto us, is originally from the free act, grant, and donation, of the Father, [1 Cor. i. 30](#); [Rom. V. 15–17](#). And hereunto sundry things do concur. As, — 1. His eternal purpose, which he

purposed in himself, **to glorify his grace in all his elect**, by this **communication** of Christ and the **benefits of his mediation** unto them; which the apostle declares at large, [Eph. i. 2](#). **His granting all the elect unto Christ** [[John 6:37](#), *all that the Father gives me will come to me*], to be his own, so to do and suffer for them what was antecedaneously necessary unto the actual communication of himself unto them: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me,” [John xvii. 6](#). 3. The **giving of the promise**, or the **constitution of the rule and law of the Gospel**, whereby a participation of Christ, an interest in him and all that he is, is made over and assured unto believers, [John i. 12](#); [1 John i. 1–4](#). 4. **An act of almighty power, working and creating faith in the souls of the elect, enabling them to receive Christ** so exhibited and communicated unto them by the Gospel, [Eph. i. 19, 20](#); [ii. 5–8](#).

These things, which I have but named, have an influence into the glory of Christ herein; for this **communication** of him unto the church is an effect of the **eternal counsel, wisdom, grace, and power of the Father**.

But they are the acts of Christ himself herein, which principally we inquire into, as those which manifest the glory of his wisdom, love, and condescension.

And, — 1. **He gives and communicates unto them his Holy Spirit**; — the Holy Spirit as peculiarly his, as granted unto him of the Father, as inhabiting in him in all fullness. This Spirit — abiding originally as to his person, and immeasurably as unto his effects and operations, in himself — **he gives unto all believers**, to inhabit and abide in them also, [John xiv. 14–20](#); [1 Cor. vi. 17](#); [Rom. viii. 9](#). Hence follows an **ineffable union between him and them**. For as in his **incarnation** he took our nature into **personal union with his own**; so herein he takes our persons into a **mystical union with himself**. Hereby he becomes ours, and we are his.

And herein he is unspeakably glorious. For this mystery of the inhabitation of the same Spirit in him as the head, and the church as his body, **animating the whole**, is a **transcendent effect of divine wisdom**. There is nothing of this nature in the whole creation besides, — **no such union, no such mutual communication**. **The strictest unions and relations in nature are but shadows of it**, [Eph. v. 25–32](#). Herein also is the Lord Christ precious unto them that do believe, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence unto the disobedient. This glorious, ineffable effect of his wisdom and grace; this rare, peculiar, singular way of the communication of himself unto the church, is by many despised. They know, it may be, some of them, what it is to be joined unto a harlot so as to become one flesh; but what it is to be joined unto the Lord so as to become one spirit, they know not. But this **principle and spring of the spiritual life** of the church, and of all vital, spiritual motions towards God and things heavenly, wherein and

whereby “our life is hid with Christ in God,” is the glory, the exaltation, the honour, the security of the church, unto the praise of the grace of God. **The understanding of it in its causes, effects, operations, and privileges wherewith it is accompanied, is to be preferred above all the wisdom in and of the world.** [upon which we are to contemplate, being spiritually minded vs. worldly minded.]

2. He thus communicates himself unto us, by the formation of a **new nature, his own nature**, in us; so as that the very same spiritual nature is in him and in the church. Only, it is so with this difference, that in him it is in the absolute perfection of all those glorious graces wherein it does consist; in the church it is in various measures and degrees, according as he is pleased to communicate it. But the same divine nature it is that is in him and us; for, **through the precious promises of the Gospel**, we are made **partakers of his Divine nature**. It is not enough for us that he has taken our nature to be his, unless he gives us also his nature to be ours; — that is, **implants in our souls all those gracious qualifications, as unto the essence and substance of them, wherewith he himself in his human nature is endued**. This is that **new man**, that **new creature**, that **divine nature, that spirit which is born of the Spirit, that transformation into the image of Christ, that putting of him on**, that worship of God whereunto in him we are created, that the Scripture so fully testifieth unto, [John iii. 6](#); [Rom vi. 3–8](#); [2 Cor. iii. 18](#); [v. 17](#); [Eph. iv. 20–24](#); [2 Peter i. 4](#).

And that new heavenly nature which is thus **formed** in believers, as the **first vital act of that union which is between Christ** and them by the inhabitation of the same Spirit, is peculiarly his nature. For both is it so as it is in him the idea and the exemplar of it in us, — **inasmuch as we are predestinated to be conformed unto his image**, — and as it is **wrought or produced in our souls by an emanation of power, virtue, and efficiency from him**.

This is a most heavenly way of the communication of himself unto us, wherein of God “he is made unto us wisdom and sanctification.” Hereon he says of his church, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;” — I see myself, my own nature, in them; whence they are comely and desirable. Hereby he makes way to “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish.” **On this communication of Christ unto us, by the forming of his own nature in us, depends all the purity, the beauty, the holiness, the inward glory of the church**. Hereby is it really, substantially, **internally separated from the world**, and distinguished from all others, who, in the outward form of things, in the profession and duties of religion, seem to be the same with them. Hereby it becomes the first fruits of the creation unto God, **bearing forth the renovation of his image in the world**; — herein the

Lord Christ is, and will be, glorious unto all eternity. I only mention these things, which deserve to be far more largely insisted on.

3. He does the same by that actual insition or implantation into himself which he gives us by faith, which is of his own operation. For hereon two things do ensue; — one by the **grace or power**, the other by the **law or constitution, of the Gospel**; which have a great influence into this mystical communication of Christ unto the church.

And the first of these is, that hereby there is communicated unto us, and we do derive, supplies of spiritual life, sustentation, motion, strength in grace, and perseverance from him continually. This is that which himself so divinely teacheth in the parable of the vine and its branches, [John xv. 1–5](#). Hereby is there a **continual communication** from his all-fulness of grace unto the whole church and all the members of it, unto all the ends and duties of spiritual life [*this Adam did not have since he was not in Christ - he did not have continual supplies of grace promised him; see Flavel page 1700 & 1709*]. They live, nevertheless not they, but Christ liveth in them; and the life which they lead in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God. And the other, — by **virtue** of the **law and constitution of the Gospel**, — is, that hereon **his righteousness and all the fruits of his mediation are imputed unto us**; the glory of which mystery the apostle unfolds, [Rom. lii.–v.](#)

I might add hereunto the mutual inbeing that is between him and believers by love; for — the way of the communication of his love unto them being by the shedding of it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and their **returns of love unto him being wrought in them by an almighty efficiency of the same Spirit** — there is that which is deeply mysterious and glorious in it. I might mention also the continuation of his discharge of all his offices towards us, whereon all our receptions from him, or all the benefits of his mediation whereof we are made partakers, do depend. But the few instances that have been given of the glory of Christ in this mysterious communication of himself unto his church may suffice **to give us such a view of it as to fill our hearts with holy admiration and thanksgiving.**

¹ 2. The subject matter of faith.

This is the second thing in the description of faith, the soul of a humble sinner, is the subject or matter of faith. I do not mean, the matter out of which faith is wrought, (for there is nothing in man out of which the Spirit begets it) but that wherein faith is seated; I mean also, the habit of faith, not the principle of it; for that is out of man in the Lord Jesus, who is therefore called our hope, as well as our strength; the soul therefore is the subject of faith, called the heart, Rom. 10:9, compared with Matt. 6:21, for we cannot come to Christ in this life with our bodies, we are here absent from the Lord, 2Cor5:6, but the soul can go to him, the heart can be with him, as the eyes can see a thousand miles off, **and receive the species or image of things into it; so the soul enlightened by faith, can see Christ afar off, it can long for, choose and rest upon the Lord of life and receive the lively image of**

Christ's glory in it, 2Cor3, ult. If Christ were present upon earth, the soul (not the body) only could truly receive him; Christ comes to his elect only by his Spirit; and hence our spirits only are fit to receive him, and close with him. Thousands hear Christ outwardly, that inwardly are deaf to all God's calls, their spirits see not, taste not, feel not; it is therefore the soul that is the subject of faith; and, I say, it is a humbled empty soul, which is the subject; for a full, proud, unbroken spirit cannot, nay, will not receive Christ, as we have proved. And therefore, Luke 14, the servant is commanded to bid the *poor, halt, blind, and lame to come in*; They would not make excuses as other did. They that were stung to death with fiery serpents, were the only men that the brazen serpent was lifted up for them *to look upon*, and so be *healed*, John 3:14. Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer p275

Directions for a contemplation; this is very important. From Ch. 5 pg. 65

The illustrious brightness wherewith this glory shines in heaven, the all-satisfying sweetness which the view of it gives unto the souls of the saints there possessed of glory, are not by us conceivable, nor to be expressed. **Here, this love passeth knowledge**, — there, we shall comprehend the dimensions of it. Yet even here, if we are not slothful and carnal, we may have a refreshing prospect of it; and where comprehension fails, let admiration take place. [we understand this mystery but do not comprehend it.]

My present business is, to exhort others unto the contemplation of it, though it be but a little, a very little, a small portion of it, that I can conceive; and less than that very little that I can express. Yet may it be my duty to excite not only myself, but others also, unto due inquiries after it; unto which end I offer the things ensuing.

1. **Labour that your minds may continually be fitted and prepared for such heavenly contemplations.** If they are carnal and sensual, or need with earthly things, a due sense of this love of Christ and its glory will not abide in them. Virtue and vice, in their highest degrees, are not more diametrically opposite and inconsistent in the same mind, **than are a habitual course of sensual, worldly thoughts and a due contemplation of the glory of the love of Christ**; yea, an earnestness of spirit, pregnant with a multitude of thoughts about the lawful occasions of life, is obstructive of all due communion with the Lord Jesus Christ herein.

Few there are whose minds are prepared in a due manner for this duty. The actions and communications of the most, evidence what is the inward frame of their souls. They rove up and down in their thoughts, which are **continually led by their affections** into the corners of the earth. It is in vain to call such persons unto contemplations of the glory of Christ in his love. **A holy composure of mind, by virtue of spiritual principles, an inclination to seek after refreshment in heavenly things, and to bathe the soul in the fountain of them, with constant apprehensions of the excellency of this divine glory, are required hereunto.**

2. **Be not satisfied with general notions concerning the love of Christ**, which represent no glory unto the mind, wherewith many deceive themselves. All who believe his divine person, profess a valuation of his love, — and think them not Christians who are otherwise minded; but they have only general notions, and not any distinct conceptions of it, and really know not what it is. To deliver us from this snare, peculiar meditations on its principal concerns are required of us. As, —

(1.) *Whose love it is*, — namely, of the divine person of the Son of God. He is expressly called God, with respect unto the exercise of this love, that we may always consider whose it is, [1 John iii. 16](#), “Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us.”

(2.) By what *ways* and *means* this wonderful love of the Son of God does act itself, — namely, in the divine nature, by eternal acts of wisdom, goodness, and grace proper thereunto; and in the human, by temporary acts of pity or compassion, with all the fruits of them in doing and suffering for us. See [Eph. iii. 19](#); [Heb. ii. 14, 15](#); [Rev. i. 5](#).

[This is why Edwards said it is important that Christians should have the deep knowledge of the wisdom of the way of salvation for we must have objects upon which we fix our faith;]

(3.) What is the *freedom* of it, as to any desert on our part, [1 John iv. 10](#). It was hatred, not love, that we in ourselves deserved; which is a consideration suited to fill the soul with self-abasement, — the best of frames in the contemplation of the glory of Christ.

(4.) What is the *efficacy* of it in its fruits and effects, with sundry other considerations of the like nature.

By a distinct prospect and admiration of these things, the soul may walk in this paradise of God, and gather here and there a heavenly flower, conveying unto it a sweet savor of the love of Christ. See [Cant. ii. 2–4](#).

Moreover, be not contented to have right *notions* of the love of Christ in your minds, unless you can attain a gracious *taste* of it in your hearts; no more than you would be to see a feast or banquet richly prepared, and partake of nothing of it unto your refreshment. It is of that nature that we may have a spiritual sensation of it in our minds; whence it is compared by the spouse to apples and flagons of wine. **We may taste that the Lord is gracious; and if we find not a relish of it in our hearts, we shall not long retain the notion of it in our minds.** Christ is the meat, the bread, the food of our souls. Nothing is in him of a higher spiritual nourishment than his love, which we should always desire.

In this love is he *glorious*; for it is such as no creatures, angels, or men, could have the least conceptions of, before its manifestation by its effects; and, after its manifestation, it is in this world absolutely incomprehensible.

Contemplating his glory - pg 77-79

3. Hereunto is added the full *manifestation* of his own divine wisdom, love, and grace, in the work of mediation and redemption of the church. **This glory** is absolutely singular and peculiar unto him. Neither angels nor men have the least interest in it. Here, we see it darkly as in a glass; above, it shines forth in its brightness, to the eternal joy of them who behold him.

This is **that glory** which our Lord Jesus Christ in an especial manner prayed that his disciples might behold. This is that whereof we ought to endeavor a prospect by faith; — **by faith, I say, and not by imagination**. Vain and foolish men, having general notions of this glory of Christ, knowing nothing of the real nature of it, have endeavored to represent it in pictures and images, with all that lustre and beauty which the art of painting, with the ornaments of gold and jewels, can give unto them. This is that representation of the present glory of Christ, which, being made and proposed unto the imagination and carnal affections of superstitious persons, carries such a show of devotion and veneration in the Papal Church. **But they err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the eternal glory of the Son of God.**

This is the sole foundation of all our meditations herein. The glory that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the real actual possession of in heaven can be no otherwise seen or apprehended in this world, but in the light of **faith fixing itself** on divine revelation. **To behold this glory of Christ is not an act of fancy or imagination**. It does not consist in framing unto ourselves the shape of a glorious person in heaven. But the steady exercise of faith on the revelation and description made of this glory of Christ in the Scripture, is the ground, rule, and measure, of all divine meditations thereon.

Hereon our duty it is to call ourselves to an account as unto our endeavor after a gracious view of this glory of Christ:— When did we steadily behold it? **when had we such a view of it as wherein our souls have been satisfied and refreshed?** It is declared and represented unto us as one of the **chief props of our faith, as a help of our joy, as an object of our hope, as a ground of our consolation,** — **as our greatest encouragement unto obedience and suffering.** Are our minds every day conversant with thoughts hereof? or do we think ourselves not much concerned herein? Do we look upon it as that which is without us and above us, — that which we shall have time enough to consider when we come to heaven? So is it with many. They care neither where Christ is nor what he is, so that one way or other they may be saved by him. They hope, as they pretend, that they shall see him and his glory in heaven, — and that they suppose to be time enough; but in vain do they pretend a desire thereof, — in vain are their expectations of any such thing. They who endeavor not to behold the glory of Christ in this world, as has been often said, shall never behold him in glory hereafter unto their satisfaction; nor do they desire so to do, only they suppose it a part of that relief which they would have when they are gone out of this world. For what should beget such a desire in them? Nothing can do it but some view of it here by faith; which they despise, or totally neglect. **Every pretense** of a desire of heaven, and of the presence of Christ

therein, that does not arise from, that is not resolved into, that prospect which we have of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, is mere fancy and imagination.

Our constant exercise in meditation on this glory of Christ will fill us with joy on his account; which is an effectual motive unto the duty itself. We are for the most part selfish, and look no farther than our own concernments. So we may be pardoned and saved by him, we care not much how it is with himself, but only presume it is well enough. We find not any concernment of our own therein. But this frame is directly opposite unto the genius of divine faith and love. For their principal actings consist in preferring Christ above ourselves, and our concerns in him above all our own. **Let this, then, stir us up unto the contemplation of this glory**. Who is it that is thus exalted over all? Who is thus encompassed with glory, majesty, and power? Who is it that sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, — all his enemies being made his footstool? Is it not he who in this world was poor, despised, persecuted, and slain, — all for our sakes? Is it not the same Jesus who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us in his own blood? So the apostle told the Jews that the same “Jesus whom they slew and hanged on a tree, God had exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins,” [Acts v. 30, 31](#). If we have any valuation of his love, if we have any concernment in what he has done and suffered for the church, we cannot but rejoice in his present state and glory.

Let the world rage whilst it pleaseth; let it set itself with all its power and craft against every thing of Christ that is in it, — which, whatever is by some otherwise pretended, proceeds from a hatred unto his person; let men make themselves drunk with the blood of his saints; we have this to oppose unto all their attempts, unto our supportment, — namely, what he says of himself: “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death,” [Rev. i. 17, 18](#).

Blessed Jesus! we can add nothing to thee, nothing to thy glory; but it is a joy of heart unto us that thou art what thou art, — that thou art so gloriously exalted at the right hand of God; and we do long more fully and clearly to behold that glory, according to thy prayer and promise.

Truly Experiencing his Glory p143-145

(2.) When the Lord Christ is near us, and we do behold his glory, he will frequently communicate *spiritual refreshment* in peace, consolation, and joy unto our souls. We shall not only hereby have our graces excited with respect unto him as their object, **but be made sensible** of his actings toward us in the communications of himself and his love unto us. When the Sun of Righteousness arises on any soul, or makes any near approach

thereunto, it shall find “healing under his wings;” — his beams of grace shall convey by his Spirit holy spiritual refreshment thereunto. For he is present with us by his Spirit, and these are his fruits and effects, as he is the Comforter, suited unto his office, as he is promised unto us.

Many love to walk in a very careless, unwise profession. So long as they can hold out in the performance of outward duties, they are very regardless of the greatest evangelical privileges, — of those things which are the marrow of divine promises, — all real endeavors of a vital communion with Christ. Such are spiritual peace, refreshing consolations, ineffable joys, and the blessed composure of assurance. **Without some taste and experience of these things, profession is heartless, lifeless, useless; and religion itself a dead carcass without an animating soul.** The peace which some enjoy is a mere stupidity. They judge not these things to be real which are the substance of Christ’s present reward; and a renunciation whereof would deprive the church of its principal supportments and encouragements in all its sufferings. It is a great evidence of the power of unbelief, when we can satisfy ourselves without an experience in our own hearts of the great things, in this kind of joy, peace, consolation, assurance, that are promised in the Gospels. For how can it be supposed that we do indeed believe the promises of things future, — namely, of heaven, immortality, and glory, the faith whereof is the foundation of all religions, — when we do not believe the promises of the present reward in these spiritual privileges? And how shall we be thought to believe them, when we do not endeavor after an experience of the things themselves in our own souls, but are even contented without them? But herein men deceive themselves. **They would very desirously have evangelical joy, peace, and assurance, to countenance them in their evil frames and careless walking.** And some have attempted to reconcile these things, unto the ruin of their souls. But it will not be. Without the diligent exercise of the grace of obedience, we shall never enjoy the grace of consolation. But we must speak somewhat of these things afterward.

It is peculiarly in the view of the glory of Christ, in his approaches unto us, and abiding with us, that we are made partakers of evangelical peace, consolation, joy, and assurances. These are a part of the royal train of his graces [See *Isa. 6:1, In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train^[a] of his robe filled the temple. Edwards commented that his is representative of all of God’s graces!*], of the reward wherewith he is accompanied. “His reward is with him.” Wherever he is graciously present with any, these things are never wanting in a due measure and degree, unless it be by their own fault, or for their trial. In these things

does he give the church of his loves, [Cant. vii. 12](#). “For if any man,” saith he, “love me, I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him,” [John xiv. 21](#); — “yea, I and the Father will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” verse 23; and that so as to “sup with him,” [Rev. iii. 20](#); — which, on his part, can be only by the communication of those spiritual refreshments. **The only inquiry is, by what way and means we do receive them?** Now, I say this is in and by our beholding of the glory of Christ by faith, [1 Peter i. 8, 9](#). Let that glory be rightly stated, as before laid down, — **the glory of his person, his office, his condescension, exaltation, love, and grace; let faith be fixed in a view and contemplation of it, mix itself with it, as represented in the glass of the Gospel, meditate upon it, embrace it, — and virtue will proceed from Christ, communicating spiritual, supernatural refreshment and joy unto our souls.** Yea, in ordinary cases, it is impossible that believers should have a real prospect of this glory at any time, but that it will in some measure affect their hearts with a sense of his love; which is the spring of all consolation in them. In the exercise of faith on the discoveries of the glory of Christ made unto us in the Gospel, no man shall ever totally want such intimations of his love, yea, such effusion of it in his heart, as shall be a living spring of those spiritual refreshments, [John iv. 14](#); [Rom. v. 5](#). When, therefore, we lose these things, as unto a sense of them in our souls, it is evident that the Lord Christ is withdrawn, and that we do not behold his glory.

Union with Christ, Faith – The Substance

Glory described as well.

code342

The next 20 pages are very comprehensive, illustrating many key doctrines and going a long way in explaining the significance of the diagram! – First, regarding faith, the substance, explained, then the communication of the glory to the elect, and so on.

Hebrews 3:12-14 John Owen p 142-151 Vol. 22 p142-151 (180-191 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_3.7-5.14.pdf

We are made μετοχοι του Χριστου, “**partakers of Christ.**” This expression is nowhere used but only in this place. The word μετοχος [**partaker**] itself is but once used in the New Testament, but only by our apostle; and μετεχω [**participate**], from whence it comes, not at all but by him. And he interprets it by κοινωνια, “communion,” or “participation:” for affirming that “the bread which we break is κοινωνια του σωματος του Χριστου, “the communion of the body of Christ,” 1 Corinthians 10:16, he adds, παντες εχ του ενος αρτου μετεχομεν, verse 17, “We all partake of that one bread;” which is a sacramental expression of the same thing here intended. Most expositors suppose the name Christ to be here taken metonymically for the benefits of his mediation, in grace here, and right to future blessedness. Some suppose it to be only an expression of being a disciple of Christ, and so really to belong unto him. But the true and precise importance of the words may be learned from the apostle in his use of those of an alike signification with reference unto Christ himself, Hebrews 2:14: “Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood,” — **that is, because those whom he was to redeem were men, partakers of human nature,** — και αυτος παραπλησιως μετεσχε των αυτων, “He himself in like manner took part of the same.” He was partaker of us, partook of us. How? **By taking flesh and blood, that is, entire human nature,** synecdochically so expressed, to be his own, as he expresseth it, verse 16, “**He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on the seed of Abraham;**” that is, the nature of

man derived from the loins of Abraham, according to the promise made unto him. How, then, are we partakers of him, partakers of Christ? It is by our having an interest in his nature, **by the communication of his Spirit, as he had in ours by the assumption of our flesh.** It is, then, our union with Christ that is intended, whereby we are made “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” Ephesians 5:30. A participation of the benefits of the mediation of Christ is included in these words, but not firstly intended, only as a consequent of our intimate union with him. And this the Syriac translation seems to have understood, reading the words by *ajyvimi* μæ ryme mælætja,, — “We are mingled” (or “mixed”) “with Christ;” that is, **joined with him, united unto him.** And this is that which the apostle puts to the trial, **as the hinge on which their present privileges and future happiness did entirely depend.** And this is the sense which Chrysostom and the Greeks that follow him do fix upon. Saith he, Τι εδτι μετοχοι λελοναμεν του Χριστου, μετεχομεν αυτου, φησιν εν εγενομεθα ημεις χαι αυτος, ειπερ αυτος μεν χεφαλη σψμα δε ημετς συγκληρονομοι χαι συσσωμοι. Εν σωμα εσμεν εχ της σαρχος αυτου φησι χαι εχ των οστων αυτου — “What is it to be ‘partakers of Christ?’ **He and we are made one; he the head, we the body, co-heirs and incorporated with him.** We are one body with him, as he speaks, of his flesh and bones.” So he. The trial and evidence hereof is declared in the last words Εανπερ την αρχην της υποστασεως ηεχοι τελους βεζαιαν χατασχωμεν— “If so be that we hold fast” (or “steadfast”) “the beginning of our confidence unto the end.” So we. It is by all agreed, that, for the substance of it, the same matter is here intended as in verse 6; and that that which is there called χαυχημα της ελπιδος, “the glorying of hope,” is here termed αρχη της ελπιδος, “the beginning of confidence;” because it is said of each of them that they are to be “kept steadfast unto the end.” But the expression here used is singular, and hath left an impression of its difficulty on most translations and expositions. Hence hath arisen that great variety that is amongst them in rendering and expounding of these words, “*Initium substantiae ejus,*” saith the Vulgar; and the Rhemists from thence, “**The beginning of his substance,**” adding “his” to the text. Arias Montan. And Erasmus, “Principium substantive;” — “**The beginning of substance.**” Beza, “*Principium illud quo sustentamur;*” — “**That beginning**” (or “principle”) “whereby we are sustained.” Castalio, “Hoc argumen-turn ab initio ad finem usque;” — “This argument from the beginning to the end.” Syriac, “From the beginning unto the end, if we abide in this substance,” or “foundation.” Ethiopic, “If we persevere to keep this new testament.” We, “The beginning of our confidence.” By which variety it appears that some know not how to express the words, as not well understanding of them, and that others were not satisfied with the conjectures of their predecessors. Neither are expositors more agreed about the meaning of the words. Some by αρχη της υποστασεως **understand the gospel, some faith, some hope,** some

confidence, some Christ himself. **Most fix on faith to be intended, which they say is termed *υποστασις*, or “substance,”** because it is that which supports us, causeth us to subsist in Christ, as the just do live by faith. But it may not be amiss to inquire a little more exactly into the proper emphasis and importance of this expression.

Υποστασις properly signifies “substance.” It is applied unto somewhat distinct in the being of the Deity, Hebrews 1:3, where it is said that the Son is the “express image of the Father’s hypostasis;” [or substance] **and there it can signify nothing but an especial manner of existence or subsistence in the divine nature,** — that is, a person; whence the eastern church first, and after the western, agreed in three hypostases in the divine nature, — that is, as we speak, three persons, or three different manners of the subsistence of the same individual being. In things human it denotes acts, and not substances. And as it is used only by our apostle, so it is used by him variously; as for confidence, 2 Corinthians 9:4, *Εν τη υποστασει ταυτη της χαυχησεως*, — In this confidence of boasting; whence ours have translated it in this place “confidence.” And it may be the rather, because as it is there joined with *χαυχησις*, so he maketh use of *χαυχημα* in the same subject with this, verse 6. But the *υποστασις* [hypostasis] of the apostle in that place was not a confidence of boldness, **but that infallible certainty** which he had of his apostleship wherein he gloried. That was it which he stood firmly on. Chapter 11 of this epistle, the apostle maketh use of it in the description he gives of faith; yet so as to denote an effect of it, and not its nature: *Εστι δε πιστις, ελπιζομενων υποστασις*, — “**Faith is the hypostasis of things hoped for;**” “*Illud quo extant quae sperantur,*” — “**That whereby the things that are hoped for do exist.**” Things that are absolutely in themselves future, absent, unseen, are, as unto their efficacy, use, benefit, fruits, and effects, made by faith present unto the soul, and have a subsistence given them therein. **It is not, then, faith itself, but an effect of it, that is there described by the apostle.**

If, then, by “the beginning of our substance,” “subsistence,” or “confidence,” faith is intended, it is because it is that which gives us all these things by our interest in Christ and the benefits of his mediation. But I confess the expression is abstruse in this sense, and difficult to be understood.

It may therefore be understood of the gospel itself, which is called “the beginning of our confidence,” because it is the means of begetting faith in us, and producing that profession wherein we are to persevere; and this sense is embraced by some expositors. There seems yet to me that there is another more genuine sense of the word, suited to the scope of the place and design of the apostle, without wresting it from its native signification. We have showed that our partaking of Christ is our being united unto him;

and the υποστασις, “hypostasis,” which on that union we are bound to preserve and maintain, **is our subsistence in Christ, our abiding in him, as the branches in the vine**. So the word signifies, and so it is here used. And although Chrysostom supposes that it is faith which is intended, yet it is on the account of this effect of our subsistence in those things that he so judgeth: Τι εστιν αρχη της υποστασεως της πιστιν λεγει δ ης υποστημεν και γεγενημεθα και συνουσιωθημεν ως αν τις ειποι? — **“He speaks of faith, by which we subsist”** (in Christ), **“and are begotten, and, as I may so say, consubstantiated with him;”** that is, **solidly, substantially united unto him**. Now, our subsistence in Christ is twofold: —

1. By profession only, which is the condition of the branches in the vine that bear no fruit, but are at length cut off and cast into the fire;
2. By real union. And the trial of which of these it is that we are partakers of, depends on our perseverance.

Την αρχην της υποστασεως. Beza, “Principium illud quo sustentamur,” — “That principle” (or “beginning”) “*whereby we are sustained.*” But this I do not understand; for it makes αρχη, “the beginning,” to denote the thing itself recommended unto us, and which we are to preserve, whereof the hypostasis mentioned is only an effect, or that whereby the work of the beginning is expressed. But αρχη is nowhere used in any such sense, nor doth it appear what should be intended by it. Besides, it is plainly here an adjunct of our subsistence in Christ; — the beginning of it. And this may be considered two ways; —

1. Absolutely, it is begun in profession or reality, and it is to be continued;
2. Emphatically, for the usual attendancies of our faith and profession at their beginning.

The beginning of our engagement unto Christ is for the most part accompanied with much love, and other choice affections, resolution, and courage; which without great care and watchfulness we are very ready to decay in and fall from. And in this sense it is here used. The remainder of the words, μεχρι τελους βεζαιαν χατασχωμεν, “Hold steadfast unto the end,” have been opened on verse 6, and we need not again insist upon them. I shall only add, that the apostle joining himself here with the Hebrews in this matter, “We are partakers, if we hold fast,” he shows that this is a general and perpetual rule for professors to attend unto, and the touchstone of their profession, by which it may be tried at the last day. And hence are the ensuing observations: —

Obs. 1. Union with Christ is the principle and measure of all spiritual enjoyments and expectations.

The apostle sums up all, both what we do enjoy by the gospel at present, and what right unto or expectation we have of future blessedness and happiness, in this one expression, “We are partakers of Christ.” That our union with him is thereby intended hath been declared in the exposition of the words. **The nature of this union**, and wherein it doth consist, I have elsewhere manifested and vindicated; I shall therefore here only confirm the proposition laid down. It is the principle and measure of all spiritual enjoyments. For as Christ is unto us “all, and in all,” Colossians 3:11, so “without him we can do nothing,” we are nothing, John 15:5; for whereas we live, “it is not we, but Christ liveth in us,” Galatians 2:20. And the truth hereof appears, —

First, Because it is itself, in the order of nature, **the first truly saving spiritual mercy, the first vital grace that we are made partakers of**; and that which is the first of any kind is the measure and rule of all that ensues in that kind. As is the root, so are the branches and the fruit. They do not only follow the nature of it but live upon its supplies. **All our grace is but a participation of the root**, and therein of the fatness of the olive tree; and we bear not the root, but the root bears us, Romans 11:17,18. Whatever precedes this is not true saving grace; and whatever follows it proceeds from it: —

1. Whatever work of excision or cutting off there may be of a branch from the wild olive, **it is its incision into the true olive which communicates unto it life and fruit-bearing**; for after it is **cut off from the wild olive** and dressed, it may either be cast away or left to wither. Whatever work of **conviction by the word** of the law, or of illumination by the word of the gospel, or of humiliation from both by the efficacy of the Spirit in all, there may be wrought in the minds and souls of men, **yet there is nothing truly saving, vital, and quickening in them, until they be implanted into Christ.** [see Heb. 6:4 & Matt. 13, the parable of the sower.] **Under any other preceding or preparatory work, however it be called [i.e., prevenient grace, an Arminian invention], or whatever may be the effects of it, they may wither, die, and perish.** Men may be so cut off from the old stock of nature as not to have sin grow or flourish in them, not to bear its blossoms, nor visible fruit, and yet have no principle of grace to bring forth fruit unto holiness. [this is where common grace can be mistaken for saving grace] And —

2. That whatever grace follows it proceeds from it, is evident from the nature of the thing itself. For our uniting unto Christ consisteth in or immediately ariseth from the **communication of his Spirit unto us**; for “he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit,” 1 Corinthians 6:17. Our conjunction unto him consists in our **participation** of the same Spirit with him. And by this Spirit is Christ himself, **or the nature of Christ, formed in us,** 2 Peter 1:4. **And if all the grace that we are or can be made partakers of in this world be but that nature, in the several parts and acts of it, that from whence it proceeds, whereby it is formed in us, must needs in order of nature be antecedent unto it. No grace we have, or can have, but what is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ.** Whence else should we have it? Doth it grow naturally in our own gardens? Or can other men plant and water it, and give it life and increase? Nay, but **all grace is the fruit and effect of the Spirit**, as the Scripture everywhere declares. See Galatians 5:22,23. It implies, then, a contradiction, that any one should have any lively saving grace., and not antecedently in order of nature receive the Spirit of grace from Christ: **for he is the cause, and grace is the effect; or, as he is savingly bestowed, according to the promise of the covenant, he is the spring and fountain, or efficient cause, of all grace whatever.** Now, our union with Christ, our participation of him, consists in the **inhabitation of the same Spirit in him and us;** and the first work of this Spirit given unto us, bestowed upon us, is **to form Christ in us, whereby our union is completed.** But it will be asked, whether the Spirit of Christ doth come into a soul that hath no grace? — if so, then he may be in a graceless person. I answer, that although this in order of nature is consequent unto the communication of the Spirit unto us, as the effect is and must be to the cause, as light and heat in the beam are unto the sun, yet it hath a simulty of time with it; as Austin speaks well of the original of the soul, “*Creando infunditur, et infuudendo creatur.*” God doth not first create a soul, giving it an existence of its own, without union with the body, but creates it in and by its infusion. **So the Spirit doth not come unto us, and afterward quicken or sanctify us; but he doth this by his coming unto us, and possessing our hearts for and with Christ.** **This the apostle calls the forming of Christ in us,** Galatians 4:19, Ἀχρις ου μορφωθη Χριστος εν υμιν, “Until Christ be formed” (or “fashioned”) “in you,” — as a child is fashioned or formed in the womb; that is, ‘until the **whole image and likeness of Christ be imparted unto and implanted upon your souls.**’ This is the **new creature** that is wrought in every one that is in Christ; that everyone is who is in Christ: for the introduction of this new spiritual form gives denomination unto the person. He that is “in Christ Jesus is a new creature,” 2 Corinthians 5:17. And this is “Christ in us, **the hope of glory,**” Colossians 1:27. **[Now the reason that I am go to great lengths in quoting long detailed explanations of what happens as conversion is so that you will get such a thorough understanding of it and**

therefore see how preposterous and blasphemous that this process can be caused by our asking for it in the condition that we are before this takes place as well as seeing how ridiculous it is to believe that this process could be reversed, i.e., lose our salvation which can only be conceived due to extreme ignorance. Thus, when you do see this amazing plan, his law, his mind and will in this affair and come to see it more and more as you contemplate its glory, you cannot help to wonder at it as Paul did (Rms 11:33) and experience the peace and security that it provides us as believers – but this is only had by diligent study; to do otherwise is sloth and negligence; to sin against God.]

1. It is “Christ in us:” for,

(1.) It is from him, he is the **author** of it, and thence he is said to be “our life,” Colossians 3:4.

(2.) It is like him, it is his **image**, and by and through him the **image of God**, 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:23,24. [This infers that before this event, we are not in the image of God in the full sense, but the image or likeness of Adam as noted in Gen 5:3 and 1Cor15:49, *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.* We were created in God’s image but due to the fall of Adam, sin wiped this image away, the principal part of it, *holiness*, mainly consisting in a love for God; we are born in the likeness of Adam, a natural man, spiritually dead, etc. See the two-fold image of God on page 44; natural and spiritual/moral excellencies]

(3.) It is that which gives us a spiritual continuity unto Christ; for being united unto him as members unto the head, there must be a constant communicative motion of blood and spirit between him and us, which is hereby, Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19. And without this we are without Christ, or so separated from him as that we can do nothing, John 15:5; for suppose a believer to stand “seorsum,” alone by himself, Χωρις Χριστου [without Christ] at a distance from Christ, without a course and recourse of spiritual supplies from him, and he can do nothing but die [as was the case with Adam - he did not have the promise of these spiritual supplies but left to his own devices and grace with which he was created.]. Cut off a member from the body, dissolve its natural continuity to the head, and all the world cannot fetch life into it. Take a member., suppose a hand, lay it as near the head as you will, bind it to it, yet if it hath not a natural continuity with the head, it will not live. It is so here. A member separated from Christ hath no life. Let it seem to lie near the Head by profession and many engagements, if it have not this spiritual continuity unto Christ, it hath no life in it.

2. It is the “**hope of glory,**” — (1.) as the kernel is the hope of fruit; (2.) as a pledge or earnest is the hope of the whole contract. **In this forming of Christ in us are we made partakers of all grace and holiness in the principle and root of them, for therein doth this image of God in Christ consist.**

Van Til states: Of this spirituality, man, created as he is in the image of God, carries within him a faint replica. Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, pg 369

Now, this proceeding from our union, the latter is, and must be, **before it in order of nature**, and so be the rule, measure, and cause of all that ensues. [i.e., all this does not happen because we pray for it – God does it irrespective of our will; he subdues our will without doing violence to it.]

Secondly, It is the first in dignity; **it is the greatest, most honorable, and glorious of all graces that we are made partakers of. It is called “glory,”** Corinthians 3:18. [This consists in those things noted on the diagram in which his glory consists, that is communicated to us, the saving knowledge of God [1Jn5:20], holiness or virtue and happiness consisting in joy in God, the internal glory of God. See Rm 6:4, “...that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”] The greatest humiliation of the Son of God consisted in his taking upon him of our nature [the hypostatic union], Hebrews 2:8,9. And this was “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich,” — **rich in the eternal glory**, the **glory** that he had with the Father before the world was, John 17:5, as being in himself “God over all, blessed forever,” Romans 9:5, — “for our sakes he became poor,” 2 Corinthians 8:9, by taking on him that nature which is poor in itself, infinitely distanced from him, and exposed unto all misery; which our apostle fully expresseth, Philipians 2, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” There was indeed great **grace and condescension** in all that he did and humbled himself unto in that nature, as it follows in that place, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” verse 8; but his assumption of the nature itself was that whereby most signally $\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\nu\omega\sigma\epsilon$, he “emptied” and “humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation.” On this all that followed did ensue, and on this it did depend. From hence all his actings and sufferings in that nature received their dignity and efficacy. All, I say, that Christ, as our mediator, did and underwent in our nature, had its worth, merit, use, and prevalency from his first

condescension in taking our nature upon him; for from thence it was that whatever he so did or suffered, it was the doing and suffering of the Son of God. And, on the contrary, our grace of union with Christ, our participation of him and his nature, is our highest exaltation, the greatest and most glorious grace that we can be made partakers of in this world. He became poor for our sakes, **by a participation of our nature**, that we through his poverty may be **rich in a participation of his**, 2 Corinthians 8:9. And this is that which gives worth and excellency unto all that we may be afterwards intrusted with. The grace and privileges of believers are very great and excellent, but yet they are such as do belong unto them **that are made partakers of Christ**, such as are due to the quickening and adorning of all the members of his body; **as all privileges of marriage, after marriage contracted, arise from and follow that contract**. For being once made co-heirs with Christ, we are made heirs of God, and have a right to the whole inheritance. And, indeed, what greater glory or dignity can a poor sinner be exalted unto, than to be thus intimately and indissolubly united unto the Son of God, **the perfection whereof is the glory which we hope and wait for**, John 17:22,23. Saith David, in an earthly, temporary concern, "What am I, and what is my father's family, that I should be son-in-law unto the king, being a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" How much more may a sinner say, 'What am I, poor, sinful dust and ashes, one that deserves to be lightly esteemed by the whole creation of God, that I should be thus united unto the Son of God, and thereby become his son by adoption!' This is honor and glory unparalleled. And all the grace that ensues receives its worth, its dignity, and use from hence. **Therefore are the graces and the works of believers excellent, because they are the graces and works of them that are united unto Christ.** **And as without this men can have no inward, effectual, saving grace; so whatever outward privileges they may lay hold of or possess, they are but stolen ornaments, which God will one day strip them naked of, unto their shame and confusion.** [This is heavy: I think this passage applies: [Mt 25:29](#) 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.']

Thirdly, It is the **first and principal grace**, in respect of causality and efficacy. [remember, all graces enable one to obey God and please him without which we cannot please God; so without the image of God we cannot please him which is the condition we are in when we come into this world as unregenerate. Therefore, we must be born again...] It is the **cause of all other graces** that we are made partakers of; **they are all communicated unto us by virtue of our union with Christ.** **Hence is our adoption, our justification, our sanctification, our fruitfulness, our perseverance, our resurrection,**

our glory. Hence is our adoption; for it is upon our receiving of him that this right and privilege is granted unto us of becoming the sons of God, John 1:12. No man can be made the adopted son of God **but by an implantation into him who is the natural Son of God**, John 15:1-6, 20:17. And thence also are the consequent privileges that attend that estate; for “because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father,” Galatians 4:6, — that is, to own God, and address ourselves unto him under the consideration of the authority and love of a father. And hence is our **justification**: for, —

1. Being united unto Christ, we are interested in that acquittal from the condemning sentence of the law which was granted unto himself when he satisfied it to the utmost, Romans 1:3, 4; Isaiah 50:8,9. For he was acquitted as the **head** and **surety** of the church, and not on his own personal account, for whereas he did no sin, he owed no suffering nor satisfaction to the law; but as “he suffered for us, the just for the unjust,” so he was acquitted as the representative of his whole church. By our union, therefore, unto him, we fall under the sentence of acquittal, which was given out towards whole **Christ mystical [as opposed to Church visible]**, head and members.

2. Our union with him is the ground of the actual imputation of his righteousness unto us; for he covers only the members of his own body with his own garments, **nor will cast a skirt over any who is not “bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh.”** And so he is “of God made unto us righteousness,” 1 Corinthians 1:30. Hence also is our sanctification, and that both as to its principle in a new spiritual nature, and as unto its progress in fruitfulness and holiness. [Sanctification is the writing of God’s law in your hearts! – Flavel, p112 Vol.6; also, “we receive the image of our heavenly Father in sanctification” – Shepard, S. Believer, p 352] The **principle** of it is the **Spirit** itself of life, holiness, and power. This God sheds on us through Jesus Christ, Titus 3:6, or on the account of our interest in him, **according to his promise**, John 7:38,39. **And for this cause is he said to be “our life,”** Colossians 3:4, because in him lie the springs of our spiritual life, which in and by our regeneration, renovation, and sanctification is **communicated unto us**. [see also Rm 6:4, “...by the glory of the Father.”] And its progress in fruitfulness is from thence alone. To teach this, is the design of the parable used by our Savior concerning the vine and its branches, John 15; for as he showeth our abiding in him to be as necessary unto us, that we may bear fruit, as it is unto a branch to abide in the vine to the same purpose; so without our so doing we are of no more use, in the ways of God, than a branch that is cut off and withered, and cast aside to burn. **And men do but labor in the fire, who, in the pursuit of their convictions, endeavor after holiness or the due performance of good works, without deriving strength for them from their relation unto Christ; for all that they do is**

either nothing in itself, or nothing as unto acceptation with God. “We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” Ephesians 2:10. Becoming new creatures by our inbeing in him, 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are thereby enabled unto those good works, or fruits of holiness, which God hath ordained that we should walk and abound in. And hence on many accounts is our perseverance; for,

1. **By virtue hereof we are interested in the covenant**, which is the great means of our preservation, God having engaged therein so to **write his law in our hearts as that we shall not depart from him**, Jeremiah 31:33. Now, this **covenant** is made with us under this formal consideration, that we are the children and **seed of Abraham**, which we are not but by our union with Christ, the one seed, to whom the promises of it were originally made, as our apostle declares, Galatians 3:16.

2. His care is peculiar for the members of his body: for as “no man hateth his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it,” nor will suffer any of his members to perish, if by any means he can prevent it; so is the heart of Christ towards those that are united to him, and therein are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” Ephesians 5:29,30. And therefore,

3. The care of giving out supplies unto us for assistance [which Adam was not promised] against opposition and strength for duties, which is the **grace of perseverance**, is incumbent on him. **Our resurrection also depends on this union**, — I mean, a blessed resurrection in joy and glory unto light and life eternal; for this **resurrection** is nothing but the entire gathering up together of the whole body of Christ unto himself, whereof he gave us a pledge, example, and assurance, in his own person. So the apostle assures us, Romans 8:11, “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you” (which, as hath been showed, is the means of our union with him), “he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” And this he expressly proveth at large, 1 Corinthians 15. **And this lands us in eternal glory; which, as was observed before, is nothing but the consummation and perfection of this union with Christ**. And hence it appears on how many accounts it is the principle and measure of all other graces and privileges whatever.

And we may see hence how great our concernment is to **inquire diligently into this foundation of all grace, mercy, and glory**. If we fail here, as too many seem to do, we do but run in vain, and build in vain, and boast in vain, for all will be lost and perish. We may do well to remember what became of the house that was built on the sand, when

its trial came: it fell, and its fall was great and irreparable. Such will be the end of the profession of men that doth not spring and arise from union with Christ. Many ways there are whereby this may be put to the trial, on which all our peace, satisfaction, and assurance of spirit in the things of God, do depend. I shall only consider that which our apostle here proposeth, and that in the ensuing observation: —

Obs. 2. Constancy and steadfastness in believing is the great touchstone, trial, and evidence of union with Christ, or a participation of him.

The Law of our Creation

The Image of God

code341

By John Owen

Everything found in brackets [in blue like this] or in blue are my comments.

The law of creation, aka, law of nature, or the law of our obedience, that which we were endued with by God upon our creation, to worship him and render obedience to him as rational creatures (as opposed to the animals that only operate upon instinct), under the law of works annexed with rewards and punishments, which is characteristic of a covenant. This law upon our souls, the order of nature is the image of God that gave man the ability to please God, to worship and obey him unto his glory as our ultimate end of our creation.¹ Ps 19:1 - this has a direct bearing on understanding the giving of his glory to us (Jn17:22) by the communication of it to us by his Spirit, to re-encrypt and restore this image, his moral image, upon our souls at conversion to enable us to obey him according to the commands of the new covenant. This image we lost at the fall which rendered us useless in this obedience required of us due to sinful flesh and our blindness. Hence we must be born again (have this image restored) to see the Kingdom...in order to please God, etc. The following excerpt is particularly applied to the morality of the sabbath day. Also, being we are rational and moral beings (vs. operating under instinct) we are under obligation to obey and worship God unto his glory. This whole excerpt sheds more light on the purpose of the image of God both prior to the fall and the re-encrypting of God's image upon our souls at conversion. The nature of a covenant is also described.

And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. 1Cor15:49

[And so our great hope is Christ in us the hope of glory, that we are a partaker of His nature and so are one with him.]

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col. 1:27

¹“By the entrance of sin, with the corruption and debasing of the faculties of our souls which ensued thereon, — whereby the alteration in our nature, the principal seat and subject of this law, was so great as that we lost the image of God, or that light and knowledge unto our duty with respect unto him which was necessary for us in that covenant, — the law itself became insufficient, a lame and imperfect guide unto the ends of the covenant.” Owen, pg 387 Vol. 18 Commentary on Heb.

³⁰ *What were the consequences of Adam’s first sin for himself?*

a) Coinciding immediately with the first sin, and therefore not to be called a consequence in the strict sense, was the total corruption of human nature— thus, that there was now nothing more in it that was in accord with the demand of God’s law. b) Related most closely to this was the loss of the gift of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. This is just the other side of what is noted in a). Both can be summarized in the proposition that man by his first sin lost the image of God—that is, insofar as it was losable. Vos, pg 272 on Sin

John Owen, Vol. 18 pg336-348 *Commentary on Hebrews*

10. These being the proper ends and reasons of the original sabbatical rest, which contain the true notion of it, we may next inquire after the law whereby it was prescribed and commanded. To this purpose we must first consider the state wherein man was created, and then the **law of his creation**. And for the state and condition wherein man was created, it falls under a threefold consideration: for man may be considered either, — (1.) Absolutely as a rational creature; or, (2.) As made under a covenant of rewards and punishments; or, (3.) With respect unto the special nature of that covenant.

First, He was made a **rational creature**, and thereby necessarily in a moral dependence on God for being endowed with intellectual faculties, in an immortal soul, capable of eternal blessedness or misery, able to know God, and to regard him as the first cause and last end of all, as the author of his being and object of his blessedness, it was naturally and necessarily incumbent on him, without any further considerations, to love, fear, and obey him, and to trust in him as a preserver and rewarder. And this the order of his nature, called “the image of God,” inclined and enabled him unto. For it was not possible that such a creature should be produced, and lie under an obligation unto all those duties which the nature of God and his own, and the relation of the one to the other, made necessary. Under this consideration alone, it was required, by the law of man’s creation, that some time should be separated unto the solemn expression of his obedience, and due performance of the worship that God required of him; for in vain was he endued with intellectual faculties and appointed unto society, if he were not to honor God by them in all his relations, and openly express the homage which he owed him. And this could not be done but in a time appointed for that purpose; the neglect whereof must be a deviation from the law of the creation. And as this is generally acknowledged, so no man can fancy

the contrary. Here, then, do we fix the necessity of the separation of some time to the ends of a sabbatical rest, even on the nature of God and man, with the relation of one to the other; for who can say no part of our time is due to God, or so to be disposed?

Secondly, Man in his creation, with respect unto the ends of God therein, was **constituted under a covenant**. That is the **law of his obedience** was attended with **promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments**, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God; for every law with rewards and recompenses annexed has the nature of a **covenant**. And in this case, although the promise wherewith man was encouraged unto obedience, which was that of eternal life with God, did in strict justice exceed the worth of the obedience required, and so was a superadded effect of goodness and grace, yet was it suited unto the constitution of a **covenant** meet for man to serve God in unto his glory; and, on the other side, the punishment threatened unto disobedience, in death and an everlasting separation from God, was such as the righteousness and holiness of God, **as his supreme governor, and Lord of him and the covenant, did require**. Now, this **covenant** belonged unto the law of creation [the law of faith is of the new covenant]; for although God might have dealt with man in a way of absolute sovereignty, requiring obedience of him without a covenant of a reward infinitely exceeding it yet having done so in his creation, it belongs unto and is inseparable from the law thereof. And under this consideration, the time required in general for a rest unto God, under the first general notion of the nature and being of man, is determined unto one day in seven; for as we shall find that in the various dispensations of the covenant with man and the change of its nature, **so long as God is pleased to establish any covenant with man**, he has and does invariably require one day in seven to be set apart unto the assignation of praise and glory to himself; so we shall see afterwards that there are indications of his mind to this purpose in the covenant itself.

Thirdly, Man is to be considered with special respect unto that covenant under which he was created, which was a covenant of works; for herein rest with God was proposed unto him as the end or reward of his own works, or of his personal obedience unto God, by absolute strict righteousness and holiness. And the peculiar **form of this covenant**, as relating unto the way of God's entering into it upon the finishing of his own works, designed the seventh day from the beginning of the creation to be the day precisely for the observation of a holy rest.

As men, then, are **always rational creatures**, so some portion of time is by them necessarily to be set apart to the solemn worship of God. **As they are under a covenant**, so this time was originally limited unto one day in seven. **And as the covenant may be varied, so may this day also**; which under the covenant of works was precisely limited unto the seventh day. And these things must be further illustrated and proved.

11. This was the state and condition wherein man was originally created. Our next inquiry is after the **law of his creation**, commonly called the **law of nature**, with what belongs thereunto, or what is required of us **by virtue** thereof. Now, by the law of nature most understand the **dictates of right reason**, which all men, or men generally, consent in and agree about; for we exclude wholly from this consideration the **instinct of brute creatures**, which has some appearance of a rule unto them. So Hesiod of old determined this matter speaking of them, *jerg kaie Jem*, — "They devour one another, because they have no right or law amongst them." Hence the prophet complaining of force and

violence amongst men, with a neglect of right, justice, and equity, says, “Men are as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them,” Hab. 1:14. They devour one another, without regard to rule or right; as he in Varro,—

“*Natura humanis omnia sunt paria. Qui pote plus, urget; pisces ut sæpe minutos Magnu’ comest, ut aves enecat accipiter.*”

Most learned men, therefore, conclude that there is no such thing as “*jus*,” or “*lex naturæ*,” among irrational creatures; and **consequently nothing of good or evil in their actions. But the consent of men in the dictates of reason is esteemed the law of nature.** So Cicero, Tusc. 1:cap. Xiii, “*Omni in re consensio omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est;*” — “The common consent of all nations in any thing is to be thought the law of nature.” And Aristotle also, Rhet lib. 1:cap. Xiv., calls it *nolmou koinon* “a common law, unwritten,” pertaining unto all, whose description he adds: Κοινων δε το χατα φυσιν εστι γαρ ο μαντευονται τι παεντες φυδει χοινων διχαιον η αδιχον και μηδεμια χοιωνια προς αλληλους χαν η μηδε δυνηχη? — That which is common is according to nature; for there is somewhat which all men think, and this is common right or injustice by nature, although there should be neither society nor compact between them.” And this he confirms out of Empedocles, that it is that *oue tisie mekaion, tisid dei ouj dikaion*, — “not which is just to some, and unjust to others.” *Jallaf toe mentwn nomimon, dia eujrume dontov Aijqe rov hjneke wv te tatai dia thv ajpletou aujghv*— “But it in right amongst all, spread out with immense right by the broad ruling sky” The like he affirms in his Ethics, lib. 5:cap. Vii., defining it to be that which *pantacou thxn aujthnamin, kai ouj twe dokein hmh*, — “that which has always, or everywhere, the same force or power, and does not seem or not seem so to be” [and not because it has been so decreed or not]. This his expositors affirm to be *parao toi0 plei stoiv, kaia ajdiafok roiv kai kata fu sin e cousin*, “amongst the most of men who live according to the light of nature, with the principles of it uncorrupted.” This *kata fusin* is the same with *meta logou*, “according to the dictates of reason.” So *logov eo ojrqov*, “right reason, is the same with many as “*jus naturæ*,” or “*naturale*.” Tully in his first de Legib., cam xii., pursues this at large. “*Est unum jus*,” says he, “*quo devincta est hominum societas, et quod lex constituit una Quæ lex est recta ratio imperandi atque prohibendi;*” — “There is one common right, which is the bond of human society, and which depends on one law. And this law is the right reason of forbidding and commanding.” **This, then, is generally received,— namely, that the law of nature consists in the dictates of reason, which men sober, and otherwise uncorrupted, do assent unto and agree in.** **But there are sundry things which will not allow us to acquiesce in this description of it; for,—**

12. First, the **law of nature is a constant and perfect law.** It must be so, because it is the fountain and rule of all other laws whatever; for they are but deductions from it and applications of it. Now, unto a complete law it is required, not only that it be instructive, but also that it have a binding force, or be coercive; that is, it does not only teach, guide, and direct what is to be done, persuading by the reason of the things themselves which it requires, but also it must have authority to exact obedience, so far as that those who are under the power of it can give themselves no dispensation from its observance. But thus it is not with these dictates of reason. They go no further than direction and persuasion; and these always have, and always will have, a respect unto occasions, emergencies, and circumstances.

When these fall under any alterations, they will put reason on new considerations of what it ought to determine with respect unto them; and this the nature of a universal law will not admit. Whatever, then, men determine by reason, they may alter on new considerations, such as occasioned their original which suffices to demonstrate that the **unalterable law of nature does not consist in these dictates of reason only.** Suppose men do coalesce into any civil society on the mere dictates of reason that it is meet and best for them so to do, if this be the supreme reason thereof, no obligation arises from thence to preserve the society so entered into **but what is liable unto a dissolution from contrary considerations.** If it be said that reason dictates and commands in the name of God, whence an indissoluble obligation attends it, it will be answered, that this introduces a new respect, which is not formally included in the nature of reason itself. Let a man indeed use and improve his own reason without prejudice, — let him collect what resolutions, determinations, instructions, laws, have proceeded from the reason of other men, — it will both exceedingly advance his understanding, and enable him to judge of many things that are congruous to the light and law of nature; but to suppose the law of nature to consist in a system or collection of such instances and observations is altogether unwarrantable.

13. The event of things, in the disagreement of the wisest men about the dictates of reason, utterly everts this opinion. The law of nature, whatever it be, must in itself be one, uniform, unalterable, the same in and unto all; for by these properties it differs from all other laws. **But if it have no higher nor more noble original to be resolved into but mere human reason, it will be found, if not in all things, yet in most, fluctuating and uncertain.** For about what is agreeable to reason in things moral, and what is not there have been differences innumerable from time immemorial, and that amongst them who searched most diligently after them, and boasted themselves to be wise upon their self-pleasing discoveries. This gave the greatest occasion unto the two hundred and eighty-eight sects of philosophers, as Austin reports them out of Varro, who was “disertissimus nepotum Romuli,” lib. 19:de Civit. Dei. Yea, and some of the most learned and contemplative authors did not only mistake in many instances what natural light required, but also asserted things in direct opposition unto what is judged so to be. The saying produced out of Empedocles by Aristotle, before mentioned, is to prove that the killing of any living creature is openly against the universally prevailing law of nature. Others maintained such things to be natural as the most did abominate. Incest in the nearest instances, with sodomy, were asserted lawful by the Magi, and some of the most learned Greeks, as Zeno and Chrysippus. And it was the judgment of Theodorus that a wise man ought [*Greek phrase*], as Diogenes in his life, who likewise reports the same of Aristippus and Carneades. Naturally they thought nothing just or unjust, good or evil, but by virtue of some arbitrary law. And there are yet those in the world, partakers of human nature in common with us all, who know no other rule of their actions towards others but power, as the cannibals, and those Indians who suppose they may justly spoil all that are afraid of them. Yea some, who of late have pretended a severe inquisition into these things, seem to incline unto an opinion that power and self-advantage are the rule of men’s conversation among themselves in this world. So it was the principle of Brennus, in his time the terror of Europe, that there was no other law of nature but that the weaker should obey the stronger.” And the commander of the Gauls who besieged the Roman Capitol, when he was on a composition to depart upon the giving to him such a weight of gold, threw his sword and helmet into the scale against it, giving no other reason for what he did but “Væ victis.” Neither will another rule which they had of assigning things to the law

of nature hold firm, namely, a general usage of mankind from time immemorial. This Antigone pleads in Sophocles for her burying of Polynices,

“This (right) arose not today nor yesterday, but was in force ever of old, nor does any man know from whence it arose.”

For all nations, from beyond the records of the original of things, had consented unto practices directly contrary to the light of nature, as is now acknowledged. And hence were all the disputes of old about the nature, bounds, and ends of good and evil, duty and vice, honest and filthy, just and unjust, that could never be determined. This Plato observing, affirms in his Phædo, “That if any one name either silver or iron, presently all men agree what it is that is intended; but if they speak of that which is just and good, presently we are at variance with others and among ourselves.” **So great uncertainty is there in human reason**, under its best natural improvements, in its judgment of what does or does not belong to the principles and condition of our nature, so far is it from being comprehensive of the whole law thereof.

14. **When, therefore, we plead anything to belong unto or to proceed from the law of nature, it is no impeachment of our assertion to say that it does not appear so to the common reason of mankind, or that right reason has not found it out or discovered it, provided it contain nothing repugnant thereunto; for it will never be universally agreed what does so appear to the common reason of all, nor what is, has been, or may be discovered thereby.** And although it should be true, which some say, that moral and natural duties depend on and have their formal reason from the nature of God and man, yet it does not thence follow that we do, or may, by the sole light of nature, know what does so arise, with the due bounds and just consequences of it. But there is, as we shall see, something yet further required in and unto the law of nature, which is the adequate rule of all such duties. I shall not, therefore, endeavor to prove that the mere dictates of reason do evince a sacred hebdomadal rest as knowing that the law of nature, unto which we say it does belong, does not absolutely consist in them; nor did they ever since the fall, steadily and universally, as acted in men possessed of reason, either comprehend or express all that belongs thereunto.

15. **By the law of nature, then, I intend, not a law which our nature gives unto all our actions, but a law given unto our nature, as a rule and measure unto our moral actions.** It is *“lex naturæ naturantis,”* and not *“naturæ”* It respects the efficient cause of nature, and not the effects of it. And this respect alone can give it the nature of a law,— that is, an obliging force and power; for this must be always from the act of a superior, seeing *“par in parem jus non habet,”*— “equals have no right one over another.” **This law, therefore, is that rule which God has given unto human nature, in all the individual partakers of it, for all its moral actions, in the state and condition wherein it was by him created and placed,** with respect unto his own government of it and judgment concerning it; **which rule is made known in them and to them by their inward constitution and outward condition wherein they were placed of God.** And the very heathens acknowledged that the common law of mankind was God’s prescription unto them. So Tully, lib. 2:de Legibe. Cap. lv., *“Hanc video sapientissimorum fuisse sententiam, legem neque hominum ingenus excogitatam, nec scitum aliquod esse populoruim, sed æternuni quiddam, quod universum mundum regeret, imperandi prohibendique sapientia. Ita principem legem illam et ultimam, mentem esse dicebant, omnia ratione aut cogentis,*

aut vetantis Dei." **Take this law, therefore, actively, and it is the will of God commanding; take it passively, and it is the conscience of man complying with it; take it instrumentally, and it is the inbred notions of our minds, with other documents from the works of God, proposed unto us.** The **supreme original** of it, as of all authority, law, and obligation, is the will of God, constituting, appointing, and ordering the nature of things; the means of its revelation, **is the effect of the will, wisdom, and power of God,** creating man and all other things wherein he is concerned, in their order, place, and condition; and the observation of it, as far as individual persons are therein concerned, is committed to the care of the conscience of every man, which naturally is the mind's acting itself towards God as the author of this law.

16. These things being premised, we shall consider what **light** is given unto this sacred duty from the **law of our creation.** The **first end of any law is to instruct,** direct, and guide them in their duty unto whom it is given. A law which is not in its own nature instructive and directive, is no way meet to be prescribed unto rational creatures. What has an influence upon any creature of any other kind, if it be internal, is **instinct,** and not properly a law; if it be external, it is force and compulsion. The **law of creation,** therefore, comprised everything whereby God instructed man, in the creation of himself and of the universe, unto his works or obedience, and his rest or reward. And whatever tended unto that end belonged unto that law. [hence without this image of God, we cannot know God's will nor please him; which is why we need it re-instamped upon our soul in *regeneration*; hence you must be born from above...] It is, then, as has been proved, unduly confined unto the ingrafted notions of his mind concerning God and his duty towards him, though they are a **principal part thereof.** Whatever was designed to give improvement unto those notions and his natural light, to excite or direct them,— I mean in the works of nature, not superadded positive institutions,— does also belong thereunto. Wherefore the **whole instruction** that God intended to give unto man **by the works of creation,** with their order and end, is, as was said, included herein. What he might learn from them, **or what God taught him by them, was no less his duty than what his own inbred light directed him unto, Romans 1:18-20.** Thus the framing of the world in six days, in six days of work, **was intended to be instructive unto man,** as well as the consideration of the things materially that were made. God could have immediately produced all out of nothing, *ejn ajtotmw | ejn rjiph | ojfqalmou,*— in the shortest measure of time conceivable; but he not only made all things for himself, or his glory, but disposed also the order of their production unto the same end. And herein consisted part of that covenant instruction which he gave unto man in that condition wherein he was made, that through him he might have glory ascribed unto him on the account of his works themselves, as also of the order and manner of their creation; for it is vain to imagine that the world was made in six days, and those closed with a day of rest, **without an especial respect unto the obedience of rational creatures, seeing absolutely with respect unto God himself neither of them was necessary.** And what he intended to teach them thereby, it was their duty to inquire and know. **Hereby, then, man in general was taught obedience and working before he entered into rest; for being created in the image of God, he was to conform himself unto God.** As God wrought before he rested, so was he to work before his rest, his condition rendering that working in him obedience, as it was in God an effect of sovereignty. And by the rest of God, or his satisfaction and complacency in what he had made and done, he was instructed to seek rest with God, or to enter into that rest of God, by his compliance with the ends intended.

17. And whereas the innate light and principles of his own mind informed him that some time was to be set apart to the solemn worship of God, as he was a **rational** creature made to give glory unto him, so the instruction he received by the works and rest of God, as made under a covenant, taught him that one day in seven was required unto that purpose, as also to be a **pledge of his resting with God**. It may be, it will be said that man could not know that the world was made in six days, and that the rest of God ensued on the seventh, without some especial revelation. I answer, —

(1.) That I know not. He that knew the nature of all the creatures, and could give them names suited thereunto upon his first sight and view of them, might know more of the order of their creation than we can well imagine; for we know no more, in our lapsed condition, what the light of nature directed man unto as walking before God in a covenant, than men merely natural do know of the guidance and conduct of the light and law of grace in them who are taken into the new covenant.

(2.) However, what God instructed him in, even by revelation, as to the due consideration and improvement of the things that belonged unto the law of his creation, that is to be esteemed as a part thereof. Institutions of things by special revelation, that had no foundation in the law or light of nature, were merely **positive**; such were the commands concerning the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. But such as were directive of natural light and of the order of the creation were **moral**, and **belonged** unto the general law of obedience; such was the especial command given unto man to till and keep the garden, Genesis 2:15, or to dress and improve the place of his habitation, for this in general the law of his creation required. **Now this God did, both as to his works and his rest**. Neither do I know any one as yet that questions whether Adam and the patriarchs that ensued before the giving of the law knew that the world was created in six days. Though some seem to speak doubtfully hereof, and some by direct consequent deny it, yet I suppose that hitherto it passes as granted. Nor have they who dispute that the Sabbath was neither instituted, known, nor observed, before the people of Israel were in the wilderness, once attempted to confirm their opinion with this supposition, that the patriarchs from the foundation of the world knew not that the world was made in six days, which yet alone would be effectual unto their purpose. Nor, on the other side, can it be once rationally imagined that if they had knowledge hereof, and therewithal of the rest which ensued thereon, they had no regard unto it in the worship of God.

18. And thus was the Sabbath, or the observation of one day in seven as a sacred rest, fixed on the same moral grounds with monogamy, or the marriage of one man to one woman only at the same time; which, from the very fact and order of the creation, our Savior proves to have been an unchangeable part of the law of it. For because God made them two single persons, male and female, fit for individual conjunction, he concludes that this course of life they were everlastingly obliged not to alter nor transgress. As, therefore, men may dispute that polygamy is not against the law of nature, because it was allowed and practiced by many, by most of those who of old observed and improved the light and rule thereof to the uttermost, when yet the very "*factum*" and order of the creation is sufficient to evince the contrary [*i.e., the means God used to confirm natural light or law of creation was the creation of Adam and Eve, not Adam with multiple wives*]; so although men should dispute that the observation of one day's sacred rest in seven is not of the light or law of nature, — all whose rules and dictates, they say, are of an easy discovery, and prone to the observation of all men, which this is not, — **yet the order of the creation, and the rest of God that ensued thereon, are sufficient to**

evince the contrary. And in the renewing of the law upon mount Sinai, God taught the people not only by the words that he spake, but also by the works that he wrought. Yea, he instructed them in a **moral** duty, not only by what he did, but by what he did not; for he declares that they ought to make no images of or unto him, **because he made no representation of himself unto them.** “They saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spoke unto them in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,” Deuteronomy 4:15, 16.

19. But now, to shut up this discourse, whereas the **covenant** which man originally was taken into was a covenant of works, wherein his obtaining rest with God depended absolutely on his doing all the work he had to do in a way of **legal obedience** [as opposed to *evangelical* obedience- faith in Christ as our surety in the new covenant – we live by faith in the Son of God, by faith in what he did, his obedience as it was a surety; he did what we could not do legally by strict obedience to the law apart from faith, for the law was weak due to our sinful flesh.], he was during the dispensation of that covenant tied up precisely to the observation of the seventh day, or that which followed the whole work of creation. And the seventh day, as such, **is a pledge and token of the rest promised in the covenant of works, and no other.** **And those who would advance that day again into a necessary observation do consequentially introduce the whole covenant of works, and are become debtors into the whole law;** for the works of God which preceded the seventh day precisely were those whereby man was initiated into and instructed in the **covenant of works**, and the day itself was a token and pledge of the righteousness thereof, or a moral and natural sign of it, and of the rest of God therein, and the rest of man with God thereby. And it is no service to the church of God, nor has any tendency into the honor of Christ in the gospel, to endeavor a reduction of us unto the covenant of nature.

20. Thus was man instructed in the whole notion of a weekly sacred rest, by all the **ways and means** which God was pleased to use [sovereignty of God!] in giving him an acquaintance with his will, and that obedience unto his glory which he expected from him: for this **knowledge** he had partly by the **law of his creation, as innate unto him or con-created with the principles of his nature**, being the necessary exsurgency of his **rational constitution**; and partly by the works and rest of God, thereon proposed unto his consideration; both firm'd by God's declaration of his sanctification of the seventh day. Hence did he know that it was his **duty** to express and celebrate the rest of God, or the complacency that he had in the works of his hands, in reference unto their **great and proper end**, or **his glory, in the honor, praise, and obedience of them unto whose contemplation they were proposed for those ends.** This followed immediately from the time spent in the creation, and the rest that ensued thereon, **which were so ordered for his instruction, and not from any other cause or reason, taken either from the nature of God or of the things themselves**, which required neither six days to make the world in, nor any rest to follow thereon; for that rest was not a cessation from working absolutely, much less merely so. Hence did he learn the nature of the covenant that he was taken into, namely, **how he was first to work in obedience, and then to enter into God's rest in blessedness; for so had God appointed**, and so did he understand his will, from his own present state and condition. Hence was he instructed to dedicate to God, and to his own more immediate communion with him, one day in a weekly revolution, wherein the whole law of his creation was consummated, **as a pledge and means of entering eternally into God's rest**, which from hence he **understood** to be his **end and happiness.** And for the sanctification of the seventh day of the week precisely, he had it by revelation,

or God's sanctification of it; which had unto him the nature of a **positive law**, being a determination of the day suited unto the **nature and tenor of that covenant** wherein he walked with God.

[So by having church on the first day of the week, we are acknowledging and celebrating what Christ did for us; what "work" he did as our surety, to satisfy the curse of the law; that work that we could not do, due to sin in us, our inability to keep the law. But Christ kept the law perfectly and Father's acceptance of such work & sacrifice was signaled by Christ's resurrection. Now, as Paul says, we live by faith in the Son of God who died for us; we don't live or trust in our self-sufficiency or our own works (legalism) which could never take away sin and are as *filthy rags*, but it is by faith in the Son – his obedience, his righteousness, etc., his person, his work in which we place our trust. And by having church on Sunday signals this as the proper language of one's heart. By having church on Saturday, the following ensues as Owen explains: 19. But now, to shut up this discourse, whereas the covenant which man originally was taken into was a covenant of works, wherein his obtaining rest with God depended absolutely on his doing all the work he had to do in a way of legal obedience, he was during the dispensation of that covenant tied up precisely to the observation of the seventh day, or that which followed the whole work of creation. And the seventh day, as such, is a pledge and token of the rest promised in the covenant of works, and no other. And those who would advance that day again into a necessary observation do consequentially introduce the whole covenant of works, and are become debtors into the whole law; for the. Works of God which preceded the seventh day precisely were those whereby man was initiated into and instructed in the covenant of works, and the day itself was a token and pledge of the righteousness thereof, or a moral and natural sign of it, and of the rest of God therein, and the rest of man with God thereby. And it is no service to the church of God, nor has any tendency into the honor of Christ in the gospel, to endeavor a reduction of us unto the covenant of nature. P346, Vol. 18 Commentary on Hebrews]

21. And by this superadded command or institution, the mind of man was confirmed in the meaning and intention of his **innate principles [or the law of his being/creation]**, and other instructions to the same purpose in general. All these things, I say, the last only excepted, was he directed unto in and by the **innate principles of light and obedience wherewith the faculties of his soul were furnished, every way suited to guide him in the whole of the duty required of him**, and by the further instruction he had from the other works of God, and his rest upon the whole. And although, it may be, we cannot now discern how in particular his **natural light** might conduct and guide him to the observance of all these things, yet ought we not therefore to deny that so it did, seeing there is evidence in the things themselves, and we know not well what that light was which was in him; for although we may have some due apprehensions of the substance of it, from its remaining ruins and materials in our lapsed condition, yet we have no acquaintance with that light and glorious luster, that extent of its directive beams, which it was accompanied withal, when it was in him as he came immediately from the hand of God, created in his image. We have lost more by the fall than the best and wisest in the world can apprehend whilst they are in it,— much more than most will acknowledge, whose principal design seems to be to extenuate the sin and misery of man; which issues necessarily in an undervaluation of the love and grace of Jesus Christ. But if a natural or carnal man cannot discern how the Spirit or grace of the new covenant, which succeeds into the room of our first innate light, as unto the end of our living unto God's glory in a new way, directs and guides those in whom it is unto the observance of all the duties of it, let us not wonder if we cannot easily and readily comprehend the brightness, and

extent, and conduct of that light which was suited unto an estate of things that never was in the world since the fall, but only in the man Christ Jesus; whose wisdom and knowledge in the mind and will of God even thereby, without his superadded peculiar assistance, we may rather admire than think to understand.

22. Thus, then, were the foundations of the old world laid, and the covenant of man's obedience established, when all the sons of God sang for joy, even in the first rest of God, and in the expression of it by the sanctification of a sacred rest, made to return unto him a revenue of glory in man's observance of it. And on these grounds I do affirm that the weekly observation of a day to God for sabbath ends is a duty natural and moral, which we are under a perpetual and indispensable obligation unto,— namely, from that command of God, which, **being a part of the law of our creation, is moral, indispensable, and perpetual.** And these things, with the different apprehensions of others about them, and oppositions unto them, must now be further explained and considered; and that we now enter upon,— namely, the consideration of the judgment and opinions of others about these things, with the confirmation of our own.

Side Bar Summary

Some notes on the image of God that I gleaned from John Owen's commentary on Hebrews will help put all these things in a good perspective so you can get a clearer understanding of all that is said in this writing and from the diagram.

The ultimate end for why God created the earth and all that is in it is to glorify himself; to glorify the excellency of his nature; his infinite power, majesty, wisdom and all his attributes – his goodness, mercy, love, and grace and his holiness and justice. So, many inquire, What is the image of God and why are we made in that image – for what purpose?

God made us moral creatures with a faculty of *reason* and *understanding* to which the communication of his glory is made, his glory consisting in the knowledge of God, the will of God consisting in holiness or love to God and happiness and Joy in God, all of which summarily is God's mind and will or his law that is impressed upon and infused into our soul (our mind or heart), which enables us, in the end, to obey God. The principle part of this image, holiness, was erased¹ by Adam's fall, made completely unusable due to the blinding, deadening and alienating effects of sin. This situation set the scene for God's grace to be greatly magnified in the saving of the worst of sinners...i.e., *not many wise or noble are chosen*, etc. When God saves someone, he communicates his glory to them (2Cor4:6, John 17:22) by putting his law back into their inward parts (Jer. 31:33 ...into their heart (or mind), which is the center of the soul. By being united to Christ we partake of his nature by the re-enstamping of his image upon our souls; thus we are in him as he is in us. Now we are once again able to see, obey and hence believe; we have been truly *set free* from the dominion of sin.

Grace is that which enable one to obey God without which you cannot obey God, hence Heb. 11:6, without faith (the grace of faith) you cannot please Him. But many try coming to God without faith, without being effectually called, from a principle of self-love, relying on their own corrupted reason and fancies (Ps 50:16). You'll see below that the law of our creation, this first image of God implanted in our souls is also known as the law of right reason or the light or law of nature, the law of our creation; but after the fall this was totally corrupted by sin.

¹ **Notes on the remains of God's image** in the soul of fallen man, which is now in the image of Adam, *in his own likeness* (Gen. 5:3) or in the image of the devil, subsequent to Adam's fall. *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p305 & 318, 319:

The rigorous Lutherans followed the master, and the *Formula Concordiae*, though recognizing that "human reason or the natural intellect of man has retained some faint glimmer of that knowledge, which is of God, and retains some particle of that law," it nevertheless so one-sidedly stresses the darkness and impotence of the natural man in matters of religion that the bond between special and general revelation is broken. In "spiritual matters and as it pertains to conversion and regeneration" a human being is no more than a "stone, a trunk, or mud." (J.T. Miller, 1882) p305

Also among pagans, says Scripture, there is a revelation of god, an illumination by the Logos, a working of God's Spirit (Gen 6:17; 7:15; Ps 33:6; 104:30; Job 32:8; Eccles 3:19; Prov 8:22f.; Mal 1:11, 14; John 1:19 Rom 2:14; Gal 4:1-3; Acts 14:16, 17; 17:22-30). Many church fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and others), assumed an operation of the logos in the pagan world. Although Augustine repeatedly spoke very unfavorably about pagans, he nevertheless recognized that they say adumbrations of the truth, that the truth was not wholly concealed from them, and, accordingly, that we must take advantage of the truth elements in pagan philosophy and appropriate it. "Still, since God's image has not been so completely erased in the soul of man by the stain of earthly affections, as to have left remaining there not even the merest lineaments of it, whence it might be justly said that man, even in the ungodliness of his life, does not appreciate some things contained in the law. [Augustine, *City of God & On The Spirit and the Letter*] Bavinck, RD, Vol. 1, pg 318-319

Van Til states: Of this spirituality, man, created as he is in the image of God, carries within him a faint replica. Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, pg 369

The Image of God

code343

More notes on the Law of Creation

John Owen

Man a rational creature capable of **obedience** or **disobedience**, the Sabbath being moral.
How God is glorified by his creatures – by obedience.

Pg 332-338 vol. 18 *Commentary on Hebrews* by John Owen

7. It is the second opinion, for the substance of it, which I shall endeavor to explain and confirm; and therein prove a sacred sabbatical rest unto God, of one day in seven, to be enjoined unto all that fear him, by a law perpetual and indispensable, upon the account of what is moral therein. The reason, I say, of the obligation of the law of the Sabbath is moral, and thence the obligation itself universal; however, the determination and declaration of the day itself depend on arbitrary revelation and a law merely positive. These things being explained and confirmed, the other opinions proposed will fall under our consideration.

To obtain a distinct light into the truth in this matter, we must consider both the true notion of the sacred rest, as also of the **law of our creation**, whereby we affirm that fundamentally and virtually it is required.

8. The general notion of the Sabbath is, “a portion of time set apart, by divine appointment, for the observance and performance of the solemn worship of God.” The worship of God is that which we are made for, as to our station in this world, and is the means and condition of our enjoyment of him in glory, wherein consists the ultimate end, as unto us, of our creation. This worship, therefore, is required of us by the law of our creation; and it is upon the matter all that is required of us thereby, seeing we are obliged by it to do all things to the glory of God. And therefore is the solemn expression of that worship required of us in the same manner; for the end of it being our glorifying him as God, and the nature of it consisting in the profession of our universal subjection unto him and dependence upon him, the solemn expression of it is as necessary as the worship itself which we are to perform. No man, therefore, ever doubted but that by the law of nature we were bound to worship God, and solemnly to express that worship; for else wherefore were we brought forth in this world? These things are inseparable from our nature; and where this order is disturbed by sin we fall into another, which the properties of God, on the supposition of **transgressing our first natural order, do render no less necessary unto his glory than the other, namely, that of punishment.**

Moreover, in this worship it is required, by the same law of our being, that we should serve God with all that we do receive from him. No man can think otherwise. For is there any thing that we have received from God that shall yield him no revenue of glory, whereof we ought to make no acknowledgment unto him? Who dare once so to imagine? Among the things thus given us of God is

our time. And this falls under a double consideration in this matter: —First, As it is an inseparable moral circumstance of the worship required of us; so it is necessarily included in the command of worship itself, not directly, but consequentially. Secondly, It is in itself a part of our vouchsafements from God, for our own use and purposes in this world. So upon its own account, firstly and directly, a separation of a part of it unto God and his solemn worship is required of us. It remains only to inquire what part of time it is that is and will be accepted with God. This is declared and determined in the fourth commandment to be the seventh part of it, or one day in seven. And this is that which is **positive** in the command; which yet, **as to the foundation, formal reason, and main substance of it, is moral**. And these things are true, but yet do not express the whole nature of the Sabbath, which we must further inquire into.

9. And, first, it must be observed, that wherever there is mention of a sabbatical rest, as enjoined unto men for their observation there is still respect unto a rest of God that preceded it, and the cause and foundation of it. In its first mention, God's rest is given as the reason of his sanctifying and blessing a day of rest for us, whence also it has its name: Genesis 2:3, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, *tbæv; wob yti,*"—"because he sabbatized thereon himself." And so it is expressed, and the same reason is given of it, in the fourth commandment. God wrought six days, and rested the seventh; therefore must we rest, Exodus 20:11. The same is observed in the new creation, as we shall see afterwards and more fully in our exposition of Hebrews 4. Now, that God may he said to rest, it is necessary that some signal work of his do go before; for rest, in the first notion of it, includes a respect to an antecedent work or labor. And so it is everywhere declared. God wrought his works and finished them, and then rested; he made all things in six days; and rested on the seventh. And he that is entered into rest ceases from his work. And both these, the work of God and the rest of God, must in this matter be considered. For the work of God, it is that of the old and whole creation, as is directly expressed, Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:11, which I desire may be borne in mind.

And this work of God may he considered two ways:—**First**, Naturally or physically, as it consisted in the mere production of the effects of his power, wisdom, and goodness. So all things are the work of God. **Secondly**, Morally, **as God ordered and designed all his works to be a means of glorifying himself, in and by the obedience of his rational creatures**. This consideration, both the nature of it, and the order and end of the whole creation, do make necessary. For God first made all the inanimate, then animate and sensitive creatures, in their glory, order, and beauty. **In and on all these he implanted a teaching and instructive power**: for "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork," Psalm 19:1; and **all creatures are frequently called on to give praise and glory to him**. And this expresses that in their nature and order which reveals and manifests him and the **glorious excellencies of his nature, which man is to contemplate in their effects in them, and give glory unto him**; for after them all was man made, to consider and use them all for the end for which they were made, and was a kind of mediator between God and the rest of the creatures, by and through whom he would receive all his glory from them. This is that which our apostle discourses about, Romans 1:19, 20. **The design of God, as he declares, was to manifest and show himself in his works to man. Man learning from them "the invisible things of God," was to "glorify him as God," as he disputes**. The ordering and disposal of things to this purpose is principally to be considered in the works of God, as his rest did ensue upon them.

Secondly, The rest of God is to be considered as that which completes the foundation of the sabbatical rest inquired after; for it is built on God's working and entering into his rest. Now, this is not a mere cessation from working. It is not absolutely so; for "God works hitherto." **And the expression of**

God's rest is of a moral and not a natural signification; for it consists in the satisfaction and complacency that he took in his works, as effects of his goodness, power, and wisdom, disposed in the order and unto the ends mentioned. Hence, as it is said that upon the finishing of them, he looked on "every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" Genesis 1:31, —that is, he was satisfied in his works and their disposal, and pronounced concerning them that they became his infinite wisdom and power; so it is added that he not only "rested on the seventh day," but also that he was "refreshed," Exodus 31:17, —that is, he took great complacency in what he had done, as that which was suited unto the end aimed at namely, the expression of his greatness, goodness, and wisdom, unto his rational creatures, and his glory through their obedience thereon, as on the like occasion he is said to "rest in his love," and to "rejoice with singing," Zephaniah 3:17.

Now, in the work and rest of God thus stated did the whole rule of the obedience of man originally consist; and therein was he to seek also his own rest, as his happiness and blessedness; for God had not declared any other way for his instruction in the ends of his creation, —that is, his obedience unto him and blessedness in him, —but in and by his own works and rest. This, then, is the first end of this holy rest. And it must always be born in mind, as that without which we can give no glory to God as rational creatures, made under a moral law in a dependence on him; for this he indispensably requires of us, and this is the sum of what he requires of us, namely, that we glorify him according to the revelation that he makes of himself unto us, whether by his works of nature or of grace. To the solemnity hereof the day inquired after is necessary. To express these things is the general end of the sabbatical rest prescribed unto us and our observation; for so it is said God wrought and rested, and then requires us so to do.

And it has sundry particular ends or reasons: —*First*, That we might learn the satisfaction and complacency that God has in his own works, Genesis 2:2, 3; that is, to consider the impressions of his excellencies upon them, and to glorify him as God on that account, Romans 1:19-21. For hence was man originally taught to fear, love, trust, obey, and honor him absolutely, even from the manifestation that he had made of himself in his works, wherein he rested. And had not God thus rested in them, and been refreshed upon their completing and finishing, they would not have been a sufficient means to instruct man in those duties. And our observation of the evangelical Sabbath has the same respect unto the works of Christ and his rest thereon, when he saw of the travail of his soul and was satisfied, as shall afterwards be declared.

Secondly, Another end of the original sabbatical rest was, that it might be a **pledge** unto man of his rest in and with God; for in and by the law of his creation, man had an end of rest proposed unto him, and that in God. This he was to be directed unto and encouraged to look after. Herein God by his works and rest had instructed him. And by giving him the Sabbath, as he gave him a pledge thereof, so he required of him his approbation of the covenant way of attaining it; whereof afterwards. Hence Psalm 92, whose title is, "A psalm or song for the Sabbath day," —which some of the Jews ascribe unto Adam, —as it principally consists in contemplations of 'the works of God, with holy admiration of his greatness and power manifested in them, with praises unto him on their account, so it expresses the destruction of ungodly sinners and the salvation of the righteous, whereof in that day's rest they had a pledge. And this belonged unto that state of man wherein he was created, namely, that he should have a pledge of eternal rest. Neither could his duty and capacity be otherwise answered or esteemed reasonable. His duty, which was working in moral obedience, had a natural relation unto a reward; and his capacity was such as could not be satisfied, nor himself attain absolute rest, but in the enjoyment of God. A pledge hereof therefore, belonged unto his condition.

Thirdly, Consideration was had of the way and means whereby man might enter into the rest of God proposed unto him. And this was by that **obedience and worship of God which the covenant wherein he was created required of him**. The solemn expression of this obedience and exercise of this worship were indispensably required of him and his posterity, in all their societies and communion with one another. This cannot be denied, unless we shall say that God making man to be a sociable creature, and capable of sundry relations, did not require of him to honor him in the societies and relations whereof he was capable; which would certainly overthrow the whole law of his creation with respect unto the end for which he was made, and render all societies sinful and rebellious against God. Hereunto the sabbatical rest was absolutely necessary; (or without some such rest, fixed or variable, those things could not be. **This is a time or season for man to express and solemnly pay that homage which he owes to his Creator**; and this is by most esteemed the great, if not the only end of the Sabbath. But it is evident that it falls under sundry precedent considerations.

10. These being the proper ends and reasons of the original sabbatical rest, which contain the true notion of it, we may next inquire after the law whereby it was prescribed and commanded. To this purpose we must first consider the state wherein man was created, and then the law of his creation. And for the state and condition wherein man was created, it falls under a threefold consideration: for man may be considered either, — (1.) Absolutely as a rational creature; or, (2.) As made under a covenant of rewards and punishments; or, (3.) With respect unto the special nature of that covenant.

First, **He was made a rational creature**, and thereby necessarily in a moral dependence on God for being endowed with intellectual faculties, in an immortal soul, **capable of eternal blessedness or misery, able to know God, and to regard him as the first cause and last end of all, as the author of his being and object of his blessedness, it was naturally and necessarily incumbent on him, without any further considerations, to love, fear, and obey him, and to trust in him as a preserver and rewarder. And this the order of his nature, called “the image of God,” inclined and enabled him unto**. [That is key. For we are born in the likeness of Adam unable to please God because we are without this image, this moral image, due to Adam’s fall. Hence we must be born again, having this image re-ensamped upon our soul. “Darkness error lies and so forth are unnatural, the characteristics of fallen nature, but the light of knowledge belongs to the image of God which originally was introduced to human nature.” Bavinck, RD, Vol. 4 pg100] For it was not possible that such a creature should be produced, and lie under an obligation unto all those duties which the nature of God and his own, and the relation of the one to the other, made necessary. Under this consideration alone, it was required, by the law of man’s creation, that some time should be separated unto the solemn expression of his obedience, and due performance of the worship that God required of him; for in vain was he endued with intellectual faculties and appointed unto society, if he were not to honor God by them in all his relations, and openly express the homage which he owed him. And this could not be done but in a time appointed for that purpose; **the neglect whereof must be a deviation from the law of the creation**. And as this is generally acknowledged, so no man can fancy the contrary. Here, then, do we fix the necessity of the separation of some time to the ends of a sabbatical rest, even on the nature of God and man, with the relation of one to the other; for who can say no part of our time is due to God, or so to be disposed?

Secondly, Man in his creation, with respect unto the ends of God therein, was constituted under a covenant. That is the law of his obedience was attended with promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God; for every law with rewards and recompenses annexed has the nature of a covenant. And in this case, although the promise wherewith

man was encouraged unto obedience, which was that of eternal life with God, did in strict justice exceed the worth of the obedience required, and so was a **superadded** effect of goodness and grace, yet **was it suited unto the constitution of a covenant meet for man to serve God in unto his glory**; and, on the other side, the punishment threatened unto disobedience, in death and an everlasting separation from God, was such as the righteousness and holiness of God, as his supreme governor, and Lord of him and the covenant, did require. **Now, this covenant belonged unto the law of creation**; for although God might have dealt with man in a way of absolute sovereignty, requiring obedience of him without a covenant of a reward infinitely exceeding it yet having done so in his creation, it belongs unto and is inseparable from the law thereof. And under this consideration, the time required in general for a rest unto God, under the first general notion of the nature and being of man, is determined unto one day in seven; for as we shall find that in the various dispensations of the covenant with man and the change of its nature, so long as God is pleased to establish any covenant with man, he has and does invariably require one day in seven to be set apart unto the assignation of praise and glory to himself; so we shall see afterwards that there are indications of his mind to this purpose in the covenant itself.

Thirdly, Man is to be considered with special respect unto that covenant under which he was created, which was a covenant of works; for herein rest with God was proposed unto him as the end or reward of his own works, or of his personal obedience unto God, by absolute strict righteousness and holiness. And the peculiar form of this covenant, as relating unto the way of God's entering into it upon the finishing of his own works, designed the seventh day from the beginning of the creation to be the day precisely for the observation of a holy rest.

As men, then, are always rational creatures, so some portion of time is by them necessarily to be set apart to the solemn worship of God. As they are under a covenant, so this time was originally limited unto one day in seven. And as the covenant may be varied, so may this day also; which under the covenant of works was precisely limited unto the seventh day. And these things must be further illustrated and proved.

The Law of Nature or The Law of Our Creation

code344

the light of reason, the law of our obedience and the image of God

by John Owen

pgs. 341-344 *Commentary on Hebrews* vol. 18

For all nations, from beyond the records of the original of things, had consented unto practices directly contrary to the light of nature, as is now acknowledged. And hence were all the disputes of old about the nature, bounds, and ends of good and evil, duty and vice, honest and filthy, just and unjust, that could never be determined. This Plato observing, affirms in his Phædo, “That if any one name either silver or iron, presently all men agree what it is that is intended; but if they speak of that which is just and good, presently we are at variance with others and among ourselves.” **So great uncertainty is there in human reason, under its best natural improvements, in its judgment of what does or does not belong to the principles and condition of our nature, so far is it from being comprehensive of the whole law thereof.**

14. When, therefore, we plead anything to belong unto or to proceed from the law of nature, it is no impeachment of our assertion to say that it does not appear so to the common reason of mankind, or that right reason has not found it out or discovered it, provided it contain nothing repugnant thereunto; for it will never be universally agreed what does so appear to the common reason of all, nor what is, has been, or may be discovered thereby. And although it should be true, which some say, that moral and natural duties depend on and have their formal reason from the nature of God and man, yet it does not thence follow that we do, or may, by the sole light of nature, know what does so arise, with the due bounds and just consequences of it. **But there is, as we shall see, something yet further required in and unto the law of nature, which is the adequate rule of all such duties.** I shall not, therefore, endeavor to prove that the mere dictates of reason do evince a sacred hebdomadal rest as knowing that the law of nature, unto which we say it does belong, does not absolutely consist in them; nor did they ever since the fall, steadily and universally, as acted in men possessed of reason, either comprehend or express all that belongs thereunto.

15. By the law of nature, then, I intend, not a law which our nature gives unto all our actions, but a law given unto our nature, as a rule and measure unto our moral actions. It is “lex naturæ naturantis,” and not “naturæ” It respects the efficient cause of nature, and not the effects of it. And this respect alone can give it the nature of a law,— that is, an obliging force and power; for this must be always from the act of a superior, seeing “par in parem jus non habet,” — “equals have no right one over another.” **This law, therefore, is that rule which God has given unto human nature, in all the individual partakers of it, for all its moral actions, in the state and condition wherein it was by him created and placed, with respect unto his own government of it and judgment concerning it; which rule is made known in them and to them by their inward constitution and outward condition wherein they were placed of God.** And the very heathens acknowledged that the common law of mankind was God’s prescription unto them. So Tully, lib. 2:de Legibe. Cap. Iv., “*Hanc video sapientissimorum fuisse*

sententiam, legem neque hominum ingenus excogitatam, nec scitum aliquod esse popularuim, sed æternuni quiddam, quod universum mundum regeret, imperandi prohibendique sapientia. Ita principem legem illam et ultimam, mentem esse dicebant, omnia ratione aut cogentis, aut vetantis Dei.” Take this law, therefore, **actively**, and it is the will of God commanding; take it **passively**, and it is the conscience of man complying with it; take it **instrumentally**, and it is the inbred notions of our minds, with other documents from the works of God, proposed unto us. The supreme original of it, as of all authority, law, and obligation, is the will of God, constituting, appointing, and ordering the nature of things; the means of its revelation, is the effect of the will, wisdom, and power of God, creating man and all other things wherein he is concerned, in their order, place, and condition; and the observation of it, as far as individual persons are therein concerned, is committed to the care of the conscience of every man, which naturally is the mind’s acting itself towards God as the author of this law.

16. These things being premised, we shall consider what light is given unto this sacred duty from the law of our creation.¹ The first end of any law is to instruct, direct, and guide them in their duty unto whom it is given. A law which is not in its own nature instructive and directive, is no way meet to be prescribed unto rational creatures. What has an influence upon any creature of any other kind, if it be internal, is instinct, and not properly a law; if it be external, it is force and compulsion. The law of creation, therefore, comprised everything whereby God instructed man, in the creation of himself and of the universe, unto his works or obedience, and his rest or reward. And whatever tended unto that end belonged unto that law. It is, then, as has been proved, unduly confined unto the ingrafted notions of his mind concerning God and his duty towards him, though they are a principal part thereof. Whatever was designed to give improvement unto those notions and his natural light, to excite or direct them,— I mean in the works of nature, not superadded positive institutions,— does also belong thereunto. Wherefore the whole instruction that God intended to give unto man by the works of creation, with their order and end, is, as was said, included herein. What he might learn from them, or what God taught him by them, was no less his duty than what his own inbred light directed him unto, Romans 1:18-20. Thus the framing of the world in six days, in six days of work, was intended to be instructive unto man, as well as the consideration of the things materially that were made. God could have immediately produced all out of nothing, *ejn ajtopmw ejn rJipop ojfqalmou*,— in the shortest measure of time conceivable; but he not only made all things for himself, or his glory, but disposed also the order of their production unto the same end. And herein consisted part of that **covenant** instruction which he gave unto man in that condition wherein he was made, that through him he might have glory ascribed unto him on the account of his works themselves, as also of the order and manner of their creation; for it is vain to imagine that the world was made in six days, and those closed with a day of rest, without an especial respect unto the obedience of rational creatures, seeing absolutely with respect unto God himself neither of them was necessary. And what he intended to teach them thereby, it was their duty to inquire and know. Hereby, then, man in general was taught obedience and working before he entered into rest; for being created in the image of God, he was to conform himself unto God. As God wrought before he rested, so was he to work before his rest, his condition rendering that working in him obedience, as it was in God an effect of sovereignty. And by the rest of God, or his satisfaction and complacency in what he had made and done, he was instructed to seek rest with God, or to enter into that rest of God, by his compliance with the ends intended.

17. And whereas the **innate light and principles** of his own mind informed him that some time was to be set apart to the solemn worship of God, as he was a **rational creature made to give glory unto him**, so the instruction he received by **the works and rest of God, as made under a covenant**, taught him that one day in seven was required unto that purpose, as also to be a pledge of his resting with God. It may be, it will be said that man could not know that the world was made in six days, and that the rest of God ensued on the seventh, without some especial revelation. I answer,— (1.) That I know not. He that knew the nature of all the creatures, and could give them names suited thereunto upon his first sight and view of them, might know more of the order of their creation than we can well imagine; for we know no more, in our lapsed condition, what the light of nature directed man unto as walking before God in a covenant, than men merely natural do know of the guidance and conduct of the light and law of grace in them who are taken into the new covenant. (2.) However, what God instructed him in, even by revelation, as to the **due consideration and improvement of the things that belonged unto the law of his creation**, that is to be esteemed as a part thereof. Institutions of things by special revelation, that had no foundation in the law or light of nature, **were merely positive; such were the commands concerning the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil**. But such as were directive of natural light and of the order of the creation were moral, and belonged unto the general law of obedience; such was the especial command given unto man to till and keep the garden, Genesis 2:15, or to dress and improve the place of his habitation, for this in general the law of his creation required. Now this God did, both as to his works and his rest. Neither do I know any one as yet that questions whether Adam and the patriarchs that ensued before the giving of the law knew that the world was created in six days. Though some seem to speak doubtfully hereof, and some by direct consequent deny it, yet I suppose that hitherto it passes as granted. Nor have they who dispute that the Sabbath was neither instituted, known, nor observed, before the people of Israel were in the wilderness, once attempted to confirm their opinion with this supposition, that the patriarchs from the foundation of the world knew not that the world was made in six days, which yet alone would be effectual unto their purpose. Nor, on the other side, can it be once rationally imagined that if they had knowledge hereof, and therewithal of the rest which ensued thereon, they had no regard unto it in the worship of God.

¹ Darkness error lies and so forth are unnatural, the characteristics of fallen nature, but the **light of knowledge belongs to the image of God** which originally was introduced to human nature.
Bavinck, RD, Vol. 4 pg100

The Two-fold Image of God

code345

Jonathan Edwards pg 279 vol.1

On Religious Affections

My comments or insert in blue.

As there are **two kinds of attributes in God**, according to our way of conceiving of him, his **moral attributes**, which are summed up in his **holiness**, and his **natural attributes**—**strength, knowledge, &c.**—that constitute his **greatness**; so there is a twofold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency; (which image was lost by the fall;) and God's natural image, consisting in man's **reason and understanding**, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes. From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that **love to divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency, is the spring of all holy affections**. [Van Til states: "Of this spirituality, man, created as he is in the image of God, carries within him a faint replica." Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, pg 369]

It has been already shown, under the former head, that the first objective ground of all holy affections is the **supreme excellency of divine things** as they are in their own **nature**. I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that the kind of excellency which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their **holiness**. Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness; they love God, in the first place, for the beauty of his holiness, or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the saints, in the exercise of gracious affections, love God only for his holiness; all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their eyes; they delight in every divine perfection; the contemplation of the infinite greatness, power, knowledge, and terrible majesty of God, is pleasant to them. **But their love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love**. Here it is that true love to God begins; all other holy love to divine things flows from hence. Love to God for the beauty of his moral attributes, necessarily causes a delight in God for all his attributes; for his moral attributes cannot be without his natural attributes. Infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and infinite greatness; and all the attributes of God as it were imply one another.

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings primarily and most essentially consist in their moral excellency or holiness. Herein consists the loveliness of angels, without which, notwithstanding all their natural perfections, they would have no more loveliness than devils. It is moral excellency alone, that is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings: it is this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of, their natural perfections and qualifications. **Moral excellency, if I may so speak, is the excellency of natural excellencies**. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not.

Strength and knowledge do not render any being lovely without holiness, but more hateful; though they render them more lovely when joined with holiness. Thus the elect angels are the more glorious

for their strength and knowledge, because these natural perfections of theirs are sanctified by their moral perfection. But though the devils are very strong, and of great natural understanding, yet they are not the more lovely. They are more terrible, indeed, not more amiable; but on the contrary, the more hateful. The holiness of an intelligent creature, is the beauty of all his natural perfections. And so it is in God, according to our way of conceiving of the Divine Being: holiness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature. Hence we often read of the beauty of holiness, (Psal. Xxix. 2. Psal. Xcvi. 9. And cx. 3.) **This renders all his other attributes glorious and lovely. It is the glory of God's wisdom, that it is a holy wisdom, and not a wicked subtlety. This makes his majesty lovely, and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy majesty. It is the glory of God's immutability, that it is holy immutability, and not an inflexible obstinacy in wickedness.**

And therefore it must needs be, that a sight of God's loveliness must begin here. **A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute;** for no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving God) it derives its loveliness from this. **Therefore, it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, until this is seen: and it is impossible that any perfection of the divine nature should be loved with true love until this is loved.** If the true loveliness of all God's perfections, arises from the loveliness of his holiness; then the true love of all his perfections, arises from the love of his holiness. They that do not see the glory of God's holiness, cannot see anything of the true glory of his mercy and grace. They see nothing of the glory of those attributes, as any excellency of God's nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them, and love them, as they concern their interest. For these attributes are no part of the excellency of God's nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his holiness, more largely taken; or as they are a part of his moral perfection.

The Image of God – It's Purpose and End

code346

(Excerpt from John Owen *Commentary on Hebrews*)

Critical! Definition of sin.

pg. 336 excerpts on various points:

I'll underline the key terms in red; my comments in blue.

10. These being the proper ends and reasons of the original sabbatical rest, which contain the true notion of it, we may next inquire after the law whereby it was prescribed and commanded. To this purpose we must first consider the state wherein man was created, and then the **law of his creation**. And for the state and condition wherein man was created, it falls under a threefold consideration: for man may be considered either, — (1.) Absolutely as a **rational creature**; or, (2.) As made under a **covenant of rewards and punishments**; or, (3.) With respect unto the special **nature** of that covenant.

First, He was made a **rational creature**, and thereby necessarily in a **moral dependence** on God for being endowed with **intellectual faculties**, in an immortal soul, capable of eternal blessedness or misery, able to know God, and to regard him as the **first cause** and last end of all, as the author of his being and object of his blessedness, it was naturally and **necessarily** [things are necessary when due to the nature of a thing, certain things will infallibly follow; e.g., God is holy and a God of justice; therefore it is necessary that all sin be punished; that is either the sinner or a qualified substitute that will satisfy his justice.] incumbent on him, without any further considerations, to love, fear, and obey him, and to trust in him as a preserver and rewarder.

And this the **order of his nature, called “the image of God,”** **inclined and enabled** him unto. [That is the key! When one gets converted, the image of God is re-ensamped upon the soul, that image of his glory, enabling one to obey God (see diagram), where knowledge of God and holiness (love for God) is given. This is synonymous with grace, that which enables one to obey, hence the obedience of faith, faith being the grace by which all other graces are received.]

For it was not possible that such a creature should be produced, and lie under an obligation unto all those duties which the nature of God and his own, and the relation of the one to the other, made necessary. Under this consideration alone, it was required, by the law of man’s creation, that some time should be separated unto the solemn expression of his obedience, and due performance of the worship that God required of him; for in vain was he endued with intellectual faculties and appointed unto society, if he were not to honor God by them in all his relations, and openly express the homage which he owed him. And this could not be done but in a time appointed for that purpose; the neglect whereof must be a **deviation from the law of the creation** [sin]. And as this is generally acknowledged, so no man can fancy the contrary. Here, then, do we fix the necessity of the separation of some time to the ends of a sabbatical rest, even on the nature of God and man, with the relation of one to the other; for who can say no part of our time is due to God, or so to be disposed?

Secondly, Man in his creation, with respect unto the ends of God therein was constituted under a **covenant**. That is the **law of his obedience** was attended with **promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments**, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God; for every law with rewards and recompenses annexed has the nature of a covenant. And in this case, although the promise wherewith man was encouraged unto obedience, which was that of eternal life with God, did in strict justice exceed the worth of the obedience required, and so was a **superadded** effect of goodness and grace, yet was it suited unto the constitution of a covenant meet for man to serve God in unto his glory; and, on the other side, the punishment threatened unto disobedience, in death and an everlasting separation from God, was such as the **righteousness and holiness of God**, as his supreme governor, and Lord of him and the covenant, did require. Now, this covenant belonged unto the law of creation; for although God might have dealt with man in a way of absolute sovereignty, requiring obedience of him without a covenant of a reward infinitely exceeding it yet having done so in his creation, it belongs unto and is inseparable from the law thereof. And under this consideration, the time required in general for a rest unto God, under the first general notion of the nature and being of man, is determined unto one day in seven; for as we shall find that in the various dispensations of the covenant with man and the change of its nature, so long as God is pleased to establish any covenant with man, he has and does invariably require one day in seven to be set apart unto the assignation of

praise and glory to himself; so we shall see afterwards that there are indications of his mind to this purpose in the covenant itself.

Skip to #15
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15. By the **law of nature**, then, I intend, not a law which our nature gives unto all our actions, but a law given unto our nature, as a **rule and measure unto our moral actions**. It is “lex naturæ naturantis,” and not “naturæ” It respects the **efficient cause** of nature, and not the effects of it. And this respect alone can give it the **nature of a law**,— that is, **an obliging force and power**; for this must be always from the act of a superior, seeing “par in parem jus non habet,” — “equals have no right one over another.” This law, therefore, is that **rule** which God **has given unto human nature, in all the individual partakers of it, for all its moral actions**, in the state and condition wherein it was by him created and placed, with respect unto his own government of it and judgment concerning it; which rule is made known in them and to them by their **inward constitution** and **outward condition** wherein they were placed of God. And the very heathens acknowledged that the common law of mankind was God’s prescription unto them.

16. These things being premised, we shall consider what **light** is given unto this sacred duty from the **law of our creation**. The first end of any law is to **instruct, direct, and guide** them in their **duty** unto whom it is given. A law which is not in its own nature instructive and directive, is no way meet to be prescribed unto rational creatures. What has an influence upon any creature of any other kind, if it be **internal**, is **instinct**, and not properly a law; if it be **external**, it is **force and compulsion**. The law of creation, therefore, comprised everything whereby God instructed man, in the creation of himself and of the universe, unto his works or obedience, and his rest or reward. **And whatever tended unto that end belonged unto that law**. It is, then, as has been proved, unduly confined unto the ingrafted notions of his mind concerning God and his duty towards him, though they are a principal part thereof. Whatever was designed to give improvement unto those notions and his natural light, to excite or direct them,— I mean in the works of nature, not **superadded positive** institutions [**external, express commands of God**],— does also belong thereunto. Wherefore the whole instruction that God intended to give unto man by the works of creation, with their order and end, is, as was said, included herein. What he might learn from them, or what God taught him by them, was no less his duty than what his own inbred light directed him unto, Romans 1:18-20.

17. And whereas the **innate light** and **principles of his own mind** informed him that some time was to be set apart to the solemn worship of God, as he was a rational creature **made to give glory unto him** [**the principle end of man**], so the instruction he received by the **works and rest of God**, as made under a covenant, taught him that one day in seven was required unto that purpose, as also to be a pledge of his resting with God [**this is a means God used to instruct man; see Romans 1**].

20. Thus was man instructed in the whole notion of a weekly sacred rest, by all the **ways and means** which God **was pleased to use** in giving him an acquaintance with his **will**, and that **obedience unto his glory** which he expected from him: for this **knowledge** he had partly by the **law of his creation** [**inbred**

light], as innate unto him or con-created with the **principles of his nature**, being the necessary exsurgency of his rational constitution; and partly by the works and rest of God, thereon proposed unto his consideration; both firm'd by God's declaration of his sanctification of the seventh day. Hence did he know that it was his duty to express and celebrate the rest of God, or the complacency that he had in the works of his hands, in reference unto their great and proper end, or his glory, in the honor, praise, and obedience of them unto whose contemplation they were proposed for those ends.

24. And here, in the first place, it is generally agreed,— so that the opposition unto it is not considerable, nor any way deserving our notice,— that in and by the **light of nature, or the law of our creation**, some time ought to be separated unto the observance of the solemn worship of God; for be that worship what it will, merely natural, or anything **superadded by voluntary and arbitrary institutions** [where God expressly lays out what is required, e.g. a command], the law for its observance is natural, and requires that time be set apart for its celebration, seeing in time it is to be performed. When there was but one man and woman, this was their duty; and so it continued to be the duty of their whole race and posterity, in all the societies, associations, and assemblies whereof they were capable. But the first object of this law or command is the worship of God itself; time falls under it only consequentially and reductively. Wherefore the law of nature does also distinctly respect time itself; for we are bound thereby to serve God with all that is ours, and with “the first fruits of our substance” in every kind. Somewhat of whatever God has given unto us is to be set apart from our own use, and given up absolutely to him, as a homage due unto him, and a necessary acknowledgment of him. To deny this, is to contradict one of the **principal dictates of the law of nature**; for God has given us nothing ultimately for ourselves, seeing we and all that we have are wholly his. And to have anything whereof no part as such is to be spent in his service, is to have it with his displeasure. Let any one endeavor to assert and prove this position, ‘No part of our time is to be set apart to the worship of God and his service in a holy and peculiar manner,’ and he will quickly find himself setting up in a full contradiction to the law of nature, and the whole **light of the knowledge of God** in his mind and conscience [conscience tells you when you are in violation of God's law]. Those who have attempted any such thing have done it under this deceitful pretense, that all our time is to be spent unto God, and every day is to be a Sabbath. But whereas, notwithstanding this pretense, they spend most of their time directly and immediately to themselves and their own occasions, it is evident that they do but make use of it to rob God of that which is his due directly and immediately; for unto the holy separation of any thing unto God, it is required as well that it be taken from ourselves as that it be given unto him. This, therefore, the law of our creation requires as unto the separation of some part of our time unto God. And if this does not at first consideration discover itself in its directive power, it will quickly do so in its condemning power [via the convictions of conscience], upon a contradiction of it. Thus far, then, we have attained.

30. (3.) What all men are taught by the **works of creation** themselves, their order, harmony, and mutual respect to each other, with reference unto their duty towards God and among themselves, is of the **law of nature**, although there be not an absolute distinct notion of it inbred in the mind discoverable. It is enough that the mind of man is so disposed as to be ready and fit to receive the discovery and revelation of it. For the very **creation itself is a law unto us, and speaks out that duty that God requires of us towards himself**; for he has not only so ordered all the works of it that they should be meet to instruct us, or contain an instructive power towards rational creatures, made in that state

and condition wherein man was created, which was before described, which has in it the first notion of a law; but it was the will of God that we should learn our duty thereby, which gives it its complement as a **law obliging unto obedience**. And it is not only thus in general, with respect unto the whole work of creation in itself, but the ordering and disposal of the parts of it is alike **directive** and **instructive** to the nature of man, and has the force of a law morally and everlastingly obligatory. Thus, the pre-eminence of the man above the woman, which is moral, ensues upon the order of the creation, in that the man was first made, and “the woman for the man,” as the apostle argues, 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9, 1 Timothy 2:12, 13. And all nations ought to be obliged hereby, though many of them, **through their apostasy from natural light** knew not that either man or woman was created, but, it may be, supposed them to have grown out of the earth like mushrooms; and yet an **effect** of the **secret original impression** hereof influenced their minds and practices. So the **creation of one man and one woman** gave the **natural law of marriage**, whence polygamy and fornication became transgressions of the law of nature. It will be hard to prove that about these and the like things there is a clear and undoubted principle of directive light in the mind of man, separate from the consideration of the order of creation; but therein a law, and that moral, is given unto us, not to be referred unto any other head of laws but that of nature. And here, as was before pleaded, **the creation of the world in six days, with the rest of God on the seventh, and that declared**, gives unto all men an everlasting law of separating one day in seven unto a sacred rest; for he that was made in the **image of God was made to imitate him and conform himself unto him**, God in this order of things saying as it were unto him, ‘What I have done, in your station do ye likewise.’ Especially was this made effectual by his innate apprehension that his happiness consisted in entering into the rest of God, the pledge whereof it was his unquestionable duty to embrace.

31. (4.) In this state of things, a direction by a revelation, in the way of a precept, for the due and just exercise of the principles, rules, and documents before mentioned, is so far from impeaching the morality of any command or duty, as that it completes the law of it, with the addition of a formal obligatory power and efficacy. The light and law of creation, so far as it was innate, or concreated with the faculties of our souls, and completing our state of dependence on God, has only the general nature of a principle, inclining unto actions suitable unto it, and directing us therein. The documents also that were originally given unto that light from without, by the other works and order of the creation, had only in their own nature the force of an instruction. The will of God, and an act of sovereignty therein, formally constituted them a law. But now, man being made to live unto God, and under his conduct and guidance in all things, that he might come to the enjoyment of him, no prejudice arises unto, nor alteration is made in the dictates of, the law of creation, by the superadding any positive commands for the performance of the duties that it does require, and regulating of them, as to the especial manner and ends of their performance. And where such a positive law is interposed or superadded, it is the highest folly. To imagine that the whole obligation unto the duty depends on that command, as though the authority of the law of nature were superseded thereby, or that the whole command about it were now grown positive and arbitrary; for although the same law cannot be moral and positive in the same respect, yet the same duty may be required by a law moral and a law positive. It is thus with many observances of the gospel. We may, for example, instance in excommunication, according to the common received notion of it. There is a positive command in the gospel for the exercise of the sentence of it in the churches of Christ But this hinders not but that it is natural for all societies of men to exclude from their societies those that refractorily refuse to observe the laws and orders of the society, that it may be preserved unto its proper end. And according to the rule of this natural equity,

that it should be so, have all rational societies amongst men, that knew nothing of the gospel, proceeded, for their own good and preservation.

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Besides, the **law of nature**, as to an **obligatory indication of our duty**, is not, no, not in the extent insisted on, as comprising the objective documents that are in the works and order of the creation, to be considered alone by itself in this matter, but in conjunction with the **covenant** that it was the rule of; for whatever was required of man by virtue of that covenant was part of the moral law of God, or belonged unto the **law of his creation**. **From all which the rest pleaded for to be moral does arise**. And considering the nature of this duty, with the divine **positive direction** whereby its first practice was **regulated**, and stood in need so to be, when “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” it is marvelous that the **remaining light of nature** about it should put forth itself by so many intimations as it does, and in so many instances, **to express the first impression that it had from God** in this matter; for I think we have manifested that they are many, and those pleadable against any probability of contradiction. In a word, we may in all ages find the generality of mankind feeling, and as it were groping in the dark, after a stated sacred rest to be observed unto God. And however the most of men destitute of divine revelation missed the season [**God does not savingly reveal himself to everyone**], the ends, and the object of this rest, yet they were plainly influenced unto all their stated sacred or religious solemnities, both feasts and abstinences, by the **remainders of an innate persuasion** that such a rest was to be observed. Besides, we know that the present **indications of nature, as corrupt, are no just rule and measure of its original abilities, with respect unto living to God**. And they do but woefully bewray their ignorance and impudence, who begin to plead that our minds or understandings were no way impaired or worsted by the fall, but that the principles or abilities in them, in reference unto God and ourselves, are the same as originally, and that unimpaired [**this, the Arminians promote, that man can, by his own self-directed will (the will determining itself!), come to God savingly, or make that wise choice unto salvation which assumes that man is not wholly corrupted by original sin – see Romans 8:7-7 & 1Cor2:14**]. **Either such men design to overthrow the gospel and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, or they know not what they say, nor whereof they do affirm**. But hereof we shall treat elsewhere, by God’s assistance. At present we know that the **light of nature is so defective, or so impotent in giving indications of itself**, that many nations left destitute of divine revelation, or willfully rejecting it, have lived and approved themselves in open transgression of the law of it, as has been showed. The apostle gives sundry instances of that kind amongst them who most **boasted themselves to attend to the dictates of right reason**, Romans 1. All idolaters, polygamists, fornicators, and those who constantly lived on spoil and rapine, approving themselves, or not condemning themselves in what they did, are testimonies hereof. **That alone, then, is not to be pretended to be of the law of nature which all men acknowledge to be a part of it**; nor is everything to be rejected from having a place therein which some have lived in a secure transgression of, and others say that it gives no indications of itself; but that is to be understood to belong thereunto which, by the diligent consideration of all means and advantages of knowledge, may be found to be congruous to all the other known and allowed principles and maxims of it, and to have its foundation in it, being what originally God by any means instructed our nature in,

as that which belonged unto our living unto him. And, it may be, a man may sooner learn what is natural duty to God, in and from corrupted nature, by the opposition that it will make unto its practice, as it is corrupted, than by the light and guidance it will give unto it as nature. It is also, as we have observed, more discernible in its judging and condemning what is done contrary unto it, than in directing unto what it did originally require.

The Image of God

By Geerhardus Vos

Reformed Dogmatics

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18. *Why is this doctrine of the image of God of such great importance for theology?*

It is self-evident that by “image of God” is expressed what is characteristic of man and his relation to God. That he is God’s image distinguishes him from animals and all other creatures. In the idea that one forms of the image is reflected one’s idea of the religious state of man and of the essence of religion itself.

a) According to the Roman Catholic conception, as we saw, *imago*, “image,” has another meaning than *similitudo*, “likeness.” Man was created with the “image.” So by nature he is God’s image-bearer. Now we have already seen that with “image” is meant the metaphysical correspondence of the human spirit with God. According to Rome, the natural relationship to God exists in the fact that in this way he is similar to Him. There is no thought of a close relationship between man and God, of a similarity of communal endeavor by the human will being subject to God. For all this belongs to the *similitudo* [likeness], and this, otherwise called *justitia originalis*, “original righteousness,” is called **an added gift, donum superadditum**. [see Van Til @ code490] Only by something that raises him above his created nature does man become a religious being, able to love, to enjoy his God, and to live in Him. Out of this follows entirely the externalist character of Roman Catholic religion. It becomes something added to man, that he has but is not identified with him, does not enter into his essence. That man is like God in this natural sense is a purely deistic relationship. There is room for something else if with the *imago* the *similitudo* would also be added as naturally belonging to the conception of man.

b) **The Roman Catholic denial of the utter inability of man in his fallen state and its weakened conception of original sin is likewise connected to this teaching concerning the image of God.** According to Rome, man can only lose what was not essential to him, namely the **supernaturally added gifts**, the *dona superaddita*. Because of his fall, these are lost. The essence of man, the *imago*, consisting in formal existence as spirit, in the *liberum arbitrium* [freedom of the will], remained. Because, however, there was no inner connection between the *similitudo* and the *imago*, the removal of the former cannot essentially change the latter. The *liberum arbitrium* **might be weakened a little; in reality it is unharmed**. In other words, by loosening the moral powers from the will, from the capacity

of the will, and by denying that the former are natural in man, **Rome has in principle appropriated the Pelagian conception of the will as *liberum arbitrium*. That capacity of free will has remained, and with that the possibility that man, even after the fall, can do something good.**

c) In both respects mentioned, the Protestant, and more specifically the Reformed, doctrine of the image of God is different than the Roman Catholic doctrine. That man bears God's image means much more than that he is spirit and possesses understanding, will, etc. It means above all that he is disposed for communion with God, that all the capacities of his soul can act in a way that corresponds to their destiny only if they rest in God. This is the nature of man. That is to say, there is no sphere of life that lies outside his relationship to God and in which religion would not be the ruling principle. According to the Roman Catholic conception, there is a natural man who functions in the world, and that natural man adopts a religion that takes place beyond his nature. According to our conception, our entire nature should not be free from God at any point; the nature of man must be worship from beginning to end. According to the deeper Protestant conception, the image does not exist only in correspondence with God but in being disposed toward God. God's nature is, as it were, the stamp; our nature is the impression made by this stamp. Both fit together.

d) If then the image of God and original righteousness are to be identified, if life in communion with God belongs to nature of man and can nowhere be excluded, and if now by sin this original righteousness is lost, then the consequences will be twofold:

1. By falling away from something to which he was wholly disposed, which constitutes his proper and highest destiny, man will be changed in the deepest depths of his being; a radical reversal will take place within him. What clings to us outwardly can be removed without making us different inwardly. On the other hand, what coheres with every part of our spiritual organism can, if it is withdrawn, only bring about a powerful revolution by which the organism itself becomes disorganized. The loss of original righteousness follows spiritual death, because death in its essence is disorganization, a process of dissolution. From this one can assess most clearly the Protestant and Roman Catholic conceptions concerning the capability of man to do spiritual good in his fallen state. *According to us, man is dead and therefore does no good toward God. According to Roman Catholics, he is weakened or ill but nonetheless still always capable with his free will to move himself to do good.*

2. **The fact that original righteousness belongs to the nature of man has yet another consequence.** Because the being of man was placed from the beginning in a necessary relation with God, because he is made in the image of God in the stricter sense and this image is his nature, sin therefore cannot be just a mere privation. This would mean that something that belongs to his nature can be removed and the rest left undamaged. This is impossible. Man has to be in relation with God in everything he is and does. So, if original righteousness falls away, unrighteousness replaces it as the natural state. That is, sin is a positive principle of enmity against God, as Paul taught us about the mind of the flesh. If the image of God, original righteousness, had not been the nature of man, perhaps he might have been able to remain in a neutral standpoint. Now, the latter is cut off. **He is either positively good or positively evil; there is no middle state.** One can therefore say that the deeper conception of sin, especially of original sin, that rules in Protestant theology flows directly from the view one has of the original state before the fall.

e) If the question is posed how man can lose what belongs to his nature and whether he has lost his human nature by the fall, then that must be answered with a twofold observation:

1. The image in the broader sense has not been lost, and given also that his nature existed in that sense, it has remained at least to that extent.

2. The moral quality of the capacities of man is certainly fallen, but that it belongs to his nature is also seen in the fact that man could not remain neutral. He must either stand for God in original righteousness or against Him in natural unrighteousness. This characteristic of his nature does not take away that man in all his being and acting takes a position toward God. When he is sinful and in conflict with God, he is still morally *toto genere* [as to entire genus] something other than an animal that exists in *puris naturalibus* [in a purely natural state].

f) One will now, after all that has been said, understand why a diverging opinion concerning the image of God must be formed by the Socinians and Arminians. They could not choose the **Roman Catholic supernaturalism**. Neither was inborn virtue (= original righteousness) a concept that fit with their line of thinking. As a consequence of this, there was no other way out than to limit the image of God in a **religiously neutral sense** to dominion over the lower creatures. For, according to the Socinians and Arminians, **the state of rectitude is a state of neutrality**, of innocence, which had not yet been determined for virtue or for sin. [Owen comments on this; that Arminians believe the will is in a state of equilibrium; that it is not fair or right for God to influence the will to disturb it, since that, they say, would be doing violence to their liberty. In fact they deny that God affects or determines the will one way or the other, "Those things God would have us freely do ourselves; he can no more effectually work or will than by the way of wishing." - Vorstius. (Owen, *Display of Arminianism*, Chapter 4)]
And hence the Arminian idol of absolute independent free will is maintained.

g) It requires no detailed demonstration that what has been said is of importance not only for determining the relationship of man to God in the abstract, but also is of the utmost moment for soteriology—what concerns God's work of grace that must renovate the image in man.

Notes on the image of God

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Principle of Life and Faith vs. the Principle in a Natural Man. O.T. vs. N.T. worship

John Owen *Commentary on Hebrews*, 7:11 pg 417 vol. 21

Secondly, This τελείωσις, or “perfection,” respects the worship of the gospel as well as the persons of the worshippers, and the grace whereof they are made partakers. **God had designed the church unto a more perfect state in point of worship than it was capable of under the Levitical priesthood.** Nor, indeed, could any man reasonably think, or wisely judge, that he intended the institutions of the law as the complete, ultimate worship and service that he would require or appoint in this world, seeing our natures, as renewed by grace, are capable of that which is more spiritual and sublime. For, —

1. They were in their **nature “carnal,”** as our apostle declares, verse 16, and Hebrews 9:10. The subject of them all, the means of their celebration, were **carnal things**, — **beneath those pure spiritual acts of the mind and soul, which are of a more noble nature.** They consisted in meats and drinks, the blood of bulls and goats, the observation of moons and festivals, in a temple made of wood and stone, gold and silver, — things carnal, perishing, and transitory. **Certainly God, who is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, designed at one time or other a worship more suited unto his own nature,** though the imposition of these things on the church for a season was necessary. And as they were carnal, so they might be exactly performed by men of carnal minds, and were so for the most part; in which respect God himself speaks often with a great undervaluation of them. See Psalm 1:8-13; Isaiah 1:11-14. Had not he designed the **renovation of our natures into his own image**, a **new creation** of them by Jesus Christ, this carnal worship might have sufficed, and would have been the best we are capable of. But to suppose that he should endow men, as he doth by Christ, with a new, spiritual, supernatural principle, enabling them unto a more sublime and spiritual worship, it cannot be imagined that he would always bind them up unto those carnal ordinances in their religious service. And the reason is, because they were not a meet and sufficient means for the exercise of that **new principle of faith and love** which he bestows on believers by Jesus Christ. Yea, to burden them with carnal observances, is a most effectual way to take them off from its exercise in his service. And so it is at this day; wherever there is a **multiplication of outward services and observances**, the **minds** of men are so taken up with the bodily exercise about them, as that they cannot attend unto the pure internal actings of faith and love

Summary: The image of God = the law of our creation, the law of God, imprinted upon our souls at creation, erased, see pg 53 (the moral law or spiritual part of the image as opposed to the natural part, or reason, understanding and dominion over creation), for all intents and purposes, upon the fall of Adam. It is from the exposition of this subject of the 4th commandment regarding the Sabbath that we can glean the meaning of what the image of God is and its purpose. Additional information on the Sabbath in the old covenant, etc.

John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews on the image of God and the law of our creation aka the light of nature or the moral law in regard to the morality of the sabbath and its observance.

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There is nothing, therefore, in the fourth commandment, directing unto six days of labor, and requiring a seventh unto rest, that is inconsistent or not compliant with the **law of our creation**, and the state of living unto God constituted thereby [*in other words, this law or the moral law was imprinted upon our souls to enable us to know God, love God and obey God as God*], although the manner of that work and labor be varied from what originally it was. Likewise in that state of mankind there was to be a superiority of some over others. This the natural relation of parents and children makes manifest. And these latter were in the worship of God to be under the government and direction of the others. And unto this natural equity is all subjection to magistrates in subjects, and to masters in servants, reduced in the fifth commandment. So, then, the outward variations which are in these things supposed in the fourth commandment do not in the least impeach its morality, or hinder but that, for the substance of it, it may be judged a law natural and moral, and a true representation of a part of the law of our creation.

3. Seeing, therefore, that the **moral law**, as a **covenant between God and man**, required this sacred rest, as we have proved, we must inquire what place, as such, it had in the Mosaical economy, whereon the true reason and notion of the Sabbath as peculiarly Judaical doth depend; for the Sabbath being originally annexed to the covenant between God and man, the renovation of the covenant doth necessarily require an especial renovation of the Sabbath, and the change of the covenant as to the nature of it must in like manner introduce a change of the Sabbath. And we shall find that the **covenant of the law, or of works**, had a twofold renovation in the church of Israel, in the framing and constitution of it. These rendered it their especial covenant, although it was not absolutely a new covenant, nor is it so called, but is everywhere called the old, and hence the Sabbath became peculiarly theirs.

First, It was renewed unto them materially. It was originally written in the heart of man, or co-created with the faculties of his soul; where its light and principles, being excited, guided, and variously affected with the consideration of the works of God (proposed unto him with an instructive ability for that end, whose directions concurred to the making up of the entire law of creation), were evidently directive unto all the duties which God in the first covenant required at our hands. By the entrance of sin, with the corruption and debasing of the faculties of our souls which ensued thereon, — whereby the alteration in our nature, the principal seat and subject of this law, was so great as that we **lost the image of God**, or that **light and knowledge unto our duty with respect unto him** which was necessary for us in that covenant, — **the law itself became insufficient**, a lame and imperfect guide unto the ends of the covenant. Besides, the **aspectable creation**, — the outward medium of instructing man in the knowledge of the goodness, power, and wisdom of God, — being for our sin brought under the curse, and the creature into bondage, **the contemplation of it would not so clearly, distinctly, and perfectly represent him unto us as formerly.** Let men fancy what they please, and please themselves whilst they will with their fancies, all things both within and without, in the whole creation, were brought into such disorder and confusion by the **entrance of sin, as that the law of nature was utterly**

insufficient to enable us unto, or to guide us in, our living unto God according to the tenor of the first covenant.

There were and are, indeed, **general notions of good and evil indelibly planted on the faculties of our souls**, with a power of judging concerning our actions and moral practices, whether they are conformable unto those notions with respect unto the superior judgment of God. But besides the impairing of the principles of these notions, before mentioned, **they were of old variously obscured, perverted, and stifled, by customs, prejudices, and the power of sin in the world, so as that they were of little use as unto a due performance of covenant duties**, indeed of none at all in reference unto any acceptation with God.

Wherefore, God erecting his church, and **renewing the knowledge** of himself and man's duty towards him, in the posterity of Abraham, **he gave unto them afresh**, in the first place, **the precepts of the law and covenant of nature**, for the guide and rule of their obedience. And that this might now be permanent, he reduced the substance of the whole law unto "**ten words**," or commands, writing them in tables of stone, which he appointed to be sacredly kept amongst them. **The law thus declared and written by him was the same, I say, materially, and for the substance of it, with the law of our creation, or the original rule of our covenant obedience unto God**. Yet in it, as thus transcribed, there was an innovation both in its form and principle of obligation. For as to its form or directive power, it was **now made external and objective unto the mind of man**, which before was **principally internal and subjective**. And the immediate obligation unto its observation among that people was now from the promulgation of it on Mount Sinai, and the delivery of it unto them thereon. Hence it was **prefaced with motives peculiar to their state and condition**, and its observation continually pressed on them afterwards with arguments taken from their peculiar relation unto God, with his love and benefits unto them. This gave it a new respect, because there was nothing originally in it nor belonging unto it but what was equally common unto all mankind. Now, this alteration in the law and covenant of creation, **as applied unto the church of the Israelites**, did also affect the law of the Sabbath, which was a part of it. It was now no more to them a mere moral command only, equally regarding all mankind; but had a temporary respect given unto it, which was afterwards to be **abolished and taken away**. So was it with the whole law, and so was it with the Sabbath in particular. To take up, therefore, the observation of it, as appointed in the decalogue, not as a material transcript of the law of nature merely, but as under its renovation to the church of Israel, is a groundless and unwarrantable going over into a part of abolished Judaism; for, —

Secondly, The law was **renewed** as an ingredient into that **economy** under which God was pleased to bring his church at that time, **before the exhibition of the promise**, or the **accomplishment** of it. And sundry things are to be observed herein: —

(1.) That God did not absolutely bring that people under the covenant of works in all the rigor of it, according to its whole law and tenor, to stand or fall absolutely by its promises or threatenings; for although the law contained the whole rule of the covenant, and on the considerations to be afterwards mentioned it is often called the "covenant of God" with that people, yet were they not absolutely tied up unto it and concluded by it, as to the eternal issue of living unto God. This arose from the **interposition of the promise**; for the **promise of grace in Christ** being given upon the first entrance of sin, for the **relief and salvation of the elect**, and being **solemnly renewed unto Abraham** and his seed

four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law unto his posterity, there was a **blessed relief** provided therein against the curse and threatenings annexed to the first covenant for all them that betook themselves unto it and made use of it. Notwithstanding, I say, this renovation of the first covenant materially unto them, they were so far freed from its covenant terms as that they had a relief provided against what they could not answer in it, with the consequences thereof.

(2.) From the nature and tenor of the covenant of works, so renewed amongst that people, there was begotten in their minds such a respect unto the rigor of its commands, the manner of their observance, or of obedience unto them, with the dread of its curse, awfully denounced amongst them, as brought a **servile and bondage frame of spirit** upon them in all wherein they had to do with God, by virtue of the law and rule of that covenant. **This frame of spirit, as that which stands in direct opposition unto the freedom and liberty purchased for us by Jesus Christ, to serve God in righteousness and holiness without fear all our days**, is much insisted on by the apostle Paul, especially in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And in their observation of the Sabbath in particular they were under this bondage, filling them with many scrupulous anxieties, which arose, not from the law of the Sabbath itself, as originally given unto man in the state of innocency, but from the accommodation of the law thereof unto them after the entrance of sin. And hereby their Sabbath rest became unto them a great part of their wearying, burdensome yoke, which is taken off in Christ.

[I added the rest of the excerpt following because it fills you in with more information on the sabbath since we are on the subject rather than to leave you hanging, even though my main purpose was to provide more light on the image of God, the law of creation, the light of nature, a covenant, etc.]

(3.) This law was yet proposed to that church and people in the manner and form of a covenant, and not only materially as a law or rule. This it had from the promises and threatenings which it was attended withal. There was adjoined unto it, "Do this, and live;" and, "The man that doeth these things shall live in them;" as also, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them." Not that it was hereby absolutely constituted a covenant, which eventually and finally they were to live or die by (for, as we showed before, there was a relief provided against that condition in the promise), but God gave the old covenant an especial revival, though with respect unto other ends [show God's displeasure for sin, to curb their sin (put limits on it or bounds to it, because of their stubbornness, and to lead them to Christ)] than were originally intended in it. Hence the covenant form given unto it tendered the obedience of that people in a great measure **servile**, for it gendered unto bondage.

(4.) The law, being attended with various explanations and many ordinances of judgment, deduced from the principles of moral right and equity contained in it, was made the *rule of the polity* and government of that people, as a holy nation under the rule of God himself, who was their king; for their polity, for the kind of it, was a theocracy, over which God in an especial manner presided, as their governor and king. And hence he affirms, that when they would choose another king over them, after the manner of the nations, they rejected him from reigning over them, though they resolved to adhere to his laws and the manner of government prescribed to them. And this was peculiar to that people. Hence the Sabbath amongst them came to have an absolute necessity accompanying it of an outward, carnal observance, the neglect whereof, or acting anything against the law of it, was to be punished with death.

(5.) Unto this renovation of the covenant, in the manner and for the ends expressed, there was added a *typical church-state*, with a great number of religious laws and ordinances, in themselves

carnal and weak, but **mystically significant** of spiritual and heavenly things, and instructive how to use the promise, that was before given, for their relief from the rigor and curse of the law or covenant now proposed unto them. And in all these things did the **covenant of God**, made with that people in the wilderness, consist. The foundation, matter, manner of administration, promises, and threatenings of it, were the same with the covenant of works; but they were all accommodated to their ecclesiastical and political estate, with especial respect unto their approaching condition in the land of Canaan: only there was, in the promise, new ends and a new use given unto it, with a relief against its rigor and curse.

4. On the account of the accessions that were thus made to the law, and especially unto the observation of the Sabbath, it is often mentioned in the Scripture as that which God had in a peculiar manner given unto the Israelites, in whose especial worship it had so great a place, many of their principal ordinances having a great respect unto it, it being also the only means of keeping up the solemnity of national worship in their synagogues among the people, Acts 15:21. Thus God says concerning them, that he gave them his Sabbaths in the wilderness, to be a sign between him and them, Ezekiel 20:10-12; and it is said of the same time, Nehemiah 9:14, that he “made known unto them his holy Sabbath,” — that is, in the manner and for the ends expressed. Nor is there any need why we should say that “He gave them” intends no more but that he restored the knowledge of the Sabbath amongst them, the memory whereof they had almost lost, although that interpretation of the expression might be justified; for he says nowhere that he then gave his Sabbaths, but that he then peculiarly gave them unto that people, and that for the ends mentioned. **For the Sabbath was originally a moral pledge and expression of God’s covenant rest, and of our rest in God;** and now was it appointed of God to be a sign of the especial administration of the covenant which was then enacted. Hence it is said that he gave it them as “a perpetual covenant,” Exodus 31:16, “that they **might know him** to be the LORD that sanctified them,” verse 13, — that is, their God according to the tenor of that covenant, which was to continue throughout their generations; that is, until the new covenant should be brought in and established by Christ. Thus was it peculiarly given unto them; and so far as it was so, as it was a sign of their covenant, as it was then first given, so it is now abolished: for, —

5. The renovation and change of the covenant must and did introduce a change in the rest annexed unto it; for **a Sabbath, or a holy rest, belongs unto every covenant between God and man.** But as for the **kind** and **nature** of it, as to its ends, use, and manner of observation, it follows the especial kind or nature of that covenant wherein we at any season walk before God. Now, the original covenant of works being, in this representation of it on **Sinai**, not absolutely changed or abolished, but **afresh presented** unto the people, only with a relief provided for the covenanters against its curse and severity, with a direction how to use it to another end than was first given unto it, it follows that the day of the sabbatical rest could not be changed. And therefore was the observation of the seventh day precisely continued, because it was a moral pledge of the rest of God in the first covenant; for this **the instructive part of the law of our creation, from God’s making the world in six days, and resting on the seventh, did require.** The observation of this day, therefore, was still continued among the Israelites, because the first covenant was again presented unto them. But when that covenant was absolutely, and in all respects as a covenant, taken away and disannulled, and that not only as to its formal efficacy, but also as to the manner of the administration of God’s covenant with men, as it is under the gospel, there was a necessity that the day of rest should also be changed, as I have more fully showed elsewhere. I say, then, that the **precise observation of the seventh day enjoined unto the Israelites had**

respect unto the covenant of works, wherein the foundation of it was laid, as hath been demonstrated. And the whole controversy about what day is to be observed now as a day of holy rest unto the Lord, is resolved fully into this inquiry, namely, what covenant we do walk before God in.

6. And that we may understand the whole nature of the Judaical Sabbath, it must moreover be considered, that the law in general, and all the precepts of it, were the instrument of the polity of the people under the government of God, as we before observed; for all the judgments relating unto civil things were but an application of the moral law to their state and condition. Hence was the sanction of the transgression of it to be punished with death. So was it in particular with respect unto the Sabbath, Numbers 15:32-36, partly that it might represent unto them the original sanction of the whole law as a covenant of works, and partly to keep that stubborn people by this severity within due bounds of government. Nor was anything punished by death judicially in the law but the transgression of some moral command, [Hebrew], “the hand of heaven,” is threatened against their presumptuous transgression of the ceremonial law, where no sacrifice was allowed: “I the LORD will set my face against that man, and cut him off.” This also made the Sabbath a yoke and a burden, that wherein their consciences could never find perfect rest. And in this sense also it is abolished and taken away. Again, it was made a part of their law for religious worship in their typical church-state; in which and whereby the whole dispensation of the covenant which they were under was directed unto other ends. And so it had the nature of a shadow, representing the good things to come, whereby the people were to be relieved from the rigor and curse of the whole law as a covenant. And on these reasons new commands were given for the observation of the Sabbath, and new motives, ends, and uses were added thereunto, every way to accommodate it to the dispensation of the covenant then in force, which was afterwards to be removed and taken away, and therewithal the Sabbath itself, so far as it had relation thereunto; for the continuation of the seventh day precisely belonged unto the new representation that was made of the covenant of works. The representation of that covenant, with the sanction given unto it amongst the judgments of righteousness in the government of the people in the land of Canaan, which was the Lord’s, and not theirs, made it a yoke and burden; and the use it was put unto amongst ceremonial observances made it a shadow: in all which respects it is abolished by Christ. To say that the Sabbath as given unto the Jews is not abolished, is to introduce the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, which stand on the same bottom with it [hence, I think this is the error of the Seventh Day Adventists, insisting on Saturday as the sabbath]. And particularly, the observation of the seventh day precisely lieth as it were in the heart of the economy. And these things will the more clearly appear if we consider the dealing of God with that people about the Sabbath from first to last.

More on the image of God: All people have this law called the “natural law”, the law of nature, or law of creation, that was infused in their soul with their being created, that teaches them that there is a God and that they are accountable to him, and that they owe obedience to Him, (Rom.1), hence, it was written on their hearts and is so prior to conversion and was retained after the fall. Along with this natural image infused, was also the spiritual image or the image of holiness, the principle part of God’s image, in which chiefly consists his beauty...”the beauty of holiness”, that excellent disposition of the heart. It was this that was lost at the fall! This is why Adam’s son Seth was said to have been begotten in Adam’s likeness, i.e., in a state of nature, missing the principle part of God’s image. Therefore, at conversion this spiritual image of holiness is re-ensamped upon the soul, i.e., that it is written on their hearts (Jer. 31:33); and this is done in its first step at conversion, then continued by degrees (2Cor3:18), from glory to glory, day by day, (Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. 2Cor4:16) which is called sanctification, the law (the moral law, love to God, holiness, etc.) being written on the heart, and hence, being conformed to his image, to his whole image, spiritual and natural. And as such, we are partakers of his nature. G Clark

The Image of God – Part 1

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The Law Written on Our Hearts

Now to a most important summary of the image of God, its purpose, in a discussion of the Sabbath under the old covenant and the new covenant etc.

(with comments from **Jonathan Edwards** and **John Flavel**)

pg 403-410 vol 18, John Owen *Commentary on Hebrews*

EXERCITATION V OF THE LORD’S DAY.

1. HOW the creation of all things was finished, and how the rest of God and man ensued thereon, hath been declared. It hath also in part, and sufficiently as unto our present purpose, been evidenced how the great ends of the creation of all, in the glory of God, and the blessedness of man in him, with the **pledge** thereof in a sabbatical rest, were for a season as it were defeated and disappointed, by the entrance of sin, which brake the covenant that was founded in the **law of creation**, and rendered it useless unto those ends; for the law became weak through sin and the flesh, or the corruption of our nature that ensued thereon, Romans 8:3. Hence it could no more bring man to rest in God. But yet a continuation of the obligatory force of that law and covenant, with the direction of it unto other ends and purposes than at first given unto them, was under the old testament designed of God, and hath been declared also. Hence was the continuation of the original sabbatical rest in the church of Israel, with the especial application of its command unto that people, insisted on in the preceding discourse. In this state of things God had of old determined the renovation of all by a new creation, a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new sabbatical rest, unto his own glory, by Jesus Christ; and these things are now to be discussed.

2. The renovation of all things by Jesus Christ is prophesied of and foretold as a **new creation of all**, even of the heavens and the earth, and all things contained in them, Isaiah 65:17, 18, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13. Hence the state of things to be introduced thereby was under the old testament called "**The world to come**," Hebrews 2:5. So it is still called by the Jewish masters. So Kimchi, among other expositions of the title of Psalm 92, "A psalm or song for the Sabbath day," adds this, as that which the most ancient rabbins fixed on [Hebrew phrase] — "They interpreted it of the world to come, which shall be wholly sabbath or rest; and these are the days of the Messiah." A spiritual rest it is they intend, and not a cessation of a Sabbath day in particular, seeing in the prophecy of the new temple, or church-state, in those days there is especial direction given for the service of the Sabbath day, Ezekiel 46:4.

And this renovation of all things is said, accordingly, to be accomplished in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The old law, old covenant, old worship, old Sabbath, all that was peculiar unto the covenant of works as such, in the first institution of it and its renewed declaration on mount Sinai, are all antiquated and gone. What now remains of them, as to any usefulness in our living to God, does not abide on the old foundation, but on a new disposition of them, by the renovation of all things in Christ; for "in the dispensation of the fullness of times," God gathered unto a head "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him," Ephesians 1:10. The whole old creation, as far as it had anything in itself or its order that belonged unto or contributed anything towards our living unto God and his glory, is disposed anew in Christ Jesus unto that end.

But this renovation of all, which is the **foundation of all our acceptable obedience unto God** and of his present worship, consists principally in the **regeneration of the elect**, making them **new creatures**, and the erection of a new church-state thereby, to the glory of God. Now, this new creation of all must answer unto all the ends of the old, in reference unto the glory of God and the good of them who are partakers of it; otherwise it would not be so rightly called, nor answer the declared end of it, which was to gather all things to a head in Christ Jesus; for what was lost by sin, as to the glory of God in the old creation, in this was to be repaired and recovered.

3. We may, then, as the foundation of our present discourse, consider how these things answer unto one another : — First, The old creation comprised in it the **law of the obedience of all creatures** unto God. This was therein and thereby **implanted on their natures**, with **inclinations natural or moral** unto the observation of it. And thus must it be also in the new creation, as unto the subject of it, which is the church. The law of the old creation unto man [**aka, the law of nature, the moral law of our obedience**] consisted principally in the **image of God** in him and **concreated** with him; for hereby did he **both know his duty and was enabled to perform it, and was acquainted with his relation unto God and dependence upon him**, which rendered it necessary and indispensable. But this law in the state of creation fell under a double consideration, or had a double use, — first as a rule, and then as a principle. As a rule, the **light that was in the mind of man**, which was a **principal part of the image of God in him, acquainted him with his whole duty, and directed him in the right performance of it. As a principle**, it respected the **ability** that the whole man was endowed withal to live to God according to his duty. **This law, as to its first use, being much impaired, weakened, and in a great measure made useless by sin, God was pleased to restore it in the vocal revelation of his will, especially in the decalogue, which with his own finger he wrote in tables of stone. In answer hereunto a new law of obedience is introduced by the new creation in Christ Jesus. And this principally consisteth in the renovation of the image of God in the new creatures, which was lost by sin; for they are "renewed in**

the spirit of their mind,” and do “put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,” Ephesians 4:23, 24. [note the *vocal revelation* of his will given at Sinai; at conversion, this will is implanted in the heart, an internal operations vs vocal, making the heart *willing in the day of his power!* Ps110] And this fully answers the first law, as it was a principle of light and power unto obedience. And in a great measure it supplies the loss of it as it was a rule also; for there is a great renovation thereof, in God’s writing his law in our hearts, not here to be insisted on. But in this new creation God designed to gather up all that was past in the old, and in the law thereof, and in the continuation of it by writing under the old testament, unto one head in Christ. Wherefore he brings over into this state the use of the first law, as renewed and represented in tables of stone, for a directive rule of obedience unto the new creature, whereby the first original law is wholly supplied. Hereunto he makes an addition of what positive laws he thinks meet, as he did also under the old law of creation, for the trial of our obedience and our furtherance in it. So the **moral law of our obedience** is in each condition, the old and the new, materially the same; nor is it possible that it should be otherwise. But yet this old law, as brought over into this new estate, is new also; for “all things are become new.” And it is now the rule of our obedience, not merely and absolutely unto God as the creator, the first cause and last end of all, but as unto God in Christ bringing us into a new relation unto himself. **In the renovation, then, of the image of God in our souls, and the transferring over of the moral law as a rule, accompanied with new distinct principles, motives, and ends, does the law of the new creation consist, and fully answer the law of the first**, as it was a principle and a rule, each of them having their peculiar positive laws annexed unto them.

4. Secondly, The law of creation had a covenant included in it, or inseparably annexed unto it. This also we have before declared, and what belonged thereunto or ensued necessarily thereon. Thus, therefore, must it be also in the new creation and the law thereof. Yea, because the covenant is that which as it were gathers all things together, both in the works and law of God, and in our obedience, disposing them into that order which tends to the glory of God and the blessedness of the creatures in him, this is that which in both creations is principally to be considered; for without this, no end of God in his works or law could be attained, nor man be made blessed in a way of righteousness and goodness unto his glory. And the **law of creation** no otherwise failed, or became useless as to its first end by sin, but that the covenant of it was thereby broken, and rendered useless as to the **bringing of man unto the enjoyment of God**. This, therefore, was principally regarded in the new creation, — namely, the making, confirming, and ratifying, of a new covenant. And the doing hereof was the great promise under the old testament, Jeremiah 31:31-34, whereby the believers who then lived were made partakers of the benefits of it. And the confirming of this covenant in and by Christ is expressed as a part of the new creation, Hebrews 8:8-13, and it is indeed comprehensive of the whole work of it.

5. Thirdly, The immediate end of the old covenant was to bring man by due obedience unto the rest of God. This God declared in and unto his **inbred, native light**, by his works and his rest that ensued thereon [instruction by God’s works which is external as opposed to the internal influence of the law of our creation; both are included in the “law of our nature” .]; and also by the day of rest which he instituted as a **pledge** thereof, and as a means of attaining it, **by that obedience which was required in the covenant**. This we have before declared, and this was the true original and end of the first sabbatical rest. **All these things, therefore, must have place also in the new covenant, belonging unto the new creation**. The immediate end of it is our entering into the rest of God, as the apostle proves at large, Hebrews 4. But herein we are not absolutely to enter into God’s rest as a creator and rewarder,

but into the rest of God in Christ, the nature whereof will be fully explained in our exposition of that chapter; **for obedience is now to be yielded unto God, not absolutely, but to God in Christ, and with that respect, therefore, are we to enter into rest.** The foundation hereof must lie in the works of God in the new creation, and the **complacency with rest** which he took therein; for all our rest in God is founded in his own rest in his works. For a pledge hereof, a day of rest must be given and observed, the reasons and necessity whereof we have explained and confirmed in our preceding discourses. This, as has been showed, was originally the seventh day of the week; but, as the apostle tells us in another case, “The priesthood being changed, **there is made of necessity a change also of the law,**” so the covenant being changed, and the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into the rest of God being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue. And no man can assert the same day of rest precisely to abide as of old, but he must likewise assert the same law, the same covenant, the same rest of God, the same way of entering into it; which yet, as all acknowledge, are changed. The day first annexed unto the covenant of works, — that is, the seventh day, — was continued under the old testament, because the outward administration of that covenant was continued. **A relief,** indeed, was provided against the curse and penalty of it; but in the administration of it, the nature, promises, and threatenings of that covenant, though with **other ends** and purposes, were represented unto the people. But now that covenant being absolutely abolished, both as to its nature, use, efficacy, and power, no more to be represented or proposed unto believers, the whole of it and its renewed administration under the old testament being removed, taken away, and disappearing, Hebrews 8:13, the precise day of rest belonging unto it was to be changed also; and so it is come to pass.

6. We must here suppose what has been before proved and confirmed, — that there was a day of holy rest unto God necessary to be observed, by the law, and by the covenant of nature or works; neither was nor could either of them be complete without it, looking on them as the rule and means of man’s living unto God, and of his coming to the enjoyment of him: and that this day was, in the **innate light of nature**, as directed by the works of God, designed and proposed unto it for that purpose, **to be one day in seven.** This was it to learn, and this it did learn, from God’s creating the world in six days, and resting on the seventh [**God’s works are instructive, externally**]; for God affirms everywhere that because he did so, therefore it was the duty of man to labor on six days, as his occasions do require, and to rest on the seventh. This, therefore, they **were taught by those works and rest of God**, or it could not be proposed as the reason of their suitable practice; and for this end did God so work and rest. The law, therefore, of this holy rest he **reneweth** in the **decatalogue**, amongst those other laws, which being of the same nature and original, — namely, branches of the law of our creation, — were to be unto us moral and eternal; for God would no longer entrust his mind and will in that law unto the depraved nature of man, — wherein if he had not, in the best, often guided and directed it by fresh extraordinary revelations, it would have been of little use to his glory, — but committed it, by vocal revelation, to the minds of the people, as the doctrinal object of their consideration, and recorded it in tables of stone. Moreover, the nature of the first covenant, and the way of God’s instructing man in the condition of it, by his works and rest, had limited this holy day unto the seventh day, the observation whereof was to be commensurate unto that covenant and its administration, however the outward forms thereof might be varied.

7. On these suppositions we lay, and ought to lay, the observation of the Lord’s day under the new testament, according to the institution of it, or declaration of the mind of Christ, who is our Lord and

Lawgiver, concerning it. (1.) A new work of creation, or a work of a new creation, is undertaken and completed, Isaiah 65:17, 18, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1; Romans 8:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Gal-vi. 15. (2.) This new creation is accompanied with a new law and a new covenant, or the law of faith and the covenant of grace, Romans 3:27, 8:2-4; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13. (3.) Unto this law and covenant a day of holy rest unto the Lord does belong; which cannot be the same day with the former, no more than it is the same law or the same covenant which were originally given unto us, Hebrews 4:9; Revelation 1:10. (4.) That this day was limited and determined to the first day of the week by our Lord Jesus Christ, is that which shall now further be confirmed. Only I must desire the reader to consider, that whereas the topical arguments whereby this truth is confirmed have been pleaded, improved, and vindicated, by many of late, I shall but briefly mention them, and insist principally on the declaration of the proper grounds and foundations of it.

8. As our Lord Jesus Christ, as the eternal Son and Wisdom of the Father, was the immediate cause and author of the old creation, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2, 10, so as Mediator he was the author of this new creation, Hebrews 3:3-4. He built the house of God; he built all these things, and is God. Herein he wrought, and in the accomplishment of it “saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied,” Isaiah 53:11; that is, “he rested, and was refreshed.” Herein he gave a new law of life, faith, and obedience unto God, Isaiah 42:4; not by an addition of new precepts to the moral law of God not virtually comprised therein, and distinct from his own positive institutions of worship, but in his revelation of that new way of obedience unto God in and by himself, with the especial causes, means, and ends of it, — which supplies the use and end whereunto the moral law was at first designed, Romans 8:2-3, 10:3-4, — whereby he becomes “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,” Hebrews 5:9. **This law of life and obedience he writes by his Spirit in the hearts of his people, that they may be “willing in the day of his power,”** Psalm 110:3, 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, Hebrews 8:10; not at once and in the foundation of his work actually, but only in the causes of it. For as the law of nature should have been implanted in the hearts of men in their conception and natural nativity, had that dispensation of righteousness continued, so in the new birth of them that believe in him is this law written in their hearts in all generations, John 3:6. Hereon was the covenant established and all the promises thereof, of which he was the mediator, Hebrews 8:6. And for a holy day of rest, for the ends before declared, and on the suppositions before laid down evincing the necessity of such a day, he determined the observation of the first day of the week; for, —

9. First, on this day he rested from his works, in and by his resurrection; for then had he laid the foundation of the new heavens and new earth, and finished the works of the new creation, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” **On this day he rested from his works, and was refreshed, as God did and was from his.** For although he “worketh hitherto,” in the communication of his Spirit and graces, as the Father continued to do in his works of providence, after the finishing of the works of the old creation, though these works belonged thereunto, **yet he ceased absolutely from that kind of work whereby he laid the foundation of the new creation.** Henceforth he dieth no more. And on this day was he refreshed in the view of his work; for he saw that it was exceeding good. Now, as God’s rest, and his being refreshed in his work, on the seventh day of old, was a sufficient indication of the precise day of rest which he would have observed under the administration of that original law and covenant, so the rest of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his being

refreshed in and **from his works**, on the first day, is a sufficient indication of the precise day of rest to be observed under the dispensation of the new covenant, now confirmed and established.

And the church of Christ could not pass one week under the new testament, or in a gospel state of worship, without this indication; for the Judaical Sabbath, as sure as it was so, and as sure as it was annexed unto the Mosaical administration of the covenant, was so far abolished as not really to oblige the disciples of Christ in conscience unto the observation of it, whatever any of them might for a season apprehend. And if a new day was not now determined, there was no day or season appointed for the observance of a holy rest unto the Lord, nor any pledge given us of our entering into the rest of Christ. And those who say that it is required that some time be set apart unto the ends of a sabbatical rest, but that there is no divine indication of that time, when nor what it is or shall be, if we consider what are the ends of such a rest, as before declared, must allow us to expect firmer proofs of their uncouth assertion than any as yet we have met withal.

Being Conformed to His Image of God

[50] [Eph. iv. 13.](#) "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge of God**, to the measure of the stature of the fullness **of Christ**;" that is, till we all come to agree in the same faith, which is **fully conformed to Christ**, and therein are come to his rule and measure in faith, and perhaps in other graces, the body of Christ becomes complete, **being completely conformed to Christ**. The church is the completeness of Christ, **the fullness of him that filleth all in all**. But this body is not complete, and perfect, till it is perfectly **conformed to his in faith**, and **to his image in other graces**. Christ and his church, as here, so elsewhere, being as body and soul, are called one man, it is as if he had said, till Christ's body is complete in stature. The church, the body of Christ, is called a man. [Eph. li. 15.](#) **Pg 807 vol. 2 Jonathan Edwards**

In the truly holy affections of the saints is found that proportion, which is the natural consequence of the universality of their sanctification. **They have the whole image of Christ upon them**: they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man entire in all its parts and members. It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell: there is in him every grace; he is full of grace and truth: and they that are Christ's, do, "of his fullness receive grace for grace" ([John 1:14, 16](#)); i.e., there is every grace in them which is in Christ; grace for grace; that is, grace answerable to grace: there is no grace in Christ, **but there is its image in believers to answer it: the image is a true image; and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image, which is in the original**; there is feature for feature, and member for member. There is symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship. The natural body, which God hath made, consists of many members; and all are in a beautiful proportion: so it is in the new man, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one that was born a perfect child, may fail of exact proportion through distemper, and the weakness and wounds of some of its members; yet the disproportion is in no measure like that of those that are born monsters. –

On Religious Affections

Heb 1:3.

When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Christ being returned again to his Father, having finished his whole work on earth, is there bid by the Father to sit down in the seat of honour and rest. A seat prepared for him at Gods right hand, that makes it honourable; and all his enemies as a footstool under his feet that makes it easy. How much is the state and condition of Jesus Christ changed in a few days! Here he groaned, wept, labourbed, suffered, sweat, yea, sweat blood, and found no rest in this world, but when he comes to heaven, there he enters into rest. Sits down for ever in the highest and easiest throne, prepared by the Father for him when he had done his work. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down," &c.

The scope of this epistle is to demonstrate Christ to be the fullness of all legal types and ceremonies, and that whatever light glimmered to the world through them, yet it was but as the light of the day-star, to the light of the sun. In this chapter, Christ the subject of the epistle, is described; and particularly in this third verse, he is described three ways.

First, By his essential and primeval glory and dignity, he is "*ap-ugasma*", the brightness at his Father's glory, the very splendor of glory, the very refulgency of that son of glory. "The primary reason of that appellation is with respect to his eternal and ineffable generation, light of light, as the Nicene creed expresses it. **As a beam of light proceeding from the sun. And the secondary reason of it, is with respect to men, "for look as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, which it projects; so does God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us, by Christ. "Yea, he is the express image, or character of his person. Not as the impressed image of the seal upon the wax, but as the engraving in the seal itself."** Thus he is described by his essential glory. **John Flavel, The Fountain of Life, p 373**

Fifthly, and lastly, The last and principal thing included in our receiving of Christ, is the respect that this act of acceptance hath unto the terms upon which Christ is tendered to us in the gospel¹, to which it is most agreeable, 1 Cor. 15:11. "So we preach, and so ye believed:" Faith answers the gospel-offer, **as the impress upon the wax doth the engraving in the seal** ; and this is of principal consideration, for there is no receiving Christ upon any other terms but his own, proposed in the gospel to us.

¹**Rom. 6:17. The will like melted metal, is delivered into the gospel-mold, where it receives the same form and figure that the mould gives.**

Rms 6:17 "But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." pgs. 109-110, Vol. 2, Works of John Flavel

[A related verse regarding the word of God being instamped or formed upon the soul, as the soul receives its form, changing the soul by degrees into the image of God from glory to glory, or day by day: Gal 4:19, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you," that is, Christ's nature be formed in us more perfectly.]

John Flavel, p224 Vol 2: Strive to be Christ-like, as ever you would be lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is the Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you, which only can make you lovely persons; the more you resemble him in holiness, the more will you discover of true excellency and loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your converse and

communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, **changing you into the same image, from glory to glory.**

Man was indeed made in the image of God, with a reasonable soul, indued with wisdom and understanding, wherein he is above all visible creatures, in which he cometh much more nearer God than any below him, but he hath two things which make him not so fit a resemblance as Angels. *What is the first?* In his soul, he hath knowledge with ignorance; truth with error; wisdom with folly; will with rebellion; affection with passion; every supply with some defect and imperfection. But Angels have truth without error; power without weakness; joy without sorrow. Thomas Taylor, Puritan theologian (1576-1632), *The Works of That Faithful Servant Jesus Christ*, 1653, p53-54

The Image of God – Part 2

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The Law Written on our Heart

A permanent principle in the mind and affections, a principle of holiness and the love of the law.

Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect

John Owen on Faith

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/faith.vi.html>

The second evidence of the faith of God's elect

To make this evident, which is the foundation of our present discovery of the acting of **saving faith**, we must consider, — [1.] What it is that is to be approved. [2.] What this approbation is, or wherein it does consist:—

[1.] That which is to be approved is the holiness and obedience which God requires in us, our natures, and actions, and accepts from us, or accepts in us. It is not particular duties as they occur unto us, taken alone and by themselves, but the universal correspondence of our natures and actions unto the will of God. The Scripture gives us various descriptions of it, because of the variety of graces and gracious operations which concur therein. We may here mention some of its principal concerns, having handled the nature of it at large elsewhere; for it may be considered, — 1st. As unto its foundation, spring, and causes: **and this is the universal renovation of our natures into the image of God**, [Eph. iv. 24](#); or the change of our whole souls, in all their faculties and powers, into his likeness, whereby we become **new creatures**, or the **workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, [2 Cor. V. 17](#), [Eph. li. 10](#); wherein we are **originally and formally sanctified throughout, in our "whole spirit, and soul, and body,"** [1 Thess. V. 23](#). **It is the whole law of God written in our hearts**, transforming them into the **image of the divine holiness**, represented therein. And this, next unto the **blood of Christ and his righteousness**, is the principal spring of peace, rest, and complacency, in and unto the souls of believers: it is their joy and satisfaction to find themselves **restored unto a likeness and conformity unto God**, as we shall see farther immediately. **And where there is not some gracious sense and experience hereof, there is nothing but disorder and confusion in the soul; nothing can give it a sweet**

composure, a satisfaction in itself, a complacency with what it is, but a spiritual sense of this renovation of the image of God in it.

2dly. It may be considered as unto its **permanent principle in the mind and affections**; and this, because of its near relation unto Christ, **its conjunction with him**, and derivation from him, is sometimes said to be Christ himself. Hence we live, yet not so much we as Christ lives in us, [Gal. ii. 20](#); for “without him we can do nothing,” [John xv. 5](#); for “he is our life,” [Col. lii. 4](#). As it resides in believers, it is a **permanent principle** of spiritual life, light, love, and power, acting in the whole soul and all the faculties of the mind, **enabling** them to cleave unto God with purpose of heart, and to live unto him in all the acts and duties of spiritual life: this is that whereby the Holy Ghost is “in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life,” [John iv. 14](#). **It is the spirit that is born of the Spirit; it is the divine nature, whereof we are made partakers by the promises**; it is a principle of victorious faith and love, with all graces any way requisite unto duties of **holy obedience**; as to the matter or manner of their performance, **enabling the soul unto all the acts of the life of God, with delight, joy, and complacency.**

This it is in its nature. However, as unto degrees of its operation and manifestation, it may be very low and weak in some true believers, at least for a season; but there are none who are really so, but there is in them a **spiritually vital principle of obedience**, or of living unto God, that is participant of the nature of that which we have described; and if it be attended unto, it will evidence itself in its power and operations unto the gracious refreshment and satisfaction of the soul wherein it is. **And there are few who are so destitute of those evidences but that they are able to say, “Whereas I was blind, now I see, though I know not how my eyes were opened; whereas I was dead, I find motions of a new life in me, in breathing after grace, in hungering and thirsting after righteousness, though I know not how I was quickened.”**

3dly. It may be considered as unto its **disposition, inclinations, and motions**. These are the **first actings of a vital principle**; as the first actings of sin are called “the motions of sin” working in our members, [Rom. Vii. 5](#). Such motions and inclinations unto obedience do work in the minds of believers, from this **principle of holiness**; it produces in them a **constant, invariable disposition unto all duties of the life of God**. **It is a new nature**, and a nature cannot be without suitable inclinations and motions; and this new spiritual disposition **consists in a constant complacency of mind in that which is good and according to the will of God**, in an adherence by love unto it, in a readiness and fixedness of mind with respect unto particular duties. In brief, it is that which David describes in the 119th Psalm throughout, and that which is figuratively foretold concerning the **efficacy of the grace of the gospel in changing the natures and dispositions of those that are partakers of it**, [Isa. Xi. 6–8](#).

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. Isa. 11:6-8

This every believer may ordinarily find in himself; for although this disposition may be variously weakened, opposed, interrupted by indwelling sin, and the power of temptation; though it may be impaired by a neglect of the stirring up and exercise of the principle of spiritual life, in all requisite graces, on all occasions; yet it will still be working in them, and will fill the mind with a **constant displicency [discontent]** with itself, when it is not observed, followed, improved. **No believer shall ever have peace in his own mind, who has not some experience of a universal disposition unto all holiness and godliness in his mind and soul**; herein consists that **love of the law**, of which it is said those in whom it is have "great peace, and nothing shall offend them," [Ps. Cxix. 165](#); it is that wherein their souls find much complacency.

Image of God, Holiness, Saving Faith

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More insight

into the purpose behind man being created in the image of God

from John Owen & John Flavel

pgs. 141-146 Vol. 17

Commentary on Hebrews

EXERCITATION 8. THE FIRST DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE MESSIAH, PROVING HIM TO BE PROMISED OF OLD.

1. Principles presupposed in the apostle's discourse in his Epistle to the Hebrews — First, a Messiah promised from the foundation of the world. 2, 3. Of the evil that is in the world. 4. Of sin and punishment — Original and entrance of them. 5. Ignorance of mankind about them. 6. The sin and fall of Adam — Their consequents. 7. Jews' opinion about the sin of Adam; also of the curse and corruption of nature. 8-12. Their sense of both at large evinced. 13. God not unjust if all mankind had perished in this condition. 14. Instance of the sin and punishment of angels — Difference between the sin of angels and man — Angels lost, mankind relieved. 15. Evidences of that deliverance. 16. How attainable — Not by men themselves; 17. Not by angels; 18. Nor by the law — That proved against the Jews. 19. Their fable of the law made before the world, with the occasion of it — The patriarchs saved before the giving of the law. 20. Observation of the moral precepts of the law no means of relief; 21. Nor the sacrifices of it. 22. The new covenant — God the author of it — How to be accomplished. 23, 24. The first promise of it, Genesis 3:15, discussed. 25. Sense of the Jews upon it manifested; 26, 27. Examined. 28. Promise of a deliverer, the foundation of all religion in the world. 29. The promise renewed unto

Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3 — Nature of it as given unto him. 30-33. Testified unto and confirmed — Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17, 19; Job 19:25, opened; with sundry other places — End of the separation of the posterity of Abraham unto a peculiar people and church. 34. This deliverer, the Messiah — Denotation of the word — The person who.

1. WE proceed now unto our principal intendment in all these discourses, which is, the consideration and discussion of those great principles, as of all religion in general, so of the Christian in particular, which the apostle supposeth as a foundation of his whole treaty [reasoning] with the Hebrews, and which are the basis that he stands upon in the management of his whole design. For in all discourses that are parenetical, as this Epistle for the most part is, there are always some principles taken for granted, which give life and efficacy unto the exhortations in them, and whereinto they are resolved. For, as to persuade men unto particulars in faith, opinion, or practice, without a previous conviction of such general principles of truth as from which the persuasions used do naturally flow and arise, is a thing weak and inefficacious; so to be exercised in the demonstration of the principles themselves, when the especial end aimed at is to persuade, would bring confusion into all discourse.

Wherefore, although our apostle do assert and confirm those dogmata and articles of truth which he dealt with the Hebrews in a way of persuasion to embrace, yet he supposeth and takes for granted those more general *kuriav doxav*, or first maxims, which are the foundation both of the doctrines and exhortations insisted on, as all skill in teaching doth require. And these are those which now we aim to draw forth and consider, being these that follow:-

First, That there was a Messiah, or Savior of mankind from sin and punishment, promised upon, and from, the first entrance of sin into the world, in whom all acceptable worship of God was to be founded, and in whom all the religion of the sons of men was to center.

Secondly, That this Messiah, long before promised, was now actually exhibited in the world, and had finished the work committed unto him, when the apostle wrote this Epistle.

Thirdly, That Jesus of Nazareth was this Messiah, and that what he had done and suffered was the work and duty promised of old concerning him.

There is not a line in the Epistle to the Hebrews that doth not virtually begin and end in these principles, — not an assertion, not a doctrine, not an exhortation, that is not built on this triple foundation. They are also the great verities της ομολογιας χριστιανης, of the Christian profession or religion. A sincere endeavor, therefore, in their explanation and vindication, — especially in these days, wherein as on the one hand there are various thoughts of heart about the Jews, their present condition and expectation, so on the other there are many who are ready with a presumptuous boldness *αχινητα χινειν*, and to call in question the fundamentals of all religion, — may not be unacceptable. Now, the first of these principles is, at this day, by several vain imaginations, obscured by the Jews, to their utter loss of all benefit by it, and hath been so for many generations; although it was the life and soul of the religion of their forefathers, as shall be demonstrated; and the two latter are by them expressly denied, and maliciously contended against. Here, then, we shall fix and confirm these principles, in the order wherein we have laid them down, declaring on every one of them the conceptions and persuasions of the Jews concerning the promised Messiah; removing, in the close,

their objections against the faith of Christians in this matter, in a peculiar Exercitation to that purpose. And the confirmation and vindication of the first of these principles is that which our present discourse is designed unto.

2. Besides the testimony of God himself in his word, we have a concurrent suffrage from the whole creation, that man in the beginning was formed, as in the image, so in the favor of God, and unto his glory [by giving him praise and worship and by our obedience! This gives him glory.]. And as he was not liable unto any evil which is the effect of God's displeasure, nor defective in any good necessary to preserve him in the condition wherein he was made, so he was destitute of nothing that was any way requisite to carry him on unto that further enjoyment of God whereunto he was designed [hence the purpose of the image in which he was created, without which he could not please God. Therefore this image, his moral image, must be re-enstamped upon his soul in order to be able to please God, which is conversion or God giving man that glory spoken of by Jesus in John 17:22; see also 2Cor. 4:4-6] Genesis 1:26, 31, Ecclesiastes 7:29 – “Truly, this I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes”.] For God, being infinitely good, wise, righteous, and powerful, creating man to know, love, honor, and enjoy him, and thereby to glorify those holy properties of his nature which exerted themselves in his creation (which that he did, the nature of those intellectual perfections wherewith he endowed him doth undeniably evince), it was utterly impossible that either he should not delight in the work of his own hands, the effect of his own wisdom and power, or not furnish him with those faculties and abilities by which he might answer the ends of his creation. To suppose a failure in any of these, is contrary to the prime dictates of reason; for infinite wisdom can do nothing in vain, nothing not perfectly suited unto the end whereunto it is designed. Neither can infinite goodness allow of any defect in aught that proceedeth from it: Genesis 1:31, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Hence many philosophers saw, and granted, that the first cause in the production of all things did οδψ βαδιζειν, proceed by such a certain reason and way as that everything might, both in itself and with reference unto its own especial end, and also in relation unto the universe, have its proper rectitude and goodness, sufficient unto its station and condition. This οδος, the Scripture calls Βουλην του ιεληματος του Θεου, Ephesians 1:11, — “The counsel of the will of God;” expressing a contemperation of absolute sovereignty and infinite wisdom. And these uncontrollable notions of nature, or reason, cast men of old into their entanglements about the original of evil: for this they plainly saw, that it must be accidental and occasional; but where to fix that occasion they knew not. Those who, to extricate themselves out of this difficulty, fancied two supreme principles or causes, the one author of all good, the other of all evil, were ever exploded, as persons bidding defiance unto all principles of reason, whereby we are distinguished from the beasts that perish. [see p 405 & 1295] This, I say, men generally discerned, that evil, wherein it now lies, could not have entered into the world without a disturbance of that harmony wherein all things at the beginning were constituted by infinite wisdom and goodness, and some interruption of that dependence on God from whence it did proceed. The very first apprehensions of the nature of God and the condition of the universe declare that man was formed free from sin, which is his voluntary subduction of himself from under the government of his Maker; and free from trouble, which is the effect of his displeasure on that subduction or deviation; — in which two the whole nature of evil consisteth: so that it must have some other original.

3. Furthermore; in this first effort of immense power did God glorify himself, as in the wisdom and goodness wherewith it was accompanied, so also in that righteousness whereby, as the supreme rector and governor of all, he allotted unto his rational creatures the law of their obedience, annexing a reward thereunto in a mixture of justice and bounty; for, that obedience should be rewarded is of justice, but that such a reward should be proposed unto the temporary obedience of a creature as is the eternal enjoyment of God, was of mere grace and bounty. And that things should have continued in the state and condition wherein they were created, I mean as unto mankind, supposing an accomplishment of the obedience prescribed unto them, is manifest from the very first notions we have of the nature of God: for we do no sooner conceive that he is, but withal we assent that “he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Hebrews 11:6; which is essential unto him, and inseparable from his nature as the sovereign ruler of the works of his hands. And thus was the continuance of this blessed state of the creation of all things provided for, and laid in a tendency unto further glory, being absolutely exclusive of any distance between God and man, besides that which is natural, necessary, and infinite, from their beings. There was no sin on the one side, nor disfavor on the other. And this secured the order of the universe; for what should cause any confusion there whilst the law of its creation was observed, which could not be transgressed by brute and inanimate creatures?

4. That this estate of things hath been altered from time immemorial; that there is a corrupt spring of sin and disorder in the nature of man; that the whole world lieth in ignorance, darkness, evil, and confusion; that there is an alienation and displeasure between God and mankind, God revealing his wrath and judgments from heaven, whence at first nothing might be expected but fruits of goodness and pledges of love, and man naturally dreading the presence of God and trembling at the effects of it, which at first was his life, joy, and refreshment, — reason itself, with prudent observation, will discover; it hath done so unto many contemplative men of old. “The whole creation groaneth” out this complaint, as the apostle witnesseth, Romans 8:20, 22; and God makes it manifest in his judgments every day, chap. 1:18. That things were not made at first in that state and condition wherein now they are, that they came not thus immediately from the hand of infinite wisdom and goodness, is easily discernible. God made not man to be at a perpetual quarrel with him, nor to fill the world with tokens of his displeasure because of sin. This men saw of old by the light of nature; but what it should be that opened the floodgates unto all that evil and sin which they saw and observed in the world, they could not tell. The springs of it, indeed, they searched after; but with more vanity and disappointment than those who sought for the heads of the Nile. The evils they saw were catholic and unlimited, and therefore not to be assigned unto particular causes; and of any general one proportioned unto their production they were utterly ignorant. And this ignorance filled all their wisdom and science with fatal mistakes, and rendered the best of their discoveries but mere, uncertain, conjectures. Yea, the poets, who followed the comprised rumors of old traditions about things whose original was occasional and accidental, give us a better shadow of truth than the philosophers, who would reduce them unto general rules of reason, which they would no way answer.

“Post ignem aetheria domo Subductum, Macies et nova Febrium Terris incubuit cohors; Semotique prius tarda necessitas Leti corripuit gradum,” Hor. Car. Lib. I. Od. Iii. 29, — is a better allusion to the original of sin and punishment than all the disputations of the philosophers will afford us.

5. But that which they could not attain unto, and which because they could not attain unto, they wandered in all their apprehensions about God and themselves, without certainty or consistency, we

are clearly acquainted withal by divine revelation. The sum of it is briefly proposed by the apostle: Romans 5:12, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Sin and death are comprehensive of all that is evil in any kind in the world. All that is morally so is sin; all that is penally so is death. The entrance of both into the world was by the sin of one man, that is, Adam, the common father of us all. This the philosophers knew not, and therefore knew nothing clearly of the condition of mankind in relation unto God. But two things doth the Scripture teach us concerning this entrance of evil into the world: —

First, The punishment that was threatened unto and inflicted on the disobedience of Adam. Whatever there is of disorder, darkness, or confusion, in the nature of things here below; whatever is uncertain, irregular, horrid, unequal, destructive, in the universe; whatever is penal unto man, or maybe so, in this life or unto eternity; whatever the wrath of the holy, righteous God, revealing itself from heaven, hath brought, or shall ever bring, on the works of his hands, — are to be referred unto this head. Other original of them can no man assign.

Secondly, The moral corruption of the nature of man, the spring of all sin, the other head of evil, proceeded hence also; for by this means, that which before was good and upright is become an inexhaustible treasure of sin. And this was the state of things in the world immediately upon the sin and fall of Adam.

Now, **holiness** is the most precious thing in the world, **it is the image of God**, and the chief excellency of man; it is our **evidence for glory**, yea, and the **first fruits of glory**. In Christ dwells the fullness of grace, and from him, our head, it is **derived and communicated to us**; thus he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. 2:11. You would think it no small privilege to have bags of gold to go to, and enrich yourselves with, and yet that were but a very trifle in comparison to have Christ’s righteousness and holiness to go to for your justification and sanctification. - Flavel, p 147 v2

Others put it this way: the **image of God** consists antecedently in man’s spiritual nature, formally in sanctity, and consequently in dominion. As a rule, however, Reformed theologians continued to speak of the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense. In Holy Scripture they read that man, on the one hand, is still called the image of God after the fall and should be respected as such (Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9); and that, on the other hand, he had nevertheless lost the **primary content of the image of God (i.e., knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) and only regains these qualities in Christ** (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). By observing this distinction in Scripture and incorporating it in their theology, Reformed theologians have maintained the bond between the physical and the ethical nature of man, and thereby also at this point (the relation between nature and grace) kept themselves from falling into various errors. **Hermon Bavinck**, Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 2 pg 550

The Image of God; the Image of His Holiness!

John Flavel p 529 Vol. 5

2. *Secondly*, Consider it in its nature, and you will find it divine, 2 Pet. i. 4, “Partakers of the Divine nature,” namely, in our sanctification; not that it gives us the properties of

the Divine nature; they are incommunicable; but the similitude and resemblance of it is **stamped upon our souls** in the work of grace.

“The **new man is renewed in knowledge¹, after the image of him** that created him,” Col. 3:10. The schoolmen, and some of the fathers, place this image or resemblance of God, in the natural faculties of the soul, namely, the understanding, memory, and will; which is an umbrage of a trinity in unity; but it rather consists in the renovation of the faculties by grace; for in this we bear the Divine image upon our souls, and that image or resemblance of God in holiness is the beauty and honour of our souls.

¹Darkness error lies and so forth are unnatural, the characteristics of fallen nature, but the **light of knowledge belongs to the image of God** which originally was introduced to human nature. Bavinck, RD, Vol. 4 pg100

Loss of the Image of God Due to Adam's Sin

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Original Sin, Imputation of Adam's Sin, and Imputation of Christ's Righteousness Denied by Some e.g., Pelagius, Socinus

If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam's transgression, that God did not impute Adam's sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam's most innocent posterity from paradise?? John Owen - A Display of Arminianism Chp 7

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith by John Owen pg 18-19 (p 21 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.iv.iii.html>

Thirdly. **A clear apprehension and due sense of the greatness of our apostasy from God, of the depravation of our natures thereby, of the power and guilt of sin, of the holiness and severity of the law, are necessary unto a right apprehension of the doctrine of justification.** Therefore, unto the declaration of it does the apostle premise a large discourse, thoroughly to convince the minds of all that seek to be justified with a sense of these things, Rom. i., ii., iii. The rules which he has given us, the method which he prescribes, and the ends which he designs, are those which we shall choose to follow. And he lays it down in general, “That the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;” and that “the just shall live by faith,” [chap. i. 17](#). But he declares not in particular the causes, nature, and way of our justification, until he has fully evinced that all men are shut up under the state of sin, and manifested how deplorable their condition is thereby; and in the ignorance of these things, in the denying or palliating of them, he lays the foundation of all misbelief about the grace of God. **Pelagianism, in its first root, and all its present branches, is resolved whereinto. For, not apprehending the dread of our original apostasy from God, nor the consequence of it in the universal depravation of our nature, they disown any necessity either of the satisfaction of Christ or the efficacy of divine grace for our recovery or restoration.** So upon the matter the principal ends of the mission both of the Son of God and of the Holy Spirit are renounced; which issues in the denial of the deity of the one and the

personality of the other. The fall which we had being not great, and the disease contracted thereby being easily curable, and there being little or no evil in those things which are now unavoidable unto our nature, it is no great matter to be freed or justified from all **by a mere act of favour on our own endeavours**; nor is the efficacious grace of God any way needful unto our sanctification and obedience; as these men suppose.

When these or the like conceits are admitted, and the minds of men by them kept off from a due apprehension of the state and guilt of sin, and their consciences from being affected with the terror of the Lord, and curse of the law thereon, justification is a notion to be dealt withal pleasantly or subtlety, as men see occasion. And hence arise the differences about it at present, — I mean those which are really such, and not merely the different ways whereby learned men express their thoughts and apprehensions concerning it.

By some the imputation of the actual apostasy and transgression of Adam, the head of our nature, whereby his sin became the sin of the world, is utterly denied. Hereby both the grounds the apostle proceeds on in evincing the necessity of our justification, or our being made righteous by the obedience of another, and all the arguments brought in the confirmation of the doctrine of it, in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, are evaded and overthrown. **Socinus**, de Servator. Par. Iv. Cap. 6, confesses that place to give great countenance unto the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; **and therefore he sets himself to oppose, with sundry artifices, the imputation of the sin of Adam unto his natural posterity.** For he perceived well enough that, upon the admission thereof, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto his spiritual seed would unavoidably follow, according unto the tenor of the apostle's discourse.

Some deny the depravation and corruption of our nature, which ensued on our apostasy from God, **and the loss of his image (see Bavinck on pg 96)**; or, if they do not absolutely deny it, yet they so extenuate it as to render it a matter of no great concern unto us. Some disease and distemper of the soul they will acknowledge, arising from the disorder of our affections, whereby we are apt to receive in such vicious habits and customs as are in practice in the world; and, as the guilt hereof is not much, so the danger of it is not great. And as for any spiritual filth or stain of our nature that is in it, it is clean washed away from all by baptism. That deformity of soul which came upon us in the loss of the image of God, wherein the beauty and harmony of all our faculties, in all their acting in order unto their utmost end, did consist; that enmity unto God, even in the mind, which ensued thereon; that darkness which our understandings were clouded, yea, blinded withal, — the spiritual death which passed on the whole soul, and total alienation from the life of God; that impotency unto good, that inclination unto evil, that deceitfulness of sin, that power and efficacy of corrupt lusts, which the Scriptures and experience so fully charge on the **state of lost nature**, are rejected as empty notions or fables. No wonder if such persons look upon imputed righteousness as the shadow of a dream, who esteem those things which evidence its necessity to be but fond imaginations. And small hope is there to bring such men to value the righteousness of Christ, as imputed to them, who are so unacquainted with their own unrighteousness inherent in them. Until men know themselves better, they will care very little to know Christ at all.

Flavel: No sooner was man created but by the exercise of knowledge he soon discovered God's image in him; and by his ambition after more, lost what he had. So that now there is an haziness or cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error, the sad effects of the fall. Pg 427 Vol. 3

"If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam's transgression, that God did not impute Adam's sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam's most innocent posterity from paradise?" John Owen – excellent reasoning A Display of Arminianism Chp 7

Man was indeed made in the image of God, with a reasonable soul, indued with wisdom and understanding, wherein he is above all visible creatures, in which he cometh much more nearer God than any below him, but he hath two things which make him not so fit a resemblance as Angels. *What is the first?* In his soul, he hath knowledge with ignorance; truth with error; wisdom with folly; will with rebellion; affection with passion; every supply with some defect and imperfection. But Angels have truth without error; power without weakness; joy without sorrow. Thomas Taylor, Puritan theologian (1576-1632), The Works of That Faithful Servant Jesus Christ, 1653, p53-54

Comment by John Flavel in the loss of the chief part of the image of God, holiness:

Obj. 3. If the soul be created and infused immediately by God, either it comes out of his hands pure, or impure; if pure, how comes it to be defiled and tainted with sin? If impure, how do we free God from being the author of sin?

Sol. If the question be, whether souls be pure or impure, as soon as they are united with their bodies? The answer is, they are impure, and tainted as soon as united: For the union constitutes a child of Adam, and consequently a sinful impure creature. But if it respect the condition and state in which God created them, I answer with Baronius. "They are created neither morally pure, nor impure; they receive neither purity nor impurity from him, but only their naked essence, and the natural powers and properties flowing there from." He inspires not any impurity in them; for he cannot be the author of sin, who is the revenger of it. Nor does he create them in their original purity end rectitude; for the sin of Adam lost that, and God justly withholds it from his posterity. Who wonders (says one) to see the children, the palaces and gardens of a traitor to droop and decay, and the arms of his house, and the badge of his nobility, to be defaced and reversed? That which is abused by men to the dishonour of God, may justly be destroyed (I add in this case, or with-held) by God to the detriment of man. Adam voluntarily and actually deprived himself, and meritoriously deprived all his posterity of that original righteousness and purity in which he was created. As an holy God, he cannot inspire ally impurity, and as a just and righteous God, he may, and does withhold, or create them void and destitute of that holiness, and righteousness which was once their yea, of happiness and glory. John Flavel, A Treatise of the Soul of Man, pg 38

The Image of God in Unregenerate Man

code350

excerpt from History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff p 75

(see Thomas Taylor's quote on previous page; See also [Bavinck's comments](#))

The elements of truth, morality, and piety scattered throughout ancient heathenism, may be ascribed to three sources. In the first place, man, even in his fallen state, [retains some traces of the divine image, a knowledge of God](#),⁶⁶ [Rms 1:19] [however weak, a moral sense or conscience](#),⁶⁷ and a longing for union with the Godhead, for truth and for righteousness.⁶⁸ In this view we may, with Tertullian, call the beautiful and true sentences of a Socrates, a Plato, an Aristotle, of Pindar, Sophocles, Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, Plutarch, "the testimonies of a soul constitutionally Christian,"⁶⁹ of a nature predestined to Christianity. Secondly, some account must be made of [traditions and recollections, however faint, coming down from the general primal revelations to Adam and Noah](#). But the third and most important source of the heathen anticipations of truth is the all-ruling providence of God, who has never left himself without a witness.

[John Flavel](#): Those whom Christ bringeth unto God were before afar off from him, both in state and condition, and in temper and disposition; we were lost creatures, [and had no desire to return to God](#)¹ [¹Although the [faculties of the soul](#) were not extinguished by the fall, [yet their inclination to spiritual objects was wholly lost](#). [*Zeaem on the image of God*. The prodigal was said to go into a far country, Luke xv. 30. [\[that is, the principle part of God's image, the image of his holiness, chiefly consisting in his love for God, was wiped clean. Owen's and John Gill's view is the same. See Gill's commentary on Gen. 5:3¹\]](#) Flavel continues from pg 427, Vol. 3: The **understanding** of man, at first, was perspicacious and clear, all truths lay obvious in their comely order and ravishing beauty before it. God made man upright, Eccl. vii. 29. This rectitude of his mind consisted in [light and knowledge](#), as appears by the prescribed method of his recovery. Col. 3:10, *Renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him*. [Truth in the mind](#), or the mind's union with truth, [being part of the Divine image in man](#), discovers to us the sin and mischief of error, [which is a defacing \(so far as it prevails\) of the image of God](#). Hence, Ps. 73:18-20 ---

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

¹⁹*Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.* ²⁰*As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake,*

You shall despise their image. Ps 73:18-20

"the image of the earthly man, of sin and of Satan, which is upon both their souls and bodies; which will both be destroyed in hell: or their riches and honour, the vain show in which they have walked, their outward pomp and splendor; which was only a show, an outward appearance, and no solidity and substance; and which will not be esteemed in the great day of account, but despised; see ([Job 36:18](#) [Job 36:19](#))" **John Gill Commentary** Ps 73:20

¹[...in his own likeness, after his image](#); not in the likeness, and after the image of God, in which Adam was created; for having sinned, he lost that image, [at least it was greatly defaced](#), and he came short of that glory of God, and could not convey it to his posterity; who are, and ever have been conceived in

sin, and shapen in iniquity; are polluted and unclean, foolish and disobedient; averse to all that is good, and prone to all that is evil: the sinfulness of nature is conveyed by natural generation, but not holiness and grace; that is not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the flesh, but of God, and produced of his own will, by his mighty power impressing the image of his Son in regeneration on his people; which by beholding his glory they are more and more changed into by the Spirit of God. [Notice Gill intimates that the image of Adam's posterity is missing the chief part of God's image, that being *holiness* or love for God. That part was totally *defaced*. That has to be restored by the Spirit at conversion. John 3, Col. 3:10, Titus 3:5 etc. Unregenerate man hates God; has no love for him.]

Hermon Bavinck on the image of God in fallen man:

At the same time and by the same token the image of God has been destroyed by sin. Rome understands by that statement that, while the supernatural gifts have been lost, the natural gifts have remained intact. Lutheran theologians originally held that humanity had totally lost the image of God inasmuch as that image consisted exclusively in moral attributes and that human beings were now like inanimate blocks. **But the Reformed maintained that, while the image of God had been lost in the restricted sense, yet in the broader sense, though completely mutilated and corrupted, it has not been destroyed.** [Belgic Confession] The image of God is not an external and mechanical appendage to us but integral to our very being: it is our health. Human beings who violate God's law do not cease to be human; they retain their body, soul, faculties, powers, intellect, will, and so on. But now these faculties are all devoted to the service of sin and function in the wrong direction. Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics vol. 3, p 174. G Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics:

30. What were the consequences of Adam's first sin for himself? a) Coinciding immediately with the first sin, and therefore not to be called a consequence in the strict sense, was the total corruption of human nature— thus, that there was now nothing more in it that was in accord with the demand of God's law. b) Related most closely to this was the loss of the gift of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. This is just the other side of what is noted in a). **Both can be summarized in the proposition that man by his first sin lost the image of God—that is, insofar as it was losable.** Vos, pg 272 on Sin

Unbelief and the Image of God

code140

Cases where this image is not instamped upon the soul yet the soul somewhat affected by the gospel as in temporary faith, e.g., parable of the sower and Heb. 6:4

John Owen Heb 3:12-14 – dangers of unbelief, image of God, impression on the soul not lasting due to a stony heart, i.e., due to unbelief

pg 123-126 *Commentary on Hebrews*

by John Owen

And these things have been spoken to discover the nature and the work of that unbelief, which the apostle here warns and cautions all professors concerning; and we have especially considered it as to its entrance towards a departure from God. And hence we may observe that, — Obs. 4. The root of all backsliding, of all apostasy, whether it be notional or practical, gradual or total, lies in unbelief. I have dwelt long already on this matter of unbelief; and I had reason so to do, for this is the bingo on which the discourses of the apostle in this chapter and the next do turn. The nature of it, with its causes, ways and means of prevalency, with its danger and means of prevention, are the things which he lays before them. But I shall confine my discourse within due bounds, and therefore speak unto this proposition only with reference unto that influence which unbelief hath on the heart to render it evil: “Take heed, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief,” — καρδια πονηρα, “*cor malum*” This is the only place in the New Testament where a disapproved heart hath this adjunct of “evil,” “an evil heart.” It is in other places termed σκληρος, “hard,” and αμετανοητος, “impenitent,” Romans 2:5, but here only “evil.” In the Old Testament it is sometimes said to be [ræ, “evil,” as Jeremiah 3:17, 7:24, 11:8, 16:12, 18:12. This the LXX renders by πονηρος, — that is, “malus,” “perversus,” “scelestus,” “improbus;” one that is “wicked” and “flagitious.” The original of the word would denote one that is industriously wicked; for it is from πενω, by πονεω, “to labor diligently and with industry, though conflicting with difficulties.” Hence the devil, because he is industriously and maliciously wicked, is called ο πονηρος, “the wicked one:” “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh ο πονηρος,” — “the wicked one,” Matthew 13:19. So are we taught to pray, Ρυσαι ημας απο του πονηρου, Matthew 6:13, “Deliver” (or “rescue”) “us from that evil one.” And it is said, that “the whole world lieth τω πονηρω,” 1 John 5:19, — “under the power of that wicked one.” When, therefore, any heart is said to be πονηρα, an evil, wicked, flagitious frame is intended.

Our present inquiry is only how the heart is gradually brought under this denomination by the power and efficacy of unbelief, and that with especial respect unto that particular sin of departing from God. And this is done several ways:—

[1st.] Unbelief sets all the corrupt lusts and affections of the heart at liberty to act according to their own perverse nature and inclination. The heart of man is by nature evil; all the thoughts and imaginations of it are “only evil continually,” Genesis 6:5. It is full of all “corrupt affections,” which act themselves and influence men in all they do. The gospel cometh in a direct opposition unto these lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root and in the fruit of them; for “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto us, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should

live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” Titus 2:11,12. There is no greater duty that it chargeth our souls withal than the mortification, crucifying, and destruction of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of the promises of it, Colossians 3:5-8; Romans 8:13. Moreover, it is the first proper work of that faith whereby we believe the gospel, in and upon our own souls, to cleanse them from these lusts and affections. It is the work of faith to purify the heart, being the great means or instrument whereby God is pleased to effect it: “Purifying our hearts by faith,” Acts 15:9. For, receiving the promises, it teacheth, persuadeth, and enableth us to “cleanse ourselves from all uncleannesses of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 2 Corinthians 7:1. **Now, these two, faith and the gospel, make up our profession**, — the one being that wherewith or whereby we profess, the other that which we do profess. And they both concur in this design, namely, the purifying of the heart. So far as these prevail upon us or in us, that work is successful. And where there is no weakening of the lusts of the heart, no restraint laid upon them, no resistance made unto them, there is no profession at all, there is nothing of faith or gospel that takes place; for “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,” Galatians 5:25. They have done so actually in some measure or degree. All, then, who have taken upon them the profession of the gospel in reality, although it be only upon the account of light and conviction, have restrained and have curbed them, and taken upon themselves a law of resistance unto them. Hence all of them proceed so far at least as to “escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” 2 Peter 2:20. Those who attain not hereunto are in no sense to be esteemed such as profess the gospel. But now whenever unbelief beginneth to influence the heart towards the flame described, it sets in the first place these corrupt lusts and affections at liberty to act themselves according to their own nature. And this it doth two ways: —

First, With respect unto the gospel and its efficacy for the mortification of them; for it takes off, weakens, and disarms those considerations which the gospel tenders unto the souls of men for that end. The way and means whereby the gospel of itself worketh towards the mortification of the lusts of the heart is by the proposition of its promises and threatenings unto the minds of men. These work morally upon them; for the consideration of them causeth men to set themselves against all those things which may cause them to come short of the one, or make them obnoxious unto the other, 2 Corinthians 7:1. Now all influence upon the soul unto this end from hence is intercepted by **unbelief**. Its proper nature and work lies in begetting a disregard of gospel promises and threatenings through a diffidence of them. And hereof we have examples everyday. Men are in a constant way wrought upon by the preaching of the word; that is, their minds are influenced by a taste of the good things proposed and promised in it, and are brought under a sense of the terror of the Lord in its threatenings. The first proper effect hereof in themselves, is the resistance of their lusts and the reformation of their lives thereon. But we see that many of these, losing, through **unbelief**, a sense of that impression that was on them from the word, have all their lusts let loose unto rage and violence; and so return again like “the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire,” as 2 Peter 2:22. Secondly, With respect unto faith itself. This is evident from the nature of the thing; for where unbelief thrives or grows, there faith must decay and wax weak. But especially it impedes and hinders faith in the work before described, by depriving it of the means and instruments whereby it works, which are care, watchfulness, or vigilancy against sin; for its great design lies in making the soul negligent, careless, and slothful in the opposition of sin. Where this is attained, the whole work of faith is defeated, and lust is set at liberty. And where this is so, it immediately returns to act according to its own corrupt and perverse nature; which, as we have elsewhere at large declared, is **“enmity against**

God.” And this consists both in an aversion from God and an opposition unto him. Look, then, whatever approaches a man in his profession hath made towards God, the work of these lusts and corruptions, now at liberty, is to incline him to withdraw and depart from them. This renders the heart evil, and disposeth it unto an utter departure from the living God.

[2dly.] It renders the heart evil by debasing it, and casting all good, honest, ingenuous, and noble principles out of it. **The gospel furnisheth the mind of man with the best and highest principles towards God and man that in this world it is receptive of.** This might easily be evinced against all the false and foolish pretences of the old philosophy or present atheism of the world. Whatever there is of faith, love, submission, or conformity unto God, **that may ingenerate a return into that image and likeness of him which we fell from by sin and apostasy; whatever is of innocency, righteousness, truth, patience, forbearance, that may render us fruitful, and useful in or needful unto the community of mankind; whatever is pure, lovely, peaceable, praiseworthy, in a man’s own soul and the retirements of his mind, is all proposed, taught, and exhibited by the word of the gospel.** **Now, principles of this nature do lively ennoble the soul, and render it good and honorable. But the work of unbelief is to cast them all out, at least as to their especial nature communicated unto them by the gospel, which alone brings with it an impress of the image and likeness of God.** And when this is separated from any of the things before mentioned, they are of no value. This, then, renders the heart base and evil, and gives it an utter dislike of communion or intercourse with God. [In other words, men can be affected with the preaching of the gospel, to have tasted its goodness, etc., (Heb. 6:4) but because God did not go deep enough into the heart to remove the resistance, the heart of stone (unbelief) and replace it with a heart of flesh they remain unconverted and so like a dog, go back to their vomit... The heart must be made soft and able to receive the impression of the Gospel, the image of god made upon their souls. Or to put it this way regarding the parable of the sower, the ground must be made good, to receive the seed and have it grow to produce fruit.]

[3dly.] **It accumulates the heart with a dreadful guilt of ingratitude against God, which before profession it was incapable of.** When a person hath been brought unto the knowledge of the gospel, and thereby vindicated out of darkness, and delivered from the sensuality of the world; and hath moreover, it may be, “tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come;” for such a one to draw back, to forsake the Lord and his ways, through the power of unbelief, there is a great aggravation attending his sin, 2 Peter 2:20,21. And when once the heart is deflowered by this horrible sin of ingratitude, it will prostitute itself of its own accord unto all manner of abominations. And for us, it is good to have this spring of all our danger in the course of our profession continually in our eye. Here it lies, the root of it is here laid open; and if it be not continually watched against, all our other endeavors to persevere blameless unto the end are and will be in vain.

Again, self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men towards God, through a great insensibility of their state with regard to God, and for want of conviction of conscience to make them sensible how dreadfully they have provoked him to anger. **They have no sense of the heinousness of sin, as against God, and of the infinite and terrible opposition of the holy nature of God against it. Having formed in their minds such a God as suits them,** and thinking him to be **such an one as themselves** [see Ps 50:16 !!], who favours and agrees with them, they may like him very well, and feel a sort of love to him, when they are far from loving the true God. And men’s affections may be much moved towards God from self-love, by some remarkable outward benefits received from him; as it was with Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, and the children of Israel at the Red sea.

[I think that this “MO” of making converts has relation to what Jesus told the Pharisees in Matt. 23:15 – because their doctrine of witnessing to gain converts was based on natural principles or false doctrine, while being blind to spiritual truths, said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Then Jesus lists all the things that they were blind of exchanging spiritual things for natural...worshiping and prizing the outward appearance of things and not what those things actually pointed to who was Christ. By using the “God loves you” approach in the salvific sense is not only not true, but leads many to remain secure in their current unsaved state, telling them there is peace when there is not peace, a fatal security and also, in effect, *turn the grace of our God into lewdness*, Jude 1:4, turning the gospel into a license for licentiousness – in effect, they are kept secure in their habitual sinning condition thinking they are saved. See Romans 6: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” The false convert, in effect, due to his blindness and sin’s dominion over him, says yes.; he unwittingly thinks God will forgive him in his sin because God loves him and is merciful (by necessity). And so you have multitudes in the church in this condition *who have crept in unnoticed* (Jude 4) that act as snares for the sheep - but this is for a later discussion.] [see Van Til on what is a true hypocrite at [codehypo1](#)]

The Excellent Glory

code141

Image of God enstamped Upon the Soul

Subjects covered: The Glory of God, the image of God, the excellency thereof – instamped upon the soul at conversion, the image of God is their (the saint’s) glory, peace = comfort and joy unspeakable... Note many terms on the diagram are in this sermon. It will shed more light on what happens at conversion regarding the glory of God, etc.

SERMON VIII. Vol. 2 December, 1740.

[Romans ii. 10.](#)

By Jonathan Edwards

But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.

The apostle, having in the preceding verses declared what is the portion of wicked men; viz. indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; in this verse declares what is the portion assigned to good men. In the words of the text we should observe,

1. The description of a good man; viz. the man that worketh good. Such men are here described by the fruit which they bring forth. Christ has taught us that the tree is known by its fruit. Paul here describes them by that which most distinguishes them; not by the external privileges which they enjoy, or the light under which they live; but by the fruits which they bring forth. For as the apostle says, in [verse 13](#). “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified.” That which

distinguishes good men from bad, is not that they hear good, or that they profess good, or that they intend good; but that they do good. They are workers of good.

2. The reward of such a man; viz. "glory, honour, and peace;" [Rom. ii. 10.](#) in which are mentioned three sorts of good that are **assigned to them as their portion**. 1. Their moral good, **expressed by the word glory**. **Glory** shall be given them; i. e. they shall be made excellent and glorious. **They shall be endowed with those excellent and glorious qualifications, which will render them beautiful and lovely.** They shall have the **image of God, and be partakers of his holiness.** Thus the word glory is used by St. Paul, [2 Cor. iii. 18.](#) **We are changed into the same image from glory to glory.** 2. Their relative good; Honour. They shall be in most honourable circumstances. They shall be advanced to great dignity, receive a relation to God, and Christ, and the heavenly inhabitants, and God shall put honour upon them. 3. Their natural good; Peace: which, as it is used in the Scriptures, signifies happiness; and includes all comfort, joy, and pleasure. I shall endeavour to show from the text, that **glory, honour, and peace are the portion which God has given to all good men.** In describing their happiness, I shall consider the successive parts of it; both here and hereafter.

First. I propose to treat of their happiness in this world. Those who are truly good men have been the subjects of a real thorough work of conversion, and have had their hearts **turned from sin to God** [[the breaking of that league between the seed of the woman and the devil promised in Gen 3:15. Remember, promises are properly the foundation of a covenant.](#)] Of such persons it may be said, that they are truly blessed. They are often pronounced blessed by God. He is infinitely wise, and sees and knows all things. He perfectly knows who are blessed, and who are miserable. He hath said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." [Ps. i. 1.](#) "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven. [Rom. iv. 7.](#)" "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust. [Ps. xi. 4](#)" "Blessed are the poor in spirit" "the meek" "the merciful" "the pure in heart." [Matt. V. 3-8.](#)

In considering the happiness of the righteous in this world, I shall pursue the method which the text obviously points out, and shall consider, 1. The excellency; 2. The honour; and, 3. The peace and pleasure, which God bestows upon them in the present life.

I. **The excellency or glory.** The sum of this consists in their having the **image of God upon them**. **When a person is converted, he has the image of God instamped on him.** [Coloss. iii. 10.](#) **"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him."** And [Eph. iv. 23, 24.](#) "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness." They have their eyes opened, **and are led into such a sight of God** and thorough acquaintance with him, **as changes the soul into the image of God's glory.**

[Remember, his glory implies a view or knowledge of God's excellency. God's internal glory is partly in his understanding or knowledge of himself and partly in his will, consisting in holiness and virtue, primarily in love to God, both of which are communicated along with happiness and joy in God to the elect at conversion the sum of which is the emanation of his internal glory, the divine fullness, called the glory of God by which we are made partakers of his divine

nature! See pg 119, Vol. 1 God's Chief End in Creation . So in order for someone who says he wants to get saved, and the only way is by a revelation of this beauty that draws the soul to Christ, then he must have this as an object of his faith to incite him to seek it but the fact that he is asking to be saved is to confess he has it not, that he is still blind, which is a contradiction if I ever heard one! Therefore, one who has not this true spiritual sight of Christ's beauty and comeliness and says he wants to ask Jesus into his heart must by necessity be deceived and that his asking proceeds from none other than from natural principles and not from a principle of life infused and that being truth, grace and faith and a spiritual sight of Christ, the very thing that is given at conversion and that not of ourselves. Regarding the knowledge of himself communicated, see 1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"]

What can render a creature more excellent than to have the very image of the Creator? And how blessed a change is that which is wrought in conversion, which brings a man thus to be in the **image of God!** For though the image of God in Christians in this world is very imperfect, yet it is real. **The real image of God is most excellent, though it be imperfect.**

Hence, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." [Prov. Xii. 26.](#) and "the saints are the excellent of the earth." [Ps. Xvi. 3.](#) The image of God is their glory, and it may well be called glory, for imperfect as it is, it renders them glorious in the eyes of the angels of heaven. The image of God is a greater beauty in their eyes, than the brightness and glory of the sun in the firmament.

Indeed the saints have no excellency, as they are in and of themselves. In them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. They are in themselves poor, guilty, vile creatures, and see themselves to be so; but they have an excellency and glory in them, because they have Christ dwelling in them. **The excellency** that is in them, though it be but as a spark, yet it is something ten thousand times more excellent than any ruby, or the most precious pearl that ever was found on the earth; and that because it is something divine, something of God.

This holy heavenly spark is put into the soul in conversion, and God maintains it there. All the powers of hell cannot put it out, for God will keep it alive, and it shall prevail more and more. Though it be but small, yet it is powerful; it has influence over the heart to govern it, and brings forth holy fruits in the life, and will not cease to prevail till it has consumed all the corruption that is left in the heart, and till it has turned the whole soul into a pure, holy, and heavenly flame, till the soul of man becomes like the angels, a flame of fire, and shines as the brightness of the firmament.

[regarding happiness, that is part of what is communicated to us, Understanding consisting in the knowledge of God and virtue or holiness consisting in love to God are the other two.]

2. They have a foundation of unspeakable comfort and joy, because of their riches. They have true and infinite riches. They are the possessors and heirs of something real and substantial, and that is worthy to be called by the name of riches. The things they possess are **excellent**, more precious than gold and than rubies; all the desirable things of this world cannot equal them, and they have enough of it. The riches that they have given them of God are inexhaustible. It is sufficient for them; there is no end of it.

They have a fountain of infinite good for their comfort, and contentment, and joy; for God has given himself to them to be their portion, and he is a God of infinite glory. There is glory in him to engage their **contemplation** forever and ever, without ever being satiated. And he is also an infinite fountain of love; for God is love, yea, an ocean of love without shore or bottom! The glorious Son of God is theirs; that lovely one, who was from all eternity God's delight, rejoicing always before him.

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Those spiritual **joys and pleasures** which believers possess in this world, are chiefly of three sorts.

1. The joy which they have in a **sense of their own good estate**; in the sense they have of the pardon of their sins, and their safety from hell; and a sense of the favour of God, and in the hope they have of eternal life.

2. The joy and delight which they have in the **apprehension and view of God's excellency and love**. The joy of a Christian does not consist merely in the sense of his own good estate, as natural men often are ready to imagine; but there is an **excellent, transcendent, soul-satisfying sweetness** that sometimes fills the soul in the **apprehension of the excellency of God**. The soul dwells upon the thought, fixes on it, and takes complacence in God as the greatest good, the most delightful object of its contemplation. This pleasure is the sweetest pleasure that a Christian ever feels, and is the foretaste of the pleasures of heaven itself. Herein sometimes the saints do boast of the clusters of Canaan.

3. The third kind of **joy** is found in doing that which is to the glory of God. The true love of God makes this sweet and delightful to the soul. The joy of a Christian **not only arises in knowing and viewing but also in doing**; not only in apprehending God, but also in doing for God. **For he loves God not only with a love of complacence, but a love of benevolence also; and as a love of complacence delights in beholding, so does a love of benevolence delight in doing for the object beloved.** The peace and pleasure which the Christian has in these things, is far better and more desirable than the pleasures that this world can afford, and especially than the pleasures of wicked men; and that on the following accounts.

1. **There is light in this pleasure.** The peace and pleasures of wicked men have their foundation in darkness. When wicked men have any quietness or joy, it is because they are blind, and do not see what is their real condition. If it were not for blindness and delusion, they could have no peace nor comfort in anything. There needs nothing but to open a wicked man's eyes, and let him look about him and see where he is, and it would be enough to destroy all the quietness and comfort of the most prosperous wicked man in the world. But on the contrary, the peace of a godly man, is a peace that arises from light; when he sees things most as they are, then he has most peace; and the distress and trouble which he sometimes feels, arise from clouds and darkness. When a godly man is in the greatest fear and distress, if he did not know what a happy state he were in, he would at the same time rejoice with unspeakable joy; so that his pleasure is not founded, like that of wicked men, in stupidity, **but in sensibleness; not in blindness, but in light and sight, and knowledge.**

Holiness and the Image of God – His Glory

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Common vs. Special Grace

Inquiring into These Divine Mysteries (Intro by J Owen)

This is another teaching by **Jonathan Edwards** on special grace vs. common grace, the glory of God communicated to his elect to effect their conversion and partaking of His nature; the image of God or the image of His glory communicated, etc. But first, I must precede this text by an excellent quote from John Owen from his commentary on the book of Hebrews (chapter 5 in particular) on the purpose and benefit of inquiring into these divine mysteries:

As for this fountain and spring of grace, this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and demonstration of divine wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love; this great discovery of the purity of the law and vileness of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere and uncorrupted love towards him, of all joy and consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves a place in the objects of their contemplation, and are ready to guess that what men write and talk about it is but phrases, canting, and fanatical. But such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ will not so easily part with their immortal interest and concern herein. Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrency of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it. – John Owen

Showing What The Image of God Is

This excerpt on the Image of God in Man is one of the best I've ever read. It is from a work titled "True Christianity" (1605) written by Johann Arndt, a Lutheran Pastor.

True Christianity

By Johann Arndt

1605

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Chapter 1: Showing What The Image Of God In Man Is.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and ... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.—EPH. 4:23, 24.

The image of God in man, is the conformity of the soul of man, of his spirit and mind, of his understanding and will, and of all his faculties and powers, both bodily and mental, to God and the Holy Trinity. For the decree of the Holy Trinity was thus expressed: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," etc. Gen., 1:26.

2. It is evident, therefore, that, when man was created, the image of the Trinity was impressed on him, in order that the holiness, righteousness, and goodness of God, might shine forth in his soul; diffuse abundant light through his understanding, will, and affections; and visibly appear even in his life and conversation: that, consequently, all his actions, both inward and outward, might breathe nothing but divine love, purity, and power, and, in short, that the life of man upon earth might resemble that of the angels in heaven, who are always engaged in doing the will of their Heavenly Father. In thus impressing his image on man, God designed to delight and rejoice in him, just as a father rejoices in a child born after his own image: for as a parent, beholding himself, or another self, in his offspring, cannot but feel the greatest complacency and delight; so, when God beheld the express character of his own Person reflected in an image of himself, his "delights were with the sons of men." Prov. 8:31. Thus it was God's chief pleasure to look on man, in whom he rejoiced, and rested, as it were, from all his labor; considering him as the great masterpiece of his creation, and knowing that in the perfect innocence and beauty of man, the excellency of his own glory would be fully set forth. And this blessed communion our first parents and their posterity were always to have enjoyed, had they continued in the likeness of God, and rested in him and in his will; who, as he was their author, was also to be their end.

3. It undoubtedly is the essential property of every image, that it be a just representation of the object which it is intended to express; and as the reflection in a mirror is vivid in a degree proportioned to the clearness of the mirror itself, so the image of God becomes more or less visible, according to the purity of the soul in which it is beheld.

4. Hence God originally created man perfectly pure and undefiled; that so the divine image might be beheld in him, not as an empty, lifeless shadow in a glass, but as a true and living image of the invisible God, and as the likeness of his inward, hidden, and unutterable beauty. There was an image of the wisdom of God, in the understanding of man; of his goodness, gentleness, and patience, in the spirit of man; of his divine love and mercy, in the affections of man's heart. There was an image of the righteousness and holiness, the justice and purity of God, in the will of man; of his kindness, clemency, and truth, in all the words and actions of man; of his almighty power, in man's dominion over the earth, and inferior creatures; and lastly, there was an image of God's eternity, in the immortality of the human soul.

5. From the divine image thus implanted in him, man should have acquired the knowledge both of God and of himself. Hence he might have learned, that God, his Creator, is all in all, the Being of beings, and the chief and only BEING, from whom all created beings derive their existence, and in whom, and by whom, all things that are, subsist. Hence, also, he might have known, that God, as the Original of man's nature, is all that essentially, of which he himself was but the image and representation. For since man was to bear the image of the divine goodness, it follows that God is the sovereign and universal goodness essentially (Matt. 19:17); and, consequently, that God is essential love, essential life, and essential holiness, to whom alone (because he is all this essentially), worship and praise, honor and glory, might, majesty, dominion, and virtue, are to be ascribed: whereas these do not appertain to the creature, nor belong to anything but God alone.

6. From this image of the Divine Being, man should further have acquired the knowledge of himself. He should have considered what a vast difference there was between God and himself. Man is not God, but God's image; and the image of God ought to represent nothing but God. He is a portraiture of the Divine Being; a character, an image, in which God alone should be seen and glorified. Nothing therefore ought to live in man, besides God. Nothing but the Divinity should stir, will, love, think, speak, act, or rejoice in him. For if anything besides God live or work in man, he ceases to be the image of God; and becomes the image of that which thus lives and acts within him. If therefore a man would become, and continue to be, the image of God, he must wholly surrender himself to the Divine Being, and submit entirely to his will; he must suffer God to work in him whatsoever he pleases; so that, by denying his own will, he may do the will of his Heavenly Father without reserve, being entirely resigned to God, and willing to become a holy instrument in his hands, to do his will and his work. Such a man follows not his own will, but the will of God; he loves not himself, but God; seeks not his own honor, but the honor of God. He covets no estates nor affluence for himself, but refers all to the Supreme

Good; and so being contented to possess him, rises above the love of the creature and the world. And thus ought man to divest himself of all love of himself and the world, that God alone may be all in him, and work all in him, by his Holy Spirit. Herein consisted the perfect innocence, purity, and holiness of man. For, what greater innocence can there be, than that a man should do, not his own will, but the will of his Heavenly Father? Or what greater purity, than that man should suffer God to work in him, and to do everything according to His pleasure? Or, what greater holiness, than to become an instrument in the hands of the Spirit of God? To resemble a child, in whose breast self-love and self-honor do not yet prevail, is, in truth, the highest simplicity.

7. Of this entire devotedness to the Divine will, our Lord Jesus Christ, while he sojourned in our world, was a perfect example. He sacrificed his own will to God his Father, in blameless obedience, humility, and meekness; readily depriving himself of all honor and esteem, of all self-interest and self-love, of all pleasure and joy; and leaving God alone, to think, speak, and act, in him, and by him. In short, he invariably made the will and pleasure of God his own, as the Father himself testified by a voice from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. The Lord Jesus Christ, blessed forever, is the true Image of God, in whom nothing appears but God himself, and such manifestations as are agreeable to his nature; namely, love, mercy, long-suffering, patience, meekness, gentleness, righteousness, holiness, consolation, life, and everlasting blessedness: for by him, the invisible God was willing to be discovered and made known to man. He is indeed the image of God in a more sublime sense; that is, according to his Divinity, by virtue of which, he is himself very God, the express and essential image of his Father's glory, in the infinite splendor of the uncreated light. Heb. 1:3. But of this point no more can at present be said: our design being to speak of him only as he lived and conversed in his holy humanity, while he tabernacled upon the earth.

8. It was in such a holy innocence as this, that the image of God was, in the beginning, conferred on Adam, which he should have preserved in true humility and obedience. Sufficient it surely was for him, that he was made capable of all the benefits of the divine image; of sincere and unmixed love and delight; of undisturbed and solid tranquility of mind; of power, fortitude, peace, light, and life. But not duly reflecting that he himself was not the chief good, but merely a mirror of the Godhead, formed purposely to receive the reflection of the divine nature, he erected himself into a God; and thus choosing to be the highest good to himself, he was precipitated into the greatest of all evils, being deprived of this inestimable image, and alienated from that communion with God, which, by virtue of it, he before enjoyed.

9. Had self-will, self-love, and self-honor, been excluded, the image of God could not have departed from man; but the Divine Being would have continued to be his sole glory, honor, and praise. As everything is capable of its like and not of its contrary, and in its like acquiesces and delights, so man, being in the similitude of God, was thereby prepared to receive God into himself, who was also ready

to communicate himself to man, with all the treasures of his goodness; goodness being of all things the most communicative of itself.

10. Finally, man ought to have learned from the image of God, that by means of it he is united to God; and that in this union, his true and everlasting tranquility, his rest, peace, joy, life, and happiness alone consist. He should have learned that all restlessness of mind and vexation of spirit, arise from nothing but a breach of this union, by which he ceases to be the image of God; for man no sooner turns to the creature, than he is deprived of that eternal good which is to be derived from God alone.

SERMON V.
TRUE GRACE DISTINGUISHED
FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVILS.

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[James ii. 19.](#)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.iii.v.html>

by Jonathan Edwards

- excerpts -

Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

OBSERVE in these words,—1. Something that some depended on, as an evidence of their good estate and acceptance, as the objects of God’s favor, viz., a speculative faith, or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned; probably, because this was a doctrine wherein, especially, there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, amongst whom the Christians in those days were dispersed. And therefore, this was what many trusted in, as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of their interest in, the great spiritual and eternal privileges, in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith, viz., that it is a good attainment; “Thou dost well.” It was good, as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and, in some respects, above all others fundamental. It was necessary to be believed, in order to salvation. To be without the belief of this doctrine, especially in those that had such advantage to know as they had to whom the apostle wrote, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, viz., that it is any evidence of a person’s being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words. And it is particularly manifest by the conclusion of the verse; which is,

4. The thing observable in the words, viz., the argument by which the apostle proves, that this is no sign of a state of grace, viz., that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God, and that he is a holy, sin-hating God; and that he is a God of truth, and will fulfill his threatenings, by which he has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them; and that he is an almighty God, and able to execute his threatened vengeance upon them.

Therefore, the doctrine I infer from the words to make the subject of my present discourse, is this, viz., nothing in the mind of man, that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.

If there be any thing that the devils have, or find in themselves, which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good; which is plainly this: "That which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, thy believing that there is one God, is no sure evidence that thou art gracious." So that the whole foundation of the apostle's argument lies in that proposition: "That which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace."—Nevertheless, I shall mention two or three further reasons, or arguments of the truth of this doctrine.

I. **The devils have no degree of holiness:** and therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy; but when he fell, he lost all his holiness [as did man when Adam fell; he lost the principle part of God's image, the image of his holiness or his moral image], and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and in some sense the father of all sin. [John viii. 44.](#) "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." [1 John iii. 8.](#) "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is often spoken of, by way of eminence, as "the wicked one." So, [Matt xiii. 19.](#) "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." And [verse xiii. 38.](#) "The tares are the children of the wicked one." [1 John ii. 13.](#) "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." And [verse iii. 12.](#) "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." And [verse v. 18.](#) "Whosoever is born of God—keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wickedness itself. [Eph. Vi. 12.](#) "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely, those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of, can have nothing of the nature of true holiness in them. **The knowledge and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion, cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No impressions made on their hearts, can be of a spiritual nature [same for fallen man]. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense [same for fallen man, again! 1Cor2:14, Rm8:7-8].** Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there be no holiness in them as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them as they are in man; unless something be added to them beyond what is in the devil.

[Hence the promise of the gospel in Gen3:15, where the change of nature is promised to the elect. See Owen's comments on this passage.] And if anything be added to them, then they are not the same things; but are something beyond what devils are the subjects of; which is contrary to the supposition; for the proposition which I am upon is, that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection, or experience, or quality holy; but it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of, have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no certain signs, that persons which have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace, but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image that is his seal and mark, the stamp by which those that are his are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness, has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sign of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or flows from, or some way belongs to, its essence; for that which distinguishes things one from another is the essence, or something appertaining to their essence. And therefore, that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness or grace, can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

II. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holiness in them; yet, certainly they will allow, that the qualifications which are sure evidences of grace, must be things that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkable affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness, but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world who are wholly destitute of saving grace, who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but nevertheless have something of that which is called moral virtue; and are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general that live under the light of the gospel, and are not given up to judicial blindness and hardness. Yea, those that are thus given up, yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world; without which the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned, or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws his restraining grace, and all merciful influences of his Spirit whatsoever. They have neither saving grace nor common grace; neither the grace of the Spirit, nor any of the common gifts of the Spirit; neither true holiness, nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell, and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than the damned, or have wicked men, when they leave this world, any principles of wickedness infused into them: but when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away his Spirit from them, as to all its merciful common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of his Spirit and good providence.

III. It is unreasonable to suppose, that a person's being in any respect as the devil is, should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him, and hereafter shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really. They are so relatively. The devil is the grand rebel; the chief enemy of God and Christ; the object of God's greatest wrath; a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by him; forever shut out of his presence; the prisoner of his justice; an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; members of the family of the glorious King of heaven; the children of God; the brethren and spouse of his dear Son; heirs of God; joint-heirs with Christ; kings and priests unto God. And they are extremely different really. The devil, on account of his hateful nature, and those accursed dispositions which reign in him, is called Satan, the adversary, Abaddon and Apollyon, the great destroyer, the wolf, the roaring lion, the great dragon, the old serpent. **The saints are represented as God's holy ones, his anointed ones, the excellent of the earth; the meek of the earth; lambs and doves; Christ's little children; having the image of God, pure in heart; God's jewels; lilies in Christ's garden; plants of paradise; stars of heaven; temples of the living God.** The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil, as heaven is from hell; and much more contrary than light is to darkness; and the eternal state that they are appointed to, is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now, it is not reasonable to suppose, that being in any respect as Satan is, or being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections, or actions, that are in him, is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him, and in circumstances so diverse, and appointed to an eternal state so extremely contrary in all respects. **Wicked men are in Scripture called the children of the devil.** Now is it reasonable to suppose, that men's being in any respect as the devil is, can be a certain sign, that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed, that wicked men shall hereafter have their part with devils; shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels, and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with him, where he is, that he may behold and partake of his glory?

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The wicked, at the day of judgment, will see everything else in Christ, but his beauty and amiableness. There is no one quality or property of his person, that can be thought of, but what will be set before them in the strongest light at that day, but only such as consist in this. They will see him coming in the clouds of heaven, "in power, and great glory, in the glory of his Father." **They will have that view of his external glory**, which is vastly beyond what we can imagine; and they will have the strongest and most convincing demonstrations of all his attributes and perfections. They will have a sense of his great majesty, that will be, as it were, infinitely affecting to them. They shall be made to know effectually, "that he is the Lord." They shall see what he is, and what he does; his nature and works shall appear in the strongest view: **but his infinite beauty and amiableness, which is all in all, and without which every other property is nothing, and worse than nothing, they will not see.**

Therefore in a sight or sense of this fundamentally consists the difference between the saving grace of God's Spirit, and the experiences of the devils and damned souls. This is the foundation of

everything else that is distinguishing in true Christian experience. **This is the foundation of the faith of God's elect.** This gives the mind a saving belief of the truth of divine things. **It is a view of the excellency of the gospel, or sense of the divine beauty and amiableness of the scheme of doctrine there exhibited, that savingly convinces the mind that it is indeed divine or of God.** This account of the matter is plainly implied; [2 Cor. iv. 3, 4](#). "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, **who is the image of God**, should shine into them." And, [verse 6](#), "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ." It is very evident that a saving belief of the gospel, is here spoken of by the apostle as **arising from a view of the divine glory or beauty** of the things it exhibits. **It is by this view that the soul of a true convert is enabled savingly to see the sufficiency of Christ for his salvation.** He that has his eyes opened to behold the divine superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus Christ, is convinced of his sufficiency to stand as a Mediator between him, a guilty hell-deserving wretch, and an infinitely holy God, in an exceeding different manner than ever he can be convinced by the arguments of authors or preachers, however excellent.

When he once comes to see **Christ's divine loveliness**, he wonders no more that he is thought worthy by God the Father to be accepted for the vilest sinner. Now it is not difficult for him to conceive how the blood of Christ should be esteemed by God so precious as to be worthy to be accepted as a compensation for the greatest sins. **The soul now properly sees the preciousness of Christ, and so does properly see and understand the very ground and reason of his acceptableness to God, and the value God sets on his blood, obedience, and intercession.** **This satisfies the poor guilty soul, and gives it rest, when the finest and most elaborate discourses about the sufficiency of Christ, and suitableness of the way of salvation, would not do it.** **When a man comes to see the proper foundation of faith and affiance with his own eyes, then he believes savingly.** "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life," [John vi. 40](#). When Christ thus manifests **God's name [aka, glory]** to men, then they believe that all things whatsoever God has given to Christ are of him, and believes that Christ was sent of God," [John xvii. 6, 8](#). And "**they that thus know Christ's name will trust in him,**" [Psalm ix. 10](#). In order to true faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God is revealed in men, [Gal. i. 15, 16](#). And it is this **sight of the divine beauty of Christ, that bows the wills, and draws the hearts of men.** **A sight of the greatness of God in his attributes [his natural image], may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure; but the enmity and opposition of the heart may remain in its full strength, and the will remain inflexible.** **Whereas one glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God, and the supreme amiableness of Jesus Christ shining into the heart, overcomes and abolishes this opposition, and inclines the soul to Christ, as it were, by an omnipotent power.** So that now, not only the **understanding**, but the **will and the whole soul**, **receives and embraces** the Savior. This is most certainly the discovery, which is the first **internal foundation of a saving faith** in Christ in the soul of the true convert, **and not any immediate outward or inward witness, that Christ loves him, or that he died for him in particular, and is his Savior;** so begetting confidence and joy, and seeming love to Christ, because he loves him. By such faith and conversion (demonstrably vain and counterfeit), multitudes have been deluded. **The sight of the glory of God**, in the face of Jesus Christ, **works true supreme love to God**. This is a **sight of the proper foundation of supreme love to God**, viz., the **supreme loveliness of his nature**; and a love to him on this ground is truly above anything that can come from a mere principle of self-love, which is in the

hearts of devils as well as men. And this begets true spiritual and holy joy in the soul, which is indeed joy in God, and glorying in him, and not rejoicing in ourselves.

This sight of the beauty of divine things will **excite true desires and longings of soul after those things:** not like the longings of devils, but natural free desires; the desires of appetite, the thirstiness of a new nature, as a new-born babe desires the mother's breast; and as a hungry man longs for some pleasant food he thinks of; or as the thirsty hart pants after the cool and clear stream.

This **sense of divine beauty** is the first thing in the actual change made in the soul in true conversion, and is the foundation of everything else belonging to that change; as is evident by those words of the apostle, [2 Cor. lii. 18.](#) "But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as the Spirit of the Lord."

2. Truly gracious affections and exercises of mind differ from such as are counterfeit, which arise from no higher principles than are in the hearts of devils, in their tendency; and that in these two respects.

(1.) They are of a tendency and influence very contrary to that which was especially the devil's sin, even **pride**. That pride was in peculiar manner the devil's sin, is manifest from [1 Tim. lii. 6.](#) "Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." **False and delusive experiences** evermore tend to this, though oftentimes under the disguise of great and extraordinary humility. Spiritual pride is the prevailing temper and general character of hypocrites, deluded with false discoveries and affections.—They are in general of a disposition directly contrary to those two things belonging to the Christian temper, directed to by the apostle; the one in [Rom. Xii. 16.](#) "Be not wise in your own conceit," and the other in [Phil. li. 3.](#) "Let each esteem others better than themselves." **False experience is conceited of itself, and affected with itself.** [see Van Til on hypocrites at [codehypo1](#)] Thus he that has false humility is much affected to think how he is abased before God. He that has false love is affected, when he thinks of the greatness of his love. The very food and nourishment of false experience is to view itself, and take much notice of itself; and its very breath and life is to be some way showing itself.—Whereas truly gracious views and affections are of a quite contrary tendency. They nourish no self-conceit; no exalting notion of the man's own righteousness, experience, or privileges; no high conceit of his humiliations. They incline to no ostentation, nor self-exaltation, under any disguise whatsoever. **But that sense of the supreme, holy beauty and glory of God and Christ, which is the foundation of them, mortifies pride, and truly humbles the soul.** It not only cuts off some of the outermost branches, but it strikes at the very **root of pride; it alters the very nature and disposition of the heart.** **The light of God's beauty, and that alone, truly shows the soul its own deformity, and effectually inclines it to exalt God and abase itself.**

(2.) These gracious exercises and affections differ from the other in their tendency to destroy Satan's interest; and that in two respects:

First, in the person himself. They cause the soul to hate every evil and false way, and to produce universal holiness of heart and life, disposing him to make the service of God, **the promotion of his glory and the good of mankind, the very business of his life:** whereas those false discoveries and

affections have not this effect. There may indeed be a great zeal, and a great deal of what is called religion; but it is not a truly Christian zeal: it is not being zealous of good works. **Their religion is not the service of God; it is not seeking and serving God; but indeed seeking and serving themselves.**—Though there may be a change of life, it is not a change from every wicked way to a uniform Christian life and practice, **but only turning the stream of corruption from one channel to another.** Thus the apostle James distinguishes, in our context, a true faith from the faith of devils; [James ii. 19, 20.](#) “Thou believest that there is one God. The devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” And thus the apostle John distinguishes true communion with God; [1 John i. 6, 7.](#) “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” By this he distinguishes true spiritual knowledge, in [verses ii. 3, 4.](#) “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” And hereby the same apostle distinguishes true love, in [verses iii. 18, 19.](#) “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed (in work, as the word signifies) and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”

2. Truly gracious experiences have a tendency to destroy Satan’s interest in the world.

When false religion, consisting in the counterfeits of the operations of the Spirit of God, and in high pretences and great appearances of inward experimental religion, prevails among a people—though for the present it may surprise many, and may be the occasion of alarming and awakening some sinners—tends greatly to wound and weaken the cause of vital religion, and to strengthen the interest of Satan, desperately to harden the hearts of sinners, exceedingly to fill the world with prejudice against the power of godliness, to promote infidelity and licentious principles and practices, to build up and make strong the devil’s kingdom in the world, more than open vice profaneness, or professed atheism, or public persecution, and perhaps more than anything else whatsoever.

But it is not so with true religion in its genuine beauty.

—That, if it prevails in great power, will doubtless excite the rage of the devil, and many other enemies of religion. However, it gives great advantage to its friends, and exceedingly strengthens their cause, and tends to convince or confound their enemies. **True religion is a divine light in the souls of the saints; and as it shines out in the conversation before men, it tends to induce others to glorify God.** There is nothing like it (as to means) to awaken the consciences of men, to convince infidels, and to stop the mouths of gainsayers.—**Though men naturally hate the power of godliness, yet when they see the fruits of it, there is a witness in their consciences in its favor.** “He that serveth Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is acceptable to God, and approved of men,” [Rom. Xiv. 17, 18.](#) The prevailing of true religion ever tends to its honor in the world, though it commonly is the occasion of great persecution. It is a sure thing, the more it appears and is exemplified in the view of the world, the more will its honor, and the honor of its author, be advanced. [Phil. i. 11.](#) “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.”

The third use may be of exhortation, to seek those distinguishing qualifications and affections of soul which neither the devil, nor any unholy being, has or can have.

How excellent is that inward virtue and religion which consists in those! Herein consists the most excellent experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Herein consists the best experience of the man Christ Jesus, whether in his humbled or glorified state. **Herein consists the image of God.**—Yea, this is spoken of in Scripture as a **communication of something of God's own beauty and excellency. A participation of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. A partaking of his holiness, Heb. Xii. 10. A partaking of Christ's fullness, John i. 16.** Hereby the saints are filled with all the **fullness** of God, **Eph. lii. 18, 19.** Hereby they have fellowship with both the Father and the Son, **1 John i. 3.** That is, **they communicate with them in their happiness.** Yea, by means of this **divine virtue, there is a mutual indwelling of God and the saints; 1 John iv. 16.** "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This qualification must render the person that has it excellent and happy indeed, and doubtless is the highest dignity and blessedness of any creature. **This is the peculiar gift of God, which he bestows only on his special favorites.** As to silver, gold, and diamonds, earthly crowns and kingdoms, he often throws them out to those whom he esteems as dogs and swine; but this is the peculiar blessing of his dear children. This is what flesh and blood cannot impart. God alone can bestow it. **This was the special benefit which Christ died to procure for his elect, the most excellent token of his everlasting love; the chief fruit of his great labors, and the most precious purchase of his blood.**

By this, above all other things, do men glorify God. By this, above all other things, do the saints shine as lights in the world, and are blessings to mankind. And this, above all things, **tends to their own comfort; from hence arises that "peace which passeth all understanding," and that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory."** And this is that which **will most certainly issue in the eternal salvation of those who have it.** It is impossible that the soul possessing it should sink and perish. **It is an immortal seed; it is eternal life begun; and therefore they that have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory.** It is the **day-star risen in the heart,** that is a sure forerunner of that sun's rising which will bring on an everlasting day. **This is that water which Christ gives,** which is in him that drinks it **"a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14.** It is something from heaven, **of a heavenly nature,** and tends to heaven. And those that have it, however they may now wander in a wilderness, or be tossed to and fro on a tempestuous ocean, shall certainly arrive in heaven at last, where this heavenly spark shall be increased and perfected, and the souls of the saints all be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

THE REFORMATION VIEW OF THE IMAGE

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Excerpt from Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Pg 548-554

The Reformers unanimously rejected this teaching, especially because it led to a weakening of [the doctrine of] original sin. Their opposition was primarily directed against the Scholastic thesis: "While the supernatural qualities are lost, the natural ones still remain whole." And from there they reasoned back to the image of God. If by sin, by the loss of the image of God, man had become totally corrupt, it must also have belonged to his nature. Thus, Luther maintained "that righteousness was not a gift which came from without, separate from man's nature, but . . . was truly part of his nature, so that it was Adam's nature to love God, to believe God, to know God, etc." But even the Reformers had to maintain a distinction between what was left and what was lost of the image of God. To that end they used the words "substance," "essence," "attributes," "gifts," even "supernatural gifts." The Apology of the Augsburg Confession calls the knowledge and fear of God in Adam "gifts," and the Formula of Concord speaks of the "properties concreated in the paradise of nature." The Lutheran dogmaticians indeed called the image of God natural insofar as human nature could not be pure without that image and was immediately concreated with that image. But they denied that the image of God was natural in the sense that it automatically flowed from human nature as such and was therefore an inamissible and essential component of it. Some, such as Gerhard, Quenstedt, and others, also specifically called the supernatural favor of God, the gracious inhabitation of the holy Trinity and the resulting pleasure and enjoyment, supernatural gifts. So also Calvin makes a distinction between the substance of the soul and its attributes, and with Augustine says: "The natural attributes were corrupted in man by sin, but the supernatural ones were removed." He even calls the latter "extraneous, not an intrinsic part of nature." And many Reformed theologians similarly drew a distinction between natural qualities and supernatural gifts. Many of them derived immortality from the grace of God, not from Adam's nature. Even the ancient distinction between "image" and "likeness" was taken over by many and also applied in that sense. It soon became clear, however, that even where Protestants retained the expression "supernatural gifts," they meant something else by it. The idea among Roman Catholics is that one can very well conceive a human being without these supernatural gifts. Indeed, as a rational and moral being, man would also have some knowledge of God, the moral law, and righteousness. But [according to Rome] there is an essential difference among knowledge, love, and righteousness in a natural sense and these qualities in a supernatural sense, between the natural and the supernatural man, between a human being and a Christian, between the world and the church, between nature and grace. **Grace is not merely restorative, but an elevation and completion of nature. It was this position that the Reformation opposed as a matter of fundamental principle.** And so it had to come around, and in fact did come around, to the doctrine that the image of God essentially belonged to man by nature, and that without it man could only exist in an "impure nature," as a sinner.

But the scholars of the Reformation, too, held differing views of the image of God. In the early period some Lutherans still equated the image of God with the essence of man and the substance of the soul, but Lutheran theology as such was grounded in another idea. Its subjective soteriological character **necessarily led to an exclusive identification of the image of God with the moral qualities that the first man received and whose loss made man, religiously and ethically, a "block of wood."** Luther already frequently put all the emphasis on the gifts, and completely equated the image of God with them. The

confessional writings followed the same lines, and so did the theologians Heerbrand, Hunnius, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Hollaz, and others. The Lutherans did not indeed deny that the essence of man also expresses something divine, but [held that] the actual image of God consists only in “original righteousness,” with the associated qualities of “immortality, impassibility, dominion,” and a “most blissful condition.” Only the Son, after all, is essentially and substantially the image of God (Heb. 1:3); **in man the image is an “accidental perfection,” capable of being lost and in fact lost** (Rom. 3:23) and only renewed and restored in the believer (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). [*accidental* refers to its philosophical meaning, a *property* of something, e.g., white is the accident of snow] From the beginning, however, Reformed theologians, incorporated also the essence of man in the image of God. Heppie is wrong when he asserts that Calvin and Zanchius did not teach this. While Calvin does make a distinction between the soul’s substance and its gifts, **he expressly states that the image of God consisted in “those marks of excellence with which God had distinguished Adam over all other living creatures,”** and that consequently it also consists in integrity. All the Reformed theologians agreed with this; only Coccejus, presenting an alternative view, taught that while the soul and its properties were presupposed by the image of God, they were not its content but only the canvas, so to speak, on which God painted his image. The image itself, according to Coccejus, consisted only in the gifts, as taught by 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:24, and Colossians 3:10. Others put it this way: the image of God consists antecedently in man’s spiritual nature, formally in sanctity, and consequently in dominion. As a rule, however, Reformed theologians continued **to speak of the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense**. In Holy Scripture they read that man, on the one hand, is still called the image of God after the fall and should be respected as such (Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9); **and that, on the other hand, he had nevertheless lost the primary content of the image of God (i.e., knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) and only regains these qualities in Christ** (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). By observing this distinction in Scripture and incorporating it in their theology, Reformed theologians have maintained the bond between the physical and the ethical nature of man, and thereby also at this point (the relation between nature and grace) kept themselves from falling into various errors. Soon an additional distinction arose that was especially worked out in the doctrine of the covenant of works. This distinction answered the question what Adam had to become, not what Adam was. It is only in these three areas, the image of God in the broad sense, the image of God in the narrow sense, and the development or destination of the image of God—that is, in the doctrine of the covenant of works—that the locus of the image of God can be treated to the full extent.

Rome and the Reformation

Between the Roman Catholic doctrine of the image of God and that of the Reformation there is a profound difference that makes itself felt over the whole field of theology. This difference is not located in the expression **“original justice or righteousness.”** For though Roman Catholic theologians use this term in a variety of senses, later ones sometimes also describe the supernatural righteousness by means of it. The righteousness of the first human being can be called “original” since from his origin he was characterized by his positive correspondence to the law of God, and since original righteousness can be distinguished as such from habitual or actual righteousness. Also, in the case of Adam, the original righteousness was the beginning and root of his actual righteousness. After Thomas there was not even disagreement over the question of whether this original righteousness would, for all humanity, have been the source of its actual righteousness if Adam had remained standing, since

Adam received it not as a private but as a public person. **The dispute concerned the question of whether that original righteousness was natural or, at least in part, supernatural.** Reformed theologians asserted the former. By that they did not mean to say that this original righteousness arose automatically from human nature understood in the sense of a union of spirit and matter, nor that it could not be called a gift—even of God’s grace in a broad sense. Rather, they used this term to maintain the conviction that the image of God, that is, original righteousness, was inseparable from the idea of man as such and that it referred to the normal state, the harmony, the health of a human being; that without it a human cannot be true, complete, or normal. When man loses that image of God, he does not simply lose a substance while still remaining fully human. Rather, he becomes an abnormal, a sick, a spiritually dead human being, a sinner. He then lacks something that belonged to his nature, just as a blind man loses his sight, a deaf man his hearing, and a sick man his health. **In Rome’s view a human being can lose the “supernatural righteousness” and still be a good, true, complete, sinless human, with a natural justice that in its kind is without any defect. [see Van Til’s comments]** But according to Protestant theologians, a human being cannot. There is no intermediate state between man as image of God and man as sinner. He is either a son of God, his offspring, his image, or he is a child of wrath, dead in sins and trespasses. **When that human being again by faith receives that perfect righteousness in Christ, that benefit is indeed a supernatural gift, but it is supernatural “as an accident,” “incidentally”; he regains that which belongs to his being, like the blind man who again receives his sight. [accident: the white of the snow is the *accident* thereof; if the snow melts, the accident goes too. Unlike the soul of an animal being an accident relative to its body, the human soul is a separate substance relative to the body, so that upon death, the soul does not disintegrate with the body like the white of the snow did, but remains intact, later to be rejoined to the body.]**

Now this doctrine is grounded in Holy Scripture, which nowhere speaks of “supernatural gifts” in connection with the creation of man. Rome, accordingly, does not appeal to Genesis 1:26–31, Ecclesiastes 7:29, and so forth, but to the New Testament representation of the state of grace and the state of glory, an appeal that can in no way serve as proof. Scripture everywhere proceeds from the assumption that humanity is akin to God and his offspring. The service of God, the love for God, and fellowship with God are not superadded gifts but originally and integrally human. God claims all of man—mind, heart, soul, body, and all his or her energies—for his service and his love. The moral law is one for all humans in all times, and the moral ideal is the same for all people. There is no “lower” or “higher” righteousness, no double morality, no twofold set of duties. Original righteousness is so natural that, even according to most Catholic theologians, it would have been inherited by Adam’s descendants in the event of his obedience, and that even now the pagans still do what the law requires (Rom. 2:15). Accordingly, the objection that the Reformed position is caught in an antinomy since on the one hand it calls original righteousness “natural,” and on the other “amissible” and “accidental” — this objection is based solely on misunderstanding. Original righteousness is called natural, not because it consists in a certain substance or essence, but because it is a natural attribute or quality. Just as good health belongs to the nature of man, but is still “amissible,” that is, can still be lost, so it is with the image of God. Rome and the Reformation both agree that original righteousness is neither a material nor a spiritual substance, as the Manichaeans taught, but an “accident,” a quality. And the sole difference concerns the question whether it is naturally “accidental” or, at least in part, supernaturally

“accidental.” Rome only says of natural justice that it is naturally accidental, while the Reformation makes this claim for the whole of original righteousness.

But for that reason, as stated above, Rome’s entire case against the teaching that the image of God is natural collapses, for Rome itself acknowledges that natural justice is natural and still amissible, and thus it is no longer in a position to lodge this objection against the teaching of the Protestants. Its doctrine, accordingly, did not arise from the objection that the naturalness of original righteousness cannot be squared with its amissibility, but it owes its origin to an entirely different rationale, namely, the Neoplatonic view of the ideal for the Christian life. It is that Neoplatonism that the Reformation, basing itself on Scripture, rejected. In that connection it took care not to fall into the trap of any form of Manichaeism. Man lost none of his substance as a result of sin. In that sense humans are fully human even after the fall. But when man lost his original righteousness, he lost the harmony and health of his nature and became a sinner through and through. His nature in the sense of substance or essence remained, but the moral qualities naturally belonging to his nature were lost.

Lutheran or Reformed

Now this splendid view of the image of God and of original righteousness has come more clearly into its own in the Reformed church and Reformed theology than in the Lutheran. In Lutheran theology the image of God is restricted to original righteousness and was therefore totally lost when the latter was lost. In this theology the lines of demarcation between the spiritual and the worldly, between the heavenly and the earthly, are so sharply drawn that the result is two hemispheres, and the connection between nature and grace, between creation and re-creation is totally denied. The supernaturalist view is still at work here; the image of God stands alongside nature, is detached from it, and is above it. **The loss of the image, which renders man totally deaf and blind in spiritual matters, still enables him in earthly matters to do much good and in a sense renders him independent from the grace of God in Christ.** Reformed theology, on the other hand, **by its distinction between the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense**, has most soundly maintained the connection between substance and quality, nature and grace, creation and re-creation. It must be granted that this distinction has often been conceived too mechanically and needs to be further developed organically. Nevertheless, Reformed theology has most vividly brought out the fact **that the image of God in the narrower sense is most intimately bound up with that image in the broader sense, and that the two components together make up the full image of God.** The whole being, therefore, and not something in man but man himself, is the image of God. **Further, sin, which precipitated the loss of the image of God in the narrower sense [i.e., principally, the knowledge of God and holiness or love for God] and spoiled and ruined the image of God in the broader sense [man’s dominion over the earth, his being a rational and reasoning creature], has profoundly affected the whole person, so that, consequently, also the grace of God in Christ restores the whole person, and is of the greatest significance for his or her whole life and labor, also in the family, society, the state, art, science, and so forth. [So when John Owen says that man’s image was completely wiped clean, he’s referring in the narrow sense, the principle part of the image, the image of holiness or love for God.]**

Hermon Bavinck - on the image of God in fallen man:

At the same time and by the same token the image of God has been destroyed by sin. Rome understands by that statement that, while the supernatural gifts have been lost, the natural gifts have remained intact. Lutheran theologians originally held that humanity had totally lost the image of God inasmuch as that image consisted exclusively in moral attributes and that human beings were now like inanimate blocks. **But the Reformed maintained that, while the image of God had been lost in the restricted sense, yet in the broader sense, though completely mutilated and corrupted, it has not been destroyed.** [Belgic Confession] The image of God is not an external and mechanical appendage to us but integral to our very being: it is our health. Human beings who violate God's law do not cease to be human; they retain their body, soul, faculties, powers, intellect, will, and so on. But now these faculties are all devoted to the service of sin and function in the wrong direction. Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics vol. 3, p 174

G. Vos states in his *Reformed Dogmatics*:

30. What were the consequences of Adam's first sin for himself? a) Coinciding immediately with the first sin, and therefore not to be called a consequence in the strict sense, was the total corruption of human nature— thus, that there was now nothing more in it that was in accord with the demand of God's law. b) Related most closely to this was the loss of the gift of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. This is just the other side of what is noted in a). **Both can be summarized in the proposition that man by his first sin lost the image of God—that is, insofar as it was losable.** Vos, pg 272 on Sin

Saving Faith

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Subjects covered: Saving faith vs. temporary faith, digesting the word, mixing the word with faith – contemplation, an act of saving faith, faith worketh by love, incorporating the word, forming the image of God upon our souls, the duty of being spiritually minded...or heavenly minded vs. temporal. The implanting of truth upon the soul, that form of doctrine we receive, making an image upon our souls!

John Owen, Heb. 4:1-2 p 246-253 (307-315 online)
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_3.7-5.14.pdf

Obs. 7. The great mystery of useful and profitable believing consists in the mixing or incorporating of truth and faith in the souls or minds of believers.

This being a truth of much importance, I shall a little insist on the explanation and improvement of it, and that in the ensuing observations: —

1. There is a great respect, relation, and union, between the **faculties of the soul** [reason, understanding & the affections] and their **proper objects**, as they act themselves. Thus **truth**, as truth, is the proper object of the understanding. Hence, as it can assent unto nothing but under the notion and apprehension of truth, so what is so indeed, being duly proposed unto it, it embraceth and cleaveth unto necessarily and unavoidably. For truth and the understanding are, as it were, of the same nature, and being orderly brought together do absolutely incorporate. Truth being received into the understanding doth no way affect it nor alter it, but only strengthen, improve, enlarge, direct, and confirm it, in its proper actings. **Only it implants a type and figure of itself upon the mind**; and hence those things or adjuncts that belong unto one of these are often ascribed unto the other. So we say such a doctrine or proposition is certain, from that **certainty** which is an **affection of the mind**; and our apprehension of anything to be true, from the truth of that which we do apprehend. **This is that which we call knowledge**; which is the relation, or rather the **union, that is between the mind and truth, or the things that the mind apprehends as true**. And where this is not, when men have only fluctuating conceptions about things, their minds are filled with opinions, they have no true knowledge of anything.

2. The truth of the gospel, of the **promise** now under especial consideration, is **peculiar, divine, supernatural; and therefore for the receiving of it God requireth in us, and bestoweth upon us, a peculiar, divine, supernatural habit, by which our minds may be enabled to receive it**. **This is faith**, which is **“not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.”** **As the mind acts naturally by its reason to receive truths that are natural and suited to its capacity, so it acts spiritually and supernaturally by faith to receive truths spiritual and supernatural. Herewith are these truths to be mixed and incorporated. Believing doth not consist in a mere assent to the truth of the things proposed to be believed, but in such a reception of them as gives them a real subsistence and inbeing in the soul by faith**. We shall make things more fully to appear, and the better explain them, if we show, — (1.) How this is expressed in the Scripture, with respect to the nature, acts, and effects of faith; (2.) By what means it comes to pass that faith and the promise do so incorporate.

(1.) [1.] For faith itself; it is by our apostle said to be *επιζομένων ύψότασις*, Hebrews 11:1, — “the substance of things hoped for.” Now the *υποστασις* [substance] here, “the things hoped for,” are so termed with respect unto their goodness and their futurity, in which respects they are the objects of hope. But they are proposed unto faith, and respected by it, as true and real. And as such it is the *υποστασις*, or “substance” of them; **not absolutely and physically, but morally and in respect of use. It brings them into, makes them present with, and gives them a subsistence, as to their use, efficacy, and comfort, in the soul**. This effect of faith is so far of the nature of it, that the apostle makes use of it principally in that description which he gives us of it. Now, this **giving a subsistence in the mind unto**

the things believed, that they shall really operate and produce their immediate effects therein, **of love, joy, and obedience**, is that spiritual mixture and incorporation whereof we speak. **And here lies the main difference between saving faith and the temporary persuasion of convinced persons.** This latter gives no such subsistence unto the things believed in the minds of men, as that they should produce their proper effects therein. Those in whom it is believe the promise, yet not so as that thereby the things promised should have such an existence in their minds as to produce in them and upon them their proper effects. It may be said of them, as it is of the law in another sense, “They have the shadow of good things to come, but **not the very image of the things.**” [this is the importance of the *image of God* pictured in the diagram in what it consists in, that is implanted upon our souls, conforming us into his likeness by this instrument called faith (with its necessary actings, e.g., contemplation, mixing the word with itself...), without which we cannot please God – Heb 11:6, etc. This is why, while in Adam, we were without this image and hence could not please God and therefore must be born again, having this image restored to our souls! 2Cor. 4:6] **There is not a real reflection of the things they profess to believe made upon their minds.** For instance, the death of Christ, or “Christ crucified,” is proposed unto our faith in the gospel. The genuine proper effect hereof is to destroy, to crucify, or mortify sin in us. But where this is apprehended by a temporary faith only, this effect will not at all be produced in the soul. Sin will not be mortified, but rather secretly encouraged; for it is natural unto men of corrupt minds to conclude that they may continue in sin, because grace doth abound. On the other side, where faith gives the subsistence mentioned unto the death of Christ in the soul, it will undoubtedly be the death of sin, Romans 6:3-14. [i.e., true saving grace slays a man – Thomas Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins]

[2.] Faith in its acting towards and on the promise is also said to receive it. By it we receive the word; that is, it takes it into the soul and incorporates it with itself. There is more herein than a mere assent to the truth of what is proposed and apprehended. And sometimes we are said by it to receive the word itself, and sometimes to receive the things themselves which are the subject-matter of it. So are we in the first way said to “receive with meekness the ingrafted word,” James 1:21; to “**receive the promises,**” Hebrews 11:13; “having received the word,” 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:13. In the latter way to “**receive Christ**” himself, John 1:12, and “**the atonement**” made by him, Romans 5:11; which are the **principal subjects of the gospel**. And herein lies the life of faith; so that it is the proper description of an unbeliever, that “he doth not receive the things of the Spirit of God,” 1 Corinthians 2:14. And unbelief is the not receiving of Christ, John 1:11. There may be a tender made of a thing which is not received. A man may think well of that which is tendered unto him, and yet not receive it. But what a man doth receive **duly and for himself, it becomes properly his own**. This work of faith, then, in receiving the word of promise, with Christ and the atonement made by him therein, consists in its giving unto them a **real admittance into the soul**, to abide there as in their proper place; which is the mixture here intended by the apostle.

[3.] Hence and hereon the word becomes an **ingrafted word**, James 1:21, “Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the **ingrafted word**, which is able to save your souls.” The exhortation is unto reality and growth in believing. To this end the word is proposed, as that which is to be brought into the soul. And to that purpose room is to be made for it, by the casting out of such things as are apt to possess the mind and leave no admittance for the word. Now the ρυπαρία and περισσεία χαχίας, “filth” and “superfluity of evil,” here intended, are those corrupt, **carnal lusts** which by nature possess the minds of men, and render them “**enmity against**

God,” Romans 8:7. These are so fixed in the mind, **so incorporated** with it, that from them it is denominated **“fleshly” and “carnal.”** And they are to be put away, cast out, separated from the mind, uprooted and rejected, that the word may be brought in and received. **And how is that to be received? As a word that is to be ἐμφυτος, “implanted” or “ingrafted”** into the mind. Now, we all know that by ingrafting there comes an **incorporation**, a **mixture** of the natures of the stock and graft into one common principle of fruit-bearing. **So is the word received by faith, that being mixed with itself, both of them become one common principle of our obedience.** And on this account doth our Savior compare the word of the gospel unto seed, Matthew 13. Now seed brings forth no fruit or increase unless falling into the earth, it **incorporate** with the **fructifying virtue thereof.** **And with respect hereunto it is said that God writes his law in our hearts, Jeremiah 31:33.** As our apostle expounds it, 2 Corinthians 3:3: “The word of the gospel is by the Spirit of the living God written, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart.” **So is it ingrafted, when it is as really, by the help of faith, communicated unto and implanted on the heart, as written words are in their engraving on tables of stone.**

[4.] The effect of this ingrafting of the word, which belongs also to this spiritual incorporation, **is the casting of the soul into the mould, type, image, or figure of the doctrine of it,** [this is key!!; remember Jesus who chided the Pharisees that they kept the key of knowledge from the people? “For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.” This is why doctrine is vital in the respect of all that Owen is explaining here regarding truth being formed in us!] as our apostle expresseth it, Romans 6:17: “Ye have obeyed from the heart εἰς ὃν παρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης,” — “that form of doctrine that ye have been delivered up unto,” that ye have been **cast** into [hence the image being formed in us which cannot be effectual or to any good if it be not the truth of doctrine vs. false doctrine]. **This is that transformation of mind which we are exhorted to look after in the renovation that it receives by believing, Romans 12:2. As the scion, being grafted or inoculated into the stock, turns and changes the natural juice of the stock into another kind of fructifying nutriment than it had before, so the word being by its mixture with faith ingrafted into the soul, it changeth the natural operation of it to the production of spiritual effects, which before it had no virtue for.** And it transforms also the whole mind, according to the allusion, Romans vi. 17, **into a new shape, as wax is changed by the impression of a seal into the likeness of it.** [WOW! Now do you see the importance of sound doctrine!! - and why John said that if you be not in the doctrine you are not in Christ! 2 John 1:9 - ⁹“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”]

[5.] The expression of **faith** by **eating and drinking**, which is frequent in Scripture, as before intimated, gives further light into the **spiritual incorporation** that we inquire after. Thus the word is said to be “food,” “strong meat,” and “milk,” suited to the respective ages and constitutions of believers. And the Lord Christ, the principal subject of the word of the gospel, says of himself, that he is “the bread that came down from heaven,” that “his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.” **Faith is the eating of this food, this milk, this meat, this flesh.** Now in eating, when food is prepared, it is received, and by a due digestion turned into the very substance of the body of him that eats. Supplies proceed from thence unto the flesh, blood, and spirits of the eater, according as the principles of nature require and direct. So also must it be in this matter spiritually. This the Capernaïtes not understanding of old, but taking the words of our Savior in a **carnal manner**, thinking he would have them eat his flesh with

their teeth, and pour his blood down their throats, were offended at him, and perished in their unbelief, John 6:52,59. But he lets his disciples know that the whole mistake lay in the carnal imagination of those wretches. **He understood no more but the spiritual union of himself unto the souls of believers by faith**, — which is no less real and sure than the union that is between the body and the meat it receives when duly digested, verse 56; that “the flesh,” in the carnal sense, was of no use or profit, but that his words were “spirit and life,” verse 63. From an ignorance also of this spiritual incorporation of Christ in the promise and faith is it that the **church of Rome** hath feigned their monstrous carnal eating with their teeth of the flesh or body of Christ, though he had foretold them that it should profit them nothing. Wherefore, the word being prepared as spiritual food for the soul, faith receives it, and by a spiritual eating and digestion of it, turns it into an increase and strengthening of the **vital principles of spiritual obedience**. And then doth the word profit them that hear it.

Hence is the word of Christ said to **dwell** or **inhabit** in us: Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ **dwell in you richly** in all wisdom.” This inhabitation of the word, whereby it makes its residence and abode in the souls of men, is **from this spiritual incorporation or mixing with faith**. Without this it may have various effects upon the mind and conscience, but it comes to no abiding habitation. With some it casts its beams and rays for a season into their minds, φαίνει [**seems**], but is not “received” nor “comprehended,” John 1:5; and therefore οὐχ αὐγάζει, it “doth not enlighten them,” though it shines unto them, 2 Corinthians 4:4 [**“whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God should shine into them.”**] It comes and departs almost like lightning, which rather amazeth than guideth. With some it makes a transient impression upon the affections; so that they hear it and admit of its dispensation with joy and some present satisfaction, Matthew 13:20. But it is but like the stroke of a skillful hand upon the strings of a musical instrument, that makes a pleasant sound for the present, which insensibly sinks and decays until a new stroke be given; it hath no abode or residence in itself or the strings. No more hath the word that strikes on the affections only, and, causing a various motion and sound in joy, or sorrow, or delight, vanisheth and departeth. With some it lays hold on their consciences, and presseth them unto a reformation of their conversation, or course in this world, until they do many things gladly, Mark 6:20; but this is by an efficacious impression from without. The word doth not abide, inhabit, or dwell in any [**see Heb. 6:4, Matt. 13, parable of the sower**], but where it hath a subsistence given unto it in the soul by its incorporation with faith, in the manner described.

This, then, is savingly and profitably to believe. And thus is it with very few of the many that make profession so to do. It is but in one **sort of ground where the seed incorporates so with the earth as to take root and to bring forth fruit** [**Matt. 13**]. Many pretend to believe, few believe indeed, **few mix the word preached with faith**; which should give us all a **godly jealousy over our hearts** in this matter, that we be not deceived.

(2.) It is therefore worth our inquiry how, or by what means, faith is assisted and strengthened in this work of mixing the word with itself, that it may be useful and profitable unto them that hear it. **For although it is in and of the nature of faith thus to do**, yet of itself it doth but begin this work, or lay the foundation of it, there are certain **ways and means whereby it is carried on and increased** [**i.e., diligence**]. And among these, —

[1.] **Constant meditation**, wherein itself is exercised, and its acts multiplied. Constant fixing the mind by spiritual meditation on its proper object, is a principal means whereby faith mixeth it with itself. This

is χατοπρίζεσθαι, to **behold steadfastly the glory of God in Jesus Christ**, expressed in the **gospel as in a glass, 2 Corinthians 3:18**; for the **meditation of faith** is an intuition into the things that are believed, **which works the assimilation mentioned, or our being “changed into the same image,”** which is but **another expression of the incorporation insisted on.** As when a man hath an idea or projection of anything in his mind that he will produce or effect, he casteth the **image framed in his mind** upon his work, that it shall **exactly answer it in all things**; so, on the other side, when a man doth **diligently contemplate** [Rms 12:1, 2Cor. 3:18] on that which is without him,

it begets an idea of it in his mind, or casts it into the same image.

And **this meditation which faith worketh by**, for to complete the mixture or composition intended, is to be fixed, intuitive, constant, looking into the nature of the things believed. [Flavel: “Meditate upon what you hear; for, without meditation, it is not like to have any effectual operation upon you.” P 302, vol. 2] James tells us, that “he who is a mere hearer of the word is like a man considering his natural face in a glass, who goeth away, and immediately forgetteth what manner of man he was,” James 1:23,24. It is so with a man that takes but a slight view of himself; so is it with men that use a slight and perfunctory consideration of the word. But saith he, Ο παραχύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον, — “He that diligently bows down, and inquires into the law of liberty,” or the word (that is, by the meditation and inquiry mentioned), “that man is blessed in all his ways.” So doth that word signify, 1 Peter 1:12, where alone again it is used in this moral sense, **of diligent inquiry**, it signifying properly “**to bow down.**” This is that which we aim at.

The soul by faith meditating on the word of promise, and the subject-matter of Christ and his righteousness, Christ is thereby formed in it, Galatians 4:19, and the **word itself is inseparably mixed with faith** [hence, digesting the word, and hence the vital importance of being spiritually minded as opposed to being worldly minded as most are.], so as to subsist with it in the soul, and to produce therein its proper effects. This is to be “**spiritually minded;**” and φρονεῖν τὰ ἄνω, Colossians 3:2, to “**mind the things that are above,**” as those which yield the best relish and savor to the soul; which being constant will assert a mixture, incorporation, and mutual conformity between the mind and the object of it.

[2.] **Faith sets love at work upon the objects proposed to be believed.** There is in the gospel, and the promises of it, not only the truth to be considered which we are to believe and assent unto, but also the **goodness, excellency, desirableness**, and suitableness unto our condition, of the things themselves which are comprised in them. Under this consideration of them, they are **proper objects for love to fix on, and to be exercised about.** And “**faith worketh by love,**” not only in acts and duties of mercy, righteousness, and charity towards men, but also in adhesion unto and **delight in the things of God which are revealed to be lovely.** **Faith makes the soul in love with spiritual things.** **Love engages all other affections into their proper exercise about them,** and **fills the mind continually with thoughtfulness about them and desires after them;** and this **mightily helps** on the **spiritual mixture of faith and the word.** It is known that love is greatly effectual to work an **assimilation between the mind and its proper object.** It will **introduce its idea into the mind,** which will never depart from it. So will carnal love, or the **impetuous working of men’s lusts** by that affection. Hence Peter tells us that some men have οφθαλμούς μεστους μοιχαλιδος και αχαταπαυστους αμαρτιας, 2 Peter 2:14, — “eyes full of an adulteress.” Their **lust** hath so wrought by their **imagination** as to **introduce a constant idea of the object into their minds**, as if there were an **image of a thing in their eye**, which continually represented itself unto them as seen, whatever they looked on: therefore are they constantly unquiet, and “cannot

cease to sin.” There is such a mixture of lust and its object in their minds, that they continually commit lewdness in themselves. **Spiritual love, set on work by faith, will produce the like effect.** It will bring in that idea of the beloved object into the mind, until the eye be full of it, and the soul is continually conversant with it. Our apostle, expressing his great love unto Christ, above himself and all the world, as a fruit of his faith in him, Philippians 3:8,9, professeth that this was that which he aimed at, namely, that he “might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,” verse 10. The resurrection, with the sufferings and death of Christ which preceded it, he knew before and believed: but he aims at more, he would have a further inward experience of “the power of his resurrection;” that is, he would so mix it with faith, working by love to Christ, as that it might produce in him its proper effects, in an increase of his spiritual life, and the quickening of him unto all holiness and obedience. He would also be yet further acquainted with “the fellowship of his sufferings,” or obtain communion with him in them; that the sufferings of Christ subsisting in his spirit by faith, might cause sin to suffer in him, and crucify the world unto him, and him unto the world. By all which he aimed to be made completely “conformable unto his death;” that is, that whole Christ, with his life, sufferings, and death, **might so abide in him that his whole soul might be cast into his image and likeness**. I shall add no more concerning this truth, but only that it is best manifested, declared, and confirmed, in the minds and consciences of them who know what it is really to believe and to walk with God thereon. [Hence, see John Flavel on this point: “Truth is the sanctifying instrument, John 17: 17. The mould into which our souls are cast, Rom. 6: 17. According therefore to the stamps and impressions it makes upon our understandings, and the order in which truths lie there, will be the depth and lastingness of their impressions and influences upon the heart; as, the more weight is laid upon the seal, the more fair and lasting impression is made upon the wax. He that sees the grounds and reasons of his peace and comfort most clearly, is like to maintain it the more constantly.”

John Flavel expounds: *First*, That the chief happiness of man consisteth in the enjoyment of God; that the creature hath as necessary dependence upon God for happiness, as the stream hath upon the fountain, or the image in the glass upon the face of him that looks into it. For as the sum of the creature’s misery lies in this, depart from me; separation from God being the principal part of damnation; so, on the contrary, the chief happiness of the creature consisteth in the enjoyment and blessed vision of God, 1 John iii. 2. Ps. 17:15, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” [or image and hence delivered from sin, to worship God]

Flavel p 147 v2: - Now, **holiness** is the most precious thing in the world, it is the image of God, and the chief excellency of man. It is our evidence for glory, yea, and the first fruits of glory. In Christ dwells the fulness of grace, and from him, our head, it is derived and communicated to us; thus he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. ii. 11.

Believers have communion with Christ in his death; they die with him, Gal. ii. 20. “I am crucified with Christ,” i.e., the death of Christ hath a real killing and mortifying influence upon the lusts and corruptions of my heart and nature; true it is, he died for sin one way, and we die to sin another way; he died to expiate it, we die to it, when we mortify it; the death of Christ is the death of sin in believers; and this is a very glorious privilege; for the death of sin is the life of your souls; if sin do not die in you by mortification, you must die for sin by eternal damnation. If Christ had not died, the Spirit of God, by which you now mortify the deeds of the body, could not have been given unto you; then you must

have lived vassals to your sins, and died at last in your sins ; but the fruit, efficacy, and benefit of Christ's death is yours for the killing those sins in you, which else had been your ruin.

Saving Faith, Knowledge of Christ, & Sin

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Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xiv.xix.html>

[49] [John xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11.](#) “And when he is come he will convince the world of **sin**, of **righteousness**, and of **judgment**. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” In these words of our Saviour is a great manifestation of his divine knowledge and wisdom.

The greatest SIN that is in the world, is sin against the gospel, contempt of, and opposition to, Jesus Christ; and the greatest evidence of the sin and wickedness of man, is the world’s ill treatment of Christ, and the gospel, and the followers of Christ. In this does most clearly appear the malignant nature of sin, and the true nature of it is fully manifest; and particularly that violent opposition that appears on occasion of the pouring out of the Spirit of God. As the coming of the Spirit is the occasion of this; so his coming eventually holds forth matter of conviction to the world of its wickedness. And those that are **savingly taught** by the Spirit, are in the first place **convinced of sin**, especially as appearing in their sinning against Christ, or against God, as revealing himself in the gospel. Thus we find that immediately after the pouring out of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost, the Jews that were awakened, were reprov’d for this sin, of rejecting and crucifying Christ, and for this they were pricked in their hearts, and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do,” [Acts ii.](#); see also [chap. lii. 13, 14.](#), &c. [iv. 11.](#), &c. [v. 30.](#), &c. [vii. 51.](#), &c. And when Saul was converted, this especially was the sin which he was reprov’d for, and convinced of. [Acts ix. 4, 5.](#) In most places where the apostles preached, there first arose great opposition, and the gospel finally prevailed against their opposition, and opposers were converted; and in this case we may suppose the thing wherein chiefly they were convinced of their sinfulness, was their opposition to Christ. This seems to have been the case with the jailer; and so in all ages, they that are truly humbled by the Spirit of God, and brought to repentance, are wont to be convinced of their sins against the gospel.

Gospel light and knowledge consist in these three things, and the things implied in them.

A conviction of these three things [[sin, righteousness & judgment](#)], is the sum of that conviction which is implied in **saving faith**. By the knowledge of these things, God’s people say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

In the **knowledge** of these things consists the **true knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, or the light of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ**. The **knowledge of these things is the foundation of all true compliance with the gospel in the heart, of repentance, faith, hope, charity, obedience, and joy**. Pg 793 vol. 2 Jonathan Edwards, [Notes on the Bible](#)

Everything in the Christian, that belongs to the **spiritual and divine life**, is spoken of in Scripture as being hidden, known only to God and to himself. His life is said to be hid with Christ in God, but to appear, and to be made manifest at the day of judgment, when Christ shall appear. [Col. iii. 3, 4.](#) Their **joy** is said to be what others intermeddle not with. Their spiritual food is said to be hidden. [Rev. ii. 17.](#) “To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the

hidden manna." So Christ told his disciples that he had meat to eat that they knew not of. And their new name, which is the name they have as new creatures, as born again, is said to be what no man knows but he that receives it. Rev. ii. 17. The **heart**, which is the thing that God looks at, and in which are those spiritual ornaments and graces, by which persons are sincere Christians, is called the **hidden man**. 1 Peter iii. 4. "But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible," &c. p797 Notes on the Bible

1Pet3:4 *"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit [with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit – NKJV], which is in the sight of God of great price."*

[See diagram regarding those **true riches** which are communicated to the elect; those represent the true beauty of God, his internal glory which are his moral excellencies.]

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as "the knowledge of faith" and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, "Faith" in DB, I 837: "The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands."] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, "unconscious" salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation. Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ. But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, our knowledge of God on earth is "a knowledge of faith." Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24). Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, pg 103

Here is a thorough discourse on faith; what it is and what it is not. Use this for your edification and self-examination. It includes Rome's view of faith, the relationship of knowledge to faith, etc.

Notes on Faith

Excerpts from Reformed Dogmatics

By Geerhardus Vos

Pgs. 705-735

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30. Does knowledge belong to the essence of faith?

Yes; and to understand this well, the sentiments of the [Roman Catholics](#), which in more than one respect deviate from Scripture, must first be rejected. **Rome eliminates the great difference there is between historical and saving faith. It demands nothing more than a historical assent to the truth, without a heartfelt trust having to be included.** This means that it has also applied its principle of externalization to faith and thereby adapted it to the masses.

The second peculiarity in **Rome's view** of faith is that the element of knowledge is eliminated and everything included in assent. If only assent is present, knowledge may be lacking, and there will still be faith. In order to accentuate this, Rome makes a distinction between *fides implicita*, "undeveloped faith," and *fides explicita*, "developed faith." The first works without knowledge of the truth, the second with knowledge of the truth. If only one is ready to believe what the church believes, this counts as faith for him. That is the principle of clericalism applied to the concept of faith. As the clergy performs many other things for the laity, so they can also believe for them, and a blind assent is all that is demanded of the laity itself. The result is that an independent quest of the divine testimonies is unnecessary for the common people and is opposed rather than promoted by the church. The language of the church is an alien language that the people do not understand. The preaching of the Word moves into the background, the rite into the foreground, and the latter works on the emotions more than on faith.

The third point, finally, that characterizes **Rome's doctrine** of faith is the distinction between *fides informis*, "unformed faith," and *fides formata*, "formed faith." The former is the bare assent to historical faith described above. **Formed faith is faith formed and perfected by love so that it becomes justifying faith.** This is connected with the error of the Roman church in the article of justification. Because they do not view this as a judicial act of God that imputes to us the merits of Christ **but as an infusion of subjective righteousness, as a making righteous**, so too a character must be ascribed to faith that accords with that doctrine. Now, love is the root of all Christian virtues. **Faith that makes righteous (holy) subjectively will therefore be able to consist in nothing other than love.** This distinction between formed and unformed faith is therefore nothing other than the principle of **works-holiness applied to the concept of faith.** And we see that by its three fundamental errors of externalization, clericalism, and works-holiness, Rome has transformed faith into its own caricature.

Concerning the second point of difference, which is only at issue here, we hold that the act of faith is completely impossible without knowledge. The disposition to believe something can be present without knowledge, but not the act. Thus it is not at all apparent what would remain of the act of faith if one removed knowledge. If one says that a conscious intention remains to accept as true all that someone says, then we answer that this can only be called trust in a person in the most general sense, but it cannot bear the name of faith. And furthermore, even this, too, will still include a certain measure of knowledge, for this general trust in the person also undoubtedly stems from knowledge of the person and of certain statements that he has made. However great or little the knowledge may be, **there is always knowledge where there is faith**. The danger resident in Rome's conception is just this: **It makes this knowledge of faith, which it cannot do without, into knowledge of the authority and trustworthiness of the church instead of knowledge of the authority and trustworthiness of God**. **So, as the object of faith, the church comes to stand in the place of God. Man is not made aware of God and the Savior so that trust might develop from this knowledge**. He is simply placed before the church and the clergy, and from what is proclaimed to him about their authority, a **blind submission** must develop in him that is called "faith."

The scriptural view of faith is a completely different one. It includes that a thing, in order to be believed, **must be known**. This is sufficiently evident from the manner in which, for example, in the Gospel of John, **knowledge of God is interchanged with faith in God, knowledge with faith in the Savior**. In this way, to know God and Christ is eternal life. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10:14, 17; John 6:69). Believing is accompanied with confession, but then there must be something to confess and something made known. One is warned in Scripture that by lack of knowledge one can be destroyed (Hos 4:6). That God accompanies the operations of His grace with external calling presupposes the same principle. And that believing is characterized by the image of seeing also allows no other view. In Isaiah 53:11, it is said that by His knowledge the Servant of the Lord will justify many, a proof that saving faith includes a certain degree of knowledge.

31. *Can we establish in advance how great must be this knowledge required for faith?*

No, we can only say in general that the knowledge must be sufficient to produce a conception of what one believes. For every exercise of faith, only knowledge of the particular object to which faith is directed and with which it is inseparably connected is necessary. To the degree that someone has a clear historical understanding of the content of Scripture, to that degree will he also be able to exercise faith in a historical sense with respect to Scripture. **To the degree that someone has a clear and distinct knowledge of the person of the Mediator, of His offices and states, to that degree his exercise of faith will also be richer and more comprehensive**. **Therefore, knowledge is not only essential for faith, but also the criterion for the extent of faith and for its inward riches**. Still, it is true that saving faith can be accompanied by a minimum of knowledge. In any case, we must hold that its object is not the truth of God in general but specifically the Mediator of the covenant of grace. Of course, everyone who believes savingly in the Mediator will also be prepared to believe all of the testimonies of God. Still, in the first place, his faith is not directed to them in general, and a great ignorance of the truth in detail is in itself not a proof of the absence of saving faith.

32. *With what things must this knowledge of faith not be confused?*

a) In the first place, it must not be confused with comprehending the things that one believes. Comprehending means having a clear discernment of a thing, of the basis from which it exists, and of the necessity with which it derives from that basis. At the same time, however, it is evident from this that **comprehending and believing are not the same**. What we believe is something positive; what we comprehend is a natural-logical conclusion.

b) **Neither must the knowledge of faith be confused with a bare portrayal of things.** [In other words there is saving knowledge of Christ and just a head knowledge (or historical knowledge) without the heart involved.] To portray is not to know. And were the knowledge of faith a bare portrayal, then it would not belong to the essence of faith. This may already be ascertained from the fact that someone can have a picture of certain things without having faith in these things. If this portrayal was knowledge, and knowledge an essential part of faith, then unbelievers would have an essential part of faith. And the above-mentioned reasoning of those who would exclude knowledge from faith would then in fact be conclusive. They do say that knowledge is required for faith and necessarily precedes it, but it is therefore not a part of faith. But that is not what is meant. Our knowledge that we intend to have viewed as an essential part of faith is more than a bare portrayal, in which case it would still be completely in doubt whether or not a reality corresponded to it. **The knowledge of faith is of that sort that it immediately places things as real to our view.** Any divide between the portrayal of the thing and the reality of the thing is alien to it. That is exactly the deep sense of the statement in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the substance of things that one hopes for, and an evidence of things that one does not see." From the outset, the representation of the knowledge that we carry in our consciousness of the objects of faith **is colored by this distinctive reality.** The knowledge of faith is a cognizance of truths inseparably connected with the thought that those truths express realities. It is not as if, like a judge, we first hear the testimony of God and, in the meantime, maintain our intellect in a neutral attitude in order only later to decide calmly how great the evidence is and what may or may not be true of what is testified. If it really happened in this manner, knowledge would have to go its way alone for a time, without being accompanied by that consciousness of reality. In other words, it would not be knowledge, but only cognition. Believing presupposes antecedent trust, by which all questions are cut off regarding whether or not the testimony is to reality. As soon as God opens His Word in order to address us, the knowledge of faith begins to work and immediately therefore also appears as faith-knowledge, bears in itself the character of faith, and has a distinctive coloration. It is extremely difficult to analyze this uniqueness psychologically, but one can appeal to each experience. **We hold, therefore, that knowledge is an essential part of faith, is resident in faith,** even at the risk that it will be difficult for us to differentiate knowledge and trust.

33. *Does what is said here also apply to saving faith —namely, that knowledge is an essential part of faith and not merely its prerequisite?*

Yes, this applies both to saving faith as well as to faith in the wider sense. **This saving faith also begins with a knowledge that presents the truth to our view as real.** By this knowledge it brings us, as it were,

into contact with the living Christ. The picture of the Mediator that **we receive in our consciousness is a picture based on knowledge and not a portrayal of fantasy**. We do not regard it as a portrait of a stranger, who as far as we are concerned can be the creation of the fantasy of the painter, but with the active interest of seeking sinners, we drink in His features; we become cognizant of the truth as the only means that can bring us into a relationship with Christ. **Hence this knowledge is an essential part of saving faith. It is the first act of receiving the Savior into our soul. He enters within through the gate of our thought-life in order also to be appropriated immediately by our will and to rule over our affections.**

And knowledge, as belonging essentially to faith, also becomes here the criterion for the extent of faith, if not the plumb line of its depth. Since faith begins with receiving the figure of the Savior, so believing fully would have to begin with taking in that figure in all its fullness, from all sides and with all its features. To admit Him as prophet, priest, and king, as our rich, full messiah **through the windows of the intellect into the heart, would be the first act of an ideal and perfect faith.**

From this it at the same time follows that in saving faith there is something different and more than the old knowledge of **historical faith**. Many imagine it as if assent and trust came with that old historical faith, in order then with these three to form saving faith. This is not the case. On the basis of that earlier knowledge a new knowledge arises—completely different and to be compared with nothing else—with which only a true believer, regenerated by God’s Spirit, knows. In this is also a new proof how, for those who have saving faith, knowledge is not merely a *conditio sine qua non* of faith but also a part of the act of faith itself. If it were merely the old historical knowledge augmented with assent and trust, then there would be no difference, as far as that knowledge is concerned, between those who have saving faith and those who do not have it. And from this it would again follow that knowledge was not included in faith but preceded it. Clearly, it is the reverse. For the regenerate, faith is irradiated and permeated with knowledge; it radiates knowledge; it is a seeing and knowing faith.

34. *To what extent can one still say that the knowledge of faith precedes saving faith?*

The distinction has already been made above between faith in a wider and in a narrower sense. All agree that the object of saving faith in the **narrower sense** is the Lord Christ, the Mediator. To believe in Him is what justifies us before God. On the other hand, having knowledge of our sins and that before God we are worthy of eternal damnation—namely, a spiritual knowledge—belongs to faith in the **wider sense**. Someone who is convicted of his guilt and his depravity has that conviction, since he believes God’s declaration concerning it. Now, it is obvious that the knowledge present in the latter is necessary for the knowledge of saving faith. A certain degree of consciousness of sin is necessary for the exercise of justifying faith. But it would clearly be wrong to say that justifying faith includes this knowledge as a part of its essence. **The knowledge that is a part of justifying faith focuses, as does that faith as a whole, on Christ, the Mediator.** It does this under the impression of the knowledge of sin. But still, if we wish to speak accurately, this knowledge of sin does not belong with it as a part. The faith that justifies and saves looks on the Savior, not on the danger. Surely, when one desires to look with interest on the Savior, a view of the danger precedes. And surely, looking to the Savior may be continuously interchanged with looking to the danger. Yes, even more: Since the Savior in His quality as savior is completely the opposite of the danger, looking on Him naturally includes the idea of the

danger. His suffering and death can only be viewed in direct connection with sin. We may therefore say that in practice this more nuanced distinction between faith in the wider sense and faith in the narrower, saving sense very rarely becomes conscious. But that is ultimately so with all the elements of the act of faith, and therefore this experience can never hinder us from distinguishing as accurately as possible. We say, therefore, that consciousness of sin precedes saving faith as an indispensable requirement but does not belong to the knowledge of faith itself.

35. *How is the definition of saving faith that our Catechism gives to be understood?*

The [Heidelberg] Catechism [21] says: "A true faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured trust," etc.² However, by this is not meant that all the truths revealed in God's Word are directly the object of saving faith, and that even where knowledge of them is lacking one would still need to speak of believing them. Only opposition to Rome is expressed in the definition. Rome said: "Believing is only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold as true all that God has revealed." Protestants: "Not only a certain knowledge, but also," etc.

36. *Can one also put too much emphasis on knowledge as part of faith?*

Yes, the **Rationalists** do that. They have the whole of religion occupied with rational conviction. There is also a dead and deadening orthodoxy that has this feature in common with Rationalism. No one side of faith may be elevated at the expense of the others. Such one-sidedness always calls forth a reaction that degenerates into the opposite extreme, and so balance is never reached. Schleiermacher's doctrine of feeling followed the rationalistic religion of reason.

37. *Is it easy to distinguish the assent of faith from knowledge as described above?*

No. As we have seen from the start, knowledge is present from the outset with the awareness that it takes note of truth and that it has to do with realities. That is already an implicit assent. It is precisely assent that makes this knowledge such a unique act. In order to distinguish both clearly, we could limit knowledge to becoming cognizant of the truth. Against that, however, are two objections:

a) In distinguishing in this way, one obtains a conception of the knowledge of faith that is falsified by reality. Nowhere is there such knowledge of faith that it would not be under the formative influence of assent. One can compare our sense perception with the knowledge of faith. In the former, two elements are also present: the reception of sense impressions and the assent that a reality outside us corresponds to them. Now, however, the knowledge that we have by our sense perception nowhere appears detached from the assent that what is perceived is real. With that knowledge, assent is given automatically. It seems absurd to us to think that we would know and not agree. Likewise with faith. When we have someone whom we trust completely, then it does not occur to us first to consider his words in the abstract. We know already assenting and assent already knowing; the one permeates the other. Someone who with us heard the same thing but did not assent would also know it in a different way. Knowing in the way we do is equivalent to assenting.

b) In distinguishing in this way, one could also lose sight of **the distinction between historical and saving faith**. The knowledge of these two differs precisely in this: **that the latter is a knowledge that is accompanied by the warmth and glow of conviction**. And precisely by that, it becomes a wholly new knowledge that is permeated by this saving assent that casts a new light on everything. When by His illumination the Holy Spirit makes the truth clear to the eye of our soul, it can no longer be denied. Receiving its impression in the consciousness coincides with assenting to it.

For this reason, it is better to say that **knowledge and assent** are not two different acts, but two sides of one and the same act. They work reciprocally on each other and are simultaneous, and we cannot say that the one is independent of the other. In the same moment that the one begins to be active, the activity of the other begins. Furthermore, **knowledge is the receptive and more passive, assent the expressive and more active side of the act of faith**. And for the consciousness, both are fused together as an indissoluble unity.

38. *Show that according to Scripture assent belongs to faith as an essential part.*

John 3:33 reads, “The one who receives his testimony has sealed that God is true.” Here the verb *lambanein* [Greek] is used—literally, “to long for something in order to take it.” This expresses very precisely the more active side of assent. It is still more than a receiving; it is an accepting and assimilating (cf. also Col 2:5–6).

39. *Is this assent an act of the intellect or an act of the will?*

This is very difficult to decide. One could say in general that the decision on the truth or the reality of a thing is due to the intellect. Everything about whether it is true or untrue belongs to the sphere of the intellect and not under the jurisdiction of the will. This is why many discuss the assent of faith as a purely intellectual act, certainly an act of the enlightened intellect effected by God’s Spirit, but with that still an act performed by the capacity of the intellect. In fact, some go even further and draw not only assent in its entirety but also trust within the intellect, so that they insist on viewing the whole of faith not as an act of the will but as an act of the intellect. Now, it is certainly clear that knowing as such, when faith is excluded, is a purely intellectual act. The conviction that this or that conclusion follows from premises does not include an act of the will. It is otherwise when the testimony of another is the ground on which I assent to the truth. A **moral element** is present in that assent. This appears, above all, in such cases where my assent to testimony that someone gives stems from an antecedent trust in general that I place in his person. Man in his sinful condition has an inclination to withdraw into himself, and this sinful, selfish directing of his will also reveals itself in his intellectual life. **If now he does not seek the basis for a judgment of the intellect within himself but in another, then that is a turning from himself and a resting in another**. We believe that this does not occur without the will. The assent of faith is an act by which man submits to the authority of another. That demands an act of the will. Of course, the expression of the verdict itself—“this or that is true”—is reserved for the intellect. To say that the will does this would be a confusion of concept and would make faith an arbitrary act. But no one will be able to deny that in any case this act of the intellect is

preceded and accompanied by a movement of the will. Also, in the assent of faith the capacities of the soul concur and penetrate each other in their activity.

40. *What question is connected with what has just been posited?*

The question regarding the actual **formal act of faith**. While some placed it in the **assent** of the judging intellect, others thought that it was to be sought **in consequent trust**. The objection that Brakel and others had against the first view resided mainly in the fact that faith was thus made a matter of the intellect. It is already evident from what was just said above, however, **that in every act of faith something more than the intellect is at work: the capacity of judgment that decides what is true and not true**. And, conversely, as will be still further evident below, a true trusting of faith is unthinkable apart from intellectual assent. Thus we can already note provisionally that the pending dispute appears to rest again and again on a one-sided emphasis on one act of faith.

41. *Which is the third act or side of faith?*

Trust, which we can describe as resting in the testimony of another for anything significant that affects our lives.

42. *Describe in more detail in what this trust consists.*

a) It is not an exclusively intellectual act. If I believe the statement of the doctor that I will be healthy again, and this intellectual act now becomes the starting point of a trusting disposition, then in the latter there is already more than an intellectual judgment. Without the judgment, "that is the truth," the disposition of trust cannot be present. Also, the former could not be present where the latter is lacking. They are inseparably connected with each other, but still not the same.

b) It is also not an act of the feeling. Of course, the doctor's statement above, for someone who hovered between life and death, exercises a great influence on his emotional life. The emotions of fear and anxiety, agitation, etc., will disappear to make room for the opposite emotions. There is thus most decidedly an effect of faith on feeling, or rather a retroactive effect of feeling on the consciousness of faith that will nowhere and never be entirely absent. **Nevertheless, feeling is not trusting**. Two people can be endowed with faith in different degrees. Faith in A can be stronger than in B. But B is an impassioned person in whom emotional life has developed much more strongly than intellectual life and the life of the will. The result will be that B, with his lesser degree of faith, at the same time has more emotional activity in connection with this faith than A. His joy, his delight, his praise will be much stronger. But no one would gather from this that more inward power of faith is at work in him than in his more calm and sedate brother. A strongly trusting faith is certainly compatible with certain natures where strong emotional activity is absent. Trust is not resident in feeling.

c) So then, nothing else is left but to **locate trust in the will**. Not, however, in the will as the capacity for particular expressions of the will, but understood more deeply as the direction and

disposition of the soul. There is in man an impulse by which he moves out toward certain things. There must be a certain object for this impulse in which he comes to rest. In a sick person there is an irresistible yearning, a tendency in which his entire life participates. If the doctor declares that the sick person will get better, this yearning lays hold of that declaration, rests in it, and finds its end for which it reached out. Trust exists in this. This may also be applied to saving faith. **In the awakened sinner is an impulse, a desire, a striving, a hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness. The soul extends itself toward this, moves itself in this direction, so that the whole life is drawn thither.** Now when God, as the physician of the soul, testifies that in Christ satisfaction of His righteousness is obtained, then this urge for righteousness that God approves finds its rest in this testimony and settles itself in it as its end point. And that is the trust of saving faith.

d) One now sees clearly in what the uniqueness of this trust is to be sought as distinct from a bare act of the intellect and a mere movement of emotion. An intellectual judgment of the truth or untruth of something—also of the testimony of another—can occur for me without my having a direct interest in it. The fact remains outside me. Antecedent, personal trust certainly does not occur without an act of the will, but it is an inclination of the will of a different sort than that meant here. The trust spoken of here always presupposes an interest, a being involved with the truth communicated by the testimony. This interest can be greater or smaller, depending on whether it affects a less significant part of my life or my life at its core. For saving faith, at issue is a question of life and death for the sinner: How can I, a sinner, live before God? Hence, trust is a trust for life that affects the soul at its core. **Emotion**, on the other hand, does share this distinctiveness with the trust of faith in that it interests me personally and is not outside me, but it is purely subjective; emotion causes me to rest in myself. The trust of faith, in contrast, is the resting of the impulse of my life in something that lies outside me, is distinguished from me, something objective.

43. *Is it correct to say that the intellect is active in the knowledge of faith, the will in the assent of faith, and emotion in the trust of faith?* **This is good!**

No, this idea must be rejected. **Emotion can on no account be taken as the seat of faith.** Moreover, the activities of the intellect and trust and those of the will and trust may not be so separated. On the whole, it is true that, in the knowledge of faith, the intellect comes to the fore; in assent and trust, the will; but also, a complete separation may not be maintained here. Our result, in general, is this: **The seat of faith, as far as its activity is concerned, is in the intellect and in the will, while these expressions are always accompanied more or less by emotion.** On the other hand, the seat of faith, as disposition, is in the heart as the common root of intellect and will.

44. *How many types of faith are distinguished?*

One is accustomed to distinguish (a) faith that is believed (*quae creditur*); (b) faith with which one believes. The first, then, stands for the content of faith, as we speak, for example, of "the Protestant faith." The question, however, is whether Scripture uses the word "faith" in this sense. It appears at least to come close to it a few times (cf. Jude 3, 20; both explanations are possible in 1 Tim 1:4, 19; 2:7;

3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 21). Faith with which one believes (*qua creditur*) is faith as disposition and act of man. It is further distinguished into: (1) historical faith; (2) temporary faith; (3) faith in miracles; (4) saving faith.

45. *What is historical faith?*

A mere assent to revealed and known truth. The designation “historical faith” does not mean that the object of this faith is only history—that is, a description of bygone things and past events—for to it also belong truths that are still valid at this moment. Neither is the meaning that one accepts certain things as true on the testimony of history, for one can have the living witness before him. In a certain sense, Nicodemus exercised historical faith when he said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God” [John 3:2]. The designation means, rather, that one accepts divine truths as one accepts history for **which one does not have a personal interest**, and one nonetheless gives credence. History is taken here in the sense of something that we stand apart from and only instills in us theoretical interest. Other designations that have been proposed are: “contemplating faith” or “faith of bare assent” (Witsius); “speculative faith” (Hodge).

46. *On what grounds may this historical faith rest?*

On more than one. It can be a merely authoritative faith—that is, holding something to be true based on the testimony of parents or a teacher or public opinion in general. It can also rest on historical research into the hallmarks of divine revelation. Finally, it can also have its basis in inner evidence that the truth possesses as coming from God and, for which, **by common grace, the eye of man is more or less opened.** [See Heb. 6:4]

47. *Where does Scripture speak of this faith?*

Among other places, in James 2:19, some have “a faith of the devils”; Matthew 7:26, “hearing and not doing”; John 11:42, “that they may believe that you sent me”; Acts 26:26, “I know that you believe them [the prophets].”

48. *What is “temporary faith”?*

It is assent to the truth for a time with an application to oneself, not without some emotion and fruit, but out of an unregenerate heart.

49. *From where is the designation derived?*

From Matthew 13:20–21, “But as to what was sown in rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and who immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself but endures for a time [*proskairos estin*],” etc. What is said there of seed sown among thorns (Matt 13:22) also must be understood of temporary faith.

50. *To what extent is this designation “temporary faith” applicable?*

Insofar as temporary faith is not finally lasting in duration. In death, it is surely taken from a person, and he learns to know himself as an unbeliever. However, it can also continue until death if there are no particular circumstances that intervene in order to bring his unrighteousness to light. In oppression and persecution, it is immediately revealed in its true character. Conversely, it can also arise in extraordinary circumstances—for example, in times of great distress, of war and contagious diseases—and then, as soon as these dangers have blown over, it disappears again. Some have wanted to call it a hypocritical faith, but incorrectly, for conscious hypocrisy is not at issue here. Those with temporary faith in fact think that they have true faith. The designation “presumed faith” would then be better, but not, as Witsius wants to call it, “an arrogant or conceited faith.”

51. *By what is temporary faith distinguished from historical faith?*

By the personal interest it shows in the truth and by the retroactive effect of feeling on the truth. The word is received, that is, personally appropriated, and received with joy, that is, appropriated with emotion.

52. *By what is temporary faith distinguished from saving faith?*

It is very difficult to specify or ascertain this difference for a third party, although there is a profound difference. Christ says, **“It has no root in itself.”** Thus, **saving faith is embedded in the regenerated root of the soul and is an expression of spiritual life that originates from this depth.** **Temporary faith** is an action of the soul that has been brought about externally at the periphery, on the exterior of the consciousness. It is precisely for this reason that it vanishes as soon as this activity from the outside ceases, and the unregenerate ground of life can reveal itself as it is in reality. Now, however, since no one can scrutinize the root of his own life, the question then arises how he can be assured that the faith he exercises is not temporary but saving faith. Many characteristics are enumerated by theologians, and since the assurance of faith is possible through self-examination, and Scripture stirs us up to examine whether we are in the faith [2 Cor 13:5], there must be signs. The main issue will reside in this: **Temporary faith runs on feeling and has a subjective basis.** It rests on the enjoyment that the activities of faith bring along with the truth and, to this extent, is selfish in nature. **Where it is no longer sustained by this pleasurable caress of feeling, it becomes vexed and ceases.** [Hence they fall away from the faith – not from saving faith but from this temporary faith.] Thus, there do not always need to be external advantages by which it is driven, and the allure of a more inward caress of soul can be the cause in back of it. A believer has therefore to ask himself whether he is being led and driven in his activities of faith by this subjective urge for enjoyment, this craving for false assurance, by antinomian, transitory sympathies, or by a passion for the honor of God by hungering and thirsting after His righteousness. **The latter is always something that can only be worked by the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart.**

53. *Is there more in this temporary faith than ordinary historical knowledge?*

There can be knowledge in it that is different not in principle but still in degree than ordinary historical knowledge. Scripture speaks of “having once been enlightened” (Heb 6:4). This certainly falls

under the rubric of temporary faith, although this is not to say, conversely, that all temporary faith falls under the rubric of Hebrews 6:4–8. If the latter were so, the exercising of temporary faith would exclude obtaining saving faith. Thus, a special, enlightening work by the Holy Spirit is possible by which the truth makes a deep impression on man, and one or other aspect of the truth begins to work on his will so that delight in the truth results. Normally, then, this temporary faith will not be directed to the truth in general but very specifically to the heart of the truth, to the gospel of redemption. In this, too, it is different than historical faith, for the latter makes no distinctions and treats all truth with the same indifference.

54. *Who have eliminated the distinction between this temporary faith and saving faith?*

All who teach an apostasy of the saints and thus suppose that the difference lies only in time. If someone's faith continues until death, then it is saving faith, for then the possibility of apostasy ceases. Conversely, if it vanishes earlier, then it is not saving faith. So, in particular, the **Remonstrants**, who lack the deeper concept of faith and whose saving faith is basically nothing more than an extended and enduring temporary faith. According to us, the two are specifically different.

55. *What is miracle faith?*

The assurance on the testimony of another that a miracle will certainly occur by me or to me (Matt 17:20; 1 Cor 13:2; Acts 14:9–10). It appears from some of these passages that this faith was in relation not only to miracles, in the narrower sense, but is associated with the extraordinary gifts of grace in general. Man has a natural confidence that he can perform this or that activity. God, however, can grant to him to perform activities that as such lie beyond the reach of human nature and for which he feels himself unable. Every attempt to do them must happen in faith. This is even clearer when man is merely the instrument or proclaimer of a miraculous work performed directly by God Himself. Then he must trust absolutely the miracle proclaimed, that God will not put him to shame.

56. *Is this miracle faith in an active sense always accompanied by saving faith?*

No, for it only includes trust in God in the physical realm, while saving faith is a trust in God and Christ in a spiritual respect. This miracle faith is certainly a glorious gift, but does not so affect the root of human life so that it could only be given to someone who is regenerate. To be elevated above the limitation of our material nature by trusting in God's miraculous power can be accompanied by unbelief in the deeper sense (Matt 7:22–23, 27; cf. Matt 10:1, 4).

57. *Is miracle faith also spoken of in a passive sense?*

Yes; then it is the certainty that a miraculous work will be done to me (John 11:40; Acts 14:9). Since the miracles of the Lord undoubtedly have a symbolic significance and picture His work of spiritual deliverance, it was in all respects fitting that faith was required in the recipients. Thus this **passive miracle faith** appears as a direct reflection of saving faith. In some instances, it merges with the latter, so that implications are drawn from it that are connected with saving faith (cf. Matt 8:10–13). Still, in no way is it to be identified with saving faith, and it can be present without it. The multitude that

followed Jesus because of bread certainly possessed miracle faith but otherwise was unbelieving; compare John 11:22 with 25–27, where both kinds of faith are clearly distinguished.

58. *Is there still a place for such miracle faith at the present time?*

Roman Catholics affirm this and substantiate this affirmation with stories of miracles that serve for defending their church. Protestants would rather answer negatively. If miracle faith will be real faith, then there must be a specific promise of God to which it can point. The Roman Catholic church believes that such a promise has been given once for all to the church in general—that is, to the clergy. It is entirely fitting that in a church that extends the line of revelation and lays claim to infallibility for itself, miracles occur as accompanying signs of revelation. For us, this is a priori improbable. We lack the promise of God that in one or other particular case He will do miracles. Otherwise, it is not entirely right to say, “Miracle faith no longer exists,” and to claim, “Miracles no longer occur.”

59. *From what standpoint must saving faith be discussed?*

From a soteriological standpoint. With that in view, we have thus come to the third part of our treatment. In order to understand well what this saving faith is, one must relate it to the rest of the steps of the order of salvation. Light can only be shed on its mysterious nature if one poses the question: What is the reason why this faith occupies such a prominent place in the order of salvation that it overshadows all the other aspects? What is there in faith by which it is suited to be the great condition of salvation? Why are we saved by faith and not in any other way? That is, we cannot arrive at clarity here by a penetrating psychological analysis or by examining the activity of faith within ourselves, **but only by considering faith objectively on the basis of God’s Word** as an appropriate phenomenon whose uniqueness corresponds to the uniqueness of the way of salvation along which God saves sinners. However much that is mysterious faith may otherwise possess, on this point it must be clear and comprehensible.

60. *How can this saving faith be defined?*

The best definition is that of the [Heidelberg] Catechism [21]: “A true faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold to be true what God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a sure confidence, which the Holy Spirit works by the gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are given by God, out of pure grace, only for the sake of the merits of Christ.”

61. *In what does the significance, the form, and the essence of faith lie?*

Not in a single one of the three aspects that it possesses—not in knowledge, assent, or trust in itself—but in the unique relationship to God in which these three—knowledge, assent, and trust—place us.

62. **In what, then, does this unique relationship consist?**

In this: that our **consciousness**, worked upon by the Holy Spirit, turns away entirely from our own doing as the ground of our righteousness before God, and to the triune God, and specifically to the Mediator, as they appear in the covenant of grace, in order to **rest** in that.

63. *What is the result of this?*

That precisely by this consciousness of faith within us God receives the honor that is due to Him by virtue of His plan of grace, and that we appear to ourselves stripped of all honor and merits.

64. *Is it therefore incidental that salvation is tied to true faith?*

No, this is far from incidental and, if one looks at it from this standpoint, in all respects natural. God saves sinners without their contributing anything. His plan of salvation is a plan of grace, His way of salvation a covenant of grace through and through, by which He alone can lay claim to honor. True, God also treats men as rational beings in this way of salvation—that is, the manner in which He saves and blesses them must be reflected and recognized in their consciousness. The sinner must know how he is saved, what his righteousness before God is, that nothing is to be ascribed to his own merits, that all his salvation lies in Christ. If this did not happen—if God transferred the sinner at once out of his state of misery into the state of blessedness—**then man would surely be saved but God would not be glorified in His work of grace.** Man must recognize that it is God who as the triune God of the covenant accomplishes his salvation. Faith is that gift of God's grace by which this recognition is brought about in man, in a manner to be described presently in more detail.

The absence of faith in a person who is being saved would be equivalent to the absence of any recognition of God's grace. The covenant of grace and faith presuppose and demand each other as the **objective** and the **subjective**. For man, there is no covenant of grace if there is no faith. And as he lives out of and in faith, to that extent he lives out of and in the covenant of grace. Now, however—since on this point man may not be considered completely neutral—we must go a step still further and say: The absence of faith in a sinner is equivalent to the presence of a being-holy-by-works, self-righteous condition of the soul. The supposition entertained above that someone could simply be transferred from the state of misery into the state of beatitude [go too codeB] is fundamentally an unthinkable, an impossible supposition. Man is so created by God that he cannot simply have salvation; he must furthermore have a basis for salvation on which it rests. Now if faith in the Mediator is not this basis, then there is another basis, namely, **faith in one's own merits**, faith in oneself, the caricature of faith, self-righteousness. Therefore, the only choice here is between a consciousness of holiness by works and a consciousness of faith. One will see that this is said with a view to fallen man, man as a sinner, and not with a view to man in the state of rectitude. It was otherwise for Adam before the fall. This dilemma was not applicable to him. He could be right before God without saving faith. But a sinner cannot. He must be one or the other, either ascribing to himself the honor of his righteousness and salvation (and then he does not believe), or giving the honor to God (and then he exercises saving faith).

65. *Must it be inferred from this conception that believing is nothing other than an insight into, a conception, a correct idea of the relationships of the covenant of grace?*

By no means. **Faith is not something that plays out in the intellect and bypasses the life of man. As saving faith, its uniqueness is just that it is a consciousness in which the deepest longing of the soul reaches closure and in which, therefore, the whole man is involved.** To exercise saving faith means to have a conviction of the gracious action of God in Christ, but then with a living, personal application to myself. That is, saving faith may only be conceived of from the standpoint of an awakened sinner who has become sensitive to the justice of God. Where this sensitivity to God's justice is lacking, the yearning in one's life to stand as just before God and to be saved in His judgment is also inconceivable. Where, on the other hand, this sensitivity is restored, then too that yearning will immediately begin to be active and become for the sinner the greatest—as it were, the only—concern, in which his whole life concentrates and focuses itself in his consciousness. Thus, providing that one starts here and does not for one moment lose sight of this, one may certainly say that for the awakened sinner faith is the conviction that his salvation lies in Christ as a free gift of God's grace.

66. *Does one then have the right to say that faith is an act of the intellect?*

This question must be answered in different ways. If one means that saving faith remains enclosed entirely within the sphere of the intellect and contains nothing other than intellectual activities, then this is certainly incorrect. If one means that a firm conviction of the intellect is the terminus of the activity of faith, where, as it were, it ends up, then that can be granted. There has been considerable dispute about this question, and even Reformed theologians diverge here. Some insisted that saving faith was to be understood essentially as a cognitive, intellectual act. Others—in fact the majority—**sought the essence of the activity of faith in an act of the will.** The former make up the line that, as Kuyper says, runs from Calvin through Voetius to Comrie and, in Kuyper's judgment, is the purest. The second conception is found in the definition of our Catechism given above, and furthermore in the majority of Reformed theologians. In *de Heraut* [The Herald] of May 31, 1885 (no. 388), one can find quoted the grounds presented by Brakel for the second view and by Comrie for the first.

Concerning the question itself, it seems to us impossible to accept either one of these two conceptions to the exclusion of the other. **Saving faith is neither a bare intellectual nor a bare volitional act. If I were to say the former, then I would sever the root of life in which the conviction of faith grows. If I were to say the latter, then the danger threatens that faith again appears as a work, as a deed, and not as a recognition of God's doing for me.**

If, on the other hand, I accept both conceptions and keep them in the closest connection, then they correct each other's one-sidedness. One realizes then that believing is more than the conviction that something is true. It is a resting of the deepest longing of spiritual life in such a conviction, and in that the will is certainly involved. However, one also realizes that believing is not a new work that has replaced the works of the law and by which I now should be justified before God. By believing, my will must not be put into motion to accomplish something before God, but at issue is that the movement of my will should coincide with the judgment of my intellect, in which **I am convinced of the gracious imputation of God. So, although faith in its final ramification is a conviction of the intellect, yet it**

would not have any significance if the direction of my entire life were not expressed in that conviction. My heart must concur that God declares me to be righteous in Christ, and in the conviction that God does that every longing of my heart must participate. Only so does it become a wholehearted conviction by which the imprint of the honor of God is not only impressed into my intellect but into the whole of my consciousness.

It is evident already in the manner in which the defenders of the first opinion express themselves that they really do not exclude the will. They say, for example, that believing is being persuaded, and that this being persuaded is the essence of faith that the various forms of faith have in common. **But however much being persuaded occurs in the intellect, everyone still understands that this does not happen without the will.** That is expressed [in Dutch] in the preposition over [in overruling, “persuade”]. There are no logical grounds that God advances to persuade me. Rather, He places His testimony before me and by the Holy Spirit inclines my consciousness to hold that testimony to be true in a wholehearted manner.

67. *Of how many parts does saving faith consist?*

Of three parts: knowledge, assent, and trust.

68. *How is this knowledge of faith to be viewed?*

a) As far as its nature is concerned, it is a spiritual knowledge that must be distinguished as such from the knowledge of historical faith. The believer possesses a different knowledge of truths than someone who accepts them as true merely historically. This has already been discussed sufficiently above.

b) As far as its object is concerned **it focuses on the Mediator of the covenant of grace.** One could perhaps think that the object should be taken more broadly. For one thing, saving faith surely accepts the testimonies of God concerning the satisfaction obtained by the Mediator, as Paul expresses it [cf., e.g., Rom 10:9], to believe in God who has raised Christ from the dead. But everyone recognizes that this amounts to the same thing. This testimony of God is a testimony concerning the Mediator, so that ultimately our faith still focuses on Him as its object. On the other hand, one could say that the sinner must surely believe much more than what is connected with the Mediator. He will have to express sincere faith and be wholeheartedly convinced of the truth of the declaration of God concerning his own lost condition. So here is an object for his faith that is not the Mediator.

We answer here as follows: **Such faith is indeed prerequisite to saving faith, and without accepting the testimony of God concerning his lost condition, no one can exercise true faith.** Still, it is less correct to reckon all this to the essence of saving faith itself. It precedes and accompanies it, but does not in the strict sense belong to it. It is necessary to hold to this, since otherwise one would have the sinner look too much within and at himself just when he needs to look away from himself and to Christ. We say, therefore, **that saving faith has the Mediator**

as object, and its knowledge consists in knowing the Mediator in the broadest sense of the word.

Here there must now be noted the connection that exists between faith as accepting as true the testimony of God in a broader sense, and faith as accepting as true the testimony of God regarding Christ, thus in a narrower sense. This connection is very close. If we say that Scripture is the object of faith in the first sense and Christ, as mediator, in the second sense, then we can express the connection in this way: The Mediator is the principal content of Scripture; the entire Scripture is so arranged as to bring the image of the Mediator before our eyes. **Someone who believes savingly therefore no longer regards Scripture as a loose amalgamation of parts that he should accept piecemeal without an inner connection.** This is the **Roman Catholic** mechanistic understanding of faith. A Roman Catholic believes in bits and pieces, time and again, as much as the church dispenses to him and approves as advisable for him. **The genuine believer takes the whole of Scripture as a living organism produced by the Holy Spirit to present Christ to him.** On every page of Scripture, he finds traits and traces of the Mediator. He regards each declaration of God in this light. One should purpose to grasp this close connection vividly—that we recognize and know nothing of Christ other than through and from Scripture. Thus, there are not two objects of our faith standing independently next to each other. **It is not Scripture plus Christ, but Christ in Scripture, and Scripture in its center, Christ. While on the one hand, for the eye of faith, the word of Scripture changes imperceptibly into the image of a person,** [Hence, as we contemplate the scriptures [Christ], his glory, we are changed into the very image of those things, changed into His image, from one degree of glory to another, the image of Christ, 2Cor. 3:18. This is our ongoing sanctification as we are transformed by degrees into his holy nature of which we are partakers. This is massively important.] on the other hand that person bears completely the traits of a word, for we do not yet behold Him in concrete form but know Him only from the Word. Once we see Him Scripture will thereby become superfluous, and He Himself in His visible appearance will be the object of our beholding. But for the present we still have the Scriptures concerning Him and Him in the Scriptures. That is already expressed by the designation “Word of God.” The Mediator is the eternal and eternally abiding Word. Scripture is also Word of God, but then a Word appearing in time and passing away again with time. For us, both are inseparably connected.

c) The extent of this knowledge of saving faith can differ considerably. For one it can be very great, very slight for another. All considerations being equal, however, one can say that a richer degree of knowledge will lead to a richer development in the life of faith, while limited knowledge will always have to hinder the development of that life.

d) The knowledge of saving faith is not a bare cognition of things that are its object. If we were to posit this, we would also have to say that knowledge is prerequisite for and not part of faith. But we do not say this. According to our view, in knowledge the essence, the uniqueness, of faith already emerges. We have seen above that knowledge of a thing always includes awareness of its reality. By knowing something we come into contact with it as with a reality. When now in this way one comes into contact with the gospel concerning the Mediator as with a reality, then the activity of the **principle of faith** already lurks there—still imperfectly, but at

the same time unmistakably. **Our self-righteous heart does not want it to be that salvation will be obtained in this way. It still has in itself by nature, its sinfulness notwithstanding, an impulse to be something before God. It will not allow itself to be persuaded of the reality of the free imputation of the merits of the Mediator.** That God would declare the sinner righteous without his own help seems foolishness to the natural man. Even where the Holy Spirit has initially enlightened the eye of the soul, and thus deep knowledge of sin is present, there still can be a struggle because of the natural aversion that asserts itself against such a procedure of God. Thus, before there is present in the sinner such knowledge of faith that makes the grace of God in Christ appear to him as an absolute reality, **he must be dissuaded of his own righteousness.** Thus, one sees how already in the knowledge or in the assent of faith—for these may not be separated here—there is an element of the true essence of faith. **This knowledge is being persuaded of something against which the natural mind testifies with all the force of its works-holiness. In historical faith, knowledge and assent naturally do not have this significance, for they are thoroughly superficial and reside merely in the intellect, without a personal, living interest being involved.** Because it occurs apart from this interest and the ignorant sinner does not concern himself with his right standing before God, it is relatively easy for him to agree that God in Christ forgives the sinner and deals with him according to grace. But as soon as his right standing before God becomes a personal question, he will also be much more involved to know this action of grace as a reality. And only by the grace of the Holy Spirit will he be able to possess this knowledge of saving faith.

e) Furthermore, as far as the uniqueness of the object known is concerned, saving faith is something invisible in the absolute sense, something that cannot be seen. That God for Christ's sake manifests grace, that He transferred our sins to Christ and transferred the righteousness of Christ to us, are invisible things that we can believe only because of God's testimony. Thus it is not only the case that in the covenant of grace God takes away the meriting of salvation and obliges man to look away from himself and to rest entirely in the work of God, but the sinner must also accept God's Word that He in fact maintains this way of salvation with him. He cannot observe God and look into the depth of His divine consciousness. Even if he had been able to see Christ suffering on the cross with his own eyes, apart from faith he would still not be able to see that this suffering was a suffering that He bore as mediator for the sins of His people, a suffering as surety. Even then, everything would ultimately still come down to the testimony of God concerning the meaning of those sorrows. Therefore, for this faith man from the outset must bring his consciousness captive under the authority of God. Already in the initial stage, he must entrust himself unconditionally to God with no other certainty than that God cannot lie. The one who receives the Mediator by faith has sealed that God is truthful. This aspect of faith, too, is in all respects normal. **The principle of the first sinful act was unbelief and made God a liar. In the same way, the principle of the act of faith that saves and justifies is a principle of faith by which, without reservation, we acknowledge the truthfulness of God** in a matter that **concerns us personally** and in which our highest interests are at stake.

This is Key in distinguishing saving faith!!

f) Regarding the activity of this knowledge of faith, it is twofold: **one more active, and one more passive or receptive.** The following is meant by this distinction. **The genuine believer not only**

approves of the truth of God when, without his action, it is placed before his consciousness, but he is also actively engaged with that truth, to probe it, to be acquainted with it, to draw it into his consciousness. The knowledge of faith is **effective knowledge**. Although it is true that with every new acquaintance with the content of truth the believer must once again bow before the convincing power of that kingly word of his God and thus once again maintain the receptive character of faith, this still does not in any respect hinder the other side from constantly revealing itself. **Faith seeks out the truth to which it wills to submit. It is not something that sits silently, not something passive, not a lifeless mirror that catches what is placed before it, but a stream of living water, an active consciousness incessantly in motion to embrace the truth.** It is completely impossible to understand the nature of saving faith correctly if we do not keep this difference in mind. By faith a union of the soul with the Mediator arises in the consciousness. **To believe, then, is not to have a conviction concerning the Mediator as a third party based on the testimony of God, but to be engaged with the Mediator Himself as a living person, to go to Him, to take in His image as it is delineated by Scripture, [see comment on 2Cor3:18 above] and to feast on beholding Him—acts that are all of an active nature.** By these two poles we can recognize faith, **and for each healthy, well developed faith, they both must be present. If someone says that he submits believingly to the testimony concerning the Mediator and yet is not actively engaged with the Mediator, his faith cannot be genuine.** We will not merely have read to us a document that acquits us of terrible punishments and gives us the right to great possessions, **but we will want to have it in our hands— to touch it and reread it.** Likewise, someone who believes in the Mediator will not be satisfied with having that Mediator depicted by someone else. He will, as it were, have Him in his hands, **inspect and examine Him, actively embrace Him, familiarize himself with Him in all respects.**

Therefore, one can best distinguish bare historical faith from saving faith by keeping in mind this twofold character of faith. Idle assent, too indifferent to offer resistance, can be found sufficiently with the ignorant. Also, with such people it is not uncommon to encounter a theoretical interest in and search for the truth. But the unity of these two characteristics—**active search for the truth and passive submission at every point to the overpowering impact of the truth—is a mark of true, saving faith.** This two-sided character, moreover, is not limited to the knowledge of faith but pervades all the activities of faith. We will meet this again in trust. **It also comes out in the images Scripture uses to depict faith. “Accepting” is more an expression for faith as receptive; “hungering and thirsting” are images referring more to the outgoing activity of faith.**

69. *Does trust also belong to the essence of saving faith?*

Yes, as the definition in our [Heidelberg] Catechism 21 says, it is an assured confidence (*certa fiducia*) that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are given by God.

70. *Show from Scripture that this is so.*

In Ephesians 3:12 the apostle says, “In whom [that is, in Christ Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him.” Hebrews also speaks of the “boldness” of faith (Heb 4:12), of a plērophoria of hope in connection with faith (Heb 6:11–12); “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (en plērophoria pisteōs; Heb 10:22). Plērophoria really means “full-spiritedness.” Further, there is a boast of faith (Rom 5:11; cf. also Matt 14:31–32, where Peter’s lack of confidence is called “little faith” by the Lord; Luke 8:25; Jas 1:3). In Galatians 2:20 the apostle describes the object of his faith as “the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

71. *Should we understand this trust of faith as an intellectual conviction that may be summarized in the sentence: “I am justified before God?”*

No; although this could seem so according to our Catechism, it is nonetheless not so. It cannot be, for the reason that one then comes into conflict with the teaching of Scripture that says that justification is by faith. According to this conception, justification would precede faith. Faith would be nothing other than the conviction by which we become informed subjectively of objective justification. Further, it would follow from this that someone lacking this firm conviction cannot possess the trust of faith. How few are there who perceive such conviction in themselves and still exhibit all the marks of possessing and exercising the genuine trust of faith?

72. *What has occasioned conceiving of the trust of faith in this sense?*

a) All those who teach a doctrine of eternal justification must certainly end up forming this conception of the nature of faith. Justification is then complete from eternity, and nothing remains for faith other than accepting it. Faith is then understood as the firm assurance that one is justified in Christ from eternity. Connected with this is when theologians such as Comrie and Holtzius, who taught an eternal justification, also put greater emphasis on the intellectual character of faith and thought that every activity of the will should be excluded. This was demanded by their entire system. However, in treating the doctrine of justification we will see how speaking of an eternal justification completely conflicts with the conception of Scripture. Consequently, the correlate of this misconception, this peculiar one-sided view of faith as trust, must be abandoned.

b) The Reformers also put great emphasis on faith as consciousness of assurance. Most of them maintained that *fiducia* was the essence, the heart of the act of faith, that this firm assurance, “I am justified,” was in fact what God demanded of the sinner. On this point their statements are very strong. For example, Calvin says, “We will obtain the right definition of faith if we say that it is a firm and certain knowledge of God’s good pleasure toward us”; “that we not only judge that the promises of mercy that God offers are true apart from us but not with regard to us, but rather that we make them ours by embracing them inwardly”; “in a word, only he is a true believer who, being fully convinced that God is a gracious and kind Father to him, hopes all things from His kindness; only he who affirms the promises of divine favor toward himself has an undoubted expectation of salvation” [Institutes, 3.2.7, 16]. Compare also the definition of our [Heidelberg] Catechism.

How did the Reformers arrive at this conception? In order to understand this we need to realize what Rome had taught the people. **With all the aids at its disposal it had kept the conscience in fear and a state of tension and denied in principle the possibility of absolute assurance concerning one's state of justification.** The standing of sinners before God goes up and down with their works. The normal, desired situation is that one lives in constant anxiety, in continual fear for his salvation. **However, this anxiety and fear have essentially a character of salvation by works.** They accompany the consciousness that one must earn salvation and that it will never be complete. The Reformers protested against that unrest of salvation by works. They could not do this better than by putting the emphasis on calm, unshakable trust as the foremost part of faith. Whoever exercises this trust stands at the furthest possible distance from Rome's error. This is why they brought rest to the consciences of people and insisted that one must hold firmly to the conviction of forgiveness in Christ. Thus, the truth is that the Reformers placed in the foreground that aspect of faith that was useful to them for their polemic against Rome. In doing that, however, they did not want to deny in the least that faith as trust also had other sides. And one may never understand their description of faith other than as a protest against the uncertainty resulting from salvation by works. There is an uncertainty, a lack in faith as trust that rests directly on principles of self-righteousness. There is also a lack of assurance that can have other causes. Only the former is a criterion for the weakness of faith. The latter, on the other hand, is a product of misunderstanding and ignorance.

One now sees that the motive by which the Reformers were led when they sought the essence of faith in fiducia was entirely different than that by which Comrie, et al., were led. The line Calvin-Voetius-Comrie can certainly be drawn formally, but on their differing points differing principles were also at work.

73. *To what extent can we say that trust belongs to the essence of faith?*

Faith must show in all its parts and aspects that distinctive quality that causes us to renounce ourselves and to rely on the work of the Mediator. Now, it is easy to see that many doubts are possible concerning the application of the work of the Mediator to myself that flow directly from a **salvation-by-works tendency** of the soul. If someone says, "Christ certainly died for sinners but not for such a great sinner as I am; my unrighteousness is too great; I may not apply His merits to me," then one senses that here a lack of trust comes to light—**in other words, that someone who speaks like this still has to learn to abandon himself completely and has to learn to surrender himself to Christ.** On the contrary, if someone can silence all such whisperings and has a firm trust that his sins do not have to stand in the way —**if he may also triumph over this last vestige of self-trust and, freed from his own fears and cares, may lay down to rest in Christ—then no one will be able to deny that here the power of faith is manifested. Thus, there is a point where trust and faith merge, where distrust, unbelief, and lack of assurance is lack of faith. And one may safely determine that there is no saving faith where this assured trust is totally lacking.**

Usually, a twofold distinction is made between (1) trust that takes refuge, and (2) assured trust. What is meant with the first is turning to and being occupied with the Mediator as meeting one's needs; with the second, the posture of the soul that finds stability and certainty in (1). We need,

however, to say that there is no saving faith without a certain measure of trust in both senses. The believer who is occupied with Christ and pleads His merits for himself cannot do this without more or less relying on them and drawing security from them. It does not matter whether he brings that to his consciousness; it is still present. And one will be able to convince a person of this presence if one poses the question to him: "If at this moment Christ as mediator vanishes, would your anxiety and lack of certainty then become greater or not?" To that even the least trusting person will have to answer, "Much greater." But with that answer is also granted that a certain measure of assured trust was present that had not entered the consciousness. If it were possible for someone to be occupied with the Mediator and behold His image without that being accompanied by minimal assurance and confirmation, then we would have to say that person does not have saving faith. But such a case cannot occur. **The awakened sinner** lays hold of the Mediator and is occupied with Him because he is constrained to do that by the longing of his soul for certainty. **He needs to find security somewhere, for man cannot exist without certainty or he will fall into despair.** Therefore, where utter despair is not present and at the same time man no longer trusts in himself, trust in the Mediator must be in him.

74. Can one also misuse the proposition that in all saving faith there is a certain degree of assured trust?

Yes, this proposition has sometimes been misused in an antinomian sense. If someone is settled in the certainty of "I am saved" and, at the same time, lives in indifference about all other things, then this would be sheer **antinomianism**. Therefore, two things must be pointed out, both of which are of the greatest importance:

a) **That also in the trust of faith the honor of God must impel us.** For the sincere believer it is never only a matter of the salvation of his soul in a hedonistic sense. If that were the case, a sense of assurance must lead to passivity. But this should not be. The believer is under the impact of having violated God's law, of missing the mark concerning this law, of everything coming down to fulfilling the law. If now he arrives at the assured trust that the merits of Christ will be applied to him, too, then it is an assurance that not only includes "I am safe" but that simultaneously includes "I stand righteous before God." Thereby the root of all antinomianism is cut off. **The confident trust that leads to antinomianism is self-deception, not the trust of saving faith.**

b) The trust of faith has two sides: **a more active and outgoing and a more receptive side.** Faith is not only insistent on the assurance that it has security in Christ, **but it also seeks that security, relies on it, and rests in it.** By this, too, that genuine faith that would lead to false passivity is excluded.

75. What is the object of this trust of faith?

Again, the Mediator, in the most extensive sense of the word, or "the Mediator as ordained by God in His mediatorial work for the salvation of lost sinners and as presented for that end in the promise of the gospel" (Owen [in *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, chapter 1]).

Pgs. 774-776 on faith:

That in justification God imputes to us the merits of Christ does not occur apart from considering faith, but still not on the basis of faith as a per se and unavoidable functioning legal basis. That we believe in Christ, viewed in the abstract, is not a sufficient basis to identify ourselves with Him in terms of rights. The basis for that is not in us or in any act of ours, but exclusively in an act of God. This act of God is the judicial act of imputation by which the merits of the Mediator are reckoned to us for our benefit, credited to our account, and their fruits allocated to us as if these merits were personally our own. The certainty of this resides in God's act, not in ours. This is all the more striking when one considers that these merits are intended for us personally already before justification, namely, in the counsel of peace and in the satisfaction of Christ. There, of course, the basis of justification cannot be faith, but on the contrary, faith is the future gift of this intention. One must thus avoid viewing the situation as follows: Prior to faith, the Mediator and the sinner are detached from each other without any legal bond; by faith, a legal unity arises; on the basis of this legal unity, God pronounces the verdict of justification. Rather, the correct conception is this: Already prior to faith the merits of the Mediator were intended for the elect sinner; at the same time, however, there was a determination of God that the **formal act of imputation** would not be carried out before the sinner by faith came **subjectively to the consciousness** of this free, sovereign imputation. When this takes place, then, on the basis of His free, sovereign intention (which naturally is completely in accord with His justice), God pronounces His formal verdict that the sinner is justified in consideration of his faith.

pg776: **Faith is the subjective side of the objective imputation of the merits of Christ**, which is the sole judicial basis of our justification. **By our believing we identify ourselves with this imputation or transfer; we approve it, accept it.** By our believing activity with respect to the Mediator we appropriate to ourselves personally what God objectively imputes to us. Faith as a whole is thus a faithful image in us of the gracious activity of God outside us. And it is on the basis of this that Scripture conjoins these two so closely and even speaks of faith as being reckoned as righteousness (*logizetai hē pistis autou eis dikaiosynēn*, Rom 4:5; cf. Gal 3:6). It was a complete misconception and misunderstanding of the nature of faith when the Remonstrants deduced from this that faith, now replacing works as in fact the judicial basis, is reckoned to us as righteousness. Faith here stands for the object of faith. This can be because faith receives and accepts Christ, mirrors Christ, and places itself in Christ, so that it itself, as it were, retreats from view and only presents its object to us. Since all true faith flows out like a stream into Christ and loses itself in Christ, Scripture can say without danger of misunderstanding, "Faith is reckoned as righteousness."

From Faith to Faith

code150

The Communication of Grace

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, John Owen, p 22 (p24 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.iv.iv.html>

He lays it down as the fundamental maxim which he would proceed upon, or as a general thesis, including the substance of what he designed to explain and prove, that in the gospel the “righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith,” [Rom. i. 17](#). All sorts of men who had any knowledge of God and themselves, were then, as they must be always, inquiring, and in one degree or other laboring, after righteousness. For this they looked on, and that justly, as the only means of an advantageous relation between God and themselves. Neither had the generality of men any other thoughts, but that this righteousness must be their own, — inherent in them, and performed by them; as [Rom. X. 3](#). **For as this is the language of a natural conscience and of the law, and suited unto all philosophical notions concerning the nature of righteousness;** so whatever testimony was given of another kind in the law and the prophets (as such a testimony is given unto a “righteousness of God without the law,” [chap. lii. 21](#)), there was a **veil** upon it, as to the understanding of all sorts of men. As, therefore, righteousness is that which all men seek after, and cannot but seek after, who design or desire acceptance with God; so it is in vain to inquire of the law, of natural conscience, of philosophical reason, after any righteousness but what consists in inherent habits and acts of our own. **Neither law, nor natural conscience, nor reason, do know any other.** But in opposition unto this righteousness of our own, and the necessity thereof, testified unto by the law in its primitive constitution, by the natural light of conscience, and the apprehension of the nature of things by reason, the apostle declares, that in the gospel there is revealed another righteousness, which is also the righteousness of another, the righteousness of God, **and that from faith to faith. For not only is the righteousness itself reveals alien from those other principles, but also the manner of our participation of it, or its communication unto us, “from faith to faith” (the faith of God in the revelation, and our faith in the acceptation of it, being only here concerned), is an eminent revelation.** Righteousness, of all things, should rather seem to be **from works unto works**, — from the work of grace in us to the works of obedience done by us, as the Papists affirm. “No,” says the apostle, **“it is ‘from faith to faith;’**” whereof afterward.

This is the general thesis the apostle proposes unto confirmation; and he seems therein to exclude from justification everything but the righteousness of God and the faith of believers. And to this purpose he considers all persons that did or might pretend unto righteousness, or seek after it, and all ways and means whereby they hoped to attain unto it, or whereby it might most probably be obtained, declaring the failing of all persons, and the insufficiency of all means as unto them, for the obtaining a righteousness of our own before God. And as unto persons, —

Faith and the Communication of the code149 Benefits of Christ's Mediation

Christ, the ordinance of God the Father for the salvation of sinners, the promises being the means of communicating Christ and the benefits of his mediation. Faith defined again. Presumption: coming to God without the due exercise of these means by saving faith. The supreme efficient cause of our salvation, the love of the Father. Blaspheme against God's wisdom in the way of salvation. Prayer by faith defined.

Justifying Faith by John Owen
Ch 1, p77-end (p87 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.v.html>

Wherefore, asserting the Lord Jesus Christ, in the work of his mediation, to be the object of faith unto justification, I include therein the grace of God, which is the cause; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of communicating Christ and the benefits of his mediation unto us.

And all these things are so united, so intermixed in their mutual relations and respects, so concatenated in the purpose of God, and the declaration made of his will in the gospel, as that the believing of any one of them does virtually include the belief of the rest. And by whom any one of them is disbelieved, they frustrate and make void all the rest, and so faith itself.

The due consideration of these things solves all the difficulties that arise about the nature of faith, either from the Scripture or from the experience of them that believe, with respect unto its object. Many things in the Scripture are we said to believe with it and by it, and that unto justification; but two things are hence evident:— First, That no one of them can be asserted to be the complete, adequate object of our faith. Secondly, That none of them are so absolutely, but as they relate unto the Lord Christ, as the ordinance of God for our justification and salvation.

And this answers the experience of all that do truly believe. For these things being united and made inseparable in the constitution of God, all of them are virtually included in every one of them.

(1.) Some fix their faith and trust principally on the grace, love, and mercy of God; especially they did so under the Old Testament, before the clear revelation of Christ and his mediation. So did the psalmist, Ps. Cxxx. 3, 4; xxxiii. 18, 19; and the publican, Luke xviii. 13. And these are, in places of the Scripture innumerable, proposed as the causes of our justification. See Rom. lii. 24; Eph. li. 4–8; Tit. lii. 5–7. But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the “redemption that is in the blood of Christ,” Dan. ix. 17. Nor does the Scripture anywhere propose them unto us but under that consideration. See Rom. lii. 24, 25; Eph. i. 6–8. For this is the cause, way, and means of the communication of that grace, love, and mercy unto us.

(2.) Some place and fix them principally on the **Lord Christ**, his **mediation**, and the **benefits** thereof. This the apostle Paul proposes frequently unto us in his own example. See [Gal. ii. 20](#); [Phil. lii. 8–10](#). But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the grace and love of God, whence it is that they are given and communicated unto us, [Rom. viii. 32](#); [John iii. 16](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). Nor are they otherwise anywhere proposed unto us in the Scripture as the object of our faith unto justification.

(3.) Some in a peculiar manner fix their souls, **in believing, on the promises**. And this is exemplified in the instance of Abraham, [Gen. xv. 6](#); [Rom. iv. 20](#). And so are they proposed in the Scripture as the object of our faith, [Acts ii. 39](#); [Rom. iv. 16](#); [Heb. iv. 1, 2](#); [vi. 12, 13](#). But this they do not merely as they are divine revelations, but as they contain and propose unto us the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation, from the grace, love, and mercy of God. Hence the apostle disputes at large, in his Epistle unto the Galatians, that if justification be any way but by the promise, both the grace of God and the death of Christ are evacuated and made of none effect. And the reason is, because the promise is nothing but the way and means of the communication of them unto us.

(4.) **Some fix their faith on the things themselves which they aim at, — namely, the pardon of sin and eternal life**. And these also in the Scripture are proposed unto us as the object of our faith, or that which we are to believe unto justification, [Ps. Cxxx. 4](#); [Acts xxvi. 18](#); [Tit. i. 2](#). **But this is to be done in its proper order, especially as unto the application of them [pardon of sin and eternal life] unto our own souls.** For we are nowhere required to believe them, or our own interest in them, **but as they are effects of the grace and love of God, through Christ and his mediation, proposed in the promises of the gospel.** Wherefore the belief of them is included in the belief of these, and is in order of nature antecedent thereunto. **[That saving grace is antecedent to believing in pardon of sin and eternal life. But in our churches today, this order is ignored, hence the sinner's prayer abounds, hence Owen's next statement regarding presumption.]** **And the belief of the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, without the due exercise of faith in those causes of them, is but presumption.**

I have, therefore, given the entire object of faith as justifying, or in its work and duty with respect unto our justification, in compliance with the testimonies of the Scripture, **and the experience of them that believe.** **[In other words, on this subject of presumption, someone who has experienced a genuine conversion knows that he had nothing to do with it; he was entirely passive in it, whereas in today's churches, people are invited to be active by exercising their idol, free will and that corrupted, by asking Jesus to come into their heart and like prayers, thus forcing the issue with God which is nowhere found in scripture, contrary to scripture and foreign to the experience of all true believers.]**

Allowing, therefore, their proper place unto the promises, and unto the effect of all in the pardon of sins and eternal life, that which I shall farther confirm is, that the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation, **as the ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the proper adequate object of justifying faith.** And the **true nature of evangelical faith consists in the respect of the heart** (which we shall immediately describe) **unto the love, grace, and wisdom of God; with the mediation of Christ, in his obedience; with the sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for sin which he made by his blood.** These things are impiously opposed by some as inconsistent; for the second head of the **Socinian** impiety is, that the grace of God and satisfaction of Christ are opposite and inconsistent, so as that if we allow of the one we must deny the other. But as these things are so

proposed in the Scripture, as that without granting them both neither can be believed; so faith, which respects them as subordinate, — namely, the mediation of Christ unto the grace of God, that fixes itself on the Lord Christ and that redemption which is in his blood, — **as the ordinance of God, the effect of his wisdom, grace, and love**, finds rest in both, and in nothing else.

For the proof of the assertion, I need not labour in it, it being not only abundantly declared in the Scripture, but that which contains in it a principal part of the design and substance of the gospel. I shall, therefore, only refer unto some of the places wherein it is taught, or the testimonies that are given unto it.

The whole is expressed in that place of the apostle wherein the doctrine of justification is most eminently proposed unto us, [Rom. lii. 24, 25](#), “**Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.**” Whereunto we may add, [Eph. i. 6, 7](#), “**He has made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.**” That whereby we are justified, is the especial object of our faith unto justification. But this is the Lord Christ in the work of his mediation: for we are justified by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; for in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin. **Christ as a propitiation is the cause of our justification, and the object of our faith, or we attain it by faith in his blood.** But this is so under this formal consideration, as **he is the ordinance of God for that end, — appointed, given, proposed, set forth from and by the grace, wisdom, and love of God.** God set him forth to be a propitiation. He makes us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption in his blood, according to the riches of his grace, whereby he makes us accepted in the Beloved. And herein he “**abounds towards us in all wisdom,**” [Eph. i. 8](#). This, therefore, is that which the gospel proposes unto us, as the especial object of our faith unto the justification of life. **[to say that Christ wants to save all and everyone, yet is unable to do so would assign imperfection to the Godhead. It makes God seem not as wise as he ought. This is an impious view by Arminians et al who believe that God wants to save all but cannot. Therefore since God is all-wise as this scripture confirms, in all wisdom, God desires only to save his elect, his sheep.]** But we may also in the same manner confirm the several parts of the assertion distinctly:—

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ, as proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the peculiar object of faith unto justification. There are three sorts of testimonies whereby this is confirmed:—

[1.] Those wherein it is positively asserted, as [Acts x. 43](#), “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Christ believed in as the means and cause of the remission of sins, is that which all the prophets give witness unto. [Acts xvi. 31](#), “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It is the answer of the apostle unto the jailer’s inquiry, — “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” His duty in believing, and the object of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, is what they return thereunto. [Acts iv. 12](#), “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” That which is proposed unto us, as the only way and means of our justification and salvation, and that in opposition unto all other ways, is the object of faith unto our justification; but this is Christ alone, exclusively unto all other things. This is testified unto by Moses and the prophets; the design of the whole Scripture

being to direct the faith of the church unto the Lord Christ alone, for life and salvation, [Luke xxiv. 25–27](#).

[2.] All those wherein justifying faith is affirmed to be our believing in him, or believing on his name; which are multiplied. [John i. 12](#), “He gave power to them to become the sons of God, who believed on his name,” [chap. lii. 16](#), “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” verse 36, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;” [chap. Vi. 29](#), “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;” verse 47, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life;” [chap. Vii. 38](#), “He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” So [chap. lx. 35–37; xi. 25; Acts xxvi. 18](#), “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” [1 Pet. li. 6, 7](#). In all which places, and many others, we are not only directed to place and affix our faith on him, but the effect of justification is ascribed thereunto. So expressly, [Acts xiii. 38, 39](#); which is what we design to prove.

[3.] Those which give us such a description of the acts of faith as make him the direct and proper object of it. Such are they wherein it is called a “receiving” of him. [John i. 12](#), “To as many as received him.” [Col. li. 6](#), “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” That which we receive by faith is the proper object of it; and it is represented by their looking unto the brazen serpent, when it was lifted up, who were stung by fiery serpents, [John iii. 14, 15; xii. 32](#). Faith is that act of the soul whereby convinced sinners, ready otherwise to perish, do look unto Christ as he was made a propitiation for their sins; and who so do “shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” He is, therefore, the object of our faith.

(2.) He is so, as he is the ordinance of God unto this end; which consideration is not to be separated from our faith in him: and this also is confirmed by several sorts of testimonies:—

[1.] All those wherein the [love and grace of God](#) are proposed as the [only cause of giving Jesus Christ to be the way and means of our recovery and salvation](#); whence they become, or God in them, the [supreme efficient cause of our justification](#) [In the eternal council of God the Father, the offended person by Adam’s sin, by his [grace, mercy and love](#), he chose some to save; that is the supreme efficient cause]. [John iii. 16](#), “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” So [Rom. V. 8](#); [1 John iv. 9, 10](#). “Being justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” [Rom. lii. 24](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). This the Lord Christ directs our faith unto continually, referring all unto him that sent him, and whose will he came to do, [Heb. X. 5](#).

[2.] All those wherein God is said to set forth and to make him be for us and unto us, what he is so, unto the justification of life. [Rom. lii. 25](#), “Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation.” [1 Cor. i. 30](#), “Who of God is made unto us [wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption](#).” [2 Cor. V. 21](#), “He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” [Acts xiii. 38, 39](#), etc. Wherefore, in the acting of faith in Christ unto justification, we can no otherwise consider him but as the [ordinance of God to that end](#); he brings nothing unto us, does nothing for us, but what God appointed, designed, and made him to do. And this must diligently be considered, that by our regard by faith unto the blood, the sacrifice, the satisfaction of Christ, [we take off nothing from the free grace, favour, and love of God](#).

[3.] All those wherein the wisdom of God in the contrivance of this way of justification and salvation is proposed unto us [Again, to say that God cannot save those who he desires to save impugns God's wisdom and understanding, and power, etc. and is blaspheme]. Eph. i. 7, 8, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and understanding." See chap. lii. 10, 11; 1 Cor. i. 24.

The whole is comprised in that of the apostle: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. V. 19. All that is done in our reconciliation unto God, as unto the pardon of our sins, and acceptance with him unto life, was by the presence of God, in his grace, wisdom, and power, in Christ designing and effecting of it.

Wherefore, the Lord Christ, proposed in the promise of the gospel as the object of our faith unto the justification of life, is considered as the ordinance of God unto that end. Hence the love, the grace, and the wisdom of God, in the sending and giving of him, are comprised in that object; and not only the actings of God in Christ towards us, but all his actings towards the person of Christ himself unto the same end, belong thereunto. So, as unto his death, "God set him forth to be a propitiation," Rom. lii. 25. "He spared him not, but delivered him up for us all," Rom. viii. 32; and therein "laid all our sins upon him," Isa. liii. 6. So he was "raised for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. And our faith is in God, who "raised him from the dead," Rom. X. 9. And in his exaltation, Acts v. 31. Which things complete "the record that God hath given of his Son," 1 John v. 10–12.

The whole is confirmed by the exercise of faith in prayer; which is the soul's application of itself unto God for the participation of the benefits of the mediation of Christ. And it is called our "access through him unto the Father," Eph. li. 18; our coming through him "unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 15, 16; and through him as both "a high priest and sacrifice," Heb. X. 19–22. So do we "bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. lii. 14. This answers the experience of all who know what it is to pray. We come therein in the name of Christ, by him, through his mediation, unto God, even the Father; to be, through his grace, love, and mercy, made partakers of what he has designed and promised to communicate unto poor sinners by him. And this represents the complete object of our faith.

The due consideration of these things will reconcile and reduce unto a perfect harmony whatever is spoken in the Scripture concerning the object of justifying faith, or what we are said to believe therewith. For whereas this is affirmed of sundry things distinctly, they can none of them be supposed to be the entire adequate object of faith. But consider them all in their relation unto Christ, and they have all of them their proper place therein, — namely, the grace of God, which is the cause; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of communicating the Lord Christ, and the benefits of his mediation unto us. [which is why we must grow in knowledge of the promises of the gospel in order to grow in grace.]

The reader may be pleased to take notice, that I do in this place not only neglect, but despise, the late attempt of some to wrest all things of this nature, spoken of the person and mediation of Christ, unto the doctrine of the gospel, exclusively unto them; and that not only as what is noisome and

impious in itself, but as that also which has not yet been endeavoured to be proved, with any appearance of learning, argument, or sobriety.

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as “the knowledge of faith” and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, “Faith” in DB, I 837: “The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands.”] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, “unconscious” salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation. Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ. But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, our knowledge of God on earth is “a knowledge of faith.” Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24).

Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 4, pg 103

Saving Faith – The Life of Christ in You

code151

A spiritually vital principle that purifies the heart, vs. a temporary and historical faith. Hypostasis, its meaning; Union with Christ, partaking of his nature. Faith mixing itself with the word, the promise. The value of experience of truly spiritual things.

My comments in [blue]

Ch 1 Doctrine of Justification – John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.v.html>

The means of justification on our part is faith. That we are justified by faith, is so frequently and so expressly affirmed in the Scripture, as that it cannot directly and in terms by any be denied. For whereas some begin, by an excess of partiality, which controversial engagements and provocations do incline them unto, to affirm that our justification **is more frequently ascribed unto other things, graces**

or duties, than unto faith, it is to be passed by in silence, and not contended about. But yet, also, the explanation which some others make of this general concession, that “we are justified by faith,” does as fully overthrow what is affirmed therein as if it were in terms rejected; and it would more advantage the understandings of men if it were plainly refused upon its first proposal, than to be led about in a maze of words and distinctions unto its real exclusion, as is done both by the **Romanists and Socinians**. At present we may take the proposition as granted, and only inquire into the true, genuine sense and meaning of it: That which first occurs unto our consideration is faith; and that which does concern it may be reduced unto two heads:— 1. **Its nature**. 2. **Its use** in our justification.

Of the nature of faith in general, of the especial nature of justifying faith, of its characteristical distinctions from that which is called faith but is not justifying, so many discourses (divers of them the effects of sound judgment and good experience) are already extant, as it is altogether needless to engage at large into a farther discussion of them. However, something must be spoken to declare in what sense we understand these things; — what is that faith which we ascribe our justification unto, and what is its use therein.

The distinctions that are usually made concerning faith (as it is a word of various significations), I shall wholly pretermit [[pass by or omit](#)]; not only as obvious and known, but as not belonging unto our present argument. That which we are concerned in is, that in the Scripture there is mention made plainly of a **twofold faith**, whereby men believe the gospel. For there is a faith whereby we are justified, which he who has shall be assuredly saved; **which purifies the heart** and **works by love**. [[We contemplate those things we love which are the things of God, the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in doing so we mix the word with faith \(digesting\) which is what contemplating is and by this we grow and are transformed into his image, 2Cor3:18 \(see pg29\), thus profiting by it compared to the others who did not profit by hearing the word being not mixed with faith, Heb. 4:2, Faith puts the affection of love to work...](#)] And there is a faith or believing, which does nothing of all this; which who has, and has no more, is not justified, nor can be saved. Wherefore, every faith, whereby men are said to believe, is not justifying. Thus it is said of Simon the magician, that he “believed,” [Acts viii. 13](#), when he was in the “gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;” and therefore did not believe with that faith which “purifieth the heart,” [Acts xv. 9](#). And that many “believed on the name of Jesus, when they saw the miracles that he did; but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew what was in man,” [John ii. 23, 24](#). They did not believe on his name as those do, or with that kind of faith, who thereon “receive power to become the sons of God,” [John i. 12](#). And some, when they “hear the word receive it with joy, believing for a while,” but “have no root,” [Luke viii. 13](#). And faith, without a root in the heart, will not justify any; for “with the heart men believe unto righteousness,” [[evangelical](#)] [Rom. X. 10](#). So is it with them who shall cry, “Lord, Lord” (at the last day), “we have prophesied in thy name,” whilst yet they were always “workers of iniquity,” [Matt. Vii. 22, 23](#).

This faith is usually called historical faith. But this denomination is not taken from the object of it, as though it were only the history of the Scripture, or the historical things contained in it. For it respects the whole truth of the word, yea, of the promises of the gospel as well as other things. But it is so called from the nature of the assent wherein it does consist; for it is such as we give unto historical things that are credibly testified unto us.

And this faith has divers differences or degrees, both in respect unto the grounds or reasons of it, and also its effects. For as unto the first, **all faith is an assent upon testimony**; and divine faith is an assent upon a divine testimony. According as this testimony is received, so are the differences or degrees of this faith. Some apprehend it on human motives only, and its credibility unto the judgment of reason; and their assent is a mere natural act of their understanding, which is the lowest degree of this historical faith. Some have their minds enabled unto it by spiritual illumination, making a discovery of the evidences of divine truth whereon it is to be believed; the assent they give hereon is more firm and operative than that of the former sort.

Again; it has its differences or degrees with respect unto its effects. With some it does no way, or very little, influence the will or the affections, or work any change in the lives of men. So is it with them that profess they believe the gospel, and yet live in all manner of sins. In this degree, it is called by the apostle James **“a dead faith,”** and compared unto a dead carcass, without life or motion; and is an assent of the very same nature and kind with that which devils are compelled to give; and this faith abounds in the world. With others it has an effectual work upon the affections, and that in many degrees, also, **represented in the several sorts of ground** whereinto the seed of the word is cast, and produces many effects in their lives. In the utmost improvement of it, both as to the evidence it proceeds from and the effects it produces, it is usually called **temporary faith**; — for it is neither permanent against all oppositions, nor will bring any unto eternal rest. The name is taken from that expression of our Saviour concerning him who believes with this faith, — Πρόσκαίρος ἔστι, [Matt. Xiii. 21](#).

This faith I grant to be true in its kind, and not merely to be equivocally so called: it is not πίστις ψευδώνυμος. It is so as unto the general nature of faith; but of the same special nature with justifying faith it is not. **Justifying faith is not a higher, or the highest degree of this faith, but is of another kind or nature.** Wherefore, sundry things may be observed concerning this faith, in the utmost improvement of it unto our present purpose. As —

1. This faith, with all the effects of it, men may have and not be justified; and, if they have not a faith of another kind, they cannot be justified. For justification is nowhere ascribed unto it, yea, it is affirmed by the apostle James that none can be justified by it.

2. It may produce great effects in the minds, affections and lives of men, although not one of them that are peculiar unto justifying faith. Yet such they may be, as that those in whom they are wrought may be, and ought, in the judgment of charity, to be looked on as true believers.

3. This is that faith which may be alone. We are justified by faith alone; but we are not justified by that faith which can be alone. Alone, respects its influence into our justification, not its nature and existence. And we absolutely deny that we can be justified by that faith which can be alone; that is, **without a principle of spiritual life and universal obedience**, operative in of it, as duty does require.

These things I have observed, only to obviate that calumny [[slander](#)] and reproach which some endeavour to fix on the doctrine of justification by faith only, through the mediation of Christ. For those who assert it, must be Solifidians, Antinomians [[those who deny obedience to God’s moral law as a guide](#)], and I know not what; — **such as oppose or deny the necessity of universal obedience, or good**

works. Most of them who manage it, cannot but know in their own consciences that this charge is false. But this is the way of handling controversies with many. They can aver anything that seems to advantage the cause they plead, to the great scandal of religion. If by Solifidians, they mean those who believe that faith alone is on our part the means, instrument, or condition (of which afterward) of our justification, all the prophets and apostles were so, and were so taught to be by Jesus Christ; as shall be proved. If they mean those who affirm that the faith whereby we are justified is alone, separate, or separable, from a principle and the fruit of holy obedience, they must find them out themselves, we know nothing of them. For we allow no faith to be of the same kind or nature with that whereby we are justified, **but what virtually and radically contains in it universal obedience, as the effect is in the cause, the fruit in the root, and which acts itself in all particular duties**, according as by rule and circumstances they are made so to be. Yea, we allow no faith to be justifying, or to be of the same kind with it, which is not itself, and in its own nature, **a spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works**.

[My comments: We are thus united to Christ, are of one Spirit, we are quickened by his Spirit into newness of life, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;* Gal 2:20 This new principle of life refers to Christ...Christ in me, that new living principle, that *fountain of water that springs up into everlasting life*.

John 4:4: “**but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.**”

John 7:38 “**He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**” ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing^[g] in Him would receive;”

Romans 8:11 “**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**”

Romans 6:4 “**Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**” - to walk in newness of life is that obedience, that principle of life spoken of earlier.

Phil. 2:13 “**for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**”

There’s that principle of life again, God working in us... We work and God works: Jonathan Edwards explains: (concurrency: **code225a**)

§ 64. In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.

In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely

because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, “God worketh in you both to will and to do.”

Owen continues:

(3.) On these concessions we yet say two things:— [1.] That the whole nature of justifying faith **does not consist merely in an assent of the mind**, be it never so firm and steadfast, nor whatever effects of obedience it may produce. [2.] That in its duty and office in justification, whence it has that especial denomination which alone we are in the explanation of, it does not equally respect all divine revelation as such, but has a peculiar object proposed unto it in the Scripture. And whereas both these will be immediately evinced in our description of the proper object and nature of faith, I shall, at present, oppose some few things unto this description of them, sufficient to manifest how alien it is from the truth.

1st This assent is an act of the understanding only, — **an act of the mind with respect unto truth evidenced unto it**, be it of what nature it will. So we believe the worst of things and the most grievous unto us, as well as the best and the most useful. **But believing is an act of the heart**; which, in the Scriptures comprises all the faculties of the soul as **one entire principle of moral and spiritual duties**: “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” Rom. X. 10. And it is **frequently described by an act of the will**, though it be not so alone. But without an act of the will, no man can believe as he ought. See John v. 40; i. 12; vi. 35. We come to Christ in an act of the will; and “let whosoever will, come.” **And to be willing is taken for to believe**, Ps. Cx. 3; and unbelief is disobedience, Heb. lii. 18, 19.

[My general comments so far on this: I am the way, the truth, and the life... He, Jesus, is the life, that principle of life that acts in us to will and to do. It is the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, that lives in us to will and to do; we are the proper actors.

So at conversion you are *quickened* to life; this life is in him, *independent life*, and he gives it to whom he will. Faith is given, the Spirit takes up residence in you as he unites you to himself, cutting you from the wild olive branch and engrafting you into himself, the vine (I think this happens all at once). Saving faith includes not only that assent to the truth of the divine testimony but also that new living principle – they are conjoined; saving faith and this principle are one which gives this understanding of God or knowledge of God as well as true virtue consisting primarily in a love for God from the heart (hence evangelical), and happiness consisting in joy in God, which is the sum total of the main gift, his fullness, the emanation of his internal glory, the sum of all good things that being the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Jesus! Who acts in you (that living principle) to will and to do...to believe on Him and put in exercise those holy acts of obedience that are pleasing to Him. Without this you can do nothing, that is, you cannot obey God, John 15, but only work iniquity. So as Paul says, it is no longer I who live, (since I have been crucified with Christ) but Christ lives in me. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that saving faith is life, that new principle of life that causes these holy acts, is Christ, is the glory of God that is given to us John 17:22. They all signify the same thing in a sense.

¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1Jn5:11

No one has independent life in himself except God. Man thinks he has independent life in himself and has an autonomous self-directed will, but this is folly. We are wholly dependent on God physically and morally. It is in him we live and move and have our being. To say that we have independent life in us is to say that we are sovereign and a God too which is impossible! Only God is sovereign; and there can only be one *sovereign* in this universe.

My opinion so far: Just as God is not, properly speaking, the compilation of the many qualities and excellencies often listed, but is one divine essence – the scripture represents his nature in so many qualities so that we can begin to comprehend his being and nature. Saving faith is similar in this sense; it is one divine living principle (or at least an integral part of this principle) the whole of which is called by the names of *life, the Holy Spirit, Christ in you*, all the better things of the new covenant which is the Promise summed up by the person of the Holy Spirit. Owen lumps these three things in this new living principle: faith, truth, and grace, or faith, grace and holiness, or a principle of life, holiness and obedience to God. (see Justification by Faith), p 146 (Efficacious Grace)

“they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” John 1:14;

Saving faith has to do with the heart and the will; and that it is conjoined with good works (James 2). Saving faith is a new vital principle, not just a mental ascent to bible testimonies which without good works is a dead faith – the reason is that saving faith affects the heart, not just the mind and hence good works, e.g., believing, and the fruit of other graces does necessarily proceed, hence John 7:38, “**He who believes in Me** [i.e., has saving faith], **as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**”

So this new principle is living; and there is only one person who is living, who has independent life in himself, who can give life to whom he will, John 5:21, that being Christ the Son of God...*In him was life*, Jn 1:4. And then John 5:21, “ For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” This life in a believer is Christ, *Christ in you!* “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:” Col. 1:27

The *riches of the glory* is himself, the Holy Spirit, The Promise! Those better things in which the promises consist, the knowledge of God, virtue or Love for God, and happiness and joy in God. So now, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20

The Spirit of God lives in us, works in us to will and to do, apart from which we can do nothing, John 15. This is different in kind than what is in a natural man as Jesus recounts when many said they believed in him, “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*,²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” Or you could say negatively,

that Jesus knew what was not in man apart from God, i.e., nothing good, as Paul says of the *old man* in him.

And if this faith is a vital principle, that it has life, it can only be of Christ, that is Christ in you, because the old man in us is dead and operates from a dead principle that leads to dead works, Heb 9:14, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” So it is only by faith that we can please God, Heb. 11:6 and that Christ is the only person that God is pleased with...this is my Son in whom I am well pleased. Hence when God looks at us he sees Christ.

Read this excerpt by Owen on this subject of the hypostatic union (hypostasis), that union of Christ, the Son of God with human flesh as well as the *hypostasis* provided by saving faith to a believer of the nature of Christ joined with ours...so that we are made partakers of his nature, hence a hypostasis. So when Heb. 11:1 says faith is the substance of things hoped for – (we hope for the redeemer, Christ our deliverer, hence the things are summed up in the Holy Spirit that is to be given, the gift of the Holy Spirit, etc. which includes knowledge of God, holiness, etc.) Christ, his nature or his glory, his doctrine, his promises, etc., are united to us, made to subsist in our souls, they being made real to us, whereas before they were indiscernible, far off, foolishness, etc.

pg7 vol. 23 on faith ref. Heb. 11:1: “Whereas things that are in hope only have no subsistence of their own, as being not present; faith becomes the subsistence of them, making them to be present after a certain manner.”

Ver. 1. — Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Secondly, The subject spoken of is “faith,” that faith whereby the just doth live; that is, faith divine, supernatural, justifying, and saving, — the faith of God’s elect, the faith that is not of ourselves, that is of the operation of God, wherewith all true believers are endowed from above. It is therefore justifying faith that the apostle here speaks concerning; but he speaks not of it as justifying, **but as it is effectually useful in our whole life unto God**, especially as unto constancy and perseverance in profession.

Owen excerpt p190 Nature and Reasons of Apostasy

Thus it seems to be with some of them of whom we speak. They had, among other notional professors, an historical knowledge of Christ, and thereof made profession, but they were never spiritually acquainted with the glorious excellencies of his person and offices; for if they had, they would not have forsaken the “great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,” for other uncouth notions of their own. Who can think it possible that any one who hath known the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the Son of God incarnate, receiving our nature into a hypostatical union with himself and a blessed subsistence in his own person, as proposed unto us in the gospel, as evidently therein crucified before our eyes, as the apostle and high priest of our profession, as our advocate with the Father, as making peace for us and reconciliation through the blood of his cross, as made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; — who that ever had experience or benefit, in his temptations and trials, of his love, care, tenderness, compassion, readiness and ability to

succor them that come to God by him, — **can renounce all these things, to betake himself to vain notions of a light and perfection of his own in their stead?** [Experience of believers of these divine things is a guard to their souls of the trappings of false propositions and teachings. See the chapter on *experience* of believers. In other words once you have experienced true riches, the fools gold will readily be made itself known.] I hope they are few who do so practically, but the expressions of many have a dangerous aspect that way; and it is certain there is nothing more necessary unto all that are called Christians than to have clear, distinct notions in themselves of the person of Christ, and plainly to declare how they place their whole faith, hope, and trust in him. And for such as really do so, though not able to express themselves in a due manner, yea, **though unduly captivated unto some novel conceptions and expressions**, the good Lord pardon them, and let mercy and peace be on them, and on the whole Israel of God! Whereas, therefore, some who have made a profession of these things do now relinquish them, I shall pray they may take heed that they do not thereby “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Neither is it a verbal acknowledgment, in owning that Christ which suffered at Jerusalem, which will free any from this charge and guilt. Unless the Lord Christ, that Christ which is God and man in one person, be owned, received, believed in, loved, trusted unto, and obeyed in all things, as he is proposed unto us in the Scripture, and with respect unto all the ends of righteousness, holiness, life, and salvation, for which he is so proposed, he is renounced and forsaken. Who can sufficiently express the cunning sleights of Satan? Who can sufficiently bewail the foolishness of the hearts of men, that after they have, at least doctrinally, known and professed these things, they should be turned aside from the **glory, truth, and holiness** of them? [those are the things that are communicated to us upon conversion and received by faith, saving faith, by which they subsist within our souls hypostatically speaking in that we partake of His nature.] Let Christians therefore know and beware, that if they find any decay in faith, love, delight, and trust in the person and mediation of Christ, they are in the way that leads to some cursed apostasy of one kind or another.

- [back to vol. 23, pg 8](#) Owen Commentary on Heb 11:1

These things for the **substance** of them are the same, the same *πραγματα* [things]; but they are proposed under various considerations. For, that they may be useful unto us as they are hoped for, **they are to have a present subsistence given unto them; as they are unseen, they are to be made evident: both which are done by faith.** (1.) “Things hoped for,” in general, **are things good, promised, future**, expected on unfailing grounds. The things, therefore, here intended as “hoped for,” are all the things that are **divinely promised unto them that believe**, — all things of **present grace and future glory**. For even the things of present grace are the objects of hope: [1.] With respect unto the degrees and measures of our participation of them. **Believers live in the hope of increase of grace, because it is promised.** [2.] Absolutely, as unto the grace of perseverance in grace, which is future until its full accomplishment. As unto the things of future glory, see what hath been discoursed on chapter 6:19,20, 8:5. All these things, as they are promised, and so far as they are so, are the objects of our hope. And that the good things of the promises are the things here intended, the apostle declares in his ensuing discourse, where he makes the end and effect of the faith which he doth so commend to be the enjoyment of the promises. **Hope in God for these things, to be received in their appointed season, is the great support of believers under all their trials**, in the whole course of their profession, temptations, obedience, and sufferings. “We are saved by hope,” Romans 8:24

... But generally they are things of the same nature that are intended, whereunto faith gives present subsistence as they are real, and evidence as they are true. But still these things as hoped for are future, not yet in themselves enjoyed; and so, although hope comprises in it trust, confidence, and an assured expectation, giving great supportment unto the soul, yet the influence of things hoped for into our comfort and stability is weakened somewhat by their absence and distance. This is that which faith supplies; it gives those things hoped for, and as they are hoped for, a real subsistence in the minds and souls of them that do believe: and this is the sense of the words. Pg 9

pg 10 Vol. 23 Truth, Faith & Grace, that operating principle of life given by God

(2.) There are several things whereby faith gives a present subsistence unto things future, and so hoped for: —

[1.] By mixing itself with the promises wherein they are contained. Divine promises do not only declare the good things promised, — namely, that there are such things which God will bestow on believers, — but they contain them by virtue of divine institution. Hence are they called “the breasts of consolations,” Isaiah 66:11, as those which contain the refreshment which they exhibit and convey. They are the treasury wherein God hath laid them up. Hence to “receive a promise,” is to receive the things promised, which are contained in it, and exhibited by it, 2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Peter 1:4. Now faith mixeth and incorporateth itself with the word of promise, Hebrews 4:2. See the exposition of it. Hereby what is in the word it makes its own, and so the things themselves believed are enjoyed; which is their subsistence in us.

[2.] By giving unto the soul a taste of their goodness, yea, making them the food thereof; which they cannot be unless they are really present unto it. We do by it, not only “taste that the Lord is gracious,” 1 Peter 2:3, — that is, have an experience of the grace of God in the sweetness and goodness of the things he hath promised and doth bestow, — but the word itself is the meat, the food, the milk and strong meat of believers; because it doth really exhibit unto their faith the goodness, sweetness, and nourishing virtue of spiritual things. They feed on them, and they incorporate with them; which is their present subsistence.

[3.] It gives an experience of their power, as unto all the ends which they are promised for. Their use and end in general is to change and transform the whole soul into the image of God, by a conformity unto Jesus Christ, the first-born. This we lost by sin, and this the good things of the promise do restore us unto, Ephesians 4:20-24. It is not truth merely as truth, but truth as conveying the things contained in it into the soul, that is powerfully operative unto this end. Truth, faith, and grace, being all united in one living, operative principle in the soul, give the things hoped for a subsistence therein. This is an eminent way of faith’s giving a subsistence unto things hoped for, in the souls of believers. Where this is not, they are unto men as clouds afar off, which yield them no refreshing showers. [One reason why some sermons are so dry, boring and dead – clouds without rain, no salt...] Expectations of things hoped for, when they are not in this power and efficacy brought by faith into the soul, are ruinous self-deceivings. [hence the error of the sinner’s prayer, presumption, or any work by man to be salvifically accepted by God, i.e., works as opposed to faith] To have a subsistence in us, is to abide in us in their power and efficacy unto all the ends of our spiritual life. See Ephesians 3: 16-19.

[4.] It really communicates unto us, or we do receive by it, the first-fruits of them all. They are present and do subsist, even the greatest, most glorious and heavenly of them, in believers, in their first-fruits. These firstfruits are the Spirit as a Spirit of grace, sanctification, supplication, and consolation, Romans 8:23. For he is the seal, [see pg 88] the earnest, and the pledge, of present grace and future glory, of all the good things hoped for, 2 Corinthians 1:22. This Spirit we receive by faith. The world cannot receive him, John 14:17; the law could not give him, Galatians 3:2. And wherever he is, there is an **υποστασις** [[hypostasis](#)], a **present subsistence** of all things hoped for, namely, in their beginning, assurance, and benefit.

[5.] It doth it by giving a representation of their beauty and glory unto the minds of them that believe, whereby they behold them as if they were present. So Abraham by faith saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced; and the saints under the old testament saw the King in his beauty, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:6. In these ways, and by these means, “faith is the substance of things hoped for;” and, —

Obs. 1. No faith will carry us through the difficulties of our profession, from oppositions within and without, giving us constancy and perseverance therein unto the end, but that only which gives the good things hoped for a real subsistence in our minds and souls. — But when, **by mixing itself with the promise**, which is the foundation of hope, (for to hope for any thing but what is promised, is to deceive ourselves,) it gives us a taste of their goodness, an experience of their power, the inhabitation of their first-fruits, and a view of their glory, it will infallibly effect this blessed end.

[Go to Pg 15 -](#)

Obs. V. It is faith alone that takes believers out of this world whilst they are in it, that exalts them above it whilst they are under its rage; that enables them to live upon things future and invisible, **giving such a real subsistence unto their power in them**, and **victorious evidence of their reality and truth in themselves**, as **secures** them from fainting under all oppositions, temptations, and persecutions whatever.

“And by this Spirit is Christ himself, **or the nature of Christ, formed in us**,” 2 Peter 1:4

⁴“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2Pet1:4

[So the image of God re-stamped upon our souls, us being conformed to his image, Christ in us, life in us, that vital principle of life in us, or saving faith, are intimately related, conjoined and inseparable. This is quite sublime and words are hard to explain it. Our being infused with this divine nature is the beginning of our or sanctification as Owen explains next]

“3. Whereas our **sanctification, in the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, and the acting of it unto an increase in duties of holiness, righteousness, and obedience, is that whereby we are made meet for glory, and is of the same nature essentially with glory itself**, whence its advances in us are said to be from “**glory to glory**,” [2 Cor. lii. 18](#); and glory itself is called the “**grace of life**,” [1 Pet. lii. 7](#): it is much more properly expressed by our being glorified than by being justified, which is a privilege quite of another nature.”

John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews, pg 511 Vol. 20
notes regarding one divine essence:

(1st.) Here the sacred truth of the trinity of persons in the divine nature or essence openeth itself unto the creatures. **The nature, the essence, or being of God, is absolutely and numerically one.** All the natural and essential properties of that being are absolutely and essentially the same; **and all the operations of this divine essence or being, according to its properties, are undivided, as being the effects of one principle, one power, one wisdom.** Hence it could not by any such acts be manifested that there was more than one person in that one nature or being. But now, in these actings of the persons of the Trinity in such ways as firstly respect themselves, or their operations “ad intra,” where one person is as it were the object of the other persons’ acting, the sacred truth of the plurality of persons in the same single, undivided essence is gloriously manifested. The Son undertaking to the Father to become a high priest for sinners, openly declares the distinction of the Son, or eternal Word, from the person of the Father. And in these distinct and mutual actings of the persons of it is the doctrine and truth of the holy Trinity most safely contemplated. See concerning this our Exercitations at large.

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¹³ But this sacred truth must be cleared from an objection where unto it seems obnoxious before we do proceed. “The *will* is a natural property and therefore in the divine essence it is but one. The Father, Son, and Spirit, have not distinct wills. They are one God and God’s will is one as being an essential property of his nature and therefore are there two wills in the one person of Christ whereas there is but one will in the three persons of the Trinity. How then can it be said that the will of the Father and the will of the Son did concur distinctly in the making of this covenant?”

This difficulty may be solved from what hath been already declared, for such is the distinction of the persons in the unity of the divine essence as that they act in natural and essential acts reciprocally one towards another, namely in understanding, love, and the like; they know and mutually love each other.

Faith

code152

What it Is

Its acts and nature; conforming us to his image.

Hebrews 11:1 by John Owen, pg 7-17 (pg 7-21 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Ver. 1. — *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

First, The respect and connection of these words unto the proceeding discourse is in the particle δε, which we render “now:” for it is not adversative or exceptive in this place, as it is usually, but illative, denoting the introduction of a further confirmation of what was before declared: ‘That is, **faith will do and effect what is ascribed unto it, in the preservation of your souls in the life of God, and constancy in profession; for “it is the substance,” etc.’ The observation of the design of the apostle dischargeth all the disputes of expositors on this place about the nature and definition of faith, seeing he describes only one property of it, with respect unto a peculiar end, as was said before.**

Secondly, The subject spoken of is “faith,” that faith whereby the just doth live; that is, **faith divine, supernatural, justifying, and saving, — the faith of God’s elect, the faith that is not of ourselves**, that is **of the operation of God**, wherewith all true believers are **endowed from above**. It is therefore **justifying faith** that the apostle here speaks concerning; but he speaks not of it as justifying, but as it is **effectually useful in our whole life unto God, especially as unto constancy and perseverance in profession**.

Thirdly, Unto this faith two things are ascribed: 1. That it is “**the substance of things hoped for.**” 2. That it is “**the evidence of things not seen.**” And, —

1. We must first inquire what are these things; and then what are the acts of faith with respect unto them. These things for the substance of them are the same, the same πράγματα [things]; but they are proposed under various considerations. For, that they may be useful unto us as they are hoped for, they are to have a present subsistence given unto them; as they are unseen, they are to be made evident: both which are done by faith.

(1.) “Things hoped for,” in general, are things good, promised, future, expected on unfailling grounds. The **things**, therefore, here intended as “hoped for,” are all the things that are **divinely promised unto them that believe**, — **all things of present grace and future glory**. For even the things of present grace are the objects of hope: [1.] With respect unto the degrees and measures of our participation of them. Believers live in the hope of increase of grace, because it is promised. [2.] Absolutely, as unto the grace of perseverance in grace, which is future until its full accomplishment. As unto the things of future glory, see what hath been discoursed on chapter 6:19,20, 8:5.

All these things, as they are promised, and so far as they are so, are the objects of our hope. And that the good things of the promises are the things here intended, the apostle declares in his ensuing discourse, where he makes the end and effect of the faith which he doth so commend to be the enjoyment of the promises. **Hope in God for these things, to be received in their appointed season, is the great support of believers under all their trials, in the whole course of their profession, temptations, obedience, and sufferings**. “**We are saved by hope**,” Romans 8:24. But yet I will not say that “things hoped for” and “things unseen” are absolutely the same; so as that there should be nothing hoped for but what is unseen, which is true; nor any thing unseen but what is hoped for, which is not so: for there are things which are the objects of faith which are unseen and yet not hoped for, — such is the creation of the world, wherein the apostle gives an instance in the first place. But generally they are things of the same nature that are intended, **whereunto faith gives present subsistence as they are real, and evidence as they are true**.

But still these things as hoped for are future, not yet in themselves enjoyed; and so, although hope comprises in it trust, confidence, and an assured expectation, giving great supportment unto the soul, yet the influence of things hoped for into our comfort and stability is weakened somewhat by their absence and distance.

This is that which faith supplies; it gives those things hoped for, and as they are hoped for, a real subsistence in the minds and souls of them that do believe: and this is the sense of the words. Some would have υποστας in this place to be “confidence in expectation;” which is hope, and not faith. Some render it the “principle,” or foundation; which neither expresseth the sense of the word nor reacheth the scope of the place. But this sense of it is that which both the **best translators and the ancient expositors** give countenance unto: “*Illud ex quo subsistunt, extant.*” **Faith is that whereby they do subsist.** **And where do they so subsist as if they were actually in effect,** whilst they are yet hoped for “In them,” saith the Syriac translation; that is, in them that do believe. “Faith is the essence of these things, and their subsistence, causing them to be, and to be present, because it believes them,” saith Oecumenius. And Theophylact to the same purpose, “Faith is the essence of those things which yet are not; the subsistence of those which in themselves do not yet subsist.” And yet more plainly in the scholiast before recited: or, **it is the substance or subsistence of those things, that is, metonymically or instrumentally, in that it is the cause and means giving them a subsistence.** But how this is done hath not been declared. This, therefore, is that which we must briefly inquire into.

(2.) **There are several things whereby faith gives a present subsistence unto things future, and so hoped for: —**

[1.] **By mixing itself with the promises** wherein they are contained. Divine promises do not only declare the good things promised, — **namely, that there are such things which God will bestow on believers,** [see diagram, His glory, etc.] — but they contain them by virtue of divine institution. Hence are they called “the breasts of consolations,” Isaiah 66:11, as those which contain the refreshment which they exhibit and convey. They are the treasury wherein God hath laid them up. Hence to “receive a promise,” is to receive the things promised, which are contained in it, and exhibited by it, 2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Peter 1:4. **Now faith mixeth and incorporateth itself with the word of promise,** Hebrews 4:2. See the exposition of it. **Hereby what is in the word it makes its own, and so the things themselves believed are enjoyed; which is their subsistence in us.**

[2.] **By giving unto the soul a taste of their goodness,** yea, making them the food thereof; which they cannot be unless they are really present unto it. We do by it, not only “taste that the Lord is gracious,” 1 Peter 2:3, — that is, have an experience of the grace of God in the sweetness and goodness of the things he hath promised and doth bestow, — but the word itself is the meat, the food, the milk and strong meat of believers; because it doth really exhibit unto their faith the goodness, sweetness, and nourishing virtue of spiritual things. They feed on them, and they incorporate with them; which is their present subsistence.

[3.] **It gives an experience of their power,** as unto all the ends which they are promised for. **Their use and end in general is to change and transform the whole soul into the image of God, by a conformity unto Jesus Christ, the first-born.** **This we lost by sin, and this the good things of the promise do restore us unto,** Ephesians 4:20-24. **It is not truth merely as truth, but truth as conveying the things contained**

in it into the soul, that is powerfully operative unto this end. Truth, faith, and grace, being all united in one living, operative principle in the soul, give the things hoped for a subsistence therein. This is an eminent way of faith's giving a subsistence unto things hoped for, in the souls of believers. Where this is not, they are 11 unto men as clouds afar off, which yield them no refreshing showers. **Expectations of things hoped for, when they are not in this power and efficacy brought by faith into the soul, are ruinous self-deceivings. To have a subsistence in us, is to abide in us in their power and efficacy unto all the ends of our spiritual life.** See Ephesians 3: 16-19.

[4.] **It really communicates unto us, or we do receive by it, the first-fruits of them all.** They are present and do subsist, even the greatest, most glorious and heavenly of them, in believers, in their first-fruits. These firstfruits are the Spirit as a Spirit of grace, sanctification, supplication, and consolation, Romans 8:23. For he is the seal [see pg 88], the earnest, and the pledge, of present grace and future glory, of all the good things hoped for, 2 Corinthians 1:22. This Spirit we receive by faith. The world cannot receive him, John 14:17; the law could not give him, Galatians 3:2. And wherever he is, there is an υποστασις, a present subsistence of all things hoped for, namely, in their beginning, assurance, and benefit. [Now think for a minute. This is what is given at conversion to those for whom Christ died; his death purchased all those *good things* just spoken of. This is all done without our asking for it – because before we could ask for them, if that were possible, we are dead, blind and enemies to God, completely ignorant of them, without faith, and that all these good things are foolishness to us! Why or how would he ask for something about which he has no knowledge of? **Martin Luther** said, “No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God.” The unregenerate hate faith and hate everything else that is truly spiritual. So if anyone gets converted, it is solely a result of God's mercy and not man's willing or running – “So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”]

[5.] It doth it by giving a representation of their beauty and glory unto the minds of them that believe, whereby they behold them as if they were present. So Abraham by faith saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced; and the saints under the old testament saw the King in his beauty, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:6.

In these ways, and by these means, “faith is the substance of things hoped for;” and, —

Obs. 1. No faith will carry us through the difficulties of our profession, from oppositions within and without, giving us constancy and perseverance therein unto the end, **but that only which gives the good things hoped for a real subsistence in our minds and souls.** — But when, by mixing itself with the promise, which is the foundation of hope, (for to hope for anything but what is promised, is to deceive ourselves,) **it gives us a taste of their goodness, an experience of their power, the inhabitation of their first-fruits, and a view of their glory, it will infallibly effect this blessed end.**

2. It is said in the description of this faith, that it is “the evidence of things not seen.” And we must inquire, (1.) What are the things that are not seen; 12 (2.) How faith is the evidence of them; (3.) How it conduceth, in its being so, unto patience, constancy, and perseverance in profession.

(1.) By “**things not seen,**” the apostle intends all those things which are not objected or proposed unto our outward senses, which may and ought to have an influence into our constancy and

perseverance in profession. Now, these are God himself, the holy properties of his nature, the person of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, all spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things that are promised, and not yet actually enjoyed. All these things are either absolutely invisible unto sense and reason, or at least so far, and under those considerations whereby they may have an influence into our profession. Everything is invisible which nothing but faith can make use of and improve unto this end, 1 Corinthians 2:9-12.

These invisible things are of three sorts: [1.] Such as are absolutely so in their own nature, as God himself, with his eternal power and Godhead, or the properties of his nature, Romans 1:20. [2.] Such as are so in their causes; such is the fabric of heaven and earth, as the apostle declares, Hebrews 11:3. [3.] Such as are so on the account of their distance from us in time and place; such are all the future glories of heaven, 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Obs. II. The peculiar specific nature of faith, whereby it is differenced from all other powers, acts, and graces in the mind, lies in this, that it makes a life on things invisible. It is not only conversant about them, but mixeth itself with them, making them the spiritual nourishment of the soul, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. And, —

Obs. III. The glory of our religion is, that it depends on, and is resolved into invisible things. They are far more excellent and glorious than anything that sense can behold or reason discover, 1 Corinthians 2:9.

(2.) Of these invisible things, as they have an influence into our profession, faith is said to be the *elegcov*, the “**evidence**,” the “**demonstration**,” that which demonstrates; the “revelation.” Properly, it is such a proof or demonstration of any thing as carries with it an answer unto and a confutation of all objections unto the contrary: a convincing evidence, plainly reproofing and refuting all things that pretend against the truth so evidenced. So it is sometimes used for a reproof, sometimes for a conviction, sometimes for an evident demonstration. See the use of the verb to this purpose, Matthew 18:15; Luke 3:19; John 3:20, 8:9, 16:8; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Ephesians 5:13; Titus 1:9; James 2:9: and of the noun, 2 Timothy 3:16.

Obs. IV. There are great objections apt to lie against invisible things, when they are externally revealed. — Man would desirously live the life of sense, or at least believe no more than what he can have a scientific demonstration of. But by these means we cannot have an evidence of invisible things; at best not such as may have an influence into our Christian profession. This is done by faith alone. We may have apprehensions of sundry invisible things by reason and the light of nature, as the apostle declares, Romans 1; but we cannot have such an **evidence** of them as shall have the properties of the *ελεγχος* here intended. It will not reprove and silence the objections of unbelief against them; it will not influence our souls into patient continuance in well-doing. Now, faith is not the evidence and demonstration of these things unto all, which the Scripture alone is; but it is an evidence in and unto them that do believe, — they have this evidence of them in themselves. For, —

[1.] Faith is that gracious power of the mind whereby it firmly assents unto divine revelation upon the sole authority of God, the revealer, as the first essential truth, and fountain of all truth. It is unto

faith that the revelation of these invisible things is made; which it mixeth and incorporates itself withal, whereby it gives an evidence unto them. Hence the Syriac translation renders the word by “revelation,” ascribing that unto the act which is the property of the object. This assent of faith is accompanied with a satisfactory evidence of the things themselves. See our discourse of the Divine Original and Authority of the Scriptures.

[2.] It is by faith that all objections against them, their being and reality, are answered and refuted; which is required unto an ελεγχος. Many such 14 there are, over all which faith is victorious, Ephesians 6:16. All the temptations of Satan, especially such as are called his “fiery darts,” consist in objections against invisible things; either as unto their being, or as unto our interest in them. All the actings of unbelief in us are to the same purpose. To reprove and silence them is the work of faith alone; and such a work it is as without which we can maintain our spiritual life neither in its power within nor its profession without.

[3.] Faith brings into the soul an experience of their power and efficacy, whereby it is cast into the mould of them, or made conformable unto them, Romans 6:17 [“yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”]; **Ephesians 4:21-23.** [hence we being transformed into his image by this mixing of faith with the word and our constant contemplation of his glory, 2Cor3:18, see pg 29] This gives an assurance unto the mind, though not of the same nature, yet more excellent than that of any scientific demonstration. (3.) Faith, in its being thus “the evidence of things not seen,” is the great means of the preservation of believers in constant, patient profession of the gospel, against all opposition, and under the fiercest persecutions; which is the thing the apostle aims to demonstrate. For, —

[1.] It plainly discovers, that the worst of what we can undergo in this world, for the profession of the gospel, bears no proportion unto the excellency and glory of those invisible things which it gives us an interest in and a participation of. So the apostle argues, Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

[2.] It brings in such a present sense of their goodness, power, and efficacy, that not only relieves and refresheth the soul under all its sufferings, but makes it joyful in them, and victorious over them, Romans 5:3-5, 8:34-37; 1 Peter 1:6-8.

[3.] It gives an assurance hereby of the greatness and glory of the eternal reward; which is the greatest encouragement unto constancy in believing, 1 Peter 4:12, 13.

In this description of faith, the apostle hath laid an assured foundation of his main position, concerning the cause and means of constancy in profession under trouble and persecution; with a discovery of the nature and end of the ensuing instances, with their suitableness unto his purpose. And we may observe in general, that, —

Obs. V. It is faith alone that takes believers out of this world whilst they are in it, that exalts them above it whilst they are under its rage; that enables them to live upon things future and invisible, giving such a real subsistence unto their power in them, and victorious evidence of their reality and truth in themselves, as secures them from fainting under all oppositions, temptations, and persecutions whatever.

VERSE 2.

That the description which he hath given of faith, and the efficacy which he hath assigned thereunto, are true, and to be relied on, the apostle proves by the effects which, as such, it hath had in those of old in whom it was.

Ver. 2. — *For by it the elders obtained a good report:* [or, were well testified unto.]

The coherence of the words with the foregoing is expressed in the conjunctive particle γαρ, “for:” and it declares that a proof is tendered, by way of instance, of what was before asserted. ‘The nature and efficacy of faith is such as I have described; “for by it the elders,” etc.’ This they could no way have done, but by that faith whereof these are the properties.

Obs. I. Instances or examples are the most powerful confirmations of practical truths.

For the exposition of the words, it must be declared, 1. Who were the elders intended. 2. How they were testified unto, or from whom they obtained this testimony. 3. What it was that was testified concerning them. 4. On what account they had this testimony.

1. Who these “elders” were is put beyond dispute by the ensuing discourse. All true believers **from the foundation of the world, or the giving of the first promise [Gen3:15]**, unto the end of the dispensation of the old testament, are intended; for in all sorts of them he giveth particular instances, from Abel unto those who suffered the last persecution that the church of the Jews underwent for religion, verses 36-38. What befell them afterward was judgment and punishment for sin, not persecution for religion. All these, by one general name, he calleth “the elders,” comprising all that went before them. ‘Thus was it constantly with all believers from the beginning of the world, — the elders, those who lived before us, in ancient times.’

2. This testimony was given unto them in the Scripture; that is, it is so in particular of many of them, and of the rest in the general rules of it. It is 17 the Holy Spirit in the Scripture that gives them this good testimony; for thereunto doth the apostle appeal for the proof of his assertion. In and from the world things were otherwise with them; none so defamed, so reproached, so reviled as they were. If they had had such a good report in the world, their example would not have been of use unto the apostle’s design; for he applies it unto them who were made a “gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions,” chapter 10:33; and so it was with many of them, who yet obtained this testimony. They “had trial of cruel mockings,” etc., verses 36,37.

Obs. II. They who have a good testimony from God shall never want reproaches from the world.

3. What was so testified of them is expressly declared afterwards; and this is, that they “pleased God,” or were accepted with him. The Holy Ghost in Scripture gives testimony unto them, that they pleased God, that they were righteous, that they were justified in the sight of God, verses 4-6, etc.

4. That whereon this testimony was founded, is their “faith.” In, by, or through their believing it was, that they obtained this report. Many other great and excellent things, some heroic actions, some deep

sufferings, are ascribed unto them, but their obtaining this testimony is assigned to faith alone; as for other reasons, so because all those other things were fruits of their faith, whose acceptance with God depended thereon. And we may observe, —

Obs. III. It is faith alone which **from the beginning of the world (or from the giving of the first promise)** was the means and way of obtaining acceptance with God. — There hath been great variety in the revelations of the object of this faith. The faith of some, as of Noah and some others, was principally and signally exercised on especial objects, as we shall see in our progress; but it is faith of the same nature and kind in all from first to last that gives acceptance with God. **And all the promises of God, as branches of the first promise, are in general the formal object of it;** that is, Christ in them, without faith in whom none was ever accepted with God, as we shall see.

Obs. IV. The faith of true believers from the beginning of the world was **fixed on things future, hoped for, and invisible; that is, eternal life and glory in an especial manner.** — That was the faith whereby they “obtained a good report,” as the apostle here testifies. So vain is the imagination of them who affirm that all the promises under the old testament respected only things temporal; so making the whole church to have been Sadducees The contrary is here expressly affirmed by the apostle.

Obs. V. **That faith whereby men please God acts itself in a fixed contemplation on things future and invisible, from whence it derives encouragement and strength to endure and abide firm in profession against all oppositions and persecutions.**

Obs. VI. However men may be despised, vilified, and reproached in the world, yet if they have faith, if they are true believers, they are accepted with God, and he will give them a good report.

VERSE 3.

He enters on the confirmation and exemplification of his proposition by instances; first from an especial object of faith, and then proceeds unto the actings of it in them who by virtue of it did actually and really believe. The former he expresseth in this verse.

Ver. 3. — By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

In this first instance of the power and efficacy of faith, the apostle hath respect unto the second clause of his general description of it, “the evidence of things not seen.” For although this world, and the things contained in it, are visible, and are here said to be seen, yet the original framing and making of them hath a principal place among things not seen. And to prove that faith hath a respect unto all unseen things as unseen, he gives an instance in that which was so long past as the creation of the world; all his other instances declare its efficacy in the prospect of unseen things that are future.

1. That which is here ascribed unto faith is, that it is the **instrumental cause** of it: “By faith.” And where faith is spoken of as the instrumental cause of anything, **it always takes in or includes its object as the principal cause of the same thing.** **So where it is said that we are “justified by faith,” it includes Christ and his righteousness as the principal cause of our justification; faith being only the instrument whereby we apprehend it.** And here, where it is said that “by faith we understand that the worlds were framed,” it includes its object, **namely, the divine revelation that is made thereof in the word of God.**

For there is no other way for faith to instruct us herein, or give us an understanding of it, but by its assent unto divine revelation. **The revelation of it being made, faith is the only way and means whereby we understand it, and assent unto it.** “By faith we understand;” that is, by faith we assent unto the divine revelation of it. The apostle lays here a good foundation of all his ensuing assertions: for if by faith we are assured of the creation of the world out of nothing, which is contrary to the most received principle of natural reason, “Ex nihilo nihil fit,” — “Nothing comes of nothing,” — it will bear us out in the belief of other things that seem impossible unto reason, if so be they are revealed. In particular, faith well fixed on the original of all things as made out of nothing, will bear us out in the belief of the final restitution of our bodies at the resurrection, which the apostle instanceth in as unto some of his worthies. [So those who do the sinner’s prayer are first, having the effect come before the cause (the cause being divine faith) and also their act of praying is trying to create its own object (Christ died for me, loves me, etc.) which is witchcraft or at least a gross presumption. For until the revelation (the object) be presented, it is mere presumption to think that man can ask for it or even think that he apprehends it in order to pray for it which he can’t because he is blind, etc. As Martin Luther said, “No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God.”]

2. **That which is ascribed unto faith subjectively, or unto its operation in our minds, is, that “by it we understand.”** Upon a due consideration of what is proposed in divine revelation concerning this matter, we come not only to assent unto it as true, **but to have a due comprehension of it in its cause, so as that we may be said to understand it.** Wherefore, “understanding” here is not opposed only unto an utter nescience or ignorance hereof, but also unto that dark and confused apprehension of the creation of the world which some by the light of reason attained unto.

Obs. I. Those who firmly assent unto divine revelation, do understand the creation of the world, as to its truth, its season, its cause, its manner, and end. — Others do only think about it unsteadily and uncertainly. It was never determined among the ancient sages of the world, the pretended priests of the mysteries of reason. Some said one 21 thing, and some another: some said it had a beginning, some said it had none; and some assigned such a beginning unto it, as it had been better it never had any. Nothing but an assent unto divine revelation can give us a clear understanding hereof. And, —

Obs. II. Then doth faith put forth its power in our minds in a due manner, when it gives us clear and distinct apprehensions of the things we do believe. Faith that gives not understanding, is but fancy.

John Flavel, p 183 v2: *We may not conceive that faith itself is the soul’s rest, but the means and instruments of it only.* We cannot find rest in any work or duty of our own, but we may find it in Christ, **whom faith apprehends for justification and salvation.** Having thus guarded the point against misapprehensions, by these needful cautions, I shall next show you how our coming to Christ by faith brings us to rest in him. And here let it be considered what those things are that burden, grieve and disquiet the soul before its coming to Christ; and how it is relieved and eased in all those respects, by its coming to the Lord Jesus; and you shall find, *First*, That one principal ground of trouble is the guilt of sin upon the conscience, of which I spake in the former point. The curse of the law lies heavy upon the soul, so heavy that nothing is found in all the world able to relieve it under that burden; as you see in a condemned man, spread a table in prison with the greatest dainties, and send for the rarest musicians, all will not charm his sorrow; but if you can produce an authentic pardon, you ease him

presently. Just so it is here, **faith plucks the thorn out of the conscience**, which so grieved it, **unites the soul with Christ**, and then that ground of trouble is removed: for “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” Rom. Viii. 1. The same moment the soul comes to Christ, it hath passed from death to life, is no more under the law, but grace. If a man’s debt be paid by his surety, he need not fear to show his face boldly abroad; he may freely meet the sergeant at the prison door.

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as “the knowledge of faith” and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, “Faith” in DB, I 837: “The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands.”] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, “unconscious” salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation. Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ. But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, our knowledge of God on earth is “a knowledge of faith.” Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24).

Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 4, pg 103

The Object of Faith

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This excerpt from John Owen puts many things together for you to more fully comprehend God’s wisdom in the way of salvation, in understanding the glory of God, the communication of that glory to the elect, its purpose and ultimate end, all so that you will approach God in more due exercise of your approached unto God and duties as a believer. Also covered is the meaning of legal repentance and evangelical repentance. This will also give you consolation in the fact that your salvation is infallibly to be brought about to fruition, not left to chance of men’s fickle and corrupt wills as Arminians suppose it is. Salvation is not dependent upon man’s will but God’s.

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. Rm9:16

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Heb. 10:14

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Heb. 7:25

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith by John Owen

Ch 1, pg75 (pg85 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.v.html>

And these things I shall leave as I find them, unto the use of the church. For I shall not contend with any about the way and manner of expressing the truth, where the substance of it is retained. **That which in these things is aimed at, is the advancement and glory of the grace of God in Christ, with the conduct of the souls of men unto rest and peace with him.** Where this is attained or aimed at, and that in the way of truth for the substance of it, variety of apprehensions and expressions concerning the same things may tend unto the useful exercise of faith and the edification of the church. Wherefore, neither opposing nor rejecting what has been delivered by others as their judgments herein, I shall propose my own thoughts concerning it; not without some hopes that they may tend to communicate light in the knowledge of the thing itself inquired into, and the reconciliation of some differences about it amongst learned and holy men. I say, therefore, **that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as the ordinance of God, in his work of mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, and as unto that end proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the adequate, proper object of justifying faith, or of saving faith in its work and duty with respect unto our justification.**

The reason why I thus state the object of justifying faith is, because it completely answers all that is ascribed unto it in the Scripture, and all that the nature of it does require. What belongs unto it as faith in general, is here supposed; and what is peculiar unto it as justifying, is fully expressed. And a few things will serve for the explication of the thesis, which shall afterwards be confirmed.

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ himself is asserted to be the proper object of justifying faith. For so it is required in all those testimonies of Scripture where that faith is declared to be our believing in him, on his name, our receiving of him, or looking unto him; whereunto the promise of justification and eternal life is annexed: whereof afterwards. See [John i. 12; iii. 16, 36; vi. 29, 47; vii. 38; xiv. 12; Acts x. 43; xiii. 38, 39; xvi. 31; xxvi. 18](#), etc.

(2.) **He is not proposed as the object of our faith unto the justification of life absolutely, but as the ordinance of God, even the Father, unto that end:** who therefore **also** is the **immediate object of faith as justifying**; in what respects we shall declare immediately. So justification is frequently ascribed unto faith as peculiarly acted on him, [John v. 24](#), "He that believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." And herein is comprised that **grace, love, and favour of God, which is the principal moving cause of our justification, Rom. lii. 23, 24.** Add hereunto [John vi. 29](#), and the object of faith is complete: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." **God the Father** as sending, **and the Son**

as sent, — that is, Jesus Christ in the work of his mediation, as the ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the object of our faith. See [1 Pet. i. 21](#).

(3.) That he may be the object of our faith, whose general nature consists in assent, and which is the foundation of all its other acts, he is proposed in the promises of the gospel; which I therefore place as concurring unto its complete object. Yet do I not herein consider the promises merely as peculiar divine revelations, in which sense they belong unto the formal object of faith; **but as they contain, propose, and exhibit Christ as the ordinance of God, and the benefits of his mediation, unto them that do believe.** There is an especial assent unto the promises of the gospel, wherein some place the nature and essence of justifying faith, or of faith in its work and duty with respect unto our justification. And so they make the promises of the gospel to be the proper object of it. And it cannot be but that, in the actings of justifying faith, there is a peculiar assent unto them. Howbeit, this being only an act of the mind, neither the whole nature nor the whole work of faith can consist therein. Wherefore, so far as the promises concur to **the complete object of faith, they are considered materially also, — namely, as they contain, propose, and exhibit Christ unto believers.** And in that sense are they frequently affirmed in the Scripture to be the object of our faith unto the justification of life, [Acts ii. 39; xxvi. 6; Rom. iv. 16, 20; xv. 8; Gal. iii. 16, 18; Heb. iv. 1; vi. 13; viii. 6; x. 36](#).

(4.) The end for which the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation, **is the ordinance of God**, and as such proposed in the promises of the gospel, — namely, the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, — belongs unto the object of faith as justifying. Hence, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life are proposed in the Scripture as things that are to be believed unto justification, or as the object of our faith, [Matt. ix. 2; Acts ii. 38, 39; v. 31; xxvi. 18; Rom. iii. 25; iv. 7, 8; Col. ii. 13; Tit. i. 2](#), etc. And whereas the just is to live by his faith, and every one is to believe for himself, or make an application of the things believed unto his own behoof, some from hence have affirmed the pardon of our own sins and our own salvation to be the proper object of faith; and indeed it does belong thereunto, when, in the way and order of God and the gospel, we can attain unto it, [1 Cor. xv. 3, 4; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. i. 6, 7](#).

Wherefore, asserting the Lord Jesus Christ, in the work of his mediation, to be the object of faith unto justification, I include therein the grace of God, which is the cause; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of communicating Christ and the benefits of his mediation unto us.

And all these things are so united, so intermixed in their mutual relations and respects, so concatenated in the purpose of God, and the declaration made of his will in the gospel, **as that the believing of any one of them does virtually include the belief of the rest.** And by whom any one of them is disbelieved, they frustrate and make void all the rest, and so faith itself.

The due consideration of these things solves all the difficulties that arise about the nature of faith, either from the Scripture or from the experience of them that believe, with respect unto its object. Many things in the Scripture are we said to believe with it and by it, and that unto justification; but two things are hence evident:— **First, That no one of them can be asserted to be the complete, adequate object of our faith.** **Secondly, That none of them are so absolutely, but as they relate unto the Lord Christ, as the ordinance of God for our justification and salvation.**

And this answers the experience of all that do truly believe. For these things being **united and made inseparable** in the constitution of God, all of them are virtually included in every one of them.

(1.) Some fix their faith and trust principally on the **grace, love, and mercy of God; especially they did so under the Old Testament**, before the clear revelation of Christ and his mediation. So did the psalmist, [Ps. Cxxx. 3, 4; xxxiii. 18, 19](#); and the publican, [Luke xviii. 13](#). And these are, in places of the Scripture innumerable, proposed as the causes of our justification. See [Rom. lii. 24](#); [Eph. li. 4–8](#); [Tit. lii. 5–7](#). **But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the “redemption that is in the blood of Christ,” Dan. lx. 17.** Nor does the Scripture anywhere propose them unto us but under that consideration. See [Rom. lii. 24, 25](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). **For this is the cause, way, and means of the communication of that grace, love, and mercy unto us.**

(2.) Some place and fix them principally on the **Lord Christ, his mediation, and the benefits thereof**. This the apostle Paul proposes frequently unto us in his own example. See [Gal. ii. 20](#); [Phil. lii. 8–10](#). **But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the grace and love of God**, whence it is that they are **given and communicated unto us**, [Rom. viii. 32](#); [John iii. 16](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). Nor are they otherwise anywhere proposed unto us in the Scripture as the object of our faith unto justification.

(3.) Some in a peculiar manner fix their souls, in believing, on the **promises**. And this is exemplified in the instance of Abraham, [Gen. xv. 6](#); [Rom. iv. 20](#). And so are they proposed in the Scripture as the object of our faith, [Acts ii. 39](#); [Rom. iv. 16](#); [Heb. iv. 1, 2](#); [vi. 12, 13](#). But this they do not merely as they are divine revelations, but as they contain and propose unto us the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation, from the grace, love, and mercy of God. **Hence the apostle disputes at large, in his Epistle unto the Galatians, that if justification be any way but by the promise, both the grace of God and the death of Christ are evacuated and made of none effect. And the reason is, because the promise is nothing but the way and means of the communication of them unto us.**

(4.) Some fix their faith on the things themselves which they aim at, — namely, the **pardon of sin and eternal life**. And these also in the Scripture are proposed unto us as the object of our faith, or **that which we are to believe unto justification**, [Ps. Cxxx. 4](#); [Acts xxvi. 18](#); [Tit. i. 2](#). **But this is to be done in its proper order, especially as unto the application of them unto our own souls. For we are nowhere required to believe them, or our own interest in them, but as they are effects of the grace and love of God, through Christ and his mediation, proposed in the promises of the gospel.** Wherefore the belief of them is included in the belief of these, and is in order of nature antecedent thereunto. **And the belief of the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, without the due exercise of faith in those causes of them, is but presumption.**

I have, therefore, given the entire object of faith as justifying, or in its work and duty with respect unto our justification, in compliance with the testimonies of the Scripture, and the experience of them that believe.

Allowing, therefore, their proper place unto the promises, and unto the effect of all in the pardon of sins and eternal life, that which I shall farther confirm is, that the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation, as the ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the proper adequate object of justifying faith. And the true nature of **evangelical faith** [see p 817] consists in the **respect of the heart** (which we shall immediately describe) unto the love, grace, and wisdom of God;

with the mediation of Christ, in his obedience; with the sacrifice, satisfaction, **and atonement for sin which he made by his blood**. These things are impiously opposed by some as inconsistent; for the second head of the Socinian impiety is, that the grace of God and satisfaction of Christ are opposite and inconsistent [**that is, mercy is opposite to justice executed which it is not – Owen talks about this in another discourse. Socinians believe that God can forgive sin by a simple act of his will without any punishment inflicted on anyone. But his justice requires punishment.**], so as that if we allow of the one we must deny the other. But as these things are so proposed in the Scripture, as that without granting them both neither can be believed; so faith, which respects them as subordinate, — namely, the mediation of Christ unto the grace of God, that fixes itself on the Lord Christ and that redemption which is in his blood, — as the ordinance of God, the effect of his wisdom, grace, and love, finds rest in both, and in nothing else.

For the proof of the assertion, I need not labour in it, it being not only abundantly declared in the Scripture, but that which contains in it a principal part of the design and substance of the gospel. I shall, therefore, only refer unto some of the places wherein it is taught, or the testimonies that are given unto it.

The whole is expressed in that place of the apostle wherein the doctrine of justification is most eminently proposed unto us, Rom. lii. 24, 25, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” Whereunto we may add, Eph. i. 6, 7, “He has made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.” **That whereby we are justified, is the especial object of our faith unto justification. But this is the Lord Christ in the work of his mediation: for we are justified by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; for in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin. Christ as a propitiation is the cause of our justification, and the object of our faith, or we attain it by faith in his blood.** But this is so under this formal consideration, **as he is the ordinance of God for that end, — appointed, given, proposed, set forth from and by the grace, wisdom, and love of God.** God set him forth to be a propitiation. He makes us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption in his blood, according to the riches of his grace, whereby he makes us accepted in the Beloved. And herein he “abounds towards us in all wisdom,” Eph. i. 8. This, therefore, is that which the gospel proposes unto us, as the especial object of our faith unto the justification of life.

But we may also in the same manner confirm the several parts of the assertion distinctly:—

(1.) **The Lord Jesus Christ, as proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the peculiar object of faith unto justification.** There are three sorts of testimonies whereby this is confirmed:—

[1.] Those wherein it is positively asserted, as Acts x. 43, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Christ believed in as the means and cause of the remission of sins, is that which all the prophets give witness unto. Acts xvi. 31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It is the answer of the apostle unto the jailer’s inquiry, — “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” His duty in believing, and the object of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, is what they return thereunto. Acts iv. 12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” That which is

proposed unto us, as the only way and means of our justification and salvation, and that in opposition unto all other ways, is the object of faith unto our justification; but this is Christ alone, exclusively unto all other things. This is testified unto by Moses and the prophets; the design of the whole Scripture being to direct the faith of the church unto the Lord Christ alone, for life and salvation, [Luke xxiv. 25–27](#).

[2.] All those wherein justifying faith is affirmed to be [our believing in him](#), or [believing on his name](#); which are multiplied. [John i. 12](#), “He gave power to them to become the sons of God, who believed on his name,” [chap. lii. 16](#), “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” verse 36, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;” [chap. Vi. 29](#), “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;” verse 47, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life;” [chap. Vii. 38](#), “He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” So [chap. ix. 35–37](#); [xi. 25](#); [Acts xxvi. 18](#), “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” [1 Pet. li. 6, 7](#). In all which places, and many others, we are not only directed to place and affix our faith on him, but the effect of justification is ascribed thereunto. So expressly, [Acts xiii. 38, 39](#); which is what we design to prove.

[3.] Those which give us such a description of the acts of faith as make him the direct and proper object of it. Such are they wherein it is called a “receiving” of him. [John i. 12](#), “To as many as received him.” [Col. li. 6](#), “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” That which we receive by faith is the proper object of it; and it is represented by their looking unto the brazen serpent, when it was lifted up, who were stung by fiery serpents, [John iii. 14, 15](#); [xii. 32](#). [Faith is that act of the soul whereby convinced sinners, ready otherwise to perish, do look unto Christ as he was made a propitiation for their sins; and who so do “shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” He is, therefore, the object of our faith.](#)

(2.) **He is so, as he is the ordinance of God unto this end**; which consideration is not to be separated from our faith in him: and this also is confirmed by several sorts of testimonies:—

[1.] All those wherein the [love and grace of God](#) are proposed as the [only cause of giving Jesus Christ to be the way and means of our recovery and salvation](#); whence they become, or God in them, [the supreme efficient cause of our justification](#). [John iii. 16](#), “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” So [Rom. V. 8](#); [1 John iv. 9, 10](#). “Being justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” [Rom. lii. 24](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). This the Lord Christ directs our faith unto continually, referring all unto him that sent him, and whose will he came to do, [Heb. X. 5](#).

[2.] All those wherein God is said to set forth and to make him be for us and unto us, what he is so, unto the justification of life. [Rom. lii. 25](#), “Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation.” [1 Cor. i. 30](#), “[Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.](#)” [2 Cor. V. 21](#), “He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” [Acts xiii. 38, 39](#), etc. Wherefore, in the [acting of faith in Christ unto justification](#), we can no otherwise consider him but as the [ordinance of God to that end](#); he brings nothing unto us, does nothing for us, [but what God appointed, designed, and made him to do](#). [And this must diligently be](#)

considered, that by our regard by faith unto the blood, the sacrifice, the satisfaction of Christ, we take off nothing from the free grace, favour, and love of God.

[3.] All those wherein the **wisdom of God in the contrivance of this way of justification** and salvation is proposed unto us. [Eph. i. 7, 8](#), “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and understanding.” See [chap. lii. 10, 11](#); [1 Cor. i. 24](#).

The whole is comprised in that of the apostle: “**God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,**” [2 Cor. V. 19](#). All that is done in our reconciliation unto God, as unto the pardon of our sins, and acceptance with him unto life, was by the presence of God, in his grace, wisdom, and power, in Christ designing and effecting of it.

Wherefore, the Lord Christ, proposed in the promise of the gospel as the object of our faith unto the justification of life, is considered as the ordinance of God unto that end. Hence **the love, the grace, and the wisdom of God, in the sending and giving of him, are comprised in that object**; and not only the actings of God in Christ towards us, **but all his actings** towards the person of Christ himself unto the same end, belong thereunto. So, as unto his death, “God set him forth to be a propitiation,” [Rom. lii. 25](#). “He spared him not, but delivered him up for us all,” [Rom. viii. 32](#); and therein “laid all our sins upon him,” [Isa. liii. 6](#). So he was “raised for our justification,” [Rom. iv. 25](#). And our faith is in God, who “raised him from the dead,” [Rom. X. 9](#). And in his exaltation, [Acts v. 31](#). Which things complete “the record that God hath given of his Son,” [1 John v. 10–12](#).

The whole is confirmed by the exercise of faith in prayer; **which is the soul’s application of itself unto God for the participation of the benefits of the mediation of Christ**. And it is called our “access through him unto the Father,” [Eph. li. 18](#); our coming through him “unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” [Heb. iv. 15, 16](#); and through him as both “a high priest and sacrifice,” [Heb. X. 19–22](#). So do we “bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” [Eph. lii. 14](#). This answers the experience of all who know what it is to pray. **We come therein in the name of Christ, by him, through his mediation, unto God, even the Father**; to be, through his **grace, love, and mercy, made partakers of what he has designed and promised to communicate unto poor sinners by him.** And this represents the complete object of our faith.

The due consideration of these things will reconcile and reduce unto a perfect **harmony** whatever is spoken in the Scripture concerning the **object of justifying faith**, or what we are said to believe therewith. For whereas this is affirmed of sundry things distinctly, they can none of them be supposed to be the entire adequate object of faith. **But consider them all in their relation unto Christ, and they have all of them their proper place therein, — namely, the grace of God, which is the cause; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of communicating the Lord Christ, and the benefits of his mediation unto us.**

The reader may be pleased to take notice, that I do in this place not only neglect, but despise, the late attempt of some to wrest all things of this nature, spoken of the person and mediation of Christ, unto the doctrine of the gospel, exclusively unto them; and that not only as what is noisome and impious in itself, but as that also which has not yet been endeavoured to be proved, with any **appearance of learning, argument, or sobriety.**

Justification by Faith

code154

Forensic vs. an Infusion of a Habit of Grace, Sanctification

Also, sanctification in vocation vs. justification, and the subject of being transformed from glory to glory is explained, giving you even more understanding of the nature of *glory*.

(to see the scriptures, hold down the CTL key and left click)

John Owen, The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, Ch. 4 p 112 (p125-127 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.viii.html>

Properly, it denotes an action towards another (as justification and to justify do) in קִטְּוּהָ only; and a reciprocal action of a man on himself in קִטְּוּהָ. Hereby alone is the true sense of these words determined. And I say, that in no place, or on any occasion, is it used in that conjugation wherein it denotes an action towards another, in any other sense but **to absolve, acquit, esteem, declare, pronounce righteous, or to impute righteousness; which is the forensic sense of the word we plead for,** — that is its constant use and signification, nor does it ever once signify to make inherently righteous, much less to pardon or forgive: so vain is the pretence of some, that justification consist only in the pardon of sin, which is not signified by the word in any one place of Scripture. Almost in all places this sense is absolutely unquestionable; nor is there any more than one which will admit of any debate, and that on so faint a pretence as cannot prejudice its constant use and signification in all other places. **Whatever, therefore, an infusion of inherent grace may be, or however it may be called, justification it is not, it cannot be; the word nowhere signifying any such thing.** Wherefore those of the **church of Rome** do not so much oppose justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as, indeed, deny that there is any such thing as justification: for that which they call the first justification, consisting in the infusion of a principle of inherent grace, is no such thing as justification: and their second justification, which they place in the merit of works, wherein absolution or pardon of sin has neither place nor consideration, is inconsistent with **evangelical justification**; as we shall show afterwards.

This word, therefore, whether the act of God towards men, or of men towards God, or of men among themselves, or of one towards another, be expressed thereby, is always **used in a forensic sense, and does not denote a physical operation, transfusion, or transmutation.** [2 Sam. xv. 4](#), “If any man has a suit or cause, let him come to me,” וְהִצַּדִּיקְתִּי, “and I will do him justice;” — “I will justify him, judge in his cause, and pronounce for him.” [Deut. xxv. 1](#), “If there be a controversy among men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them,” וְהִצַּדִּיקוּ אֶת־הַצַּדִּיק, “they shall justify the righteous;” pronounce sentence on his side: whereunto is opposed, וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת־הַרְשָׁע, — “and they shall condemn the

wicked;” make him wicked, as the word signifies; — that is, judge, declare, and pronounce him wicked; **whereby he becomes so judicially, and in the eye of the law, as the other is made righteous by declaration and acquitment.** He does not say, “This shall pardon the righteous;” which to suppose would overthrow both the antithesis and design of the place. And הרשע is as much to infuse wickedness into a man, as הצדיק is to infuse a principle of grace or righteousness into him. The same antithesis occurs, [Prov. xvii. 15](#), מצדיק רשע ומרשע צדיק, — “He that justifieth the wicked, and condemneth the righteous.” Not he that makes the wicked inherently righteous, not he that **changes him inherently** from unrighteous unto righteousness; but he that, without any ground, reason, or foundation, acquits him in judgment, or declares him to be righteous, “is an abomination unto the Lord.” And although this be spoken of the judgment of men, yet the judgment of God also is according unto this truth: for although he justifies the ungodly, — those who are so in themselves, — yet he does it on the ground and consideration of a perfect righteousness made theirs by imputation; and by another act of his grace, that they may be meet subjects of this righteous favour, really and inherently changes them from unrighteousness unto holiness, by the renovation of their natures. And these things are **singular** in the actings of God, which nothing amongst men has any resemblance unto or can represent; for the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto a person in himself ungodly, unto his justification, or that he may be acquitted, absolved, and declared righteous, is built on such foundations, and proceeds on such principles of righteousness, wisdom, and sovereignty, as have no place among the actions of men, nor can have so; as shall afterwards be declared. And, moreover, when God does justify the ungodly, on the account of the righteousness imputed unto him, **he does at the same instant, by the power of his grace, make him inherently and subjectively righteous or holy;** which men cannot do one towards another. And therefore, whereas man’s justifying of the wicked is to justify them in their wicked ways, whereby they are constantly made worse, and more obdurate in evil; when God justifies the ungodly, **their change from personal unrighteousness and unholiness unto righteousness and holiness does necessarily and infallibly accompany it.** [So, to justify is to declare one absolved of all guilt due to sin; to declare one not guilty and at the same time is made inherently righteous by a different kind of act of the Spirit, that being an infusion of a new principle of life, that being faith, including in this, a love for God.]

To the same purpose is the word used, [Isa. V. 23](#), “Which justify the wicked for reward;” and [chap. L. 8, 9](#), קרוב מצדקי — “He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who shall condemn me?” where we have a full declaration of the proper sense of the word; **which is, to acquit and pronounce righteous on a trial.** And the same sense is fully expressed in the former antithesis. [1 Kings viii. 31, 32](#), “If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house; then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants,” להרשיע רשע, “to condemn the wicked,” to charge his wickedness on him, to bring his way on his head, ולהצדיק צדיק, “and to justify the righteous.” The same words are repeated, [2 Chron. vi. 22, 23](#). [Ps. Lxxxii. 3](#), עני נרש הצדיקו, — “Do justice to the afflicted and poor;” that is, justify them in their cause against wrong and oppression. [Exod. xxiii. 7](#), לא-אצדיק רשע, — “I will not justify the wicked;” absolve, acquit, or pronounce him righteous. [Job xxvii. 5](#), קלילה לי אם-אצדיק אתכם, — “Be it far from me that I should justify you,” or pronounce sentence on your side as if you were righteous. [Isa. liii. 11](#), “By his knowledge my righteous servant,” נצדיק, “shall justify many:” the reason whereof is added, **“For he shall bear their iniquities;” whereon they are absolved and justified.**

Skip to pg 115 (pg 130-133 online)

This is on the distinguishing between sanctification and justification and their order of nature. Owen answers an objection to the relationship of these two things, sanctification and justification, by Lud. De Blanc. Blanc is trying to prove that justification includes sanctification whereas Owen proves him wrong – that they are two separate acts of the Holy Spirit. Owen also makes mention of some good rules of interpretation.

It is not, therefore, in many places of Scripture, as Bellarmine grants, that the words we have insisted on do signify the declaration or juridical pronouncement of any one to be righteous; but, in all places where they are used, they are capable of no other but a forensic sense; especially is this evident where mention is made of justification before God. And because, in my judgment, this one consideration does sufficiently defeat all the pretences of those of the Roman church about the nature of justification, I shall consider what is excepted against the observation insisted on, and remove it out of our way.

Lud. De Blanc, in his reconciliatory endeavours on this article of justification, (“*Thes. De Usu et Acceptatione Vocis, Justificandi,*”) grants unto the Papists that the word $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\omega$ does, in sundry places of the New Testament, signify to renew, to sanctify, to infuse a habit of holiness or righteousness, according as they plead. And there is no reason to think but he has grounded that concession on those instances which are most pertinent unto that purpose; neither is it to be expected that a better countenance will be given by any unto this concession than is given it by him. I shall therefore examine all the instances which he insists upon unto this purpose, and leave the determination of the difference unto the judgment of the reader. Only, I shall premise that which I judge not an unreasonable demand, — namely, that if the signification of the word, in any or all the places which he mentions, should seem doubtful unto any (as it does not unto me), **that the uncertainty of a very few places should not make us question the proper signification of a word whose sense is determined in so many wherein it is clear and unquestionable.** [This is good, a good rule of interpretation; false teachers will not abide by this rule and many are deluded by hanging their hat on one scripture rather than by the analogy of faith, that is, comparing one passage with many others to arrive at a solid understanding.] The first place he mentions is that of the apostle Paul himself, Rom. viii. 30, **“moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”** The reason whereby he pleads that by justified in this place, an internal work of inherent holiness in them that are predestinated is designed, is this, and no other: “It is not,” says he, “likely that the holy apostle, in this enumeration of gracious privileges, would omit the mention of our sanctification, by which we are freed from the service of sin, and adorned with true internal holiness and righteousness. But this is utterly omitted, if it be not comprised under the name and title of being justified; for it is absurd with some to refer it unto the head of glorification.”

Ans. 1. The grace of sanctification, whereby our natures are spiritually washed, purified, and endowed with a principle of life, holiness, and obedience unto God, is a privilege unquestionably great and excellent, and without which none can be saved; of the same nature, also, is our redemption by the

blood of Christ; and both these does this apostle, in other places without number, declare, commend, and insist upon: but that he ought to have introduced the mention of them or either of them in this place, seeing he has not done so, I dare not judge. [another good rule; not to go beyond what the scripture actually states.]

2. If our sanctification be included or intended in any of the privileges here expressed, there is none of them, predestination only excepted, but it is more probably to be reduced unto, than unto that of being justified. Indeed, in vocation it seems to be included expressly. For whereas it is **effectual vocation** that is intended, wherein a holy principle of spiritual life, or faith itself, is communicated unto us, [see 2Cor4:6, Rm6:4] our sanctification radically, and as the effect in its adequate immediate cause, is contained in it. Hence, we are said to “**be called to be saints,**” Rom. i. 7; which is the same with being “**sanctified in Christ Jesus,**” 1 Cor. i. 2. And in many other places is sanctification included in vocation.

3. Whereas our sanctification, in the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, and the acting of it unto an increase in duties of holiness, righteousness, and obedience, is that whereby we are made meet for glory, and is of the same nature essentially with glory itself, whence its advances in us are said to be from “**glory to glory,**” 2 Cor. lii. 18; and glory itself is called the “grace of life,” 1 Pet. lii. 7: it is much more properly expressed by our being glorified than by being justified, which is a privilege quite of another nature. However, it is evident that there is no reason why we should depart from the general use and signification of the word, no circumstance in the text compelling us so to do. [another rule of interpretation]

The next place that he gives up unto this signification is 1 Cor. Vi. 11, “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” That by justification here, the infusion of an inherent principle of grace, making us inherently righteous, is intended, he endeavours to prove by three reasons:— 1. “Because justification is here ascribed unto the Holy Ghost: ‘Ye are justified by the Spirit of our God.’ But to renew us is the proper work of the Holy Spirit.” 2. “It is manifest,” he says, “that by justification the apostle does signify some change in the Corinthians, whereby they ceased to be what they were before. For they were fornicators and drunkards, such as could not inherit the kingdom of God; but now were changed: which proves a real inherent work of grace to be intended.” 3. “If justification here signify nothing but to be absolved from the punishment of sin, then the reasoning of the apostle will be infirm and frigid: for after he has said that which is greater, as heightening of it, he adds the less; for it is more to be washed than merely to be freed from the punishment of sin.”

Ans. 1. All these reasons prove not that it is the same to be sanctified and to be justified; which must be, if that be the sense of the latter which is here pleaded for. But the apostle makes an express distinction between them, and, as this author observes, proceeds from one to another, by an ascent from the lesser to the greater. And the infusion of a habit or principle of grace, or righteousness evangelical, whereby we are inherently righteous, by which he explains our being justified in this place, is our sanctification, and nothing else. Yea, and sanctification is here distinguished from washing, — “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified;” so as that it peculiarly in this place denotes positive habits of grace and holiness: neither can he declare the nature of it any way different from what he would have expressed by being justified.

2. Justification is ascribed unto the Spirit of God, as the principal efficient cause of the application of the grace of God and blood of Christ, whereby we are justified, unto our souls and consciences; and he is so also of the operation of that faith whereby we are justified: whence, although we are said to be justified by him, yet it does not follow that our justification consists in the renovation of our natures.

3. The change and mutation that was made in these Corinthians, so far as it was physical, in effects inherent (as such there was), the apostle expressly ascribes unto their washing and sanctification; so that there is no need to suppose this change to be expressed by their being justified. And in the real change asserted — that is, in the renovation of our natures — consists the true entire work and nature of our sanctification. But whereas, by reason of the vicious habits and practices mentioned, they were in a state of condemnation, and such as had no right unto the kingdom of heaven, they were by their justification changed and transferred out of that state into another, wherein they had peace with God, and right unto life eternal.

4. The third reason proceeds upon a mistake, — namely, that to be justified is only to be “freed from the punishment due unto sin;” for it comprises both the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness, with the privilege of adoption, and right unto the heavenly inheritance, which are inseparable from it. And although it does not appear that the apostle, in the enumeration of these privileges, did intend a process from the lesser unto the greater; nor is it safe for us to compare the unutterable effects of the grace of God by Christ Jesus, such as sanctification and justification are, and to determine which is greatest and which is least; yet, following the conduct of the Scripture, and the due consideration of the things themselves, we may say that in this life we can be made partakers of no greater mercy or privilege than what consists in our justification. And the reader may see from hence how impossible it is to produce any one place wherein the words “justification,” and “to justify,” do signify a real internal work and physical operation, in that this learned man, a person of more than ordinary perspicacity, candour, and judgment, designing to prove it, insisted on such instances as give so little countenance unto what he pretended. He adds, Tit. lii. 5–7, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” The argument which he alone insists upon to prove that by justification here, an infusion of internal grace is intended, is this:— that the apostle affirming first, that “God saved us, according unto his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” and afterwards affirming that we are “justified by his grace,” he supposes it necessary that we should be regenerate and renewed, that we may be justified; and if so, then our justification contains and comprises our sanctification also.

Ans. The plain truth is, the apostle speaks not one word of the necessity of our sanctification, or regeneration, or renovation by the Holy Ghost, antecedently unto our justification; a supposition whereof contains the whole force of this argument. Indeed he assigns our regeneration, renovation, and justification, all the means of our salvation, all equally unto grace and mercy, in opposition unto any works of our own; which we shall afterwards make use of. Nor is there intimated by him any order of precedency or connection between the things that he mentions, but only between justification and adoption, justification having the priority in order of nature: “That, being justified by his grace, we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

[I think you could also use this passage in Romans 4:5, “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,”. While we were *ungodly*, is before we are sanctified or made godly by the infusion of grace, giving us new nature, that *new man*, which is the image of God re-enstamped upon our souls, making us *righteous*. Therefore, in order of nature, we are justified first, then sanctified. Yet in the other sense, it all happens at once.] All the things he mentions are inseparable. No man is regenerate or renewed by the Holy Ghost, but withal he is justified; — no man is justified, but withal he is renewed by the Holy Ghost. **And they are all of them equally of sovereign grace in God, in opposition unto any works of righteousness that we have wrought.** And we plead for the freedom of God’s grace in sanctification no less than in justification. But that it is necessary that we should be sanctified, that we may be justified before God, who justifies the ungodly, the apostle says not in this place, nor any thing to that purpose; neither yet, if he did so, would it at all prove that the signification of that expression “to be justified,” is “to be **sanctified**,” or to have **inherent holiness and righteousness wrought in us**: and these testimonies would not have been produced to prove it, wherein these things are so expressly distinguished, but that there are none to be found of more force or evidence.

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as “the knowledge of faith” and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, “Faith” in DB, I 837: “The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands.”] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, “unconscious” salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation. Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ. But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, our knowledge of God on earth is “a knowledge of faith.” Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24).

Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, pg 103

Justification and Imputation

code155

John Owen

This is crucial in understanding the grounds for the communication of the benefits of the covenant to the covenanters and so being able to discern false teachers on this subject. Faith, union with Christ, the mystical body of Christ, etc. Legal repentance and evangelical repentance explained. More on Socinianism.

From [The Doctrine of Justification by Faith](#) by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.xiii.html>

Chapter IX.

The formal cause of justification, or the righteousness on the account whereof believers are justified before God — Objections answered

The principal differences about the doctrine of justification are reducible unto three heads:—

1. The nature of it, — namely, whether it consist in an internal change of the person justified, by the imputation of a habit of inherent grace or righteousness; or whether it be a **forensic act**, in the judging, esteeming, declaring, and pronouncing such a person to be righteous, thereon absolving him from all his sins, giving unto him right and title unto life. Herein we have to do only with those of the church of Rome, all others, both Protestants and **Socinians**, being agreed on the forensic sense of the word, and the nature of the thing signified thereby. And this I have already spoken unto, so far as our present design does require; and that, I hope, with such evidence of truth as cannot well be gainsaid. Nor may it be supposed that we have too long insisted thereon, as an opinion which is obsolete, and long since sufficiently confuted. I think much otherwise, and that those who avoid the Romanists in these controversies, will give a greater appearance of fear than of contempt; for when all is done, if free justification through the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness, be not able to preserve its station in the minds of men, the Popish doctrine of justification must and will return upon the world, with all the concomitants and consequences of it. **Whilst any knowledge of the law or gospel is continued amongst us, the consciences of men will at one time or other, living or dying, be really affected with a sense of sin, as unto its guilt and danger. Hence that trouble and those disquietments of mind will ensue, as will force men, be they never so unwilling, to seek after some relief and satisfaction.** And what will not men attempt who are reduced to the condition expressed, [Mic. Vi. 6, 7](#)? Wherefore, in this case, if the true and only relief of distressed consciences of sinners who are weary and heavy-laden be hid from their eyes, — if they have no apprehension of, nor trust in, that which alone they may oppose unto the sentence of the law, and interpose between God's justice and their souls, wherein they may take shelter from the storms of that wrath which abides on them that believe not, — **they will betake themselves unto anything which confidently tenders them present ease and relief.** Hence many persons, living all their days in an **ignorance of the righteousness of God**, are oftentimes on their sick-beds, and in their dying hours, proselyted unto a confidence in the ways of

rest and peace which the Romanists impose upon them; for such seasons of advantage do they wait for, unto the reputation, as they suppose, of their own zeal, — in truth unto the scandal of Christian religion. **But finding at any time the consciences of men under disquietments, and ignorant of or disbelieving that heavenly relief which is provided in the gospel, they are ready with their applications and medicines, having on them pretended approbations of the experience of many ages, and an innumerable company of devout souls in them. Such is their doctrine of justification, with the addition of those other ingredients of confession, absolution, penances, or commutations, aids from saints and angels, especially the blessed Virgin; all warmed by the fire of purgatory, and confidently administered unto persons sick of ignorance, darkness, and sin.** And let none please themselves in the contempt of these things. If the truth concerning evangelical justification be once disbelieved among us, or obliterated by any artifices out of the minds of men, unto these things, at one time or other, they must and will betake themselves. As for the new schemes and projections of justification, which some at present would supply us withal, **they are no way suited nor able to give relief or satisfaction unto a conscience really troubled for sin,** and seriously inquiring how it may have rest and peace with God. I shall take the boldness, therefore, to say, whoever be offended at it, that if we lose the ancient doctrine of justification through faith in the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness unto us, public confession of religion will quickly issue in Popery or Atheism, or at least in what is the next door unto it, — καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ ταῦτα.

2. The **second** principal controversy is about the **formal cause of justification**, as it is expressed and stated by those of the Roman church; and under these terms some Protestant divines have consented to debate the matter in difference. I shall not interpose into a strife of words; — so the Romanists will call that which we inquire after. Some of ours say the righteousness of Christ imputed, some, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is the formal cause of our justification; some, that there is no formal cause of justification, but this is that which supplies the place and use of a formal cause, which is the righteousness of Christ. In none of these things will I concern myself, though I judge what was mentioned in the last place to be most proper and significant.

The substance of the inquiry wherein alone we are concerned, is, **What is that righteousness whereby and wherewith a believing sinner is justified before God; or whereon he is accepted with God, has his sins pardoned, is received into grace and favour, and has a title given him unto the heavenly inheritance?** I shall no otherwise propose this inquiry, as knowing that it contains the substance of what convinced sinners do look after in and by the gospel.

And herein it is agreed by all, the Socinians only excepted, that the procatartical or procurring cause of the pardon of our sins and acceptance with God, **is the satisfaction and merit of Christ.** Howbeit, it cannot be denied but that some, retaining the names of them, do seem to renounce or disbelieve the things themselves; but we need not to take any notice thereof, until they are free more plainly to express their minds. But as concerning the righteousness itself inquired after, there seems to be a difference among them who yet all deny it to be the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us. For those of the **Roman church** plainly say, **that upon the infusion of a habit of grace, with the expulsion of sin, and the renovation of our natures thereby, which they call the first justification, we are actually justified before God by our own works of righteousness.** Hereon they dispute about the merit and satisfactoriness of those works, with their condignity of the reward of eternal life. Others, as the

Socinians, openly disclaim all merit in our works; only some, out of reverence, as I suppose, unto the antiquity of the word, and under the shelter of the ambiguity of its signification, have faintly attempted an accommodation with it. But in the substance of what they assert unto this purpose, to the best of my understanding, they are all agreed: for what the Papists call “justitia operum,” — the righteousness of works, — they call a personal, inherent, evangelical righteousness; whereof we have spoken before. And whereas the Papists say that this righteousness of works is not absolutely perfect, nor in itself able to justify us in the sight of God, but owes all its worth and dignity unto this purpose unto the merit of Christ, they affirm that this evangelical righteousness is the condition whereon we enjoy the benefits of the righteousness of Christ, in the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons before God. But as unto those who will acknowledge no other righteousness wherewith we are justified before God, the meaning is the same, whether we say that on the condition of this righteousness we are made partakers of the benefits of the righteousness of Christ, or that it is the righteousness of Christ which makes this righteousness of ours accepted with God. But these things must afterwards more particularly be inquired into.

3. The third inquiry wherein there is not an agreement in this matter is, — upon a supposition of a necessity that he who is to be justified should, one way or other, be interested in the righteousness of Christ, what it is that on our part is required thereunto. This some say to be faith alone; others, faith and works also, and that in the same kind of necessity and use. That whose consideration we at present undertake is the second thing proposed; and, indeed, herein lies the substance of the whole controversy about our justification before God, upon the determination and stating whereof the determination of all other incident questions does depend.

This, therefore, is that which herein I affirm:— *The righteousness of Christ (in his obedience and suffering for us) imputed unto believers, as they are united unto him by his Spirit, is that righteousness whereon they are justified before God, on the account whereof their sins are pardoned, and a right is granted them unto the heavenly inheritance.*

This position is such as wherein the substance of that doctrine, in this important article of evangelical truth which we plead for, is plainly and fully expressed. And I have chosen the rather thus to express it, because it is that thesis wherein the learned Davenant laid down that common doctrine of the Reformed churches whose defense he undertook. This is the shield of truth in the whole cause of justification; which, whilst it is preserved safe, we need not trouble ourselves about the differences that are among learned men about the most proper stating and declaration of some lesser concernments of it. This is the refuge, the only refuge, of distressed consciences, wherein they may find rest and peace.

For the confirmation of this assertion, I shall do these three things:— I. Reflect on what is needful unto the explanation of it. II. Answer the most important general objections against it. III. Prove the truth of it by arguments and testimonies of the holy Scripture.

I. As to the first of these, or what is necessary unto the explanation of this assertion, it has been sufficiently spoken unto in our foregoing discourses. The heads of some things only shall at present be called over.

1. The foundation of the imputation asserted is union. Hereof there are many grounds and causes, as has been declared; but that which we have immediate respect unto, as the foundation of this imputation, is that whereby the Lord Christ and believers do actually coalesce into one **mystical person**. **This is by the Holy Spirit inhabiting in him as the head of the church in all fullness**, and in all believers according to their measure, **whereby they become members of his mystical body**. That there is such a union between Christ and believers is the faith of the catholic church, and has been so in all ages. Those who seem in our days to deny it, or question it, either know not what they say, or their minds are influenced by their doctrine who deny the divine persons of the Son and of the Spirit. **Upon supposition of this union, reason will grant the imputation pleaded for to be reasonable**; at least, that there is such a peculiar ground for it as is not to be exemplified in any things natural or political among men.

2. The nature of imputation has been fully spoken unto before, and whereunto I refer the reader for the understanding of what is intended thereby.

3. **That which is imputed is the righteousness of Christ**; and, briefly, I understand hereby his whole obedience unto God, in all that he did and suffered for the church. This, I say, is imputed unto believers, so as to become their only righteousness before God unto the justification of life.

If beyond these things any expressions have been made use of, in the explanation of this truth, which have given occasion unto any differences or contests, although they may be true and defensible against objections, yet shall not I concern myself in them. The substance of the truth as laid down, is that whose defence I have undertaken; and where that is granted or consented unto, I will not contend with any about their way and methods of its declaration, nor defend the terms and expressions that have by any been made use of therein. For instance, some have said that “what Christ did and suffered is so imputed unto us, as that we are judged and esteemed in the sight of God to have done or suffered ourselves in him.” This I shall not concern myself in; for although it may have a sound sense given unto it, and is used by some of the ancients, yet because offence is taken at it, and the substance of the truth we plead for is better otherwise expressed, it ought not to be contended about. For we do not say that God judges or esteems that we did and suffered in our own persons what Christ did and suffered; **but only that he did it and suffered it in our stead**. **Hereon God makes a grant and donation of it unto believers upon their believing, unto their justification before him**. And the like may be said of many other expressions of the like nature.

II. These things being premised, I proceed unto the consideration of the general objections that are urged against the imputation we plead for: and I shall insist only on some of the principal of them, and whereinto all others may be resolved; for it were endless to go over all that any man’s invention can suggest unto him of this kind. And some general considerations we must take along with us herein; as,
—

1. **The doctrine of justification is a part, yea, an eminent part, of the mystery of the gospel**. It is no marvel, therefore, if it be not so exposed unto the common notions of reason as some would have it to be. There is more required unto the true spiritual understanding of such mysteries; yea, unless we

intend to renounce the gospel, it must be asserted that reason as it is corrupted, and the mind of man as destitute of divine, supernatural revelation, do dislike every such truth, and rise up in enmity against it. So the Scripture directly affirms, [Rom. Viii. 7](#); [1 Cor. ii. 14](#).

2. Hence are the minds and inventions of men wonderfully fertile in coining objections against evangelical truths and raising cavils against them. Seldom to this purpose do they want an endless number of **sophistical objections**, which, because they know no better, they themselves judge insoluble; **for carnal reason being once set at liberty, under the false notion of truth, to act itself freely and boldly against spiritual mysteries, is subtle in its arguing, and pregnant in its invention of them.** How endless, for instance, are the sophisms of the **Socinians** against the doctrine of the Trinity! And how do they triumph in them as unanswerable! Under the shelter of them they despise the force of the most evident testimonies of the Scripture and those multiplied on all occasions. In like manner they deal with the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, **as the Pelagians of old did with that of his grace.** Wherefore, he that will be startled at the appearance of subtle or plausible objections against any gospel mysteries that are plainly revealed, and sufficiently attested in the Scripture, is not likely to come unto much stability in his profession of them.

3. The most of the objections which are levied against the truth in this cause do arise **from the want of a due comprehension of the order of the work of God's grace**, and of our compliance wherewithal in a way of duty, as was before observed; for they consist in opposing those things one to another as inconsistent, which, in their proper place and order, are not only consistent, but mutually subservient unto one another, and are found so in the **experience** of them that truly believe. Instances hereof have been given before, and others will immediately occur. Taking the consideration of these things with us, we may see as the rise, so of what force the objections are.

4. Let it be considered that the objections which are made use of against the truth we assert, are all of them taken from certain consequences which, as it is supposed, will ensue on the admission of it. And as this is the only expedient to perpetuate controversies and make them endless, so, to my best observation, I never yet met with anyone but that, **to give an appearance of force unto the absurdity of the consequences** from whence he argues, **he framed his suppositions, or the state of the question, unto the disadvantage of them whom he opposed**; a course of proceeding which I wonder good men are not either weary or ashamed of.

1. It is objected, **"That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does overthrow all remission of sins on the part of God."** This is pleaded for by **Socinus**, De Servatore, lib. Iv. Cap. 2–4; and by others it is also made use of. A confident charge this seems to them who steadfastly believe that without this imputation there could be no remission of sin. But they say, "That he who has a righteousness imputed unto him that is absolutely perfect, so as to be made his own, needs no pardon, has no sin that should be forgiven, nor can he ever need forgiveness." But because this objection will occur unto us again in the vindication of one of our ensuing arguments, I shall here speak briefly unto it:— (1.) Grotius shall answer this objection. Says he, *"Cum duo nobis peperisse Christum dixerimus, impunitatem et præmium, illud peperisse, hoc merito Christi distinctè tribuit vetus ecclesia. Satisfactio consistit in peccatorum translatione, meritum in perfectissimæ obedientiæ pro nobis præstitæ imputatione,"* Præfat. Ad lib. De Satisfact.; — "Whereas we have said that Christ has procured or

brought forth two things for us, — freedom from punishment, and a reward, — the ancient church attributes the one of them distinctly unto his satisfaction, the other unto his merit. Satisfaction consists in the translation of sins (from us unto him); merit, in the imputation of his most perfect obedience, performed for us, unto us.” In his judgment, the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness were as consistent as the satisfaction and merit of Christ; as indeed they are.

(2.) Had we not been sinners, we should have had no need of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to render us righteous before God. Being so, the first end for which it is imputed is the **pardon of sin**; without which we could not be righteous by the imputation of the most perfect righteousness. **These things, therefore, are consistent, — namely, that the satisfaction of Christ should be imputed unto us for the pardon of sin, and the obedience of Christ be imputed unto us to render us righteous before God; and they are not only consistent, but neither of them singly were sufficient unto our justification.**

2. It is pleaded by the same author, and others, “That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ overthrows all necessity of repentance for sin, in order unto the remission or pardon thereof, yea, renders it altogether needless; for what need has he of repentance for sin, who, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is esteemed completely just and righteous in the sight of God? If Christ satisfied for all sins in the person of the elect, if as our surety he paid all our debts, and if his righteousness be made ours before we repent, then is all repentance needless.” And these things are much enlarged on by the same author in the place before mentioned.

Ans. (1.) It must be remembered that **we require evangelical faith, in order of nature, antecedently unto our justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us;** which also is the condition of its continuation. Wherefore, whatever is necessary thereunto is in like manner required of us in order unto believing. Amongst these, there is a sorrow for sin, and a repentance of it; for whosoever is convinced of sin in a due manner, so as in be sensible of its evil and guilt, — both as in its own nature it is contrary unto the preceptive part of the holy law, and in the necessary consequences of it, in the wrath and curse of God, — cannot but be perplexed in his mind that he has involved himself therein; and that posture of mind will be accompanied with shame, fear, sorrow, and other afflictive passions. Hereon a resolution does ensue utterly to abstain from it for the future, with sincere endeavours unto that purpose; issuing, if there be time and space for it, in reformation of life. And in a sense of sin, sorrow for it, fear concerning it, abstinence from it, and reformation of life, a repentance true in its kind does consist. **This repentance is usually called legal, because its motives are principally taken from the law;** but yet there is, moreover, required unto it that **temporary faith** of the gospel which we have before described; and as it does usually produce great effects, in the confession of sin, humiliation for it, and change of life (as in Ahab and the Ninevites), **so ordinarily it precedes true saving faith, and justification thereby.** Wherefore, the necessity hereof is no way weakened by the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, yea, it is strengthened and made effectual thereby; for without it, **in the order of the gospel**, an interest therein is not to be attained. And this is that which, in the Old Testament, is so often proposed as the means and condition of turning away the judgments and punishments threatened unto sin; for it is true and sincere in its kind. Neither do the **Socinians** require any other repentance unto justification; for as they deny true evangelical repentance in all the especial causes of it, so that which may and does precede faith in

order of nature is all that they require. This objection, therefore, as managed by them, is a causeless, vain pretence.

(2.) **Justifying faith includes in its nature the entire principle of *evangelical repentance*, so as that it is utterly impossible that a man should be a *true believer*, and not, at the same instant of time, be *truly penitent***; and therefore are they so frequently conjoined in the Scripture as one simultaneous duty. **Yea, the call of the gospel unto repentance is a call to faith acting itself by repentance**: So the sole reason of that call unto repentance which the forgiveness of sins is annexed unto, **Acts ii. 38, is the proposal of the promise which is the object of faith**, verse 39. And those conceptions and affections which a man has about sin, with a sorrow for it and repentance of it, **upon a legal conviction, being enlivened and made evangelical by the introduction of faith as a new principle of them, and giving new motives unto them, do become evangelical**; so impossible is it that faith should be without repentance. Wherefore, although the **first act of faith**, and **its only proper exercise unto justification**, does respect the **grace of God in Christ, and the way of salvation by him, as proposed in the promise of the gospel**, **yet is not this conceived in order of time to precede its acting in self-displicity, godly sorrow, and universal conversion from sin unto God; nor can it be so, seeing it virtually and radically contains all of them in itself**. **However, therefore, evangelical repentance is not the condition of our justification, so as to have any direct influence thereinto; nor are we said anywhere to be justified by repentance; nor is conversant about the proper object which alone the soul respects therein; nor is a direct and immediate giving glory unto God on the account of the way and work of his wisdom and grace in Christ Jesus, but a consequent thereof**; nor is that reception of Christ which is expressly required unto our justification, and which alone is required thereunto; — yet is it, in the root, principle, and promptitude of mind for its exercise, in every one that is justified, then when he is justified. And it is peculiarly proposed with respect unto the forgiveness of sins, as that without which it is impossible we should have any true sense or comfort of it in our souls; but it is not so as any part of that righteousness on the consideration whereof our sins are pardoned, nor as that whereby we have an interest therein. These things are plain in the divine method of our justification, and the order of our duty prescribed in the gospel; as also **in the experience of them that do believe**. **Wherefore, considering the necessity of legal repentance unto believing; with the sanctification of the affections exercised therein by faith, whereby they are made evangelical; and the nature of faith, as including in it a principle of universal conversion unto God; and in especial, of that repentance which has for its principal motive the love of God and of Jesus Christ, with the grace from thence communicated, — all which are supposed in the doctrine pleaded for; the necessity of true repentance is immovably fixed on its proper foundation.**

(3.) As unto what was said in the objection concerning Christ's suffering in the person of the elect, I know not whether any have used it or no, nor will I contend about it. **He suffered in their stead; which all sorts of writers, ancient and modern, so express, — in his suffering he bare the person of the church**. The meaning is what was before declared. **Christ and believers are one mystical person, one spiritually-animated body, head and members**. This, I suppose, will not be denied; to do so, is to overthrow the church and the faith of it. **Hence, what he did and suffered is imputed unto them**. And it is granted that, as the surety of the covenant, he paid all our debts, or answered for all our faults; **and that his righteousness is really communicated unto us**. "Why, then," say some, "there is no need of repentance; all is done for us already." But why so? Why must we assent to one part of the gospel unto

the exclusion of another? Was it not free unto God to appoint what way, method, and order he would, whereby these things should be communicated unto us? Nay, upon the supposition of the design of his wisdom and grace, these two things were necessary:—

[1.] That this righteousness of Christ should be communicated unto us, and be made ours, in such a way and manner as that he himself might be glorified therein, seeing he has disposed all things, in this whole economy, unto “the praise of the glory of his grace,” [Eph. i. 6. This was to be done by faith, on our part. It is so; it could be no otherwise: for that faith whereby we are justified is our giving unto God the glory of his wisdom, grace, and love; and whatever does so is faith, and nothing else is so.](#) [e.g., see Abraham, “...but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,” Romans 4:20 Faith works itself by giving glory to God as opposed to man, so that there is no grounds for boasting, see Eph 2:8]

[2.] That whereas our nature was so corrupted and depraved as that, continuing in that state, it was not capable of a participation of the righteousness of Christ, or any benefit of it, unto the glory of God and our own good, it was in like manner necessary that it should be renewed and changed. And unless it were so, the design of God in the mediation of Christ, — which was the entire recovery of us unto himself, — could not be attained. And therefore, as faith, under the formal consideration of it, was necessary unto the first end, — [namely, that of giving glory unto God,](#) — so unto this latter end it was necessary that [this faith should be accompanied with, yea, and contain in itself, the seeds of all those other graces wherein the divine nature does consist,](#) whereof we are to be made partners. [Not only, therefore, the thing itself, or the communication of the righteousness of Christ unto us, but the way, and manner, and means of it, do depend on God’s sovereign order and disposal.](#) Wherefore, although Christ did make satisfaction to the justice of God for all the sins of the church, and that as a common person (for no man in his wits can deny but that he who is a mediator and a surety is, in some sense, a common person); and although he did pay all our debts; yet does the particular interest of this or that man in what he did and suffered depend on the way, means, and order designed of God unto that end. This, and this alone, gives the true necessity of all the duties which are required of us, with their order and their ends.

3. It is objected, “That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which we defend, overthrows the necessity of faith itself.” This is home indeed. “*Aliquid adhærebit*” is the design of all these objections; but they have reason to plead for themselves who make it. “For on this supposition,” they say, “the righteousness of Christ is ours before we do believe; for Christ satisfied for all our sins, as if we had satisfied in our own persons. And he who is esteemed to have satisfied for all his sins in his own person is acquitted from them all and accounted just, whether he believe or no; nor is there any ground or reason why he should be required to believe. If, therefore, the righteousness of Christ be really ours, because, in the judgment of God, we are esteemed to have wrought it in him, then it is ours before we do believe. If it be otherwise, then it is plain that that righteousness itself can never be made ours by believing; only the fruits and effects of it may be suspended on our believing, whereby we may be made partakers of them. Yea, if Christ made any such satisfaction for us as is pretended, it is really ours, without any farther imputation; for, being performed for us and in our stead, it is the highest injustice not to have us accounted pardoned and acquitted, without any farther, either imputation on the part of God or faith on ours.” These things I have transcribed out of [Socinus](#), De Servatore, lib. iv. Cap. 2–5; which I would not have done but that I find others to have gone before me

herein, though to another purpose. And he concludes with a confidence which others also seem, in some measure, to have learned of him; for he says unto his adversary, “Hæc tua, tuorumque sententia, adeo fœda et execrabilis est, ut pestilentiore errorem post homines natos in populo. Dei exitisse non credam,” — speaking of the satisfaction of Christ, and the imputation of it unto believers. And, indeed, **his serpentine wit was fertile in the invention of cavils against all the mysteries of the gospel.** Nor was he obliged by any one of them, so as to contradict himself in what he opposed concerning any other of them; for, denying the deity of Christ, his satisfaction, sacrifice, merit, righteousness, and overthrowing the whole nature of his mediation, nothing stood in his way which he had a mind to oppose. **But I somewhat wonder how others can make use of his inventions in this kind; who, if they considered aright their proper tendency, they will find them to be absolutely destructive of what they seem to own.** So it is in this present objection against the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. If it has any force in it, as indeed it has not, it is to prove that the satisfaction of Christ was impossible; and so he intended it. But it will be easily removed.

I answer, first, in general, that the whole fallacy of this objection lies in the opposing one part of the design and method of God’s grace in this mystery of our justification unto another; or the taking of one part of it to be the whole, which, as to its efficacy and perfection, depends on somewhat else. Hereof we warned the reader in our previous discourses. For the whole of it is a supposition that the satisfaction of Christ, if there be any such thing, must have its whole effect without believing on our part; which is contrary unto the whole declaration of the will of God in the gospel. But I shall principally respect them who are pleased to make use of this objection, and yet do not deny the satisfaction of Christ. And I say, —

(1.) When the Lord Christ died for us, and offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, “God laid all our sins on him,” [Isa. Liii. 6](#); and he then “bare them all in his own body on the tree,” [1 Pet. ii. 24](#). Then he suffered in our stead, and made full satisfaction for all our sins; for he “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” [Heb. ix. 26](#); and “by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified,” [chap. X. 14](#). He whose sins were not actually and absolutely satisfied for in that one offering of Christ, shall never have them expiated unto eternity; for “henceforth he dies no more,” there is “no more sacrifice for sin.” The repetition of a sacrifice for sin, which must be the crucifying of Christ afresh, overthrows the foundation of Christian religion.

(2.) **Notwithstanding this full, plenary satisfaction once made for the sins of the world that shall be saved,** yet all men continue equal to be born by nature “children of wrath;” and whilst they believe not, “the wrath of God abides on them,” [John iii. 36](#); — that is, they are obnoxious unto and under the curse of the law. Wherefore, on the only making of that satisfaction, no one for whom it was made in the design of God can be said to have suffered in Christ, nor to have an interest in his satisfaction, nor by any way or means be made partaker of it antecedently unto another act of God in its imputation unto him. For this is but one part of the purpose of God’s grace as unto our justification by the blood of Christ, — namely, that he by his death should make satisfaction for our sins; nor is it to be separated from what also belongs unto it in the same purpose of God. Wherefore, from the position or grant of the satisfaction of Christ, no argument can be taken unto the negation of a consequential act of its imputation unto us; nor, therefore, **of the necessity of our faith in the believing and receiving of it, which is no less the appointment of God than it was that Christ should make that satisfaction.** Wherefore, —

(3.) **That which the Lord Christ paid for us is as truly paid as if we had paid it ourselves.** So he speaks, [Ps. Lxix. 5](#), אֲשֶׁר לֹא-גָזַלְתִּי אֶז אֲשִׁיב. He made no spoil of the glory of God; what was done of that nature by us, he returned it unto him. And what he underwent and suffered, he underwent and suffered in our stead. But yet the act of God in laying our sins on Christ conveyed no actual right and title to us unto what he did and suffered. They are not immediately thereon, nor by virtue thereof, ours, or esteemed ours; because God has appointed somewhat else, not only antecedent thereunto, but as the means of it, unto his own glory. These things, both as unto their being and order, depend on the free ordination of God. But yet, —

(4.) **It cannot be said that this satisfaction was made for us on such a condition as should absolutely suspend the event, and render it uncertain whether it should ever be for us or no.** Such a constitution may be righteous in pecuniary solutions. A man may lay down a great sum of money for the discharge of another, on such a condition as may never be fulfilled; for, on the absolute failure of the condition, his money may and ought to be restored unto him, whereon he has received no injury or damage. But in penal suffering for crimes and sins, there can be no righteous constitution that shall make the event and efficacy of it to depend on a condition absolutely uncertain, and which may not come to pass or be fulfilled; for if the condition fail, no recompense can be made unto him that has suffered. **Wherefore, the way of the application of the satisfaction of Christ unto them for whom it was made, is sure and steadfast in the purpose of God.**

(5.) **God has appointed that there shall be an immediate foundation of the imputation of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ unto us; whereon we may be said to have done and suffered in him what he did and suffered in our stead, by that grant, donation, and imputation of it unto us; or that we may be interested in it, that it may be made ours: which is all we contend for. And this is our actual coalescency into one mystical person with him by faith. Hereon does the necessity of faith originally depend.** And if we shall add hereunto the necessity of it likewise unto that **especial glory of God** which he designs to exalt in our justification by Christ, as also **unto all the ends of our obedience unto God**, and **the renovation of our natures into his image**, its station is sufficiently secured against all objections. **Our actual interest in the satisfaction of Christ depends on our actual insertion into his mystical body by faith, according to the appointment of God.**

4. It is yet objected, “That if the righteousness of Christ be made ours, we may be said to be saviours of the world, as he was, or to save others, as he did; for he was so and did so by his righteousness, and no otherwise.” This objection also is of the same nature with those foregoing, — a mere **sophistical cavil**. For, —

(1.) **The righteousness of Christ is not transfused into us, so as to be made inherently and subjectively ours,** as it was in him, and which is necessarily required unto that effect of saving others thereby. Whatever we may do, or be said to do, with respect unto others, by virtue of any power or quality inherent in ourselves, we can be said to do nothing unto others, or for them, by virtue of that which is imputed unto us only for our own benefit. That any righteousness of ours should benefit another, it is absolutely necessary that it should be wrought by ourselves.

(2.) If the righteousness of Christ could be transfused into us, and be made inherently ours, yet could we not be, nor be said to be, the saviours of others thereby; for our nature in our individual persons is not “subjectum capax,” or capable to receive and retain a righteousness useful and effectual unto that end. **This capacity was given unto it in Christ by virtue of the hypostatical union, and no otherwise.** The righteousness of Christ himself, as performed in the human nature, would not have been sufficient for the justification and salvation of the church, had it not been the righteousness of his person who is, **both God and man**; for **“God redeemed his church with his own blood.”**

(3.) This imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us, as unto its ends and use, **has its measure from the will of God**, and his purpose in that imputation; and this is, **that it should be the righteousness of them unto whom it is imputed, and nothing else.**

(4.) We do not say that the righteousness of Christ, as made absolutely for the whole church, is imputed unto every believer; but his satisfaction for every one of them in particular, according unto the will of God, is imputed unto them, — not with respect unto its general ends, but according unto every one’s particular interest. Every believer has his own homer of this bread of life; and all are justified by the same righteousness.

(5.) **The apostle declares, as we shall prove afterwards, that as Adam’s actual sin is imputed unto us unto condemnation, so is the obedience of Christ imputed unto us to the justification of life.** But Adam’s sin is not so imputed unto any person as that he should then and thereby be the cause of sin and condemnation unto all other persons in the world, but only that he himself should become guilty before God thereon. And so is it on the other side. **And as we are made guilty by Adam’s actual sin, which is not inherent in us but only imputed unto us; so are we made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed unto us.** And imputed unto us it is, because himself was righteous with it, not for himself, but for us.

5. It is yet said, “That if we insist on personal imputation unto every believer of what Christ did, or if any believer be personally righteous in the very individual acts of Christ’s righteousness, many absurdities will follow.” But it was observed before, that when any design to oppose an opinion from the absurdities which they suppose would follow upon it, they are much inclined so to state it as, that at least they may seem so to do. And this oft times the most worthy and candid persons are not free from, in the heat of disputation. So I fear it is here fallen out; for as unto personal imputation, I do not well understand it. All imputation is unto a person, and is the act of a person, be it of what, and what sort it will; but from neither of them can be denominated a personal imputation. And if an imputation be allowed that is not unto the persons of men, — namely, in this case unto all believers, — the nature of it has not yet been declared, as I know of.

That any have so expressed the imputation pleaded for, “that every believer should be personally righteous in the very individual acts of Christ’s righteousness,” I know not; I have neither read nor heard any of them who have so expressed their mind. It may be some have done so: but I shall not undertake the defense of what they have done; for it seems not only to suppose that Christ did every individual act which in any instance is required of us, but also that those acts are made our own inherently, — both which are false and impossible. **That which indeed is pleaded for in this imputation**

is only this, that what the Lord Christ did and suffered as the mediator and surety of the covenant, in answer unto the law, for them, and in their stead, is imputed unto every one of them unto the justification of life. And sufficient this is unto that end, without any such supposals. (1.) **From the dignity of the person** who yielded this obedience, which rendered it both satisfactory and meritorious, and imputable unto many. (2.) From the nature of the obedience itself, which was a perfect compliance with, a fulfilling of, and satisfaction unto the whole law in all its demands. This, on the supposition of that act of God's sovereign authority, whereby a representative of the whole church was introduced to answer the law, is the ground of his righteousness being made theirs, and being every way sufficient unto their justification. (3.) **From the constitution of God**, that what was done and suffered by Christ as a public person, and our surety, should be reckoned unto us, as if done by ourselves. **So the sin of Adam, whilst he was a public person, and represented his whole posterity, is imputed unto us all, as if we had committed that actual sin.** This Bellarmine himself frequently acknowledges: "Peccavimus in primo homine quando ille peccavit, et illa ejus prævaricatio nostra etiam prævaricatio fuit. Non enim vere per Adami inobedientiam constitueremur peccatores, nisi inobedientia illius nostra etiam inobedientia esset," De Amiss. Grat. Et Stat. Peccat., lib. V. cap. 18. And elsewhere, that the actual sin of Adam is imputed unto us, as if we all had committed that actual sin; **that is, broken the whole law of God.** And this is that whereby the apostle illustrates the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto believers; and it may on as good grounds be charged with absurdities as the other. It is not, therefore, said that God judges that we have in our own persons done those very acts, and endured that penalty of the law, which the Lord Christ did and endured; for this would overthrow all imputation; — but what Christ did and suffered, that God imputes unto believers unto the justification of life, as if it had been done by themselves; and his righteousness as a public person is made theirs by imputation, even as the sin of Adam, whilst a public person, is made the sin of all his posterity by imputation.

Hereon none of the absurdities pretended, which are really such, do at all follow. It does not so, that Christ in his own person performed every individual act that we in our circumstances are obliged unto in a way of duty; nor was there any need that so he should do. **This imputation, as I have showed, stands on other foundations.** Nor does it follow, that every saved person's righteousness before God is the same identically and numerically with Christ's in his public capacity as mediator; for this objection destroys itself, by affirming that as it was his, it was the righteousness of God-man, and so it has an especial nature as it respects or relates unto his person. It is the same that Christ in his public capacity did work or effect. **But there is a wide difference in the consideration of it as his absolutely, and as made ours.** It was formally inherent in him, — is only materially imputed unto us; was actively his, — is passively ours; was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, — is imputed unto each single believer, as unto his own concernment only. Adam's sin, as imputed unto us, is not the sin of a representative, though it be of him that was so, but is the particular sin of every one of us; but this objection must be farther spoken unto, where it occurs afterwards. Nor will it follow, that on this supposition we should be accounted to have done that which was done long before we were in a capacity of doing anything; **for what is done for us and in our stead, before we are in any such capacity, may be imputed unto us, as is the sin of Adam.** And yet there is a manifold sense wherein men may be said to have done what was done for them and in their name, before their actual existence; so that **therein is no absurdity.** As unto what is added by the way, that Christ did not do nor suffer the "idem" [the same] that we were obliged unto; whereas he did what the law required, and suffered what the

law threatened unto the disobedient, which is the whole of what we are obliged unto, it will not be so easily proved, nor the arguments very suddenly answered, whereby the contrary has been confirmed. That Christ did sustain the place of a surety, or was the surety of the new covenant, the Scripture does so expressly affirm that it cannot be denied. And that there may be sureties in cases criminal as well as civil and pecuniary, has been proved before. What else occurs about the singularity of Christ's obedience, as he was mediator, proves only that his righteousness, as formally and inherently his, was peculiar unto himself; and that the adjuncts of it, which arise from its relation unto his person, as it was inherent in him, are not communicable unto them to whom it is imputed.

6. It is, moreover, urged, "That upon the supposed imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it will follow that every believer is justified by the works of the law; for the obedience of Christ was a legal righteousness, and if that be imputed unto us, then are we justified by the law; which is contrary unto express testimonies of Scripture in many places."

Ans. (1.) I know nothing more frequent in the writings of some learned men than that the righteousness of Christ is our legal righteousness; who yet, I presume, are able to free themselves of this objection. (2.) If this do follow in the true sense of being justified by the law, or the works of it, so denied in the Scripture, their weakness is much to be pitied who can see no other way whereby we may be freed from an obligation to be justified by the law, but by this imputation of the righteousness of Christ. (3.) The Scripture which affirms that "by the deeds of the law no man can be justified," affirms in like manner that by "faith we do not make void the law, but establish it;" that "**the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us;**" that Christ "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," and is the "**end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe.**" And that the law must be fulfilled, or we cannot be justified, we shall prove afterwards. (4.) **We are not hereon justified by the law, or the works of it, in the only sense of that proposition in the Scripture; and to coin new senses or significations of it is not safe.** The meaning of it in the Scripture is, that only "the doers of the law shall be justified," [Rom. ii. 13](#); and that "he that does the things of it shall live by them," [chap. X. 5](#), — namely, in his own person, by the way of personal duty, which alone the law requires. **But if we, who have not fulfilled the law in the way of inherent, personal obedience, are justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us, then are we justified by Christ, and not by the law.**

But it is said that this will not relieve; for if his obedience be so imputed unto us, as that we are accounted by God in judgment to have done what Christ did, it is all one upon the matter, and we are as much justified by the law as if we had in our own proper persons performed an unsinning obedience unto it. This I confess I cannot understand. The nature of this imputation is here represented, as formerly, in such a way as we cannot acknowledge; from thence alone this inference is made, which yet, in my judgment, does not follow thereon. For grant an imputation of the righteousness of another unto us, be it of what nature it will, all justification by the law and works of it, in the sense of the Scripture, is gone forever. **The admission of imputation takes off all power from the law to justify; for it can justify none but upon a righteousness that is originally and inherently his own:** "The man that does them shall live in them." **If the righteousness that is imputed be the ground and foundation of our justification, and made ours by that imputation, state it how you will, that justification is of grace, and not of the law.** However, I know not of any that say we are accounted of God in judgment personally to have done what Christ did; and it may have a sense that is false, — namely, that God should judge us in

our own persons to have done those acts which we never did. But what Christ did for us, and in our stead, is imputed and communicated unto us, as we coalesce into one mystical person with him by faith; and thereon are we justified. And this absolutely overthrows all justification by the law or the works of it; though the law be established, fulfilled, and accomplished, that we may be justified.

Neither can any, on the supposition of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ truly stated, be said to merit their own salvation. Satisfaction and merit are adjuncts of the righteousness of Christ, as formally inherent in his own person; and as such it cannot be transfused into another. Wherefore, as it is imputed unto individual believers, it has not those properties accompanying of it, which belong only unto its existence in the person of the Son of God. But this was spoken unto before, as also much of what was necessary to be here repeated.

These objections I have in this place taken notice of because the answers given unto them do tend to the farther explanation of that truth, whose confirmation, by arguments and testimonies of Scripture, I shall now proceed unto.

Justification by Faith

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The following is an excerpt from Owen's discourse on justification by faith. Pay particular attention to the word communication or communicate, that which God uses to apply the benefits of the death of Christ to the elect, hence, as stated in Jer. 31:33, "I will put my law in their inward parts; and write it in their hearts." The *inward parts* is the mind, the same as the heart in this case, the deepest part of the soul, the affections being the outer part so to speak. Remember the affections are worked on by the Spirit in those who only have a temporary faith that is not saving (see parable of the sower and Heb 6:4), but when God saves a man, the mind is changed or renewed, that is, the heart of stone is removed and a heart of flesh is put in its place, Ezek. 36:26. This is a much deeper work of the Spirit than just having the affections moved upon. For more explanation on this, study Jonathan Edwards' works, On Religious Affections, True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils and Concerning Efficacious Grace. This will make the meaning of 2Cor4:6 clearer once you gain a deeper understanding of what this *communication* actually entails. This will give you more understanding of the scope of the atonement, unconditional election and God's sovereignty in the free disposal of his gifts. Also, the order of nature of things in salvation, believing in ref. to faith, are explained regarding presumption.

Justification by Faith – John Owen Ch 1, p 77-79, 85-88

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.v.html>

(4.) The end for which the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation, is the **ordinance of God**, and as such proposed in the **promises** of the gospel, — **namely, the recovery and salvation of lost sinners**, — **belongs unto the object of faith as justifying**. Hence, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life are proposed in the Scripture as things that are to be believed unto justification, or as the **object of our faith**, [Matt. ix. 2](#); [Acts ii. 38, 39](#); [v. 31](#); [xxvi. 18](#); [Rom. lii. 25](#); [iv. 7, 8](#); [Col. li. 13](#); [Tit. i. 2](#), etc. And whereas the just is to live by his faith, and everyone is to believe for himself, or make an application of the things believed unto his own behoof, some from hence have affirmed the pardon of our own sins and our own salvation to be the proper object of faith; and indeed it does belong thereunto, when, in the way and order of God and the gospel, we can attain unto it, [1 Cor. xv. 3, 4](#); [Gal. ii. 20](#); [Eph. i. 6, 7](#).

Wherefore, asserting the Lord Jesus Christ, in the **work of his mediation**, to be the **object of faith unto justification**, I **include therein the grace of God, which is the cause**; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of **communicating Christ** and the **benefits of his mediation** unto us.

And all these things are so **united**, so **intermixed in their mutual relations and respects**, so **concatenated in the purpose of God**, and the declaration made of his will in the gospel, as that the believing of any one of them does virtually include the belief of the rest. And by whom any one of them is disbelieved, they frustrate and make void all the rest, and so faith itself.

The due consideration of these things solves all the difficulties that arise about the nature of faith, either from the Scripture or from the experience of them that believe, with respect unto its object. Many things in the Scripture are we said to believe with it and by it, and that unto justification; but two things are hence evident:— First, That no one of them can be asserted to be the complete, adequate object of our faith. Secondly, That none of them are so absolutely, but as they relate unto the Lord Christ, as the ordinance of God for our justification and salvation.

And this answers the experience of all that do truly believe. For these things being **united and made inseparable in the constitution of God**, all of them are virtually included in every one of them.

(1.) Some fix their faith and trust principally on the grace, love, and mercy of God; especially they did so under the Old Testament, **before the clear revelation of Christ and his mediation**. So did the psalmist, [Ps. Cxxx. 3, 4](#); [xxxiii. 18, 19](#); and the publican, [Luke xviii. 13](#). And these are, in places of the Scripture innumerable, proposed as the causes of our justification. See [Rom. lii. 24](#); [Eph. li. 4–8](#); [Tit. lii. 5–7](#). **But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the “redemption that is in the blood of Christ,”** [Dan. ix. 17](#). Nor does the Scripture anywhere propose them unto us but under that consideration. See [Rom. lii. 24, 25](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). **For this is the cause, way, and means of the communication of that grace, love, and mercy unto us.**

(2.) Some place and fix them principally on the Lord Christ, his mediation, and the benefits thereof. This the apostle Paul proposes frequently unto us in his own example. See [Gal. ii. 20](#); [Phil. lii. 8–10](#). **But this they do not absolutely, but with respect unto the grace and love of God, whence it is that they are given and communicated unto us,** [Rom. viii. 32](#); [John iii. 16](#); [Eph. i. 6–8](#). Nor are they otherwise anywhere proposed unto us in the Scripture as the object of our faith unto justification.

(3.) Some in a peculiar manner fix their souls, in believing, on the promises. And this is exemplified in the instance of Abraham, [Gen. xv. 6](#); [Rom. iv. 20](#). And so are they proposed in the Scripture as the object of our faith, [Acts ii. 39](#); [Rom. iv. 16](#); [Heb. iv. 1, 2](#); [vi. 12, 13](#). **But this they do not merely as they are divine revelations, but as they contain and propose unto us the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation, from the grace, love, and mercy of God.** Hence the apostle disputes at large, in his Epistle unto the Galatians, that if justification be any way but by the promise, both the grace of God and the death of Christ are evacuated and made of none effect. **And the reason is, because the promise is nothing but the way and means of the communication of them unto us.**

(4.) Some fix their faith on the things themselves which they aim at, — namely, the **pardon of sin and eternal life**. And these also in the Scripture are proposed unto us as the object of our faith, or that which we are to believe unto justification, [Ps. Cxxx. 4](#); [Acts xxvi. 18](#); [Tit. i. 2](#). **But this is to be done in its proper order**, especially as unto the application of them unto our own souls. **For we are nowhere required to believe them, or our own interest in them, but as they are effects of the grace and love of God, through Christ and his mediation, proposed in the promises of the gospel.** Wherefore the belief of them is included in the belief of these, and is in order of nature **antecedent** thereunto. And the belief of the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, **without the due exercise of faith in those causes of them, is but presumption.**

I have, therefore, given the entire object of faith as justifying, or in its work and duty with respect unto our justification, in compliance with the testimonies of the Scripture, and the experience of them that believe.

Allowing, therefore, their proper place unto the promises, and unto the effect of all in the pardon of sins and eternal life, that which I shall farther confirm is, that **the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation**, as the **ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the proper adequate object of justifying faith.** And the true nature of evangelical faith consists in the respect of the heart (which we shall immediately describe) unto the love, grace, and wisdom of God; with the mediation of Christ, in his obedience; with the sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for sin which he made by his blood. These things are impiously opposed by some as inconsistent; for the second head of the Socinian impiety is, that the grace of God and satisfaction of Christ are opposite and inconsistent, so as that if we allow of the one we must deny the other. But as these things are so proposed in the Scripture, as that without granting them both neither can be believed; so faith, which respects them as subordinate, — namely, the mediation of Christ unto the grace of God, that fixes itself on the Lord Christ and that redemption which is in his blood, — as **the ordinance of God**, the effect of his wisdom, grace, and love, finds rest in both, and in nothing else.

For the proof of the assertion, I need not labour in it, it being not only abundantly declared in the Scripture, but that which contains in it a principal part of the design and substance of the gospel. I shall, therefore, only refer unto some of the places wherein it is taught, or the testimonies that are given unto it.

The whole is expressed in that place of the apostle wherein the doctrine of justification is most eminently proposed unto us, [Rom. iii. 24, 25](#), **“Being justified freely by his grace through the**

redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” Whereunto we may add, [Eph. i. 6, 7](#), “He has made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.” That whereby we are justified, is the especial object of our faith unto justification. But this is the Lord Christ in the work of his mediation: for we are justified by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; for in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin. Christ as a propitiation is the cause of our justification, and the object of our faith, or we attain it by faith in his blood. But this is so under this formal consideration, as he is the ordinance of God for that end, — appointed, given, proposed, set forth from and by the grace, wisdom, and love of God. **God set him forth to be a propitiation.** He makes us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption in his blood, according to the riches of his grace, whereby he makes us accepted in the Beloved. And herein he “abounds towards us in all wisdom,” [Eph. i. 8](#). This, therefore, is that which the gospel proposes unto us, as the especial object of our faith unto the justification of life.

[Skip to pg 85](#)

This next excerpt gets into what unbelief is contrasted with true saving faith. One whose mind has not been renewed by this spiritual sight of God’s glory cannot acquiesce or rest in these doctrines.

So is it with all that continue unbelievers under the proposal of the object of faith in the preaching of the gospel. **They may give an assent unto the truth of it, so far as it is a mere act of the mind**, — at least they find not themselves concerned to reject it; yea, they may assent unto it with that **temporary faith** which we described before, and perform many duties of religion thereon: yet do they manifest that they are not sincere believers, that **they do not believe with the heart unto righteousness**, by many things that are irreconcilable unto and inconsistent with justifying faith. The inquiry, therefore, is, Wherein the unbelief of such persons, on the account whereof they perish, does consist, and what is the **formal nature** of it? It is not, as was said, in the want of an assent unto the truths of the doctrine of the gospel: for from such an assent are they said, in many places of the Scripture, to believe, as has been proved; and this assent may be so firm, and by various means so radicated in their minds, as that, in testimony unto it, they may give their bodies to be burned; as men also may do in the confirmation of a false persuasion. Nor is it the want of an especial fiduciary application, of the promises of the gospel unto themselves, and the belief of the pardon of their own sins in particular: for this is not proposed unto them in the first preaching of the gospel, as that which they are first to believe, and there may be a believing unto righteousness where this is not attained, [Isa. L. 10](#). This will evidence faith not to be true; but it is not formal unbelief. Nor is it the want of obedience unto the precepts of the gospel in duties of holiness and righteousness; for these commands, as formally given in and by the gospel, belong only unto them that truly believe, and are justified thereon. That, therefore, which is required unto evangelical faith, wherein the nature of it does consist, as it is the foundation of all future obedience, **is the heart’s approbation of the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, proposed unto it as the effect of the infinite wisdom, love, grace, and goodness of God; and as that which is suited unto all the wants and whole design of guilty convinced sinners.** **This such persons have not; and in the want thereof consists the formal nature of unbelief.** For without this no man is, or can be, influenced by the gospel unto a relinquishment of sin, or encouraged unto obedience, whatever they may do on other grounds and motives that are foreign unto the grace of it. **And wherever this cordial,**

sincere approbation of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, proposed in the gospel, does prevail, it will infallibly produce both repentance and obedience.

If the mind and heart of a convinced sinner (for of such alone we treat) be able spiritually to discern the wisdom, love, and grace of God, in this way of salvation, and be under the power of that persuasion, he has the ground of repentance and obedience which is given by the gospel. The receiving of Christ mentioned in the Scripture, and whereby the nature of faith in its exercise is expressed, I refer unto the latter part of the description given concerning the soul's acquiescence in God, by the way proposed.

Again: some there were at first, and such still continue to be, who rejected not this way absolutely, and in the notion of it, but comparatively, as reduced to practice; and so perished in their unbelief. They judged the way of their own righteousness to be better, as that which might be more safely trusted unto, — as more according unto the mind of God and unto his glory. So did the Jews generally, the frame of whose minds the apostle represents, [Rom. X. 3, 4](#). And many of them assented unto the doctrine of the gospel in general as true, howbeit they liked it not in their hearts as the best way of justification and salvation, but sought for them by the works of the law.

Wherefore, **unbelief, in its formal nature, consists in the want of a spiritual discerning and approbation of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, as an effect of the infinite wisdom, goodness, and love of God; for where these are, the soul of a convinced sinner cannot but embrace it, and adhere unto it.** Hence, also, all acquiescency in this way, and trust and confidence in committing the soul unto it, or unto God in it, and by it (**without which whatever is pretended of believing is but a shadow of faith**), is impossible unto such persons; for they want the foundation whereon alone they can be built. And the consideration hereof does sufficiently manifest wherein the nature of true evangelical faith does consist.

[hence Rom 11:7 – “but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” To be set free by Christ is to have the veil over your heart (or mind) removed so that you can see and believe. Until this is done by the Spirit, you will not believe. So when the Spirit reveals to you this glory spoken of in 2Cor4:6, it is speaking of that communication of the saving knowledge of Christ; the effect, being born again, the cause is the goodness, mercy and grace of the God the Father and consequent of salvation is infallible to all who have this happen to them. In other words, God never spoke to those who are in hell; not one word. He only calls his sheep, and they hear and follow. John 10. Flavel speaks on this subject:

One end of Christ's death was to purchase our freedom, that we might be capable of being espoused to him; for you must know that we were not in a capacity while under the curse of the law, to be married unto Christ. The Apostle, Rom. 7:2-4, compares the law to a husband, to whom the wife is bound as long as he liveth, and not capable of a second marriage until here husband be dead. The death of Christ was the death of the law, as a covenant of works holding us under the bond of the curse of it; and so it gave us a *manumission* or freedom from that bond, and a capacity of espousals to Christ, as ver. 4, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised form the dead.” A slave to another is not capable of being disposed in marriage, until made free; you were in bondage to the law, the slaves of sin and Satan; Christ bought you your liberty (for his blood is called a ransom, Matt. 20:28, and so put you into a

capacity of being espoused unto himself. **Here you see Christ loved you not for any advantage he could have by you** code156a & code319a for you had nothing to bring him; nay, he must purchase you, and that with his own blood, before he can be united to you. O incomparable love! O fervent desires!]

2. The design of God in and by the gospel, with the work and office of faith with respect thereunto, farther confirms the description given of it. That which God designs herein, in the first place, is not the justification and salvation of sinners. His utmost complete end, in all his counsels, is his own glory. He does all things for himself; nor can he who is infinite do otherwise. But in an especial manner he expresses this concerning this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

Particularly, he designed herein the **glory of his righteousness**; “To declare his righteousness,” [Rom. lii. 25](#); — of his love; “God so loved the world,” [John iii. 16](#); “Herein we perceive the love of God, that he laid down his life for us,” [1 John iii. 16](#); — of his grace; “Accepted, **to the praise of the glory of his grace**,” [Eph. i. 5, 6](#); — of his wisdom; “Christ crucified, the wisdom of God,” [1 Cor. i. 24](#); “Might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,” [Eph. lii. 10](#); — of his power; “it is the power of God unto salvation,” [Rom. i. 16](#); — of his faithfulness, [Rom. iv. 16](#). For God designed herein, **not only the reparation of all that glory whose declaration was impeached and obscured by the entrance of sin**, but also a farther exaltation and more eminent manifestation of it, unto the degrees of its exaltation, and some especial instances before concealed, [Eph. lii. 9](#). And all this is called “**The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;**” **whereof faith is the beholding**, [2 Cor. iv. 6](#).

3. This being the principal design of God in the way of justification and salvation by Christ proposed in the gospel, that which on our part is required unto a participation of the benefits of it, **is the ascription of that glory unto God which he designs so to exalt**. The acknowledgment of all these glorious properties of the divine nature, as manifested in the provision and proposition of this way of life, righteousness, and salvation, with an **approbation of the way itself as an effect of them, and that which is safely to be trusted unto, is that which is required of us; and this is faith or believing**: “**Being strong in faith, he gave glory to God**,” [Rom. iv. 20](#). And this is in the **nature of the weakest degree of sincere faith**. And no other grace, work, or duty, is suited hereunto, or firstly and directly of that tendency, but only consequentially and in the way of **gratitude**. [in other words, as Thomas Shepard describes faith, it springs out of the destruction of our own excellency. If Abraham did not have saving faith, he could not have given glory to God and his excellency; he would have attributed it to himself or some of it to himself which is the same thing; and that’s the point. Arminians say that their self-determined will is the cause of their coming to Christ; the language of their heart is, I chose Christ, so Christ saved me, which is ascribing some if not all of the glory to themselves and in essence turning the gospel on its head. See sinner’s prayer comments above.] And although I cannot wholly assent unto him who affirms that faith in the epistles of Paul is nothing but “*existimatio magnificè sentiens de Dei potential, justitia, bonitate, et si quid promiserit in eo præstando constantia*,” because it is too general, and not limited unto the way of salvation by Christ, his “**elect in whom he will be glorified**,” yet has it much of the nature of faith in it. Wherefore I say, that hence we may both learn the nature of faith, and whence it is that faith alone is required unto our justification. The reason of it is, **because this is that grace or duty alone whereby we do or can give unto God that glory which he designs to manifest and exalt in and by Jesus Christ. This only faith is suited unto, and this it is to believe.**

Faith, in the sense we inquire after, is the heart's approbation of, and consent unto, the way of life and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, as that wherein the glory of the righteousness, wisdom, grace, love, and mercy of God is exalted; the praise whereof it ascribes unto him, and rests in it as unto the ends of it, — namely, justification, life, and salvation. It is to give "glory to God," [Rom. iv. 20](#); to "behold his glory as in a glass," or the gospel wherein it is represented unto us, [2 Cor. iii. 18](#); to have in our hearts "**the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,**" [2 Cor. iv. 6](#). The contrary whereunto makes God a liar, and thereby despoils him of the glory of all those holy properties which he this way designed to manifest, [1 John v. 10](#).

And, if I mistake not, this is that which the experience of them that truly believe, when they are out of the heats of disputation, will give testimony unto.

Faith vs. Sight

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Chapter XII.

Differences between our beholding the glory of Christ by faith in this world and by sight in heaven — the first of them explained.

"We walk" here "by **faith**, and not by **sight**," [2 Cor. V. 7](#); that is, in the life of God, in our walking before him, in the whole of our obedience therein, we are under the conduct and influence of faith, and not of sight. Those are the two spiritual powers of our souls; — by the one whereof we are made partakers of grace, holiness, and obedience in this life; and by the other, of eternal blessedness and glory.

Both these — namely, **faith and sight**, the one in this life, the other in that which is to come — have the same **immediate object**. For they are the abilities of the soul to go forth unto, and to embrace their **object**. Now, this object of them both is the **glory of Christ**, as has been declared, as also what that

glory is, and wherein it does consist; wherefore my present design is to inquire into the difference that is between our beholding of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, and the vision which we shall have of the same glory hereafter.

The latter of these is peculiarly intended in that prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for his disciples, [John xvii. 24](#), “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” But I shall not distinctly insist upon it, my design being another way, respecting principally the work of God in this life, and the privileges which we enjoy thereby. Yet I shall now take a short prospect of that also; not absolutely, but in the differences that are between faith and sight, or the view which we have of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, and that which they enjoy by vision who are above; — the object of them both being adequately the same.

But herein, also, I shall have respect only unto some of those things which concern our practice, or the present immediate exercise of faith. For I have elsewhere handled at large the state of the church above, or that of present glory, giving an account of the administration of the office of Christ in heaven, his presence among the glorified souls, and the adoration of God under his conduct. I have also declared the advantage which they have by being with him, and the prospect they have of his glory. Therefore these things must here be only touched on.

These differences may be referred unto two heads:— 1. Those which arise from the different natures and acting of those means and instruments whereby we apprehend this glory of Christ, — namely, **faith and vision**; and, 2. Those that arise from the different effects produced by them. Instances in each kind shall be given.

1. **The view which we have of the glory of Christ by faith in this world is obscure, dark, inevident, reflexive**. So the apostle declares, [1 Cor. Xiii. 12](#), “Now we see through a glass darkly,” δι’ ἑσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι; — “through” or by “a glass, in a riddle,” a parable, a dark saying. There is a double figurative limitation put upon our view of the glory of Christ, taken from the two ways of our perception of what we apprehend, — namely, the **sight of things**, and the **hearing of words**.

The first is, that we have this view not directly, but reflexively and by way of a representation, as in a glass. For I take the glass here, not to be optical or a prospective, which helps the sight, but a speculum, or a glass which **reflects an image** of what we do behold. It is a sight like that which we have of a man in a glass, when we see not his person or substance, but an image or representation of them only, which is imperfect.

The shadow or image of this glory of Christ is drawn in the Gospel, and therein we behold it as the likeness of a man represented unto us **in a glass**; **and although it be obscure and imperfect in comparison of his own real, substantial glory, which is the object of vision in heaven**, yet is it the only image and representation of himself which he has left, and given unto us in this world. **That woeful, cursed invention of framing images** of him out of stocks and stones, however adorned, or representations of him by the art of painting, are so far from presenting unto the minds of men anything of his real glory, **that nothing can be more effectual to divert their thoughts and**

apprehensions from it. But by this figurative expression of seeing in a glass, the apostle declares the comparative imperfection of our present view of the glory of Christ.

But the allusion may be taken from an optic glass or tube also, whereby the sight of the eye is helped in beholding things at a great distance. By the aid of such glasses, men will discover stars or heavenly lights, which, by reason of their distance from us, the eye of itself is no way able to discern. And those which we do see are more fully represented, though remote enough from being so perfectly. **Such a glass is the Gospel, without which we can make no discovery of Christ at all; but in the use of it we are far enough from beholding him in the just dimensions of his glory.**

And he adds another intimation of this imperfection, in an allusion unto the way whereby things are proposed and conveyed unto the minds and apprehensions of men. Now this is by **words**. And these are either plain, proper, and direct, or dark, figurative, and parabolical. And this latter way makes the conception of things to be difficult and imperfect; and by reason of the imperfection of our view of the glory of Christ by faith in this world, the apostle says it is in αἰνίγματι, in “a **riddle**.” These αἰνίγματα the Psalmist calls קִידוֹת, “**dark sayings**,” [Ps. Lxxviii. 2.](#)

Give ear, O my people, to my law;
 Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
²I will open my mouth in a parable;
 I will utter dark sayings of old,
³Which we have heard and known,
 And our fathers have told us.
⁴We will not hide *them* from their children,
 Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
 And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. Ps 78:1-4

But here it must be observed, that the description and representation of the Lord Christ and his glory in the Gospel is not absolutely or in itself either dark or obscure; yea, it is perspicuous, plain, and direct. Christ is therein evidently set forth crucified, exalted, glorified. **But the apostle does not here discourse concerning the way or means of the revelation of it unto us, but of the means or instrument whereby we comprehend that revelation. This is our faith, which, as it is in us, being weak and imperfect, we comprehend the representation that is made unto us of the glory of Christ as men do the sense of a dark saying, a riddle, a parable; that is, imperfectly, and with difficulty.**

On the account hereof we may say at present, how little a portion is it that we know of him! as Job speaks of God, [chap. Xxvi. 14.](#) How imperfect are our conceptions of him! How weak are our minds in their management! **There is no part of his glory that we can fully comprehend.** And what we do comprehend, — there is a comprehension in faith, [Eph. lii. 18,](#) — we cannot abide in the steady contemplation of. For ever blessed be that sovereign grace, whence it is that He who “**commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ,**” and therein of the glory of Christ himself; — **that he has so revealed him unto us, as that we may love him, admire him, and obey him: but constantly, steadily, and clearly to behold his glory in this life we are not able; “for we walk by faith, and not by sight.”**

Hence our sight of him here is as it were by glances, — liable to be clouded by many interpositions. “Behold, he standeth behind the wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing” (פִּרְצֵהוּ, flourishing) “himself through the lattice,” [Cant. li. 9](#). **There is a great interposition between him and us, as a wall;** and the means of the discovery of himself unto us, as through a window and lattice, include a great instability and imperfection in our view and apprehension of him. There is a wall between him and us, which yet he standeth behind. **Our present mortal state is this wall, which must be demolished before we can see him as he is. In the meantime he looketh through the windows of the ordinances of the Gospel.** He gives us sometimes, when he is pleased to stand in those windows, a view of himself; but it is imperfect, as is our sight of a man through a window. **The appearances of him at these windows are full of refreshment unto the souls of them that do believe.** But our view of them is imperfect, transient, and does not abide; — **we are for the most part quickly left to bemoan what we have lost.** And then our best is but to cry, **“the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before thee?”** When wilt thou again give me to see thee, though but as through the windows? Alas! What distress do we oftentimes sit down in, after these views of Christ and his glory! But he proceeds farther yet; and flourishes himself through the lattices. This displaying of the glory of Christ, called the flourishing of himself, is by the **promises of the Gospel, as they are explained in the ministry of the Word.** In them are represented unto us the desirable beauties and glories of Christ. How precious, how amiable is he, as represented in them! How are the souls of believers ravished with the views of them! Yet is this discovery of him also but as through a lattice. **We see him but by parts,** — unsteadily and unevenly.

Such, I say, is the sight of the glory of Christ which we have in this world by faith. It is dark, — it is but in part. It is but weak, transient, imperfect, partial. It is but little that we can at any time discover of it; it is but a little while that we can abide in the contemplation of what we do discover. “Rara hora, breves mora.” Sometimes it is unto us as the sun when it is under a cloud, — we cannot perceive it. When he hideth his face, who then can behold him? As **Job** speaks, so may we, “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him,” [chap. Xxiii. 8, 9](#). Which way soever we turn ourselves, and what duties soever we apply ourselves unto, we can obtain no distinct view of his glory. Yet, on the other hand, it is sometimes as the sun when it shines in its brightness, and we cannot bear the rays of it. **In infinite condescension** he says unto his church, “Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me,” [Cant. Vi. 5](#), — as if he could not bear that overcoming affectionate love, which looks through the eyes of the church in its acting of faith on him. Ah! How much more do we find our souls overcome with his love, when at any time he is pleased to make any clear discoveries of his glory unto us!

Let us now, on the other hand, take a little consideration of that vision which we shall have of the same glory in heaven, that we may compare them together.

Vision, or the sight which we shall have of the glory of Christ in heaven, is immediate, direct, intuitive; and therefore steady, even, and constant and it is so on a double account:— 1. Of the object which shall be proposed unto us; 2. Of the visive power or faculty wherewith we shall be

endued: from the imperfection of both which in this world ariseth the imperfection of our view of the glory of Christ by faith, as has been declared.

1. **The object of it will be real and substantial. Christ himself, in his own person,** with all his glory, shall be continually with us, before us, proposed unto us. **We shall no longer have an image, a representation of him, such as is the delineation of his glory in the Gospel. We “shall see him,” saith the apostle, “face to face,”** [1 Cor. Xiii. 12](#); — **which he opposeth unto our seeing him darkly as in a glass, which is the utmost that faith can attain to.** “We shall see him as he is”, 379 [1 John iii. 2](#); — **not as now, in an imperfect description of him.** As a man sees his neighbor when they stand and converse together face to face, so shall we see the Lord Christ in his glory; and not as Moses, who had only a transient sight of some parts of the glory of God, when he caused it to pass by him.

There will be use herein of our bodily eyes, as shall be declared. For, as Job says, in our flesh shall we see our Redeemer, and our eyes shall behold him, [chap. Xix. 25–27](#). That corporeal sense shall not be restored unto us, and that glorified above what we can conceive, but for this great use of the eternal beholding of Christ and his glory. Unto whom is it not a matter of rejoicing, that with the same eyes **wherewith they see the tokens and signs of him in the sacrament of the supper, they shall behold himself immediately** in his own person? But principally, as we shall see immediately, this vision is intellectual. It is not, therefore, the mere human nature of Christ that is the object of it, but his divine person, as that nature subsisteth therein. What is that perfection which we shall have (for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part) in the comprehension of the **hypostatical union**, I understand not; but this I know, that in the **immediate beholding of the person of Christ**, we shall see a **glory** in it a thousand times above what here we can conceive. **The excellencies of infinite wisdom, love, and power therein, will be continually before us.** And all the glories of the person of Christ which we have before weakly and faintly inquired into, will be in our sight for evermore.

Hence the **ground and cause of our blessedness is, that “we shall ever be with the Lord,”** [1 Thess. iv. 17](#), — as himself prays, **“that we may be with him where he is, to behold his glory.”** **Here we have some dark views of it, — we cannot perfectly behold it, until we are with him where he is.** Thereon our **sight of him will be direct, intuitive, and constant.**

There is a glory, there will be so, subjectively in us in the beholding of this glory of Christ, which is at present incomprehensible. For it does not yet appear what we ourselves shall be, [1 John iii. 2](#). Who can declare what a glory it will be in us to behold this glory of Christ? And how excellent, then, is that glory of Christ itself!

This immediate sight of Christ is that which all the saints of God in this life do breathe and pant after. Hence are they willing to be dissolved, or “desire to depart, that they may be with Christ,” which is best for them, [Phil. i. 23](#). They choose “to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord,” [2 Cor. V. 8](#); or that they may enjoy the inexpressibly longed-for sight of Christ in his glory. **Those who do not so long for it, whose souls and minds are not frequently visited with earnest desires after it, unto whom the thoughts of it are not their relief in trouble, and their chiefest joy, are carnal, blind, and cannot see afar off.** He that is truly spiritual entertains and refresheth himself with thoughts hereof continually.

2. It will be so from that visive power or faculty of beholding the glory of Christ which we shall then receive. Without this we cannot see him as he is. When he was transfigured in the mount, and had on his human nature some reflections of his divine glory, his disciples that were with him were rather amazed than refreshed by it, [Matt. XVII. 6](#). They saw his glory, but spake thereon “they knew not what,” [Luke ix. 30–33](#). **And the reason hereof was, because no man in this life can have a visive power, either spiritual or corporeal, directly and immediately to behold the real glory of Christ.**

Should the Lord Jesus appear now to any of us in his majesty and glory, it would not be unto our edification nor consolation. **For we are not meet nor able, by the power of any light or grace that we have received, or can receive, to bear the immediate appearance and representation of them.** His beloved apostle John had leaned on his bosom probably many a time in his life, in the intimate familiarities of love; but when he afterward appeared unto him in his glory, “he fell at his feet as dead,” [Rev. i. 17](#). And when he appeared unto Paul, all the account he could give thereof was, “that he saw a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun;” whereon he, and all that were with him, “fell to the ground,” [Acts xxvi. 13, 14](#).

And this was one reason why, in the days of his ministry here on earth, his glory was veiled with the infirmities of the flesh, and all sorts of sufferings, as we have before related. **The church in this life is no way meet, by the grace which it can be made partaker of, to converse with him in the immediate manifestations of his glory.**

And therefore those who dream of his personal reign on the earth before the day of judgment, unless they suppose that all the saints shall be perfectly glorified also (which is only to bring down heaven to the earth for awhile, to no purpose), provide not at all for the edification or consolation of the church. **For no present grace, advanced unto the highest degree whereof in this world it is capable, can make us meet for an immediate converse with Christ in his unveiled glory.** [excellent point]

How much more abominable is the folly of men, who would represent the Lord Christ in his present glory by pictures and images of him! When they have done their utmost with their burnished glass and gildings, an eye of flesh can not only behold it, but, if it be guided by reason, see it contemptible and foolish. But the true glory of Christ, neither inward nor outward sight can bear the rays of it in this life.

The dispensation which we are meet for is only that of his presence with us by his Spirit. We know him now no more after the flesh, [2 Cor. V. 16](#). **We are advanced above that way and means of the knowledge of him by the fleshly, carnal ordinances of the Old Testament.** And we know him not according unto that bodily presence of his which his disciples enjoyed in the days of his flesh. We have attained somewhat above that also. **For such was the nature of his ministry here on earth, that there could not be the promised dispensation of the Spirit until that was finished.** Therefore he tells his disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go away, and send the Spirit to them, [John xvi. 7](#). Hereon they had a clearer view of the glory of Christ than they could have by beholding him in the flesh. **This is our spiritual posture and condition. We are past the knowledge of him according to the flesh,** — we cannot attain nor receive the sight of him in glory; but the life which we now lead is by the faith of the Son of God.

I shall not here inquire into the nature of this vision, or the power and ability which we shall have in heaven to behold the glory of Christ. Some few things may be mentioned, as it relates unto our minds, and our bodies also, after the resurrection.

1. For the mind, it shall be perfectly freed from all that darkness, unsteadiness, and other incapacities, which here it is accompanied with; and whereby it is weakened, hindered, and obstructed, in the exercise of faith. And they are of two sorts.

(1.) **Such as are the remainders of that depravation of our natures which came upon us by sin.** Hereby our minds became **wholly vain, dark, and corrupt**, as the Scripture testifieth, — utterly unable to discern spiritual things in a due manner. This is so far cured and removed in this life by **grace**, as that those who were darkness do become light in the Lord, **or are enabled to live unto God under the conduct of a new spiritual light communicated unto them**. But it is so cured and removed in part only, it is not perfectly abolished. Hence are all our remaining weaknesses and incapacities in discerning things spiritual and eternal, **which we yet groan under, and long for deliverance from**. No footsteps, no scars or marks that ever it had place in our minds shall abide in glory, [Eph. V. 27](#). Nothing shall weaken, disturb, or incapacitate our souls, in acting all their powers, **unimpeded by vanity, diversions, weakness, inability, upon their proper objects**. The excellency hereof, in universal liberty and power, we cannot here comprehend; nor can we yet conceive the glory and beauty of those immixed spiritual actings of our minds which shall have no clog upon them, no encumbrance in them, no alloy of dross accompanying them. One pure act of spiritual sight in discerning the glory of Christ, — one pure act of love in cleaving unto God, — will bring in more blessedness and satisfaction into our minds than in this world we are capable of.

(2.) **There is an incapacity in our minds, as unto their actings on things spiritual and eternal, that is merely natural**, from the posture wherein they are, and the figure which they are to make in this life. For they are here clothed with flesh, and that debased and corrupted. Now, in this state, though the mind act its conceptions by the body as its organ and instrument, yet is it variously straitened, encumbered, and impeded in the exercise of its native powers, especially towards things heavenly, by this prison of the flesh, wherein it is immured. There is an angelical excellency in the pure actings of the soul when delivered from all material instruments of them, or when they are all glorified and made suitable helps in its utmost spiritual activity. How and by what degrees our minds shall be freed from these obstructions in their beholding the glory of Christ shall be afterward declared.

2. Again, a new light, the light of glory, shall be implanted in them. **There is a light in nature, which is the power of a man to discern the things of man; — an ability to know, perceive, and judge of things natural.** It is that **“spirit of a man”** which **“is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly,”** [Prov. Xx. 27](#). [*he refers to reason as the spirit in a man*]

But by the **light** hereof no man can discern spiritual things in a due manner, as the apostle declares, [1 Cor. li. 11–15](#).

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹³Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹⁸These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy^l Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. ¹⁶For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?”^l But we have the mind of Christ.” 1Cor.2 11-16

Wherefore God gives a **superior, a supernatural light, the light of faith and grace, unto them whom he effectually calls unto the knowledge of himself** by Jesus Christ. **He shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his dear Son.** Howbeit this new light does not abolish, blot out, or render useless, the other **light of nature**, as the sun, when it riseth, extinguisheth the light of the stars; but it **directs it and rectifies it as unto its principle, object, and end.** **Yet is it in itself a light quite of another nature.** **But he who has only the former light can understand nothing of it, because he has no taste or experience of its power and operations.** He may talk of it, and make inquiries about it, but he knows it not.

Now, **we have received this light of faith and grace, whereby we discern spiritual things, and behold the glory of Christ in the imperfect manner before described.** But in heaven there shall be a **superadded light of glory**, which shall make the mind itself “shine as the firmament,” [Dan. Xii. 3](#). I shall only say three things of it. 1. That as the **light of grace** does not destroy or abolish the **light of nature**, **but rectify and improve it, so the light of glory shall not abolish or destroy the light of faith and grace, but, by incorporating with it, render it absolutely perfect.** 2. That as by the **light of nature** we cannot clearly comprehend the true nature and efficacy of the light of grace, **because it is of another kind, and is seen only in its own light; so by the light of grace we cannot absolutely comprehend this light of glory, being of a peculiar kind and nature, seen perfectly only by its own light.** [[hence Ps 36:9, “For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.”](#)] It does not appear what we shall be. 3. That this is the best notion we can have of this light of glory, — that, **in the first instance of its operation, it perfectly transforms the soul into the image and likeness of Christ.** [So before this happens, we are not in the image or likeness of Christ but in the image and likeness of Adam (Gen5:3, 1Cor15:49), having only the light of nature to enable us to live a natural life not a spiritual one that is pleasing to God, hence Heb 11:6, *without faith it is impossible to please him*, or 1Cor2:14, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Arminians think that one has the ability to believe before one is converted; that while still in the likeness of Adam we have this ability – that the fall of Adam did not erase the image of God; that there is still a remnant of some virtue in us that will enable us to believe – our depravity is not total. This turns the Gospel on its head and undermines many key doctrines.]

This is the progress of our nature unto its rest and blessedness. The principles remaining in it concerning good and evil, with its practical convictions, are not destroyed but improved by grace; **as its blindness, darkness, and enmity to God are in part taken away.** [[the heart of stone being removed, Jer32:39-40, Ezek36:25-27](#)] **Being renewed by grace, what it receives here of spiritual life and light shall never be destroyed, but be perfected in glory. Grace renews nature; glory perfects grace; and so the whole soul is brought unto its rest in God.** We have an image of it in the blind man whom our Saviour cured, [Mark viii. 22–24](#). He was absolutely blind, — born so, no doubt. Upon the first touch, his eyes were opened, and he saw, but very obscurely; — he saw men walking like trees. But on the second, he saw all things clearly. Our minds in themselves are absolutely blind. The first visitation of them by grace gives them a sight of things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal; but it is obscure and unsteady. **The sight of glory makes all things clear and evident.**

3. The body as glorified, with its senses, shall have its use and peace herein. After we are clothed again with our flesh, we shall see our Redeemer with our eyes. We know not here what power and spirituality there will be in the acts of our glorified bodies. Such they will be as shall bear a part in eternal blessedness. Holy **Stephen**, the first martyr, took up somewhat of glory by anticipation before he died. For when he was brought to his trial before the council, all that sat therein, “looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as the face of an angel,” [Acts vi. 15](#). He had his transfiguration, according unto his measure, answerable unto that of our blessed Saviour in the mount. And by this initial beam of glory he received such a piercing vivacity and edge on his bodily eyes, that through all those inconceivable distances between the earth and the residence of the blessed, he looked steadfastly into heaven, and “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,” [Acts vii. 55, 56](#). Who, then, can declare what will be **the power and acting of this sense of sight when perfectly glorified; or what sweetness and refreshment may be admitted into our souls thereby?**

It was a privilege (who would not have longed to partake of it?) to have seen Him with our bodily eyes in the days of his flesh, as did the apostles and his other disciples. Howbeit he was not then glorified himself in the manifestation of his glory; nor they who saw him, in the change or transformation of their nature. How great this privilege was, himself declares unto those that so saw him, [Matt. Xiii. 17](#), “Verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see;” whereunto we shall speak immediately. And if this were so excellent a privilege as that we cannot but congratulate them by whom it was enjoyed, **how excellent, how glorious will it be, when with these eyes of ours, gloriously purified and strengthened beyond those of Stephen, we shall behold Christ himself immediately in the fullness of his glory!** He alone perfectly understands the greatness and excellency hereof, who prayed his Father that those who “believe in him may be where he is, so to behold his glory.”

These are some of the grounds of this first difference between our beholding the glory of Christ by faith here, and by immediate vision hereafter. Hence the one is weak, imperfect, obscure, reflexive; the other direct, immediate, even, and constant; — and we may stay a little in the contemplation of these things.

This view of the glory of Christ which we have now spoken unto is that which we are breathing and panting after; **that which the Lord Christ prays that we may arrive unto** [[Jn17](#)]; that which the apostle

testifies to be our best; — the best thing or state which our nature is capable of, — that which brings eternal rest and satisfaction unto our souls.

Here our souls are burdened with innumerable infirmities, and our faith is clogged in its operations by ignorance and darkness. This makes our best estate and highest attainments to be accompanied with **groans for deliverance**: “We which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” [Rom. Viii. 23](#). Yea, whilst we are in this tabernacle, we groan earnestly, as being burdened, because we are not “absent from the body, and present with the Lord,” [2 Cor. V. 2, 4, 8](#). **The more we grow in faith and spiritual light, the more sensible are we of our present burdens, and the more vehemently do we groan for deliverance into the perfect liberty of the sons of God. This is the posture of their minds who have received the first fruit of the Spirit in the most eminent degree. The nearer any one is to heaven, the more earnestly he desires to be there, because Christ is there.** For the more frequent and steady are our views of him by faith, the more do we long and groan for the removal of all obstructions and interpositions in our so doing. Now **groaning** is [the expression of] a vehement desire, mixed with sorrow, for the present want of what is desired. The desire has sorrow, and that sorrow has joy and refreshment in it; — like a shower that falls on a man in a garden in the spring; it wets him, but withal refresheth him with the savour it causeth in the flowers and herbs of the garden where he is. And this groaning, which, when it is constant and habitual, is one of the choicest effects of faith in this life, respects what we would be delivered from, and what we would attain unto. [Again, those who profess Christ but have a secret dislike of this doctrine argue their hypocrisy.] The first is expressed, [Rom. Vii. 24](#), the other in the places now mentioned. And this triune, with an intermixture of some sighs from weariness by the troubles, sorrows, pains, sicknesses of this life, is the best we can here attain unto.

Alas! We cannot here think of Christ, but we are quickly ashamed of, and troubled at, our own thoughts; so confused are they, so unsteady, so imperfect. Commonly they issue in a groan or a sigh: Oh! When shall we come unto him? when shall we be ever with him? when shall we see him as he is? And if at any time he begins to give more than ordinary evidences and intimations of his glory and love unto our souls, we are not able to bear them, so as to give them any abiding residence in our minds. But ordinarily this trouble and groaning is amongst our best attainments in this world, — a trouble which, I pray God, I may never be delivered from, until deliverance do come at once from this state of mortality; yea, **the good Lord increase this trouble more and more in all that believe.**

The heart of a believer affected with the glory of Christ, is like the needle touched with the loadstone. It can no longer be quiet, no longer be satisfied in a distance from him. It is put into a continual motion towards him. This motion, indeed, is weak and tremulous. Pantings, breathing, sighings, groanings in prayer, in meditations, in the secret recesses of our minds, are the life of it. However, it is continually pressing towards him. But it obtains not its point, it comes not to its centre and rest, in this world.

But now above, all things are clear and serene, — all plain and evident in our beholding the glory of Christ, — we shall be ever with him, and see him as he is. This is heaven, this is blessedness, this is eternal rest.

The person of Christ in all his glory shall be continually before us; and the eyes of our understandings shall be so gloriously illuminated, as that we shall be able steadily to behold and comprehend that glory.

But, alas! Here at present our minds recoil, our meditations fail, our hearts are overcome, our thoughts confused, and our eyes turn aside from the lustre of this glory; nor can we abide in the contemplation of it. But there, an **immediate, constant view of it**, will bring in everlasting refreshment and joy unto our whole souls.

This beholding of the glory of Christ given him by his Father [Jn17:22], is, indeed, subordinate unto the ultimate vision of the essence of God. What that is we cannot well conceive; only we know that the “pure in heart shall see God.” But it has such an immediate connection with it, and subordination unto it, as that without it we can never behold the face of God as the objective blessedness of our souls. For he is, and shall be to eternity, **the only means of communication between God and the church.**

And we may take some direction in our looking into and longing after this perfect view of the glory of Christ, from the example of the saints under the Old Testament. The sight which they had of the glory of Christ — for they also saw his glory through the obscurity of its revelation, and its being **veiled with types and shadows** — **was weak and imperfect in the most illuminated believers; much inferior unto what we now have by faith, through the Gospel.** Yet such it was as encouraged them to **inquire and search diligently** into what was revealed, **1 Peter i. 10, 11.** Howbeit, their discoveries were but dark and confused, such as men have of things at a great distance, or “**in a land that is very far off,**” as the prophet speaks, **Isa. Xxxiii. 17.** And the continuance of this veil on the revelation of the glory of Christ, **whilst a veil of ignorance and blindness was upon their hearts and minds, proved the ruin of that church in its apostasy**, as the apostle declares, **2 Cor. lii. 7, 13, 14.** This double veil (the covering covered, the veil veiled) God promised to take away, **Isa. Xxv. 7;** and then shall they turn to the Lord, when they shall be able clearly to behold the glory of Christ, **2 Cor. lii. 16.**

But this caused them who were real believers among them to desire, long, and pray for, the removal of these veils, the departure of those shadows, which made it as night unto them in comparison of what they knew would appear, when “the Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings.” They thought it long ere “the day did break, and the shadows flee away,” **Cant. li. 17; iv. 6.** There was an ἀποκαρδοκία, as the apostle speaks, **Rom. Viii. 19,** — a thrusting forth of the head with desire and expectation of the exhibition of the Son of God in the flesh, and the accomplishment of all divine promises therein. Hence he was called the Lord whom they sought and delighted in, **Mal. lii. 1.**

And great was the spiritual wisdom of believers in those days. They rejoiced and gloried in the **ordinances of divine worship** which they did enjoy. They looked on them as their chiefest **privilege**, and **attended unto them with diligence**, as an effect of divine wisdom and love, as also because they had a **shadow of good things to come**. But yet, at the same time, they longed and desired that the time of reformation were come, wherein they should all be removed; that so they might behold and enjoy the good things signified by them. **And those who did not so, but rested in and trusted unto their present institutions, were not accepted with God.** Those **who were really illuminated** did not so, but lived in

constant desires after the revelation of the whole mystery of the wisdom of God in Christ; as did the angels themselves, [1 Peter i. 3](#); [Eph. lii. 9, 10](#).

In this frame of heart and suitable actings of their souls there was more of the power of true faith and love than is found among the most at this day. They saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, [Heb. Xi. 13](#). They reached out the arms of their most intent affections to embrace the things that were promised. We have an instance of this frame in old [Simeon](#), who, so soon as he had taken the child Jesus in his arms, cried out, "Now, Lord, let me depart," now let me die; this is that which my soul has longed for, [Luke ii. 28, 29](#).

Our present darkness and weakness in beholding the glory of Christ, is not like theirs. It is not occasioned by a veil of types and shadows, cast on it by the representative institutions of it, — it does not arise from the want of a clear doctrinal revelation of the person and office of Christ; but, as was before declared, it proceedeth from two other causes. First, From the nature of faith itself, in comparison with vision. It is not able to look directly into this excellent glory, nor fully to comprehend it. Secondly, From the way of its proposal which is not substantial of the thing itself, but only of an image of it, as in a glass. But the sight, the view of the glory of Christ, which we shall have in heaven, is much more above that which we now enjoy by the Gospel, than what we do or may so enjoy is above what they have attained under their types and shadows. There is a far greater distance between the vision of heaven and the sight which we have now by faith, than is between the sight which we now have and what they had under the Old Testament. Heaven does more excel the Gospel state than that state does the Law.

Wherefore, if they did so pray, so long for, so desire the removal of their shadows and veils, that they might see what we now see, that they might so behold the glory of Christ as we may behold it in the light of the Gospel; how much more should we, if we have the same faith with them, the same love (which neither will nor can be satisfied without perfect fruition), long and pray for the removal of all weakness, of all darkness and interposition, that we may come unto that immediate beholding of his glory which he so earnestly prayed that we might be brought unto!

To sum up briefly what has been spoken: There are **three things** to be considered concerning the **glory of Christ**, three degrees in its manifestation, — **the shadow, the perfect image, and the substance itself**. Those under the **Law** had only the **shadow** of it, and of the things that belong unto it; — they had not the perfect image of them, [Heb. X. 1](#). Under the Gospel we have the perfect image, which they had not; or a clear, complete revelation and declaration of it, **presenting it unto us as in a glass: but the enjoyment of these things in their substance is reserved for heaven;** we must be "where he is, that we may behold his glory." Now, there is a greater difference and distance between the real substance of anything and the most perfect image of it, than there is between the most perfect image and the lowest shadow of the same thing. If, then, they longed to be freed from their state of types and shadows, to enjoy the representation of the glory of Christ in that image of it which is given us in the Gospel; **much more ought we to breathe and pant after our deliverance from beholding it in the image of it, that we may enjoy the substance itself. For, whatever can be manifest of Christ on this side heaven, it is granted unto us for this end, that we may the more fervently desire to be present with him.**

And as it was their **wisdom and their grace** to rejoice in the light they had, and in those **typical administrations** of divine worship which shadowed out the glory of Christ unto them, yet did always pant after that more excellent light and full discovery of it which was to be made by the Gospel; **so it will be ours also thankfully to use and improve the revelations which we enjoy of it, and those institutions of worship wherein our faith is assisted in the view thereof, — yet so as continually to breathe after that perfect, that glorifying sight of it which is reserved for heaven above.**

And may we not a little examine ourselves by these things? Do we esteem this pressing towards the perfect view of the glory of Christ to be our duty? And do we abide in the performance of it? If it be otherwise with any of us, it is a signal evidence that our profession is hypocritical. If Christ be in us, he is the hope of glory in us; and where that hope is, it will be active in desires of the things hoped for. Many love the world too well, and have their minds too much filled with the things of it, to entertain desires of speeding through it unto a state wherein they may behold the glory of Christ. **They are at home, and are unwilling to be absent from the body, though to be present with the Lord. They hope, it may be, that such a season will come at one time or another, and then it will be the best they can look for when they can be here no more. But they have but a little sight of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, if any at all, who so little, so faintly desire to have the immediate sight of it above. **I cannot understand how any man can walk with God as he ought, or has that love for Jesus Christ which true faith will produce, or does place his refreshments and joy in spiritual things, in things above, that does not on all just occasions so meditate on the glory of Christ in heaven as to long for an admittance into the immediate sight of it.****

Our Lord Jesus Christ alone perfectly understood **wherein the eternal blessedness of them that believe in him does consist.** And this is the sum of what he prays for with respect unto that end, — namely, that we may be where he is, to behold his glory. And is it not our duty to live in a continual desire of that which he prayed so earnestly that we might attain? If in ourselves we as yet apprehend but little of the glory, the excellency, the blessedness of it, yet ought we to repose that confidence in the wisdom and love of Christ, that it is our best, — infinitely better than anything we can enjoy here below.

Unto those who are inured unto these contemplations, they are the **salt** of their lives, whereby everything is condited and made savoury unto them, as we shall show afterward. And the want of spiritual diligence herein is that which has brought forth a negligent, careless, worldly profession of religion, which, countenancing itself with some outward duties, has lost out of it the power of faith and love in their principal operations. Hereby many deceive their own souls. Goods, lands, possessions, relations, trades, with secular interests in them, are the things whose image is drawn on their minds, and whose characters are written on their foreheads, as the titles whereby they may be known. **As believers, beholding the glory of Christ in the blessed glass of the Gospel, are changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord; so these persons, beholding the beauty of the world and the things that are in it in the cursed glass of self-love, are in their minds changed into the same image.** Hence perplexing fears, vain hopes, empty embraces of perishing things, fruitless desires, **earthly, carnal designs,** cursed, self-pleasing imaginations, feeding on, and being fed by, **the love of the world and self,** do abide and prevail in them. But we have not so learned Christ Jesus.

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as “the knowledge of faith” and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, “Faith” in DB, I 837: “The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands.”] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, “unconscious” salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation. Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ. But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, our knowledge of God on earth is “a knowledge of faith.” Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24).

Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 4, pg 103

Living by Faith on Earth

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Much on faith in the gospel state vs. sight in heaven, meditation and its necessary consequents for our spiritual growth regarding the image of God, being conformed to his image, vs. the image of Adam/the world/or Satan. This is taken from Owen’s, The Glory of Christ, Ch 14

Chapter XIV.

Other differences between our beholding the glory of Christ by faith in this world and by sight in heaven.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.i.xvii.html>

Among the many other differences which might be insisted on (although the greatest of them are unto us at present absolutely incomprehensible, and so not to be inquired into), I shall name two only, and so put a close to this Discourse.

I. In the view which we have here of the glory of Christ by faith, we gather things, as it were, one by one, in several parts and parcels, out of the Scripture; and comparing them together in our minds, they become the object of our present sight, — which is our spiritual comprehension of the things themselves. **We have no proposal of the glory of Christ unto us by vision or illustrious appearance of his person, as Isaiah had of old, [chap. Vi. 1–4](#); or as John had in the Revelation, chap. i. 13–16.** We need it not; — it would be of no advantage unto us. For as unto the assurance of our faith, we have a word of prophecy more useful unto us than a voice from heaven, [2 Peter i. 17–19](#). And of those who received such visions, though of eminent use unto the church, yet as unto themselves, one of them cried out, “Woe is me! I am undone;” and the other “fell as dead at his feet.” **We are not able in this life to bear such glorious representations of him, unto our edification.**

And as we have no such external proposals of his glory unto us in visions, so neither have we any new revelations of him by [immediate inspiration](#). We can see nothing of it, know nothing of it [but what is proposed unto us in the Scripture](#), and that as it is proposed [[many claim otherwise being deceived and deceiving others – common in the Pentecostal movements – many say that God speaks to them being led by the Spirit, but this is not being led by the Spirit but a lying spirit – Jonathan Edwards’ discourse On Religious Affections](#)]. Nor does the Scripture itself, in any one place, make an entire proposal of the glory of Christ with all that belongs unto it; [nor is it capable of so doing](#), nor can there be any such representation of it [unto our capacity](#) on this side heaven. **If all the light of the heavenly luminaries had been contracted into one, it would have been destructive, not useful, to our sight;** but being by divine wisdom distributed into sun, moon, and stars, each giving out his own proportion, **it is suited to declare the glory of God and to enlighten the world.** So, if the whole revelation of the glory of Christ, and all that belongs unto it, had been committed into one series and contexture of words, **it would have overwhelmed our minds rather than enlightened us.** Wherefore God has distributed the light of it through the whole [firmament](#) of the [books of the Old and New Testament](#); whence it communicates itself, by various parts and degrees, unto the proper use of the church. In one place we have a description of his person, and the glory of it; sometimes in words plain and proper, and sometimes in great variety of allegories, conveying a heavenly sense of things unto the minds of them that do believe; — in others, of his love and condescension in his office, and his glory therein. His humiliation, exaltation, and power, are in like manner **in sundry places represented unto us.** And as one star differeth from another in glory, so it was one way whereby God represented the glory of Christ in **types and shadows** under the Old Testament, and another wherein it is declared in the New. Illustrious testimonies unto all these things are planted up and down in the Scripture, which we may collect as choice flowers in the paradise of God, for the object of our faith and sight thereby.

So the spouse in the Canticles [[Song of Solomon](#)] considered **every part of the person and grace of Christ distinctly by itself**, and from them all concludes that “he is altogether lovely,” [chap. V. 10–16](#). [So ought we to do in our study of the Scripture](#), to find out the revelation of the glory of Christ which is made therein, as did the prophets of old, as unto what they themselves received by immediate inspiration. They [“searched diligently what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify](#), when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,” [1 Peter i. 11](#). But this seeing of Christ by parts in the revelation of him is one cause why we see him here but in parts.

Some suppose that by chopping, and painting, and gilding, they can make an image of Christ that shall perfectly represent him to their **senses and carnal affections** from head to foot. But they “feed on

ashes” and have “a lie in their right hand.” Jesus Christ is evidently crucified before our eyes in the Scripture, [Gal. iii. 1](#). So also is he evidently exalted and glorified therein. And it is the wisdom of faith to gather into one those parcelled descriptions that are given of him, that they may be the object of its view and contemplation.

In the vision which we shall have above, the whole glory of Christ will be at once and always represented unto us; and we shall be enabled in one act of the light of glory to comprehend it. Here, indeed, we are at a loss; — our minds and understandings fail us in their contemplations. It will not yet enter into our hearts to conceive what is the beauty, what is the glory of this complete representation of Christ unto us. To have at once all the glory of what he is, what he was in his outward state and condition, what he did and suffered, what he is exalted unto, — his love and condescension, his mystical union with the church, and the communication of himself unto it, with the recapitulation of all things in him, — and the glory of God, even the Father, in his wisdom, righteousness, grace, love, goodness, power, shining forth eternally in him, in what he is, has done, and does, — all presented unto us in one view, all comprehended by us at once, is that which at present we cannot conceive. [\[As we are able, we are to meditate and contemplate these things in order to our being conformed to his image, 2Cor3:18\]](#) **We can long for it, pant after it, and have some foretastes of it,** — namely, of that state and season wherein our whole souls, in all their powers and faculties, shall constantly, inseparably, eternally cleave by love unto whole Christ, in the sight of the glory of his person and grace, until they are watered, dissolved, and inebriated in the waters of life and the rivers of pleasure that are above for evermore. So must we speak of the things which we admire, which we adore, which we love, which we long for, which we have some foretastes of in sweetness ineffable, which yet we cannot comprehend.

These are some few of those things whence ariseth the difference between that view which we have here of the glory of Christ, and that which is reserved for heaven, — namely, such as are taken from the difference between the **means or instruments** of the one and the other, **faith and sight**.

II. In the last place, the great difference between them consists in, and is manifested by, their effects. Hereof I shall give some few instances, and close this Discourse.

First, The vision which we shall have of the glory of Christ in heaven, and of the glory of the immense God in him, is perfectly and absolutely transforming. It does change us wholly into the image of Christ. When we shall see him, we shall be as he is; we shall be like him, because we shall see him, [1 John iii. 2](#). But although the closing, perfecting act of this transformation be an **act of sight**, or the sight of glory, yet there are many things towards it, or degrees in it, which we may here take notice of in our way.

1. The soul, upon its departure from the body, is immediately freed from all the weakness, ability, darkness, uncertainties, and fears, which were impressed on it from the flesh, wherewith it was in the strictest union. The image of the first Adam as fallen is then abolished. Yea, it is not only freed from all irregular, sinful distempers cleaving to our nature as corrupted, but from all those sinless grievances and infirmities which belong unto the original constitution of it. **This necessarily ensues on the dissolution of the person in order unto a blessed state.** The first entrance by mortality into immortality, is a step towards glory. The ease which a blessed soul finds in a deliverance from this encumbrance, is a door of entrance into eternal rest. **Such a change is made in that which in itself is the centre of all evil, — namely, death, — that it is made a means of freeing us from all the remainders of what is evil.**

For this does not follow absolutely on the nature of the thing itself. A mere dissolution of our natures can bring no advantage with it, especially as it is a part of the curse. **But it is from the sanctification of it by the death of Christ.** Hereby that which was God's ordinance for the infliction of judgment, becomes an effectual means for the communication of mercy, 1 Cor. Xv. 22, 54. It is by **virtue of the death of Christ alone**, that the souls of believers are freed by death from all impressions of sin, infirmity, and evils, which they have had from the flesh; which were their burden, under which they groaned all their days. No man knows in any measure the excellency of this privilege, and the dawning of glory which are in it, who has not been wearied, and even worn out, through long conflicting with the body of death. The soul hereon being freed from all annoyances, **all impressions from the flesh**, is expedite and enlarged unto the exercise of all its gracious faculties, as we shall see immediately.

With wicked men it is not so. **Death unto them is a curse; and the curse is the means of the conveyance of all evil, and not deliverance from any.** Wherein they have been warmed and refreshed by the influences of the flesh, they shall be deprived of it. But their souls in their separate state, are perpetually harassed with all the disquieting passions which have been impressed on their minds by their corrupt fleshly lusts. In vain do such persons look for relief by death. If there be any thing remaining of present good and usefulness to them, they shall be deprived of it. And their freedom for a season from bodily pains in no way lie in the balance against that confluence of evils which death will let in upon them.

2. The "spirits of just men," being freed by death from the clog of the flesh, not yet refined, — all the faculties of their souls, **and all the graces in them, as faith, love, and delight, are immediately set at liberty, enabled constantly to exercise themselves on God in Christ.** The end for which they were created, for which our nature was endowed with them, was, **that we might adhere unto God by them, and come unto the enjoyment of him.** Being now freed wholly from all that impotency, perverseness, and disability unto this end, with all the effects of them, which came upon them by the fall; they are carried with a full stream towards God, cleaving unto him with the most intense embraces. And all their actings towards God shall be natural, with facility, joy, delight, and complacency. We know not yet the excellency of the operations of our souls in divine things, when disburdened of their present weight of the flesh. And this is a second step towards the consummation of glory. For, —

In the **resurrection of the body, upon its full redemption, it shall be so purified, sanctified, glorified, as to give no obstruction unto the soul in its operations**, but be a blessed organ for its highest and most spiritual actings. The body shall never more be a trouble, a burden unto the soul, but an assistant in its operations, and participant of its blessedness. Our eyes were made to see our Redeemer, and our other senses to receive impressions from him, according unto their capacity. As the bodies of wicked men shall be restored unto them to increase and complete their misery in their sufferings; so shall the bodies of the just be restored unto them, to heighten and consummate their blessedness.

3. These things are preparatory unto glory. The complete communication of it is by the infusion of a **new heavenly light into the mind, enabling us to see the Lord Christ as he is.** The soul shall not be brought into the immediate presence of Christ without a **new power**, to behold him and the immediate representation of his glory. Faith now does cease, as unto the manner of its operation in this life, whilst

we are absent from Christ. This light of glory succeeds into its room, fitted for that state and all the ends of it, as faith is for that which is present. And, —

4. In the first operation of this **light of glory**, believers shall so behold the glory of Christ, and the glory of God in him, as that there with and thereby they shall be **immediately and universally changed into his likeness**. They shall be as he is, when they shall see him as he is. There is no growth in glory, as to parts; — there may be as to degrees. Additions may be outwardly made unto what is at first received as by the resurrection of the body; but the **internal light of glory and its transforming efficacy is capable of no degrees, though new revelations may be made unto it unto eternity**. For the infinite fountain of life, and light, and goodness, can never be fathomed, much less exhausted. And what God spake on the entrance of sin, by the way of contempt and reproach, “Behold, the man is become like one of us,” upbraiding him with what he had foolishly designed; — on the accomplishment of the work of his grace, he says in love and infinite goodness, “Man is become like one of us,” in the perfect restoration of our image in him. **This is the first effect of the light of glory**.

Faith also, in beholding the glory of Christ in this life, is accompanied with a transforming efficacy, as the apostle expressly declares, 2 Cor. lii. 18. It is the principle from whence, and the instrumental cause whereby, all spiritual change is wrought in us in this life; but the work of it is imperfect; — first, because it is gradual, and then because it is partial.

(1.) As unto the manner of its operation, it is gradual, and does not at once transform us into the image of Christ; yes, the **degrees of its progress** therein are unto us for the most part imperceptible. **It requires much spiritual wisdom and observation to obtain an experience of them in our own souls.** “The inward man is renewed day by day,” whilst we behold these invisible things, 2 Cor. iv. 16–18. But how? — even as the outward man decays by age, which is by insensible degrees and alterations. Such is the transformation which we have by faith, in its present view of the glory of Christ. And according to our experience of its efficacy herein, is our evidence of its truth and reality in the beholding of him. **No man can have the least ground of assurance that he has seen Christ and his glory by faith, without some effects of it in changing him into his likeness.** For as on the touch of his garment by the woman in the Gospel, **virtue went out from him to heal her infirmity; so upon this view of faith, an influence of transforming power will proceed from Christ unto the soul.**

(2.) As unto the event, it is but partial. It does not bring this work unto perfection. The change wrought by it is indeed great and glorious; or, as the apostle speaks, it is “from glory to glory,” in a progress of glorious grace: but **absolute perfection** is reserved for vision. **As to divine worship, perfection was not by the law.** It did many things preparatory unto the revelation of the will of God concerning it, but it “made nothing perfect:” so absolute perfection in holiness, and the **restoration of the image of God**, is not by the Gospel, is not by faith; — however, it gives us many preparatory degrees unto it, as the apostle fully declares, Phil. lii. 10–14.

Secondly, Vision is beatifical, as it is commonly called, and that not amiss. It gives perfect rest and blessedness unto them in whom it is. This may be a little opened in the ensuing observations.

1. There are continual operations of God in Christ in the souls of them that are glorified, and communications from him unto them. For all

creatures must externally live, even in heaven, in **dependence** on Him who is the eternal fountain of being, life, goodness, and blessedness unto all. As we cannot subsist one moment in our beings, lives, souls, bodies, the inward or outward man, without the continual acting of divine power in us, and towards us; so in the glorified state our all shall depend eternally on divine power and goodness, communicating themselves unto us, for all the ends of our blessed subsistence in heaven.

2. What is the way and manner of these communications, we cannot comprehend. We cannot, indeed, fully understand the nature and way of his spiritual communications unto us in this life. We know these things by their **signs**, their **outward means**, and principally **by the effects they produce in the real change of our natures** [hence this is how one examines himself – the evidence of saving faith that one looks for]; but in themselves we see but little of them. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we know not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit,” John iii. 8. All God’s real operations in heaven and earth are incomprehensible, as being acts of infinite power; and we cannot search them out unto perfection.

3. All communications from the Divine Being and infinite fulness in heaven unto glorified saints, **are in and through Christ Jesus**, who shall for ever be the **medium of communication between God and the church, even in glory**. All things being gathered into one head in him, even things in heaven, and things in earth, — **that head being in immediate dependence on God**, — this order shall never be dissolved, Eph. i. 10, 11; 1 Cor. lii. 23. And on these communications from God through Christ depends entirely our continuance in a state of blessedness and glory. We shall no more be self-subsistent in glory than we are in nature or grace.

4. The way on our part whereby we shall receive these communications from God by Christ, which are the eternal springs of life, peace, joy, and blessedness, is this vision the sight whereof we speak. For, as it is expressly assigned thereunto in the Scripture, so whereas it contains the **perfect operation of our minds and souls in a perfect state, on the most perfect object, it is the only means of our blessedness**. And this is the true cause whence there neither is nor can be any satiety or weariness in heaven, in the **eternal contemplation** of the same glory. For not only the object of our sight is absolutely infinite, which can never be searched unto the bottom, yea, is perpetually new unto a finite understanding; but our subjective blessedness consisting in continual **fresh communications from the infinite fullness of the divine nature, derived unto us through vision**, is always new, and always will be so to eternity. Herein shall all the saints of God drink of the **rivers of pleasure** that are at his right hand, be satisfied with his likeness, and refresh themselves in the eternal springs of life, light, and joy for evermore.

This **effect**, — **that view, which we have by faith** of the glory of Christ in this world, does not produce. **It is sanctifying, not glorifying**. The best of saints are far from a perfect or glorified state in this life; and that not only on the account of the outward evils which in their persons they are exposed unto, but also of the weakness and imperfection of their inward state in grace. Yet we may observe some things unto the honour of faith in them who have received it. As —

(1.) In its due exercise on Christ, it will give unto the souls of believers some previous participation of future glory, working in them dispositions unto, and preparation for, the enjoyment of it.

(2.) There is no glory, no peace, no joy, no satisfaction in this world, to be compared with what we receive by that weak and imperfect view which we have of the glory of Christ by faith; yea, all the joys of the world are a thing of nought in comparison of what we so receive.

(3.) It is sufficient to give us such a perception, such a foretaste of future blessedness in the enjoyment of Christ, as may continually stir us up to breathe and pant after it. But it is not beatifical.

Other differences of an alike nature between our beholding of the glory of Christ in this life by faith, and that vision of it which is reserved for heaven, might be insisted on; but I shall proceed no farther. There is nothing farther for us to do herein but that now and always we shut up all our meditations concerning it with the deepest self-abasement, out of a sense of our unworthiness and insufficiency to comprehend those things, admiration of that excellent glory which we cannot comprehend, and vehement longings for that season when we shall see him as he is, be ever with him, and know him even as we are known.

Summary of the Nature of Saving Faith A New Living Principle of Life

code36

This is a beautiful exposition of many important doctrinal points having to do with the sovereignty of God in salvation and in so doing, lends itself to the believer, an important aid in self-examination. For one must know what true saving faith is; in what that new principle of life consists, so as to confirm his estate. Shepard does a superb job in presenting these doctrines in their true light. My comments in [blue], red for emphasis.

Excerpts from The Parable of the Ten Virgins

by Thomas Shepard

CHAPTER XVIII

THAT THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF BELIEVERS ARE MADE AS VESSELS ONLY FOR THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST, HIS SPIRIT, AND THE GRACES THEREOF.

SECTION I.

2. THE inward principle, wherein lies the second difference which is plainly expressed.

We are now to inquire further concerning these vessels and the oil in them. Vessels were the place only of receiving and preserving the oil for the continual burning and shining of the lamps; so that, though in some scriptures, by lamp is understood both the vessel and the lamp by a figure, yet in distinct phrase of speech, that is properly the lamp which burns and gives light, and that which contains the oil to nourish, this is the vessel; so that the vessels were not separate things from the lamp, as though the lamp was in one hand, and a vessel in another; this was neither the custom nor comeliness of that age to cumber themselves thus; but the lamp (as it is in ours) was that part which was kindled and lighted, the vessel that which kept the oil to serve this end; and hence the folly of five of them appeared, that they would carry burning lamps with empty vessels, just as if a man should draw the wick through the oil that it may burn for a time, and provide no oil in the vessel to maintain the lamp; however, all comes to one (if they be separate) in respect of that that I aim at.

Thus, literally, we see what the lamp, vessel, and oil is; now, what is spiritually meant thereby?

1. For the oil; what is that? I intend not here to show the fond and various apprehensions of Popish writers, who understand by oil, alms, good works, a good intention, etc. But by oil is meant the Spirit of Christ and the graces of it, peculiar to all the elect and thus, in Scripture phrase, (1 John ii. 27), -_ the Spirit is called “the anointing;” and the graces of the Spirit, (Cant. i. 3,) “the smell of Christ’s ointments.” Harlots love him for the gifts he sends, but virgins for the grace he has [Hence the wickedness of the Prosperity Gospel; they want what Christ has, but they do not desire Christ for who he is; they will not nor can not.]. That oil which ran first on Aaron’s head, and runs down to his skirts, is here meant. Now, as Christ himself had not the Spirit without graces, nor these without the Spirit, **but both**, so both these being in him as in the fountain, they are in us as in the vessels.

2. Christ being the fountain of all grace, and having the Spirit without measure, and, therefore, has enough to spare, he cannot be meant by these vessels which had but their measure, and such a measure as that they had none to spare for the other. Therefore, by vessels are meant principally the precious souls of the faithful, into which this golden oil was put; and, therefore, (2 Cor. iv. 7), “We have this treasure in earthen vessels;” and, (Rom. ix. 83), “They are vessels of glory, prepared unto glory,” and so frequently; so that herein the foolish fall short, for the foolish boasted of Christ out of them, but where was the **Spirit and virtue** of Christ in them? [This is what is communicated to the elect as Edwards and Owen comment] And this is conceived to be the reason why the main difference is not made, by the want of the external principle, viz., Christ, but by want of the internal principle and work [the re-

enstamping of the image of God upon or souls]; this they had not. 1. They had so much oil, i.e., lighter strokes of the Spirit, as kindled a profession, but they had not enough. 2. They had so much oil and light as continued their profession for a while, but it continued not long.

Here, therefore, observe these four things.

Observ. 1. That the precious souls of the faithful are vessels made only, or chiefly, to receive and preserve the presence of the **Spirit and the grace of Christ**.

Observ. 2. That within these vessels there is an **inward principle of grace and life** [i.e., faith].

Observ. 3. There is a certain measure, degree, plenitude, or fullness of the Spirit of grace in the heart of the faithful, which, the unsound, though most glorious professors of the gospel, fall short of.

Observ. 4. That the graces of the saints, wherewith their hearts by the Spirit are filled, are constant, and of an everlasting and eternal nature.

These three last answer three questions. If any ask the difference between the virgins, the foolish want [lack], and the wise have, an inward principle of the Spirit of life [the faith of God's elect]. If it be said, hypocrites have an inward work, yet this inward principle is such a fullness of Spirit which they ever fall short of, and this will make them known for the present. If, again, it be said, that many flourish gloriously for a time, yet it is of an everlasting nature, and this will manifest them one from another in time to come. [see Van Til on hypocrites at [codehypo1](#)]

The first point, therefore, I will only touch on now.

SECTION II.

Doct. 1. That the precious souls and hearts of all the faithful are vessels made chiefly and only to receive and preserve the Spirit and grace of Christ, or the gracious presence of the Spirit of Christ [Rom 9:21]. **That, as it is with the souls of the wicked, they are made only to hold Satan, sin, and wrath, and so fitted for destruction, so the souls of the saints are made and fitted only to receive and nourish the Spirit, grace, and love of Christ.** That, as it is with princes, the best rooms are reserved only for them; their attendants may come in and out to serve them, but it is their room, their lodging. So here, the hearts of the faithful, and the best rooms, best affections of it, are only to entertain the Lord and his graces and Spirit; yet other things may come in and out as attendants to him, to serve him, but the rooms themselves are only for his proper use. 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. The church is God's house. Now, there are many vessels, (many souls;) some baser, of wood and earth, some of honor. What are these? *Ans.* "If a man purge himself from these;" for no man is born with a next [typical, I think] disposition to receive grace, as a vessel full of puddle water that must be first cast out. Now, when this is done, he is a vessel meet for his Master's use, prepared, etc. The best vessels abide in the house, not for their own or servants' use, but for the master's use only. And though the Spirit may withdraw for some time, and they be unable to do any good work, yet they are prepared for the Spirit, and so for every good work; and here is all the use of the vessel of honor.

Hypocrites are vessels of pomp, and state, and ornament. [see [Van Til on hypocrites at codehypo1](#)] O, the brave church of Sardis! The profound judgments, deep heads, eminent Christians; but not vessels of honor, because not vessels of use, only for their Master, only to receive the eternal anointing of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. If you would know the certainty of this more fully, 1. Go and ask themselves, Is it so or not? If they be of age, and know themselves, they will say, I am the Lord's only; (Is. Xliv. 4, 5,) "When they spring up as willows by the watercourses; one shall say, I am the Lord's." As an eminent light said, when dying, O Lord, I will be thine. Ask the world whose they are, and to what use and purpose they serve. They will answer, they are none of ours; and, therefore, (John xv. 19,) "the world hates them." Ask the Lord himself; he will profess, though many wants and weaknesses in them, — nay, though sometimes they are weary and neglect him, fall and soil themselves, — yet, (Is. 43:21,) "This people have I formed for myself." **Vessels formed and fitted of God only for his glory.**

Reason 1. Because all the creatures in the world are theirs and servants to them, and, therefore, they are for the Lord only. 1 Cor. lii. 21-23. If the more we took care for and set our hearts upon the creature, if the more we were conversant with it, the more we should have and the better we should live. Or if they should not serve us, unless we did first bow down our knees to worship them, and our backs to bear them; then, seeing the world lives by catching, we might then disrobe and dethrone our souls, and care more for these things and less for the Lord; love these things more and the Lord less; but the Lord Jesus having taken all care for his people, and bearing more love to them, and having more care of them than themselves, and, therefore, having given all creatures in heaven, sea, and dry land to serve them, they ought to be and are only for him. Hos. li. 21, 23. When a man is the seed of God, and born for him, now all creatures serve him; hence 1 Tim. Vi. 17, 18. It is a prevailing motive with all the saints, we have a living God that gives us all things; all creatures being dead, and not able of themselves to help us, therefore, trust not on these things, but him only; be not high-minded in these things, but magnify him only. We know how angry God was with Belshazzar for profaning the vessels of the Lord's house in making them quaffing-bowls, and turning them to common use. When a man is brought to that misery that he has none, nor knows of none to be a friend to take care or thought for him, none that loves him, then he shifts for himself, and becomes a servant. **But those that know, as women, that they have rich husbands to live on, they take care** (1 Cor. vii. 34) **how to please them; so here.** What is the reason that men are mad for this world? Because they, poor creatures, have no friend, know no friend; but saints have him and know him. John xvii. 2. The saints are given to Christ, Christ to them, and all the world put into Christ's hand for us, (for the creatures are not given to us immediately to our own dispose, and hence we have not much of this world,) to what end? That so he might give eternal life begun here. This is the only gift, and last, and best, and worthy of himself, and this only we receive.

Reason 2. In regard of that blessed liberty all the faithful are brought into; for what is a Christian liberty? Is it to serve men? No. 1 Cor. vii. 23. Therefore, serve not yourselves. Is it, then, to serve your own lust? No. Rom. vi. 22, "You are made free from sin and servants unto

God." Is it, then, to serve any creature out of yourselves? No. Gal. iv. 1. The world is yours already, (1 Cor. lii. 21, 22,) given to you, bought for you; spend not, therefore, one groat more to purchase it, but keep those affections and hearts for the Lord, much less imprison not and imbondage not yourselves for it. A Christian's liberty, which God crowns him with above all the princes of the world, is to be only for the Lord, which liberty all creatures groan to be in. Rom. Viii. 21, 22. **To be for God and a lust, for Christ and this world, it is a shameful bondage, and most lamentable, and you are not at liberty yet, if not only for the Lord.** [This, Arminians would argue against, saying that man is not in bondage, but has a liberty to do as he will, a self-directed will, and is not in bondage to sin and Satan to the extent that the bible teaches, e.g., 1Cor 2:14]. When the children of kings and peers, of princes, shall be made to come at the call of their grooms and kitchen boys, if ever they stood before the face of princes, they will count this a heavy thralldom and bondage; so, if ever you stood before the God of the whole earth, you will account it a heavy bondage to have a heart sometime for and sometime not for the Lord. Is not this liberty? No; but to have a heart only determined to the Lord; as it is in angels, and in the man Christ Jesus. Verily, look as the Lord leaves his people for a time to their liberty in sin, so that their hearts are determined only to sin, that they are fit only to receive the suggestions and pleasures of it, but fit to quench the Lord's Spirit; so the Lord Jesus making himself and grace more sweet than their lusts, their hearts are determined only for him, their vessels are only for his oil. Rom. Vi. 19. **The liberty of will that Arminians plead for is nothing but hypocrisy of a false heart, whose heart being touched partly with God and partly with the creature, hence is always falling from one to the other.** James 1., "Double-minded men." But the saints are determined unto one, and then made perfect in one.

Reason 3. In regard of the fullness and all-sufficiency of the Spirit of grace, which their hearts are made fit vessels to receive, and do receive; **they finding enough there**, God reserves them, and they reserve themselves, only for the receiving of this; (John vi. 68,) "Will you depart? Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life;" and so the Spirit of life, that have quickened our hearts when dead, that do put fresh life to us when dying, that comfort our hearts when sorrowing. **Here is the life, glory, the life of Christ, the life of God.** Other things do but dead our hearts, thou hast words of life: (John iv. 14,) "The water that I shall give," **1. Be that which shall quench all his thirst to other things; so that, though a man wants [lacks] them, yet his stomach is gone, which the damned shall find otherwise.** **2. A well of water in him,** ever near him; men have their accommodations far off, **but this is in him.** Your hearts within are troubled, perplexed, and behold this is in you. **3. Springing up, continually increasing;** for to have a good thing, and not to be satisfied in our desires with it, what is it but a misery? Hence it springs up unto everlasting life, which is the fourth, viz., The continuance of it; this will be here till my mortality is swallowed up of life. Like a leaking ship, that takes in water by little and little, till at last it is swallowed up in the sea.

SECTION III.

Use 1. Hence we may see the reason why the Lord doth not abundantly reveal and communicate himself to the souls of many men. What is the matter? Is it because they find no want of his Spirit, and life, and grace, and peace, and glory? Yes, they do, and hence express their wants to men, and complain of their wants to God. Is it for this that Christ has not wherewithal? Yes, he has received the Spirit without measure, (John 3:34), and fountains always run, though men seldom drink. What, then, is it because they bring not their hearts, hold not their vessels, under the Lord's horn of oil? Yes, that they do; but their vessels are naught; they are not only for him; they feel their want of grace and Christ, but not only or chiefly of this. **Special grace [saving grace] shall never be poured into a common vessel, a common heart, that lies in common for God, and lust, and world, too.** The honor, peace, life, gain, of a God are sweet and precious. "Lord, ever give me that water to drink." But you have five husbands, and seek not this only. Hence, if the Lord denies you, you can be content, because you have something else to fill your vessels; if the Lord gives, you undervalue it, and grow worse; and the very rising of that common grace you have is the beginning of your apostasy and setting off from God. And hence no wonder why you pray, but never have, (James i. 6, 7;) you want [lack] and crave, but never find; your vessel is naught, though the Lord is good. **It is a black mark that thou art in bondage to the creature, and didst never know what the liberty, even the glorious liberty of a son means.** And it is a most grievous bondage to be half unloosed, and yet to be in bonds. And I assure you, if you knew the gift of God, if ever you tasted how sweet the Lord is, this is the only thing your souls will cry for; that when you come to ask, and the Lord saith, What would you have? O, the Spirit of life! O, the anointing of my blessed head! And what else? It only. **This is it my vessel is made to hold. I am not made for my lust, nor sins, nor world.** I would I had a bigger vessel, a larger heart to receive thy grace only. I confess, a gracious heart may, for a time, be carried too violently after other things, and yet seek the Lord, too, as Solomon, Eccles. 2. But after it knows Christ better, it is more reserved now for him, as Gen. 39:3-6. Joseph's master for a time kept things in his own hand; but when he saw the Lord was with Joseph, and that he was prosperous and blessed, then he made him overseer, and he knew not, it is said, what he had, save only the bread that he did eat. So it is in our Joseph. As the poor woman that knew the Messiah, she leaves her vessel, her water-pot, with him, and now would have all the city to come and see, and believe in him, and depend on him only, trust to him only, etc. Dost, therefore, seek, and find not? Hast been long waiting, and feelest not? And thou wonderest at it! Others comforted and I not! Search if this be not the cause; it may be thy heart is not set only for this, but on thy back, belly, lots, ease, what shall I eat, drink, etc. As some women, because God does not feed so liberally their sweet tooth, their lickerish longings, build them ceiled houses, measure their present condition according to their sinful humor; nothing can please them, neither husband, servants, ministers, nor God's ordinances. Is this a vessel for the Lord and his grace only? You must, you will have a longer coat than you can well wear; hold here. Never think to have one prayer answered. If this night thy day of misery should come, cry thou mayst, but no God to hear thee or help thee. O, a little oil, now a little grace, now a little mercy, Lord, now. O, no; you have no vessel to hold it.

But, O, bless the Lord, you know it. Others, it may be, are not so full of these sores of impatience; but you pray for God and grace, and have it not. Why so? These are not the things that you are only set for. Why? Because you are content without them. I am not, you will say; but you are, for you do not lament daily after the Lord for these things only. That which only satisfies, that thy heart is not at rest till it find. I hope I may have help for all this. No, saith James, think not so. O, therefore, bless the Lord! You know what hurts you; saints have hurts thus; but they purge themselves, and hence are blessed vessels still. When Moses was begging for Israel, "Mine angel," saith God, "shall go with you;" I will not. No; thou only, "else let us die here." Exod. 33. This prayer wins the field and wears the garland. The evils of the churches are many, an hour of temptation is coming on; scandals are like to be great; the subtleties of enemies many. Now, we pray, and yet these have come, and we fear they will come. O beloved, go to the Lord, and plead with him only for this; and when thou canst procure nothing for thyself, yet let it fare well with Sion; and this only I must have, (Ps. 27:4,) "**One thing I have desired.**" You shall have it then, else not.

Ps. 27:4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquireⁱⁿ in his temple.

Use 2. See the great sin of those that lose their life, preserve not the Spirit when he comes to them in ordinances. You are vessels only made for the Lord, and will you lose that which he drops in? There are no others can receive him, (John xiv. 17); and when he comes to you, do you thus requite him ? etc.

"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." - Jn 14:17

Shepard on Faith:

"It is true, all things that pertain to life and godliness are received by faith 2Peter 1:3, yet faith itself is a saving work, which is not received by another precedent faith. Faith therefore is to be accepted not only as begotten in us, but as it is in the beginning of it in the conviction and humiliation of every sinner." Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, p254,5

Hermon Bavinck on Faith:

From all this it is now also becoming clear why religious knowledge in Scripture is described as "the knowledge of faith" and why, in the subjective work of salvation, faith is so prominently featured. **Properly speaking, it is not faith or knowledge that saves us but God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.** [B.B. Warfield, "Faith" in DB, I 837: "The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour, on whom it stands."] He saves us by bestowing the benefits of the covenant, by giving Christ and himself to us sinners. But how would that salvation benefit us if we did not know about it? In that case it would not even be real. To the Buddhist, "unconscious" salvation may be the pinnacle of being, and many people today prefer nonbeing to being, but to the Christian the highest state of being is to

know God and by that knowledge to have eternal life. **Knowledge, therefore, is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it. Salvation that is not known and enjoyed is no salvation.** Of what benefit would the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and complete renewal by the Holy Spirit, the glories of heaven, be to us if we did not know about them? They could not exist. They presuppose and require consciousness, knowledge, enjoyment, and in these confer salvation. **God saves by causing himself to be known and enjoyed in Christ.** But since on earth the benefits of the covenant of grace are only granted to us in part; since communion with God, regeneration, and sanctification are still incomplete; and since our knowledge is imperfect, has invisible things for its object, and is bound to Scripture, **our knowledge of God on earth is “a knowledge of faith.”** Faith is the only way it can be appropriated, the only form in which it can take shape. Indeed, all benefits (forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, the blessedness of heaven) exist for us only by faith. We enjoy them only by faith. We are saved only through hope (cf. Rom. 8: 24). Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, pg 103

True Holy Desires After Christ

Examine Yourself Here

John Flavel

Code451

If Christ be the desire of all nations, examine whether he be the desire of your souls in particular; else you shall have no benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the frames and tempers of your heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his love to Christ? Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I desire thee. Try your desires as to their sincerity by the following characters: First, Are they vehement and ardent? Has Christ the supreme place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and dung in comparison of the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord? Is he to you as the refuge city to the man-slayer? As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? Such vehement desires are true desires. Secondly, Are your desires after Christ universal; i.e., is everything in Christ desirable in your eyes? The hypocrite, like the harlot, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his name, but live

upon their own stock. If his holiness and government, his cross and sufferings be desirable for his saints; such universal desires are right desires. Thirdly, Are your desires after Christ industrious desires, using all the means of accomplishing what you desire? thou say you desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires? If you seek him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty; if you will strive in prayer, labor to believe, cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, i.e., be content to part with the most profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the desire of your souls; then are your desires right desires. Fourthly, Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or only a sudden motion or fit which goes off again without effect? If your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree, then are your desires right desires. Christ always dwells in the desires of his people; they can feel him in their desires, when they cannot discern him in their love or delight. Fifthly, Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction, nor find rest anywhere but in the enjoyment of Christ? then are your desires right desires. The soul that desires Christ, can never be at rest till it come home to Christ. The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasures of this world, as children are quieted with rattles; but if nothing but Christ can rest and terminate your desires, surely such restless desires are right desires. Sixthly, Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense of your need and want [lack] of Christ? Has conviction opened your eyes to see your misery, to feel your burthens, and to make you sensible that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus? then are your desires right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst; by these things try the truth of your desires after Christ.

Examining One's Faith & the Effectual Call

Code452

Self-Examination

Thomas Watson & John Flavel

***A Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson**

5. The application of redemption

Faith

'The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

Gal 2: 20.

The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us. Christ is the glory, and faith in Christ the comfort, of the gospel.

What are the kinds of faith?

Fourfold:

(1.) An historical or dogmatic faith, which is believing the truths revealed in the Word, because of divine authority.

(2.) There is a temporary faith, which lasts for a time, and then vanishes. 'Yet has he no root in himself, but dureth for a while.' Matt 13: 21. A temporary faith is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and withered. Chap 4: 10.

(3.) A miraculous faith, which was granted to the apostles, to work miracles for the confirmation of the gospel. This Judas had; he cast out devils, yet was cast out to the devil.

(4.) A true justifying faith, which is called 'A faith of the operation of God,' and is a jewel hung only upon the elect. Col 2: 12.

What is justifying faith?

I shall show,

(1.) What it is not. It is not a bare acknowledgment that Christ is a Saviour. There must be an acknowledgment, but that is not sufficient to justify. The devils acknowledged Christ's Godhead. 'Jesus the Son of God.' Matt 8: 29. There may be an assent to divine truth, and yet no work of grace on the heart. Many assent in their judgements, that sin is an evil thing, but they go on in sin, whose corruptions are stronger than their convictions; and that Christ is excellent; they cheapen the pearl, but do not buy.

(2.) *What justifying faith is.* True justifying faith consists in three things:

(1:) Self-renunciation. Faith is going out of one's self, being taken off from our own merits, and seeing we have no righteousness of our own. 'Not having mine own righteousness.' Phil 3: 9. Self-righteousness is a broken reed, which the soul dares not lean on. Repentance and faith are both humbling graces; by repentance a man abhors himself; by faith he goes out of himself. As Israel in their wilderness march, behind them saw Pharaoh and his chariots pursuing, before them the Red Sea ready to devour; so the sinner behind sees God's justice pursuing him for sin, before, hell ready to devour him; and in this forlorn condition, he sees nothing in himself to help, but he must perish unless he can find help in another.

(2:) Reliance. The soul casts itself upon Jesus Christ; faith rests on Christ's person. Faith believes the promise; but that which faith rests upon in the promise is the person of Christ: therefore the spouse is said to 'lean upon her Beloved.' Cant 8: 5. Faith is described to be 'believing on the name of the Son of God,' I John 3: 23, viz., on his person. The promise is but the cabinet, Christ is the jewel in it which faith embraces; the promise is but the dish, Christ is the food in it which faith feeds on. Faith rests on Christ's person, 'as he was crucified.' It glories in the cross of Christ. Gal 6: 14. To consider Christ crowned with all manner of excellencies, stirs up admiration and wonder; but Christ looked upon as bleeding and dying, is the proper object of our faith; it is called therefore 'faith in his blood.' Rom 3: 25.

(3:) Appropriation, or applying Christ to ourselves. A medicine, though it be ever so sovereign, if not applied, will do no good; though the plaster be made of Christ's own blood, it will not heal, unless applied by faith; the blood of God, without faith in God, will not save. This applying of Christ is called receiving him. John 1: 12. The hand receiving gold, enriches; so the hand of faith, receiving Christ's golden merits with salvation, enriches us.

How is faith wrought?

By the blessed Spirit; who is called the 'Spirit of grace,' because he is the spring of all grace. Zech 12: 10. Faith is the chief work which the Spirit of God works in a man's heart. In making the world God did but speak a word, but in working faith he puts forth his arm. Luke 1: 51. The Spirit's working faith is called, 'The exceeding greatness of God's power.' Eph 1: 19. What a power was put forth in raising Christ from the grave when such a tombstone lay upon him as 'the sins of all the world,! yet he was raised up by the Spirit. The same power is put forth by the Spirit of God in working faith. The Spirit irradiates the mind, and subdues the will. The will is like a garrison, which holds out against God: the Spirit with sweet violence conquers, or rather changes it; making the sinner willing to have Christ upon any terms; to be ruled by him as well as saved by him.

Wherein lies the preciousness of faith?

(1.) In its being the chief gospel-grace, the head of the graces. As gold among the metals, so is faith among the graces. Clement of Alexandria calls the other graces the daughters of faith. In heaven, love will be the chief grace; but, while we are here, love must give place to faith. Love takes possession of glory, but faith gives a title to it. Love is the crowning grace in heaven, but faith is the conquering grace upon earth. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' I John 5: 4.

(2.) In its having influence upon all the graces, and setting them to work: not a grace stirs till faith set it to work. As the clothier sets the poor to work, sets their wheel going; so faith sets hope to work. The heir must believe his title to an estate in reversion before he can hope for it; faith believes its title to glory, and then hope waits for it. If faith did not feed the lamp of hope with oil, it would soon die. Faith sets love to work. 'Faith which worketh by love.' Gal 5: 6. Believing the mercy and merit of Christ causes a flame of love to ascend. Faith sets patience to work. 'Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Heb 6: 12. Faith believes the glorious rewards given to suffering. This makes the soul patient in suffering. Thus faith is the master-wheel, it sets all the other graces running.

(3.) In its being the grace which God honours to justify and save. Thus indeed it is 'precious faith,' as the apostle calls it. 2 Pet 1: 1: The other graces help to sanctify, but it is faith that justifies. 'Being justified by faith.' Rom V 1: Repentance or love do not justify, but faith does.

How does faith justify?

(1.) Faith does not justify as it is a work, which would make a Christ of our faith; but faith justifies, as it lays hold of the object, viz. Christ's merits. If a man had a precious stone in a ring that could heal, we

should say the ring heals; but properly it is not the ring, but the precious stone in the ring that heals. Thus faith saves and justifies, but it is not any inherent virtue in faith, but as it lays hold on Christ it justifies.

(2.) Faith does not justify as it exercises grace. It cannot be denied, that faith invigorates all the graces, puts strength and liveliness into them, but it does not justify under this notion. Faith works by love, but it does not justify as it works by love, but as it applies Christ's merits.

How then shall we know a true faith?

By the noble effects.

(1.) Faith is a Christ-prizing grace, it puts a high valuation upon Christ. 'To you that believe he is precious.' I Pet 2: 7. Paul best knew Christ. 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' I Cor 9: 1: He saw Christ with his bodily eyes in a vision, when he was caught up into the third heaven; and with the eye of his faith in the Holy Supper; therefore he best knew Christ. And see how he styles all things in comparison of him. 'I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ.' Phil 3: 8. Do we set a high estimate upon Christ? Could we be willing to part with the wedge of gold for the pearl of price? Gregory Nazianzen blessed God he had anything to lose for Christ's sake.

(2.) Faith is a refining grace. 'Mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' I Tim 3: 9. Faith is in the soul as fire among metals; it refines and purifies. Morality may wash the outside, faith washes the inside. 'Having purified their hearts by faith.' Acts 15: 9. Faith makes the heart a sacristy or holy of holiest. Faith is a virgin-grace: though it does not take away the life of sin, yet it takes away the love of sin. Examine if your hearts be an unclean fountain, sending out the mud and dirt of pride and envy. If there be legions of lusts in thy soul, there is no faith. Faith is a heavenly plant, which will not grow in an impure soil.

(3.) Faith is an obediential grace. 'The obedience of faith.' Rom 16: 26. Faith melts our will into God's. It runs at God's call. If God commands duty (though cross to flesh and blood) faith obeys. 'By faith Abraham obeyed.' Heb 11: 8. Faith is not an idle grace; as it has an eye to see Christ, so it has a hand to work for him. It not only believes God's promise, but obeys his command. It is not having knowledge that will evidence you to be believers; the devil has knowledge, but wants obedience, and that makes him a devil. The true obedience of faith is a cheerful obedience. God's commands do not seem grievous. Have you obedience, and obey cheerfully? Do you look upon God's command as your burden, or privilege; as an iron fetter about your leg, or as a gold chain about your neck.

(4.) Faith is an assimilating grace. It changes the soul into the image of the object; it makes it like Christ. Never did any look upon Christ with a believing eye, but he was made like Christ. A deformed person may look on a beautiful object, and not be made beautiful; but faith looking on Christ transforms a man, and turns him into his similitude. Looking on a bleeding Christ causes a soft bleeding heart; looking on a holy Christ causes sanctity of heart; looking on a humble Christ makes the soul humble. As the chameleon is changed into the colour of that which it looks upon, so faith, looking on Christ, changes the Christian into the similitude of Christ.

(5.) True faith grows. All living things grow. 'From faith to faith.' Rom 1: 17.

How may we judge of the growth of faith?

Growth of faith is judged by strength. We can do that now, which we could not do before. When one is man-grown, he can do that which he could not do when he was a child; he can carry a heavier burden; so thou canst bear crosses with more patience.

Growth of faith is seen by doing duties in a more spiritual manner, with more fervency; we put coals to the incense, from a principle of love to God. When an apple has done growing in bigness, it grows in sweetness; so thou performest duties in love and art sweeter, and come off with a better relish.

But I fear I have no faith.

We must distinguish between weakness of faith and no faith. A weak faith is true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is such as Christ will not break. Though thy faith be weak, be not discouraged.

(1.) A weak faith may receive a strong Christ. A weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong one; and a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The woman in the gospel did but touch Christ's garment, and received virtue from him. It was the touch of faith.

(2.) The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise says not whosoever has a giant-faith, that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouths of lions, shall be saved; but whosoever believes, be his faith ever so small. Though Christ sometimes chides a weak faith, yet that it may not be discouraged, he makes it a promise. *Beati qui esuriunt.* Matt 5: 3.

(3.) A weak faith may be fruitful. Weakest things multiply most; the vine is a weak plant, but it is fruitful. Weak Christians may have strong affections. How strong is the first love, which is after the first planting of faith!

(4.) Weak faith may be growing. Seeds spring up by degrees; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Therefore, be not discouraged. God who would have us receive them that are weak in faith, will not himself refuse them. Rom 14: 1: A weak believer is a member of Christ; and though Christ will cut off rotten members from his body, he will not cut off weak members.

Effectual Calling

'Them he also called.' Rom 8: 30.

WHAT IS EFFECTUAL CALLING?

A: It is a gracious work of the Spirit, whereby he causes us to embrace Christ freely, as he is offered to us in the gospel. In this verse is the golden chain of salvation, made up of four links, of which one is vocation. 'Them he also called.' Calling is *nova creatio*, 'a new creation,' the first resurrection. There is a two-fold call:

- (1.) An outward call:
- (2.) An inward call.

(1.) An outward call, which is God's offer of grace to sinners, inviting them to come and accept of Christ and salvation. 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Matt 20: 16. This call shows men what they ought to do in order to salvation, and renders them inexcusable in case of disobedience.

(2.) There is an inward call, when God with the offer of grace works grace. By this call the heart is renewed, and the will is effectually drawn to embrace Christ. The outward call brings men to a profession of Christ, the inward to a possession of Christ.

What are the means of this effectual call?

Every creature has a voice to call us. The heavens call to us to behold God's glory. Psalm 19: 1: Conscience calls to us. God's judgements call us to repent. 'Hear ye the rod.' Mic 6: 9. But every voice does not convert. There are two means of our effectual call:

(1.) The 'preaching of the word,' which is the sounding of God's silver trumpet in men's ears. God speaks not by an oracle, he calls by his ministers. Samuel thought it had been the voice of Eli only that called him; but it was God's voice. I Sam 3: 6. So, perhaps, you think it is only the minister that speaks to you in the word, but it is God himself who speaks. Therefore Christ is said to speak to us from heaven. Heb 12: 25. How does he speak but by his ministers? as a king speaks by his ambassadors. Know, that in every sermon preached, God calls to you; and to refuse the message we bring, is to refuse God himself.

(2.) The other means of our effectual call is the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the word is the pipe or organ; the Spirit of God blowing in it, effectually changes men's hearts. 'While Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word of God.' Acts 10: 44. Ministers knock at the door of men's hearts, the Spirit comes with a key and opens the door. 'A certain woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened.' Acts 16:14.

From what does God call men?

(1.) From sin. He calls them from their ignorance and unbelief. I Pet 1: 14. By nature the understanding is enveloped with darkness. God calls men 'from darkness to light,' as if one should be called out of a dungeon to behold the light of the sun. Eph 5: 8.

(2.) From danger. As the angels called Lot out of Sodom, when it was ready to rain fire; so God calls his people from the fire and brimstone of hell, and from all those curses to which they were exposed.

(3.) He calls them out of the world; as Christ called Matthew from the receipt of custom. 'They are not of the world.' John 17: 16. Such as are divinely called, are not natives here, but pilgrims; they do not conform to the world, or follow its sinful fashions; they are not of the world; though they live here, yet they trade in the heavenly country. The world is a place where Satan's throne is. Rev 2: 13. It is a stage on which sin every day acts its part. Now such as are called are in the world but not of it. To what does God call men?

from *Method of Grace*

by **John Flavel** Vol. 2, pgs. 394-396

Fourth use, for examination.

In the next place, this point naturally puts us upon the examination and trial of our own heart, whether we, who so confidently claim a special interest in Christ, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. And because two sorts of persons will be concerned in this trial, viz. the weaker and the stronger Christians; I shall therefore lay down two sorts of evidences of mortification, one respecting the sincerity and truth, the other respecting the strength and progress of that work in confirmed and grown Christians, and both excluding false pretenders.

First, There are some things that are evidential of the truth and sincerity of mortification, even in the weakest Christians: as,

First, True tenderness of conscience as to all known sins, one as well as another, is a good sign sin has lost its dominion in the soul. O it is a special mercy to have a heart that shall smite and reprove us for those things that others make nothings of: To check and admonish us for our secret sins, which can never turn to our reproach among men: this is a good sign that we hate sin, however, through the weakness of the flesh we may be ensnared by it. : 15. "What I hate, that I do."

Secondly, The sincere and earnest desires of our souls to God in prayer for heart-purging and sin-mortifying grace, is a good sign our souls have no love for sin. Canst thou say, poor believer, in the truth of thy heart, that if God would give thee thy choice, it would please thee better to have sin cast out, than to have the world cast in: that thy heart is not so earnest with God for daily bread, as it is for heart-purging grace? This is a comfortable evidence that sin is nailed to the cross of Christ.

Thirdly, Do you make conscience of guarding against the occasions of sin? Do you keep a daily watch over your hearts and senses, according to 1John5:18, Job 31:1? This speaks a true design and purpose of mortification also.

Fourthly, Do you rejoice and bless God from your hearts, when the Providence of God orders any means for the prevention of sin? Thus did David, 1Sam25:33, "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the

Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand."

Fifthly, In a word, though the thoughts of death may be terrible in themselves, yet if the expectation and hope of your deliverance from sin thereby, do sweeten the thoughts of it to your souls, it will turn unto you for a testimony, that you are not the servants and friends of sin. And so much briefly of the first sort of evidences.

Secondly, There are other signs of a more deep and thorough mortification of sin, in more grown and confirmed believers, and such are these.

First, The more submissive and quiet any man is under the will of God, in smart and afflicting providences, the more that man's heart is mortified unto sin, Ps119:67, 71; Col. 1:11.

Secondly, The more able any one is to bear reproaches and rebukes for his sin, the more mortification there is in that man, Ps141:5.

Thirdly, The more easily any man can resign and give up his dearest earthly comforts at the call and command of God, the more progress that man has made in the work of mortification, Heb. 11:17, 2Sam. 15:25 .

Fourthly, The more power any man has to resist sin in the first motions of it, and stifle it in the birth; the greater degree of mortification that man has attained, Rom. 7:23,24.

Fifthly, If great changes, upon our outward condition, make no change for the worse upon our spirits, but we can bear prosperous and adverse providences with an equal mind; then mortification is advanced far in our souls, Phil. 4:11,12.

Sixthly, The more fixed and steady our hearts are with God in duty, and the less they are infested with wandering thoughts, and earthly interpositions; the more mortification there is in that soul. And so much briefly of the evidences of mortification.

Fifth use, for consolation.

It only remains, that I shut up all with a few words of consolation unto all that are under the mortifying influence of the Spirit. Much might be said for the comfort of such. In brief,

First, Mortified sin shall never be your ruin: It is only reigning sin that is ruining sin, . Mortified sins and pardoned sins shall never lie down with us in the dust. Secondly? If sin be dying, your souls are living; for dying unto sin, and living unto God, are inseparably connected, Rom. 8:13.

Thirdly, **If sin be dying in you, it is certain that Christ died for you, and you cannot desire a better evidence of it**, Rom. 6:5,6.

Fourthly, If sin be dying under the mortifying influences of the Spirit, and it be your daily labour to resist and overcome it, you are then in the direct way to heaven, and eternal salvation; which few, very few in the world shall find, Luke 13:24

Fifthly, To shut up all, if you, through the Spirit, be daily mortifying the deeds of the body, then the death of Christ is effectually applied by the Spirit unto your souls, and your interest in him is unquestionable: for they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts; and they that have so crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts are Christ's. Blessed be God for a crucified Christ.

Blessed be God for a crucified Christ

This following sermon by Jonathan Edwards further explains the importance of Christian Knowledge, the use of our faculties of understanding and reason to which God communicates his glory which consists in knowledge of God, virtue or holiness and happiness consisting in joy in God. It is very important to understand this doctrine. This is followed by a piece on self-examination which cannot be done effectively without sufficient knowledge of our duty, Christian doctrines and principles; in other words, what do we look for to see that be in the faith? Then the religious sect of Deists are examined with respect to divine revelation vs. human reasoning alone; this will further give understanding to this subject. And finally, a discourse on the unreasonableness of natural men or unregenerate men in Sermon XI. This will, again, give you further insight as to why we need to constantly exercise our understanding of divine truths by a constant contemplation of them using these faculties of reason and understanding without which we will not grow in faith (2Cor3:18), resist the fiery darts of the devil, etc. Hence, Hebrews 5:14: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Christian Knowledge – Part I

code37

By Jonathan Edwards

or, The Importance and Advantage of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.vi.iii.i.html>

[HEB. V. 12.](#)

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

These words are a complaint, which the apostle makes against the Christian Heb., for their want of such proficiency in the knowledge of the Doctrine and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains, that they had not made that progress in their acquaintance with the things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in spiritual and experimental knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a doctrinal acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity; as is evident by the manner in which the apostle introduces this reproof. The occasion of his introducing it is this: In the next verse but one preceding, he mentions Christ as being “Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” In the Old Testament, the oracles of God, Melchizedek was held forth as an eminent type of Christ; and the account we there have of him contains many gospel mysteries. These mysteries the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Heb.; but he apprehended, that through their weakness in knowledge, they would not understand him; and therefore breaks off for the present from saying anything about Melchizedek, thus, ([ver. 11.](#)) “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are all dull of hearing;” i.e. there are many things concerning Melchizedek which contain wonderful gospel-mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dulness, and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit; and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too strong.

Then come in the words of the text: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” As much as to say, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of the Holy Scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: but it is not so with you. The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed by human teaching: as appears by that expression, “When for the time ye ought to be teachers;” which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a doctrinal, knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, the apostle speaks of such knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to understand those things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: “For every one that useth milk, is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” **It is such knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion.** As here; “Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter, advises them “to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection.”

We may observe that the fault of this defect appears, in that they had not made proficiency according to their time.—For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself.—Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge; and leaving the food of babes, they should learn to digest strong meat.

Doctrine. Every Christian should make a business of endeavouring to grow in knowledge in divinity.—

This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers: it is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the Scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge; and most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Heb. For not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers. Or if he had thought, that this concerned Christians in general only as a thing by the by, and that their time should not in a considerable measure be taken up with this business; he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show—what is intended by *divinity*? What kind of *knowledge* in divinity is intended? Why knowledge in divinity is necessary.

And why all Christians should make a business of endeavouring to grow in this knowledge.

SECT. I.

What is intended by divinity, as the object of Christian knowledge.

Various definitions have been given of this subject by those who have treated on it. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition; but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a proper notion of it.—It is that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion.

There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But one science, or kind of knowledge and doctrine, is above all the rest; as it treats concerning God and the great business of religion. Divinity is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a book full of instruction, which he hath given us for that end. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called *natural religion*. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. **But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation.** Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature, in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of significance to us, any otherwise than as it some way or other belongs to the gospel-scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. **But the light of nature teaches us no truth in this matter.** Therefore it cannot be said, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian truth by the light of nature. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

This comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, the doctrine of living to God; and by some who seem to be more accurate, the doctrine of living to God by Christ. It comprehends all Christian Doctrine as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz. as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.

SECT. II.

What kind of knowledge in divinity, is intended in the doctrine.

There are two kinds of knowledge of divine truth, viz. **speculative and practical, or in other terms, natural and spiritual.** The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a **natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God.** **The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it.** And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the Doctrine contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists the speculative or natural knowledge, in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: but it is intended **that we should seek the former in order to the latter.** The latter, or the spiritual and practical, is of the greatest importance; for a speculative without a spiritual knowledge, is to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended; it is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity: while the latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other. But I proceed to

SECT. III.

The usefulness and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths.

There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. **Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind.** There is an order of men which Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. In such things men receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeable to the apostle's arguing, [1 Cor. Xiv. 2-6.](#)

No speech can be a mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and if he that spoke, had spoken only into the air; as it follows in the passage just quoted, [ver. 6-10.](#) God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. **Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding,** [Rom x. 14.](#) "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" In like manner, there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart. [\[this is why sound Christian doctrine is vital and why Paul insisted on it.\]](#)

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind: it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word. So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. **And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that no object can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding:** and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. **It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is.** A man cannot see the wonderful

excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and excellency of divine truth, unless he first have a notion that there is such a thing.

Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of divine truths.

If men have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast as a man. But divine subjects are the things, to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any good purpose, further than he hath knowledge of divine truth.

Sidebar: from John Owen's book, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, regarding man being created with a faculty of understanding and reason:

[1. God being a most perfect, and therefore a most free agent, all his acting towards mankind, all his dealings with them, all his constitutions and laws concerning them, are to be resolved into his own sovereign will and pleasure. No other reason can be given of the original of the whole system of them. This the Scripture testifies unto, Ps. Cxv. 3; cxxxv. 6; Prov. Xvi. 4; Eph. i. 9, 11; Rev. iv. 11. The being, existence, and natural circumstances of all creatures being an effect of the free counsel and pleasure of God, all that belongs unto them must be ultimately resolved thereinto.

2. Upon a supposition of some free acts of the will of God, and the execution of them, constituting an order in the things that outwardly are of him, and their mutual respect unto one another, some things may become necessary in this relative state, whose being was not absolutely necessary in its own nature. The order of all things, and their mutual respect unto one another, depend on God's free constitution no less than their being absolutely. But upon a supposition of that constitution, things have in that order a necessary relation one to another, and all of them unto God. Wherefore, —

3. It was a free, sovereign act of God's will, to create, effect, or produce such a creature as man is; that is, of a nature intelligent, rational, capable of moral obedience, with rewards and punishments. But on a supposition hereof, man, so freely made, could not be governed any other ways but by a moral instrument of law or rule, influencing the rational faculties of his soul unto obedience, and guiding him therein. He could not in that constitution be contained under the rule of God by a mere physical influence, as are all irrational or brute creatures. To suppose it, is to deny or destroy the essential faculty and powers wherewith he was created.] Wherefore, on the supposition of his being, it was necessary that a law or rule of obedience should be prescribed unto him and be the instrument of God's government towards him.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary.—Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

John Flavel on *reason*: But now the more rational any gracious person is, by so much the more he is fixed, settled, and satisfied in religion; and when this change is wrought upon men [the power of God working faith], it is carried on in a rational way, Isa. 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,” & John 16:9 The Spirit overpowers the understanding with clear demonstrations, and silences all objections, pleas, and pretenses to the contrary. Pg 32 Vol. VI

SECT. IV.

Why all Christians should make a business of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of divinity.

Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge of divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, as they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

This endeavour to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the bye, but all Christians should make a business of it. They should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling.—For,

1. Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beast for, and therefore hath given us superior powers. [Hence Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Rm12:1] Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the bye. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the bye, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by-faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others: whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business; but instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior power—to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites—not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God hath set them above the brutes, by giving them understanding.

God hath given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties: and some things he hath given him superior to the brutes, **the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason.** Now God never gave man these faculties to be subject to those which he hath in common with the brutes.

This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant to the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man's understanding; and therefore it must be a great part of man's principal business to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow, that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity: for the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy; and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy; we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

2. **The truths of divinity are superlative excellency,** and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of them. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science; and next Jesus Christ, as God-man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure. All these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever existed; and they are also the subject of study to the angels in heaven; [1 Pet. i. 10-12.](#)—They are so excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labour of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls accidentally found, and opened with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather; would not every one think it worth his while to make a business of gathering while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is far more rich

than any one of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches! But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. Divine truths not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrine of divinity as it is with the doctrine of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right.—But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrine of this nearly concern every one. They are about those things which relate to [160](#)every man's eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines; let them dispute them out among themselves as they can; they concern not us: for they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrine which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistences of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is a Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being; [162](#)" who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

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This book was written for the use of all; all are directed to search the Scriptures, [John v. 39](#). "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;" and [Isa. Xxxiv. 16](#). "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." They that read and understand are pronounced blessed, [Rev. i. 3](#). "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy." If this be true of that particular book of the Revelation, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a bye concern with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the Scriptures were written that they might be understood: otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner's instruction; unless we endeavour to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain; for we can receive benefit by no more of the Scriptures than we understand. We have reason to bless God that he hath given us such various and plentiful instruction in his word; but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we after all content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God hath opened a very large treasure before us, for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us so much; if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it. because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time the canon of Scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

SECT. V.

An exhortation that all may diligently endeavour to gain Christian knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ; and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation; else you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavour, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scriptures; labour to understand as much of what he saith as you can. **God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected.** Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or accidentally gain in conversation; **but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labour with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.**

Especially I would advise those who are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is peculiarly proper for gaining and storing up knowledge.—Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. **If you apply yourselves diligently to this work**, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time spent in evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, [Prov. X. 19.](#) “That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.” And is not this verified in those who find little else to do but to go to one another’s houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one’s present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: [Prov. Xiv. 23.](#) “In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do, but to sit, and talk, and chat, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbours; not considering what Christ

hath said, [Matt. Xii. 36.](#) “Of every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment.”

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to employ your time besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which they would both be more out of the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves [162](#)in, after they are become incapable of bodily labour. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleasure be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time.—The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: [Acts xvii. 11.](#) “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Similar to this is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavouring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, [1 Pet. i. 12.](#) “Which things the angels desire to look into.” This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, [Prov. Xxv. 2.](#) “It is the honour of kings to search out a matter;” and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honour even of kings, is it not equally if not much more your honour?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all, the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labour necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. “When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul.” [Prov. ii. 10.](#)

4. This knowledge is exceedingly useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; *for no means of grace have a saving effect, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart.* The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes advantage of persons’ ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them. By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honour of God and religion. Many who mean

well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. X. 2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge. Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbours: and so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much of this knowledge now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, **and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed.** So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke x. 23, 24. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the religious principles which we hold. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? **Beside, the apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.**

SECT. VI.

Directions for the acquisition of Christian knowledge.

1. Be assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself.—We are expressly directed by Christ, to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use, other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a loathness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath-days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. **Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things**, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction. **[All the more reason to not let unsaved people become members of the church because they will not desire to talk about holy things nor contemplate them or value them all to the disadvantage or contamination of the sheep.]**

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice.—If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to me knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being; your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: [1 Cor. Viii. 1.](#) “Knowledge puffeth up.”

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, [Jam. i. 5.](#) “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.” God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: [Prov. li. 6.](#) “**The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.**” Labour to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: [1 Cor. lii. 18.](#) “If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

7. **Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more.** The psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience: [Psal. Cxix. 100.](#) “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.” Christ also recommends the same: [John vii. 17.](#) “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Christian Knowledge Part II

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The Knowledge of God is key! This explains part of God's glory given to the elect, the knowledge of God seen on the diagram on page 4.

On Religious Affections

by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/works1.vii.iv.iv.html>

SECT. IV.

Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened rightly and spirituality to apprehend divine things.

Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before, more of God or Christ, and of the glorious things exhibited in the gospel. He has a clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected; either he receives some new understanding of divine things, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed; 1 John iv. 7. "Every one that loveth, knoweth God." Phil. i. 9. "I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." Rom. X. 2. "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Col. lii. 10. "The new man, which is renewed in knowledge." Psal. Xliii. 3, 4. "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill." John vi. 45. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart, enlarges the affections, and opens the way for men into the kingdom of heaven; Luke xi. 52. "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge."

Now there are many affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding; which is a sure evidence that these affections are not spiritual, let them be ever so high. Indeed they have some new apprehensions which they had not before. Such is the nature of man, that it is impossible his mind should be affected, unless it be by something that he apprehends, or that his mind conceives. But in many persons those apprehensions or conceptions wherewith they are affected, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them. For instance; when a person is affected with a lively idea, suddenly excited in his mind, of some shape, or beautiful pleasant form of countenance, a shining light, or other glorious outward appearance: here is something conceived by the mind; but nothing of the nature of instruction. Persons become never the wiser by such things, more knowing about God, a Mediator between God and man, the way of salvation by Christ, or anything contained in the doctrines of the gospel. Persons by these external ideas have no further acquaintance with God, as to any of the **attributes or perfections of his nature**; nor have they any further understanding of his **word, his ways, or works**. Truly spiritual and gracious affections are not raised after this manner; these arise from the enlightening of the understanding, to understand the things taught of God and Christ, in a new manner. There is a new understanding of the **excellent nature of God** and his **wonderful perfections**, some new view of Christ in his **spiritual excellencies and beauties**; or things are opened to him in a new manner, whereby he now understands those divine and spiritual doctrines which once were foolishness to him [1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"]. **Such enlightenings** of the understanding as these, **are entirely different in their nature**, from strong ideas of shapes and colours, outward brightness and glory, or sounds and voices. That all

gracious affections arise from some instruction, or enlightening of the understanding, is therefore a further proof, that affections which arise from such an impression on the imagination, are not gracious.

Hence also it appears, that affections arising from texts of Scripture coming to the mind, are vain, when no instruction received in the understanding from those texts, or anything taught in them, is the ground of the affection, but the manner of their coming to the mind. When Christ makes the Scripture a means of the heart's burning with gracious affection, it is by opening the Scriptures to their understandings; [Luke xxiv. 32](#). "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Notes on the Value of Christian Knowledge vs. Being in Darkness

John Owen Heb 7:11 p 412 vol. 21 (p505 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_6.1-7.28.pdf

Death was originally threatened as the final end and issue of sin. And the evidence hereof was received under the Levitical priesthood, in the curse of the law. There was, indeed, a remedy provided against its eternal prevalency, in the first promise (Gen 3:15). For whereas death comprised all the evil that was come, or was to come on man for sin, — "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," — the promise contained the means of deliverance from it, or it was no promise, tendered no relief unto man in the state whereinto he was fallen. **But the people under the law could see but little into the manner and way of its accomplishment, nor had they received any pledge of it, in any one that was dead, and lived again so as to die no more. Wherefore their apprehensions of this deliverance were dark, and attended with much fear; which rendered them obnoxious unto bondage.** See the exposition on Hebrews 2:14, 15, where we have declared the dreadful apprehensions of the Jews concerning death, received by tradition from their fathers. They could not look through the dark shades of death, into light, immortality, and glory. See the two-fold spirit of the old and new testaments with respect unto the apprehensions of death expressed; the one, Job 10:21, 22; the other, 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. But there is nothing more needful unto the perfect state of the church. Suppose it endowed with all possible privileges in this world, yet if it have not a clear view and prospect with a blessed assurance of immortality and glory after death, its condition will be dark and uncomfortable. And as this could not be done without the bringing in of another priesthood, so by that of Christ it is accomplished. **[You might ask, Why do I need to grow in Christian knowledge? Ans. So as to see Christ, his nature, etc., in a more perfect light and understanding so as to approach him and worship him and have thoughts of him in a due manner and worthy of his person. In this way do we grow in grace and are transformed into his image from glory to glory. (2Cor3:18, see pg 29) Otherwise this work is frustrated with many pains and with a lack of peace and consolation in the trials we are subject to in this life. It is a great privilege to be endowed with the image of God to enable us to come closer to God; it greatly aggravates our sin in the negligence of taking advantage of this great privilege if we do not take every opportunity to grow in knowledge as Paul says of himself "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Phil 3:8]**

6. There is also an especial joy belonging unto this state; for this kingdom of God is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” **Neither was this attainable by the Levitical priesthood.** Indeed many of the saints of the old testament did greatly rejoice in the Lord, and had the joy of his salvation abiding with them. See Psalm 51:12; Isaiah 25:9; Habakkuk 3:17, 18. **But they had it not by virtue of the Levitical priesthood.** Isaiah tells us that the ground of it was the “swallowing up of death in victory,” Isaiah 25:8; which was no otherwise to be done but by the death and resurrection of Christ. It was by an influence of efficacy from the priesthood that was to be introduced that they had their joy: whence “Abraham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced to see it.” The prospect of the day of Christ was the sole foundation of all their spiritual joy, that was purely so. But as unto their own present state, they were allowed and called to rejoice in the abundance of temporal things; though the psalmist, in a spirit of prophecy, prefers the joy arising from the light of God’s countenance in Christ above all of that sort, Psalm 4:6, 7. **But ordinarily their joy was mixed and alloyed with a respect unto temporal things.** See Leviticus 23:39-41; Deuteronomy 12:11, 12, 18, 16:11, 27:7. This was the end [purpose] of their annual festivals. **And those who would introduce such festival rejoicings into the gospel-state do so far degenerate unto Judaism, as preferring their natural joy, in the outward manner of expression, before the spiritual, ineffable joys of the gospel.** [hence the error of the Messianic Jewish Roots cults] This it is that belongs unto the state thereof: — such a joy in the Lord as carrieth believers with a holy triumph through every condition, even when all outward causes of joy do fail and cease. A joy it is “unspeakable, and full of glory,” 1 Peter 1:8. See John 15:11; Romans 15:13; Jude 1:24. It is that inexpressible satisfaction which is wrought in the minds of believers by the Holy Ghost, from an evidence of their interest in the love of God by Christ, with all the fruits of it, present and to come, **with a spiritual sense and experience of their value, worth, and excellency. This gives the soul a quiet repose in all its trials, refreshment when it is weary, peace in trouble, and the highest satisfaction in the hardest things** that are to be undergone for the profession of the name of Christ, Romans 5:1-5.

Meditations upon the glory of God

A remarkable transformation and change of spirit follows it. These things are found to be **marvelously assimilating.** The sights of God, the felt presence of God, is as fire, **which quickly assimilates what is put into it to its own likeness.** So 2Cor. 3:18. They are said to be “changed from glory to glory.” It always leaves the mind more refined and abstracted from gross material things, and changed into the same image. **They have a similitude of God upon them, who have God near unto their hearts and reins.** — John Flavel, Sacramental Meditations, pg 390 Vol. VI

2. The subject matter of faith.

This is the second thing in the description of faith, the soul of a humble sinner, is the subject or matter of faith. I do not mean, the matter out of which faith is wrought, (for there is nothing in man out of which the Spirit begets it) but that wherein faith is seated; I mean also, the habit of faith, not the principle of it; for that is out of man in the Lord Jesus, who is therefore called our hope, as well as our strength; the soul therefore is the subject of faith, called the heart, Rom. 10:9, compared with Matt. 6:21, for we cannot come to Christ in this life with our bodies, we are here absent from the Lord, 2Cor 5:6, but the soul can go to him, the heart can be with him, as the eyes can see a thousand miles off, **and receive the species or image of things into it; so the soul enlightened by faith, can see Christ afar off, it can long for, choose and rest upon the Lord of life and receive the lively image of Christ’s glory in it,** 2Cor 3, ult. If Christ were present upon earth, the soul (not the body) only could truly

receive him; Christ comes to his elect only by his Spirit; and hence our spirits only are fit to receive him, and close with him. Thousands hear Christ outwardly, that inwardly are deaf to all God's calls, their spirits see not, taste not, feel not; it is therefore the soul that is the subject of faith; and, I say, it is a humbled empty soul, which is the subject; for a full, proud, unbroken spirit cannot, nay, will not receive Christ, as we have proved. And therefore, Luke 14, the servant is commanded to bid the *poor, halt, blind, and lame to come in*; They would not make excuses as other did. They that were stung to death with fiery serpents, were the only men that the brazen serpent was lifted up for them *to look upon*, and so be *healed*, John 3:14. Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer p275

The Importance of Christian Knowledge

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by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.vi.iii.iii.html>

This is excellent!

SECT. II.

What kind of knowledge in divinity, is intended in the doctrine.

There are two kinds of knowledge of divine truth, viz. speculative and practical, or in other terms, natural and spiritual. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the Doctrine contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists the speculative or natural knowledge, in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: but it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, or the **spiritual** and practical, is of the greatest importance; for a speculative without a spiritual knowledge, is to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this

exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Heb. seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore, the former is first and most directly intended; it is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity, while the latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other. But I proceed to -

SECT. III.

The usefulness and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths.

There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men which Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. **It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding.** Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. In such things men receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeable to the apostle's arguing, [1 Cor. Xiv. 2-6.](#)

No speech can be a means of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and if he that spoke, had spoken only into the air, as it follows in the passage just quoted, [ver. 6-10.](#) God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. **Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding,** [Rom x. 14.](#) "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" **In like manner, there can be no love without knowledge.** It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind; it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word. So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, **than by conveying some knowledge.** They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? **Such is the nature of man, that no object can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding: and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge.** It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and excellency of divine truth, unless he first have a notion that there is such a thing.

Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of divine truths.

If men have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast as a man. But divine subjects are the things, to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any good purpose, further than he hath knowledge of divine truth.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary.—Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

Sect IV excerpt

9. God hath in the Scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavour to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be enriched with all knowledge: [1 Cor. i. 4, 5](#). “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge,” So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge; [Phil. i. 9](#). “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.” So the apostle Peter advises to “give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,” [2 Pet. i. 5](#). And the apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Heb., leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental Doctrine of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were instructed when baptized, at their first initiation in Christianity. (See [Heb. Vi.](#) &c.)

SECT. V.

An exhortation that all may diligently endeavour to gain Christian knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ; and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is

necessary to salvation; else you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavour, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scriptures; labour to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labour with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those who are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is peculiarly proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. — Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time spent in evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. X. 19. “That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.” And is not this verified in those who find little else to do but to go to one another’s houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one’s present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: Prov. Xiv. 23. “In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do, but to sit, and talk, and chat, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbours; not considering what Christ hath said, Matt. Xii. 36. “Of every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment.”

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to employ your time besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which they would both be more out of the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves [162](#)in, after they are become incapable of bodily labour. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleasure be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. **This would be a noble way of spending your time.**—The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: [Acts xvii. 11](#). “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Similar to this is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavouring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, [1 Pet. i. 12](#). “Which things the angels desire to look into.” This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, [Prov. Xxv. 2](#). “It is the honour of kings to search out a matter;” and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honour even of kings, is it not equally if not much more your honour?

3. **This is a pleasant way of improving time.** Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all, the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labour necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. **“When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul.”** [Prov. li. 10](#).

4. This knowledge is exceedingly useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; for no means of grace have a saving effect, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, **when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them.** The heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, **The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty;** your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes advantage of persons’ ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them. **By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course,** and so to live much more to the honour of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound

religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. X. 2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge. Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbours: and so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much of this knowledge now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke x. 23, 24. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the religious principles which we hold. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Beside, the apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.

SECT. VI.

Directions for the acquisition of Christian knowledge.

1. Be assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself.—We are expressly directed by Christ, to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a

scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use, other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a loathness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath-days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their **mutual edification and instruction.**

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice.—If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to me knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being; your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, [163](#)it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: [1 Cor. Viii. 1.](#) “Knowledge puffeth up.”

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, [Jam. i. 5.](#) “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.” God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: [Prov. li. 6.](#) “The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” **Labour to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God,** lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: [1 Cor. liii. 18.](#) “If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

7. Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience: [Psal. Cxix. 100.](#) “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.” Christ also recommends the same: [John vii. 17.](#) “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

The Purpose of Christian Knowledge Application

code161

men “cannot endure sound doctrine,” nor will abide in the simplicity of the gospel – John Owen

Application. [Analysis of Socinianism](#). This is vital! – shows the necessity of growing in Christian knowledge, to put on the armor of God, etc., to stand against deception. Owen explains why this is so in his analysis of Socinianism or any other ‘ism’ that infiltrates the minds of men in the church to the leading of many astray.

By John Owen
Ephesians 6:10-18---

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, **that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.** ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,^[a] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*¹⁴Stand therefore, **having girded your waist with truth**, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶above all, **taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.** ¹⁷And take the **helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;** ¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

I would say in preface to this analysis regarding Socinian unbelief of the key doctrines that he describes, that the same can be applied to other false teachings that lead to unbelief in the other important doctrines like limited atonement, election, original sin – man’s total depravity, free will, God’s sovereignty and so on.

P 167, Ch 6, Causes of Apostasy – (cont.) by John Owen

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Owen_V07_Nature_And_Cause_Of_Apostasy_From_The_Gospel.pdf

I shall briefly exemplify these things in one instance, and that in a prevalent apostasy from the truth, and which at present is visibly progressive in the world; this is that of **Socinianism**. And I shall give an instance herein, because the poison of it is highly efficacious where it meets with the **complexion and constitution of mind** before described, and is more diffused than many are aware of: for although the name of it be generally condemned, and there are some opinions comprised under it whose profession is inconsistent with the interest of the most, yet all those deviations from the truth which we have

amongst us, under several denominations, are emanations from that corrupt fountain; yea, the whole of it being a system of opinions craftily suited unto the first notions and conceptions of corrupted reason, and the inbred pride of men's minds, in them who on any account own divine revelation, the first proposal of them finds ready entertainment with many of those whose souls are not prepared and fortified against them by a spiritual experience of the excellency, power, and efficacy, of the mysteries of the gospel. They no sooner hear of them but they know they express what they would have, as gratifying all the corrupt desires and carnal reasonings of their minds.

There are, as was observed before, **two sorts** of things in the doctrines of the gospel: —

1. Such as are above the comprehension and measure of reason in its best condition, as it is in us limited and confined;

2. Such as are contrary unto it as corrupted and depraved. And unto these two heads is this kind of apostasy reducible.

1. **What is above reason, incomprehensible by it, those of this way do absolutely reject.** Such are the doctrines of the Trinity and of the incarnation of the Son of God. Because the things taught in these doctrines are not comprehensible by their reason, they conclude that they are repugnant unto right reason. And by others the same doctrines are refused, as not compliant with the light that is within them; for the existence of the divine nature in three distinct persons, with the hypostatical union of the natures of God and man in the same person, they cannot acknowledge. These things, so fully, so plainly, so frequently revealed and asserted in the Scripture, so attested by the primitive catholic church, are rejected on no other reason but that they are against reason; nor is there any pretense that they are so, but because they are above it. When they have puzzled themselves with Nicodemus' question, "How can these things be?" they peremptorily deny their existence, because they cannot comprehend the manner of it.

2. As unto those things which are contrary unto reason as corrupted, these they deprave and wrest unto a compliance therewithal. So they deal with the doctrines of the attributes of God, of his eternal decrees, of the office and mediation of Christ, of justification by his righteousness, of the power and efficacy of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and of the resurrection of the dead. Because they cannot bring their reason as corrupted and depraved unto a compliance with these truths, they will force, hale, torture, and rack the truths themselves, to bring them into slavery unto their own reasons, or carnal, fleshly conceptions of spiritual things; for, allowing the words, terms, and propositions wherein they are expressed, they put absurd senses upon them, destructive unto the faith and contrary to the whole scope and design of the Scripture. **So do they endeavor expressly to**

bring every divine revelation into captivity unto the bondage of their own perverse reasonings and imaginations.

It is, therefore, evident that this kind of apostasy springs from no other root but the **pride of the minds of men**, refusing to admit of evangelical truths on the mere authority of divine revelation, where they are above reason as it is limited, or contrary unto it as corrupted. On these terms the gospel can nowhere keep its station, nor will it forego its prerogative by subjecting itself to be tried by these uncertain measures or weighed in these uneven, tottering balances. **The humble, the meek, the teachable, those who are made free and willing to captivate their understandings unto the obedience of faith, are those alone with whom it will abide and continue.**

But it may be said, that, this being only one private heresy, of no great extent or acceptation in the world, there is no danger of any influence from it unto a more general defection. So, it may be, it seems unto many; but I must acknowledge myself to be otherwise minded, and that for two reasons: —

1. Because of the advance which it maketh every day in the addition of new, bold, proud imaginations unto what it hath already made its successful attempts in: for, in the pursuit of the same principles with those of the men of this way and persuasion, **not a few begin absolutely to submit the Scripture, and everything contained in it, to the judgment and sentence of their own reason; which is the true form and spirit of Socinianism**, visibly acting itself with some more than ordinary confidence. What is suited unto their reason they will receive, and what is not so, let it be affirmed a hundred times in the Scripture, they will reject with the same ease and confidence as if they were imaginations of men like themselves. Both books that are written unto this purpose, and the common discourses of many, do fully testify unto this advance of the pride of the minds of men; and he is careless about these things who seeth not that the **next stage is downright atheism**. This is that dunghill which such blazing exhalations of pride do at last fall into. And herein do many countenance themselves with a false and foolish pretense that all those whom they differ from are fanatical enemies of reason, when they ascribe unto it all that any man in his wits can so do who believeth divine revelation, and doth not absolutely disavow the corruption of nature by the fall.

2. The poison of these principles is greatly diffused in the world; for hence it is that all those doctrines of the gospel which have anything of spiritual mystery in them, **which are constituent principles of, or do any way belong unto, the covenant of grace, and so not absolutely reconcilable unto reason as corrupt and carnal**, are by many so laden with contempt and scorn that it is sufficient to expose any man unto the contumelies of “ignorant, irrational, and foolish,” who dares to avow them. Such are the **doctrines of eternal predestination**, of **the total corruption of the nature of men** as unto spiritual things by the fall, of **the power and efficacy of the grace of God in the conversion of sinners**, of the

nature and necessity of regeneration, of union with Christ, of justification by the imputation of his righteousness, of the nature of internal, inherent righteousness or evangelical holiness, of the necessity of continual supplies of the Spirit in actual grace unto all duties of obedience, of the power of the Holy Ghost evidencing the divine authority of the Scriptures in and by themselves, [see Flavel, page 1700, 1708] with sundry others. Many can see no reason for the admittance of these things, or they cannot see the reason of them; and therefore, although they are fully and plainly declared in the Scriptures, yet are they, by no small generation among us, so derided and exploded as that the very names of them are grown into contempt. But why all this scorn, all this severity? Men may do well to consider, that not long since all the prelates of England owned those doctrines as articles of faith which now they so deride; and although they are not obliged by any divine precept to be of the same judgment with them because it was theirs, yet it may be they are under some obligation from the laws of the land not to renounce the ancient doctrines of the church, and are certainly bound by the laws of Christian modesty and sobriety not to vilify and scorn the doctrines they owned, and all that do profess them.

But it is warrant sufficient unto some for the utmost detestation of any principles in religion, that they have a seeming incompliance with their reason, though apparently corrupted by prejudice and weakened by ignorance. Hence they will not admit that there can be a consistency between the unchangeableness of God's decrees and the freedom of our wills; that justification by the blood of Christ doth not render our own obedience needless; that the efficacy of God's grace and the necessity of our duty are reconcilable. And herein they seem to take along with them, as their security, these two principles, seeing without them they have no foundation to build upon: —

(1.) That reason as it acts in them is the same with right reason in general, — that whatever respect is due to the one is so to the other. It were well, in the meantime, if prejudices, corrupt affections, and gross ignorance, did not, on great variety of occasions, manifest themselves among this sort of persons; and not only so, but such a course of conversation among some of them as none can think consistent with the divine teachings who believe the Scriptures. But it is so come to pass, that all that humility, meekness, self-diffidence, all that conscientious fear of sinning and practice of holiness, which the word of God makes so necessary unto them who would learn the truth as it is in Jesus, are by many (puffed up with a conceit of their own ability to know all things) utterly disregarded.

(2.) That there is no time or instance wherein those thoughts which seem to us most rational are to be captivated unto the obedience of faith; and yet without this there is no true knowledge of the mind of God in the gospel to be attained. What such principles will carry men out unto in religion were easy to conjecture, if experience did not render conjecture useless in this case. Wherefore, this pride of the minds of men, refusing to bow or subject themselves unto the authority of divine

revelation, designing to exalt self, in its intellectual and moral abilities, in its powers to know what it should and do what it ought, hath in all ages been a great principle of opposition unto and apostasy from evangelical truth: nor was it ever more rampant than in the days wherein we live; for besides that it hath openly spawned that whole brood of errors which some entire sects do espouse, it diffuseth itself in its effects among all sorts of professors of Christianity. An humble subjection of mind and conscience unto the authority of God in his word, — which alone, upon trial, will be found to answer the experience of believers, — is the only security against this distemper. This we may, this we ought to, pray for, not only for ourselves, but that it might be given of God unto them who scarce believe that God gives anything that is spiritual and supernatural unto the souls of men, in any such way as that the effect should depend on the efficiency of grace, and not on their own wills. **Unto this pride, as inseparable from it,** we may adjoin that **vanity** and **curiosity** that are in the minds of men. These are those which the apostle marketh under the outward sign and effect of them, namely, “**itching ears,**” 2 Timothy 4:3; for hence an inclination and **hankering of mind after things novel, vain, and curious, doth arise.** Under the power of these **affections,** men “cannot endure sound doctrine,” nor will abide in the simplicity of the gospel. They know not how to be wise unto sobriety, and to keep their speculations about spiritual things within the bounds of sober modesty; but they are still intruding themselves into things they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their own fleshly minds, Colossians 2:18. And as this curiosity hath produced many of these needless, vain opinions, subtle, nice, philosophical disputations and distinctions, wherewith some have filled religion; so from the uncured vanity of mind doth proceed that levity and inconstancy which are in many, whereby they are “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine” that blows upon them, from the “cunning sleights of men who lie in wait to deceive.” Unto all we may add **carnal pride and ambition** (where the outward affairs of the church or the profession of religion are accompanied with such secular advantages of wealth, honor, and rule, as to stir up envy and emulation among men of earthly minds); which, as they have occasioned many scandalous outrages in religion, so they have been the rise and occasion of many heresies also.

IV. *Careless security and groundless confidences* do betray men into apostasies from the gospel when unexpected trials do befall them. To give evidence hereunto we may do well to consider the things that ensue: —

1. The Holy Spirit hath sufficiently warned us all that defections and backslidings from the truth would fall out among the professors of it. This hath been already abundantly manifested in the express instances of such warnings and predictions before produced and insisted on. And there is in the word a vehement application made of all these warnings unto us and our duties. Hence are those exhortations and precepts multiplied, to “**watch,**” to “stand fast in the faith,” to “**be strong and quit ourselves like men**” in this matter. Nothing but a **diligent attendance** unto all gospel duties and a vigorous acting of all gospel graces will preserve us, if the Scripture may be believed. **And as for those by whom these things are despised, it is no matter at all what religion they are of.**

2. We are foretold and forewarned of the great danger that will attend the professors of the gospel when such a season of apostasy shall by any means come upon them. So prevalent shall the means of it be as that many shall be deceived, and if it were possible even the elect themselves, **Matthew 24:11,24**. Such a season is an

“hour of temptation that cometh on all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,” Revelation 3:10;

and the woeful event in them that shall be overtaken with the power of it, in their utter and eternal destruction, is in many instances set before us.

3. It is also plainly intimated that such a season of the prevalency of a defection from the truth shall be a time of great security among the generality of professed Christians. Churches shall be asleep, persons shall cry, “Peace, peace,” when that day cometh as a snare. [\[this is so true! They are all asleep; see the Parable of the 10 Virgins in Matt. 25\]](#)

We are not, therefore, left without sufficient warning in this case, both of the certainty of our trial, the greatness of our concernment, **and the danger of security**; and yet, notwithstanding all these means of excitation unto a vigorous attendance unto our condition, danger, and duty, it is evident unto every discerning eye **how desperately secure are the generality of professors of the gospel with respect unto this evil and the consequents of it. Nothing can awake them unto the consideration of their own state, although their neighbors’ houses are set on fire from hell. Love of the world, with prosperity and ease, on the one hand, or the cares and businesses of it on the other, do so take up the minds of men that they are not sensible of any concernment in these things.** And we may briefly consider the various ways whereby this security puts forth its efficacy in disposing men unto apostasy when they fall into the occasions of it: —

(1.) It doth so by possessing and overpowering them with a proud, careless, **supine negligence**. Men hear of this evil and the danger of it, but, like Gallio, they “care for none of these things.” They know not of any concernment they have in them, nor of any need they have to provide against them. Unto some others, perhaps, these things may belong, but unto them not at all. **Those who would press them on their minds and consciences they look on as persons causelessly importunate, or troubled with groundless suspicions and fears.** If there be any danger about religion, they doubt not but sooner or later provision will be made against it by law; but as unto any special duty incumbent on themselves with respect unto their own souls, they know nothing of it, nor will consider it, Had not the world been asleep in this security, had not men been utterly regardless of their interest in the truth, it had not been possible that religion should have been so totally corrupted as it was in the Papacy, and yet so few take any notice thereof. At some seasons God raised up among them witnesses for the truth, who not only declared and professed it, but also sealed their confession with their blood; but the generality of Christians were so far from being excited thereby to the consideration of their own concern and duty as that they opposed and persecuted them unto destruction, **as the disturbers of the public tranquility.** And it is no otherwise at this day. Many complain of, more fear, a defection from the gospel. It is also evident in how many things the doctrine of it is already by some corrupted by whom it

was formerly professed. Instances of as great apostasies as the name of Christianity is capable of are multiplied among us; and yet how few are there that do at all regard these things, or once consider what is either their duty or their danger in such a season!

(2.) *It worketh and is effectual by a wicked indifferency as unto all things in religion.* Men under the power of this security neither see, nor will understand, nor can be made sensible of, the difference that is between truth and error, piety and superstition, so as to value one more than another. "It is all religion, and it is no more but so. If persons change from one way to another, so as they do not utterly renounce Jesus Christ, they may be saved in the way they betake themselves unto." The profession of such persons attends on all occasions, and an apostasy from the mysteries of the gospel will be but a useful compliance with opportunity.

We judge no men, no party of men, as to their eternal state and condition, upon the account of their outward profession in religion, unless they are open idolaters or flagitious in their lives God only knows how it is between him and their souls The framing of churches (as the church of Rome) according unto men's minds, fancies, opinions, or interests, and then confining salvation unto them, is an effect of pride and folly, as contradictory to the gospel as anything that can be imagined. But yet there is a wide difference to be made between apostates and others.

"Better men had never known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment."

Those who have been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and have made profession of it, are for the most part acted by such depraved principles, moved by such corrupt lusts, and do show so much ingratitude against the Lord Jesus Christ in their defection, "denying the Lord that bought them," that they put a peculiar character and mark upon themselves; and although we will not judge any, yet is it our duty to put men in remembrance of the danger that attends such apostasies. So the apostle expressly tells the Galatians, that upon their admittance of legal ceremonies, and falling from the grace of the gospel in the one point of justification, "Christ should profit them nothing," or they should have no benefit by what they yet retained of the profession of the gospel, chap. 5:2-6. And as to those who are carried away by the "strong delusion" of the grand apostasy, foretold 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, he says plainly that "they shall be damned," verse 12; and Peter also affirms that those who introduce "damnable heresies" do bring on themselves, and those that follow their pernicious ways, "swift destruction," 2 Peter 2:1,2. So little countenance doth the Scripture give unto this effect of cursed security.

(3.) It likewise worketh by vain confidences. Most men think with Peter, and on no better grounds than he did (nor so good neither, as not being conscious unto themselves of so much sincerity as he was), that though all men should forsake the truth and purity of religion, yet they will not do so. *But they understand not at all what it is to be preserved in an hour of temptation, nor what is required thereunto. They scorn to fall away, and yet they scorn all the means whereby they may be preserved from so doing.* Tell them that they stand in need of the power of God for their preservation, of the intercession of Christ, of the constant supplies of the Spirit, of an experience of the goodness and efficacy of the truth, with the benefits which their own souls have received thereby; and that for this

end they are to watch, pray, and live in a constant attendance unto all evangelical duties; **and they despise them all through their pride, or neglect them through their spiritual sloth that they are given up unto.** Such persons as these, if they meet with anything that mates their confidence, fall at once under the power of the next temptation they are assaulted withal.

Wherefore, whereas the generality of professed Christians are influenced, one way or other, by this woeful security, it is no wonder if they are surprised and hurried away from their profession by seducers, or that they will be easily carried down the stream when they fall into a general inclination unto a defection.

Notes from John Flavel

An application of having knowledge of the covenant.

The Balm of the Covenant The Necessity of Faith for Comfort in Trouble By John Flavel P 110-110, Vol. VI

I know many Christians droop and are dejected under the rod, notwithstanding such sovereign cordials are prepared for them in the covenant; but his is not for want of efficacy in the covenant, but for want of faith to clear their interest, and draw forth the virtue of it to their relief. It is with many of God's children, **as it is with our children in their infancy, they know not their father, nor the inheritance that are born unto.**

That which remains, is the improvement of this truth to our actual comfort and relief in the day of trouble. And this I shall assist you in, as God shall assist me, by way of:

1. Information
2. Exhortation
3. Examination, and
- 4 .Consolation

Use 1. For information, in three corollaries.

Corollary 1. By what hath been discoursed from this text, it appears, *That God governs the spiritual part of the world by faiths and not by sense. He will have them live upon his covenant and promises, and fetch their relief and comfort thence, under all their sorrows and distresses in this life.*

God never intended temporal things for his people's portion, therefore from them they must not expect their relief in times of trouble. He will have us read his love to us by things within us, not by things without us. He hath other ways of expressing his love to his people, than by the smiles of his providence upon them. **How would earthly things be overvalued and idolized, if besides their conveniency to our bodies,** they should be the marks and evidences of God's love to our souls! A Christian is to value himself as the merchant, or the husbandman does. The merchant values himself by

his bills and goods abroad, not by the ready cash that lies by him. And the husbandmen by his deeds and leases, and so many acres of corn he has in the ground, and knows he has a good estate, though sometimes he be not able to command twenty shillings. Christian, thy estate also lies in good promises, and new-covenant-securities, whether you have more or less of earthly comforts in thy hands. Every creature feeds according to its nature; the same plant affords food to several sorts of creatures. The bee feeds upon the flower, the sheep upon the branch, the bird upon the seed, and the swine upon the root. One cannot live upon what the other does. So it is here. A Christian can feed upon the promises, and make a sweet meal upon the covenant, which the carnal mind cannot relish, "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God;" saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. This is that mysterious and excellent life of faith, and the test of true Christianity, to relieve ourselves by our hopes of things to come, against present evils; to balance the sorrows and losses of this life, with the promises and expectations of the next. Thus did the renowned believers of the first age; whenever they felt a pang or qualm upon their hearts, under their trials and sorrows from the world, they would presently run to their cordial, the promises, and, by faith, from thence would refresh and invigorate their souls with new life and power, "We faint not, whilst we look not at the things which are seen, for they are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, for they are eternal," 2Cor. 4:16, 17, 18. And truly so must we also, when our hearts are faint within us in days of affliction, or our spirits will fail, and we shall go away in a faint fit of despondency. Flavel, p 110 Vol. VI

The Inestimable Value of Knowledge and the Grace Thereof

The Importance of the Knowledge of Election and
other mysteries of the Kingdom

code162

Excerpt from John Flavel, The Method of Grace p 241-2 pdf file
<https://thepuritans.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/flavel-vol-2.pdf>

In this you'll see that as you come into more knowledge of who God is, more particularly, his sovereignty over the wills of men, having elected them before the world was and then converting them

by his mighty power, that a due sense of awe of him, that wonder and astonishment over the souls of believers, will have its proper effects: a more heavenly and holy fear of God and consequently a dramatic increase in your love for God so that you will work out your salvation with fear and trembling. This is why teachers and pastors need to preach the whole counsel of God, even those parts that may be uncomfortable, which after due consideration and contemplation and study of them, will be exceedingly comfortable, which is the basis for the believers' peace and consolation in all trials especially death. At first, for a season, some of these truths may be omitted so as to not overwhelm the hearers for a teacher must rightly divide the word of truth into bite size chunks. Eventually, in a reasonable amount of time, the whole truth should be made known for obvious reasons. First a quote from Jonathan Edwards along these lines: "Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrency of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it."

Inf. 6. If Christ be the Lord of glory, how careful should all be who profess him, that they do not dishonour Jesus Christ, whose name is called upon by them? Christ is a glory to you, be not you a shame and dishonour to him. How careful had Christians need to be, to draw every line and action of their lives exactly: The more glorious Christ is, the more circumspect and watchful ye had need to be. How lovely would Jesus Christ appear to the world, if the lives of Christians did adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, in all things! Remember, you represent the Lord of glory to the world; it is not your honour only, but the honour of Christ which is engaged and concerned in your actions. O let not the carelessness or scandal of your life, make Jesus Christ ashamed to be called your Lord. When Israel had grievously revolted from God, he bids Moses rise and get. Down from thence; for (saith he) thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves, Deut. ix. 12. As if the Lord were ashamed to own them for his people any longer. It was a cutting question, James ii. 7. Apt to startle the consciences of these loose professors ; "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" Your duty is to adorn the gospel by your conversations, Titus ii. 10. The words signify to deck, trim, or adorn the gospel, to make it trim, neat, and lovely, to the eyes of beholders. When there is such a beautiful harmony, and lovely proportion betwixt Christ's doctrine and your practices, as there is in the works of creation, wherein the comeliness and elegancy of the world much consists, (for to this the apostle's word here alludes) then do we walk suitably to the Lord of glory.

Inf. 7. What delight should Christians take in their daily converse with Jesus Christ in the way of duty?¹ Your converses in prayer, hearing, and meditation, are with the Lord of glory. The greatest peers in the kingdom count it more honour to be in the presence of a king, bare-headed, or upon the knee at court, than to have thousands standing bare to them in the country. When you are called to the duties of communion with Christ, you are called to the greatest honour, dignified with the noblest privilege creatures are capable of in this world: **Had you but a sense of that honour God puts upon you by this means, you would not need so much pressing and striving, to bring a dead and backward heart into the special presence of Jesus Christ.** When he saith, Seek ye my face, your hearts would echo to his calls ; Thy face, Lord, will we seek. But alas! The glory of Christ is much hid and veiled by

ignorance and unbelief, from the eyes of his own people; it is but seldom the best of saints, by the eye of faith, do see the King in his glory. [i.e., being ignorant of this mystery, the effectual call, unconditional election, etc., that we had nothing to do with our being born again! And then being raised up to such a high state and honor, how can that not excite one to his duty! O how we under-rate the blood of Christ and make what is special, common.]

Inf. 8. If Christ be so glorious, how should believers long to be with him, and behold him in his glory above? Most men need patience to die, a believer should need patience to live. Paul thought it well worth enduring the pangs of death, to get a sight of Jesus Christ in his glory, Phil. i. 23. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ," (saith the apostle) 2 Thess. lii. 5. Intimating that the saints have great need of patience, to enable them to endure the state of distance and separation from Christ, so long as they must endure it in this world. The spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is a-thirst come: even so, come Lord Jesus, and be thou as a swift roe upon the mountains of separation. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

¹Suppose (saith Mr. Rutherford) there were no letter of command, **yet there is a suitableness betwixt the law engraven on the heart, and the spiritual matter commanded**. There is an heaven in the bosom of prayer, though there were not a granting of the suit. Rutherford's Treatise of the Covenant, p. 71.

[The seal's impression (even the engravings in the seal itself being Christ, his nature,) answer to the image made or instamped upon the soul. So that a true believer's understanding, will and affections should answer this image and hence should relish all the conditions of the gospel, all the doctrines, the whole counsel of God, i.e., election, predestination, the kingly office of Christ, the will's subserviency to God's will, etc. as opposed to a having an uneven carriage or conversation, believing in some but rejecting others as distasteful that ought not be.]

Hence, Flavel points this out here on page 206:

Christ is a peculiar mercy, intended for, and applied to a **remnant** among men [the elect]; some would extend redemption as large as the world, but the gospel limits it to those only that believe; and those believers are upon that account called **a peculiar people**, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The offers of Christ indeed are large and general, but the application of Christ is but to few, Isa. liii. 1. **The greater cause have they to whom Christ comes, to lie with their mouths in the dust, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of so peculiar and distinguished a mercy.** And then, on page 109-110, Vol. 2, he says:

Fifthly, and lastly, The last and principal thing included in our receiving of Christ, is the respect that this act of acceptance hath unto the terms upon which Christ is tendered to us in the gospel¹, to which it is most agreeable, 1 Cor. xv. 11. "So we preach, and so ye believed:" Faith answers the gospel-offer, **as the impress upon the wax doth the engraving in the seal**; and this is of principal consideration, **for there is no receiving Christ upon any other terms but his own**, proposed in the gospel to us;

¹Rom. 6:17. **The will like melted metal, is delivered into the gospel-mould, where it receives the same form and figure that the mould gives.**

[If you think that you had anything to do with your conversion, to the degree that you do, is to the degree that you rob God of his glory, the glory of his grace which he shares with no one. The gospel

squashing human boasting, Eph 2:8-9 and in many other places. If you oppose election which is the same thing as opposing God's sovereignty over the wills of men, then you are guilty of "will worship", your will being an idol. The sinner's prayer is a textbook example of this robbing God of his glory, men trying to come into the sheep fold by some other way other than effectual vocation. One is taking some of the honor to himself. By acknowledging God's electing grace, you give glory to the one to whom it is due and consequently you love God, honor God, esteem God and give God glory and praise in a due manner along with cheerful obedience. This is why it is important to have a proper understanding of election and not just for knowledge sake. As Flavel says in Sermon 32, p 439: *Inf. 6.* Lastly, what cause have they to rejoice, admire, and praise the Lord to eternity, who have a well-grounded confidence that they are freed from God's condemnation? "O give thanks to the Father, who has delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son," [Col. 1:13](#). Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for if you be freed from condemnation, you are out of Satan's power, he has no more any dominion over you. ...O it is a privilege in which the grace, mercy, and love of God shine forth as clearly as the sun when it shineth in its full strength. And certainly you will find cause to lie at the feet of God, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of this mercy, when you shall find yourselves free from the condemnation of God, whilst many others, as good as you were, are still under condemnation. Yea, yourselves freed, and many of your superiors in the world still under the curse, [1 Cor. 1:26](#). Yea, yourselves freed, and others that sat under the same means of grace, and had the same external advantages as you had, still in chains, [2 Cor. 2:16](#). O brethren! This is a marvelous deliverance;]

Flavel (Fountain of Life p 31)

Use 5. Again, Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers! What an ancient friend he has been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellencies of ours could engage the love of God; for as yet we were not.

Use 6. Hence judge, **How reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ**, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation; they were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand; it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you.

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[Should this truth of election, and that unconditional, melt our hearts to serve God fervently??!]

Inf. 3. Let no believer be dejected at the contempts and slights of men, so long as they stand in the grace and favour of God. It is the lot of the best men to have the worst usage in the world; those of whom the world was not worthy, were not thought worthy to live in the world, Heb. xi. 38. Paul and his companions were men of choice and excellent spirits; yet, saith he, 1 Cor. iv. 12. "Being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." They are words signifying the basest, most contemptible, and abhorred things among men. How are heaven and earth divided in their judgments and estimations of the saints? Those whom men call filth and dirt, God calls a peculiar treasure, a crown of glory, a royal diadem. But trouble not thyself, believer, for the unjust censures of the blind world; they speak evil of the things they know not: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man," 1 Cor. ii. 14. You can discern the

earthliness and baseness of their spirits: they want [lack] a faculty to discern the excellency and choiceness of your spirits; he that carries a dark lantern in the night can discern him that comes against him, and yet is not discerned by him. **A courtier regards not a slight in the country, so long as he hath the ear and favour of his prince.**

Inf. 4. Never let believers fear the want of any good thing necessary for them in this world. The favour of God is the fountain of all blessings, provisions, protections, even of all that you need. He hath promised that he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly, Ps. 84:11. He that is bountiful to his enemies will not withhold what is good from his friends. The favour of God will not only supply your needs, but protect your persons, Ps. V. 12. "Thou wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield."

Inf. 5. Hence also it follows, that the sins of believers are very piercing things to the heart of God. The unkindness of those whom he hath received into his very bosom, upon whom he hath set his special favour and delight, who are more obliged to him than all the people of the earth beside, O this wounds the very heart of God. What a melting expostulation was that which the Lord used with David, 2 Sam. Xii. 7, 8. "I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah, and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things: wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?" **But reader, if thou be a reconciled person, a favorite with God, and hast grieved him by any eminent transgression, how should it melt thy heart to hear the Lord thus expostulating with thee:** I delivered thee out of the hand of Satan; I gave thee into the bosom of Christ; I have pardoned unto thee millions of sins; I have bestowed upon thee the riches of mercy; my favour hath made thee great: and, as if all this were too little, I have prepared heaven for thee: for which of all these favors dost thou thus requite me?

Inf. 6. **How precious should Jesus Christ be to believers,** by whose blood they are ingratiated with God, and **by whose intercession** they are, and shall for ever be continued in his favour? When the apostle mentions the believer's translation, from the sad state of nature to the blessed privileged state of grace, see what a title he bestows upon Jesus Christ, the purchaser of that privilege, calling him the dear Son, Col. i. 13. Not only dear to God, but exceeding dear to believers also. Christ is the favorite in heaven, to him you owe all the preferment there: Take away Christ, and you have no ground on which to stand one minute in the favour of God. O then let Jesus Christ, the fountain of your honour, be also the object of your love and praise.

Inf. 7. Estimate by this the state and condition of a deserted saint, upon whom the favour of God is eclipsed. If the favour of God be better than life, the hiding of it from a gracious soul must be more bitter than death: Deserted saints have reason to take the first place among all the mourners in the world: The darkness before conversion had indeed more danger, but this hath more of trouble. Darkness after light is dismal darkness. Since therefore the case is so sad, let your preventing care be the more; grieve not the good Spirit of God; you prepare but for your own grief in so doing.

To conclude, Christian liberty is either,

1. Privative, or,
2. Positive.

The liberty believers are invested with is of both kinds: They are not only freed from many miseries, burdens and dangers, but also invested by Jesus Christ with many royal privileges and invaluable immunities.

Fourthly, And this brings us to the fourth and last thing; namely, the properties of this blessed freedom which the saints enjoy by Jesus Christ; and, if we consider it duly, it will be found to be,

First, A wonderful liberty, never enough to be **admired**. How could it be imagined that ever those who owed unto God more than ever they could pay by their own eternal sufferings; those that were under the dreadful curse and condemnation of the law, in the power and possession of Satan the strong man armed; those that were bound with so many chains in their spiritual prison; their understanding bound with ignorance, their wills with obstinacy, their hearts with impenetrable hardness, their affections with a thousand bewitching vanities, that slight their state of slavery so much, as industriously to oppose all instruments and means of deliverance; for such persons to be set at liberty, notwithstanding all this, **is the wonder of wonders**, and will be deservedly **marvelous in the eyes of believers forever**. [surely this has a strong effect in the souls of those who know this. Knowing this, provides strong motive to obedience, e.g., “Do ye thus **requite** the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?” Deut. 32:6 [In this sense, knowledge is a grace! With it, or to the degree that you have it, is the degree that you obey God, esteem him, and give him his due praise. Believers should be overwhelmed with the sense of mercy with even more elevated levels joy, astonishment and awe due to a right understanding of this doctrine of election.]

Secondly, The freedom of believers is a peculiar freedom; a liberty which few obtain; the generality abiding still in bondage to Satan, who, from the multitude of his subjects, is styled the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Believers in scripture are often called a remnant, which is but a small part of the whole piece; the more cause have the people of God to admire distinguishing mercy. How many nobles and great ones of the world are but royal slaves to Satan, and their own lusts!

Thirdly, The liberty of believers is a liberty dearly purchased by the blood of Christ. What that captain said, Acts xxii. 28, “With a great sum obtained I this freedom,” may be much more said of the believers’ freedom. It was not silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ that purchased it, 1 Pet. i. 18.

Fourthly, The freedom and liberty of believers is a growing and increasing liberty; they get more and more out of the power of sin, and nearer still to their complete salvation every day, Rom. xiii. 11. The body of sin dieth daily in them: they are said to be crucified with Christ: the strength of sin abates continually in them, after the manner of crucified persons, who die a slow, “but sure death: And look in what degree the power of sin abates, proportionally their spiritual liberty increases upon them.

Fifthly, The freedom of believers is a comfortable freedom: the apostle comforts Christians of the lowest rank, poor servants, with this consideration, 1 Cor. vii. 22. "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman, q. d. Let not the meanness of your outward condition, which is a state of subjection and dependence, a state of poverty and contempt, at all trouble you : you are the Lord's freemen, of precious account in his eyes. O it is a comfortable liberty!

Sixthly, and Lastly, It is a perpetual and final freedom; they that are once freed by Christ, have their manumission and final discharge from that state of bondage they were in before; sin shall never have dominion over them any more: it may tempt them and trouble them, but shall never more rule and govern them, Acts xxvi. 18. And thus you see what a glorious liberty the liberty of believers is.

The improvement whereof will be in the following inferences.

Inf. 1. How rational is the joy of Christians, above the joy of all others in the world? Shall not the captive rejoice in his recovered liberty? The very birds of the air (as one observes) had rather be at liberty in the woods, though lean and hungry, than in a golden cage with the richest fare; every creature naturally prizes it; none more than believers, who have felt the burden and bondage of corruption, who in the days of their first illumination and conviction have poured out many groans and tears for this mercy. What was said of the captive people of God in Babylon, excellently shadows forth the state of God's people under spiritual bondage, with the way and manner of their deliverance from it, Zech. ix. 11. "By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water." [the foundation of which is the eternal love of the Father towards the elect, his church, that was the cause of him to choosing you over others!!! As to why people reject the doctrine of election is another issue, greatly to their disadvantage] Believers are delivered by the blood of Christ, out of a worse pit than that of Babylon; and look, as the tribes in their return from thence were overwhelmed with joy and astonishment, [that is the desired effect of this knowledge! Joy and astonishment, without it you will not praise him in this manner; other effects to that Flavel mentions] Ps. 126: 1, 2, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we are like them that dream: Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

They were overwhelmed with the sense of the mercy; so should it be with the people of God. It is said, Luke xv. 24, when the prodigal son (there made the emblem of a returning, converting sinner) was returned again to his father's house, that there was heard music and dancing, mirth and feasting in that house. The angels in heaven rejoice when a soul is recovered out of the power of Satan: And shall not the recovered soul, immediately concerned in the mercy, greatly rejoice? Yea, let them rejoice in the Lord, and let no earthly trouble or affliction ever have power to interrupt their joy for a moment, after such a deliverance as this.

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Inf. 3. How great a mercy is it to be awakened out of that general sleep and security which is fallen upon the world! **You cannot estimate the value of that mercy, for it is a peculiar mercy.** [which began in heaven, in eternity, in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. The main issue is this: it is peculiar or distinguishing mercy; before you were born, before you had done anything good or bad, he chose you! That fact has to affect your whole soul in utter admiration and wonder in this life and to eternity; this elevates the soul in a profound admiration for his incredible work of salvation; excites you to a due level of diligence in the study of his works and excites a holy reverential fear of

God, raising your affections toward Him, whereas otherwise, the case would be different.] O that ever the Spirit of the Lord should touch thy soul under the ministry of the word, startle, and rouse thy conscience, while others are left in the dead sleep of security round about thee! When the Lord dealt with thy soul much after the same manner he did with Paul in the way to Damascus, who not only saw a light shining from heaven, which those that travelled with him saw as well as he, but heard that voice, from heaven which did the work upon his heart, though his companions heard it not. Besides, it is not only a peculiar mercy, but it is a leading, introductive mercy, to all other spiritual mercies that follow it to all eternity. **If God had not done this for thee, thou hadst never been brought to faith, to Christ, or heaven. From this act of the Spirit all other saving acts take their rise; so that you have cause for ever to admire the goodness of God in such a favour as this is.**

Here are some other excerpts that give cause for our being thankful or grateful to a higher degree after having learned or come to the knowledge of his sovereignty in election and other operations of the Holy Spirit:

3. If you say, whence then hath the word all this power? Our answer is, It derives it all from the Spirit of God, 1 Thes. ii. 13. **“For this cause thank we God without ceasing,** because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” It is a successful instrument only when it is in the hand of the Spirit, without whose influence it never did, nor can convince, convert, or save any soul. P 298 vol. 2

God’s unmerited favor towards you should also beget in you a strong sense of the infinite evil of sin and a strong effort to avoid it at all costs and a due sense of how much we ought to give all the glory to God, and an excitement in searching out the scriptures for more of this knowledge, which, by the way, is inseparable from growing in grace! If we know more of his sovereignty, we become more humble and adore God in a higher degree (PS 119:93 below) than had we not known these mysteries. This why David prays, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”, Ps 119:18

Secondly, Others there are upon whom the word hath had its full effect as to conversion. **O bless God for ever for this mercy; you cannot sufficiently value it!** God hath not only made it a convincing and wounding, but a converting and healing word to your souls; he hath not only revived your sins, and killed your vain hopes, but begotten you again to a lively hope; **see that you be thankful for this mercy.** How many have sat under the same word, but never felt such effects of it? As Christ said in another case, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a certain widow there, Luke iv. 46. So I may say, in this case, there were many souls in the same congregation, at the same time, but unto none of them was the word sent with a commission to convince and save, but such a one as thyself; one as improbable to be wrought upon as any soul there. **O let this beget thankfulness in your souls; and let it make you love the word as long as you live: “I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me,” Psal. Cxix. 93.** But above all, I beseech you make it appear that the commandment hath come home to your hearts, with power to convince you of the evil of sin, by your tenderness and care to shun it as long as you live. If ever you have seen the face of sin, in the glass of the jaw of God; **if your hearts have been humbled and broken for it** in the days of your

trouble and distress, certainly you will choose the worst affliction rather than sin. It would be the greatest folly in the world to return again to iniquity, Ps. 85: 8.

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Christ is & peculiar mercy, intended for, and applied to a remnant among men ; some would extend redemption as large as the world, but the gospel limits it to those only that believe; and those believers are upon that account called a peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The offers of Christ indeed are large and general, but the application of Christ is but to few, Isa. liii. 1. The greater cause have they to whom Christ comes, to lie with their mouths in the dust, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of so peculiar and distinguished a mercy.

Christ is an astonishing and wonderful mercy; his Name is called wonderful, Isa. 9:6. And as his name is, so is he; a wonderful Christ: His Person is a wonder, 1 Tim. 3:16. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." His abasement is wonderful, Phil. ii. 6. His love is a wonderful love; his redemption full of wonders; angels desire to look into it. He is, and will be admired by angels and saints to all eternity.

Pg 367! More effects of knowing God's mercies which includes election!

Let every new creature be cheerful and thankful; if God hath renewed your natures, and thus altered the frame and temper of your hearts, he hath bestowed the richest mercy upon you that heaven or earth affords. This is a work of the greatest rarity; a new creature, may be called, One among a thousand; it is also an everlasting work, never to be destroyed, as all other natural works of God (how excellent soever) must be : it is a work earned on by Almighty Power, through unspeakable difficulties and mighty oppositions, Eph. i. 12. The exceeding greatness of God's power goes forth to produce it; and indeed no less is required to enlighten the blind mind, break the rocky heart, and bow the stubborn will of man; and the same Almighty Power which at first created it, is necessary to be continued every moment to preserve and continue it, 1 Pet. i. 5. The new creature is a mercy which draws a train of innumerable and invaluable mercies after it, Eph. ii. 13, 14. 1 Cor. iii. 20. When God hath given us a new nature, then he dignifies us with a new name, Rev. ii. 17, brings us into a new covenant, Jer. 31:33, begets us again to a new hope, 1 Pet. i. 8, intitles us to a new inheritance, John i. 12, 13. It is the new creature which through Christ makes our persons and duties acceptable with God, Gal. 6:15. In a word, it is the wonderful work of God, of which we may say, **"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."** There are unsearchable wonders in its generation, in its operation, and in its preservation. Let all therefore, whom the Lord hath thus renewed, fall down at the feet of God, **in an humble admiration** of the unsearchable riches of free grace, **and never open their mouths to complain under any adverse or bitter providences of God.**

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Inference 1. Learn from hence, what a naked, destitute, and empty thing, a poor sinner is, in his natural unregenerate state.

He is one that naturally and inherently hath neither wisdom, nor righteousness, sanctification nor redemption; all these must come from without himself, even from Christ, who is made all this to a sinner, or else he must eternally perish.

As no creature (in respect of external abilities) comes under more natural weakness into the world than man, naked, empty, and more shiftless and helpless than any other creature; so it is with his soul, yea, much more than so; all our excellencies are borrowed excellencies, no reason therefore to be proud of any of them, 1 Cor. iv. 7. **“What hast thou that thou hast not received? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received?”** q. d. What intolerable insolence and vanity would it be for a man that wears the rich and costly robe of Christ’s righteousness, in which there is not one thread of his own spinning, but all made by free-grace, and not by free-will, to jet proudly up and down the world in it, as if himself had made it, and he were beholden to none for it? O man! thine excellencies, whatever they are, are borrowed from Christ, they oblige thee to him, but he can be no more obliged to thee, who wears them, than the sun is obliged to him that borrows its light, or the fountain to him that draws its water for his use and benefit.

And it hath ever been the care of holy men, when they have viewed their own gracious principles, or best performances, still to disclaim themselves, and own free-grace as the sole author of all. Thus holy Paul, viewing the principles of divine life in himself, (the richest gift bestowed upon man in this world by Jesus Christ) how doth he renounce himself, and deny the least part of the praise and glory as belonging to him, Gal. ii. 20. “Now I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me;” and so for the best duties that ever he performed for God (and what mere man ever did more for God?). Yet when, in a just and necessary defense, he was constrained to mention them, 1 Cor. xv. 10. How carefully is the like [Yet not I] presently added? “I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” Well then, let the sense of your own emptiness by nature humble and oblige you the more to Christ, from whom you receive all you have. P26 v2

pg 153 v2

Inf. 3. How absurd, disingenuous, and unworthy of a Christian, is it to deny, or withhold from Christ anything he hath, or by which he may be served or honored?

Doth Christ communicate all he hath to you, and can you withhold anything from Christ? On Christ’s part it is not mine, and thine, but ours, or mine and yours; John xx. 17. “I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.” But O this cursed idol self! Which appropriates all to its own designs and uses. How liberal is Christ! and how penurious are we to him! Some will not part with their credit for Christ, when yet Christ abased himself unspeakably for them. Some will not part with a drop of blood for Christ, when Christ spent the whole treasure of his blood freely for us; yea, how loth are we to part with a shilling for Christ, to relieve him in his distressed members, when as yet we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich!” O ungrateful return! O base and disingenuous spirits! The things Christ gives us are great, and the things we deny to him are small; he parts with the greatest, and yet is denied the least. The things he communicates to us are none of ours, we have no right nor title by nature, or any desert of ours to them; the things we deny or grudge to Christ are by all titles his own, and he hath the fullest and most unquestionable title to them all; what he gives to us, he gives to them that never deserved it; what we withhold from him, we withhold from one that hath deserved that, and infinitely more from us than we have or are. He interested you freely in all his riches when you were enemies; you stand upon trifles with him, and yet call him your best and dearest friend : he gave himself and all he hath to you, when you could claim nothing from him ; you deny to part with these things to Christ, who may not only claim them upon the highest title, his own sovereignty, and absolute property, but by your own act, who profess to have given all in covenant to him : what he gives you

return no profit to him; but what you give or part with for him is your greatest advantage. O that the consideration of these things might shame and humble your souls!

Pg 223 v2

Use. First, Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely, then I beseech you *set your souls upon this lovely Jesus*. Methinks such an object as hath been here represented, should compel love from the coldest breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give it ; let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O did you but know his worth and excellency, what he is in himself, what he hath done for, and deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love him.

Secondly, *Esteem nothing lovely but as it is enjoyed in Christ, or improved for Christ*. Affect nothing for itself, love nothing separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of creatures, viz. in the excess of our affections, loving them above the rate and value of creatures; and in the *inordinary* of our affections, i.e., in loving them out of their proper places.

Pg 239 v2

Inf. 2. How transcendently glorious is the advancement of believers, by their union with the Lord of glory? This also is an admirable and astonishing mystery; it is the highest dignity of which our nature is capable, to be *hypostatically* united; and the greatest glory of which our persons are capable is to be *mystically* united to this Lord of glory; to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. O what is this! Christian, dost thou know and believe all this, and thy heart not burn within thee in love to Christ? O! then, what a heart hast thou? What art thou, by nature, but sinful dust, a loathsome sinner, viler than the vilest creature, cast out to the loathing of thy person in the day of thy nativity! O that ever the Lord of glory should unite himself to such a lump of vileness ! take such a wretch into his very bosom! **Be astonished**, O heavens and earth, at this! This is the great mystery which the angels stooped down to look into. Such an honour as this could never have entered into the heart of man. It would have seemed a rude blasphemy in us, once to have thought or spoken of such a thing, had not Christ made first the motion thereof; yet how long didst thou make this Lord of glory wait upon thy undetermined will, before he gained thy consent? Might he not justly have spurned thee into hell, upon thy first refusal, and never have made thee such another offer? **Wilt thou not say, Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that so great a King should stoop so far beneath himself, to such a worm as I am!** That strength should unite itself to weakness, infinite glory to such baseness! **O grace, grace, for ever to be admired.**

P 263

The Author of this Covenant The author of this covenant is God himself: "I will make it, says the Lord." This is the third time that this expression, "Says the Lord," is repeated in this testimony. The work expressed, in both the parts of it, the disannulling of the old covenant and the establishment of the new, is such as calls for this solemn interposition of the authority, veracity, and grace of God. "I will do it, says the Lord." And the mention of this is thus frequently inculcated, to beget a reverence in us of the work which he so emphatically assumes to himself. Owen – pg 263 Covenant Theology by Coxe/Owen

Christian Knowledge

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by G Clark

This is the approach to understand the scriptures. Study this one; I actually think that Proverbs 16:3 is related to this, “**Commit your works to the Lord, And your thoughts will be established.**” You want peace of mind? You want direction? Then study God. Study Owen, Edwards, Flavel and other great teachers. They were put here for that purpose; for believers to follow after, to copy, so to speak, from whom to learn the scriptures to glorify God. If we are not taught the scriptures, then we open ourselves to error, superstition and unreasonable ideas. See 2 Pet. 3:16, “**¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which **untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction**, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” So, God in his wisdom has given us teachers for this purpose, to build up the saints in the faith. See Jer. 3:15, “**And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.**” That’s the answer; and your thoughts, that is, your mind, your soul, that which is subject to vanity, vexation of spirit and the perplexities of life, prejudices, vain traditions, will be established, will be set in order, so you’ll know what to do! The more you grow in knowledge, the more you contemplate it, the more it will be an effective influence upon your heart, your affections, from which the issues of life flow, Pr. 4:23, “**Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.**” See Luke 6:45 too. There is a virtue or power in this vital exercise which is seen in 2Cor3:18, that you will be transformed into this very image of this knowledge or glory (of which knowledge, the knowledge of God, his moral excellencies, is a principal part) that was begun upon your conversion. See Col. 3:10, “**and have put on the new man [there’s His image] who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,**”. Thus, growth in knowledge, takes time and happens by degrees, hence *from glory to glory!* “**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord** [there’s the contemplating the knowledge or glory of God, faith mixing itself with the word in our minds as we think about and study these things], **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**” This is the way to attain peace, consolation, and joy and happiness, but the Spirit must work it. We work all, God works all; we are the proper actors, as Edwards says, and is born out in the scriptures (Phil. 2:13, *he works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure*). To the degree that this image is being impressed upon the soul, is directly proportional to the degree of our obedience to God and to the degree our peace and joy that we experience. That’s the answer.**

In an excellent introduction to his book, followed up by Sermon 1 in The Fountain of Life, John Flavel goes into the vital importance of Christian knowledge, the excellency of our faculty of understanding

over that of the beasts of the earth (instinct), and the importance of having an ordered view of the main plan of God's will and mind, to help us understand it, appreciate it more and retain the knowledge thereof, in the great plan of God to redeem man. This will incite you to your duty of being spiritually minded and in growing in knowledge. Grace and knowledge are inseparable. You grow in grace when you grow in knowledge. You cannot get saved without either! Hence, as John Flavel states, "faith is so much dependent on his knowledge, that it is denominated by it, Isaiah 53:11, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." And hence, John 6:40, seeing and believing are made the same things."¹

Barnes Notes on this: By his knowledge – That is, by the knowledge of him. The idea is, by becoming fully acquainted with him and his plan of salvation. The word knowledge here is evidently used in a large sense to denote all that constitutes acquaintance with him. Thus Paul says [Philippians 3:10](#), 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.' It is only by the knowledge of the Messiah; by an acquaintance with his character, doctrines, sufferings, death, and resurrection, that anyone can be justified. Thus the Saviour says [John 17:3](#), 'And this is life eternal, **that they might know thee** the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' People are to become acquainted with him; with his doctrines, and with his religion, or they can never be regarded and treated as righteous in the sight of a holy God.

¹ [Herman Bavinck puts it this way regarding this knowledge](#): "It is Gods' will, however, to give human beings a higher, a supernatural and heavenly, destiny. To that end he had to furnish them the so-called "superadded gifts" both before and after the fall. He must grant them a supernatural grace by which they can know and love God in another, a better and higher way, practice better and higher virtues, and attain a higher destiny. **This higher knowledge is faith (*fides*) and this higher love is charity (*caritas*).**" [Reformed Dogmatics](#), pg 358

Christian Knowledge

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The Fountain of Life by John Flavel

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/fountain.iv.html>

To the Christian Readers,

Especially those in the Town and Corporation of Dartmouth, and Parts adjacent, who have either befriended, or attended these Lectures.

Honoured and worthy Friends,

Knowledge is man's excellency above the beasts that perish, [Psal. 32: 9](#). The **knowledge** of Christ is the Christian's excellency above the Heathen, [1 Cor. 1: 23, 24](#). Practical and saving knowledge of Christ is the sincere Christian's excellency above the self-cozening hypocrite, [Heb. 6: 4, 6](#). But methodical and well digested knowledge of Christ is the strong Christian's excellency above the weak, [Heb. 5: 13, 14](#). A saving, though an immethodical knowledge of Christ, will bring us to heaven, [John 17: 2](#), but a regular and methodical, as well as a saving knowledge of him, will bring heaven into us, [Col. 2: 2, 3](#).

For such is the excellency thereof, even above all other knowledge of Christ, that it renders the understanding judicious, the memory tenacious, and the heart highly and fixedly joyous. How it serves to confirm and perfect the understanding, is excellently discovered by a worthy divine of our own, in these words:

A young ungrounded Christian, when he sees all the fundamental truths, and sees good evidence and reasons of them, perhaps may be yet ignorant of the right order and place of every truth. It is a rare thing to have young professors to understand the necessary truths methodically: and this is a very great defect; for a great part of the usefulness and excellency of particular truths consisteth in the respect they have to one another. This therefore will be a very considerable part of your confirmation, and growth in your understandings, to see the body of the Christian doctrine, as it were, at one view, as the several parts of it are united in one perfect frame; and to know what aspect one point has upon another, and which are their due places. There is a great difference betwixt the sight of the several parts of a clock or watch, as they are disjointed and scattered abroad, and the seeing of them conjoined, and in use and motion. To see here a pin and there a wheel, and not know how to set them all together, nor ever see them in their due places, will give but little satisfaction. It is the frame and design of holy doctrine that must be known, and every part should be discerned as it has its particular use to that design, and as it is connected with the other parts.

By this means only can the true nature of Theology, together with the harmony and perfection of truth, be clearly understood. And every single truth also will be much better perceived by him that sees its place and order, than by any other: for one truth exceedingly illustrates and leads another into the understanding. – Study therefore to grow in the more methodical knowledge of the same truths which you have received; and though you are not yet ripe enough to discern the whole body of theology in due method, yet see so much as you have attained to know, in the right order and placing of every part. As in anatomy, it is hard for the wisest physician to discern the course of every branch of the veins and arteries; but yet they may easily discern the place and order of the principal parts, and greater vessels, (and surely in the body of religion there are no branches of greater or more necessary truth than these) so it is in divinity, where no man has a perfect view of the whole, till he comes to the state of perfection with God; but every true Christian has the knowledge of all the essentials, and may know the orders and places of them all.

And as it serves to render the mind more judicious, so it causes the memory to be more tenacious, and retentive of truths. The chain of truth is easily held in the memory, when one truth links in another; but the loosing of a link endangers the scattering of the whole chain. We use to say, **order is the mother of memory**; I am sure it is a singular friend to it: hence it is observed, those that write of the art of memory, lay so great a stress upon place and number. The memory would not so soon be overcharged with a multitude of truths, if that multitude were but orderly disposed. It is the incoherence and confusion of truths, rather than their number, that distracts. Let but the understanding receive them regularly, and the memory will retain them with much more facility. A bad memory is a common complaint among Christians: all the benefit that many of you have in hearing, is from the present influence of truths upon your hearts; there is but little that sticks by you, to make a second and third impression upon them. I know it may be said of some of you, that if your affections were not better than your memories, you would need a very large charity to pass for Christians. I confess it is better to have a well ordered heart, than a methodical head; but surely both are better than either. And for you that have constantly attended these exercises, and followed us through the whole series and deduction of these truths, from text to text, and from point to point; who have begun one sabbath where you left another, it will be your inexcusable fault, if these things be not fixed in your understanding and memories, as nails fastened in a sure place: especially as providence has now brought to your eyes, what has been so often sounded in your ears, which is no small help to fix these truths upon you, and prevent that great hazard of them, which commonly attends bare hearing; for now you may have recourse as often as you will to them, view and review them, till they become your own.

But though this be a great and singular advantage, yet is not all you may have by a **methodical understanding of the doctrines of Christ**: it is more than a judicious understanding them, or faithful remembering them, that you and I must design, even the warm, vital, animating influences of these truths upon our hearts, without which we shall be never the better; yea, much the worse for knowing and remembering them.

Truth is the sanctifying instrument, John 17: 17. the mould into which our souls are cast, Rom. 6: 17. According therefore to the stamps and impressions it makes upon our understandings, and the order in which truths lie there, will be the depth and **lastingness of their impressions and influences upon the heart**; as, the more weight is laid upon the seal, the more fair and lasting impression is made upon the wax. He that sees the grounds and reasons of his peace and comfort most clearly, is like to maintain it the more constantly.

Great therefore is the advantage Christians have by such methodical systems. Surely they may be set down among the *desiderata Christianorum*, The most desired things of Christians.

Divers worthy modern pens have indeed undertaken this noble subject before me, Some more succinctly, others more copiously: these have done worthily, and their praises are in the churches of

Christ; yet such breadth there is in the knowledge of Christ, that not only those who have written on this subject before me, but a thousand authors more may employ their pens after us, and not interfere with, or straiten another.

And such is the deliciousness of this subject, that, were there ten thousand volumes written upon it, they would never cloy, or become nauseous to a gracious heart. We use to say, one thing tires, and it is true that it does so, except that one thing be virtually and eminently all things, as Christ is; and then one thing can never tire; for such is the variety of sweetness in Christ, who is the *deliciae humani generis*, the delights of the children of men, that every time he is opened to believers from pulpit or press, it is as if heaven had furnished them with a new Christ; and yet he is the same Christ still.

The treatise itself will satisfy you, that I have not boasted in another man's line, of things made ready to my hand; which I speak not in the least to win any praise to myself from the undertaking, but to remove prejudice from it; for I see more defects in it, than most of my readers will see, and can forethink more faults to be found in it, than I now shall stand to tell thee of, or answer for. It was written in a time of great distractions; and didst thou but know how oft this work has died and revived under my hand, thou wouldst wonder that ever it came to thine.

I am sensible it may fall under some censorious (it may be, envious) eyes, and that far different judgements will pass upon it; for *pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*: And no wonder if a treatise of Christ be, when Christ himself was to some, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." I expect not to please every reader, especially the envious; *magna debet esse eloquentie, quae invitis placet*. It is as hard for some to look upon other men's gifts without envy, as it is to look upon their own without pride; nor will I be any further concerned with such readers, than to pity them; well knowing that every proud, contemptuous and envious censure is a grenado that breaks in the hand of him that casts it.

But to the ingenuous and candid reader, I owe satisfaction for the obscurity of some part of this discourse, occasioned by the conciseness of the stile; to which I have this only to say, that I was willing to crowd as much matter as I could into this number of sheets in thy hand, that I might therein ease thee both in thy pains and thy purse. I confess the sermons were preached in a more relaxed stile, and most of these things were enlarged in the pulpit, which are designedly contracted in the press, that the volume might not swell above the ability of common readers. And it was my purpose at first to have comprised the second part, viz., The application of the redemption that is with Christ unto sinners, in one volume, which occasioned the contraction of this; but that making a just volume itself, must await another season to see the light. If the reader will be but a little the more intent and considerate in reading, this conciseness will turn to his advantage.

This may suffice to show the usefulness of such composure, and prevent offence; but something yet remains with me, to say to the readers in general, to those of this town in special, and to the flock committed by Christ to my charge more especially.

1. To readers in general, according as their different states and conditions may be; there are six things earnestly to be requested of them.

(1.) If you be yet strangers to Christ, let these things begin, and beget your first acquaintance with him. I assure thee, reader, it was a principal part of the design thereof; and here thou wilt find many directions, helps, and sweet encouragements, to assist a poor stranger as thou art, in that great work. Say not, I am an enemy to Christ, and there is no hope of reconciliation; for here thou wilt see, how “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” Say not, all this is nothing except God had told thee so, and appointed some to treat with thee about it; “for he has committed unto us the word of this reconciliation.” Say not, yea, that may be from your own pity and compassion for us, and not from any commission you have for it; for we “are ambassadors for Christ,” [2 Cor. 5: 20](#).

Say not, O but my sins are greater than can be forgiven: the difficulties of my salvation are too great to be overcome, especially by a poor creature as I am, that am able to do nothing, no, not to raise one penny towards the discharge of that great debt I owe to God. For here thou wilt find, upon thy union with Christ, that there is merit enough in his blood, and mercy enough in his bowels, to justify and save such a one as thou art. Yea, and I will add for thine encouragement, that it is a righteous thing, with God to justify and save thee, that canst not pay him one penny of all the vast sums thou owest him; when, by the same rule of justice, he condemns the most strict, self-righteous Pharisee, that thinks thereby to quit scores with him. It is righteous for a judge to cast him that has paid ninety-nine pounds of the hundred, which he owed, because the payment was not full; and to acquit him, whose surety has paid all, though himself did not, and freely confess that he cannot pay one farthing of the whole debt.

(2.) If thou be a self-deceiving soul, that easily takest up thy satisfaction about thine interest in Christ, look to it, as thou valuest thy soul, reader, that a fond and groundless conceit of thine interest in Christ do not effectually and finally obstruct a true and saving, interest in him. This is the common and fatal error in which multitudes of souls are ensnared and ruined: for look as a conceit of great wisdom hinders many from the attaining of it; so a groundless conceit that Christ is already thine, may prove the greatest obstacle between Christ and thee: but here thou wilt meet with many rules that will not deceive thee, trials that will open thy true condition to thee.

Thou sometimes reflectest upon the state of thy soul, and enquirest, is Christ mine? May I depend upon it, that my condition is safe? Thy heart returns thee an answer of peace, it speaks as thou wouldst have it. But remember, friend, and mark this line, Thy final sentence is not yet come from the mouth of thy Judge; and what if, after all thy self-flattering hopes and groundless confidence, a sentence should come from him quite cross to that of thine own heart? Where art thou then? What a confounded person wilt thou be? Christless, speechless, and hopeless, all at once!

O therefore build sure for eternity; take heed lest the loss of thine eternal happiness be at last imputed by thee to the deceitfulness and laziness of thine own heart: lest thy heart say to thee in hell, as the heart of Apollodorus seemed in his sufferings to say to him, I am the cause of all this misery to thee.

(3.) If thou be one whose heart is eagerly set upon this vain world, I beseech thee take heed, lest it interpose itself betwixt Christ and thy soul, and so cut thee off from him for ever. O beware, lest the dust of the earth, getting into thine eyes, so blind thee, that thou never see the beauty or necessity of Christ. The god of this world so blinds the eyes of them that believe not. And what are sparkling pleasures that dazzles the eyes of some, and the distracting cares that wholly divert the minds of others, but as a napkin drawn by Satan over the eyes of them that are to be turned off into hell? [1 Cor. 4: 3, 4.](#)

Some general aims, and faint wishes after Christ you may have; but alas! The world has centered thy heart, entangled thy affections, and will daily find new diversions for them from the great business of life; so that, if the Lord break not this snare, thou wilt never be able to deliver thy soul.

(4.) If thou be a loose and careless professor of Christ, I beseech thee, let the things thou shalt read in this treatise of Christ, convince, shame, reclaim thee from thy vain conversation. Here thou wilt find how contrary thy conversation is to the grand designs of the death and resurrection of Christ. Oh, rethinks as thou art reading the deep humiliation, and unspeakable sorrows Christ underwent for the expiating of sin, thou shouldst thenceforth look upon sin as a tender child would look upon that knife that stabbed his father to the heart! Thou shouldst never whet and sharpen it again to wound the Son of God afresh. To such loose and careless professors, I particularly recommend the last general use of this discourse, containing many great motives to reformation and strict godliness in all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

(5.) If thou hast been a profane and vain person, but now art pardoned, and dost experience the superabounding riches of grace, my request to thee is, that thou love Jesus Christ with a more fervent love than ever yet thou hadst for him. Here thou wilt find many great incentives, many mighty arguments to such a love of Christ. Poor soul, consider what thou hast been, what the morning of thy life was, what treasures of guilt thou laidst up in those days; and then think, can such a one as I receive mercy, and that mercy not break my heart? Can I read my pardon, and mine eyes not drop? What! Mercy for such a wretch as I! a pardon for such a rebel! O what an ingenuous thaw should this cause upon my heart! If it do not, what a strange heart is thine.

Did the love of Christ break through so many impediments to come to thee? Did it make its way through the law, through the wrath of God, through the grave, through thine own unbelief and great unworthiness, to come to thee? O what a love was the love of Christ to thy soul; And is not thy love

strong enough to break through the vanities and trifles of this world, which entangle it, to go to Christ? How poor, how low and weak is thy love to Christ then?

(6.) Lastly, Art thou one that hast through mercy at last attained assurance, or good hope, through grace, of thy interest in Christ? Rejoice then in thy present mercy, and long ardently to be with thine own Christ in his glory. There be many things dispersed through this treatise, of Christ, to animate such joy, and excite such longings. It was truly observed by a worthy author, (whose words I have mentioned more freely than his name in this discourse) That it is in a manner as natural for us to leap when we see the new Jerusalem, as it is to laugh when we are tickled: Joy is not under the soul's command when Christ kisseth it. And for your desires to be with Christ, what consideration can you find in this world strong enough to rein them in? O when you shall consider what he has done, suffered, and purchased for you, where he is now, and how much he longs for your coming, your very hearts should groan out those words, [Phil. 1: 23](#), "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for of Christ.

2. Having delivered my message to the reader in general, I have somewhat more particularly to say to you of this place.

You are a people that were born under, and bred up with the gospel. It has been your singular privilege, above many towns and parishes in England, to enjoy more than sixty years together an able and fruitful ministry among you. The dew of heaven lay upon you, as it did upon Gideon's fleece, when the ground was dry in other places about you; you have been richly watered with gospel-showers; you, with Capernaum, have been exalted to heaven in the means of grace. And it must be owned to your praise, that you testified more respect to the gospel than many other places have done, and treated Christ's ambassadors with more civility, whilst they prophesied in sackcloth, than some other places did. These things are praise-worthy in you. But all this, and much more than this, amounts not to that which Jesus Christ expects from you, and which in his name I would now persuade you to. And O that I (the least and unworthiest of all the messengers of Christ to you) might indeed prevail with all that are Christless among you, (1) To answer the long continued calls of God to you, by a thorough and sound conversion, that the long-suffering of God may be your salvation, and you may not receive all this grace of God in vain. O that the damned might never be set a wondering, to see a people of your advantages for heaven, sinking as much below many of themselves in misery, as you now are above them in means and mercy.

Dear friends, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is that you may be saved. O that I knew how to engage this whole town to Jesus Christ, and make fast the marriage-knot betwixt him and you, albeit after that I should presently go to the place of silence; and see men no more, with the inhabitants of the world. Ah sirs! Me thinks I see the Lord Jesus laying the merciful hand of a holy violence upon you: methinks he calls to you, as the angel to Lot saying, "Arise, lest ye be consumed; And "while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, the Lord being merciful unto him. And they

brought him without the city, and said, Escape for thy life, stay not in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed," [Gen. 19: 15](#). How often (to allude to this) has Jesus Christ in like manner laid hold upon you in the preaching of the gospel, and will you not flee for refuge to him? Will you rather be consumed, than to endeavour an escape? A beast will not be driven into the fire, and will you not be kept out? The merciful Lord Jesus, by his admirable patience and bounty, has convinced you how loth he is to leave or lose you. To this day his arms are stretched forth to gather you, and will you not be gathered? Alas for my poor neighbours! Must so many of them perish at last? What shall I do for the daughter of my people?

Lord, by arguments shall they be persuaded to be happy? What will win them effectually to thy Christ? They have many of them escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. They are a people that love thine ordinances, they take delight in approaching to God; thou hast beautified many of them with lovely and obliging tempers and dispositions. Thus far they are come, there they stick; and beyond this no power but thine can move them. O thou, to whose hand this work is and must be left, put forth thy saving power and reveal thine arm for their salvation; Thou hast glorified thy name in many of them; Lord, glorify it again.

(2.) My next request is, that you will all be persuaded, whether converted or unconverted, to set up all the duties at religion in your families, and govern your children and servants as men that must give an account to God for them in the great day. O that there were not a prayerless family in this town! How little will their tables differ from the manger, where beasts feed together, if God be not owned and acknowledged there, in your eating and drinking? And how can you expect blessings should dwell in your tabernacles, if God be not called on there? Say not, you want time for it, or that your necessities will not allow it; for, had you been more careful of these duties, it is like you had not been exposed to such necessities: besides, you can find time to be idle, you can waste a part of every day vainly; Why could not that time be redeemed for God? Moreover, you will not deny but the success of all your affairs at home and abroad depends upon the blessing of God; and if so, think you it is not the right way, even to temporal prosperity, to engage his presence and blessing with you, in whose hands your all is? Say not, your children and servants are ignorant of God, and therefore you cannot comfortably join with them in those duties, for the neglect of those duties is the cause of their ignorance; and it is not like they will be better, till you use God's means to make them so.

Besides, prayer is a part of natural worship, and the vilest among men are bound to pray, else the neglect of it were none of their sin. O let not a duty, upon which so many and great blessings hang, fall to the ground, upon such silly (not to say wicked) pretences to shift it off. Remember, death will shortly break up all your families, and disband them; and who then think you will have most comfort in beholding their dead? The day of account also hastens, and then who will have the most comfortable appearing before the just and holy God? Set up, I beseech you, the ancient and comfortable duties of reading the scriptures, singing of psalms, and prayer, in all your dwelling-places. And do all these

conscientiously, as men that have to do with God; and try the Lord herewith, if he will not return in a way of mercy to you, and restore even your outward prosperity to you again. However, to be sure, far greater encouragements than that lie before you, to oblige you to your duties.

(3.) More especially, I have a few things to say to you that have attended on the ministry, or are under my oversight in a more particular manner, and then I have done. And,

1st, I cannot but observe to you the goodness of our God, yea, the riches of his goodness:

Who freely gave Jesus Christ out of his own bosom for us, and has not withheld his Spirit, ordinances and ministers, to reveal and apply him to us. Here is love that wants an epithet to match it:

Who engaged my heart upon this transcendent subject in the course of my ministry among you: a subject which angels study and admire, as well as we:

Who so signally protected and overshadowed our assemble in those days of trouble, wherein these truths were delivered to you. You then sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to your taste: his banner over you was love; your bread was then sure, and your waters failed not: Yea, such was his peculiar indulgence, and special tenderness to you, that he suffered no man to do you harm; and it can hardly be imagined any could attempt it that had but known this, and no worse than this, to be your only design and business:

Who made these meditations of Christ a strong support, and sweet relief to mine, now with Christ, and no less to me, under the greatest exercises and tries that ever befell me in this world; preserving me yet (though a broken vessel) for some farther use and service to your souls:

Who in the years that are past left not himself without witness among us, blessing my labours, to the conversion and edification of many; Some of which yet remain with us, but some are fallen asleep:

Who has made many of you that yet remain, a willing and obedient people, who have in some measure supported the reputation of religion by your stability and integrity in days of abounding iniquity: my joy and my crown; so stand ye fast in the Lord!

Who after all the days of fears and troubles, through which we have past, has at last given us and his churches rest; "that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness (which doing, this mercy may be extended to us) all the days of our life."

In testimony of a thankful heart for these invaluable mercies, I humbly and cheerfully rear up this pillar of remembrance, inscribing it with EBEN-EZER, and JEHOVAH-JIREH!

2dly, As I could not but observe these things to you, so I have a few things to request of you, in neither of which I can bar denial, so deeply Christ's, your own, and my interest lie in them.

(1.) Look to it, my dear friends, that none of you be found Christless at your appearance before him. Those that continue Christless now, will be left speechless then. God forbid that you that have heard so much of Christ, and you that have professed so much of Christ, should at last fall into a worse condition than those that never heard the name of Christ.

(2.) See that you daily grow more Christ-like by conversing with him, as you do, in his precious ordinances. Let it be with your souls, as it is with a piece of cloth, which receives a deeper dye every time it is dipt into a vat. If not, you may not expect the continuance of your mercies much longer to you.

(3.) Get these great truths well digested both in your heads and hearts, and let the power of them be displayed in your lives, else the pen of the scribe, and the tongue of the preacher, are both in vain. These things, that so often warmed your hearts from the pulpit, return now to make a second impression upon them from the press. Hereby you will recover and fix those truths, which, it is like, are in great part already vanished from you.

This is the fruit I promise myself from you: and whatever entertainment it meets with from others in this Christ-despising age, yet two things relieve me; one is, that future times may produce more humble and hungry Christians than this gluttonous age enjoys, to whom it will be welcome: the other is, that duty is discharged, and endeavours are used to bring men to Christ,, and build them up in him: wherein he does and will rejoice, who is a well-wisher to the souls of men.

Sermon 1

Opens the Excellency of the Subject.

[1 COR. 2: 2.](#)

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

The former verse contains an apology for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle's preaching, which was not (as he there tells them) with excellency of speech, or of wisdom; i. e. he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties. In this he gives the reason, "for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ," &c.

"I determined not to know." The meaning is not, that he simply despised, or condemned all other studies and knowledge; but so far only as they stand in competition with, or opposition to the study and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And it is as if he should say, it is my stated, settled judgement; not a hasty, inconsiderate censure, but the product and issue of my most serious and exquisite enquiries. After I have well weighed the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all

advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things, that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the result and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in the same day with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, I resolve to make the scope and end of my ministry, and the end regulates the mean; such pedantic toys, and airy notions as injudicious ears affect, would rather obstruct than promote my grand design among you; therefore, wholly waving that way, I applied myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, **fitted rather to pierce the heart, and convince the conscience, than to tickle the fancy.** This is the scope of the words, in which three things fall under consideration;

First, The subject matter of his doctrine, to wit, Jesus Christ. "I determined to know nothing," i. e. to study nothing myself, to teach nothing to you, but "Jesus Christ." Christ shall be the centre to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all reductively the preaching and discovery of Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, **this is the sweetest; if there be any thing on this side heaven, worthy our time and studies**, this is it. Thus he magnifies his doctrine, from the excellency of its subject-matter, accounting all other doctrines but airy things, compared with this.

Secondly, We have here that special respect or consideration of Christ, which he singled out from all the rest of the excellent truths of Christ, to spend the main strength of his ministry upon; and that is, Christ as crucified: and the rather, because hereby he would obviate the vulgar prejudice raised against him upon the account of his cross; "For Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness," chap. 1: 23. This also best suited his end, to draw them on to Christ; as Christ above all other subjects, so Christ crucified above all things in Christ. There is, therefore, a great emphasis in this word, "and him crucified."

Thirdly, The manner in which he discoursed this transcendent subject to them, is also remarkable; he not only preached Christ crucified, but he preached him assiduously and plainly. He preached Christ frequently; "and whenever he preached of Christ crucified, he preached him in a crucified stile." This is the sum of the words; to let them know that his spirit was intent upon this subject, as if he neither knew, nor cared to speak of any other. All his sermons were so full of Christ, that his hearers might have thought he was acquainted with no other doctrine. Hence observe,

Doct. That there is no doctrine more excellent in itself or more necessary to be preached and, studied, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

ALL other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be esteemed but dross, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, [Phil. 3: 8.](#) "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," [Col. 2: 3.](#)

Eudoxus was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it; much more should a Christian judge himself born only to behold and delight in the glory of the Lord Jesus.

The truth of this proposition will be made out by a double consideration of the doctrine of Christ.

First, Let it be considered absolutely, and then these lovely properties with which it is naturally clothed, will render it superior to all other sciences and studies.

1st, The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the very marrow and kernel of all the scriptures; the scope and centre of all divine revelations; both Testaments meet in Christ. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the gospel is full of Christ: the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in him; and how they both harmonize, and sweetly centre in Jesus Christ, is the chief scope of that excellent epistle to the Hebrews, to discover; for we may call that epistle the sweet harmony of both Testaments. This argues the unspeakable excellency of this doctrine, the knowledge whereof must needs therefore be a key to unlock the greatest part of the sacred scriptures. For it is in the understanding of scripture, much as it is in the knowledge men have in logic and philosophy: if a scholar once come to understand the bottom-principle, upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy, and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the scriptures.

2dly, **The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a fundamental knowledge**; and foundations are most useful, though least seen. **The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all graces, duties, comforts, and happiness.** [knowledge and grace are inseparable! 2Pet. 2:2, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.”]

(1.) **It is fundamental to all graces; they all begin in knowledge**; [Col. 3: 10](#). **“The new man is renewed in knowledge.”** As the old, so the new creation begins in light; the opening of the eyes is the first work of the Spirit; and as the beginnings of grace, so all the after-improvements thereof depend upon this increasing knowledge, [2 Pet. 3: 18](#). “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.” See how these two, grace and knowledge, keep equal pace in the soul of a Christian in what degree the one increases, the other increases answerable.

(2.) **The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all duties**; the duties, as well as the graces of all Christians, are all founded in the knowledge of Christ, Must a Christian believe? That he can never do without the knowledge of Christ: faith is so much dependent on his knowledge, that it is denominated by it, [Isa. 53: 11](#). “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;” and hence, [John 6: 40](#), seeing and believing are made the same thing. Would a man exercise hope in God? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for he is the author of that hope, [1 Pet. 1: 3](#), he is also its object, [Heb. 6: 19](#). Its ground-work and support, [Col. 1: 27](#). And as you cannot believe or hope, so

neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge. The very Heathen could say, *Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine*, i. e. Men must not speak of God without light: the true way of conversing with, and enjoying God in prayer, is by acting faith on him through a Mediator: so much comfort and true excellency there is in it, and no more. O then, how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ, to all that do address themselves to God in any duty.

(3.) **It is fundamental to all comforts: all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain.** Jesus Christ is the very object matter of a believer's joy, [Phil. 3: 3](#). "Our rejoicing is in "Christ Jesus." Take away the knowledge of Christ, and a Christian is the most sad and melancholy creature in the world: again, let Christ but manifest himself, and dart the beams of his light into their souls, it will make them kiss the stakes, sing in flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

*Lastly, **This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls: as we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it,*** [John 17: 3](#). "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And, if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ: as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key that opens Christ. The excellent gifts, and renowned parts of the moral Heathens, though they purchased to them great esteem and honour among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, they were ignorant of Christ, [1 Cor. 1: 21](#). Thus you see how fundamental the knowledge of Christ is, essentially necessary to all the graces, duties, comforts and happiness of souls.

3dly, **The knowledge of Christ is profound and large; all other sciences are but shadows;** this is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature has a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth and breadth ascribed to it, [Eph. 3: 18](#), yea, it passeth knowledge. There is "a manifold wisdom of God in Christ," [Eph. 3: 10](#). It is of many sorts and forms, of many folds and plates: it is indeed simple, pure and unmixed with anything but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds and administrations; though something of Christ be unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold him. I see something, said Luther, which blessed Austin saw not; and those that come after me, will see that which I see not. It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new discovered country; at first men sit down by the sea-side, upon the skirts and borders of the land; and there they dwell, but by degrees they search farther and farther into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!

4thly, **The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject** that ever a soul spent itself upon; those that rack and torture their brains upon other studies, like children, weary themselves at a low game; the eagle plays at the sun itself. The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? [Eph. 3: 8, 9](#). God's heart is opened to men in Christ, [John 1: 18](#). This makes the gospel

such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein, [2 Cor. 3: 9](#). And the studying of Christ in the gospel, stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul, ver. 18.

5thly, **It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge**; to be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? And the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts ravished with the discoveries of Christ in the gospel? What ecstasies, meltings, transports, do gracious souls meet there? Doubtless, Philip's ecstasy, [John 1: 25](#). "eurekamen Iesoun", "We have found Jesus," was far beyond that of Archimedes. A believer could sit from morning to night, to hear discourses of Christ; "His mouth is most sweet", [Cant. 5: 16](#).

Secondly, Let us compare this knowledge with all other knowledge, and thereby the excellency of it will farther appear.

1. **All other knowledge is natural, but this wholly supernatural**, [Mat. 11: 27](#). "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father", neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whom soever the Son will reveal him." The wisest Heathens could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate Christians.

2. **Other knowledge is unattainable by many**. All the helps and means in the world would never enable some Christians to attain the learned arts and languages; men of the best wits, and most pregnant parts, are most excellent in these; **but here is the mystery and excellency of the knowledge of Christ**, that men of most blunt, dull and contemptible parts attain, through the teaching of the Spirit, to this knowledge, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind. [Mat. 11: 25](#), "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." [1 Cor. 1: 26, 27](#). "You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise," &c.

3. Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would never bring you to heaven, being defective and lame both in the integrity of parts, the principal thing, viz. Christ, being wanting; and in the purity of its nature: for the knowing Heathens grew vain in their imaginations, [Rom. 1: 21](#), and in the efficacy and influence of it on the heart and life, They held the truth in unrighteousness; their lusts were stronger than their light, [Rom. 1: 18](#). But this knowledge has potent influences, changing souls, into its own image, [2 Cor. 3: 18](#), and so proves a saving knowledge unto men, [1 Tim. 2: 4](#). And thus I have in a few particulars pointed out the transcendence of the knowledge of Christ.

The use of all this I shall give you in a few inferences, on which I shall not enlarge, the whole being only preliminary to the doctrine of Christ; only for the present I shall hence infer,

Inference 1.

The sufficiency of the doctrine of Christ, to make men wise unto salvation. Paul desired to know nothing else; and, indeed, nothing else is of absolute necessity to be known. A little of this knowledge, if saving and effectual upon thy heart, will do thy soul more service, than all the vain speculation and profound parts that others so much glory in. Poor Christian, be not dejected, because thou sees thyself out-stript and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge; if thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate Christians in heaven.

Inference 2.

If there be such excellency in the knowledge of Christ, let it humble all, both saints and sinners, that we have no more of this clear and effectual knowledge in us, notwithstanding the excellent advantages we have had for it. Sinners, concerning you I may sigh and say with the apostle, [1 Cor. 15: 34](#). "Some have not the knowledge of Christ, I speak this to your shame". This, O this is the condemnation. And even for you that are enlightened in this knowledge, how little do you know of Jesus Christ, in comparison of what you might have known of him? What a shame is it, that you should need to be taught the very first truths, "when for the time you might have been teachers of others?" [Heb. 5: 12, 13, 14](#). "That your ministers cannot speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ," [1 Cor. 3: 1, 2](#). O how much time is spent in other studies, in vain discourses, frivolous pamphlets, worldly employments? How little is the search and study of Jesus Christ.

Inference 3.

How sad is their condition that have a knowledge of Christ, and yet as to themselves it had been better they had never had it! Many there be that content themselves with an unpractical, ineffectual, and merely notional knowledge of him; of whom the apostle saith, "It had been better for them not to have known," [2 Pet. 2: 21](#). It serves only to aggravate sin and misery; for though it be not enough to save them, yet it puts some weak restraints upon sin, which their impetuous lusts breaking down, exposes them thereby to a greater damnation.

Inference 4.

Fourthly, This may inform us by what rule to judge both ministers and doctrine. Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be an able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit, [2 Cor. 3: 6](#). He is the best artist, that can most lively and powerfully display Jesus Christ before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them; and that is the best sermon, that is most full of Christ, not of art and language. I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ's ministers, they should not be rude and careless in language or method; but surely the

excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ.

Inference 5.

Let all that mind the honour of religion, or the peace and comfort of their own souls, wholly sequester and apply themselves to the study of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Wherefore spend we ourselves upon other studies, when all excellency, sweetness, and desirableness is centered in this one? Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten thousands, "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood;" Quae faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt. These things which singly ravish and delight the souls of men, are all found conjunctly in Christ. O what a blessed Christ is this! Whom to know is eternal life. From the knowledge of Jesus Christ do bud forth all the fruits of comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. Hence [Rev. 22: 2](#), he is called "the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month; and the very leaves of this tree are for healing." In Christ souls have, (1.) All necessaries for food and physic. (2.) All varieties of fruits, twelve manner of fruits; a distinct sweetness in this, in that, and in the other attribute, promise, ordinance. (3.) In him are these fruits at all times, he bears fruit every month; there is precious fruit in Jesus Christ, even in the black month; winter fruits as well as summer fruits. O then study Christ, study to know him more extensively. There be many excellent things in Christ, that the most eagle-eyed believer has not yet seen: Ah! 'tis pity that any thing of Christ should lie hid from his people. Study to know Christ more intensively, to get the experimental taste and lively power of his knowledge upon your hearts and affections: This is the knowledge that carries all the sweetness and comfort in it. Christian, I dare appeal to thy experience, whether the experimental taste of Jesus Christ, in ordinances and duties, has not a higher and sweeter relish than any created enjoyment thou ever tasted in this world? O then separate, devote, and wholly give thyself, thy time, thy strength to this most sweet transcendent study.

Inference 6.

Lastly, Let me close the whole with a double caution; one to ourselves, who by our callings and professions are the ministers of Christ; another to those that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily.

First, If this doctrine be the most excellent, necessary, fundamental, profound, noble, and comfortable doctrine, let us then take heed lest, while we study to be exact in other things, we be found ignorant in this. Ye know it is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, for any man to be unacquainted with his own calling, or not to attend the proper business of it: it is our calling, as the Bridegroom's friends, to woo and win souls to Christ, to set him forth to the people as crucified among them, [Gal. 3: 1](#), to present him in all his attractive excellencies, that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love: we must also be able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining heretics, to instill his knowledge into the ignorant, to answer the cases and

scruples of poor doubting Christians. How many intricate knots have we to untie? What pains, what skill is requisite for such as are employed about our work? And shall we spend our precious time in frivolous controversies, philosophical niceties, dry and barren scholastic notions? Shall we study every thing but Christ? Revolve all volumes but the sacred ones? What is observed even of Bellarmine, that he turned with loathing from school divinity, because it wanted the sweet juice of piety, may be convictive to many among us, who are often too much in love with worse employment than what he is said to loathe. O let the knowledge of Christ dwell richly in us.

Secondly, Let us see that our knowledge of Christ be not a powerless, barren, unpractical knowledge: O that, in its passage from our understanding to our lips, it might powerfully melt, sweeten, and ravish our hearts! Remember, brethren, a holy calling never saved any man, without a holy heart; if our tongues only be sanctified, our whole man must be damned. "We and our people must be judged by the same gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced to the same terms, and dealt with as severely as any other men: We cannot think to be saved by our clergy, or to come off with a Legit ut clericus, when there is wanting the Credit et vixit ut Christianus; as an eminent Divine speaks. O let the keepers of the vineyard look to, and keep their own vineyard: we have a heaven to win or lose, as well as others.

Thirdly, Let us take heed that we withhold not our knowledge of Christ in unrighteousness from the people. O that our lips may disperse knowledge and feed many. Let us take heed of the napkin, remembering the day of account is at hand. Remember, I beseech you, the relations wherein you stand, and the obligations resulting thence: Remember, the great Shepherd gave himself for, and gave you to the flock; your time, your gifts are not yours, but God's; remember the pinching wants of souls, who are perishing for want of Christ; and if their tongues do not, yet their necessities do bespeak us, as they did Joseph, [Gen. 47: 15](#). "Wherefore should we die in thy presence? Give us food, that we may live and not die." Even the sea monsters draw forth their breasts to their young ones, and shall we be cruel! Cruel to souls! Did Christ not think it too much to sweat blood, yea, to die for them? And shall we think it much to watch, study, preach, pray, and do what we can for their salvation? O let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ!

Secondly, To the people that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily, and have the light of his knowledge shining round about them.

First, Take heed ye do not reject and despise this light. This may be done two ways: First, When you despise the means of knowledge by slight and low esteems of it. Surely, if you thus reject knowledge, God will reject you for it, [Hos. 4: 6](#). It is a despising of the richest gift that ever Christ gave to the church; and however it be a contempt and slight that begins low, and seems only to vent itself upon the weak parts, in artificial discourses, and untaking tones and gestures of the speakers; yet, believe it, it is a daring sin that flies higher than you are aware, [Luke 10: 16](#) "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me". Secondly, You despise the knowledge of Christ,

When you despise the directions and loving constraints of that knowledge; when you refuse to be guided by your knowledge, your light and your lusts contest and struggle within you. O it is sad when your lusts master your light. You sin not as the heathens sin, who know not God; but when you sin, you must slight and put by the notices of your own consciences, and offer violence to your own convictions. And what sad work will this make in your souls? How soon will it lay your consciences waste?

Secondly, Take heed that you rest not satisfied with that knowledge of Christ you have attained, but grow on towards perfection. It is the pride and ignorance of many professors, when they have got a few raw and undigested notions, to swell with self-conceit of their excellent attainments. And it is the sin, even of the best of saints, when they see (*veritas in profundo*) how deep the knowledge of Christ lies, and what pains they must take to dig for it, to throw by the shovel of duty, and cry, Dig we cannot. To your work, Christians, to your work; let not your candle go out: sequester yourselves to this study, look what intercourses, and correspondence are betwixt the two world; what communion soever God and souls maintain, it is in this way; count all, therefore, but dross in comparison of that excellency which is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The key of knowledge and why it's important.

John Flavel, *England's Duty*, vol. 4, pg 43-44

First Bar.

The first Bar making fast the soul of man against Christ, is ignorance, that *obex infernalis*, that hellish bolt, which effectually keeps Christ out of the soul.

If knowledge be the Key that opens the heart to Christ, as its plain it is, from Luke 11:52, where Christ denounces a woe to them that took away *the key of knowledge*; then ignorance must needs be the shutter that makes fast the door of the heart against Christ. Upon this ground Christ told the woman of Samaria, John 4:10, that her infidelity grew upon the root of her ignorance, *If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* Ah sinners, did you but know what a Christ he is, that is offered to your souls in the Gospel, did you see his beauty, fulness, and suitableness, and feel your own necessities of him, all the World could not keep you from him: You would break through all reproaches, all sufferings, all self-denials, to come into the enjoyment of him. But alas, it is with you as it was with those, *Cant. 5:9, What is thy beloved (say they to the Spouse) more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?* Unknown excellencies attract not. Ignorance is Satan's scepter, which he sways over all his Kingdom of darkness, and holds his vassals in miserable bondage to him. Hence the devils are called, *The rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. 6:12.* Alas, were the eyes of sinners but opened to see

their woeful state, and their remedy in Christ, he could never hold them in subjection one day longer; they would break away from under his cruel government, and run over by thousands to Christ; for so they do as soon as ever God opens their eyes; in the same hour they are turned from darkness to light, they are also turned from the power of Satan to God, *Acts 28:16*. Oh, that you did but know the worth of your souls, the dreadful danger they are in, and the fearful wrath that hangs over them; the willingness and ability of Christ to save them, you could not sleep one night longer in the state you are: The next cry would be, *what shall I do to be saved? Who will shew me the way to Christ? Help ministers, help Christians, yea, help Lord; these would be the laments and cries of them that are now secure and quiet; but the God of this World hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not. No cries for a physician, because no sense how their souls are stabbed by sins of commission and starved by sins of omission. Oh, that the great physician would once apply his excellent eye-salve to your understandings which are yet darkened with gross ignorance both of your misery and remedy.*

The first Inference. Pg 36-37 [\[considering the nearness of the Spirit of Christ\]](#)

If Christ **really present** in all gospel administrations, how awfully solemn then is every part of gospel worship? We having to do with Christ himself, and not with men only, in gospel ordinances. Happy were it, if under this consideration, all our people did receive the word we preach, as the Thessalonians did, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God, 1 *Thes. 2:13*, then it would work effectually in us as it did in them. But alas! **We have loose and low apprehensions of the word; we come to judge the gifts of the speaker, not to have our minds informed, our consciences searched, our lusts mortified, and our lives regulated.** But oh, that men would realize the presence of Christ in ordinances, and seriously consider that word of his, *Rev. 2:23, All the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works.* [\[In similar vane, Christ is in us, i.e., close to us in a most profound sense, Phil. 2:13, working in us both to will and to do...! This should excite us to duty of prayer, self-examination, and so on.\]](#)

How would it compose vain and wandering hearts unto holy seriousness! Oh, if men would but consider that they are before the Lord Jesus Christ, as Cornelius and his family did, *Acts 10:33, We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* If they would consider the Word as the executioner of Gods eternal decrees which returns not in vain, but accomplishes that whereunto God sends it, *Isa. 55:11*, and eventually proves the savour of life or death eternal to them that sit under it, *2 Cor. 2:16*. In a word, were it but considered as the Rule by which its hearers shall be judged in the great day, *John 12:48*, then how would men tremble at the word? What mighty effects would it have upon their Hearts? How would it run and be glorified? But alas, as *Job* speaks, *Job 9:11. He goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.* Few realize the spiritual presence of Christ in ordinances. [\[As we begin to grasp that the Spirit works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure, how that truth would excite you to pray with a holy seriousness and with a](#)

more pure intense flame of fire. As we grow in knowledge of God and subsequently, grace, we cannot help but to shed off dead, cold and lethargic frames.]

Two Kinds of Knowledge

Natural and Spiritual Sense

code79

pg 123 v2 Flavel

Inference 3. Hence it will follow, *That there may be more true and sound believers in the world, than know, or dare conclude themselves to be such.*

For, as many ruin their own souls by placing the essence of saving faith in naked assent, so some rob themselves of their own comfort, by placing it in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies : you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it, Isa. 50:10. Some there be that say, Thou art our God, of whom God never said, You are my people; these have no authority to be called the sons of God; others there are, of whom God saith, These are my people, yet dare not call God their God; these have authority to be called the sons of God, but know it not. They have received Christ, that is their safety, but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it ; that is their trouble; the Father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to be his Father.

Now there are two reasons why many believers, who might argue themselves into peace, do yet live without the comforts of their faith; and this may come to pass, either from,

First, The inevidence of the premises.

Secondly, Or the weighty importance of the conclusion.

First, It may come to pass from the inevidence of the premises. Assurance is a practical syllogism, and it proceeds thus:

All that truly have received Christ Jesus, they are the children of God. I have truly received Jesus Christ. Therefore I am the child of God. The major proposition is found in the scripture, and there can be no doubt of that. The assumption depends upon experience, or internal sense; I have truly received Jesus Christ; here usually is the stumble: many great objections lie against it, which they cannot clearly answer: As,

Obj. 1. Light and knowledge are necessarily required to the right receiving of Christ, but I am dark and ignorant; many carnal, unregenerate persons know more than I do, and are more able to discourse of the mysteries of religion than I am.

Sol. But you ought to **distinguish of the kinds and degrees of knowledge**, and then you would see that your bewailed ignorance is no bar to your interest in Christ. There are two kinds of knowledge:

1. Natural.
2. Spiritual.

There is a **natural knowledge**, even of spiritual objects, a spark of nature blown up by an **advantageous education**; and though the objects of this knowledge be spiritual things, yet the light in which they are discerned is but a mere natural light. And there is a **spiritual knowledge of spiritual things**, the **teaching of the anointing**, as it is called, 1 John ii. 27, i.e., **the effect and fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying work upon our souls**, when the **experience of a man's own heart informs and teaches his understanding**, when by **feeling the workings of grace in our own souls**, we come to understand its nature; **this is spiritual knowledge**. [This is **intuitive knowledge** that Flavel mentions on pg 310 v2 in opposition to natural knowledge where he likens it "to the sight of a painted lion upon the wall, and the sight of a living lion that meets us roaring in the way. The intuitive sight of sin is another thing than men imagine it to be. It is such a sight as wounds a man to the very heart, Acts 2:37" p 310] Now, a little of this knowledge is a better evidence of a man's interest in Christ, than the most raised and excellent degree of natural knowledge. As the philosopher truly observes: *Præstat paucula de meliori scientia degustasse, quam de ignobili multa*. One dram of knowledge of the best and most excellent things, is better than much knowledge of common things. So it is here, a little spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ, that hath life and savour in it, is more than all the natural, sapless knowledge of the unregenerate, which leaves the heart dead, carnal, and barren; **it is not the quantity, but the kind, not the measure, but the savour**. If you know so much of the evil of sin, as renders it the most bitter and burdensome thing in the world to you, and so much of the necessity and excellency of Christ, as renders him the most sweet and desirable thing in the world to you, though you may be defective in many degrees of knowledge, yet this is enough to prove yours to be the fruit of the Spirit : you may have a sanctified heart, though you have an irregular or weak head : many that knew more than you are in hell: and some that once knew as little as you, are now in heaven. In *absoluto et Jacili stat ceteritas*; God hath not

prepared heaven only for clear and subtle heads. A little sanctified and effectual knowledge of Christ's person, offices, suitableness, and necessity, may bring thee thither, when others, with all their curious speculations and notions, may perish forever.

An excellent description of the communication to the soul as the seal makes an impression upon soft wax. This is outstanding!

Truth, the Sanctifying Instrument

code68

as the seal is to the wax

John Flavel, Vol. 2 pg 109-110

Fifthly, and lastly, The last and principal thing included in our receiving of Christ, is the respect that this act of acceptance hath unto the terms upon which Christ is tendered to us in the gospel¹, to which

it is most agreeable, 1 Cor. Xv. 11. "So we preach, and so ye believed:" Faith answers the gospel-offer, **as the impress upon the wax doth the engraving in the seal**; and this is of principal consideration, **for there is no receiving Christ upon any other terms but his own**, proposed in the gospel to us;

¹**Rom. 6:17. The will like melted metal, is delivered into the gospel-mould, where it receives the same form and figure that the mould gives.**

Rms 6:17 "But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."

[This verse is regarding the word of God being instamped or formed upon the soul, as the soul receives its form, as the wax receives the impression from the seal, changing the soul by degrees into the image of God from glory to glory (2Cor3:18), or day by day (2Cor4:16, *the inward man being renewed day by day*), also, Gal 4:19, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you," that is, Christ's nature or his image, his holiness, being formed in us more and more, hence sanctification at work...purified by faith, faith mixing itself with the word as we contemplate it, by which we grow (profit) spiritually, etc.]

Truth is the sanctifying instrument, John 17:17, **the mould into which our souls are cast**, Rom. 6:17, **according therefore to the stamps and impressions it makes upon our understandings**, and the order in which truths lie there, will be the depth and lastingness of their impressions and influences upon the heart; **as the more weight is laid upon the seal, the more fair and lasting impression is made upon the wax**. He that sees the grounds and reasons of his peace and comfort most clearly, is like to maintain it the more constantly. Flavel vol. 1 p 23 pdf file

The scope of this epistle [Hebrews] is to demonstrate Christ to be the fulness of all legal types and ceremonies, and that whatever light glimmered to the world through them, yet it was but as the light of the day-star, to the light of the sun.

In this chapter, Christ the subject of the epistle, is described; and particularly, in this third verse, he is described three ways. First, By his essential and primeval glory and dignity, he is the brightness of his Father's glory, the very splendor of glory, the very refulgency of that son of glory. The primary reason of that appellation is with respect to his **eternal** and **ineffable generation, light of light**, as the Nicene creed expresses it. **As a beam of light proceeding from the sun**. And the secondary reason of it, is with respect to men, **for look as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, which it projects; so doth God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us, by Christ**. Yea, **he is the express image, or character of his person**. **Not as the impressed image of the seal upon the wax, but as the engraving in the seal itself**. Thus he is described by his essential glory. **John Flavel, Sermon XVI, Fountain of Life (pg 514 in the pdf file)**

*Notes on man's (the elect) dependence upon God's continual supply of grace
vs. self-sufficiency – Flavel, Method of Grace (vol. 2)*

p 349 Vol 2 Sixthly, The same power which created the world, still underprops and supports it in its being: the world owes its conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God, without which it

could not subsist one moment. Just so it is with the new creation, which entirely depends upon the preserving power, which first formed it, Jude ver. 1. “Preserved in Christ Jesus,” and 1 Pet. i. 5. “Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.” As in a natural way “we live, move, and have our being in God,” Acts xvii. 28, so in a spiritual way, we continue believing, repenting, loving, and delighting in God; **without whose continued influence upon our souls, we could do neither.**

P 322-23 Vol. 2 *First use for information.*

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine which asserts the possibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace? **The desire of self-sufficiency was the ruin of Adam,** and the **conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes of his posterity.** This doctrine is not only contradictory to the current stream of scripture, Phil. ii. 13, 1 John 1:13, with many other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and overthrow.

Beholding the Glory of God

code163

Notes on the Bible cont. – by Jonathan Edwards

[96] [2 Cor. lii. 17.](#) “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” It seems to refer to that place, [51st Psalm, 12th verse.](#), where the Spirit of God is called the free Spirit.

[89] [2 Cor. lii. 17, 18.](#) “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty;” that is, **freedom of looking;** and behold our sight is not hindered as the children of Israel’s was, but we have liberty to see. “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the **glory of the Lord;**” with open face, **not covered with a veil, as Moses’s face was,** as in the 7th and 13th verses; **[are changed into the same image;]** as Moses was by beholding God’s brightness, **his own face shone; [from glory to glory;] that is, changed from the glory of God, from a sight of his glory, to a glory to, and glory in, ourselves like it.**

[335] [2 Cor. lii. 18.](#) “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.” The word in the original, Greek or Hebrew, signifies beholding, as in a reflecting glass, or looking-glass. Had the meaning been, beholding through a transmitting glass, the word [*Greek*] or [*Hebrew*] would rather have been used, which signifies to see through or to look through.

We behold the glory of God, as in a glass, in two respects, both which seem to be intended in these words.

1. We behold the glory of God, as in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the **brightness of God’s light or glory,** as it were reflected; and is the **express image of the Deity; the perfect image of God,** as the

image in a plain and clear looking-glass is the express image of the person that looks in it; and this is the only way that the glory of God is seen by his church, he is seen no other way but in this perfect, and as it were **reflected, image; for no one hath seen God immediately**, at any time; the only-begotten Son of God that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He is “the image of the invisible God;” and “he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father;” and the Father is seen no other way but by the Son; and it is only by this image in Christ, that God is seen in heaven by the saints and angels there; yea, it is by this image only that God sees himself, for he sees himself in his own perfect substantial idea. And that one thing here meant by the image in the glass, is the image of Christ, that is to be seen in Christ’s face, may be argued from two things.

(1.) The apostle is here comparing the glory of God that we see in Christ to the reflected glory of God which the children of Israel beheld in Moses, where Moses’s face was instead of a glass to them, in which they beheld the glory of God reflected to their view; though with this difference, that a veil was put over the glass then, or there was a veil between their eyes and Moses’s face, which was the glass that reflected God’s glory, because the children of Israel could not bear to look upon the glass immediately; but now we all with open face behold the image in the glass.

(2.) Another thing that argues this, is what follows here in the continuance of the apostle’s discourse on this subject, in the [4th verse of the next chapter](#); where the apostle, speaking of the same glory, mentions it as the **light of God’s glory**, which we **see in Christ as the image of God**; (i. e. as the image in the glass is the image of the man it represents;) and in the 6th verse he speaks of this same glory as that which is seen in the face of Christ; alluding to the children of Israel seeing the reflected light of God’s glory in the face of Moses.

2. We behold the **glory of God** as in a **looking-glass** in another respect, and that is as we behold it by the intermediation of the outward means of our **illumination and knowledge of God**, viz. Christ’s ministers, and the gospel which they preach, and his ordinances which they administer; which serve instead of a looking-glass, to reflect the glory of the Lord. **When men read the Holy Scriptures, they there may see Christ’s glory, as men see images of things by looking in a glass**, so we see Christ’s glory in ordinances. **Ministers are burning and shining lights**; but then they do not shine by their own light, **but only reflect the light of Christ**. They are called **stars**, that are held in the right hand of Christ, and shine by reflecting Christ’s light, as the stars shine by reflecting the light of the sun; and so they are as **mirrors that bring the light of Christ’s glory to the view of the church**. They are lights set up in golden candlesticks; **by looking on these lights, they see light, they see the light of Christ reflected**. It is evident the apostle is here speaking of the light of Christ’s glory as ministered and communicated by ministers of the gospel, and ministers of the Spirit, which is that light and glory, as we shall show presently. [Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6](#). So in the words next following in the beginning of the next chapter, [ver. 1, 2, 5](#). And which is strongly to the purpose in the [6th verse](#), he expressly speaks of the light of this glory as communicated to men by ministers in this way, viz. **by first shining upon them or into their hearts, and then being communicated, or given from them to others**, which is just as light is **communicated** from a **reflecting glass**. “For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ.” [\[see also Rm 6:4 “...by the glory of the Father,”\]](#) And in the next verse they are spoken of as the **vessel that conveys the treasure: now a vessel is to the treasure that it conveys, as a glass is to**

the light that that conveys. And, it further argues that the apostle has respect to ministers and to the means of grace, as a glass in which we see the glory of the Lord, by that to which he here alludes, viz. the children of Israel's seeing the glory of the Lord in Moses's face; but Moses is here by the apostle spoken of, as in this representing both Christ and gospel ministers. That he speaks of him as in this thing representing Christ, is most evident by the 6th verse of the next chapter; and that he also speaks of him as herein like gospel ministers the apostles and others is also evident, because the apostle does expressly compare Moses's holding forth the glory of God in his face to ministers' holding forth the glory of Christ, as in the 12th and 13th verses.

And herein the sight, that the saints have of the glory of Christ in this world, differs from that sight that the saints have in heaven; for there they see immediately face to face, but here by a medium, by an intervening looking-glass, in which the glory is but obscure in comparison of the immediate glory seen in heaven. [1 Corinth. Xiii. 12.](#) "Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face." **But it is a very plain and clear sight in comparison of that which was under the law; it is beholding with open face in comparison of that, though the face that is seen be in a glass; the sight we have now is by a medium as well as then, though the medium made use of now excels that made use of under the law, as much as an open glass, for discerning, exceeds a glass covered with a veil.**

"Are changed into the same image." In this there is an agreement between our looking in this glass, and a person's looking in a material glass, that there is an exact resemblance between the image in the glass, and the person that beholds it, in both cases. But in this there is a difference, that, whereas when a person looks in a glass, the image in the glass is conformed to him, as being derived from him as his image; he impresses his image upon the glass; but, when a person looks in this spiritual glass, the image that he beholds there conforms him to it. It is not his image, but the image of God, and reflects and impresses its likeness on the beholder.

[341] [2 Cor. iiii. 18.](#) "Behold as in a glass." What seems especially to be meant by the looking-glass here spoken of, is the figurative representation of gospel things in the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses; which, to the Jews, who did not know the meaning of them, nor see the image of Christ, or gospel things, in them, was as a veil; but to us, **to whom the image plainly appears as unveiled by the gospel, those types and other figurative representations are as a glass, in which we see the image of Christ's face.** Pg 801 Vol. 2

The Filial Spirit or Spirit of Love

code317

True Riches, His fullness, etc.

excerpt from Jonathan Edwards

II. A being led by the Spirit is a thing that causes that alteration with respect to them, **that renders them unapt to be the subjects of law.**

1. By their having the Spirit given them, they are advanced to that state that does not agree with a state of subjection to the law. [2 Cor. lii. 17.](#) "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" see Note on that verse. For hereby they are regenerated, are born of God, and do become the sons of God; they are hereby assimilated to the Son of God in nature and state. Being sons, it is suitable that they should be dealt with alter another manner: to hold them under the law, is to treat them as servants, as in the [6th and 7th verses.](#) Of the preceding chapter, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son." [[Gal. 4:6](#)]

2. The Spirit of Christ in Christians, or Spirit of adoption actuating and leading, is a principle that supersedes the law, and sets them above law, upon two accounts:

(1.) By their having this principle, so far as it prevails, they are above the need of the exaction of the law, and therefore are such as the law was not given for, and are not aimed at in the law. They have a spirit of love and truth that fulfils the law, [1 Tim. i. 9.](#) The thing that is aimed at by the law, as in the [14th and 16th verses.](#) Of the context. **They do not need the exaction of the law to drive them to their duty;** for, so far as they are led by the Spirit, they are of themselves naturally inclined to the same things that the law requires, and derive strength from God according to his promises to fulfil them. [e.g., "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" Strength refers to the power of God or grace that enables us to love and obey God.] The fruits of the Spirit are such, as they by the Spirit without the law are inclined and enabled to, such as love, joy, peace, &c.; are such as the law is not against, as in the [22d and 23d verses of the context.](#) "Against such there is no law."

The filial Spirit, or Spirit of love and truth, fulfils the law; that is, the law obliges to no other things but what this Spirit inclines to, and is sufficient for. The law was not made for those that are already **sufficiently disposed** to all things contained it. [1 Tim. 9.](#) "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient," &c. A filial spirit is law enough. It is a superior sort of law, the law of the Spirit of life is the best law, and makes free from any other law. The spirit is better than the letter. **They, that have the Spirit of Christ in them, have the law written in their hearts, according to God's promise by his prophets.**

The Spirit of Christ is superior to the law, and sets a person above a subjection to the law, because it is a **principle that is superior to a legal principle,** or that **principle which is the proper subject of the force and influence of the exaction of a law, viz. fear;** so far as the **Spirit of the Son, or the Spirit of adoption,** prevails, so far he is above the need of that principle, and consequently above the need of being under the law.

II. The filial Spirit, or Spirit of the son, or Spirit of adoption, is a principle that, so far as it prevails, excludes and renders the saints incapable of fear, or a **legal principle, or spirit of bondage.** [1 John iv. 18.](#) "Perfect love casteth out fear." It casts it out as Sarah and Isaac cast out the bond-woman and her son, that we read of in the chapter preceding the text that we are upon. It is in Christians a principle of love, of childlike confidence and hope, as in the 6th verse of the foregoing chapter, it cries, "Abba, Father." It evidences to them their being the children of God, and **begets that trust and assurance** that

renders them incapable of a [legal principle](#). [Rom. Viii. 15, 16](#). "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." **[If a person has not that legal principle, or principle of fear, he has not that principle which the law, or that constitution which exacts obedience](#)**, was made to influence and work upon; **[and therefore is not a proper subject of law, because, being destitute of that principle, the law takes no hold of him, for it finds no principle in him to take hold by](#)**. [The unregenerate hate faith or the law of faith (1Cor2:14); they are inclined to works to try to please God and so the Law and its condemning power keeps them in bondage to fear. P 39 vol 22, Owen]

A being led by the Spirit of the Son of God, as a Spirit of adoption, is inconsistent with a state of bondage, as son-ship is inconsistent with servitude. [2 Cor. lii. 17](#). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." See Owen pg 184

[235] [Eph. i. 22, 23](#). "And gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the **fulness of him** that filleth all in all." By fulness, according to the apostle's use of the phrase, is signified the good of any being; all that by which any being is **excellent and happy; including its perfection, beauty, riches, joy, and pleasure**. [Rom. Xi. 12](#). "Now if the fall of them be the **riches** of the world, and the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness!" The word fullness, in the former part of this verse, is doubtless to be understood in like manner as the word filleth in the latter part. By Christ's filling all in all, seems evidently to be intended that **he supplies** all the creatures in heaven and on earth, angels, and blessed spirits, and men, **with all good**; as in [chap. iv. 10](#). "He that descended, is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, viz. **that he might supply all intelligent creatures in heaven and earth with good**. So when it is said, [chap. li. 19](#). "That ye might be filled with all the **fulness of God**," the meaning seems to be, that ye might have your **souls satisfied with a participation of God's own good, his bounty and joy**; "for our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." [1 John i. 3](#). So when the apostle says Christ, the [Greek word here], "emptied himself," as [Philip. li. 7](#). He means that he appeared in the world without his former **glory and joy**; see [John xvii. 5](#). So that here the apostle teaches that Christ, who fills all things, **all elect creatures in heaven and earth**, is himself filled by the church; he, **who supplies angels and men with all that good in which they are perfect and happy**, receives the church as that in which he himself is happy; he, from whom and in whom all angels and saints are adorned and made perfect in beauty, himself receives the church as his glorious and beautiful ornament, as the virtuous wife is a crown to her husband. The church is the garment of Christ, and was typified by that coat of his that was without seam, which signified the union of the various members of the church, and was typified by those garments of the high priest that were made for glory and for beauty, [Exod. Xxviii. 2](#). As seems evident by the 2d verse of the 133d Psalm, and by the precious stones of his breastplate, in a particular manner, on which were engraven the names of the children of Israel. [Isa. Lxii. 3](#). "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," i. e. in the possession of God. So [Zech. ix. 16, 17](#). "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up, as an ensign upon his land." As it is from and in Christ that **all are supplied with joy and happiness**, so Christ receives the church as that in which he has exceeding and satisfying delight and joy. [Isa. Lxii. 5](#). "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." This

seems to be the good that Christ sought in the creation of the world, who is the beginning of the creation of God; when all things were created by him and for him, viz. that he might obtain the church, who is “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” to whom, and for whom, he might give himself, on whom he might pour forth his love, and in whom his soul might eternally be delighted. Until he had attained this, he was pleased not to look on himself as complete, but as wanting something, as the first Adam was not complete before the creation of Eve. [Gen. ii. 20.](#)

[481] [Eph. i. 23.](#) “The fulness of him that filleth all in all.” The church is not only represented as Christ’s ornament, but God’s people are often spoken of in the Old Testament as God’s portion and inheritance, his treasure, his jewels, his garden of pleasant fruits, his pleasant plant, [Isa. V. 7.](#) The plant of his pleasures, his pleasant food, as the first ripe figs. [Jer. XXiv. 2.](#) [Hosea ix. 10.](#) The first-fruits of all his increase, [Jer. li. 3.](#) A garden and orchard of spices, and his bed, or field, of lilies, among which he feeds, his fountain of gardens, or refreshing streams from Lebanon, a garden where he gathers his myrrh and his spice, and where he eats his honeycomb with his honey and drinks his wine with his milk.

So the saints in the New Testament are spoken of as God’s wheat, and good grain, that he gathereth into his garner.

[300] [Eph. li. 7.](#) “That in the ages to come he might show the **exceeding riches of his grace** in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” Intimating that this was not made known in ages past, but in a great measure kept hid, as it is said in the [next chapter, at the 5th verse.](#), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. **The riches of God’s grace in his kindness through Christ Jesus** here spoken of, is the same with those unsearchable riches of Christ spoken of in the [next chapter, 8th and 9th verses.](#), which the apostle there says was a **mystery**, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. So [Rom. Xvi. 25.](#) “According to the revelation of the **mystery** which was kept secret since the world began;” and [Col. i. 26, 27.](#) “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known, what is the **riches of the glory of this mystery** among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**” The apostle, in this text we are upon, speaks of it as being now made known for the present and all future ages; brought to light for the last ages of the world, which were new begun. P 805 vol. 2

An excellent discourse on why God has sin in this world, what is sin, and that he is absolutely sovereign over it for His glory.

Why Sin is in the World

What is Sin?

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From
Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck
Vol. 3, pg 64-65

Possibility of Sin as God's Will

By the distinction of the material and the formal aspect of sin, however, we have not yet [in any way] answered the question why God included sin in his decree and its execution. The answer is implied in the providence of God as it also pertains to sin. Scripture repeatedly states that **God uses sin as punishment of the wicked** (Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Judg. 9:23–24; John 12:40; Rom. 1:21–28; 2 Thess. 2:11–12), **as a means of saving his people** (Gen. 45:5; 50:20), **to test and chastise believers** (Job 1:11–12; 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:13; 11:19; 2 Cor. 12:7), **and to glorify his name** (Exod. 7:3; Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:17; 11:33; etc.). Precisely because God is the absolutely Holy and Almighty One, he can use sin as a means in his hand. Creatures cannot do that; with the least contact, they themselves become polluted and impure. But God is so infinitely far removed from wickedness that he can make sin, as an unresisting instrument, subservient to his glorification. There are countless examples that prove that also in this connection “when two parties do the same thing, it is not the same.” It was God’s will that Shimei cursed David, that Satan tested Job, that Jews and Gentiles wanted to give up God’s holy servant Jesus to death—**still in all these iniquities, human creatures are guilty and God is innocent**. **For even when he wants there to be evil, he only wants it in a way that is holy: though using it, he never commits it.** And for that reason, he has also allowed sin in his creation. **He would not have tolerated it had he not been able to govern it in an absolute holy and sovereign manner.** He would not have put up with it if he were not God, the Holy and Omnipotent One. But being God, he did not fear its existence and its power. **He willed it so that in it and against it he might bring to light his divine attributes.** If he had not allowed it to exist, there would always have been a rationale for the idea that he was not in all his attributes superior to a power whose possibility was inherent in creation itself. For all rational creatures as creatures, as finite, limited, changeable beings, have the possibility of apostatizing. But God, because he is God, never feared the way of freedom, the reality of sin, the eruption of wickedness, or the power of Satan. **So, both in its origin and its development, God always exercises his rule over sin.** He does not force it, nor does he block it with violence but rather **allows it [though not by bare permission]** to reach its full dynamic potential. He remains king yet still gives it free rein in his kingdom. He allows it to have everything—his world, his creatures, even his Anointed—for evils cannot exist without goods. He allows it to use all that is his; he gives it opportunity to show what it can do in order, in the end, as King of kings, to leave the theater of battle. For sin is of such a nature that it destroys itself by the very freedom granted it; it dies of its own diseases; it dooms itself to death. At the apex of its power, it is, by the cross alone, publicly shown up in its powerlessness (Col. 2:15). [A. von Oettingen]

For that reason God willed there to be sin. “Although, therefore, what is evil, insofar as it is evil is not a good, nevertheless it is well that not only good but also evil should exist. For, were it not a good that evil things should also exist, the Omnipotent Good would most certainly not allow evil to be, since

beyond doubt it is just as easy for Him not to allow what He does not will, as it is for Him to do what He wills. Unless we believe this, the very first sentence of our profession of faith is endangered, wherein we profess to believe in God the Father Almighty.”[Augustine] Because he knew he was absolutely able to control sin, “he deemed it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist at all.”[Augustine] He thinks and guides evil for good and makes it subservient to his glory. Augustine even employs an array of images to assign to sin a place in the order of the whole. There it has the same function as the shadows in a painting, the solecisms and barbarisms in the language, the contrasts in a song.[Augustine] God composed the order of history, like a beautiful poem, of **antithetical elements to heighten the beauty and harmony of the whole.**[Augustine] Though these images contain some truth, they easily occasion misunderstanding. They tend to make sin appear necessary and entirely fitting in the whole of things. They sacrifice the particular to the universal and as a result offer no reconciliation or solace to those who wrestle with sin or experience suffering. But it is true that also and even especially in God’s government over sin his attributes are splendidly displayed. The riches of God’s grace, the depth of his compassion, the unchanging nature of his faithfulness, the inviolable character of his justice, the glory of his wisdom and power have shone out all the more brilliantly as a result of sin. When humans broke the covenant of works, God replaced it with the greatly improved covenant of grace. When Adam fell, God gave Christ as Lord from heaven. It is precisely God’s greatness to so rule and overrule sin that against its own genius and intent it becomes serviceable to the honor of his name. And therefore the sin that is in the world, so far from being able to rob us of our faith in God, his love, and his power, rather confirms and strengthens us in that faith. “If there is evil, there is a God. For there would be no evil, if the order of good were removed, **the privation of which is evil**; and there would be no such order, if there were no God.”[T. Aquinas]

[An excellent discourse on Original Sin and the federal headship of Adam and Christ](#)

Explaining Original Sin: Human Solidarity

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From

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3, pg 100-106

The doctrine of original sin is one of the weightiest but also one of the most difficult subjects in the field of dogmatics. “Nothing is better known than original sin for preaching; for understanding, nothing is more mysterious.” [Augustine] “It is astonishing, however, that the mystery furthest from our understanding is the transmission of sin, the one thing without which we can have no understanding of ourselves! Because there can be no doubt that nothing shocks our reason more than to say that the sin of the first man made guilty those who, so far from that source, seem incapable of having taken part in it. . . . Nevertheless without this most incomprehensible of all mysteries we are incomprehensible to ourselves. Within this gnarled chasm lie the twists and turns of our condition. So, humanity is more inconceivable without this mystery than this mystery is conceivable to humanity.” [Pascal] “Original sin explains everything and without it one cannot explain anything” (de Maistre), and yet the doctrine itself needs explanation more than anything. [Even Rousseau acknowledges that original sin explained everything except [t] itself.] From ancient times it was described in theology as original sin (*peccatum originale*), not because it was peculiar to humans from their origin by virtue of creation, but because in all humans it is the origin and source of all other sins. Much misunderstanding could be avoided if in original sin we differentiated between an originating sin (*peccatum originans*; imputed, guilt) and the sin originated (*peccatum originatum*; inherent, punishment). Actually by original or hereditary sin, one should only understand the moral depravity that people carry with them from the time of their conception and birth from their sinful parents.

But this moral depravity, which is characteristic of all people by nature and does not just arise later as a result of their own misguided deeds, certainly must have a cause. According to Scripture and for Christian thought, this cause can be no other than the first trespass of the first human, by which sin and death entered the world. **Adam’s disobedience is the originating sin.** Scripture plainly says it (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22), and experience confirms it every minute: all people are conceived in sin and born in iniquity. This is conceivable only if we adopt the idea that this trespass of Adam in some way concerns us all. If there were absolutely no connection between Adam and us, it would be impossible for us to be born in sin because he broke God’s commandment. Scripture and history, accordingly, together point us to an original common moral debt incurred by the human race. The hypothesis of Plato and others that every soul before its advent into the human body had already existed for a long time and fallen during its preexistence earlier proved, for good reason, to be totally untenable to us. Underlying it, however, is the undeniable truth that every human is born under a moral debt. That debt is not something each one of us has—personally, individually, actually—brought down on ourselves. It rests on each one of us on account of Adam. “By one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (**Rom. 5:19**). Regardless of whether we can make some sense out of the fact that God—immediately, [as opposed to mediately] as Placaeus asserts by and on account of Adam’s disobedience—makes us all sinners, that fact itself is certain, based on Scripture and experience. Still, some things can be said, if not to explain this action of God, then certainly to strip from it the appearance of arbitrariness.

In the first place, remember, humanity is not an aggregate of individuals but an organic unity, one race, one family. Angels, on the other hand, all stand side-by-side, independently of one another. They were all created at the same time and are not the products of procreation. Among them a divine

judgment such as was pronounced upon all humanity in Adam would not have been possible: everyone stood or fell on his own. But that is not how it is among us. God created all of us from one man (Acts 17:26); we are not a heap of souls piled on a piece of ground, but all blood relatives of one another, connected to one another by a host of ties, therefore conditioning one another and being conditioned by one another. **And among us the first human again occupies an utterly unique and incomparable place. Like branches in a trunk, a mass at its beginning, members in a head, so all of us were germinally present in Adam's loins**, and all proceeded from that source. He was not a **private person**, not a loose individual alongside other such loose individuals, but a root-source, the base, the seminal beginning of the whole human race, our common natural head. In a sense it can be said that "we all were that one human," that what he did was done by us all in him. The choice he made and the action he undertook were those of all his descendants. Certainly this physical oneness of the whole of humanity in Adam as such is of great importance for the explanation of original sin. It is its necessary presupposition and prerequisite. If Christ was to be able to bear our sins and to share with us his righteousness, he first of all had to assume our human nature. Still, realism by itself is insufficient as an explanation of original sin. [Realism was promoted in America by Shedd and found in the Netherlands an able and convinced defender in Dr. Greydanus. Cf. also the identity of doctrine of Jonathan Edwards in J.I. Ridderbos, *Jonathan Edwards*, 162...] In a certain sense it can indeed be said that all humans were comprehended in Adam, but then only in a certain specific sense: it is representatively but not physically true. In connection with the covenant of grace, no one talks that way. We can and may indeed say that God so imputes to us the righteousness of Christ as if we ourselves had accomplished the obedience that Christ accomplished for us, [Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 60] but we are not, by that token, the people who personally and physically satisfied God's righteousness. **Christ satisfied God's righteous requirement for us and in our place. So it is also with Adam: virtually, potentially, and seminally, we may have been comprehended in him; personally and actually, however, it was he who broke the probationary command, and not we.** If **realism were to reject this distinction** and be totally consistent, all imputation, both in the case of Adam and in that of Christ, would be unnecessary. **In both cases it would be each individual himself or herself who had personally committed the sinful deed and personally made satisfaction by his or her suffering and death.**

Further, if Adam's trespass had been ours in this realistic sense, we would also be responsible for all the other sins of Adam, all the sins of Eve, even all the sins of all our ancestors, for we were included in them as much as in Adam when he violated the probationary command. It is impossible to see, therefore, how Christ, who physically descended from the fathers and from Adam and Eve, could be free from original sin. On this view, certainly, physical unity necessarily entails also moral unity. Furthermore, **realism** gets itself in considerable trouble when it comes to the covenant of grace. For if there was no covenant of works, neither would there be a covenant of grace: the one stands and falls with the other. Now if the righteousness of Christ is acquired and applied not in the way of a covenant but realistically, then in the case of Christ it consists in the fact that he assumed our nature, and in that case the satisfaction and salvation accrues to all humans, for Christ assumed the nature of them all. Or it consists in the fact that everyone first acquires this physical and realistic unity with Christ only by regeneration or faith, and then it is impossible to see how Christ could make satisfaction in advance for those with whom he does not become one until they believe in him; then regeneration and faith run the risk of losing their ethical character, the focus is shifted from Christ to the Christian, and the benefits of the covenant are realized only after and by faith. Finally, while realism does represent an

excellent interest, namely, the unity of the human race, in the process it loses sight of another interest that is no less weighty, namely, the independence of the human personality. A human is a member of the race as a whole, certainly, but in that whole he or she occupies a unique place of his or her own. Individuals are more than ripples in the ocean, more than passing manifestations of human nature in general. Earlier already we remarked that the relations in which people stand to one another are distinct from those that are found among angels and animals.[90] While related to both, humans are also different from both. They are creatures with a character of their own. **For that reason, physical unity in their case is not enough; an ethical, a federal unity is added as well.**[91]

As soon as theologians in the Christian church began to reflect on the link between Adam's sin and our sin, physical unity proved to be insufficient. **Shedd** admittedly asserts that **Augustine**, the scholastics, as well as the earliest Reformed theologians were all realists.[92] But that is incorrect. Whereas the doctrine of the covenant had not yet been developed, the idea already occurs in the church fathers and the medieval theologians.[93] **The mere fact that almost all of them adhered to creationism says enough, for a creationist cannot be a realist.** **Federalism** certainly does not rule out the truth contained in realism; on the contrary, it fully accepts it. It proceeds from it but does not confine itself to it. It recognizes a unity of nature on which the federal unity depends. In the human race, we encounter a variety of forms of community that are absolutely not based only, nor even principally, on physical descent but on another, a higher, moral unity. There are "moral communities"—the nuclear and extended family, society, the nation, the state and the church, associations and federations of all kinds and for a variety of purposes—that have a life of their own, are subject to particular laws, especially to the law that Paul formulates when he says: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:26). All the members of such a body can be either a blessing or a curse to one another, and increasingly so to the degree that they themselves are more outstanding and occupy a more pivotal place in the organism. Fathers, mothers, guardians, caretakers, teachers, professors, patrons, guides, princes, kings, and so on have the greatest influence on those under their jurisdiction. **Their life and conduct decides the fortunes of their subordinates, elevates them and brings them to honor, or drags them down and pulls them along to destruction.** The family of the drunkard is ruined and disgraced because of the father's sin. The family of a criminal is widely and for a long time identified and condemned along with him. A congregation languishes under the faithless conduct of a pastor. A people decline and are eventually destroyed as a result of the foolish policies of a king. "In whatever thing the kings go crazy, the Achaeans [Homer's Greeks] are punished." Among people there is **solidarity for good or ill**: community in blessing and in judgment. We stand on the shoulders of earlier generations and inherit the things they have accumulated in the way of material and spiritual wealth.

We enter into their labors, rest on their laurels, enjoy the things they have frequently acquired at great cost. We receive all this undeservedly, without having asked for it. It is waiting for us at our birth; it is bequeathed to us by grace. There is no one who objects to this and opposes this law. **But if the same law begins to exert its effects in things that are bad and makes us partakers in the sins and sufferings of others, the human mind revolts and charges this law with being unjust.** The same son who [blithely] accepts his father's inheritance refuses to pay his father's debts.

In Israel the same lament was heard in the days of Ezekiel.[94] In the Old Testament there existed a **law of solidarity** (Gen. 9:25; Exod. 20:5; Num. 14:33; 16:32; Josh. 7:24–25; 1 Sam. 15:2–3; 2 Sam. 12:10; 21:1f.; 1 Kings 21:21, 23; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 32:18; Lam. 3:40f.; 5:7; Ezra 9:6; Matt. 23:35; 27:25). But when Israel in its supposed righteousness complains about this, the Lord has the prophet announce, not what he can rightfully do, but what he will do if Israel repents and stops walking in the ways of the ancestors. There is indeed a **solidarity** in sin and suffering, but God permits it and frequently gives people the power to break with that moral community and themselves to become the forerunners of a generation that walks in the fear of the Lord and enjoys his favor. But so far from suspending the law of solidarity, it rather confirms it. Christ demonstrated the truth of the solidarity of the human race in another and better way than Adam. If this solidarity also could be broken, not only all compassion but all love, friendship, intercession, and so on would cease to exist. Humankind would fall apart in lifeless atoms; there would be no mystery, no mysticism, no human life left.

Still, **Shedd** is correct in saying that the solidarity of suffering does not yet explain the imputation of Adam's sin to all his descendants.[95] To suffer for the sin of another is not the same as to be punished for the sin of another and hence to be viewed as the perpetrator of that sin oneself. There is suffering without personal transgression (Luke 13:1–5; John 9:3). But this solidarity, which we witness every day, deprives us of a reason for charging God with injustice when he causes all of humankind to share in Adam's punishment. For thus he acts every moment, both in blessings and in judgments. **If such conduct is consistent with his justice, then this is and has to be the case also with respect to Adam's trespass.** There is, moreover, a special reason why in the case of Adam the above law of solidarity does not and even cannot completely hold true. The law of solidarity does not explain the covenant (of works or grace) **but is based on it and harks back to it.** It always holds sway within circles that are more circumscribed than that formed by humankind itself. However great the blessing or curse of parents and guardians, philosophers and artists, founders of religion and reformers, kings and conquerors, and so on may have been, there were always "circumstances" of place, time, country, people, language, and so on that set limits to it. The circle within which their influence was exerted was always enclosed within other and larger circles. Only two persons have existed whose life and works extended to the boundaries of humanity itself, whose influence and dominion had effects to the ends of the earth and into eternity.

We are referring to Adam and Christ. The former brought sin and death into the world, the latter righteousness and life. **It follows from the totally exceptional position occupied by Adam and by Christ that they alone can be compared to each other,** and that all other relations, which are derived from circles within humankind, though they can serve as illustrations and are of great value, merely offer analogies, not identity. **That is to say that both Adam and Christ were placed under an utterly special ordinance of God, precisely with a view to the special position they occupy in humankind.** When a father plunges his family into misery along with himself, or a king his people, or a philosopher his followers, or a boss his workers, we can go back behind these persons and to some extent find some explanation and satisfaction in the solidarity that prevails in humankind as a whole and in its various circles. But in the case of Adam and Christ, we cannot do this. They have the human race not behind them but before them; they do not spring from it but give rise to it; they are not sustained by it but themselves sustain it; they are not the product of humankind, but are, each in his own way, the beginning and root of it, the heads of all humanity. They are not explained by the law of solidarity but

explain this law by their own existence. They do not presuppose but constitute the organism of humanity. If humanity, both in a physical and an ethical sense, were to remain a unity, as it was intended to be; hence, if in that human race there were to exist, not just community of blood, as in the case of the animals, but on that basis also community of all **material, moral, and spiritual goods**, then **that could be brought about and maintained only by judging all in one person**. **As things went with that person, so they would go with the whole human race. If Adam fell, humanity would fall; if Christ remained standing, humanity would be raised up in him.** **The covenant of works and the covenant of grace are the forms by which the organism of humanity is maintained also in a religious and an ethical sense.** Because God is interested, not in a handful of individuals, but in humanity as his image and likeness, it had to fall and be raised up again in one person. So reads God's ordinance, so reads his judgment. In one person he declares all guilty, and so humankind is born—unclean and in the process of dying—from Adam; in one person he declares all righteous and consecrated to eternal life. "For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all" [Rom. 11:32].[96]

Original Sin Expounded

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Man's miserable condition explained

Excerpt from Sermon 1 – Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xv.i.html>

Doctrine. They who are in a natural condition, are in a dreadful condition. This I shall endeavour to make appear by a particular consideration of the state and condition of unregenerate persons.

- I. As to their actual condition in this world.
- II. As to their relations to the future world.

I. The condition of those who are in a **natural state** [meaning **unsaved or unregenerated**], is dreadful in the present world.

First. On account of the depraved state of their natures. As men come into the world, their natures are dreadfully depraved. Man in his primitive state was a noble piece of divine workmanship; but by the fall it is dreadfully defaced. It is awful to think that so excellent a creature as man is, should be so ruined. The dreadfulness of the condition, which unconverted men are in in this respect, appears in the following things:

- 1. The dreadfulness of their depravity appears in that they are so sottishly **blind** and **ignorant**. **God gave man a faculty of reason and understanding, which is a noble faculty. Herein he differs from all**

other creatures here below. He is exalted in his nature above them, and is in this respect like the angels, and is made capable to know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things. And God gave him understanding for this end, that he might know him, and know heavenly things, and made him as capable to know these things as any others. But man has debased himself, and has lost his glory in this respect. He has become as ignorant of the excellency of God as the very beasts. His understanding is full of darkness; his mind is blind, is altogether blind to spiritual things. Men are ignorant of God, and ignorant of Christ, ignorant of the way of salvation, ignorant of their own happiness, blind in the midst of the brightest and clearest light, ignorant under all manner of instructions. [Romans iii. 17.](#) "The way of peace they have not known." [Isa. Xxvii. 11.](#) "It is a people of no understanding." [Jer. iv. 22.](#) "My people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and have none understanding:" [v. 21.](#) [Jer. iv. 21.](#) "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding." [Psal. Xcv. 10, 11.](#) "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." [1 Cor. Xv. 34.](#) "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame."

There is a **spirit of atheism** prevailing in the hearts of men; a strange disposition to doubt of the very being of God, and of another world, and of everything which cannot be seen with the bodily eyes. [Psalm xiv. 1.](#) "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." They do not realize that God sees them, when they commit sin, and will call them to an account for it. And therefore, if they can hide sin from the eyes of men, they are not concerned, but are bold to commit it. [Psalm xciv. 7, 8, 9.](#) "Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" [Psalm lxxiii. 11.](#) "They say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" So sottishly unbelieving are they of future things, of heaven and hell, and will commonly run the venture of damnation sooner than be convinced. They are **stupidly senseless** to the importance of eternal things. How hard to make them believe, and to give them a real conviction, that to be happy to all eternity is better than all other good; and to be miserable for ever under the wrath of God, is worse than all other evil. Men show themselves senseless enough in temporal things; but in spiritual things far more so. [Luke xii. 56.](#) "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" They are very subtle in evil designs; but sottish in those things which most concern them. [Jeremiah iv. 22.](#) "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Wicked men show themselves more foolish and senseless of what is best for them, than the very brutes. [Isa. i. 3.](#) "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." [Jer. Viii. 7.](#) "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

[Now you can see the mercy and love of God in his sovereign benevolence, to give us the *knowledge of the light of the Glory of God* in which glory consists the knowledge of himself!! This he has not done for everyone, but only his elect or his sheep. And this is the whole point of spelling this all out to you, the reader, so that an awe of God will be implanted upon your mind and affections and thus approach God in a more due manner and take heed in a more diligent manner than before, to grow in knowledge and grace.]

2. They have **no goodness** in them. [Romans vii. 18.](#) “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” [If this is true, and it is, then the communication of God’s glory, his image of his knowledge, etc., is a direct result of God’s good pleasure, his will only, and not the so called will of the creature from his alleged [virtue](#) or power of his own will. He is devoid of all saving virtue, hence the next comment by [Edwards.](#)] **They have no principle that disposes them to anything that is good. Natural men have no higher principle in their hearts than self-love. And herein they do not excel the devils. The devils love themselves, and love their own happiness, and are afraid of their own misery.** And they go no further. And the devils would be as religious as the best of natural men, if they were in the same circumstances. They would be as moral, and would pray as earnestly to God, and take as much pains for salvation, if there were the like opportunity. And as there is no good principle in the hearts of natural men, so there are never any good exercises of heart, never one good thought, or motion of heart in them. Particularly, there is no love to God in them. They never had the least degree of love to the infinitely glorious Being. They never had the least true respect to the Being that made them, and in whose hand their breath is, and from whom are all their mercies. However they may seem to do things at times out of respect to God, and wear a face as though they honoured him, and highly esteemed him, it is all in mere hypocrisy. Though there may be a fair outside, they are like painted sepulchres; within, there is nothing but putrefaction and rottenness. They have no love to Christ, the glorious Son of God, who is so worthy of their love, and has shown such wonderful grace to sinners in dying for them. They never did anything out of any real respect to the Redeemer of the world, since they were born. They **never brought forth any fruit to that God, who made them, and in whom they live, and move, and have their being.** They never have in any way answered the end for which they were made. They have hitherto lived altogether in vain, and to no purpose. They never so much as sincerely obeyed one command of God; never so much as moved one finger out of a true spirit of obedience to him, who made them to serve him. And when they have seemed outwardly to comply with God’s commands, their hearts were not in it. They did not do it out of any spirit of subjection to God, or any disposition to obey him, but were merely driven to it by fear, or in some way influenced by their worldly interest. pg. 817, Sermon 1 of 17

If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam’s transgression, that God did not impute Adam’s sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam’s most innocent posterity from paradise?? Owen’s reasoning is excellent. [\[I can’t remember where I got this quote by Owen; it could have been a paraphrase of the one below from his work, A Display of Arminianism, Ch. 7 – excellent reasoning.\]](#)

“I see no reason, then, why Corvinus should affirm, as he doth,¹² “That it is absurd, that by one man’s disobedience many should be made actually disobedient,” unless he did it purposely to contradict St Paul, teaching us that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” Romans 5:19. *Paulus ait, Corvinus negat; eligite cui credatis;* — Choose whom you will believe, St Paul or the Arminians. The sum of their endeavor in this particular is, to clear the nature of man from being any way guilty of Adam’s actual sin, as being then in him a member and part of that body whereof he was the head, or from being obnoxious unto an imputation of it by

reason of that covenant which God made with us all in him. So that, denying, as you saw before, all inherent corruption and pravity of nature, and now all participation, by any means, of Adam's transgression, methinks they cast a great aspersion on Almighty God, however he dealt with Adam for his own particular, yet for casting us, his most innocent posterity, out of paradise. It seems a hard case, that having no obliquity or sin in our nature to deserve it, nor no interest in his disobedience whose obedience had been the means of conveying so much happiness unto us, we should yet be involved in so great a punishment as we are; for that we are not now by birth under a great curse and punishment, they shall never be able to persuade any poor soul who ever heard of paradise, or the garden where God first placed Adam." A Display of Arminianism Chp 7

Here is a good discussion on the view of the Roman Catholic Church (and others) on Original Sin (that fallen man is not totally depraved) as opposed to the reformed view (totally depraved). It is amazing to see fallen men devise many ways to skirt or deny the serious implications of Adam's sin, the imputation of sin and guilt on all his posterity. If man is not totally depraved as this supernaturalistic view Rome holds, then man thinks he has some remaining virtue in him that enables him to come to God apart from God's determining/saving grace, e.g., via a sinner's prayer or like ordinance or

sacrament, which leads to a fatal or stupid security. Also, contained here is sin's effect on the image of God and its effects on man's inclinations.

From
Reformed Dogmatics
 By Hermon Bavinck
 Vol. 3, pg 93-97

ORIGINAL SIN AND CONCUPISCENCE

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& Total Corruption and What is Sin

pgs., 110, 127, 136-138, 145

Paul, however, having been instructed by the contrasting model of Christ, responded to this problem by saying that by the trespass of one sin death came into the world and so spread to all humans. Very gradually, in Christian theology, people opened their minds to this deep doctrine. Irenaeus said: "We offend (against God) in the first Adam, not doing his commandments; but we are reconciled in the second Adam, being made obedient even unto death." **Tertullian** spoke of "an evil of the soul" that came to us from "an original defect" and is to be inferred from Adam's fall. "Therefore every soul, as long it is stained, is judged in Adam, until it is re-judged in Christ." Most vigorous is the language of **Ambrose**, who more than others before him stressed the guilt character of all sin and the sinful state in which we are born and traced it to Adam's fall: "Adam lived and we all lived in him; Adam died and we all die in him." Still, more than anyone else, it was **Augustine** who took hold of Paul's thought and developed it further. Over and over, especially in his writings against Julian, he appeals to Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Ephesians 2:3. Also, he cites Cyprian, **Hilary, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom**, and others in support of his sentiments. In the practice of infant baptism as well, he sees a compelling argument for his doctrine of original sin. Finally, he points out that the appalling misery of the human race can only be explained as a punishment upon sin. How can God, who certainly is good and just, subject all humans from their conception on to sin and death if they are completely innocent? An original moral debt must rest upon all; there is no other way to understand the crushing yoke that weighs upon all the children of Adam. One who examines the miseries of human life, from the first cries of infants to the final groans of the dying, has to come, with Paul, to the acknowledgment of **original sin**. "Inasmuch as God is not an unfair judge, we must acknowledge original sin in the misery of the human race, which begins with the tears of the little ones." [Augustine]

Adam's sin must therefore be viewed as an act committed by him and all his followers. **Adam was not a private person**, not one individual alongside other such individuals, but all humans were included in him. The manner of it does not become completely clear in Augustine. As in the question concerning the origin of the soul, he abstained from making a choice between traducianism and creationism, so here also he does not definitely say whether the inclusion of the human race in Adam is to be

conceived just realistically or also federally. On the one hand, he repeatedly states that all were in Adam's loins like the Israelites in those of Abraham; that Adam could not procreate people who are morally better than he himself was; that Adam's sin is transmitted by propagation not by imitation; that by birth we are the heirs of Adam's sin in the same manner as by rebirth we become heirs of the righteousness and life of Christ.[Augustine] On the other hand, it is significant that he does not accept the traducianism of **Tertullian** and that he repeatedly states in the strongest possible way that all were in Adam and sinned in him. "All were that one man; we all were in that one." Original sin differs from actual sins in that it was not personally committed by us; but it is still sin, since in a sense it was our deed. It is both: another's and our own sin. "Original sins are alien because each individual person does not commit them in his or her own life; truly it is ours, too, because Adam lived and all lived in him"; "it is even a voluntary sin because, contracted by an evil will from the first man, it was done in some hereditary fashion." **The sinful state in which we are conceived and born is a consequence and punishment of our trespass in Adam. God frequently punishes sin with sin.** This original sin in fact consists in "concupiscence." Sometimes **Augustine** takes this word in a broad sense and says that inherited sinfulness is not just located in the sex drive but is to be learned, in a certain sense, from the body. Carnal concupiscence thus also has its seat in the soul, and original sin is not a substance but a quality of the affections, a defect, weakness, disease, an accident of our nature.[Augustine] Still, in referring to concupiscence, he thinks first of all of the sex drive; the depravity of nature comes out especially in the spontaneous motion of the genitals, which occurs independently of the will, and shame is there to prove it. By the sex drive, accordingly, sin propagates itself and turns all of humankind into a corrupt mass, subject to the wretched necessity of not being able not to sin. This concupiscence can better be called "original" than "natural" sin, since it is not of divine but of human origin. It is sin "because by sin it has been created and also seeks to sin" and makes humans the "originally guilty party." [Augustine] Children who die unbaptized are lost on account of it; and when their guilt is removed in baptism, it nevertheless remains as a stimulus to the struggle: "The defendant is absolved by his regeneration; the torment remains for the ongoing battle."

Scholasticism and **Roman Catholic** theology, while continuing to build on this foundation, nevertheless introduced a significant modification. What remained was the idea that Adam's trespass was the cause of the sin and death of all humans. **Original sin consists first of all in the imputation to all humans of the trespass committed by Adam, since they were all included in him.** It is, in the first place, **guilt, then punishment.** Scripture, accordingly, clearly states this, and the church made it part of its confession. [Council of Milev...] Pighius and Catharinus even went so far as to totally equate original sin with this imputation of Adam's trespass and wanted to consider everything that followed—the loss of original righteousness, the corruption of nature—only as punishment, not as sin. [R. Bellarmine] But these theologians, in doing so, undoubtedly expressed an idea that had its roots in the development of the doctrine of original sin in Roman Catholic theology. Soon, in fact, there arose a difference about the character of the moral state that, following Adam's disobedience, set in both in his life and in that of his descendants. In **Augustine** it consisted in the concupiscence that, according to him, had its primary seat and organ in the sex drive. Lombard still stuck with this view. But slowly gaining ground was the doctrine of the **superadded gift that had been given to Adam but was lost by his fall.** [the Roman Catholic view, *supernaturalism*] Hence for him and all humans, the first consequence of Adam's trespass was the loss of supernatural grace (original righteousness); this was the first and negative element in original sin, to which was added a second and positive element, viz., concupiscence. Anselm

already described original sin in this way and was followed in this respect by Hales, Bonaventure, Albert, and Aquinas. **Original sin, accordingly, consisted in two things: the loss of original righteousness and a certain inordinate disposition of nature (concupiscence).** [T. Aquinas] But on further reflection, disagreement about the latter was inevitable.

The **image of God, as we recall, was gradually conceived as a supernatural gift. Consequently, one could also conceive as existing a human without that image, yet without sin: a natural human (*homo naturalis*).** In such a human, flesh and spirit would in the nature of the case be at odds with each other; that is, **concupiscence, the desire of the flesh against the spirit,** naturally and necessarily belongs to being human in virtue of creation and can therefore not as such be sinful. Granted, the **image of God** had been given to Adam as a remedy and a bridle, but when he lost it, the war between flesh and spirit automatically broke out again. This inner conflict in his nature, though it had been suppressed, was now again free to assert itself. **Concupiscence** is “a disease and faintness of human nature that arises from a material condition.” **It cannot per se be sinful nor therefore be part of original sin. Here the Catholic doctrine of the superadded gift causes serious difficulty in connection with original sin.** It can be historically demonstrated, therefore, that in Catholic theology the center of gravity in the doctrine of original sin gradually shifted from concupiscence to the loss of original righteousness, from the positive to the negative. **Augustine** described original sin totally in terms of concupiscence. The scholastics included in it the loss of original righteousness but still maintained original sin in a positive sense as an inordinate disposition, a “languor” of nature, a corrupt habit. [T. Aquinas] Trent expressed itself very cautiously. It says that Adam not only lost righteousness but was also changed for the worse in soul and body. After being defiled, he not only transfused death and the punishments of the body but above all sin into his descendants, and the sin of Adam is in each one as his own, not by imitation but by propagation, and can be removed only by Christ’s merit in baptism. But the council deliberately refrained from laying down more specific determinations. [J.A. Mohler] The nature of sin was not further defined; **the words “for the worse” do not say much. Concupiscence, which remains in the baptized, is not itself seen as sin but only arises from sin and inclines to sin. The free will is not lost but weakened and can also do good works before sin.** All in all, it is hard to see in what, besides the imputation of Adam’s trespass and the loss of original righteousness, original sin could still further consist. There is nothing left for it.

After Trent, accordingly, there is express opposition to the view of Lombard later still embraced by Henric, Gregory Arim, and Driedo—that, formally or materially, original sin consists in concupiscence, a positive quality.[Bellarmine] With an appeal to Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and others, original sin was defined as only the loss of original righteousness. Bellarmine openly and clearly stated this point: “The state of man after Adam’s fall does not differ much from his state in its natural purity, any more than a man stripped of his clothes differs from a nude; nor is human nature worse if you subtract original sin; neither does it labor more under infirmity and ignorance than it would have while established in its purely natural state. In like manner the corruption of nature did not flow from the lack of some natural gift nor from the accession of some bad quality but only from a loss of the supernatural gift occasioned by Adam’s sin.”[R. Bellarmine]

The state in which humans are born after the fall is completely identical to that of Adam before the fall but without the supernatural gift. [the Roman Catholic view and others as mentioned earlier] One

can speak of a corruption or wounding of nature only in the sense that this state ought not to be, since, after receiving the superadded gift, Adam lost it; the loss of it is culpable. But materially that state is not wrong: it is “naked naturalness.” **Original sin consists in nothing but reduction to a merely natural state; the supernatural things having been lost, the natural [nevertheless] remains intact.** In baptism this loss is made up with infused grace; after death original sin is punished only with the “punishment of the damned.” Although some theologians still attempted to maintain a “corruption of nature,” the **supernaturalistic** view of Christianity made this impossible.[Baius and Jansen did try to find acceptance for a more rigorous view of original sin but their theses were rejected by Rome] The only remaining difference pertains to whether the imputation of Adam’s sin, which resulted in the loss of the superadded gift for all his descendants, is based on a physical or on a moral (**federal**) connection. Some say that all humans are—not formally but causally, materially, and seminally—included in Adam; others think they can only explain the imputation by assuming that Adam was not only our original ancestor but also our head and our representative [i.e., our federal head] Still others combine the two views.

TOTAL CORRUPTION

The Reformation opposed this **Roman Catholic weakening of original sin**. By itself the scholastic definition of original sin as “the loss of original righteousness which ought to be in humans” was not found objectionable, provided it was not understood in purely negative terms. In Roman Catholic theology, however, this increasingly became the case, and so the Reformation in turn stressed that original sin is not just a loss of something but simultaneously a total corruption of human nature. In the early years this corruption was still called by the name of “**concupiscence**,” but this term was construed, not one-sidedly with Augustine and Lombard, as the sex drive, but as the “disordered state of all the appetites,” seated in the higher as well as the lower faculties of humans. **Calvin** very clearly puts it this way: those who define original sin as the loss of original righteousness, while they do describe it in its totality, **do not adequately give expression to its power and energy. For our nature is not only destitute of good but “fertile and fruitful of every evil.”** If then original sin is described as “concupiscence,” this is fine provided there be added “that whatever is in man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, has been defiled and crammed with this concupiscence. Or, to put it more briefly, the whole man is of himself nothing but **concupiscence.**”[Calvin] The Reformers further taught that from its very first motion this concupiscence was also sin: it does not first become sin when the will has consented to it, but it is sin in itself, not only as formed, therefore, but already as unformed. Calvin again states that on this point he disagrees with Augustine, who describes concupiscence, after its guilt has been removed from it in baptism, by the word “weakness.” “We, on the other hand, deem it sin.” **Finally, this corruption of human nature is so total that humans are by nature incapable of any spiritual good, inclined to all evil, and on account of it alone deserving of eternal punishment.**

It cannot be denied that, out of reaction against Rome, especially among Lutherans, people sometimes expressed themselves too deserving of eternal punishment. It cannot be denied that, out of reaction against Rome, especially among Lutherans, people sometimes expressed themselves too

strongly. Though it was meant well, it was certainly open to serious misunderstanding when Luther called original sin “essential sin” and “the essence of humans.”[According to J. Kostlin...] Even more strongly, Flacius spoke of original sin as “the substance of humans.” And also the Formula of Concord stated, in Luther’s own words, that in spiritual matters the mind, heart, and will were “altogether corrupt and dead,” no more capable [of good] than “a stone, a trunk, or mud.”[J. T. Muller] Catholics for that reason accused the Lutherans of Manicheism.[Bellarmine] But in the Formula of Concord, they nevertheless expressly confessed that sin was not a substance, and all the theologians agreed. Although Lutherans as a rule even held to traducianism and were therefore inclined to regard original sin as being propagated by carnal concupiscence,[Luther, according to the J. Kostlin...] Melancthon also states there that he has no objection to saying that humans are “born guilty on account of Adam’s fall.” The Formula of Concord declares that original sin is “a fault or an indictment as a result of which, on account of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we are all at enmity with God and by nature children of wrath,”[J.T. Muller, *Die Symbolischen Bucher*, 576] and several Lutheran theologians later say that **Adam must not only be viewed as the “physical head” but also as the “moral or federal head of the human race” and that therefore his trespass is imputed to all.**[J.A. Quenstedt, *Theologia*]

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INHERITED SIN?

The way in which this “originated sin” becomes the experience of all of us **is not through imitation but through generation based on imputation.** There is an antecedent judgment (κριμα) of God, and in virtue of that judgment all people are born of Adam guilty, impure, and in the process of dying. **They do not become all this only at a later age as a result of actual sins but are this from conception and birth on.**

What is Sin p 127, 136-138

[Sin: not a substance, but an active principle of a privation of good]

Reformed Dogmatics, Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 3 pg 127, 136-138

The Nature of Sin, pg 127

Original sin, by contrast, has passed to all humans and characterizes all of them to the same extent. It is, after all, nothing other than the sin of Adam himself, imputed to all his descendants; it regards every one of them as born with the same guilt, the same impurity, and the same perverseness as, in the case of Adam, made their appearance immediately after his violation of God’s commandment. [i.e., as Bavinck notes, not *mediately* after they were conceived in iniquity, referring to *mediate imputation*, but immediately upon Adam’s transgression.]

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If sin were a substance, there would exist an entity that either was not created by God or was not caused by God. Sin, accordingly, has to be understood and described neither as an existing thing nor as being in things that exist but rather as a **defect, a deprivation, an absence of the good, or as weakness,**

imbalance, just as blindness is a deprivation of sight. [Athanasius, *Against the Heathens*] In the West especially Augustine brought out and upheld this privative character of sin in his opposition to the Manicheans. All being is per se good. All that is natural, to the degree that it is natural, is good. Evil can therefore only be something about the good. There cannot be any evil at all except in something good, because it cannot be except in something natural. It is itself not nature, but a lack, privation, or corruption of the good, a vice or defect of nature; for good to be diminished is evil. [Augustine, *City of God*] It therefore has no efficient but only a deficient cause. [Augustine, *City of God*] Scholastics and Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed theologians similarly reduced the concept of sin in a metaphysical sense to that of privation. [in addition to the literature already mentioned, see e.g., also M. Becanus, *Summa theologiae scholasticae...*]

On the other hand, it is also clear that sin cannot be adequately described with the concept of privation. Certainly it is not a mere lack, pure nonbeing, but an active and corrupting principle, a dissolving, destructive power. Scripture usually speaks of it in a very positive sense as an act of transgression, wrongness, disobedience, lawlessness, and so on and ascribes to it the activity of witnessing, ruling, moving, thinking, fighting, and so on. Various theologians have therefore rejected the distinction between matter and form in their definition of sin. They based their views on the premise that blasphemy, idolatry, hatred against God, and so on are sinful actions and can never assume a good form, and so they described sin rather as a “certain real and positive something,” as a “real something.” [Cajetan in M. Becanus, *Summa theologiae scholasticae...*]

To understand this correctly, however, we must note the following: (1) When the majority of Christian theologians conceive sin as privation, they first of all have opposition to **Manicheism** in view. To that extent their opinion is completely correct and to be accepted without reservation. Sin is not a substance, neither spiritual nor material, for then it would either have God as its cause or else God would not be the creator of all things. (2) Also the nature of sin itself keeps us from viewing it as a substance, for sin is not a physical but an ethical phenomenon. It is a state and act of the will and is rooted in the will; it is not given with creation but originated after the creation as a result of disobedience. Accordingly, it cannot be a material thing that existed eternally or was created in time by God but only exists as a deformation of existence; in that sense it can even be called something that does not exist, a “nothing.” [Dr. R. P. Mees 1907] (3) This is not to be understood as meaning that sin is a nonnegative. The case is rather that Christian theology has at all times very firmly opposed the **pantheistic view** of sin as pure negation, as a state of not yet being, as a necessary component in the development of a finite being, as an illusion of thought. Sin was no “mere negation” but a “privation,” the difference between them being that “negation” is only a matter of “being without” (*carere*), while “privation” is lacking something essential to life (*egere*). The fact that a stone does not see is a negation, but that a human should not see is a privation, since sight belongs to the essential functions of a human being. Sin is a privation of the moral perfection a human ought to possess. (4) The characterization of sin as privation, accordingly, by no means excludes its being also—viewed from a different angle— **an action**. It is not a “substance” or thing, but in its being deprived of the good, it is an activity (*ἐνεργεῖα*), just as the limp of a cripple is not the absence of walking but a defective kind of walking. Augustine, who over and over describes sin as “privation,” therefore calls it a transgression of the law (*transgressio legis*), [Augustine, *The Consensus of the Evangelists*] the will to hang on to or pursue something that justice forbids, [Augustine, *On the Two Souls, Against the Manicheans*] a defect

that includes a tendency, a defect that is not altogether nothing but tends toward nothingness, [Augustine, *Against Secundus the Manichee*] a leaning away from what is more to what is less. [ibid] He then gives this definition: **“Sin is something done, or said, or desired contrary to eternal law; the law that is truly eternal is the divine reason or will of God, which demands the preservation of the natural order and forbids its disturbance.”** [idem, *Against Faustus the Manichee*] Later this definition was universally accepted: **sin is not mere or pure privation but an action deprived of due order**, [P. Lombard] **a privation having a positive quality and action, that is, an active privation.** [J. Zanchi, *Op. Theol.*, IV]

On the basis of Holy Scripture, and in keeping with the confession of the Christian faith, therefore, the essential character of sin can be defined and explained as follows.

As Ethical-Spiritual

1. Inasmuch as sin is not a physical or metaphysical but an ethical antithesis of the good, it has no self-existent, independent being of its own. **Those who consider sin a substance may seem to be deeply convinced of its power and importance but in fact weaken it by transferring it from the ethical to the physical domain and turn the conflict between good and evil into a struggle between light and darkness, spirit and matter, a good and an evil God, a struggle that is never-ending and makes all redemption from sin impossible.** [the difficulty of Gnosticism/dualism] For that reason it is of supreme importance always to view sin as an ethical phenomenon. Certainly the punishments and consequences of sin extend also to the physical domain, but sin itself is and remains ethical in character. That being the case, sin cannot have its own principle and its own independent existence; it only originated after and exists only by and in connection with the good. While evil does depend on the good, the reverse is not true. “It is possible for the good (noble) to become bad.” [Plato, *Protagoras*] “The better and more honorable seems to be prior by nature.” [Aristotle, *Categories*] “The good (true) is its own standard as well as that of evil (falsehood).” The good, by a free choice, was the cause of evil and remains its substratum. Fallen angels and humans as creatures are and remain good and exist from moment to moment only by, and in, and for God. **And just as sin is dependent on the good in its origin and existence, so it is in its operation and struggle.** It has power to do anything only with and by means of the powers and gifts that are God-given. Satan has therefore correctly been called the ape of God. When God builds a church, Satan adds a chapel; over against the true prophet, he raises up a false prophet; over against the Christ, he poses the Antichrist. Even a band of robbers can only exist if within its own organization it respects the rules. A liar always garbs himself or herself in the guise of truth. A sinner pursues evil under pretense of the good. Satan himself appears as an angel of light. In its operation and appearance, sin is always doomed to borrow, despite itself, from the treasury of virtue. It is subject to the unalterable fate— while striving for the destruction of all good— of working simultaneously on its own demise. **It is a parasite of the good.**

This is key! :

2. Thus, although sin in virtue of its own nature strives toward nonbeing, it nonetheless has no power over being itself. It cannot create; neither can it destroy. Accordingly, neither the essential character of the angels, nor that of humans, nor that of nature, has been changed as a result of sin. Essentially they are the same creatures before and after the fall, with the same substance, the same capacities, the

same powers. Both before and after the fall, humans have a soul and a body, intellect and will, feelings and passions. What has changed is not the substance, the matter, **but the form in which these show themselves, the direction in which they function.** With the same power of love with which human beings originally loved God, they now love the creature. The same intellect with which in the past they sought the things above now frequently, with admirable acuteness and profundity, makes them hold falsehood to be truth. With the same freedom with which they formerly served God, they now serve the world. Substantially, sin has neither removed anything from humanity nor introduced anything into it. It is the same human person, but now walking, not toward God but away from him, to destruction. “Sin is not some positive essence but a defect, a corruptive tendency; that is, a force that contaminates mode, species, and order in the created will.” [Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Boneventure*]

3. Nor is the loss of the **image of God** and the breaking of the covenant of works inconsistent with **this view of sin.** For the **image of God**, though no superadded gift but integral to human nature, was not a substance but an accident [*accident: a property added to something, e.g., white is the accident of snow; the soul is an accident to animals; not so with humans, the soul of humans were created by the breath of God separate from the body, but the image of god is an accident to the soul*]; that is, human beings, as they were created, were so designed that their nature automatically— without supernatural grace, but not without God’s good providence— **carried with it and displayed the knowledge, holiness, and righteousness that were the primary components of the image of God.** When humanity fell, it lost nothing substantial, no faculty even and no power. What happened was that since sin violated the form of the entire human nature, these faculties and powers now function so as to produce, no longer the knowledge and righteousness of God, but their very opposites. As a result of the fall, accordingly, human beings have not just lost an inessential addition to their nature (a superadded gift), while for the rest their nature remained intact; nor did they become devils who, incapable of being re-created, can never again display the features of the image of God. Instead, while they remained essentially and substantially the same, that is, human, and kept all their human components, capacities, and powers, the form, the character and nature, **the set and direction of all these capacities and powers were so changed that now, instead of fulfilling the will of God, they fulfill the “law of the flesh.”** The image has changed into a caricature. Similarly, the covenant of works has been broken, inasmuch as by the works of the law no human flesh can any longer be justified (Rom. 3: 20; Gal. 3: 2). However, it has been so little destroyed and abolished that the law of the covenant of works still obligates every human to absolute obedience; it has been incorporated by Christ into the covenant of grace and has been completely fulfilled and now still remains as a rule of gratitude for believers.

pg 145

As Mystery in Variety [A good summary on the mystery of what is sin.]

7. When all is said and done, sin proves to be an incomprehensible mystery. We know neither whence it is nor what it is. It exists, but has no right to existence. It exists, but no one can explain its origin. Sin itself came into the world without motivation, yet it is the motivation for all human thought and action. **From an abstract point of view, it is nothing but a privation, yet concretely it is a power that**

controls everyone and everything. It has no independent principle of its own, yet it is a principle that devastates the whole creation. It lives off the good, yet fights it to the point of destruction. It is nothing, has nothing, and cannot do anything without the entities and forces God has created, yet organizes them all into rebellion against him. With everything that belongs to God, it opposes everything that belongs to God. **It is the will of a weak, finite creature in its revolt against the Creator. It is dependence at war with the Independent One and striving for its own independence.** It is impermanent becoming in a struggle with him who exists eternally. It is the greatest contradiction tolerated by God in his creation, yet used by him in the way of justice and righteousness as an instrument for his glory.

Diversity and Development of Sin

“sensuality, self-seeking”

pg 151-152

In sin, too, there is a dynamic of development: **there is a law of sin.** A given sin originates step-by-step by suggestion, enjoyment, consent, and execution. In the suggestion is the seed of sin; in enjoyment the nourishment; in consent the completion. [Gregory the Great and other] In that way sin also develops gradually in a person, a nuclear or extended family, a society and nation, and humanity as a whole as well. Not that sin in itself is so resourceful that it can assume so many forms, **for it is not an independent principle** and is, **metaphysically speaking, nothing but the privation of the good.** As in its origin, however, so in its development, **it exists solely in connection with and by means of the good. It unites with the boundless resources of the created world, destroys everything that exists, with the entire world as its instrument wars against God and his holy law,** and as a result assumes all those diverse forms and appearances that in their totality give it the character of a well-administered kingdom, an organism animated by a single principle, a cosmos subject to the rule of the “prince of this world,” the “god of this age.”

Inasmuch as sin is essentially privation, one can derive from it neither a principle of differentiation nor a division. “Privation takes its species from the form to which it is opposed” [Aristotle]. The earlier dogmatics and ethics, while they spoke about the character of the first sin, made very little effort to discover a so-called **principle of sin** and to trace all violations of the moral law to that first principle. Only in later times did theologians make an attempt to identify such a principle, finding it in turn in **sensuality,** [F. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*] **or in self-seeking,** [J. Muller, *Christian Doctrine of Sin*] or in both. [R. Rothe, *Theologische Ethik*] And in fact human sins do usually display the character of sensuality or self-seeking, of carnal covetousness or spiritual pride, of weakness or wickedness. Sometimes sin seems to consist in the rule of matter over mind, sometimes also in the abuse of freedom in rebellion against God’s ordinances. Yet Rothe failed to explain self-seeking from sensuality, and J. Müller, with his pre-existentialism, failed to explain self-seeking from sensuality. [Cf. I. A. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*] Nor is it hard to understand why.

Metaphysically and abstractly sin cannot be described in a way other and more precisely than as privation of the good. As such it has no principle of its own, no real existence: it exists solely in relation to the good. It derives the forms it assumes from the good it inhabits and corrupts. It will therefore differ in appearance depending on the creatures in which it lodges and the organs and powers it

utilizes. Although it is always privation of the good, in angels and humans and again in each of these individually it bears a particular character. Since human beings are originally not just sensual but also spiritual beings and always both in conjunction, all sin in their case will display this character. No single human sin is exclusively either sensual or self-seeking. As in the first sin in the case of Adam, so in every subsequent sin various aspects can be discerned, even though one of these aspects is usually more prominent than the others. **In humans every sin is a turning away from God, disobedience, rebellion, anarchy, lawlessness, and at the same time, since sin is never self-sufficient, a turning toward a creature, idolatry, pride, self-seeking, sensuality.** [Bonaventure, *Sent.*, II] And because the creatures to which humans can turn are so numerous, sin in their case can also assume a wide variety of forms. There are as many kinds of sin as there are different commandments, duties, virtues, and moral goods. **Aquinas** categorized sins in terms of the objects to which they were directed, Duns Scotus in terms of the virtues of which they were the opposites. [See more on Aquinas' doctrine at [codeaquinas1](#)] In addition there were numerous other arrangements, such as the list of seven deadly sins: pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. [O. Zockler] Or they were arranged in terms of the norms, in terms of sins against the various commandments of the law, or sins against God, one's neighbor, and ourselves. Or they were distinguished by the instrument with which they are committed, as sins of thought, word, and deed; or as sins of the spirit and of the flesh; or, in keeping with 1 John 2: 16, as sins of feeling, knowing, and controlling; or as sins of weakness, ignorance, and wickedness. Sins can also be categorized in terms of the form, as sins of omission and commission; or as sins as such and sins incidentally; or, according to the connecting words, as secret and open, controlling and noncontrolling, silent and crying sins, and so on. [P. Lombard]

My note:

Here is a statement that I heard on the Ben Shapiro Show this morning that sums up original sin, man's depravity: his pride, self-reliance, self-righteousness, addictedness to his own will, practical atheism, and an Arminian/Pelagian bent:

"Man was born on third base, and he thinks he hit a triple."

This is so true! Now you can get a clearer sense of our miserable, self-deceived condition as we are born into the world.

[Comments on the Roman Catholic supernaturalistic view of Original Sin and the image of God. From learning the views of Pelagius, pagan philosophers and Arminians, you can see how their gross error of anthropology set the foundation for the Sinner's Prayer which has permeated most churches in the world today.](#)

THE PELAGIAN OBJECTION TO ORIGINAL SIN

code404

From
Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3, pg 85-88

In the Christian church, the doctrine of original sin was based on the above scriptural data. From the beginning, people discerned a certain connectedness between Adam's sin and that of his descendants. In that respect the assertion that the doctrine of original sin is an invention of **Augustine** is totally incorrect, and he himself could write: "I did not dream up original sin, which the catholic faith believes from of old." Yet it is true that theology in the early centuries, especially in the **East in its struggle with Gnosticism, tended much more to stress free will and actual, personal sin than the sin inherited from Adam**. Where it is recognized that "an evil of the soul proceeds from an original fault," [Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*] the essence of that original sin is not necessarily further defined and the manner of its propagation more deeply thought through. **Pelagius**, therefore, could with some semblance of justice appeal to many predecessors; yet he went much farther than they, taught something essentially different, and denied original sin. According to Pelagius, the **image of God consisted solely in a free personality, not in positive holiness, immortality, and so on**. Adam's trespass, according to him, did not deprive humans of the **image of God** and in fact had no adverse consequences whatsoever. There is no such thing as original sin. Adam's trespass negatively affected his descendants only in that it left them a bad example, which, followed by others, made sin a power among humankind. Hereditary transmission of sin is a Manichean error; **sin is not a state but an act** and always bears a personal stamp. It would be contrary to God's justice to charge us with the sins of others. Also, procreation in marriage would be impermissible if the hereditary transmission of sin took place by that channel. Furthermore, baptized parents can no longer propagate sin since it is eradicated by baptism. Sin, accordingly, is propagated not by generation but by imitation. Humans, whose souls were created pure by God, are **still today born in the same state as Adam was before the fall**: sickness, suffering, death, and so on are not punishments visited upon sin. Human beings are still completely free and can of themselves know and do the good: **they have no need of grace**. It is indeed possible for them to abstain from all sins, and a few have in fact attained this ideal. [anti-Pelagian writings of Augustine...]

In voicing these ideas, **Pelagius** did little more than take over the views that had been promulgated long before by **Greek and Roman philosophers** and had found acceptance in popular philosophy. Even according to the Jews, souls were still always created pure by God and enabled to counter and conquer the covetousness that dwells in the flesh. It is true that poets and thinkers in the classical world frequently spoke in poignant lament of the universal power of sin, but because they knew of no redemption, they could not remain true to this view and, alongside it, always again taught **that humans had the power to liberate themselves from sin and to practice virtue**. They were caught up in an antinomy and oscillated from one extreme to another. Sometimes they depicted the depravity of their time in such dark colors that even the most somber pessimism could not make it seem worse; then again they idealized the world, considering nature perfect and not capable of improvement. Among them already the antithesis between culture and nature emerges; the former may be corrupt, but the latter is good, both within humanity and outside it. Evil is not born along with us but is later voluntarily

committed by us; by contrast, the seeds of virtue have been planted in our heart, and **virtue** itself is within our power. “Existing in our minds are inborn seeds of the virtues which, if permitted to mature, nature itself will lead to a life marked by happiness.”[M. T. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputation*] “You err if you think that vices are inborn in us; no, they come upon us, they are imposed.”[L. A. Seneca, *Letters From a Stoic*] **Virtue is not given and received; it is acquired only by practice and effort; we thank not God for them but ourselves.** [the logical subsequent in Arminianism: why do I need to thank God for my being converted if my own power within me, virtue, does the job, is the determining power. See Edwards on *Concerning Efficacious Grace*¹ and John Owen on *A Display of Arminianism*] However widespread sin may be, there are exceptions. Truly solid, virtuous people exist. However, “no one is almost without defect. The majority are bad.”[R. Schneider]

¹ § 53. **If God is not the disposing author of virtue, then he is not the giver of it.** The very notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit. [1 John iv. 4.](#) “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;” that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. **But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict?** – Jonathan Edwards

In **Pelagianism** this doctrine of the **natural goodness of humanity** was renewed. Although it was condemned under the name of Pelagius, it continued to assert itself in the Christian church under other names. The **Roman Catholic Church**, by its **supernaturalistic** and **mechanical** conception of the **image of God**, arrived at the confession that the “natural man” (*homo naturalis*), after losing the **super-added gifts**, **can still do truly good works, not, to be sure, in a supernatural sense, but certainly in the natural sense.** [Decrees of the Council of Trent] One needed only to remove the supernatural addition to suddenly come face to face with unblemished nature. This occurred in humanism; and Coornhert, who remained Catholic and humanist till his death, articulated this sentiment when he was greatly scandalized by the fifth and eighth questions [and answers] of the Heidelberg Catechism. **Socinians, Anabaptists, and Rationalists** returned to this identical Roman Catholic viewpoint. Especially in the eighteenth century, the **glorification of nature** was fashionable, with **Rousseau** as its eloquent interpreter. Everything that comes to us from the hands of nature is good, but everything turns rotten in the hands of human beings. Nature is always and everywhere good, but culture is the source of all deficiency and misery. Take away the work of human beings, and everything is good. An animal in its natural state is happy, but, as a result of society, people have become miserable. Accordingly, in education, in religion, in morality, in society and the state let us return to nature, to the idyllic circumstances of shepherds and farmers, the innocent and carefree lifestyle of Hottentots and natives. Then, for humanity, virtue and happiness will instantly be restored.[Rousseau in his *Profession of Faith of the Vicar*] The revolution attempted to realize that ideal practically. Numerous **utopians** designed a political “state of happiness” on paper. A few attempted to establish a colony based on these principles in foreign parts of the world. But in the face of all sorts of disappointments, and despite the fact that the theory of evolution suggested a very different view of the state of nature, thousands upon thousands of people exist who believe in the total natural goodness of humanity, who proceed from it in the upbringing of children, and who build their optimistic future expectations upon it.[21]

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From
Reformed Dogmatics
 By Hermon Bavinck
 Vol. 3, pg 90-92

SEMI-PELAGIANISM

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Pelagianism was condemned by the Christian church. From the outset the church fathers assumed a certain connection between Adam's sin and that of his descendants. Although this connection was not yet examined in detail, Adam's trespass did bring about a great moral upheaval in his own life and that of his descendants. The nature of that moral change, however, was viewed in very diverse ways. According to **semi-Pelagianism**, the consequences of Adam's fall consisted for him and his descendants, aside from death, **primarily in the weakening of moral strength.** Though there is actually no real original sin in the sense of guilt, there is a hereditary malady: as a result of Adam's fall, humanity has become morally sick; the human will has been weakened and is inclined to evil. There has originated in humans a conflict between "flesh" and "spirit" that makes it impossible for a person to live without sin; **but humans can will the good, and when they do, grace comes to their assistance in accomplishing it.** [G. F. Wiggers] This is the position adopted by the **Greek church**; and although in the West Augustine exerted strong influence, the [Western] church increasingly strayed toward semi-Pelagianism. The Council of Trent taught that though the freedom of the will had diminished, it had not been destroyed, and that concupiscence as such is not a sin. Totally in agreement with this is the opinion of Anabaptists, Zwingli, the Remonstrants, the Moravian Brethren, the Supernaturalists, and many modern theologians. All agree in believing that Adam's fall had consequences also for his descendants, because they are physically connected with him. **But the moral state that came into being in the human race as a result of Adam's trespass is not one of sin and guilt but of weakness, lack, sickness.** Original sin as such cannot damn humans and at most results in a punishment of the damned [*poena damni*—the pain of eternal separation from God] without a punishment of the senses (*poena*

sensus). It is an occasion for sin, not sin itself in the true sense of the word. Since the will is in a weakened state, however, it easily yields to the temptations of the flesh; then, when the will agrees and consents to concupiscence, original sin turns into personal sin, which renders a person guilty and deserving of punishment. Materially this theory of original sin completely corresponds to the theory that sin is the product of sensuality and a remnant of humanity's earlier animal state.

This **semi-Pelagian** view of original sin, however, is basically not much better than that of Pelagius and is open to the same objections. (1) It denies the character and seriousness of sin. Sin, after all, is lawlessness (*ἀνομία*). The state in which humans are born either corresponds to God's law or deviates from it; it is good or evil, sinful or not sinful. There is no third category. That that state is good and agrees in all parts with God's law, semi-Pelagians dare not assert either. **Yet they do not call it sinful in the true sense of the word. So they create an intermediate state and speak of original sin as a disease, a deficiency, an illness that is not a real sin but can only be an occasion for sin. Or they separate sin and guilt** and say, like Rothe and Kaftan, that though original sin is sin, it is not guilt. (2) This is impossible both ways. **Sin and guilt are inseparable** (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10; 1 John 5:17). If sin is lawlessness, it is punishable; and, conversely, where there is guilt and punishment, there has to be sin. Original sin, however, is such that death is its consequence (Rom. 5:14), that it makes us unworthy of the fellowship of God and his heaven (*Doedes*), that it is inherently impure, the occasion and source of many sins, and is presumably therefore itself sin. Otherwise God would be unjust for punishing with death, the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23), that which is no sin and does not deserve death. The law would lose its absolute validity, for there would be deviation that did not deserve punishment, fellowship with God would be withheld where there was no guilt. Between heaven and hell, good and evil, light and darkness there would come a state that was neither, a "punishment of the damned" without a "punishment of the senses." That which engenders all sorts of sins would not itself be sinful. The tree, though good, would still bear bad fruit. The spring, though pure, would produce impure water. (3) **The notion that innate sinfulness only becomes sin and guilt when the will consents to it,** so far from improving the theory, makes it worse. We have to choose: either the will, as it were, stands above and outside that innate tendency, and then original sin consists in nothing but the innate sensual nature, and the entire [moral] character of sin is lost; or the will is itself more or less affected and weakened by original sin. It is rooted in the sinful nature and arises from it, and then one loses—to precisely the same degree as that to which one allows the will to be weakened—that which the theory was designed to maintain: that there is no sin without a decision of the free will.

God is Sovereign, Not Man

code319

God's Chief End in Creation

by Jonathan Edwards

pg 97 vol. 1

The General Dictates of Reason Sect. 1

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.i.html>

As to the first of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, **eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy**: that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being. The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, **out of nothing**. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature? ^{code319a} [masterful logic and reasoning! - see [code156a](#) for Flavel's comment on this.]

[Jonathan Edwards comments on the evil of this coming to God without being called:](#)

§ 88. The Arminian scheme naturally, and by necessary consequence, leads men to take all the glory of all spiritual good (which is immensely the chief, most important, and excellent thing in the whole creation) to ourselves; as much as if we, with regard to those effects, were the supreme, the first cause, self-existent, and independent, and absolutely sovereign disposers. We leave the glory of only the meaner part of creation to God, and take to ourselves all the glory of that which is properly the life, beauty, and glory of the creation, and without which it is all worse than nothing. So that there is nothing left for the great First and Last; no glory for either the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in the affair. This is not carrying things too far, but in a consequence truly and certainly to be ascribed to their scheme of things.

John Owen:

1. When God first created all things, the heavens and the earth, with all that is contained in them, he left such footsteps and **impressions** of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, on them, that they might signify and declare his perfection, -- his eternal power and Godhead; yet did he not, he is not said to have created them in his own image. And this was because they were only **a passive representation of him in the light of others**, and not in themselves; nor did they represent at all that wherein God will be principally glorified among his creatures, -- namely, the **universal rectitude of his nature in righteousness and holiness**. But of man it is said, peculiarly and only, that he was made in the image and likeness of God: and this was because, in the **rectitude of his nature, he represented the holiness and righteousness of God**; **which is the only use of an image**. This was lost by sin. Man in his fallen condition does no more represent God; there is nothing in him that has any thing of the likeness

or image of God in it; all is dead, dark, perverse, and confused. This **new nature**, whereof we speak, is created of God for this very end, that it may be a **blessed image and representation of the holiness and righteousness of God**. Hence it is called the "**divine nature**," whereof we are partakers, 2 Pet. i. 4. And he that cannot see a representation of God in it, has not the light of faith and life in him.

[So, when God communicates this glory, this image of his knowledge and divine nature to us to make a new creation in us, to make us partakers of his divine nature, he is not improving on what we have; he is not building upon it, but is making something entirely new (*a new creation*). In fact, Paul tells us to put away the old man, not improve upon it. So until this communication is effected in us or is *shone in our hearts*, is instamped upon our souls, we are totally destitute of any power, holy or otherwise, to make any advance to God or to recommend ourselves to God acceptably in any way. As I said earlier we are unwilling and unable to come to God for life because of the enmity in our hearts (1Cor.2:14, Rms. 8:7-8, Heb11:6, **Jn 14:17**,etc). That is the whole point of this diagram. Salvation is of the Lord, not of man and when this glory is shone into one's heart, it will infallibly convert the soul. It will do what the observance of the law and the old testament priesthood could not do (and was never designed to do), due to the weakness of the flesh and the imperfections of the priesthood.]

Jn 14:17, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

Sovereignty of God and Other Subjects

code320

Man totally dependent upon God; God's prescriptive will not always God's (secret) will. Rules of Interpretation of Scripture explained, duty of believers to meditate upon God's law. Comment on the sinner's prayer and man's self-sufficiency vs. the effectual grace of God. Foundation of heresies explained and the value of having well taught teachers. It is not just us and our bibles!

Heb. 1:8,9 John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews 1

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_1.3-6.pdf

Verse 8, 9. — But unto the Son [he saith], Thy throne, O God, is for ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; wherefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

And this is the first testimony whereby the apostle confirms his assertion of the pre-eminence of the Lord Christ above angels, in that comparison which he makes between them; which also will afford the ensuing observations : —

I. The conferring and comparing of scriptures is an excellent means of coming to an acquaintance with the mind and will of God in them.

Thus dealeth the apostle in this place. He compareth what is spoken of angels in one place, and what of the Son in another, and from thence manifesteth what is the mind of God concerning them. This duty lies in the command we have to "[search the Scriptures](#)," John 5:39, ερευνατε τας γραφας: **make a diligent investigation of the mind of God in them**, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," — what the Spirit hath declared of the mind of God in one place, with what in like manner he hath manifested in another. God, to try our obedience, and to exercise our diligence unto a study in his word day and night, **Psalm 1:2**, and our continual meditation thereon, **1 Timothy 4:15**, (Ταυτα μελετα εν τουτοις ισθι, — "**Meditate on these things, be wholly in them**,") hath planted his truths with great variety up and down his word; yea, here one part, and there another of the same truth; **which cannot be thoroughly learned unless we gather them together into one view**. For instance, in one place God commands us to circumcise our hearts, and to make unto ourselves new hearts, that we may fear him; **which at first consideration seems so to represent it, not only as our duty, but also within our power**, as though we had no need of any help from grace for its accomplishment [[an argument that Arminians use to justify coming to God without being called, i.e., the sinner's prayer, that we have within ourselves the power to believe or obey God](#)]. **In another he promiseth absolutely to circumcise our hearts, and to give us new hearts to fear him; as though it were so his work as not to be our concernment to attempt it**. But now these several places being spiritually compared together, make it evident that as it is our duty to have new and circumcised hearts, so it is the **effectual grace of God** that must work and create them in us. And the like may be observed in all the important truths that are of divine revelation. And this, —

1. **[Discovers the root of almost all the errors and heresies that are in the world](#)**. Men whose hearts are not subdued by faith and humility unto the obedience of the truth, lighting on some expressions in the Scripture, that, **singly considered, seem to give countenance to some such opinion as they are willing to embrace**, without further search they fix it on their minds and imaginations, until it is too late to oppose any thing unto it; for when they are once fixed in their persuasions, **those other places of Scripture which they should with humility have compared with that whose seeming sense they cleave unto, and from thence have learned the mind of the Holy Ghost in them all**, are considered by them to no other end but only how they may pervert them, and **[free themselves from the authority of them](#)**. This, I say, seems to be the way of the most of them who pertinaciously cleave unto false and foolish

opinions. They rashly take up a seeming sense of some particular places, and then obstinately make that sense the rule of interpreting all other scriptures whatever. Thus in our own days we have many who, from the outward sound of these words, John 1:9, "He is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," having taken up a rash, foolish, and false imagination that Christ is that light which is remaining in all men, and therein their guide and rule, do from thence either wrest the whole Scripture to make it suit and answer that supposal, or else utterly slight and despise it; when, if they had compared it with other scriptures, which clearly explain and declare the mind of God in the things which concern the person and mediation of the Lord Christ, with the nature and works of natural and saving spiritual light, and **submitted to the authority and wisdom of God in them**, they might have been preserved from their delusion. It shows also, —

2. The danger that there is unto men **unskilled and unexercised in the word of truth**, when, without the advice, assistance, or direction of others who are able to guide them and instruct their inquiry after the mind of God, they **hastily** embrace opinions which it may be someone text or other of Scripture doth seemingly give countenance unto. By this means do men run themselves into the fore-mentioned danger every day, especially where any seducing spirit applies himself unto them with swelling words of vanity, boasting of some misunderstood word or other. Thus have we seen multitudes led, by some general expression, in two or three particular places of Scripture, into an opinion about a general redemption of all mankind and every individual thereof; when, if they had been wise, and able to have searched those other scriptures innumerable setting forth the eternal love of God to his elect, his purpose to save them by Jesus Christ, the nature and end of his oblation and ransom, and compared them with others, they would have understood the vanity of their hasty conceptions.

3. From these things it appears what **diligence, patience, waiting, wisdom, are required of all men in searching of the Scriptures**, who intend to come unto the acknowledgment of the truth thereby. And unto this end, and because of the greatness of our concernment therein, doth the Scripture itself abound with precepts, rules, directions, to enable us unto a right and profitable discharging of our duty. They are too many here to be inserted. I shall only add, that the diligence of heathens will rise up in judgment and condemn the sloth of many that are called Christians in this matter: for whereas they had no certain rule, way, or means to come to the knowledge of the truth, yet they ceased not with indefatigable diligence and industry to inquire after it, and to trace the obscure footsteps of what was left in their own natures or implanted on the works of creation; but many, the most of those unto whom God hath granted the inestimable benefit and privilege of his word, as a sure and infallible guide to lead them into the knowledge of all useful and saving truth, do openly neglect it, not accounting it worthy their searching, study, and diligent examination. How woefully will this rise up in judgment against them at the last day is not difficult to conceive. **And how much greater will be their misery who, under various pretences, for their own corrupt ends, do deter, yea, and drive others from the study of it!**

Efficacious Grace – Arminianism Liberty

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and free/autonomous self-directed will.
The gift of God's grace, His image not of ourselves...

Here are some more excerpts are from **Concerning Efficacious Grace** by Jonathan Edwards. This should help paint the picture more clearly. I underlined and emboldened in red many of the important points; my comments in [blue]

§ 8. [Acts xii. 23.](#) God was so angry with Herod for not giving him the glory of his eloquence, that the angel of the Lord smote him immediately, and he died a miserable death; he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But if it be very sinful for a man to take to himself the glory of such a qualification as eloquence, how much more a man's taking to himself the **glory of divine grace, God's own image**, and that which is **infinitely God's most excellent, precious, and glorious gift, and man's highest honour, excellency, and happiness, whereby he is partaker of the divine nature**, and becomes a God-like creature? If God was so jealous for the glory of so small a gift, how much more for so high an endowment, this being that alone, of all other things, by which man becomes like God? **If man takes the glory of it to himself, he thereby will be in the greatest danger of taking the glory to himself that is due to God**, and of setting up himself as standing in competition with God, as vying with the Most High, **and making himself a god, and not a man**. If not giving God the glory of that which is least honorable, provokes God's jealousy; much more must not giving God the glory of that which is infinitely the most honorable. It is allowed, the apostle insists upon it, that the primitive Christians should be sensible that the glory of their gifts belonged to God, and that they made not themselves to differ. But how small a matter is this, if they make themselves to differ in that, which the apostle says is so much more excellent than all gifts! P544 Vol. 2 Concerning Efficacious Grace

§ 9. How much more careful has God shown himself, that men should not be proud of their **virtue**, than of any other gift! See [Deut. ix. 4.](#) [Luke xviii. 9.](#) And innumerable other places. **And the apostle plainly teaches us to ascribe to God the glory, not only of our redemption, but of our wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification; and that no flesh should glory in themselves in these things, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31.** Again, the apostle plainly directs, that all **that glory** in their **virtue**, should glory in the Lord, [2 Cor. X. 17.](#) It is glorying in virtue and virtuous deeds he is there speaking of; and it is plain, that the apostle uses the expression of glorying in the Lord, in such a sense, as to imply ascribing the glory of our **virtue** to God. p544 Vol. 2 Concerning Efficacious Grace

§ 10. **The doctrine of men's being the determining causes of their own virtue, teaches them, not to do so much, as even the proud Pharisee did, who thanked God for making him to differ from other men in virtue, Luke xviii.** See [Gen. xli. 15, 16.](#) [Job xi. 12.](#) [Dan. li. 25,](#) &c. [2 Cor. lii. 5, 6.](#) [2 Cor. iv. 7.](#) [2 Cor. X. 17.](#) [Prov. Xx. 12.](#) "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made, even both of them;" compared with many parallel places that speak about God's giving eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, &c.

§ 11. The Arminian doctrine, and the doctrine of our new philosophers, concerning habits of virtue being only by custom, discipline, and gradual culture, joined with the other doctrine, that the obtaining of these habits in those that have time for it, is in every man's power, according to their doctrine of the

freedom of will, tends exceedingly to cherish presumption in sinners, while in health and vigour, and tends to their utter despair, in sensible approaches of death by sickness or old age. Pg. 544

The sum is this; Arminians and most people think that we have it in our own power to endeavour after holiness, and thus to determine the matter of believing the Gospel, believing on Christ, to really see Christ as our only hope and to see us as vile creatures, meriting nothing but damnation, and us as nothing in comparison to Christ, all to be done in a saving manner and that the only thing that God does to help us in this way is only by moral suasion, presenting ideas to our understanding, and that nothing on God's part by his Spirit is infallibly effectual or decisive; the decision for salvation is left up to their idea of man's own "self-directed" or "autonomous free-will" of deciding the matter, that the human will determines itself. Hence, the first cause is within us, this deciding originates within us, and not from without. (which by definition makes us gods) - G Clark

I would highly recommend studying John Owen's book, [A Display of Arminianism!](#) Also, when looking at the diagram of the Glory of God, in what it consists and the communication of it to the elect by the Holy Spirit, this exposition should increase your understanding and make plain the vanity of the Arminian doctrine of man's self-sufficiency to the exclusion of the power of God that works in us ..., and the truth of the doctrine of Original Sin which ascribes nothing to man but total depravity (1Cor2:14, Rms 8:7-8).

The Limitations (impotence) of the Will of Man,
Saving Grace
& The Affections Working For Man's
Enjoyment of God Forever

Code430

Excerpt from John Flavel

A Treatise of the Soul of Man p. 27-31

VI. God has endued the soul of man not only with an **understanding** to discern, and direct, but also a **will** to govern, moderate, and over-rule the actions of life.

The will is a faculty of the rational soul, whereby a man either chuseth or refuseth the things which the understanding discerns and knows.

This is a very high and noble power of the soul. The understanding seems to bear the same relation to the will, as a grave counsellor does to a great prince. It glories in two excellencies, namely,

1. Liberty.
2. Dominion.

1. It has a freedom and liberty; it cannot be compelled and forced: Coaction is repugnant to its very nature. In this it differs from the understanding, that the understanding is wrought upon necessarily, but the will acts spontaneously. This liberty of the will respects the choice, or refusal of the means for attaining those ends it prosecutes, according as it finds them more or less conducive thereunto. **The liberty of the will must be understood to be in things natural, which are within its own proper sphere, not in things supernatural. It can move, or not move the body, as it pleases, but it cannot move towards Christ, in the way of faith, as it pleaseth;** it can open or shut the hand or eye at its pleasure, but not the heart. **True, indeed, it is not compelled, or forced to turn to God by supernatural grace, but in a way suitable to its nature, it is determined and drawn to Christ, Psal. 110:3. "Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power;" It is drawn by a mighty power, and yet runs freely: Cant. 1:4. "Draw me, and I will run after thee."**

Efficacious grace, and victorious delight, is a thing very different from compulsive force. "Pelagius (as a late author speaks) at first gave all to nature, acknowledged no necessity of divine grace; but when this proud doctrine found little countenance, he called nature by the name of grace; and when that deceit was discovered, he acknowledged no other grace but outward instruction, or the benefit of external revelation, to discourse, and put men in mind of their duty. Being yet driven farther, he acknowledged the grace of pardon; and before a man could do anything acceptably, there was a necessity of the remission of sin, and then he might obey God perfectly. But that not sufficing, he acknowledged another grace, namely, the example of Christ, which does both secure our rule and encourage our practice. And last of all, his followers owned some kind of internal grace, but they made that to consist in some illumination of the understanding, or moral persuasion, by probable arguments, to excite the will, and this not absolutely necessary, but only for facilitation, as a horse to a journey,

which otherwise a man might go on foot. **Others grant the secret influences of God's grace, but make the will of man a co-ordinate cause with God, namely, that God doth propound the object, hold forth inducing considerations; give some remote power and assistance; but still there is an indifferency in the will of man, to accept or refuse, as liketh him best.**" Thus have they been forced to quit and change their ground; **but still the pride of nature will not let men see the necessity of divine efficacious influences upon the will, and the consistency thereof with natural liberty.** [the doctrine of compatibility]

(2.) Its dignity in its dominion, as well as in its liberty. The will has an empire, and sceptre belonging to it; yea, a double empire, for it rules,

1. *Imperium Despoticum*, Over the body, *imperio despotico*, by way of absolute command.

2. *Imperium Politicum*, Over the other powers and passions of the soul, *imperio politico*, by way of suasion.

(1.) **The will, like an absolute sovereign, reigns over the body, i.e. its external members by way of absolute command.** It says, as the centurion did, I am in authority, and God has put the many members of the body in subjection to me; I say to one, move, and it moves; to another, stop, and it stops; and to a third, do this, and it doth it. The obsequious members of the body, like so many servants, have their eyes waiting on the imperial commands of the will, and it is admirable to behold with what dispatch and speed they execute its commands, as if their obedient motions were rather concomitant than subsequent acts to the will's mandates. Let it but command to have the windows of the body, open or shut, and it is done in a moment, in the twink of an eye; and so for the rest of the external senses and members, they pay it most ready obedience. Yet when I say, the will has a despotical, and absolute sovereignty over the members, it must be understood with a double limitation. First, They are only at its beck for use and service; it can use them while well and rightly disposed; but it cannot perpetuate them, or restore them when indisposed. If the soul will the health and life of the body never so intensely and vehemently, it cannot keep off death one moment the longer from it. And, Secondly, Its sovereignty no way intrenches upon, nor interferes with the dominion of providence over the members of the body, and the various motions of them. God has reserved a sovereign, negative voice to himself, whatever decrees the will passes. Jeroboam stretches out his hand against the man of God to smite him; but God puts a remora in the very instant to the loco-motive faculty, that though he would never so fain, he could not pull in his hand again to him, [1 Kings 13:4](#). The will commands the service of the tongue, and charges it to deliver faithfully such or such words, in which, it may be, the ruin of good men may be imported; and when it comes to do its office, the tongue falters; **and contrary to the command of the will, drops some word that discovers and defeats the design of the**

will, according to that in [Job 12:20](#). "He removeth away the speech of the trusty." This is its despotical and sovereign power over the external members of the body.

(2.) It has a political power over the faculties and passions of the soul, not by way of absolute command, but by way of suasion and insinuation. Thus it can oftentimes persuade the understanding and thoughts to lay by this or that subject, and apply themselves to the study of another. **It can bridle and restrain the affections and passions, but yet it has no absolute command over the inner, as it has over the outward man.** Its weakness and inability to govern the inner man appears in two things, more especially remarkable, namely, 1. It cannot, with all its power and skill command and fetch off the thoughts from some subjects, which are set on, at some times, with extraordinary weight upon the soul. However, the thoughts may obsequiously follow its beck at some times, yea, for the most part; yet there are cases and seasons, in which its authority and persuasions cannot disengage one thought.

As (1.) When God has to do with the soul, in the work of conversion, when he convinceth of sin and danger, and sets a man's evils in order before his eyes: These are terrible representations, and fain would the carnal will disengage the thoughts from such sad subjects, and strives by all manner of persuasions and diversions so to do, but all to no purpose, [Psal. 2:3](#). "My sin is ever before me." The thoughts are fixed, and there is no removing of them. It may give them a little interruption, but they return with the more impetuous violence. And instead of gaining them off, they at last, or rather God by them gains over the will also.

(2.) When Satan has to do with the soul, in the way of temptation and hellish suggestion: Look, as the carnal will opposes itself to the thoughts in the former case to no purpose; so that the sanctified will opposes itself to them in this case, oft times with as little effect or success, as he that opposeth his weak breath to the strong current of a mighty river. Well were it, if the sanctified will were now the master of the fancy, and could control the thoughts of the heart; but, like a mad horse, the fancy takes the bit in its teeth, and runs whither it pleaseth; the will cannot govern it. Think quite another way says the will, turn thy thoughts to other things; but notwithstanding, the soul turneth a deaf ear to its counsels. 2. **It cannot quiet and compose a raging conscience, and reduce it at its pleasure to rest and peace. This is the peculiar work of God. He only that stills the stormy seas, can quiet the distressed and tempestuous soul. The impotence of the will, in this case, is known to all that have been in those deeps of trouble.** And this is the misery of the devil and the damned, that though they would never so lain, **yet they cannot get rid of those tormenting impressions made upon them by their own trembling**

and condemning consciences. There would not be so many pale, sweating, affrighted consciences on earth, and in hell, if the will had any command or power over them.

Tam frigida mens est.

Criminibus; tacita sudant praecordia culpa.

It is an horrible sight to see such a trembling upon all the members, such a cold sweat upon the panting bosom of a self-condemned, and wrath presaging soul, in which it can, by no means relieve or help itself. These things are exempt from the liberty and dominion of the will of man; but notwithstanding these exemptions, it is a noble faculty, and has a vastly extended empire in the soul of man; it is the door of the soul; at which the Spirit of God knocks for entrance. When this is won, the soul is won to Christ; and if this stand out in rebellion against him, he is barred out of the soul, and can have no saving union with it. The truth of grace is to be judged and discerned by its compliance with his call, and the measure of grace to be estimated by the degree of its subjection to his will.

VII. The soul of man is not only endued with all understanding and will, but also with various affections and passions, which are of great use and service to it, and speak the excellency of its nature. **They are originally designed and appointed for the happiness of man**, in the promoting and securing its chiefest good, to which purpose they have a natural aptitude: for the true happiness and rest of the soul not being in itself, nor in any other creature, but in God, the soul must necessarily move out of itself, and beyond all other created beings, to find and enjoy its true felicity in him. The soul considered at a distance from God, its true rest and happiness, is furnished and provided with desire and hope to carry it on and quicken its motion towards him. These are the arms it is to stretch out towards him, in a state of absence from him. And seeing it is to meet with many obstacles, enemies, and difficulties, in its course, which hinder its motion, and hazard its fruition of him, God hath planted in it, fear, grief, indignation, jealousy, anger, &c. to grapple with, and break through those intercurrent difficulties and hazards. By these weapons in the hands of grace, it conflicts with that which opposes its passages to God, as the apostle expresseth that holy fret and passion of the Corinthians, and what a fume their souls were in by the gracious motion of the irascible appetite; **2 Cor. 7:11.** "For behold this self same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge?" Much like the raging and struggling of waters, which are interrupted in their course by some dam or obstacle which they strive to bear down, and sweep away before them.

But the soul considered in full union with and fruition of God, its supreme happiness, is accordingly furnished with affections of love, delight, and joy, whereby it rests in him and enjoys its

proper blessedness in his presence for ever. Yea, even in this life, these affections are in an imperfect degree exercised upon God, according to the prelibations and enjoyments it has of him by faith, in its way to heaven. In a word,

The true uses, and most excellent ends for which these affections and passions are bestowed upon the soul of man, are to qualify it, and make it a fit subject to be wrought upon in a moral way of persuasions and allurements, in order to its union with Christ, (for by the affections, as Mr. Fenner rightly observes, the soul becomes marriageable, or capable of being espoused to him) and being so, then to assist it in the prosecution of its full enjoyment in heaven, as we heard but now.

But, alas, how are they corrupted and inverted by sin! The concupiscible appetite greedily fastens upon the creature, not upon God; and the irascible appetite is turned against holiness, not sin. But I must insist no farther on this subject here, it deserves an entire treatise by itself.

Grace, Its Purpose and Use

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The following will explain the purpose of grace, its nature and use and vital requirement in order to serve God acceptably and our command to grow in grace all to the praise of his glory of which grace is a principle part. This will add more clarity to the error of the sinner's prayer or coming to God without being called which is presumption. Owen also goes into what consists in the Kingdom of God and hence its direct relation to what is communicated to the elect, that being knowledge, virtue/holiness and happiness (joy in God) which is what the Kingdom of God consist in... "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men." Romans 14:17 And so the point here regarding man coming to God without being called, infers that he has not any grace yet, i.e., graceless; he is not saved yet, which is why he is praying, but then to be acceptable to God he must have grace infused antecedently to this prayer to even be acceptable! But if he does have it, then he is saved already and the prayer is unnecessary. So if he is unsaved while saying this prayer, then he prayer is clearly a gross inconsistency and hence a wicked presumption, him being outside of Christ, his prayer founded upon self-love and not from a principle of spiritual life, i.e., faith. For "whatever *is* not from faith is sin.", Romans 14:23, and hence is not pleasing to God nor acceptable, Heb. 11:6. This exposition by Owen will add to this argument. The **Kingdom** of God defined. What are some graces; what is grace, its purpose? First a statement by **Van Til** on common grace:

Common grace is an attitude of favor of God toward men as men, as creatures made by himself in his own image. Common grace is the giving of good gifts to men though they have sinned against him, that they might repent and mend their evil ways. Common grace provides for the doing of relatively good deeds by sinful men who are kept from working out to its full

fruition the principle of total depravity within them. Common grace thus is a means by which God accomplishes through men his purpose in displaying his glory in the created world, in history, before the judgment day. So there is no common grace in hell.

Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* – pg165

John Owen

Pgs. 369-378 Vol. 23 (463- 475 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Ver. 28,29. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God [is] a consuming fire.

The apostle in these verses sums up both the doctrinal and hortatory parts of the epistle. For what by all his arguments he hath evinced, concerning the preference and preeminence of the gospel-state of the church above that under the law, he presseth as a reason for that obedience and constancy in profession which he exhorts unto. And from hence unto the close of the epistle he brancheth his general exhortation into a prescription of particular duties of most importance unto his general end.

In the words there are, 1. A note of inference; “wherefore.” 2. A privilege of gospel believers asserted; “we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved.” 3. A duty pressed on the consideration of it; which is, to “serve God acceptably:” described from, (1.) The means of it, “let us have grace;” and, (2.) The manner of its performance, “with reverence and godly fear.”

1. The note of inference, “wherefore,” may respect either the whole discourse which he hath now passed through, or that immediately preceding, concerning the shaking and removal of the Judaical church-state, with the introduction and establishment of the things of the kingdom of Christ. The force of the exhortation ariseth equally from either of them ‘Seeing it is so, that the state of believers under the gospel is such as we have described, and the gospel itself whereunto they are called so excellent and glorious, it follows that this duty they are to apply themselves unto.’ So, —

Obs. I. Such is the nature and use of all divine or theological truths, that the teaching of them ought constantly to be applied and improved unto practice; **for faith and obedience are the end of their revelation. To remain within the compass of mere speculation, is to overthrow both their nature and use.** Hence all preaching consists virtually in **doctrine and use, or instruction and application;** though the methods of it may be various, and ought to be varied as occasion doth require.

2. The privilege asserted is, that “we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved.” And herein we may consider, (1.) The nature of this privilege; it is a “kingdom.” (2.) The property of it, in opposition unto other things; “it cannot be moved.” (3.) The way of believers’ participation of it; “we receive it.”

(1.) As unto the nature of it, it is a kingdom, a heavenly, spiritual state, under the rule of Jesus Christ, whom God hath anointed, and set his king upon his holy hill of Zion, Psalm 2:6,7. The state of the gospel, and the rule of Christ therein, were represented and promised from the beginning under the

name and notion of a kingdom, being properly so. See Isaiah 9:7. The kingly office of Christ, and his kingdom, were the common faith of the church of the old testament and the new. Whoever believed the promise of the Messiah, believed that he should be a king, and should have an everlasting kingdom, however the church of the Jews had lost the true notion of it in the latter days. This kingdom in the Scripture is everywhere called “the kingdom of God,” to distinguish it from all other dominions and kingdoms of the world, — the kingdom wherein Christ proceeds in the name and majesty of God for all the ends of his glory, and the salvation of the church. And this kingdom is usually distinguished into the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory; but improperly. For although the saints that are now in glory do belong unto this kingdom, by virtue of the communion that is between them and the church below in Christ as their common head, yet this kingdom of Christ shall cease when the state of glory shall fully take place. So the apostle expressly declares, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. Wherefore the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, so often mentioned in the Scripture, is that which we call the kingdom of God only. It is true, the saints do and shall reign in heaven, whereon that state may be called the kingdom of glory; but the promised kingdom of the Messiah, is that rule which is to be continued unto the end of this world, and no longer. And at present those in heaven and these on earth do constitute but one kingdom, though they are in various conditions therein.

This kingdom, then, is that rule of Christ in and over the gospel-state of the church, which the apostle hath proved to be more excellent than that of the law. Hereunto belong all the **light, liberty, righteousness, and peace, which by the gospel we are made partakers of**, with all the privileges above the law insisted on by the apostle. **Christ is the king, the gospel is his law, all believers are his subjects, the Holy Spirit is its administrator, and all the divine treasures of grace and mercy are its revenue.** The reader may see a delineation of this kingdom in our exposition on chap. 1:2. This is the kingdom which is here intended, the present actual participation whereof is made the foundation of the exhortation ensuing, being undeniably cogent unto that end.

(2.) The especial property of this kingdom is, that it is ἀσάλευτος, — such as cannot be shaken, or moved. It is true of it universally, and only, it cannot be moved in any sense, by any ways or means; and this is the only kingdom that cannot be moved. To speak of the unshaken, unmovable kingdom, is all one as if we expressly mentioned the kingdom of Christ, seeing that only is so. All other kingdoms have been, or shall be, shaken and overturned; all boastings and expectations to the contrary are but vain. No dominion ever so dreamed of eternity as did the Roman empire; but it hath not only been shaken, but broken to pieces, and scattered like chaff before the wind. See Daniel 2:44, 7:14,27. No external opposition shall ever be able to shake or move this kingdom. The “gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” Matthew 16:18. No internal decays shall ruin it. The spring of it is in Him who lives forever, and who hath the keys of hell and death.

These things are true, the kingdom of Christ is thus immovable: but that which is here peculiarly intended is, that it is not obnoxious unto such a shaking and removal as the church-state was under the old testament; that is, God himself will never make any alteration in it, nor ever introduce another church-state or worship. God hath put the last hand, the hand of his only Son, unto all revelations and institutions. No addition shall be made unto what he hath done, nor alteration in it. No other way of calling, sanctifying, ruling, and saving of the church, shall ever be appointed or admitted; for it is here called an immovable kingdom in opposition unto the church-state of the Jews, which God himself first shook, and then took away, for it was ordained only for a season.

(3.) **Believers receive this kingdom** [i.e., they don't ask for it otherwise it becomes a wage and not a gift which we receive. As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God."]. As the apostle had before joined himself with them in the threatening, "How shall we escape?" so he doth here in the privilege, "We receiving:" 'You and I, even all that believe.' And how they do so, we must inquire.

[1.] Their interest in this kingdom is called **their receiving it**, because they have it by **gift, grant, or donation from God their Father**: Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock," saith Christ, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" 'freely to grant unto you an interest in his heavenly kingdom.' [2.] **They receive it in its doctrine, rule, and law, owning its truth, and submitting unto its authority.** They "**obey from the heart the form of doctrine which is delivered to them,**" Romans 6:17 [that form which is the image of the knowledge of God implanted upon their souls at conversion, the law put in their inward parts, their mind (Jer31:33), as the seal makes an image upon wax that has been softened, the stony heart removed and the heart of flesh given so as to receive this impression.]; which constitutes them formally the subjects of his kingdom. [3.] They receive it in the **light, grace, mercy, and spiritual benefits of it**. Such a kingdom it is as whose **treasures and revenues consist in these things, namely, light, liberty, righteousness, peace, grace and mercy.** For "**the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,**" Romans 14:17. All these do they receive, in right, title, and possession, according to their various measures; and hereon are properly said to receive the kingdom itself. [4.] They receive it in the privileges of it; which may be referred unto two heads: **1st. Dignity; 2dly. Safety;** which are the two advantages of any kingdom added unto their wealth, which in this consists in the treasures before mentioned. As to the first, or dignity, this is such a kingdom as wherein, though with respect to Christ and his rule we are absolutely subjects, yet with respect unto others we are absolutely free: "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye servants of men," 1 Corinthians 7:23; that is, in all things which belong to this kingdom. And not only so, but all the subjects of this kingdom are, with respect unto their acceptance with God, and power over their enemies, kings also: "A kingly priesthood," 1 Peter 2:9; "Kings and priests unto God," Revelation 1:6. And, secondly, for safety, they are all built on the Rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. This dignity and safety are of eminent consideration, when we are said "to receive a kingdom;" for they are principal ornaments and advantages of such a state. [5.] **They receive it by an initiation into the sacred mysteries of it, the glory of its spiritual worship, and their access unto God thereby.** Herein consists the glory of the administration of this kingdom, 2 Corinthians 3.

And all believers have a right unto all the mystical ordinances of divine worship in this kingdom, which all others are excluded from. [6.] They receive it in its outward rule and discipline. And in all these things they receive it as a pledge of a future reign in glory. Wherefore, —

Obs. II. The privileges which believers receive by the gospel are inconceivable. — They are a kingdom, the kingdom of God or Christ, a spiritual, heavenly kingdom, replenished with inexhaustible treasures of spiritual blessings and advantages.

Obs. III. Believers are not to be measured by their outward state and appearance in the world, but by the interest they have in that kingdom which it is their Father's good pleasure to give them.

Obs. IV. It is assuredly their duty in all things to behave themselves as becomes those who receive such privileges and dignity from God himself.

Obs. V. The obligation from hence unto the duty of serving God here exhorted unto, of so serving God as is here described, is evident and unavoidable. — **Those on whom it hath not an efficacy, have no real interest in this privilege, whatever they pretend.** [Therefore, those who do this sinners prayer are pretending they have some measure of grace when they have none; otherwise why would they be asking to get saved? But to have none is to hate grace, faith, and anything else that is truly holy and spiritual!! 1Cor2:14]

Obs. VI. Spiritual things and mercies do constitute the most glorious kingdom that is in the world, even the kingdom of God.

Obs. VII. This is the only kingdom that shall never be moved, nor ever can be so, **however hell and the world do rage against it.**

3. The duty exhorted unto, on the consideration of this blessed state and privilege is, that **“we should serve God acceptably.”** There is a duty previously required unto this enjoined us, which is to “have grace;” and this is introduced only as an effect thereof: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God.” But whereas this is the end for which we should endeavor to have grace, I place it as the duty exhorted unto in the circumstances described.

The word λατρευω doth most frequently, if not only, signify that service unto God which consists in his worship; namely, in prayer and the observance of some other institutions of divine service. See Luke 2:37; Acts 7:7, 27:23; Romans 1:9,25; Philippians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 9:9, 10:2, 13:10; Revelation 7:15. I will not deny but that it may comprise the whole of gospel obedience, which is λογικη λατρευια, Romans 12:1, — our “reasonable service;” but I judge that here peculiar respect is had unto the worship of God according to the gospel, which was brought in upon the removal of all those institutions of worship which were appointed under the old testament. Herein the apostle would have the believing Hebrews to be diligent; which they would not be in a due manner without an equal attendance unto all other duties of evangelical obedience.

Wherefore it is added, that we should thus serve God “acceptably,” as we have well rendered the word; that is, so as that we may be accepted, or find acceptance with him. As it respects the worship of God, it is sometimes applied unto the persons that perform it, sometimes unto the worship itself performed. With respect unto both, it signifies that which is well-pleasing unto God, that which is accepted with him, Romans 12:1,2; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10; Philippians 4:18; Colossians 3:20; Hebrews 11:5,6: in all which places, and others, the verb or adjective is used; the verb only in this place, “acceptably.”

There is an intimation that there may be a performance of the duties of divine worship, when yet neither the persons that perform them nor the duties themselves are accepted with God. So was it with Cain and his sacrifice; so is it with all hypocrites always. The principal things required unto this

acceptation are, (1.) That the persons of the worshippers be “accepted in the Beloved.” God had respect unto Abel, then to his offering. (2.) That the worship itself, in all the duties of it, and the whole manner of its performance, be of his own appointment and approbation. Hereon all Judaical observances are rejected, because now disapproved by him. (3.) That the graces of faith, love, fear, reverence, and delight, be in actual exercise: for in and by them alone, in all our duties, we give glory unto God; which the apostle declares in the remaining words of these verses.

4. In order unto this serving of God, it is required of us, in a way of duty, that we “have grace.” Some copies have εχομεν, which are followed by the Vulgar and some other translations, “We have grace.” But the most, and most ancient copies, have εχωμεν, “Let us have,” which suits the other words and design of the place; for it is not a privilege asserted, **but a duty prescribed.**

Χαριν here may be taken in a double sense: (1.) For the free grace and favor of God in Christ, which we obtain by the gospel. And in this sense it is most frequently used in the Scripture. (2.) For internal, sanctifying, aiding, assisting grace, as it is in other places innumerable. And the word εχωμεν may have a double signification also. For it is not a bare having or possession that is intended; for that is not the object of an exhortation in the way of a duty: but it signifies either “to retain and hold fast,” as our translators render it in the margin; or to “obtain and improve;” in which sense the word is often used.

And these double significations of the words are suited unto one another. Take εχωμεν, “Let us have, in the first sense, “to retain and hold fast,” and it answers unto Χαριν, or “grace,” in the first sense of the word, namely, the grace and favor of God, which we obtain by the gospel. This we are exhorted unto, 1 Corinthians 15:1; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27, 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:8. See Romans 5:2. **Thus the duty intended should be perseverance in the faith of the gospel, whereby alone we are enabled to “serve God acceptably.”** [Hence without grace infused, which is the case for those who are praying to get saved, he cannot please God. Only after one is converted can one pray for more grace which is our duty. The initial infusion of grace for salvation is totally gratuitous, is a gift and cannot be prayed for; we receive it passively. In other words, one cannot raise himself out of his own grave.] Take it in the latter sense, and it answers unto “grace” in the latter sense also; that is, **for internal, spiritual aids of grace, enabling us unto this duty of serving God, without which we cannot so do.** This is the proper sense of the place. The service of God in such a way and manner as is acceptable unto him is required of us, — it is due upon the account of the unspeakable privileges which we receive by the gospel, before declared; — **but this of ourselves, without special divine aid and assistance, we are no way able to perform: for “without Christ we can do nothing.” We have no sufficiency of ourselves to think or do anything as we ought: “It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”** It is therefore in order unto the end of serving acceptably, required of us, that we have, that is, that we obtain and improve, this grace of God, or the aids of divine grace.

Now, whereas this “**grace**” may be considered either as unto its essence and the **first communication** of it unto us, or as unto its degrees and measures with respect unto its continual exercise, it may be here considered both ways. **For without it in the first sense, as it is sanctifying, we cannot serve God acceptably at all;** and in the latter, it is required to be exercised in every particular duty of divine worship. And this is especially intended, the former being supposed. ‘You that have received grace essentially considered, unto your sanctification, endeavor much an increase of it in its degrees and

measures, so that being in continual exercise, you may be enabled by it to serve God acceptably.' And two things evince this sense:

(1.) **That this grace is assigned as the instrumental efficient cause** of the duty proposed: "By which," 'by virtue whereof, in whose strength, by which you are enabled.' Now, this is no other but internal, aiding, assisting grace, in its exercise. (2.) The things prescribed to accompany this service of God on our part, namely, "reverence and godly fear," are such graces themselves, or acts of that grace.

It is most true, that the holding fast the grace of the gospel, **the doctrine of the love and favor of God in Christ Jesus, is an effectual means of enabling us to serve God acceptably**. For thereby, or by the exercise of faith therein, **we do derive spiritual strength from Christ, as the branches derive juice and nutriment from the vine, to enable us thereunto**. [Therefore one who is praying to get saved, is not engrafted into the vine yet, so has no *strength* or saving virtue, which is why his prayer is not heard and is thus presumption.] And if we decay in the faith thereof, much more if we relinquish it, we can never serve God in a due manner. I would not therefore exclude that sense of the words, though I judge the latter to be more especially intended. And, —

(1.) Without this grace we cannot serve God at all. He accounts not that as his worship or service which is performed by graceless persons. (2.) Without this grace in actual exercise we cannot serve God acceptably; **for it is the exercise of grace alone that is the life and soul of divine worship**. (3.) **To have an increase in this grace as unto its degrees and measures, and to keep it in exercise in all duties of the service of God, is a duty required of believers by virtue of all the gospel privileges which they receive from God**; for herein consists that revenue of glory which on their account he expecteth and requireth. 4.) This is the great apostolical canon for the due performance of divine worship, namely, "**Let us have grace to do it**;" all others are needless and superfluous.

5. The manner of the performance of the duty exhorted unto is also prescribed. And this is, that it be done "**with reverence and godly fear**." These words are not anywhere else used together with respect unto the service of God, nor apart. Αιδως, which we translate "reverence," is but once more used in the New Testament, where it signifies "pudor" or "modestia, shame-facedness" or modesty," 1 Timothy 2:9; but nowhere else. **It is applied to denote a grace or virtue in the worship of God**. Ευλαζεια is used only here, and chap. 5:7; where see the exposition. See also chap. 11:7. We render it, "with godly fear." For the verb is sometimes used for "fear," without any respect to religion, Acts 23:10; and the adjective, for "religious" or "devout," without any especial respect to fear, Luke 2:25; Acts 2:5, 8:2: both are included in it.

The sense of the words in this place may be learned best from what they are opposed unto. For they are prescribed as contrary unto some such defects and faults in divine worship as from which **we ought to be deterred by the consideration of the holiness and severity of God**; as is manifest from the addition of it in the next words, "**For our God is a consuming fire**." Now those vices from which we ought to be deterred by this consideration, are,

(1.) **Want of a due sense of the majesty and glory of God**, with whom we have to do. For whereas he had provided against this evil under the old testament, **by the dread and terror** which were

ingenerated in the people by the giving of the law, by many severe interdictions of their approach unto pledges of his presence among them, and the prescription of outward ceremonies in all their accesses unto him; all these things being now removed, **yet a deep, spiritual sense of his holiness and greatness ought to be retained in the mind of all that draw nigh unto him in his worship.**

(2.) **Want of a due sense of our own vileness, and our infinite distance from him in nature and condition; which is always required to be in us.**

(3.) **Carnal boldness**, in a customary performance of sacred duties, under a neglect of endeavoring the exercise of all grace in them; **which God abhors.** To prevent these and the like evils, **these graces or duties are prescribed.** Wherefore αἰδώς, “or pudor spiritualis,” is “**a holy abasement of soul in divine worship, in a sense of the majesty of God, and our own vileness, with our infinite distance from him.**” This, in extraordinary instances, is called “blushing,” being “ashamed,” and “confusion of face,” Ezra 9:6; Daniel 9:7. So it is in extraordinary cases; but for the essence of it, it ought always to accompany us in the whole worship of God. And εὐλαζεια is, “**a religious awe on the soul in holy duties, from a consideration of the great danger there is of sinful miscarriages in the worship of God, and of his severity against such sins and offenses.**” **Hereby the soul is moved and excited unto spiritual care and diligence, not to provoke so great, so holy and jealous a God, by a neglect of that exercise of grace which he requires in his service, which is due unto him on the account of his glorious excellencies.**

And we may consider of how great importance this exhortation and duty are. For this charge of **serving God from a principle of grace**, in the manner described, is that which is given unto us in the consideration of the kingdom which we have received, and enforced with that of the **terror of the Lord** with respect unto all miscarriages therein; which is urged also in the last verse.

Ver. 29. — “For our God [is] a consuming fire.”

This is the reason making the foregoing duty necessary. ‘Therefore ought we to serve God with reverence and fear, because “he is a consuming fire.”’ The words are taken from Deuteronomy 4:24, where they are used by Moses to deter the people from idols or graven images in the worship of God; for this is a sin that God will by no means bear withal. And the same description of God is applied here by the apostle **unto the want of grace with reverence and fear in that worship which he hath appointed.** We may not please ourselves that the worship itself which we attend unto is by divine institution, not idolatrous, not superstitious, not of our own invention; **for if we are graceless in our persons, devoid of reverence and godly fear in our duties,** God will deal with us even as **with them who worship him after their own hearts’ devisings.** [which what a sinner’s prayer is, a graceless act.]

There is a metaphor in the expression. God is compared to, and so called a “devouring fire,” because of a likeness in effects as unto the case under consideration. For as a vehement fire will consume and devour whatever combustible matter is cast into it, so will God with a fiery terror consume and destroy such sinners as are guilty of the sin here prohibited. And as such, will such sinners, — namely, hypocrites and false-worshippers, — apprehend him to be, when they fall under convictions, Isaiah 33:14.

And he is called herein “our God;” as in Moses to the people, “The LORD thy God.” A covenant relation unto him is in both places intimated. Wherefore although we have a firm persuasion that he is our God in covenant, yet it is his will that we should have holy apprehensions of his greatness and terror towards sinners. See 2 Corinthians 5:10,11.

Two things are represented unto us in this expression, “A consuming fire.” 1. The nature of God, as declared in the first commandment. And, 2. His jealousy with respect unto his worship, as it is expressed in the second.

1. **The holiness and purity of his nature**, with his severity and vindictive justice, are represented hereby. And these, as all other his essential properties, are proposed unto us in the first commandment. **From them it is that he will consume impenitent sinners, such as have no interest in the atonement**, even as fire consumes that which is cast into it.

2. His jealousy with reference unto his worship is here also represented, as declared in the second commandment. So it is added in that place of Moses, “The LORD thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” This title God first gave himself with respect unto his instituted worship, Exodus 20:5. And this affection or property of jealousy is figuratively ascribed unto God, by an anthropopathy. In man, it is a vehement affection and inclination, arising from a fear or apprehension that any other should have an interest in or possess that which they judge ought to be peculiar unto themselves. And it hath place principally in the state of marriage, or that which is in order thereunto. It is therefore supposed that the covenant between God and the church hath the nature of a marriage covenant, wherein he calleth himself the husband thereof, and saith that he is married unto it, Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14. In this state, it is religious worship, both as unto the outward form of it in divine institution, **and its inward form of faith and grace**, which God requires, as wholly his own. With reference, therefore, unto defects and miscarriages therein, he assumeth that affection unto him, and calleth himself “a jealous God.” And because this is a vehement, burning affection, God is said on the account of it to be “a consuming fire.” And we may observe, that, —

Obs. VIII. However God takes us near unto himself in covenant, whereby he is our God, yet he requires that we **always retain due apprehensions of the holiness of his nature**, the severity of his justice against sinners, and his ardent jealousy concerning his worship.

Obs. IX. The consideration of these things, and the dread of being by guilt obnoxious unto their terrible consuming effects, **ought to influence our minds unto reverence and godly fear in all acts and parts of divine worship.**

Obs. X. We may learn how great our care and diligence about the serving of God ought to be, which are pressed on us by the Holy Ghost from the consideration of the greatness of our privileges on the one hand, name]y, our receiving the kingdom; with the dreadful destruction from God on the other, in case of our neglect herein.

Obs. XI. **The holiness and jealousy of God, which are a cause of insupportable terror unto convinced sinners, driving them from him, have towards believers only a gracious influence into that fear and reverence which causes them to cleave more firmly unto him.**

My summary regarding covenants: You have the Father and the Son entering into a covenant between themselves to glorify them (God), and God by the eternal counsel of his will, entered into an eternal covenant with fallen man, the remnant or the elect, which is the covenant of grace. A covenant to be a covenant must be with distinct persons, as Owen outlines, those whom the Father *foreknew*, the elect (Romans 8:29, *for whom He foreknew...*), first made known to Adam in Gen 3:15, reaffirmed with the patriarchs. It is not my intention to go into all the particulars of the definition of a covenant and a testament (which can be found in Owen's commentary on Hebrews in this text), but only to show the infallible consequences of such for those who are covenantees, those chosen by the Father to be given to the Son; that this, it is not based on the will of man and his fickle will in some kind of open ended proposal to man, but dependent upon God's design, will and eternal purpose. For example, when a will is read upon the death of the testator, the beneficiaries are named as opposed to there being a large blank for someone to fill in their name if they so chose, right? And so it is with this new testament. It is *particular* and all the particulars of the covenant will be carried out by the mediatory role of our high priest. In short, without listing a slew of passages, Christ will carry out the Father's will perfectly and completely, e.g., John 6:37, *All that the Father gives me will come to me*. It is not left up to man's will but God's. This is of great consolation to believers. In this way, all God's promises are yea and Amen for those who are in Christ. See also Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.") see also, Jer. 31:33 .

Efficacious Grace, True virtue

code267

Comments regarding moral suasion and

Arminianism by Jonathan Edwards from his discourse Concerning Efficacious Grace

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iv.html>

CHAP. IV.

CONCERNING EFFICACIOUS GRACE.

§ 1. It is manifest that the Scripture supposes, that if ever men are turned from sin, God must undertake it, and he must be the doer of it; that it is his doing that must determine the matter; that all that others can do, will avail nothing, without his agency. [i.e., without Me you can do nothing – Jn 15] This is manifest by such texts as these: Jer. Xxxi. 18, 19. “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh,” &c. Lam. V. 21. “Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.”

[The following is typical of Arminian dogma that Edwards points out: for if they confess that the Spirit of God actually does something to effect an end, which Scripture says in a multitude of places (they just ignore many scriptures), their positions all fall to the ground.]

§2. According to Dr. Whitby’s notion of the assistance of the Spirit, the Spirit of God does nothing in the hearts or minds of men beyond the power of the devil; nothing but what the devil can do; and nothing showing any greater power in any respect, than the devil shows and exercises in his temptations. For he supposes that all that the Spirit of God does, is to bring moral motives and inducements to mind, and set them before the understanding, &c. It is possible that God may infuse grace, in some instances, into the minds of such persons as are striving to obtain it in the other way, though they may not observe it, and may not know that it is not obtained by gradual acquisition. But if a man has indeed sought it only in that way, and with as much dependence on himself, and with as much neglect of God in his endeavours and prayers, as such a doctrine naturally leads to, it is not very likely that he should obtain saving grace by the efficacious, mighty power of God. It is most likely that God should bestow this gift in a way of earnest attention to divine truth, and the use of the means of grace, with reflection on one’s own sinfulness, and in a way of being more and more convinced of sinfulness, and total corruption and need of the divine power to restore the heart, to infuse goodness, and of becoming more and more sensible of one’s own impotence, and helplessness and inability to obtain goodness by his own strength. And if a man has obtained no other virtue, than what seems to have been wholly in that gradual and insensible way that might be expected from use and custom, in the exercise of his own strength, he has reason to think, however bright his attainments may seem to be, that he has no saving virtue.

§ 3. Great part of the gospel is denied by those who deny pure efficacious grace. They deny that wherein actual salvation and the application of redemption mainly consists; and how unlikely are such to be successful in their endeavours after actual salvation!

Turnbull’s explanation of Philip. li. 12, 13. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,” is this, (Christian Philosophy, p. 96, 97.) “Give all diligence to work out your salvation; for it is God, the Creator of all things, who, by giving you, of his good pleasure, the power of willing and doing, with a sense of right and wrong, and reason to guide and direct you, hath visibly made it your end so to do. Your frame shows, that to prepare yourselves for great moral happiness, arising from a well cultivated and improved mind, suitably placed, is your end appointed to you by your Creator. Consider, therefore, that by neglecting this your duty, this your interest, you contemn and oppose the good will of God towards you, and his design in creating you.” [This is a good example of misapplication of those two scriptures by Arminians that Edwards points out.]

[The following excerpt: Is salvation obtained by gradual habits, etc., or by a decisive effectual power of the Holy Spirit in infusing true virtue or holiness in the heart, thus changing the heart?]

§ 4. If we look through all the examples we have of conversion in Scripture, the conversion of the apostle Paul, and of the Corinthians, ("Such were some of you, but ye are washed, [1 Cor. Vi. 11.](#) " &c.) and all others that the apostles write to, [how far were they from this gradual way of conversion, by contracted habits, and by such culture as Turn-bull speaks of!](#) Turnbull, in his Christian Philosophy, p. 470. Seems to think, that the **sudden conversions** that were in the apostles' days, **were instances of their miraculous power**, as in these words, "They appealed to the works they wrought, to the samples they gave of their power to foretell future events; their power to cure instantaneously all diseases of the body; their power to cure, in the same extraordinary manner, all diseases of the mind, or to convert bad into good dispositions; their power to bestow gifts and blessings of all sorts, bodily and spiritual." See again to the like purpose, p. 472.

Now I would inquire, whether those who thus had the diseases of their minds cured, and theirs had converted into good dispositions, had any virtue; or whether those good dispositions of theirs were virtues, or anything praiseworthy; and whether, when they were thus converted, they became good men and the heirs of salvation? As Turnbull himself allows, all that are not good men, were called the children of the devil in Scripture; and he asserts that [nothing is virtue, but what is obtained by our own culture; that no habit is virtuous, but a contracted one, one that is owing to ourselves, our own diligence,](#) &c.; and also holds, that none are good men but the virtuous; none others are the heirs of future happiness.

§ 5. **What God wrought for the apostle Paul and other primitive Christians, was intended for a pattern to all future ages, for their instruction and excitement;** [Eph. li. 7. 1 Tim. i. 16.](#) It is natural to expect, that the first fruits of the church specially recorded in history, and in that book which is the steady rule of the church in all things pertaining to salvation, should be a pattern to after-ages in those things, those privileges, which equally concern all. Or if it be said, that as soon as men take up a strong resolution, they are accepted and looked upon by God as penitents and converts; it may be inquired, is there a good man without good habits, or principles of virtue and goodness in his heart?

[Regarding the Spirit of God... efficacious or not? Common virtue vs. true virtue infused... from Jonathan Edwards, Efficacious Grace, pg 544](#)

§.12. Observe that the question with some is, **whether the Spirit of God does anything at all in these days**, since the Scriptures have been completed. With those that allow that he does anything, the question cannot be, whether his influence be immediate; for, if he does anything at all, his influence must be immediate. Nor can the question be, whether his influence, with regard to what he intends to do, be efficacious.

The questions relating to efficacious grace, controverted between us and the Arminians, are two:

1. Whether the grace of God, in giving us saving virtue, be **determining and decisive.**

2. Whether saving virtue be decisively given by a supernatural and sovereign operation of the Spirit of God; or, whether it be only by such a divine influence or assistance, as is imparted in the course of common providence, either according to established laws of nature, or established laws of God's universal providence towards mankind; i.e. either,

1. **Assistance** which is given in all natural actions, wherein men do merely exercise and improve the principles of nature and laws of nature, and come to such attainments as are connected with such exercises by the mere laws of nature. For there is an assistance in all such natural actions; because it is by a divine influence that the laws of nature are upheld; and a constant occurrence of divine power is necessary in order to our living, moving, or having a being. [Hence, for in him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28] **This we may call a natural assistance.** Or,

2. That assistance, which though it be something besides the upholding of the laws of nature, (which take place in all affairs of life,) is yet, by a divine, universal constitution in this particular affair of religion, so connected with those voluntary exercises which result from this mere natural assistance, that by this constitution it indiscriminately extends to all mankind, and is certainly connected with such exercises and improvements, as those just mentioned, by a certain, established, known rule, as much as any of the laws of nature. This kind of assistance, though many Arminians call it a supernatural assistance, differs little or nothing from that natural assistance that is established by a law of nature. The law so established, is only a particular law of nature; as some of the laws of nature are more general, others more particular: but this establishment, which they suppose to be by divine promise, differs nothing at all from many other particular laws of nature, except only in this circumstance, of the established constitutions being revealed in the word of God, while others are left to be discovered only by experience.

The Calvinists suppose otherwise; they suppose that **divine influence and operation, by which saving virtue is obtained, is entirely from, and above common assistance, or that which is given in a course of ordinary providence,** according to universally established laws of nature. They suppose a principle of saving virtue is immediately imparted and implanted by that operation, which is sovereign and efficacious in this respect, that its effect proceeds not from any established laws of nature. I mention this as an entirely different question from the other, viz. Whether the grace of God, by which we obtain saving virtue, is **determining or decisive.** For that it may be, if it be given wholly in a course of nature, or by such an operation as is limited and regulated perfectly according to established, invariable laws. For none will dispute that many things are brought to pass by God in this manner, that are decisively ordered by him, and are brought to pass by his determining providence. The controversy, as it relates to efficacious grace, in this sense, includes in it these four questions.

1. **Whether saving virtue differs from common virtue,** or such virtue as those have that are not in a state of salvation, in nature and kind, or only in degree and circumstances?
2. Whether a **holy disposition of heart,** as an **internal governing principle of life and practice,** be immediately implanted or infused in the soul, [see diagram – it show this!] or only be contracted by repeated acts, and obtained by human culture and improvement?

3. Whether conversion, or the change of a person from being a vicious or wicked man, to a truly virtuous character, be instantaneous or gradual!

4. Whether the divine assistance or influence, by which men may obtain true and saving virtue, be sovereign and arbitrary, or, whether God, in giving this assistance and its effects, limits himself to certain exact and stated rules, revealed in his word, and established by his promises?

§ 13. Eph. i. 19, 20. “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, according to the working of his mighty power,” or the **effectual working**, as the word signifies. These words, according to the **effectual working of his power, we shall find applied to conversion, to growth in grace, and to raising us up at last.** You have them applied to conversion, Eph. lii. 7. “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given to me, by the effectual working of his power.” So likewise to grow in grace, Eph. iv. 10. “The whole body increaseth with the increase of God, by the **effectual working** in the measure of every part.” And to the resurrection to glory at the last day, Philip. lii. 21. “He will change our vile bodies, according to the **effectual working** of his mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.”

And that the power of God in conversion, or in giving faith and the spiritual blessings that attend it, is here meant, may be argued from the apostle’s change of phrase, that whereas in the foregoing verse, he spoke of the riches of the glory of Christ’s inheritance in the saints, he does not go on to say, “and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them,” (i. e. the saints,) which surely would have been most natural, if he still had respect only to the power of God in bestowing the inheritance of future glory. But, instead of that, we see he changes the phrase; “**and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;**” plainly intimating some kind of change of the subject, or a respect to the subject of salvation with regard **to something diverse**; that whereas before he spoke of saints in their future state only, now he speaks of something that the saints, we that dwell in this world that believe, are the subjects of. And as the apostle includes himself, so it is the more likely he should have the mighty **power of God in conversion in his thought; his conversion having been so visible and remarkable an instance of God’s marvelous power.**

Next: *The new way or another way that man has invented... Efficacious Grace cont.*

§ 14. **It is a doctrine mightily in vogue, that God has promised his saving grace to men’s sincere endeavours in praying for it, and using proper means to obtain it; and so that it is not God’s mere will that determines the matter, whether we shall have saving grace or not; but that the matter is left with us, to be determined by the sincerity of our endeavours.**

But there is vast confusion in all talk of this kind, **for want of its being well explained** [This typifies the “MO” of cults and false teaching; they avoid sound examination of their positions.] what is meant by sincerity of endeavour, and through men’s deceiving themselves by using words without a meaning. I think the Scripture knows of but one sort of sincerity in religion, and that is a truly pious or holy sincerity. The Bible suggests no notion of any other sort of sincere obedience, or any other sincerity of endeavours, or any doings whatsoever in religion, than doing from love to God and true love to our duty. As to those that endeavour and take pains, (let them do ever so much,) that yet do nothing freely, or from any true love to or delight in God, or free inclination to virtue, but wholly for by-ends,

and from sinister and mercenary views, as being driven and forced against their inclination, or induced by regard to things foreign; I say, respecting such as these, I find nothing in Scripture that should lead us to call them honest and sincere in their endeavours. I doubt not but that the Scripture promises supernatural, truly divine, and saving blessings, to such a sincerity of endeavour as arises from **true love to our duty**. But then, as I apprehend, **this is only to promise more saving grace to him that seeks it in the exercise of saving grace**, agreeably to that repeated saying of our Saviour, “to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” [Matthew 13:12](#). **Persons, in seeking grace with this sincerity, ask in faith; they seek these blessings in the exercise of a saving faith, the great condition of the covenant of grace.** And I suppose, promises are made to no sincerity, but what implies this. And whoever supposes that divine promises are made to any other sincerity than this, I imagine he never will be able to make out his scheme, and that for two reasons:

1. On such a supposition, the promises must be supposed to be to an undetermined condition. And,
2. Even on the supposition that the promises are made to some other sincerity than a truly pious sincerity, the sovereign grace and will of God must determine the existence of the condition of the promises; and so the whole must still depend on God’s determining grace. pg. 545-6 Vol. 2

[Arminianism: man’s will, not God’s, determines itself to endeavor after holiness!]

And if it be said, that there is no need of supposing any such thing as any previous, habitual sincerity, or any such sincerity going before, as shall be an **established principle**, **but that it is sufficient that the free will does sincerely determine itself to endeavour after holiness** [the key Arminian position] I answer, whether we suppose the sincerity that first entitles to the promises, to be a **settled habit or established principle**, or not, it does not in the least remove the difficulty, as long as it is something, in which some men are distinguished from others, that precedes the distinguishing endeavour which entitles to the promises, and is the source and spring of those endeavours. This **first distinguishing sincerity**, which is the **spring of the whole affair**, **must have existence by some means or other; and it must proceed either from some previous sincere endeavour of the man’s own, which is a contradiction; or from God, which is the point required;** or it must be the effect of chance, in other words, of nothing. Pg. 547 Vol. 2

an example of twisting scripture:

§ 15. [Ephesians ii. 8](#). “By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Mr. Beach observes, “this text does not mean that their faith is so God’s gift, as not to be of themselves, as is most evident to any who reads the original.” This is certainly a great mistake. What I suppose he means, is, that the relative *that*, being of the neuter gender, and the word *παις* of the feminine, they do not agree together. But if he would translate the Greek relative *that* thing, namely, the thing last spoken of, all the difficulty vanishes. Vid. Beza, in loc. Such Scriptures as these, [1 Cor. Xv. 10](#). “Not I, but the grace of God *that* was with me;” [Gal. ii. 20](#). **“Not I, but Christ liveth in me;”** **proves efficacious grace.** **The virtuous actions of men that are rewardable, are not left to men’s indifference, without divine ordering and efficacy, so as to be possible to fail. They are often in the Scripture the matter of God’s promises. How often does God promise reformations! How often does**

God promise that great revival of religion in the latter days! Dr. Whitby seems to deny any physical influence at all of the Spirit of God, on the will; and allows an influence by moral suasion and moral causes only, p. 344. This is to deny that the Spirit of God does anything at all, except inspiring the prophets, and giving the means of grace, with God's ordination of this in his providence. If God do anything physically, what he does must be efficacious and irresistible. P547 Vol. 2 [2Chron. 20:6, *...none is able to withstand you.*]

Thomas Shepard on Faith:

"It is true, all things that pertain to life and godliness are received by faith 2Peter 1:3, yet faith itself is a saving work, which is not received by another precedent faith. Faith therefore is to be accepted not only as begotten in us, but as it is in the beginning of it in the conviction and humiliation of every sinner." Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, p254,5

James White on common grace and prevenient grace: this is very good!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_tk7du59F4

"The difference between common and Prevenient grace is that Prevenient grace is an attempt on God's part to move someone to a place where they then will make some kind of a decision for Christ; so it is an attempt while maintaining some kind of autonomy on the part of man, to bring about salvation. Common grace is not a salvific grace."

But if it be said, that though God has promised assistance, yet he has not promised the exact degree, as, notwithstanding his promise, he has left himself at liberty to assist some, much more than others, in consequence of the very same endeavour. I answer, that this will prove a giving up of their whole scheme, and will infallibly bring in the Calvinistical notion of sovereign and arbitrary grace; whereby some, with the very same sincerity of endeavour, with the same degree of endeavour, and the same use of means, nay, although all things are exactly equal in both cases, both as to their persons and behaviour; yet one has that success by sovereign grace and God's arbitrary pleasure, that is denied another. If God has left himself no liberty of sovereign grace in giving success to man's endeavours, but his consequent assistance be always tied to such endeavours precisely, **then man's success is just as much in his own power**, and is in the **same way the fruit of his own doings**, as the effect and fulfilment of his endeavours to commit adultery or murder; and indeed much more. For his success in those endeavours is not tied to such endeavours, but may be providentially disappointed. Although particular motions follow such and such acts of will, in such a state of body, exactly according to certain laws of nature; yet a man's success in such wickedness is not at all tied to his endeavours by any divine establishment, as the Arminians suppose success is to man's endeavours after conversion.

For the Spirit of God, by assisting in the alleged manner, becomes not the efficient cause of those things, as the Scriptures do certainly represent him. If God be not the proper bestower, author, and efficient cause of virtue, then the greatest benefits flow not from him; are not owing to his goodness; nor have we him to thank for them. P548 Vol. 2

§ 20. Arminians argue that God has obliged himself to bestow a holy and saving disposition, on certain conditions, and that what is given in **regeneration**, is given either for **natural men's asking** [natural,

meaning unsaved], or for the diligent improvement of [common grace](#); because, otherwise, it would not be our fault that we are without it [a common objection of unconditional election by Arminians], nor our virtue that we have it. But if this reasoning is just, the holy qualities obtained by the regenerate, are only the fruits of virtue, not virtues themselves. **All the virtue lies in asking, and in the diligent improvement of common grace.** [Hence the popularity of saying the sinner's prayer, etc.]
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Edwards: True Sincerity Comes Only From God

§ 60. Sincerity itself is spoken of as coming from God. [Phil. i. 10.](#) "That ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence in the day of Christ." And elsewhere God is represented as "creating a clean heart, renewing a right spirit, giving a heart of flesh," &c. The apostle "gives thanks for the faith and love of the Colossians, their being delivered from the power of darkness, &c. and prays that they may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and might, agreeable to their knowledge, being fruitful in every good work; and for their perseverance, and that they might be made meet for the reward of the saints." [Col. 1:3, 4, 9-13.](#) This argues all to flow from God as the giver. Their first faith, and their love that their faith was attended with, and their knowledge and spiritual wisdom and prudence, and walking worthy of the Lord, and universal obedience, and doing every good work, and increasing in grace and being strengthened in it, and their perseverance and cheerfulness in their obedience, and being made meet for their reward, all are from God. They are from God as the determining cause; else, why does the apostle pray that God would bestow or effect these things, if they be not at his determination whether they shall have them or not? He speaks of God's glorious power as manifested in the bestowment of these things.

[Col. 2:13.](#) "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." [Col. 3:10.](#) "Have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

The apostle thanks God for his own prayers, and for others; [2 Tim. i. 3.](#) If they are from God, then doubtless our prayers for ourselves, our very prayers for the Spirit, are from him. The prophet ascribes persons prayers to their having the spirit of grace and supplication. True acceptable prayer is spoken of, [Rom. Viii.](#) As being the language of the Spirit; not that I suppose that the very words are indited [written or composed], but the disposition is given. [2 Tim. i. 7.](#) "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." J Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, pg 556

Efficacious Grace – Miscellaneous Remarks

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by Jonathan Edwards pg 553 volume 2
Concerning Efficacious Grace
(cont.)

[This is a very strong argument in favor of God's sovereign disposal of his gifts. **This is key!** Edwards excellently uncovers the subsequent gross inconsistencies of the Arminian doctrine of free will, liberty etc. confirming the sinful presumptuousness of the sinner's prayer as not the way of salvation.]

Moses speaks of the great **moral means** [this is the same as moral suasion or reasonings that Arminians say that God uses to try to convince men to decide for Christ and leaving the deciding in the hands of man's so called free will to decide the matter] that God had used with the children of Israel to enlighten them, and convince and persuade them; but of their being yet un-persuaded and unconverted, and gives this as a reason, **that God had not given them a heart to perceive**, as [Deut. Xxix. 4](#). "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." **The Scripture plainly makes a distinction between exhibiting light, or means of instruction and persuasion, and giving eyes to see, circumcising the heart, &c.**

§ 51. Why should Christ teach us to pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," [Matt. Vi. 10](#). If it is not God's work to bring that effect to pass, and it is left to man's free will, and cannot be otherwise, because otherwise it is no virtue, and none of their obedience, or doing of God's will; and God does what he can oftentimes consistently with man's liberty, and those that enjoy the means he uses, do generally neglect and refuse to do his will? He does so much, that he can well say, what could I have done more? And yet almost all are at the greatest distance from doing his will. See [Colos. i. 9, 10](#).

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event**; that it is no part of the ordering of God, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he has not the disposal.

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. [Isa. Lx. 22](#). "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." **Surely this is the language of promiser, and not merely a predictor.** God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. Xiv. 11](#). "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. Vii](#). After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. Xi](#). And innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.

Next, this is superb reasoning!!

§ 53. If God is not the disposing author of **virtue** [this is that virtue or holiness shone on the diagram that means mainly, [love for God](#)], then he is not the giver of it. The very **notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit.** [1 John iv. 4.](#) “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;” that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. **But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict?**

§ 54. There are no sort of benefits that are so much the **subject of the promises** of Scripture, as this sort, **the bestowment of virtue**, or benefits which imply it. How often is the faith of the Gentiles, or their coming into the Christian church, promised to Christ in the Old Testament, [Isa. Xlix. 6.](#) And many other places; and he has promised it to his church, [chap. Xlix. 18-21.](#) And innumerable other places. See [Rom. Xv. 12, 13.](#) What a promise have we, [Isa. Lx. 21.](#) “Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand, that I may be glorified” compared with the [next chapter, 3rd verse.](#) “That they may be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” See also [ver. 8th.](#) Of the same chapter. Likewise [chap. Lx. 17, 18.](#) “I will make thy officers peace, and thy exactors righteousness; violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy border, but thou shall call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” Here it is promised that the rulers shall be righteous; and then, in the [21st verse.](#) Following, it is promised that the people shall be so. The change of men to be of a **peaceable disposition is promised**, as in places innumerable, so in [Isa. Xi. 6 11.](#) “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,” &c. [Isa. Iv. 5.](#) “Behold, thou shall call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee.” [Jer. Iii. 15.](#) “**And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.**” This implies a promise that there should be such pastors in being, and that they should be faithful to feed the people with knowledge and understanding. [Jer. X. 23.](#) “**The way of man is not in himself.**” **Stebbing owns, that on Arminian principles, conversion depending on the determination of free will, it is possible, in its own nature, that none should ever be converted,** (p. 235.) **Then all the promises of virtue, of the revival of religion, &c. are nothing.** [Jer. Xxxi. 18.](#) “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,” compared with [Jer. Xvii. 14.](#) “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for thou art my praise.” **Which shows the force and meaning of such a phraseology to be, that God alone can be the doer of it; and that if he undertakes it, it will be effectually done.** [Jer. Xxxi. 32-35.](#) “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,** and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” The prophet elsewhere tells what is connected with knowing God, viz. doing judgment and justice, and showing mercy, &c. [Chap. Xxii. 16.](#) [Jer. Xxxii. 39, 40.](#) “**And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and their children after them; and I will make an everlasting**

covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.” [Jer. Xxxiii. 2.](#) “Thus saith the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it.” [Verse 8.](#) “And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me.” [Ezek. Xi. 18-20.](#) “And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abomination thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

[Zech. Xii.10.](#), to the end. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,” &c.

So in the [next chapter at the beginning.](#), “I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered;” and also, “I will cause the prophets, and also the unclean spirits, to pass out of the land.”

[Mal. Iii. 3, 4.](#) “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in the former years.”

§ 55. We are told, [Job xxviii. 28.](#) That “the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” The same is also abundantly declared in other places. But it is equally declared, **that God is the author and giver of wisdom, and that he is the author wholly and only;** which is denied of other things. It is also abundantly declared in this [28th chapter of Job.](#), that it cannot be obtained of any creature by any means; and it is implied in the end of the chapter, that it is God that gives wisdom, as is asserted, [Prov. Ii. 6.](#) “For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” It is the promise of God the Father, [Psalm cx. 2.](#) “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” [Psalm cxix. 35.](#) “Make me to go in the way of thy commandments.” [Verse 36.](#) “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.”

§ 56. We are directed earnestly to pray and cry unto God for wisdom, and the fear of the Lord; for this reason, that it is he that giveth wisdom, [Prov. Ii.](#) at the beginning. Compare [Job xxviii.](#) With [Prov. Xxi. 1.](#) “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will.” **Here it is represented that the will of God determines the wills of men, and that when God pleases to interpose, he even directs them according to his pleasure, without failure in any instance.** This shows that God has not left men’s hearts so in their own hands, as to be determined by themselves alone, independently on any antecedent determination.

Sanctification

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God works in us holiness by means of discipline, trials, etc., conforming us to his image, including mortification of our lusts and corrupt affections. Evidence of divine love. Hence, “You’re delight and readiness in the paths of obedience is the very measure of your sanctification.” John Flavel, Vol. VI, pg 440

Heb 12:9 Commentary on Hebrews by John Owen p267-271 (336-341 online)
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Ver. 9,10. — Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh, who chastened [us,] and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us,] as it seemed good unto them; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might partake of his holiness.

The design of these words is further to evince the equity of the duty exhorted unto, namely, the patient enduring of divine chastisement; which is done on such cogent principles of conviction as cannot be avoided.

It is a new argument that is produced, and not a mere application or improvement of the former; as the word Εἰτα, “furthermore,” or “moreover,” doth signify. The former was taken from the right of parents, this is taken from the duty of children. And the argument in the words is taken from a mixture of principles and experience. The principles whereon it proceeds are two, and of two sorts: the first is from the light of nature, namely, that children ought to obey their parents, and submit unto them in all things; the other is from the light of grace, namely, that there is the same real relation between God and believers as is between natural parents and their children, though it be not of the same nature. The whole strength of the argument depends on these undoubted principles.

For the confirmation of the first of these principles, common experience is produced. ‘It is so, for it hath been so with us; we ourselves have had such fathers,’ etc. As for the manner of the argument, it is “a comparatis,” and therein “a minori ad majus.” ‘If it be so in the one case, how much more ought it to be so in the other.’ In each of the comparates there is a supposition consisting of many parts, and an assertion on that supposition: in the first, as to matter of fact, in the latter, as unto right; as we shall see. The supposition in the first of the comparates consists of many parts; as,

1. That “we have had fathers of our flesh;” those from whom we derived our flesh by natural generation. This being the ordinance of God, and the way by him appointed for the propagation of mankind, is the foundation of the relation intended, and that which gives parents the right here asserted. That learned man did but indulge to his fancy, who would have these “fathers” to be the teachers of the Jewish church; which how they should come to be opposed unto “the Father of spirits,” he could not imagine.

2. That they were chasteners: “They chastened us.” They had a right so to do, and they did so accordingly.

3. The rule whereby they proceeded in their so doing is also supposed, namely, they used their judgment as unto the causes and measure of chastisement; they did it “as it seemed good unto them.” It is not said that they did it for or according to their pleasure, without respect unto rule or equity; for

it is the example of good parents that is intended: but they did it according to their best discretion; wherein yet they might fail, both as unto the causes and measure of chastisement.

4. The exercise of this right is “for a few days.” And this may have a double sense: (1.) The limitation of the time of their chastisement, namely, that it is but for a little while, for a few days; to wit, whilst we are in infancy, or under age. Ordinarily corporal chastisements are not longer continued. So “a few days,” is a few of our own days. Or, 338 (2.) It may respect the advantage which is to be obtained by such chastisement; which is only the regulation of our affections for a little season.

The case on the one hand being stated on these suppositions, the duty of children, under the power of their natural parents, is declared. And the word signifies “an ingenuous, modest shame, with submission;” opposite unto stubbornness and frowardness. We add the word “them” unto the original, which is necessary; “we had them in reverence.” ‘We were kept in a temper of mind meet to be applied unto duty. We did not desert the family of our parents, nor grow weary of their discipline, so as to be discouraged from our duty.’ And, —

Obs. I. As it is the duty of parents to chastise their children, if need be, and of children to submit thereunto; so, —

Obs. II. It is good for us to have had the experience of a reverential submission unto paternal chastisements; as from hence we may be convinced of the equity and necessity of submission unto God in all our afflictions. For so these things are improved by the apostle. — And they arise from the consideration of the differences that are between divine and parental chastisements. For, —

1. He by whom we are chastised is “the Father of spirits.” He is a father also, but of another kind and nature than they are. “The Father of spirits; that is, **of our spirits**: for so the opposition requires; the fathers of our flesh, and the Father of our spirits. And whereas the apostle here distributes our nature into its two essential parts, the **flesh** and the **spirit**; it is evident that by the “**spirit**,” the rational soul is intended. For although the flesh also be a creature of God, yet is natural generation used as a means for its production; **but the soul is immediately created and infused, having no other father but God himself**. See Numbers 16:22; Zechariah 12:1; Jeremiah 38:16. I will not deny but that the signification of the word here may be farther extended, namely, so as to comprise also the state and frame of our spirits in their restoration and rule, wherein also they are subject unto God alone; **but his being the immediate creator of them is regarded in the first place**.

And this is the fundamental reason of our patient submission unto God in all our afflictions, namely, that our very souls are his, the immediate product of his divine power, and under his rule alone. May he not do what he will with his own? Shall the potsherd contend with its maker?

2. It is supposed from the foregoing verses, that this Father of our spirits doth also chastise us; which is the subject-matter treated of.

3. His general end and design therein, is “**our profit**” or advantage. This being once well fixed, takes off all disputes in this case. Men, in their chastisements, do at best but conjecture at the event, and are no way able to effect it: **but what God designs shall infallibly come to pass; for he himself will accomplish it, and make the means of it certainly effectual**. But it may be inquired, what this “profit,” this benefit or advantage, is; for outwardly there is no appearance of any such thing. This is declared in the next place.

4. The especial end of God in divine chastisements, is, “that he may make us partakers of his holiness.” **The holiness of God, is either that which he hath in himself, or that which he approves of and requires in us**. The first is the infinite purity of the divine nature; which is absolutely incommunicable unto us, or any creature whatever. Howbeit we may be said to be partakers of it in a peculiar manner,

by virtue of our interest in God, as our God: as also by the effects of it produced in us, which are his image and likeness, Ephesians 4:24; as we are said to be made “partakers of the divine nature,” 2 Peter 1:4. And this also is the holiness of God in the latter sense; namely, that which he requires of us and approves in us.

Whereas, therefore, this **holiness consists in the mortification of our lusts and affections, in the gradual renovation of our natures, and the sanctification of our souls**, the carrying on and increase of these things in us is that which God designs in all his chastisements. And whereas, next unto our participation of Christ, by the imputation of his righteousness unto us, this is the greatest privilege, glory, honor, and benefit, that in this world we can be made partakers of, we have no reason to be weary of God’s chastisements, which are designed unto no other end. And we may observe, —

Obs. III. **No man can understand the benefit of divine chastisement, who understands not the excellency of a participation of God’s holiness.** — No man can find any good in a bitter potion, who understands not the benefit of health. If we have not a due valuation of this blessed privilege, it is impossible we should ever make a right judgment concerning our afflictions.

Obs. IV. **If under chastisements we find not an increase of holiness, in some especial instances or degrees, they are utterly lost: we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them.**

Obs. V. There can be no greater pledge or evidence of divine love in afflictions than this, that God designs by them to “make us partakers of his holiness,” — to bring us nearer to him, and make us more like him.

5. The reasons from whence they have their efficacy unto this end, and the way whereby they attain it, are, (1.) God’s designation of them thereunto, in an act of infinite wisdom; which gives them their efficacy. (2.) **By weaning us from the world, and the love of it, whose vanity and unsatisfactoriness they openly discover, breaking the league of love that is between it and our souls.** (3.) By calling us unto the faith and contemplation of things more glorious and excellent, wherein we may find rest and peace.

That which is required of us, as children, is, that we be “in subjection” unto him, as “the Father of spirits.” This answers unto the having of our earthly parents in reverence, before mentioned; — the same which the apostle Peter calls, “humbling of ourselves under the mighty hand of God,” 1 Peter 5:6. And there may be respect unto the disobedient son under the law, who refused to subject himself to his parents, or to reform upon their correction, Deuteronomy 21:18-21; which I the rather think, because of the consequent assigned unto it, “And live;” whereas the refractory son was to be stoned to death. And this subjection unto God consists in, 1. An acquiescency in his right and sovereignty to do what he will with his own. 2. An acknowledgment of his righteousness and wisdom in all his dealings with us. 3. A sense of his care and love, with a due apprehension of the end of his chastisements. 4. A diligent application of ourselves unto his mind and will, as unto what he calls us unto in an especial manner at that season. 5. In keeping our souls, by faith and patience, from weariness and despondency. 6. In a full resignation of ourselves unto his will, as to the matter, manner, times, and continuance of our affliction.

And where these things are not in some degree, we cast off the yoke of God, and are not in due subjection unto him; which is the land inhabited by the sons of Belial.

Lastly, The consequent of this subjection unto God in our chastisements, is, that “we shall live:” “And,” or “for so we shall live.” Though in their own nature they seem to tend unto death, or the destruction of the flesh, yet is it life whereunto they are **designed**, — which is the consequent, which shall be the effect of them, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. The increase of spiritual life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, are that whereunto they tend. The rebellious son, who would not submit himself to correction, was to die without mercy; but they who are in subjection unto God in his chastisements, shall live.

Foundation of the Communication of Grace

code270

John Owen – Hebrews 13:21-22 474-480 (599-604 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Ver. 20,21. — Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen.

This exposition of Heb 13:21-22 will further clear up so called difficulties in reconciling man’s liberty, his inability and his obstinacy, with God’s sovereignty, His decrees, His promises, that are and will be effectual. God will do all his pleasure. This will further define the glory of God, it’s purpose and its infallible effectualness.

Subjects: The **foundation of the communication of grace**; The eternal covenant, the Blood of the covenant, securing the **communication of all graces and mercy to the elect** compared to the inability of the old covenant which could not do what the new covenant could do and will infallibly do, i.e., it is not dependent upon man’s cooperation and his will, but on God’s will, his eternal decree and promise. That man is not converted by his own will or by an outside moral suasion, but by the power of God, his grace. The upshot of this is that God’s sovereignty in the exercise of his good pleasure in applying the benefit of death of Christ unto the elect in no way violates their liberty as the Arminian suppose it does. I am glad that God, in effect, overruled my will and saved me.

[2.] Again, he is described by his office, — under which consideration he was the object of the work mentioned, — “that great shepherd of the sheep.” As such God brought him again from the dead. The expression in the original is emphatical, by a reduplication of the article, *tona, togan*, which we cannot well express. And it is asserted, 1st. That Christ is a shepherd; that is, the only shepherd. 2dly. That he is the great shepherd. 3dly. That he is not so to all, but the shepherd of the sheep.

1st. He doth not say he is the great shepherd, but “that great shepherd;” namely, he that was promised of old, the object of the faith and hope of the church from the beginning, — he who was looked for, prayed for, who was now come, and had saved his flock.

2dly. He is said to be “great” on many accounts: (1st.) He is great in his person, above all angels and men, being the eternal Son of God; (2dly.) Great in power, to preserve and save his flock; (3dly.) Great in his undertaking, and the effectual accomplishment of it in the discharge of his office; (4thly.) Great in his glory and exaltation, above the whole creation. He is every way incomparably great and glorious. See our discourse of the Glory of Christ, in his Person, Office, and Grace. And, —

Obs. V. The safety, security, and consolation of the church, much depend on this greatness of their shepherd. 5

3dly. He is the “shepherd of the sheep.” They are his own. He was promised, and prophesied of, **of old under the name of a shepherd**, Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24. And that which is signified hereby is comprehensive of the whole office of Christ, as king, priest, and prophet of the church. **For as a shepherd he doth feed, that is, rule and instruct it; and being that shepherd who was to lay down his life for the sheep**, John 10:11, it hath respect unto his priestly office also, and the atonement he made for his church by his blood. **[the argument follows that salvation is perfected in eternity for the elect due to this covenant between the Father and the Son; and hence the Son will not fail in his purpose, thus, those in hell never were part of this covenant, their names were never written in the book of life, that is, he never knew them. Mt. 7:23]** **All the elect are committed unto him of God, as sheep to a shepherd, to be redeemed, preserved, saved, by virtue of his office.** This relation between Christ and the church is frequently mentioned in the Scripture, with the **security and consolation which depend thereon**. That which we are here taught is, that he died in the discharge of his office, as the “great shepherd of the sheep;” which expresseth both the **excellency** of his love and the **certainty of the salvation** of the elect. For, —

He is **not said to be a shepherd in general, but the “shepherd of the sheep.”** He did not lay down his life, **as a shepherd, for the whole herd of mankind, but for that flock of the elect which was given and committed to him by the Father [in the counsel of his will, the covenant with the Son in eternity]**, as he declares, John 10:11, 14-16.

Obs. VI. On this relation of Christ unto the church doth it live and is preserved in the world. — In particular, this little flock of sheep could not be maintained in the midst of so many wolves and other beasts of prey as this world is filled withal, were it not by the power and care of this great shepherd.

(2.) The work of God toward him is, that he “brought him again from the dead.” The God of peace is he who brought him again from the dead. Herein consisted his great acting towards the church, as he is the God of peace; and herein he laid the foundation of the communication of grace and peace unto us.

God, even the Father, is frequently said to raise Christ from the dead, because of his sovereign authority in the disposal of the whole work of redemption, which is everywhere ascribed unto him. And Christ is said to raise himself, or to take his life again when he was dead, because of the immediate efficiency of his divine person therein, John 10:18. But somewhat more is intended than that mere act

of divine power whereby the human nature of Christ was quickened by a reunion of its essential parts, soul and body. And the word here used is peculiar, not signifying an act of raising, but of reducing or recovery out of a certain state and condition; that is, the state of the dead. Christ, as the great shepherd of the sheep, was brought into the state of death by the sentence of the law; and was thence led, recovered and restored, by the God of peace. Not a real efficiency of power, but a moral act of authority, is intended. The law being fulfilled and answered, the sheep being redeemed by the death of the shepherd, the God of peace, to evidence that peace was now perfectly made, by an act of sovereign authority brings him again into the state of life, in a complete deliverance from the charge of the law. See Psalm 16:10, 11.

(3.) Hence he is said to do this “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” “In the blood,” εἰς for δία, which is frequent. And we must see, [1.] What “covenant” this is; [2.] What was “the blood of this covenant;” [3.] How “through it” the Lord Christ was brought again from the dead.

[1.] This **covenant** may be the **eternal covenant between the Father and the Son** about the **redemption of the church**, by his undertaking on its behalf. The nature hereof hath been fully declared in our Exercitations. But this covenant needed no confirmation or ratification by blood, as consisting only in the **eternal counsels of Father and Son.** Wherefore it is the covenant of grace, which is a transcript and effect of that covenant of redemption, which is intended. Hereof we have treated at large in our exposition of the 8th and 9th chapters. **And this is called “everlasting,” as in opposition unto the covenant made at Sinai**, which, as the apostle proves, was **but for a time**, and accordingly waxed old, and was removed; so because the effects of it are not temporary benefits, but everlasting mercies, — **grace and glory.**

[2.] The blood of this covenant is the blood of Christ himself, so called in answer to the blood of the beasts, which was offered and **sprinkled in the confirmation of the old covenant**; whence it is by Moses called “the blood of the covenant,” Exodus 24:8; Hebrews 9:20. See that place, and the exposition. And it is called the blood of the covenant, because, as it was a sacrifice to God, **it confirmed the covenant; and as it was to be sprinkled, it procured and communicated all the grace and mercy of the covenant, unto them who are taken into the bond of it.** (particular vs. universal)

[3.] But the principal inquiry is, how God is said to bring Christ from the dead “through the blood of the covenant,” the shedding whereof was the means and the way of his entrance unto death. Now the mind of the Holy Ghost herein will appear in the ensuing considerations.

1st. By the blood of Christ, as it was the blood of the covenant, the whole will of God, as unto what he intended in all the institutions and sacrifices of the law, was accomplished and fulfilled. See chap. 10:5-9. And hereby an end was put unto the old covenant, with all its services and promises.

2^{dly}. **Hereby was atonement made for sin, the church was sanctified or dedicated to God, the law was fulfilled, the threatenings of death executed, eternal redemption obtained, the promises of the new covenant confirmed, and by one offering they who were sanctified are perfected forever.**

3dly. Hereon not only way was made for the dispensation of grace, but all grace, mercy, peace, and glory, were purchased for the church, and in the purpose of God were necessarily to ensue. **Now the head and well-spring of the whole dispensation of grace, lies in the bringing of Christ again from the dead.** That is the beginning of all grace to the church; the greatest and first instance of it, and the cause of all that doth ensue. **The whole dispensation of grace, I say, began in, and depends on, the resurrection of Christ from the dead;** which could not have been, had not the things before mentioned **been effected and accomplished by the blood of the covenant.** Without them he must have continued in the state and under the power of death. Had not the will of God been satisfied, atonement made for sin, the church sanctified, the law accomplished, and the threatenings satisfied, Christ could not have been brought again from the dead. **It was therefore hereby that he was so, in that way was made for it unto the glory of God.** **The death of Christ,** if he had not risen, would not have completed our redemption, we should have been “yet in our sins;” for evidence would have been given that atonement was not made. The bare resurrection of Christ, or the bringing him from the dead, would not have saved us; for so any other man may be raised by the power of God. But the bringing again of Christ from the dead, **“through the blood of the everlasting covenant,”** is that which gives assurance of the complete redemption and salvation of the church. Many expositors have filled this place with conjectures to no purpose, none of them so much as looking towards the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words. That which we learn from them is, —

Obs. VII. That the bringing back of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the shepherd of the sheep, from the state of the dead, through the blood of the covenant, is the **great pledge and assurance of peace with God,** or the **effecting of that peace which the God of peace had designed for the church.** [in other words, the effecting of God’s promise to save his people will be accomplished despite man’s unwillingness or obstinancy; he will take out the heart of stone...! The blood of Christ is not something just made available. His word will not return void...*but it shall accomplish what I please...Isa55:11, whether it be a further hardening of the heart (Isa. 6:9-10...make the heart of this people dull...)* or bringing the elect to glory. Rom 8 & 9]

Obs. VIII. The reduction of Christ from the dead, by the God of peace, **is the spring and foundation of all dispensations and communications of grace to the church, or all the effects of the atonement and purchase made by his blood.** — For he was so brought again, as the shepherd of the sheep, **unto the exercise of his entire office towards the church.** For hereon followed his exaltation, and the glorious exercise of his **kingly power** in its behalf, **with all the benefits which ensue thereon,** Acts 5:30, 31, Romans 14:9, Philippians 2:8-11, Revelation 1:17, 18; and the **completing of his prophetic office, by sending of his Holy Spirit** to abide always with the church, for its instruction, Acts 2:33; and the discharge of what remains of his **priestly office,** in his **intercession,** Hebrews 7:25, 26, and his ministering in the sanctuary, **to make the services of the church acceptable unto God,** Hebrews 8:2; Revelation 8:3, 4. **These are the springs of the administration of all mercy and grace unto the church, and they all follow on his reduction from the dead as the shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the covenant.**

Obs. IX. All legal sacrifices issued in blood and death; there was no recovery of any of them from that state. — There was no solemn pledge of their success. But their weakness was supplied by their

frequent repetition. [Hence the Old Covenant was weak due to the weakness of the flesh and the fact that God never intended it be effectual but only to lead one to relief in Christ alone.]

Obs. X. There is, then, a blessed foundation laid of the communication of grace and mercy to the church, unto the eternal glory of God.

Ver. 20,21. — Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Ver. 21. — The other verse contains the things which the apostle, with all this solemnity, prayeth for on the behalf of the Hebrews. And they are two:

1. That “God would perfect them in every good work to do his will.”
2. That “he would work in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.”

In this whole prayer we have the method of the dispensation of grace laid before us. For, (1.) The original of it is in God himself, as he is “the God of peace;” that is, as in the **eternal counsel of his will** he had designed grace and peace to poor sinners, suitably unto his own goodness, wisdom, and grace. (2.) The preparation of it, in a way suitable unto the exaltation of the glory of God, and the **original means of its communication**, is **the mediation of Christ in his death and resurrection**. (3.) The nature of it, as unto one principal part, or our sanctification, is expressed under these two heads in this verse.

Again, it is evident that this **communication of grace** here prayed for **consists in a real efficiency of it in us**. [Hence this communication of grace to us is not dependent upon our cooperation otherwise it would be no different than the covenant of works! – of which was the old covenant that this new one was replacing. In the new covenant, God will work it! He is our surety; that he will do what we could not do under the old covenant. But the Arminians say that our receiving this grace or salvation is up to our own will of deciding and not God’s effectual grace in converting.] It is here expressed by words denoting not only a **certain efficacy, but a real actual efficiency**. The pretense of some, that the eventual efficacy of divine grace depends on the first contingent compliance of our wills, which leaves it to be no more but persuasion or instruction, is irreconcilable unto this prayer of the apostle. It is not a sufficient proposal of the object, and a pressing of rational motives thereon, **but a real efficiency of the things themselves**, by the **power of God through Christ**, that the apostle prays for.

1. The first part of the prayer, the first thing prayed for us, is, “Perfection in every good work to do the will of God.” “Make you perfect,” or rather, “make you meet,” fit and able. ‘**This is a thing which you in yourselves are no way meet, fit, prepared, able for; whatever may be supposed to be in you of light, power, liberty, yet it will not give you this meetness and ability.**’ [Arminians disagree with this and in doing so undermine the doctrine of man’s total depravity or inability to comply. See Rom. 8:7-8, 1Cor. 2:14] It is not an absolute perfection that is intended, nor doth the word signify any such thing; but it is to bring the faculties of the mind into that order, so to dispose, prepare, and enable them, as

that they may work accordingly. [This is very similar to Edwards' comments on a believer's new inclination to obey and love God which is law enough – see pg 9 above.] *“The fruits of the Spirit are such, as they by the Spirit without the law **are inclined and enabled to, such as love, joy, peace, etc.**; are such as the law is not against, as in the 22d and 23d verses of the context. “Against such there is no law.” The filial Spirit, or Spirit of love and truth, fulfils the law; that is, the law obliges to no other things but what this Spirit inclines to, and is sufficient for.”]*

And this is to be “in every good work;” in, for, unto every good work, or duty of obedience. The whole of our obedience towards God, and duty towards man, consists in good works, Ephesians 2:10. And therefore the end of the assistance prayed for is, that they might do the will of God, which is the sole rule of our obedience.

It is hence evident what is the grace that in these words the apostle prayeth for. In general, he designs the application of the grace of God through the mediation of Christ unto our sanctification. And this adapting of us to do the will of God in every good work, is by that **habitual grace which is wrought in our souls.** Hereby are they prepared, fitted, enabled, unto all duties of obedience. And whereas many, at least of the Hebrews, might justly be esteemed to have already received this grace, in their first conversion unto God, as all believers do, the daily increase of it in them, whereof it is capable, is that which on their behalf he prayeth for. For all this strengthening, thriving, and growing in grace, consists in the increase of this spiritual habit in us.

He lets therefore the Hebrews know, that in themselves they are unable to answer the will of God in the duties of obedience required of them; and **therefore prays that they may have supplies of sanctifying grace enabling them thereunto.** And he doth it after he hath in particular prescribed and enjoined sundry gospel duties unto them, in this and the foregoing chapter; and it may be with especial regard unto the casting out of all contentious disputes about the law, with a holy acquiescency in the doctrine of the gospel; which he therefore prays for from “the God of peace.”

2. But there is yet more required in us besides this habitual disposition and preparation for duties of obedience, according to the will of God; **namely, the actual gracious performance of every such duty.** For neither can we do this of ourselves, whatever furniture of habitual grace we may have received. This therefore he hath also respect unto: “Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” This is the way whereby we may be enabled effectually to do the will of God.

Our whole duty, in all the acts of it, according to his will, is “that which is well-pleasing unto him,” (so is it expressed, Romans 12:1, 14:18; Ephesians 5:10; Philippians 4:18), — that which is right in his eyes, before him, with respect unto the principle, matter, forms, and end of what is so done. This we are not sufficient for in ourselves, in any one instance, act, or duty.

Therefore he prayeth **that God would do it, work it, effect it, in them; not by moral persuasion and instruction only, but by an effectual in-working, or working in them.** See Philippians 2:13. **The efficiency of actual grace in and unto every acceptable act or duty of obedience, cannot be more directly expressed.** This the church prays for; this it expects and relies upon. Those who judge themselves to stand in no need of the actual efficiency of grace in and unto every duty of obedience, cannot honestly give their assent and consent unto the prayers of the church.

He prays that all may be granted unto them “through Jesus Christ.” This may be referred either to working or to acceptance. If it be so to the latter, the meaning is, that the best of our duties, wrought in us by the grace of God, **are not accepted as they are ours, but upon the account of the merit and mediation of Christ: which is most true.** But it is rather to be referred unto the former; **showing that there is no communication of grace unto us from the God of peace, but in and by Jesus Christ, and by virtue of his mediation;** and this the apostle presseth in a peculiar manner upon the Hebrews, who seem not as yet to be fully instructed in the things which belong unto his person, office, and grace. [The main purpose in me using this excerpt is to show the infallible and hence, greatness of God’s power that works in the elect (Eph and Phil); those in whom this never happened, they were never part of the covenant of grace, hence salvation or the atonement is limited to those who God entered into covenant with. If he entered into covenant with all by the eternal counsel of his will (by his decree), with the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), then all would be saved. He, beforehand, in eternity, has determined who shall be saved; he entered into covenant with them, a particular people, and thus chose them for salvation. A covenant is not a covenant unless it is made with distinct persons and that all are agreed on the terms. All this was done in eternity and then played out as time unfolds. More on this is explained by John Owen on covenants in his commentary on Hebrews. This would confirm the atonement being limited to those and those only who are covenanted with.]

Continual Supplies of Grace

code271

His Yoke is Easy, explained

(see also pg 1700 & 1709)

Heb. 1:8,9 John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews 1

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_1.3-6.pdf

But now for the rule of Christ, he tells us that “his yoke is easy, and his burden light,” Matthew 11:30; and that “his commandments are not grievous,” 1 John 5:3. And this gentleness and easiness of the rule of Christ consisteth in these three things: —

(1.) That his commands are all of them reasonable, and suited unto the principles of that natural obedience we owe to God; and so not grievous unto anything in us but that principle of sin and darkness which is to be destroyed. He hath not multiplied precepts merely arbitrary, and to express his authority, but given us only such as are in themselves good, and suitable unto the principles of reason; as might be evinced by the particular consideration of his institutions. Hence our obedience unto them is called “our reasonable service,” Romans 12:1.

(2.) His commands are easy, because all of them are suited to that principle of the new nature or new creature which he worketh in the hearts of all his disciples. It likes them, loves them, delights in them [delight being a grace!]; which makes them easy unto it. The Lord Christ rules, as we said, **by his word and Spirit; these go together in the covenant of the Redeemer,** Isaiah 59:20, 21. And their work is suited and commensurate one to the other. The Spirit creates a new nature fitted for obedience according to the word, and the word gives out laws and precepts suited unto the inclination and disposition of that nature; and in these two consist the scepter and rule of Christ. **This suitability of principle and rule one to the other makes his government easy, upright, and righteous.**

(3.) His commands are easy, because he continually gives out supplies of his Spirit to make his subjects to yield obedience unto them. This is that which, above all other things, sets a lustre upon his rule. The law was holy, just, and good of old; but whereas it

extended not strength unto men to enable them unto obedience [e.g., Adam], it became unto them altogether useless and unprofitable, as to the end they aimed at in its observation. It is otherwise in the kingdom of Christ. Whatever he requires to have done by his subjects, he gives them strength by his Spirit and grace to perform it; which makes his rule easy, righteous, equal, and altogether lovely. Neither can any of the sons of men pretend to the least share or interest in this privilege.

Faith worketh Itself by love

code272

John Owen – Conforming to his image by faith which works by love
p 250 v20 Hebrews 4:1-2 (312-315 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_3.7-5.14.pdf

This is very good on Faith working by love via contemplation/meditation on the word and the glory of God in Jesus Christ and how it works an assimilation into the soul to be conformed to his image.

My comments in [blue]; I highlighted Owen's comments in red for emphasis.

An understanding of James 1:23...the man who looks into the mirror and forgets...

Hence is the word of Christ said to dwell or inhabit in us: Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." This inhabitation of the word, whereby it makes its residence and abode in the souls of men, is from this spiritual incorporation or mixing with faith. Without this it may have various effects upon the mind and conscience, but it comes to no abiding habitation. With some it casts its beams and rays for a season into their minds, φαίνει, but is not "received" nor "comprehended," John 1:5; and therefore ουχ αυγαζει, it "doth not enlighten them," though it shines unto them, 2 Corinthians 4:4. It comes and departs almost like lightning, which rather amazeth than guideth. With some it makes a transient impression upon the affections; so that they hear it and admit of its dispensation with joy and some present satisfaction, Matthew 13:20. But it is but like the stroke of a skillful hand upon the strings of a musical instrument, that makes a pleasant sound for the present, which insensibly sinks and decays until a new stroke be given; it hath no abode or residence in itself or the strings. No more hath the word that strikes on the affections only, and, causing a various motion and sound in joy, or sorrow, or delight, vanisheth and departeth. With some it lays hold on their consciences, and presseth them unto a reformation of their conversation, or course in this world, until they do many things gladly, Mark 6:20; but this is by an efficacious impression from without. The word doth not abide, inhabit, or dwell in any, but where it hath a subsistence given unto it in the soul by its incorporation with faith, in the manner described.

This, then, is savingly and profitably to believe. And thus is it with very few of the many that make profession so to do. It is but in one sort of ground where the seed incorporates so with the earth as to take root and to bring forth fruit. Many pretend to believe, few believe indeed, few mix the word preached with faith; which should give us all a godly jealousy over our hearts in this matter, that we be not deceived.

(2.) It is therefore worth our inquiry how, or by what means, faith is assisted and strengthened in this work of mixing the word with itself, that it may be useful and profitable unto them that hear it. For although it is in and of the nature of faith thus to do, yet of itself it doth but begin this work, or lay the foundation of it, there are certain ways and means whereby it is carried on and increased. And among these, —

[1.] **Constant meditation**, wherein itself is exercised, and its acts multiplied. **Constant fixing the mind by spiritual meditation on its proper object, is a principal means whereby faith mixeth it with itself.** This is χατοπτριζεσθαι, **to behold steadfastly the glory of God** in Jesus Christ, expressed in the gospel **as in a glass**, 2 Corinthians 3:18; for the meditation of faith is an intuition into the things that are believed, **which works the assimilation mentioned, or our being “changed into the same image,”** which is but **another expression of the incorporation insisted on.** As when a man hath an idea or projection of anything in his mind that he will produce or effect, he casteth the image framed in his mind upon his work, that it shall exactly answer it in all things; so, on the other side, **when a man doth diligently contemplate on that which is without him, it begets an idea of it in his mind, or casts it into the same image.** And this **meditation which faith worketh by**, for to complete the mixture or composition intended, is to be fixed, intuitive, **constant, looking into the nature of the things believed.** James tells us, that “he who is a **mere hearer of the word** is like a man considering his natural face in a glass, who goeth away, and immediately forgetteth what manner of man he was,” **James 1:23,24.** It is so with a man that takes but a slight view of himself; **so is it with men that use a slight and perfunctory consideration of the word.** [And that is the point of this comparison, to illustrate the vital importance of not forgetting what is revealed by Gospel as in a glass (mirror), the glory of the Lord....and to be in constant meditation on the glory of God in Jesus Christ, which he forgets to do! He looks into the mirror of the Gospel in which is revealed God’s glory upon which we are supposed to contemplate and yet he forgets it and thus neglects the duty of contemplating it!] But saith he, Ο παραχυψας εις νομον τελειον, — “**He that diligently bows down, and inquires into the law of liberty,**” **or the word (that is, by the meditation and inquiry mentioned),** “**that man is blessed in all his ways.**” [In other words, those who do contemplate God’s glory will be conformed to His image from glory to glory. But those who do not meditate on the word or on His glory, but quickly center their thoughts on temporal concerns being earthly minded, forget what they saw and will not be conformed to the image of the Son in a due manner; that is the danger of “forgetting...” which this passage warns against and argues the person’s hypocrisy. But if one does not forget but does meditate on His glory, etc., then Christ will be formed in him in the manner that Owen describes.] So doth that word signify, 1 Peter 1:12, where alone again it is used in this moral sense, of diligent inquiry, it signifying properly “to bow down.” This is that which we aim at. **The soul by faith meditating on the word of promise, and the subject-matter of Christ and his righteousness, Christ is thereby formed in it,** Galatians 4:19, and the word **itself is inseparably mixed with faith, so as to subsist with it in the soul, and to produce therein its proper effects.** This is to be “**spiritually minded;**” and φρονειν τα ανω, Colossians 3:2, to “**mind the things that are above,**” as those which yield the best relish and savor to the soul; **which being constant will assert a mixture,**

incorporation, and mutual conformity between the mind and the object of it. [Remember that passage that says that they did not profit the word because they did not mix it with faith? Heb. 4:2 Faith acts itself by contemplation, by this mixing the word with itself in our minds. But if one forgets what he saw, with what shall he mix?? And this is the situation with the unsaved. They only contemplate worldly things, temporal things, those things that are lawful in themselves, but in the end, they are conformed to the image of the world! And not God! Wow.]

[2.] **Faith sets love at work upon the objects proposed to be believed.** There is in the gospel, and the promises of it, not only the truth to be considered which we are to believe and assent unto, but also the **goodness, excellency, desirableness**, and suitableness unto our condition, of the things themselves which are comprised in them. Under this consideration of them, they are proper objects for **love** to fix on, and to be exercised about. And **“faith worketh by love,”** not only in acts and duties of mercy, righteousness, and charity towards men, but also in **adhesion unto and delight in the things of God which are revealed to be lovely.** **Faith makes the soul in love with spiritual things. Love engages all other affections into their proper exercise about them, and fills the mind continually with thoughtfulness about them and desires after them; and this mightily helps on the spiritual mixture of faith and the word.** It is known that **love is greatly effectual to work an assimilation between the mind and its proper object.** It will introduce its idea into the mind, which will never depart from it. So will carnal love, or the impetuous working of men’s lusts by that affection. Hence Peter tells us that some men have οφθαλμους μεστους μοιχαλιδος και αχαταπαυστους αμαρτιας, 2 Peter 2:14, — “eyes full of an adulteress.” Their lust hath so wrought by their imagination as to introduce a constant idea of the object into their minds, as if there were an image of a thing in their eye, which continually represented itself unto them as seen, whatever they looked on: therefore are they constantly unquiet, and “cannot cede to sin.” There is such a mixture of lust and its object in their minds, that they continually commit lewdness in themselves. **Spiritual love, set on work by faith, will produce the like effect. It will bring in that idea of the beloved object into the mind, until the eye be full of it, and the soul is continually conversant with it.** Our apostle, expressing his great love unto Christ, above himself and all the world, as a fruit of his faith in him, Philippians 3:8,9, professeth that this was that which he aimed at, namely, that he “might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made **conformable** unto his death,” verse 10. The resurrection, with the sufferings and death of Christ which preceded it, he knew before and believed: but he aims at more, he would have a further inward experience of “the power of his resurrection;” that is, **he would so mix it with faith working by love to Christ,** as that it might produce in him its proper effects, in an increase of his spiritual life, and the **quickening of him unto all holiness and obedience.** He would also be yet further acquainted with “the fellowship of his sufferings,” or obtain communion with him in them; that the sufferings of Christ subsisting in his spirit by faith, might cause sin to suffer in him, and crucify the world unto him, and him unto the world. By all which he aimed to be made completely “conformable unto his death;” that is, that whole Christ, with his life, sufferings, and death, might so abide in him that his whole soul might be cast into his image and likeness. I shall add no more concerning this truth, but only that it is best manifested, declared, and confirmed, in the minds and consciences of them who know what it is really to believe and to walk with God thereon.

Restraining Grace – Common influences of the Spirit

not to be confused with Saving Grace
explained by Jonathan Edwards in
[code273](#)

Men Naturally God's Enemies

SECT. VI.

Restraining grace a great privilege.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.vi.i.vi.html>

If natural men are God's enemies; then hence we may learn, how much we are indebted to God for his restraining grace. If all natural men are God's enemies, what would they not do, if they were not restrained! For what has one that is an enemy in his disposition, to restrain him from acting against him to whom he is an enemy? Hatred will not restrain a man from acting anything against him that is hated. Nothing is too bad for haired, if it be mere hatred and no love. Hatred shows no kindness either in doing, or forbearing; it will never make a man forbear to act against God; for the very nature of hatred is to seek evil. But wicked men, as has been shown, are mere enemies to God; they have hatred, without any love at all. And hence natural men have nothing within them, in their own nature, to restrain them from anything that is bad; and therefore their restraint must not be owing to nature, but to restraining grace. And therefore whatever wickedness we have been kept from, it is not because we have not been bad enough to commit it; but it is God has restrained us, and kept us back from sin. There can be no worse principle, than a principle of hatred to God. And there can be no principle that will go further in wickedness than this, if it be neither mortified nor restrained. But it is not mortified in natural men; and therefore all that keeps them from any degree of wickedness, is restrained. If we have seen others do things that we never did; and if they have done worse than we, this is owing to restraining grace. If we have not done as bad as Pharaoh, it is owing to divine restraints. If we have not done as bad as Judas, or as the scribes and Pharisees, or as bad as Herod, or Simon Magus, it is because God has restrained our corruption. If we have ever heard or read of any that have done worse than we; if we have not gone the length in sinning, that the most wicked pirates or carnal persecutors have gone, this is owing to restraining grace. For we are all naturally the enemies of God as much as they. If we have not committed the unpardonable sin, it is owing to restraining grace. There is no worse principle in exercise in that sin, than enmity against God. There is the entire fountain, and all the foundation of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in that enmity against God that naturally reigns in us. It is not we that restrain ourselves from the commission of the greatest imaginable wickedness; for enmity against God reigns in us and over us; we are under its power and dominion, and are sold tinder it. We do not restrain that which reigns over us. A slave, as long as he continues a mere slave, cannot control his master. "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin." [John viii. 34](#). So that the restraint of this our cruel tyrant, is owing to God, and not to us. What does a poor, impotent subject do to restrain the absolute Lord, that has him wholly under his power? How much will it appear that the world is indebted to the restraining grace of God, if we consider that the world is full of enemies to God. The

world is full of inhabitants; and almost all are God's enemies, his implacable and mortal enemies. What therefore would they not do, what work would they not make, if God did not restrain them?

God's work in the restraint that he exercises over a wicked world, is a glorious work. God's holding the reins upon the corruptions of a wicked world, and setting hounds to their wickedness, is a more glorious work, than his ruling the raging of the sea, and setting bounds to its proud waves, and saying, Hitherto shall thou come, and no further. In hell, God lets the wickedness of wicked spirits have the reins, to rage without restraint; and it would be in a great measure upon earth as it is in hell, did not God restrain the wickedness of the world. But in order to the better understanding how it is owing to the restraining grace of God, that we are kept and withheld from the highest acts of sin, I would here observe several things.

1. Whenever men are withheld from sinning by the common influence of God's Spirit, they are withheld by restraining grace. If sinners are awakened, and are made sensible of the great guilt that sin brings, and that it exposes to a dreadful punishment; under such circumstances they dare not allow themselves in willful sin: God restrains them by the convictions of his Spirit; and therein their being kept from sin, is owing to restraining grace. And unawakened sinners that live under the gospel, who are in a great measure secure, commonly have some degrees of the influence of God's Spirit, with his ordinances influencing natural conscience. And though they be not sufficient thoroughly to rouse them out of security, or make them reform; yet they keep them from going such lengths in sin, as otherwise they might do. And this is restraining grace. They are indeed very stupid and sottish: yet they would be a great deal more so, if God should let them wholly alone.

2. All the restraints that men are under from the word and ordinances, is from grace. The word and ordinances of God might have some degree of influence on men's natural principles of self-love, to restrain them from sin, without any degree of the influence of God's Spirit: but this would be the restraining grace of God; for God's goodness and mercy to a sinful world appears in his giving his word to be a restraint on the wickedness of the world. When men are restrained by fear of those punishments that the word of God threatens; or by the warnings, the offers, and promises of it; when the word of God works upon hope, or fear, or natural conscience, to restrain men from sin, this is the restraining grace of God, and is owing to his mercy. It is an instance of God's mercy that he has revealed hell, to restrain men's wickedness; and that he has revealed a way of salvation, and a possibility of eternal life. This which has great influence on men to keep them from sin, is the restraining grace of God.

3. When men are restrained from sin, by the light of nature, this also is of grace. If men are destitute of the light of God's word, yet the light of natural conscience teaches that sin brings guilt, and exposes to punishment. The light of nature teaches that there is a God who governs the world, and will reward the good and punish the evil. God is the author of the light of nature, as well as the light of revelation. He in mercy to mankind makes known many things by natural light to work upon men's fear and self-love, in order to restrain their corruptions.

4. When God restrains men's corruptions by his providence, this is from grace. And that whether it be his general providence in ordering the slate of mankind; or his providential disposals towards them in particular.

(1.) God greatly restrains the corruption of the world, by ordering the state of mankind. He hath set them here in a mortal state, and in a state of probation for eternity; and that is a great restraint to corruption. God hath "so ordered the state of mankind, that ordinarily many kinds of sin and wickedness are disgraceful, and what tend to the hurt of a man's character and reputation amongst his fellow-men; and that is a great restraint. He hath so disposed the world, that many kinds of wickedness are many ways very contrary to men's temporal interest; and mankind are led to prohibit many kinds of wickedness by human laws; and that is a great restraint. God hath set up a church in the world, made up of those who, if they are answerable to their profession, have the fear and love of God in their hearts; and they by holding forth revealed light, by keeping up the ordinances of God, and by warning others, are a great restraint to the wickedness of the world.

In all these things, the restraining grace of God appears.—It is God's mercy to mankind, that he has so ordered their state, that they should have so many things, by fear and a regard to their own interest, to restrain their corruptions. It is God's mercy to the world, that the state of mankind here differs from the state of the damned in hell; where men will have none of these things to restrain them. The wisdom of God, as well as the attributes of his grace, greatly appear in thus disposing things for the restraining of the wickedness of men.

(2.) God greatly restrains the corruptions of men by his providence towards particular persons; by placing men in such circumstances as to lay them under restraints. And to this it is often owing that some natural men never go such lengths in sinning, or are never guilty of such atrocious wickedness, as some others, that Providence has placed them in different circumstances. If it were not for this, many thousands of natural men, who now live sober and orderly lives, would do as Pharaoh did. The reason why they do not, is, that Providence has placed them in different circumstances. If they were in the same circumstances as Pharaoh was in, they would do as he did. And so, if in the same circumstances as Manassah, as Judas, or Nero. But Providence restrains their corruptions, by putting them in such circumstances, as not to open such a door or outlet for their corruption, as he did to them. So some do not perpetrate such horrid things, they do not live such horribly vicious lives, as some others, because Providence has restrained them, by ordering that they should have a better education than others. Providence has ordered that they should be the children of pious parents, it may be, or should live where they should enjoy many means of grace; and so Providence has laid them under restraints. Now this is restraining grace; or the attribute of God's grace exercised in thus restraining persons.

And oftentimes God restrains men's corruptions by particular events of providence. By particular afflictions they are brought under, or by particular occurrences, whereby God does, as it were, block up men's way in their course of sin, or in some wickedness that they had devised, and that otherwise they would perpetrate. Or something happens unexpected to hold men back from that which they were about to commit. Thus God restrained David by his providence from shedding blood, as he intended to do. "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand,—"[1](#)

[Sam. Xxv. 26.](#) God withheld him from it no otherwise, than by ordering it so in his providence that Abigail should come, and by her wisdom should cool, pacify, and persuade him to alter his purpose. See [ver. 32, 33, 34.](#)

5. Godly persons are greatly indebted to restraining grace, in keeping them from dreadful acts of sin. So it was in that instance of David, just mentioned. Even godly persons, when God has left, and has not restrained them, have fallen into dreadful acts of sin. So did David, in the case of Uriah; and Lot, and Peter. And when other godly persons are kept from falling into such sins, or much worse sins than these, it is owing to the restraining grace of God. Merely having a principle of grace in their hearts, or merely their being godly persons, without God's presence to restrain them, will not keep them from great acts of sin. That the godly do not fall into the most horrid sins that can be conceived of, is owing not so much to any inconsistency between their falling into such sins, and the having a principle of grace in the heart, as it is owing to the covenant mercy of God, whereby he has promised never to leave nor forsake his people; and that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; but with the temptation will make a way for them to escape. If saving grace restrains men from great acts of sin, that is owing to God who gives such exercises of grace at that time when the temptation comes, that they are restrained.

Let not the godly therefore be insensible of their obligations to the restraining grace of God. Though they cannot be said to be enemies to God, because a principle of enmity does not reign; yet they have the very same principle and seed of enmity in them, though it be mortified. Though it be not in reigning power, yet it has great strength; and is too strong for them, without God's almighty power to help them against it. Though they be not enemies to God, because they have a principle of love; yet their old man, the body of sin and death that yet remains in them, is a mortal enemy to God. Corruption in the godly, is not better than it is in the wicked; but is of as bad a nature every whit, as that which is in a mortal enemy to God. And though it be not in reigning power; yet it would dreadfully rage, were it not for God's restraining grace. God gives his restraining grace to both natural and godly men; but there is this difference; he gives his restraining grace to his children in the way of covenant mercy: it is part of the mercy promised in his covenant. God is faithful, and will not leave them to sin in like manner as wicked men do; otherwise they would do every whit as bad.—Let not therefore the godly attribute it to themselves, or merely to their own goodness, that they are not guilty of such horrid crimes as they hear of in others; let them consider it as not owing to them, but to God's restraints? Thus all, both godly and ungodly, may learn from this doctrine, their great obligations to the restraining grace of God.

Common Influences of the Spirit

code274

An excellent discussion on [saving light of the knowledge of God vs. only impressions of knowledge upon the mind without the heart being changed, a common work of the Spirit](#). The diagram that I made concerns the communication of saving light to the soul, changing the heart, regeneration, etc., which is to be distinguished from just impressions of gospel truths upon the mind by the Holy Spirit without this change of heart. The word [privilege](#) is used to describe this **illumination** without regeneration which, more often than not, is abused and not improved upon which was the case in a similar manner with the Jews having the revelation from God, that is, his law and ordinances, which the world did not have revealed to them. Despite this grace (common illumination) the Jews did not improve upon it but only a few which is served as an aggravation of their sin. See Isaiah 9. Also, [extraordinary, miraculous gifts](#) – their purpose. [see Flavel’s comment on knowledge on page 107]

Hebrews 6:4-6 - John Owen p 68, 74-86 (82, 89-104 online) Vol. 21
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_6.1-7.28.pdf

Ver. 4-6. — For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away [for any] to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put him unto open shame [or treat him ignominiously].

That this passage in our apostle’s discourse hath been looked upon as accompanied with great difficulties is known to all; and many have the differences been about its interpretation. For, both doctrinally and practically, sundry have here stumbled and miscarried. It is almost generally agreed upon, that from these words, and the colorable but indeed perverse interpretation and application made of them by some in the primitive times, occasioned by the then present circumstances of things, to be mentioned afterwards, the Latin church was so backward in receiving the epistle itself, that it had not absolutely prevailed therein in the days of Jerome, as we have elsewhere declared. Wherefore it is necessary that we should a little inquire into the occasion of the great contests which have been in the church, almost in all ages, about the sense of this place.

Skip to pg 74 (82 online)

Φωτιζομαι, is “to give light or knowledge by teaching;” — the same with *hrwih* [[Hebrew](#)], which, therefore, is so translated oftentimes by the Greeks; as by Aquila, Exodus 4:12; Psalm 119:33; Proverbs 4:4; Isaiah 27:11, as Drusius observes. And it is so by the LXX., Judges 13:8; 2 Kings 12:2, 17:27. Our apostle useth it for “to make manifest;” that is, “bring to light,” 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Timothy 1:10. **And the meaning of it, John 1:9, where we render it “lighteth,” is to teach.** And φωτισμοσν is “knowledge upon instruction:” 2 Corinthians 4:4, Εις το μη αυγασαι τον φωτισμον του ευαγγελιου, — “That the light of the gospel should not shine into them;” that is, the knowledge of it. So verse 6, Προς φωτισμον της γνωσεως, — “The light of the knowledge.” [Wherefore to be “enlightened,” in this place, is to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a spiritual apprehension thereof.](#) And this is so termed on a double account: —

(1.) Of the object, or the things known and apprehended. For “life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel,” 2 Timothy 1:10. Hence it is called “light;” “the inheritance of the saints in light.”

And the state which men are thereby brought into is so called in opposition to the darkness that is in the world without it, 1 Peter 2:9. The world without the gospel is the kingdom of Satan: Ο χοςμος ολος εν τω πονηρω χειται, 1 John 5:19. The whole of the world, and all that belongs unto it, in distinction and opposition unto the new creation, is under the power of the wicked one, the prince of the power of darkness, and so is full of darkness. It is τοπος αυχυηρος, 2 Peter 1:19; — “a dark place,” wherein ignorance, folly, error, and superstition do dwell and reign. By the power and efficacy of this darkness are men kept at a distance from God, and know not whither they go. This is called “walking in darkness,” 1 John 1:6; whereunto “walking in the light,” that is, the knowledge of God in Christ by the gospel, is opposed, verse 7. On this account is our instruction in the knowledge of the gospel called “illumination,” because itself is light.

(2.) On the account of the subject, or the mind itself, whereby the gospel is apprehended. For the knowledge which is received thereby expels that darkness, ignorance, and confusion, which the mind before was filled and possessed withal. The knowledge, I say, of the doctrine of the gospel, concerning the person of Christ, of God’s being in him reconciling the world unto himself, of his offices, work, and mediation, and the like heads of divine revelation, doth set up a spiritual light in the minds of men, enabling them to discern what before was utterly hid from them, whilst “alienated from the life of God through their ignorance.” **Of this light and knowledge there are several degrees, according to the means of instruction which they do enjoy**, the **capacity** they have to receive it, and the **diligence** they use to that purpose. But a competent measure of the knowledge of the fundamental and most material principles or doctrines of the gospel is required unto all that may thence be said to be illuminated; that is, freed from the darkness and ignorance they once lived in, 2 Peter 1:19-21.

This is the first property whereby the persons intended are described; they are such as were “illuminated” by the instruction they had received in the doctrine of the gospel, and the impression made thereby on their minds by the Holy Ghost; for this is a common work of his, and is here so reckoned. And the apostle would have us know that, —

Obs. I. It is a great mercy, a great privilege, to be enlightened with the doctrine of the gospel, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost. But, —

Obs. II. It is such a privilege as may be lost, and end in the aggravation of the sin, and condemnation of those who were made partakers of it. And, —

Obs. III. Where there is a total neglect of the due improvement of this privilege and mercy, the condition of such persons is hazardous, as inclining towards apostasy.

Thus much lies open and manifest in the text. But that we may more particularly discover the nature of this first part of the character of apostates, for their sakes who may look after their own concernment therein, we may yet a little more distinctly express the nature of that illumination and knowledge which is ascribed unto them; and how it is lost in apostasy will afterwards appear. And, —

(1.) There is a knowledge of spiritual things that is purely natural and disciplinary, attainable and attained without any especial aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost. As this is evident in common experience, so especially among such as, casting themselves on the study of spiritual things, are yet

utter strangers unto all spiritual gifts. Some knowledge of the Scripture, and the things contained in it, is attainable at the same rate of pains and study with that of any other art or science.

(2.) The illumination intended, being a gift of the Holy Ghost, differs from, and is exalted above this knowledge that is purely natural; for it makes nearer approaches unto the light of spiritual things in their own nature than the other doth. Notwithstanding the utmost improvement of scientific notions that are purely rural, **the things of the gospel, in their own nature, are not only unsuited to the wills and affections of persons endued with them, but are really foolishness unto their minds.** And as unto that goodness and excellency which give desirableness unto spiritual things, this knowledge discovers so little of them, **that most men hate the things which they profess to believe. But this spiritual illumination gives the mind some satisfaction, with delight and joy, in the things that are known.** By that beam whereby it shines into darkness, although it be not fully comprehended, yet it represents the way of the gospel as a way of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:21, which reflects peculiar regard of it on the mind.

Moreover, **the knowledge that is merely natural hath little or no power upon the soul, either to keep it from sin or to constrain it unto obedience.** There is not a more secure and profligate generation of sinners in the world than those who are under the sole conduct of it. But the **illumination here intended is attended with efficacy, and doth effectually press in the conscience and whole soul unto an abstinence from sin, and the performance of all known duties.** Hence persons under the power of it and its convictions do oftentimes walk blamelessly and uprightly in the world, so as not with the other to contribute unto the contempt of Christianity. Besides, there is such an alliance between spiritual gifts, that where any one of them doth reside, it hath assuredly others accompanying of it, or one way or other belonging unto its train, as is manifest in this place. *[side note: the word train is seen in Isa 6: ...and his train filled the temple. His train refers to all his graces – Jonathan Edwards]* Even a single talent is made up of many pounds. But the light and knowledge which is of a mere natural acquirement is solitary, destitute of the society and countenance of any spiritual gift whatever. And these things are exemplified unto common observation every day.

(3.) **There is a saving, sanctifying light and knowledge, which this spiritual illumination riseth not up unto; for though it transiently affects the mind with some glances of the beauty, glory, and excellency of spiritual things, yet it cloth not give that direct, steady, intuitive insight into them which is obtained by grace.** See 2 Corinthians 2:18, 4:4, 6. **Neither doth it renew, change, or transform the soul into a conformity unto the things known, by planting of them in the will and affections, as a gracious saving light doth, 2 Corinthians 2:18; Romans 6:17, 12:2.**

These things I judged necessary to be added, to clear the nature of the first character of apostates.

2. The second thing asserted in the description of them is, that they have “tasted of the heavenly gift,” — γευσσαμενους τε της δωρεας της επουρανιου. The doubling of the article gives emphasis to the expression. And we must quire, (1.) What is meant by the “heavenly gift;” and, (2.) What. By “tasting of it.”

(1.) The “gift of God,” δωρεα, is either δοσις, “donatio,” or δωρημα, “donum.” Sometimes it is taken for the grant or giving itself, and sometimes for the thing given. In the first sense it is used, 2 Corinthians 9:15, Thanks be to God, επι τη ανεχδιγητησ αυτου δωρεα,” — “for his gift that cannot be declared;” that is, fully or sufficiently. Now this gift was his grant of a free, charitable, and bountiful spirit to the Corinthians, in ministering unto the poor saints. The grant hereof is called God’s gift. So is the gift of Christ used also, Ephesians 4:7, “According to the measure of the gift of Christ;” that is, according as he is pleased to give and grant of the fruits of the Spirit unto men. See Romans 5:15-17; Ephesians 2:7. Sometimes it is taken for the thing given, properly δωρον or δωρημα, as James 1:17. So is used, John 4:10, “If thou knewest the gift of God, την δωρεαν του Θεου:” — “the gift of God;” that is, the thing given by him, or to be given by him. It is, as many judge, the person of Christ himself in that place which is intended. **But the context makes plain that it is the Holy Ghost;** for he is the “**living water**” which the Lord Jesus promiseth in that place to bestow. And so far as I can observe, δωρεα, “the gift,” with respect unto God, as denoting the thing given, is nowhere used but only to signify the Holy Ghost. And if it be so, the sense of this place is determined, Acts 2:38, “Ye shall receive,” την δωρεαν του αγιου Πνευματος, Acts 8:20, “Thou hast thought δωρεαν του Θεου,” that the gift of God could be purchased with money;” That is, the power of the Holy Spirit in miraculous operations. So expressly, chap. X. 45, xi. 17. Elsewhere δωρεα, so far as I can observe, when respecting God, doth not signify the thing given, but the grant itself. The Holy Spirit is signally “the gift of God” under the new testament.

And he is said to be επουρανιος, “heavenly,” or from heaven. This may have respect unto his work and effect, — they are heavenly as opposed to carnal and earthly. But principally it regards his mission by Christ after his ascension into heaven, Acts 2:33. Being exalted, and having received the **promise** of the Father, **he sent the Spirit**. The promise of him was, that he should be sent “from heaven,” or “from above;” as God is said to be “above,” which is the same with “heavenly,” Deuteronomy 4:39; 2 Chronicles 6:23; Job 31:28; Isaiah 32:15, 24:18. When he came upon the Lord Christ, to anoint him for his work, “the heavens were opened,” and he came from above, Matthew 2:16. So, Acts 2:2, at his first coming on the apostles, “there came a sound from heaven.” Hence he is said to be *ajpostalei tou Qeou ejpoura niov*, “sent from heaven,” 1 Peter 1:12. Wherefore, although he may be said to be heavenly upon other accounts also, which therefore are not absolutely to be excluded, yet his being sent from heaven by Christ, after his ascension thither, and exaltation there, is principally here regarded. He, therefore, is this η δωρεα η επουρανιος, the “heavenly gift” here intended, though not absolutely, but with respect to an especial work. That which riseth up against this interpretation is, that the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned in the next clause, “And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” It is not therefore probable that he should be here also intended.

Ans. [1.] It is ordinary to have the same thing twice expressed in various words, to quicken the sense of them; and it is necessary it should be so when there are divers respects unto the same thing, as there are in this place.

[2.] The following clause may be exegetical of this, declaring more fully and plainly what is here intended, which is usual also in the Scriptures; so that nothing is cogent from this consideration to disprove an interpretation so suited to the sense of the place, and which the constant use of the word makes necessary to be embraced. But, —

[3.] The Holy Ghost is here mentioned as the great gift of the gospel times, as coming down from heaven, not absolutely, not as unto his person, but with respect unto an especial work, namely, the change of the whole state of religious worship in the church of God; whereas we shall see in the next words he is. Spoken of only with respect unto external, actual operations. But he was the great, the promised heavenly gift, to be bestowed under the new testament, by whom God would institute and ordain a new way, and new rites of worship, upon the revelation of himself and will in Christ. Unto him was committed the reformation of all things in the church, whose time was now come, Hebrews 9:10. The Lord Christ, when he ascended into heaven, left all things standing and continuing in religious worship as they had done from the days of Moses, though he had virtually put an end unto it [the Mosaical dispensation.] And he 95 commanded his disciples that they should attempt no alteration therein until the Holy Ghost were sent from heaven to enable them thereunto, Acts 1:4, 5. But when he came, as the great gift of God promised under the new testament, he removes all the carnal worship and ordinances of Moses, and that by the full revelation of the accomplishment of all that was signified by them, and appoints the new, holy, spiritual worship of the gospel, that was to succeed in their room. The Spirit of God, therefore, as bestowed for the introduction of the new gospel-state, in truth and worship, is “the heavenly gift” here intended. Thus our apostle warneth these Hebrews that they “turn not away from him who speaketh from heaven,” Hebrews 12:25; that is, Jesus Christ speaking in the dispensation of the gospel by “the Holy Ghost sent from heaven.” And there is an antithesis included herein between the law and the gospel; the former being given on earth, the latter being immediately from heaven. God in the giving of the law made use of the ministry of angels, and that on the earth; but he gave the gospel church-state by that Spirit which, although he worketh in men on the earth, and is said in every act or work to be sent from heaven, yet is still in heaven, and always speaketh from thence, as our Savior said of himself, with respect unto his divine nature, John 3:13.

(2.) We may inquire what it is to “taste” of this heavenly gift. **The expression of tasting is metaphorical, and signifies no more but to make a trial or experiment;** for so we do by tasting, naturally and properly, of that which is tendered unto us to eat. We taste such things by the sense given us naturally to discern our food; and then either receive or refuse them, as we find occasion. It doth not, therefore, include eating, much less digestion and turning into nourishment of what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savor, upon some other consideration. Some have observed, that to taste is as much as to eat; as 2 Samuel 2:35, “I will not taste bread, or ought else.” But the meaning is, ‘I will not so much as taste it;’ whence it was impossible he should eat it. And when Jonathan says he only tasted a little of the honey, 1 Samuel 14:29, it was an excuse and extenuation of what he had done. But it is unquestionably used for some kind of experience of the nature of things: Proverbs 31:18, “She tasteth that her merchandise is good;” or hath experience of it, from its increase. Psalm 34:8, “O taste and see that the LORD is good:” which Peter respects, 1 Epistle 2:3, “If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” or found it so by experience. It is therefore properly to make an experiment or trial of anything, whether it be received or refused; and is sometimes opposed to eating and digestion, as Matthew 27:34. **That, therefore, which is ascribed unto these persons, is, that they had an experience of the power of the Holy Ghost, that gift of God, in the dispensation of the gospel, the revelation of the truth, and institution of the spiritual worship of it; of this state, and of the excellency of it, they had made some**

trial, and had some experience; — a privilege which all men were not made partakers of. And by this taste they were convinced that it was far more excellent than what they had been before accustomed unto; although now they had a mind to leave the finest wheat for their old acorns. Wherefore, although tasting contains a diminution in it, if compared with that spiritual eating and drinking, with that digestion of gospel truths, turning them into nourishment, which are in true believers; yet, absolutely considered, it denotes that apprehension and experience of the excellency of the gospel as administered by the Spirit, which is a great privilege and spiritual advantage, the contempt whereof will prove an unspeakable aggravation of the sin, and the remediless ruin of apostates.

The meaning, then, of this character given concerning these apostates is, that they had some experience of the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit from heaven, in gospel administrations and worship. For what some say of faith, it hath here no place; and what others affirm of Christ, and his being the gift of God, comes in the issue unto what we have proposed. And we may observe, further to clear the design of the apostle in this commination, that, —

Obs. I. All the gifts of God under the gospel are peculiarly heavenly, John 3:12, Ephesians 1:3; and that in opposition, — (1.) To earthly things, Colossians 3:1, 2; (2.) To carnal ordinances, Hebrews 9:23. Let them beware by whom they are despised.

Obs. II. The Holy Ghost, for the revelation of the mysteries of the gospel, and the institution of the ordinances of spiritual worship, is the great “gift of God” under the new testament.

Obs. III. There is a goodness and excellency in this heavenly gift, which may be tasted or experienced in some measure by such as never receive them, in their life, power, and efficacy. They may taste, — (1.) Of the word in its truth, not its power; (2.) Of the worship of the church in its outward order, not its inward beauty; (3.) Of the gifts of the church, not its graces.

Obs. IV. **A rejection of the gospel, its truth and worship, after some experience had of their worth and excellency, is a high aggravation of sin, and a certain presage of destruction.**

3. The third property whereby these persons are described is added in these words, *Και μετοχους γενηθεντας Πνευματος αγιου* — “And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” This is placed in the middle or center of the privileges enumerated, two preceding it, and two following after, as that which is the root and animating principle of them all. They all are effects of the Holy Ghost, in his gifts or his graces, and so do depend on the participation of him. Now men do so partake of the Holy Ghost as they do receive him. And he may be received either as unto personal inhabitation or as unto spiritual operations. In the first way “the world cannot receive him,” John 14:17; where “the world” is opposed unto true believers, and therefore those here intended were not in that sense partakers of him. **His operations respect his gifts**. So to partake of him is to have a share, part, or portion, in what he distributes by way of spiritual gifts; in answer unto that expression, “All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will,” 1 Corinthians 12:11. So Peter told Simon the magician, that he had no part in spiritual gifts, he was not partaker of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8:21. Wherefore to be “partaker of the Holy Ghost,” is to have a share in and benefit of his spiritual operations.

But whereas the other things mentioned are also gifts or operations of the Holy Ghost, on what ground or for what reason is this mentioned here in particular, that they were made partakers of him, which if his operations only be intended, seems to be expressed in the other instances?

Ans. (1.) It is, as we observed before, no unusual thing in the Scripture to express the same thing under various notions, the more effectually to impress a consideration and sense of it on our mind, especially where an expression hath a singular emphasis in it, as this hath here used; **for it is an exceeding aggravation of the sins of those apostates, that in these things they were partakers of the Holy Ghost.**

(2.) As was before intimated, also, this participation of the Holy Ghost is placed, it may be, in the midst of the several parts of this description, as that whereon they do all depend, and they are all but instances of it. **They were “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” in that they were “once enlightened;” and so of the rest.**

(3.) It expresseth their own personal interest in these things. They had an interest in the things mentioned not only objectively, as they were proposed and presented to them in the church, but subjectively, — they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of them. **It is one thing for a man to have a share in and benefit by the gifts of the church, another to be personally himself endowed with them.**

(4.) To mind them in an especial manner of the privileges they enjoyed under the gospel, above what they had in their Judaism; **for whereas then they had not so much as heard that there was a Holy Ghost,** — that is, a blessed dispensation of him **in spiritual gifts**, Acts 19:2, — now they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of him; **than which there could be no greater aggravation of their apostasy. And we may observe in our way, that,** —

Obs. **The Holy Ghost is present with many as unto powerful operations, with whom he is not present as to gracious inhabitation; or, many are made partakers of him in his spiritual gifts who are never made partakers of him in his saving graces**, Matthew 7:22, 23:

“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

4. It is added, *fourthly*, in the description, that they had “tasted *χαλον Θεου ρημα*,” — the good word of God.” And we must inquire, — (1.) What is meant by “the word of God;” (2.) How it is said to be “good;” and, (3.) In what sense they “tasted” of it.

(1.) *Ρημα* is properly “verbum dictum,” “a word spoken;” and although it be sometimes used in another sense by our apostle, and by him alone, — Hebrews 1:3, 11:3, where it denotes the effectual active power of God, — yet both the signification of the word and its principal use elsewhere denote words spoken; and when applied unto God, **his word as preached and declared**. See Romans 10:17,

John 6:68. The word of God, that is, the word of the gospel as preached, is that which they thus tasted of. But it may be said, that they enjoyed the word of God in their state of Judaism. They did so, as to the written word; for “unto them were committed the oracles of God,” Romans 3:2; but it is the word of God as preached in the dispensation of the gospel that is eminently thus called, and concerning which such excellent things are spoken, Romans 1:16; Acts 20:32; James 1:21.

(2.) The word is said to be *χαλον*, “good,” desirable, amiable, as the word here used signifieth. Wherein it is so we shall see immediately. But whereas the word of God preached under the dispensation of the gospel may be considered two ways: — [1.] In general, as to the whole system of truths contained therein; and [2.] In especial, for the declaration made of the accomplishment of the promise in sending Jesus Christ for the redemption of the church, — it is here especially intended in this latter sense. This is emphatically called *ρημα Κυριου*, 1 Peter 1:25. **So the promise of God in particular is called his “good word:”** Jeremiah 29:10, “After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you;” as he calls it “the good thing which he had promised,” Jeremiah 33:14. The gospel is the “good tidings of peace and salvation” by Jesus Christ, Isaiah 52:7. (3.) Hereof they are said to “taste,” as they were before of the heavenly gift. The apostle as it were studiously keeps himself to this expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ, as tendered in the word of the gospel, John 6:35, 49-51, 54-56. It is as if he had said, ‘I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual food of their souls, and turned it into spiritual nourishment; but of such as have so far tasted of it, as that they ought to have desired it as “sincere milk, to have grown thereby.”’ **But they had received such an experiment of its divine truth and power, as that it had various effects upon them.** And for the further explication of these words, and therein of the description of the state of these supposed apostates, we may consider the ensuing observations, which declare the sense of the words, or what is contained in them: —

Obs. I. **There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God, able to attract and affect the minds of men, who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it.**

Obs. II. There is an especial goodness in the word of the promise concerning Jesus Christ, and the declaration of its accomplishment.

5. Lastly, It is added, *Δυναμεις τε μελλοντος αιωνος αιωνος*, — “And the powers of the world to come.” *Δυναμεις* are [Hebrew], or [Hebrew]; the mighty, great, miraculous operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were, and how they were wrought among these Hebrews, hath been declared in our exposition on Hebrews 2:4, whither I shall refer the reader; and they are known from the Acts of the Apostles, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that chapter, that by “the world to come,” our apostle in this epistle intends the days of the Messiah, that being the usual name of it in the church at that time, as the new world which God had promised to create. Wherefore these “powers of the world to come,” were the gifts whereby those signs, wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, according as it was foretold by the prophets that they should be so. See Joel 2, compared with Acts 2. These the persons spoken of are supposed to have “tasted;” for the participle *τε* refers to *γευσσμενους* foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had an experience of the glorious and powerful working of the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the gospel. **Yea, I do judge that themselves**

in their own persons were partakers of these powers, in the gifts of tongues and other miraculous operations; which was the highest aggravation possible of their apostasy, and that which peculiarly rendered their recovery impossible. For there is not in the Scripture an impossibility put upon the recovery of any but such as peculiarly sin against the Holy Ghost: and although that guilt may be otherwise contracted, yet in none so signally as this, of rejecting that truth which was confirmed by his mighty operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an ascription of his divine power unto the devil. Yet would I not fix on those extraordinary gifts exclusively unto those that are ordinary. They also are of the powers of the world to come. **So is everything that belongs to the erection or preservation of the new world or the kingdom of Christ. To the first setting up of a kingdom, great and mighty power is required; but being set up, the ordinary dispensation of power will preserve it. So is it in this matter. The extraordinary, miraculous gifts of the Spirit were used in the erection of Christ's kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary gifts; which, therefore, also belong unto the powers of the world to come.**

THIRDLY, From the consideration of this description, in all the parts of it, we may understand what sort of persons it is that is intended here by the apostle. And it appears, yea is evident, — 1. That the persons here intended are not true and sincere believers, in the strict and proper sense of that name, at least they are not described here as such; so that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are so, as to the possibility of their total and final apostasy. For, (1.) There is in their full and largo description no mention of faith, or believing, either expressly or in terms equivalent; and in no other place in the Scripture are such intended, but they are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. And, (2.) There is not any thing ascribed to these persons that is peculiar to them as such, or discriminative of them, as taken either from their especial relation unto God in Christ, or any such property of their own as is not communicable unto others. For instance, they are not said to be called according to God's purpose; to be born again, not of man, nor of the will of flesh, but of God; nor to be justified, or sanctified, or united unto Christ, or to be the sons of God by adoption; nor have they any other characteristical note of true believers ascribed to them. (3.) **They are in the following verses compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briers. But this is not so with true believers.** For faith itself is an herb peculiar to the enclosed garden of Christ, and meet for him by whom we are dressed. (4.) The apostle afterwards discoursing of true believers, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as may be apostates; which is supposed of the persons here intended, as was before declared. For, [1.] He ascribeth unto them in general "better things, and such as accompany salvation," verse 9. [2.] He ascribes a "work and labor of love," as it is true faith alone which worketh by love, verse 10; whereof he speaks not one word concerning these. [3.] He asserts their preservation; — 1st, On the account of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, verse 10; 2^{dly}, Of the immutability of his counsel concerning them, verse 17, 18. In all these and sundry other instances doth he put a difference between these apostates and true believers. **And whereas the apostle intends to declare the aggravation of their sin in falling away by the principal privileges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word, in name or thing, of those which he expressly assigns to be the chief privileges of true believers,** Romans 8:27-30.

2. Our next inquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend. And, (1.) They were such who not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity, **upon the evidence of the truth of its doctrine, and the miraculous operations wherewith its dispensation was accompanied.** [Hence, some of these

miraculous gifts have ceased, e.g., tongues, gift of healing. God can still heal; we should still pray for people to get healed but the gift of healing has ceased.] (2.) He intends not the common sort of them, but such as had obtained especial privileges among them. For they had received extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as speaking with tongues or working miracles. And, (3.) They had found in themselves and others convincing evidences that the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which they called “the world to come,” was come unto them; and had satisfaction in the glories of it. (4.) Such persons as these, as they have a work of light on their minds, so, according to the efficacy of their convictions, they may have such a change wrought upon their affections and in their conversation, as that they may be of great esteem among professors; and such those here intended might be. Now it must needs be some horrible frame of spirit, some malicious enmity against the truth and holiness of Christ and the gospel, some violent love of sin and the world, that could turn off such persons as these from the faith, and blot out all that light and conviction of truth which they had received. But the least grace is a better security for heaven than the greatest gifts and privileges whatever.

These are the persons concerning whom our apostle discourseth, and of whom it is supposed by him that they may “fall away,” — *χαι παραπεσοντας*. The especial nature of the sin here intended is afterwards declared in two instances or *aggravating circumstances*. This word expresseth the respect it had to the state and condition of the sinners themselves; they fall away, do that whereby they do so. I think we have well expressed the word, “If they shall fall away.” Our old translations render it only, “If they shall fall:” which expressed not the sense of the word, and was liable to a sense not at all intended; for he doth not say, “If they shall fall into sin,” — this, or that, or any sin whatever that can be named, suppose the greatest sin imaginable, namely, the denial of Christ in the time of danger or persecution. This was that sin (as we intimated before) about which so many contests were raised of old, and so many canons were multiplied about the ordering of them who had contracted the guilt thereof. But one example well considered had been a better guide for them than all their own arbitrary rules and imaginations, — when Peter fell into this sin, and yet was “renewed again to repentance,” and that speedily. Wherefore we may lay down this in the first place, as to the sense of the words: There is no particular sin that any man may fall into occasionally, through the power of temptation, that can cast the sinner under this commination, so that it should be impossible to renew him to repentance. It must, therefore, secondly, be a course of sin or sinning that is intended. But there are various degrees herein also, yea, there are divers kinds of such courses in sin. A man may so fall into a way of sin as still to retain in his mind such a principle of light and conviction that may be suitable to his recovery. To exclude such from all hopes of repentance is expressly contrary to Ezekiel 18:21, Isaiah 55:7, yea, and the whole sense of the Scripture. Wherefore men, after some conviction and reformation of life, may fall into corrupt and wicked courses, and make a long abode or continuance in them. Examples hereof we have every day amongst us, although it may be none to parallel that of Manasseh. Consider the nature of his education under his father Hezekiah, the greatness of his sins, the length of his continuance in them, with his following recovery, and he is a great instance in this case. Whilst there is in such persons any seed of light or conviction of truth which is capable of an excitation or revival, so as to put forth its power and efficacy in their souls, they cannot be looked on to be in the condition intended, though their case be dangerous

Irresistible Grace

By John Owen

code275

The following is an excellent discourse on **irresistible grace** and the power of God's word in doing that which he intends to do. The communication of his glory to the elect is designed to save and will do so infallibly. And on the contrary, many will stumble and fall at the preaching of the word and so perish, thus the word that is sent out will not return void in either case. The spirit of a man, his mind vs. his soul or affections. God is one essence yet is described by many natures; why? This is well explained by John Owen

John Owen pg 365-371 (452-460) God's power irresistible, double edge sword, his word will accomplish its purpose to save or to harden...will not return void... [2Chron. 20:6, *...none is able to withstand you.*]

Hebrews 4:12-13

Ver. 12, 13. — For the word of God is living and powerful [or effectual,] and sharper [more cutting, or cutting more] than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner [a discerning judge] of the thoughts and intents [conceptions] of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not [apparently] manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, [or to whom we must give an account.]

Obs. 1. It is the way of the Spirit of God, to excite us unto especial duties by proposing unto us and minding us of such **properties of God** as the consideration whereof may in an especial manner incline us unto them. [This is why we should teach the properties of God to our children and everyone else – for this very purpose.]

Here the Hebrews are minded that the Word of God is living, **to give unto their hearts that awe and reverence of him which might deter them from backsliding or falling away from him. Our whole duty in general respects the nature of God.** It is our giving glory to him because he is God, and as he is God, "glorifying him as God," Exodus 20:2; Isaiah 42:8; Deuteronomy 28:58; Romans 1:21. It is our giving him the honor which is due to his being. **That is the formal reason of all divine worship and obedience.** And as this duty in general brancheth itself into many particular duties in the kinds of them, all which in various instances are continually to be attended unto; so God hath not only **revealed** his being unto us in general, but he hath done it by many distinct properties, all of them suited to promote in our minds our whole duty towards God, and this or that duty in particular. And he often distinctly presseth upon us the consideration of those properties, for to stir us up unto those distinct duties which they direct unto. **God in his nature exists in one simple essence or being; nor are there any things really different or distinct therein.** His nature is all his properties, and every one of his

properties is his whole nature; but in the revelation of himself unto us he proposeth his nature under the notion of these distinct properties, **that we may the better know the nature of the duty which we owe unto him**: Hosea 3:5, “Fear the LORD and his goodness.” So in places innumerable doth he mind us of his power and greatness; that upon our thoughts and apprehensions of them we might **be stirred up to fear him, to trust in him, to get our hearts filled with a due awe and reverence of him**, with many other duties of the like nature with them, or evidently proceeding from them: — to trust, Isaiah 26:4; fear, Jeremiah 10:6,7. His goodness, grace, bounty, patience, are all of them distinctly proposed unto us; and they all lead us unto especial duties, **as the apostle speaks**, Romans 2:4, **“The goodness of God leadeth to repentance.”** **From these, or the efficacy of the consideration of them upon our souls, ought to proceed our love, our gratitude, our delight in God, our praise and thankfulness; and by them ought they to be influenced.** So his holiness ingenerates terror in the wicked, Isaiah 33:14; and holy reverence in others, Hebrews 12:28,29. The like may be spoken of the rest of the properties of God, with respect unto the remainder of our duties. In like manner, and to the same purpose, did God of old reveal himself by his name. He still ascribed such a name to himself as might be prevalent on the minds of men unto their present duties. So when he called Abraham to “walk before him,” in the midst of many difficulties, temptations, hardships, and dangers, he revealed himself unto him by the name of God Almighty, thereby to encourage him to sincerity and perseverance, Genesis 17:1. Hence, in his greatest distress he peculiarly acted his faith on the power of God, Hebrews 11:19. And when he called his posterity to comply in their faith and obedience with his faithfulness in the accomplishment of his promises, he revealed himself unto them by his name Jehovah; which was suited to their especial encouragement and direction, Exodus 6:3. To the same end are the properties of the Word of God here distinctly proposed unto us. We are called to the faith and profession of the gospel. Herein we meet with many difficulties without, and are oftentimes ready to faint in ourselves, or otherwise to fail and miscarry. In this matter we have to do with the Lord Christ; to him we must one day give an account. **Wherefore, to stir us up to carefulness, diligence, and spiritual watchfulness, that we give not place to any decays or declensions in our profession, we are especially minded that he is the living one, and one that continually exerciseth acts of life toward us.** And in all duties of obedience, it will be our wisdom always to mind that respect which the properties of God or of Christ have unto them. Again, the Word of God is so living as that also it is powerful, or **actually always exercising itself in power, actually efficacious toward the ends mentioned**, —
So that, —

Obs. 2. The life and power of Christ are continually exercised about the concernments of the souls of professors; are always actually efficacious in them and upon them.

And this power he putteth forth by his word and Spirit; for we declared, in the opening of the words, that the effects here ascribed unto the essential **Word** are such as he produceth **by the word preached**, **which is accompanied with and made effectual by the dispensation of the Spirit**, **Isaiah 9:21**. And the power here intended is wholly clothed with the word; thereby it is conveyed to the souls of men; therein is **“the hiding of his power,”** Habakkuk 3:4. **Though it seems weak, and is despised, yet it is accompanied with the hidden power of Christ, which will not fail of its end**, 1 Corinthians 1:18.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

And the word preached is not otherwise to be considered, but as that which is the conveyance of divine power to the souls of men. And every impression that it makes on the heart is an effect of the power of Christ. And this will teach us how to value it and esteem it, seeing it is the only way and means whereby the Lord Christ exerciseth his mediatory power towards us on the behalf of God; and effectual it will be unto the ends whereunto he designs it. For he is in it “sharper than any two-edged sword.” So that, —

Obs. 3. The power of Christ in his word is irresistible, as to whatever effects he doth design it, Isaiah 55:10,11. [also, 2Chron. 20:6, ...*none is able to withstand you.*]

*"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
¹¹So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

The power of Christ in his word is by many exceedingly despised and slighted. Few there are who seem to have any real effects of it produced in them or upon them. Hence it is looked on in the world as a thing of no great efficacy; and those who preach it in sincerity are ready to cry out, “Who hath believed our report?” But all this ariseth from a mistake, as though it had but one end designed into it. Had the Lord Christ no other end to accomplish by his word but merely that which is the principal, the conversion of the souls of his elect, it might be conceived to fail towards the far greater number of them to whom it is preached. But it is with him in his word as it was in his own person. He was “set for the fall” as well as “the rising of many in Israel,” and “for a sign that should be spoken against, Luke 2:34. As he was to be unto some “for a sanctuary,” so “for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” among whom “many were to stumble” at him, “and fall, and be broken,” Isaiah 8:14,15. And these things are all of them effectually accomplished towards them to whom he is preached. They are all of them either raised by him unto God out of their state of sin and misery, and do take sanctuary in him from sin and the law; or they stumble at him, through their unbelief, and perish eternally. None can ever have Christ proposed unto them upon indifferent terms, so as to be left in the condition wherein they were before. They must all be saved by his grace, or perish under his wrath. And so is it also with him in his word. The end, whatever it be that he assigns unto it with respect unto any, shall undoubtedly be accomplished. Now these ends are various, 2 Corinthians 2:14,15. Sometimes he intends by it only the hardening and further blinding of wicked sinners, that they may be the more prepared for deserved destruction: Isaiah 6:9-11, “Go, tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant,

and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” The principal accomplishment hereof was in the personal ministry of Christ himself towards the people of the Jews, Matthew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:50. But the same is the condition of things in the preaching of the word to this day. Christ designs in it to harden and blind wicked sinners unto their destruction. And herein it misseth not of its effect. They are so until they are utterly destroyed. Towards some he designs it only for their conviction; and this it shall through his power unconquerably effect. There is not one whom he aimeth to convince but he shall be convinced, whatever he intends by those convictions. “His arrows are sharp in the heart of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him,” Psalm 45:5. Let men be never so much his enemies, yet if he intends their conviction, he will so sharpen his word upon their hearts as that they shall let go their professed enmity and fall down in the acknowledgment of his power. None whom he will have convinced by his word shall be able to withstand it. Now, as the first sort of men may reject and despise the word as to any convictions from it which it is not designed to give them, but **can never avoid its efficacy to harden them in their sins**; so this second sort may resist and reject the word as to any real saving work of conversion, which is not in it or by it assigned unto them, but they cannot withstand its convictions, which are its proper work towards them. With respect unto others, it is designed for their conversion; and the power of Christ doth in this design so accompany it as that it shall infallibly accomplish that work. These dead creatures shall “**hear the voice of the Son of God**” in it and live. It is, then, certainly of high concernment unto all men unto whom Christ comes in his word, to consider diligently what is or is like to be the issue and consequence of it with respect unto themselves. Things are not issued according to outward appearance. If there were no hidden or secret events of the dispensation of the power of Christ in the word, all thoughts of any great matter in it might easily be cast off; for we see that the most live quietly under a neglect of it, without any visible effect upon their hearts or lives. And how then is it “sharper than any two-edged sword?” Things are indeed quite otherwise; the word hath its work on all; and those who are neither convinced nor converted by it, are hardened, — which is in many evident to a spiritual eye. And surely we may do well to consider how it fareth with our own souls in this state of things. It is to no purpose to think to hide things secretly in our own thoughts, and to please ourselves in our own darkness; the power of Christ in the word will reach and search out all; for it “pierceth to the dividing asunder of the Soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.” So that, —

Obs. 4. Though men may close and hide things from themselves and others, yet they cannot exclude the power of Christ in his word from piercing into them.

Men are apt strangely to hide, darken, and confound things between their soul and their spirit [spirit = their reasonings and understanding], — that is, **their affections and their minds.** **Herein consists no small part of the deceitfulness of sin, that it confounds and hides things in the soul, that it is not able to make a right judgment of itself.** So men labor to deceive themselves, Isaiah 28:15. **Hence, when a man can countenance himself from anything in his affections, his soul, against the reflections that are made upon him from the convictions of his mind or spirit, or when he can rest in the light of his understanding, notwithstanding the perverseness and frowardness of his affections, he is very apt to be secure in an ill condition.** The first deceiveth the more ignorant, the latter the more knowing professors. The true state of their souls is by this means hid from themselves. **But the power of Christ in his word will pierce into these things, and separate between them.** He doth so as to his — 1. Discerning, his 2. Discovering or convincing, and his 3. Judging power.

1. Let things be never so close and hid, he discerneth all clearly and distinctly; they are not hid from him, Psalm 139:4; Jeremiah 23:24. See John 2:23-25. And where he designs,

2. The conviction of men, he makes his word powerful to discover unto them all the secret follies of their minds and affections, the hidden recesses that sin hath in them, their close reserves, and spreads them before their eyes, to their own amazement, Psalm 50:21. So our apostle tells us, that by prophesying, or expounding the word of Christ, **the secrets of men's hearts are discovered**; that is, to themselves, — they find the word dividing asunder between their souls and spirits; whereon they fall down and give glory to God, 1 Corinthians 14:24,25.

[Hence, the duty of pastors is to preach the word, the whole counsel of God in the truly *reformed* sense not mixed with Arminian principles to accommodate the carnal desires of the congregation. In this way the sheep are fed, the primary duty of a pastor, and others hear the truth so as not to be kept in a carnal security. This is vital.]

And hereby also,

3. He exerciseth his judging power in men. Let men arm themselves never so strongly and closely with love of sin and pleasure, carnal security, pride, and hatred of the ways of God, until their brows become as brass, and their neck as a sinew of iron, or **let their sins be covered with the fair pretense of a profession**, Christ by his word will pierce through all into their very hearts; and having discovered, divided, and scattered all their vain imaginations, he will judge them, and determine of their state and condition, Psalm 45:5, 110:6. Hereby doth he break all their strength and peace, **and the communication of supplies in sin and security that have been between the mind and the affections**, and destroys all their hopes. **Men are apt to please themselves in their spiritual condition, though built on very sandy foundations**. And although all other considerations fail them, yet they will maintain a life of hopes, though ungrounded and unwarrantable, Isaiah 57:10. This is the condition of most false professors; but when the word of Christ by his power enters into their souls and consciences, it utterly casts down all their confidences, and destroys their hopes and expectations. Nothing now remains but that such a person betake himself wholly to the life which he can make in sin, with its lusts and pleasures; **or else come over sincerely to him in whom is life, and who giveth life unto all that come unto him**. So he “slays the wicked with the breath of his lips,” Isaiah 11:4. And this is the progress that the Lord Christ makes with the souls of men: —

1. He discerneth himself their state and condition, what is good or evil in them.
2. He discovereth this unto themselves, or convinceth them of their sins and dangers; which surpriseth them with fears, and sometimes with amazements.
3. He judgeth them by his word, and condemns them by it in their own consciences. This makes them give over their old security and confidences, and betake themselves unto new hopes that yet things may be better with them.

4. He destroys these hopes also, and shows them how vain they are. And hereon they either betake themselves wholly to their sins, so to free themselves from their convictions and fears, or sincerely give up themselves unto him for relief. To this purpose, again, it is added, that this Word of God is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;” that is, one that so discerns them as to put a difference between them, and to pass judgment upon them.

Obs. 5. The Lord Christ discerneth all inward and spiritual things in order to his future judgment of those things, and the persons in whom they are on their own account.

Our discerning, our judging, are things distinct and separate. Discerning everything weakly, imperfectly, and by parts or pieces, we cannot judge speedily, if we intend at all to judge wisely. For we must “judge after the sight of our eyes, and reprove after the hearing of our ears;” that is, according as we can take in by weak means an understanding of what we are to make a judgment upon. With the **Word or Son of God** it is not so; for he at once discerning all things perfectly and absolutely, in all their causes, circumstances, tendencies, and ends, in the same instant he approveth or condemneth them. The end of his knowledge of them is comprised in his knowledge itself, *lience* to “know,” in the Scripture, when ascribed to God, doth sometimes signify to approve, accept, and justify; sometimes to refuse, reject, and condemn. Wherefore Christ’s judging of the thoughts and intents of men’s hearts is inseparable from his discerning of them, and the end why he fixeth his eye upon them. For this cause is he said to be “of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD,” so as “not to judge after the sight of his eyes, nor approve after the hearing of his ears;” that is, according to the outward appearance and representation of things, or the profession that men make, which is seen and heard: but “he judgeth with righteousness, and reproveth with equity,” according to the true nature of things, which lieth hidden from the eyes of men, Isaiah 11:3,4. He knows to judge, and he judgeth in and by his knowledge; and the most secret things are the especial objects of his knowledge and judgment. Let not men please themselves in their secret reserves. **There is not a thought in their hearts, though but transient, never arising to the consistency of a purpose, not a pleasing or seeming desirable imagination in their minds, but it lies continually under the eye of Christ, and at the same instant that very judgment is by him passed on them which shall be given out concerning them at the last day. O that we could always consider with what awe and reverence, with what care and diligence, we ought continually to walk before this holy, all-seeing One!** In the description that is given of him when he came to deal with his churches, to “judge them with righteousness, and reprove them with equity,” “not according to the sight of his eyes or the hearing of his ears,” — that is, the outward profession that they made, — it is said that “his eyes were as a flame of fire,” Revelation 1:14; answerable unto that of Job to God, “Hast thou eyes of flesh? Or seest thou as man seeth?” Job 10:4. He doth not look on things through such weak and failing mediums as poor frail creatures do, but sees all things clearly and perfectly according as they are in themselves, by the light of his own eyes, which are “as a flame of fire.” And when he comes actually to deal with his churches, he preface it with this, “I know thy works,” which leads the way; and his judgment on them upon the account of those works immediately followeth after, Revelation 2:3. And it may be observed, that the judgment that he made concerning them was not only wholly independent of their outward profession, and oftentimes quite contrary unto it, but also that he judged otherwise of them, yea, contrary to that which in the secret of their hearts they judged of themselves. See Hebrews 3:17. So when Judas was in the height of his profession, he judged him a devil, John 6:70,71; and when Peter was in the worst of his defection he judged him a

saint, as having prayed for him that his faith might not fail. So doth he know that he may judge, and so doth he judge together with his knowledge; and this easily and perfectly, for “all things are naked and opened before him;” so that, —

Obs. 6. It is no trouble or labor to the Word of God to discern all creatures, and all that is of them and in them, seeing there is nothing but is evidently apparent, open, and naked, under his all-seeing eye.

It would be necessary here to open the nature of the knowledge or omniscience of God, but that I have done it at large in another treatise, whereunto I refer the reader. Now, after the consideration of all the particulars, we may subjoin an observation that naturally ariseth from the multiplying of the instances here given by the apostle, and it is that, —

Obs. 7. It is a great and difficult matter really and practically to convince professors of the practical judging omniscency of Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

On the account hereof, added to the great importance of the thing itself unto our faith and obedience, doth the apostle here so multiply his expressions and instances of it. It is not for nothing that what might have been expressed in one single plain assertion is here set out in so many, and with such variety of allusions, suited to convey a practical sense of it unto our minds and consciences. All professors are ready enough to close with Peter in the first part of his confession, “Lord, thou knowest all things;” but when they come to the other, “Thou knowest that I love thee,” — that is, to make a practical consideration of it with respect unto their own hearts and ways, as designing in all things to approve themselves unto him as those who are continually under his eye and judgment, — this they fail in and are hardly brought unto. **If their minds were fully possessed with the persuasion hereof, were they continually under the power thereof, it would certainly influence them unto that care, diligence, and watchfulness, which are evidently wanting in many, in the most of them. But love of present things, the deceitfulness of sin, the power of temptations, cares, and businesses of life, vain and uncertain hopes, do effectually divert their minds from a due consideration of it.** And we find by experience how difficult it is to leave a lasting impression of it on the souls of men. Yet would nothing be of more use unto them in the whole course of their walking before God. And this will further appear, if, after the precedent exposition of the several particular parts of these verses, and brief observations from them, we duly consider the general design of the apostle in the words, and what we are instructed in thereby.

Common (Resistible) vs Saving Grace (Irresistible)

Code472

Excerpt from Reformed Dogmatics by G. Vos

Pgs 622-625

12. *What is the relationship between the operations of common grace and the special grace of the Holy Spirit?*

To understand correctly the difference between these two in connection with the preceding distinction, we must move out of the sphere of nature into the sphere of revelation. This revelation is itself the product of a wholly supernatural act of grace. The announcement of the truth of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit lie both beyond and above nature. At the same time, however, that truth is given in natural forms. It is expressed in words written with letters, words that can be heard by the natural ear and read by the natural eye. As we hope to see, it is not the most proper and highest end of the truth to accomplish its work outwardly in this way; rather, it reaches its proper goal only when an entirely supernatural work of the Holy Spirit accompanies it. That it works in this way as well, however, no one can doubt. The only question, though, is how? If it were simply directed to man and nothing more, this encounter would only result in opposition and reaction from a soul that is sinful and hostile to God. That this nevertheless does not occur, but that even in those who are not regenerate the moral power of the truth is manifested, shows that there is an accompanying working of God's Spirit. That working of the Spirit is given to all in greater or lesser degree. It comes down, then, to separating it sharply from special grace, in which only the elect share. So that the distinction would already appear in the term, it has been called common grace, and what contrasts with it, special or particular grace. One further needs to give attention to making distinctions on the following points:

- a) **Common grace brings about no change in the nature of man as special grace does.** Whatever may also be its external manifestations, it does not regenerate man.
- b) A second distinction is connected with this. **Common grace is also limited to making man receptive to the influence of the truth that works on him from his consciousness. It works persuasively,** by offering motives to the will and by making use of inclinations that are already present, not by creating new habits in man. It can certainly bring the external good still present in man to development, but it cannot produce what is spiritually good from that. It can cause a seed of external righteousness to germinate, but it is not capable of implanting the seed of regeneration.
- c) **All that works in this manner can also be resisted.** Since it is directed toward individual motives from outside, the possibility always exists that the unrenewed nature will overrule all these motives and render common grace powerless. It is otherwise with efficacious grace. It does not offer motives for doing good to a will that in its nature is evil, but transforms the will itself from the innermost recesses of its nature, not by countering it but by re-creating it. Hence, common grace is termed resistible; efficacious grace, with a somewhat oblique label, irresistible.

13. *Does one sometimes also speak of "common grace" in a still broader sense?*

Yes, one sometimes also applies the word to the **restraining action** of the Holy Spirit that, where revelation is not known, is joined with the natural knowledge of God and hinders the breaking out of sin in its most dreadful extremes.

14. *From what may we discern in some measure what should be ascribed to the operation of this common grace?*

We have seen in the doctrine of election that God's Word rightly ascribes the **hardening of sinners to the withdrawal of common grace**. It calls this being given over to a perverse mind and shows from experience what dreadful dimensions sin assumes where this hardening sets in. On the other hand, it also describes for us the fate of the lost who are devoid of common grace. Consequently, everything that hinders the process of death that sin brings in producing the complete dissolution of moral and social life for the individual and for society is to be ascribed to *gratia communis* in the broadest sense of the word.

15. *Can you show that Scripture teaches such an operation of the Holy Spirit?*

Yes, it is said of the generation that lived before the flood that God's Spirit contended with them and contended in vain, that the patience of God at the time of this contending held back His punishment, but that finally this operation of grace ceased since it was resisted and scorned (Gen 6:3; cf. 1 Pet 3:19–20; 4:6). Stephen cried out to the Jews, "You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). Also, Isaiah 63:10 mentions a grieving of the Holy Spirit.

16. *How far can this common operation of the Holy Spirit go?*

We must assume that it always remains distinguished specifically from regenerating grace. So, concerning the operation itself, one really cannot speak of it approaching the grace of regeneration. What lies between these two is not a gradual but **a principial difference**. **Whatever else one may do to a dead person, one cannot say that actions are performed on him that bring him close to life**. Since, however, the infusion of life eludes our sight and we can judge it only by its outward manifestation, so the possibility always continues to exist that common grace reveals itself in forms that are hardly to be distinguished from the actions of the regenerate. Temporary faith, of which Scripture speaks in very strong terms, must be counted among these cases. And often the sole criterion for recognition lies in the passing of time itself.

17. *Are the effects of common grace divorced from any connection with regenerating grace, which works only in the elect?*

No; if by common grace someone has received a certain measure of insight into the truth prior to his regeneration, be it then also in a nonsaving way, its fruits are not lost. When saving grace comes upon us, it imparts new worth to all the old that was already present with us earlier. It only must be

maintained that it never is the old as such that continues to work after regeneration, but the old is placed in a new light and with completely new qualities. The knowledge of saving faith is very much connected with historical knowledge that someone gained prior to his regeneration, but it would still certainly be wrong to maintain that a regenerate person does not know, in his faith, in an essentially different way than the unregenerate person.

18. Has the doctrine of common grace also been misused?

Yes, some have wished to find in it a solution to the question why saving grace befalls only some and not all—in other words, an explanation of God’s sovereign election. Shedd says the following: “The nonelect receives common grace, and common grace would incline human will if it were not defeated by the human will. If the sinner should make no hostile opposition, common grace would be equivalent to saving grace. To say that common grace if not resisted by the sinner would be equivalent to regenerating grace is not the same as to say that common grace if assisted by the sinner would be equivalent to regenerating grace. In the first instance, God would be the sole author of regeneration; in the second He would not be.” Yet in another place he maintains, “Regeneration rests upon God’s election ... upon special grace and not upon common grace.” Thus it is not very clear what he intends. If, of themselves, all sinners already resist common grace, then it makes no sense to say that it would regenerate them if they did not resist it, for nonresisting means the same as being no longer sinful. If, on the other hand, a sinner is able to resist and not resist common grace, and some are really in the latter category, then for them, according to this conception, regenerating grace becomes completely superfluous. Common grace should work on them and regenerate them. **This idea is completely false.** God’s election lies above every consideration of the use of common grace. One can only go this far: Those who resist common grace such that God withdraws it do not belong to the elect. They are then abandoned to the hardening from which salvation is no longer possible. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that a good use of common grace always leads to receiving saving grace or is even a characteristic of election. Certainly in a negative sense, if someone resists common grace, then this is a bad sign. But we may not go further.

Thomas Shepard states regarding this irresistible grace:

Because all divine light of glory is ever powerful through Christ to change the heart. Hence if hypocrites had it, their hearts would be sincere, which is not so, and hence they ever want [lack] it, whatever light else they have; and hence those that have it must be sincere, John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and it shall make you free," i.e., from your bondage of fears and sins; hence David prays for light, Psalm 119:33, 34, and then he shall be set at liberty. As iron is drawn to the load-stone by a secret hidden virtue, so there is a secret virtue of divine light that draws the most iron heart; nay, changes it, John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth," etc. For this is the difference between God and man's teaching; and hence when the gospel comes in power, it comes in demonstration; whereby the heart is mightily overpowered, that it cannot but fall down before God, whose voice and truth it

hears. And hence the young man saw some worth in Christ, but not enough, and hence he forsook Christ. Truth is not stones, but bread to them that see it indeed. Thomas Shepard, The Parable of the Ten Virgins, pg 231

Communication of Grace, The Image of God, & Self-examination

code276

More on the communication of grace, (the fullness of God) to the faculty of the will, the goodness of God his holiness and understanding the knowledge of God and Christ, as well as self-examination! Here you will find whether you are saved or not!

The Sincere Convert

by Thomas Shepard

CHAPTER II.

Pg 25-34

That this God made all mankind at first in a most glorious and happy estate, like unto himself.

For the opening of which assertion I have chosen this text, (Eccl. vii. 29,) God made man righteous; which clearly demonstrates, –

That God made all mankind at first in Adam, in a most glorious, happy, and righteous estate. Man, when he came first out of God's mint, shined most glorious. There is a marvelous glory in all creatures, (the servants and household stuff of man), therefore there was a greater glory in man himself, the end of them. God calls a parliament, and gathers a council, when man was to be made; and said, "Come, let us make man in our own image," as though all the wisdom of the Trinity should be seen in the creation of man.

Wherein did the glory and blessedness of man appear?

In the impression of God's image upon him. (Gen. 1:26.) Can there be any greater glory for a Joseph, for a subject, than to be like his prince?

What was the image of God?

The schoolmen and fathers have many curious (yet some necessary) though difficult questions about this. I will omit all theirs, and tell you only what is the apostle's judgment, (Col. iii. 20,) out of which this general description of God's image may be thus gathered. "It is man's perfection of holiness, resembling God's admirable holiness [see Edwards on this too; God communicates holiness to the soul, primarily, a love for God...], whereby only man pleases God." or all other inferior creatures did carry the marks and footsteps of God's power, wisdom, goodness, whereby all these attributes were seen. One of the most perfect attributes, his holiness, he would have men only appear in, and be made

manifest by man, his best inferior creature, as a king's wisdom and bounty appears in managing the affairs of all his kingdom; but his royal, princely, and **most eminent perfections appear in the face and disposition of his Son**, next under him. But more particularly this **image of God** appeared in these four particulars: —

1. **In man's understanding.** [see Edwards on this too; God communicates and understanding of himself to created understandings...] This was like unto God's. Now, God's image here chiefly consisted in this particular, namely, As God saw himself, and beheld his own infinite, endless glory and excellency, so man was privy to God's excellency, and saw God most gloriously; as Moses, though a sinful man, saw him face to face, much more Adam, a perfect man. God, loving man, could do no less than reveal himself to man.

2. **In his affections.** The image of God chiefly appeared in two things:

First. As God, seeing himself, loved himself, so Adam, seeing God, loved this God more than the world, more than himself. As iron put into the fire seems to be nothing but fire, so Adam, being beloved of God, was turned into a lump of love, to love God again.

Secondly. As God delighted in himself, so did Adam delight in God, took sweet repose in the bosom of God. Methinks I see Adam rapt up in continual ecstasies in having this God.

3. **In his will.** The image of God chiefly appeared in two things : —

[Edwards said that God communicates holiness, joy & happiness to the faculty of the will, while an understanding of Himself or knowledge of Himself to the faculty of understanding.]

First. As God only willed himself as his last end, so did Adam will God as his last end, not as man doth now. [the will here is not yet corrupted by sin, performing rightly]

Secondly. As God willed nothing but good, so did Adam will nothing, **though not immutably**, but good [good point; Adam was made all good, but defectible; all created things are defectible and wholly dependent upon God for their proper behavior in pleasing to God] ; for God's will was his.

4. In his life, God's image did appear thus: that, even as God, if he had assumed man's nature, would have lived outwardly, so did Adam; for God would have lived according to his own will, law, and rule: so did Adam. **Adam's body was the lantern through which holiness, like a lamp burning in his heart, shined.** This was God's image by means of which, as it is said in the description, he pleased God, similitude being the ground of love ; and hence did most dearly love him, and highly him to be Lord over all creatures. No evil (continuing in that estate) could hurt him; here was no sorrow, no sickness, no tears, no fears, no death, no hell, nor ever should have been if there he had stood.

Objection. How was this estate ours?

Answer. As Christ's righteousness is a believer's by imputation, though he never performed it himself, so Adam's righteousness and image were imputed to us, and accounted ours; for Adam received our stock or patrimony to keep it for us, and to convey it to us. **Hence, he proving bankrupt, we lost it.** But we had it in his hands, as an orphan may have a great estate left him, though he never receive one penny of it from him that was his guardian, that should have kept it for him, and conveyed it to him. Here see the horrible nature of sin, that plucks man down by the ears from his throne, from his perfection, though never so great. Adam might have pleaded for himself, and have said, Although I have sinned, yet it is but one and the first fault, Lord, behold, I am thy first born. O, pity my poor

posterity, who are forever undone if you forgive not. Yet see, one sin weighs him down and all his posterity, as we shall hear, into eternal ruin.

Hence learn how justly God may require perfect obedience to all the law of every man, and curse him if he cannot perform it, because man was at first made in such a glorious estate, wherein he had power given him to please God perfectly. God may, therefore, require this debt of perfect obedience. Now man is broke, and in prison; in hell he must lie forever, if he cannot pay justice every farthing, because God trusted him with a stock which if he had well improved, he might have paid all.

See what cause every man hath to lament his miserable estate he is now fallen into. For beggars' children to live vagrants and poor is not so lamentable as for a great prince's children to become such. One never in favor with the prince grieves not as he does that was once in favor, but now cast out. Man is now rejected of God that was beloved of God. He is now a runagate up and down the earth that was once a prince and lord of all the world. This is one aggravation of the damned's sorrow. O, the hopes, the means, the mercies that once I had! Can these, do these lament for the loss of their hopes and common mercies? Lord, what hearts, then, have men that cannot, do not, that will not lament the loss of such special high favors, now gone, which once they had? It is said that those that saw the glory of the first temple wept when they saw the glory of the second, and how inferior it was to the first. You that either have the temple of God begun to be repaired in you, or not begun at all, O, think of the temple burnt, the glory of God now vanished and lost. [\[Very good!!\]](#)

This speaks comfort to all God's people. If all Adam's posterity were perfectly righteous in him, then you that are of the blood royal, and in Christ art perfectly righteous in him much more, inasmuch as the righteousness of the second Adam exceeds the first, so are you more happy, more holy in the second Adam than ever the first in himself was. He might lose all his righteousness; but the second Adam cannot, has not; so that, if Christ may be damned, then you may; else not.

This likewise reproveth three sorts of people:—

1. Such as are ashamed of holiness. Lord, what times are we fallen into now! **The image-of-God, which was once men's glory, is now their shame; and sin, which is men's shame, is now their glory.** The world hath raised up many false reports of holy courses, calling it folly and preciseness, pride, hypocrisy, and that, whatsoever shows men may make, they are as bad as the worst, if their sins were writ in their foreheads. Hence it comes to pass that many a man, who is almost persuaded to be a new man, and to turn over a new leaf, dares not, will not, for shame of the world, enter upon religious courses. What will they think of me then says he. Men are ashamed to refuse to drink healths, and hence maintain them lawful. Our gallants are ashamed to stay a mile behind the fashion; hence they will defend open and naked breasts and strange apparel, as things comely. O, time servers! that have some conscience to desire to be honest, and to be reputed so, yet conform themselves to all companies. If they hear others swear, they are ashamed to reprove them; they are ashamed to enter the lists of holy discourse in bad company; and they will pretend discretion, and we must not cast pearls before swine; but the bottom of the business is, they are ashamed to be holy. **O, fearful! Is it a shame to be like God?** O, sinful wretches It is a credit to be anything but religious, and, with many, religion is a shame. I wonder with what face you dare pray, or with what look thou will behold the Lord

of glory at the last day, who are ashamed of him now, that will be admired of all men, angels, and devils then? Do you look for wages from Christ that are ashamed to own Christ, or to wear his livery?

2. It reproves them that hate holiness, which is more than to be ashamed of it.

3. It reproves them that content themselves with a certain measure of holiness. **Perfect holiness was Adam's image, whereby he pleased God**; and shall a little holiness content thee? Now, there are these three sorts of them : —

1. The *formalist*, who contents himself with some holiness, as much as will credit him.

The form and name of religion is *honor*, honor sometimes; but the power and practice of it is *onus*, a burden; hence men take up the first, and shake off the second. And indeed the greatest partake up this course; if they have no goodness, they should be the shame, scorn, and table talk of the times; therefore every man will, for his honor's sake, have this *form*. Now, this form is according to the mold wherein he is cast; if his acquaintance be but civil, he will be like them; if they be more exact, as to pray, read, confer, he will not stay one inch behind them. If to be better than his companions, to bear the bell before them, will credit him, he will be so, whatever it cost him; but yet he never will be so exact in his course as to be hated for it, unless he perceives the hatred he contracts from some men shall be recompensed with the more love and credit by other men. He disguises himself according to the places or company he comes into. King Joash was a good man so long as Jehoiada the priest lived. If a little religion will serve to credit men, that shall serve for that time; if more in another place, you shall then have them commending good men, good sermons, good books, and drop forth two or three good sentences. What will they think of him then? They cover themselves over with these fig leaves of common honesty to cover their nakedness; they bait all their courses over with honesty, that they may catch, for they fish only for credit. One may trap these people thus: **Follow them in their private houses, there is worldliness, passion, looseness; and to their private chambers, there they ordinarily neglect or snuffle over duties to their private vain thoughts**. In this tiring house you shall then see these **stage players**; their shop windows are shut; here no honesty is to be seen scarce, because their gain, their respect, comes not in at this door, where none beholds them. Let either minister or any faithful friend search, try, discover, accuse, and condemn these men as rotten, though gilded, posts, as unsound, hollow hearted wretches, their hearts will swell like toads, and hiss like snakes, and bark like dogs, against them that thus censure them, because they rob them of their God they served, their gain is gone.

2. The *guilty, self-condemned sinner*, that goes further than the formalist and contents himself with so much holiness as will quiet him; and hence all the heathen have had some religion, because they had some conscience to trouble them. This man, if he has lived in foul sins, and begins to be racked and troubled for them, he will then confess and forsake those sins. But how? As a dog does his meat; not because he hates his carrion, but because he fears the cudgel [a short, thick stick used as a weapon]. **He performs, holy duties, not because he will use them, but because he must use them; there is no quiet else**. If conscience be still, he omits duties; if conscience cry and stir, he falls to duties, and so has his good mood as conscience has his fits. They boast and crow over hypocrites, because the holiness they have is not a bare show. **No; but it is to stop thy conscience, and only to quiet the clamors of that**. You do bribe, and so quiet (the bailiff) your conscience, by thy praying, hearing, and

sorrowing; but God, your Judge, has heavy things to lay to your charge, before whom you shall shortly with dread appear.

3. *The pining and devout hypocrite*, that, being pursued with the fear of hell, goes further, and labors for just so much holiness as will save him only, and carry him to heaven at last. Hence the young man in the gospel came with that great question to Christ, which many unsound hearts come with, to ministers now — what he should do to inherit eternal life. These people set up such a man in their thoughts to be a very honest man, and one doubtless that shall be saved; and hence they will take him to be their copy and sampler, and labor to do as he does, and to live just as he lives, and to hold opinions as he holds, and so hope to be saved. They will ask, very inquisitively, What is the least measure of grace, and the least grain of faith? **and the best sermons are not such as humble them most, but such as flatter them best;** wherein they may hear how well good desires are accepted of by God; which if they hear to be of that virtue to save them, God shall be served only with good desires, and the devil in their actions all their lives. **Thus they make anything serve for God; they labor not after so much holiness as will honor Christ, but after just so much as will bear their charges to heaven, and save themselves.** **For this is one of the greatest differences betwixt a child of God and a hypocrite.** In their obedience, the one takes up duties out of love to Christ, to have him ; and hence he mourns daily, because Christ is no greater gainer by him; the other out of love to himself, merely to save his own soul; and hence he mourns for his sins, because they may damn him. Remember that place, therefore, 1 Cor. 15. ult.

Lastly. **Labor to get this image of God renewed again.** Honest men will labor to pay their debts; this is God's debt. How do men labor to be in the fashion? Better to be out of the world than out of the fashion. To be like God is heaven's fashion, angels' 'ashion, and it will be in fashion one day, when the Lord Jesus shall appear; then, if you have the **superscription and image of the devil**, and not the image of God upon thee, God and Christ will never own thee at that day. **Labor, therefore, to have God's image restored again**, and Satan's washed out; seek not, as many do, to purchase such and such a grace first. But, —

1. Labor to mortify and subdue that sin which is opposite in thine heart to that grace. First, *put off the old man*, and then *put on the new*. (Eph. 4)

2. Labor for a melting, tender heart for the least sin. **Gold is then only fit to receive the impression when it is tender and is melted;** when thine heart is heated, therefore, at a sermon, cry out, Lord, now strike, now imprint thine image upon me!

3. Labor to see the Lord Jesus in his glory. For as wicked men, looking upon the evil example of great ones in the world, that will bear them out, grow like them in villainy, so the very beholding the glorious grace in Christ, this great Lord of glory, **transforms men into this image.** (2 Cor. 3:17, 18.) As the glass, set full against the sun, receives not only the beams, as all other dark bodies do, but the image of the sun, **so the understanding, with open face beholding Christ, is turned into the image and likeness of Christ.** Men nowadays look only to the best men's lives, and see how they walk, and rest here. **O, look higher to this blessed face of God in Christ as thine own.** **As the application of the seal to the wax imprints the image, so to view the grace of Christ as all yours imprints the same image strongly on the soul.**

Conversion, Grace, Faith & Man's Sinful Nature, etc.

code277

The Call, Grace, Regeneration, Conversion, and the Soul

This discourse by Shepard puts many things together regarding conversion; grace, faith, nature of fallen man, irresistible grace, Arminianism, *Ordo Salutis*, effectual vocation, compunction, self-examination, union to Christ, mourning for sin, etc.

Excerpt from *The Sound Believer*

by Thomas Shepard

pg 224-241

That therefore,

1. There must be some sense of misery, before the application of the remedy.
2. That this **compunction** or **sense of misery** is wrought by the Spirit of Christ, not the power of man to prepare himself thereby for further grace.
3. That these terrors and sorrows in the elect, do virtually differ from those in the reprobate; the one driving the soul to Christ, the other not; these are agreed on all hands. The question only is, whether there is this farther stroke of severing the soul from sin, conjoined with the terrors and sorrows in the elect, before their closing with Christ, which is not in the reprobate? For the affirmative, I leave these several considerations:

Con. 1. That there is *gratia actualis*, or actual grace, as well as *habitualis*, or **habitual grace**. Learned Ferrius makes a vast difference between them; and therefore to think that there can be no power of sin removed but by habitual or sanctifying grace, is unsound; for actual grace may do it, the Spirit may take away sin mediately by habitual grace, and yet he can do it immediately also, by an omnipotent act, by that which is called actual actuating, or **moving grace**; **Christ can and must first bind the strong man, and cast him out by this working, or actual grace, before he dwells in the house of man's heart, by habitual and sanctifying grace**. The gardener's knife may immediately cut off a scion from a tree, thereby taking away all its power to grow there any more, before it has a power to bring forth any fruit, which is wrought only by implanting it into another stock; now creation (which is at first conversion) may well be without habitual graces that are but creatures.

Con. 2. Whether any man since the fall is a subject immediately capable of sanctifying or habitual grace; or whether any unregenerate man is in a next disposition to receive such grace; as the air is immediately of light, out of which the darkness is expelled by light, and so the habits of grace do expel the habits and power of sin (say some). I suppose the affirmative is most false, and in near affinity with some gross points of Arminianism. Adam, in his pure naturals, and considered merely as a living soul,

was such a subject; like a white paper, fitted immediately to take the impression of God's image; but since, by his fall, sin is fallen like a mighty blot upon the soul, whereby a man not only wants (lacks) grace, as the dark air does light, but also resist grace, John 14:17 (*the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him*), **hence this resistance must be first taken away, before the Lord introduce his image again**. To say that a man can of himself dispose himself unto grace, was Pelagianism in Aquinas' time [[for more on Aquinas' views, go to codeaquinas1](#)]; yet some disposition is necessary, says Ferrius; not unto actual grace, or that which is wrought upon a man, per *modum actus* (as he says) but unto the reception of habitual or sanctifying grace, it being in the soul per *modum formae*, no form being introduced but into *materiam dpositam*, i.e., matter fitted or prepared, or into such a vessel which is immediately capable of it.

There is in man a double resistance against grace.

1. Of a holy frame of grace by original corruption, which is opposite to original and renewed holiness, or to this holy frame.
2. Of the God of grace himself, when he comes to work it, Ezek. 24:13.

The first is taken away in that which we call the **spirit of sanctification**, after faith; the second is takes away, not only in the act of it (as by Terrors it may be in reprobates, Ps. 66:2), but in some measure in the inward root, and disposition of it (only in the elect) there being (as has been said) not more separation from sin, at this time required, than so much as may make the soul come to the Lord to take it away, or at least not unwilling, now resisting the Lord, when he comes to do it himself.

Con. 3. Whether does not the work of union unto Christ, go before our communion with Christ? I suppose, it is undeniable, **that union to Christ, is a work of grace, as peculiar to the elect, as communion with him**. Now justification and sanctification are two parts of our communion with him, and follow out union, Rom. 8:1. Our union therefore must be before these, of which there are two parts, or rather two things on our part, necessarily required to it, **1. Cutting off from the wild olive-tree, the older Adam. 2. Implanting into the good olive-tree, the second Adam. The first must go before the second**; for where there is perfect resistance, there can be no perfect union. But take a man growing upon his old root of nature, there is nothing but perfect resistance, Rom. 8:7, and therefore **that resistance must first be taken away, before the Lord draw the soul to Christ, and by faith implant it into Christ**. In a word, I see not how a man can wholly resist God and Christ, and yet be united to him at the same instant; and therefore the one (**in order of nature** at least) goes before the other; **and therefore let any man living prove his union to Christ, and to his lusts also, if he can. You will believe in Christ many of you, and yet you will have your whores and cups, and lusts, and pride, and world too, and oppose all the means that would have you from these also**. I tell you, you shall find one day how miserably deceived you have been herein. *You cannot serve God and Mammon; how can you believe*, says Christ, John 5:44 that seek honor one of another? If you can have Christ and be ambitious too, take him; but how can you believe, till the Lord have broken you off from thence?

Con. 4. Whether **vocation** (as peculiar to the elect as sanctification) does not go before justification and glorification? Rom 8:30. Whether also there are not two things in **effectual vocation**?

1. Is not Christ, that good, the term to which the soul is firstly called?
2. Is not sin and the world, that evil, the term from which the soul is called?

I suppose it is evident, that the soul is effectually called, and therefore actually and firstly turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. First from darkness, then unto light; first from the power of Satan, then unto God, as is evident from Christ's own words, Acts 26:18, where he methodically sets down the wonderful works of grace by the apostle's: the first is to turn them from darkness to light, and from Satan's power unto God, which are the **two parts of vocation**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins in justification, (vocation being a means to this end) that they may receive an inheritance in glorification among such as being justified are sanctified also by faith in his name. Christ does not say, that he was to turn men to light, and unto God, and so turn them from darkness and the power of Satan; though this is true in some sense; but he was first to turn them from darkness and Satan and so turn them unto light, and God in Christ. For how is it possible to be turned unto Christ and yet then also to be turned to sin and Satan? Does it not imply a contradiction, to be turned toward sin, (which is ever from Christ) and yet to be turned toward Christ together? All divines affirm generally, that in the working of faith, the Lord makes the soul willing to love Christ. Ps 110:2,3, but withal they affirm, **that while unwilling he makes them willing; and therefore it follows that the Lord must first remove that unwillingness before it can be willing, it being impossible to be both willing and unwilling together.**

Con. 5.

Whether the cause of all that counterfeit coin and **hypocrisy** in this professing age, does not arise from this root, namely, **not having this work at first**, but only some trouble for sin, without separation from it, sore throws without deliverance from sin is not this the death of most, if not all wicked men living? **How many are there that clasp about Christ, and yet prove enemies to the cross of Christ; fall from Christ scandalously or secretly afterward?** What is the reason of it? Certainly, if the Lord has cut them off from their sin, they had never fallen to everlasting bondage in sin, again; but there the Spirit of God forsook them, **the Lord not owing so much love to them**, consider seriously, why the **stony and thorny ground hearers, Matt. 13**, came to nothing in their growth of seeming faith and sanctification; was the fault in the seed? No, verily, but **only in the ground**; the one was broken, but not deep enough; the other was broken deep, but not thorough enough, the roots of those choked them, the lusts and cares of this world were not destroyed first, and therefore they destroyed that ground.

I conclude therefore with that of Jeremiah, *break up your fallow ground*, Jer. 4:3, 4, seek to the Lord, to break them for you, *and sow not among thorns*, take heed of such brokenness which removes not the **thorns of sinful secret stubbornness**, lest the wrath of the Lord break out against you, and burn that none can *quench* it. Do not cut off John the Baptist's head, you that can be content to hear him gladly, and do many things, **but he must not touch your Herodias, and make a divorce there**, but suffer him to come in the spirit and power of Elias, nay, of Christ Jesus, **to beat down your mountains, fill up your valleys, and make your crooked and rough ways smooth, that you may see the glory of the Lord Jesus, without which he shall be ever hid from you.** Cry, you faithful servants of the Lord, *All flesh is grass, and the glory of man (of sin of the world) is a withering flower*, that the Lord Jesus may be revealed ever fresh, and sweet and precious in the eyes of saints.

The evidence of this truth is the general, put blessed and learned **Pemble** upon another way, for when he perceived (as himself professes) that it is the general doctrine of all orthodox divines, namely,

that **actual faith** is never wrought in the soul, till besides the supernatural illumination of the mind, **the will be also first freed in part from its natural perverseness** (God making all men of unwilling, willing); hereupon he concludes, that this is done by the Spirit of sanctification, and one supernatural quality of holiness supernaturally infused in all the powers of the soul at once; so that the Spirit instantly first sanctifies us, and puts life in us; then it acts in sorrow for, and detestation of sin, and so we come actually to believe. And because he foresaw the blow, namely, that in this way, Christians are sanctified before they be justified, he answers, Yes, we are really and actually justified declaratively after this.

Others, who follow him, answer more roundly, namely, that we are sanctified before we are really and actually justified, and herein differ from him.

Now when it is objected against this, namely, that our vocation is that which goes before our justification, sanctification being a part of glorification following after, Rom. 8:30. Hereupon some others, trading in his steps, affirm that vocation is the same with sanctification and not comprehended under glorification.

Others, perceiving the evil of this error, namely, to place sanctification before justification, **good fruits before a good tree**, they do therefore deny any saving work, whether of vocation or sanctification, before justification. And hence, on the other extreme, they do place a Christian's justification, before his faith in vocation, or holiness in sanctification, so that by this last opinion, a Christian is not justified by faith, (which was Paul's phrase) but rather, as he said wittily and wisely, faithed by his justification.

Before I come to clear the truth in these spiritual mysteries, let this only be remembered, namely, that sanctification, which Pemple calls our spiritual life, may be taken two way:

1. Largely 2. Strictly

1. Largely, for any awakenings of conscience, or acts of the Spirit of life; and so it is true, we are quickened by these acts, and so in a large sense sanctified first.

2. Strictly, for those habits of the life of holiness which are opposite to the body of death in us; and that we are not first sanctified before we are justified, in this sense, we shall manifest by and by. Only, let me begin to show the **error of the last opinion first, namely,**

1. That a Christian is not first justified before faith or vocation, may appear thus;

1. It is professedly cross to the whole current of scripture, which says, we are justified by faith, and therefore not before faith; and to say, that the meaning of such phrases is that we are justified declaratively by faith, or to our sense and feeling in *foro conscientie*, is a mere device; for our justification is opposed to the state of unrighteousness and condemnation going before, which condemnation is not only declarative and in the court of conscience, but real, and in the court of heaven; for so says the scripture expressly, John 3:18, *he that believeth not, is condemned already*; and verse 36, *the wrath of God abideth on him*; and Gal. 3:22, the scripture (which is the sentence in God's court) *hath concluded all under sin*. Hence a second argument arises.

2. If a man be justified before faith, then an actual unbeliever is subjected to no condemnation; but this is expressly cross to the letter of the text, *he that believeth not is condemned already*, John 3:18, *and the wrath of God abideth on him*. These subjects of non-condemnation are those that be in Christ, by faith, Rom. 8:1, not out of Christ by unbelief, Rom. 11:20. There is indeed a merited justification by Christ's death and a **virtual** or exemplary justification in Christ's resurrection, as in our head and surety; and **both these were before not only our faith, but our very being**; but to say, that we are therefore actually justified before faith, because our justification was merited before we had faith, gives us as just a ground of affirming that we are actually sanctified while we are in the state of nature unsanctified, because our sanctification was merited by Christ before we had any being in him.

We must indeed be first made good trees by faith in Christ's righteousness, before we can bring forth any good fruits of holiness, John 14:3, 4, 5. God makes us not good trees without being in Christ by faith, no more than we are bad trees in contracting Adam's guilt without our being first in him; God gives us first his Son, offered in the gospel and received by faith, and then gives us all other things with him; he does not justify us without giving us his Son, but having first given him, gives us this also.

2. That sanctification does not go before justification may appear thus:

1. If guilt of Adam's sin go before original pollution Rom. 5:12, then imputation of Christ's righteousness before renewed sanctification.

2. **To place sanctification before justification is quite cross to the apostle's practice**, which is our pattern, who first sought to be *found in Christ*, Phil. 3:9, (in the work of union) *not having his own righteousness* in the work of justification (which in order follows that) *that he may then know him in the power of his death and resurrection* in sanctification (here comes in sanctification) *if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead* in glorification (the last of all).

3. This is quite cross to the apostle's doctrine which makes justification the cause of sanctification, and therefore must needs go before it, Rom. 5, as sin goes before spiritual and eternal death, so righteousness goes before spiritual life in sanctification, and eternal life in glory; the Lord holds forth Christ in the gospel, first as our propitiation, Rom. 3:24 and then comes dying to sin, and living to God in sanctification, chap. 6. **Holiness is the end [ult. purpose] of our actual reconciliation**, Col. 1:21, 22.

4. If sanctification go before justification by faith, then a Christian's communion with Christ goes before his union to him by faith; **but our union is the foundation of communion**, and it is impossible there should be communion without some precedent union, 1Cor. 1:30, Christ is made righteousness and sanctification; unto whom? Read the beginning of the verse, and you shall see it is only to those that be in Christ, which is by faith.

Let none say here, as some do, that we have union to Christ, by the Spirit without faith, in order going before faith; for understanding of which, let us a little consider of our union unto Christ. Our union to Christ is not by the essential presence of the Spirit, for that is in every man, as the Godhead is everywhere, *in whom we live and move*. This is common to the most wicked man, nay to the vilest creature in the world. **Hence it follows that our union is by some act of the Spirit peculiar to the elect** (who only shall have communion with Christ) working some real change in the soul, (for of real, not relative union I now speak) this act cannot be those first acts of the Spirit of bondage, (for they are

common to reprobates) they are therefore such acts as are essential to the nature of union. Now look as disunion is the disjunction and separation of several things one from another; so union is the conjunction or joining of them together, that were before severed. Hence that act of the Spirit of uniting us to Christ can be nothing else but the bringing back the soul unto Christ, or the conjunction of the soul unto Christ and into Christ, by bringing it back to him, that, before this, **lay like a dry bone in the valley separated from him**, thus, 1Cor. 6:17, *he that is joined*, or as the word signifies, *glewed to the Lord, is one spirit with him*. **The Spirit therefore brings us to the Lord Christ, and so we are in him**. Now the coming of the soul to Christ, what is it but faith? John 6:35. **Our union therefore is by faith, not without it**; for by it only we that were once separated from him by sin, and especially by unbelief, Heb. 3:12, are now come not only unto him, as iron unto the loadstone, John 6:39. But (which is most near) into him, as branches into the vine, and so grow one with him; and hence those phrases in scripture, to believe in Christ, or into Christ. I speak not this, as if we were united to Christ without the Spirit on this part; (for the conjunction of things severed must be mutual, if it be firm) I only show that we are not united before faith by the Spirit unto Christ; but that we are by faith (wrought by the Spirit) whereby on our part we are first conjoined unto him, and then on his part, he by the person of the Spirit is most wonderfully united unto us. **The Spirit puts forth variety of acts in the soul**; as it acts us to good works, it is the Spirit of obedience; as it infuses habits of grace, so it is the Spirit of sanctification; as it assists us continually, and guides us to our end, and witnesses favor, it is the Spirit of adoption; as it works fears of death and hell, it is the Spirit of bondage; but as it draws us from sin to Christ, so it is the Spirit of union; and therefore to imagine before and without faith by the Spirit, is but a spirit indeed, which when you come to feel it, you shall find it a nothing, without flesh or bones or sinews. **As our marriage-union to Christ must have consent of faith on our part, wrought by the Spirit, or else the Lord Jesus is a vain suitor to us**; so now the Spirit on Christ's part must apprehend our faith, and dwell in us, **who otherwise shall suddenly go a-whoring from him**, 1Pet. 1:5, Eph. 3:17.

3. That vocation is not all one with sanctification may appear thus:

1. Vocation is before justification, Rom. 8:30. But sanctification is not before justification, as we have proved, and therefore are not the same.
2. Sanctification is the end of vocation, 1Thes. 4:7, therefore it is not the same with it.
3. **Faith is the principal part of vocation**; the first part of it being God's call; the second part being our answer to that call, or in coming at that call, Jer. 3:22. Now faith is no part of sanctification strictly taken, because it is the **means and instrument of our justification and sanctification**, Acts 26:19. Our hearts, are said to be *purified by faith*, Acts 15:9, not our lives only in the acts of holiness and purity, but our hearts in the habitual frame of them. *I live by faith of the Son of God*, says Paul; *we pass from death to life by faith*, John 5:24, therefore it is not part of our spiritual life; *you will not come to me* (which is faith) *that you may have life*, John 5:40, John 6:50, 51, therefore faith is the **instrumental means of life**, and therefore no part of our life; as faith comes by hearing, and therefore hearing is no part of faith, so justification comes by faith, and therefore is no part of sanctification; all our life both of justification and sanctification is laid up in **Christ our head**; **this life**, according to God's great plot, shall never be had but by coming to Christ for it, Heb. 7:25, **else grace and Christ should not be so much honored**, Rom. 4:16, *it is of faith, that it might be by grace*; sanctification therefore is the grace applied by faith, faith the grace applying; by coming to Christ for it, we have it; and therefore have it not, when first we come.

I am sorry to be thus large in less practical matters; yet I have thought it not unuseful, but very comfortable to a poor passenger, **not only to know his journey's end**, and the way in general to it, but also the several stadia or towns he is orderly to pass through; there is **much wisdom of God to be seen, not only in his work, but in his manner and order of working**, for want of which, I see many Christians in these days fall very foully into erroneous apprehensions in their practice; the objections made against what has been delivered, are for the principle of them answered; the main end, by beloved, of propounding these things is, that you would look narrowly to your union. Oh, take heed you miss not there; if you close with Christ, believe in Christ, and yet not cut off from your sin, namely, that **spirit of resistance of Christ**, you are utterly and eternally undone. This is the condemnation of the world, not that men love darkness wholly, and hate light, **but that they love darkness more than light**; not that the unclean spirit is not gone out, but that he is not so cast out, as never to return again; the wound of all men, yea, the best of men that profess Christ, and yet indeed out of Christ, lies in this; they were never severed from their sin by all their prayers, tears, fears, sorrows; and hence they never truly come to Christ; and hence perish in their sins.

Trouble me no more therefore in asking, whether a Christian is in a state of happiness or misery in that condition? I answer, he is preparatively happy; he is now passing from death to life, though not as yet wholly passed; nor yet, whether there is any saving work before union? I answer, No; for what is said is one necessary ingredient to the working up of our union, as cutting off the branch from the old stock is to the engrafting it into the new; indeed, without faith it is impossible to please God; nor do I say, that this work does please, i.e., it does not pacify God (for that is proper to Christ's perfect righteousness received by faith) yet as it is a work of his own Spirit upon us, it is pleasing to him; (as the after-work of sanctification is though it neither does pacify him); nor do I see how this doctrine is any way opposite to the free offer of grace, and Christ, because it requires no more separation from sin, than that which drives them unto Christ; nay, which is less, that makes them (by power of the Spirit) not to resist, but to yield to Christ, that he may come unto them and draw them – **you cannot repent nor convert yourselves; be converted therefore**, says Peter, Acts 3:19, *that you may receive remission of sins*, (as explained to you) let him believe notwithstanding all that which is said; and the God of heaven speak peace to him; his faith shall not trouble me, if he be sure it shall not one day deceive himself.

Use 1.

Of lamentation for the hardness of men's hearts in these times: as it is said, the Lord Jesus mourned when he saw the hardness of the people's hearts, Mark 3:5, are there not some so far from this, as that they take pleasure in their sins, **they are sugar under their tongues, as sweet as sleep, nay as their lives?** And you come to pull away their limbs, when you come to pluck away their sins; though they have broken Sabbaths, neglected prayer, despised the word, hated and mocked at the saints, been stubborn to their parents, cursed and sworn, (which made Peter go out and weep bitterly); thought lustful and wanton, (which brake David's bones); though guilty of more sins than there be motes in the sun, or stars in heaven, though their sins be crimson, and fill heaven with their cry, and all the earth with their burden, **yet they mourn not**; never did it one hour together; **nay they cannot do it because they will not**; if you are weary and loaden, where are your unutterable groans? If wounded and bruised, where are your dolorous complaints? If sick, where is your inquiry for a physician? If sad, where are your tears in the day, in the night, morning and evening, alone by yourselves, and in

company with others? Oh how great is the wrath of God, hardening so many thousands at this day! Whence comes it that Christ is not prized, but from this senselessness? Name any reason why the blessed gospel of peace, and all the sweet promises of life are undervalued, but from hence; and what do you hereby, poor creatures, but only aggravate your sins, and make those that are little, exceeding great in the eyes of God? Whence is it that you treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Rom. 2:2-5. This hardness is that which blunts the edge of all God's ordinances, whence God's poor ministers sit sorrowful in their closets, seeing all God's seed lost upon bare rocks. Oh this is the condition of many a man, and which is most fearful, the means which should make the heart sensible, make it more proud and insensible. Tyre and Sidon and Sodom are more fit to mourn, than Chorazin and Capernaum, that have enjoyed humbling means long. Nay, how many be there that mourn out their mournings, confess out their confessions, and by their humiliations grow more senseless afterward? Did we ever live in a more impenitent secure age? **We shall seldom meet with one broken with sin, but how few are broken from sin also?** And hence it is many a tall cedar that were set down in the table-book for converted men, once much humbled, and now comforted; stay but a few years, **you shall see more dangerous sins of a second growth**; one turns drunkard, another covetous, another proud, another a sectary, another a very dry leaf, a very formalist; another full of humorous opinions, another laden with scandalous lusts. **Woe to you that lament not now; for you shall mourn.** Do you think that Christ should ever wipe off thy tears, that shed none at all? Do you think to reap in joy, that sow not with these showers? Verily God will make his word good, Prov. 29:1, *He that hardens his own heart, shall perish suddenly.* **Hear this, you secure, sorrowless sinners, if ever God's hand be stretched out suddenly against you, in blasting your estate, snatching away your children, the wife of thy bosom, the husband of thy delight; in staining thy name, vexing you with debts and crosses, short and sore, or lingering sicknesses, know that all this comes upon thee for hard heart;** but, oh mourn for it now, you parents, children, servants, **the tokens of death are upon you;** desire the Lord to break your hearts for you; lie under God's hammer, be not above the word, and suffer the Lord to take away that which grieves him most, even your stony heart, because it grieves your least. Meditate much on your woeful condition, chew that bitter pill; remember death and rotting in the grave, **that many are now in hell for your sins**; that Christ must die, or you die for the least sin; remember how patient and long suffering the Lord has been to you, and how long he has groaned under your burden, that it may be, though he would, yet he cannot bear your load long. **Let these things be mused on, that your heart may be at last sorrowful before it be too late.** But oh the sad estate of many with us that can mourn for any evil, except it be for the greatest sin, and death and wrath, that lie upon them.

Use. 2. Of exhortation: **labor for this sense of misery, this spirit of compunction;** how can you believe in Christ, that feel not your misery without him? A broken Christ cannot do thee good without a broken heart. **Be afflicted and mourn ye sinners, turn your laughter into mourning, tremble to think of that wrath which burns down to the bottom of hell, and under which the eternal Son of god did sweat drops of blood;** great sins which you know you are guilty of, cause great guilt, and great hardness of heart, and therefore are seldom forgiven or subdued without great affliction of spirit. They have loaded the Lord long, they must load you. Little sins are usually slighted, and extenuated, and therefore the Lord accounts them great; and therefore your soul must be in bitterness for them, before the Lord will pass them by. It is not every trouble that will serve the turn; look that it be such as separates you soul from you sin, or else it will separate between your soul and God. I know it is not in your power to break your own hearts, no more than to make the rocks to bleed, yet remember, he that

bids you, *cast up and prepare the way of the Lord*, Isa. 43:4, has promised that *every mountain shall be brought low, and the crooked ways made straight, and the rough smooth, and the valleys filled*. He only can do it for you, and will do it for some, it may be for you; he that broke the heart of Manasseh and Paul, after their bold and blasphemies, when they never desire any such thing, he can break yours much more when you are desiring him to do it for you; Here are many of you that fear you were never humbled nor burdened enough; I say, hear it still, fear lest there be a stone in the bottom, not so as to discourage and drive you heart from Christ, *but so as to feel a greater need of his grace to soften you heart, and to take you senselessness away*. The Lord does purposely command you to plough up your fallow ground that you might feel your impotency so to do, and come to him to take it way; everything will harden you more and more, until the Lord come and take your stony heart away by his own hand. All God's kindnesses will make you more bold to sin, and all God's judgments, more fierce and obstinate in sin, unless the lord put to his hand.

If Pharaoh's heart be softened for a time, it will grow hard again, if the Lord take it not away. The means therefore for you to get this compunction, are,

1. *To feel the evil of thy hard heart*; no surer token of reprobation than hardness, if continued in; especially for your heart to grow hard under or after softening means, as it was in Pharaoh.
2. To look up to the Lord in all ordinances, that he would take it away.

Use. 3. Have not you great cause of abundant thankfulness, into whose hearts the Lord has let in fears and sorrows, concerning your estates? The blind world looks upon all troubles of conscience as temptations of the devil to despair, and the very way to run mad; but consider what the Lord has done for you that have such. *What if the Lord had left you without feeling*, as those in Eph. 4:19²? *What if the Lord had smitten you with a spirit of slumber*, as those in Romans 11:8³? Would not your estate have been then lamentable? And have you no hearts to acknowledge his unspeakable goodness in awakening of you, in shaking your very foundations? Do you think that any ever had such a hard heart as you have? Do you not say so in secret before the Lord sometimes? *Oh then, what rich grace is this to give you any sense or feeling of your sin, and danger by it, though it be ever so little in your eyes?* Some think these terrors are a judgment; it is true, if they were merely imaginary, or worldly and desperate; but says the apostle, 2Cor. 7:7, *I think God I made you sorry*. Suppose your sorrow should be only in regard of the punishment of sin, yet this is the Lord's goodness to make your heart so far sensible, that once did go as a sheep to the slaughter, fearing no danger at all; the very means to prize favor from God, is to feel wrath, as well as sin. And the very reason why the Lord has made you feel your punishment heavy, is that your soul might feel the evil of sin, by considering that if the fruit be so bitter, what is then the cause? Be not therefore weary of your burden, Jer. 30:15¹, so as to think the Lord pours out his vengeance on you while your trouble remains. Oh consider that this is the hand of the Lord Jesus, and that he is now about to save you, when he comes to work any compunction in you, especially such as whereby he does not only cut your heart with fears and sorrows, but cut you off from your sin, so far only, as humbles you and drives you to the Lord Christ to take them away.

¹ Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow *is* incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, *Because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you*.

² who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

3^a "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day."

Effects of Sin, Blindness, Irresistible Grace, etc.

Reminder – my comments in [blue]

Code278

And lastly, Sermon 1 cont. regarding lost souls, irresistible grace, spiritual blindness, excellency of Christ not seen by natural men but only thru the eyes of faith.

by Jonathan Edwards

The souls of natural men are so blinded that they **see no beauty or excellency in Christ**. They do not see his sufficiency. They see no beauty in the work of salvation by him; and as long as they remain thus blind, it is impossible that they should close with Christ. **The heart will never be drawn to an unknown Saviour. It is impossible that a man should love that, and freely choose that, and rejoice in that, in which he sees no excellency.** But if your eyes were opened to see the excellency of Christ, the work would be done. **You would immediately believe on him;** and you would find your heart going after him. It would be impossible to keep it back. But take heed that you do not entertain a wrong notion of what it is, spiritually to see Christ. If you do, you may seek that which God never bestows.

[parallel point by Thomas Shepard (main point in red):

"It is that work of the Spirit whereby a sinner, sensible of his extreme nakedness, emptiness, and wants, being called of God, his whole soul comes out of himself to Christ, for himself. I speak not of assurance, for if that were faith, all reprobates then were bound to believe an untruth, viz. that God the Father loves and Christ hath died for them.

1. It is a work of God's Spirit, and hence it is called the Spirit of faith, not only because wrought by it, but because the Spirit is in an admirable manner fastened to it, and clasped to the soul, and the soul to Christ by it.

2. The subject in which it is wrought; a sinner sensible of his extreme wants; **for faith springs out of the destruction of our own excellency and ruins of it;** like Christ that did arise as root out of a dry ground for the **Lord's great plot** is to **advance Christ and his rich grace.** Now, look, as it is obscured by bringing anything of our own to it, so it is advanced by fetching all from it. This can never be till the soul is sensible of his nakedness, emptiness and wants; **let Christ be ever so sweet, a full soul will loathe him."**

Edwards cont.:

Do not think that spiritually to see Christ, is to have a vision of him as the prophets had, to see him in some bodily shape, to see the features of his countenance. Do not pray or seek for any such thing as this. But what you are to seek is, that you may have a **sight of the glorious excellency of Christ**, and of the way of salvation through him, in your heart. **This is a spiritual sight of Christ.** This is that for which you must cry to God day and night. God is the fountain of spiritual light. He opens the eyes of the blind. **He commands** the **light** to shine out of darkness. It is easy with God to enlighten the soul, and fill it

with these **glorious discoveries**, though it is beyond the power of men and angels. [The diagram exhibits this excellency and the communication of it, Christ's riches, to blind and lost souls, to take away the veil and enstamp the image of God upon their souls, conforming them to Christ.]

Since the scriptures are reasonable...as God spoke to Isaiah...*come now, let us reason together..* Isa. 1:18.

What clouds our reasoning is sin. It stupifies the mind. Also what clouds reason is prejudices, our traditions and superstitions. As you read Edwards or Owen, you'll see a sound exercise of reason; for a moment it hurts your mind and causes you to slow down and think things through. A sound exegesis of the scriptures also tends to strip away these hindrances to reason, making things appear as they are...letting the text speak for itself which is what exegesis is (as opposed to eisegesis, reading things into the text that aren't there). So that being said, I wrote this follow-up to the doctrines exhibited on the diagram (see separate jpg image).

This is the significance or application of these doctrines:

Having considered these things; for a man to ask Jesus into this heart or to say some other kind of "sinner's prayer", is to infer that this person has a holy disposition or a good heart to some degree before he has been given a holy disposition and a good heart!, that he has a knowledge of spiritual things before he's been given a knowledge of spiritual things! For before this communication of God's glory, he is dead spiritually (1Cor. 2:14). Thus to desire truly spiritual things, holy and divine things in some degree enough to say this prayer, is to introduce a huge contradiction and to infer the effect before the cause. He has no knowledge of truly spiritual things. Also, consider John 9:31 - "Now we know that God does not hear sinners;" (those who are unconverted) Also see Pr. 15:8 and 28:9. This prayer is being asked by someone who is not saved in an effort to get saved, so God doesn't *hear* him, i.e., God will not oblige him. His prayers are rejected as an abomination, Pr. 15:8. God casts them back into their faces, Mal. 2:3, John Flavel relates. (p 263 vol. 2 of his works) It is by the will of God one gets converted, not by the will of man, John 1:13, Romans 9:16, etc.

To truly desire holiness is to say this prayer, but to truly desire holiness is to have a holy heart or a good heart already! For an unconverted heart cannot do this and will not do this (1Cor2:14). The fact that he is praying to be saved is admitting that he does not have a holy heart, yet how can anyone sincerely make this wise and holy prayer when he is in an unsaved condition where it is acknowledged by most unprejudiced men and the bible that the heart before conversion is not holy but wretched, blind, and naked; bound in sin and at enmity with God? To have a holy disposition and a knowledge of what is truly holy and wise is required to make this prayer and therefore this prayer is gross presumption. It is to have a the ability to make a most spiritually wise act before the ability to make such an act is given which is to have the effect before the cause! - or to have this act create its own object! It is to suppose that someone has "strength" when he has no "strength". For this person is praying from natural principles which is no different than that of demons and what they are capable of (and would do if they were in our position), and not from a principle of spiritual life which is the designed effect of the communication of the image of God's glory. This is coming to God without being called, i.e., apart from effectual vocation, a vocation which consists in this communication of God's glory, is the height of man's rebellion to God and the height of man's enmity that is in his heart, his

mind. For it is really man wanting what God has and not really desiring God for who he is because he has yet to see Him by the eyes of faith. This way of coming to God is "*some other way*" spoken of in John 10:1 and is none other than man's invention to quiet conscience and provide for a false peace when there is no peace and thus is no different than many of the ways and inventions like that of the Roman church, or the Mormons, or the Muslims, etc., to the same purpose. It is a wicked presumption and is highly provoking to God. See Psalm 50:16 See Shepard's excellent comment on this subject down further on bottom of page 734 entitled, A Wholesome Caveat.

Those who teach this way of salvation risk the chiding of Christ as he derided the Pharisees, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." The sinner's prayer is one of the most effective ways to make false converts, those who come to Christ by nature principles, the principle of self-love and not from a new principle of life that is communicated by the Spirit of Christ (as outlined in this diagram). They are coming to God without being called. This has many pernicious consequences for those who are falsely converted and for the church in general.

Other notes on this subject:

The nature of saving grace is greatly misunderstood. Many think that this grace is made effectual only by our asking for it - that this grace is something just made available but is only effectual if we ask or pray for it, hence the sinner's prayer and like prayers that recommend one's self to God. But this is a great mistake. We are entirely passive in our conversion; before we are converted or saved, we are dead, blind, naked and at enmity with God; we don't want to get saved before we are saved. We can't want to! - see 1Cor2:14 "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." The Spirit of God who applies this grace to the heart is a positive action on his part; he applies it to the heart! See Jer31:33, "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" and then Ezek36:27, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*." Then see Jer32:40, "but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me." This is not man's doing by his asking but it is all of God. If God did not save a remnant, all would perish; that is, if God did not sovereignly apply this saving grace to certain people, then all would perish. We are completely dependent upon his mercy, not on our so called self-directed, autonomous wills as the Arminians would have you believe. See Romans 9:16, "So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Or see John 1:13, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The very gift of faith, a grace, is not of ourselves lest anyone boast, Eph2:8-9. It is a gift that is given. If one has to ask for it, then it is no longer a gift but a wage; and God owes no man anything. As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God." So, the whole point in examining these spiritual mysteries is to see them in their true light so that you glory not in yourselves but in God who has mercy. And in doing so, in growing in a proper understanding of these things, you will approach God in a due manner with reverence and Godly fear and gain more consolation and true peace in your eternal state, that Christ is really yours.

The more you see the immensity of this wisdom in the way of salvation, the more you will see that you had nothing to do with it; that God had all to do with it; and this should fill your hearts with

humility and sense of awe with thanksgiving and holy admiration (which is its design anyway!). So that he who glories will glory in the Lord. So the Scripture testifies: 1Cor1:30-31, " But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹ that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." and Jer9:24

Thus says the LORD:

"Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
 Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might,
 Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches;
²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this,
 That he understands and knows Me,
 That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.
 For in these I delight," says the LORD.

We don't believe to get converted; we are converted and are then able to believe and will infallibly do so.

One other passage on this is 2Cor4:7 -

2Cor. 4:7 having to do with God's power, refers to the ability, spiritual strength, or virtue that enables us to believe - that which God works in us, John 6:29 (*this is the work of God, that you believe in Him...*). This ability is via faith, which is given by God, not of ourselves lest anyone boast. Arminians/Pelagians don't agree; they think we have this power, a spark of it anyway, that was not lost after the fall of Adam, that enables us to believe before we receive God's power to do so - but 2Cor4:7, like all the other related verses, dispels that notion, attributing that power all to God and not to us in any degree.

2Cor4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.* I should add that one to the Total Depravity category.

Edwards adds to this:

§89. He may be said to be the giver of money that offers it to us, without being the proper determiner of our acceptance of it. But if the acceptance of an offer itself be the thing which is supposed to be given, he cannot, in any proper sense whatsoever, be properly said to be the giver of this, who is not the determiner of it. But it is the acceptance of offers, and the proper improvement of opportunities, wherein consists virtue. He may be said to be the giver of money or goods that does not determine the wise choice; but if the wise and good choice itself be said to be the thing given, it supposes that the giver determines the existing of such a wise choice. But now, this is the thing that God is represented as the *giver* of, when he is spoken of as the giver of virtue, holiness, &c. for virtue and holiness (as all our opponents in these controversies allow and maintain) is the thing wherein a wise and good choice consists. - Jonathon Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, pg 562

[In other words, the very ability that this person supposes he has to make this wise spiritual choice, is the very ability (grace) that is given antecedently to his act of praying, that the Holy Spirit gives in an actual conversion, which is the effect (believing and seeing spiritually) coming before the cause (saving faith given) which is what I noted earlier.

Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus; "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (Jn3:3), i.e., one cannot truly see or comprehend spiritual things; you are blind; spiritual things are foolishness to him - he cannot discern them because they are spiritually discerned. See 1Cor2:14 - "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He hates faith. Why? Because saving faith (as opposed to a common faith or temporary faith) is of the Spirit of God and it is foolishness to him. For in his state and condition of darkness, blindness and being an enemy to God in his mind, while he is making this prayer as sincere as he may sound, he is without saving faith, without which, according to Hebrews 11:6, he cannot please God. It is a glaring contradiction to ask for saving faith without having the kind of faith necessary to ask for it acceptably, which you can't do anyway because we are entirely passive in our being converted. Faith is something given to us by grant or by donation, by the free or sovereign pleasure of God. We are born from above - "...not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" Jn1:13 "So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Romans 9:16

And is not saving faith a gift? If one has to ask for it then it is not a gift but a wage and hence, Romans 11:6 - "And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.^[a] But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." As **Martin Luther** said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God."

The Gospel squashes all human boasting. Faith is a gift...not of ourselves: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast." Eph2:8-9 If someone says he got saved because he believed, he has grounds for boasting.

Thomas Shepard on Faith:

"It is true, all things that pertain to life and godliness are received by faith 2Peter 1:3, yet faith itself is a saving work, which is not received by another precedent faith. Faith therefore is to be accepted not only as begotten in us, but as it is in the beginning of it in the conviction and humiliation of every sinner." Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, p254,5

We don't believe to get converted, that is, we don't work the work of believing from our own industry and strength in order to recommend our self to God so that God will give us what is required for our conversion, this glory of his image and all that consists in it, e.g., holiness, saving faith, and thus effecting our conversion; no, it is because God unites himself to us, gives us this saving grace of faith (while we were without strength) by which we are enabled to believe and we will infallibly do so! In other words the effect of believing cannot come before the cause of saving faith that is given. Once it is given, then are you really able believe and not before. See Owen's discourse on this later!

Also, unless one is in Christ, he can do nothing (see John 15 below). He must first be severed from the wild olive branch and engrafted into the true vine from whence he receives the life giving sap (graces) enabling him to believe the testimony and obey God, hence the obedience of faith.]

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me....for without Me you can do nothing." Jn 15:4-5

Furthermore Edwards makes a good point regarding the error of Arminian doctrine (an anthropocentric dogma) on this issue:

§ 20. Arminians argue that God has obliged himself to bestow a holy and saving disposition, on certain conditions, and that what is given in regeneration, is given either for natural men's asking, or for the diligent improvement of common grace; because, otherwise, it would not be our fault that we are without it, nor our virtue that we have it. But if this reasoning is just, the holy qualities obtained by the regenerate, are only the fruits of virtue, not virtues themselves. All the virtue lies in asking, and in the diligent improvement of common grace.

I will quote John Owen on this topic of universal grace, that God loves all, etc., that God's grace is common and available to all, to help clear up this issue of coming to God without being called.

2. "This objection supposeth that a man is bound to know and be persuaded (that is, to believe) that Jesus Christ died by the appointment of God for him in particular, before he believe in Jesus Christ. Nay, this they [Arminians] make the bottom of their argument, that men, according to our persuasion [doctrine of election - my insert], may scruple whether they ought to believe or no, because they are not assured before that Christ died for them in particular, by the designation and appointment of God. Now, if this be not to involve themselves in a plain contradiction, I know not what is; for what, I pray, is it, according to Scripture, for a man to be assured that Christ died for him in particular? Is it not the very highest improvement of faith? doth it not include a sense of the spiritual love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Is it not the top of the apostle's consolation, [Rom. viii. 34](#), and the bottom of all his joyful assurance, [Gal. ii. 20](#)? **So that they evidently require that a man must believe before he do believe, — that he cannot believe, and shall exceedingly fear whether he ought to do so or no, unless he believe before he believe!** Methinks such removing of scruples were the ready way to entangle doubting consciences in farther inextricable perplexities." - John Owen, Death of Death in the Death of Christ

Owen continues to explain the absurdity of this type of prayer:

"Do not they openly make God to say, "Such is this my love, my universal grace, that by it I will freely love them, I dare joyfully embrace them, in all things but only that which will do them good?" Would not they affirm him to be a grossly counterfeiting hypocrite that should go to a poor blind man, and tell him, "**Alas, poor man, I pity thy case, I see thy want, I love thee exceedingly; open thine eyes, and I will give thee a hundred pounds?**" And dare they assign such a deportment to the most holy God of truth? Is their universal grace anything but a mock? Did that ever do good to any, as to salvation, which is common to all? Are they not the two properties of the grace of God in the Scripture, that it is discriminating and effectual? And is not their grace anything else but these? Let it be granted that all is true which they say concerning the extent of grace; is it such grace as that ever any soul was saved by? Why, I pray, then, are not all? "Why," they will say, "because they do not believe." **So, then, the bestowing of faith is no part of this free grace. See your second aim, even to exalt yourselves and your free-will into the room of grace; or, at least, leaving it room to come in, to have the best share in the work of salvation, — namely, believing itself, that makes all the rest profitable.** See, now, what your universality of free grace leads and tends to. Are not the very terms opposite to one another? In a word, to bring in reprobates to be objects of free grace, you deny the free grace of God to the elect; and to make it universal, you deny it to be effectual. That all may have a share of it, they deny any to be saved by it; for saving grace must be restrained." "...Are not the two great aims of their free grace

to mock God and exalt themselves?"

Cornelius Van Til states:

"If men are totally ignorant of the truth, how can they even become interested in it?"

Here is a great description Edwards gives of the difference between a person who is genuinely converted and a nature (unconverted) man:

<https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/affections/affections.vi.iii.html>

- *On Religious Affections*

It is with hypocrites, as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complains of their hypocrisy, [Hos. 7:8](#): "Ephraim is a cake not turned," half roasted and half raw: there is commonly no manner of uniformity in their affections.

There is in many of them great partiality with regard to the several kinds of religious affections; great affections in some things, and no manner of proportion in others. A holy hope and holy fear go together in the saints, as has been observed from [Psal. 33:18](#), and [147:11](#). But in some of these is the most confident hope, while they are void of reverence, self-jealousy and caution, to a great degree cast off fear. In the saints, joy and holy fear go together, though the joy be never so great: as it was with the disciples, in that joyful morning of Christ's resurrection, [Matt. 28:8](#): "And they departed quickly from the sepulcher, with fear and great joy."⁶⁹ But many of these rejoice without trembling: their joy is of that sort, that it is truly opposite to godly fear.

But particularly one great difference between saints and hypocrites is this, that the joy and comfort of the former is attended with godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but after they are comforted, and their joy established. As it is foretold of the church of God, that they should mourn and loathe themselves for their sins, after they were returned from the captivity, and were settled in the land of Canaan, the land of rest, and the land that flows with milk and honey, [Ezek. 20:42, 43](#): "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." As also in [Ezek. 16:61, 6S, 63](#). A true saint is like a little child in this respect; he never had any godly sorrow before he was born again; but since has it often in exercise: as a little child, before it is born, and while it remains in darkness, never cries; but as soon as it sees the light, it begins to cry; and thenceforward is often crying. Although Christ hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, so that we are freed from the sorrow of punishment, and may now sweetly feed upon the comforts Christ hath purchased for us; yet that hinders not but that our feeding on these comforts should be attended with the sorrow of repentance. As of old, the children of Israel were commanded, evermore to feed upon the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs. True saints are spoken of in Scripture, not only as those that have mourned for sin, but as those that do mourn, whose manner it is still to mourn: [Matt. 5:4](#), "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

Man's wicked presumption: ([code278a](#))

Here is a statement that I heard on the Ben Shapiro Show this morning that sums up original sin, man's depravity: his pride, self-reliance, self-righteousness, addictedness to his own will, practical atheism, and an Arminian/Pelagian bent:

"Man was born on third base, and he thinks he hit a triple."

This is so true! Now you can get a clearer sense of our miserable, self-deceived condition as we are born into the world.

The Subject of Faith and of Irresistible Grace

code254

Excerpt from *The Sound Believer*, pg 268-270

By Thomas Shepard

1. The efficient cause of faith.

Faith is a gracious work of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit therefore is the efficient cause or principal workman of faith; the Spirit does not believe, but causes us to believe; it is not *principium quod*, the principle which does believe, but *principium quo*, the principle by which we do believe. The souls of all the elect (especially when humbled) are, of all other things, most unable to believe; nay, look, as before compunction and humiliation, Satan held the soul captive, chiefly by its lusts and sense; so now when the Lord has burnt these cords, and broken these chains, all the powers of darkness strengthen themselves, and keep the soul under mightily, by unbelief. What do you tell me of mercy, says the soul, it is mercy which I have continually resisted, desperately despised; why do you persuade me to believe? Alas! I cannot, it is true, all that which you say is true, if I could believe, but I cannot see Christ, I cannot come at Christ; I seek him in the means, but he forsakes me there, and I am left of God desolate. And here, believed, the soul has not formerly so many excuses for its sin, as now it has clouds of objections against believing; the Spirit therefore takes fast hold of the souls of the elect, draws them unto Christ, and therefore it is called the **Spirit of faith**, 2Cor. 4:13, and that by an **omnipotent and irresistible power**, Isa. 53:1 *Who hath believed? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* that the soul must and shall believe now. *Compel them to come in*, says the Lord of the supper, Luke 14:35. This the Arminians will not believe; for they say, the question is not whether we are enabled to believe by grace but whether it be after this manner, and by this means, namely, *mode irresistibile*? Consider therefore these reasons to clear the point:

1. Whence does our call and coming to Christ arise but from God's immoveable and unchangeable purpose? Rom. 8:28. The Lord therefore must either **alter his purpose**, or **prevail with the soul to believe**, and overpower the heart thereunto. [*alter his purpose: since God is immutable, his decrees are immutable, hence irrevocable. Arminians don't like this truth, don't believe in God having eternal decrees, since they see it as a threat to their so-called liberty of their will.*]

2. Is not Jesus Christ bound by office and promise to his Father to bring all his lost sheep, that so the Father and he may be glorified in them? **John 10:16.** *Other sheep I have, that I must bring home, and they shall hear my voice.* You that complain, you cannot believe, nay, that you have no heart to believe, the Lord must fetch you in; and you shall hear the bridegroom's voice with joy.

3. **Is not the act of believing wrought by a creating power?** Eph. 1:9 and 2:19 Isa. 57:18, 19 *I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near.* And is not a creating voice irresistible, though there be nothing in it to work upon? So, though you have no ability, heart, head, or strength to believe, yet the Lord will create the fruit of the lips of God's messengers peace, peace. [this is incredible...*I create the fruit of the lips!* How does that happen!? A divine mystery; I understand it but I do not comprehend it. How can that be resisted by human flesh or will? It can't! See the doctrine of compatibility...God works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure, Phil. 2:13, 2Cor. 8:16-17, etc.]

4. Does not the Lord let in that infinite and surpassing sweetness of grace, when he works the soul to believe, standing in extreme need of that grace, that it cannot but come and cleave to it, Ps. 63:2-3, *I long to see thee, says David, for thy loving kindness is better than life;* Is it possible for a man to cleave to his life? Much more to that which is better than life! The light is so clear, it cannot but see and wonder at grace; the good is so sweet, it cannot but taste and accept what God so freely offers and therefore the poor Canaanitish woman, Matt. 15, could not be driven away, though Christ bid her, in a manner, be gone. But she made all the objections against her, arguments for here, as faith usually does, when under this stroke of the Spirit, *The violent take the kingdom of heaven by force.* The Spirit puts a necessity upon them, and irresistibly overpowers them, and this is the cause of it.

And is not this matter of great consolation to all those who feel themselves utterly unable to believe? You think the Lord would give peace and pardon, life and mercy, if I could believe; Oh consider, the Lord has undertaken in the covenant of grace, to work in all his, the condition of the covenant, as well as to convey the good of it, **Jer. 31:32-34.** He has done this for others by an irresistible power, **Heb. 12:1,2,** *Look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;* he came out of his Father's bosom, not only to give life by his death, but to enable his to eat and close with him by faith, that they might never die, **John 6:50,** so that the Lord may work it in you; it is true also, he may not; yet it is unspeakable comfort to consider, that if the Lord had put it over unto you to believe, it is certain, you should never have believed, but now the work is put into the hand of Christ; that which is impossible to you is possible, nay, easy with him; he can comprehend you, when you can not apprehend him; this is exceeding sweet, when your body is sick, and soul is deserted, incredible things to be believed are propounded, an impossible work to thy weakness urged, upon pain of God's sorest and most unappeasable wrath; to consider it is not in me, but in the Lord's own hand, and it is his office, his glory to work faith, and as the apostle speaks, *to show mercy unto them that are shut up,* not only under sin, but also unbelief, Romans 11:32.

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2. The subject matter of faith.

This is the second thing in the description of faith, the soul of a humble sinner, is the subject or matter of faith. I do not mean, the matter out of which faith is wrought, (for there is nothing in man out of which the Spirit begets it) but that wherein faith is seated; I mean also, the habit of faith, not the principle of it; for that is out of man in the Lord Jesus, who is therefore called our hope, as well as our strength; the soul therefore is the subject of faith, called the heart, Rom. 10:9, compared with Matt. 6:21, for we cannot come to Christ in this life with our bodies, we are here absent from the Lord, 2Cor5:6, but the soul can go to him, the heart can be with him, as the eyes can see a thousand miles off, and receive the species or image of things into it; so the soul enlightened by faith, can see Christ afar off, it can long for, choose and rest upon the Lord of life and receive the lively image of Christ's glory in it, 2Cor3, ult. If Christ were present upon earth, the soul (not the body) only could truly receive him; Christ comes to his elect only by his Spirit; and hence our spirits only are fit to receive him, and close with him. Thousands hear Christ outwardly, that inwardly are deaf to all God's calls, their spirits see not, taste not, feel not; it is therefore the soul that is the subject of faith; and, I say, it is a humbled empty soul, which is the subject; for a full, proud, unbroken spirit cannot, nay, will not receive Christ, as we have proved. And therefore, Luke 14, the servant is commanded to bid the *poor, halt, blind, and lame to come in*; They would not make excuses as other did. They that were stung to death with fiery serpents, were the only men that the brazen serpent was lifted up for them *to look upon*, and so be *healed*, John 3:14.

True Grace Distinguished

code310

pg 45 Vol. 2

Jonathan Edwards

[Hence the fruits of the Spirit indicating that this image of God, his glory of his image, has been instamped upon the soul:]

These were the characteristics of those that are **truly happy** given by our Savior in the beginning of his sermon on the mount. These are the things that Christ mentions, as the true evidences of being his real disciples, in his last and dying discourse to his disciples, in the [14th 15th and 16th chapters](#) of John, and in his intercessory prayer, [chap. xvii](#). These are the things which the apostle Paul often speaks of as

evidences of his sincerity, and sure title to a crown of glory. And these are the things he often mentions to others, in his epistles, as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; as the proper evidences of being Christ's, and living in the Spirit: Gal. v. 22-25. It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, &c, that he insists on, as the most essential evidence of true godliness; without which, all other things are nothing. Such are the signs which the apostle James insists on, as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man: James iii. 17. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And such are the signs of true Christianity, which the apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have anywhere in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given, than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted, without its being first known what method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable. All the works of God are in some respects unsearchable; but the Scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God as peculiarly so: Isa. xl. 13. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" Eccles. xi. 5. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VI. It follows from my text and doctrine, that it is no certain sign of grace, that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation.

The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer, and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must, necessarily, earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in Scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous, when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them: they come to the door, and cry Lord, Lord, open to us. Therefore, we are not to look on all desires that are very earnest and vehement, as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints: but there are also longings, which unregenerate men may have, which are often mistaken for marks of godliness. They think they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven; when, indeed, all is to be resolved into self-love; and so is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of the devils.

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Adam's Grace in the Garden

code280

pg 173-176 vol. 17

by John Owen

...the nature of man [Adam], **then flourishing in the vigor of all its intellectual abilities, reason, wisdom, knowledge, in that order and rectitude of them which was his grace...**

[Here, I believe Owen is referring to Adam's grace originally given (concreated) by God in the garden upon his creation; but being he was not "i" Christ" "ut alone and under a covenant of works, *do this and live*, that is, attain the reward of eternal life from the exercise of those graces alone and not from continual flows of grace from Christ. Because he was not *engrafted into the vine*, Jn15, he could not persevere and hence fell as Owen notes. This was to show man's insufficiency and emptiness. Also, noted: the state and condition of Adam while in the garden under the covenant of works as opposed to the preserving grace included in the Promise provided for in the new covenant.

For finding fault with them, [complaining of them,] he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, and I will make [when I will make] a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Heb 8:8

go to pg 116 vol. 22

Owen talks about the situation with Adam, the grace God gave to him initially, but not on an ongoing or continual basis as new covenant believers are promised:

[2.] His wisdom, goodness, and grace, in the nature of that covenant which he hath condescended to make and enter into. The first covenant he made with us in Adam, which we brake, was in itself good, holy, righteous, and just; — it must be so, because it was also made by him. **But there was no provision made in it absolutely to preserve us from that woeful disobedience and transgression which would make it void**, and frustrate all the holy and blessed ends of it. **Nor was God obliged so to preserve us**, having **furnished us with a sufficiency of ability** for our own preservation, so as we could no way fall but by a willful apostasy from him. But this covenant [the new covenant] is of that nature, as that the grace administered in it shall effectually preserve all the covenanters unto the end, and secure unto them all the benefits of it. For, —
p 160 online

Obs. VII. **No covenant between God and man ever was, or ever could be stable and effectual, as unto the ends of it, that was not made and confirmed in Christ**. — God first made a covenant with us in Adam. **There was nothing therein but the mere defectibility of our natures** as we were creatures that could render it ineffectual. And from thence did it proceed. In him we all sinned, by breach of covenant. **The Son of God had not then interposed himself, nor undertaken on our behalf**. The apostle tells us that "in him all things consist;" —without him they have no consistency, no stability, no duration. **So was this first covenant immediately broken. It was not confirmed by the blood of Christ.** And those who suppose that the efficacy and stability of the present covenant do depend solely on our own will and diligence [Pelagianism/Arminianism], had need not only to assert our nature free from that depravation which it was under when this covenant was broken, but also from that defectibility

[see pg 1603] that was in it before we fell in Adam. And such as, neglecting the interposition of Christ, do betake themselves unto imaginations of this kind, surely know little of themselves, and less of God.

Obs. VIII. No external administration of a covenant of God's own making, no obligation of mercy on the minds of men, can enable them unto steadfastness in covenant obedience, **without an effectual influence of grace from and by Jesus Christ**. —For we shall see in the next verses that this is the only provision which is made in the wisdom of God to render us steadfast in obedience, and his covenant effectual unto us.

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Adam After the Fall

code281

The New Covenant vs the Old Covenant of Works

Adam after the fall, the state and condition of those that are not saved vs. those who are, who have the Spirit of Adoption, promises of continual supplies of grace - --his whole excerpt by Owen is Awesome news!! see Flavel, page 1703

Heb1:10-12 *Commentary on Hebrews* by John Owen 211-214 Vol. 19

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

¹¹ *They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;*

¹² *And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

I. **All the properties of God**, considered in the person of the Son, the head of the church, **are suited to give relief, consolation, and supportment unto believers in all their distresses**.

This truth presents itself unto us from the use of the words in the psalm, and their connection in the design of the psalmist. Under the consideration of his own mortality and frailty, he relieves himself with thoughts of the **omni potency** and **eternity of Christ**, and takes arguments from thence to plead for relief.

And this may a little further be unfolded for our use in the ensuing observations : —

1. The properties of God are those whereby God makes known himself to us, and declares both what he is and what we shall find him to be in all that we have to deal with him: he is infinitely holy, just,

wise, good, powerful, etc. And by our apprehension of these things are we led to that acquaintance with the nature of God which in this life we may attain, Exodus 34:5-7.

2. *God oftentimes declares and proposeth these properties of his nature unto us for our supportment, consolation, and relief, in our troubles, distresses, and endeavors after peace and rest to our souls, Isaiah 40:27- 31.*

3. That since the entrance of sin, these properties of God, absolutely considered, will not yield that relief and satisfaction unto the souls of men which they would have done, and did, whilst man continued obedient unto God according to the law of his creation. Hence Adam upon his sin knew nothing that should encourage him to expect any help, pity, or relief from him; and therefore fled from his presence, and hid himself. [For this same reason, the person in Matt. 25:24 hid his one talent because he was afraid:

" *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:" "*

Bottom line - —hose who are not in the new covenant (i.e., unsaved) do not have the assurance that God is a merciful, loving father but they see him as a holy sin avenging God, etc. However, upon being united to Christ, they receive the Spirit of Adoption where they cry out Abba. Father! This Adam did not have, nor did he have the promise of continual supplies of grace; so he, like this person in Matt. 25, ran and hid himself because he was afraid. Hence, Owen states here:

The righteousness, holiness, purity, and power of God, all infinite, eternal, unchangeable, considered absolutely, are no way suited to the advantage of sinners in any condition, Romans 1:32; Habakkuk 1:12, 13.

4. These properties of the divine nature are in every person of the Trinity entirely; so that each person is so infinitely holy, just, wise, good, and powerful, because each person is equally partaker of the whole divine nature and being.

5. The person of the Word, or the eternal Son of God, may be considered either absolutely as such, or as designed in the counsel, wisdom, and will of the Father, by and with his own will and consent, unto the work of mediation between God and man, Proverbs 8:22-31. And in him as such it is that the properties of the nature of God are suited to yield relief unto believers in every condition;

[Unbelievers do not see this nor do the demons; they only see God's Justice in avenging sin, etc.] for, —

(1.) It was the design of God, in the appointment of his Son to be mediator, to retrieve the communion between himself and his creature that was lost by sin. Now, man was so created at first as that everything in God was suited to be a reward unto him, and in all things to give him satisfaction. This being wholly lost by sin, and the whole representation of God to man becoming full of dread and terror, all gracious intercourse, in a way of special love on the part of God, and spiritual, willing obedience on the part of man, was intercepted and cut off. God designing again to take sinners into a communion of love and obedience with himself, it must be by representing unto them his blessed

properties as suited to their encouragement, satisfaction, and reward. And this he doth in the person of his Son, as designed to be our mediator [*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*], Hebrews 1:2, 3; for, —

(2.) **The Son is designed to be our mediator and the head of his church in a way of covenant, wherein there is an engagement for the exerting of all the divine properties of the nature of God for the good and advantage of them for whom he hath undertaken,** and whom **he designed to bring again into favor and communion with God.** Hence **believers do no more consider the properties of God in the person of the Son absolutely, but as engaged in a way of covenant for their good,** and as proposed unto them for an everlasting, satisfactory reward. This is the ground of his calling upon them so often to behold, see, and consider him, and thereby to be refreshed. They consider his power, **as he is mighty to save; his eternity, as he is an everlasting reward; his righteousness, as faithful to justify them; all his properties, as engaged in covenant for their good and advantage.** **Whatever he is in himself, that he will be to them in a way of mercy.** Thus do the holy properties of the divine nature become a **means of supportment unto us,** as considered in the person of the Son of God. And this is, —

[1.] **A great encouragement unto believing.** The Lord Christ, as the Wisdom of God inviting sinners to come unto him, and to be made partakers of him, **lays down all his divine excellencies as a motive thereunto,** Proverbs 8:14, 15, etc.; for on the account of them he assures us **that we may find rest, satisfaction, and an abundant reward in him.** And the like invitation doth he give to poor sinners: Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” They may justly expect salvation in him who is God, and in whom all divine attributes are proposed to their benefit, as they find who come unto him, verses 24, 25. **The consideration hereof prevents all the fears and answers all the doubts of them that look up unto him.**

[2.] An instruction how to consider the properties of God by faith for our advantage; that is, as engaged in the person of the Son of God for our good. **Absolutely considered they may fill us with dread and terror** [e.g., *Adam and the man in Matt. 25:24*], as they did them of old who concluded, when they thought they had seen God or heard his voice, that they should die. Considered as his properties who is our Redeemer, they are always relieving and comforting, Isaiah 54:4, 5.

II. The whole old creation, even the most glorious parts of it, hastening unto its period, at least of our present interest in it and use of it, calls upon us not to fix our hearts on the small perishing shares which we have therein, especially since we have Him who is **omnipotent and eternal for our inheritance** [*this and the other properties of God to insure our perseverance to the end! We are kept by the power of God through faith..to say that man can lose his salvation is to assign imperfection to the Godhead!*]. The figure or fashion of this world, the apostle tells us, is passing away, — that lovely appearance which it hath at present unto us; it is hastening unto its period; it is a fading, dying thing, that can yield us no true satisfaction.

III. The Lord Christ, the mediator, the head and spouse of the church, is infinitely exalted above all creatures whatever, in that he is God over all, omnipotent and eternal.

IV. The whole world, the heavens and earth, being made by the Lord Christ, and being to be dissolved by him, is wholly at his disposal; **to be ordered for the good of them that do believe.** And therefore, —

V. **There is no just cause of fear unto believers from anything in heaven or earth, seeing they are all of the making and at the disposal of Jesus Christ.**

VI. Whatever our changes may be, inward or outward, yet Christ changing not, our eternal condition is secured, and relief provided against all present troubles and miseries. The immutability and eternity of Christ are the spring of our consolation and security in every condition. The sum of all is, that, —

VII. Such is the frailty of the nature of man, and such the perishing condition of all created things, that none can ever obtain the least stable consolation but what ariseth from an interest in the omni potency, sovereignty, and eternity of the Lord Christ.

An Explanation of Man Under the Covenant of Works Before and After the Fall.

code413

Excerpt from

The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant

Theology by Pascal Denault

pgs 28-29

The Covenant of Works had a simple way of functioning: if Adam had obeyed, he and his posterity after him would have retained life and would have been sealed in justice; but his disobedience marked the entrance of death into the world. The fall placed Adam and all of his posterity under condemnation. The Covenant of Works was conditional and provided no way to expiate the offence in case of disobedience. In reformed theology, the Covenant of Works is seen as the foundation of the “retributive” justice of God, whereby obedience begets blessing and disobedience brings malediction. It is the Covenant of Works that founded the principle “do this and you shall live” (Lev 18:5; Gal 3:12) as well as the principle “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23; Heb 10:28). Under the Covenant of Works, eternal life cannot be given freely, it must be earned.⁴ But now, because of sin, the Covenant of Works is ineffective in giving life; it can only bring death (Gal 3:21; Rom 8:3).

⁴ Peter Bulkeley makes a very pertinent remark regarding the revelation of the Covenant of Works versus the revelation of the covenant of Grace: **“The covenant of works is revealed by the light of Nature, but the covenant of grace is reveal by a supernatural light from above.**

Nature's light teaches men to look for life and righteousness by works, and this is written in all men's hearts, Rom. 2:15." *The Gospel Covenant; or the Covenant of Grace Opened*, [...], 1646, p. 98. Bulkeley continues by explaining that it is natural for men to seek justification through works, grace being contrary to natural reasoning.

Reformed theologians considered that the Covenant of Works remained in effect after the fall,⁵ but the features inside this covenant changed after the entry of sin into the world. Before the fall, man benefited from a relationship with his Creator wherein, by virtue of the Covenant of Works, God was his God. While remaining under the obligation of obeying God because of this covenant, fallen man lost his covenantal privileges which ensured him of God's favour and found himself, from then on, under God's wrath. While God remained God for all men even after the fall, sin made it so that He was not longer their God in a favourable convenantal connection. John Owen summarizes the Puritan conception of the Covenant of Works after the fall as follows: "And man continued under an obligation to dependence on God an subjection to his will in all things. [...] But that especial relation of mutual interest by virtue of the first covenant ceased between them."

⁵ Arminius rejected the idea that the Covenant of Works remained in effect after the fall, because, according to him, God cannot require of man something that he is unable to do. To demand perfect obedience from a fallen creature would have been unjust. [...] The Calvinists did not consider it unjust to require such obedience from a creature incapable of this obedience, since this requirement was given while man was still able to comply. Man changed, but the divine standards of justice remain the same. The Covenant of Works allowed the Calvinists to say that God could have unilaterally condemned all men while remaining just, even if none of them could have obeyed.

Continual Supplies of Grace in the New Covenant

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Continuing supplies of grace Jesus, the man vs. Adam in the garden. This shows that believers have the promise of continual supplies of grace from God (from Christ) as Jesus, the man did, as Adam did not which is why he fell upon the first temptation. He was defectible. Adam did not have the promise of continual supplies of grace in that he did not have the Spirit of Adoption. If the man Christ Jesus needed it while innocent and certainly Adam did; then how much more do we as fallen creatures in a

much more corrupt environment than Adam was in, need those continual supplies of graces in order to persevere? Adam only operated upon the first supply of grace with which he was endued by God, to show that man alone or that man's self-sufficiency is not sufficient, that our sufficiency is in God alone - that only when one is in Christ can he do all things and walk worthy of the Lord, all to the glory of God grace, John 15. Also 2Cor3:5, Eph. 1:6 "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the ^{la}Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." and 2Cor4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

Occasional Sermons

Sermon VI

Jonathan Edwards

But then here another inquiry may arise, viz. What is implied in Christ's praying that God's will might be done in what related to his sufferings? To this I answer,

1. This implies a request **that he might be strengthened and supported, and enabled to do God's will**, by going through with these sufferings. The same as when he says, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." It was the preceptive will of God that he should take that cup and drink it; it

was the Father's command to him. The Father had given him the cup, and as it were set it down before him with the command that he should drink it. This was the greatest act of obedience that Christ was to perform. He prays for strength and help, **that his poor feeble human nature might be supported, that he might not fail in this great trial, that he might not sink and be swallowed up, and his strength so overcome that he should not hold out, and finish the appointed obedience.** This was the thing that he feared, of which the apostle speaks in the 5thth of Hebrews, when he says, "he was heard in that he feared." When he had such an extraordinary sense of the dreadfulness of his sufferings impressed on his mind, the fearfulness of it amazed him. He was afraid lest his poor feeble strength should be overcome, and that he should fail in so great a trial, that he should be swallowed up by that death that he was to die, and so should not be saved from death; and therefore he offered up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to strengthen him, and support, and save him from death, that the death he was to suffer might not overcome his love and obedience, but that he might overcome death, and so be saved from it. If Christ's courage had failed in the trial, and he had not held out under his dying sufferings, he never would have been saved from death, but he would have sunk in the deep mire; he never would have risen from the dead, for his rising from the dead was a reward of his victory. If his courage had failed, and he had given up, he would have remained from under the power of death, and so we should all have perished, we should have remained yet in our sins. If he had failed, all would have failed. If he had not overcome in that sore conflict, neither he nor we could have been freed from death, we all must have perished together. Therefore this was the saving from death that the apostle speaks of, that Christ feared and prayed for with strong crying and tears. His being overcome of death was the thing that he feared, and so he was heard in that he feared. This Christ prayed, that the will of God might be done in his sufferings, even that he might not foil of obeying God's will in his sufferings; and therefore it follows in the next verse in that passage of Hebrews,

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." That it was in this respect that Christ in his agony so earnestly prayed that the will of God might be done, viz. that he might have strength to do his will [the very thing Adam should have prayed for but didn't—my insert], and might not sink and fail in such great sufferings; is confirmed from the scriptures of the Old Testament, as particularly from the 69th Psalm. The psalmist represents Christ in that psalm, as is evident from the fact that the words of that psalm are represented as Christ's words in many places of the New Testament. That psalm is represented as Christ's prayer to God when his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow and amazement, as it was in his agony; as you may see in the 1st and 2nd verses, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." But then the thing that is represented as being the thing that he feared, was failing, and being overwhelmed, in this great trial: verses 14 and 15. "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." So again in the 22d Psalm, which is also represented as the prayer of Christ under his dreadful sorrow and sufferings, verses 19, 20, 21. "But be not thou far from me, O Lord; O my Strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from die lion's mouth." It was meet and suitable that Christ, when about to engage in that terrible conflict, should thus earnestly seek help from God to enable him to do his will; for he needed God's help the strength of his human nature, without divine help, was not sufficient to carry him through. This was, without doubt, that in which the first Adam foiled in his first trial, that when the trial came he was not sensible of his own weakness and dependence. If he had been, and had leaned on God, and cried to him for his assistance and strength against the temptation, in all likelihood we should have remained innocent and happy creatures to this day.

Skip to IV.

IV. Why was Christ so earnest in those supplications? Luke speaks of them as very earnest; the apostle speaks of them as strong crying; and his agony partly consisted in this earnestness: and the account that Luke gives us, seems to imply that his bloody sweat was partly at least with the great labour and earnest sense of his soul in wrestling with God in prayer. There were three things that concurred at that time, especially to cause Christ to be thus earnest and engaged.

1. He had then an extraordinary sense how dreadful the consequence would be, if God's will should fail of being done. He had then an extraordinary sense of his own last suffering under the wrath of God, and if he had failed in those sufferings, he knew the consequence must be dreadful. He having now such an extraordinary view of the terribleness of the wrath of God, his love to the elect tended to make him more than ordinarily earnest that they might be delivered from suffering that wrath to all eternity, which could not have been if he had failed of doing God's will, or if the will of God in the effect of his suffering had failed.

2. No wonder that that extraordinary sense that Christ then had of the costliness of the means of sinners' salvation, made him very earnest for the success of those means, as you have already heard.

3. Christ had an extraordinary sense of his dependence on God, and his need of his help to enable him to do God's will in this great trial. Though he was innocent [as Adam was too], yet he needed divine help. He was dependent on God, as man, and therefore we read that he trusted in God. Matt. xxvii. 43. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." And when he had such an extraordinary sight of the dreadfulness of that wrath he was to suffer, he saw how much it was beyond the strength of his human nature alone.

What is this Spirit which the saints have?

Thomas Shepard

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Answer. I shall express myself in these three conclusions.

Concl. 1. That if Adam had stood, he and all his posterity should have had that power and presence, and constant assistance of the Spirit of God, as that they should never have fallen, nor have been able to fall in respect of the assistance of the Spirit. He should have been green all the year long, his blossom should have not been blasted, his fruit should never have withered. And the ground is the rule of justice; for if he falling, all his posterity are forsaken of God, and under the reign of sin, and death, and Satan, Rom. 5:8,21. Then he standing, all his posterity should have had the everlasting presence of God, and should have been under the reign of the Spirit of grace and life. Thus also the covenant ran, "Do and live."

Concl. 2. That the Lord Jesus, the second Adam, standing and rising in the room of all his people, hence he doth convey and propagate to all his posterity the immutable and constant assistance and presence of his Spirit., whereby being once begotten of him, and called to him, they never afterward depart from him. And though weak in themselves, yet assisted by the Spirit, do not, cannot depart wickedly again. The Lord Jesus having stood, they cannot fall, because, by virtue of his standing, they have this, the presence of the Holy Ghost, John 14:19, "Because I live, you shall live also." John 6:57, "As the living Father sent me, and I live by him," &c. Christ standing next to the Father, lives by him; we standing next to Christ, live as infallibly by him. And I say, the ground is Christ's standing. For though there be many reason why the saints can never fall from Christ, as the Spirit of grace, covenant of grace, intercession of Christ, yet the main ground is Christ's standing, without the least fall from the fulfilling of the first covenant, which we having the first moment of believing kept in Christ, hence the Spirit is given, and the covenant of grace, of strength. And hence, Rom. 5:21 and ver. 17 ,18. **And hence the Spirit is said to dwell in believers**, Rom. 8:11. And we are temples of the Spirit, whether he dwell in them in his person personally, the well is here deep, but he dwells in them so as he **never ceaseth assisting of them** [unlike toward Adam who did not have this promise of continual supplies of grace while under his trial under *law*], so that they cannot depart from the Lord again; hence, Isa 49:21, "**My Spirit shall not depart from thy seed.**" In John 14, it is called "**the Spirit that abides forever.**" It binds the soul to the Lord, and keep it forever. Never suffers that love-knot to be united again. When the soul is weak, the Spirit helps him; when careless of itself, the Spirit keeps him, though the

soul offers to run from the Lord, yet this Spirit follow him; though he grieves the Spirit, yet this Spirit still keeps his own house, will not depart from him; and so not suffer the soul to depart from the Lord. And this is the reason why the saints never fall from the Lord, though they have weak grace, poor beginnings, many sins, and Adam not stood, though with the perfect image of God upon him, because he had not this Spirit yet given; though he had the Spirit of God, yet not this Spirit, which some call the Spirit of adoption given to him, because he had not fulfilled the first covenant, which we in Christ have, which is not only the ground of our never falling, but of the assurance we shall never fall. For what breaks a man's peace after faith? Apparition of sin in the conscience. What makes that terrible? The Law. Now when I see in Christ, I have kept all things in the Law, not only the cry and accusations of the law and sin are stilled, but also there ariseth a holy boldness and confidence and joy, even before the face of an angry God, Eph. 3:12. And as soul are body are ever knit, so here, &c.

Concl. 3 This Spirit thus assisting, no unregenerate man ever hath. I speak not now of keeping the soul from falling from grace, but from Christ.

1. Because the spirit of Satan fills them, he is the strong man that keeps the palace [Lk11:21], under whose kingdom and power they are; and therefore this Spirit, which destroys the kingdom of Satan, is not in them.
2. Because this was a prerogative that Adam had not, though he had great gifts and glory otherwise; so this is not the gift which is given unto them.
3. Because this ariseth, and therefore is given because Christ because Christ stood, and therefore those he never stood for, rose for, suffered for, never have it.
4. Therefore we shall see in experience, take the best professors living, though they may come, as they and others judged, to the Lord, and follow the Lord, yet they will in time depart, sometimes outwardly; (John 6:64), "There be some of you that believe not." And why did they depart? "It was not given them of the Father." The Spirit never was given effectually to draw them, nor yet to keep them. Thomas Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins, pg 324

Conforming Us To His Image Through Divine Chastisements

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God works in us holiness by means of discipline, trials, etc., conforming us to his image, including mortification of our lusts and corrupt affections. Evidence of divine love

John Owen, *Commentary on Hebrews 12:9-10*, pg 269-271 Vol. 23

Obs. II. It is good for us to have had the experience of a reverential submission unto paternal chastisements; as from hence we may be convinced of the equity and necessity of submission unto God in all our afflictions. For so these things are improved by the apostle. — And they arise from the consideration of the differences that are between divine and parental chastisements. For, —

1. He by whom we are chastised is “the Father of spirits.” He is a father also, but of another kind and nature than they are. “The Father of spirits; that is, of our spirits: for so the opposition requires; the fathers of our flesh, and the Father of our spirits. And whereas the apostle here distributes our nature into its two essential parts, **the flesh and the spirit**; it is evident that by the “**spirit**,” the **rational soul is intended**. For although the flesh also be a creature of God, yet is **natural generation** used as a means for its production; but the soul is immediately created and infused [that is, **God makes it directly, using no second causes, e.g., as when Paul heard directly from Christ, in an immediate manner, as opposed to from the reading of the word.**], having no other father but God himself. See Numbers 16:22; Zechariah 12:1; Jeremiah 38:16. I will not deny but that the signification of the word here may be farther extended, namely, so as to comprise also the state and frame of our spirits in their restoration and rule, wherein also they are subject unto God alone; but his being the immediate creator of them is regarded in the first place.

And this is the fundamental reason of our patient submission unto God in all our afflictions, namely, **that our very souls are his, the immediate product of his divine power, and under his rule alone**. May he not do what he will with his own? Shall the potsherd contend with its maker?

2. It is supposed from the foregoing verses, that this Father of our spirits doth also chastise us; which is the subject-matter treated of.

3. His general end and design therein, is “our profit” or advantage. This being once well fixed, takes off all disputes in this case. Men, in their chastisements, do at best but conjecture at the event, and are no way able to effect it: but what God designs shall infallibly come to pass; for he himself will accomplish it, and make the means of it certainly effectual. But it may be inquired, what this “profit,” this benefit or advantage, is; for outwardly there is no appearance of any such thing. This is declared in the next place.

4. **The especial end of God in divine chastisements, is, “that he may make us partakers of his holiness.”** The holiness of God, is either that which he hath in himself, or that which he approves of and requires in us. The first is the **infinite purity of the divine nature; which is absolutely incommunicable unto us**, or any creature whatever. Howbeit we may be said to be **partakers** of it in a peculiar manner, **by virtue of our interest in God**, as our God: as also by the **effects of it produced in us, which are his image and likeness**, Ephesians 4:24; as we are said to be made “**partakers of the divine nature**,” 2 Peter 1:4. And this also is the holiness of God in the latter sense; namely, that which he requires of us and approves in us.

Whereas, therefore, this holiness consists in the mortification of our lusts and affections, in the gradual renovation of our natures, and the sanctification of our souls, the carrying on and increase of these things in us is that which God designs in all his chastisements. And whereas, next unto our participation of Christ, by the imputation of his righteousness unto us, this is the greatest privilege,

glory, honor, and benefit, that in this world we can be made partakers of, we have no reason to be weary of God's chastisements, which are designed unto no other end. And we may observe, —

Obs. III. No man can understand the benefit of divine chastisement, who understands not the excellency of a participation of God's holiness. — No man can find any good in a bitter potion, who understands not the benefit of health. If we have not a **due valuation** of this **blessed privilege**, it is impossible we should ever make a right judgment concerning our afflictions.

Obs. IV. If under chastisements we find not an increase of holiness, in some especial instances or degrees, they are utterly lost: we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them.

Obs. V. There can be no greater pledge or evidence of divine love in afflictions than this, that God designs by them to "make us partakers of his holiness," — to bring us nearer to him, and make us more like him.

5. The reasons from whence they have their efficacy unto this end, and the way whereby they attain it, are, (1.) God's designation of them thereunto, in an act of infinite wisdom; which gives them their efficacy. (2.) By weaning us from the world, and the love of it, whose vanity and unsatisfactoriness they openly discover, breaking the league of love that is between it and our souls. (3.) By calling us unto the faith and contemplation of things more glorious and excellent, wherein we may find rest and peace.

Conforming Power Through the Duty in Contemplation

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Duty of Contemplation of God's law, his mind and will, the wisdom of his works, the mysteries of the kingdom, etc. How to know that you are known by him. **Faith defined.** Relief in trials. Two springs of mediation -to be conformed to his image. Delight and joy in the knowledge of God!

Heb. 2:2-4 John Owen, *Commentary on Hebrews 2*

Verse 2. — For if the word spoken [pronounced] by angels was sure [steadfast], and every transgression and [stubborn] disobedience received a just [meet, equal] retribution [or, recompence of reward];

Verse 3. — How shall we escape [fly or avoid], if we neglect [not taking care about] so great salvation, which began to be [was first of all] spoken [declared] by the Lord, and was confirmed [assured, established] unto us by them that heard [it of him],

Verse 4. — God bearing witness with signs and wonders [prodigies], and divers [various] mighty works [powers], and distributions [divisions] of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Thirdly, Then all hopes of escaping must arise from hence, that he whose right it is, and on whom it is incumbent to take vengeance on them that neglect the gospel, will not be able so to do, or at least not to such a degree as to render it so fearful as is pretended. This need not much be insisted on. It is God with whom men have to do in this matter. And they who allow his being cannot deny him to be omnipotent and eternal. Now what cannot he do who is so? It will at length be found to be “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” There is unto wicked men the same everlasting cause of being and punishment. The same hand that upholds them shall afflict them, and that forever. What his righteousness requires, his power and wrath shall execute unto the uttermost, so that there will be no escaping. And these are the holy foundations on which all gospel threatenings and comminations are built; which will all of them take place and be accomplished with no less certainty than the promises themselves.

Now, from all that hath been spoken unto this proposition, we may learn, —

1. To admire the riches of the grace of God, which hath provided so great salvation for poor sinners. Such and so great as it is, we stood in need of it. Nothing could be abated without our eternal ruin. **But when divine wisdom, goodness, love, grace, and mercy, shall set themselves at work**, what will they not accomplish? And the effect of them doth the Scripture set forth in these expressions: “So God loved the world;” “God commendeth his love unto us;” “Greater love hath no man than this;” “Riches of grace;” “Treasures of wisdom;” “Exceeding greatness of power;” and the like. **In this will God be glorified and admired unto all eternity. And in the contemplation hereof are we to be exercised here and hereafter; and thereby may we grow up into the image of God in Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18.** Which way soever we look, whatever we consider in it, here is that which will entertain our souls with delight and satisfaction. The eternal counsel of God, the person of Christ, his mediation and grace, the promises of the gospel, the evil and wrath we are freed from, the redemption and glory purchased for us, the privileges we are admitted unto a participation of, the consolations and joys of the Spirit, the communion with God that we are called unto, — how glorious are they in the eyes of believers! or assuredly at all times they ought so to be. **How can we enough bewail that vanity, whence it is that the mind suffereth itself to be possessed and filled with other things!** Alas, what are they, if compared with the excellency of this love of God in Christ Jesus! Here lies our treasure, here lies our inheritance; why should not our hearts be here also? **Were our minds fixed on these things as they ought, how would the glory of them cast out our cares, subdue our fears, sweeten our afflictions and persecutions, and take off our affections from the fading, perishing things of this world, and make us in every condition rejoice in the hope of the glory that shall be revealed!** And, indeed, we lose the sweetness of the life of

faith, the benefit of our profession, the reward that is in believing, and are made a scorn to the world and a prey unto temptations, because we dwell not enough in the contemplation of this great salvation [this explains why sleepy Christians complain of much drama in their life!]. To stir us up, then, hereunto we may consider, —

(1.) The excellency of the things themselves that are proposed unto our meditations. They are the great, the deep, the hidden things of the wisdom and grace of God. Men justify themselves in spending their time and speculations about the things of nature: and indeed such employment is better and more noble than what the generality of men do exercise themselves about; for some seldom raise their thoughts above the dunghills whereon they live, and some stuff their minds with such filthy imaginations as make them an abomination to God, Micah 2:1, 2, — they are conversant only about their own lusts, and making provision to fulfill and satisfy them. But yet what are those things which the better and more refined part of mankind do search and inquire into? Things that came out of nothing, and are returning thitherward apace; things which, when they are known, do not much enrich the mind, nor better it at all as to its eternal condition, nor contribute any thing to the advantage of their souls. But these things are eternal, glorious, mysterious, that have the character of all God's excellencies enstamped upon them, whose knowledge gives the mind its perfection and the soul its blessedness, John 17:3. This made Paul cry out that he accounted all things to be "but loss and dung" in comparison of an acquaintance with them, Philippians 3:8; and the prophets of old to "search diligently" into the nature of them, 1 Peter 1:10-12, as the things which alone deserved to be inquired after; and which inquiry renders them "noble" in whom it is, Acts 17:11, and is that which alone differenceth men in the sight of God, Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

(2.) Our interest and propriety in them. If we are believers, these are our things. The rich man is much in the contemplation of his riches, because they are his own; and the great man, of his power, because of his propriety in it. Men take little delight in being conversant in their minds about things that are not their own. Now, all these things are ours, if we are Christ's, 1 Corinthians 3:22, 23. This salvation was prepared for us from all eternity, and we are the heirs of it, Hebrews 1:14. It was purchased for us by Jesus Christ; we have redemption and salvation by his blood. It is made over unto us by the promise of the gospel, and conferred upon us by the Spirit of grace. Are these things to be despised? are they to be cast aside among the things wherein we are least concerned? **or can there be any greater evidence that we have no propriety in them than that would be, if our hearts should not be set upon them?** What! all these riches ours, all these treasures, this goodly inheritance, this kingdom, this glory, and yet not be constant in thoughts and meditations about them! It is doubtless a sign, at least, that we question our title unto them, and that the evidences we have of them will not endure the trial. But woe unto us if that should be the end of our profession! and if it be otherwise, why are not, our minds fixed on that which is our own, and which no man can take from us?

(3.) The profit and advantage which we shall have hereby, which will be much every way; for,

[1.] By this means we shall grow up into a likeness and conformity unto these things in our inward man. Spiritual meditation will assimilate our minds and souls unto that which is the object of it. So the apostle tells the Romans that they were delivered into the form of the doctrine preached unto them, chapter 6:17. Obeying it by faith, the likeness of it was brought forth upon their souls; and, by

the renewing of their minds, they were transformed quite into another image in their souls, chapter **12:2**. This the apostle most excellently expresseth, 2 Corinthians 3:18. A constant believing contemplation of the glory of God in this salvation by Christ, will change the mind into the image and likeness of it, and that by various degrees, until we attain unto perfection, when “we shall know even as we are known.” Accustoming of our minds unto these things will make them heavenly; and our affections, which will be conformed unto them, holy. This is the way to have Christ dwell plentifully in us, and for ourselves to “grow up into him who is our head.” And is it nothing, to get our minds purged from an evil habit, inclining unto earthly things, or continually forging foolish and hurtful imaginations in our hearts? **This meditation will cast the soul into another mould and frame**, making the heart “a good treasure,” out of which may be drawn at all times good things, new and old.

[2.] Consolation and supportment under all afflictions will from hence spring up in the soul. When the apostle would describe that property of faith whereby it enables a believer to do and suffer great things joyfully and comfortably, he doth it by its work and effect in this matter. It is, saith he, “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,” Hebrews 11:1; that is, **it brings into the soul, and makes evident unto it, the great things of this salvation, the great things of the love and grace of God therein**. And this it doth no otherwise than by a constant contemplation and holy admiration of them. And when this is once done, he multiplies instances to evince what great effects it will produce, especially in its enabling of us to go through difficulties, trials, and afflictions. And the same also he ascribeth unto hope; which is nothing but the soul’s waiting and expectation to be made partaker of the fullness of this salvation, whose greatness and satisfactory excellency it doth admire, Romans 5:2-5. When any affliction or tribulation presseth upon a believer, he can readily divert his thoughts from it unto the rich grace of God in this salvation; which will fill his heart with such a sense of his love as shall carry him above all the assaults of his trouble. And a direction to this purpose the apostle pursues at large, Romans 8:15-18, 24, 25, 31- 39. This is a safe harbor for the soul to betake itself unto in every storm; as he teacheth us again, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Whatever befalls us in our “outward man,” though it should press so sore upon us as to ruin us in this world, yet “we faint not,” we despond not; and the reason is, **because those things which we suffer bear no proportion unto what we enjoy or expect**. And the way whereby this consideration is made effectual unto us, is by a constant contemplation by faith on the great unseen things of this salvation, which takes off our minds and spirits from a valuation of the things which we presently suffer and endure. And this experience assures us to be our only relief in afflictions; which undoubtedly it is our wisdom to be provided for.

[3.] The same may be said concerning persecution, one especial part of affliction, and commonly that which most entangles the minds of them that suffer. Now, no man can endure persecution quietly, patiently, constantly, according to the will of God, especially when the devil pursues 386 his old design of brining it home unto their persons, Job 2:5, **unless he hath in readiness a greater good, which shall in itself and in his own mind outbalance the evil which he suffers**. And this the grace of this salvation will do. The soul that is exercised in the contemplation and admiration of it, will despise and triumph over all his outward sufferings which befall him on the account of his interest therein, as all persecution doth. This the apostle declares at large, Romans 8. Verses 31-34, he directs us unto a **holy meditation on God’s electing love**, and on the **death and mediation of Christ, the two springs of this meditation**; and thence leads us, verses 35, 36, to a supposition of the great and sore persecutions that

may befall us in this world; and from the former consideration triumphs over them all, verse 37, with a joy and exultation beyond that of conquerors in a battle, which yet is the greatest that the nature of man is capable of in and about temporal things. When the soul is prepossessed with the glory of this grace and his interest therein, it will assuredly bear him up against all the threatenings, reproaches, and persecutions of this world, even as it did the apostles of old, making them esteem that to be their glory and honor which the world looked on as their shame, Acts 5:41; and without this the heart will be very ready to sink and faint.

[4.] This also will greatly tend unto the confirmation of our faith, by giving us a full experience of the things that we do believe. **Then the heart is immovable, when it is established by experience, when we find a substance, a reality, a spiritual nourishment in things proposed unto us. Now, how can this be obtained, unless we are conversant in our minds about them? unless we dwell in our thoughts and affections upon them?** for thereby do we taste and find how good the Lord is in this work of his grace.

Thus this duty being on many accounts of so great importance, we may do well to consider wherein it consisteth. And there are these four things belonging unto it: —

(1.) **Intense prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to give us an acquaintance with the mystery and grace of this great salvation.** In ourselves we have no inbred knowledge of it, nor can we by our own endeavors attain unto it. **We must have a new understanding given us, or we shall not “know him that is true,”** 1 John 5:20. For notwithstanding the declaration that is made of this mystery in the gospel, we see that the most of men live in darkness and ignorance of it. It is only the Spirit of God which can search these “deep things of God,” and reveal them unto us, 1 Corinthians 2:10. By him must “he who commanded light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4:6. And therefore the apostle prays for the Ephesians that God would give unto them “**the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that, the eyes of their understandings being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,**” chapter 1:17-19; and for the **Colossians**, that they might come unto “all riches of the **full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,**” chapter 2:2, — that is, that they might have a spiritual and saving acquaintance with the mystery of this great salvation, the love, grace, and wisdom of God therein, which without this Spirit of wisdom and revelation from above we shall not attain unto. This, then, in the first place, is to be sought after, this are we to abide in, — **constant prayers and supplications for the teaching, instructing, revealing, enlightening work and efficacy of this Spirit, that we may be enabled to look into these deep things of God, that we may in some measure with all saints comprehend them, and grow wise in the mystery of salvation.** Solomon tells us how this wisdom is to be obtained: **Proverbs 2:3-5, “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seediest her as for silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”** It is by praying, crying, supplications, with diligence and perseverance, that we attain this wisdom. Abide herein, or all other attempts will prove but vain. How many poor souls, otherwise weak and simple,

have by this means grown exceeding wise in the mystery of God! and how many more, wise in this world, through the neglect of it, do walk in darkness all their days!

(2.) **Diligent study of the word, wherein this mystery of God is declared and proposed unto our faith and holy contemplation;** but this hath been spoken unto in part already, and must again be considered, and so need not here be insisted on.

(3.) **Sincere love unto and delight** in the things that are by the Spirit of God revealed unto us, is another part of this duty. Herein our apostle declares what was his frame of heart, Philippians 3:8. How doth his heart, triumph in and rejoice over the knowledge he had obtained of Jesus Christ! and then, indeed, **do we know anything of the grace of God aright, when our hearts are affected with what we know.** Peter tells us that the saints of old, in their believing, “rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” 1 Epist. 1:8. They discovered that in Christ which made their hearts leap within them, and all their affections to overflow with **delight and joy.** **And this is an essential part of this holy admiration, which distinguisheth it from that barren, fruitless, notional speculation of it, which some are contented with.** This are we to stir up our hearts unto in all our meditations of the grace of God, and not to rest until we find them affected, satisfied, and filled with a holy complacency; **which is the most eminent evidence of our interest in and union unto the things that are made known unto us.**

(4.) All these things are to be attended with **thankfulness and praise.** This the apostle was full of, and broke forth into, when he entered upon the description of this grace, Ephesians 1:3, 4; and this will be the frame of his heart who is exercised unto a holy admiration of it. When our Lord Jesus Christ considered the grace of God in revealing the **mysteries of this salvation** unto his disciples, it is said of him that he “rejoiced in spirit,” *ἠγαλλιασατο*, Luke 10:21, “his spirit leaped in him;” and he breaks forth into a solemn doxology, giving praise and glory unto God. And is it not their duty to whom they are revealed to do that which, out of love unto them, our Lord Jesus Christ did on their behalf? Thankfulness for the things themselves, **thankfulness** for the revelation of them, thankfulness for the love of God and the grace of Jesus Christ in the one and the other, is a great part of this duty.

2. This will teach us what esteem we ought to have of the word of the gospel, by which alone this great salvation is revealed and exhibited unto us, the great means and instrument which God is pleased to use in bringing us unto a participation of it. This one consideration is enough to instruct us as to what valuation we ought to make of it, what price we should set upon it, seeing we cannot have the “treasure” without the purchase of this “field.” **Some neglect it, some despise it, some persecute it, some look upon it as foolishness, some as weakness; but unto them that believe, it is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”** To further us in this duty, I shall take up some of those considerations which the words we insist upon do offer unto us, and thereby also pass through what yet remains for our instruction in them. And we may consider, —

(1.) The excellency and pre-eminence of the gospel, which ariseth from the first revealer, that is, the Lord Christ, the Son of God. It was” begun to be spoken unto us by the Lord.” Herein the apostle prefers it before the law. It is that word which the Son came to reveal and declare from the bosom of the Father; and surely he deserves to be attended unto. Hence it is so often called “the word of Christ”

and “the gospel of Christ;” not only because it treateth of him, but because it proceedeth from him, and on that account is “worthy of all acceptation.’ And,

(2.) To neglect the gospel is to neglect and despise the Son of God, who is the author of it, and consequently the love and grace of God in sending him. So the Lord Christ tells them that preach the gospel, “He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” Neglect of the gospel reflects immediately upon the Lord Christ and the Father; and therefore our apostle bids us take heed that we despise not him who spake from heaven; which can be no otherwise done but by neglect of his word. Some pretend to honor Christ, but they have no regard for his word; yea, they may say of it as Ahab of Micaiah, that they hate it, and have therefore some of them endeavored to extirpate the preaching of it out of the world, as the Papists have done, — at least, have looked on it as a useless thing, that the church might be well enough without. But such men will find themselves mistaken when it is too late to seek after a remedy. The true cause of their hatred unto the word, is because they can find no other way to express their hatred unto Christ himself; neither did ever any man hate or loathe the gospel, but he that first hated and loathed Jesus Christ. But against the word they have many pretences, against the person of Christ none, that are as yet passable in the world. This makes the word to bear that which is intended against Christ himself; and so will he interpret it at the last day.

(3.) Consider that this word was confirmed and witnessed. unto from heaven, by the mighty works and miracles which attended the dispensation thereof. So our apostle here informs us. And though we saw not those miracles, yet we have them left on infallible record for our use, that by them we might be yet stirred up to value and attend unto the word in a due manner. God hath so ordered things in his holy providence, that none can neglect the word without shutting his eyes against such light and evidence of conviction as will leave him abundantly inexcusable at the last day. Now, from these and the like considerations the duty proposed may be enforced.

--*Eighthly*, To conclude, The teachings of God are transforming teachings; [2 Cor. 3:18](#). they change the soul into the same image; God casts them, whom he teacheth, into the very mould of those truths which they learn of him, [Rom. 6: 17](#). Flavel p319v2 Sermon 23.

John Flavel states:

“Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and molds their hears into their own similitude and nature; the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments.” [\[the same effect that contemplating spiritual things, contemplating God’s glory, his works, his excellencies, his ways, etc., does to the saints, transforming them into the very image of those things as the Spirit works it. 2Cor3:18, Romans 12:1-2](#)

Being Conformed to the Image of Christ

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by diligent attendance to being spiritually minded, by contemplating the glory of Christ. More on [2Cor3:18](#), contemplation of the glory of Christ. Mixing the word with faith.

John Owen, *Commentary on Hebrews 2:1* p264-266

I. Diligent attendance unto the word of the gospel is indispensably necessary unto perseverance in the profession of it.

Such a profession I mean as is acceptable unto God, or will be useful unto our own souls. The profession of most of the world is a mere not-renunciation of the gospel in words, whilst in their hearts and lives they deny the power of it every day. A saving profession is that which expresseth the efficacy of the word unto salvation, Romans 10:10. This will never be the effect of a lifeless attendance unto the word. And therefore we shall first consider what is required unto the giving heed to the gospel, here commended unto us. And there are in it (amongst others) the things that follow: —

1. **A due valuation of the grace tendered in it**, and of the word itself on that account. προσεχειν [watch] denotes such an attendance unto anything as proceeds from an estimation and valuation of it answerable unto its worth [this is not the case in false converts who try to come to God by a human prayer]. If we have not such thoughts of the gospel, we can never attend unto it as we ought. **And if we consider it not as that wherein our chief concernment lies, we consider it not at all as we ought.** The field wherein is the hid treasure is so to be heeded as to be valued above all other possessions whatsoever, Matthew 13:44. They who esteemed not the marriage-feast of the King above **all avocations and worldly occasions**, were shut out as unworthy, Matthew 22:7, 8. **If the gospel be not more unto us than all the world besides, we shall never continue in a useful profession of it.** Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children, must all be despised in comparison of it and in competition with it. When men hear the word as that which puts itself upon them, attendance unto which they cannot decline without present or future inconveniencies, without considering that all the concernments of their souls lie bound up in it, they will easily be won utterly to neglect it. According as our esteem and valuation of it is, so is our heeding of it and attendance unto it, and no otherwise. Harkening unto the word as unto a song of him that hath a pleasant voice, which may please or satisfy for the present, is that which profits not men, and which God abhors, Ezekiel 33:32. **If the ministration of the gospel be not looked on as that which is full of glory, it will never be attended unto.** [those who came to God by a human prayer and think they are saved, will not have this due valuation of the glory of Christ; they do not see him full of glory. Remember, the only way of salvation is by effectual vocation; it of the Lord and not of the will or choosing by man that is the efficient cause of their conversion.] This the apostle presseth, 2 Corinthians 3:8, 9. Constant high thoughts, then, of the necessity, worth, glory, and excellency of the gospel, as on other accounts, so especially of the author of it, and the grace dispensed in it, is the first step in that diligent heeding of it which is required of us. Want of this was that which ruined many of the Hebrews to whom the apostle wrote. And without it we shall never keep our faith firm unto the end.

2. **Diligent study of it**, and searching into the mind of God in it, that so we may grow **wise in the mysteries thereof**, is another part of this duty. The gospel is “the wisdom of God,” 1 Corinthians 1:24. In it are laid up all the stores and treasures of that wisdom of God which ever any of the sons of men shall come to an acquaintance with in this world, Colossians 2:2, 3. **And this wisdom is to be, sought for as silver, and to be searched after as hid treasures, Proverbs 2:4; that is, with pains and diligence**, like

unto that of those who are employed in that inquiry. Men with indefatigable pains and danger pierce into the bowels of the earth, in the search of those hid treasures that are wrapped up in the vast womb of it. **Silver and treasures are not gathered by every lazy passenger on the surface of the earth. They must dig, seek, and search, who intend to be made partakers of them; and they do so accordingly.** And so must we do for these treasures of heavenly wisdom. The mystery of the grace of the gospel is great and deep, such as the angels desire to bow down and look into, 1 Peter 1:12; which the prophets of old, notwithstanding the advantage of their own especial revelations, inquired diligently after, verses 10, 11: whereas now, **if any pretend, though falsely, to a revelation, they have immediately done with the word, as that which, by the deceit of their imaginations, they think beneath them, when indeed it is only distant from them,** and is really above them; as if a man should stand on tiptoe on a molehill, and despise the sun appearing newly above the horizon as one beneath him [This is the danger of the pentecostal movement]. Diligent, sedulous searching into the word belongs unto this heeding of it, Psalm 1:2; or a laboring by all appointed means to become acquainted with it, wise in the mystery of it, and skilled in its doctrine. Without this, no man will hold fast his profession. **Nor doth any man neglect the gospel but he that knows it not,** 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4. **This is the great principle of apostasy in the world: — men have owned the gospel, but never knew what it was; and therefore leave the profession of it foolishly, as they took it up lightly. Studying of the word is the security of our faith.**

3. **Mixing the word with faith** is required in this attention. See Hebrews 4:2. As good not hear as not believe. **Believing is the end of hearing,** Romans 10:10, 11; and therefore Lydia's faith is called her attention, Acts 16:14. This is the life of heeding the word, without which all ether exercise about it is but a dead carcass. To hear and not believe, is in the spiritual life what to see meat and not to eat is in the natural; **it will please the fancy, but will never nourish the soul. Faith alone realizeth the things spoken unto the heart, and gives them subsistence in it, Hebrews 11:1; without which, as to us, they flow up and down in loose and uncertain notions.** This, then, is the principal part of our duty in heeding the things spoken; **for it gives entrance to them into the soul,** without which they are poured upon it as water upon a stick that is fully dry.

4. Laboring to express the word received, in **a conformity of heart and life unto it,** is another part of this attention. **This is the next proper end of our hearing.** And to do a thing appointed unto an end without aiming at that end, is no better than the not doing it at all, in some cases much worse. The apostle says of the Romans, **that they were cast into the mould of the doctrine of the gospel,** chapter 6:17. **It left upon their hearts an impression of its own likeness, or produced in them the express image of that holiness, purity, and wisdom which it revealeth.** This is to **behold with open face the glory of the Lord in a glass, and to be changed into the same image, 2 Corinthians 3:18; that is, the image of the Lord Christ,** manifested unto us and **reflected upon us** by and in the glass of the gospel. **When the heart of the hearer is quickened, enlivened, spirited with gospel truths, and by them is moulded and fashioned into their likeness,** and expresseth that likeness in its **fruits,** or a conversation becoming the gospel, then is the word attended unto in a right manner. This will secure the word a station in our hearts, and give it a permanent abode in us, This is the indwelling of the word, whereof there are many degrees, and we ought to aim that it should be plentiful
 -- A remarkable transformation and change of spirit follows it [meditation]. These things are found to be **marvelously assimilating.** The sights of God, the felt presence of God, is as fire, **which quickly**

assimilates what is put into it to its own likeness. So 2Cor. 3:18. They are said to be "changed from glory to glory." "It always leaves the mind more refined and abstracted from gross material things, and changed into the same image. They have a similitude of God upon them, who have God near unto their hearts and reins.

- John Flavel, Sacramental Meditations, pg 390 Vol. VI

John Flavel states:

"Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and molds their hearts into their own similitude and nature; the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments." [the same effect that contemplating spiritual things, contemplating God's glory, his works, his excellencies, his ways, etc., does to the saints, transforming them into the very image of those things as the Spirit works it. 2Cor3:18, Romans 12:1-2

Being Conformed to his Image by the Gospel

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Notes on the Bible, pg 801 Vol. 2

The Works of Jonathan Edwards

2. We behold the glory of God as in a **looking-glass** in another respect, and that is as we behold it by the intermediation of the outward means of our **illumination and knowledge of God**, viz. Christ's ministers, and the gospel which they preach, and his ordinances which they administer; **which serve instead of a looking-glass, to reflect the glory of the Lord.** When men read the Holy Scriptures, they there may see Christ's glory, as men see **images** of things by looking in a glass, so we see **Christ's glory in ordinances. Ministers are burning and shining lights; but then they do not shine by their own light, but only reflect the light of Christ.** They are called stars, that are held in the right hand of Christ, and shine by reflecting Christ's light, as the stars shine by reflecting the light of the sun; and so they are as **mirrors that bring the light of Christ's glory to the view of the church.** They are lights set up in golden candlesticks; by looking on these lights, they see light, they see the light of Christ reflected. It is evident the apostle is here speaking of the light of **Christ's glory** as **ministered and communicated** by ministers of the gospel, and ministers of the **Spirit, which is that light and glory**, as we shall show presently. **Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.** So in the words next following in the beginning of the next chapter, **ver. 1, 2, 5.** and which is strongly to the purpose in the **6th verse,** he expressly speaks of the light of this glory as communicated to men by ministers in this way, viz. **by first shining upon them or into their hearts, and then being communicated, or given from them to others, which is just as light is communicated from a reflecting glass.** "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And in the next verse they are spoken of as the vessel that conveys the treasure: **now a vessel is to the treasure that it conveys, as a glass is to the light that that conveys.** And, it further argues that the apostle has respect to **ministers and to the means of grace,** as a **glass in which we see the glory of**

the Lord, by that to which he here alludes, viz. the children of Israel's seeing the glory of the Lord in Moses' face; but Moses is here by the apostle spoken of, as in this representing both Christ and gospel ministers. That he speaks of him as in this thing representing Christ, is most evident by the 6th verse of the next chapter; and that he also speaks of him as herein like gospel ministers the apostles and others is also evident, because the apostle does expressly compare Moses' holding forth the glory of God in his face to ministers holding forth the glory of Christ, as in the 12th and 13th verses.

And herein the sight, that the saints have of the glory of Christ in this world, differs from that sight that the saints have in heaven; for there they see **immediately face to face, but here by a medium, by an intervening looking-glass, in which the glory is but obscure in comparison of the immediate glory seen in heaven.** 1 Corinth. xiii. 12. "Now we see **through a glass darkly [the gospel],** then face to face." **But it is a very plain and clear sight in comparison of that which was under the law; it is beholding with open face in comparison of that, though the face that is seen be in a glass; the sight we have now is by a medium as well as then, though the medium made use of now excels that made use of under the law, as much as an open glass, for discerning, exceeds a glass covered with a veil.**

"Are changed into the same image." In this there is an agreement between our looking in this glass, and a person's looking in a material glass, that there is an exact resemblance between the image in the glass, and the person that beholds it, in both cases. But in this there is a difference, that, whereas when a person looks in a glass, the **image in the glass is conformed to him, as being derived from him as his image; he impresses his image upon the glass; but, when a person looks in this spiritual glass, the image that he beholds there conforms him to it.** [hence, 2Cor3:18*] It is not his image, but the image of God, and reflects and impresses its likeness on the beholder.¹

[341] 2 Cor. iii. 18. "Behold as in a glass." What seems especially to be meant by the looking-glass here spoken of, is the **figurative representation of gospel things** in the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses; which, to the Jews, who did not know the meaning of them, nor see the image of Christ, or gospel things, in them, was as a veil; but to us, to whom the image plainly appears as unveiled by the gospel, those types and other figurative representations are as a glass, in which we see the image of Christ's face. [Hence, the vital important of growing in Christian knowledge of the gospel mysteries!!... the God-man, his infinite condescension, the offices of Christ, especially his office of being our High Priest, etc., upon which we meditate daily (Joshua 1, 2Cor3:18) contemplating these by faith mixing itself with them by which we grow, being conformed to his image from glory to glory!¹ See also Romans 12:1-2 Opposed to this is the mind of a worldling, whose mind is continually contemplating worldly interests.

___ *A remarkable transformation and change of spirit follows it. **These things are found to be marvelously assimilating.** The sights of God, the felt presence of God, is as fire, **which quickly assimilates what is put into it to its own likeness.** So 2Cor. 3:18. They are said to be "changed from glory to glory." It always leaves the mind more refined and abstracted from gross material things, and changed into the same image. **They have a similitude of God upon them, who have God near unto their hearts and reins.** - John Flavel, *Sacramental Meditations*, pg 390 Vol. VI

¹ In the last place, I shall show you the **transcendent excellency** of this life of communion with God; it is the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth, as will appear by these twenty excellencies thereof following,

I. *Excellency*. It is the assimilating instrument whereby the soul is molded and fashioned after the image of God. This is the excellency of communion with God, to make the soul like him. There is a two-fold assimilation or conformity of the soul to God, the one perfect and complete, the other inchoate and in part. Perfect assimilation is the privilege of the perfect state, resulting from the immediate vision and perfect communion the soul has with God in glory, **1 John 3:2**, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." **Perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation**; but the soul's assimilation or imperfect conformity to God in this world, is wrought and gradually carried on, by daily communion with him. And as our communion with God here, grows up more and more into spirituality and power, so in an answerable degree does our conformity to him advance. Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating efficacy; he that walks in vain company is made vainer than he was before; and he that walks in spiritual, heavenly company, will be ordinarily more serious than he was before. But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man as communion with God does. **Those are most like unto God that converse most frequently with him**. The beauty of the Lord is upon those souls; it figures the spirit of a man after the divine pattern. That is the first excellency of communion with God, it assimilates them to God. Flavel, Vol. 4 pg 250 [[I added this footnote.](#)]

John Flavel states further:

"Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and molds their hearts into their own similitude and nature; the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments." [[the same effect that contemplating spiritual things, contemplating God's glory, his works, his excellencies, his ways, etc., does to the saints, transforming them into the very image of those things as the Spirit works it. 2Cor3:18, Romans 12:1-2](#)]

Being Conformed To His Image Necessary

Man's Pride Subdued, etc., Isa. 11:6

(Conformed by knowledge of God – Matthew Henry)

By G Clark

Quote from the Ben Shapiro Show,

Feb. 1, 2022

An explication

Code450

Here is a quote that I heard on the Ben Shapiro Show this morning that sums up original sin and man's depravity: his pride, self-reliance, self-righteousness, addictedness to his own will, practical atheism, and an Arminian/Pelagian bent:

“Man was born on third base, and he thinks he hit a triple.”

So True! Now you can get a clearer sense of our miserable, self-deceived condition as we come into this world.

Follow up comment:

This is what our ongoing sanctification works to eradicate: the corruptions from our souls, for God hates these things, being highly provoking to him; and this is why we go through afflictions and trials - to draw us to him, and to separate the wheat from the chaff, those corruptions that so easily besets us; but the Spirit must work it.

As we study and contemplate the word, we grow in the knowledge of him. And in so doing we are transformed into the very image of those things, his likeness, his moral likeness; we more and more take on this image of his moral excellencies (see 1Cor13:4, Gal. 5:22, e.g., *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³[a]gentleness, self-control*), in which his 'glory' principally consists.

Now, **2Cor. 3:18** become clear:

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord [his moral excellencies], are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another [our sanctification, **2Cor. 4:16**]. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit [the Spirit works it]." This process is imperceptible - like watching grass grow or paint dry. Now see **Romans 9:29** -

"...He predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son," (see all this yet?)

2Cor. 4:16, "Even though our outward man is perishing [the old image of Adam], yet the inward *man* [the new creation, the new man, God's image restored] is being renewed day by day."

Isa. 11:6

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

Matthew Henry explains:

Lastly, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God. 1. The effect of it shall be tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction: A little child shall lead those who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness and not to use any coercive power, but to be as little children, [Matt 18 3](#). See [2 Cor 8 5](#). 2. **The cause of it shall be the knowledge of God.** The more there is of that the more there is of a disposition to peace. They shall thus live in love, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. **The better acquainted we are with the God of love the more shall we be changed into the same image and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image.**

Now read **Mark 4:25**...with [\[my inserts\]](#)

"For to the one who has [\[saving graces\]](#), more will be given [\[pursuant to 2Cor3:18, growing in grace...\]](#), and from the one who has not [\[does not have 'saving graces' but only common\]](#), even what he has will be taken away [\[especially at the last day..."depart from me"...Mt. 7:23\]](#).

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed [\[the word\]](#) on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. [\[because the Spirit works it, Phil. 2:13, a wonderful mystery.\]](#) The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear [\[signifying grace brought to maturity\]](#).

But when the grain is ripe [\[our sanctification is complete\]](#), at once he puts in the sickle [at death], because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26-29

Re-read this tomorrow. There's a lot here. Heavy, uh!

Phil. 2:13, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

God's "good pleasure" is his will, his *will of decree*, that never is frustrated.

The next question is, Why is this so? What's the deal? What is the big picture?

Christians are being prepared to be able to partake wholly, in a pure manner, in a pure flame of love to God, to participate in the infinite love that God has for himself! That's heavy. That's it!! This is our whole purpose: to love God and enjoy him forever in his presence with joy unspeakable. Hence, *without holiness no one will see the Lord*.

Hermon Bavinck (1900s) states regarding God:

He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself. Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, he may not love anything else except with a view to himself. He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.

When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts. For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. He made man perfect. And loving mankind, he offered them eternal life. It was seriously meant. It was no farce. All men disobey God. All came under his wrath and curse. God continued to love himself; he therefore had to punish every insult to his holiness. Pg 132 *Common Grace & the Gospel*

Why God created the earth and all that is in it, especially human beings that have a *faculty of understanding* that can know God and have *affections that make us marriable*, fit in this grand scheme of God's self-glorification. God's Glory is the ultimate end of which our salvation is a large part. This is what sanctification is preparing us for. It weans us off the addictedness to our own will, purifies our souls, our minds, wills, and affections, so that we are no longer bewitched by the attractions of temporal things (many of which are lawful, but not all profitable; it's the overvaluing of them that is not good.); but what does the scripture say? "

...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2Cor4:18

Sin separates from God, even in this life, even as Christians in a sense; not eternally, but for a season, during God discipline, afflictions, and cloudy days, where we cannot see the sun [Sun as clearly as we would like] and are left, for a season, to our own devices to show our complete inadequacies and the vileness of our self-reliance, for as John said, *for without me you can do nothing*, John 15:5, nothing spiritually good. When you see God more clearly, who he is, what he is like, this will get your mind off your self-interests and vain earthly attractions, and onto him; consequently, a more holy balance.

Thomas Shepard on Free Grace, etc.

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To say that this converting grace that is described in the previous pages is a common thing, that Christ died for sinners, I am a sinner; therefore, Christ died for me; that everybody is the subject of it, tends to a gross inconsistency and undervaluation of God's grace, for if it is common, then it is a grace that is consistent with going to hell since most go there. For how can you esteem Christ's work, his person, his infinite power and wisdom in the way of salvation in a due manner if it is a common thing? How can you praise God in a due manner and give him the honor due to him if his grace can lead to such dismal results? [Thomas Shepard](#) explains this Arminian heresy:

Morality of the Sabbath p 124

Vol. 3 by Thomas Shepard

https://books.google.com/books?ei=6RmuTpGKBIqUiQK5_PGNCg&ct=result&output=text&id=JYF-cp2Q5WMC&dq=thomas+shepard+ineffectual+hearing+the+word&jtp=124

1. That this doctrine, under a color of free grace, doth as much vilify and take off **the** price of free grace in Christ's death as any I know; for what can vilify this grace of Christ more, than for Christ so to shed his blood as that Peter and Abraham in heaven shall have no more cause to thank Jesus Christ for his love therein than Judas and Cain in hell? it being equally shed for one as much as for **the** other.

2. That this is a false bottom for faith to rest upon and gather evidence from; for, 1. If Christ hath died for all, he will then certainly save all; for so Paul reasons, (Rom. viii. 32, and vi. 10;) he hath given his Son to death for us; how shall he not but with him give us all other things? And therefore he will give faith, and give repentance, and give perseverance, and give eternal life also, which is most false. If he did not pray for all, then he hath not died for all, (John xvii. 9) which Scripture never yet received scarce the show of a rational answer, though some have endeavored it with all willingness.

Hence, therefore, they that say that the first evidence of God's love and free grace or actual favor is to a sinner, as a sinner [\[meaning everyone - All that was ever born, since all are born sinners\]](#), had need consider what they say; for is it to a sinner as possessed with Christ and receiving of him, or as dispossessed of Christ, not having of him, but rather refusing and rejecting of him? If they say the first, they then speak the truth; but then they raze down their own pernicious principle, that Christ and God's love belongs to them, as sinners. If they affirm the latter, then they do injuriously destroy God's free grace and the glory of Christ, who think to possess promises without possessing Christ, or to have promises of grace without having Christ the foundation of them all. **For, though the common love of God (as the bare offer of grace is) may be manifested without having Christ, yet special, actual love cannot be actually our own, without having and first receiving of him; and if the Spirit of God convince the world of sin (and consequently of condemnation) while they do not believe, (John xvi. 9,) **I wonder how it can then convince them of pardon of sin and reconciliation before they do believe?** unless we will imagine it to be a lying spirit, which is blasphemous [\[excellent reasoning!\]](#). These things**

not considered of, have and do occasion **much error at this day in the point of evidencing**, and hath been an inlet of deep delusion, and open gaps have been made hereby to the loose ways and depths of **Familism** and gross **Arminianism**, and therefore, being well considered of, are sufficient to clear up the ways of those faithful servants of the Lord, (who dare not sow pillows, nor cry peace to the wicked, much less to sinners, as sinners.) both from the slanderous imputation of legal ministrations after an Old Testament manner, as also of making works the ground of faith, or the causes of assurance of faith; the free offer being the ground of the one, and the free promise the cause and ground of the other. p132-33

Being Drawn to Christ - The Meaning

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Concerning Efficacious Grace

by Jonathan Edwards

p559-560 vol. 2

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iv.html>

When Christ speaks of men being **drawn** to him, he does not mean any preparation of disposition antecedent to their having the gospel, but a being converted to Christ by faith in the gospel, revealing Christ crucified, as appears by [John xii. 32](#). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." [Acts xv. 9](#). "Purifying their hearts by faith." Therefore we are not to suppose God first purifies the heart with the most excellent virtues, to fit it for faith.

The apostle says, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Therefore, it is not possible that persons should have, before faith, those virtues that are peculiarly amiable to God, as Stebbing supposes. [\[Stebbing is an Arminian\]](#)

§ 67. The apostle James tells us, that if we do not pray in faith, we have no reason to expect to receive any thing, and particularly not to receive divine wisdom. And therefore it is unreasonable to suppose with Stebbing, that persons first pray, even before they have a spirit of meekness, and teachableness, and humility, faith, or repentance, and that God has promised to answer these prayers. [\[Hence coming to God by a human prayer is a coming without being called, without faith, and is a wicked presumption. see §71 below and code278a.\]](#) Christian virtues being everywhere spoken of as the special effect of grace, and often called by the name of grace, by reason of its being the peculiar fruit of grace, does not well consist with the Arminian notion of assistance, viz. that God is obliged to give us assistance sufficient for salvation from hell, because, forsooth, it is not just to damn us for the want of that which we have not sufficient means to escape; and then, after God has given these sufficient means, our improving them well is wholly from ourselves, our own will, and not from God; and the thing wherein Christian virtue consists, is wholly and entirely from ourselves.

§ 68. **Efficacious grace is not inconsistent with freedom.** This appears by [2 Cor. viii. 16, 17.](#) "Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you; for indeed he accepted the invitation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you." So that his forwardness being put into his heart by God, and his being forward of his own accord, are not inconsistent one with the other.

§ 69. **According to Arminian principles, men have a good and honest heart, the very thing that is the grand requisite in order to God's acceptance,** and so the proper grand condition of salvation, and which is often spoken of in the Scriptures as such, before they have the proper condition of salvation. See Stebbing, page 48. This good and honest, meek and humble, sincere heart, they suppose they have before they have faith, repentance, or obedience. Yea, they themselves hold this previous qualification to be the grand and essential requisite in order to God's acceptance, and salvation by Christ; so that they greatly insist that if men have it, they shall be surely saved, though they live and die in ignorance of the gospel, and without faith, and repentance, and holiness, which are necessary in order for salvation, according to them. Stebbing, p. 13.

pg 558 Concerning Efficacious Grace
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iv.html>

This next excerpt on page 558 of the same discourse by Edwards on efficacious grace, examines the inconsistency of man's coming to God to get saved by his own prayer which is very common in most churches today. Keeping in mind what Paul said in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;" "he flesh being the "old man", "the clear inference is that a man who is unconverted has nothing good in him, i.e., no virtue whatsoever, and that apart from Christ he can do nothing good (John 15) from his own strength, from natural principles, and those corrupted, it is clear that man is empty of anything that could possibly recommend himself acceptably to God. Hence man is wholly insufficient in himself though he imagines otherwise, hence the Arminians. This Edwards explains in these excerpts. This next excerpt goes into Arminian doctrine and how it differs from reformed doctrine; from here you will see the battle line drawn on who is really sovereign and why and the gross inconsistencies with Arminian doctrine. I would read the piece by Owen called [A Display of Arminianism](#); it is excellent!

§ 71. Stebbing supposes the assistance God gives, or the operation of the Spirit in order to faith, is to give a good and honest heart, prepared to receive and well improve the word; as particularly meekness, humility, teachableness, &c. and supposes that these effects of the Spirit are to be obtained by prayer; but yet allows, that the prayer must be acceptably made, page 106. **which supposes that some degree of virtue must be exercised in prayer.** For surely they do not suppose anything else beside virtue, in prayer or in any other part of religion, is acceptable to God. I suppose they will not deny, that there must be at least some virtuous respect to the Divine Being, as well as some virtuous concern for the good of their own souls, to make any external act of religion in them at all acceptable to God, who is a Spirit, and the Searcher of hearts. And it may be also presumed that they will allow, that there are multitudes of men, who at present are so wicked, so destitute of virtue, that they have not virtue enough for acceptable prayer to God. They have not now so much respect to God or their own souls,

as to incline them to pray at all. But they live in a total neglect of that duty. **Now I would inquire, how these men shall come by virtue, in order to acceptably praying for it, and so obtain it?** But this is contrary to the supposition. For it is supposed, that they now have not virtue enough to pray acceptably, and this is the very thing inquired, **how they come by the virtue necessary** in order to their making acceptable prayer? Or shall they work the virtue in themselves wholly without God's assistance? But this is contrary to what they pretend, viz. that all virtue is from God, or by the grace and assistance of God, which they allow to be evident by that scripture, "without me ye can do nothing." Or is God obliged to give, or to assist them to obtain it, without their praying for it, or having virtue enough to ask it of him? That they do not pretend. **For they suppose the condition of our obtaining the heavenly Spirit is our seeking, &c. asking, &c.** and besides, if God gives it without their first seeking it, that will make God the first determining efficient, yea, the mere and sole author of it, without their doing anything toward it, without their so much as seeking or asking for it; which would be entirely to overthrow their whole scheme, and would, by their principles, make this virtue no virtue at all, because not at all owing to them, or any endeavours of theirs.

skip to pg 563 for more detail - <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iv.html>

Man's virtue, according to Arminian principles, must consist wholly and entirely in improving assistance: for in that only consists the exercise of their free will in the affair, and, not in their having the assistance, **although their virtue must be by their principles entirely from themselves, and God has no hand in it.** From the latter part of the above discourse, it appears that, according to Arminian principles, men's virtue is altogether of themselves, and God has no hand at all in it.

§ 72. When I say that the acts and influences of the Spirit determine the effects, it is not meant that man has nothing to do to determine in the affair. The soul of man undoubtedly, in every instance, does voluntarily determine with respect to his own consequent actions. **But this determination of the will of man, or voluntary determination of the soul of man, is the effect determined.** This determining act of the soul is not denied, but supposed, as it is the effect we are speaking of, **that the influence of God's Spirit determines.**

§ 73. **The Scripture speaks of this as the reason that good men have virtue, that God hath given it to them; and the reason why bad men have it not, that God hath not given it to them. These two together clearly prove that God is the determining or disposing cause of virtue or goodness in men.**

§ 74. Dr. Stebbing insists upon it, that conversion is the effect of God's word; and supposes that therefore it is demonstratively evident, that it must needs be the effect of men's free will, and not the necessary effect of the Spirit of God. But I say, that by their doctrine of self-determination it cannot be the effect of the word of God in any proper sense at all. That it should be the effect of the word, is as inconsistent with their scheme, as they suppose it to be with ours. **Self-determination is utterly inconsistent with conversion's being at all the effect of either the word or Spirit.**

§ 75. They say that commands, threatenings, promises, invitations, counsels, &c. are to no purpose in our scheme. But indeed they can have no place in their scheme: for their scheme excludes all motives. **[in defense of their idea of that there liberty be not violated by any outside influence]**

§ 76. In many particulars their scheme contradicts common sense. It is contrary to common sense, that a being should continually meet with millions of millions of real, proper disappointments and crosses to his proper desires, and not continually lead a distressed and unhappy life. It is contrary to common sense, that God should know that an event will certainly come to pass, whose non-existence he at the same time knows is not impossible. It is contrary to common sense that a thing should be the cause of itself; and that a thing not necessary in its own nature should come to pass without any cause: that the more **indifferent** a man is in any moral action, the more virtuous he is, &c. [Arminians hold that any outside influence will tilt the balance so as to make their liberty compromised or violated, influenced one way or the other. This disturbs their idea or requirement that their choosing one way or the other must be at an equilibrium as though their decision came out of an indifferent or neutral disposition uninfluenced by any outward force, e.g., motives, warnings, threatenings, etc. - —hat they could have chosen to will one thing or the other as though it were from an toss of the dice, as though it were by chance or contingency - —his view is irrational as the excerpt by Edwards immediately following shows.* So that if they were influenced by an outside influence to sin, they are not blamable and so also on the contrary; if they were influence to do good by any outside influence, they are not commendable for it - —either of these two acts came out of an indifferent or neutral disposition. For example, by nature unregenerate man is bound by sin and thus will by *necessity* sin all the time. Arminians don't like that because it violates their idea that they are to be at liberty to go one way or the other - —hey don't like being painted into a corner - —hey say their will is autonomous and thus self-directed. And on the other front, if any good acts were to come from natural man, e.g., to receive Christ, and being that this can only happen if God wills to save them, that he is the first and efficient cause of their good act, Arminians say, that because this is from without themselves and not from their own self-directed will, they are not rewardable for it - because they see it as forced upon them from without and so not of themselves. It all has to come from within themselves either way or it is not blamable or rewardable and praiseworthy.]

*§ 19. It may be argued from the infinite power and wisdom of God, that nothing can come to pass, but that it must be agreeable to the will and pleasure of God that it should come to pass. For, as was observed before, every being had rather things should be according to his will, than not. Therefore, if things be not according to his will, it must be for want of power. It cannot be for want of will, by supposition. It must therefore be for want of sufficiency. It must be either because he cannot have it so, or cannot have it so without some difficulty, or some inconvenience; or all may be expressed in a word, viz. that he wants sufficiency to have things as he wishes. But this cannot be the case of a being of infinite power and infinite wisdom. If he has infinite power and wisdom, he can order all things to be just as he wills: and he can order it with perfect and infinite ease, or without the least difficulty or inconveniency.. Two things lie before him, both equally within his power, either to order the matter to be, or not to order it to be; and both of them are equally easy to him. One is as little trouble to him as the other; as to easiness or trouble, they are perfectly equal. It is as easy for him to order it, as not to order it. Therefore, his determination, whether it be ordering it, or not ordering it, must be a certain sign of his will in the case. If he does order it to be, this is a sign that his will is that it should be. And if he does not order it to be, but suffers it not to be, that is as sure a sign that he wills that it should not be. So that, however the thing is, it is a sure sign that it is the will of God that it should be as it is.

To this, nothing can be objected, unless that it is not for want of will, nor want of power in God, that things be not as he would have them, but because the nature of the subject will not allow of it. But how can this be to the purpose, when the nature of the subject itself is of God, and is wholly within his power, is altogether the fruit of his mere will? And cannot a God of infinite wisdom and infinite power cause the natures of thing to be such, and order them so after they are caused, as to have things as he chooses, or without his will's being crossed, and things so coming to pass that he had rather have them otherwise? As, for instance, God foresaw who would comply with the terms of salvation, and who would not: and he could have forbore to give being to such as he foresaw would not comply, if, upon some consideration, it was not his pleasure that there should be some who should not comply with the terms of salvation. **Objectors may say, God cannot always prevent men's sins, unless he act contrary to the free nature of the subject, or without destroying men's liberty. But will they deny, that an omnipotent and infinitely wise God could not possibly invent, and set before men, such strong motives to obedience, and have kept them before them in such a manner, as should have influenced all mankind to continue in their obedience, as the elect angels have done, without destroying their liberty? God will order it so, that the saints and angels in heaven never will sin: and does it therefore follow, that their liberty is destroyed, and that they are not free, but forced in their actions? Does it follow, that they are turned into blocks, as the Arminians say the Calvinist doctrine turn men?**

Some relate excerpts on Arminian's idea of liberty by Edwards, Concerning Divine Decrees:

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§ 22. The first objection of the Arminians is, that the divine decree infringes on the creature's liberty. In answer to this objection, we may observe some things to show what is the true notion of liberty, and the absurdity of their notion of liberty. Their notion of liberty is, that there is a sovereignty in the will, and that the will determines itself, so that its determination to choose or refuse this or that, is primarily within itself; which description of liberty implies a self-contradiction. For it supposes the will, in its first act, choosing or refusing to be determined by itself; which implies that there is an antecedent act of the will to that first act, determining that act. For, if the will determines its own first act, then there must be an act of the will before that first act, (for that determining is acting,) which is a contradiction. There can be no fallacy in this; for we know that if the will determines its own act, it does not determine it without acting. Therefore, here is this contradiction, viz. that there is an act of the will before the first act. There is an act of the will determining what it shall choose, before the first act of choice; which is as much as to say, that there is an act of volition before the first act of volition. This analysis is long; continue reading at:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iii.html>

pg. 535

It is pretended, that the antecedent certainty of any sin's being committed, seeing that it is attended with necessity, takes away all liberty, and makes warnings and exhortations to avoid sin, a mere illusion. To this I would bring the instance of Peter. Christ told him, that he should surely deny him thrice that night, before the cock should crow twice. And yet, after that, Christ exhorted all his disciples to watch and pray, that they might not fall into temptation; and directs, that he who had no sword, should sell his garment and buy one.

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Works, Grace, Legal Righteousness and **Gospel** (evangelical) **Righteousness**

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by Calvin, Owen & Edwards

Book 3, Ch 13 & 14 Institutes of the Christian Religion
by **John Calvin** (pg 485)

13. But since a great part of mankind imagine a righteousness compounded of faith and works let us here show that there is so wide a difference between justification by faith and by works, **that the establishment of the one necessarily overthrows the other**. The Apostle says, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,” ([Phil. 3:8, 9](#)). You here see a comparison of contraries, **and an intimation that everyone who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must renounce his own**. Hence he elsewhere declares the cause of the rejection of the Jews to have been, that “they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,” ([Rom. 10:3](#)). If we destroy the righteousness of God by establishing our own righteousness, then, in order to obtain his righteousness, our own must be entirely abandoned. **This also he shows, when he declares that boasting is not excluded by the Law, but by faith** ([Rom. 3:27](#)). **Hence it follows, that so long as the minutes portion of our own righteousness remains, we have still some ground for boasting. Now if faith utterly excludes boasting,** the righteousness of works cannot in any way be associated with the righteousness of faith. This meaning is so clearly expressed in the fourth chapter to the Romans as to leave no room for cavil or evasion. “If Abraham were justified by works he has whereof to glory;” and then it is added, “but not before God,” ([Rom. 4:2](#)). The conclusion, therefore, is, that he was not justified by works. He then employs another argument from contraries—viz. **when reward is paid to works, it is done of debt, not of grace; but the righteousness of faith is of grace**: therefore it is not of the merit of works. Away, then, with the dream of those who invent a righteousness compounded of faith and works (see Calvin. ad Concilium Tridentinum).

14. The Sophists, who delight in sporting with Scripture and in empty cavils, think they have a **subtle evasion** when they expound works to mean, such as unregenerated men do literally, **and by the effect of free will, without the grace of Christ**, and deny that these have any reference to spiritual works. Thus according to them, man is justified by faith as well as by works, provided these are not his own works, but gifts of Christ and fruits of regeneration; Paul’s only object in so expressing himself being to convince the Jews, that in trusting to their own strength they foolishly arrogated righteousness to themselves, whereas it is bestowed upon us by the Spirit of Christ alone, and not by

studied efforts of our own nature. But they observe not that in the antithesis between Legal and Gospel righteousness, which Paul elsewhere introduces, all kinds of works, with whatever name adorned, are excluded (Gal. 3:11, 12). For he says that the righteousness of the Law consists in obtaining salvation by doing what the Law requires [which is legalism, since this person's obedience or works is founded upon the law itself as opposed to faith in Christ's obedience, merit, love for God, etc. In other words, people who are unsaved trying to come to God by their own strength, e.g., by human prayer, are doing so because the law says so (the command to believe) not because they had a divine revelation of Christ and his glory which is only received by the instrument of faith which is a gift, not of works lest anyone boast. It is also important to note that the command of God is not necessary his will. He may command someone to believe in his Son by the preaching of the Gospel, i.e., the gospel command to repent and believe, but that does not mean that he desires him to believe and be saved nor does it presume that since God commands him to believe that he has the ability within himself to do so, as Arminians suppose he does.], but that the righteousness of faith consists in believing that Christ died and rose again (Rom. 10:5-9). Moreover, we shall afterwards see, at the proper place, that the blessings of sanctification and justification, which we derive from Christ, are different. Hence it follows, that not even spiritual works are taken into account when the power of justifying is ascribed to faith. And, indeed, the passage above quoted, in which Paul declares that Abraham had no ground of glorying before God, because he was not justified by works, ought not to be confined to a literal and external form of virtue, or to the effort of free will. The meaning is, that though the life of the Patriarch had been spiritual and almost angelic, yet he could not by the merit of works have procured justification before God.

John Flavel: First, All believers are freed from the rigour and curse of the law : The rigorous yoke of the law is broken off from their necks, and the sweet and easy yoke of Jesus Christ put on, Matth. ix. 28. The law required perfect working, under the pain of a curse, Gal. iii. 10. accepted of no short endeavours; admitted no repentance; gave no strength. It is not so now; proportionable strength is given, Phil. iv. 13. Evangelical sincerity is reckoned perfection, Job i. 1. Transgression brings not under condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. O blessed freedom! when duty becomes light, and failings hinder not acceptance! This is one part of the blessed freedom of believers. pg 273 The Method of Grace vol 2

Evangelical vs Legal Repentance Part I

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Comments by John Owen

Ch IX *Doctrine of Justification by Faith* pg 193

2. It is pleaded by the same author, and others, "That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ overthrows all necessity of repentance for sin, in order unto the remission or pardon thereof, yea, renders it altogether needless; for what need has he of repentance for sin, who, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is esteemed completely just and righteous in the sight of God? If Christ satisfied for all sins in the person of the elect, if as our surety he paid all our debts, and if his righteousness be made ours before we repent, then is all repentance needless." And these things are much enlarged on by the same author in the place before mentioned.

Ans. (1.) It must be remembered that we require evangelical faith, in order of nature, antecedently unto our justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us; which also is the condition of its continuation. Wherefore, whatever is necessary thereunto is in like manner required of us in order unto believing. Amongst these, there is a sorrow for sin, and a repentance of it; for whosoever is convinced of sin in a due manner, so as in be sensible of its evil and guilt, — both as in its own nature it is contrary unto the preceptive part of the holy law, and in the necessary consequences of it, in the wrath and curse of God, — cannot but be perplexed in his mind that he has involved himself therein; and that posture of mind will be accompanied with shame, fear, sorrow, and other afflictive passions. Hereon a resolution does ensue utterly to abstain from it for the future, with sincere endeavours unto that purpose; issuing, if there be time and space for it, in reformation of life. And in a sense of sin, sorrow for it, fear concerning it, abstinence from it, and reformation of life, a repentance true in its kind does consist. This repentance is usually called legal, because its motives are principally taken from the law; but yet there is, moreover, required unto it that temporary faith of the gospel which we have before described; and as it does usually produce great effects, in the confession of sin, humiliation for it, and change of life (as in Ahab and the Ninevites), so ordinarily it precedes true saving faith, and justification thereby. Wherefore, the necessity hereof is no way weakened by the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, yea, it is strengthened and made effectual thereby; for without it, in the order of the gospel, an interest therein is not to be attained. And this is that which, in the Old Testament, is so often proposed as the means and condition of turning away the judgments and punishments threatened unto sin; for it is true and sincere in its kind. Neither do the Socinians require any other repentance unto justification; for as they deny true evangelical repentance in all the especial causes of it, so that which may and does precede faith in order of nature is all that they require. This objection, therefore, as managed by them, is a causeless, vain pretence.

(2.) Justifying faith includes in its nature the entire principle of evangelical repentance, so as that it is utterly impossible that a man should be a true believer, and not, at the same instant of time, be truly penitent; and therefore are they so frequently conjoined in the Scripture as one simultaneous duty. Yea, the call of the gospel unto repentance is a call to faith acting itself by repentance: So the sole reason of that call unto repentance which the forgiveness of sins is annexed unto, Acts ii. 38, is the proposal of the promise which is the object of faith, verse 39. And those conceptions and affections which a man has about sin, with a sorrow for it and repentance of it, upon a legal conviction, being enlivened and made evangelical by the introduction of faith as a new principle of them, and giving new motives unto them, do become evangelical; so impossible is it that faith should be without repentance. Wherefore, although the first act of faith, and its only proper exercise unto justification, does respect the grace of God in Christ, and the way of salvation by him, as proposed in the promise of the gospel,

yet is not this conceived in order of time to precede its acting in **self-displicity, godly sorrow, and universal conversion from sin unto God**; nor can it be so, seeing it virtually and radically contains **all of them in itself**. **However, therefore, evangelical repentance is not the condition of our justification, so as to have any direct influence thereinto; nor are we said anywhere to be justified by repentance;** nor is conversant about the proper object which alone the soul respects therein; nor is a direct and immediate giving glory unto God on the account of the way and work of his wisdom and grace in Christ Jesus, **but a consequent thereof**; nor is that reception of Christ which is expressly required unto our justification, and which alone is required thereunto; — yet is it, in the root, principle, and promptitude of mind for its exercise, in every one that is justified, then when he is justified. And it is peculiarly proposed with respect unto the forgiveness of sins, as that without which it is impossible we should have any true sense or comfort of it in our souls; **but it is not so as any part of that righteousness on the consideration whereof our sins are pardoned, nor as that whereby we have an interest therein**. These things are plain in the divine method of our justification, and the order of our duty prescribed in the gospel; as also in the experience of them that do believe. Wherefore, considering the necessity of **legal repentance unto believing; with the sanctification of the affections exercised therein by faith, whereby they are made evangelical**; and the nature of faith, as including in it a principle of universal conversion unto God; and in especial, of that repentance which has for its **principal motive the love of God and of Jesus Christ**, with the **grace from thence communicated**, — all which are supposed in the doctrine pleaded for; the necessity of **true repentance is immovably fixed on its proper foundation**.

Evangelical vs. Legal Part II

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By Jonathan Edwards

This is a very good analysis of being under Law - Legal vs. Evangelical obedience, being led by the Spirit, etc.

Notes on the Bible, Jonathan Edwards
Vol. 2, p 805

Inq. II. Why is it said, "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law?" or what is the connexion between being led by the Spirit, and not being under the law?

Ans. The connexion consists in two things: 1. As this evidences their not being under the law. 2. It renders them not the proper subjects of law.

I. Their being led by the Spirit, is an evidence of their being in Christ, who has fulfilled the law, and delivered them from it. The Spirit is given in Scripture as the proper evidence of being in Christ, [1 Cor. i. 22. v. 5.](#) [Eph. i. 13, 14.](#) and [iv. 30.](#) [Rom. viii. 9.](#) [1 John iii. 24.](#) and [iv. 13.](#) It is the proper evidence of their being children, for it is the Spirit of the Son, [Gal. iv. 6.](#) "As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, because it is the Spirit of adoption." [Rom. viii. 14.](#) "But children are not under the law as servants."

II. A being led by the Spirit is a thing that causes that alteration with respect to them, that renders them unapt to be the subjects of law.

1. By their having the Spirit given them, they are advanced to that state that does not agree with a state of subjection to the law. [2 Cor. iii. 17.](#) "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" see Note on that verse. For hereby they are regenerated, are born of God, and do become the sons of God; they are hereby assimilated to the Son of God in nature and state. Being sons, it is suitable that they should be dealt with alter another manner: to hold them under the law, is to treat them as servants, as in the [6th and 7th verses.](#) of the preceding chapter, And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son."

2. The Spirit of Christ in Christians, or Spirit of adoption actuating and leading, is a principle that supersedes the law, and sets them above law, upon two accounts: (1.) By their having this principle, so far as it prevails, they are above the need of the exaction of the law, and therefore are such as the law was not given for, and are not aimed at in the law. **They have a spirit of love and truth that fulfils the law, [1 Tim. i. 9.](#)** the thing that is aimed at by the law, as in the [14th and 16th verses.](#) of the context. They do not need the exaction of the law to drive them to their duty; for, so far as they are led by the Spirit, they are of themselves naturally inclined to the same things that the law requires, and derive strength from God according to his promises to fulfil them. The fruits of the Spirit are such, as they by the Spirit without the law are inclined and enabled to, such as love, joy, peace, &c.; are such as the law is not against, as in the [22d and 23d verses of the context.](#) "Against such there is no law."

The filial Spirit, or Spirit of love and truth, fulfils the law; that is, the law obliges to no other things but what this Spirit inclines to, and is sufficient for. **The law was not made for those that are already sufficiently disposed to all things contained it. [1 Tim. 9.](#)** "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient," &c. A filial spirit is law enough. It is a superior sort of law, the law of the Spirit of life is the best law, and makes free from any other law. The spirit is better than the letter.

They, that have the Spirit of Christ in them, have the law written in their hearts, according to God's promise by his prophets.

The Spirit of Christ is superior to the law, and sets a person above a subjection to the law, because it is a principle that is superior to a legal principle, or that principle which is the proper subject of the force and influence of the exaction of a law, viz. **fear**; so far as the Spirit of the Son, or the Spirit of adoption, prevails, so far he is above the need of that principle, and consequently above the need of being under the law.

II. The filial Spirit, or Spirit of the son, or Spirit of adoption, is a principle that, so far as it prevails, excludes and renders the saints **incapable of fear, or a legal principle, or spirit of bondage**. [1 John iv. 18](#). "Perfect love casteth out fear." It casts it out as Sarah and Isaac cast out the bond-woman and her son, that we read of in the chapter preceding the text that we are upon. It is in Christians a principle of love, of childlike confidence and hope, as in the 6th verse of the foregoing chapter, it cries, "Abba, Father." It evidences to them their being the children of God, and begets that trust and assurance that renders them **incapable of a legal principle**. [Rom. viii. 15, 16](#). "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." If a person has not that legal principle, or principle of fear, he has not that principle which the law, or that constitution which exacts obedience, was made to influence and work upon; and therefore is not a proper subject of law, because, being destitute of that principle, the law takes no hold of him, for it finds no principle in him to take hold by.

A being led by the Spirit of the Son of God, as a Spirit of adoption, is inconsistent with a state of bondage, as son-ship is inconsistent with servitude. [2 Cor. iii. 17](#). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Edwards continues in his discourse, [On Religious Affections](#), describing **evangelical obedience as being led by the Spirit, when we obey God because of who he is as revealed to us by the instrument of faith** and all its subsequent graces that are supplied, rather than by the [condemning] letter of the law being the sole foundation of our obedience which is legal. Hence, 2Cor3:4-6, "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit;^[a] for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." [That is, **spiritual life** where believers operate from a new infused principle of life upon the soul as opposed to the principle of the *old man*, self-love & self preservation.]

Being led by the Holy Spirit, Its Meaning

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/affections.i.html>

And as to a gracious *leading of the Spirit*, it consists in two things; partly in *instructing* a person in his duty by the Spirit, and partly in powerfully *inducing* him to comply with that instruction. But so far as the gracious leading of the Spirit lies in instruction, it consists in a person's being guided by a **spiritual and distinguishing taste** of that which has in it **true moral beauty**. I have shown that spiritual knowledge primarily consists in a **taste or relish** of the amiableness and beauty of that which is truly good and holy: **this holy relish discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and**

unholy, without being at the trouble of a train of reasoning. As he who has a true relish of external beauty, knows what is beautiful by looking upon it; he stands in no need of a train of reasoning about the proportion of the features, in order to determine whether that which he sees be a beautiful countenance or no; he needs nothing, but only the glance of his eye. He who has a rectified musical ear, knows whether the sound he hears be true harmony; he does not need first to be at the trouble of the reasonings of a mathematician, about the proportion of the notes. He that has a **rectified palate, knows what is good food, as soon as he tastes it**, without the reasoning of a physician about it. There is a holy beauty and sweetness in words and actions, as well as a natural beauty in countenances and sounds, and sweetness in food; [Job xii. 11.](#) "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?" When a holy and amiable action is suggested to the thoughts of a holy soul; that soul, **if in the lively exercise of its spiritual taste, at once sees a beauty in it, and so inclines to it, and closes with it.** [Hence, this person upon hearing of the mysteries of the gospel such as election, God's sovereignty, etc., they are beautiful to him and not despised.] On the contrary, if an unworthy, unholy action be suggested, its sanctified eye sees no beauty in it, and is not pleased with it; its sanctified taste relishes no sweetness in it, but on the contrary, it is nauseous. Yea, its holy taste and appetite leads it to think of that which is truly lovely, and naturally suggests it; as a healthy taste and appetite naturally suggests the idea of its proper object. **Thus a holy person is led by the Spirit, as he is instructed and led by his holy taste, and disposition of heart; whereby, in the lively exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good and evil**, and knows at once what is a suitable, amiable behaviour towards God, and towards man, in this case and the other; and judges what is right, as it were spontaneously, without a particular deduction, by any other arguments than the beauty that is seen, and goodness that is tasted. Thus Christ blames the Pharisees, that they *did not, even of their own selves, judge what was right*, without needing miracles to prove it. [Luke xii. 57.](#) The apostle seems plainly to have respect to this way of judging of spiritual beauty, in [Rom. xii. 2.](#) "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God." -*Jonathon Edwards* *On Religious Affections* p286

The Natural Man and Saving Grace

6. Natural men, or those that are not savingly converted, have no degree of that **principle from whence all gracious actings flow**, viz. the Spirit of God or of Christ; as is evident, because it is asserted both ways in Scripture, that those who have not the Spirit of Christ, are not his, [Rom. vii. 9.](#) and also, that those who have the Spirit of Christ, are his; [1 John iii. 24.](#) "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." And the Spirit of God is called the earnest of the future inheritance, [2 Cor. i. 22.](#) and [v. 5. Eph. i. 14.](#) Yea, that a natural man has nothing of the Spirit in him, no part nor portion in it, is still more evident, because the *having of the Spirit* is given as a sure sign of being in Christ. [1 John iv. 13.](#) "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit." By which it is evident, that they have none of that **holy principle** that the godly have. And if they have nothing of the Spirit, they have nothing of those things that are the **fruits of the Spirit**, such as those mentioned in [Gal. v. 22.](#) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." **These fruits are here mentioned with the very design, that we may know whether we have the Spirit or no.** In the [18th verse](#), the apostle tells the Galatians, that if they are **led by the Spirit, they are not under the law**; and then directly proceeds, first, to mention

what are the fruits or works of the flesh, and then, nextly, what are fruits of the Spirit, that we may judge whether we are led by the Spirit or no.

-Jonathon Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace pg 563

Law vs. Grace

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The Law vs. Grace has application to what is communicated to the elect, that being the Spirit of Adoption which Adam did not have. The best wine is saved for last - the exposition of the significance of the wine at the marriage ceremony where Jesus turns water into wine. This following excerpt will expound on this spirit of adoption, love for God, etc.

[244] [Rom. vi. 14.](#) "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." The law, or covenant of works, is not a proper means to bring the fallen creature to the service of God. It was a very proper means to be used with men in a state of innocency, but it has no tendency to answer this end in our present weak and sinful state; on the contrary, to have been kept under the law would have had a tendency to hinder it, and would have been a bar in the way of it, and that upon two accounts.

1. It would have tended to discourage persons from any attempts to serve God, because under such a constitution it must necessarily have been looked upon as impossible to please him and serve him to his acceptance; and one in despair of this would have been in no capacity to yield a cheerful service to God, but would rather have been far from any manner of endeavours to serve him at all. But to have abandoned himself to wickedness by such a despair, the dominion of sin would have been dreadfully established, and all yielded up to it, as in the damned in hell.

2. God must necessarily have been looked on as an enemy; which would have tended to drive from him and stir up enmity against him. A fallen creature held under the covenant of works cannot look on God as a father and friend, but must necessarily look on him as an enemy; for the least failure of obedience by that constitution, whether past or future, renders him so. But this would greatly establish the dominion of sin or enmity against God in the heart, and indeed it is the law only that makes wicked men hate God. They hate him no otherwise than as they look upon him as acting, either as the giver or judge of the law, and so by the law opposing their sins, and the law tending to establish the hatred of God. Hence it is necessary to be brought from under the dominion of it, in order to a willing serving of God.

Corol. Hence men, when they are convinced of the law, under awakenings, and have God represented to them as a strict lawgiver and judge, before they are convinced of the gospel, have sometimes such sensible exercises of enmity of heart stirred up against God.

But those that are redeemed from the bondage of the law, they have,

1. Great encouragement to serve God, in that their poor and imperfect obedience may be accepted.
2. They have a great deal to incline them to an ingenuous obedience; for God **now represents himself** as a **merciful** God, a God ready to pardon past transgressions and future infirmities, and he promises that if we will yield ourselves willingly to serve him as we are able, he will be our friend, and will treat us as a merciful and gracious father.

If a man does perform an external service while under the bondage of the law, it is no real service, it is merely forced by threats and terrors, it is not performed freely and heartily, but is a dead, lifeless obedience. But a being delivered from the law and brought under grace, tends to win men to serve God from love, and with the whole heart; [Rom. vii. 6.](#) “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

[84] [Rom. viii. 15.](#) “For ye have not received the **spirit of bondage** again to fear; but ye have received the **spirit of adoption**, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” That is, ye have not the spirit of slaves and bond-servants, that work by slavish fear, but the spirit of children, so that you are not afraid, but dare cry, Abba, Father; dare, as children, approach God with a holy boldness. The spirits are different; one is the spirit of God, the other is not. pg 799 Notes on the Bible - **Jonathan Edwards**

“The New Wine Calls For New Wineskins”

Comments on the Law and the Gospel

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Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck’s book,

Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 450-455
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

The Word as Law, Gospel and Power

(pg 450) God uses his word to make his will known in the area of morality and spirituality, and it must be differentiated as law and gospel. When Jesus appeared on earth to announce the coming of the kingdom promised in the Old Testament (Mark 1: 15), to bring the gospel of forgiveness and salvation to publicans and sinners, the poor and the imprisoned (Matt. 5: 1ff.; 11: 5, 28–30; Luke 4: 18–19; 19: 10; and so forth), **he automatically clashed with the Pharisaic and nomistic view of religion, which prevailed in his day.** Still, though he rejected the human ordinances of past teachers of the law (Matt. 5: 21ff.; 15: 9), and though he has a different view of murder (5: 21–22), adultery (5: 27–28), oaths (5: 33–37), fasting (6: 16–18), divorce (19: 9), and the Sabbath (Mark 2: 27–28), he does uphold the whole law, also its ceremonial elements (Matt. 5: 23–24; 17: 24–27; 23: 2–3, 23; Mark 1: 44; 11: 16). He also explains it in its spiritual sense (Matt. 5–7), stresses its ethical content, considers love to God and one’s neighbor its sum (7: 12; 9: 13; 12: 7; Mark 7: 15; 12: 28–34), and desires a righteousness different from and more abundant than the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matt. 5: 20). Accordingly, though he himself is greater than the temple (12: 6), he positioned himself under the law (3: 15) and came to fulfill the law and the prophets (5: 17). He therefore knows that, though he never insists on the abolition of the law, his disciples are inwardly free from it (17: 26); that his church is not founded on the law but on the confession of his messiahship (16: 18); and that a new covenant has been established in his blood (26: 28). **In a word, the new wine calls for new wineskins** (9: 17), and the days of the temple and people and law have been numbered (Mark 13: 2). **Jesus’s agenda is not a revolutionary overthrow of the legalistic dispensation of the old covenant, but the reformation and renewal that is naturally born from its complete fulfillment.**

And so, in fact, it happened. In the early period the church at Jerusalem still stuck to the temple and the law (Acts 2: 46; 3: 1; 10: 14; 21: 26; 22: 12). But a new outlook began to take shape. With the conversion of the Gentiles, the question arose about the meaning of the Mosaic law. And Paul was the first to understand fully that in the death of Christ the written code of the law had been canceled (Col. 2: 14). By “law” (νόμος, *nomos*) Paul always understands—unless a further stipulation indicates otherwise (e.g., Rom. 3: 27; Gal. 6: 2)—the Mosaic law, the entire Torah, including the ceremonial commandments (Rom. 9: 4; Gal. 2: 12; 4: 10; 5: 3; Phil. 3: 5–6). And he does not, like the Letter to the Hebrews, view that law as the imperfect, preparatory, Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace, which vanishes after the high priest and mediator of a better covenant has come, but as the revelation of God’s will, as a religious/ethical requirement and demand, as the God-willed regulation of the revelation between him and human beings. And concerning this law, thus interpreted, Paul now teaches that, **though it is indeed holy and good and God-given** (Rom. 2: 18; 7: 22, 25; 9: 4; 2 Cor. 3: 3, 7), **it cannot, as the Pharisees asserted, produce righteousness, but is made powerless by the flesh** (Rom. 8: 3); **stimulates covetousness** (7: 7–8); **increases trespasses** (5: 20; Gal. 3: 19); **produces wrath, a curse, and death** (Rom. 4: 15; 2 Cor. 3: 6; Gal. 3: 10); **and intervened only for a time for pedagogical [teaching] reasons** (Rom. 5: 20; Gal. 3: 19, 24; 4: 2–3). In Christ, the offspring of the promise, therefore,

that law has attained its end [τέλος, telos] (Rom. 10: 4): believers are free from the law (Gal. 4: 26–5: 1), inasmuch as they have been delivered by Christ from the curse of the law (3: 13; 4: 5) and have received the spirit of adoption, the spirit of freedom (Rom. 8: 15; 2 Cor. 3: 16–17; Gal. 5: 18). This freedom of faith, however, does not cancel out the law but confirms it (Rom. 3: 31) since its just requirement is fulfilled precisely in the lives of those who walk according to the Spirit (8: 4). The Spirit, after all, renews believers so that they delight in God’s law in their inner selves and try to find out what God’s holy will is (Rom. 7: 22; 12: 2; Eph. 5: 10; Phil. 1: 10). At the same time they are urged onward to do the will of God for all sorts of pressing reasons—the great mercy of God, the example of Christ, the high price with which they were purchased, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and so forth.

MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

In the Christian church this antithesis between law and gospel was even exacerbated and made irreconcilable, on the one hand, by **antinomianism** in its various forms: **Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Paulicianism, Anabaptism, Hattemism**, and so forth. The whole Old Testament, it was said, was derived from an inferior God, a wrathful, jealous, avenging God, and had now been replaced by the very different revelation of the God of love, the Father of Christ. On the other hand, this antithesis between law and gospel was weakened and canceled out by **nomism** in its various forms: **Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, Romanism, Socinianism, rationalism, and so forth**. By the church fathers already and later by Scholastic and Roman Catholic theologians, law and gospel were equated with the Old and the New Testaments, and then not construed antithetically but viewed as a lower and a higher revelation of the will of God. Law and gospel do not differ in the sense that the former only demands and the latter only promises, for both contain commandments, threats, and promises; mysteries, promises, and precepts; things to be believed, things to be hoped for, and things to be done. Not just Moses but also Christ was a legislator.

But in all this the gospel of the New Testament, the new law, far surpasses the law of the Old Testament, the old law. The mysteries (Trinity, incarnation, atonement, and so forth) **are much more clearly revealed in the New Testament**; the promises are much richer in content and embrace especially spiritual and eternal goods; the laws are much more glorious and lighter since the ceremonial and civil laws have been abolished and replaced by only a handful of ceremonies. **Furthermore, “the law . . . was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”** [John 1: 17]. The law was temporary and designed for one people; the gospel is eternal and has to be carried to all peoples. **The law was imperfect, a shadow and an example; the gospel is perfect and the substance of the good things themselves. The law fostered fear and servitude; the gospel generates love and freedom. The law could not fully justify, it conferred no riches of grace, it gave no eternal salvation.** The gospel embodied in the sacrament, however, confers the power of grace that enables its recipients to keep God’s commandments and to gain eternal life. **In a word, the law is the incomplete gospel; the gospel the complete law.** The gospel was contained in the law as a tree in a seed, a grain in an ear of corn.

Now to the extent that the Old and the New Testament dispensations of the covenant of grace can be described—following Scripture and in terms of the most salient difference between them—with the

terms “law” and “gospel,” the distinction that Rome makes between the two can for the most part, but not completely, be endorsed. **Rome, however, totally equated the old and the new covenants with law and gospel [respectively], denied the presence of the gospel in the Old Testament and that of the law in the New Testament, viewed the entire doctrine promulgated by Christ and the apostles as gospel, accepted in it the presence not just of promises but also of laws and threats, and thus made the gospel into a second law. The Pauline antithesis of law and gospel was erased.** For though it is true that Paul understood by “law” the entire Old Testament dispensation, in so doing he views it above all in terms of its law-centered form and so contrasts it directly with the gospel. And even when he does this, he acknowledges that the law-centered dispensation by no means snuffed out the promise already made to Abraham (Gal. 3: 17, 21), that the gospel was also preached in the days of the old covenant (Gal. 3: 8), and that in those days, too, righteousness was obtained from and by faith (Rom. 4: 11–12; 11: 32; Gal. 3: 6–7). Concerning the **law as law**, apart from the promises, to which in the Old Testament the law was made subservient, Paul asserts that it cannot justify, that it increases sin, that it is a ministry of condemnation [2 Cor. 3: 9], **and precisely in that way prepares the fulfillment of the promise and necessitates another righteousness, that is, the righteousness of God in Christ by faith. And this antithesis between law and gospel was again understood by the Reformation.** To be sure, some pronouncements made by the church fathers also testify to a better insight. But no clarity was achieved because they consistently confuse the difference between law and gospel with that between the old covenant and the new.

While, on the one hand, the **Reformers** held on to the unity of the covenant of grace in its two dispensations against the Anabaptists, on the other hand, **they also perceived the sharp contrast between law and gospel and thereby again restored the peculiar character of the Christian religion as a religion of grace.** Although in a broad sense the terms “law” and “gospel” can indeed be used to denote the old and the new dispensation of the covenant of grace, in their actual significance they definitely describe two essentially different revelations of divine will. Also the law is the will of God (Rom. 2: 18, 20); holy, wise, good, and spiritual (7: 12, 14; 12: 10); giving life to those who maintain it (2: 13; 3: 2); but because of sin it has been made powerless, it fails to justify, it only stimulates covetousness, increases sin, arouses wrath, kills, curses, and condemns (Rom. 3: 20; 4: 15; 5: 20; 7: 5, 8–9, 13; 2 Cor. 3: 6ff.; Gal. 3: 10, 13, 19). Over against it stands the gospel of Christ, the εὐαγγέλιον, which contains nothing less than the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise (Mark 1: 15; Acts 13: 32; Eph. 3: 6), which comes to us from God (Rom. 1: 1–2; 2 Cor. 11: 7); has Christ as its content (Rom. 1: 3; Eph. 3: 6); and conveys nothing other than grace (Acts 20: 24), reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: 18), forgiveness (Rom. 4: 3–8), righteousness (3: 21–22), peace (Eph. 6: 15), freedom (Gal. 5: 13), life (Rom. 1: 17; Phil. 2: 16), and so forth. In these texts law and gospel are contrasted as demand and gift, as command and promise, as sin and grace, as sickness and healing, as death and life. [*footnote: The distinction between law and gospel was also weakened or eliminated by Protestants: for example, by C. Strange,.. prior to that, even Zwingli according to F.A. Loofs...*]

Although they agree in that both have God as author, both speak of one and the same perfect righteousness, and both are addressed to human beings to bring them to eternal life, they nevertheless differ in that the **law proceeds from God’s holiness, the gospel from God’s grace; the law is known from nature, the gospel only from special revelation; the law demands perfect righteousness, but the gospel grants it; the law leads people to eternal life by works, and the gospel produces good**

works from the riches of the eternal life granted in faith; the law presently condemns people, and the gospel acquits them; the law addresses itself to all people, and the gospel only to those who live within its hearing; and so forth.

On account of this difference, there was even disagreement over whether the preaching of faith and repentance, which seemed after all to be a condition and a demand, really belonged to the gospel and should not rather (with Flacius, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Voetius, Witsius, Cocceius, de Moor, and others) be counted as law. And indeed, strictly speaking, there are no demands and conditions in the gospel but only promises and gifts. **Faith and repentance are as much benefits of the covenant of grace as justification (and so forth).** But, concretely, the gospel never comes in that form. In practice it is always united with law and is therefore always interwoven with the law throughout Scripture. The gospel always presupposes the law and also needs it in its administration. **It is brought, after all, to rational, moral human beings, who are responsible for themselves before God and therefore have to be called to faith and repentance.** The demanding and summoning form in which the gospel is cast is derived from the law. **Every person is obligated not first of all by the gospel but by nature, the law, to believe God at his word and by implication to accept the gospel in which he speaks to us humans.** The gospel therefore immediately takes possession of all human beings, binds it on their consciences, for the God who speaks in the gospel is none other than he who has made himself known to them in his law. Faith and repentance are therefore demanded of people in the name of God's law, by virtue of the relation in which humans stand to God as rational creatures; and that demand is addressed not only to the elect and regenerate but to all humans without distinction.

But faith and repentance themselves, nevertheless, are components of the gospel, not the workings or fruits of the law. For while the law demands faith in God in general, it does not demand the special faith that directs itself toward Christ, **and while the law can produce penitence** (μεταμελεια, metameleia), **it cannot produce conversion** (μετανοια, metanoia), which is rather the fruit of faith. And precisely because faith and repentance are components of the gospel—though humans are naturally obligated by law to display these attributes—one can speak of a law of faith, of a commandment of faith, of the obedience of faith (Rom. 1: 5; 3: 27; 1 John 3: 23), of being disobedient to and judged according to the gospel (Rom. 2: 16; 10: 16; and so forth). **Law and gospel, viewed concretely, do not so much differ in that the law always speaks with a commanding voice and the gospel with a promising voice,** for also the law makes promises and the gospel utters admonitions and imposes obligations. But they differ especially in content: **the law demands that humans work out their own righteousness, and the gospel invites them to renounce all self-righteousness and to accept the righteousness of Christ and even offers the gift of faith to that end.** And law and gospel occur in that relation not only before and at the start of conversion, but also remain in it throughout the Christian life, right up until death. Lutherans almost exclusively have an eye for the accusing and condemning function of the law and therefore know no higher bliss than deliverance from the law. Law is necessary only because of sin. **In the state of perfection, there is no law.** God is free from the law; Christ was in no way subject to the law for himself; the believer is no longer subject to the law. Granted, Lutherans do speak of a threefold use of the law, not only of a political, that is, civil, use for the purpose of restraining sin, and of a pedagogical use to arouse the knowledge of sin, but also of a didactic use of the law to be a rule of life for believers. This last use, however, is solely necessary since and insofar as believers still continue to

be sinners and have to be restrained by the law and led to a continuing knowledge of sin. **By itself, when faith and grace come on the scene, the law expires and loses all its meaning.**

Saving Illumination and Experience of Believers vs. Reason Corrupted

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Subjects: Reason and reason corrupted by sin, Socinianism, the value of experience in truly spiritual experiences to oppose the trappings and subtlety of false teaching, accommodating spiritual things, the gospel mysteries, to the unregenerate, to reason corrupted, a problem. Definition of Faith

from *Justification by Faith* by John Owen

Sixthly. We can never state our thoughts aright in this matter, unless we have a clear apprehension of, and satisfaction in, the introduction of grace by Jesus Christ into the whole of our relation unto God, with its respect unto all parts of our obedience. There was no such thing, nothing of that nature or kind, in the first constitution of that relation and obedience by the law of our creation. We were made in a state of immediate relation unto God in our own persons, as our creator, preserver, and rewarder. There was no mystery of grace in the covenant of works. No more was required unto the consummation of that state but what was given us in our creation, enabling us unto rewardable obedience. “Do this, and live,” was the sole rule of our relation unto God. There was nothing in religion originally of that which the gospel celebrates under the name of the grace, kindness, and love of God, whence all our favourable relation unto God does now proceed, and whereinto it is resolved; nothing of the interposition of a mediator with respect unto our righteousness before God, and acceptance with him; — which is at present the life and soul of religion, the substance of the gospel, and the centre of all the truths revealed in it. The introduction of these things is that which makes our religion a mystery, yea, a “great mystery,” if the apostle may be believed, 1 Tim. iii. 16. **All religion at first was suited and commensurable unto reason; but being now become a mystery, men for the most part are very unwilling to receive it.** But so it must be; and unless we are restored unto our **primitive rectitude, a religion suited unto the principles of our reason** (of which it has none but what answer that first state) will not serve our turns.

Wherefore, of this introduction of Christ and grace in him into our relation unto God, there are no notions in the natural conceptions of our minds; nor are they discoverable by reason in the best and utmost of its exercise, 1 Cor. ii. 14. For before our understanding were darkened, and our reason debased by the fall, there were no such things revealed or proposed unto us; yea, the supposition of them is inconsistent with, and contradictory unto, that whole state and condition wherein we were to live to God, — seeing they all suppose the entrance of sin. And it is not likely that our reason, as now corrupted, should be willing to embrace **that which it knew nothing of in its best condition,** and which was inconsistent with that way of attaining happiness which was absolutely suited unto it: for it

has no faculty or power but what it has derived from that state [in other words Adam was operating on his own strength, his graces that God endued him with at his creation which is the *law of his creation* or the *law of his obedience*. He was not endued with faith, nor a knowledge of a redeemer, nor promised continual supplies of grace as believers are now in the new covenant. See Edwards below and Flavel pg 1700 & 1709.]; and to suppose it is now of itself suited and ready to embrace such heavenly mysteries of truth and grace as it had no notions of [As Arminians and Socinians believe that we can in an unregenerate state under law or the covenant of works, e.g., they think that man can come to God by their own innate principle without the sole aid of the Holy Spirit with His illumination or regeneration of their souls], nor could have, in the state of innocence, **is to suppose that by the fall our eyes were opened to know good and evil, in the sense that the serpent deceived our first parents with an expectation of**. Whereas, therefore, our reason was given us for our only guide in the first constitution of our natures, it is naturally unready to receive what is above it; and, as corrupted, has an enmity thereunto."

[Another way of saying this (the red section above) is that Arminian/Socinian belief that man can come to God via a human prayer while in a fallen, unsaved condition is the same as saying that after the fall of Adam our eyes were opened to see these truths and desire them which is ludicrous. For someone to pray to God or Christ, is to presuppose that their eyes opened already! otherwise their blindness would prevent this. The fact is that they are blind; so their this praying this prayer is presumption! In other words, in saying this human prayer they are saying that they can see God enough and understand God enough and have holy desires enough, all of which comes before they receive sight, faith and holy desires!! That's why Owen says that if you take their doctrine to its logical issue, the fall has opened their eyes!

I find in my trying to see this more clearly is like trying to fill in the blanks in a tough crossword puzzle. Sometimes your mind is blocked somehow. So when I put it aside for a day, let my mind rest so to speak, and come back to it the next day...and voila! I see it. It was right under my nose - so it's kinda like that. That's why it's helpful to re-read difficult passages of the reformers over and over again - there's no getting around it.]

"The filial Spirit, or Spirit of love and truth, fulfils the law; that is, the law obliges to no other things but what this Spirit inclines to, and is sufficient for. The law was not made for those that are already **sufficiently disposed** to all things contained in it. 1 Tim. 9. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient," &c. A filial spirit is law enough. It is a superior sort of law, the law of the Spirit of life is the best law, and makes free from any other law. The spirit is better than the letter. **They, that have the Spirit of Christ in them, have the law written in their hearts, according to God's promise by his prophets.**

The Spirit of Christ is superior to the law, and sets a person above a subjection to the law, because it is a **principle that is superior to a legal principle**, or that **principle which is the proper subject of the force and influence of the exaction of a law, viz. fear**; so far as the **Spirit of the Son, or the Spirit of adoption**, prevails, so far he is above the need of that principle, and consequently above the need of being under the law.

II. The filial Spirit, or Spirit of the son, or Spirit of adoption, is a principle that, so far as it prevails, excludes and renders the saints incapable of fear, or a **legal principle, or spirit of bondage**. [1 John iv. 18](#). "Perfect love casteth out fear." It casts it out as Sarah and Isaac cast out the bond-woman and her son, that we read of in the chapter preceding the text that we are upon. It is in Christians a principle of love, of childlike confidence and hope, as in the 6th^verse of the foregoing chapter, it cries, "Abba, Father." It evidences to them their being the children of God, and **begets that trust and assurance** that renders them incapable of a **legal principle**. [Rom. viii. 15, 16](#). "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." **If a person has not that legal principle, or principle of fear, he has not that principle which the law, or that constitution which exacts obedience, was made to influence and work upon; and therefore is not a proper subject of law, because, being destitute of that principle, the law takes no hold of him, for it finds no principle in him to take hold by.**" - Jonathan Edwards

Owen continues:

Hence, in the **first open proposal of this mystery**, — namely, of the **love and grace of God in Christ**, of the introduction of a **mediator and his righteousness** into our relation unto God, in that way which God in infinite wisdom had designed, [side note: now, certainly, all who God desires to be saved will be saved. To argue otherwise as Arminians do would argue that God's wisdom is not infinite or that he is not wise enough to contrive a successful way of salvation] — **the whole of it was looked on as mere folly** by the generality of the wise and rational men of the world, as the apostle declares at large, [1 Cor. i.](#); **neither was the faith of them ever really received in the world without an act of the Holy Ghost upon the mind in its renovation**. **And those who judge that there is nothing more needful to enable the mind of man to receive the mysteries of the gospel in a due manner but the outward proposal of the doctrine thereof, do not only deny the depravation of our nature by the fall, but, by just consequence, wholly renounce that grace whereby we are to be recovered**. **Wherefore, reason** (as has been elsewhere proved), acting on and by its own innate principles and abilities, conveyed unto it from its original state, and as now corrupted, is repugnant unto the whole introduction of grace by Christ into our relation unto God, [Rom. viii. 7](#). **An endeavour, therefore, to reduce the doctrine of the gospel, or what is declared therein concerning the hidden mystery of the grace of God in Christ, unto the principles and inclinations of the minds of men, or reason as it remains in us after the entrance of sin, — under the power, at least, of those notions and conceptions of things religious which it retains from its first state and condition, — is to debase and corrupt them (as we shall see in sundry instances), and so make way for their rejection.**

Hence, very difficult it is to keep up doctrinally and practically the minds of men unto the reality and spiritual height of this mystery; **for men naturally do neither understand it nor like it**; and therefore, every attempt to **accommodate it unto the principles and inbred notions of corrupt reason** is very acceptable unto many [that many preachers water down the gospel, in effect, not preaching the whole council of God so as to accommodate it to their carnal apprehensions which ends up in unprofitable information and heresy], yea, unto the most; for the things which such men speak and declare, are, without more ado, — **without any exercise of faith or prayer, without any supernatural illumination**, — easily intelligible, and exposed to the common sense of mankind. But whereas a declaration of the mysteries of the gospel can obtain no admission into the minds of men **but by the effectual working of**

the Spirit of God, Eph. i. 17–19, it is generally looked on as difficult, perplexed, unintelligible; and even to the minds of many who find they cannot contradict it, are yet not at all delighted with it. And here lies the advantage of all them who, in these days, do attempt to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, in the whole or any part of it; for the accommodation of it unto the common notions of corrupted reason is the whole of what they design. And in the confidence of the suffrage hereof, they not only oppose the things themselves, but despise the declaration of them as enthusiastical canting. And by nothing do they more prevail themselves than by a pretence of reducing all things to reason, and contempt of what they oppose, as unintelligible fanaticism. But I am not more satisfied in any thing of the most uncontrollable evidence, than that the understandings of these men are no just measure or standard of spiritual truth. Wherefore, notwithstanding all this fierceness of scorn, with the pretended advantages which some think they have made by traducing expressions in the writings of some men, it may be improper, it maybe only not suited unto their own genius and capacity in these things, we are not to be “ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

Of this repugnancy unto the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in Christ, and the foundation of its whole economy, in the distinct operations of the persons of the holy Trinity therein, there are two parts or branches:—

1. That which would reduce the whole of it unto the private reason of men, and their own weak, imperfect management thereof. This is the entire design of the Socinians. Hence, —

(1.) The doctrine of the Trinity itself is denied, impugned, yea, derided by them; and that solely on this account. They plead that it is incomprehensible by reason; for there is in that doctrine a declaration of things absolutely infinite and eternal, which cannot be exemplified in, nor accommodated unto, things finite and temporal. This is the substance of all their pleas against the doctrine of the holy Trinity, that which gives a seeming life and sprightly vigour to their objections against it; wherein yet, under the pretence of the use and exercise of reason, they fall, and resolve all their reasonings into the most absurd and irrational principles that ever the minds of men were besotted withal. For unless you will grant them that what is above their reason, is, therefore, contradictory unto true reason; that what is infinite and eternal is perfectly comprehensible, and in all its concerns and respects to be accounted for; that what cannot be in things finite and of a separate existence, cannot be in things infinite, whose being and existence can be but one; with other such irrational, yea, brutish imaginations; all the arguments of these pretended men of reason against the Trinity become like chaff that every breath of wind will blow away. Hereon they must, as they do, deny the distinct operations of any persons in the Godhead in the dispensation of the mystery of grace; for if there are no such distinct persons, there can be no such distinct operations. Now, as upon a denial of these things no one article of faith can be rightly understood, nor any one duty of obedience be performed unto God in an acceptable manner; so, in particular, we grant that the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ cannot stand. [So the Socinian logic leads to.]

(2.) On the same ground the incarnation of the Son of God is rejected as ἀτόπων ἀτοπώτατον, — the most absurd conception that ever befell the minds of men. Now it is to no purpose to dispute with men so persuaded, about justification; yea, we will freely acknowledge that all things we believe about

it are γράωδεις μύθοι, — no better than old wives' tales, — if the incarnation of the Son of God be so also. For I can as well understand how he who is a mere man, however exalted, dignified, and glorified, can exercise a spiritual rule in and over the hearts, consciences, and thoughts of all the men in the world, being intimately knowing of and present unto them all equally at all times (which is another of their fopperies), as how the righteousness and obedience of one should be esteemed the righteousness of all that believe, if that one be no more than a man, if he be not acknowledged to be the Son of God incarnate.

Whilst the minds of men are prepossessed with such prejudices, nay, unless they firmly assent unto the truth in these foundations of it, it is impossible to convince them of the truth and necessity of that justification of a sinner which is revealed in the gospel. [this is the predicament that false conversions and those who say they said the sinner's prayer make way for.] Allow the Lord Christ to be no other person but what they believe him to be, and I will grant there can be no other way of justification than what they declare; though I cannot believe that ever any sinner will be justified thereby. These are the issues of an obstinate refusal to give way unto the introduction of the mystery of God and his grace into the way of salvation and our relation unto him.

And he who would desire an instance of the fertility of men's inventions in forging and coining objections against heavenly mysteries, in the justification of the sovereignty of their own reason, as unto what belongs to our relation unto God, need go no farther than the writings of these men against the Trinity and incarnation of the eternal Word. For this is their fundamental rule, in things divine and doctrines of religion, — That not what the Scripture says is therefore to be accounted true, although it seems repugnant unto any reasonings of ours, or is above what we can comprehend; but what seems repugnant unto our reason, let the words of the Scripture be what they will, that we must conclude that the Scripture does not say so, though it seem never so expressly so to do. “Itaque non quia utrumque Scripture dicat, propterea hæc inter se non pugnare concludendum est; sed potius quia hæc inter se pugnant, ideo alterutrum a Scriptura non dici statuendum est,” says Schlichtingius [a Socinian author] ad Meisn. Def. Socin. p. 102; — “Wherefore, because the Scripture affirms both these” (that is the efficacy of God's grace and the freedom of our wills), “we cannot conclude from thence that they are not repugnant; but because these things are repugnant unto one another, we must determine that one of them is not spoken in the Scripture:” — no, it seems, let it say what it will. This is the handsomest way they can take in advancing their own reason above the Scripture; which yet savours of intolerable presumption.

So Socinus 14 [very interesting footnote by the way, hold the ctrl key and left click] himself, speaking of the satisfaction of Christ, says, in plain terms: “Ego quidem etiamsi non semel sed sæpius id in sacris monumentis scriptum extaret, non idcirco tamen ita prorsus rem se habere crederem, ut vos opinamini; cum enim id omnino fieri non possit non secus atque in multis aliis Scripturæ Testimoniis, una cum cæteris omnibus facio; aliquâ, quæ minus incommoda videretur, interpretatione adhibitâ, eum sensum ex ejusmodi verbis elicere qui sibi constaret;” — “For my part, if this (doctrine) were extant and written in the holy Scripture, not once, but often, yet would I not therefore believe it to be so as you do; for where it can by no means be so (whatever the Scripture says), I would, as I do with others in other places, make use of some less incommodious interpretation, whereby I would draw a sense out of the words that should be consistent with itself.” And how he would do this he declares a little before: “Sacra verba in alium sensum, quam verba sonant, per inusitatos etiam tropos quandoque explicantur.” He would explain the words into another sense than what they sound or propose, by

unusual tropes [a figurative or metaphorical use of a word]. And, indeed, such uncouth tropes does he apply, as so many engines and machines, to pervert all the divine testimonies concerning our redemption, reconciliation, and justification by the blood of Christ.

Having therefore fixed this as their rule, constantly to prefer their own reason above the express words of the Scripture, which must, therefore, by one means or other, be so perverted or wrested as to be made compliant therewith, it is endless to trace them in their multiplied objections against the holy mysteries, all resolved into this one principle, that their reason cannot comprehend them, nor does approve of them. And if any man would have an especial instance of the serpentine wits of men winding themselves from under the power of conviction by the spiritual light of truth, or at least endeavouring so to do, let him read the comments of the Jewish rabbins on Isaiah, chap. liii., and of the Socinians on the beginning of the Gospel of John.

2. The second branch of this repugnancy springs from the want of a due comprehension of that harmony which is in the mystery of grace, and between all the parts of it. This comprehension is the principal effect of that wisdom which believers are taught by the Holy Ghost [the proper sense of the words, which Socinians twist and distort. And the reason is that they do not have that God given relish for the excellency and suitableness of God's word and person]. For our understanding of the wisdom of God in a mystery is neither an art nor a science, whether purely speculative or more practical, but a spiritual wisdom. And this spiritual wisdom is such as understands and apprehends things, not so much, or not only in the notion of them, as in their power, reality, and efficacy, towards their proper ends. And, therefore, although it may be very few, unless they be learned, judicious, and diligent in the use of means of all sorts, do attain unto it clearly and distinctly in the doctrinal notions of it; yet are all true believers, yea, the meanest of them, directed and enabled by the Holy Spirit, as unto their own practice and duty, to act suitably unto a comprehension of this harmony, according to the promise that “they shall be all taught of God.” Hence, those things which appear unto others contradictory and inconsistent one with another, so as that they are forced to offer violence unto the Scripture and their own experience in the rejection of the one or the other of them, are reconciled in their minds and made mutually useful or helpful unto one another, in the whole course of their obedience. But these things must be farther spoken unto.

Such an harmony as that intended there is in the whole mystery of God. For it is the most curious effect and product of divine wisdom; and it is no impeachment of the truth of it, that it is not discernible by human reason. A full comprehension of it no creature can in this world arise unto. Only, in the contemplation of faith, we may arrive unto such an understanding admiration of it as shall enable us to give glory unto God, and to make use of all the parts of it in practice as we have occasion. Concerning it the holy man mentioned before cried out, ὧ ἀνεξιχνιάστου δημιουργίας: — “O unsearchable contrivance and operations.” And so is it expressed by the apostle, as that which has an unfathomable depth of wisdom in it, ὧ βάθος πλοῦτου, etc. — “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom. xi. 33–36. See to the same purpose, Eph. iii. 8–10.”

There is a harmony, a suitableness of one thing unto another, in all the works of creation. Yet we see that it is not perfectly nor absolutely discoverable unto the wisest and most diligent of men. How far are they from an agreement about the order and motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sympathies and qualities of sundry things here below, in the relation of causality and efficiency between one thing

and another! The new discoveries made concerning any of them, do only evidence how far men are from a just and perfect comprehension of them. Yet such a universal harmony there is in all the parts of nature and its operations, that nothing in its proper station and operation is destructively contradictory either to the whole or any part of it, but everything contributes unto the preservation and use of the universe. But although this harmony be not absolutely comprehensible by any, yet do all living creatures, who follow the conduct or instinct of nature, make use of it, and live upon it; and without it neither their being could be preserved, nor their operations continued.

But in the mystery of God and his grace, the harmony and suitableness of one thing unto another, with their tendency unto the same end, is incomparably more excellent and glorious than that which is seen in nature or the works of it. For whereas God made all things at first in wisdom, yet is the new creation of all things by Jesus Christ ascribed peculiarly unto the riches, stores, and treasures of that infinite wisdom. Neither can any discern it unless they are taught of God; for it is only spiritually discerned. But yet is it by the most despised. Some seem to think that there is no great wisdom in it; and some, that no great wisdom is required unto the comprehension of it: few think it worth the while to spend half that time in prayer, in meditation, in the exercise of self-denial, mortification, and holy obedience, doing the will of Christ, that they may know of his word, to the attaining of a due comprehension of the mystery of godliness, as some do in diligence, study, and trial of experiments, who design to excel in natural or mathematical sciences. Wherefore there are three things evident herein:—

1. That such an harmony there is in all the parts of the mystery of God, wherein all the blessed properties of the divine nature are glorified, our duty in all instances is directed and engaged, our salvation in the way of obedience secured, and Christ, as the end of all, exalted. Wherefore, we are not only to consider and know the several parts of the doctrine of spiritual truths but their relation, also, one unto another, their consistency one with another in practice, and their mutual furtherance of one another unto their common end. And a disorder in our apprehensions about any part of that whose beauty and use arises from its harmony, gives some confusion of mind with respect unto the whole.

2. That unto a comprehension of this harmony in a due measure, it is necessary that we be taught of God; without which we can never be wise in the knowledge of the mystery of his grace. And herein ought we to place the principal part of our diligence, in our inquiries into the truths of the gospel.

3. All those who are taught of God to know his will, unless it be when their minds are disordered by prejudices, false opinions, or temptations, have an experience in themselves and their own practical obedience, of the consistency of all parts of the mystery of God's grace and truth in Christ among themselves, — of their spiritual harmony and cogent tendency unto the sane end. The introduction of the grace of Christ into our relation unto God, makes no confusion or disorder in their minds, by the conflict of the principles of natural reason, with respect unto our first relation unto God, and those of grace, with respect unto that whereunto we are renewed.

From the want of a due comprehension of this divine harmony it is, that the minds of men are filled with imaginations of an inconsistency between the most important parts of the mystery of the gospel, from whence the confusions that are at this day in Christian religion do proceed.

Thus the Socinians can see no consistency between the grace or love of God and the satisfaction of Christ, but imagine if the one of them be admitted, the other must be excluded out of our religion. Wherefore they principally oppose the latter, under a pretence of asserting and vindicating the former. And where these things are expressly conjoined in the same proposition of faith, — as where it is said that “we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” [Rom. iii. 24, 25](#), — they will offer violence unto common sense and reason, rather than not disturb that harmony which they cannot understand. For although it be plainly affirmed to be a redemption by his blood, as he is a propitiation, as his blood was a ransom or price of redemption, yet they will contend that it is only metaphorical, — a mere deliverance by power, like that of the Israelites by Moses. But these things are clearly stated in the gospel; and therefore not only consistent, but such as that the one cannot subsist without the other. Nor is there any mention of any especial love or grace of God unto sinners, but with **respect unto the satisfaction of Christ as the means of the communication of all its effects unto them**. See [John iii. 16](#); [Rom. iii. 23–25](#); [viii. 30–33](#); [2 Cor. v. 19–21](#); [Eph. i. 7](#), etc.

In like manner, they can see no consistency between the satisfaction of Christ and the necessity of holiness or obedience in them that do believe. Hence they continually clamour, that, by our doctrine of the mediation of Christ, we overthrow all obligations unto a holy life. And by their **sophistical reasonings** unto this purpose, they prevail with many to embrace their delusion, who have not a spiritual experience to confront their sophistry withal. But as the testimony of the Scripture lies expressly against them, so those who truly believe, **and have real experience of the influence of that truth** into the life of God, and how impossible it is to yield any acceptable obedience herein without respect thereunto, are secured from their snares.

These and the like imaginations arise from the unwillingness of men to admit of the introduction of the mystery of grace into our relation unto God. For suppose us to stand before God on the old constitution of the covenant of creation, **which alone natural reason likes and is comprehensive of**, and we do acknowledge these things to be inconsistent. But the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in Christ cannot stand without them both.

So, likewise, God’s efficacious grace in the conversion of sinners, and the exercise of the faculties of their minds in a way of duty, are asserted as contradictory and inconsistent. And although they seem both to be positively and frequently declared in the Scripture, yet, say these men, their consistency being repugnant to their reason, let the Scripture say what it will, yet is it to be said by us that the Scripture does not assert one of them. And this is from the same cause; men cannot, in their wisdom, see it possible that the mystery of God’s grace should be introduced into our relation and obedience unto God. [hence they are under law, under the curse of it and are like the wicked servant that hid his talent thinking God was a harsh man when in fact, under the gospel or covenant of grace, is his grace and mercy revealed! An unregenerated person cannot see anything in God having to do with mercy grace love; he is still in a state and condition that prevents him from operating within it but only under the law of works. Ask him how one gets saved and he will say, in short, that you must do something as opposed to *receiving* something – —s Paul says, “For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not

received *it?*"] Hence have many ages of the church, especially the last of them, been filled with endless disputes, in opposition to the grace of God, or to accommodate the conceptions of it unto the interests of corrupted reason.

But there is no instance more pregnant unto this purpose than that under our present consideration. Free justification, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is cried out against, as inconsistent with a necessity of personal holiness and obedience: and because the Socinians insist principally on this pretence, it shall be fully and diligently considered apart; and that holiness which, without it, they and others deriving from them do pretend unto, shall be tried by the unerring rule.

Wherefore I desire it may be observed, that in pleading for this doctrine, we do it as a principal part of the introduction of grace into our whole relation unto God. Hence we grant, —

1. **That it is unsuited, yea foolish, and, as some speak, childish, unto the principles of unenlightened and unsanctified reason or understandings of men.** And this we conceive to be the principal cause of all the oppositions that are made unto it, and all the deprivations of it that the church is pestered withal. Hence are the wits of men so fertile in sophistical cavils against it, so ready to load it with seeming absurdities [straw man arguments], and I know not what unsuitableness unto their wondrous rational conceptions. And no objection can be made against it, be it never so trivial, but it is highly applauded by those who look on that introduction of the **mystery of grace, which is above their natural conceptions, as unintelligible folly.**

2. That the necessary relation of these things, one unto the other, — namely, of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of our personal obedience, — will not be clearly understood, nor duly improved, but by and in the exercise of the wisdom of faith. This we grant also; and let who will make what advantage they can of this concession. **True faith has that spiritual light in it, or accompanying of it, as that it is able to receive it, and to conduct the soul unto obedience by it.** Wherefore, reserving the particular consideration hereof unto its proper place, I say, in general, —

(1.) **That this relation is evident unto that spiritual wisdom whereby we are enabled, doctrinally and practically, to comprehend the harmony of the mystery of God, and the consistency of all the parts of it, one with another.** [So when one gets saved he is given a *delight* in all the ways of God (even though he doesn't understand them all) not just some of them. Delight is a grace that enables one to delight in God, his word, etc.]

(2.) That it is made evident by the Scripture, wherein both these things — justification through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of our personal obedience — are plainly asserted and declared. And we defy that rule of the Socinians, that seeing these things are inconsistent in their apprehension or unto their reason, therefore we must say that one of them is not taught in the Scripture: for whatever it may appear unto their reason, it does not so to ours; and we have at least as good reason to trust unto our own reason as unto theirs. Yet we absolutely acquiesce in neither, but in the authority of God in the Scripture; rejoicing only in this, that we can set our seal unto his revelations by our own experience. For, —

(3.) It is fully evident in the gracious conduct which the minds of them that believe are under, even that of the Spirit of truth and grace, and the inclinations of that new principle of the divine life [i.e., faith] whereby they are acted; for although, from the remainders of sin and darkness that are in them, temptations may arise unto a continuation in sin because grace has abounded, yet are their minds so formed and framed by the doctrine of this grace, and the grace of this doctrine, that the abounding of grace herein is the principal motive unto their abounding in holiness, as we shall see afterward. [Hence Romans 6:17, "*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart [i.e., evangelical not legal obedience] that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*"]"

And this we aver to be the spring of all those objections which the adversaries of this doctrine do continually endeavour to entangle it withal. As, —

1. If the passive righteousness (as it is commonly called), that is, his death and suffering, be imputed unto us, there is no need, nor can it be, that his active righteousness, or the obedience of his life, should be imputed unto us; and so on the contrary: for both together are inconsistent.

2. That if all sin be pardoned, there is no need of the righteousness; and so on the contrary, if the righteousness of Christ be imputed unto us, there is no room for, or need of, the pardon of sin.

3. If we believe the pardon of our sins, then are our sins pardoned before we believe, or we are bound to believe that which is not so.

4. If the righteousness of Christ be imputed unto us, then are we esteemed to have done and suffered what, indeed, we never did nor suffered; and it is true, that if we are esteemed ourselves to have done it, imputation is overthrown.

5. If Christ's righteousness be imputed unto us, then are we as righteous as was Christ himself.

6. If our sins were imputed unto Christ, then was he thought to have sinned, and was a sinner subjectively.

7. If good works be excluded from any interest in our justification before God, then are they of no use unto our salvation.

8. That it is ridiculous to think that where there is no sin, there is not all the righteousness that can be required.

9. That righteousness imputed is only a putative or imaginary righteousness, etc.

Now, although all these and the like objections, however subtly managed (as Socinus boasts that he had used more than ordinary subtlety in this cause, — "In quo, si subtilius aliquanto quam opus esse videretur, quædam a nobis disputata sunt," De Servat., par. iv., cap. 4.), are capable of plain and clear solutions, and we shall avoid the examination of none of them; yet at present I shall only say, that all the shades which they cast on the minds of men do vanish and disappear before the light of express Scripture testimonies, and the experience of them that do believe, where there is a due comprehension of the mystery of grace in any tolerable measure.

-- **John Flavel** on *reason*: But now the more rational any gracious person is, by so much the more he is fixed, settled, and satisfied in religion; and when this change is wrought upon men [the power of God

[working faith](#)], it is carried on in a rational way, Isa. 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,” & John 16:9 The Spirit overpowers the understanding with clear demonstrations, and silences all objections, pleas, and pretences to the contrary. Pg 32 Vol. VI

Right Reason In Exercise

code365

John Owen

[In understanding the scriptures as opposed to reason corrupted and scripture abused. This will force you to exercise your mind and think. This excerpt from John Owen is excellent. Also, conclusive analysis that Christ died only for the elect - –articular redemption.](#)

[Introductory excerpt from Ch 6 pg 162-7, *Causes of Apostasy* by John Owen:](#)

Again; it is confessed that there is nothing proposed unto us in the gospel that is contrary unto reason, as reason is the due comprehension and measure of things as they are in their own nature; for how should there be so, seeing it is in itself the principal external effect of the reason or wisdom of God, which hath given unto all things their natures, properties, and measures? But yet there are things revealed in it which are above the comprehension of reason, as planted in the finite, limited understanding of man; nor is the ground hereof the accidental corruption of our nature, but the essential constitution of its being. There are, I say, divine mysteries in the gospel whose revelation we may understand, but the nature of the things themselves we cannot comprehend. And this reason itself cannot but acknowledge; for whereas it knows itself to be finite, limited, and bounded, how should it be able perfectly to comprehend things infinite, or all the effects of infinite wisdom?

“Can we by searching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what can we do? deeper than hell; what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea,” Job 11:7-9

These things so exceed the natural and duly proportionate objects of our understandings as that we cannot find them out to perfection. The reason of man hath nothing here to do, but humbly to comply with the revelations that are made of them.

Moreover, there are in the gospel things that are unsuited, yea, contradictory unto reason as it is corrupted. Reason in us is now no longer to be considered merely as it is finite and limited, but as, in the subject and exercise of it, it is impaired, depraved, and corrupted. To deny this, is to deny the fundamental principle and supposition that, in all things, the gospel procedeth on; that is, that Jesus Christ came into the world to restore and repair our nature. In this state, as it is unable of itself to discern and judge of spiritual things in a due manner, so it is apt to frame unto itself vain imaginations, and to be prepossessed with innumerable prejudices, contrary unto what the gospel doth teach and

require; and whatever it doth so fancy or frame, the mind esteems as proper acts and effects of reason as any it exerciseth or is capable of.

With respect unto both these, — namely, the weakness of reason as it is finite and limited, and the depravation of reason as it is corrupted, — it is the design of the gospel to bring every thought into captivity unto the obedience of faith; for, —

1. As to the former, it requires men to believe things above their reason, merely on the authority of divine revelation. Things they must believe which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man to conceive;” only they are “revealed unto us by the Spirit,” 1 Corinthians 2:9,10. It will not admit of an inquiry how those things may be which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. The sense and meaning of the revelation it may inquire into, but cannot comprehend the things revealed. And when of old the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world, would not submit hereunto, under the supposed conduct of their reason, they fell into the most brutish unreasonableness, in judging the wisdom of God to be folly and his power to be weakness, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. And it is an unparalleled attempt of atheism which some in our days (who would yet be accounted Christians) have engaged in; — they would exalt philosophy or human reason into a right of judicature over all divine revelations. Nothing must be supposed to be contained in them but what is measurable by its principles and rules. What pretends to be above them, they say ought to be rejected; which is to make itself infinite, or the wisdom and understanding of God finite and limited. Wherefore, as to the things that are revealed in the gospel, because many of them are absolutely above the comprehension of our minds or reasons, they are not the judges of them, but are the servants of faith only in bearing witness unto them; for

“the things of a man knoweth the spirit of man which is in him; but the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God,” 1 Corinthians 2:11.

In brief, to affirm that we can be obliged to believe no more than we can comprehend, or nothing but what we can perfectly understand the nature of in itself, or that we may reject what is really above reason, on a supposition that it is contrary unto reason, is to renounce the gospel, and therewith all divine revelations. And this is spoken not of reason as it is corrupted, but merely as it is human reason, finite and limited.

2. As in things infinite, spiritual, and heavenly, the gospel proposeth unto men things quite above their comprehension, supposing their reason to be pure and uncorrupted, only allowing it to be that which is finite and limited; so in things which practically respect the obedience of faith which it doth require, it prescribeth things contrary unto our natural conceptions, or reason as it is in us depraved: for the natural conceptions of our minds about religious duties and the way of living unto God are all of them suited unto the covenant of works, for they are the effects of the remainders of that light which did direct us to walk with God thereby. But hereunto the disposal of things in the covenant of grace is diametrically opposed, so that their accounts will never intermix, Romans 11:6; yea, the carnal mind, — that is, reason as it is corrupted, — acts its contradiction unto the will of God as revealed in the gospel with enmity and hatred, **chap. 8:7**. And [as] for those duties which are suited unto the light of nature, the gospel doth so change them, with the respect it gives them unto the mediation of Christ and the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, as that corrupted reason defies them, being so qualified, as foreign

unto its conceptions. The duties themselves it can approve of, but not of their respect unto Jesus Christ, whereunto they are disposed by the gospel.

Hence it is that of old those **who pretended such an absolute sovereignty of their own reason as to admit of nothing as truth but what its dictates complied withal**, were of all men the slowest to receive and the forwardest to oppose the mysteries of the gospel; because they were above it in some things, and contrary unto it in more, as it is in most things corrupted, they looked on them as folly, and so despised them. This the apostle declares and records, 1 Corinthians 1:2. Especially was it so among them who, unto the vain imaginations wherein in general “their foolish heart was darkened,” had superadded some peculiar sect in philosophy which was of reputation among the wise men of the world; for they conceived and maintained all the maxims of their sect as the absolute dictates of right reason, though most of them were foolish fancies, either taken up by tradition or sophistically imposed on their understandings. **Hence, every thing that was contrary unto such principles or inconsistent with them, they looked on as opposite unto reason, and so despised it.** Nor is it much otherwise at this day with many Christians, who make the traditional principles of their sect or party the rule whereby every thing that is in religion proposed unto them may be examined. Thus, though the generality of philosophers and wise men at Athens rejected the doctrine of the apostle, yet were there none so forward and fierce in their opposition unto him, so contemptuously proud in their censures of him, as were the **Epicureans and Stoics**, Acts 17:18; and the reason hereof was, because the doctrine which he taught was eminently contrary to the maxims of their peculiar sects: for whereas the Epicureans denied the providence of God in the government of the world, the existence of the souls of men after this life, all eternal rewards or punishments, there was no admission of any one word of the apostle’s doctrine without a renunciation of all their impious sentiments, and so the ruin of their sect. And as for the Stoics, the fundamental principle of their philosophy was, that a man should look for all blessedness or happiness in and from himself alone, and from the things that were in his own power, as being every way sufficient unto himself for that end. All that the apostle taught concerning the mediation of Christ and the grace of God by him was also diametrically opposite unto this principle. Wherefore those of these two sects opposed him in a peculiar manner, not only from the pride and darkness that are naturally in the minds of men, and are improved by the advancement of corrupted reason above its own proper place and dignity, but from the prejudicate opinions which, on the reputation of their sects, they adhered unto, as assured dictates of right reason in general. And when some such persons as these 166 afterward, upon a general conviction of its truth, took upon them a profession of the gospel, they were the men who corrupted its principal mysteries by their vain philosophy, as the apostle intimates, Colossians 2:8. So Tertullian,

“Haereses a philosophia subornantur. Inde AEones et formae, et nescio quae, et Trinitas hominum apud Valentinum, [qui] Platonius fuerat. Inde Marcionis Deus melior de tranquillitate, a Stoicis venerat; et ubi anima interire dicatur ab Epicuraeis observatur; et ut carnis restitutio negatur, de una omnium philosophorum schola sumitur.”

We may apply these things unto our present purpose. The design of the gospel, in all its especial truths and mysteries, is to bring every thought into subjection unto the obedience of faith. Hence is that direction which flesh and blood will never comply withal,

“If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise,” 1 Corinthians 3:18.

Unless men renounce their **carnal wisdom**, in all its principles, effects, and operations, they will never become wise with that wisdom which is from above; and he who knoweth not what it is so to become a fool, be he who he will, was never yet wise towards God. Wherefore, when men have taken on them the outward profession of the gospel, they begin to find, upon inquiry, that the mysteries and principles of its doctrine are unsuited unto the **natural pride of their minds**, and inconsistent with that **absolute sovereignty which they would in all things give unto their own reason**. Hereon “many inventions are sought out” **to cast off the yoke of faith**, and to **re-enthroned reason in the room thereof**; — not that men depart from the faith with this express design, but this is that which **secretly influenceth** them thereunto. Hence the generality of those who forsake the truth on this ground and occasion are such as, trusting too soon to their own rational abilities, having neither will, nor humility, nor industry to inquire into the principles and reasons of truth in a due manner, do give up themselves unto the conduct and teaching of others, who have **invented opinions more suited unto the innate pride of their minds and carnal reasonings**; and some, by an over-earnest pursuit of the workings of their own rational faculties in spiritual things, having subducted their minds from that humble frame wherein alone they are capable of divine teaching, are betrayed into the same miscarriage. **All ancient heresies sprung from this root**, yea, **those of them which are most absurd and foolish, and most diametrically opposite unto right reason, arose from a pretense thereof: for when men will have reason to have an absolute supremacy in religion, it is unavoidable but they must judge that their own is the reason which is intended**; and that some may be led hereby into very foolish imaginations is easy to be conjectured, unless we shall suppose all men to be equally wise and sober.

Excerpt from Owen’s **The Doctrine of Justification by Faith**, pg 39 (45 online) on the use of reason in the Old Covenant vs the inability of its use to discern the mysteries of the new Covenant without divine revelation; this is very good! <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.iv.vi.html>

Sixthly. We can never state our thoughts aright in this matter, unless we have a clear apprehension of, and satisfaction in, *the introduction of grace by Jesus Christ into the whole of our relation unto God, with its respect unto all parts of our obedience*. There was no such thing, nothing of that nature or kind, in the first constitution of that relation and obedience by the law of our creation. **We were made in a state of immediate relation unto God in our own persons**, as our creator, preserver, and rewarder. There was no mystery of grace in the covenant of works. No more was required unto the consummation of that state but what was given us in our creation, enabling us unto rewardable obedience. **“Do this, and live,”** was the sole rule of our relation unto God. **There was nothing in religion originally of that which the gospel celebrates under the name of the grace, kindness, and love of God, whence all our favorable relation unto God does now proceed**, and whereinto it is resolved; nothing of the interposition of a mediator with respect unto our righteousness before God, and acceptance with him; — which is at present the life and soul of religion, the substance of the gospel, and the centre of all the truths revealed in it. **The introduction of these things is that which makes our religion a mystery, yea, a “great mystery,”** if the apostle may be believed, **1 Tim. iii. 16**. All religion at first was suited and commensurable unto reason; but being now become a mystery, men for the most part are very unwilling to receive it. But so it must be; and unless we are restored unto our

primitive rectitude, a religion suited unto the principles of our reason (of which it has none but what answer that first state) will not serve our turns.

Wherefore, of this introduction of Christ and grace in him into our relation unto God, there are no notions in the natural conceptions of our minds; nor are they discoverable by reason in the best and utmost of its exercise, 1 Cor. ii. 14. For before our understanding were darkened, and our reason debased by the fall, there were no such things revealed or proposed unto us; yea, the supposition of them is inconsistent with, and contradictory unto, that whole state and condition wherein we were to live to God, — seeing they all suppose the entrance of sin. And it is not likely that our reason, as now corrupted, should be willing to embrace that which it knew nothing of in its best condition, and which was inconsistent with that way of attaining happiness which was absolutely suited unto it: for it has no faculty or power but what it has derived from that state; and to suppose it is now of itself suited and ready to embrace such heavenly mysteries of truth and grace as it had no notions of, nor could have, in the state of innocence, is to suppose that by the fall our eyes were opened to know good and evil, in the sense that the serpent deceived our first parents with an expectation of. Whereas, therefore, our reason was given us for our only guide in the first constitution of our natures, it is naturally unready to receive what is above it; and, as corrupted, has an enmity thereunto.

The Affections

code358

The following is an excellent discourse on the affections; good for self-examination and growing spiritually by faith, the actings of saving faith, true spiritual experiences or renewed affections, vs. love of the world, fear of losing temporal things, etc. My comments in blue, Owen's in red for emphasis. Excellent summary by AW Pink on *overcoming the world*, the meaning of 1Jn5:4! See also pg 1417 on the affections

THE GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED CHAPTER XX.

[The application of the soul unto spiritual objects.]

III. Having considered the nature of spiritual affections as **renewed by grace**, and those notions of their objects under which they **cleave** unto them, it remains only that we inquire into the way of the **soul's application of itself** unto those objects **by its affections**, which belongs also unto our being **spiritually minded**; and I shall give an account hereof in some few particulars, with brief observations on them:—

1. It is required that our adherence unto all spiritual things with love and delight be firm and stable. The affections are the powers and instruments of the soul, whereby it makes application unto anything without itself, and cleaves unto it. This is their nature and use with reference unto things spiritual. Transient thoughts of spiritual things, with vanishing desires, may rise out of present convictions, as they did with them who cried out unto our Saviour, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," and immediately left him. Such occasional thoughts and desires are common unto all sorts of men, yea, the worst of them: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" [Num 23:10] Fading satisfaction, with joy and delight, do often befall men in their attendance on the word, who yet never come to have it rooted in their hearts.

There are sundry things wanting unto the sincerity of these affections:—

(1.) Those in whom they are never had a clear spiritual view of the things themselves in their own nature which they pretend to be affected withal. [The heart of stone was never removed, their mind was never renewed, never saw his glory revealed (2or4:6)]

(2.) They have not a sincere love unto them and delight in them for their own sakes, but are only affected with some outward circumstances and concernments of them.

(3.) They find not a suitableness in them unto the ruling principles of their minds. They do not practically, they cannot truly say, "The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light; his commandments are not grievous;" or, with the psalmist, "O how I love your law!"

(4.) Their affections are transient, unstable, vanishing, as unto their exercise and operations. They are on and off; now pleased and anon displeased; earnest for a little while, and then cold and indifferent. Hence the things which they seem to affect have no transforming efficacy upon their souls; they dwell not in them in their power. [the affections were moved upon by the Spirit, but the Spirit never went deep enough into the inward parts, the mind, to change it.]

But where our affections unto spiritual things are sincere, where they are the true, genuine application of the soul and adherence unto them, they are firm and stable; love and delight are kept up unto such a constant exercise as renders them immovable. This is that which we are exhorted unto, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Transient affections, with their occasional operations, deceive multitudes; oftentimes they are as pregnant in their actions as those that are most sincere; and many effects, in joys, in mournings, in complaints, they will produce, especially when excited by any outward affliction, sickness, and the like; — but their goodness is like the early cloud or morning dew. Let none, therefore, please themselves with the operations of transient affections with respect unto spiritual things, be they never so urgent, or so pleasant, or so frequent in their returns; those that are sincere are at all times firm and stable.

2. That the soul do find a spiritual relish and savour in the things which it so adheres unto. The affections are the palate of the soul, whereby it tastes of all things which it receiveth or refuseth, and it will not long cleave unto anything which they find not a savour and relish in. Something was

spoken before of that sweetness which is in spiritual things, and the taste of them consists in a gracious sense of their suitableness unto the affections, inclinations, and dispositions of the mind. Hence they have no relish unto men of carnal minds. Whoever, therefore, would know whether his affections do sincerely adhere unto spiritual things, let him examine what relish, what sweetness, what savour he findeth in them. When he is pleased with them, as the palate with suitable and proper food, when he finds that he receives nourishment by them in the inward man, then doth he adhere unto them in a due manner.

This spiritual taste is the ground of all experience. It is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried and tasted, whereof we have experience. This makes us long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and strengthens faith as unto what we pray for and expect.

In every darkness, in every damp of spirit, under every apprehension of deadness, or the withdrawing of the sense of divine love, the soul knoweth what it wants [lacks] and what it doth desire. "Oh!" saith such a one, "that it were now with me as in former days. I know he who then gave me such refreshing tastes of his own goodness, who made everything of himself sweet and pleasant unto me, can renew this work of his grace towards me; he can give me a new spiritual appetite and relish, he can make all spiritual things savoury unto me again."

As a man under a languishing sickness, or when he is chastened with strong pain, so as that his soul abhorreth bread and his daily meat, can remember what appetite he had, with what gust and relish he was wont to take in his food in the days of his health, which makes him to know that there is such a condition, and to desire a return unto it; so is it with a **sin-sick soul.** It can find no relish, no gust, no sweetness, in spiritual things; he finds no savour in the bread of the word, nor any refreshment in the ordinances of the gospel, which yet in themselves are daily meat, "a feast of fat things, and of wine well refined:" yet doth it remember former days, when all these things were sweet unto him; **and if he have any spark of spiritual life yet remaining, it will stir him up to seek with all diligence after a recovery.** How is it with you who are now under spiritual decays, who find no taste or relish in spiritual things, unto whom the word is not savoury, nor other ordinances powerful? Call to mind how it hath been with you in former days, and what ye found in these things: "If so be," saith the apostle, "that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." **If you have not, it is to be feared that you have never yet had the least sincere love unto spiritual things;** for where that is, it will give a spiritual relish of them. If you have, how is it you can give yourselves rest one moment without an endeavour after the healing of your backsliding?

3. It is required that our affections be so set on spiritual things as to be a continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. No man can be so forsaken of reason as to suppose that he hath any sincere affection for what he thinks little on or not at all, or that he can have a true affection for anything which will not stir up and ingenerate in him continual thoughts about it. Let men try themselves as unto their relations, or their enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. And, therefore, whereas all men pretend to love God, and Christ, and the ways of God, and yet know in their own hearts that they little think of them or meditate upon them, both their pretence and religion is vain. Where our affections are duly placed on heavenly things, so as that we are indeed spiritually minded, they will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts

and meditations. But this also hath been before spoken unto. [see the part on *faith worketh itself by love* on page 211, 956, 1398, & 120. Very important. We think about or contemplate that which we love - —the affection of love for God which is given us at conversion leads us to contemplate God, his nature, the wisdom of the way of salvation, the mysteries, etc. this faith mixes itself with that causes us to grow spiritually with all its subsequent benefits, conforming ourselves to his image, increase in grace, peace, consolation, etc.]

4. When our affections are thus applied unto spiritual things, they will be prevalent **and victorious against solicitations unto the contrary**, or allurements to draw them off unto any other objects. **The work of all our spiritual adversaries is to solicit and tempt our affections, to divert them from their proper object**. There are some temptations of Satan that make an **immediate impression on the mind and conscience**. Such are his injection of diabolical, blasphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will; and the distresses which he reduceth men unto in their consciences through darkness and misrepresentations of God and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of all our spiritual adversaries, is by the solicitation of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our affection towards them, evil and sinful. Of the first are all **sensual pleasures** of the flesh, as drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering and wantonness, with all sorts of sensual pleasures. Of the latter is all our inordinate love unto self, our families, and the whole world, or the things of it. **Unto this end everything in the whole world that may make provision for lust is made use of**. Herein consists the nature and efficacy of most of those temptations which we have to conflict withal. **Solicitations they are of our affections, to draw them off from things spiritual and heavenly and to divert them unto other things**. Hereby do our enemies endeavour to beguile us, as the serpent beguiled Eve, with fair and false representations of other beloveds, that our hearts be not preserved as a chaste virgin in all their affections for Christ.

And it is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the **specious pretences** wherewith we are solicited.

That our affections, in the degree treated about, — suppose of **love unto the world and the things of it**, — **are lawful and allowable, is one of the sophisms and artifices wherewith many are deluded**. Hereon, provided they run not out into scandalous excesses, they approve of themselves in such a worldly frame of mind, and acting according unto it, as renders them fruitless, useless, senseless, and is inconsistent with that prevailing adherence of affections unto spiritual things that ought to be in us. **Others are deluded by a pretence that it is in one instance** only they would be spared; it is but this or that object they would give out the embraces of the affections unto, in all other things they will be entire for God: the vanity of which pretence we have spoken unto before. Others are ruined by giving place unto their solicitations with respect unto any one affection whatever; as suppose it be that of **fear**. In times of danger for profession, multitudes have lost all their affection unto spiritual things through a fear of losing that which is temporal, as their lives, their liberties, their goods, and the like. **When once Satan and the world have gotten, as it were, the mastery of this affection, or a prevalent interest in it, they will not fail to draw all others into a defection from Christ and the gospel. “He that loveth his life shall lose it.”**

Wherefore, it is no ordinary nor easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady, in their vigorous adherence unto spiritual things, against all these solicitations. Watchfulness, prayer,

faith in exercise, and a daily examination of ourselves, are required hereunto. For want of a due attendance unto these things, and that with respect unto this end, — namely, the preservation of our spiritual affections in their integrity, — many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigour of spiritual life.

5. Affections thus fixed upon things spiritual and heavenly will give great relief against the remainders of that vanity of mind which believers themselves are oftentimes perplexed withal; yea, I do not know anything that is a greater burden unto them, nor which they more groan for deliverance from. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, the irregularity of their thoughts, are a continual burden unto many. Nothing can give the soul any relief herein, nothing can give bounds unto the endless variety of **foolish imaginations**, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil wherein they grow barren as unto their production and maintenance, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual vigorous actings on heavenly things; for hereby the heart and mind will be so united unto them (that which the psalmist prays for, [Ps. lxxxvi. 11](#)), as that they will not be ready to depart from them, and give entertainment unto vain, empty, foolish imaginations. [this is a good reason to teach your children Christian knowledge when they are young so that when the world presents these vain things to them, their affections will have been grounded more so in the right doctrines so as to resist these offers.] Thoughts of other things, greater and better than what this world can contain, will be continually arising in the mind, not to be laid aside by any solicitations of vanity: for he that is wise cannot but know and consider that the spiritual things which it exerciseth its thoughts about have substance in them, are durable, profitable, always the same; that the advantage, peace, rest, riches, and reward of the soul, lieth in them; but other imaginations, which the foolish mind is apt to give entertainment unto, are vain, empty, fruitless, and such as end in shame and trouble.

Again; the vanity of the mind in an indulgence unto foolish imaginations ariseth from, or is animated and increased by, that gust and relish which it finds in earthly things and enjoyment of them, whether lawful or unlawful. Hence on all occasions, yea, in holy duties, it will be ready to turn aside and take a taste of them, and sometimes to take up with them: like a tippling traveller, who, though he be engaged in a journey on the most earnest occasion, yet he cannot but be bibbing here and there as he passes by, and it may be, at length, before he comes to his journey's end, lodgeth himself in a nasty ale-house. When men are engaged in important duties, yet if they always carry about them a strong gust and relish of earthly things, they will ever and anon in their thoughts divert unto them, either as unto such real objects as they are accustomed unto, or as unto what present circumstances do administer unto **corrupt affections**, or as to what they fancy and create in their own minds; and sometimes, it may be, after they have made them a few short visits, they take up with them, and lose wholly the work they were engaged in. Nothing, as was said, will give relief herein but the vigorous and constant exercise of our affections on heavenly things; for this will insensibly take off that gust and relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them as a sapless thing unto the whole soul. They will so place the cross of Christ, in particular, on the heart as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savour, which it made use of to solicit our minds unto thoughts and desires about it.

Moreover, this frame of spirit alone will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means whereby the vanity of the mind is excited and maintained. Such are the wandering and roving of the outward senses. The senses, especially that of the eye, are ready to become purveyors to make provision for the vanity and lusts of the mind. Hence the psalmist prays, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." If the eyes rove after vain objects the mind will ruminare upon them. And another affirms that he had "made a covenant with his eyes," to preserve them from fixing on such objects as might solicit lust or corrupt affections. And it were a useful labour, would this place admit of it, to discover the ready serviceableness of the outward senses and members of the body unto sin and folly, if not watched against, [Rom. vi. 13, 19](#). Of the same nature is the incessant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itself is evil continually and all the day long. This is the food of a vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world. Besides, sundry occasions of life and conversation are usually turned or abused unto the same end, exciting and exercising of the vanity of the mind.

Wherever our affections are fixed on spiritual things, our mind will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all those things whereby that vanity which it so abhorreth, which it is so burdened withal, is maintained and excited. Nor without this prevalency in the mind will ever a work of mortification be carried on in the soul, [Col. iii. 2, 4, 5](#).

[On a parallel note!! Read this excerpt by **AW Pink!** - another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John5:4). Observe that this is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this the saint is conformed to His head: "B" of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.]

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Definition of a Covenant - Part I

code312

The covenant between the Father and the Son, God's liberty or freedom in all that he does. The Father, positionally superior to the Son explained. Free grace defined. The nature of God, his freedom vs. necessity

John Owen, p 81-88 Vol. 18 (pg 99 online)
Introduction to Hebrews - Observations

Thirdly, An absolute promise is also called *tyrib* [a Hebrew word], “a covenant,” the covenant of God: Isaiah 59:21, “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth.” And God also calls his decree constitutive of the law of nature and its continuance his covenant: Jeremiah 33:20, “Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in their season.”

It is therefore certain that where God speaks of his covenant, we cannot conclude that whatever belongs unto a perfect, complete covenant is therein intended. And they do but deceive themselves who, from the name of a covenant between God and man, do conclude always unto the nature and conditions of it; for the word is used in great variety, and what is intended by it must be learned from the subject-matter treated of, seeing there is no precept or promise of God but may be so called.

6. In the making of covenants between men, yea, in the covenant of God with men, besides that they were always conceived “*verbis expressis*,” there was some sign and token added, for their **confirmation**. This was generally the **slaying** of some creature, and the dividing of it into parts, before mentioned. Hence “*sancire foedus*” and “*sanctio foederis*” are “a sanguine,” from the blood shed in their confirmation. Of the slaying of a beast there is mention in all who have spoken of ancient covenants. So was it in that between the Romans and Albans, whose form is reported by Livy, as that whose tradition was of greatest antiquity among them. And there are likewise instances of the division of the slain beasts into two parts, like what we observed before concerning Abraham, and the princes of Judah in Jeremiah: Οι Μολοττοι εν τοις ορκωμοσιαις κατακοπτοντες εις μικρα τους Βους τα σουνθηκας εποιουντε, Herod.; — “The Molossians in their confederations cut oxen into small pieces, and so entered into covenants.” And how these pieces or parts were disposed Livy declares, lib. 39: “*Prior pars ad dextram cum extis, posterior ad laevam viae ponitur; inter hanc divisam hostiam copiae armatae traducuntur.*” [Google translated: **The first part is on the right hand with the entrails, and the latter is placed to the left of the road; between the parts of the sacrifice of the troops are marched.**] And hence it is that *trok* [Hebrew word], which signifies “to cut” or “divide,” is used in the Scripture absolutely for the making of a covenant, without any addition of *tyriB*, 1 Samuel 20:16, 1 Kings 8:9. And although such outward things did never belong unto the essence of a covenant, yet were they useful **significations of fidelity**, intended and accepted in the performance of what was engaged in it; and therefore **God himself never made a covenant with men but he always gave them a token and visible pledge thereof**. And whosoever is interested in the covenant itself hath thereby a right unto and is obliged to the use of the sign or token, according to God’s appointment.

7. An **absolutely complete covenant** is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement, between distinct persons, about the ordering and disposal of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage: —

(1.) **Distinct persons are required unto a covenant, for it is a mutual compact.** As “a mediator is not of one,” — that is, there must be several parties, and those at variance, or there is no room for the interposition of a mediator, Galatians 3:20, — so a covenant, properly so called, is not of one. In the large sense wherein *tyrib* is taken, a man’s resolution in himself with respect unto any especial end or purpose may be called his covenant, as Job 31:1, “I made a covenant with mine eyes.” And so God calleth his purpose or decree concerning the orderly course of nature in the instance before given. But a covenant, properly so called, is the **convention or agreement of two persons or more.**

(2.) **This agreement must be voluntary** and of choice upon the election of the terms convented about. Hence *tyrint* by some derived from *arhuu*;, which signifies “to choose” or “elect;” for such choice is the foundation of all solemn covenants. What is properly so is founded on a free election of the terms of it, upon due consideration and a right judgment made of them. Hence, when one people is broken in war or subdued by another, who prescribe terms unto them, which they are forced as it were to accept for the present necessity, it is but an **imperfect covenant**, and, as things are in the world, not like to be firm or stable. [And so it is with those who are falsely converted by this sinner's prayer; in their hearts they are still at enmity with God! - original Sin. And so must be made willing which God promises to do in the new covenant!] So some legates answered in the senate of Rome when their people were subdued, “Pacem habebitis qualem dederitis; si bonam, firmam et stabilem, sin haud diuturnam.” [Google translated: "We shall make peace; If good, is firm and stable, but if you will soon be broken."]

(3.) The matter of every righteous and complete covenant must be of **things in the power of them who convent and agree about them**; otherwise any, yea the most solemn compact, is **vain and ineffectual**. A son or daughter in their father’s house, and under his care, making a vow or covenant for the disposal of themselves, can give no force unto it, because they are not in their own power. Hence, when God invites and takes men into the covenant of grace, whereunto belongs a restipulation of faith and obedience, **which are not absolutely in their own power, that the covenant may be firm and stable he takes upon himself to enable them thereunto; and the efficacy of his grace unto that purpose is of the nature of the covenant.** Hence, when men enter into any compact wherein one party takes on itself the performance of that which the other thinks to be, but is not, really in its power, there is *dolus malus* in it [fraud and misrepresentation], which enervates and disannuls the covenant itself. And many such compacts were rescinded by the senate and people of Rome, which were made by their generals without their consent; as those with the Gauls who besieged the Capitol, and with the Samnites, at the *Furcae Caudinae*.

Lastly, The end of a **covenant** is the disposal of the things about which the covenant is made to the **mutual content and satisfaction** of all persons concerned. Hence was the ancient form, “*Quod felix faustumque sit huic et illi populo.*” [Google translated: "That this day, and to that people, fortunate and prosperous."] If either party be absolutely and finally detrimented by it, it is no absolute, free, or voluntary covenant, but an agreement of a mixed nature, where the consent of one party is given only for the avoiding of a greater inconvenience. And these things we shall find of use in our progress.

8. As all these things concur in every equal compact, so there is an especial kind of covenant, depending solely on the personal undertakings and services of one party in order unto the common ends of the covenant, or the mutual satisfaction of the covenanters. So it is in all agreements where anything is distinctly and peculiarly required of one party. And such covenants have three things in them: — (1.) **A proposal of service; (2.) A promise of reward; (3.) An acceptance of the proposal, with a restipulation of obedience out of respect unto the reward.** And this indispensably introduceth an **inequality and subordination in the covenanters as to the common ends of the covenant, however on other accounts they may be equal; for he who prescribes the duties which are required in the covenant, and giveth the promises of either assistance in them or a reward upon them, is therein and so far superior unto him, or greater than he who observeth his prescriptions and trusteth unto his promises.** Of this nature is that **divine transaction that was between the Father and Son about the redemption of mankind.** There was in it a prescription of personal services, with a promise of reward; and all the other conditions, also, of a complete covenant before laid down are observed therein. And this we must inquire into, as that wherein doth lie the **foundation and original of the priesthood of Christ.**

9. First, Unto a proper covenant it is required that it be made between **distinct persons.** Such have I elsewhere proved the **Father and Son** to be, and in this discourse I do take that fundamental principle of our profession as granted. **That there were eternal transactions in general between those distinct persons, with respect unto the salvation of mankind,** hath been evinced in the foregoing Exercitation. That these were federal, or **had in them the nature of a covenant,** is now further to be manifested. And in general this is that which the Scripture intends, where God, that is the Father, is called by the Son his God, and where he says that he will be unto him a God and a Father; **for this expression of being a God unto any one is declarative of a covenant, and is the word whereby God constantly declares his relation unto any in a way of covenant,** Jeremiah 31:33, 32:38; Hosea 2:23.

For God, declaring that he will be a God unto any, engageth himself unto the exercise of his holy properties, which belong unto him as God, **in their behalf and for their good;** and this is not without an engagement of obedience from them. Now, this declaration the Scripture abounds in: Psalm 16:2, "Thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord." **These are the words of the Son unto the Father,** as is evident from verses 9-11. Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God." Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Psalm 45:7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee." Micah 5:4, "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God." John 20:17, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Revelation 3:12, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God." **All which expressions argue both a covenant and a subordination therein.**

And on this account it is that our Savior says his Father is greater than he, John 14:28. This place, I confess, the ancients expound unanimously of the human nature only, to obviate the **Arians,** who ascribed unto him a divine nature, but made, and absolutely in itself inferior to the nature of God. But the inferiority of the human nature unto God or the Father is a thing so unquestionable as needed no declaration or solemn attestation, and **the mention of it is no way suited unto the design of the place.** But our Savior speaks with respect unto the **covenant engagement that was between the Father and**

himself as to the work which he had to do: for therein, as we shall further manifest, the Father was the prescriber, the promiser and lawgiver; and the Son was the undertaker upon his prescription, law, and promises. He is, indeed, in respect of his divine personality, said to be “God of God.” No more is intended hereby but that the person of the Son, as to his personality, was of the person of the Father, who communicated his nature and life unto him by eternal generation [see pg 1289]. But the Father on that account is not said to be his God, or to be a God unto him, which includes the acting of divine properties on his behalf, and a dependence on the other side on him who is so a God unto him. And this hath its sole foundation on that covenant and the execution of it which we are in the consideration of.

10. Again; the transactions before insisted on and declared are proposed to have been by the way of “counsel,” for the accomplishment of the end designed in a covenant: Zechariah 6:13, *μωΟlv; txæfwæ μh, ynev w yB, hy, hgri* [Hebrew words]. The counsel about peace-making between God and man was “between them both;” that is, the two persons spoken of, — namely, the Lord Jehovah, and he who was to be *jmæx*, “The Branch.” And this was not spoken of him absolutely as he was a man, or was to be a man, for so there was not properly [Greek word], or “counsel,” between God and him; “for who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Romans 11:34. And, besides, the Son in his human nature was merely the servant of the Father to do his will, Isaiah 42:1. But God takes this counsel with him as he was his eternal Wisdom, only with respect unto his future incarnation; for therein he was to be both the “Branch of the LORD and “the fruit of the earth,” Isaiah 4:2. Hereunto regard also is had in his name: Isaiah 9:6, “He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor;” for these titles, with those that follow, do not absolutely denote properties of the divine nature, though they are such divine titles and attributes as cannot be ascribed unto any but to him who is God; but there is in them a respect unto the work which he had to do as he was to be a “child born” and “a son given” unto us. And on the same account is he called “The everlasting Father,” a name not proper unto the person of the Son with mere respect unto his personality. **There is, therefore, a regard in it unto the work he had to do, which was to be a father unto all the elect of God.** And therein also was he “The Prince of Peace,” — he who is the procurer and establisher of peace between God and mankind. On the same account God speaking of him, says that he is “My shepherd, and the man my fellow,” Zechariah 13:7; such an one as with whom he had sweetened and rejoiced in secret counsel, as Psalm 55:14, according unto what was before declared on Proverbs 8:30, 31.

11. **Particularly, the will of the Father and Son concurred in this matter; which was necessary, that the covenant might be voluntary and of choice.** And the original of the whole is referred to the will of the Father constantly. Hence our Lord Jesus Christ on all occasions declares solemnly that he came to do the will of the Father: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,” Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-10; for in this agreement the part of the enjoiner, prescriber, and promiser whose will in all things is to be attended unto, is on the **Father**. **And his will was naturally at a perfect liberty from engaging in that way of salvation which he accomplished by Christ. He was at liberty to have left all mankind under sin and the curse, as he did all the angels that fell; he was at liberty utterly to have destroyed the race of mankind that sprang from Adam in his fallen estate,** either in the root of them, or in the branches when multiplied, as he almost did in the flood, and have created another stock or race of them unto his glory. **And hence the acting of his will herein is expressed by grace, — which is free, or it is not grace,** — and is said to proceed from love acting by choice; all arguing the highest liberty in the will of the

Father, John 3:16; Ephesians 1:6. [This liberty destroys the Arminian's idea of liberty; that God cannot violate man's liberty; it is unfair if He does, they say; for man's will must be free and uninfluenced by any outward force which is to make man God.]

And the same is further evidenced by the exercise of his authority, both in the commission and commands that he gave unto the Son, as incarnate, for the discharge of the work that he had undertaken; **for none puts forth his authority but voluntarily, or by and according unto his own will.** Now, he both sent the Son, and sealed him, and gave him commands; which are all acts of choice and liberty, proceeding from sovereignty. **Let none, then, once imagine that this work of entering into covenant about the salvation of mankind was any way necessary unto God, or that it was required by virtue of any of the essential properties of his nature, so that he must have done against them in doing otherwise. God was herein absolutely free, as he was also in his making of all things out of nothing.** He could have left it undone without the least disadvantage unto his essential glory or contrariety unto his holy nature. Whatever, therefore, we may afterwards assert concerning the necessity of satisfaction to be given unto his justice, upon the supposition of this covenant, yet the entering into this covenant, and consequently all that ensued thereon, **is absolutely resolved into the mere will and grace of God.**

12. **The will of the Son also was distinct herein.** In his divine nature and will he **undertook voluntarily** for the work of his person when the **human nature** should be united thereunto, which he determined to assume; for what is spoken of the second person is spoken with respect unto his purpose to assume our nature, for the obedience whereof, in all that was to be done upon it or by it, he undertook. This the Scripture fully declares, and that for a double end: —

First, To demonstrate that the things which he underwent in his human nature were just and equal, inasmuch as himself whose it **was voluntarily consented thereunto.**

Secondly, To manifest that those very acts which he had in command from his Father **were no less the acts of his own will.** Wherefore, **as it is said that the Father loved us, and gave his Son to die for us;** so also it is said that the Son loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us in his own blood. These things proceeded from and were founded **in the will of the Son of God;** and it was an **act of perfect liberty** in him to engage into his peculiar concerns in this covenant. **What he did, he did by choice, in a way of condescension and love.** And this his voluntary susception of the discharge of what he was to perform, according to the nature and terms of this covenant, was the ground of the authoritative mission, sealing, and commanding, of the Father towards him. See Psalm 60:7, 8; Hebrews 10:5; John 10:17, 18: [“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”] And whatever is expressed in the Scripture concerning the will of the human nature of Christ, as it was engaged in and bent upon its work, **it is but a representation of the will of the Son of God when he engaged into this work from eternity.** So then he **freely** undertook to do and suffer whatever on his part was required; and **therein owns himself the servant of the Father,** because he would obey his will and serve his purposes **in the nature which he would assume** for that end, Isaiah 42:1, 6, 49:8, 9; Zechariah 13:7; **and therein acknowledgeth him to be his Lord, Psalm 16:2, unto whom he owed all homage and obedience:** for this mind was in him, that whereas he was in the form of God, he humbled himself unto this work, Philippians 2:5-8, and **by his own voluntary consent** was engaged therein.

Whereas, therefore, **he had a sovereign and absolute power over his own human nature when assumed, whatever he submitted unto, it was no injury unto him, nor injustice in God to lay it on him.**

13. But this sacred truth must be cleared from an objection whereunto it seems obnoxious, before we do proceed. “The will is a natural property, and therefore in the divine essence it is but one. The Father, Son, and Spirit, have not distinct wills. They are one God, and God’s will is one, as being an essential property of his nature; and therefore are there two wills in the one person of Christ, whereas there is but one will in the three persons of the Trinity. How, then, can it be said that the will of the Father and the will of the Son did concur distinctly in the making of this covenant?”

This difficulty may be solved from what hath been already declared; for such is the distinction of the persons in the unity of the divine essence, as that they act in natural and essential acts reciprocally one towards another, — namely, in understanding, love, and the like; **they know and mutually love each other.** **And as they subsist distinctly, so they also act distinctly in those works which are of external operation.** And whereas all these acts and operations, whether reciprocal or external, **are either with a will or from a freedom of will and choice, the will of God in each person,** as to the peculiar acts ascribed unto him, is his will therein peculiarly and eminently, though not exclusively to the other persons, by reason of their mutual in-being. **The will of God as to the peculiar actings of the Father in this matter is the will of the Father, and the will of God with regard unto the peculiar actings of the Son is the will of the Son; not by a distinction of sundry wills, but by the distinct application of the same will unto its distinct acts in the persons of the Father and the Son.** And in this respect the covenant whereof we treat differeth from a pure decree; for from these distinct actings of the will of God in the Father and the Son there doth arise a new habitude or relation, which is **not natural or necessary unto them, but freely taken on them.** **And by virtue hereof were all believers saved from the foundation of the world, upon the account of the interposition of the Son of God antecedently unto his exhibition in the flesh;** for hence was he esteemed to have done and suffered what he had undertaken so to do, and which, through faith, was imputed unto them that did believe. [WOW! Think about that!! and then tell me people chose Christ without being called! Does this truth not magnify the magnitude of this wicked presumption? See [code278a](#)] See pg 553 for the continuation of this particular text. pg 88-92 vol 18

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Definition of a Covenant – Part II

[code314](#)

Subjects covered: Definition of a covenant, Nature of a covenant, Free will of man, the difference between the Old and New Covenant; **this is Key!**

By John Owen *Commentary on Hebrews* **p 146 vol. 22**

And yet notwithstanding all this, it is added, “that God had not circumcised their hearts to fear him and obey him always,” as it is here promised [in the new covenant]. The communication of grace effectual, **producing infallibly the good things proposed and promised** in the minds and hearts of men, **belonged not unto that covenant [the old covenant of works]**. If, therefore, there be no more in the making of the new covenant **but only the adding of more forcible outward means and motives, more suitable unto our reasons, and meet to work on our affections, it differs only in some unassignable degrees from the former. But this is directly contrary unto the promise in the prophet, that it shall not be according unto it, or of the same kind; no more than Christ, the high priest of it, should be a priest after the order of Aaron.** [Adam did not have the promise of being provided ongoing and continual supplies of grace, above and beyond what he was originally supplied with, as believers do in the new covenant as described in the previous excerpt. See Flavel, page 1700, 1709]

next: **Pelagianism explained**, which is the foundation of **Arminianism**, basically states that man can come to God without any help from the Holy Spirit; it is totally from his own supposed independent, autonomous power, his will determining itself. Arminianism is an offshoot of Pelagianism in that Arminianism includes synergism, man cooperating with God to some extent, but leaving the final decision up to man; in other words man can frustrate God's will, that the promises of the covenant are not infallibly effectual. This gets into Prevenient grace (described excellently by James White later in this text), that kind of grace that doesn't save but is a kind of moral suasion only and has its roots in Arminianism. This is very good and brings this heresy into sharper focus. The Soul: the mind, the heart = the will and the affections, described in relation to each other, hence the meaning of the saving knowledge of God is understood. This gift of grace defined. What is the law of God? The first grace communicated.

More on what a covenant is, the difference between the Old and New Covenant and what consists in both. More on the image of God as well.

John Owen, p143-152 vol. 22 (p174-184)

The circumstances of the making of this covenant being thus cleared, the **nature** of it in its promises is next proposed unto us. And in the exposition of the words we must do these two things:

1. Inquire into the general nature of these promises.
2. Particularly and distinctly explain them: —

FIRST, The **general nature** both of the **covenant** and of the **promises** whereby it is here expressed must briefly be inquired into, because there are various apprehensions about them. For some suppose

that there is an especial efficacy towards the things mentioned intended in these promises, and no more; some judge that the things themselves, the event and end, are so promised.

In the first way Schlichtingius [an Arminian 1600s] expresseth himself on this place: “Non ‘ut olim curabo leges meas in lapideis tantum tabulis inscribi, sed tale foedus cum illis feriam ut meae leges ipsis eorum mentibus et cordibus insculpantur:’ —apparet haec verba intra vim et efficaciam accipienda esse, non veto ad ipsum inscriptionis effectum necessario porrigenda, qui semper in libera hominis potestate positus est; quod ipsum docent et sequentia Dei verba, ver. 12. Quibus ipse Deus causam seu modum ac rationem hujus rei aperit, quae ingenti illius gratia ac misericordia populo exhibenda continetur. Hac futurum dicit ut populus tanto ardore sibi serviat, suasque leges observet. Sensus ergo est, ‘tale percutiam foedus quod maximas et sufficientissimas vires habebit populum meum in officio continendi.’” [I looked on Google translate, which had trouble translating well, but from what I read of the translation, it mentioned that it is within man's power to do what he wills to do: “which is always in the power of the free will of man he was laid”] And another: “I will, instead of these external, carnal ordinances and observations, give them spiritual commands for the regulating of their affections, precepts most agreeable unto all men, [made] by the exceeding greatness of that grace and mercy. In this and many other particulars I shall incline their affections willingly to receive my law.”

The sense of both is, that all which is here promised consisteth in the nature of the means, and their efficacy from thence, to incline, dispose, and engage men unto the things here spoken of, but not to effect them certainly and infallibly in them to whom the promise is given. And it is supposed that the efficacy granted ariseth from the nature of the precepts of the gospel, which are rational, and suited unto the principles of our intellectual natures. For these precepts, enlivened by the promises made unto the observance of them, with the other mercies wherewith they are accompanied in God's dealing with us, are meet to prevail on our minds and wills unto obedience; but yet, when all is done, the whole issue depends on our own wills, and their determination of themselves one way or other. But these things are not only liable unto many just exceptions, but do indeed overthrow the whole nature of the new covenant, and the text is not expounded but corrupted by them; wherefore they must be removed out of the way. And, —

1. The exposition given can no way be accommodated unto the words, so as to grant a truth in their plain literal sense. For whereas God says, “He will put his laws in their mind, and write them in their heart, and they shall all know him,” —which declares **what he will effectually do; the sense of their exposition is, that indeed he will not do so, only he will do that which shall move them and persuade them to do that themselves which he hath promised to do himself, and that whether they ever do so or no! But if any one concerning whom God says that he will write his law in his heart, have it not so written, be it on what account it will, —suppose it be that the man will not have it so written, —how can the promise be true, that God will write his law in his heart? It is a sorry apology, to say that God in making that promise did not foresee the obstruction that would arise, or could not remove it when it did so.**

2. It is the event, or the effect itself, that is directly promised, and not any such efficacy of means as might be frustrated. For the weakness and imperfection of the first covenant was evidenced hereby,

that those with whom it was made continued not in it. Hereon God neglected them, and the covenant became unprofitable, or at least unsuccessful as unto the general end of continuing the relation between God and them, —of his being their God, and they being his people. To redress this evil, and prevent the like for the future, —that is, effectually to provide that God and his people may always abide in that blessed covenant relation, —**he promiseth the things themselves whereby it might be secured.** That which the first covenant could not effect, God promised to work in and by the new.

3. It is nowhere said nor intimated in the Scripture, that the efficacy of the new covenant, and the accomplishment of the promises of it, should depend on and arise from the suitability of its precepts unto our reason, or natural principles; but it is universally and constantly ascribed unto the efficacy of the Spirit and grace of God, not only enabling us unto obedience, but enduing us with a spiritual, supernatural, vital principle, from which it may proceed. [excellent!]

4. It is true, that our own wills, or the free actings of them, are required in our faith and obedience; whence it is promised that we shall be “willing in the day of his power.” **But that our wills are left absolutely herein unto our own liberty and power, without being inclined and determined by the grace of God, is that Pelagianism¹ which hath long attempted the church, but which shall never absolutely prevail.**

¹“If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam's transgression, that God did not impute Adam's sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam's most innocent posterity from paradise?” John Owen – excellent reasoning

5. The putting the laws of God in our minds, and the writing of them in our hearts, that we may know him, and fear him always, is promised in the same way and manner as is the forgiveness of sin, verse 12; and it is hard to affix such a sense unto that promise, as that God will use such and such means that our sins may be pardoned, which yet may all of them fail.

6. As this exposition is no way suited unto the words of the text, nor of the context, or scope of the place, **so indeed it overthrows the nature of the new covenant, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which comes thereby. For, —**

(1.) **If the effect itself, or the things mentioned are not promised, but only the use of means, left unto the liberty of men's wills whether they will comply with them or no, then the very being of the covenant, whether it ever shall have any existence or no, depends absolutely on the wills of men, and so may not be.** For it is not the proposal of the terms of the covenant, and the means whereby we may enter into it, that is called the making of this covenant with us; **but our real participation of the grace and mercy promised in it. This alone gives a real existence unto the covenant itself, without which it is not a covenant; nor without it is it properly made with any.** [That is fantastic arguing!]

(2.) **The Lord Christ would be made hereby the mediator of an uncertain covenant.** For if it depend absolutely on the **wills of men** whether they will accept of the terms of it and comply with it or no, it is uncertain what will be the event, and whether ever any one will do so or no [which is what Arminians plead]; **for the will being not determined by grace, what its actings will be is altogether uncertain.**

(3.) The covenant can hereon in no sense be a testament; which our apostle afterwards proves that it is, and that irrevocably ratified by the death of the testator. For there can, on this supposition, be no certain heir unto whom Christ did bequeath his goods, and the inheritance of mercy, grace, and glory. This would make this testament inferior to that of a wise man, who determines in particular unto whom his goods shall come.

(4.) It takes away that difference between this and the former covenant which it is the main scope of the apostle to prove; at least it leaves the difference to consist only in the gradual efficacy of outboard means; which is most remote from his purpose. For there were by the old covenant means supplied to induce the people unto constant obedience, and those in their kind powerful. This is pleaded by Moses, in the whole book almost of Deuteronomy. For the scope of all his exhortations unto obedience is to show that God had so instructed them in the knowledge of his will by giving of the law, and had accompanied his teachings with so many signal mercies, such effects of his mighty power, goodness, and grace; that the covenant was accompanied with such promises and threatenings, that therein life and death temporal and eternal were set before them; all which made their obedience so reasonable and necessary, that nothing but profligacy in wickedness could turn them from it. To this purpose are discourses multiplied in that book. And yet notwithstanding all this, it is added, “that God had not circumcised their hearts to fear him and obey him always,” as it is here promised. The communication of grace effectual, producing infallibly the good things proposed and promised in the minds and hearts of men, belonged not unto that covenant. If, therefore, there be no more in the making of the new covenant but only the adding of more forcible outward means and motives, more suitable unto our reasons, and meet to work on our affections, it differs only in some unassignable degrees from the former. But this is directly contrary unto the promise in the prophet, that it shall not be according unto it, or of the same kind; no more than Christ, the high priest of it, should be a priest after the order of Aaron.

(5.) It would on this supposition follow, that God might fulfill his promise of “putting his laws in the minds of men, and writing them in their hearts,” and yet none have the laws put into their minds, nor written in their hearts; which things are not reconcilable by any distinction unto the ordinary reason of mankind.

Wherefore we must grant that it is the effect, the event in the communication of the things promised, that is ascribed unto this covenant, and not only the use and application of means unto their production. And this will yet further appear in the particular exposition of the several parts of it. But yet, before we enter thereon, two objections must be removed, which may in general be laid against our interpretation.

First, ‘This covenant is promised as that which is future, to be brought in at a certain time, “after those days,” as hath been declared. But it is certain that the things here mentioned, the grace and mercy expressed, were really communicated unto many both before and after the giving of the law, long ere this covenant was made; for all who truly believed and feared God had these things effected in them by grace: wherefore their effectual communication cannot be esteemed a property of this covenant which was to be made afterwards.’

Ans. This objection was sufficiently prevented [came before] in what we have already discoursed concerning the efficacy of the grace of this covenant before itself was **solemnly consummated**. For all things of this nature that belong unto it do arise and spring from the mediation of Christ, or his interposition on the behalf of sinners. Wherefore this took place **from the giving of the first promise [Gen 3:15]; the administration of the grace of this covenant did therein and then take its date.** Howbeit the Lord Christ had not yet done that whereby it was solemnly to be confirmed, and that whereon all the virtue of it did depend. Wherefore this **covenant** is promised now to be made, not in opposition unto what grace and mercy was derived from it both before and under the law, nor as unto the first administration of grace from the mediator of it; but in opposition unto the covenant of Sinai, and with respect unto its outward solemn confirmation.

Secondly, 'If the things themselves are promised in the covenant, then all those with whom this covenant is made must be really and effectually made partakers of them. But this is not so; they are not all actually sanctified, pardoned, and saved, which are the things here promised.' [Hence, the atonement is limited]

Ans. The making of this covenant may be considered two ways: 1. As unto the preparation and proposition of its terms and conditions. 2. As unto the internal stipulation between God and the souls of men. In this sense alone God is properly said to make this covenant with any. **The preparation and proposition of laws are not the making of the covenant.** And therefore all with whom this covenant is made are effectually sanctified, justified, and saved.

SECONDLY, These things being premised, as it was necessary they should be, unto the right understanding of the mind of the Holy Ghost, I shall proceed unto the particular parts of the covenant as here expressed, namely, **in the blessed properties and effects of it, whereby it is distinguished from the former.**

The first two expressions are of the same nature and tendency, "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts." **In general it is the reparation of our nature by the restoration of the image of God in us**, — that is, our **sanctification**, — which is promised in these words. And there are two things in the words both doubly expressed:

1. The subject wrought upon; which is the **"mind" and the "heart."**
 2. The manner of producing the effect mentioned in them; and that is by **"putting"** and **"writing."**
- And,
3. The things by these means so **communicated**; which are the "laws" of God.

1. The subject spoken of is the **mind** and **heart**. When the apostle treats of the depravation and corruption of our nature, he placeth them εν τη διανοια and εν τη καρδια, Ephesians 4:18; that is, **"the mind and the heart."** These are, in the Scripture, the **seat of natural corruption, the residence of the principle of alienation from the life of God which is in us.** Wherefore the renovation of our natures consists in the **rectifying and curing of them, in the furnishing them with contrary principles of faith, love, and adherence unto God.** And we may observe, that, —

Obs. VI. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the new covenant, in its being and existence, in its healing, repairing efficacy, is as large and extensive as sin is in its residence and power to deprave our natures.** — This is the difference about the extent of the new covenant, and the grace of it: **Some would have it to extend unto all persons, in its tender and conditional proposition; but not unto all things, as unto its efficacy in the reparation of our natures.** [in other words, Arminians limit its effectiveness; Reformers limit its scope] Others assert it to extend unto all the effects of sin, in the removal of them, and the cure of our natures thereby; **but as unto persons, it is really extended unto none but those in whom these effects are produced [right],** whatever be its outward administration, which was also always limited: unto whom I do subscribe. [Hence the atonement is limited not universal.]

The first thing mentioned is the “mind.” *Anrq*, the apostle renders by *διανοια*, “the inward part.” **The mind is the most secret, inward part or power of the soul.** And the prophet expresseth it by the “inward part,” because it is the only safe and useful repository of the laws of God. When they are there laid up, we shall not lose them; neither men nor devils can take them from us. John Flavel comments on the mind and the heart often being the same thing:

[code314b - Regarding the *heart* and *mind*: Explaining the effects of drunkenness, John Flavel quotes Hosea 4:11, “*Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.*” that is, the mind, that *most inward part of the soul* as Owen just stated. And he says, regarding the heart, “that is, the understanding, reason, and ingenuity of a man, and so makes him incapable of being reclaimed by counsel. Upon this account it was that Abigail would not speak less or more to Nabal, until the wine was gone out of him, 1Sam25:36,37.” So the heart is interchangeable with the mind often times. Flavel applies the same passage in Hosea to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, “who lost the heart of a man, and had the heart of a beast given him, Dan 4:32. The heart of a man hath its generosity and sprightliness, brave, vigorous spirits in it, capable of and fitted for noble and worthy actions and employments [which the mind does or directing the will] but his lusts effeminates, quenches, and drowns that masculine vigour in the puddles of excess and sensuality. For no sooner is a man brought under the dominion of his lust, but the government of reason [the mind] is renounced, which should exercise a coercive power over the affections [sometimes the heart is the affections], and all is delivered up into the hands of lust and appetite. And so they act not by discretion and reason [i.e., the mind], but by lust and will, as the beasts do by instinct.”] John Flavel, Vol. 5, pgs 299, 304

For more comments on this subject go to [code21b](#) and the previous page.

And he also declares wherein the excellency of covenant obedience doth consist. It is not in the conformity of our outward actions unto the law, although that be required therein also; but it principally lieth in the inward parts, where God searcheth for and regardeth truth in sincerity, Psalm 51:6. Wherefore *διανοια* is the “**mind and understanding,**” **whose natural depravation is the spring and principle of all disobedience; the cure whereof is here promised in the first place.** In the **outward administration of the means of grace**, the **affections**, or, if I may so speak, **the more outward part of the soul**, are usually first affected and wrought upon: **but the first real effect of the internal promised grace of the covenant is on the mind, the most spiritual and inward part of the soul.** This in the New Testament is expressed by the renovation of the mind, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23; and the **opening**

of the eyes of our understandings, Ephesians 1:17, 18; God **shining into our hearts**, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Hereby the enmity against God, the vanity, darkness, and alienation from the life of God, which the mind naturally is possessed and filled withal, are taken away and removed, —of the nature of which work I have treated at large elsewhere; —**for the law of God in the mind, is the saving knowledge of the mind and will of God**, whereof the **law is the revelation, communicated** unto it and **implanted** in it.

2. The way whereby God in the covenant of grace thus works on the mind is expressed by διδου; so the apostle tenders XXX, “I will give.” Διδου; “giving,” may by an enallage be put for δωσω, “I will give.” So is it expressed in the next clause, επιγραψω, in the future tense, “I will write.” The word in the prophet is, “I will give;” we render it, “I will put.” But there are two things intimated in the word:

(1.) The **freedom of the grace** promised; it is a mere grant, gift, or donation of grace.

(2.) The efficacy of it. **That which is given of God unto any is received by them, otherwise it is no gift.** And this latter is well expressed by the word used by us, “I will put;” which expressteth an actual communication, and not a fruitless tender. This the apostle renders emphatically, διδου; that is, ειυ ‘This is that which I do, am doing in this covenant; namely, freely giving that grace whereby my laws shall be implanted on the minds of men.’

3. To show in general, before we proceed to the nature of this work, so far as is necessary unto the exposition of the words, we may here consider what was observed in the third place, namely, **what it is that is thus promised to be communicated**, and so carry it on with us unto the other clause of this promise.

That which is to be put into this spiritual receptacle is in these words, Του; νομου; μου, “My laws;” in the plural number. Expositors inquire what laws are here intended, whether the moral law only, or others also. But there is no need of such inquiry. There is a metonymy of the subject and effect in the words. **It is that knowledge of the mind and will of God which is revealed in the law, and taught by it, which is promised.** The **“laws of God,”** therefore, are here taken largely, **for the whole revelation of the mind and will of God.** So doth *hrwot* originally signify **“doctrine” or “instruction.”** **By what way or revelation soever God makes known himself and his will unto us, requiring our obedience therein, it is all comprised in that expression of “his laws.”**

From these things we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this **first branch of the first promise of the covenant.** And this is, the effectual operation of his Spirit in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, whereby they are habitually made conformable unto the whole law of God, —that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, — and enabled unto all acts and duties that are required of us. **And this is the first grace promised and communicated unto us by virtue of this covenant, as it was necessary that so it should be.** For,

1. The mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience. 2. The proper and peculiar actings of the mind, in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actings of the will and affections, much more all outward practices. 3. **The depravation of the mind is such, by blindness, darkness, vanity, and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our**

natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace upon the mind. 4. Faith itself is principally ingenerated by an infusion of saving light into the mind, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6. So, —

Obs. VII. All the beginnings and entrances into the saving knowledge of God, and thereon of obedience unto him, **are effects of the grace of the covenant.**

The second part of this first promise of the covenant is expressed in these words, “And will write them upon their hearts;” **which is that which renders the former part actually effectual.**

Expositors generally observe, that respect is had herein unto the giving of the **law on mount Sinai**, — that is, in the **first covenant**; for then the law (that is, “the ten words”) was written in tables of stone. And although the original tables were broken by Moses, when the people had broken the covenant, yet would not God alter that dispensation, nor write his laws any other way, but commanded new tables of stone to be made, and wrote them therein. And this was done, not so much to secure the outward letter of them, as to represent the hardness of the hearts of the people unto whom they were given. God did not, God would not by virtue of that covenant otherwise dispose of his law. And the event that ensued hereon was, that they brake these laws, and abode not in obedience. **This event God promiseth to obviate and prevent under the new covenant, and that by writing these laws now in our hearts, which he wrote before only in tables of stone; that is, he will effectually work that obedience in us which the law doth require, for he “worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”** The **heart**, as distinguished from the **mind**, **compriseth the will and the affections**; and they are compared unto the tables wherein the letter of the law was engraven. For as by that writing and engraving, the tables received the impression of the letters and words wherein the law was contained, which they did firmly retain and represent, so as that although they were stones still in their nature, yet were they nothing but the law in their use; **so by the grace of the new covenant there is a durable impression of the law of God on the wills and affections of men, whereby they answer it, represent it, comply with it, and have a living principle of it abiding in them.** [this is us being conformed to his image as we contemplate the word mixed with faith whereby we grow and are changed from glory to glory! 2Cor. 3:18] Wherefore, as this work must necessarily consist of **two parts**, namely, the **removal out of the heart of whatever is contrary unto the law of God**, and the **implanting of principles of obedience thereinto**; so it comes under a double description or denomination in the Scripture. For sometimes it is called a **“taking away of the heart of stone,” or “circumcising of the heart;”** and sometimes the **“giving of an heart of flesh,” the “writing of the law in our hearts;” — which is the renovation of our natures into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth.** Wherefore in this promise the whole of our **sanctification**, in its **beginning and progress**, in its work upon our whole souls and all their faculties, is comprised. And we may observe, —

Obs. VIII. The work of grace in the new covenant passeth on the whole soul, in all its faculties, powers, and affections, unto their change and renovation. —The whole was corrupted, and the whole must be renewed. **The image of God was originally in and upon the whole, and on the loss of it the whole was depraved.** See 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Obs. IX. To take away the necessity and efficacy of renewing, changing, sanctifying grace, consisting in an internal, efficacious operation of the principles, habits, and acts of internal grace and obedience, is plainly to overthrow and reject the new covenant.

Obs. X. We bring nothing to the new covenant but our hearts, as tables to be written in, with the sense of the insufficiency of the precepts and promises of the law, with respect unto our own ability to comply with them.

The last thing in the words, is the relation that ensues hereon between God and his people: "I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This is indeed a **distinct promise** by itself, summarily comprising all the blessings and privileges of the **covenant**. And it is placed in the center of the account given of the whole, as that from **whence all the grace of it doth spring**, wherein all the blessings of it do consist, and **whereby they are secured**. Howbeit in this place it is peculiarly mentioned, as that which hath its foundation in the foregoing promise. **For this relation, which implies mutual acquiescency in each other, could not be, nor ever had been, if the minds and hearts of them who are to be taken into it were not changed and renewed. For neither could God approve of and rest in his love towards them, whilst they were enemies unto him in the depravation of their natures; nor could they find rest or satisfaction in God, whom they neither knew, nor liked, nor loved.**

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Nature of a Covenant

code293

Promises of mercy, etc. pg 67- (pg 81-3 online vol. 22)
by John Owen

All this appears most evidently in the covenant of grace, which is here said to be "established on promises;" and that on two accounts. For, —

[1.] At the same time that much is required of us in the way of duty and obedience, we are told in the Scripture, and find it by experience, **that of ourselves we can do nothing.** **Wherefore, unless the precept of the covenant be founded in a promise of giving grace and spiritual strength unto us, whereby we may be enabled to perform those duties,** the covenant can be of no benefit or advantage unto us. And the want of this one consideration, that **every covenant is founded in promises, and that the promises give life unto the precepts of it,** hath perverted the minds of many to suppose an ability in ourselves of yielding obedience unto those precepts, **without grace antecedently received to enable us thereunto;** which overthrows the nature of the new covenant **[hence the heresy of Arminianism and Pelagianism - read Owen's book, *A Display of Arminianism*; it is excellent! See sinner's prayer comments].**

[2.] As was observed, we are all actually guilty of sin before this covenant was made with us. Wherefore unless there be a promise given of the **pardon of sin,** it is to no purpose to propose any new

covenant terms unto us. For “the wages of sin is death;” and we having sinned must die, whatever we do afterwards, unless our sins be pardoned. **This, therefore, must be proposed unto us as the foundation of the covenant, or it will be of none effect.** And herein lies the great difference between the promises of the covenant of works and those of the covenant of grace. The **first** were only concerning things future; eternal life and blessedness upon the accomplishment of perfect obedience. Promises of present mercy and pardon it stood in need of none, it was not capable of. **Nor had it any promises of giving more grace, or supplies of it; but man was wholly left unto what he had at first received** [e.g. Adam, pg 1706]. Hence the covenant was broken. But in the covenant of grace **all things are founded in promises of present mercy, and continual supplies of grace, as well as of future blessedness.** Hence it comes to be “ordered in all things, and sure.” 2Sam 23:5

And this is the first thing that was to be declared, namely, **that every divine covenant is established on promises.**

(2.) These promises are said to be “**better promises.**” The other covenant had its promises peculiar unto it, with respect whereunto this is said to be “established on better promises.” It was, indeed, principally represented under a system of precepts, and those almost innumerable; but it had its promises also, into the nature whereof we shall immediately inquire. With respect, therefore, unto them is the new covenant, whereof the **Lord Christ is the mediator**, said to be “established on better promises.” That it should be founded in promises, was necessary from its **general nature as a covenant**, and more necessary from its **especial nature as a covenant of grace**. That these promises are said to be “better promises,” respects those of the old covenant. But this is so said as to include all other degrees of comparison. They are not only better than they, but they are **positively good in themselves**, and absolutely the best that God ever gave, or will give unto the church. And what they are we must consider in our progress. And sundry things may be observed from these words: —

Obs. VIII. There is infinite grace in every divine covenant, inasmuch as it is established on promises. — **Infinite condescension** it is in God, that he will enter into covenant with dust and ashes, with poor worms of the earth. And herein lies the spring of all grace, from whence all the streams of it do flow. And the first expression of it is in laying the foundation of it in some undeserved promises. And this was that which became the goodness and greatness of his nature, the means whereby we are brought to adhere unto him in faith, hope, trust, and obedience, until we come unto the enjoyment of him; for that is the use of promises, to keep us in adherence unto God, as the first original and spring of all goodness, and the ultimate satisfactory reward of our souls, 2 Corinthians 7:1. [There is another reference to this same point regarding Adam's endowment of certain excellencies in himself to sustain himself in the garden but this was apart from ongoing flows of grace from God which he had not the promises for and therefore Satan took immediate advantage of this.]

Obs. IX. The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because the grace of them prevents [comes before] any condition or qualification on our part. —I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requireth of us in and by virtue of that covenant; but this I say, the principal promises thereof are not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant, **but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant**, and establishing or

confirming in the covenant. The covenant of works had its promises, but they were all remunerative, **respecting an antecedent obedience in us**; (so were all those which were peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them **was formally reward only**. **In the covenant of grace it is not so; for sundry of the promises thereof are the means of our being taken into covenant, of our entering into covenant with God.** The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged unto obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those **promises**, namely, of the pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts, which the apostle expressly insisteth upon as the peculiar promises of this covenant, do take place and are effectual **antecedently unto our covenant obedience**. **For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.** [This further emphasizes the nature of the law of faith that being that it excludes all boasting whatsoever, he who glories, glory in the Lord - Romans 3:27 & 1Cor1:26-31] Romans 3:27, "*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*" Cor. 1:31 – "*that, as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.*"

Virtue of the Covenant

code330

More conclusive proof; here Owen declares by reason, the effect (saving faith) cannot come before the cause (God's giving of it, Eph 2:8-9)

p 67-69 vol. 22

Nature of a covenant, apart from me you can do nothing, continual grace flowing from Christ, etc.

[3.] It is necessary from the nature of a covenant. For every covenant that is proposed unto men, and accepted by them, requires somewhat to be performed on their part, otherwise it is no covenant; but where anything is required of them that accept of the covenant, or to whom it is proposed, it doth suppose that somewhat be promised on the behalf of them by whom the covenant is proposed, as the foundation of its acceptance, and the reason of the duties required in it.

All this appears most evidently in the covenant of grace, which is here said to be "established on promises;" and that on two accounts. For, —

[1.] At the same time that much is required of us in the way of duty and obedience, we are told in the Scripture, and find it by experience, that of ourselves we can do nothing. Wherefore, unless the precept of the covenant be founded in a promise of **giving grace and spiritual strength unto us, whereby we may be enabled to perform those duties**, the covenant can be of no benefit or advantage

unto us. And the want [lack of] of this one consideration, that every **covenant is founded in promises**, and that the **promises give life** unto the precepts of it, hath **perverted the minds of many to suppose an ability in ourselves of yielding obedience unto those precepts, without grace antecedently received to enable us thereunto; which overthrows the nature of the new covenant.** [That is key! If the condition of the covenant was that one had to believe before receiving the promises which include in them saving faith and all the graces, then clearly the sinner's prayer is a gross inconsistency, the effect before the cause and thus presumption and no different than being under law or the covenant of works but an extension of it in degree. See Jn3:27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.]

[2.] As was observed, we are all actually guilty of sin before this covenant was made with us. Wherefore unless there be a promise given of the pardon of sin, it is to no purpose to propose any new covenant terms unto us. For "the wages of sin is death;" and we having sinned must die, whatever we do afterwards, unless our sins be pardoned. This, therefore, must be proposed unto us as the foundation of the covenant, or it will be of none effect. **And herein lies the great difference between the promises of the covenant of works and those of the covenant of grace.** The first were only concerning things future; eternal life and blessedness upon the accomplishment of perfect obedience. Promises of present mercy and pardon it stood in need of none, it was not capable of. **Nor had it any promises of giving more grace, or supplies of it; but man was wholly left unto what he had at first received.** Hence the covenant was broken. **But in the covenant of grace all things are founded in promises of present mercy, and continual supplies of grace, as well as of future blessedness.** Hence it comes to be "ordered in all things, and sure." [see Flavel on pg 1709!]

And this is the first thing that was to be declared, namely, that every divine covenant is established on promises. (2.) These promises are said to be "better promises." The other covenant had its promises peculiar unto it, with respect whereunto this is said to be "established on better promises." It was, indeed, principally represented under a system of precepts, and those almost innumerable; but it had its promises also, into the nature whereof we shall immediately inquire. With respect, therefore, unto them is the new covenant, whereof the Lord Christ is the mediator, said to be "established on better promises." That it should be founded in promises, was necessary from its general nature as a covenant, and more necessary from its especial nature as a covenant of grace. That these promises are said to be "better promises," respects those of the old covenant. But this is so said as to include all other degrees of comparison. They are not only better than they, but they are positively good in themselves, and absolutely the best that God ever gave, or will give unto the church. And what they are we must consider in our progress. And sundry things may be observed from these words: —

Obs. VIII. There is infinite grace in every divine covenant, inasmuch as it is established on promises. — Infinite condescension it is in God, that he will enter into covenant with dust and ashes, with poor worms of the earth. And herein lies the spring of all grace, from whence all the streams of it do flow. And the first expression of it is in laying the foundation of it in some undeserved promises. And this was that which became the 83 goodness and greatness of his nature, the means whereby we are brought to adhere unto him in faith, hope, trust, and obedience, until we come unto the enjoyment of him; for that is the use of promises, to keep us in adherence unto God, as the first original and spring of all goodness, and the ultimate satisfactory reward of our souls, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Obs. IX. The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because the **grace** [the power to obey, believe, etc.] **of them prevents** [comes before] **any condition or qualification on our part**. [But before we are taken in the covenant, the Arminians say we must first believe and then we are instated in the covenant and then receive these promises, eternal life, etc., when it is the promises themselves, those graces, true riches, that enable us to enter in the first place and no otherwise!]
—I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requireth of us in and **by virtue of that covenant**; **but this I say, the principal promises thereof are not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant, but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant, and establishing or confirming in the covenant**. The covenant of works had its promises, **but they were all remunerative, respecting an antecedent obedience in us**; (so were all those which were peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them **was formally reward only**. **In the covenant of grace it is not so; for sundry of the promises thereof are the means of our being taken into covenant, of our entering into covenant with God**. The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged unto obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those promises, namely, of the pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts, which the apostle expressly insisteth upon as the peculiar promises of this covenant, **do take place and are effectual antecedently unto our covenant obedience**. For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, **yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith**. [This further emphasizes the nature of the law of faith that being that it excludes all boasting whatsoever, he who glories, glory in the Lord - Romans 3:27 & 1Cor1:26-31] Romans 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith." Cor. 1:31 – "that, as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Covenant With Adam: Only The Beginning

code294

(Why a Covenant Was Necessary)

from Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3 pg 568

One can certainly raise the objection against the doctrine of the covenant as it has been developed in Reformed theology, that it was overly detailed and treated too scholastically. Although later theologians still defended the doctrine, they no longer felt its significance and its theological and religious importance. Since it had lost its vitality, it was easy to combat it. But the doctrine of the

covenant of works is based on Scripture and is eminently valuable. Among rational and moral creatures all higher life takes the form of a covenant. **Generally, a covenant is an agreement between persons who voluntarily obligate and bind themselves to each other for the purpose of fending off an evil or obtaining a good.** Such an agreement, whether it is made tacitly or defined in explicit detail, is the usual form in terms of which humans live and work together. Love, friendship, marriage, as well as all social cooperation in business, industry, science, art, and so forth, is ultimately grounded in a covenant, that is, **in reciprocal fidelity** and an assortment of generally recognized moral obligations. It should not surprise us, therefore, that also the highest and most richly textured life of human beings, namely, religion, bears this character. In Scripture “covenant” is the fixed form in which the relation of God to his people is depicted and presented. And even where the word does not occur, we nevertheless always see the two parties, as it were, in dialogue with each other, dealing with each other, with God calling people to conversion, reminding them of their obligations, and obligating himself to provide all that is good. Later, when we discuss the covenant of grace, we will spotlight the biblical concept of *bĕrît*. Here we will confine ourselves to reminding the reader of the general idea of covenant. Even if the term “covenant” never occurred in Scripture for the religious relation between Adam and God, not even in Hosea 6:7, **still the religious life of man before the fall bears the character of a covenant.** Reformed scholars were never so narrow as to insist on the word “covenant” since the matter itself was certain: one may doubt the word, provided the matter is safe (*de vocabulo dubitetur, re salva*). But hidden behind the opposition to the word was opposition to the matter itself. And this must never be surrendered inasmuch as covenant is the essence of true religion.

Why should this be? First of all, because God is the Creator, man a creature; and with that statement an infinite distance between the two is a given. No fellowship, no religion between the two seems possible; there is only difference, distance, endless distinctness. **If God remains elevated above humanity in his sovereign exaltedness and majesty, then no religion is possible,** at least no religion in the sense of fellowship. Then the relation between the two is exhaustively described in the terms “master” and “servant.” Then the image of the potter and the clay is still much too weak to describe that relation because clay has existence—and hence rights—independently of, and over against, the potter, but human beings have nothing and are nothing apart from God. Accordingly, if there is truly to be religion, if there is to be fellowship between God and man, if the relation between the two is to be also (but not exclusively) that of a master to his servant, of a potter to clay, as well as that of a king to his people, of a father to his son, of a mother to her child, of an eagle to her young, of a hen to her chicks, and so forth; that is, if not just one relation but all relations and all sorts of relations of dependence, submission, obedience, friendship, love, and so forth among humans find their model and achieve their fulfillment in religion, then religion must be the character of a covenant. **For then God has to come down from his lofty position, condescend to his creatures, impart, reveal, and give himself away to human beings; then he who inhabits eternity and dwells in a high and holy place must also dwell with those who are of a humble spirit** (Isa. 57:15). But this set of conditions is nothing other than the description of a covenant. If religion is called a covenant, it is thereby described as the true and genuine religion. This is what no religion has ever understood; all peoples either pantheistically pull God down into what is creaturely, or deistically elevate him endlessly above it. In neither case does one arrive at true fellowship, at covenant, at genuine religion. But Scripture insists on both: God is infinitely great and condescendingly good; he is Sovereign but also Father; he is Creator but also Prototype. In a word, he is the God of the covenant.

It is clear, in the second place, that a creature cannot bring along or possess any rights before God. That is implicitly—in the nature of the case—impossible. A creature as such owes its very existence, all that it is and has, to God; it cannot make any claims before God, and it cannot boast of anything; it has no rights and can make no demands of any kind. There is no such thing as merit in the existence of a creature before God, nor can there be since the relation between the Creator and a creature radically and once-and-for-all eliminates any notion of merit. This is true after the fall but no less before the fall. Then too, human beings were creatures, without entitlements, without rights, without merit. When we have done everything we have been instructed to do, we are still unworthy servants (*douloi achreioi*, Luke 17:10). Now, however, the religion of Holy Scripture is such that in it human beings can nevertheless, as it were, assert certain rights before God. For they have the freedom to come to him with prayer and thanksgiving, to address him as “Father,” to take refuge in him in all circumstances of distress and death, to desire all good things from him, even to expect salvation and eternal life from him. All this is possible solely because God in his condescending goodness gives rights to his creature. Every creaturely right is a given benefit, a gift of grace, undeserved and nonobligatory. All reward from the side of God originates in grace; no merit, either of condignity or of congruity, is possible. True religion, accordingly, cannot be anything other than a covenant: it has its origin in the condescending goodness and grace of God. It has that character before as well as after the fall. For religion, like the moral law and the destiny of man, is one. The covenant of works and the covenant of grace do not differ in their final goal but only in the way that leads to it. In both there is one mediator: then, a mediator of union; now, a mediator of reconciliation. In both there is one faith: then, faith in God; now, faith in God through Christ; and in both covenants there is one hope, one love, and so forth. Religion is always the same in essence; it differs only in form.

In the third place, men and women are rational and moral beings. That is how God created them, and that therefore is how he treats them. He maintains what he created. God, accordingly, does not coerce human beings, for coercion is inconsistent with the nature of rational creatures. He deals with them, not as irrational creatures, as plants or animals, as blocks of wood, but goes to work with them as rational, moral, self-determining beings. He wants human beings to be free and to serve him in love, freely and willingly (Ps. 100:3f.). Religion is freedom; it is love that does not permit itself to be coerced. For that reason it must by its very nature take the shape of a covenant in which God acts, not coercively, but with counsel, admonition, warning, invitation, petition, and in which humans serve God, not under duress or violence, but willingly, by their own free consent, moved by love to love in return. At bottom religion is a duty but also a privilege. It is not work by which we bring advantage to God, make a contribution to him, and have a right to reward. It is grace for us to be allowed to serve him. God is never indebted to us, but we are always indebted to him for the good works we do (Belgic Confession, art. 24). On his part there is always the gift; on our part there is always and alone the gratitude. For that reason religion is conceivable only in the form of a covenant and comes to its full realization only in that form. God, accordingly, made such a covenant with the first human beings. We must completely set aside the fragmentary development of this doctrine. The matter itself is certain. After creating men and women after his own image, God showed them their destiny and the only way in which they could reach it. Human beings could know the moral law without special revelation since it was written in their hearts. But the probationary command is positive; it is not a given of human nature as such but could only be made known to human beings if God communicated it to them. Nor was it self-evident that keeping that command would yield eternal life. In that sense the “covenant of

works” is not a “covenant of nature.” Initially, the church did not yet clearly understand this, but gradually it became obvious—and was taught as such—that God was in no way obligated to grant heavenly blessedness and eternal life to those who kept his law and thereby did not do anything other than what they were obligated to do. There is no natural connection here between work and reward.

REFORMED AND OTHER VIEWS OF HUMAN DESTINY

And that is the truth that inheres in **Rome’s doctrine** of the added gift (*donum superadditum*) [see Van Til @ code490]. Eternal life is and remains an unmerited gift of God’s grace. But because Rome does not know the doctrine of the covenant of works, it infers from this gracious gift of eternal life that also the image of God in man has to be supernatural and, by virtue of the supernatural power granted with the image of God, has humans again **meriting eternal life *ex condigno***. **Under the guise of honoring grace, Rome therefore again introduces the meritoriousness of good works.** But **Reformed theologians maintained, on the one hand, that the image of God in man was natural** and that man, who was this image of God, could know as well as keep the moral law without supernatural power, and, on the other hand, they firmly asserted that a higher state of blessedness than that which prevailed in paradise on earth could never, in the nature of the case, be merited but could only be granted by a free dispensation of God. And they combined these two ideas in their theory of the covenant of works. **This covenant is rooted in a free, special, and gracious dispensation of God. It proceeds from God and he decrees all the parts of it: condition and fulfillment, compliance and reward, transgression and punishment.** It is monopoleuric (unilateral) in origin, and it is added to the creation in God’s image. On their part, the first human beings, being created in God’s image, rested in it and saw in this covenant a revelation of a way to a higher blessedness.

The covenant of works, accordingly, does justice to both the sovereignty of God—which implies the dependency of creatures and the non-meritoriousness of all their works—and to the grace and generosity of God, who nevertheless wants to give the creature a higher-than-earthly blessedness. It maintains both the dependence as well as the freedom of mankind. It combines Schleiermacher [dependence] and Kant [freedom]. The probationary command relates to the moral law as the covenant of works relates to man’s creation in God’s image. The moral law stands or falls in its entirety with the probationary command, and the image of God in mankind in its entirety stands or falls with the covenant of works. The covenant of works is the road to heavenly blessedness for the [first] human beings, who were created in God’s image and had not yet fallen. The covenant of works, accordingly, includes still another beautiful thought. **It not only realizes the true and full idea of religion; it also gives expression to the fact that humanity before the fall, though created in God’s image, did not yet possess the highest possible blessing.** On this point Reformed theology has a primary difference with Lutheran theologians. In their view, creation in God’s image was the realization of the highest idea of man. In Adam that ideal was fully attained, and a higher state was not possible. Adam did not have to become anything; he only had to remain what he was, namely, a participant in the full gracious indwelling of the holy Trinity. Accordingly, he was not subject to a law that commanded him to do anything positive. The law that applied to him had only a negative thrust, and not until sin appeared was he brought under the dominion of the law. That is why in the works of Lutheran theologians, as in those of the church fathers, the original state of man was frequently pictured in a very exaggerated manner. It is

also why the state to which believers in Christ are elevated is essentially equated with that of Adam before the fall. In reference to the believer, everything is focused for the Lutheran on justification. Once the believer is justified, he or she has enough and is completely satisfied and blessed. **Salvation completely coincides with forgiveness.** No need is felt to connect it backward with eternal election and forward with the whole of the Christian life, good works, and eternal life. Neither predestination nor perseverance is needed here. **The Lutheran believer enjoys the new life in the present and feels no need for more.** For the Reformed, who walked in the footsteps of Augustine, things were different. **According to them, Adam did not possess the highest kind of life. The highest kind of life is the material freedom consisting of not being able to err, sin, or die. It consists in being elevated absolutely above all fear and dread, above all possibility of falling.** This highest life is immediately bestowed by grace through Christ upon believers. They can no longer sin (1 John 3:9) and they can no longer die (John 3:16) since by faith they immediately receive eternal, inamissible life. **Theirs is the perseverance of the saints; they can no longer be lost.** **Hence, Christ does not [merely] restore his own to the state of Adam before the fall. He acquired and bestows much more, namely, that which Adam would have received had he not fallen. He positions us not at the beginning but at the end of the journey that Adam had to complete. He accomplished not only the passive but also the active obedience required; he not only delivers us from guilt and punishment, but out of grace immediately grants us the right to eternal life.**

Adam, however, did not yet have this high state of blessedness; he did not yet have eternal life. He received the possibility to remain standing (*posse stare*) but not the will (*velle stare*). He could have it if he willed it (*posse si vellet*) **but did not have the will to want what he was able to have** (*velle, quod posset*). He had the possibility of not erring, sinning, and dying (*posse non errare, peccare, mori*), **but not yet the impossibility of erring, sinning, and dying** (*non posse errare, peccare, mori*) [i.e., he was defectible, as all created things are by nature]. **He still lived in the state of one who could sin and die, and was therefore still in some fear and dread. His was not yet the invariable perfect love that casts out all fear.** Reformed theologians rightly pointed out, therefore, that this possibility, this being changeably good, this still being able to sin and die, was no part or component of the image of God, but was its boundary, its limitation, its circumference. The image of God therefore had to be fully developed—thereby overcoming and nullifying this possibility of sin and death—and glitter in imperishable glory. In virtue of this view of the state of integrity Reformed theologians, in distinction from others, were able to observe a commendable sobriety in their account of the paradisaic state. Adam was not Christ. **The natural was not the spiritual.** Paradise was not heaven. However careful we must be to resist the naturalism that denies the power of sin and considers death natural, no less to be avoided is the [code294a] supranaturalism that defines the image of God as a supernatural addition to nature. Sin, according to Reformed theologians, spoiled and destroyed everything, but because it is not a substance it could not alter the essence or substance of the creation. **[If it was a substance, then God would have created it and hence God would be, by necessity, the author of sin.]** The human being as sinner is still a human being. Similarly, all other creations (earth, heaven, nature, plant, animal), despite the curse of sin and the rule of corruption, essentially and substantially remained the same. As we noted above in the case of religion, so it is also in the case of all the other things: sin did not take away the substance of things, and grace therefore does not restore that substance either. The stuff (*materia*) of all things is and remains the same. However, the form (*forma*), given in creation, was deformed by sin in order to be entirely reformed again in the sphere of grace.

Nature of the New Covenant

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This exposition of the **Nature of the New Covenant** and what is promised (saving knowledge of God) and to whom the covenant is made will clarify even more so the gross inconsistency, impropriety and danger that the sinner's prayer, or any like human endeavours to attain God's favor for salvation, is to the souls of men. As usual, my comments in [blue]. Owen's in red etc., for emphasis.

p 167-170

Obs. XXIV. Where there is not some degree of **saving knowledge**, there no interest in the new covenant can be pretended.

2. The thing promised, is the **knowledge of God**: “They shall all know me.” [this answers to the glory of God imparted to the soul, a part of which is knowledge of God!] No duty is more frequently commanded than this is, nor any **grace** more frequently **promised**. See Deuteronomy 29:6; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:10, 36:23, 26, 27: for it is the foundation of all other duties of obedience, and of all communion with God in them. **All graces as unto their exercise, as faith, love, and hope, are founded therein.** And the woeful want of it which is visible in the world is an evidence how little there is of true evangelical obedience among the generality of them that are called Christians. And two things may be considered in this **promise**: (1.) The object, or what is to be known. (2.) The knowledge itself, of what kind and nature it is: —

(1.) The first is **God himself**: “They shall all know me, saith the LORD.” And it is so not absolutely, but as unto some especial revelation of himself. For there is a knowledge of God, as God, by the light of nature. This is not here intended, nor is it the subject of any gracious promise, but is common unto all men. There was, moreover, a knowledge of God by revelation under the old covenant, but attended with great obscurity in sundry things of the highest importance. Wherefore there is something further intended, as is evident from the antithesis between the two states herein declared. **In brief, it is the knowledge of him as revealed in Jesus Christ under the new testament.** To show what is contained herein doctrinally, were to go over the principal articles of our faith, as declared in the gospel. The sum is, — **To “know the Lord,” is to know God as he is in Christ personally, as he will be unto us in Christ graciously, and what he requires of us and accepts in us through the Beloved.** In all these things, notwithstanding all their teaching and diligence therein, the church was greatly in the dark under the old testament; but they are all of them more clearly revealed in the gospel.

(2.) **The knowledge of these things is that which is promised.** For notwithstanding the clear revelation of them, we abide in ourselves unable to discern them and receive them. **For such a spiritual knowledge is intended as whereby the mind is renewed, being accompanied with faith and love in the heart.** [see diagram!] This is that **knowledge which is promised in the new covenant, and which shall be wrought in all them who are interested therein.** [hence limited atonement] And we may observe, —

Obs. XXV. The full and clear declaration of God, as he is to be known of us in this life, is a privilege reserved for and belonging unto the days of the new testament. Before, it was not made; and more than is now made is not to be expected in this world. And the reason hereof is, because it was made by Christ. See the exposition on Hebrews 1:1, 2.

Obs. XXVI. To know God as he is revealed in Christ, is the highest privilege whereof in this life we can be made partakers; for this is life eternal, that we may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John 17:3.

Obs. XXVII. Persons destitute of this saving knowledge are utter strangers unto the covenant of grace; for this is a principal promise and effect of it, wherever it doth take place.

Ver. 12. — For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

This is the great **fundamental promise** and grace of the new covenant; for though it be last expressed, yet in order of nature it procedeth the other mercies and privileges mentioned, and is the foundation of the collation or **communication** of them unto us. This the causal οτι whereby the apostle rendereth [Hebrew word] in the prophet, doth demonstrate. ‘What I have spoken, saith the Lord, shall be accomplished, “**for I will be merciful,**” etc.; —without which there could be no participation of the other things mentioned. Wherefore, not only an addition of new grace and mercy is expressed in these words, but a reason also is rendered why, **or on what grounds** he would **bestow** on them those other mercies.

The house of Israel and the house of Judah, with whom this covenant was made in the first place, and who are spoken of as representatives of all others who are taken into it, and who thereon become the Israel of God, were such as had broken and disannulled God’s former covenant by their disobedience; —“Which my **covenant** they brake.” Nor is there any mention of any other qualification whereby they should be prepared for or disposed unto an entrance into this new covenant. **Wherefore the first thing in order of nature that is to be done unto this end; is the free pardon of sin.** Without a supposition hereof, no other mercy can they be made partakers of; for whilst they continue under the guilt of sin, they are also under the curse. Wherefore a reason is here rendered, and that the only reason, why God will give unto them the other blessings mentioned: “For I will be merciful.” [notice the word “will”. *God will be merciful, not maybe if man cooperates.*]

Obs. XXVIII. **Free and sovereign, undeserved grace in the pardon of sin, is the original spring and foundation of all covenant mercies and blessings.** — **Hereby, and hereby alone, is the glory of God and the safety of the church provided for.** And those who like not God’s covenant on these terms (as none do by nature [upon which foundation the sinner's prayer rests!]) **will eternally fall short of the grace of it.** **Hereby all glorying and all boasting in ourselves is excluded; which was that which God aimed at in the contrivance and establishment of this covenant, Romans 3:27; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31. For this could not be, if the fundamental grace of it did depend on any condition or qualification in ourselves [i.e., if we had to ask for it and thus the reward would be our salvation, hence grounds is had for**

boasting in ourselves, our sufficiency, strength or virtue enough to warrant God's acceptance. As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God."]. If we let go the free pardon of sin, without respect unto anything in those that receive it, we renounce the gospel. **Pardon of sin is not merited by antecedent duties** [including asking to get saved], **but is the strongest obligation unto future duties.** He that will not receive pardon unless he can one way or other deserve it, or make himself meet for it; or pretends to have received it, and finds not himself obliged unto universal obedience by it, neither is nor shall be partaker of it.

In the **promise itself** we may consider, 1. Whom it is made unto; 2. What it is that is promised: —

1. The first is expressed in the pronoun αὐτῶν, "their," three times repeated. **All those absolutely, and only those with whom God makes this covenant, are intended.** [Hence the atonement is limited, limited to those, i.e., the elect.] **Those whose sins are not pardoned do in no sense partake of this covenant; it is not made with them.** [Those in hell did not receive pardon; therefore they were never in the covenant; God never knew them. Hence the atonement is limited in scope. The *blood* is said that it is *of the covenant*. It is not something separate but inseparable to it. So if one, while witnessing, says to someone that Christ died for you, he is also saying that that person is in the covenant by definition, which may not be true and most likely is not true. And thus many are again misled into a fatal security - see Jn 9:41.] For this is the covenant that God makes with them, **that he will be merciful unto their sins**; that is, unto them in the pardon of them. Some speak of a universal conditional covenant, made with all mankind. If there be any such thing, it is not that here intended; **for they are all actually pardoned with whom this covenant is made.** And the indefinite declaration of the nature and terms of the covenant, is not the making of a covenant with any. **And what should be the condition of this grace here promised of the pardon of sin?** 'It is,' say they, 'that men repent, and believe, and turn to God, and yield obedience unto the gospel.' If so, then men must do all these things before they receive the remission of sins? 'Yes.' Then must they do them whilst they are under the law, and the curse of it, for so are all men whose sins are not pardoned. **This is to make obedience unto the law, and that to be performed by men whilst under the curse of it, to be the condition of gospel-mercy; which is to overthrow both the law and the gospel.** [classic Arminian doctrine! This explains why many do this sinner's prayer. Keep in mind that if people really get saved in close proximity to making this prayer, it is in no way a result of this prayer; they got saved despite making it; or they just made this prayer in ignorance after they got saved.]

'But then, on the other hand it will follow,' they say, 'that men are pardoned before they do believe; which is expressly contrary unto the Scripture.'

Ans. (1.) The communication and donation of faith unto us is an effect of the same grace whereby our sins are pardoned; **and they are both bestowed on us by virtue of the same covenant.** (2.) **The application of pardoning mercy unto our souls is in order of nature consequent unto believing, but in time they go together.** (3.) **Faith is not required unto the procuring of the pardon of our sins** [a common misunderstanding], **but unto the receiving of it: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43.** But that which we shall observe from hence is, that —

Obs. XXIX. **The new covenant is made with them alone who effectually and eventually are made partakers of the grace of it.** [again, the atonement is limited in scope but not in effectualness; the Arminians believe it is universal in scope but not universally effective.] — **“This is the covenant that I will make with them,.... I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness,”** etc. Those with whom the old covenant was made were all of them actual partakers of the benefits of it; and if they are not so with whom the new is made, it comes short of the old in efficacy, and may be utterly frustrated. Neither doth the indefinite proposal of the terms of the covenant prove that the covenant is made with them, or any of them, who enjoy not the benefits of it. Indeed this is the excellency of this covenant, and so it is here declared, **that it doth effectually communicate all the grace and mercy contained in it unto all and every one with whom it is made;** whomsoever it is made withal, his sins are pardoned.

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this is further explained by Edwards below:

Excerpt from Jonathan Edwards from Sermon 1 vol. 2 p 829

5. Abound in earnest prayer to God, that he would open your eyes, that you may behold the glorious and rich provision made for sinners in Jesus Christ. **The souls of natural men are so blinded that they see no beauty or excellency in Christ.** They do not see his sufficiency. They see no beauty in the work of salvation by him; and as long as they remain thus blind, **it is impossible that they should close with Christ.** **The heart will never be drawn to an unknown Saviour.** **It is impossible that a man should love that, and freely choose that, and rejoice in that, in which he sees no excellency.** But if your eyes were opened to see the **excellency of Christ**, the work would be done. You would immediately believe on him; and you would find your heart going after him. It would be impossible to keep it back. But take heed that you do not entertain a wrong notion of what it is, spiritually to see Christ. If you do, you may seek that which God never bestows. Do not think that spiritually to see Christ, is to have a vision of him as the prophets had, to see him in some bodily shape, to see the features of his countenance. Do not pray or seek for any such thing as this. But what you are to seek is, that you may have a sight of the glorious excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him, in your heart. **This is a spiritual sight of Christ.** This is that for which you must cry to God day and night. **God is the fountain of spiritual light. He opens the eyes of the blind. He commands the light to shine out of darkness.** It is easy with God to enlighten the soul, and fill it with these glorious discoveries, **though it is beyond the power of men** and angels. --Jonathan Edwards

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Difference between the Old and New Covenant

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“If you were blind, you would have no sin;
but now you say, ‘We see.’”

John Owen, Hebrews 8:6 - the difference between the Old and New Covenants; different natures accompanying them. This is very helpful in seeing the preposterousness of the assertion that one can ask to be converted, i.e., come to God by a human prayer or by a sovereign, autonomous act of someone's will, when one sees what is involved in the New Covenant and what is promised therein and how it is received or applied and by whom, under what conditions, etc. This investigative process is called being *diligent*, a further examination of the text of scripture to see if what pastors say regarding the sinner's prayer is true or not. There is nothing worse than a fatal security which this doctrine of the sinner's prayer establishes in the minds of those who trust it. For one thing, it shields them from much self-examination to see if they be in the faith and many other pernicious effects within the church follow. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' [as the unregenerate presumes when they say the sinner's prayer] Therefore your sin remains." "when they think their sins are forgiven!].

John Owen Commentary on Hebrews p 202- 204, Vol. 22, (p248- 251online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

- Subjects covered: Duties of the High Priest regarding incense (prayers) - that it prefigures regarding prayers made effectual and accepted by God. If a person's prayers are to be accepted then they must be made accepted by the intercession of Christ, our high priest. Therefore, to assume that one who is praying while unsaved is presumptuous because it assumes that he is "In Christ" or Christ to be his high priest which he is not since he is not "in Christ" yet. This excerpt from John Owen explains this by comparing this intercession of Christ to the incense used in the duties of the high priest before he went into the Holy of Holies during the annual atonement.

The manner of the service of this altar intended by the apostle was briefly thus: The high priest, on the solemn day of expiation, —that is, once year, —took a golden censer from this altar; after which, going out of the sanctuary, he put fire into it, taken from the altar of burnt-offerings without the tabernacle, in the court where the perpetual fire was preserved. Then returning into the holy place, he filled his hands with incense taken from this altar, the place of the residence of the spices. And this altar being placed just at the entrance of the most holy place, over against the ark and mercy-seat, upon his entrance he put the incense on the fire in the censer, and entered the holy place with a cloud of the smoke thereof. See Leviticus 16:12, 13. The composition and making of this incense is declared, Exodus 30:34, 35, etc. And being compounded, it was beaten small, that it might immediately take fire, and so placed on this altar before the ark, verse 36. And the placing of this incense "before the testimony," as is there affirmed, is the same with what our apostle affirms, that the most holy place had it.

That in general by incense, prayer is signified, the Scripture expressly testifieth: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense," Psalm 141. 2. And there is a fourfold resemblance between them:

(1.) In that it was beaten and pounded before it was used. So doth acceptable prayer proceed from "a broken and contrite heart," Isaiah 51. 17. [by definition, one who is not saved yet does not have this

kind of heart but a heart of stone; he is proud, has enmity in his heart toward the Lord, hates faith and anything else that is truly spiritual (1Cor,2:14, Rms. 8:7-8)]

(2.) It was of no use until fire was put under it, and that taken from the altar. **Nor is that prayer of any virtue or efficacy which is not kindled by the fire from above, the Holy Spirit of God; which we have from our altar, Christ Jesus.** [This also is contrary to Arminian principles or anyone who is not saved, in that they see their coming to God as from themselves and not enabled completely by the Holy Spirit.]

(3.) It naturally ascended upwards towards heaven, as all offerings in the Hebrew are called *twevhto*, “ascensions,” risings up. And this is the **design of prayer, to ascend unto the throne of God:** “I will direct unto thee, and will look up;” that is, pray, Psalm 5:3. (4.) It yielded a sweet savor: which was one end of it in temple services, wherein there was so much burning of flesh and blood. So doth prayer yield a sweet savor unto God; a savor of rest, wherein he is well pleased. [God is not pleased with the prayers of the wicked who are those who have not be converted. He does not hear their prayers. John 9:31]

In this general sense, even the prayers of the saints might be typified and represented in that daily burning of incense which was used in the sanctuary. **But it must be granted that this incense is distinguished from the prayers of the saints, as that which is in the hand of Christ alone, to give virtue and efficacy unto them,** Revelation 8:4. Wherefore this golden altar of incense, as placed in the sanctuary, and whereon incense was burned continually every morning and evening, was **a type of Christ, by his mediation and intercession giving efficacy unto the continual prayers of all believers.** [unbelievers of themselves have no efficacy in their prayers (and so it is presumptuous to think that they do) and will not until they are converted. Jn9:31]

But that which the apostle in this place hath alone respect unto, was the burning of the incense in the golden censer on the day of expiation, when the high priest entered into the most holy place. And this represented only the personal mediatory prayer of Christ himself. Concerning it we may observe: (1.) That the time of it was after the sacrifice of the sin-offering; for the high priest was to take along with him the blood of that sacrifice, to carry with him into the holy place, Leviticus 16: (2.) That the incense was kindled with fire taken from the altar, when the blood of the sacrifices was newly offered.

And two things in the mediatory prayer of Christ are hereby intimated unto us: (1.) That the efficacy of them ariseth from and dependeth on the sacrifice of himself. Hence his intercession is best apprehended as the representation of himself and the efficacy of his sacrifice in heaven, before the throne of God. (2.) That this prayer is quickened and enlivened by the same fire wherewith the sacrifice of himself was kindled, —that is, by the eternal Spirit; whereof we shall treat on verse 14. Yet we must not so oblige ourselves unto the times, seasons, and order of these things, as to exclude the prayers which he offered unto God before the oblation of himself. Yea, that solemn prayer of his, recorded John xvii., wherein he sanctified himself to be an oblation, was principally prefigured by the cloud of incense which filled the most holy place, covering the ark and mercy-seat. For by reason of the imperfection of these types, and their accommodation unto the present service of the church so far as it was carnal, they could not represent the order of things as they were to be accomplished in the

person of Christ, who was both priest and sacrifice, altar, tabernacle, and incense. For the law had only a shadow of these things, and not the perfect image of them. Some obscure lines of them were drawn therein, but their beautiful order was not represented in them. Although, therefore, the offering of incense from the golden altar in the most holy place was after the offering of sacrifice on the altar of burnt offerings, yet was the mediatory prayer of Christ for the church of the elect, wherein he also prepared and sanctified himself to be a sacrifice, thereby typified. **So also the beating or bruising of the incense before its firing did represent the agony of his soul, with the strong cries and supplications that he offered unto God therein.** And we may observe, —

Obs. III. The mediatory intercession of Jesus Christ is a sweet savor unto God, and efficacious for the salvation of the church. —The smoke of this perfume was that which covered the ark and mercy-seat. Hereby the law itself, which was contained in the ark, became compliant unto our salvation; for herein Christ was declared to be the end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe.

Obs. IV. The efficacy of Christ's intercession dependeth on his oblation. —It was fire from the altar of burnt-offerings wherewith the incense was kindled.

Obs. V. The glory of these types did no way answer the glory of the antitype, or that which was represented by them. —It is acknowledged that the service of the high priest at and from this golden altar, and his entrance with a cloud of incense into the most holy place, had great glory in it, and was suited to ingenerate a great veneration in the minds of the people; howbeit they were all but carnal things, and had no glory in comparison of the spiritual glory of Christ in the discharge of his office. We are apt in our minds to admire these things, and almost to wish that God had ordained such a service in the gospel, so outwardly glorious. For there is that in it which is suited unto those images of things which men create and are delighted withal in their minds. And besides, they love in divine service to be taken up with such a bodily exercise as carries glory with it, —an appearance of solemn veneration. Wherefore many things are found out by men unto these ends. But the reason of all is, because we are carnal. We see not the glory of spiritual things, nor do know how to be exercised in our minds about them with pure acts of faith and love.

Obs. VI. **We are always to reckon that the efficacy and prevalency of all our prayers depends on the incense which is in the hand of our merciful high priest.** —It is offered with the prayers of the saints, Revelation 8:4. In themselves our prayers are weak and imperfect; it is hard to conceive how they should find acceptance with God. **But the invaluable incense of the intercession of Christ gives them acceptance and prevalency.** [This is the only way our prayers and duties are accepted with God, by our high priest, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us so that they are accepted, but this is done only for those who are converted, i.e., are saints. As I said before, we are entirely passive in our being converted, faith being a gift and not something prayed for. But after we are converted, we are to seek the Lord in prayer, and thus, being "in Christ" your prayers are accepted by the intercession of Christ.]

Notes on the difference between the old and new covenants by Thomas Watson:

Thomas Watson (A Body of Divinity, pg 155) states:

Why should God make a covenant with us?

It is out of indulgence, favour, and regard to us. A tyrant will not enter into a covenant with slaves, he will not show them such respect. God's entering into a covenant with us, to be our God, is a dignity he puts upon us. A covenant is *insigne honouris*, a note of distinction between God's people and heathens. 'I will establish my covenant with thee.' Ezek. 16: 60. When the Lord told Abraham that he would enter into a covenant with him, Abraham fell upon his face, as being amazed that the God of glory should bestow such a favour upon him. Gen 17: 2.

God makes a covenant with us, to tie us fast to him; as it is called in Ezekiel, the 'bond of the covenant.' God knows we have **slippery hearts**, therefore he will have a covenant to bind us. It is horrid impiety to go away from God after covenant. If one of the vestal nuns, who had vowed herself to religion, was deflowered, the Romans caused her to be burnt alive. It is perjury to depart from God after solemn covenant.

How does the covenant of grace differ from the first covenant made with Adam?

(I.) The terms of the first covenant were more strict and severe. For,

(1) The least failing would have made the covenant with Adam null and void, but many failings do not annul the covenant of grace. I grant, the least sin is a trespass upon the covenant, but it does not make it null and void. There may be many failings in the conjugal relation, but every failing does not break the marriage bond. It would be sad, if, as oft as we break covenant with God he should break covenant with us; but God will not take advantage of every failing, but in 'anger remember mercy.'

(2) The first covenant being broken, allowed the sinner no remedy, all doors of hope were shut; but the new covenant allows the sinner a remedy: it leaves room for repentance, and provides a mediator. 'Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.' Heb 12: 24.

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pg 89-96 Vol. 22 (108-116 online)

The whole point of God establishing covenants and all that is associated with it is clear evidence that God intended infallibly to save those for whom he died. The blood of Christ and the good things that it procured is not something just made available for the taking but is designedly bestowed upon or bequeathed to those whom God chose to have mercy, i.e., the covenantees. That's why I'm spending so much time on this subject. Arminians and many others make it seem that there is no plan of this sort and that all is up to man's will, and that corrupted.

4. **They differ in their mediators.** The mediator of the first covenant was Moses. "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Galatians 3:19. And this was no other but Moses, who was a servant in the house of God, Hebrews 3:5. And he was a mediator, as designed of God, so chosen of the people, in that dread and consternation which befell them upon the terrible promulgation of the law. For they saw that they could no way bear the immediate presence of God, nor treat with him in their own persons. Wherefore they desired that there might be an internuncius, a mediator between God and them, and that Moses might be the person, Deuteronomy 5:24-27. But the mediator of the new covenant is the Son of God himself. For "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Timothy 2:5. He who is the Son, and the Lord over his own house, graciously undertook in his own person to be the mediator of this covenant; and herein it is unspeakably preferred before the old covenant.

5. They differ in their subject-matter, both as unto precepts and promises, the advantage being still on the part of the new covenant. For, —

(1.) The **old covenant**, in the preceptive part of it, renewed the commands of the **covenant of works**, and that on their original terms. Sin it forbade, — that is, all and every sin, in matter and manner, — on the pain of death; and gave the **promise of life unto perfect, sinless obedience only**: whence the decalogue itself, which is a transcript of the law of works, is called "**the covenant**," Exodus 34:28. And besides this, as we observed before, it had other precepts innumerable, accommodated unto the present condition of the people, and imposed on them with rigor. But in the new covenant, the very first thing that is proposed, is the accomplishment and establishment of the covenant of works, both as unto its commands and sanction, in the obedience and suffering of the mediator. Hereon the commands of it, as unto the obedience of the covenanters, are not grievous; the yoke of Christ being easy, and his burden light.

(2.) The **old testament**, absolutely considered, had,

[1.] **No promise of grace, to communicate spiritual strength, or to assist us in obedience**; nor,

[2.] Any of eternal life, no otherwise but as it was contained in the promise of the covenant of works, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them;” and,

[3.] Had promises of temporal things in the land of Canaan inseparable from it. In the new covenant all things are otherwise, as will be declared in the exposition of the ensuing verses.

6. They differ, and that principally, in the manner of their dedication and sanction. This is that which gives anything the **formal nature of a covenant or testament**. There may be a promise, there may be an agreement in general, which hath not the formal nature of a covenant, or testament, — and such was the covenant of grace before the death of Christ, — but it is the **solemnity and manner of the confirmation, dedication, and sanction of any promise or agreement, that give it the formal nature of a covenant or testament**. And this is by a sacrifice, wherein there is **both blood shedding and death ensuing thereon**. Now this, in the confirmation of the old covenant, was only the sacrifice of beasts, whose blood was sprinkled on all the people, Exodus 24:5-8. But the new testament was solemnly confirmed by the sacrifice and blood of Christ himself, Zechariah 9:11; Hebrews 10:29, 13:20. And the Lord Christ dying as the mediator and surety of the covenant, he purchased all good things for the church; and as a testator bequeathed them unto it. Hence he says of the sacramental cup, that it is “the new testament in his blood,” or the pledge of his bequeathing unto the church [i.e., not the whole world, only the elect] all the promises and mercies of the covenant [the sinner's prayer is completely inconsistent with this bequeathing]; which is the new testament, or the **disposition of his goods unto his children**. But because the Hebrews 9:18-23, we must thither refer the full consideration of it. [Those who have not these goods is evidence that they were never made a partaker of the covenant mercies or promises upon which the covenant was founded; they were never chosen in eternity, hence the blood of the covenant did not cover them; had it covered them, i.e., had Jesus died for them, then by definition of a covenant founded on infallible promises, they would have been saved, hence the limited atonement.]

7. They differ in the **priests** that were to officiate before God in the behalf of the people. In the old covenant, Aaron and his posterity alone were to discharge that office; in the new, the Son of God himself is the only priest of the church. This difference, with the advantage of the gospel-state thereon, we have handled at large in the exposition of the chapter foregoing.

8. They differ in the sacrifices whereon the peace and reconciliation with God which is tendered in them doth depend. And this also must be spoken unto in the ensuing chapter, if God permit.

9. They differ in the way and manner of their solemn writing or enrolment. All **covenants were of old solemnly written in tables** of brass or stone, where they might be faithfully preserved for the use of the parties concerned. So the old covenant, as to the principal, fundamental part of it, was “**engraven in tables of stone**,” which were kept in the ark, Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10; 2 Corinthians 3:7. And God did so order it in his providence, that the first draught of them should be broken, to intimate that the covenant contained in them was not everlasting nor unalterable. **But the new covenant is written in the “fleshy tables of the hearts” of them that do believe** 2 Corinthians 3:3; Jeremiah 31:33.

10. They differ in their ends. The principal end of the first covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set bounds unto it. So saith the apostle, "It was added because of transgressions." And this it did several ways: —

(1.) By conviction: for "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" it convinced sinners, and caused every mouth to be stopped before God.

(2.) By condemning the sinner, in an application of the sanction of the law unto his conscience.

(3.) By the judgments and punishments wherewith on all occasions it was accompanied. In all it manifested and represented the justice and severity of God. The end of the new covenant is, to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God; and therewith to give repentance, remission of sin, and life eternal.

11. They differed in their effects. For the first covenant being the "ministration of death" and "condemnation," it brought the minds and spirits of them that were under it **into servitude and bondage**; whereas spiritual liberty is the immediate effect of the new testament. And there is no one thing wherein the Spirit of God doth more frequently give us an account of the difference between these two covenants, than in this of the liberty of the one and the bondage of the other. See Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 4:1-7, 24, 26, 30, 31; Hebrews 2:14, 15. This, therefore, we must a little explain. Wherefore the bondage which was the effect of the old covenant arose from several causes concurring unto the effecting of it: — see Edwards, pg 99

(1.) The renovation of the terms and sanction of the covenant of works contributed much thereunto. **For the people saw not how the commands of that covenant could be observed, nor how its curse could be avoided.** They saw it not, I say, by anything in the covenant of Sinai; which therefore "gendered unto bondage." **All the prospect they had of deliverance was from the promise.**

(2.) It arose from the manner of the delivery of the law, and God's entering thereon into covenant with them. This was ordered on purpose to fill them with dread and fear. And it could not but do so, whenever they called it to remembrance.

(3.) From the severity of the penalties annexed unto the transgression of the law. And God had taken upon himself, that where punishment was not exacted according to the law, he himself would "cut them off." This kept them always anxious and solicitous, not knowing when they were safe or secure.

(4.) From the nature of the whole ministry of the law, which was the "ministration of death" and "condemnation," 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9; which declared the desert of every sin to be death, and denounced death unto every sinner, administering by itself no relief unto the minds and consciences of men. So was it the "letter that killed" them that were under its power.

(5.) From the darkness of their own minds, in the means, ways, and causes of deliverance from all these things. It is true, they had a promise before of life and salvation, which was not abolished by this covenant, even the promise made unto Abraham; but this belonged not unto this covenant, and the way of its accomplishment, by the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, was much hidden

from them, —yea, from the prophets themselves who yet foretold them. This left them under much bondage. **For the principal cause and means of the liberty of believers under the gospel, ariseth from the clear light they have into the mystery of the love and grace of God in Christ.** This **knowledge** and **faith** of his incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and sacrifice, whereby he made atonement for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, is that which gives them liberty and boldness in their obedience, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18. Whilst they of old were in the dark as unto these things, they must needs have been kept under much bondage.

(6.) It was increased by the yoke of a multitude of laws, rites, and ceremonies, imposed on them; which made the whole of their worship a burden unto them, and insupportable, Acts 15:10.

In and by all these ways and means there was a spirit of bondage and fear administered unto them. And this God did, thus he dealt with them, to the end that they might not rest in that state, but continually look out after deliverance.

On the other hand, the new covenant gives liberty and boldness, the liberty and boldness of children, unto all believers. It is the Spirit of the Son in it that makes us free, or gives us universally all that liberty which is any way needful for us or useful unto us. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” namely, to serve God, “not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit.” And it is declared that this was the great end of bringing in the new covenant, in the accomplishment of the promise made unto Abraham, namely, “that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve God without fear all the days of our life,” Luke 1:72-75. And we may briefly consider **wherein this deliverance and liberty by the new covenant doth consist**, which it doth in the things ensuing: —

(1.) **In our freedom from the commanding power of the law, as to sinless, perfect obedience, in order unto righteousness and justification before God.** Its commands we are still subject unto, **but not in order unto life and salvation**; for unto these ends it is **fulfilled in and by the mediator of the new covenant**, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth,” Romans 10:4.

(2.) **In our freedom from the condemning power of the law, and the sanction of it in the curse.** This being undergone and answered by him who was “made a curse for us,” we are freed from it, Romans 7:6; Galatians 3:13, 14. And therein also are we “delivered from the fear of death,” Hebrews 2:15, as it was penal and an entrance into judgment or condemnation, John 5:24.

(3.) **In our freedom from conscience of sin**, Hebrews 10:2, — that is, conscience disquieting, perplexing, and condemning our persons; the hearts of all that believe being “sprinkled from an evil conscience” by the blood of Christ.

(4.) **In our freedom from the whole system of Mosaical worship**, in all the rites, and ceremonies, and ordinances of it; which what a burden it was the apostles do declare, Acts 15, and our apostle at large in his epistle to the Galatians.

(5.) From all the laws of men in things appertaining unto the worship of God, 1 Corinthians 7:23.

And by all these, and the like instances of spiritual liberty, doth the gospel free believers from that “spirit of bondage unto fear,” which was administered under the old covenant.

It remains only that we point out the heads of those ways whereby this liberty is communicated unto us under the new covenant. And it is done, —

(1.) **Principally by the grant and communication of the Spirit of the Son as a Spirit of adoption, giving the freedom, boldness, and liberty of children,** John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6, 7. [Right here is proof that before this is given, you cannot come to God; you will not come as Jesus told the Pharisees, *But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.* Jn5:40., even Jn 14:17. For without the giving of this Spirit you are still in bondage and properly not *set free* until *the Son sets you free*, John 8:36; you are still unwilling, blind, dead in sin, an enemy to God in your mind, etc. and hence when one comes by his own strength in asking, it is from a principle of self-love and not from a principle of life nor from a *spiritual sight* of the glory of Christ or God in Christ and therefore is a most wicked presumption. see [code278a](#).] From hence the apostle lays it down as a certain rule, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2 Corinthians 3:17. Let **men pretend what they will, let them boast of the freedom of their outward condition in this world, and of the inward liberty or freedom of their wills, there is indeed no true liberty where the Spirit of God is not.** [And the Spirit of God is not in someone who is not saved saying this sinners prayer.] The ways whereby he giveth freedom, power, a sound mind, spiritual boldness, courage, contempt of the cross, holy confidence before God, a readiness for obedience, and enlargedness of heart in duties, with all other things wherein true liberty doth consist, or which any way belong unto it, I must not here divert to declare. **The world judges that there is no bondage but where the Spirit of God is;** for that gives that conscientious fear of sin, that awe of God in all our thoughts, actions, and ways, that careful and circumspect walking, that temperance in things lawful, that abstinence from all appearance of evil, wherein they judge the greatest bondage on the earth to consist. But those who have received him, do know that the whole world doth lie in evil, and that all those unto whom spiritual liberty is a bondage **are the servants and slaves of Satan.**

(2.) It is obtained by the evidence of our justification before God, and the causes of it. This men were greatly in the dark unto under the first covenant, although all stable peace with God doth depend thereon; for it is in the gospel that “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” Romans 1:17. Indeed “the righteousness of God without the law is witnessed by the law and the prophets,” Romans 3:21; that is, testimony is given to it in legal institutions and the promises recorded in the prophets. But these things were obscure unto them, who were to seek for what was intended under the veils and shadows of priests and sacrifices, atonements and expiations. But our justification before God, in all the causes of it, being now fully revealed and made manifest, it hath a great influence into spiritual liberty and boldness.

(3.) **By the spiritual light which is given to believers into the mystery of God in Christ.** This the apostle affirms to have been “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:9. **It was contrived and prepared in the counsel and wisdom of God from all eternity.** Some intimation was given of it in the first promise [[Gen3:15](#)], and it was afterwards shadowed out by sundry legal institutions;

but the depth, the glory, the beauty and fullness of it, were “hid in God,” in his mind and will, until it was **fully revealed in the gospel**. The saints under the old testament believed that they should be delivered by the promised Seed, that they should be saved for the Lord’s sake, that the Angel of the covenant would save them, yea, that the Lord himself would come to his temple; and they diligently inquired into what was foreshadowed concerning “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” But all this while their thoughts and conceptions were exceedingly in the dark as to those glorious things which are made so plain in the new covenant, concerning the incarnation, mediation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God, —concerning the way of God’s being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now as darkness gives fear, so light gives liberty. [Until one has this light, this light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining into his heart, he is blind. These old testament saints had some notion of salvation, that is, the real revelation made to them of the promised Seed, but those today who are unsaved, who are saying the sinner's prayer in some form are unsaved and thus are totally in the dark, still enemies to God and thus have no object for the faith that they think they have. Saving faith always has its object revealed by God in his word. One can't just make something up and say they have faith in it if it be not revealed by God otherwise it is not saving faith but a faith of their own making - —hat it is creating its own object. Their supposed act of faith has created their own object of their imaginations. And this is why so many apostatize; they never saw his glory or the beauty of holiness and so were never truly converted - Hebrews 6]

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How does the covenant of grace differ from the first covenant made with Adam?

(I.) The terms of the first covenant were more strict and severe. For,

(1) The least failing would have made the covenant with Adam null and void, but many failings do not annul the covenant of grace. I grant, the least sin is a trespass upon the covenant, but it does not make it null and void. There may be many failings in the conjugal relation, but every failing does not break the marriage bond. It would be sad, if, as oft as we break covenant with God he should break covenant with us; but God will not take advantage of every failing, but in 'anger remember mercy.'

(2) The first covenant being broken, allowed the sinner no remedy, all doors of hope were shut; but the new covenant allows the sinner a remedy: it leaves room for repentance, and provides a mediator. 'Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.' Heb 12: 24.

Old Covenant vs. the New Covenant

code298

Hebrews 8:6 An excellent summary of the difference between the Old and New Covenants (testaments), the communication of the good things of the New Covenant explained as the reason why the new is better than the old. This will put things into their proper perspective in an greater degree and help explain where the diagram fits in. Also, Owen goes into more on what consists in a formal covenant. 13,19, role of Christ, the testator, bequeathing the good things of the covenant to the covenanters, the Spirit of Adoption...

p49, 77-100 Vol. 22 (pg 59, 93-121 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Ver. 6. —But now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

In this verse beginneth the second part of the chapter, concerning the difference between the two covenants, the old and the new, with the preeminence of the latter above the former, and of the ministry of Christ above the high priests on that account. The whole church-state of the Jews, with all the ordinances and worship of it, and the privileges annexed unto it, depended wholly on the covenant that God made with them at Sinai. But the introduction of this new priesthood whereof the apostle is discoursing, did necessarily abolish that covenant, and put an end unto all sacred ministrations that belonged unto it. And this could not well be offered unto them without the supply of another covenant, which should excel the former in privileges and advantages. For it was granted among them that it was the design of God to carry on the church unto a perfect state, as hath been declared on Hebrews 7; wherefore he would not lead it backward, nor deprive it of any thing it had enjoyed, without provision of what was better in its room. This, therefore, the apostle here undertakes to declare. And he doth it after his wonted manner, from such principles and testimonies as were admitted among themselves. Two things unto this purpose he proves by express testimonies out of the

prophet Jeremiah: 1. That besides the covenant made with their fathers in Sinai, God had promised to make another covenant with the church, in his appointed time and season. 2. That this other promised covenant should be of another nature than the former, and much more excellent, as unto spiritual advantages, unto them who were taken into it. From both these, fully proved, the apostle infers the necessity of the abrogation of that first covenant, wherein they trusted, and unto which they adhered, when the appointed time was come. And hereon he takes occasion to declare the nature of the two covenants in sundry instances, and wherein the differences between them did consist. This is the substance of the remainder of this chapter.

skip to page 76 (91 online)

4. These things being observed, we may consider that the Scripture doth plainly and expressly make mention of two testaments, or covenants, and distinguish between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated unto a twofold administration of the same covenant. The one is mentioned and described, Exodus 24:3-8, Deuteronomy 5:2-5, — namely, the covenant that God made with the people of Israel in **Sinai**; and which is commonly called “**the covenant**,” where the people under the old testament are said to keep or break God’s covenant; which for the most part is spoken with respect unto that worship which was peculiar 92 thereunto. The other is promised, **Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:40**; which is the **new or gospel covenant**, as before explained, mentioned Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24. And these two covenants, or testaments, are compared one with the other, and opposed one unto another, 2 Corinthians 3:6-9; Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 7:22, 9:15-20.

These two we call “the old and the new testament.” Only it must be observed, that in this argument, by the “old testament,” we do not understand the books of the Old Testament, or the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, or the oracles of God committed then unto the church, (I confess they are once so called, 2 Corinthians 3:14, “The veil remaineth untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament,” —that is, the books of it; unless we shall say, that the apostle intendeth only the reading of the things which concern the old testament in the Scripture;) for this old covenant, or testament, whatever it be, is abrogated and taken away, as the apostle expressly proves, but the word of God in the books of the Old Testament abideth forever. And those writings are called the Old Testament, or the books of the Old Testament, not as though they contained in them nothing but what belongeth unto the old covenant, for they contain the doctrine of the New Testament also; but they are so termed because they were committed unto the church whilst the old covenant was in force, as the rule and law of its worship and obedience.

5. Wherefore we must grant two distinct covenants, rather than a twofold administration of the same covenant merely, to be intended [[This Owen explains on pg 59-93](#)]. We must, I say, do so, provided always that the way of reconciliation and salvation was the same under both. But it will be said, —and with great pretense of reason, for it is that which is the sole foundation they all build upon who allow only a twofold administration of the same covenant, —‘That this being the principal end of a divine covenant, if the way of reconciliation and salvation be the same under both, then indeed are they for the substance of them but one.’ And I grant that this would inevitably follow, if it were so equally by virtue of them both. If reconciliation and salvation by Christ were to be obtained not only under the old covenant, but by virtue thereof, then it must be the same for substance with the new. But this is not so; for no reconciliation with God nor salvation could be obtained by virtue of the old

covenant, or the administration of it, as our apostle disputes at large, though all believers were reconciled, justified, and saved, by virtue of the promise [Gen 3:15, ref the Seed, etc.], whilst they were under the covenant.

As therefore I have showed in what sense the covenant of grace is called “the new covenant,” in this distinction and opposition, so I shall propose sundry things which relate unto the nature of the first covenant, which manifest it to have been a distinct covenant, and not a mere administration of the covenant of grace: —

1. This covenant, called “the old covenant,” was never intended to be of itself the absolute rule and law of life and salvation unto the church, but was made with a particular design, and with respect unto particular ends. This the apostle proves undeniably in this epistle, especially in the chapter foregoing, and those two that follow. Hence it follows that it could abrogate or disannul nothing which God at any time before had given as a general rule unto the church. For that which is particular cannot abrogate anything that was general, and before it; as that which is general doth abrogate all antecedent particulars, as the new covenant doth abrogate the old. And this we must consider in both the instances belonging hereunto. For, —

(1.) God had before given the covenant of works, or perfect obedience, unto all mankind, in the law of creation [see *law of creation* earlier, pg 564]. But this covenant at Sinai did not abrogate or disannul that covenant, nor any way fulfill it. And the reason is, because it was never intended to come in the place or room thereof, as a covenant, containing an entire rule of all the faith and obedience of the whole church. God did not intend in it to abrogate the covenant of works, and to substitute this in the place thereof; yea, in sundry things it reenforced, established, and confirmed that covenant. For, —

[1.] It revived, declared, and expressed all the commands of that covenant in the decalogue for that is nothing but a divine summary of the law written in the heart of man at his creation [hence the *law of creation* or the *law of our obedience*]. And herein the **dreadful manner** of its delivery or promulgation, with its writing in tables of stone, is also to be considered; for in them the nature of that first covenant, with its **inexorableness as unto perfect obedience**, was represented. And because none could answer its demands, or comply with it therein, it was called “the ministration of death,” causing fear and bondage, 2 Corinthians 3:7. 94

-- **Break:** First, a short review of the *law of creation*, pg 214 (263 online), describing the old testament worship, and all those things that prefigured Christ, the tabernacle, the ark, the utensils, etc.

We have, therefore, nothing else to do but to find out the resemblance which, as an effect of divine wisdom, and by virtue of divine institution, was in them unto God’s being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. And to this end the things ensuing may be observed:

(1.) The *spring*, the *life* and *soul* of all this service, was the *decalogue* “the ten words,” written in tables of stone, called “the tables of the covenant.” This is the eternal, unalterable rule of our relation unto God as rational creatures, capable of moral obedience and eternal rewards. Hereunto all this

service related, as prefiguring the way whereby the church might be freed from the guilt of its transgression, and obtain the accomplishment of it in them and for them. For, —

[1.] It was given and prescribed unto the people, and by them accepted, as the terms of God's covenant, before any of these things were revealed or appointed, Deuteronomy 5:2-27. Wherefore all these following institutions did only manifest how that covenant should be complied withal and fulfilled.

[2.] It was written in *tables of stone*, and those renewed after they were broken, before any of these things were prepared or erected, Exodus 34:1. God, by the occasional breaking of the first tables, on the sin of the people, declared that there was no keeping, no fulfilling of that covenant, before the provision made in these ordinances was granted unto the people.

[3.] The ark was made and appointed for no other end but to preserve and keep these tables of the covenant, or testimony of God, Exodus 25:16. And it was hereon the great token and pledge of the presence of God among the people, wherein his glory dwelt among them. So the wife of Phinehas the priest made the dying confession of her faith: she said, "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken," 1 Samuel 4:22. Wherefore, —

[4.] All other things, the whole tabernacle, with all the furniture, utensils, and services of it, were made and appointed to *minister unto the ark*; and when the ark was removed from them they were of no use nor signification. Wherefore, when it was absent from the tabernacle, "all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD," 1 Samuel 7:2; for the remaining tabernacle was no longer unto them a pledge of his presence. And therefore, when Solomon afterwards had finished all the glorious work of the temple, with all that belonged unto it, "he assembled all the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant into its place" in the temple, 1 Kings 8:1-4. Before this was done, all that glorious and costly structure was of no sacred use. This order of things doth sufficiently evidence that the spring of all these services lay in the tables of the covenant.

(2.) This law, as unto the substance of it, was the only law of creation, the rule of the first covenant of works; for it contained the sum and substance of that obedience which is due unto God from all rational creatures made in his image, and nothing else. It was the whole of what God designed in our creation unto his own glory and our everlasting blessedness. **What was in the tables of stone was nothing but a transcript of what was written in the heart of man originally; and which is returned thither again by the grace of the new covenant,** Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3 ---

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer. 31:33

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 2Cor. 3:3

(3.) Although this law as a covenant was broken and disannulled by the entrance of sin, and became insufficient as unto its first ends, of the justification and salvation of the church thereby, Romans 8:3; yet as a law and rule of obedience it was never disannulled, nor would God suffer it to be. Yea, one principal design of God in Christ was, that it might be fulfilled and established, Matthew 5:17, 18; Romans 3:31. For to reject this law, or to abrogate it, had been for God to have laid aside that glory of his holiness and righteousness which in his infinite wisdom he designed therein.

[So, when Adam and Eve sinned they perceived they were naked; this primarily is in respect of the *departing* of the glory of God's image that was enstamped upon their souls at their creation (hence the law of creation or obedience) that enabled them to obey God to the glory of God. This is why all of their posterity were born in the likeness of Adam, without this spiritual or moral image upon their souls (see two-fold image of God, pg 46), hence born natural, or blind or spiritually dead as opposed to *spiritual* (see 1Cor. 2:14) and unable to please God. This is why one must be born again, re-enstamped with this image of God's glory which includes the knowledge of God, virtue and holiness or a love for God and happiness consisting in joy in God, all of which enables one to please God (see diagram). This is communicated to the elect in the restoration of the image of God upon their souls. See Rm 6:4, "b" the glory of the Father,]"-- [2.] **It revived the sanction of the first covenant, in the curse or sentence of death which it denounced against all transgressors. Death was the penalty of the transgression of the first covenant: "In the day that thou eatest, thou shalt die the death."** And this sentence was revived and represented anew in the curse wherewith this covenant was ratified, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them," Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10. **For the design of God in it was to bind a sense of that curse on the consciences of men, until He came by whom it was taken away,** as the apostle declares, Galatians 3:19.

[3.] It revived the promise of that covenant, —that of eternal life upon perfect obedience. So the apostle tells us that Moses thus describeth the righteousness of the law, "**That the man which doeth those things shall live by them,**" Romans 10:5; as he doth, Leviticus 18:5.

Now this is no other but the covenant of works revived. Nor had this covenant of Sinai any promise of eternal life annexed unto it, as such, but only the promise inseparable from the covenant of works which it revived, saying, "Do this, and live."

Hence it is, that when our apostle disputeth against *justification by the law*, or by the works of the law, he doth not intend the works peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai, such as were the rites and ceremonies of the worship then instituted; but he intends also the *works of the first covenant*, which alone had the promise of life annexed unto them.

And hence it follows also, that it was not a new covenant of works established in the place of the old, for the absolute rule of faith and obedience unto the whole church; for then would it have abrogated and taken away that covenant, and all the force of it, which it did not.

(2.) **The other instance is in the promise [Gen 3:15, the promise of the coming Seed, etc.] . This also went before it; neither was it abrogated or disannulled by the introduction of this covenant. This**

promise was given unto our first parents immediately after the entrance of sin, and was established as containing the only way and means of the salvation of sinners. **Now, this promise could not be abrogated by the introduction of this covenant, and a new way of justification and salvation be thereby established.** For the promise being given out in general for the whole church, as containing the way appointed by God for righteousness, life, and salvation, it could not be disannulled or changed, without a change and alteration in the counsels of Him “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Much less could this be effected by a particular covenant, such as that was, when it was given as a general and eternal rule.

2. But whereas there was an especial promise given unto Abraham, in the faith whereof he became “the father of the faithful,” he being their progenitor, it should seem that this covenant did wholly disannul or supersede that promise, and take off the church of his posterity from building on that foundation, and so fix them wholly on this new covenant now made with them. So saith Moses, “The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day,” Deuteronomy 5:3. God made not this covenant on mount Sinai with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but with the people then present, and their posterity, as he declares, Deuteronomy 29:14, 15. This, therefore, should seem to take them off wholly from that promise made to Abraham, and so to disannul it. But that this it did not, nor could do, the apostle strictly proves, Galatians 3:17-22; yea, it did divers ways establish that promise, both as first given and as afterwards confirmed with the oath of God unto Abraham, two ways especially: —

(1.) **It declared the impossibility of obtaining reconciliation and peace with God any other way but by the promise.** For representing the commands of the covenant of works, requiring perfect, sinless obedience, under the penalty of the curse, it convinced men that this was no way for sinners to seek for life and salvation by. **And herewith it so urged the consciences of men, that they could have no rest nor peace in themselves but what the promise would afford them, whereunto they saw a necessity of betaking themselves.**

(2.) **By representing the ways and means of the accomplishment of the promise**, and of that whereon all the **efficacy** of it unto the justification and salvation of sinners doth depend. This **was the death, blood-shedding, oblation, or sacrifice of Christ, the promised seed. This all its offerings and ordinances of worship directed unto; as his incarnation, with the inhabitation of God in his human nature, was typed by the tabernacle and temple.** Wherefore it was so far from disannulling the promise, or diverting the minds of the people of God from it, **that by all means it established it and led unto it.** But, —

3. It will be said, as was before observed, ‘That if it did neither abrogate the first covenant of works, and come in the room thereof, nor disannul the promise made unto Abraham, then unto what end did it serve, or what benefit did the church receive thereby?’ I answer, —

(1.) There hath been, with respect unto God’s dealing with the church, *οικονομια των χαιρων*, — a “certain dispensation” and **disposition of times and seasons, reserved unto the sovereign will and pleasure of God.** Hence from the beginning he revealed himself *πολυτροπως* and *πολυμερως*, as seemed good unto him, Hebrews 1:1. And this dispensation of times had a *πληρωμα*, a “fullness” assigned unto it, wherein all things, namely, **that belong unto the revelation and communication of**

God unto the church, should come to their height, and have as it were the last hand given unto them. This was in the sending of Christ, as the apostle declares, Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might bring all unto a head in Christ.” Until this season came, God dealt variously with the church, εν ποικιλη σοφια, “in manifold” or “various wisdom,” according as he saw it needful and useful for it, in that season which it was to pass through, before the fullness of times came. Of this nature was his entrance into the covenant with the church at Sinai; the reasons whereof we shall immediately inquire into. In the meantime, if we had no other answer to this inquiry but only this, that in the order of the disposal or dispensation of the seasons of the church, before the fullness of times came, God in his manifold wisdom saw it necessary for the then present state of the church in that season, we may well acquiesce therein. But, —

(2.) The apostle acquaints us in general with the ends of this dispensation of God, Galatians 3:19-24: “Wherefore then serveth the law?” It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Much light might be given unto the mind of the Holy Ghost in these words, and that in things not commonly discerned by expositors, if we should divert unto the opening of them. I will at present only mark from them what is unto our present purpose.

There is a double inquiry made by the apostle with respect unto the **law, or the covenant of Sinai**: [1.] Unto what end in general it served. [2.] Whether it was not contrary to the promise of God. Unto both these the apostle answereth from the nature, office, and work of that covenant. For there were, as hath been declared, two things in it: [1.] A revival and representation of the covenant of works, with its sanction and curse. [2.] A direction of the church unto the accomplishment of the promise. From these two doth the apostle frame his answer unto the double inquiry laid down.

And unto the first inquiry, “unto what end it served,” he answers, “It was added because of transgressions.” The promise being given, there seems to have been no need of it, why then was it added to it at that season? “It was added because of transgressions.” The fullness of time was not yet come, wherein the promise was to be fulfilled, accomplished and established as the only covenant wherein the church was to walk with God; or, “the seed” was not yet come, as the apostle here speaks, to whom the promise was made. In the meantime some order must be taken about sin and transgression, that all the order of things appointed of God might not be overflowed by them And this was done two ways by the law: —

[1.] By reviving the commands of the covenant of works, with the sanction of death, it put an awe on the minds of men, and set bounds unto their lusts, that they should not dare to run forth into that excess which they were naturally inclined unto. It was therefore “added because of transgressions;” that, in the declaration of God’s severity against them, some bounds might be fixed unto them; for “by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

[2.] To shut up unbelievers, and such as would not seek for righteousness, life, and salvation by the promise, under the power of the covenant of works, and curse attending it. “It concluded” or “shut up all under sin,” saith the apostle, Galatians 3:22. This was the end of the law, for this end was it added, as it gave a revival unto the covenant of works.

Unto the second inquiry, which ariseth out of this supposition, namely, that the law did convince of sin, and condemn for sin, which is, “whether it be not then contrary to the grace of God,” the apostle in like manner returns a double answer, taken from the second use of the law, before insisted on, with respect unto the promise. And, —

[1.] He says, ‘That although the law doth thus rebuke sin, convince of sin, and condemn for sin, so setting bounds unto transgressions and transgressors, yet did God never intend it as a means to give life and righteousness, nor was it able so to do.’ The end of the promise was to give righteousness, justification, and salvation, all by Christ, to whom and concerning whom it was made. But this was not the end for which the law was revived in the covenant of Sinai. For although in itself it requires a perfect righteousness, and gives a promise of life thereon, (“He that doeth these things, he shall live in them,”) yet it could give neither righteousness nor life unto any in the state of sin. See Romans 8:3, 10:4. **Wherefore the promise and the law, having diverse ends, they are not contrary to one another.**

[2.] Saith he, ‘The law hath a great respect unto the promise; and was given of God for this very end, that it might lead and direct men unto Christ;’ —which is sufficient to answer the question proposed at the beginning of this discourse, about the end of this covenant, and the advantage which the church received thereby.

What hath been spoken may suffice to declare the nature of this covenant in general; and two things do here evidently follow, wherein the substance of the whole truth contended for by the apostle doth consist: —

(1.) That whilst the **covenant of grace** was contained and proposed only in the promise, before it was solemnly confirmed in the blood and sacrifice of Christ, and so legalized or established as the only rule of the worship of the church, the introduction of this other covenant on Sinai did not constitute a new way or means of righteousness, life, and salvation; but believers sought for them alone by the **covenant of grace as declared in the promise.** This follows evidently upon what we have discoursed; and it secures absolutely that great fundamental truth, which the apostle in this and all his other epistles so earnestly contendeth for, namely, that there neither is, nor ever was, either righteousness, justification, life, or salvation, to be attained by any law, or the works of it, (for this covenant at mount Sinai comprehended every law that God ever gave unto the church,) but by Christ alone, and faith in him.

(2.) That whereas this covenant being introduced in the pleasure of God, there was prescribed with it a form of outward worship **suited unto that dispensation of times and present state of the church;** upon the introduction of the new covenant in the fullness of times, to be the rule of all intercourse between God and the church, **both that covenant and all its worship must be disannulled.** This is that

which the apostle proves with all sorts of arguments, manifesting the great advantage of the church thereby.

These things, I say, do evidently follow on the preceding discourses, and are the main truths contended for by the apostle.

4. There remaineth one thing more only to be considered, before we enter on the comparison between the two covenants here directed unto by the apostle. And this is, how this first covenant came to be an especial covenant unto that people: wherein we shall manifest the reason of its introduction at that season. And unto this end sundry things are to be considered concerning that people and the church of God in them, with whom this covenant was made; which will further evidence both the nature, use, and necessity of it: —

(1.) **This people were the posterity of Abraham, unto whom the promise was made that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.** Wherefore from among them was the promised Seed to be raised up in the fullness of time, or its proper season, — from among them was the Son of God to take on him the seed of Abraham. To this end sundry things were necessary: —

[1.] That they should have a certain abiding place or country, which they might freely inhabit, distinct from other nations, and under a rule or scepter of their own. So it is said of them, that “the people should dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations,” Numbers 23:9; and “**the scepter was not to depart from them until Shiloh came,**” Genesis 49:10. For God had regard unto his own glory in his faithfulness as unto his word and oath given unto Abraham, not only that they should be accomplished, but that their accomplishment should be evident and conspicuous. But if this posterity of Abraham, from among whom the promised Seed was to rise, had been, as it is at this day with them, scattered abroad on the face of the earth, mixed with all nations, and under their power, although God might have accomplished his promise really in raising up Christ from among some of his posterity, **yet could it not be proved or evidenced that he had so done, by reason of the confusion and mixture of the people with others.** Wherefore God provided a land and country for them which they might inhabit by themselves, and as their own, even the land of Canaan. And this was so suited unto all the ends of God towards that people, —as might be declared in sundry instances, —that God is said to have “espied this land out for them,” Ezekiel 20:6. He chose it out, as most meet for his purpose towards that people of all lands under heaven. [This begs the question, Why did the Jews establish a state of Israel back in 1948 if Christ, the Seed, has come and gone? Ans. They don't believe that he has come yet! Where are all the high priests and their sacrifices and how will they determine if the high priests (if there are any which I don't think there are) are legit since it next to impossible to confirm that they are from the tribe of Levi, the house of Aaron? It sounds to me that there is no purpose in this effort of the Jews to re-establish their nation again but only presumption. But once the Messiah had come and gone, God completely destroyed the Jewish church state and dispersed them by the destruction of the Roman invasion in 70AD in answer to Gen 49:10, “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes;*” “That is, the Mosaical law and church state or the Jewish polity shall not depart until the Christ comes, which he has and has gone!]

[2.] That there should be always kept among them an open confession and visible representation of the end for which they were so separated from all the nations of the world. They were not to dwell in

the land of Canaan merely for secular ends, and to make as it were a dumb show; but as they were there maintained and preserved to evidence the faithfulness of God in bringing forth the promised Seed in the fullness of time, so there was to be a testimony kept up among them unto that end of God whereunto they were preserved. This was the end of all their ordinances of worship, of the tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices and ordinances; which were all appointed by Moses, on the command of God, “for a testimony of those things which should be spoken afterwards,” Hebrews 3:5.

These things were necessary in the first place, with respect unto the ends of God towards that people.

(2.) It becomes not the wisdom, holiness, and sovereignty of God, to call any people into an especial relation unto himself, to do them good in an eminent and peculiar manner, and then to suffer them to live at their pleasure, without any regard unto what he hath done for them. Wherefore, having granted unto this people those great privileges of the land of Canaan, and the ordinances of worship relating unto the great end mentioned, he moreover prescribed unto them laws, rules, and terms of obedience, whereon they should hold and enjoy that land, with all the privileges annexed unto the possession thereof. And these are both expressed and frequently inculcated, in the repetition and promises of the law. But yet in the prescription of these terms, God reserved the sovereignty of dealing with them unto himself. For had he left them to stand or fall absolutely by the terms prescribed unto them, they might and would have utterly forfeited both the land and all the privileges they enjoyed therein. And had it so fallen out, then the great end of God in preserving them a separate people until the Seed should come, and a representation thereof among them, had been frustrated. Wherefore, although he punished them for their transgressions, according to the threatenings of the law, yet would he not bring the *μρje*, or “curse of the law,” upon them, and utterly cast them off, until his great end was accomplished, Malachi 4:4-6.

(3.) **God would not take this people off from the promise, because his church [the elect] was among them, and they could neither please God nor be accepted with him but by faith therein.** But yet they were to be dealt withal according as it was meet. For they were generally a people of a hard heart, and stiff-necked, lifted up with an opinion of their own righteousness and worth above others. This Moses endeavoreth, by all manner of reasons and instances unto the contrary, to take them off from, in the book of Deuteronomy. Yet was it not effected among the generality of them, nor is to this day; for in the midst of all their wickedness and misery, they still trust to and boast of their own righteousness, and will have it that God hath an especial obligation unto them on that account. **For this cause God saw it necessary, and it pleased him to put a grievous and heavy yoke upon them, to subdue the pride of their spirits, and to cause them to breathe after deliverance.** This the apostle Peter calls “a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear,” **Acts 15:10; that is, with peace, ease, and rest:** which therefore the Lord Christ invited them to seek for in himself alone, Matthew 11:29, 30. And this yoke that God put on them consisted in these three things: —

[1.] **In a multitude of precepts,** hard to be understood, and difficult to be observed. The present Jews reckon up six hundred and thirteen of them; about the sense of most of which they dispute endlessly among themselves. But the truth is, since the days of the Pharisees they have increased their own yoke, and made obedience unto their law in any tolerable manner altogether impracticable. It were easy to manifest, for instance, that no man under heaven ever did, or ever can, keep the Sabbath according to the rules they give about it in their Talmuds. And they generally scarce observe one of

them themselves. But in the law, as given by God himself, it is certain that there are a multitude of arbitrary precepts, and those in themselves not accompanied with any spiritual advantages, as our apostle shows, Hebrews 9:9, 10; only they were obliged to perform them by a mere sovereign act of power and authority.

[2.] In the severity wherewith the observance of all those precepts was enjoined them. And this was the threatening of death; for “he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy,” and “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward.” Hence was their complaint of old, “Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?” Numbers 17:12, 13. And the curse solemnly denounced against every one that confirmed not all things written in the law was continually before them.

[3.] In a spirit of bondage unto fear. This was administered in the giving and dispensation of the law, even as a spirit of liberty and power is administered in and by the gospel. And as this respected their present obedience, and manner of its performance, so in particular it regarded death not yet conquered by Christ. Hence our apostle affirms, that “through fear of death they were all their lifetime subject unto bondage.”

This state God brought them into, partly to subdue the pride of their hearts, trusting in their own righteousness, and partly to cause them to look out earnestly after the promised deliverer.

(4.) Into this estate and condition God brought them by a solemn covenant, confirmed by mutual consent between him and them. The tenor, force, and solemn ratification of this covenant [a formal covenant], are expressed, Exodus 24:3-8. Unto the terms and conditions of this covenant was the whole church obliged indispensably, on pain of extermination, until all was accomplished, Malachi 4:4-6. Unto this covenant belonged the dialogue with all precepts of moral obedience thence educed. So also did the laws of political rule established among them [see Gen 49:10 above ref lawgiver/scepter], and the whole system of religious worship given unto them. All these laws were brought within the verge of this covenant, and were the matter of it. [Hence all this was abolished at the coming of Shiloh, the Christ!] And it had especial promises and threatenings annexed unto it as such; whereof none did exceed the bounds of the land of Canaan. For even many of the laws of it were such as obliged nowhere else. Such was the law of the sabbatical year, and all their sacrifices. There was sin and obedience in them or about them in the land of Canaan, none elsewhere. Hence, —

(5.) This covenant thus made, with these ends and promises, did never save nor condemn any man eternally. All that lived under the administration of it did attain eternal life, or perished forever, but not by virtue of this covenant as formally such. It did, indeed, revive the commanding power and sanction of the first covenant of works; and therein, as the apostle speaks, was “the ministry of condemnation,” 2 Corinthians: 3:9; for “by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified.” And on the other hand, it directed also unto the promise, which was the instrument of life and salvation unto all that did believe. But as unto what it had of its own, it was confined unto things temporal. Believers were saved under it, but not by virtue of it. Sinners perished eternally under it, but by the curse of the original law of works. And, —

(6.) Hereon occasionally fell out the ruin of that people; “their table became a snare unto them, and that which should have been for their welfare became a trap,” according to the prediction of our Savior, Psalm 69:22. It was this covenant that raised and ruined them. It raised them to glory and honor when given of God; it ruined them when abused by themselves to ends contrary to express declarations of his mind and will. For although the generality of them were wicked and rebellious, always breaking the terms of the covenant which God made with them, so far as it was possible they should, whilst God determined to reign over them unto the appointed season, and repining under the burden of it; yet they would have this covenant to be the only rule and means of righteousness, life, and salvation, as the apostle declares, Romans 9:31-33, 10:3. For, as we have often said, there were two things in it, both which they abused unto other ends than what God designed them: —

[1.] There was the renovation of the rule of the covenant of works for righteousness and life. And this they would have to be given unto them for those ends, and so sought for righteousness by the works of the law.

[2.] There was ordained in it a typical representation of the way and means whereby the promise was to be made effectual, namely, in the mediation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; which was the end of all their ordinances of worship. And the outward law thereof, with the observance of its institution, they looked on as their only relief when they came short of exact and perfect righteousness.

Against both these pernicious errors the apostle disputes expressly in his epistles unto the Romans and the Galatians, to save them, if it were possible, from that ruin they were casting themselves into. Hereon “the elect obtained,” but “the rest were hardened.” For hereby they made an absolute renunciation of the promise, wherein alone God had inwrapped the way of life and salvation.

This is the nature and substance of that covenant which God made with that people; a particular, temporary covenant it was, and not a mere dispensation of the covenant of grace.

That which remains for the declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost in this whole matter, is to declare the differences that are between those two covenants, whence the one is said to be “better” than the other, and to be “built upon better promises.”

Those of the **church of Rome** do commonly place this difference in three things: 1. In the promises of them: which in the old covenant were temporal only; in the new, spiritual and heavenly. 2. In the precepts of them: which under the old, required only external obedience, designing the righteousness of the outward man; under the new, they are internal, respecting principally the inner man of the heart. 3. In their sacraments: for those under the old testament were only outwardly figurative; but those of the new are operative of grace.

But these things do not express much, if anything at all, of what the Scripture placeth this difference in. And besides, as by some of them explained, they are not true, especially the two latter of them. For I cannot but somewhat admire how it came into the heart or mind of any man to think or say, that God ever gave a law or laws, precept or precepts, that should “respect the outward man only, and the regulation of external duties.” A thought of it is contrary unto all the essential properties of the nature of God, and meet only to ingenerate apprehensions of him unsuited unto all his glorious excellencies. The life and foundation of all the laws under the old testament was, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God

with all thy soul;" without which no outward obedience was ever accepted with him. And for the third of the supposed differences, neither were the sacraments of the law so barely "figurative," but that they did exhibit Christ unto believers: for "they all drank of the spiritual rock; which rock was Christ." Nor are those of the gospel so operative of grace, but that without faith they are useless unto them that do receive them.

The things wherein this difference doth consist, as expressed in the Scripture, are partly circumstantial, and partly substantial, and may be reduced unto the heads ensuing: —

1. These two covenants differ in the **circumstance of time** as to their promulgation, declaration, and establishment. This difference the apostle expresseth from the prophet Jeremiah, in the ninth verse of this chapter, where it must be more fully spoken unto. In brief, the first covenant was made at the time that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and took its date from the third month after their coming up from thence, Exodus 19:24. From the time of what is reported in the latter place, wherein the people give their actual consent unto the terms of it, it began its formal obligation as a covenant. And we must afterwards inquire when it was abrogated and ceased to oblige the church. The new covenant was declared and made known "in the latter days," Hebrews 1:1, 2; "in the dispensation of the fullness of times," Ephesians 1:10. **And it took date, as a covenant formally obliging the whole church, from the death, resurrection, ascension of Christ, and sending of the Holy Ghost**. I bring them all into the epocha of this covenant, because though principally it was established by the first, yet was it not absolutely obligatory as a covenant until after the last of them.

2. They differ in the **circumstance of place** as to their promulgation; which the Scripture also taketh notice of. **The first was declared on mount Sinai**; the **manner** whereof, **and the station of the people in receiving the law**, I have in my Exercitations unto the first part of this Exposition at large declared, and thither the reader is referred, Exodus 19:18. The other was declared on mount Zion, and the law of it went **forth from Jerusalem**, Isaiah 2:3. This difference, with many remarkable instances from it, our apostle insists on, Galatians 4:24-26: **"These are the two covenants; the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar."** That is, Agar, the bondwoman whom Abraham took before the heir of promise was born, before the introduction of the new, or the covenant of promise; for so he adds **was a type of the old covenant given on Sinai**: "For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth unto Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." This mount Sinai, where the old covenant was given, and which was represented by Agar, is in Arabia, — cast quite out of the verge and confines of the church. And it "answereth," or "is placed in the same series, rank, and order with Jerusalem," namely, in the opposition of the two covenants. For as the new covenant, the covenant of promise, giving freedom and liberty, was given at Jerusalem, in the death and resurrection of Christ, with the preaching of the gospel which ensued thereon; so the old covenant, that brought the people into bondage, was given at mount Sinai in Arabia.

3. **They differ in the manner of their promulgation and establishment**. There were two things remarkable that accompanied the solemn declaration of the first covenant: —

(1.) **The dread and terror** of the outward appearance on mount Sinai, which filled all the people, yea, Moses himself, **with fear and trembling**, Hebrews 12:18-21; Exodus 19:16, 20:18, 19. **Together**

herewith was a spirit of fear and bondage administered unto all the people, so as that they chose to keep at a distance, and not draw nigh unto God, Deuteronomy 5:23-27.

(2.) That it was given by the ministry and "disposition of angels," Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19. Hence the people were in a sense "put in subjection unto angels," and they had an authoritative ministry in that covenant. The church that then was, was put into some kind of subjection unto angels, as the apostle plainly intimates, Hebrews 2:5. Hence the worshipping or adoration of angels began among that people, Colossians 2:18; which some, with an addition unto their folly and superstition, would introduce into the Christian church, wherein they have no such authoritative ministry as they had under the old covenant.

Things are quite otherwise in the promulgation of the new covenant. The Son of God in his own person did declare it. This he "spake from heaven," as the apostle observes; in opposition unto the giving of the law "on the earth," Hebrews 12:25. Yet did he speak on the earth also; the mystery whereof himself declares, John 3:13. And he did all things that belonged unto the establishment of this covenant in a spirit of meekness and condescension, with the highest evidence of love, grace, and compassion, encouraging and inviting the weary, the burdened, the heavy and laden to come unto him. And by his Spirit he makes his disciples to carry on the same work until the covenant was fully declared, Hebrews 2:3. See John 1:17, 18.

And the whole ministry of angels, in the giving of this covenant, was merely in a way of service and obedience unto Christ; and they owned themselves the "fellow-servants" only of them that have "the testimony of Jesus," Revelation 19:10. So that this "world to come," as it was called of old, was no way put in subjection unto them.

4. They differ in their mediators. The mediator of the first covenant was Moses. "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Galatians 3:19. And this was no other but Moses, who was a servant in the house of God, Hebrews 3:5. And he was a mediator, as designed of God, so chosen of the people, in that dread and consternation which befell them upon the terrible promulgation of the law. For they saw that they could no way bear the immediate presence of God, nor treat with him in their own persons. Wherefore they desired that there might be an internuncius, a mediator between God and them, and that Moses might be the person, Deuteronomy 5:24-27. But the mediator of the new covenant is the Son of God himself. For "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Timothy 2:5. He who is the Son, and the Lord over his own house, graciously undertook in his own person to be the mediator of this covenant; and herein it is unspeakably preferred before the old covenant.

5. They differ in their subject-matter, both as unto precepts and promises, the advantage being still on the part of the new covenant. For, —

(1.) The old covenant, in the preceptive part of it, renewed the commands of the covenant of works, and that on their original terms. Sin it forbade, — that is, all and every sin, in matter and manner, — on the pain of death; and gave the promise of life unto perfect, sinless obedience only: whence the decalogue itself, which is a transcript of the law of works, is called "the covenant," Exodus 34:28. And

besides this, as we observed before, it had other precepts innumerable, accommodated unto the present condition of the people, and imposed on them with rigor. But in the new covenant, the very first thing that is proposed, is the accomplishment and establishment of the covenant of works, both as unto its commands and 109 sanction, in the obedience and suffering of the mediator. Hereon the commands of it, as unto the obedience of the covenanters, are not grievous; the yoke of Christ being easy, and his burden light.

(2.) **The old testament**, absolutely considered, had, [1.] **No promise of grace, to communicate spiritual strength, or to assist us in obedience; nor,** [2.] Any of eternal life, no otherwise but as it was contained in the promise of the covenant of works, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them;” and, [3.] Had promises of temporal things in the land of Canaan inseparable from it. In the new covenant all things are otherwise, as will be declared in the exposition of the ensuing verses.

6. They differ, and that principally, in the manner of their dedication and sanction. **This is that which gives anything the formal nature of a covenant or testament.** There may be a promise, there may be an agreement in general, which hath not the formal nature of a covenant, or testament, — and such was the covenant of grace before the death of Christ, — **but it is the solemnity and manner of the confirmation, dedication, and sanction of any promise or agreement, that give it the formal nature of a covenant or testament.** **And this is by a sacrifice, wherein there is both bloodshed-ding and death ensuing thereon.** Now this, in the confirmation of the old covenant, was only the sacrifice of beasts, whose blood was sprinkled on all the people, Exodus 24:5-8. **But the new testament was solemnly confirmed by the sacrifice and blood of Christ himself,** Zechariah 9:11; Hebrews 10:29, 13:20. And the Lord Christ dying as the mediator and surety of the covenant, **he purchased all good things for the church; and as a testator bequeathed them unto it.** Hence he says of the sacramental cup, that it is “the new testament in his blood,” or the pledge of his bequeathing unto the church all the promises and mercies of the covenant; which is the new testament, **or the disposition of his goods unto his children.** But because the Hebrews 9:18-23, we must thither refer the full consideration of it.

7. They differ in the **priests** that were to officiate before God in the behalf of the people. In the old covenant, Aaron and his posterity alone were to discharge that office; in the new, the Son of God himself is the only priest of the church. This difference, with the advantage of the gospel-state thereon, we have handled at large in the exposition of the chapter foregoing.

8. They differ in the **sacrifices** whereon the peace and reconciliation with God which is tendered in them doth depend. And this also must be spoken unto in the ensuing chapter, if God permit.

9. They differ in the **way and manner of their solemn writing or enrolment.** All **covenants** were of old **solemnly** written in tables of brass or stone, where they might be faithfully preserved for the use of the parties concerned. So the old covenant, as to the principal, fundamental part of it, was “engraven in tables of stone,” which were kept in the ark, Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10; 2 Corinthians 3:7. And God did so order it in his providence, that the first draught of them should be broken, to intimate that the covenant contained in them was not everlasting nor unalterable. **But the new covenant is written in the “fleshy tables of the hearts” of them that do believe** **2 Corinthians 3:3; Jeremiah 31:33.**

10. They differ in their ends. The principal end of the first covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set bounds unto it. So saith the apostle, “It was added because of transgressions.” And this it did several ways: —

(1.) By conviction: for “by the law is the knowledge of sin;” it convinced sinners, and caused every mouth to be stopped before God.

(2.) By condemning the sinner, in an application of the sanction of the law unto his conscience.

(3.) By the judgments and punishments wherewith on all occasions it was accompanied. In all it manifested and represented the justice and severity of God. The end of the new covenant is, to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God; and therewith to give repentance, remission of sin, and life eternal.

11. They differed in their effects. For the first covenant being the “ministration of death” and “condemnation,” it brought the minds and spirits of them that were under it into servitude and bondage; whereas spiritual liberty is the immediate effect of the new testament. And there is no one thing wherein the Spirit of God doth more frequently give us an account of the difference between these two covenants, than in this of the liberty of the one and the bondage of the other. See Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 4:1-7, 24, 26, 30, 31; Hebrews 2:14, 15. This, therefore, we must a little explain. Wherefore the **bondage which was the effect of the old covenant** arose from several causes concurring unto the effecting of it: —

(1.) The renovation of the terms and sanction of the covenant of works contributed much thereunto. For the people saw not how the commands of that covenant could be observed, nor how its curse could be avoided. They saw it not, I say, by anything in the covenant of Sinai; which therefore “gendered unto bondage.” All the prospect they had of deliverance was from the promise.

(2.) It arose from the manner of the delivery of the law, and God’s entering thereon into covenant with them. This was ordered on purpose to fill them with dread and fear. And it could not but do so, whenever they called it to remembrance.

(3.) From the severity of the penalties annexed unto the transgression of the law. And God had taken upon himself, that where punishment was not exacted according to the law, he himself would “cut them off.” This kept them always anxious and solicitous, not knowing when they were safe or secure.

(4.) From the nature of the whole ministry of the law, which was the “ministration of death” and “condemnation,” 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9; which declared the desert of every sin to be death, and denounced death unto every sinner, administering by itself no relief unto the minds and consciences of men. So was it the “letter that killed” them that were under its power.

(5.) From the darkness of their own minds, in the means, ways, and causes of deliverance from all these things. It is true, they had a promise before of life and salvation, which was not abolished by this covenant, even the promise made unto Abraham; but this belonged not unto this covenant, and the way of its accomplishment, by the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, was much hidden

from them, —yea, from the prophets themselves who yet foretold them. This left them under much bondage. For the principal cause and means of the liberty of believers under the gospel, ariseth from the clear light they have into the mystery of the love and grace of God in Christ. This knowledge and faith of his incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and sacrifice, whereby he made atonement for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, is that which gives them liberty and boldness in their obedience, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18. Whilst they of old were in the dark as unto these things, they must needs have been kept under much bondage.

(6.) It was increased by the yoke of a multitude of laws, rites, and ceremonies, imposed on them; which made the whole of their worship a burden unto them, and insupportable, Acts 15:10.

In and by all these ways and means there was a spirit of bondage and fear administered unto them. And this God did, thus he dealt with them, to the end that they might not rest in that state, but continually look out after deliverance.

On the other hand, the new covenant gives liberty and boldness, the liberty and boldness of children, unto all believers. It is the Spirit of the Son in it that makes us free, or gives us universally all that liberty which is any way needful for us or useful unto us. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty:” namely, to serve God, “not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit.” And it is declared that this was the great end of bringing in the new covenant, in the accomplishment of the promise made unto Abraham, namely, “that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve God without fear all the days of our life,” Luke 1:72-75. And we may briefly consider wherein this deliverance and liberty by the new covenant doth consist, which it doth in the things ensuing: —

(1.) In our freedom from the commanding power of the law, as to sinless, perfect obedience, in order unto righteousness and justification before God. Its commands we are still subject unto, but not in order unto life and salvation; for unto these ends it is fulfilled in and by the mediator of the new covenant, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Romans 10:4.

(2.) In our freedom from the condemning power of the law, and the sanction of it in the curse. This being undergone and answered by him who was “made a curse for us,” we are freed from it, Romans 7:6; Galatians 3:13, 14. And therein also are we “delivered from the fear of death,” Hebrews 2:15, as it was penal and an entrance into judgment or condemnation, John 5:24.

(3.) In our freedom from conscience of sin, Hebrews 10:2, — that is, conscience disquieting, perplexing, and condemning our persons; the hearts of all that believe being “sprinkled from an evil conscience” by the blood of Christ.

(4.) In our freedom from the whole system of Mosaical worship, in all the rites, and ceremonies, and ordinances of it; which what a burden it was the apostles do declare, Acts 15, and our apostle at large in his epistle to the Galatians.

(5.) From all the laws of men in things appertaining unto the worship of God, 1 Corinthians 7:23.

And by all these, and the like instances of spiritual liberty, doth the gospel free believers from that “spirit of bondage unto fear,” which was administered under the old covenant.

It remains only that we point out the heads of those ways whereby this liberty is communicated unto us under the new covenant. And it is done, —

(1.) **Principally by the grant and communication of the Spirit of the Son as a Spirit of adoption, giving the freedom, boldness, and liberty of children**, John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6, 7. From hence the apostle lays it down as a certain rule, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2 Corinthians 3:17. Let men pretend what they will, let them boast of the freedom of their outward condition in this world, and of the inward liberty or freedom of their wills, there is indeed no true liberty where the Spirit of God is not. **The ways whereby he giveth freedom, power, a sound mind, spiritual boldness, courage, contempt of the cross, holy confidence before God, a readiness for obedience, and enlargedness of heart in duties, with all other things wherein true liberty doth consist**, or which any way belong unto it, I must not here divert to declare. **The world judges that there is no bondage but where the Spirit of God is; for that gives that conscientious fear of sin, that awe of God in all our thoughts, actions, and ways, that careful and circumspect walking, that temperance in things lawful, that abstinence from all appearance of evil, wherein they judge the greatest bondage on the earth to consist.** But those who have received him, do know that the whole world doth lie in evil, and that all those unto whom spiritual liberty is a bondage are the servants and slaves of Satan.

(2.) It is obtained by the evidence of our justification before God, and the causes of it. This men were greatly in the dark unto under the first covenant, although all stable peace with God doth depend thereon; for it is in the gospel that “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” Romans 1:17. Indeed “the righteousness of God without the law is witnessed by the law and the prophets,” Romans 3:21; that is, testimony is given to it in legal institutions and the promises recorded in the prophets. But these things were obscure unto them, who were to seek for what was intended under the veils and shadows of priests and sacrifices, atonements and expiations. **But our justification before God, in all the causes of it, being now fully revealed and made manifest, it hath a great influence into spiritual liberty and boldness.**

(3.) **By the spiritual light which is given to believers into the mystery of God in Christ.** This the apostle affirms to have been “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:9. It was contrived and prepared in the counsel and wisdom of God from all eternity. Some intimation was given of it in the first promise, and it was afterwards shadowed out by sundry legal institutions; but the depth, the glory, the beauty and fullness of it, were “hid in God,” **in his mind and will**, until it was fully revealed in the gospel. **The saints under the old testament believed that they should be delivered by the promised Seed**, that they should be saved for the Lord’s sake, that the **Angel of the covenant** would save them, yea, that the Lord himself would come to his temple; and **they diligently inquired into what was foreshigned concerning “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”** But all this while their thoughts and conceptions were **exceedingly in the dark** as to those glorious things which are made so plain in the new covenant, **concerning the incarnation, mediation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God, — concerning the way of God’s being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now as darkness gives fear, so light gives liberty.**

(4.) We obtain this liberty by the opening of the way into the holiest, and the entrance we have thereby with boldness unto the throne of grace. This also the apostle insists upon peculiarly in sundry places of his ensuing discourses, as Hebrews 9:8, 10:19-22: where it must be spoken to, if God permit, at large; for a great part of the liberty of the new testament doth consist herein.

(5.) **By all the ordinances of gospel-worship.** How the ordinances of worship under the old testament did lead the people into bondage hath been declared; but those of the new testament, through their plainness in signification, their immediate respect unto the Lord Christ, with their use and efficacy to guide believers in their communion with God, do all conduce unto our evangelical liberty. And of such importance is our liberty in this instance of it, that when the apostles saw it necessary, for the avoiding of offense and scandal, to continue the observance of one or two legal institutions, in abstinence from some things in themselves indifferent, they did it only for a season, and declared that it was only in case of scandal that they would allow this temporary abridgment of the liberty given us by the gospel.

12. **They differ greatly with respect unto the dispensation and grant of the Holy Ghost.** It is certain that God did grant the gift of the Holy Spirit under the old testament, and his operations during that season, as I have at large elsewhere declared;⁶ but it is no less certain, that there was always **a promise of his more signal effusion upon the confirmation and establishment of the new covenant.** See in particular that great promise to this purpose, **Joel 2:28, 29**, as applied and expounded by the apostle Peter, Acts 2:16-18. Yea, so sparing was the communication of the **Holy Ghost** under the old testament, compared with his effusion under the new, as that the evangelist affirms that **“the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,”** John 7:39; **that is, he was not yet given in that manner as he was to be given** upon the confirmation of the new covenant. And those of the church of the Hebrews who had received the doctrine of John, yet affirmed that “they had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost” or no, Acts 19:2; that is, any such gift and communication of him as was then proposed as the chief privilege of the gospel. Neither doth this concern only the plentiful effusion of him with respect unto those miraculous gifts and operations wherewith the doctrine and establishment of the new covenant was testified unto and confirmed: however, that also gave a signal difference between the two covenants; for the first covenant was confirmed by dreadful appearances and operations, effected by the ministry of angels, but the new by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost himself. But this difference principally consists herein, that under the new testament the Holy Ghost hath graciously condescended to bear the office of the comforter of the church. That this unspeakable privilege is peculiar unto the new testament, is evident from all the promises of his being sent as a comforter made by our Savior, John 14-16.; especially by that wherein he assures his disciples that “unless he went away” (in which going away he confirmed the new covenant) “the **Comforter** would not come; but if he so went away, he would send him from the Father,” John 16:7. And the difference between the two covenants which ensued hereon is inexpressible.

13. **They differ in the declaration made in them of the kingdom of God.** It is the observation of Augustine, that the very name of “the kingdom of heaven” is peculiar unto the new testament. It is true, God reigned in and over the church under the old testament; but his rule was such, and had such a relation unto secular things, especially with respect unto the land of Canaan, and the flourishing

condition of the people therein, as that it had an appearance of a kingdom of this world. And that it was so, and was so to be, consisting in empire, power, victory, wealth, and peace, was so deeply fixed on the minds of the generality of the people, that the disciples of Christ themselves could not free themselves of that apprehension, until the new testament was fully established. But now in the gospel, the nature of the kingdom of God, where it is, and wherein it consists, is plainly and evidently declared, unto the unspeakable consolation of believers. For whereas it is now known and experienced to be internal, spiritual, and heavenly, they have no less assured interest in it and advantage by it, in all the troubles which they may undergo in this world, than they could have in the fullest possession of all earthly enjoyments.

14. They differ in their substance and end. The old covenant was typical, shadowy, and removable, Hebrews 10:1. The new covenant is substantial and permanent, as containing the body, which is Christ. Now, consider the old covenant comparatively with the new, and this part of its nature, that it was typical and shadowy, is a great debasement of it. But consider it absolutely, and the things wherein it was so were its greatest glory and excellency; for in these things alone was it a token and pledge of the love and grace of God. For those things in the old covenant which had most of bondage in their use and practice, had most of light and grace in their signification. This was the design of God in all the ordinances of worship belonging unto that covenant, namely, to typify, shadow, and represent the heaven]y, substantial things of the new covenant, or the Lord Christ and the work of his mediation. This the tabernacle, ark, altar, priests, and sacrifices did do; and it was their glory that so they did. However, compared with the substance in the new covenant, they have no glory.

15. They differ in the extent of their administration, according unto the will of God. The first was confined unto the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, and unto them especially in the land of Canaan, Deuteronomy 5:3, with some few proselytes that were joined unto them, excluding all others from the participation of the benefits of it. And hence it was, that whereas the personal ministry of our Savior himself, in preaching of the gospel, was to precede the introduction of the new covenant, it was confined unto the people of Israel, Matthew 15:24. And he was the “minister of the circumcision,” Romans 15:8. Such narrow bounds and limits had the administration of this covenant affixed unto it by the will and pleasure of God, Psalm 147:19, 20. But the administration of the new covenant is extended unto all nations under heaven; none being excluded, on the account of tongue, language, family, nation, or place of habitation. All have an equal interest in the rising Sun. The partition wall is broken down, and the gates of the new Jerusalem are set open unto all comers upon the gospel invitation. This is frequently taken notice of in the Scripture. See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 11:51, 52, 12:32; Acts 11:18, 17:30; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:11-16, 118 3:8-10; Colossians; 3:10, 11; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9. This is the grand charter of the poor wandering Gentiles. Having willfully fallen off from God, he was pleased, in his holiness and severity, to leave all our ancestors for many generations to serve and worship the devil. And the mystery of our recovery was “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:8-10. And although it was so foretold, so prophesied of, so promised under the old testament, yet, such was the pride, blindness, and obstinacy, of the greatest part of the church of the Jews, that its accomplishment was one great part of that stumbling-block whereat they fell; yea, the greatness and glory of this mystery was such, that the disciples of Christ themselves comprehended it not, until it was testified unto them by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, the great promise of the new covenant, upon some of those poor Gentiles, Acts 11:18.

16. **They differ in their efficacy; for the old covenant “made nothing perfect,”** it could effect none of the things it did represent, nor introduce that perfect or complete state which God had designed for the church. But this we have at large insisted on in our exposition of the foregoing chapter.

Lastly, **They differ in their duration: for the one was to be removed, and the other to abide for ever;** which must be declared on the ensuing verses.

It may be other things of an alike nature may be added unto these that we have mentioned, wherein the difference between the two covenants doth consist; but these instances are sufficient unto our purpose. For some, when they hear that the covenant of grace was always one and the same, of the same nature and efficacy under both testaments, —that the way of salvation by Christ was always one and the same, —are ready to think that there was no such great difference between their state and ours as is pretended. But we see that on this supposition, that covenant which God brought the people into at Sinai, and under the yoke whereof they were to abide until the new covenant was established, had all the disadvantages attending it which we have insisted on. And those who understand not how excellent and glorious those privileges are which are added unto the covenant of grace, as to the administration of it, by the introduction and establishment of the new covenant, are utterly unacquainted with the nature of spiritual and heavenly things.

There remaineth yet one thing more, which the **Socinians** give us occasion to speak unto from these words of the apostle, that the new covenant is “established on better promises.” For from hence they do conclude that there were no promises of life under the old testament; which, in the latitude of it, is a senseless and brutish opinion. And, —

1. The apostle in this place intends only those promises whereon the new testament was legally ratified, and reduced into the form of a covenant; which were, as he declares, the promises of especial pardoning mercy, and of the efficacy of grace in the renovation of our natures, But it is granted that the other covenant was legally established on promises which respected the land of Canaan. Wherefore it is granted, that as to the promises whereby the covenants were actually established, those of the new covenant were better than the other.

2. The old covenant had express promise of eternal life: “He that doeth these things shall live in them.” It was, indeed, with respect unto perfect obedience that it gave that promise; however that promise it had, which is all that at present we inquire after.

3. The institutions of worship which belonged unto that covenant, the whole ministry of the tabernacle, as representing heavenly things, had the nature of a promise in them; for they all directed the church to seek for life and salvation in and by Jesus Christ alone.

4. The question is not, What promises are given in the law itself, or the old covenant formally considered as such? but, What promises had they who lived under that covenant, and which were not disannulled by it? for we have proved sufficiently, that the addition of this covenant did not abolish or supersede the efficacy of any promise that God had before given unto the church. And to say that the first promise, and that given unto Abraham, confirmed with the oath of

God, were not promises of eternal life, is to overthrow the whole Bible, both Old Testament and New. And we may observe from the foregoing discourses, —

Obs. X. That although one state of the church hath had great advantages and privileges above another, yet no state hath had whereof to complain, whilst they observed the terms prescribed unto them.

—We have seen in how many things, and those most of them of the highest importance, the state of the church under the new covenant excels that under the old; yet was that in itself a state of unspeakable grace and privilege. For, —

1. **It was a state of near relation unto God, by virtue of a covenant.** And when all mankind had absolutely broken covenant with God by sin, to call any of them into a new covenant relation with himself, **was an act of sovereign grace and mercy.** Herein were they distinguished from the residue of mankind, whom God suffered to walk in their own ways, and winked at their ignorance, whilst they all perished in the pursuit of their foolish imaginations. This a great part of the Book of Deuteronomy is designed to impress a sense of upon the minds of the people. And it is summarily expressed by the psalmist, Psalm 147:19, 20; and by the prophet, “We are thine: thou never barest rule over them: thy name was not called upon by them,” Isaiah 63:19.

2. This covenant of God was in itself holy, just, and equal. For although there was in it an imposition of sundry things burdensome, they were such as God in his infinite wisdom saw necessary for that people, and such as they could not have been without. Hence on all occasions God refers it even unto themselves to judge whether his ways towards them were not equal, and their own unequal. And it was not only just, but attended with promises of unspeakable advantages above all other people whatever.

3. God dealing with them in the way of a covenant, whereunto the mutual consent of all parties covenanting is required, it was proposed unto them for their acceptance, and they did accordingly willingly receive it, Exodus 24, Deuteronomy 5; so as that they had not whereof to complain.

4. In that state of discipline wherein God was pleased to told them, they enjoyed the way of life and salvation in the promise; for, as we have showed at large, the promise was not disannulled by the introduction of this covenant. Wherefore, although God reserved a better and more complete state for the church under the new testament, having “ordained better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect;” yet was that other state in itself good and holy, and sufficient to bring all believers unto the enjoyment of God.

Obs. XI. The state of the gospel, or of the church under the new testament, being accompanied with the highest spiritual privileges and advantages that it is capable of in this world, two things do thence follow: —

1. **The great obligation that is on all believers unto holiness and fruitfulness in obedience, unto the glory of God.** We have herein the **utmost condescension of divine grace**, and the greatest effects of it that God will communicate on this side glory. That which all these things tend unto, that which God

requireth and expecteth upon them, is the **thankful and fruitful obedience of them that are made partakers of them**. And they who are not sensible of this obligation are strangers unto the things themselves, and are not able to discern spiritual things, because they are to be spiritually discerned.

2. The heinousness of their sin by whom this covenant is neglected or despised is hence abundantly manifest. This the apostle particularly asserts and insists upon, Hebrews 2:2, 3, 10:28, 29.

Notes on the difference between the Old and New Covenants by Thomas Watson:

Thomas Watson (A Body of Divinity, pg 155) states:

Why should God make a covenant with us?

It is out of indulgence, favour, and regard to us. A tyrant will not enter into a covenant with slaves, he will not show them such respect. God's entering into a covenant with us, to be our God, is a dignity he puts upon us. A covenant is *insigne honouris*, a note of distinction between God's people and heathens. 'I will establish my covenant with thee.' Ezek. 16: 60. When the Lord told Abraham that he would enter into a covenant with him, Abraham fell upon his face, as being amazed that the God of glory should bestow such a favour upon him. Gen 17: 2.

God makes a covenant with us, to tie us fast to him; as it is called in Ezekiel, the 'bond of the covenant.' God knows we have **slippery hearts**, therefore he will have a covenant to bind us. It is horrid impiety to go away from God after covenant. If one of the vestal nuns, who had vowed herself to religion, was deflowered, the Romans caused her to be burnt alive. It is perjury to depart from God after solemn covenant.

How does the covenant of grace differ from the first covenant made with Adam?

(I.) The terms of the first covenant were more strict and severe. For,

(1) The least failing would have made the covenant with Adam null and void, but many failings do not annul the covenant of grace. I grant, the least sin is a trespass upon the covenant, but it does not make it null and void. There may be many failings in the conjugal relation, but every failing does not break the marriage bond. It would be sad, if, as oft as we break covenant with God he should break covenant with us; but God will not take advantage of every failing, but in 'anger remember mercy.'

(2) The first covenant being broken, allowed the sinner no remedy, all doors of hope were shut; but the new covenant allows the sinner a remedy: it leaves room for repentance, and provides a mediator. 'Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.' Heb 12: 24.

Properties of a Covenant and Testament

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Definitions and implications thereof clearly point to particularity in redemption.

The benefits of the new testament depends upon the death and resurrections of the testator, Jesus Christ, after which he bequeaths his goods, the good things procured by his death, faith, grace and glory hereafter, to his elect, the church. It has to be this way if it be a testament, where an inheritance is involved. An inheritance is not open ended but designed for those for who named in the covenant. Remember a covenant is no covenant without distinct persons involved on both sides that are to be reconciled, hence, those who receive the inheritance are those who were chosen in Him, actual individuals, the elect (*the election hath obtained it - -om11:7*). So that this covenant or testament made by God and those things in it to be bestowed or bequeathed to the beneficiaries are not just things made available but will actually be bestowed infallibly to those who God chose - --yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure:" "Sam23:5 . In this way, salvation is *sure* to the elect not just a possibility, depending upon the free will of man whether or not he will chose Christ as the Arminians suppose. It is an inconsistency to say that the effect (salvation or receiving Christ) comes before the cause (God's disposing of virtue, the communication of his glory) or that man's act of believing creates its own object.

Therefore, God had a purpose in mind to infallibly bring to pass his will in glorifying himself in the salvation of his church by his free sovereign grace without any antecedent merit or acts in the creature to include believing or faith or any other work (Romans 9:11..*that election might stand*) - Arminian doctrine says that one must believe to warrant the gift of the promises. But this is a mistake, for the very ability of believing is the very thing that is bestowed on one who God intends to convert - --o the Arminians have it all backwards; they believe that we have it in our power to believe before we receive the gift of believing, i.e., faith! So, I added this real long discourse on the covenant to give you an appreciation of this sovereign act of God infinite wisdom of the way of salvation, so that in the end you will know the things that are revealed to us, these mysteries, because they are invaluable to our growing in faith and grace, being conformed to his image and that we might walk worthy of the Lord, Col. 1:9, all of which will lead you to react as Paul did in Romans 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Hebrews 8:6 pg52-78 (p63-95 online) by John Owen

Ver. 6. —But now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

3. The general way whereby our Lord Christ came unto this ministry is expressed: Τετευχε, —"He obtained it." Τυχαῖως either "*sorte contingo*," "to have a lot or portion;" or to have anything befall a man, as it were by accident; or "*assequor*," "*obtineo*," to "attain" or "obtain" anything which before we had not. But the apostle designeth not to express in this word the especial call of Christ, or the

particular way whereby he came unto his ministry, but only in general that he had it, and was possessed of it, in the appointed season, which before he had not. The way whereby he entered on the whole office and work of his mediation he expresseth by *χεκληρονομηχε*, Hebrews 1:4, — he had it by “inheritance;” that is, by free grant and perpetual donation, made unto him as the Son. See the exposition on that place.

There were two things that concurred unto his obtaining this ministry: (1.) **The eternal purpose and counsel of God designing him thereunto; an act of the divine will accompanied with infinite wisdom, love, and power.** [This the Arminian do not like; they do not like the idea of God's decree that would overrule man's liberty or freedom, his so called self-directed will.] (2.) **The actual call of God,** whereunto many things did concur, especially his unction with the Spirit above measure for the **holy discharge of his whole office. Thus did he obtain this ministry, and not by any legal constitution, succession, or carnal rite, as did the priests of old.** And we may see that, —

Obs. V. The exaltation of the human nature of Christ into the office of this glorious ministry depended solely on the sovereign wisdom, grace, and love of God. —When the human nature of Christ was united unto the divine, it became, in the person of the Son of God, meet and capable **to make satisfaction for the sins of the church, and to procure righteousness and life eternal for all that do believe.** But it did not merit that union, nor could do so. For as it was utterly impossible that any created nature, **by any act of its own,** should merit the hypostatical union, so it was granted unto the human nature of Christ antecedently unto any act of its own in way of obedience unto God; for it was united unto the person of the Son by virtue of that union. Wherefore, antecedently unto it, it could merit nothing. Hence its whole exaltation, and the ministry that was discharged therein, depended solely on the sovereign wisdom and pleasure of God. **And in this election and designation of the human nature of Christ unto grace and glory, we may see the pattern and example of our own.** For if it was not upon the consideration or foresight of the obedience of the human nature of Christ that it was predestinated and chosen unto the grace of the hypostatical union, with the ministry and glory which depended thereon, but of the mere sovereign grace of God; how much less could a foresight of anything in us be the cause why God should choose us in him before the foundation of the world unto grace and glory!

4. The quality of this ministry, thus obtained, as unto a comparative excellency, is also expressed: “More excellent.” The word is used only in this epistle in this sense, Hebrews 1:4, and in this place. The original word denotes only a difference from other things; but in the comparative degree, as here used, it signifies a difference with a preference, or a comparative excellency. The ministry of the Levitical priests, was good and useful in its time and season; this of our Lord Jesus Christ so differed from it as to be better than it, and more excellent. And, —

5. There is added hereunto the degree of this pre-eminence, so far as it is intended in this place and the present argument, in the word *οσω* — “by how much.” ‘So much more excellent, by how much.’ The excellency of his ministry above that of the Levitical priests, bears proportion with the excellency of the covenant whereof he was the mediator above the old covenant wherein they administered; whereof afterwards.

So have we explained the apostle's assertion, concerning the excellency of the ministry of Christ. And herewith he closes the discourse which he had so long engaged in, about the pre-eminence of Christ in his office above the high priests of old. And indeed, this being the very hinge whereon his whole controversy with the Jews did depend, he could not give it too much evidence, nor too full a confirmation. And as unto what concerns ourselves at present, we are taught thereby, that, —

Obs. VI. It is our duty and our safety to acquiesce universally and absolutely in the ministry of Jesus Christ. — That which he was so designed unto, in the **infinite wisdom and grace of God**; that which he was so furnished **for the discharge of by the communication of the Spirit unto him in all fullness**; that which all other priesthoods were removed to make way for, must **needs be sufficient and effectual for all the ends unto which it is designed**. It may be said, 'This is that which all men do; all that are called Christians do fully acquiesce in the ministry of Jesus Christ.' But if it be so, why do we hear the bleating of another sort of cattle? What mean those other priests, and reiterated sacrifices, which make up the worship of the church of Rome? If they rest in the ministry of Christ, why do they appoint one of their own to do the same things that he hath done, — namely, to offer sacrifice unto God ?

Secondly, The proof of this assertion lies in the latter part of these words; “By how much he is the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises” The words are so disposed, that some think the apostle intends now to prove the excellency of the covenant from the excellency of his ministry therein. But the other sense is more suited unto the scope of the place, and the nature of the argument which the apostle presseth the Hebrews withal. For on supposition that there was indeed another, and that a “better covenant,” to be introduced and established, than that which the Levitical priests served in, — which they could not deny, — it plainly follows, that he on whose ministry the dispensation of that covenant did depend must of necessity be “more excellent” in that ministry than they who appertained unto that covenant which was to be abolished. However, it may be granted that these things do mutually testify unto and illustrate one another. Such as the priest is, such is the covenant; such as the covenant is in dignity, such is the priest also.

In the words there are three things observable: — 1. What is in general ascribed unto Christ, declaring the nature of his ministry; he was a “mediator:” 2. The determination of his **mediatory office** unto the new covenant; “of a better covenant:” 3. The proof or demonstration of the **nature of this covenant as unto its excellency**, it was “established on better promises:” —

1. His office is that of a mediator, — one that interposed between God and man, for the doing of all those things whereby a covenant might be established between them, and made effectual **Schlichtingius** on the place gives this description of a mediator: “Mediatorem foederis esse nihil aliud est, quam Dei esse interpretem, et internuntium in foedere cum hominibus pangendo; per quem scilicet et Deus voluntatem suam hominibus declarer, et illi vicissim divinae voluntatis notitia instructi ad Deum accedant, cumque eo reconciliati, pacem in posterum. And Grotius speaks much unto the same purpose.

[Google Translate from Latin: "The Mediator of the covenant, to be nothing else than to be an interpreter of God, and a go-between in league with the men pangendo; the will of God to men, and whereby he is declarer, and equipped for the knowledge of God, and they look at the approach of the

divine will, and live with him, being reconciled, to cultivate peace in the future,"]” My input - Socinians do not believe in the imputation of righteousness to the elect hence they only believe that Jesus just points the way and disregards the atoning sacrifice of Christ which is the primary act of his priestly duty as High Priest. Also, Arminians do not believe in the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity which has a direct bearing on the doctrine of Original Sin, i.e., they don't believe it; they believe that we have some virtue in us after the fall, that we can come to God by our self-directed wills or can resist God's grace; either way.

But this description of a mediator is wholly applicable unto Moses, and suited unto his office in giving of the law. See Exodus 20:19; Deuteronomy 5:27, 28. What is said by them doth indeed immediately belong unto the mediatory office of Christ, but it is not confined thereunto; yea, it is exclusive of the principal parts of his mediation. And whereas there is nothing in it but what belongs unto the prophetic office of Christ, —which the apostle here doth not principally intend, —it is most improperly applied as a description of such a mediator as he doth intend. And therefore, when he comes afterwards to declare in particular what belonged unto such a mediator of the covenant as he designed, he expressly placeth it in his “death for the redemption of transgressions,” Hebrews 9:15; affirming that” for that cause he was a mediator.” But hereof there is nothing at all in the description they give us of this office. But this the apostle doth in his, elsewhere, 1 Timothy 2:5, 6, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.” The principal part of his mediation consisted in the “giving himself a ransom,” or a price of redemption for the whole church. Wherefore this description of a mediator of the new testament is feigned only, to exclude his satisfaction, or his offering himself unto God in his death and blood shedding, with the atonement made thereby.

The Lord Christ, then, in his ministry, is called μεσσιτης, the “mediator” of the covenant, in the same sense as he is called *ergguov*, the “surety;” whereof see the exposition on Hebrews 7:22. He is, in the new covenant, the mediator, the surety, the priest, the sacrifice, all in his own person. The ignorance and want of a due consideration hereof, are the great evidence of the degeneracy of Christian religion.

Whereas this is the first general notion of the office of Christ, that which compriseth the whole ministry committed unto him, and containeth in itself the especial offices of king, priest, and prophet, whereby he dischargeth his mediation, some things must be mentioned that are declarative of its nature and use. And we may unto this purpose observe, —

(1.) That unto the office of a mediator it is required that there be different persons concerned in the covenant, and that by their own wills; as it must be in every compact, of what sort soever. So saith our apostle, “**A mediator is not of one, but God is one,**” Galatians 3:20; that is, if there were none but God concerned in this matter, as it is in an absolute promise or sovereign precept, there would be no need of, no place for a mediator, such a mediator as Christ is. Wherefore our consent in and unto the covenant is required in the very notion of a mediator. Jonathan Edwards noted similarly, meaning that God is one side of the transaction.

(2.) That the persons entering into covenant be in such a state and condition as that it is no way convenient or morally possible that they should treat immediately with each other as to the ends of

the covenant; for if they are so, a mediator to go between is altogether needless. So was it in the original covenant with Adam, which had no mediator. But in the giving of the law, which was to be a covenant between God and the people, they found themselves utterly insufficient for an immediate treaty with God, and therefore desired that they might have an internuncius to go between God and them, to bring his proposals, and carry back their consent, Deuteronomy 5:23-27. And this is the voice of all men really convinced of the holiness of God, and of their own condition. Such is the state between God and sinners. The law and the curse of it did so interpose between them, that they could not enter into any immediate treaty with God, Psalm 5:3-5. This made a mediator necessary, that the new covenant might be established; whereof we shall speak afterwards.

(3.) **That he who is this mediator be accepted, trusted, and rested in on both sides, or the parties mutually entering into covenant. An absolute trust must be reposed in him, so that each party may be everlastingly obliged in what he undertaketh on their behalf; and such as admit not of his terms, can have no benefit by, no interest in the covenant.** So was it with the Lord Christ in this matter. On the part of God, he reposed the whole trust of all the concernments of the covenant in him, and absolutely rested therein. "Behold," saith he of him, "my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," or is "well pleased," — εν ω ευσοχησα, Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 3:17. When he undertook this office, and said, "**Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,**" the soul of God rested in him, Exodus 23:21; John 5:20-22. And to him he gives an account at last of his discharge of this thing, John 17:4. And on our part, unless we resign ourselves absolutely unto a universal trust in him and reliance on him, and unless we accept of all the terms of the covenant as by him proposed, and engage to stand unto all that he hath undertaken on our behalf, we can have neither share nor interest in this matter. [hence, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Ps110:3*]

(4.) A mediator must be a middle person between both parties entering into covenant; and if they be of different natures, a perfect, complete mediator ought to partake of each of their natures in the same person. The necessity hereof, and the glorious wisdom of God herein, I have elsewhere at large demonstrated, and shall not therefore here again insist upon it.

(5.) **A mediator must be one who voluntarily and of his own accord undertaketh the work of mediation.** This is required of everyone who will effectually mediate between any persons at variance, to bring them unto an agreement on equal terms. So it was required that the will and consent of Christ should concur in his susception of this office; and that they did so, himself expressly testifieth, **Hebrews 10:5-10**. It is true, he was designed and appointed by the Father unto this office; whence he is called his "servant," and constantly witnesseth of himself, that he came to do the will and commandment of him that sent him: but he had that to do in the discharge of this office, which could not, according unto any rule of divine righteousness, be imposed on him without his own voluntary consent. **And this was the ground of the eternal compact that was between the Father and the Son, with respect unto his mediation; which I have elsewhere explained.** And the testification of his own will, grace, and love, in the susception of this office, is a principal motive unto that faith and trust which the church placeth in him, as the mediator between God and them. Upon this his voluntary undertaking doth the soul of God rest in him, and he repositeth the whole trust in him of accomplishing his will and pleasure, or the design of his love and grace in this covenant, Isaiah 53:10-12. And the faith of the church, whereon salvation doth depend, must have love unto his person inseparably

accompanying it. Love unto Christ is no less necessary unto salvation, than faith in him. And as faith is resolved into the sovereign wisdom and grace of God in sending him, and his own ability to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him; so love ariseth from the consideration of his own love and grace in his voluntary undertaking of this office, and the discharge of it.

(6.) In this voluntary undertaking to be a mediator, two things were required: —

[1.] **That he should remove and take out of the way whatever kept the covenanters at a distance, or was a cause of enmity between them. For it is supposed that such an enmity there was, or there had been no need of a mediator.** Therefore in the covenant made with Adam, there having been no variance between God and man, nor any distance but what necessarily ensued from the distinct natures of the Creator and a creature, there was no mediator. **But the design of this covenant was to make reconciliation and peace. Hereon, therefore, depended the necessity of satisfaction, redemption, and the making of atonement, by sacrifice.** For man having sinned and apostatized from the rule of God, making himself thereby obnoxious unto his wrath, according unto the eternal rule of righteousness, and in particular unto the curse of the law, there could be no new peace and agreement made with God unless due satisfaction were made for these things. For although God was willing, in infinite love, grace, and mercy, to enter into a new covenant with fallen man, yet would he not do it unto the prejudice of his righteousness, the dishonor of his rule, and the contempt of his law. Wherefore none could undertake to be a mediator of this covenant, but he that was able to satisfy the justice of God, glorify his government, and fulfill the law. And this could be done by none but him, concerning whom it might be said that “God purchased his church with his own blood.

[2.] **That he should procure and purchase, in a way suited unto the glory of God, the actual communication of all the good things prepared and proposed in this covenant; that is, grace and glory, with all that belong unto them, for them and on their behalf whose surety he was.** And this is the foundation of the merit of Christ, and of the grant of all good things unto us for his sake.

(7.) It is required of this mediator, as such, that he give assurance to and undertake for the parties mutually concerned, as to the accomplishment of the terms of the covenant, undertaking on each hand for them: —

[1.] On the part of God towards men, that they shall have peace and acceptance with him, in the sure accomplishment of all the promises of the covenant. This he doth only declaratively, in the doctrine of the gospel, and in the institution of the ordinances of evangelical worship. For he was not a surety for God, nor did God need any, having confirmed his promise with an oath, swearing by himself, because he had no greater to swear by.

[2.] On our part, he undertakes unto God for our acceptance of the terms of the covenant, and our accomplishment of them, **by his enabling us thereunto.**

These things, among others, were necessary unto a full and complete mediator of the new covenant, such as Christ was. And, —

Obs. VII. The provision of this mediator between God and man was an effect of infinite wisdom and grace; yea, it was the greatest and most glorious external effect of them that ever they did produce, or ever will do in this world. The creation of all things at first out of nothing was a glorious effect of infinite wisdom and power; but when the glory of that design was eclipsed by the entrance of sin, this provision of a mediator, — one whereby all things were restored and retrieved into a condition of bringing more glory unto God, and securing forever the blessed estate of them whose mediator he is, — is accompanied with more evidences of the divine excellencies than that was. See Ephesians 1:10.

2. Two things are added in the description of this mediator: (1.) That he was a mediator of a covenant; (2.) That this covenant was better than another which respect is had unto, whereof he was not the mediator: —

(1.) He was the mediator of a “covenant.” And two things are supposed herein: —

[1.] That there was a covenant made or prepared between God and man; that is, it was so far made, **as that God who made it had prepared the terms of it in a sovereign act of wisdom and grace.** The preparation of the covenant, consisting in the will and purpose of God graciously to bestow on all men the good things which are contained in it, all things belonging unto grace and glory, as also to make way for the obedience which he required herein, is supposed unto the constitution of this covenant.

[2.] **That there was need of a mediator, that this covenant might be effectual unto its proper ends, of the glory of God and the obedience of mankind, with their reward.** This was not necessary from the nature of a covenant in general; for a covenant may be made and entered into between different parties without any mediator, merely on the equity of the terms of it. Nor was it so from the nature of a covenant between God and man, as man was at first created of God; for the first covenant between them was immediate, without the interposition of a mediator. But it became necessary from the state and condition of them with whom this covenant was made, and the especial nature of this covenant. This the apostle declares, **Romans 8:3**, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” **The law was the moral instrument or rule of the covenant that was made immediately between God and man: but it could not continue to be so after the entrance of sin; that is, so as that God might be glorified thereby, in the obedience and reward of men.** Wherefore he “sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh;” that is, provided a mediator for a new covenant. The persons with whom this covenant was to be made being all of them sinners, and apostatized from God, it became not the holiness or righteousness of God to treat immediately with them anymore. Nor would it have answered his holy ends so to have done. For if when they were in a condition of uprightness and integrity, they kept not the terms of that covenant which was made immediately with them, without a mediator, although they were holy, just, good, and equal; how much less could any such thing be expected from them in their depraved condition of apostasy from God and enmity against him! **It therefore became not the wisdom of God to enter anew into covenant with mankind, without security that the terms of the covenant should be accepted, and the grace of it made effectual.** This we could not give; yea, we gave all evidences possible unto the contrary, in that “God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually,” Genesis 6:5. Wherefore it was necessary there should be a mediator, to be the surety of this covenant. **Again, the covenant itself was so prepared, in the counsel, wisdom, and grace of God, as that the principal, yea, indeed, all the benefits of it, were to**

depend on what was to be done by a mediator, and could not otherwise be effected. [i.e., not dependent upon man's fickle will] Such were satisfaction for sin, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; which are the foundation of this covenant.

(2.) To proceed with the text; this covenant, whereof the Lord Christ is the mediator, is said to be a "better covenant." Wherefore it is supposed that there was another covenant, whereof the Lord Christ was not the mediator. And in the following verses there are two covenants, a first and a latter, an old and a new, compared together. We must therefore consider what was that other covenant, than which this is said to be better; for upon the determination thereof depends the right understanding of the whole ensuing discourse of the apostle. And because this is a subject wrapped up in much obscurity, and attended with many difficulties, it will be necessary that we use the best of our diligence, both in the investigation of the truth and in the declaration of it, so as that it may be distinctly apprehended. And I shall first explain the text, and then speak to the difficulties which arise from it: —

[1.] There was an original covenant made with Adam, and all mankind in him. The rule of obedience and reward that was between God and him was not expressly called a covenant, but it contained the express nature of a covenant; for it was the agreement of God and man concerning obedience and disobedience, rewards and punishments. Where there is a law concerning these things, and an agreement upon it by all parties concerned, there is a formal covenant. Wherefore it may be considered two ways: —

1st: As it was a law only; so it proceeded from, and was a consequent of the nature of God and man, with their mutual relation unto one another. God being considered as the creator, governor, and benefactor of man; and man as an intellectual creature, capable of moral obedience; this law was necessary, and is eternally indispensable.

2dly. As it was a covenant; and this depended on the will and pleasure of God. I will not dispute whether God might have given a law unto men that should have had nothing in it of a covenant, properly so called; as is the **law of creation** unto all other creatures, which hath no rewards nor punishments annexed unto it. Yet this God calls a covenant also, inasmuch as it is an effect of his purpose, his unalterable will and pleasure, Jeremiah 33:20, 21. But that this law of our obedience should be a formal, complete covenant, there were moreover some things required on the part of God, and some also on the part of man. **Two things were required on the part of God to complete this covenant, or he did so complete it by two things:** —

(1st^{ly}) By annexing unto it promises and threatenings of reward and punishment; the first of grace, the other of justice. (2dly.) The expression of these promises and threatenings in external signs; the first in the tree of life, the latter in that of the knowledge of good and evil. By these did God establish the original law of creation as a covenant, gave it the nature of a covenant. On the part of man, it was required that he accept of this law as the rule of the covenant which God made with him. And this he did two ways: —

[1st¹] **By the innate principles of light and obedience concreated with his nature.** By these he absolutely and universally assented unto the law, as proposed with promises and threatenings, as holy, just, good, —what was meet for God to require, what was equal and good unto himself.

[2dly.] **By his acceptance of the commands concerning** the tree of life, and that of the knowledge of good and evil, as the signs and pledges of this covenant. So was it established as a covenant between God and man, without the interposition of any mediator.

This is the covenant of works, absolutely the old, or first covenant that God made with men. But this is not the covenant here intended; for, —

1st: The covenant called afterwards “the first,” was *σλαθηκη* [a will - -y insert], a “**testament.**” So it is here called. It was such a covenant as was a **testament** also. Now there can be no testament, but there must be death for the confirmation of it, Hebrews 9:16. But in the making of the covenant with Adam, there was not the death of anything, whence it might be called a testament. But there was the death of beasts in sacrifice in the confirmation of the covenant at Sinai, as we shall see afterwards. And it must be observed, that although I use the name of a “covenant,” as we have rendered the word *σλαθηκη*, because the true signification of that word will more properly occur unto us in another place, yet I do not understand thereby a covenant properly and strictly so called, but such a one as hath the nature of a testament also, wherein the good things of him that makes it are bequeathed unto them for whom they are designed. Neither the word used constantly by the apostle in this argument, nor the design of his discourse, will admit of any other covenant to be understood in this place. Whereas, therefore, the first covenant made with Adam was in no sense a testament also, it cannot be here intended.

2dly. That first covenant made with Adam, had, as unto any benefit to be expected from it, with respect unto acceptation with God, life, and salvation, ceased long before, even at the entrance of sin. **It was not abolished or abrogated by any act of God, as a law, but only was made weak and insufficient unto its first end, as a covenant.** God had provided a way for the salvation of sinners, declared in the first promise. **When this is actually embraced, that first covenant ceaseth towards them, as unto its curse, in all its concerns as a covenant, and obligation unto sinless obedience as the condition of life: because both of them are answered by the mediator of the new covenant.** **But as unto all those who receive not the grace tendered in the promise, it doth remain in full force and efficacy, not as a covenant, but as a law; and that because neither the obedience it requires nor the curse which it threatens is answered.** Hence, if any man believeth not, “the wrath of God abideth on him.” For its commands and curse depending on the necessary relation between God and man, with the righteousness of God as the supreme governor of mankind, they must be answered and fulfilled. Wherefore it was never abrogated formally. But as all unbelievers are still obliged by it, and unto it must stand or fall, so it is perfectly fulfilled in all believers, —not in their own persons, but in the person of their surety. “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” Romans 8:3, 4. But as a covenant, obliging unto personal, perfect, sinless obedience, as the condition of life, to be performed by themselves, so it ceased to be, long before the introduction of the new covenant which the apostle

speaks of, that was promised “in the latter days.” **But the other covenant here spoken of was not removed or taken away, until this new covenant was actually established.**

3dly. The church of Israel was never absolutely under the power of that covenant as a covenant of life; for from the days of Abraham, the promise was given unto them and their seed. And the apostle proves that no law could afterwards be given, or covenant made, that should disannul that promise, Galatians 3:17. But had they been brought under the old covenant of works, it would have disannulled the promise; for that covenant and the promise are diametrically opposite. And moreover, if they were under that covenant, they were all under the curse, and so perished eternally: which is openly false; for it is testified of them that they pleased God by faith, and so were saved. But it is evident that the covenant intended was a covenant wherein the church of Israel walked with God, until such time as this better covenant was **solemnly** introduced. This is plainly declared in the ensuing context, especially in the close of the chapter, where, speaking of this former covenant, he says, it was “become old,” and so “ready to disappear.” Wherefore it is not the covenant of works made with Adam that is intended, when this other is said to be a “better covenant.”

[2.] There were other **federal transactions** between God and the church before the giving of the law on mount Sinai. Two of them there were into which all the rest were resolved: —

1st: The first promise, given unto our first parents immediately after the fall. This had in it the nature of a covenant, grounded on a promise of grace, and requiring obedience in all that received the promise.

2dly. The promise given and sworn unto Abraham, which is expressly called the covenant of God, and had the whole nature of a covenant in it, with a solemn outward seal appointed for its confirmation and establishment. Hereof we have treated at large on the sixth chapter.

Neither of these, nor any transaction between God and man that may be reduced unto them, as explanations, renovations, or confirmations of them, is the “first covenant” here intended. For they are not only consistent with the “new covenant,” so as that there was no necessity to remove them out of the way for its introduction, but did indeed contain in them the essence and nature of it, and so were confirmed therein. Hence the Lord Christ himself is said to be “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,” Romans 15:8. As he was the mediator of the new covenant, he was so far from taking off from, or abolishing those promises, that it belonged unto his office to confirm them. Wherefore, —

[3.]. The other covenant or testament here supposed, whereunto that whereof the Lord Christ was the mediator is preferred, is none other but that which God made with the people of Israel on mount Sinai. So it is expressly affirmed, verse 9: “The covenant which I made with your fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” This was that covenant which had all the institutions of worship annexed unto it, Hebrews 9:1-3; whereof we must treat afterwards more at large. With respect hereunto it is that the Lord Christ is said to be the “mediator of a better covenant;” that is, of another distinct from it, and more excellent.

It remains unto the exposition of the words, that we inquire what was this covenant, whereof our Lord Christ was the mediator, and what is here affirmed of it.

This can be no other in general but that which we call “the covenant of grace.” And it is so called in opposition unto that of “works,” which was made with us in Adam; for these two, grace and works, do divide the ways of our relation unto God, being diametrically opposite, and every way inconsistent, Romans 11:6. Of this covenant the Lord Christ was the mediator from the foundation of the world, namely, from the giving of the first promise, Revelation 13:8; for it was given on his interposition, and all the benefits of it depended on his future actual mediation. But here ariseth the first difficulty of the context, and that in two things; for,

[1.] If this covenant of grace was made from the beginning, and if the LORD Christ was the mediator of it from the first, then where is the privilege of the gospel-state in opposition unto the law, by virtue of this covenant, seeing that under the law also the Lord Christ was the mediator of that covenant, which was from the beginning ?

[2.] If it be the covenant of grace which is intended, and that be opposed unto the covenant of works made with Adam, then the other covenant must be that covenant of works so made with Adam, which we have before disproved.

The answer hereunto is in the word here used by the apostle concerning this new covenant: *νενομοθετηται*, whose meaning we must inquire into. I say, therefore, that the apostle doth not here consider the new covenant absolutely, and as it was virtually administered from the foundation of the world, in the way of a promise; for as such it was consistent with that covenant made with the people in Sinai. And the apostle proves expressly, that the renovation of it made unto Abraham was no way abrogated by the giving of the law, Galatians 3:17. There was no interruption of its administration made by the introduction of the law. But he treats of such an establishment of the new covenant as wherewith the old covenant made at Sinai was absolutely inconsistent, and which was therefore to be removed out of the way. Wherefore he considers it here as it was actually completed, so as to bring along with it all the ordinances of worship which are proper unto it, the dispensation of the Spirit in them, and all the spiritual privileges wherewith they are accompanied. It is now so brought in as to become the entire rule of the church’s faith, obedience, and worship, in all things.

This is the meaning of the word *νενομοθετηται*: “established,” say we; but it is, “reduced into a fixed state of a law or ordinance.” All the obedience required in it, all the worship appointed by it, all the privileges exhibited in it, and the grace administered with them, are all given for a statute, law, and ordinance unto the church. **That which before lay hid in promises, in many things obscure, the principal mysteries of it being a secret hid in God himself, was now brought to light; and that covenant which had invisibly, in the way of a promise, put forth its efficacy under types and shadows, was now solemnly sealed, ratified, and confirmed, in the death and resurrection of Christ.** It had before the confirmation of a promise, which is an oath; it had now the confirmation of a covenant, which is blood. That which before had no visible, outward worship, proper and peculiar unto it, is now made the only rule and instrument of worship unto the whole church, nothing being to be admitted therein but what belongs unto it, and is appointed by it. This the apostle intends by *νενομοθετηται*, the “legal

establishment” of the new covenant, with all the ordinances of its worship. Hereon the other covenant was disannulled and removed; and not only the covenant itself, but all that system of sacred worship whereby it was administered. This was not done by the making of the covenant at first; yea, all this was superinduced into the covenant as given out in a promise, and was consistent therewith. When the new covenant was given out only in the way of a promise, it did not introduce a worship and privileges expressive of it. Wherefore it was consistent with a form of worship, rites and ceremonies, and those composed into a yoke of bondage which belonged not unto it. And as these, being added after its giving, did not overthrow its nature as a promise, so they were inconsistent with it when it was completed as a covenant; for then all the worship of the church was to proceed from it, and to be conformed unto it. Then it was established. Hence it follows, in answer unto the second difficulty, that as a promise, it was opposed unto the covenant of works; as a covenant, it was opposed unto that of Sinai. This legalizing or authoritative establishment of the new covenant, and the worship thereunto belonging, did effect this alteration.

3. In the last place, the apostle tells us whereon this establishment was made; and that is $\epsilon\pi\iota$ $\chi\rho\epsilon\upsilon\pi\tau\omicron\sigma\iota\nu$ $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma$, —“on better promises.” For the better understanding hereof we must consider somewhat of the original and use of divine promises in our relation unto God. And we may observe, —

(1.) That **every covenant between God and man must be founded on and resolved into “promises.”** Hence essentially a promise and a covenant are all one; and God calls an absolute promise, founded on an absolute decree, his covenant, Genesis 9:11. And his purpose for the continuation of the course of nature unto the end of the world, he calls his covenant with day and night, Jeremiah 33:20. **The being and essence of a divine covenant lies in the promise.** Hence are they called “**the covenants of promise,**” Ephesians 2:12; —such as are founded on and consist in promises. And it is necessary that so it should be. For, —

[1.] The nature of God who maketh these covenants requireth that so it should be. **It becometh his greatness and goodness, in all his voluntary transactions with his creatures, to propose that unto them wherein their advantage, their happiness and blessedness, doth consist.** We inquire not how God may deal with his creatures as such; what he may absolutely require of them, on the account of his own being, his absolute essential excellencies, with their universal dependence on him. **Who can express or limit the sovereignty of God over his creatures?** All the disputes about it are fond. We have no measures of what is infinite. May he not do with his own what he pleaseth? Are we not in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter? And whether he make or mar a vessel, who shall say unto him, What doest thou? He giveth no account of his matters. But upon supposition that he will condescend to enter into covenant with his creatures, and to come to agreement with them according unto the terms of it, it becometh his greatness and goodness to give them promises as the foundation of it, wherein he proposeth unto them the things wherein their blessedness and reward do consist.

For, 1st: Herein he proposeth himself unto them as the **eternal spring and fountain of all power and goodness.** Had he treated with us merely by a law, he had therein only revealed his sovereign authority and holiness; the one in giving of the law, the other in the nature of it. But in promises he revealeth himself as the eternal spring of goodness and power; for the matter of all promises is somewhat that is good; **and the communication of it depends on sovereign power.** That God should so declare himself in

his covenant, was absolutely necessary to direct and encourage the obedience of the covenanters; and he did so accordingly, Genesis 15:1, 17:1, 2. 2dly. Hereby he reserves the glory of the whole unto himself. For although the terms of agreement which he proposeth between himself and us be in their own nature “holy, just, and good,” —which sets forth his praise and glory, —**yet if there were not something on his part which hath no antecedent respect unto any goodness, obedience, or desert in us, we should have wherein to glory in ourselves; which is inconsistent with the glory of God. But the matter of those promises wherein the covenant is founded is free, undeserved, and without respect unto any thing in us whereby it may in any sense be procured.** And so in the first covenant, which was given in a form of law, attended with a penal sanction, yet the foundation of it was in a promise of a free and undeserved reward, even of the eternal enjoyment of God: which no goodness or obedience in the creature could possibly merit the attainment of. So that if a man should by virtue of any covenant be justified by works, though he might have whereof to glory before men, yet could he not glory before God, as the apostle declares, Romans 4:2; and that because the reward proposed in the promise doth infinitely exceed the obedience performed.

[2.] It was also necessary on our part that every divine covenant should be founded and established on promises; for there is no state wherein we may be taken into covenant with God, but it is supposed we are not yet arrived at that perfection and blessedness whereof our nature is capable, and which we cannot but desire. And therefore when we come to heaven, and the full enjoyment of God, there shall be no use of any covenant any more, seeing we shall be in eternal rest, in the enjoyment of all the blessedness whereof our nature is capable, and shall immutably adhere unto God without any further expectation. But whilst we are in the way, we have still somewhat, yea principal parts of our blessedness, to desire, expect, and believe. So in the state of innocency, though it had all the perfection which a state of obedience according unto a law was capable of, yet did not the blessedness of eternal rest, for which we were made, consist therein. Now, whilst it is thus with us, we cannot but be desiring and looking out after that full and complete happiness, which our nature cannot come to rest without. **This, therefore, renders it necessary that there should be a promise of it given as the foundation of the covenant; without which we should want our principal encouragement unto obedience.** And much more must it be so in the state of sin and apostasy from God; for we are now not only most remote from our utmost happiness, but involved in a condition of misery, without a deliverance from which we cannot be any ways induced to give ourselves up unto covenant obedience. Wherefore, unless we are prevented in the covenant with promises of deliverance from our present state, and the enjoyment of future blessedness, no covenant could be of use or advantage unto us.

[3.] It is necessary from the nature of a covenant. For every covenant that is proposed unto men, and accepted by them, **requires somewhat to be performed on their part, otherwise it is no covenant;** but where anything is required of them that accept of the covenant, or to whom it is proposed, it doth suppose that somewhat be promised on the behalf of them by whom the covenant is proposed, as the foundation of its acceptance, and the reason of the duties required in it.

All this appears most evidently in the covenant of grace, which is here said to be “**established on promises;**” and that on two accounts. For, —

[1.] At the same time that much is required of us in the way of duty and obedience, we are told in the Scripture, and find it by experience, that of ourselves we can do nothing. **Wherefore, unless the precept of the covenant be founded in a promise of giving grace and spiritual strength unto us, whereby we may be enabled to perform those duties, the covenant can be of no benefit or advantage unto us.** And the want of this one consideration, that every covenant is founded in promises, and that the promises give life unto the precepts of it, hath perverted the minds of many to suppose an ability in ourselves of yielding obedience unto those precepts, without grace antecedently received to enable us thereunto; which overthrows the nature of the new covenant.

[2.] As was observed, we are all actually guilty of sin before this covenant was made with us. Wherefore unless there be a promise given of the pardon of sin, it is to no purpose to propose any new covenant terms unto us. For “the wages of sin is death;” and we having sinned must die, 82 whatever we do afterwards, unless our sins be pardoned. This, therefore, must be proposed unto us as the foundation of the covenant, or it will be of none effect. And herein lies the great difference between the promises of the covenant of works and those of the covenant of grace. The first were only concerning things future; eternal life and blessedness upon the accomplishment of perfect obedience. Promises of present mercy and pardon it stood in need of none, it was not capable of. Nor had it any promises of giving more grace, or supplies of it; but man was wholly left unto what he had at first received. Hence the covenant was broken. But in the covenant of grace all things are founded in promises of present mercy, and continual supplies of grace, as well as of future blessedness. Hence it comes to be “ordered in all things, and sure.”

And this is the first thing that was to be declared, namely, that every divine covenant is established on promises.

(2.) These promises are said to be “**better promises.**” The other covenant had its promises peculiar unto it, with respect whereunto this is said to be “established on better promises.” It was, indeed, principally represented under a system of precepts, and those almost innumerable; but it had its promises also, into the nature whereof we shall immediately inquire. With respect, therefore, unto them is the new covenant, whereof the Lord Christ is the mediator, said to be “established on better promises.” That it should be founded in promises, was necessary from its general nature as a covenant, and more necessary from its especial nature as a covenant of grace. That these promises are said to be “better promises,” respects those of the old covenant. But this is so said as to include all other degrees of comparison. They are not only better than they, but they are positively good in themselves, and absolutely the best that God ever gave, or will give unto the church. And what they are we must consider in our progress. And sundry things may be observed from these words: —

Obs. VIII. **There is infinite grace in every divine covenant**, inasmuch as it is established on promises. — Infinite condescension it is in God, that he will enter into covenant with dust and ashes, with poor worms of the earth. And herein lies the spring of all grace, from whence all the streams of it do flow. And the first expression of it is in laying the foundation of it in some undeserved promises. And this was that which became the goodness and greatness of his nature, the means whereby we are brought to adhere unto him in faith, hope, trust, and obedience, until we come unto the enjoyment of him; for

that is the **use of promises**, to keep us in adherence unto God, as the first original and spring of all goodness, and the ultimate satisfactory reward of our souls, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Obs. IX. The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because the grace of them prevents any condition or qualification on our part. —I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requireth of us in and by virtue of that covenant; but this I say, the principal promises thereof are not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant, but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant, and establishing or confirming in the covenant. The covenant of works had its promises, but they were all remunerative, respecting an antecedent obedience in us; (so were all those which were peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them was formally reward only. In the covenant of grace it is not so; for sundry of the promises thereof are the means of our being taken into covenant, of our entering into covenant with God. The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged unto obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those promises, namely, of the pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts, which the apostle expressly insisteth upon as the peculiar promises of this covenant, do take place and are effectual antecedently unto our covenant obedience. For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.

This entrance hath the apostle made into his discourse of the two covenants, which he continues unto the end of the chapter. But the whole is not without its difficulties. Many things in particular will occur unto us in our progress, which may be considered in their proper places. In the meantime there are some things in general which may be here discoursed, by whose determination much light will be communicated unto what doth ensue.

First, therefore, the apostle doth evidently in this place dispute concerning two covenants, or two testaments, comparing the one with the other, and declaring the disannulling of the one by the introduction and establishment of the other. What are these two covenants in general we have declared, — namely, that made with the church of Israel at mount Sinai, and that made with us in the gospel; not as absolutely the covenant of grace, but as actually established in the death of Christ, with all the worship that belongs unto it.

Here then ariseth a difference of no small importance, namely, whether these are indeed two distinct covenants, as to the essence and substance of them, or only different ways of the dispensation and administration of the same covenant. And the reason of the difficulty lieth herein: We must grant one of these three things: 1. That either the covenant of grace was in force under the old testament; or, 2. That the church was saved without it, or any benefit by Jesus Christ, who is the mediator of it alone; or, 3. That they all perished everlastingly. And neither of the two latter can be admitted.

Some, indeed, in these latter days, have revived the old Pelagian imagination, that before the law men were saved by the **conduct of natural light and reason**; and under the law by the directive doctrines, precepts, and sacrifices thereof, —without any respect unto the Lord Christ or his mediation in another covenant. But I shall not here contend with them, as having elsewhere sufficiently refuted these imaginations. **Wherefore I shall take it here for granted, that no man was ever saved but by virtue of the new covenant, and the mediation of Christ therein.**

Suppose, then, that this new covenant of grace was extant and effectual under the old testament, so as the church was saved by virtue thereof, and the mediation of Christ therein, how could it be that there should at the 85 same time be another covenant between God and them, of a different nature from this, accompanied with other promises, and other effects?

On this consideration it is said, that the two covenants mentioned, the new and the old, were not indeed two distinct covenants, as unto their essence and substance, but only different administrations of the same covenant, called two covenants from some different outward solemnities and duties of worship attending of them. To clear this it must be observed, —

1. That by the old covenant, the original covenant of works, made with Adam and all mankind in him, is not intended; for this is undoubtedly a covenant different in the essence and substance of it from the new.

2. By the new covenant, not the new covenant absolutely and originally, as given in the first promise, is intended; but in its complete gospel administration, when it was actually established by the death of Christ, as administered in and by the ordinances of the new testament. This, with the covenant of Sinai, were, as most say, but different administrations of the same covenant.

But on the other hand, there is such express mention made, not only in this, but in sundry other places of the Scripture also, of two distinct covenants, or testaments, and such different natures, properties, and effects, ascribed unto them, as seem to constitute two distinct covenants. This, therefore, we must inquire into; and shall first declare what is agreed unto by those who are sober in this matter, though they differ in their judgments about this question, whether two distinct covenants, or only a twofold administration of the same covenant, be intended. And indeed there is so much agreed on, as that what remains seems rather to be a difference about the expression of the same truth, than any real contradiction about the things themselves. For, —

1. It is agreed that the way of reconciliation with God, of justification and salvation, was always one and the same; and that from the giving of the first promise none was ever justified or saved but by the new covenant, and Jesus Christ, the mediator thereof. The foolish imagination before mentioned, that men were saved before the giving of the law by following the guidance of the light of nature, and after the giving of the law by 86 obedience unto the directions thereof, is rejected by all that are sober, as destructive of the Old Testament and the New.

2. That the writings of the Old Testament, namely, the Law, Psalms, and Prophets, do contain and declare the doctrine of justification and salvation by Christ. This the church of old believed, and walked with God in the faith thereof. This is undeniably proved, in that the doctrine mentioned is frequently confirmed in the New Testament by testimonies taken out of the Old.

3. That by the covenant of Sinai, as properly so called, separated from its figurative relation unto the covenant of grace, none was ever eternally saved.

4. That the use of all the institutions whereby the old covenant was administered, was to represent and direct unto Jesus Christ, and his mediation.

These things being granted, the only way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, under the old testament and the new, is secured; which is the substance of the truth wherein we are now concerned. On these grounds we may proceed with our inquiry.

The judgment of most reformed divines is, that the church under the old testament had the same promise of Christ, the same interest in him by faith, remission of sins, reconciliation with God, justification and salvation by the same way and means, that believers have under the new. And whereas the essence and the substance of the covenant consists in these things, they are not to be said to be under another covenant, but only a different administration of it. But this was so different from that which is established in the gospel after the coming of Christ, that it hath the appearance and name of another covenant. And the difference between these two administrations may be reduced unto the ensuing heads: —

1. It consisted in the way and manner of the declaration of the mystery of the love and will of God in Christ; of the work of reconciliation and redemption, with our justification by faith. For herein the gospel, wherein “life and immortality are brought to light,” doth in plainness, clearness, and evidence, much excel the administration and declaration of the same truths under the law. And the greatness of the privilege of the church 87 herein is not easily expressed. For hereby” with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” and Lord changed into the same image,” 2 Corinthians 3:18. The man whose eyes the Lord Christ opened, Mark 8:23-25, represents these two states. When he first touched him, his eyes were opened, and he saw, but he saw nothing clearly; whence, when he looked, he said, “I see men as trees, walking,” verse 24: but upon his second touch, he saw every man clearly,” verse 25. They had their sight under the old testament, and the object was proposed unto them, but at a great distance, with such an interposition of mists, clouds, and shadows, as that they saw men like trees, walking,” —nothing clearly and perfectly: but now under the gospel, the object, which is Christ, being brought near unto us, and all clouds and shadows being departed, we do or may see all things clearly. When a traveler in his way on downs or hills is encompassed with a thick mist and fog, though he be in his way yet he is uncertain, and nothing is presented unto him in its proper shape and distance; things near seem to be afar off, and things afar off to be near, and everything hath, though not a false, yet an uncertain appearance. Let the sun break forth and scatter the mists and fogs that are about him, and immediately everything appears quite in another shape unto him, so as indeed he is ready to think he is not where he was. His way is plain, he is certain of it, and all the region about lies evident under his eye; yet is there no alteration made but in the removal of the mists and clouds that interrupted his sight. So was it with them under the law. The types and shadows that they were enclosed in, and which were the only medium they had to view spiritual things in, represented them not unto them clearly and in their proper shape. But they being now removed, by the rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, in the dispensation of the gospel, the whole mystery of God in Christ is clearly manifested unto them that do believe. And the greatness of this privilege of the gospel above the law is inexpressible; whereof, as I suppose, we must speak somewhat afterwards.

2. In the plentiful communication of grace unto the community of the church; for now it is that we receive “grace for grace,” or a plentiful effusion of it, by Jesus Christ. There was grace given in an eminent manner unto many holy persons under the old testament, and all true believers had true, real, saving grace communicated unto them; but the measures of grace in the true church under the new testament do exceed those of the community of the church under the old. And therefore, as God winked at some things under the old testament, as polygamy, and the like, which are expressly and severely interdicted under the new, nor are consistent with the present administrations of it; so are sundry duties, as those of self denial, readiness to bear the cross, to forsake houses, lands, and habitations, more expressly enjoined unto us than unto them. And the obedience which God requireth in any covenant, or administration of it, is proportionable unto the strength which the administration of that covenant doth exhibit. And if those who profess the gospel do content themselves without any interest in this privilege of it, if they endeavor not for a share in that plentiful effusion of grace which doth accompany its present administration, the gospel itself will be of no other use unto them, but to increase and aggravate their condemnation.

3. In the manner of our access unto God. Herein much of all that is called religion doth consist; for hereon doth all our outward worship of God depend. And in this the advantages of the gospel-administration of the covenant above that of the law is in all things very eminent. Our access now to God is immediate, by Jesus Christ, with liberty and boldness, as we shall afterwards declare. Those under the law were immediately conversant, in their whole worship, about outward, typical things, — the tabernacle, the altar, the ark, the mercy-seat, and the like obscure representations of the presence of God. Besides, the manner of the making of the covenant with them at mount Sinai filled them with fear, and brought them into bondage, so as they had comparatively a servile frame of spirit in all their holy worship.

4. In the way of worship required under each administration. For under that which was legal, it seemed good unto God to appoint a great number of outward rites, ceremonies, and observances; and these, as they were dark in their signification, as also in their use and ends, so were they, by reason of their nature, number, and the severe penalties under which they were enjoined, grievous and burdensome to be observed. But the way of worship under the gospel is spiritual, rational, and plainly subservient unto the ends of the covenant itself; so as that the use, ends, benefits, and advantages of it are evident unto all.

5. In the extent of the dispensation of the grace of God; for this is greatly enlarged under the gospel. For under the old testament it was upon the matter confined unto the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh; but under the new testament it extends itself unto all nations under heaven.

Sundry other things are usually added by our divines unto the same purpose. See Calvin. Institut. lib. 2:cap. xi.; Martyr. Loc. Com. loc. 16, sect. 2; Bucan. loc. 22, etc.

The Lutherans, on the other side, insist on two arguments to prove, that not a twofold administration of the same covenant, but that two covenants substantially distinct, are intended in this discourse of the apostle.

1. Because in the Scripture they are often so called, and compared with one another, and sometimes opposed unto one another; the first and the last, the new and the old.

2. Because the covenant of grace in Christ is eternal, immutable, always the same, obnoxious unto no alteration, no change or abrogation; neither can these things be spoken of it with respect unto any administration of it. as they are spoken of the old covenant.

To state our thoughts aright in this matter, and to give what light we can unto the truth, the things ensuing may be observed: —

1. When we speak of the “old covenant,” we intend not the covenant of works made with Adam, and his whole posterity in him; concerning which there is no difference or difficulty, whether it be a distinct covenant from the new or no.

2. When we speak of the “new covenant,” we do not intend the covenant of grace absolutely, as though that were not before in being and efficacy, before the introduction of that which is promised in this place. For it was always the same, as to the substance of it, from the beginning. It passed through the whole dispensation of times before the law, and under the law, of the same nature and efficacy, unalterable, “everlasting, ordered in all things, and sure.” All who contend about these things, the Socinians only excepted, do grant that the covenant of grace, considered absolutely, — that is, the promise of grace in and by Jesus Christ, — was the only way and means of salvation unto the church, from the first entrance of sin. But 90 for two reasons it is not expressly called a covenant, without respect unto any other things, nor was it so under the old testament. When God renewed the promise of it unto Abraham, he is said to make a covenant with him; and he did so, but it was with respect unto other things, especially the proceeding of the promised Seed from his loins. But absolutely under the old testament it consisted only in a promise; and as such only is proposed in the Scripture, Acts 2:39; Hebrews 6:14-16. The apostle indeed says, that the covenant was confirmed of God in Christ, before the giving of the law, Galatians 3:17. And so it was, not absolutely in itself, but in the promise and benefits of it. The *nomoesia*, or full legal establishment of it, whence it became formally a covenant unto the whole church, was future only, and a promise under the old testament; for it wanted two things thereunto: —

(1.) **It wanted its solemn confirmation and establishment, by the blood of the only sacrifice which belonged unto it.** Before this was done in the death of Christ, it had not the formal nature of a covenant or a testament, as our apostle proves, Hebrews 9:15-23. For neither, as he shows in that place, would the law given at Sinai have been a covenant, had it not been confirmed with the blood of sacrifices. Wherefore the promise was not before a formal and solemn covenant.

(2.) This was wanting, that it was not the spring, rule, and measure of all the worship of the church. This doth belong unto every covenant, properly so called, that God makes with the church, **that it be the entire rule of all the worship that God requires of it;** which is that which they are to restipulate in their entrance into covenant with God. But so the covenant of grace was not under the old testament; **for God did require of the church many duties of worship that did not belong thereunto. But now, under the new testament, this covenant, with its own seals and appointments, is the only rule and**

measure of all acceptable worship. Wherefore the new covenant promised in the Scripture, and here opposed unto the old, is not the promise of grace, mercy, life, and salvation by Christ, absolutely considered, but as it had the formal nature of a covenant given unto it, **in its establishment by the death of Christ, the procuring cause of all its benefits, and the declaring of it to be the only rule of worship and obedience unto the church.** So that although by “the covenant of grace,” we oftentimes understand no more but the way of life, grace, mercy, and salvation by Christ; yet by “the new covenant,” we intend its actual establishment in the death of Christ, with that blessed way of worship which by it is settled in the church.

3. Whilst the church enjoyed all the spiritual benefits of the promise, wherein the substance of the covenant of grace was contained, before it was confirmed and made the sole rule of worship unto the church, it was not inconsistent with the holiness and wisdom of God to bring it under any other covenant, or prescribe unto it what forms of worship he pleased. It was not so, I say, upon these three suppositions: —

(1.) That this covenant did not disannul or make ineffectual the promise that was given before, but that that doth still continue the only means of life and salvation. And that this was so, our apostle proves at large, Galatians 3:17-19.

(2.) That this other covenant, with all the worship contained in it or required by it, did not divert from, but direct and lead unto, the future establishment of the promise in the solemnity of a covenant, by the ways mentioned. And that the covenant made in Sinai, with all its ordinances, did so, the apostle proves likewise in the place before mentioned, as also in this whole epistle.

(3.) That it be of present use and advantage unto the church in its present condition. This the apostle acknowledgeth to be a great objection against the use and efficacy of the promise under the old testament, as unto life and salvation; namely, ‘To what end then serveth the giving of the law?’ whereunto he answers, by showing the necessity and use of the law unto the church in its then present condition, Galatians 3:17-19.

4. These things being observed, we may consider that the Scripture doth plainly and expressly make mention of two testaments, or covenants, and distinguish between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated unto a twofold administration of the same covenant. The one is mentioned and described, Exodus 24:3-8, Deuteronomy 5:2-5, — namely, the covenant that God made with the people of Israel in Sinai; and which is commonly called “the covenant,” where the people under the old testament are said to keep or break God’s covenant; which for the most part is spoken with respect unto that worship which was peculiar thereunto. The other is promised, Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:40; which is the new or gospel covenant, as before explained, mentioned Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24. And these two covenants, or testaments, are compared one with the other, and opposed one unto another, 2 Corinthians 3:6-9; Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 7:22, 9:15-20.

These two we call “the old and the new testament.” Only it must be observed, that in this argument, by the “old testament,” we do not understand the books of the Old Testament, or the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, or the oracles of God committed then unto the church, (I confess they are once so called, 2 Corinthians 3:14, “The veil remaineth untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament,” —that is, the books of it; unless we shall say, that the apostle intendeth only the reading

of the things which concern the old testament in the Scripture;) for this old covenant, or testament, whatever it be, is abrogated and taken away, as the apostle expressly proves, but the word of God in the books of the Old Testament abideth for ever. And those writings are called the Old Testament, or the books of the Old Testament, not as though they contained in them nothing but what belongeth unto the old covenant, for they contain the doctrine of the New Testament also; but they are so termed because they were committed unto the church whilst the old covenant was in force, as the rule and law of its worship and obedience.

5. Wherefore we must grant two distinct covenants, rather than a twofold administration of the same covenant merely, to be intended. We must, I say, do so, provided always that the way of reconciliation and salvation was the same under both. But it will be said, —and with great pretense of reason, for it is that which is the sole foundation they all build upon who allow only a twofold administration of the same covenant, —‘That this being the principal end of a divine covenant, if the way of reconciliation and salvation be the same under both, then indeed are they for the substance of them but one.’ And I grant that this would inevitably follow, if it were so equally by virtue of them both. If reconciliation and salvation by Christ were to be obtained not only under the old covenant, but by virtue thereof, then it must be the same for substance with the new. But this is not so; for no reconciliation with God nor salvation could be obtained by virtue of the old covenant, or the administration of it, as our 93 apostle disputes at large, though all believers were reconciled, justified, and saved, by virtue of the promise, whilst they were under the covenant. As therefore I have showed in what sense the covenant of grace is called “the new covenant,” in this distinction and opposition, so I shall propose sundry things which relate unto the nature of the first covenant, which manifest it to have been a distinct covenant, and not a mere administration of the covenant of grace: —

1. This covenant, called “the old covenant,” was never intended to be of itself the absolute rule and law of life and salvation unto the church, but was made with a particular design, and with respect unto particular ends. This the apostle proves undeniably in this epistle, especially in the chapter foregoing, and those two that follow. Hence it follows that it could abrogate or disannul nothing which God at any time before had given as a general rule unto the church. For that which is particular cannot abrogate any thing that was general, and before it; as that which is general doth abrogate all antecedent particulars, as the new covenant doth abrogate the old. And this we must consider in both the instances belonging hereunto. For, —

(1.) God had before given the covenant of works, or perfect obedience, unto all mankind, in the law of creation. But this covenant at Sinai did not abrogate or disannul that covenant, nor any way fulfill it. And the reason is, because it was never intended to come in the place or room thereof, as a covenant, containing an entire rule of all the faith and obedience of the whole church. God did not intend in it to abrogate the covenant of works, and to substitute this in the place thereof; yea, in sundry things it reenforced, established, and confirmed that covenant. For, —

[1.] It revived, declared, and expressed all the commands of that covenant in the decalogue; for that is nothing but a divine summary of the law written in the heart of man at his creation. And herein the dreadful manner of its delivery or promulgation, with its writing in tables of stone, is also to be considered; for in them the nature of that first covenant, with its inexorableness as unto perfect

obedience, was represented. And because none could answer its demands, or comply with it therein, it was called “the ministration of death,” causing fear and bondage, 2 Corinthians 3:7.

[2.] It revived the sanction of the first covenant, in the curse or sentence of death which it denounced against all transgressors. Death was the penalty of the transgression of the first covenant: “In the day that thou eatest, thou shalt die the death.” And this sentence was revived and represented anew in the curse wherewith this covenant was ratified, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them,” Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10. For the design of God in it was to bind a sense of that curse on the consciences of men, until He came by whom it was taken away, as the apostle declares, Galatians 3:19.

[3.] It revived the promise of that covenant, —that of eternal life upon perfect obedience. So the apostle tells us that Moses thus describeth the righteousness of the law, “That the man which doeth those things shall live by them,” Romans 10:5; as he doth, Leviticus 18:5.

Now this is no other but the covenant of works revived. Nor had this covenant of Sinai any promise of eternal life annexed unto it, as such, but only the promise inseparable from the covenant of works which it revived, saying, “Do this, and live.”

Hence it is, that when our apostle disputeth against justification by the law, or by the works of the law, he doth not intend the works peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai, such as were the rites and ceremonies of the worship then instituted; but he intends also the works of the first covenant, which alone had the promise of life annexed unto them.

And hence it follows also, that it was not a new covenant of works established in the place of the old, for the absolute rule of faith and obedience unto the whole church; for then would it have abrogated and taken away that covenant, and all the force of it, which it did not.

(2.) The other instance is in the promise. This also went before it; neither was it abrogated or disannulled by the introduction of this covenant. This promise was given unto our first parents immediately after the entrance of sin, and was established as containing the only way and means of the salvation of sinners. Now, this promise could not be abrogated by the introduction of this covenant, and a new way of justification and salvation be thereby established. For the promise being given out in general for the whole church, as containing the way appointed by God for righteousness, life, and salvation, it could not be disannulled or changed, without a change and alteration in the counsels of Him “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Much less could this be effected by a particular covenant, such as that was, when it was given as a general and eternal rule.

2. But whereas there was an especial promise given unto Abraham, in the faith whereof he became “the father of the faithful,” he being their progenitor, it should seem that this covenant did wholly disannul or supersede that promise, and take off the church of his posterity from building on that foundation, and so fix them wholly on this new covenant now made with them. So saith Moses, “The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day,” Deuteronomy 5:3. God made not this covenant on mount Sinai with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but with the people then present, and their posterity, as he declares, Deuteronomy 29:14, 15. This,

therefore, should seem to take them off wholly from that promise made to Abraham, and so to disannul it. But that this it did not, nor could do, the apostle strictly proves, Galatians 3:17-22; yea, it did divers ways establish that promise, both as first given and as afterwards confirmed with the oath of God unto Abraham, two ways especially: —

(1.) It declared the impossibility of obtaining reconciliation and peace with God any other way but by the promise. For representing the commands of the covenant of works, requiring perfect, sinless obedience, under the penalty of the curse, it convinced men that this was no way for sinners to seek for life and salvation by. **And herewith it so urged the consciences of men**, that they could have no rest nor peace in themselves **but what the promise would afford them**, whereunto they saw a necessity of betaking themselves.

(2.) By representing the ways and means of the accomplishment of the promise, and of that whereon all the efficacy of it unto the justification and salvation of sinners doth depend. This was the death, blood-shedding, oblation, or sacrifice of Christ, the promised seed. This all its offerings and ordinances of worship directed unto; as his incarnation, with the inhabitation of God in his human nature, was typed by the tabernacle and temple. Wherefore it was so far from disannulling the promise, or diverting the minds of the people of God from it, that by all means it established it and led unto it. But,

pg 85 Vol. 22 Heb. 8:6

Old Covenant particulars

The terror and bondage of the law - pointed to promise in Christ

“Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?” Numbers 17:12, 13. And the curse solemnly denounced against every one that confirmed not all things written in the law was continually before them.

[3.] In a spirit of bondage unto fear. This was administered in the giving and dispensation of the law, even as a spirit of liberty and power is administered in and by the gospel. And as this respected their present obedience, and manner of its performance, so in particular it regarded death not yet conquered by Christ. Hence our apostle affirms, that “through fear of death they were all their lifetime subject unto **bondage**.”

This state God brought them into, partly to subdue the pride of their hearts, trusting in their own righteousness, and partly to cause them to look out earnestly after the promised deliverer.

(4.) Into this estate and condition God brought them by a solemn covenant, confirmed by mutual consent between him and them. The tenor, force, and solemn ratification of this covenant, are expressed, Exodus 24:3-8. Unto the terms and conditions of this covenant was the whole church obliged indispensably, on pain of extermination, until all was accomplished, Malachi 4:4-6. Unto this covenant belonged the decalogue, with all precepts of moral obedience thence educed. So also did the laws of political rule established among them, and the whole system of religious worship given unto them. All these laws were brought within the verge of this covenant, and were the matter of it. And it

had especial **promises** and threatenings annexed unto it as such; whereof none did exceed the bounds of the land of Canaan. For even many of the laws of it were such as obliged nowhere else. Such was the law of the sabbatical year, and all their sacrifices. There was sin and obedience in them or about them in the land of Canaan, none elsewhere. Hence, — (5.) This **covenant** thus made, with these ends and promises, did never save nor condemn any man eternally. All that lived under the administration of it did attain eternal life, or perished forever, but not by virtue of this covenant as formally such. It did, indeed, revive the commanding power and sanction of the first covenant of works; and therein, as the apostle speaks, was “the ministry of condemnation,” 2 Corinthians: 3:9; for “by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified.” And on the other hand, **it directed also unto the promise**, which was the instrument of life and salvation unto all that did believe. But as unto what it had of its own, it was confined unto things temporal. **Believers were saved under it, but not by virtue of it. Sinners perished eternally under it, but by the curse of the original law of works.**

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Nature of the Promises

code300

The following excerpt from John Owen has a multitude of important doctrines and considerations almost like a grand summary of everything - the nature of the promises, Adam's grace vs. NT believers, Arminianism, Pelagianism, the will, heart, soul, communication of grace in the New Covenant, etc.

Subjects covered: Adam's original grace given (see **bold red** next few pages); temptation of Satan, the serpent an instrument of Satan, God redemptive plan. Adam was given a certain grace but was promised no more, i.e., there was no promise of perseverance that believers have under the new covenant, that constant stream of *grace for grace* that we receive having been engrafted into the true vine. Adam was not "in Christ" while in the Garden, but believers in the new covenant are...*in Him all things consist*; that is, if one is not in Christ, he is liable to defect which Adam was and subsequently fell. In the covenant of works, there was no surety or mediator; Adam was under the covenant of works...do this and live. It is man's proud opinion of himself that he is autonomous, self-directed without any effectual influence from God which is an extension of this covenant of works and opposed to the covenant of grace in which those who are partakers benefit from the constant influence of the sap of the vine or God's *grace for grace* being supplied them by virtue of the promises of this covenant. So if one is still under the covenant of works, he will expose himself by insisting on this autonomous condition, being ignorant of his utter dependence on God and thus opposed to it, hence Christ is a "stone of stumbling, a rock of offense", the stone that the builders rejected. But one that is saved prizes this dependence and gives glory to God for it thus evidencing his saved condition. The nature of the new and old covenants is covered here too; very good in understanding the heresy of Pelagianism and Arminianism, Prevenient grace, etc., the will of man, etc. See Flavel's comments on this in his Sermon #28 on page 1596. It is outstanding...Grace without the Spirit.

The Promise in Gen 3:15

(see also, pg 711)

The new covenant obscurely stated to Adam

The first promise contained in it the whole essence and substances of the covenant of grace. All those afterwards given unto the church, on various occasions, were but explications and confirmations of it. - John Owen p 112 vol. 22

For much of this discussion on covenants - go online to page 60-119, volume 22, Commentary on Hebrews 8 ref. a covenant and a testament as well as pg 320-321:

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

This next excerpt from John Owen p112 (p136 online) regarding this new covenant:

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

(1.) A recapitulation, collection, and confirmation of all the promises of grace that had been **given unto the church from the beginning**, even all that was spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets that had been since the world began, Luke 1:70.

Here is Luke 70-75:

⁷⁰As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began,

⁷¹That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,

⁷²To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,

⁷³The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴To grant us that we,

Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

[The promises of grace were first given to Adam in Gen 3:15 - that God would break that league between man and the devil by changing the nature of the covenantees so as to hate sin and Satan, and to turn people to God, re-stated in Jer. 31:33, Ezek.36:25-27]

¹⁵And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel." Gen. 3:15

This, the promise in Gen. 3:15, is the gospel proposed in obscure language - so, before I end this long discourse and because Owen explains it so well, let me digress for a moment; I have included Owen's explanation of it here:

Exercitations to Hebrews pg170-174 Vol. XVII John Owen

23. The first intimation that God gave of this work of his grace in redeeming mankind from sin and misery, is contained in the promise subjoined unto the curse denounced against our first parents, and their posterity in them: Genesis 3:15 "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent shall bruise his heel." Two things there are contained in these words; — a promise of relief from the misery brought on mankind by the temptation of Satan; and an intimation of the means or way whereby it should be brought about. That the first is included in these words is evident; for, —

First, If there be not a promise of deliverance expressed in these words, whence is it that the execution of the sentence of death against sin is suspended? Unless we will allow an intervention satisfactory to the righteousness and truth of God to be expressed in these words, there would have been a truth in the suggestion of the serpent, namely, that whatever God had said, yet indeed they were not to die. The Jews, in the Midrash Tehillim, — as Kimchi informs us on Psalm 92, whose title is, "A Psalm for the Sabbath-day," which they generally assign unto Adam, — say that Adam was cast out of the garden of Eden on the evening of the sixth day, after which God came to execute the sentence of death upon him; but the Sabbath being come on, the punishment was deferred, whereon Adam made that psalm for the Sabbath-day. Without an interposition of some external cause and reason, they acknowledge that death ought immediately to have been inflicted; and other besides what is mentioned in these words there was none.

Secondly, The whole evil of sin, and curse, that mankind then did, or was to, suffer under, proceeded from the friendship contracted between the woman and the serpent, and her fixing faith in him. God here declares that he will break that league, and put enmity between them. Being now both of them under the same condition of sin and curse, this could not be without a change of condition in one of them. Satan is not divided from himself, nor is at enmity with them that are left wholly in his estate. A change of condition, therefore, on the part of the woman and her seed is plainly promised; that is, by a deliverance from the state of sin and misery wherein they were. Without this the enmity mentioned could not have ensued.

Thirdly, In pursuit of this enmity, the Seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent. The head is the seat of his power and craft. Without the destruction of the evil and pernicious effects which by his counsel he had brought about, his head cannot be bruised. By his head he had contrived the ruin of mankind; and without the destruction of his works and a recovery from that ruin, he is not conquered nor his head bruised. And as these things, though they may now seem somewhat obscurely expressed in these words, are yet made plain unto us in the gospel, so the importance of them was evident unto our first parents of old, being expounded by all the circumstances wherewith the matter of fact was attended.

Again, there is an intimation of the manner how this work shall be performed. This, first, God takes upon himself: ‘I will do it; “I will put enmity.”’ It is an issue of his sovereign wisdom and grace. But, secondly, he will do it in and by the nature of man, “the Seed of the woman.” And two things must concur to the effecting of it; — first, That this Seed of the woman must conquer Satan, bruise his head, destroy his works, and procure deliverance for mankind thereby; secondly, That he must suffer from, and by the means of, Satan in his so doing, — the serpent must “bruise his heel.” This is the remedy and relief that God hath provided for mankind. And this is the MESSIAH, or God joining with the nature of man to deliver mankind from sin and eternal misery.

24. This promise of relief by the Seed of the woman is, as the first, so the only intimation that God gave unto our first parents of a way of deliverance from that condition whereinto they, and the whole creation, were brought by the entrance of evil or sin. It was likewise the first discovery that there was in him [Hebrew words], —benignity, grace, kindness, or mercy, compassion, pardon. Hereby he declared himself to be [Hebrew words] Nehemiah 9:17, —“a God of pardons, gracious, and tenderly merciful;” as also, Psalm 86:5, “good and pardoning, and much in mercy.” And if this be not acknowledged, it must be confessed that all the world, at least unto the flood, if not unto the days of Abraham, — in which space of time we have testimony concerning some that they walked with God, and pleased him, — were left without any certain ground of faith, or hope of acceptance with him; for without some knowledge of this mercy, and the provision of a way for its exercise, they could have no such persuasion. This, then, we have obtained, that God, presently upon the entrance of sin into the world, and the breach of its public peace thereby, promised a reparation of that evil, in the whole extent of it, to be wrought in and by the Seed of the woman, — that is, the Messiah
--Resuming where I left off from (1.) above on page 218]

(1.) A recapitulation, collection, and confirmation of all the promises of grace that had been given unto the church **from the beginning**, even all that was spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets that had been since the world began, Luke 1:70.

The first promise [in Gen3:15] contained in it the whole essence and substance of the covenant, of grace. All those afterwards given unto the church, on various occasions, were but explications and confirmations of it. In the whole of them there was a full declaration of the wisdom and love of God in sending his Son, and of his grace unto mankind thereby. And God solemnly confirmed them with his oath, namely, that they should be all accomplished in their appointed season. Whereas, therefore, the **covenant here promised included the sending of Christ for the accomplishment of those promises**, they are all gathered into one head therein. It is a constellation of all the promises of grace.

(2.) All these promises were to be reduced into an actual covenant or testament two ways: —

[1.] In that, as unto the accomplishment of the grace principally intended in them, they received it in the sending of Christ; and as to the confirmation and establishment of them for the communication of grace unto the church, they received it in the **death of Christ, as a sacrifice of agreement or atonement.**

[2.] They are established as the rule and law of reconciliation and peace between God and man. **This gives them the nature of a covenant; for a covenant is the solemn expression of the terms of peace between various parties,** with the **confirmation** of them.

(3.) They are reduced unto such form of law, as to become the only rule of the ordinances of worship and divine service required of the church. Nothing unto these ends is now presented unto us, or required of us, but what belongeth immediately unto the administration of this covenant, and the grace thereof. But the reader must consult what hath been discoursed at large unto this purpose on the 6th^verse.

And we may see from hence what it is that God here promiseth and foretelleth, as that which he would do in the “days that were coming.” **For whereas they had the promise before, and so virtually the grace and mercy of the new covenant, it may be inquired: ‘What is yet wanting, that should be promised solemnly under the name of a covenant?’** For the full resolution of this question, I must, as before, refer the reader unto what hath been discoursed at large about the two covenants, and the difference between them, on verse 6. Here we may briefly name some few things, sufficient unto the exposition of this place; as, —

This is the whole point in going through this explanation of what a covenant is. It is foundational to a fuller understanding of the scope of the atonement being limited.

"For by the making of this covenant with any, the effectual **communication of the grace of it to them is principally intended**. **Nor can that covenant be said to be made absolutely with any but those whose sins are pardoned by virtue of it, and in whose hearts the law of God is written; which are the express promises of it.** And it was with **respect to those of this sort among that people that the covenant was promised to be made with them.** See Rom 9:27-33; 11:7. **But in respect of the outward dispensation of the covenant, it is extended beyond the effectual communication of the grace of it.** And in respect to that did the privilege of the carnal seed of Abraham lie." " Owen

That is, for a covenant to be a legitimate covenant, there must be specific persons as the object of those promises (i.e., the Father chooses distinct persons (Jesus calls them by name! ..I sheep hear my voice..) who are the objects of his love, in eternity, to whom he bestows his glorious possessions, his graces [and surely, he gives his dowry to none other than to his bride - Thomas Shepard) which comprise the foundation of the covenant, otherwise it is no covenant. Heb. 8:8 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." The greatest and utmost mercies that God ever intended to communicate unto the church, and to bless it withal, were enclosed in the new covenant. Nor doth the efficacy of the mediation of Christ extend itself beyond the verge and compass thereof; for he is only the **mediator** and **surety** of this covenant. p120 (p 147 online) Heb. 8:9 -

The Blood of the Covenant

code301

John Owen Heb. 9:18-22 **The blood of the Covenant**; the nature of a covenant, in what it consists, **purification** by blood, etc. (also comment on "he came by water and blood" ...sprinkling of blood (the efficacy of it) for our **sanctification**. The types: water, blood, the sprinkler: scarlet wool and hyssop = the human nature of Christ...

pg 358-363 (online: 441-445)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Ver. 19 on pg 355 (437 online)

Ver. 19. — "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people."

(3.) There is the rule whereby Moses proceeded herein, or the warranty he had for what he did: "According unto the law." He read every precept according to the law. It cannot be the law in general that the apostle intends, for the greatest part of that doctrine which is so called was not yet given or written; nor doth it in any place contain any precept unto this purpose. Wherefore it is a particular law, rule, or command, that is intended; — according unto the ordinance or appointment of God. Such was the command that God gave unto Moses for the framing of the tabernacle: "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." Particularly, it seems to be the agreement between God and the people, that Moses should be the *internunci*, the interpreter between them. According unto this rule, order, or divine constitution, Moses read all the words from God out of the book unto the people. Or it may be, "the law" may here be taken for the whole design of God in giving of the law; so as that "according unto the law," is no more but, **according unto the sovereign wisdom and pleasure of God in giving of the law**, with all things that belong unto its order and use. **And it is good for us to look for God's especial warranty for what we undertake to do in his service.**

The second thing in the words is, what **Moses did immediately** and **directly** towards the dedication or consecration of this covenant. And there are three things to this purpose mentioned: (1.) What he made use of. (2.) How he used it. (3.) With respect unto what and whom: —

(1.) The first is expressed in these words: "He took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop." He took the blood of the beasts that were offered for **burnt-offerings and peace offerings**, Exodus 24:5, 6, 8. Unto this end, in their slaying he took all their blood in basins, and made an equal division of it. The one half he sprinkled on the altar, and the other half he sprinkled on the people. That which was sprinkled on the altar was God's part; and the other was put on the people. **Both the mutual stipulation of God and the congregation in this covenant**, and the **equality** of it, or the equity of its terms, were denoted hereby. And herein lies the principal force of the apostle's argument

in these words: **Blood was used in the dedication of the first covenant.** This was the blood of the beasts offered in sacrifice unto God. Wherefore both death, and death by blood-shedding, was required unto the confirmation of a covenant. So also, therefore, must the new covenant be confirmed; but with blood and a sacrifice far more precious than they were.

This distribution of blood, that half of it was on the altar, and half of it on the people, — the one to **make atonement**, the other to **purify or sanctify**, — was to teach the twofold efficacy of the blood of Christ, in making atonement for sin unto our justification, and the purifying of our natures in sanctification.

(2.) With this blood he took the things mentioned with respect unto its use, which was sprinkling. The manner of it was in part declared before. The blood being put into basons, and having water mixed with it to keep it fluid and aspersible, he took a bunch or bundle of hyssop bound up with scarlet wool, and dipping it into the basons, sprinkled the blood, until it was all spent in that service.

This rite or way of sprinkling was chosen of God as an expressive token or sign of the effectual communication of the benefits of the covenant unto them that were sprinkled. Hence the communication of the **benefits of the death of Christ unto sanctification** is called the **sprinkling of his blood**, 1 Peter 1:2. And our apostle compriseth all the effects of it unto that end under the name of “the blood of sprinkling,” Hebrews 12:24 And I fear that those who have used the expression with some contempt, when applied by themselves unto the sign of the communication of the benefits 443 of the death of Christ in baptism, have not observed that reverence of holy things that is required of us. For this symbol of sprinkling was that which **God himself chose and appointed, as a meet and apt token of the communication of covenant mercy; that is, of his grace in Christ Jesus unto our souls.**

And, — Obs. X. The blood of the covenant will not benefit or advantage us without an especial and particular application of it unto our own souls and consciences. — If it be not as well sprinkled upon us as it was offered unto God, it will not avail us. The blood of Christ was not divided, as was that of these sacrifices, the one half being on the altar, the other on the people; but the efficacy of the whole produced both these effects, yet so, as that the one will not profit us without the other. We shall have no benefit of the atonement made at the altar, unless we have its efficacy on our own souls unto their purification. And this we cannot have unless it be sprinkled on us, unless particular application be made of it unto us by the Holy Ghost, in and by an especial act of faith in ourselves. [which faith is also promised and bestowed (bequeathed) to the elect in the covenant! - hence *the faith of God's elect.*]

(3.) The object of this act of sprinkling was “the book” itself “and all the people.” The same blood was on the book wherein the covenant was recorded, and the people that entered into it. But whereas this sprinkling was for purifying and purging, it may be inquired unto what end the book itself was sprinkled, which was holy and undefiled. I answer, There were two things necessary unto the dedication of the covenant, with all that belonged unto it: [1.] **Atonement;** [2.] **Purification.** And in both these respects it was necessary that the book itself should be sprinkled. [1.] As we observed before, it was sprinkled as it lay upon the altar, where atonement was made. And this was plainly to signify that atonement was to be made by blood for sins committed against that book, or the law contained in it. Without this, that book would have been unto the people like that given to Ezekiel, that

was “written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe,” Ezekiel 2:10. Nothing but curse and death could they expect from it. But the sprinkling of it with blood as it lay upon the altar was a testimony and assurance that atonement should be made by blood for the sins against it; which was the life of the things. [2.] The book in itself was pure and holy, and so are all God’s institutions; but unto us every thing is unclean that is not sprinkled with the blood of Christ. So afterwards the tabernacle and all the vessels of it were purified every year with blood, “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions,” Leviticus 16:16. Wherefore on both these accounts it was necessary that the book itself should be sprinkled.

The blood thus sprinkled was mingled with water. The natural reason of it was, as we observed, to keep it fluid and aspersible. But there was a mystery in it also. That the blood of Christ was typified by this blood of the sacrifices used in the dedication of the old covenant, it is the apostle’s design to declare. And it is probable that this mixture of it with water might represent that blood and water which came out of his side when it was pierced. For the mystery thereof was very great. Hence that apostle which saw it, and bare record of it in particular, John 19:34, 35, affirms likewise **that “he came by water and blood,” and not by blood only,** 1 Epist. 5:6. He came not only to make atonement for us with his blood, that we might be justified, **but to sprinkle us with the efficacy of his blood, in the communication of the Spirit of sanctification, compared unto water.**

For the sprinkler itself, composed of scarlet wool and hyssop, I doubt not but that **the human nature of Christ,** whereby and through which all grace is communicated unto us, (“for of his fullness we receive, and grace for grace,”) was signified by it; but the analogy and similitude between them are not so evident as they are with respect unto some other types. The hyssop was a humble plant, the meanest of them, yet of a sweet savor, 1 Kings 4:33; so was the Lord Christ amongst men in the days of his flesh, in comparison of the tall cedars of the earth. Hence was his complaint, that he was as “a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people,” Psalm 22:6. And the scarlet wool might represent him as red in the blood of his sacrifice. But I will not press these things, of whose interpretation we have not a certain rule. 445 Secondly, The principal truth asserted is confirmed by what Moses said, as well as what he did: —

Ver. 20. — “Saying, This [is] the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.”

The difference between the words of Moses and the repetition of them by the apostle is not material, as unto the sense of them. [*Greek word*], “behold,” in Moses, is rendered by τούτο, “this;” both demonstrative notes of the same thing. For in pronouncing of the words Moses showed the blood unto the people; and so, “Behold the blood,” is all one as if he had said, “This is the blood.” The making of the covenant in the words of Moses is expressed by [*Greek word*], “hath cut,” “divided,” solemnly made. This the apostle renders by ενετειλατο “hath enjoined” or “commanded you.” And this he doth partly to **signify the foundation of the people’s acceptance of that covenant,** which was the authority of God enjoining them or requiring them so to do; **partly to intimate the nature of the covenant itself,** which consisted in precepts and injunctions principally, and not absolutely in promises, as the new covenant doth. The last words of Moses, “Concerning all these words,” the apostle omits; for he includes the sense of them in that word, “Which God hath commanded you.” For he hath respect therein both unto the words themselves written in the book, which were precepts and injunctions, as also the command of God for the acceptance of the covenant.

That which Moses said is, "This is the blood of the testament." Hence the apostle proves that death, and the shedding of blood therein, **was necessary unto the consecration and establishment of the first testament.** For so Moses expressly affirms in the dedication of it, "This is the blood of the covenant;" **without which it could not have been a firm covenant between God and the people.** Not, I confess, from the nature of a covenant in general, for a covenant may be solemnly established without death or blood; but from **the especial end of that covenant, which in the confirmation of it was to prefigure the confirmation of that new covenant which could not be established but with the blood of a sacrifice.** And this adds both force and evidence unto the apostle's argument. For he proves the necessity of the death and blood-shedding or sacrifice of Christ in the confirmation of the new covenant from hence, that the old covenant, which in the dedication of it was prefigurative hereof, **was not confirmed without blood.** Wherefore, whereas God had solemnly promised to make a new covenant with the church, and that different from, or not according unto the old (which he had proved in the foregoing chapter), it follows unavoidably that it was to be confirmed with the blood of the mediator (for by the blood of beasts it could not be); which is that truth wherein he did instruct them. And nothing was more cogent to take off the scandal of the cross and of the sufferings of Christ.

For the enunciation itself, "This is the blood of the covenant," it is figurative and sacramental. The covenant had no blood of its own; but the blood of the sacrifices is called "the blood of the covenant," **because the covenant was dedicated and established by it.** Neither was the covenant really established by it; **for it was the truth of God on the one hand, and the stability of the people in their professed obedience on the other, that the establishment of the covenant depended on.** But this blood was a **confirmatory sign of it, a token between God and the people of their mutual engagement in that covenant.** So the paschal lamb was called "the LORD'S Passover," because it was a sign and token of God's passing over the houses of the Israelites when he destroyed the Egyptians, Exodus 12:11, 12. With reference it was unto those sacramental expressions which the church under the old testament was accustomed unto, that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the institution of the sacrament of the supper, called the bread and the wine, whose use he appointed therein, by the names of his body and blood; and any other interpretation of the words wholly overthrows the nature of that holy ordinance.

Wherefore this blood was a confirmatory sign of the covenant. And it was so, 1. **From God's institution; he appointed it so to be,** as is express in the words of Moses. 2. From an implication of the interest of both parties in the blood of the sacrifice; God, unto whom it was offered; and the people, on whom it was sprinkled. For it being the blood of beasts that were slain, in this use of it each party as it were engaged their lives unto the observation and performance of what was respectively undertaken by them. 3. Typically, in that it represented the blood of Christ, and fore-signified the necessity of it unto the confirmation of the new covenant. See Zechariah 9:11; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25. **So was it "the blood of the covenant," in that it was a sign between God and the people of their mutual consent unto it, and their taking on themselves the performance of the terms of it, on the one side and the other.**

Obs. XI. The **condescension** of God in making a covenant with men, especially in the ways of the confirmation of it, is **a blessed object of all holy admiration.** — For,

1. The infinite distance and disproportion that is between him and us, both in nature and state or condition;
2. The ends of this covenant, which are all unto our eternal advantage, he standing in no need of us or our obedience;
3. The obligation that he takes upon himself unto the performance of the terms of it, whereas he might righteously deal with us in a way of mere sovereignty;
4. The nature of the assurance he gives us thereof, by the blood of the sacrifice, confirmed with his oath; do all set forth the ineffable glory of this condescension. And this will at length be made manifest in the eternal blessedness of them by whom this covenant is embraced, and the eternal misery of them by whom it is refused. The apostle having given this full confirmation unto his principal assertion, he adds, for the illustration of it, the use and efficacy of blood, that is, the blood of sacrifices, unto purification and atonement.

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Covenant Theology – The Old and the New

code410

Types and Shadows Pointing To The Real Substance

Law vs. Grace

Efficacious Grace w/o Compulsion - Concurrence

Jewish Dispensation, OT (the type) vs Gospel, NT (anti-type)

Yet all is of Grace

Excerpts from Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

THE NEW COVENANT [\[my comments in blue\]](#)

The necessity of this upbringing and preparation does not arise, objectively, in God as though he were variable; nor in Christ as though he were not the same yesterday and today and forever; nor in the spiritual benefits as though they did not exist and could not be communicated by God. But it arises, subjectively, in the state of the human race, which, precisely as a race, had to be saved and hence had to be **gradually prepared** and educated for salvation in Christ. [Calvin] Christ, accordingly, is the turning point of the times, the cross the focal point of world history. First, everything was led in the direction of the cross; subsequently, everything was inferred from the cross.

So when the fullness of time had come and Christ had completed his work on earth, the covenant of grace moved into a higher dispensation. Believers in Israel indeed knew that the Sinaitic dispensation was merely temporary and therefore anticipated the day of the new covenant with longing. And Jesus with the apostles who read the Old Testament in that way saw in it the same covenant of grace with

the same benefits that now became fully manifest. **The Old and the New Testaments are in essence one covenant** (Luke 1: 68– 79; Acts 2: 39; 3: 25). They have one gospel (Rom. 1: 2; Gal. 3: 8; Heb. 4: 2, 6; 2 Tim. 3: 15); one mediator, namely, Christ, who existed also in the days of the Old Testament (John 1: 1, 14; 8: 58; Rom. 8: 3; 2 Cor. 8: 9; Gal. 4: 4; Phil. 2: 6; etc.), exercised his office of mediator (John 8: 56; 1 Cor. 10: 4; 1 Pet. 1: 11; 3: 19; Heb. 13: 8), and is the only mediator for all humans and in all times (John 14: 6; Acts 4: 12; 1 Tim. 2: 5). It included one faith as the way of salvation (Matt. 13: 17; Acts 10: 43; 15: 11; Rom. 4: 11; Gal. 3: 6– 7; Heb. 11); the same promises and benefits of God's communion (2 Cor. 6: 16; Rev. 21: 3), forgiveness, justification (Acts 10: 43; Rom. 4: 22), and eternal life (Matt. 22: 32; Gal. 3: 18; Heb. 9: 15; 11: 10; etc.). The road was the same on which believers in the Old and the New Testaments walked, **but the light in which they walked was different.** [Calvin]

For all the unity between them, therefore, there is also difference. The Old and the New Testaments as different dispensations of the same covenant of grace are related as **promise and fulfillment** (Acts 13: 32; Rom. 1: 2), **as shadow and substance** (Col. 2: 17), as the letter that kills and the Spirit that makes alive (2 Cor. 3: 6ff.), **as servitude and freedom** (Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 1ff., 22ff.; Col. 2: 20; Heb. 12: 18f.), **as particular and universal** (John 4: 21; Acts 10: 35; 14: 16; Gal. 4: 4– 5; 6: 15; Eph. 2: 14; 3: 6).

The new thing in the New Testament, therefore, is the shedding of the non-arbitrary but still temporary sensory national forms under which one and the same grace was revealed in the old day. The new dispensation already starts in a sense when, with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, the promises of the Old Testament begin to be fulfilled. Yet the old dispensation still remained in effect up until the death of Christ. [62] Jesus himself was an Israelite, fulfilled all righteousness, and still concerned himself only with the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But at his death, the curtain in the temple tore in two (Matt. 27: 51), the testator himself died (Heb. 9: 15– 17), the New Testament was founded in his blood (Matt. 26: 28), the bond that stood against us was canceled (Col. 2: 14), the dividing wall was broken down (Eph. 2: 14), and so on. **Factually the old dispensation may long linger, but legally it has been abolished. Better still, nothing was abolished, but the fruit was ripe and broke through the husk.** The church, carried like a fetus in Israel's womb, was born to an independent life of its own and in the Holy Spirit received an immanent life principle of its own. The sun of righteousness rose to its zenith in the heavens and shone out over all peoples. The law and the prophets have been fulfilled and in Christ as their end and goal reached their destiny. **The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ** (John 1: 14). He is the truth (John 14: 6), the substance (Col. 2: 17) **in whom all the promises and shadows have been realized.** In him all things have been fulfilled. He is the true prophet, priest, and king; the true servant of the Lord, the true expiation (Rom. 3: 25), the true sacrifice (Eph. 5: 2), the true circumcision (Col. 2: 11), the true Passover (1 Cor. 5: 7), and therefore his church is the true seed of Abraham, the true Israel, the true people of God (Matt. 1: 21; Luke 1: 17; Rom. 9: 25– 26; 2 Cor. 6: 16– 18; Gal. 3: 29; Titus 2: 14; Heb. 8: 8– 10; 1 Pet. 2: 9; Rev. 21: 3), the true temple of God (1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 16; Eph. 2: 21; 2 Thess. 2: 4; Heb. 8: 2, 5), the true Zion and Jerusalem (Gal. 4: 26; Heb. 12: 22), its spiritual offering, the true religion (John 4: 24; Rom. 12: 1; Phil. 3: 3; 4: 18; etc.). Nothing of the Old Testament is lost in the New, but everything is fulfilled, matured, has reached its full growth, and now, **out of the temporary husk, produces the eternal core.** It is not the case that in Israel there was a true temple and sacrifice and priesthood and so on and that all these have now vanished. The converse, rather, is true: of all this Israel only possessed a shadow, but

now the substance itself has emerged. The things we see are temporal, but the invisible things are eternal. [63]

RELATION TO THE COVENANT OF NATURE

[Doctrine of Concurrence explained]

This **covenant of grace**, which through various dispensations has now been fully realized in the New Testament, was from the first moment of its revelation and is still today surrounded and sustained on all sides by the covenant of nature God established with all creatures. Although special grace is essentially distinct from common grace, it is intimately bound up with it. After all, though the covenant with Noah is called— for the purpose of differentiation— the “covenant of nature,” it did not flow from God’s nature and was not given with the nature of things; it, too, rests on grace, **proceeds from God’s patience, and grants all natural benefits and blessings out of God’s general goodness. It is a covenant of grace in the broad sense**. Further, it is the Father who— not apart from the Son but specifically through the Logos and the Spirit— produces all the forces and gifts present in nature and unregenerate humankind (John 1: 4– 5, 9– 10; Col. 1: 17; Pss. 104: 30; 139: 7). And this Logos and Spirit who dwell and work in all creatures and humans are the same agents who as Christ and the Spirit of Christ acquire and apply all the benefits pertaining to the covenant of grace. Father, Son, and Spirit, then, prepare for the covenant of grace in the covenant of nature and reach back from it, as it were, into the covenant of nature.

The essential character of the covenant of grace, accordingly, consists in the fact that it proceeds from **God’s special grace** and has for its content nothing other than grace— undeserved and forfeited blessings. To that extent it is essentially distinct from the covenant of works, which was established before, and broken by, the fall. Granted, it is also true of the covenant of works that God was not obligated to introduce it. **It was his condescending goodness, and thus also grace in a general sense**, that prompted him to grant this covenant to human beings. He, accordingly, established it and determined every part of it: it is his ordinance and institution. Yet in that covenant of works God came to humanity with the demand of obedience and—only in that way and upon the accomplishment of it— promised to grant them the blessedness of heaven, eternal life, and the enjoyment of the beatific vision. **The covenant of works, accordingly, factored in the free will of the first human pair; in part it depended on them and was therefore insecure and unstable**. In fact, therefore, it was broken, not by God, but by [the first] human pair. God stands by the rule that those who keep the law will receive eternal life. He posits this in his law, attests it in everyone’s conscience, and validates the statement in Christ. **But human beings broke the covenant of works; now they are no longer able to acquire life by keeping it**. By the works of the law no human can be justified. In distinction from and contrast to the covenant of works, God therefore established another, a better, covenant, **not a legalistic but an evangelical covenant**. [*legalistic is doing things primarily from a principle of self-love, self-preservation, self-interest or for mercenary ends, etc.; evangelical is doing things by faith in the God, and more particularly, because you love God; your acts flow from a principle of love for God*] But he made it, not with one who was solely a human, but with the man Christ Jesus, who was his own only begotten, much-beloved Son. And in him, who shares the divine nature and attributes, this covenant has an

unwaveringly firm foundation. It can no longer be broken: it is an everlasting covenant. It rests not in any work of humans but solely in the good pleasure of God, in the work of the Mediator, in the Holy Spirit, who remains forever. It is not dependent on any human condition; it does not confer any benefit based on merit; it does not wait for any law keeping on the part of humans. It is of, through, and for grace. God himself is the sole and eternal being, the faithful and true being, in whom it rests and who establishes, maintains, executes, and completes it. The covenant of grace is the divine work par excellence— his work alone and his work totally. All boasting is excluded here for humans; all glory is due to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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Covenant of Election

Thus in a marvelous way the doctrine of the covenant maintains God's sovereignty in the entire work of salvation. It far surpasses the covenant of works to the degree that Christ exceeds Adam. God's threefold being is manifest much more clearly in the re-creation than in the creation. It is the Father who conceives, plans, and wills the work of salvation; it is the Son who guarantees it and effectively acquires it; it is the Spirit who implements and applies it. And into that entire work of salvation, from beginning to end, nothing is introduced that derives from humans. **It is God's work totally and exclusively; it is pure grace and undeserved salvation.** Despite, or rather because of, the fact that this doctrine of the covenant so purely and fully maintains God's sovereignty in the work of salvation, however, it is all the more important to note that it at the same time beautifully allows the rational and moral nature of humans to come into their own. [Doctrine of Concurrence; God's sovereignty is consistent with man's liberty; God does not operate by compulsion doing violence to man's liberty of his will; he's doesn't force man against his will.] In the covenant of works, this point has already been explained in detail. [Bavinck] But in the covenant of grace, it comes to even more striking expression. In this respect it is very different from election. [Kuyper] Admittedly, the two are not so different that election is particular while the covenant of grace is universal, that the former denies free will and the latter teaches or assumes it, that the latter takes back what the former teaches. But the two do differ in that in election humans are strictly passive but in the covenant of grace they also play an active role. Election only and without qualification states who are elect and will infallibly obtain salvation; the covenant of grace describes the road by which these elect people will attain their destiny. The covenant of grace the channel by which the stream of election flows toward eternity. In this covenant Christ indeed acts as the head and representative of his own, but he does not efface and destroy them. He vouches for them but does so in such a way that they themselves, instructed and enabled by the Spirit, also consciously and voluntarily consent to this covenant. [Doctrine of Concurrence again] Although the covenant of grace has been made with Christ, through him it nevertheless reaches out also to his own, completely embraces and incorporates them body and soul. The pact of salvation expands to become a covenant of grace. The head of the covenant of grace is at the same time its mediator. For that reason, from the moment of its public announcement, it comes with the demand of faith and repentance (Mark 1: 15). In the beginning Reformed theologians spoke freely of "the conditions" of the covenant. [Calvin] But after the nature of the covenant of grace had been more carefully considered and had to be defended against Catholics, Lutherans, and Remonstrants, many of them took exception to the term and avoided it. [K. Olevianus]

In the covenant of grace, that is, in the gospel, which is the proclamation of the covenant of grace, there are actually no demands and no conditions. **For God supplies what he demands.** [the main difference between the Covenant of Works vs. Grace] Christ has accomplished everything, and though he did not accomplish rebirth, faith, and repentance in our place, he did acquire them for us, and the Holy Spirit therefore applies them. Still, in its administration by Christ, the covenant of grace does assume this demanding conditional form. **The purpose is to acknowledge humans in their capacity as rational and moral beings;** still, though they are fallen, to treat them as having been created in God's image; and also on this supremely important level, where it concerns their eternal weal and eternal woe, to hold them responsible and inexcusable; and, finally, **to cause them to enter consciously and freely [Concurrence] into this covenant and to break their covenant with sin.** The covenant of grace, accordingly, is indeed unilateral: it proceeds from God; he has designed and defined it. He maintains and implements it. It is a work of the triune God and is totally completed among the three Persons themselves. **But it is destined to become bilateral, to be consciously and voluntarily accepted and kept by humans in the power of God. [Concurrence again!]** This is the will of God, which so clearly and beautifully manifests itself in the covenant in order that the work of grace may be clearly reflected in the human consciousness and **arouse the human will** to exert itself energetically and forcefully. **The covenant of grace does not deaden human beings or treat them as inanimate objects.** On the contrary, it totally includes them with all their faculties and powers, in soul and body, for time and eternity. **It embraces them totally, does not destroy their power, but deprives them of their impotence.** It does not kill their will but frees them from sin; it does not numb their consciousness but delivers it from darkness. **[God does not destroy their liberty – their wills are not forced, but sweetly changed by the Spirit – that's the key!]** It re-creates the whole person and, having renewed it by grace, **prompts it, freely and independently, with soul, mind, and body, to love God and to dedicate itself to him.** The covenant of grace declares that God's honor and acclaim is not won at the expense but for the benefit of human persons and celebrates its triumphs in the re-creation of the whole person, in his or her enlightened consciousness and restored freedom.

More On Descriptions of What the New Covenant Is, the Promises, the Old Covenant, etc.

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4. The subject-matter of the promise given is a “**covenant**,” — *tyriki*. The LXX. render it by διαθηκη, — “a **testament**.” And that is more proper in this place than “a **covenant**.” For if we take “**covenant**” in a strict and proper sense, it hath indeed no place between God and man. **For a covenant, strictly taken, ought to proceed on equal terms, and a proportionate consideration of things on both sides; but the covenant of God is founded on grace, and consists essentially in a free, undeserved promise.** And therefore *tyriki*, “a **covenant**,” is never spoken of between God and man, **but on the part of God it**

consists in a free promise, or a testament. And “a **testament**,” which is the proper signification of the word here used by the apostle, is suited unto this place, and nothing else.

For, — (1.) **Such a covenant is intended as is ratified and confirmed by the death of him that makes it. And this is properly a testament: for this covenant was confirmed by the death of Christ, and that both as it was the death of the testator, and as it was accompanied with the blood of a sacrifice;** whereof we must treat afterwards at large, if God will.

(2.) **It is such a covenant, as wherein the covenanter, he that makes it, bequeatheth his goods unto others in the way of a legacy;** for this is done by Christ herein, as we must also declare afterwards. **Wherefore our Savior calls this covenant “the new testament in his blood.”** This the word used by the apostle doth properly signify; and it is evident that he intends not a covenant absolutely and strictly so taken. With respect hereunto the first covenant is usually called the “old testament.” For we intend not thereby the books of Scripture, or oracles of God committed unto the church of the Jews, (which yet, as we have observed, are once called “the Old Testament,” 2 Corinthians 3:14,) but the covenant that God made with the church of Israel at Sinai, whereof we have spoken at large. And this was called a “testament” for three reasons: —

[1.] **Because it was confirmed by death;** that is, **the death of the sacrifices** that were slain and offered at its solemn establishment. So saith our apostle, “The first testament was not dedicated without blood,” Hebrews 9:18. But there is more required hereunto; for even a covenant properly and strictly so called may be confirmed with sacrifices. Wherefore, —

[2.] God did therein **make over and grant unto the church** of Israel the good things of the land of Canaan, with the privileges of his worship.

[3.] The principal reason of this denomination, “the old testament,” is taken from its being typically significative of the **death and legacy of the great testator**, as we have showed.

We have treated somewhat before concerning the nature of the new testament, as considered in distinction from and opposition unto the old. I shall here only briefly consider what concurrerth unto the constitution of it, as it was then future, when this promise was given, and as it is here promised. And three things do concur hereunto: —

(1.) A recapitulation, collection, and confirmation of all the promises of grace that had been given unto the church from the beginning, even all that was spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets that had been since the world began, Luke 1:70. **The first promise contained in it the whole essence and substance of the covenant, of grace [Gen3:15].** All those afterwards given unto the church, on various occasions, were but explications and confirmations of it. In the whole of them there was a full declaration of the wisdom and love of God in sending his Son, and of his grace unto mankind thereby. And God solemnly confirmed them with his oath, namely, that they should be all accomplished in their appointed season. Whereas, therefore, the covenant here promised included the sending of Christ for the accomplishment of those promises, they are all gathered into one head therein. It is a constellation of all the promises of grace.

(2.) All these promises were to be reduced into an actual covenant or testament two ways:

[1.] In that, as unto the accomplishment of the grace principally intended in them, they received it in the sending of Christ; and as to the confirmation and establishment of them for the communication of grace unto the church, they received it in the death of Christ, as a sacrifice of agreement or atonement.

[2.] They are established as the rule and law of reconciliation and peace between God and man. This gives them the nature of a covenant; for a covenant is the solemn expression of the terms of peace between various parties, with the confirmation of them.

(3.) They are reduced unto such form of law, as to become the only rule of the ordinances of worship and divine service required of the church. Nothing unto these ends is now presented unto us, or required of us, but what belongeth immediately unto the administration of this covenant, and the grace thereof. But the reader must consult what hath been discoursed at large unto this purpose on the 6th^verse.

And we may see from hence what it is that God here promiseth and foretelleth, as that which he would do in the “days that were coming.” For whereas they had the promise before, and so virtually the grace and mercy of the new covenant, it may be inquired: ‘What is yet wanting, that should be promised solemnly under the name of a covenant?’ For the flail resolution of this question, I must, as before, refer the reader unto what hath been discoursed at large about the two covenants, and the difference between them, on verse 6. Here we may briefly name some few things, sufficient unto the exposition of this place; as, —

(1.) All those **promises** which had before been given out unto the church from the beginning of the world, were now reduced into the form of a covenant, or rather of a testament. The name of “a **covenant**” is indeed sometimes applied unto the **promises of grace** before or under the old testament; but *tyrubi*, the word used in all those places, denoteth only “a **free, gratuitous promise**,” Genesis 9:9, 17:4. But they were none of them, nor all of them together, reduced into the form of a testament; which they could not be but by the death of the testator. And what blessed privileges and benefits were included herein hath been showed before, and must yet further be insisted on in the exposition of the ninth chapter, if God permit.

(2.) There was another covenant **superadded** unto the promises, which was to be the immediate rule of the obedience and worship of the church. And according unto their observance of this superadded covenant, they were esteemed to have kept or broken covenant with God. **This was the old covenant on Sinai**, as hath been declared. Wherefore the promises could not be in the form of a covenant unto the people, inasmuch as they could not be under the power of two covenants at once, and those, as it afterwards appeared, absolutely inconsistent. For this is that which our apostle proves in this place, namely, that when the promises were brought into the form and had the use of a covenant unto the church, the former covenant must needs disappear, or be disannulled. Only, they had their place and efficacy to convey the benefits of the grace of God in Christ unto them that did believe; but God here foretelleth that he will give them such an order and efficacy in the administration of his grace, as that

all the fruits of it by Jesus Christ shall be bequeathed and made over unto the church in the way of a solemn covenant.

(3.) Notwithstanding the promises which they had received, yet the whole system of their worship sprang from, and related unto the covenant made at Sinai. But now God promiseth a new state of spiritual worship, relating only unto the promises of grace as brought into the form of a covenant.

Obs. VIII. The new covenant, as re-collecting into one all the promises of grace given from the foundation of the world, accomplished in the actual exhibition of Christ, and confirmed in his death, and by the sacrifice of his blood, thereby becoming the sole rule of new spiritual ordinances of worship suited thereunto, was the great object of the faith of the saints of the old testament, and is the great foundation of all our present mercies.

All these things were contained in that new covenant, as such, which God here promiseth to make. For, —

(1.) There was in it a recapitulation of all the promises of grace. God had not made any promise, any intimation of his love or grace unto the church in general, nor unto any particular believer, but he brought it all into this covenant, so as that they should be esteemed, all and every one of them, to be given and spoken unto every individual person that hath an interest in this covenant. Hence all the promises made unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the other patriarchs, and the oath of God whereby they were confirmed, are all of them made unto us, and do belong unto us no less than they did unto them to whom they were first given, if we are made partakers of this covenant. Hereof the apostle gives an instance in the singular promise made unto Joshua, which he applies unto believers, Hebrews 13:5. There was nothing of love or grace in any of them but was gathered up into this covenant.

(2.) The actual exhibition of Christ in the flesh belonged unto this promise of making a new covenant; for without it, it could not have been made. This was the desire of all the faithful from the foundation of the world; this they longed after, and fervently prayed for continually. And the prospect of it was the sole ground of their joy and consolation. “Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced.” This was the great privilege which God granted unto them that walked uprightly before him; such an one, saith he, “shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off,” Isaiah 33:16, 17. That prospect they had by faith of the King of saints in his beauty and glory, though yet at a great distance, was their relief and their reward in their sincere obedience. And those who understand not the glory of this privilege of the new covenant, in the incarnation of the Son of God, or his exhibition in the flesh, wherein the depths of the counsels and wisdom of God, in the way of grace, mercy, and love, opened themselves unto the church, are strangers unto the things of God.

(3.) It was confirmed and ratified by the death and blood shedding of Christ, and therefore included in it the whole work of his mediation. This is the spring of the life of the church; and until it was

opened, great darkness was upon the minds of believers themselves. What peace, what assurance, what light, what joy, depend hereon, and proceed from it, no tongue can express.

(4.) All ordinances of worship do belong hereunto. What is the benefit of them, what are the advantages which believers receive by them, we must declare when we come to consider that comparison that the apostle makes between them and the carnal ordinances of the law, Hebrews 9.

Whereas, therefore, all these things were contained in the new covenant, as here promised of God, it is evident how great was the concernment of the saints under the old testament to have it introduced; and how great also ours is in it, now it is established.

5. The author or maker of this covenant is expressed in the words, as also those with whom it was made: —

(1.) The first is included in the person of the verb, “I will make;” “I will make, saith the Lord.” It is God himself that makes this covenant, and he takes it upon himself so to do. He is the principal party covenanting: “I will make a covenant.” God hath made a covenant: “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” And sundry things are we taught therein: —

[1.] The freedom of this covenant, without respect unto any merit, worth, or condignity in them with whom it is made. What God doth, he doth freely, — “ex mera gratia et voluntate.” There was no cause without himself for which he should make this covenant, or which should move him so to do. And this we are eminently taught in this place, where he expresseth no other occasion of his making this covenant but the sins of the people in breaking that which he formerly made with them. And it is expressed on purpose to declare the free and sovereign grace, the goodness, love, and mercy, which alone were the absolute springs of this covenant.

[2.] The *wisdom of its contrivance*. The making of any covenant to be good and useful, depends solely on the wisdom and foresight of them by whom it is made. Hence men do often make covenants, which they design for their good and advantage, but they are so ordered, for want of wisdom and foresight, that they turn unto their hurt and ruin. But there was infinite wisdom in the constitution of this covenant; whence it is, and shall be, infinitely effective of all the blessed ends of it. And they are utterly unacquainted with it, who are not affected with a holy admiration of divine wisdom in its contrivance. A man might comfortably spend his life in the contemplation of it, and yet be far enough from finding out the Almighty in it unto perfection. Hence is it that it is so divine a mystery in all the parts of it, which the wisdom of the flesh cannot comprehend. Nor, without a due consideration of the infinite wisdom of God in the contrivance of it, can we have any true or real conceptions about it: JEKazhloi. Profane, unsanctified minds can have no insight into this effect of divine wisdom.

[3.] It was God alone who could prepare and provide a surety for this covenant. Considering the necessity there was of a surety in this covenant, seeing no covenant between God and man could be firm and stable without one, by reason of our weakness and mutability; and considering of what a nature this surety must be, even God and man in one person; it is evident that God himself must make

this covenant. And the provision of this surety doth contain in it the glorious manifestation of all the divine excellencies, beyond any act or work of God whatever.

[4.] There is in this covenant a sovereign law of divine worship, wherein the church is consummated, or brought into the most perfect estate whereof in this world it is capable, and established for ever. This law could be given by God alone.

[5.] There is ascribed unto this covenant such an **efficacy of grace**, as nothing but almighty power can make good and accomplish. The grace here mentioned in the promises of it, directs us immediately unto its author. **For who else but God can write the divine law in our hearts, and pardon all our sins? The sanctification or renovation of our natures, and the justification of our persons, being pro-raised herein, seeing infinite power and grace are required unto them, he alone must make this covenant with whom all power and grace do dwell. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy," Psalm 62:1 |, 12. [Arminians say that the power belongs to us in our innate ability to believe which is untrue, and not only that, their doctrine undermines the doctrine of original sin, saying that man is unwilling and unable to come to God, 1Cor2:14, Rm8:7-8, Jn14:17 and robs God of the glory of his free grace.]**

[6.] The reward promised in this covenant is God himself: "I am thy reward." And who but God can ordain himself to be our reward?

Obs. IX. **All the efficacy and glory of the new covenant do originally arise from, and are resolved into, the author and supreme cause of it, which is God himself.** —And we might consider, unto the encouragement of our faith, and the strengthening of our consolation, —

[1.] His infinite condescension, to make and enter into covenant with poor, lost, fallen, sinful man. This no heart can fully conceive, no tongue can express; only we live in hope to have yet a more clear prospect of it, and to have a holy admiration of it unto eternity.

[2.] His *wisdom, goodness, and grace*, in the nature of that covenant which he hath condescended to make and enter into. The first covenant he made with us in Adam, which we brake, was in itself good, holy, righteous, and just; — it must be so, because it was also made by him. **But there was no provision made in it absolutely to preserve us from that woeful disobedience and transgression which would make it void**, and frustrate all the holy and blessed ends of it. **Nor was God obliged so to preserve us**, having furnished us with a sufficiency of ability for our own preservation, so as we could no way fall but by a willful apostasy from him. But this covenant is of that nature, **as that the grace administered in it shall effectually preserve all the covenanters unto the end, and secure unto them all the benefits of it.** For, —

[3.] **His power and faithfulness are engaged unto the accomplishment of all the promises of it. And these promises do contain everything that is spiritually and eternally good or desirable unto us.** "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth'." How glorious art thou in the ways of thy grace towards poor sinful creatures, who had destroyed themselves! And, —

[4.] He hath made no created good, but himself only to be our reward.

(2.) **The persons with whom this covenant is made are also expressed:** “The house of Israel, and the house of Judah.” Long before the giving of this promise, that people were divided into two parts. The one of them, in way of distinction from the other, retained the name of Israel. These were the ten tribes, which fell off from the house of David, under the conduct of Ephraim; whence they are often also in the Prophets called by that name. The other, consisting of the tribe properly so called, with that of Benjamin and the greatest part of Levi, took the name of Judah; and with them both the promise and the church remained in a peculiar manner. But whereas they all originally sprang from Abraham, who received the promise and sign of circumcision for them all, and because they were all equally in their forefather brought into the bond of the old covenant, they are here mentioned distinctly, that none of the seed of Abraham might be excluded from the tender of this covenant. Unto the whole seed of Abraham according to the flesh it was that the terms and grace of this covenant were first to be offered. So Peter tells them, in his first sermon, that **“the promise was unto them and their children”** who were then present, —**that is, the house of Judah; and “to all that were afar off,” —that is, the house of Israel in their dispersions, Acts 2:39.** So again he expresseth the order of the dispensation of this covenant with respect to the promise made to Abraham, Acts 3:25, 26, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you;” namely, in the preaching of the gospel. So our apostle, in his sermon unto them, affirmed that “it was necessary that the word should be first spoken unto them,” Acts 13:46. And this was all the privilege that was now left unto them; for the partition-wall was now broken down, and all obstacles against the Gentiles taken out of the way. **Wherefore this house of Israel and house of Judah may be considered two ways:** [1.] As that people were the whole entire posterity of Abraham. [2.] As they were **typical, and mystically significant of the whole church of God.** Hence alone it is that the promises of grace under the old testament are given unto the church under these names, because they were types of them who should really and effectually be made partakers of them.

[1.] In the first sense, God made this covenant with them, and this on sundry accounts:

1st: Because He in and through whom alone it was to be established and made effectual was to be brought forth amongst them of the seed of Abraham, as the apostle Peter plainly declares, Acts 3:25.

2dly. Because all things that belonged unto the ratification of it were to be transacted amongst them.

3dly. Because, in the outward dispensation of it, the terms and grace of it were first in the counsel of God to be tendered unto them.

4thly. Because by them, by the ministry of men of their posterity, the dispensation of it was to be carried unto all nations, as they were to be blessed in the seed of Abraham; which was done by the apostles and other disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. So the law of the Redeemer went forth from Zion. By this means “the covenant was confirmed with many” of them “for one week,” before the calling of the Gentiles, Daniel 9:27. And because these things belonged equally unto them all, mention is made distinctly of “the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.” For the house of Judah was, at the time of

the giving of this promise, in the sole possession of all the privileges of the old covenant; Israel having cut off themselves, by their revolt from the house of David; being cast out also, for their sins, amongst the heathen. But God, to declare that the covenant he designed had no respect unto those carnal privileges which were then in the possession of Judah alone, but only unto the promise made unto Abraham, he equals all his seed with respect unto the mercy of this covenant.

[2.] **In the second sense the whole church of elect believers is intended under these denominations, being typified by them.** These are they alone, being one made of twain, namely, **Jews and Gentiles**, with whom the covenant is really made and established, and unto whom the grace of it is actually communicated. **For all those with whom this covenant is made shall as really have the law of God written in their hearts, and their sins pardoned, according unto the promise of it, as the people of old were brought into the land of Canaan by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham. These are the true Israel and Judah, prevailing with God, and confessing unto his name.**

Obs. X. The covenant of grace in Christ is made only with the Israel of God, the church of the elect. — For by the making of this covenant with any, the effectual communication of the grace of it unto them is principally intended. **Nor can that covenant be said to be made absolutely with any but those whose sins are pardoned by virtue thereof, and in whose hearts the law of God is written;** which are the **express promises of it.** And it was with respect unto those of this sort among that people that the covenant was promised to be made with them. See Romans 9:27-33, 11:7. **But in respect of the outward dispensation of the covenant, it is extended beyond the effectual communication of the grace of it. And in respect thereunto did the privilege of the carnal seed of Abraham lie.**

Obs. XI. Those who are first and most advanced as unto **outward privileges**, are oftentimes last and least advantaged by the grace and mercy of them. — Thus was it with these two houses of Israel and Judah. They had the privilege and pre-eminence, above all nations of the world, as unto the first tender, and all the benefits of the outward dispensation of the covenant; yet, “though the number of them was as the sand of the sea, a remnant only was saved.” They came behind the nations of the world as unto the grace of it; and this by reason of their unbelief, and the abuse of the privileges granted unto them. **Let not those, therefore, who now enjoy the greatest privileges be high-minded, but fear.**

(3.) The manner of making this covenant is expressed by “perficiam,” “consummabo,” “I will perfect” or “consummate.” In the Hebrew it is only trokwa,, “pangam,” “feriam,” “I will make; but the apostle renders it by this word, to denote that this covenant was at once perfected and consummated, to the exclusion of all additions and alterations. Perfection and unalterable establishment are the properties of this covenant: “An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.”

(4.) As unto its **distinguishing character**, it is called “a new covenant.” So it is with respect unto the old covenant made at Sinai. Wherefore by this covenant, as here considered, is not understood the promise of grace given unto Adam absolutely; nor that unto Abraham, which contained the substance and matter of it, the grace exhibited in it, but not the complete form of it as a covenant. For if it were only the promise, it could not be called “a new covenant,” with respect unto that made at Sinai; for so it was before it absolutely two thousand five hundred years, and in the person of Abraham four

hundred years at the least. But it must be considered as before described, in the establishment of it, and its law of spiritual worship. And so it was called “new” in time after that on Sinai eight hundred years. Howbeit it may be called “a new covenant” in other respects also. As, first, because of its eminency; —so it is said of an eminent work of God, “Behold, I work a new thing in the earth:” and its duration and continuance, as that which shall never wax old, is denoted thereby.

Man's Corruption - Total Depravity

code303

[Sin, Satan, the Curse, the Promise of relief, Man's corruption or Original Sin, Adam's original grace in the garden at his creation by John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews](#)

“If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam's transgression, that God did not impute Adam's sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam's most innocent posterity from paradise?” Owen's reasoning is excellent. - A Display of Arminianism Chp 7

pg 173-176 vol. 17 (241-244 online) John Owen

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_Introduction_Background.pdf

26. We may now, therefore, take the sum of this discourse, and of the whole matter that we have insisted on, about the entrance of sin into the world, and the remedy provided in the grace and wisdom of God against it. It appears, upon our inquiry, First, That the sin of our first parents was the occasion and cause of all that evil which is in the world, — of all that is felt or justly feared by mankind; for as those who knew not, or received not, the revelation of the truth in these things made unto us in the Scripture, could never assign any other cause of it that might be satisfactory unto an ordinary rational inquirer, so the testimonies of the Scripture make it most evident, and especially that insisted on. Secondly, It hath been evinced that mankind could not recover or deliver themselves from under the power of their own innate corruption and disorder, nor from the effects of the curse and wrath of God that came upon them; **neither is there any ground of expectation of relief from any other part of God's creation: but yet, that God, for the praise of the glory of his grace, mercy, and goodness, would effect it and bring it about.** **Thirdly, that this relief and deliverance is first intimated and declared in these words of God unto the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;”** which appears, —

First, Because, in and with the serpent, **Satan**, who was the head of all apostasy from God, and by whom our first parents were beguiled, is intended in these words. This we have made evident from the confession of the Jews, with whom principally, in this

matter, we have to do. And to what hath been already observed unto that purpose, we may add the testimonies of some other of them to the same purpose. Rabbi Bechai, he whom they call *qzyyjb*, “Bechai the elder,” in his comment on the law, upon these words, Genesis 3:15, speaks to this purpose: “We have no more enmity with the serpent than with other creeping things. Wherefore the Scripture mystically signifies him who was hid in the serpent; for the body of the crafty serpent was a fit instrument for that force or virtue that joined itself therewithal. That was it which made Eve to sin; whence death came on all her posterity. **And this is the enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman**; and this is the mystery of the holy tongue, that the serpent is sometimes called Saraph, according to the name of an angel who is also called Saraph. And now thou knowest that the serpent is Satan, and the evil figment, and the angel of death.” And Rabbi Judah, in *rqylk*: “Many interpreters say that the evil figment hath all its force from the old serpent, or Satan.” To the same purpose, the author of *jrpw rwtpk*, “Caphtor Vapaerach:” “The devil and the serpent are called by one name.” And many other testimonies of the like importance might be collected out of them. We have also a surer word for our own satisfaction, in the application of this place unto Satan in the divine writings of the New Testament: as 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5:11-13, 15; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9, 20:2, 3; but we forbear to press them on the Jews.

Besides, it is most evident from the thing itself; for, — first, Who can be so sottish as to imagine that this great alteration which ensued on the works of God, that which caused him to pronounce them accursed, and to inflict so sore a punishment on Adam and all his posterity, should arise from the actings of a brute creature? Where is the glory of this dispensation? How can we attribute it unto the wisdom and greatness of God? What is there in it suitable unto his righteousness and holiness? Whereas supposing this to be the work of him who was in himself the beginning of all apostasy, and who first brake the law of his creation, all things answer the excellency of the divine perfections. Moreover, is it imaginable that the nature of man, **then flourishing in the vigor of all its intellectual abilities, reason, wisdom, knowledge, in that order and rectitude of them which was his grace**, should be surprised, seduced, and brought into subjection unto the craft and machinations of an inferior creature, a beast of the field, and that unto its own ruin, temporal and eternal? The whole nature of the inferior creatures, James tells us, “is tamed by the nature of man,” chap. 3:7, and that now, in his lessened and depraved condition; and shall we think that this excellent nature, in the blossom of its strength and right unto rule over all, should be tamed, corrupted, subdued, by the nature of a beast or a serpent? And yet again, whereas in the whole

action of the serpent, there is an open design against the glory and honor of God, with the welfare and happiness of mankind, and that managed with craft, subtlety, and forecast, how can we imagine that such a contrivance should befall a brute worm, incapable of moral evil, and newly framed out of the dust by the power of its Creator?

Original Sin, and the Necessity of Being Born Again

Code447

John 3

By John Calvin

My notes in [blue]

6. That which is born of the flesh. By reasoning from contraries, he [Christ talking to Nicodemus] argues that the kingdom of God is shut against us, unless an entrance be opened to us by a new birth (*palingenesia*). For he takes for granted, that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless we are spiritual [that is, born again or born from above, i.e., converted]. But we bring nothing from the womb but a carnal nature. [or fallen/sinful/depraved nature: the effect of Adam's sin: the doctrine of Original Sin] Therefore it follows, that we are naturally banished from the kingdom of God, and, having been deprived of the heavenly life [where the heart has been changed to love Christ/God and hate sin and Satan], remain under the yoke of death. [under the curse of the law as all are by nature until they are converted by the Spirit – the new birth.] Besides, when Christ argues here, that men must be born again, because they are only flesh [*natural as opposed to spiritual, i.e., born again to the newness of life, having now being made a partaker of the divine nature but also still having the old nature that wars with this new nature. Hence a believer as two natures; the Spirit, via grace, wars with the flesh, etc.*], he undoubtedly comprehends all mankind under the term flesh. By the flesh, therefore, is meant in this place not the body, but the soul also, and consequently every part of it. When the Popish divines restrict the word to that part which they call sensual, they do so in utter ignorance of its meaning; for Christ must in that case have used an inconclusive argument, that we need a second birth, because part of us is corrupt. But if the flesh is contrasted with the Spirit, as a corrupt thing is contrasted with what is uncorrupted, a crooked thing with what is straight, a polluted thing with what is holy, a contaminated thing with what is pure, we may readily conclude that the whole nature of man is condemned by a single word. Christ therefore declares that our understanding and reason is corrupted, because it is carnal, and that all the affections of the heart are wicked and reprobate, because they too are carnal. [All people come into this world in this state of nature, a fallen nature due to Adam's sin (the doctrine of Original Sin); man is totally depraved in all his being: all the faculties of his soul, the mind/understanding darkened, the will stubborn, self-centered, and the affections perverted, so that man is a hater and despiser of God and lover of self. Man declares his independence from God as Adam and Eve did in the garden in this way: that I will decide what is good or evil from my

own understanding or contrivance, and not from God's law. And so, God, punishing sin with sin, all of us come into this world declaring our independence from God, putting our own self in the room of God. Read Romans 1 and Romans 3 for a summary of this situation.]

But here it may be objected, that since the soul is not begotten by human generation, we are not born of the flesh, as to the chief part of our nature. This led many persons to imagine that not only our bodies, but our souls also, descend to us from our parents; for they thought it absurd that original sin, which has its peculiar habitation in the soul, should be conveyed from one man to all his posterity, unless all our souls proceeded from his soul as their source. And certainly, at first sight, the words of Christ appear to convey the idea, that we are flesh, because we are born of flesh. I answer, so far as relates to the words of Christ, they mean nothing else than that we are all carnal [as opposed to Christ/heavenly minded] when we are born; and that as we come into this world mortal men, our nature relishes nothing but what is flesh. He simply distinguishes here between nature and the supernatural gift; for the corruption of all mankind in the person of Adam alone did not proceed from generation, but from the appointment of God, who in one man had adorned us all, and who has in him also deprived us of his gifts. Instead of saying, therefore, that each of us draws vice and corruption from his parents, it would be more correct to say that we are all alike corrupted in Adam alone, because immediately after his revolt God took away from human nature what He had bestowed upon it. [This is the judgement of God, that God punishes sin with sin.]

Here another question arises; for it is certain that in this degenerate and corrupted nature some remnant of the gifts of God still lingers; and hence it follows that we are not in every respect corrupted. The reply is easy. The gifts which God hath left to us since the fall, if they are judged by themselves, are indeed worthy of praise; but as the contagion of wickedness is spread through every part, there will be found in us nothing that is pure and free from every defilement. That we naturally possess some knowledge of God, that some distinction between good and evil is engraven on our conscience, that our faculties are sufficient for the maintenance of the present life, that -- in short -- we are in so many ways superior to the brute beasts, that is excellent in itself, so far as it proceeds from God [Romans 1]; but in us all these things are completely polluted, in the same manner as the wine which has been wholly infected and corrupted by the offensive taste of the vessel loses the pleasantness of its good flavor, and acquires a bitter and pernicious taste [Romans 3:9-18]. For such knowledge of God as now remains in men is nothing else than a frightful source of idolatry and of all superstitions; the judgment exercised in choosing and distinguishing things is partly blind and foolish, partly imperfect and confused; all the industry that we possess flows into vanity and trifles; and the will itself, with furious impetuosity, rushes headlong to what is evil. Thus in the whole of our nature there remains not a drop of uprightness. Hence it is evident that we must be formed by the second birth, that we may be fitted for the kingdom of God; and the meaning of Christ's words is, that as a man is born only carnal from the womb of his mother; **he must be formed anew by the Spirit, that he may begin to be spiritual.**

The word Spirit is used here in two senses, namely, for grace, and the effect of grace. For in the first place, Christ informs us that the Spirit of God is the only Author of a pure and upright nature, and afterwards he states, that we are spiritual, because we have been renewed by his power.

The Gov't of Christ; when nations or people cast off the Gov't of Christ, i.e., rebel against his law, bondage and affliction comes. Other subjects: when salvation comes to a person - signs of conversion - self-examination, etc. This is very good! Plus a comment on Arminianism.

FOR A TIME OF LIBERTY

By Thomas Shepard

Vol. 3 pg285-308

My comments in blue; red etc., for emphasis

Code449

2 Chron. xii. 8, "Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the country."

The greatest part of this chapter is spent in setting down that famous war which Shishak, king of Egypt, made against Rehoboam, king of Judah.

The cause of this war in regard of Shishak is not set down; probable conjectures there be: Jeroboam probably might be treacherous, who having a party in Egypt, lest Rehoboam should grow too great, together with some other pretended wrongs, might awaken this bear from his den; but in regard of God, you may see the reason set down, (ver. 2,) "because they had transgressed against the Lord."

The time of this war is set down in the first verse — when he had established the kingdom by wholesome laws, erecting God's worship, and countenancing godly men, (2 Chron. xi. 16, 17,) which continued three years, and strengthened himself by fortified places, and munition fit for war, as in the foregoing chapter appears. Now, when he had most peace and quiet, he and all Israel suddenly forsake the Lord, which was the fourth year; and in the fifth year comes Shishak, and with a mighty host wastes all before him until he comes to the chief city.

Now, in verse the fifth and sixth is set down the repentance of the people, with their princes especially Shemaiah, who, no doubt, had spoke against their idolatrous courses before, takes his season when they were low and tamed, and tells them the true cause of their misery. (Ver. 5.) Many sins there were in the land, as idolatry, and whoredoms, etc.; yet the venom was, "They had forsaken the Lord." Let the sin be what it will be, yet let it be such a one as men forsake the Lord by it, that is the provocation; hereupon they humble themselves, some effectually, some hypocritically, yet all outwardly, and say the Lord is righteous; they extenuate not their sin, they lay not the blame on man, no, not on Shishak, but see the Lord, justify his proceedings: The Lord is righteous, we unrighteous, although it were more heavy than it is.

Now, in the seventh verse, and in the words read, is set down the mitigation of God's plague, and the moderation of his chastisement, "I will not pour out all my wrath," yet I think it not fit to show perfect deliverance, "I will make them servants, to let them know," etc.

There are two parts in the words read: —

1. The punishment or chastisement on Judah for forsaking the Lord, and backsliding from him, which is bondage and privation of the liberty they had — they must be Shishak's servants.
2. The Lord's end; it was very gracious — "that they may know my service," etc .

For explication.

1. What is meant by service?

Ans. There are two things in service: 1. Government. 2. Subjection; cheerful obedience to that government. Both the Hebrew word, as also the nature of the thing itself, hath these two.

God sets up his government over a people; his people do or should subject cheerfully to this government. By my service is therefore meant my government, and your subjection wrought by me to this government.

2. "They shall know." 1. Not by the knowledge of the brain, for that they know now, but knowledge of experience, as it is said in Ezek. 6. ult.: "When I shall have made the land desolate in all their habitations, they shall know that I am the Lord." Now, what shall they know of it?

Ans. The difference between them, the sorrow of the one, the sweet of the other; the misery of the one, and blessedness of the other; the bondage of the one, and the liberty of the other.

There might be many things observed from the words, but I note only the general.

Obser. That when any people of God forsake the Lord, and cast off his government over them, they provoke the Lord to put them under the bondage of another government. They that abuse God's liberty must be under bondage; the Lord hath a kingdom, in this world most glorious; hence, when men will not be under it, if they will not be ruled by him, they must be ruled by the whip; and if Christ's laws cannot bind, Christ's chains must. Jer. v. 19, "And it shall come to pass when ye shall say, Wherefore does the Lord do all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours." Ps. 107:10, 11, "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High." Ezek. 20:24, 25, "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and polluted my Sabbaths, etc. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments, whereby they should not live," etc. Zech. 11:15, 16, "And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall

not visit those that be cut off, nor seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that stands still," etc. [Here is the ESV version:](#)

¹⁵ And the LORD said to me, "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land *who* will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand.

When people break covenant with God, and loathe him, then saith the Lord, I will not feed, and then he sets over them idol shepherds.

This is certain: when the soul will not subject itself to God, he goes about to subject God to him, nay, to his lusts. Is. xliii. 24, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." For one of them must stoop, and a man would have the Lord be merciful, patient, and pitiful to him, when he is in league with his lusts: now, this the Lord will not do. And hence, if he does not destroy him, he withdraws himself from serving of the creature, and hence other evils take hold of it, and bring it under. When Adam stood and was for God, all creatures served him, and the riches of God's goodness preserved him, the Lord communicated the sweet of his government or service to him; but when turned away from the right ways of God, now, if the Lord should serve him by governing of him in goodness, he should serve a lust, and bow to the creature, nay, to a lust; which is a viler thing than for one creature to fall down and worship another. Therefore, now, hence it comes to pass, because the Lord will not be a servant to any man's lust, there must be some other government that must seize upon them. Hence set all the saints in the churches with their faces subjected to the Lord, his good will and righteous ways, and then his goodness shall flow down upon them in and through Christ; for otherwise we have nothing to do with good, but when we are set right for God. Hos. ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, and mercy," etc. The Lord will then command all creatures to be serviceable to his church and people. (Ver 21, 22.) But on the contrary, misery must needs seize upon the soul that doth cast off the government of the Lord Jesus. Thus much for the general explication of the point. Now, in particular, —

1. What is this government or service of God?
2. What is that bondage he captivates his unto?
3. Why doth the Lord do thus?

Ques. 1. What is this government or service of God which being shaken off the Lord gives them over to bondage?

Ans. There is a double government of the Lord over his people.

1. **Internal or inward**, of which our Saviour speaks. (Luke 17:21.) The kingdom of God (saith Christ) comes not by observation and outward pomp; "For behold the kingdom of God is within you." **And this is nothing else in general, but when the Lord doth by his Spirit in the word of his grace cause the whole soul willingly to submit and subject itself to the whole will of God so far as it is made known to it; this is the inward kingdom of God and government of Christ in the soul.** Rom. viii. 14, "So many as are led

by the Spirit are the sons of God." Ps. 90:2, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion," etc. 2 Cor. x. 4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Ver. 5, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are mighty boisterous distempers, but the Lord, when he comes in his kingdom, to sit upon the royal throne of the hearts of his people, now they fly; and this is the inward kingdom of Christ, like a poor subject pardoned and received to favor, he is before the face of the prince continually attending on him. Rev. vii. 14,15, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Ver. 15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple," etc. Now, this is meant in part by God's service in these days: do you think the Lord cared for thousands of rams? No, but to walk humbly. (Micah vi.) Did he care for temple and ordinances? No, but, (Is. i 19,) "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Neh. ix. 20, "In these days he gave them his good Spirit to instruct them."

2. **External or outward**, the end and instigation of which was to set up and help forward the inward; for external ordinances are nothing in themselves, mean things, but as they are appointed and sanctified for this end, they are most glorious; and therefore, Christ threatens the Jews (Matt. 21:43) that the kingdom should be taken from them. What was that? Surely not inward, for that they had not, but the outward and external means called God's kingdom; all these helps and means shall be taken from you, and all laid ruinous. Now, his external kingdom of Christ is double.

1. **The external kingdom or government of God by his church, in the administration, and execution, and subjection to the blessed ordinances of God**, wherein the power and kingdom of Christ I is seen and thus, (Dan. ii. 44, 45; vii. 27,) "It shall be given to the saints of the Most High," etc. Not to profane her of beasts or cages of unclean birds, but to the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all the princes of the world shall subject themselves to this kingdom of Christ.

This outward kingdom Christ administers amongst his people in this world: and this was part of the Lord's government over his people herein, though various from our form now.

2. Of the commonwealth which may have many forms and had in the time of Israel; but it receiving its law from God and governing for God, hence it was the government of God, and subjection hereunto was subjection and service to God himself. And hence, when the people cast off Samuel, (1 Sam. 8:7,) "They have not rejected thee, but me." Rev. 11:15, "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." For although the commonwealth of Israel was made up of the church, and hence Josephus calls it a theocracy, where the Lord governed, and yet the same thing had many forms and respects, and hence there was a diverse government then, and hence made diverse, 2 Chron. 19:5, 8, "Jehoshaphat sets judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities." Such is the wildness, boldness, and carelessness of men's hearts, that they do not only need laws, but watchmen over them, to see they be kept; and

hence the Lord appointed some chief, some judges in every city, and also some in every village, as by proportion may be gathered, (Ex. 18) every ten men had one over them.

Now, this was the blessed wisdom of God to put all into sweet subordination one unto another for himself.

1. Everyone professing his name is made for God, for Christ, "as Lord of lords, unto whom every knee must bow," and inwardly subject. ',

2. Hence, the Lord (it being not good to leave man to himself) erects a kingdom of the church, with his own power and authority, and government in it for that end.

3. This being poor and shiftless against inward and outward revenge, hence the Lord sets up kingdoms of the world, which either rule for this end, or these ends, or not. If they do not, they are to answer it, and shall one day to Christ, "whom God hath made head over all things to the church." (Eph. 1:22.) If they do, then their government, judgment, and kingdom is the Lord's in a special manner; and hence break the yoke of subjection to any one of these, you cast off Christ, the Lord's government and service; and being so linked together, in truth if you break one you break all, and this will provoke the Lord to make you kiss the clink, and to put your necks under iron bondage that refuse subjection to him.

Ques. 2. What is that bondage or other government to which the Lord gives over his people when they have cast off his government: this will provoke the Lord if the Lord be cast off, and the casting off the government of Christ will bring the most famous kingdoms, churches, and families into bondage: you will say, What is this bondage? When is it that the Lord takes his season for the execution of it?

Ans. 1. The Lord takes his own times to do it; these were a twelvemonth before the Lord sent Shishak. Here he was more quick. Nebuchadnezzar comes at last, and many years it is before the Lord does it.

2. The Lord is various in working; as he is wonderful and has many ways or means of bondage, he has more prisons and chains than one.

1. Sometimes the Lord opens the door of a kingdom or state for the inroad of some foreign, or it may be barbarous enemy, breaking in sometimes by power, coming in sometimes by craft, and then ruling like lions, which the Lord makes to vex and prick the people of God; thus here their lives were spared, but liberties lost. Thus, Judg. ii. 13, 14, "They forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth;" and in verse 14, "The anger of the Lord waxed hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them." Ver. 15, "Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil." And this the Lord doth many times suddenly, that one would never think that

ever the Lord should be so sudden; the Lord can be as quick to punish as man to sin, and that unexpectedly. Eccl. ix. 12, "Man knows not his time, but is taken like fish in an evil net suddenly." Lam. iv. 12, "The kingdoms of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed." Judg. v. 8, "They set up new gods, and war was in the gate."

2. Sometimes the Lord turns the edge of that lawful authority God hath set over them against themselves, to be a heavy scourge from God upon them. Thus it was with Israel in Egypt, (Ex. i. 8, 9;) there arose a king which knew not Joseph, and it is said then they were oppressed. Thus Jeroboam, whom the ten tribes chose, (Hos. 5:11,) he oppressed the people, he will be innovating, and this becomes their oppression. Thus the people under the reign of degenerate Solomon, (though their complaint might be in part unjust.) Such is the venom of sin and unsubduedness to the kingdom of God, that the Lord turns light into darkness, and makes an aching head matter of sorrow to all the state and body of people. Eccl. x. 16, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." And one man shall do a world of hurt, one Shebna or Amaziah, and this the Lord doth in justice many times for casting off his government.

3. Sometimes the Lord gives a people up into the hands of one another to be mutual oppressors of each other, that a man's neighbor shall be his oppressor. Zech. xi. 9, "I will pity no more the inhabitants of the land, I will deliver them everyone into his neighbor's hands. I will feed you no more; that which dies let it die, and that which is cut off let it be cut off, and let the rest eat everyone the flesh of another." Sometimes the Lord is pleased to send marvelous straits into a place, that men are forced to imbondage themselves sometimes by words as bitter as death, as sharp as arrows; the Lord is pleased, for the forsaking of his righteous ways, to make a man's self rip his own bowels, the father against the child, the master shall be a scourge to the servant, and the servant shall be a scourge to his master, weary him of his life, the government of the Lord in a man's heart or family being cast off; (Micah vii. 4, 5,) "Trust not in a friend." No greater bondage in the world than for men professing the Lord to be desperately set one against another.

4. By taking from a people all that righteous power of government the Lord hath set over them, when a people despising the Lord and inward government first, (for there all begins,) and so not prizing what they have, nor praying for them, nor subjecting to them, the Lord hereupon sends some sickness, or some other evil, that they are either suddenly taken away, or gradually; and when they are gone, all sink, or else such cross carriages, that as Moses said, so say they, "I cannot bear this people." Thus, (Judg. xxi. 25,) "Men did what was right in their own eyes when there was no king in Israel." No state so miserable as an anarchy, when everyone is a slave, because everyone will be a master. Thus, (Is. in. 1, 2, ff,) "Be a ruler to us." No, I will not undertake to rule. So (2 Chron. xv. 3, 5) when without a teaching priest, then no peace at all, men will not be under government of them, you shall not have them, they shall rest in peace, and you shall then know the want of them.

5. By giving them over to Satan's and their own hearts' lusts, that seeing they will not serve the Lord, they shall serve their lusts and their sins, that now the Lord he hath left off chastising of men, and conscience shall check no more, prosper, saith the Lord, and go on in thy sin. Ps. lxxxi. 12, "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked after their own counsels." Rev. xxii. 11, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still."

When the Lord shall give a man over to Satan, not only to winnow him, to let out the chaff, and so to make the grain the purer, or to buffet them as he did Paul, but to insnare them, and hold them, that he shall not only tempt, but his temptations shall take, and not only take, but holds (2 Tim. ii. ult.) "who are taken captive by him at his will;" taken alive as a snare doth, that now a man is beyond the reach of all means, only peradventure God may give repentance; (Is. 1:5), "Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt yet more and more." The Lord leaves smiting and says, Go on and prosper in thy sin; and, which is the worst of all, Satan shall so Wind him and harden him, fill him with pride, passion, lying, hatred of God's people, caviling against the Lord's ways of grace, slighting of his betters, despising of wholesome counsel from his dearest friends, that he knows not that gray hairs are upon him. And after this, when God hath cast out, it may be the church doth also, a most fearful bondage that the Lord gives such a soul over unto.

There are two reasons of this point which I collect only from the story in this chapter.

Reason 1. In regard of the righteous judgment of God. It is just and equal that he that will not be ruled by this blessed Lord Jesus, he should be ruled by his lusts; he that will not be in subjection to a merciful Christ, he should be in bondage to unmerciful men: this a humbled heart will acknowledge, as these do here. (Ver. 6.) They acknowledged the Lord to be righteous. Man being fallen, it had been righteous with God to have left all men as the angels that fell in chains of darkness forever. But among his church and people the Lord sends the gospel to proclaim liberty, and with it sends Christ with his Spirit, to come to the prison doors of poor sinners, to give repentance as well as remission of sins; and now, if they will not come out of their bondage, accept of the Lord's liberty, it is exceeding righteous to deal with them as we do with prisoners condemned to die; if the prince comes to the prison doors, and says, I am come to give thee thy life, nay, and here is pardon, nay, favor, and to pull off thy chains also; now, if he says, No, I had rather be in prison, everyone will say it is just, and as it was in the year of jubilee, he that would not go free was to be a bondman forever. It is very righteous to give men their own choice; it is no wrong to let them have their own will: if, indeed, the laws of Christ were Draco's laws, hard and heavy, there were something to object; but they are most sweet, and for which of all other blessings men have cause to bless him. (Ps. 147: ult.)

Reason 2. In regard of the mercy or merciful wisdom of the Lord toward his church and people, especially his peculiar ones, that hereby they keep the closer to the Lord, set a higher price upon the rules and government of the Lord, love his kingdom the more, and the liberties thereof, and use them better when they have them again, so here, "that they may know my service," etc.

1. How sweet it is. Experience, we say, is the mistress of fools; such is the foolishness of men's hearts that men are many times never truly taught a truth till they are taught it by sense, (Prov. 5:11,) "and thou mourn at last when thy flesh is consumed : " tell a man of all the glory of the saints, they never understand it till they feel it; tell men of the woe of their ways, they will not believe it till they see it. Ps. 32:9, "Be not as the horse or mule, that hath no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Hos. x. 11, "Ephraim is like a heifer that is taught." Like untamed horses that will cast their rider, unless they be held under and backed, and then they are gentle, so it is here; and truly it is long before a man can learn the sweet of Christ's government: hence Israel must be long in Egyptian bondage, and many long miseries, so that, if there be either justice or mercy in the Lord, he will do this, and this point shall be true.

Use 1. Hence, then, see that the greatest liberty and sweetest liberty is to be under the government of Christ Jesus, although men do not think so: hence the Lord tells them here " they shall know my service." they might have replied, We do know it. No, till they be in bonds they know it not, nor cannot learn it. So it is now; and hence, let men observe while they live loosely, and are guided by their own wisdom, for their own ends, according to their own will, at peradventures, at rovers, as they please, they do think this liberty very sweet; and it is better than to be curbed in. But let the Lord strike an arrow in the heart of these wild bucks that have broke park and pale, send affliction and an iron yoke of sorrow upon them, or distress of conscience, if there be any sense and feeling left, they will bemoan themselves, and say, I did think my liberty sweet, but now I see it is bitter in a sinful way: and the Lord's way was most sweet, by their own confession. Hence, (Ps. ii. 3,) " Let us break their bands," etc. But O, now hence learn this truth, and digest it thoroughly, that the greatest liberty lies here. Do not, in thy judgment, think Christian liberty lies in being freed from the law as a rule of obedience in respect of the matter of it to be done, nor in thy practice; but know though thou didst meet with a thousand sorrows with it and griefs, yet it is sweet. Christ's "yoke (Matt. xi. 30.) is easy, and his burden light." What, when not a hole to hide his head in, when a reproach of men, a worm and no man, when he bore the Father's wrath? Yes, when he was meek under it, ("Not mine, but thy will be done,") it was then most sweet. 1 Kings ix. 21, 22, To be a servant to Solomon is no bondage. Ps. cxix. 32, "I will run, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Use 2. Hence see the reason why the Lord hath deprived his churches of their liberty, and his government over them at sundry times, and hath put them under iron yokes and bonds, and sore pressures: the reason is shown; they have either openly or more secretly cast off the government of the Lord; here hath been the very wound, the ail of all churches famous and glorious. Ps. 81:14, "O that they had hearkened! I should then soon have subdued their enemies." The cause is not so hard to find to a discerning spirit who is privy in any measure to the counsels of God. 1 Kings ix. 8, 9, Solomon hath a promise that "the Lord's eyes and heart shall be to his people" which are under him; but if once they slip the collar, then woe; and why?" Because they forsook the Lord, that brought them out of Egypt;" they had liberty, but they cast it off.

What do you think was the moving cause of all those bloody persecutions, when the blood of dogs was more precious than of Christian churches? Were not they godly? "Yes, I do not doubt of it. But as it was here, **though humbled they must be in bondage, because they had cast off the government of the Lord Jesus.** And, hence in the apostle's time evil times were come, sad apostasies from the truth, and because it was long before they were low enough. And hence, (Rev. vi.) till the fifth seal was opened; no crying, as it was with Israel in bondage, no prayer to purpose, and because the Lord saw they would **abuse all liberties** if they had them. And hence in Constantine's time, when peace came in, contention came with it, and so abused all, that their peace was their poison. And hence, in the primitive churches, they began to cast off the government of the Lord Jesus; murmurings there were; hence came persecution; but they were a precious people, and made blessed use of it. And the Lord couples their chief persecution with their rest. And it is said, (Acts ix. 31,) "Then had the churches rest," etc.

And what do you think of the reason of the long reign of Antichrist, exalting himself above God and all that is called God, bringing the church under the heaviest bondage for body and soul that ever the earth saw? Men did not love the truth, either speculative to guide their minds, or practical to rule their wills; and hence left to this day. _

What is the cause of bleeding Germany's woe? O poor Germany! whence the gospel first broke out in its full strength, that now it is a field of blood, that men in woods like satyrs are afraid of men, and men in cities glad to eat the entrails of beasts, and sometimes the flesh of their own babes, to preserve their lives. What, was there no evil, but the common condition of the church to be under the cross? Ask them, they cannot tell what ails them, but curse the emperor and Swedes, etc. O, think of it with sorrow, in secret, for them that know it not themselves, they have secretly, I say, secretly cast off the government of a merciful i Christ, and hence are under the hand of unmerciful men.'

What is the cause in our native country, notwithstanding all prayers and tears no deliverance? Truly men do not know it, but the Lord sees it, they know not how to use their liberty.

And for ourselves, what shall I say? I cannot but bless God, and wonder to see how it is with many, and rejoice to see many precious, holy ones, to whom one day in God's court is sweeter than a thousand elsewhere; but I must profess, and cannot but mourn for others, men that were eminent under bondage, but never worse than here; as if the Lord should say, Look, here be your eminent ones; look, and fear, and mourn, you ministers of my house; here .be the people you had thought had been converted, and that of all others such a one would never have fallen so; one an opinion takes him, another a lot, another loose company, another his lust, another goes proud, another fierce, another murmuring. What, should I name all? O, that my words might be healing! etc.

Use 3. Hence see what will become of us that are now under the government of the Lord, if ever we cast it off, either inward or outward, or both. We are not dearer to him than his people Israel here,

nay,- Judah. When old Israel, the great and numerous tribes of Israel, had set up calves, little Judah and Benjamin received the priests; and yet they fell, and were in bondage. I know we are not yet in bondage; yet it is not more unseasonable to speak now than for the Lord to Solomon. (1 Kings ix. 1.)

Quest. But there being much unsubduedness in the hearts of the best, how shall one know when there be such sins for which the Lord will cast from under his government?

Ans. 1. When men do not loathe their own hearts for the unprofitableness, but loathe God's ordinances secretly, and grow weary of them as of their burdens, because of the unprofitableness of them; when a people find not that special good by them which recompenses all losses, and so prize them, but lay blame on them, because unfruitful to them. (Mai. iii. 13.) He speaks to a people got out of captivity, "Your words have been stout against me;" no, say they, "It is in vain to serve the Lord; what profit is there in this?" You must conceive they had many losses, were very poor, (as ver. 11,) a temptation which a proud heart cannot endure above any; here is now no profit in mourning, fasting, etc., and God's own people began to think so; and hence, (ver. 16), "Then they spoke often one to another;" there was good effect of his sermon. Now what follows? Chapter iv. 1, Hence the wicked shall come and cut off branch and root in Antiochus's time; there is a burning day a coming, that shall burn down house, root and branch and hence, (Matt. xxi. 43,) "The kingdom shall be given to them that bring forth fruit." You will say, We do; no, your own mouth shall condemn you; you do not; you find no good by all the ordinances of God, and, hence come those questions; what warrant for such an ordinance? **The bottom is, they never felt good of it, and hence grow weary of it. Well, if it be your burden, the Lord will ease you of it.**

2. When you see men (professing the fear of God) mutually naturally contentious, and continuing so; I say contentious with saints which they say they love, and which they are by covenant bound to love, either from some conceived wrong, and hence cannot forgive as Christ doth them; or from a prejudicate groundless opinion, They care not for me, nor I for them; or from a spirit of scornful censoriousness, what are such and such? or because distasted, because of some reproof in their sin; or by some opinion, or by some worldly conveniency, or laying out lots, or restraint of some liberty, etc., or because of some sin; now can sit and censure; and I say, when this is mutual; for a godly man may be contended with, but he prays and mourns and pities, unless it be at some time, but when it shall continually abide so fierce and implacable, (Eccles. vii. 9,) "Anger rests in the bosom of fools." When a man shall be glad of an occasion of difference, that so he may depart and have something to quiet conscience for breach of covenant, that there can be no healing, but bellies of pigs are more dear than bowels of saints, and when quiet, upon the least occasion apt to pick holes and quarrel; now, it is time for the Lord to give over to another government. Zech. xi. 14, 15, When brotherhood is broken, then an idol shepherd is set up. Ex. ii., Moses was sent to deliver Israel, but he finds two Hebrews, oppressed, striving, and must not be checked neither; well then farewell deliverance if you be of that spirit; you shall love one another better if ever the Lord doth that for you. It hath been the wisdom of some

princes, when their subjects have been at civil wars, to call them forth to a common enemy, and there they can agree. O brethren, there is no sin like this, and yet none so slighted. You shall know what it is either by being yoked under enemies or sins; the first of these breaking bonds of union to Christ, the other with his members.

Use 4. Hence see the reason why many men are delivered up to the bondage of their own lusts, the most sad bondage and power of Satan, who have seemed to be delivered from it truly they have cast off the government of the Lord. / Men wonder why in this country men are more vile than ever they were, men that gave great hopes: the reason is this; they have seemed to be under Christ's government, but secretly cast it off; and hence filthy and vile lusts are their apparitors and pursuivants, etc. [*pursuivants* are followers or attendants; *apparitors* an officer who summons witnesses and executes orders for an ecclesiastical and formerly a civil court.]

Object. The saints feel a bondage; how shall one know the difference?

Ans. The first and greatest enthrallment is, when Satan and sin so rule as that they know them not; this is lamentable, that like those, (John viii. 33,) when Christ told them, if they continued in the truth it should make them free, they would not believe that ever they were in bondage. So here a man thinks himself free when he is a slave, thus: (Ps. lxxxi. 13,) "God gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they were led by their own counsels." The saints may be much carried away by the power of Satan's temptations, but never so far as to think their bondage is their freedom, and to have reasons and arguments prevailing against the good ways of God's grace, and to have reasons to maintain their sinful courses, and that is in such as have wit, and parts, and knowledge, which through the righteous judgment of God are left so far to abuse it as to make use of it to maintain their sinful lusts.

2. When men, if they see their bondage, yet have no heart to come out of it, in using all means for that end. When the will is in captivity, no captivity like it, no galley slave like it: a child of God hath a bondage and is led into captivity; but, O miserable man! he cries; but these (Prov. xvii. 10) "have a price in their hand, but no heart to make use of it.", Ezra 1:5, "So many whose hearts the Lord stirred, they get up to go to Jerusalem." But the Lord never stirs the hearts of these poor creatures; they know and fear, yet have no heart to get out of that condition, nay, rather willingly are so. They sell themselves to their lusts, and sins, and Satan. Here is (says Satan) this gain; neglect prayer for it, tell a lie for it, break covenant for it, lose thy peace for it: here is this honor and credit; look big on it: here is this estate; carry thy countenance high, and thus apparel thyself with these trappings, walk thus with thy boots French-like: here is this pleasure and mirth; keep thou this company, loose thy heart, neglect thy God, give thyself over to it: here is this ease; defer thy repentance, be cold in prayer, neglect thy family; and a man sells himself to his lust, pleasures, and honors; thou art thus provoked, and therefore now you must fret, and murmur, and rage, and hold your own, and so ease your heart: thus men set themselves to sale willingly.

3. When men have some heart to come out of it, but the Lord leaves men to an indifferency, and consequently to apostasy, as it was with Agrippa almost persuaded, and like the Israelites that refused to go into that good land, (Num. 14), and hereupon the Lord was wroth, and said they should not, but they repented and would fain have had some pity showed in regard of their misery, but their enemies fell upon them and destroyed them; all the plea of the **Arminians** is for this, which is nothing else but men's misery. Luke xiv., Those that were invited made their excuses, and said, " I must needs go and see it;" but found no necessity to come to Christ. **Now, the saints, the Lord never leaves them to a spirit of indifferency, but keeps them in a spirit of necessity. I must come out of this miserable condition, saith the poor soul; they say not, Flesh is weak, but, I must have help. (Ps ex.) Because it is "the day of the Lord's power," they must not rest contented without help; and if the Lord delays them, and hears not, they will follow the Lord so much the harder.**

4. If they have any resolution to come out, and think it must not be thus, and purpose never to live thus again, yet notwithstanding all their purposes and resolutions, they fall again, and never get any real conquest, their untamed hearts and wills are never a whit more subdued. Isa. 63:7, 8, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie. So he was their Saviour; but they soon rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit:" **their wills were never subdued**. But now the saints, either the Lord preserves them from such falls and apostasies; or if they do depart from the Lord by reason of the prevailing power of any temptation, they ever get real conquest by their fall; their sinful corruption thereby gets its deadly wound. (Rom. xi. 10.) Their backs are not always bowed down, but the Lord raises their bowed down spirits, (Ps. 145:14,) and upholds their spirits for them when they think they shall one day fall by the hand of such Saul-like sins and distempers. **A carnal heart may carry a fair profession, and be in subjection to Christ for a time; but his back stands always bowed down under his profession; it is his burden, and hence at last he casts it off as a man does his wearisome burden; but on the contrary, a child of God being indeed weary of his sin, and carrying that up and down with him as his burden, with his soul bowed down in the sense of his own vileness, by this means, through the help of Christ, at last he comes to get real conquest over his sin, and cast it off.**

5. When the Lord in this case lets them alone without inward or outward troubles, this is a fearful sign. Hosea iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone;" the Lord will take no more pains with them; he is wearied out with striving. Isa. 1:5, "Why should ye be stricken? ye will revolt yet more and more." when the Lord sees men the worse for his merciful corrections, he deals like parents that have striven long with their children, and can do no good on them; they then resolve to let them take their own course, and will own them no longer to be of their family: the Lord never deals thus long with his; but if their sin will not waste by words, the Lord will then try what chains will do; and now they shall find good, now they shall remember their backslidings and apostasies from God, **and their impenitency in sin, in secret sins, especially in the days of their peace and prosperity; now the Lord will make sin as bitter ad ever it was sweet. O, consider this, you that are prosperous; and because the Lord is good to you, therefore you think the Lord likes well of your ways. No greater plague than for the Lord to give a**

man peace in his sin; or if the Lord begins to afflict you in your name, or estate begin to be blasted, and you cannot see God's hand on you, and know it, and yet you remain unhumbled, this is a sign you are under the bondage of your sin.

Use 5. For **examination**, whether we do, or when a people do cast off the government of the Lord and destroy his kingdom, **it is needful to know the sin, that we may prevent the misery**; and it is certain, let New England be watchful, and make sure here to advance the Prince of Peace, and to keep the right and government in his hand, and you shall have the blessing of God and his ordinances, peace and mercy in your times, and continued to your children ; for "his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of the increase of his kingdom there is no end;" and on the contrary, if New England cast off the government from over them, and refuse his service, the Lord will then take the kingdom from you, and you shall then know the want of what now ye enjoy. Now, because Christ's government or kingdom is, 1, inward; 2, outward in church and in state, —

I shall let you know, 1, when the inward kingdom of Christ is set up, and when it is razed down, which I shall do by giving you a brief view of the nature of it, and wherein it consists, and so you may the better judge of your own hearts in this particular. As Satan hath an inward kingdom in the hearts of those that are without, so the Lord Jesus hath an inward kingdom in the hearts of all his saints. Col. i. 13, "Blessed be God" (saith the apostle) "which hath translated us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son," which is very spiritual, little seen; a man may be under all outward government, and yet nought here; and therefore attend: this inward kingdom therefore consists in four things, or when the whole soul submits itself to God in these four particulars : —

1. When the whole soul gives entertainment unto the Lord himself to come into it; for if a people shall say they are under such a government, and yet will not admit the prince himself to come amongst them, but keep him out of the kingdom, they cast off his government and his kingdom.

2. When the whole soul closes with the whole will of the Lord; for if a people shall receive a prince amongst them, but he shall make no wholesome laws to govern them but will be led by their own wills and lusts, they pull down his kingdom.

3. When the whole soul thus closes with the will of Christ by virtue of the power and spirit of Christ; for if a people submit to the will of their prince, but it is not by virtue of his authority over them, command of them, and helps he hath given them for that end, but it is by reason of some foreign power, that underhand encourages them to yield, this is poor subjection.

4. When the soul thus submits to Christ's will for the Lord's ends, denying its own wisdom or will, and is led by the Lord to his end; for if a people shall submit to their prince, but it is to set up other princes, he is cast off from his throne. When a man shall serve God and be under his government because it is profitable or honorable, it suits his own end, this is poor service in the Lord's account.

1. I say, then, the soul is under the inward kingdom or government of Christ, when the whole soul gives entertainment to the Lord of lords, the Lord himself, with all his train, in and by the gospel of grace, the royal sword and scepter of Christ's kingdom; for when Christ himself is thus received, the kingdom of God is come to that soul, and entered into that heart; and hence (Mark i. 14, 15) the gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom, and when John and Christ preached, " Believe and repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Under which word is comprehended much, but principally Christ Jesus ready to enter the souls of his people; and hence John preached Christ. **Now, it is said those that were effectually wrought upon, (Matt. 11:12,) that " the kingdom of heaven did suffer violence, and the violent take it by force;" so that the kingdom of God is come into the hearts of all the elect of God, when the soul uses a holy violence, and the Lord does draw the heart to an entertainment of the Lord himself. Many difficulties there be between them and Christ, and yet they break through all.**

This is the condition of all men by nature; they are strangers to Christ, and live without God and Christ in the world, and Christ from them, and so Satan takes possession and rules them, and so men are under the kingdom of darkness, so that the devil himself possesses. every natural man, as the apostle speaks, "He worketh in the children of disobedience," to run on so, and remain so. Now, the gospel of the kingdom and the means to advance Christ in his kingdom makes a free offer of Christ himself; indeed, it offers pardon, grace, mercy, life, glory, but all these are in Christ himself, and we possess them by possessing and receiving of Christ himself; as a poor woman hath all the wealth of the man by entertaining of the man. **So that the gospel firstly and primarily offers Christ himself, and faith doth pitch on Christ himself,** and doth "open those everlasting doors that the King of glory may come in." John i. 12, It is said, "So many as received him, he gave power to be the sons of God." 1 John v. 12, " He that hath the Son hath life;" so that now let a man refuse or reject the Lord himself as he is thus offered in the gospel, he does refuse the kingdom of the Lord, **and does refuse to be under the power of the Lord.** True, it may be said the kingdom of God hath been nigh to him, when Christ is offered in the gospel, and God says, as it were, Nothing shall please me so much as this, if you do receive me, Luke 10, "Go and preach to these and these cities, and if they will not receive you, shake off the dust of your feet, and let them know the kingdom of God hath been nigh to them;" then Christ comes into the soul when the whole soul takes the Lord for himself, Christ, and all that Christ hath, Christ in a pardon, and Christ in a promise: at that very day the Lord gave the heart to receive him, then is the kingdom of God come in that heart, and with him all, life, peace, joy, and glory, God, Spirit, and all.

Now, the whole soul receives him, when, 1. the mind sees him in the glory of his grace, that though it had low, mean thoughts of Christ before, for which it mourns, yet the rising of this glorious sun upon him, he esteems all things loss for him that he may win Christ, and be found in Christ, I in him, and he in me, in vocation; and not having my own righteousness, in justification; and to feel the life of Christ and death also, in sanctification; and to attain to the resurrection of the dead, in glorification: and now

nothing is dear to the soul but Christ. 2. When the will, after the soul hath had some hopes, the Lord may look toward it in his grace, and having had many heart breaking tears before the Lord, the Lord is now pleased by the glad tidings of the gospel to give the will power not only to receive and entertain the Lord, but gladly to receive him. The soul wonders that ever the Lord should bow down to him, and offer mercy to him; and whenas together with this, by the sweet favor of his grace that he doth let into the heart, the soul doth receive the Lord with most dear embracings into his soul, that now there is none like to the Lord, Cant. 1:3, "Thy name is like an ointment poured out, where the very feet of the messengers of glad tidings are beautiful." But the Lord himself is the only crown and joy of the soul, when the least look of love to a castaway is more sweet than kingdoms, ay, and much more, that is, love itself. Isa. 52:9, "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people." When kings shall stop their mouths as vile in themselves, and not able to set forth that glory they never heard of before, and the soul for joy Bells away all to buy this pearl, that it says with David, "How do I love thy law!"

Now, beloved, when the soul does thus receive the Lord, the kingdom of God is come to that soul, and therefore try and examine, is it thus with you? or hath the Lord begun to deal thus with thee, to give himself, the glory of angels, the wonderment of heaven, the mighty God of heaven, to come to thy heart? Thou art then under the government of the kingdom of God. But now, on the contrary, if thou canst be content to receive the ordinances of Christ, or the consolations of Christ, or some of the commands of Christ, and that is all, and the Lord never gave thee a heart to close with Christ himself, it is a strange thing to thee, that which is the main thing, the diamond in the ring of the gospel; thou art yet far enough off from the kingdom of God; I dare not say nor think, for all the world, that ever the kingdom of God came to thy heart. Again, if you have received Christ, but not with thy whole soul; that now the offer, promises, blood, life, grace, glory in the gospel, are grown common things to thee; that the Lord never sent thee home wondering at the glory of God's grace to a poor wretch, never yet said, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" the Lord never yet lay next thy heart, or if thou hast had some liking, and some love and affections in pangs, yet the Lord is not only precious and exceeding dear in thy heart, thy heart breaks not for grief that thou hast so much slighted him, so little borne him of thy heart. It is a sign that the Lord hath begun to reveal himself to thy soul when he gives thee a heart to mourn for thy standing out against him, but this never came to thy soul.

Certainly, here is the wound of many men. The gospel of God never hath its proper effect till the Lord help thee to give thy whole heart thus to a Saviour, to a God, to the Prince of Peace; and till this is done, the gospel is ineffectual, it doth nothing. It was a sweet prayer of him, "Make thy Son dear, very dear, exceeding dear, only dear and precious, or not at all!" If thou hadst a thousand hearts, it was too little for Christ to love him; and dost grudge him one? When thou hast imparted thy heart and esteem to thy lusts and creature, dost thou love the Lord with part of thy heart? but a vile lust, a poor creature must have a share, and the remnant will serve Christ; is he not the only pearl of thy heart? to give him daily communion, know this thou art a stranger to. "Hear, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; God

will work a work in your days." What is that? The infinite God cannot express, as it were, the wrath that shall come against such a soul, nor I cannot express the wrath that shall come upon such a despiser of the Lord Jesus. Give him all thy heart or none; if thou hast the Lord, thou hast his whole heart: if he had a thousand lives, he would have laid them all down for thee. He poured out his blood for every one of his; but for the present thou art out of the kingdom of God to this day.

2. When the whole soul closeth with the whole will of Christ, having thus received him; for if a prince be come, and people will not be ruled by him nor any laws that he makes, though never so good, but what they list, the kingdom is cast off; for, beloved, there is a marvelous common deceit in men's hearts, they would not for all the world but have Christ; ay, but the will of Christ is neglected, that is a clog, and the burden of the Lord of hosts. Christ is sweet and his will is bitter, Christ is precious and his will is vile. Why do you make him a king, and ye will make laws for Christ, and you will rule Christ, and his will shall not stand? Here is no king. Such kind of idle libertines were in the apostles' time. 1 John 1:6, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and there is no truth in us." But now, when the whole soul does submit to the whole will of the Lord, now his kingdom is come indeed, when his will is thus sweet. Dan. vii. 27, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all nations shall serve him, and his servants ye are whom ye obey," whether Christ, the devil, or your own hearts.

Now, the whole will of Christ is, 1. directing; 2. correcting.

Now, when the soul submits to both, then Christ rules in his kingdom; sometimes you meet with Christ's directing will; now this is men's frame, naturally they will not see it, "they will not come to the light," (John iii. 20,) they are led by their own counsel, and will not regard the light and counsel of God in his word; they will quarrel with the light when it is cross to their ends, gain, honor, and the like; men have high thoughts against the Lord Jesus, (2 Cor. 10:5), "Casting down imaginations, and every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." And again, if men do see it, yet, like the devil, that has much light, **they do not love it, nor out of love**, (not unless it be out of fear,) subject to it like Balaam, that had no love to God's command, **but only was acted by fear and constraint**; **now, when the soul continues thus, it casts off Christ's kingdom**, but if the whole soul first comes to the light, though it sees little, sets the whole will of Christ before it, (Ps. 18:22,) says David, "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God;" and though it hath had many quarrelings against the truth of God, yet now it hath not, nor dares not, **but says, Lord, teach me; the Lord gives them hearts to lie down at the feet of any man that shall show them anything that is amiss in them, and they say with David, "Lord, search me, and try me;" I have many crooked ways, and therefore, good Lord, find them out, and therefore come to the Lord for that end; and though there be something in them that is desperately contrary to the good will of God, yet there is an inward man that does delight in the law of God, and when the Lord is pleased to give them a heart to submit to the will of God, O, the soul doth wonder at the Lord, that the Lord should show him anything, and help him against temptations**; and though there be a great deal of weariness in the ways of God, **yet there is a**

spirit within him, that it is indeed heaven itself to him to be in the ordinances of God; now, ye stoop to the directing will of Christ, when this is thy way, though you go often out of it, yet comes in it again, as sin is a wicked man's way, although he goes a thousand times out of it.

Now for the other, the correcting will of Christ. The Lord hath strong trials. Now, here subjection to Christ is required as well as to the directing will of Christ; then the soul submits to this will when the mind objects not, charges not God with folly, as Eli. 1 Sam. iii. 18, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." And likewise, the will, though it hath had many sad bouts, yet this is his frame in the conclusion, that the will of Christ is better than everything else; the will of Christ is alone sweet to him. Isa. 37, Says Hezekiah, "Good is the will of the Lord;" and so Lam. 3, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, and to turn his cheeks to him that smites him." Nay, when there is spiritual evils on the soul, as was on Christ himself, spiritual desertions, nothing but bitterness and sorrow, yet the soul saith, as Christ did, "Not my will, but thine, be done; Father, save me from this hour; yet, Father, glorify thyself," and so the soul does humbly submit itself to the Lord; though the Lord should never pity it, yet it will lie down at the feet of the Lord; now is God's kingdom come.

But if the soul will have Christ, and yet cast off the will of Christ, 1. either in his judgment, that the law of God, as given by Christ, should be no rule to a Christian; suppose you were in England, and were there pressed to bow before an altar, or image; what shall lead you, if that God's will and law must not be your rule? The Lord will one day make you know his blessed will in that blessed law of his, that ye shall never find peace to the end of the world, except the Lord do help ye thus to walk. Again, when men cannot endure the will of Christ, cannot endure exhortations: What doth the man mean to exhort us thus? I tell thee there goes forth power with the exhortations of Christ. I say, take heed of casting off the will of Christ here; and so, when men in their practice shall quarrel against any of God's truths, and are loathe to see it, or, if they do, yet not love dearly every truth of God, but it is a burden to them, especially if it cross their own ends and gain, they will not see it to be a truth, lest they should be convinced and turn to the rule of it; if the will and ordinances of Christ be a burden to a man, and a man is not weary of his weariness, but weary of them all the while. Art thou under the government of Christ? If a man forsaken of God, led by his own counsels, be under the kingdom of Christ, then thou art; so long as there is credit for the truth, so long it is entertained; but now suppose it be costly, that it should bring beggary and affliction with it; is it now sweet to you? doth this support thy heart? I am in God's way; canst lie down and subscribe to the equity of Christ's proceedings with thee, though he should never show favor to thee? If it be not thus, I dare not say thou art under the kingdom of Christ. And so for the correcting will of Christ; many sad afflictions the Lord tries thee withal, the Lord tries men marvelously; when thou art under the hand of the Lord, those very things that should make men cry to heaven and wean thee from the world, those very things do harden thee, and make thee grudge and repine. The Lord be merciful to thee, if this be thy frame; the kingdom of Christ never came into that heart; you are begging for mercy, and the Lord says, You mercy? you have abused it; no,

saith the Lord, go to your lust, that have despised the day of grace, and so now you cast off the Lord because the Lord will not give you mercy when you would have it. Will you now quarrel with the Lord? No! down, proud heart; pray still, and mourn still, and turn to the Lord, and say, Lord, do with me what thou wilt; I am clay in thine hand; thou mayest make me a vessel of dishonor; I deserve not the least bit of bread: such a one as is above the Lord and his will is not under the Lord; therefore submit thyself to the good will of Christ.

3. When the soul doth thus submit to the will of Christ, by virtue of the power and spirit of Christ, i. e., when the soul doth not submit by virtue of its own power, strength, or ability, for this is foreign power. But as it doth seek to submit to the will of Christ, so it would have Christ himself act it and rule it, and so enable it to submit thereunto. Now is the kingdom of God come near to that heart. And herein Christ's kingdom is different from princes'; they give laws that men may keep them by their own might; hence they command no impossible things; but the will of Christ is so cross to a carnal heart, that it is impossible man of himself should submit to it; but the Lord doth, it for this end, that the soul should then come to Christ in its need, that he would do all the good pleasure of his will, and now , the Lord himself reigns, and that gloriously./ Rom. viii. 1, 2, "For the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Acts v. 31, "A Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins." It is part of his princely power for to give remission of sins, both in turning from sin, and to God and all the ways of God; and now you exalt him when he is thus set up. 1 Cor. iv. 20, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." The power of Christ Jesus is come into thy soul, and the soul is under the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, when it doth lie under the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. 1:11, 12, "We pray always for you, that the Lord would work and fulfill the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith in power, that Christ may be glorified." Yea, then is Christ glorified, when God omnipotent reigns over sin and unbelief; and when the Lord doth this, not only the kingdom of God is now come, but the kingdom of Christ in glory is come. There is many a poor soul thinks Christ rules him not, because he cannot do this nor that, because he finds his heart unable and unwilling for to submit to the will of Christ. I find no strength at all, saith the soul, and I go to Christ, and find not strength conveyed; and now he thinks he is not under the kingdom of Christ. I answer, that is not the question; but hath the Lord made thee willing in the day of his power? When the soul doth lie under the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the soul doth lie like wax before the Lord Jesus, when the soul saith, Lord, there was never any change of my nature; the good Lord change it, and if there be any change, the good Lord increase and stir up the graces of thy Spirit in my soul, and do thou lead me and guide me, — brethren, the kingdom of Christ is come to this soul. John v. 40, "You will not come to me for life." He does not say, You do not quicken yourselves, or, Ye cannot come to me, but will not. Here is their wound; they will not come to Christ for life, Rom. vi. 19, "As ye have yielded your members servants to sin and Satan, so now yield up yourselves servants to righteousness and to holiness." Ps. cxix. 5, 6, "Thou hast commanded that we should keep thy precepts continually. O that my heart were directed to keep thy precepts continually! O that my heart were directed to keep thy statutes!" When a Christian is grappling with his own heart, ye will never be able

to overcome the unsubduedness thereof; but when ye bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he would take a course with them, 1. Now ye please Christ. 2. Ye take a sure course to have the will of God done, he being in office for that end; for him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to Israel; when the soul doth look up to the Lord Jesus, and lie under the power and Spirit of the Lord Jesus. 3. You now make the yoke of Christ sweet, and his name glorious; nothing glorifies Christ so much as this, when Jesus doth work in a Christian; now the kingdom of Christ is come to the soul, and that in power. (pg 308)

The Deceitfulness of Sin Seen In Its Exercise

Code471

It is clear that man is radically depraved. This is clearly stated in Romans 3. But how does this manifest? How are we to guard against it. How do we examine ourselves to see that we be in the faith or not? Thomas Shepard is probably the best at this work of discovery of the hidden things of the heart that above all are profoundly deceitful. I have highlighted many places where sin is manifested, that before here mentioned was hidden from your sight! And so many acknowledge man's depraved nature but are unskilled in discerning its tendency and appearances so as to root it out. As the introduction to Shepard's work, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, advised the reader – "Don't read it! Study it, a few pages at a time; decipher it. Live with it. Die with it. It may not save you, but it will leave you in no doubt if you are saved, and even less if you are not." We are commanded to make us a clean heart; but it is the Spirit that must work it.

The following are excerpts from **Thomas Shepard's** book *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (1659). My comments in [blue]. The introductions, the Forward, etc., are priceless!

Parable of the Ten Virgins Thomas Shepard 1659

Forward

(The last part of the forward to Shepard's Book,)
My inserts in [blue]

Jonathan Edwards quoted from the *Parable* in his classic *Religious Affections* more often than all the other secondary writings combined. This may have been because Shepard was the profoundest of all, the most biblical of all, or the most cryptic of all. It could even have been because he was the most

difficult of all to understand. Certainly, that was because his *Parable* was the most unfinished of all, being published from rough sermon notes he left behind.

Reader, beware! The Puritans are never “light” reading. However, Edwards is relatively easy alongside Shepard in the *Parable*. It is inconceivable that Shepard would have allowed his notes to go to press in that form. But how glad we are that Jonathan Mitchell and Shepard’s son, the Rev. Thomas Shepard, did not hesitate.

This work is valuable in inverse proportion to its readability. Don’t read it! Study it, a few pages at a time; decipher it. Live with it. Die with it. It may not save you, but it will leave you in no doubt if you are saved, and even less if you are not.

The first part of the *Parable* deals with the visible church’s preparation to meet Christ at His return; and the second with His coming to meet her. If you are a typical church member today, you will learn that you are not prepared for Christ’s coming. Shepard will do everything in human power to get you prepared. When you realize that you have never “closed with Christ,” you will spend the rest of your life seeking and praying that God will close with you! - John H. Gerstner

John Henry Gerstner (November 22, 1914 – March 24, 1996) was a Professor of [Church History](#) at [Pittsburgh Theological Seminary](#) and [Knox Theological Seminary](#). He was very knowledgeable on the life and [theology](#) of [Jonathan Edwards](#).^{[1][2]}

Gerstner counted among his students noted author and preacher [R. C. Sproul](#), founder of [Ligonier Ministries](#).

To the Reader

If thou art one who knowest what it is to be serious in the great business of providing for eternity, it is very probable thou mayst be no stranger to the name of this reverend author, now with God, whose name in both the Englands is as an ointment poured forth; and then thou wilt be eagerly desirous to peruse these following Sermons, in tendency to the further increasing thy stock of spiritual oil; and when thou hast read them, and sucked forth the sweetness and nourishment contained in them, and, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, turned them into good and healthful nutriment to thy soul, we question not but it will enhance the author’s worth in thy thoughts and estimation. But perhaps thou hast never lighted on any of those flowers which this holy man has planted in God’s garden, and then we are confident thou wilt meet with such savory sweetness in this Discourse as will make thee wish Christ’s church had longer enjoyed to choice and skillful a workman. If thou be one who hast hitherto little considered of God, and thy soul, and the concernments of eternity, or only now and then had some morning-dew thoughts of that which deserves and requires the choicest and most vigorous workings of thy soul, we wish thou wouldst so far comply with God’s goodness in bringing this book to thy hand, and gratify thyself, - we mean thy soul, thy better self, - as to read over this treatise in which thou wilt meet with those serious and soul-piercing truths which, by God’s blessing, may be as poison

to thy lusts, and awaken thee to a serious and hearty engaging in that work which none ever yet repented of. For the occasion of publishing this piece, we refer thee to the larger epistle of our reverend brother, and only add, that though a vein of serious, solid, and hearty piety run through all this author's works, yet he has reserved the best wine till the last. The Lord help they and us so to read and improve these and such like labors of God's harvestmen, that we may, with the wise virgins, have the lamps of our souls trimmed and furnished with oil, that, when the Bridegroom shall come, we may be ready to enter with him into his kingdom. Which is and shall be the prayer of us who are hearty well-wishers to thy Soul.

William Greenhill
Edmund Calamy
John Jackson
Simon Ash
William Taylor

Preface
(Excerpts)

To the Reader, and especially to the Inhabitants of Cambridge, in New England

That to make sure of life eternal is the one necessary business that we some of death have to do in this world, and without which all our time here is worse than lost, every enlightened mind will easily acknowledge; this present life being, by the rule of it, appointed but to this end, to be preparation time, spent in a continual care to make ready, that we might have a good meeting with Him who shall be seen in this air one day. And whether we look up to heaven, or down to hell; whether we reflect upon our own immortal souls, or turn our eyes toward the greatness and goodness of that God in Christ with whom we have to do; whether we pace over the time between this and judgment day or send our thoughts to view the eternity that is to follow after, - all things put a necessity, a solemnity, a glory upon this work.

But *difficilia quae pulchra*. It is one of the oracles uttered by our Lord with his own mouth, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It is not so easy a thing to get to heaven, nor so broad a way thither, as the slight and loose opinions of some, and practices of more, would make it, nor as the carnal hearts of all would have it; though that, if it be examined, is the common scope of all erroneous conceits; and how restlessly have the corrupt minds of men labored therein in all ages, and od in these our days, to widen the way to life, to break down the boundaries of this narrow path, and make it broader than ever God made it!

...But when all stones are turned, the way to heaven is and will be found to be a strait way; truth has said it is so, God has laid it out so, and it is not all the notions of men that will make it otherwise. And hence those solemn counsels of the Scripture, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" "Give all diligence to make all sure;" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" "So run that you may obtain;" etc., though they be little attended by the looseness of these times, yet they are of endless moment and use, and had need be awfully regarded by all that love their everlasting peace.

...For to speak any good and useful truths is good and commendable; but yet it is another and an further matter to hold the candle to the poor people of God, even to the meanest, to light them to heaven, or to take the soul by the hand, and lead it from step to step through all the difficulties, deceits, and turnings, at which the closes hypocrites do miss their way and lose themselves; and to do this so convincingly, thoroughly, and distinctly, as that the secrets of the hearts may be made manifest, the secure self-deceiver discovered and awakened, and yet the humble, upright Christian confirmed and encouraged.

In this skill and work, as the author of the following Sermons was known to be among the first three, so these lectures of his, upon the Parable of the Virgins, have been esteemed to excel in this kind; having left such a relish un the hearers as that they have not forgotten the taste of them to this day.

And you that sometimes were the flock of his shepherd, and have heard these things from the lively voice of this soul-melting preacher, whom you neve can forget, let it be a welcome providence to have these truths thus revived to you and put into your hands, that he who is dead may yet speak to you and yours. Get them into your house to read, nay, into your hears to feed upon, as choice and precious treasure. And let them still be living and continual warning to you to watch and keep alive the power of godliness, the daily practice of working "out your own salvation with fear and trembling," the love of the truth, the hatred of every false way, the esteem and improvement of God's ordinances, and the true, humble, heavenly life of faith in Christ Jesus.

JONATHAN MITCHELL

Cambridge, New England,
December 1659

[Here the excerpt begins regarding the deceitfulness of sin, etc., that will help you in self-examination.](#)

The last part of
Sect. I
Pg 192-196

...The epistle of James and John are antidotes against this kind of poison, and I look on them as lamps hung up to discover these men, not but that these men are indeed under a covenant of works; for there be but two sorts of men, and two ends of all men, hence but two covenants; hence those that are not indeed under grace are under law, and under the curse; but because the most subtle hypocrites appear or seem to be under grace, and their external operations are chiefly evangelical, hence I call them evangelical hypocrites.

SECT. II

Reason 1. In regard of the power of the Word and Gospel of life and spirit in such churches; for the Gospel where it comes, as it advanceth the glorious and everlasting righteousness of Christ, so it knocks under foot all mans, as a means subservient to that end, and it coming with

power and light, it would be too gross for hypocrites to maintain life by works; hence Christ is that which they look unto; for Christ when he preached, not only many *believed because of his Miracles*, but *when they heard his Word*, John 8:30, Mat. 13. In the Parable of the Sower, the word came with much power, that they received it with joy, and did believe, **but fell by their lusts**. And look as 'tis with the sun, there comes light and heat with it, so there comes -

1. Truth to the mind, and conquers the judgements of hypocrites, that there is no life, good, righteousness, but in Christ, nor salvation but by Christ.
2. There comes some goodness of the gospel to the heart, that men hearing and seeing Salvation wrapt up there, Oh that is sweet and good! and hence their affections and hearts are in some measure conquered by the power of the over-dazzling truth, and hence hypocrites being thus conquered, partly being of this opinion, partly **tasting** some good of it, **desire it out of self-love**, expect it out of **self-delusion**, and **profess themselves virgins out of these principles**. [i.e., “natural principles” such as self-love, nothing different from what demon possess.]

Reason 2. In regard of power of evangelical examples in the five wise virgins; for look as 'tis with living men when the sun shines upon their heads, they cast their shadows that follow them; so when the Lord Jesus shines upon the souls of his own people, almost every honest sincere-hearted man will cast his shadow that will be like him; hence hypocrites in those churches which are commonly rather **led by example than by rule**, will be very like them, **and imitate them**; if they should not, what communion could they have with them, or what love could they receive from them? [**seeking honor from men...**] for there is a mighty power in eminent examples to overbear hypocrites, that if they will turn themselves into any form, they must into theirs, as in Joash: for there are two things in the carriage of the Saints.

1. There is a condemning power in it; hence men fear to live unlike them.
2. There is a winning virtue in it, an attractive virtue; hence men endeavour to be and live like them, to be of the same mind, the same heart with them: and hence others take them, and they take themselves to be sincere, and hence they are evangelical gospel hypocrites that lie hid in these churches; hence Zach. 8:23, *Many shall take hold of a Jew's skirt* (I doubt not but some false ones,) *we have heard God is with you*. And as Christ when lifted up and risen, so saints draw hypocrites to them.

Reason 3. Because the Gospel brings the greatest and sweetest consolations with it: Hence a man under the terror of the law, and sense of curse for his sin, will make his last refuge hither, and hide himself under the wing of the Gospel, **not so much out of love to Christ, or Gospel, but because they serve his turn, and give him ease**. Like men scorched with heat, and almost ready to die, the shadow of a tree is now very comfortable, and therefore there they sit; so these. Or as men with scalded arms, they put them into water, which gives them ease, no cure; **but because it gives them ease, there they keep them, so here**. Men have been scalded with wrath, Oh now Gospel is very sweet, and **so are eased by it, never cured by it**. Therefore, here you

shall find them disclaim all works, and cry up grace only; where the purest churches are, there are usually great awakenings, there God is very near men, and made most manifest to men's consciences, and there are most soul-plagues, contempt of the Spirit of Grace, and hence most dreadful torments of conscience, and fearful lookings for of Judgement. Now hence it comes to passe when Christ is offered, and general notice given to men's minds, that yet there is hope and mercy for great sinners, this fills them with joy and peace, as John's hearers, John 5:35, and hence they believe as the stony ground that had some plowing, and hence received the word with joy and believed, Psalm 66:3. It's a Prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ, Antichrist he tormented the consciences of men, Rev. 9. Men have no peace within or without. Luther is raised up, and preacheth the doctrine of free grace, which a world of **men looking to their ease**, others in truth receive it; for some time before his death he cries to God that he may not live to see the ruins that were coming on Germany for their contempt. The law is the ministry of death, the gospel propounds great privileges, with much more sweetness to sinners, and hence hither men fly.

Reason 4. Because the Gospel yields the fairest colors for a **man's sloth**, and **strongest props for that**. Hence you shall see them walking in this garden. For the last sin God conquers in a man is his sloth. When the swine have no swill to eat, yet you shall find them in the mire of sloth; this *slays the foolish*. Hence the best hypocrite will plead the gospel, **its troublesome to the flesh, to bear a daily sense of the sins and wants of the soul**. Hence you shall have Capernaum receive Christ, and wonder at his doctrine; and yet Christ upbraids them, *they repented not*, Matt. 11:20. **It's troublesome, nay, impossible for a man to break his chains and get his soul loosed from his lusts, and free for the Lord**. The gospel shows all fulness in Christ, & **that he must do all, a slothful false heart there closeth with Christ as the end, but neglects him in the means**. Why? **Christ must do all, say they, and hence if Christ do drop upon their hearts, well and good, if not, 'tis Christ's fault**; he is a hard master that gathers where he did not sow, and hence wrap it up. **A man's false heart is weary of the yoke of Christ, and hence would fain be eased of it**. Now the Gospel promiseth liberty from the bondage and curse of the Law, and a slothful heart can find out reasons to free himself from the rule of it, as part of Christian liberty, *this is our Liberty in Christ Iesus*, 2 Pet. 2:19. And they rejoice exceedingly that the Law is dead, as they did, Rev. 11:10, for the death of the witnesses, because they tormented them. I say again, they rejoice not because the Lord makes them like himself, and because of his Image restored by the gospel, and because they feel the power of it, but because they are free from the power of it. It's an old deceit, yet subtle, to rejoice, and love, and bless Christ, because he will pardon sin, though I lie and live in them. Or if they do not free themselves from it, the gospel shows the law within closing with the law without, to be an evidence the Lord will not impute it, and that 'tis not therefore they, but sin in them. **Hence a slothful heart will continue in his sloth, and to ease himself of trouble for sin and obedience too, say 'tis not he, but sin**. And hence **Arminius** makes a strange interpretation of Rom. 7. Because he saw German professors plead that for themselves, the Israelites entered not into Canaan, unbelief caused it. And why did that shut them out? Oh, there were walled towns and difficulties, and this was the last shock, and hence they fell off; so 'tis in hypocrites now. **The safest place to lie asleep is in Christ Lap**.

Reason 5. From the mighty cunning of Satan, the strength of whose Kingdom is **made and continued by peace**, Luke 11:21, Hence *he will turn himself into an Angel of light*, and suffer men to go to Christ and gospel, **to avoid the search**, that they may be Christ's in appearance, and his indeed, 2 Cor. 4:4. He hath a mighty power over men to blind them.

Luke 11:21

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

2Cor. 4:4

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For there be three things which trouble men usually, and make them question their estates, and **the gospel quiets and absolves them from all**.

1. Conscience, that cries dolefully sometimes, these sins shall have these woes. Yes, unless I believe; but I believe, and trust to Christ, and flee to Gods mercy.
2. Ministry, that cries and seacheth into the deepest windings of men's hearts, that men cannot but see that Christ hath eyes of flaming fire to see through them. Now hence men avoid the stroke and power of all ministry, thus it is with me, thus it is will be with me, but I believe and trust to Christ. And hence men bear back like brazen walls all blows.
3. Gods judgment-seat. What though men see you not, yet God seeth. Why, they have sinned they confess, but Christ hath suffered, they have sinned, but they trust, &c. Micah 3:11, *Is not the Lord among us?* Look as it was with Joab, *he runs to the Horns of the Altar*, yet there he perisheth, there he would die, there was the last refuge from search and death, so here.

Chapter 11

Sect. 1

Pgs. 308-317

Quest. How may a Christian know when the Lord hath changed his nature, and taken down the power of his sin?

Ans. It might suffice to evidence this against all gainsayers, that thus 'tis, and so to know it by the Spirit's witness, which shows us the things freely given of God, who to save the Lord a trying another day, tries us now, and makes known these hidden works. Especially seeing some divines think, that as the first Adam conveyed this sin of nature, I not knowing; so the second Adam doth also remove this by an immediate stroke, I conceive 'tis so also, but not only by it. And therefore take two Evidences now.

1. Wherever this is done, that soul doth not only see this sin, for so an unregenerate Paul did, *Rom. 7:9*, Where *sin revived*, &c. And the word is a *divider of joints and Marrow*. Nor do they

only feel this as an evil, and so be much troubled with it, but when the Lord makes the dejected soul feel it as its greatest evil, so long as it remains in its being; (as it will) worse than death, than hell, than all afflictions, and miseries. 'Tis not a particular sin, but this that he feels thus. You will say, this is a high pitch. I say, consider if any man was ever humbled under sin, but he that felt sin as it is. **For if I feel it not as 'tis, I am deceived. Now 'tis the greatest evil.** To depart from a living God is worse than for soul and body and all creatures to depart from me. To make God miserable is worse than for all creatures ever to be made so, and sin in its tendency doth so, being a cross to his will, Isa. 1:24. Hence he that feels it indeed, feels it so; the beginning of which is a sorrow and mourning after God, that it might be so, Isa. 63:17, *Why hast hardened our hearts from thy fear?* But thus 'tis indeed, Rom. 7:24. And when 'tis thus, it will hold thus till death, while the cause remains; nay, **the more life and love, the more tender it grows**; setting aside some careless fits. And hence its greatest joy is to think of the time it shall be for ever holy. And hence accounts no such mercy as to be set at liberty to live to God indeed. A graceless heart sees and fears it, and cries out of himself for it; but stay a while, and he loseth his tenderness, either because he cannot part with it, or because of Christ, he looks now to him, or because he hath now some sprinkling of the Spirit, nature is eased thereby, and he is quieted; and hence never any carnal heart, but some root of bitterness did grow up at last in this soil. Hence ordinances profit not, because feeling is lost. But the soul thus feeling it, beholding the holiness of God and Love of Christ, and its constant withdrawings, resistings, oh it cuts deep!

2. Then the nature is changed, when the conscience being still and quiet, and the soul assured of the Lords love, **yet nothing gives the heart quiet till 'tis contiguous to God in Christ to enjoy him, in his Holiness, and in the love and delight of his whole will.** For this is a certain rule: If the nature be not changed, if conscience be but once quieted with the sense of Gods love, and affected with it, and hath not God indeed, nor his work to quiet it, **it will fall to lusting after creatures and live upon them, and feed the heart there.** For as 'tis impossible for a man to live, or to be without provision, so the world being provision for the flesh, meat, drink, sleep, and these lawful things, there it doth and will lie quiet without God. But now where the nature is changed, and there is another nature, there is something else provided for it to live on, and that is the Lord and his Will. As Christ said, *'tis my meat and drink to do his Will.* And Rom. 7:22, *I delight in the Law of God in the inner man.* There was somewhat that loathed it, but here was somewhat else delighted in it, **and there lies its life**, and though the heart would rest and give over sometimes, yet 'tis a Law of the mind that the soul hath, he can have no rest, Rom. 8:5. And therefore take a child of God, let him have meat, drink, sleep, blessing in his calling, preach, pray, and have honour, **yet he will constantly come home to the Lord mourning.** What doth all this do me good? When I rise up, lie down, eat, drink and pray, and do all without him? An untuned heart all this while. The world stands between him and the Lord all this while, but this doth not. Many a sincere heart hath heavy complaints, and many doubts, because 'tis not thus; this rather is an evidence of peace, than Gods war against it. Its an old rule, he that can live in heaven, shall; and there is nothing but a God to suck in, and breath out, and live unto. **Is this thy Element now?**

Oh consider and examine your selves here you poor Saints, that you may be comforted.

Others of you, if now you do not, the Lord Jesus will another day, and bring these secret things of darkness to light. If thou findest this was never yet done, know it, all thy tears, and fears, and prayers have been in vain; and under the power of sin and Satan thou still art, through the fierce wrath of God against thee. And there I leave thee till the Lord find thee out.

SECT. II.

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II. A Fulness of Illumination in the room of darkness.

But let it be first noted that I speak not here of Revelations of future events. When virgin churches shall fall a dreaming, 'tis a sign they fall a sleeping. Nor of revelation of new doctrines, nor yet of the Love of Christ and assurance thereof; but of the person of Christ, a work common to all the elect, and not peculiar to some, for Christ may not appear in his promise of love for a time to a sincere heart, yet this is then wrought. I shall therefore express my thoughts herein in four conclusions.

1. That all unregenerate men are under the power of darkness, of ignorance, Eph. 5:8. *You were darkness* in the abstract, Eph. 4. 18. So that *they cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. Especially the Lord Jesus, for the knowledge of him is above nature, not only corrupted but pure nature. Nay though the Lord gives the best and clearest means of revealing himself, yet they cannot see, John 1. 5. *Light shined in darkness, and it comprehended him not*, no more than he whose visive faculty is lost, when the Sun shines round about him. Nay, that light which is in them is darkness, Mat. 6. 23. And then how great is that darkness? For many men might have known Christ, but that they thought they did know him before, and so are delivered up in these chains of darkness to the prince of darkness, but are like wilderness-shrubs, shall never see when good comes. Ministers (as Christ did) may mourn over them, but can never help them until the Lord pull off their scales. **For they please themselves in darkness, and love it more than light, and are not as Paul, praying and mourning under the scales that are upon their eyes.**

Concl. 2. That there is a state of light to which God calls his people only; or rather, that there is a spirit of light, illumination or revelation let into the mind, which is peculiar to the beloved of Christ, 1 Pet. 2:9. As of other things, so especially of the Lord Jesus, 2 Cor. 4:4, 5, 6. And 'tis so glorious a work that Christ himself admires the Father, and stands in a ravishment at it, Mat. 11:25. *To babes*, incapable of all others of knowledge; yet to them doth the Lord reveal some things that the wisest in the world never knew. I do believe that the greatest scholar that ever lived, never had one such thought or apprehension of the Lord and the things of the Lord, as the saints have. And hence Christ puffedeth, *oh blessed are your eyes that they see*; and themselves bless him, and fall a wondring many times, *Lord why dost manifest thy self to us, and not to the world?* And therefore 'tis an injury to the grace of God, to make precious things

common, and all the work of the Spirit on the understanding to be common to reprobates, and to say, the difference lies only in the work of the Spirit upon the will, John 6:45. *He that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me. If the Learning of the Father be common to a Reprobate, then either they may come to Christ, which is there denied, or Christs promise is false, for then a carnal heart may hear and learn of the Father, and never come to Christ.*

Concl. 3 That notwithstanding 'tis thus with them, yet foolish virgins may have some light in their Lamp; some sight and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is said we live in days of light, and so indeed we do, but as the Lord said to them that had seen his miracles, *yet the Lord had not given them eyes to see to this day*; they were enlightened yet fell, Heb. 6:4. I shall therefore speak not of the revelation of all the word, but of Christ the end of it, and the knowledge of whom comprehends all the rest.

1. There is a knowledge of Christ in many a man which is begot by common fame, and human private instruction, which men hearing from credible men, conceive of and believe; as that Christ is the Saviour of the world, is come, is dead, is risen, is at God's right hand, that in him Gods justice and mercy is reconciled, that there is mercy with him for the greatest of all sinners, &c. And according as men are more or less instructed; so do men conceive and believe. But now this knowledge is but traditional, and begot by common fame and human report, like Herod's, that heard many things of Christ, and yet indeed despised him. The Lord I know doth make use of this to cause the soul to come to further sight of him, as in the queen of Sheba, but it's far enough off from giving any saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus; and hence John 1:46, when they had been with Christ, they do not wish them to rest in the report, but *Come and see*; so you hear of these things, but come and see these things. You have learned them from man come unto the Lord that he may teach them; and hence we shall see many of the people of God that have been put to a question of all things that ever they learned, and learnt them over again; as, whether there be a Christ or no, &c. And they never saw these things indeed, until the Lord taught them a second time; hence therefore those that have been thus trained up, and have been troubled and comforted by some conceived promises of Christ, but never saw any more of his person, then what you have learned before; *Your eyes are closed up to this day.*

2. If any man should see and behold Christ really, immediately, this is not the saving knowledge of him. I know the Saints do know Christ as if immediately present, they are not strangers by their distance, if others have seen him more immediately I will not dispute it, but if they have seen the Lord Jesus as immediately as if here on earth, yet Capernaum saw him so; nay, some of them were disciples for a time, and followed him, John 6, and yet the Lord was hid from their eyes; nay all the world shall see him in his glory which shall amaze them, and yet this is far short of the saving knowledge of him, which the Lord doth communicate to the elect. So that though you see the Lord so really as that you become familiar with him, yet Luke 13:26, *Lord have we not eat and drunk, &c.* And so perish.

3. A man may see the Lord in his wonderful works, and glorious kingdom and government, and yet not know him savingly, wondrous deliverances, preservations of himself, and of Gods people, dreadful destruction of enemies, such as they cannot but say, *This is the finger of the*

Lord, and yet know not, Deut. 29:1, 2, 3, 4. And hence John 15. 24. and hence men think such things are done, and shall I ever be vile again, yet they become as bad as ever.

4. He may see the Lord Jesus yet more clearly by the letter of the Scripture, which though it brings to the saving knowledge of Christ, yet to see the Lord Jesus no otherwise then by the **strength of fancy and understanding**, from thence is no saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; and hence (Rom. 16:26), the mystery of the gospel was hid from the Jews, but now 'tis revealed to all nations; literally, to all where it comes, savingly to some few. For between the saving knowledge of Christ in the gospel, and palpable ignorance of him in the Gospel, there is this middle knowledge which is literal, whereby a man doth see, *yet in seeing, sees not*, Isai. 6:9, which is the state of a church which hath been long trained up under good means; and hence we shall see many men of great learning have been able to wrote volumes of the mystery of Christ, and yet in *seeing never saw*.

5. There may be in a false heart a strange knowledge of Christ without scriptures, which may ravish a man's deluded heart strangely, which is usually the first temptation of the virgin churches, that are of much knowledge, and little love, 2 *Cor.* 11:2, 3, 4. Wherein Satan doth not seek to pull away men to forsake the gospel, but from the simplicity of the Gospel, *Repent, and believe, and be saved*, for saith he, *Satan is transformed into an Angel of light*. And hence we have heard that some have heard voices, some have seen the very blood of Christ dropping on them, and his wounds in his side, some have seen a great light shining in the chamber, some wonderfully affected with their dreams, some in great distress have had inward witness, *Thy sins are forgiven*; and hence such liberty and joy that they are ready to leap up and down the chamber: O adulterous generation! This is natural and usual with men, they would earnestly see Jesus, and have him present to give them peace; and hence papists have his image; and hence Christ gives the sacrament to show himself as familiarly as can be. Hence Thomas would not believe, *unless he might put his finger in his side*, and the Lord tendered him, yet pronounced *them blessed, them have not seen, and yet believed*, Joh. 20:29. So I say *e contra*, Woe to them that have no other manifested Christ, but such a one. Little do you think what wrong you do to Christ, for you do as much as in you lies eclipse all his glory at the last day, as the wicked by their sins eclipse his glory at this day. 2 *Thes.* 1:10. *He shall be admired in all that believe*. Why? Because our Testimony was believed; that faith which closeth with, and sees Christ in a Testimony, is that whereby Jesus shall be admired at the worlds end.

Concl. 4. That the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is this, whereby the soul **being sensible of his ignorance of Jesus**, beholds such a glory in Christ's person, as that he esteems him in all his glory, as his present, greatest, and only good. I will take this in pieces.

1. I say that soul which hath truly and savingly seen the Lord Jesus, **hath been made sensible of his ignorance of him**; I see him not, I have heard of him, and read of him, and taken his name into my mouth, and professed him; and I believe others see him, and blessed are their eyes, but I see him not, John 9:26, 27, 39. *For judgment came into this world*, and look as all the increase of the knowledge of Christ comes in by this door, so the beginning of it, and therefore those that have been cast down and heard of Christ a Saviour, **but never felt their ignorance of**

him before they have apprehended him, their light is darkness, and their knowledge full of delusion and idolatrous.

2. It beholds a glory in Christs person, for before the Lord reveals his Son to any, look what he was to the Jews he is to every man, Isa. 53:2, 3. *He is rejected and despised of men*, nothing so mean as Christ, **every vanity preferred above him, and men can do no other, because they see not his glory and beauty**, 1 Cor. 2:8. *If they had known, &c. Therefore the Lord reveals his hidden glory to them, such as never entered into their hearts before*, or into the minds of other men, which though others may talk of, yet they cannot see it in that manner as they do; it is called therefore, *marvelous light* which he doth reveal, when the soul hath been viewing its own shame and filth, when all the grass and glory is withered, Isa. 40:6, then the glory of Christ is revealed; one every way so fit and suitable to them, according to all their wants and woes, by some sermon or other, which when the soul doth see, it usually fills the head, and heart, and eyes with tears. Oh that I have despised him so glorious! Acts 2:36, 37, 2 Cor. 4:5, 6. **If the soul should not feel its ignorance of him, it would never esteem the fight of him**, but now it doth thus, and now that Glory is revealed, John 1:14, *We beheld his Glory as the Glory of the only begotten Son*. In every truth there is a Glory which men see not, and this is called in Scripture, *the finding of the Pearl*, Matt. 13: 45.

III. He so beholds him in his Glory, as that he now esteems of him in all his Glory. For a Balaam may see the glory of the tents of Israel; and *the Star of Iacob*, but they esteem not of him in all his Glory. The damned in Hell see a Glory in Christ, else they would never grieve for the loss of him, but 'tis only in regard of something in Christ, delivering saints **from sorrows they feel**. Nay many reprobates under a lively ministry, shall see some glory in Christ and in saints, to think them the happy men, **yet not esteem of him in all his Glory**; but 'tis otherwise here. The Lord ariseth as the sun upon the earth, which makes all things that have any Glory to appear therein, and it puts a Glory on every thing, that was hid before. So Christ puts a Glory on every thing of himself: So that,

1. The soul sees a glory in the grace of Christ, John 1:14. For the glory of Christs person is not seen without these excellencies, Luke 1:46. *My soul magnifies the Lord*.

2. A Glory in the holiness of Christ, Isa. 6:3. Especially to consider, it's in him to make me holy, 2 Cor. 3:18.

3. A Glory in his Covenant and Promises, Psa. 45:1, 2. Oh that all those Promises might be made good to me! This is all my desire, 2 Sam. 23:5.

4. A Glory in the Government and Commands and Will of Christ. Oh, if once I could in everything give content to his heart. Psa. 19:10. That the soul had rather lose all than cross his will in a small thing, seeing a glory in the least truth, in casting off a ceremony, &c. Zach. 6:13.

5. A Glory in all the ordinances of Christ. *Oh how amiable are thy tabernacles oh God!* Oh, the fellowship of saints! Oh the peace on sabbath!

6. A glory in all his carriage. Let him bless me with outward estate, though but a little. This is the allowance that Christ in Glory provides for me. Let him threaten me, *good is the Word of the Lord*. Let him desert me, his anger is love. Oh that is Glorious! Let him take all from me, reproach me, *Moses esteems Christs reproach greater riches than Egypt*, which is our estate here. It sees a glory in all Christ's ways, **and quiets itself here, it is the Lord**, as Eli said. Thus saints see and esteem of Christ in all his Glory, and we shall find a false heart ever falls short here, a sincere heart never, but commonly is so taken up with it, that if you ask, suppose you should have all grace, holiness, promises of Christ, &c. Would not this be mercy? Yes, enough. I should then boast in him, and bless him for ever. And hence Christ is called, *Luke 2:33, the Glory of Israel*, because they so esteem him. And *Isa. 28:5, In that day the Lord shall be a Diadem of Glory*. **Others may in horror prize Christ above the world, but 'tis only to ease them.**

IV. I add, he esteems him thus,

1. As his present good; so that if the Lord doth withdraw or deny himself, now unto him nothing in this world can for the present quiet him, *Jer. 50:4, 5*. Hence those in their judgments acknowledge Christ the greatest good, and when they are dying, and see he will be so at last day, yet now for the present a little more liberty in sin, sloth, lust, honour, gain, Lots, large accommodations are better. **You never saw him**. Oh, vile world! the Lord will one day condemn thee out of thine own mouth; **thy own will was more dear to thee than his; this worlds ease better than his peace**, &c. When you lie on your Death-beds, you esteem him then. Why? **Because he serves your turn then. Hence before you did not.**

2. As the greatest good, *Deut. 33:26. Jer. 10:7*. Hence those that see some good in Christ and desire him, and offer fair for him, **but prize him not as the greatest good**: And hence with the young man, though content to part with somewhat, not with all, they will cast their rags down at Christs feet, and entreat him to take away their sins; but will not cast their crowns down, **the dearest things they have.** And hence the thorny-ground-professors ever fall away. **The good things of this world which they forsook in time of persecution, were dearer than Christ, and hence they fall away.** 'Tis a dishonour to a King to be valued as other men are, *Zach. 11:12, 13*.

3. As the only good, *Isa. 24:23. The Sun shall be confounded*, &c. And though other things may steal into their hearts for a time, **yet they recover themselves**; this is the *one thing*, *Psa. 27:4*, that they beg in this life. And hence do fall short,

1. Those that esteem Christ as men do merchandise; they would fain have it, **but are loath to fetch it**. Men may esteem Christ, as they think, the only good; but herein **their falseness appears, that they neglect means to it, because they have some good else to quiet them**. And here is condemned all lazy profession.

2. Those that would have Christ, and esteem him highly, and use means for him diligently, **but they must have Christ, and world, and lust, and ease too; Christ to quiet their Consciences, and the world their hearts; Christ to rest on, when their duties fail them, and world to rest in, when the Consolations of Christ are denied unto them. The Lord is good, go up and possess it.**

Object. 1. But do the Saints come to this pitch?

Ans.: 2 *Cor.* 4:3. *If our Gospel be hid, 'tis hid to them that be lost.* Who are those from whom Christ is hid? When is he hid? **When his Glory is hid.** I know saints may feel a want of, and mourn for it, but it will appear if they are the Lord's, at some time. Nay this they will find, some and much contempt remaining which they oppose, yet this is here, and at parting times it is seen.

Object 2. But Saints cannot know this.

Ans.: Yes (as well as they can know their contempt) by means of God's Spirit, he that carried from one contrary to another shall know it.

Object. 3. But hypocrites may attain to this.

Ans.: Then the gospel may be revealed to an hypocrite and to them that are lost.

2. Then they may believe; for to them only the Lord is precious, 1 *Pet.* 2:7. Then a thing is precious, when we value it according to the worth of it. Now the Lord is the greatest and only good and then when we esteem him so; this is the work of believers only.

3. Then Christ may be a carnal treasure. For that is our treasure which we esteem most.

4. Then a carnal heart may honour Christ with one of the highest degrees of honour, which consists in this high esteem, *Luke* 1:46. *My soul magnifies the Lord.*

5. Observe we, that never any lost Christ but because they undervalued him. Forsake all, and take the pearl. That it shall lie upon you one day; Oh if Christ had had that esteem which lust and world hath had, I had had him now! Examine, if it be thus, if you thus see and prize the Lord Jesus. Oh be thankful that ever the Lord sent that Messenger to reveal Christ! If not, Oh go and mourn! Paul did ss three days, *Acts* 9. when *he saw nothing.* Oh Christ hath been long hid from thee. Oh, few have this; but lay about for it, for else that in *Mat.* 23:39, shall be your portion.

SECT. III.

III. Fulness of Faith, in the room of unbelief.

For 'tis not unknown how strongly this sin keeps every mans palace, and that not Moses, but the Lord Jesus is the stumbling stone even of the Jews, the peculiar people of God. When men are at their last cast, that the Lord intends to wait to pity no more, at last the Son comes, and an unbelieving heart casts the balance and refuseth him. After that the Lord hath tried men by miraculous preservations, deliverances from Pharaohs, provision at Massah, then Canaan

comes to be entered, and men cannot enter because of unbelief. This sin stands in open view, and keeps the breach, when all other sins in appearance are beaten out of the field. Now there is a Spirit of Faith, which comes in the room of this unbelief, dispossesseth the soul of the power of it; for there may be some lighter strokes of the Spirit, which are lighter skirmishes with it, but yet it wins the field again; as in the **stony ground**, that believed, **but unbelief got head again in time of persecution and temptation**, and then they fell away.

Quest. 1. What is this Faith, or that fullness or full measure of it?

Ans.: I shall not speak here of historical or miraculous faith. The first of which is in the devils, the second in some men only, that may perish afterward. Nor yet of that faith which we call, of assurance, we shall not come yet to that. But of that which we call justifying Faith, and that which doth first unite to Christ, and justify. Now this faith is the coming of the soul to Christ. This is the general. For Adam had his life in himself, but now 'tis lost in us, but laid up in Christ, Col. 3:3. Now hence they that would have this life, **must go out of themselves to the Lord for it**. Now the motion of the soul between these two extremes of emptiness and death here, to life and fulness there, what is it but faith? Which Adam had not, nor could have in that estate; and therefore none of the Sons of Adam naturally can share in it.

And that this is faith it appears,

1. From John 6:35. *I am the Bread of life, he that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst.*

2. Because unbelief is the departing of the soul from the God of life, Heb. 3:1. Not from a holy Law, but *from a living God*.

3. Faith is the proper effect of vocation or rather **the chief part thereof**. Now look as ineffectual vocation is when the Lord calls, but the soul never comes; so **effectual vocation** is whereby the Lord calls, and the soul answers, and so comes. So that to sit still and see nothing, and do nothing, is not faith, but sloth. No, Christ cannot be in that soul that is yet in himself. Therefore faith is not a passive possibility of the soul to receive Christ, though that may prepare for him, **but the going out** of a man's self unto Christ.

Quest. 2. But may not a man come to Christ, that never shall have mercy from Christ?

Ans.: Yes, there may be many lighter strokes, as in **temporary Believers**. The world is at this day full of faith. Every man thinks and saith he believes, though his faith be weak. 'Tis men's buckler against all means, they know these sins, but as long as they believe all is well. And 'tis their comfort in all their troubles, though the Lord kills, yet they will believe. And I say, some men have departed indeed from the Lord. The Gospel hath been preached, and they have made out of themselves to Christ, but missed of him. There is a **Bramble-Faith** that catcheth and scratcheth Christ, kisseth and betrays him. That coming to Christ therefore which none else have the full measure of, it appears in these particulars.

'Tis that work of the Spirit whereby a sinner, **sensible of his extreme nakedness, emptiness and wants**, being called of God, **his whole soul comes out of himself to Christ, for himself**. I speak not of assurance, for if that were faith, all reprobates then were bound to believe an untruth, viz. that God the Father loves, and Christ hath died for them.

1. 'Tis a work of Gods Spirit, and hence 'tis called the Spirit of Faith, not only because wrought by it; but because the Spirit is in an admirable manner fastened to it, and clasped to the soul, and the soul to Christ by it.

2. The subject in which 'tis wrought: **A sinner sensible of his extreme wants; for faith springs out of the destruction of our own excellency, and ruins of it;** like Christ, that did *arise a root out of a dry ground*; for the Lords great plot, **is to advance Christ and his rich grace. Now look as 'tis obscured by bringing any thing of our own to it, so 'tis advanced by fetching all from it; this can never be till the soul is sensible of his nakedness, emptiness and wants; let Christ be never so sweet, a full soul will loath him; and I say extreme want.** The Prodigal never comes home, till he dies for hunger; **for such is the senselessness of men, and dislike of Christ**, that extremities only drive them hither, as Judges 5:6. When the Midianites came, they ran like beasts to their den, and until bread was taken from them, they cry not unto the Lord, but then they do. **So men have neither hearts, or if so, no heads to come to Christ till now;** and usually the Lord makes this the ground of the souls first motion towards Christ. I die here, and because of my wants I therefore come. *Pardon sin, because great, Psa. 25:11, Be merciful, because 'tis a stiff-necked people, Exod. 34:9.* That so when the Lord pardons, **the soul may have nothing to boast of** but misery, and now 'tis hard to believe. But this is not all.

3. **It must be called of God, for else the soul though never so sensible of misery, could not, would not, durst not come;** but it would either sink under its burden, or plead against all means. It shall presume, as Judas that had no look of Christ (as Peter had) hangs himself: And hence Jer. 3:23. *Come unto me, their heart answered, we come.* For this is usually the objection of the soul when it sees the riches of mercy, What have I to do with it, that am so vile, and have fallen so oft, and rejected the Lord, and am like to do so? I shall sin the more by this means. No, the command of the Gospel comes, Oh come, notwithstanding all this, nay because of this, for I will heal you of them. Now this call hath two things in it. 1. **'Tis particular**, for general invitations to believe and come in, are made particular to the elect, who else would not come in; and hence Isa. 43:1. *I have called thee by name.* For we shall find that the hearts of men when they see a promise, cannot think it concerns them; all that hunger shall be satisfied, but shall I? And hence show them 'tis as particular as the law, they cannot think it is to them; and hence they say sometime the word All, is not put in. Now that is the mighty power of unbelief, a word spoken to all is regarded by none, till the Lord make it particular; and hence Isa. 2. Christ is said to *judge the Nations*, now when judges ride their circuits, they do not make laws, but only apply laws. One man is brought before them to be condemned, he hopes better, but he is so; now he trembles: Another to be acquitted, he fears, being falsely accused, he is freed; and now he rejoices. 2. 'Tis a living call, or powerful call, John 5:25. And hence a man may live under the calls of the minister long, and never come, because 'tis not made living from the Lord of life; and hence not irresistible.

4. Upon this call the whole soul comes out of it self to Christ; for if a man could climb the clouds, and unlock the doors of heaven, and come Elias like in his body to Christ, he might miss of Christ, as well as those that came and followed Christ for a time with their bodies while he lived on the earth; a man may come to Christ with half his soul or heart, there may be some hope, and some desires, some love, and some cleaving to him, and choice of him really, inwardly, and yet not savingly, **because the whole soul is not here come, but half of it**, James 1:7, 8. Now the whole soul then comes, **when all the affections and will take their flight to the Lord, and fasten there**. When all the affections are gathered **from all other things** and changed, and so they come to, and **embrace** the Lord; so that hope waits only here, When will the Lord pity me? **Desires that were set on a thousand things before, all long after him, love only tasted him**; the Lord letting in some sight of the freeness of mercy, hope looks out hither; the Lord showing the want, but the way to it, desire breaks down stone-walls, and all means, and the difficulty of them, to have him: The Lord letting the soul **taste the sweetness** of Jesus and his grace, the soul joys, and love embraceth, and the will fosters; **a carnal heart desires, loves, joys in other things, and the Lord also, and so hath a false heart**. But **the whole heart comes hither**, and when 'tis here, **thinks one heart too little**, nay, one life, one soul, **and when any part of the affections are left any where else, then the soul mourns, hates that bondage, is ashamed of it**, &c. **So that the stream of the whole soul runs now hither**, Psal. 119:2, Jer. 3:10, Psal. 45:10. So 'tis with the soul, as with them when they were to come out of Egypt, they would not leave child, nor hoof behind, lest there should be any occasion of return; it is with the soul departed from the body, it only minds the Lord, it hath taken leave of all; **so by faith the whole soul leaves all**, and comes to the Lord; **otherwise the soul is not come to Christ, but reacheth after Christ**; like men that waded after the ark, but perished in the waters: Their arms are not long enough, **their desires and love are not long enough to reach Christ, the bent and stream of the soul is set and runs here**. 'Tis with the soul, as 'tis with two rivers, both run with all their strength to the sea, but the great river is bigger, and runs faster, yet the others stream is wholly carried thither. So some men may be more full of faith then others, yet both run to the sea, and as rivers, they run in their circles, this way and that way, and are sometimes dammed up, yet end there. So the souls of all saints run to this and the other creature, yet they end in the Lord at last. As Peter and John that ran to the Sepulcher, though one out-ran the other, yet they came both to the Lord at last; when both of them had for a time forsook him, though all the world draw the soul back, it cannot live without the Lord; nay, though the Lord beat away the soul from him, yet it follows after him.

5. 'Tis to the Lord for himself, for John 6, some came to Christ for loaves, and could have been glad if Christ had been king for it, but did not care for himself. And hence vers. 27, he points and turns them to himself; some came to him for higher ends, therefore were his Disciples, that is, **for life from him**. But when he told them, *There is no life, unless you have the Son, and eat and drink his flesh and blood, or else you die*, it was a hard saying, they could not understand nor see what that meant, and hence forsook him, but when they come and receive him himself; now life is indeed theirs.

So that it's Christ's person that this faith first pitcheth on, as 'tis in marriage, and those that come for this, were never sent away. Now the soul is truly come to him for himself: 1. When

himself gives rest to the soul in the want of all things, Heb. 4. 3. If friends, protection, strength, life, glory be wanting, yet having him, in him I have all these; when all is sold away, not the treasure only, **but the field contents him**; for it looks on this, as better than heaven, than glory, it comforts the soul that the Lord himself should be mine. 2. The soul that talketh him, **'tis not only to make boast of him**, as Capernaum had him, **nor to cover sloth, and sin, and delusion by him**. I have Christ, and I have no more to care for, &c. but to live on him, John 6:57, *He that eateth me, shall live by me*. Phil. 3:9, 10. A man takes **not Christ as medicine to ease him; nor as stately hanging to adorn him, but as bread to receive life from him**. For many receive Christ, rest they do upon him, and rest they say in him, **but they do not suck any good from him**, nay before they had any Christ or assurance of him they were better than now. You have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus, you are out of your place. As in Jotham's parable, the olive and vine would not be pulled out of their places, to be set on the tops of other trees, as Kings; lest they lose their fatness and sweetness. So since you have closed with Christ, you have lost your fatness and sweetness that once you had, you are now out of your place, go to your horrors and sorrows again, till the Lord so give himself to you as that you may receive life from him.

Quest. 3. But must all come thus to Christ with their whole soul, will not part of the price serve?

Ans.: No, the whole soul must come, and cannot but come.

1. In regard of the jealousy of God; who is like a jealous husband, can bear with many weaknesses, but will have the whole heart; and they that do not, shall be destroyed for **spiritual whoredom**, *Psa.* 73:27. He should dishonour Christ else, to sell him so cheap.

2. In regard of the excellency of Christ: The Lord draws the soul by the revelation of him, *Rom.* 1:16, 17, *Isa.* 55:3, 4. Now look, as men in this world, when they see a seeming good, their whole soul is over-powered to be drawn after it. So here, when such an object is seen, especially the soul having been at his sepulcher weeping, as iron never stirs till the loadstone comes, **and then it makes to that only**, not to things touched with it. For as *we love him because he loved us first*, so Christ loving the soul with all his heart, and his whole heart set upon him, the whole soul is, *e contra*, set on Christ.

3. In regard else a man can receive nothing from the Lord, *Jer.* 29:12, 13. As 'tis with conduit-pipes, let them be laid, but not reach the conduit head, no water can come to that family; so here. And this is the reason why men live, and pray, and receive nothing, their hearts reach not hither. **Men's hearts reach but half way to Christ**. Tell me else, did you ever not receive?

4. Because else 'tis indeed no coming to him, but a leaning on him or toward him. So as 'tis with trees, if not cut off quite, or not pulled up quite by the roots, they cannot be set in another orchard, if the tree be left with never so little twigs in the ground, so here. Nay, the Lord accounts this worse than if a man had not come at all, *Jer.* 3:10. The Lord abhors a double heart, that Judas -like forsakes all for the Lord, but then loves the Lord **and the bag too**. You are

not the Lords. As it was with that man that quarreled about the tree, it leaned over the pales, but the root being found to be there, his it was. So though he lean on Christ, he is none of his.

Quest. 4. But do all Saints come to this measure?:

Ans.: Ponder these grounds else.

Object. But are not our hearts partly carnal, and so close with the creature?

Ans. True, but yet,

1. So far as is carnal it is lamented heavily; so that they grow not there, but are dying, withering daily, Jer. 31:18, 19. **When a man's affections grow out of the world, and there is no fear nor sorrow, in this respect now, no Christ is there.**

2. The bent and bias of the soul carries the whole soul hither. For I would not judge of this so much by sudden pangs, **as by an inward bent**; for the whole soul in affectionate expressions and actions may be carried unto Christ, **but being without this bent and change of affections, it's unsound.** As in Gideon, they would on a hurry make him king. He would not. He knew it was a sudden pang which would die. And the reason is, the true turn of the whole soul is not by turning old affections upon another object, **but changing them first by this bent, and so turning them.** For a carnal heart may have the first, as the same eye may see the sun and a dunghill, and the eye not changed; so here. Now when the whole soul is set here, it is never at rest till here.

Quest. 5. But may not Hypocrites come to this?:

1. Then they may be blessed, Psa. 119:2.

2. Then they shall never be cast off from Christ, John 6:37.

3. Then they may partake of that which the Lord only looks for. For why is the Lord angry? **The heart is gone from him.** Why is the ministry ordained, but to win the whole heart to him? John 3:19, 20, 21. **Oh, therefore consider whether it hath been thus with you or no!** If not, woe to you! **Oh, be very careful here!** 'Tis a thousand to one if some part of your heart be not fixt elsewhere. If Christ were at judgment, and should say, *Come ye Blessed:* How glad would ye be? Oh, he saith now, Come and take myself.

SECT. III.

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Quest. But doth not the Lord respect the groanings of his people? doth not Christ say, John 4. 10, *if thou hadst asked, &c.*, doth not the Lord look upon the inner man, the very frame, nay, desires that have been past?

Ans. Yes, there be some desires which are evidences; some which are not; I shall **discover them that be unsound** in the particular example of these foolish Virgins, &c.

First, Those are unsound desires, which arise in the soul easily, without feeling a need of the Lords almighty power and Spirit of life to work them at first; we shall find that the desires of

regenerate Christians do not come easily, but they find a need of the Lord to draw them, Jer. 31:10, Lam. 5:21; but the desires of others spring up easily and quickly; as these foolish Virgins, they wanted [*lacked, I think meant here*] oil, they could quickly desire it; and they go to their fellow-brethren for help, *Oh give us of your oil*. Look as it is with wild rye and pease, they will come up at the season of the year in abundance, without sowing or plowing, the ground bears them naturally; but other corn and grain will not come so easily; your ground will not bear it till plowed and digged, and then the hand of man must set it, and die it must, before it can live again; so here, **if desires come and spring up easily, it is a sign they are wild; the Lord must break the heart**, and then sow these, and plant these from heaven, and you must fetch it out of heaven, else it is naught; **for when the Lord works saving desires indeed, he ever sows them in a broken heart**, which is thoroughly broken indeed; when God sets the smoking flax on fire (which are desires) he first bruise the reed itself.

Secondly, The subject in which these desires are; a man hath a Son and a Servant; the Son hath all his desires granted him, because he hath a sonly spirit; all the Father hath is for him, that may be good for him; a servant desires importunately, but he prays from the **spirit of a servant**, and all that his master hath is not for him; and therefore if he pray for the inheritance or a part of it, of the portion of the son, shall he have it? No, he shall have what is fit for a servant; so it is here, the Lord hath some sons in his churches; these praying and desiring from a son-like spirit, all that God hath being theirs, they shall have it; and hence Psal. 145:18, 19, 20, *He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, and love him, and delight themselves in him*; for that is the **son-like disposition**; when he is cut short of all comfort in the world, nay, when he may have his fill of them, **yet he delights in his Fathers face, love, and grace, and fellowship, and house**, Psal. 27: 4, *For they are heirs and coheirs with Christ, being sons*; but now there are servants in the house of God; shall they have their wills and lusts? No; thus it was with these foolish Virgins; they were only servants in the house, no true spouse or sons, and were foolish at best, and had not the spirits of sons, but had their lusts; never were espoused savingly to the Lord Jesus himself, nor laid up all their hope in him, but were foolish and that is the ground why others desires are heard, not theirs.

Thirdly, unsound desires make after a **certain measure** only, whereas the desires of saints **seek after this grace without measure**; and thus the foolish virgins fell short of the wise; all that they could get was little enough for themselves; but the foolish look after some of their oil, as many a man looks upon the gifts and parts of another; Oh, saith he, if I was as honest, as humble a man as such a one! and many a man sets up such a measure, and if he hath that, is well, while he wants [*lacks*] that miserably: Look wistly [*intently*] upon the foolish virgins, they did content themselves with a measure, and now they are in want of it, seek for it; at first a little did content them, and now when it is spent, a little will serve them again: And what is their measure?

1. So much as will beautify and adorn them before men, *our Lamp is out*.
2. So much as will comfort them against the coming of Christ; for now they were troubled that their oil was spent, whereby they might meet the bridegroom; he that desires it for a little

measure of it, his desires are certainly unsound; **so much as will serve his turn** (he cuts his coat according to his cloth) but he that desires it without measure, *è contra*, as Paul, *Phil. 3:2, That I may apprehend by any means, that for which I am apprehended*: As Chrysostom calls Paul that *insatiabilis Dei cultor*; for he makes it his last end; as he that desires wealth without measure, though he gets not all the wealth of the world, yet the more he hath, the more he craves; this his fleshly lust is his last end.

Obj. But he may desire it without measure for his own ends.

Ans. I confess 'tis true; for men may desire honor and no honor but by gifts, and no gifts but by grace; and hence may desire infinitely, **but yet it is but a measure, viz. to serve his own ends, but not the Lords ends; to set up himself; true desire of grace, is for that which may pull down self, and make God all**, *Psal. 119. 4, 5.*

Fourthly, It is not their only desire, or the only thing they desire, *viz.* the good Spirit of the Lord, and that they might not live or any thing else in them, but that the Lord may live, and his Grace and Kingdom may prevail in their hearts; the desires of saints are only after this; or if their desires are after other things, the Spirit lusts against them, *2 Sam. 23:5.* As carnal desires are after life, and the comforts of it, so spiritual desires are after the life of Christ in them, and the comforts of the Lord thereby, *Psal. 27:3, 4, One thing I have desired, and that I will seek for*; what was it? a crown, a kingdom? No, *but that I may dwell in the Lords house for ever, and visit his Temple*: Notable is that example of Abraham, *Heb. 11.* Two things he met with that might draw down his desires.

1. He came to a land which God promised to give him, where he lives among enemies and in fears.

2. He might have returned to another Country, and now have been better.

3. *God blessed him, &c.* but it was nothing he desired, only another above; hence God is not ashamed to be called his God; but the foolish virgins fell short of this, and hence **they now seek only in times of extremity**. And this is the frame of many graceless hearts in time of extremity.

1. When all grace is gone. 2. When death is come, then they seek earnestly after the Lord, and Grace; Oh their sin lies heavy! Oh then a humble heart is sweet! **but before their hearts were overcome with lusts after other things; and this double heart every carnal heart hath**, *Ephes. 2:3, fulfilling the lusts of the mind, i.e., diabolical lusts, and lusts of the flesh, i.e., sensual and beastly lusts*, it's the state of all men; and hence promises are not made simply to men's seeking the Lord, for they may miss, but to them that do it with their whole heart, *Psal. 119:2, Jer. 29:13, this they never do*; and hence men pray daily, and live in their lusting all the day after; **men long in misery, but are cool in peace**.

SECT. IV.

Quest. But seeing there is in Saints two natures, flesh lusting against the spirit, and spirit against flesh; and a double heart in a reprobate, whereby he desires grace and other things, how shall we distinguish them?

Ans. 1. **The lusts after grace and worldly things in a hypocrite agree together in the same heart**; but those lusts which are after the flesh and spirit in a regenerate heart are contrary one to another, and like fire and water one seeking to destroy the whole being of the other. *E.g.*, A man wants the things of this world, he seeks and desires after them, riches, honor, rest, and peace; but thinks he, if I have no more but this, I may to hell; if no grace; hence he desires that, and so doing now he hath peace, and all is quiet with him, and goes on sweetly in a way of profession and prayer; and a gracious heart is ready thus to do, and to make his head lie soft with two pillows, but yet the Spirit riseth up against this, that the soul thinks, I shall fall by this heart; Lord, how apt to rest in these lees! lusts in hypocrites are like brethren, that help one another, to this end to get peace; but here as enemies, to destroy such a cursed peace as that is in the godly.

2. In a false heart, lusts and desires after these things are dear to them, like their limbs and best members, they cannot be nor cannot do without them; but in saints they are sores and blains, and so hated of them; *ex. gr.* Let a man have a full table, and fair estate, and outward blessings, promising much, and the ordinances of God, and a heart to follow God there; now see him lively in the service of God; but let him be brought to extremities, and want of all this, and fears of poverty, estate wasteth, poverty appears, many rates come in, and the wife cries out; now he falls down to the earth in discontent or worldliness, and his life and affection to ordinances, or the servants of God, is now gone; as it is with a bird, when she hath two wings she can fly, but when she hath only one, then she falls, and the fowler takes her, because it was a limb precious to her; so here. Thus it was with David's servants at Ziklag, 1 *Sam.* 30:4, *all wept till they could weep no more; but here it was otherwise with David, he could fly to God without those wings*; so when God gives a man a condition not so great as he would, and the heart lusts after so much, and God crosseth; he cannot be content with a little, or with a mean estate, **because his lust is his limb**, he cannot suffer it to be cut off, or be pared; if a man hath a wooden leg, he can cut it answerable to his shoe, but if but a limb, he must have his shoe cut answerable to his leg; because it is his limb, no cutting of that less; **Oh it is dear. So it is with a man that hath a lust after any thing, it is dear, and hence he is said to live in them, and to be in the flesh**; but the desires after these things in a gracious heart, they are blains, they can be without them; Oh never such a happiness if the Lord would dead them to me, Gal. 5:24, *they that are in Christ have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.*

3. **The lusts and desires in a false heart are reigning lusts, and make the lusts after grace and holiness serve them**; but *è contra* in a holy heart. *Ex. gr.* A man prays for the love of God, and the Spirit of grace, and 'tis affectionate, but yet 'tis ever for some lust: Jam. 4:3, a man desires grace to perfect his gifts, and gifts to deck him, and purchase him honor before men; a man desires grace to quiet his conscience in assurance of Gods love, and pardon of sin, that he may live the more peaceably with his sin, Isa. 58:3, 4. **Now in a gracious heart**, the desires of these things serve the desires after grace; **for he desires the things of this world to be the more**

holy, Prov. 30:7, 8. *Feed me with food convenient, that I may not tempt thee*; he desires, and hath them for Israel's sake, 2 Sam. 5:12. Like a tradesman, he buys and sells, but it is for gain, Phil. 1:20. Oh consider of these things, and if your hearts have had only such false desires as these, know it, that as verily as these virgins were shut out, so shall you another day.

Chapter XIII

The Desires and Endeavors of Hypocrites after Grace Are Not Lasting

Observ. 4. That foolish Virgins in their first endeavors after the spirit of grace, usually cease from seeking farther, before they have got that measure and fulness of it which will continue to the last. *Or,*

That there is ever a cessation in the first endeavors of carnal professors from seeking after that measure of grace which will indeed last and continue until their meeting with and appearing before the Lord Jesus Christ.

For these virgins here did seek after the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and hence did get that measure which lighted their lamps for a good season; and they contented themselves with this, and gave over seeking until it is too late; and therefore now they say, *Give us of your oil, our Lamps are out*: These foolish virgins when they had got somewhat, **they are carried with abundance of affection and profession, they think themselves as good as the best, and what need they seek for more!** and then grow **secure** and **fall asleep** until all is spent. The Scripture is pregnant every where for this. But let us look and see the causes of this.

First. Sometime it is because they know not what that measure is which doth accompany salvation; but they **set up an imagination of their own heads**, which is a **false image of saving-grace**, and when they have that, now they think all is well, and they go no further. Judg. 2:11, 12. **People that know not the Lord, nor the power of his grace, will set up other gods, and serve them**, and there rest; until it is with them, as it was with those, when *the anger of the Lord waxeth hot, and spoilers come*, now they cry unto the Lord; What is the reason why many a man falls short of the righteousness which is of God, viz. of faith? **Because he sets up in his head a righteousness of his own; and if I get that, then I hope the Lord will accept me, and forgive me**; and hence Rom. 9:31, 32, why did they miss of it? Because they sought it by a righteousness which is of their own; so why do many miss of faith? **because they think it is an assurance**; or when a man rests upon Christ, not considering the need of an Almighty power; and hence the Apostle prays for this, Ephes. 1:19. So for repentance, why do men fall short of it? they think it is when God's anger is expressed, the soul then comes to seek the Lord, and finds some comfort Psal. 78, Matt. 3, and so runs away with it. So for Holiness, they think it is to be like others; and then well, they think these are the men that shall live, and are happy; and look as it is like it was at Babel, when head and tongues were confounded, one calls for a brick, the other brings him a trowel, hammer or tile, because he did but imagine what he spake, and so

understood not his language; so 'tis here; men read and hear God speak, and ministers call for faith, and knowledge of God; **but earthly minds cannot understand heavenly language; and hence they imagine that is faith and repentance which indeed is not, and so miss of that which indeed else would continue; and this is the misery of many thousands that in seeing see not.** The **experience** of the work of grace, **makes men savingly to know what grace is**, John 5:37, 38. Now men graceless never felt it in the life and power of it, and therefore cannot tell it.

Secondly. From the nature of Common-grace; the nature of which is as the Apostle speaks of **lifeless knowledge**, 1 Cor. 8:1 *to puff up*; **it never leaves the soul more sensible of his vileness, as saving-grace doth**, Ezek. 16 *ult.*, and so makes a man never rest in seeking after the Lord; **but makes the soul feel himself full, and hence the stomach is gone from seeking after more**, as **Rev. 3:17**, *She thought she was rich, &c.* The spirit of grace which is but common, that heals a vile, proud heart, it easeth him, it quiets him, in healing some sin, which lies sore on the conscience; it heals and quiets the man, so he is well, needs no repentance; **but the Spirit of life indeed destroyeth the man, and slays corruption**, and hence he resists; and now saith the soul, *I never felt my heart so vile as now*; and hence, saith Paul, *Sin revived, and led me captive, Oh wretched man!* as it is with a prince, if any great ones come and serve him, he likes them, this gives him rest, settles him in his throne; but if any one come to reign over him, now he gathers all his strength to oppose. So **common grace** it ever comes as a servant to corrupt; and hence take a man of best wit and parts, he turns them against the Lord, and makes them serve himself.

Thirdly. From an apprehension of this difficulty, and an unwillingness in the heart to break through the difficulty of seeking after the Lord; many a man sees (as Dives in hell, *Abraham afar off*) grace, and God, and Christ afar off; but there is a great gulf between them and grace; now to be watching, fasting, seeking the Lord diligently, to follow the Lord hard, Psal. 63, to **keep the heart lamenting till the Lord comes, this is hard**, as *Heb. 3*, 'tis said, *They could not enter in because of unbelief*. 1. They thought they could never overcome. 2. They thought the Lord did therefore hate them, Deut. 1:27. They did not regard the strength of God; *they shall be but bread for us saith Caleb*; they could not believe that to be bread that is so hazzardful. So 'tis with many a man; and hence he sits down with desires and hopes, and so perisheth; the sluggard's desires slay him; hence many complain of difficulty, but never break difficulties, and so perish; and so not like to the merchant that goes far for pearl. It is his business, and no storms nor ill weather drive him to desire the smoke of his chimney, till he hath got them, he hath now resolved to venture all for, Prov. 2:5, *if thou dig for silver, &c.*, many prize Christ and grace, Oh that I had it, but are loath to dig for it, they love their ease so well, and hence rest in their desire after it; but indeed miss it; and hence many can come to, and follow God in outward ordinances, but never find fruit and comfort in any of them, because of difficulty, yet sit down content because they seek for ordinances, as Prov. 12:27, *The sluggard roasts not what he had took in hunting*; **there is a very great delight in coming to ordinances, as travelers under the shadow, but then to climb the tree that is hard**, and hence lose the fruit; and hence God seeing a man love his sloth, and hath that base esteem of his grace, as that he will not follow so hard after it as he hath done after his lusts, let's loose Satan, and he comes and stakes down a sinner in this, **God must do all, and there he rests, and so he falls short**; like one that

comes to husbandmen, and tells them they have taken much pains and care to get their ground good to bring forth much, but for time to come their ground shall bring forth fruit without planting or sowing, only reap you the fruit, it would be good news to them, and they believe it, and then when the year comes about, they are to seek for corn; so this affects, and here they rest, and by this means want [lack].

Fourthly. From feeling the unprofitableness of seeking the Lord through difficulties, and hence they give over but a little before they find that that will continue.

1. **Some follow the Lord for carnal ends**, as Judas did, but he finding the purse grow lank, and the bag empty, he forsakes the Lord.

2. **Some for comfort**, and hence pray and mourn; and hence Mal. 3:14, what profit is there that we have walked so? as it was with Naomi, when she returned home, both her daughters accompany her some part of her way, *Return again*, saith she, *to your friends, here is no husband for you where I go*; the one would not be beaten off, **it is not a husband I came for, but a God; thy God shall be my God**; the other hearing her speeches, and loving her fathers house, and country, goes back, not without some affection; so it is here; whereas faith will cry the more.

Fifthly. From the offences which usually Satan casts in when they are in the heat of their first endeavors; as the stony ground being offended fell away. As,

1. Persecution, and hence they fall; a childe begins to look towards God; the Father, Mother, Friends scoff and reproach.

2. Corrupt Teachers, Matt. 24, that like false Christs deceive, and put a world of scruples into men's heads, and then lead them away; as the Galatians that would pull out their eyes for Paul, yet by love and smooth carriage of false teachers so plausible, they fell off strangely.

3. Corrupt company, women or men; many strong men have fallen by the one, and *men also who having a form of godliness, yet denying the power of it*, their hearts be taken in these snares.

4. Some hard point of doctrine, John. 6:60, 66. something is preacht that is cross to our apprehensions; I will never believe it, say they; and away they fall.

▣ *Sixthly*, **Because of false comforts** which usually men meet with before they get that which will abide in them, in their worst hours; **and this quiets all**.

1. From themselves; A man sees Christ only can redeem him by price, **but he feels no need of Christ to redeem him by power**; and now seeing what a miserable creature he is, stays himself upon the Lord, and that it may be by some word which he hears, John 8:30, 31, *when they heard that, they believed*; yet the Lord tells them, they are not free, but were yet captive to

their sin, which they need the Son himself to die to save them from; and so many a one comforts himself, and stays here, though he have no other assurance.

2. The approbation and comfort of others, Ezek. 13:3, 4.

3. Strange ecstasies of joy which many a man meets with suddenly; they have eaten and drunk in Christs presence, and have been comforted at such and such a time in such a manner; this, we shall find it, persuades men that God is theirs, without revealing the subject, *viz.* we be his people, and that change which God hath made.

SECT. II.

Quest. What is that measure which will last, and throughout continue?

Ans. I have spoken of this at large; but he that loves the truth as his daily bread, will feed upon it, when ever it is set before him. Now there is one thing (this is different) and I shall express my self in one thing only, *viz.* *They give over before they have tasted and drunk the satisfying sweetness of the grace of Christ, and the presence of his grace in their souls.* That look as it was with Israel, they came out of Egypt, and saw the wonders of God in the wilderness, and had his fiery law, and glorious tabernacle among them, yet they never came to the land of rest; so it is at this day with many, they have some glimpses of the excellency of Christ, and his grace, and some desires after it, and some tastes of it; they are pulled out of their woeful bondage, and seeing words of God, are oft affected, yet their carcasses must fall in the wilderness, because they never come to rest; they fall off from God because they never knew what this rest meaneth, Heb. 4:11.

Hypocrites have awakening grace, and are much troubled; they have enlightening grace, and know more than many Christians; they have affecting grace, and are wonderfully taken with the glad tidings of the Gospel; but satisfying grace, or that grace which brings them to full rest, and satisfying sweetness in God, not only to their consciences but to their hearts; **not carnal, but spiritual, this they never came to**, John 4:14, *he that drinks the water I give, shall never thirst again*; John 6:54, *If ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is life*, if not, no life; **eating and drinking, is not sipping and tasting**; many may eat and drink in his presence, as those Exod. 24:11, **but yet not feed at all on his person**; this makes the soul hold out, Prov. 2:10, 11, Psal. 90:14, this makes the soul glad in God, and in all the days of his life; **where any creature is at rest, there it is in the proper place**; it is a token the Lord is the proper place of the soul, (not sin, nor hell, which was Judas' proper place) when it is at rest there; and this is the last end, and fruit of the redemption of Christ, Jer. 31:11, 14. *i.e.*, not having so much of God as to be a God-glutted Christian (as he said) **but so satiate as not to desire other things**, but there to stay, though the heart doth oft feel not the same sweetness.

SECT. III.

Now there be four things which do concur to this fulness of satisfying sweetness:

First. Manifestation of the Lord Jesus in his full proportion, and in all the dimensions of his goodness to the soul; the soul of man is made for, and so desires an infinite eternal good; whiles this good is not known to be such a one, **it never satisfies**; and **hence let a man look upon any one creature, there is much sweetness in it, but not all**; hence it satisfies not; there's sweetness in honor and wealth, but if sick, a miserable man; there is sweetness in health, but if poor and naked, a desolate man; and if one creature had all in it, yet when one thinks this must be taken from me, it is like Jonah's gourd, **it never satisfies**:

Now the grace which satisfies must first, manifest the fulness of infinite goodness suitable to me in the Lord; if that now do I want any outward blessing it is in Christ, for he is heir not only of heaven, but of all the world.

2. Do I want spiritual blessings? *Eph. 3*, there is all in him; life, and peace and glory.

3. Have I nothing to move the Lord to do any of these to me? yet there is fulness of tender mercy, and pity in him, *Eph. 1:17* and *3:18*.

Secondly. Possession of this good as mine; let a poor man see heaps of gold before him, it satisfies not him, because it is none of his; let a Christian hear of kingdoms, peace, glory, in and with Christ, yet it satisfies not him; it troubles him the more, if Christ forsake him, and grow strange to him; but to be sure that Christ is mine, this makes the soul do, nay suffer the utmost for Christ, and to know that nothing can separate, &c., as a man that knows he shall kill, and not lose his life, will venture like Sampson upon an host of men; they may wound me, they cannot bind nor slay me, *Rom. 8. ult.*, there is joy and some satisfaction in finding the pearl of great price, what joy when it is possessed!

Thirdly. Communication of this good to the soul; let a man have meat and drink, but he cannot come at it when he hath need of it, will this satisfy if it be lockt up? Let a man have real possession of never so many lands, yet if he hath not the benefit sure to him, as well as the thing, he will never hold out; what am I the better? so that grace satisfies that brings the soul to fruition of the good, that it is now in respect of the benefit of it conveyed to the soul, *Psal, 16:4, 5, the Lord is the portion of my lot and cup*, and he maintains both; and hence *Jer. 14:9. Why art thou like a man astonished, yet in the midst of us!* if a man have meat and clothes, and the one never feeds, the other never warms, would this satisfy? no, unless that he may feel them; nay, he would think this a curse; so let saints have God in his ordinances, the best in the world there is, if not fed thereby, Lord! what a misery is this? especially if the Lord helps not in time of need.

Fourthly. Reflection of good again to the good which doth refresh us, else it never satisfies; if a man have meat dealt out, and it is very sweet, yet if it gives him no strength to perform acts of life; if a man have a friend, and he cannot love again, nor show testimony of love, it will not satisfy him; so that grace satisfies which makes the soul reflect the love of God to God again; *shall I serve the Lord, said David, of that which cost me nothing?* you know the vine and olive,

Judg. 9, were quieted by this, *that they did rejoice the heart of God and man; what do you tell me of bonds? I account not my life dear to finish my course, saith Paul.*

□ **Now a carnal heart gives over before he sees or possesseth or enjoyeth the Lord, or found the sweetness of a holy life in walking with God.** Hence,

1. He loathes and is weary of all his profession and truth he knows, and the God he talks of.
2. Hence they break out to some lusts or others; which because if not satisfied here, they must satisfy themselves some other way, either in vain conceits or opinions, or lusts of the world.
3. Hence, desperate doubts, Is the Lord mine? whereas if it were otherwise, then as it is with a man, ask him, how do you know you eat and drink? it satisfies me, saith he, it puts strength, I should die daily else.

SECT. IV.

Use 1. Of Examination, instruction, and exhortation to all those who have rest content with that measure of the Spirit which will never last, to begin again, and lay a better foundation, lest it befall you as it did these virgins, or as the sinner in Prov. 5:11, 12, 13. *you mourn when you, not your flesh, but soul is consumed; Oh how have I despised instruction!* lest wrath break out which cannot be quenched, for dealing slightly with God and your own souls; how many Christians take that for grace, which when it comes to trial will be found too light, and know it not, and regard it not, *till the hand-writing of God is upon their consciences!*

If therefore you have not found the satisfying sweetness of the Spirit of God's grace, that water which quenqueth all your inordinate thirst, that bread which feeds you to life, **be sure your oil will be spent, and your light will go out before you die.**

SECT. V.

Quest. **How should I know that satisfying sweetness?**

Ans. Ah methinks you should say, Oh that I did know it! yet wary I would be of giving any just occasion to break off what the Lord in his grace hath wrought; yet you may know something of it by this.

1. **When the Spirit of Gods grace dispensed in his ordinances doth glut you and slay you, and make you worse;** here is not the grace of Christ which doth satisfy you; if the more knowledge you have of the truth, the less glory you see in the truth, and the less you love the truth; if the

more comfort you have sound by it, the less you now desire after it; if the more abilities you have received by it, the more proud you grow, and high-minded; if having come for to seek the ordinances of God, the less good you find by them, the more weary you grow of them, and the more you despise them; it is certain, the satisfying grace of Christ is not here, when the bread to feed, is poison to slay; is not this the condition of many? what is the cause they are growing worse, that they are worse in their latter end and middle of their Christian profession, than the beginning, because they are grown full by Gods Ordinances, and so worse; what is the cause in places of persecution the Lords ordinances were precious, not when they come to them? God's ordinances plenty makes them to undervalue them through their sin; that look as it is with men in consumptions, whose life is going out, they think they can eat, yet when it is before them, loath the smell of it, or a little serves them, whereas another finds it otherwise; not but that saints may think thus, but they with Hezekiah mourn under it, *2 Chron. 32, Hos. 6:5, I have hewn and slain*, what is the cause? because your goodness is like a morning dew, which soon vanisheth, therefore have I slain them. Oh God loves us, and we are the best people in the world, because we have ordinances; no, but because you be shallow, hence you shall have prophets to slay you.

Secondly, If any man maintains any living lust in himself in the midst of his profession, and hungers after it, and the life of it; for when a man hath better food to feed upon, he will neglect his own at home, as Christ said to them when they asked him, why he did not eat; how many be there which have strange gifts, and have had marvelous ebbings and flowings of the spirit of life and peace, and yet one sin have they lived in, and would not, could not live without it. Look as it was in the wilderness, they were for a time pretty well content with their allowance and wilderness-walks and provisions, but they could not stay long, *They asked meat for their lusts, but he sent leanness into their souls*, *Psal. 106:14, 15*. So that there it is, if lust be stirring, the Lord either denies it his own people, because he will starve the lust, that the soul may grow, or if he gives it, slays the lust by it, gluts it, makes the soul grow weary of it, and prize his first husband more; as Solomon by his experimental discovery of the creature: many men confess and pray against their sins, but by their sorrows and desires, they do maintain the life of their sin, fall to it as the dog to the vomit; you will be cast away at last, *1 Cor. 9. ult., I beat not the air, lest I become a cast-away; whereas a gracious heart doth not maintain, but waste and consume his lust. His life is to live to God*.

Thirdly, If a mans heart and affections reach not the people of God with the dearest embracings, nor yet mourn for the want of such a heart; for sometimes there are some drops of the Lords goodness falling into the heart, whereby the soul cleaves unto the Lord, and is moved and ravished, and bears much love, as it thinks, towards him; but look to their love to the people of God, there they fall short; because *the love of Christ is not shed abroad abundantly into their hearts, filling and satisfying of them; and hence have none to pour out upon the souls of their neighbors*, *1 John 4:20, 21*. In our own Country, what was the accusation of saints? *viz.* They are hypocrites before God; what did you think of those men that said so?

Ans. Surely they were enemies to the Lord, **and that never loved him; for then they would love his people.** But what is the occasion here? Now they say they come far for ordinances; but they are unjust oppressors, cruel; poor men may starve before regarded by them; and so they cast reproach not only upon some few, but all the people of God, and church of God; If that it be so, their accusation is God's accusation; if not (as generally it is) for many, though unable to do much, yet if called to it, would lay down their estates and lives for others; then know thou never hadst Christ's love shed in thy heart (which will continue) but drops of it only; **because thy love cannot reach to these.** Beloved, what is the end of your coming over hither? is it not to enjoy first Christ, and nextly his people, so his ordinances? because next to fellowship of Christ, **the saints company is most precious; and do you here bite, and censure, and devour, and neglect, and reproach one another, and upon any conceived injury stumble? are poor men neglected?** It is a sad sign the love of Christ in not in power, Heb. 6:9, 10.

Fourthly. If there have been abundance of sweet affections and sweet refreshings, thereby rising up within the soul, **without the death, and killing, and removal of the contrary lusts and sins; it is certain this soul was never truly filled nor satisfied with the Spirit of Gods grace;** for as it is with vessels, while they be filled with lime or chaff, they cannot be filled with wheat or with water; so while the heart is filled with some noisome distempers, it cannot be filled or satisfied with the Lord; look but abroad in the Churches; how many be there that say and think they hate their sin as the only evil, they close with the Lord Jesus, they love the people of God all of them, they seek the glory of God, and yet they do but think so! **for though they hate sin, yet it is unsoundly, because they see not how closely their hands are knit to their sin;** they never did believe, because **they never felt their unwilling heart** to close with Christ; they never loved the saints, because they never felt their contempt of saints; never sought Gods glory, because they never mourned under that which did stain it; they never make work with their own hearts; the stony and thorny ground withered because their soil was naught; a heart filled with sweet affections, which never felt the strength of contrary corruptions lying underneath, it is an ill soil, and where those affections will never prosper, nor prove right; and hence, 2 Tim. 2:20, 21, he that purgeth himself from these things shall be a vessel of honor, ever preserved, never broken. Do not put it to a venture, it may be I may have grace, and so put your salvation on the hazard of such hopes; but the Lord that hath come to thee knocking, open the door that he may come in and feast; cry for infinite creating power and mercy to make haste and come and help thee; **what have you to do else but to get your old lusts purged away? what do you labor for else?** if you have children to bring up, if you have any love to them, nay if swine or cattle, meat you will have to feed them, and satisfy them if possible; and yet behold thy soul perishing for want of true spiritual refreshings!

Chapter X

Sect. VI

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SECT. VI.

See the happiness of saints (all you standers by) and of all believers. You think what are they? What have they, that I have not? What get they by seeking, by mourning? They have the Lord himself, not Kingdoms, nor Heaven, not guard of Angels, not pardon, nor comfort or Grace only, but which is greater, and than which there can be no greater, the Lord of Glory himself. Is there any thing that is good there? I theirs. I doubt not but Angels stand amazed at this. What hast thou? Thou hast peace, and ease, and duties, and friends, but no Christ, then poor and cursed thou art.

SECT. VII.

Hence learn to judge of your faith, whether it be of the right make or no? whether it be such a faith as will never fail you, but shall in deepest miseries, in sorest agonies, and most furious temptations; nay in greatest sins and desertions, be indeed a friend unto you? Is it such a faith as pitcheth on, and closeth with the person of Christ himself, and him alone? So that all the delights in creatures quiet thee not, unless thou canst find him through them; nay, no ordinances cheer thee, unless thou canst see him in them; nay, heaven itself will not content thee, but him in heaven, Psa. 73:25. And hence 'tis him thou seekest, 'tis him thou seest, it is him thou approvest thy self unto, and servest. So that it is this *Rock of ages* thou trustest to, Isa. 26:3, 4. 'Tis his strength thou art strong by, 'tis his life thou livest by, 'tis the Lord himself that thy faith fathoms. This is right, 1 Pet. 2:7. For now what good can the Father deny thee, when he hath given a Son to thee? What hurt can Satan do thee by all his shakings, when thou hast the Son himself, this corner-stone, this horn of salvation to support thee? What hurt can the law do thee, when thou hast righteousness in a son? What hurt can delusion do thee, when thou hast wisdom ever plotting for thy good, in such a glorious Head as the Son? What hurt can death do thee, or sin do thee, when thy life is in the Son? *Oh lead me to the Rock, saith David, that is higher than I.* Oh here is a rock higher than death, than grave, than sin, than Satan. Who can hurt thee now? But oh Beloved, how many fall short of *entering into this rest?* and closing with this person? And there are four sorts of them, that spin the finest thread of deceit to themselves that think they believe when yet they have not the Son.

1. Those that do not close with himself, but only come to him for some righteousness out of himself (for I shall not speak of them that forsake all, and follow Christ for the bag and for the loaves [see Jn6:26]) for 'tis with all men living naturally, as 'tis with men that have been rich shop-keepers, but now they are broke, and cast into great want; steal they will not, dig they cannot, beg they know not how; turn prentice to another they must not, they have not been used to that life; hence they resolve to set up their trade again, though they sell but pins, and points, and small wares; and because they cannot set up for themselves, they go unto

merchants to help them, and run into their books on trust, and desire day and patience, and they will pay them all again; now 'tis not the man that they respect, but to make up their markets out of him; but alas, they cannot pay their debts, and hence to prison they go: so 'tis here, God set up *Adam* with a stock in his own hand [*stock is the original stock of grace given or concreated in him at his creation*], now he is broken and cast into great want, and fears the arrest of Gods displeasure. Now, sin men dare not, dig and help themselves they cannot, and to beg and live upon the Lord and his alms they know not how; indeed they will not, they are not used to this life; hence seek to set up their trade again, though in never so small duties; and because they cannot help themselves, hence they go to Christ, not as to an husband for himself, but as to a merchant to set them up again. And truly Christ for many ends, and to show his freeness to his own, gives many talents to such, which they receiving hope to please the Lord by; when I can get the Lord to give me some more knowledge, brokenness, affections, enlargements, abilities to do, then I hope I shall please him: but either they spend all and fall away to nothing before they die, or else death come; and carries them captive to the judgement-seat of God, and there they see they are run but the deeper in debt, and not able to pay. Thus it is with Papists who profess that none of their own works save, but his works in us, and his blood meriting, that these shall save. Hence they trust not to what they do, but to what the Lord does, against which very faith the Apostle disputes, Rom. 4:5. Thus it was with the Jews, divers despised Christ, and sought a righteousness of their own; others cried *Lord, Lord, Lord*, there be these sins that wring my conscience, *ease me of them*; here be these duties I must do, else never saved, and my heart is dead, Oh affect me, and help me to do them; there be such works I am to perform, and have no strength to pray, to prophesy, Lord assist me! Matt. 7:21, 22, *Depart, I know you not*, never accepted of you, you thought these things would please me, you closed not with me. Oh now depart from me, from my fellowship, my bosom, my presence! For this is ever their frame; they think to pacify God by what they do, and though they think his justice cannot, yet they hope there is such indulgence in his mercy that he will accept. Thus it was, Isa. 58:2, for this is their temper; they are not wounded with the want of Christ himself, but with some jarrings against the Law, for which they fear they must die. Hence not seeing into the spiritual nature of the Law, they are wounded, not slain by the Law; they hope they shall live if they can leave such sins, perform such duties, feel such abilities. Now having made trial at home, they go to Christ, and seek him with delight for to work this or that, and then they are well. Now if they do not receive at present, then they hope by seeking to find in time, if he doth not help them, then they shall be well. Hence they ever live in some sin, and know it not, as these did, and as the young man, Mat. 19. And thus it is as it is with two princes; one is in trouble by inroaders, he sends for aid to another, but doth not cast down his crown, and put himself in subjection to the other. So men will be kings, and hence send for aid against the inroads of some sin that stings conscience, but put not themselves under the Lord Jesus. Bring those mine enemies hither, Luke 19:27. In one word; as the wound is, so is my closing with Christ. If one be in outward trouble, now to Christ he goes to deliver; if pressed with inward trouble for some sins, now to Christ to remove them, and so to pacify conscience; if with want of Christ himself, now he goes for himself.

2. Those that close with Promises without Christ himself, and divide between them two, that strip Christ of these his Swadling-clouts, make their gain of these, and let himself go. I confess

all a Christians wealth is laid up in promises, not in words and syllables, for they are dead things, but Christ in them, and God's faithfulness in them, 2 Sam. 23:4, 5. This is all my salvation, for all fulness is in Christ; he is rich, but what am I the better? Nay, the more miserable, for all emptiness is in me; therefore in the promise lies my peace. And this is a Christian's support in all troubles, and hence he casts anchor here; but here is his frame; he lays not hold on them without Christ, but by them goes to Christ, and there rests, John 6:45. *He that hath heard of the Father cometh unto me.* Give children milk in the dish, they cry still, they must have it from the mother, and there suck; so 2 Pet. 1. 2, 3. Now there are others that finding some work in themselves without Christ, and thinking that it's saving, and so a good sign; hence are mistaken, and close with it without Christ, and now they think it's well. I doubt not but the Jews that be devout comforted themselves with that promise, *He that confesseth, &c.* Prov. 28:13, not understanding of it, Matt. 3, *Say not within your selves we have Abraham to our Father,* that promise kept them off from Christ, Matt. 22. Some came not to the feast, some came but without a wedding garment. 'Tis with these men as 'tis with men that come to buy wines, they taste them, and content themselves with a taste, another buys the thing; a Saint doth so; another tastes the sweet, and after falls to the unpardonable sin, Heb. 6. Or as 'tis with a man that sees corn on the ground, he buys the field, another he gleans somewhat, and contents himself with that. There is in one word a double error,

First. When a man shall close with Christ without promises; and hence seek to be seated without a promise. Hence say some, you must not gather any evidence from any qualification you feel in your self. [\[Roman Catholicism says that you cannot be assured of your salvation! But if you see evidence of the Spirit's work on your heart, that is evidence.\]](#)

Secondly. When men shall snatch and nibble at promises, and misapply them, not closing with Christ in them and by them. I have confessed my sin, and repented, and run away with this without Christ. Oh time will come, the Lord will say, how camest thou in hither? what hast thou to do to take my promises into thy mouth? [\[Ps. 50:16\]](#) to arm thy self against Christ by promises to make a spoil of Christ's grants, and let him be crucified. When Saul rent off Samuel's garment, he said, *The Lord shall rend, &c.* 1 Sam. 15:27, 28. The letter kills, all promises without Christ slay, because they keep the famishing soul from bread itself.

3. Those that close not with promises only, but with Christ himself, but it's only with the image and fancy of him, which they think is himself. In true faith the Father reveals the Son as he is, or the Son reveals himself as he is, and faith hence closeth with him as he is, John 6:40. But some there be that hear of him, hence think what he is. Hence a carnal mind imagines of him as it imagines of a King in a far Country, and falls down to his Image, and trusts to it, and depends on it, and joys in it, until a man comes to be converted, or to die; and then he sees the deceit. Or if he did see him, yet he can see no beauty in him to desire him. There is many a man in this case that trusts to, and joys in Christ, whom if he did know he would loath. John came preaching the Gospel to show them Christ; they all came to him and rejoiced in his light, but it was but for a season; for when he came to show them *there he is*, John 1:29, not one man stirs when he shows them Christ, and ver. 35, *only two:* and chap. 3:32, *No man received his testimony.* This is (beloved) the great sin and cause of all the rest, if they had known they would

not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Christ is not seen, hence not thought of, hence not esteemed; hence men boast not in him. Nay, 'tis the great plague under means, that in seeing they see not. *Lord how long*. You say Christ never so clearly seen, true, but thou in seeing mayest not see; and if it be thus, then look for ruin, Isa. 6:9, 10, 11, 12. We say Christians want [lack?]not light, but life and affections. Oh, beg for light that will bring affections, else all affections will dry up if not fed with this Spring, John 5:37 [I think he meant John 4:13-14 below]. What people had such means as they, yet they not eyes to see?

¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.^[b] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

4. Those that do not close with the bare fancy of Christ, but with himself; but 'tis not for himself, and for his holiness, but only for his peace, and consolations, and joys. Like a sick woman that comes to the physician, not to marry him, but to heal her, cure her, and so comfort her. Or if she doth come to marry him, 'tis only to satisfy her lust, or to save her from trouble, etc. In a word, they receive Christ, that he may give contentment to them, and not that hereby they may also give contentment unto him. They close with Christ to make them happy, not to make them holy. But they thus closing with him, think they have him, and hence rejoice exceedingly, and hence have a love to him, and hence some kind of communion with him, and hence think they are espoused to him, and more familiar with him than others, and hence verily look with these *five foolish virgins* to embrace the bride-groom. That look as a saint from a false apprehension of Christ, to be none of his, may be very sad, lose his joy, nay his very love, in the act of it, nay his communion and boldness to go to him, nay, his expectation of him; so from a false conceit that Christ is mine, *è contra*. Thus, a man is grievously troubled with the sight of God's anger, and with horror, and useth all means; at last he sees only Christ can do it, and hence seeks for and prizeth his love (for his one ease) for as horror may be his greatest evil, so love to ease him, may be his greatest good. At last he is fully persuaded. How? By any work or word? No, but God hath persuaded, and its now sealed, hence joy. But now there is matter of more trouble, **holiness, and close walking with Christ; this is troublesome. He cares not for Christ, to help him here, but diviseth how to keep Christ and joy without holiness.** Hence let a world of sin lie upon them, they be not troubled with that; they look up to Christ. Or if they see and be troubled at it, they take it as a burden, **not as the greatest burden**. Hence (say men) you must not judge of your estate by any thing or qualification you feel in your self, for these may fail your eye-sight in misty times (But we must follow it then, and not rest till we see and find it, for *without holiness no man shall see God*) Hence also let there be never so many falls, yet, say they, never call your state into question, hence they profess, we cannot move till we be moved; **and if I do not, it is not my fault.** Hence, if ministers do preach any things which are not about the person of Christ, or the excellency of a Christian in Christ, or the emptiness of the creature to prepare for Christ, (which are indeed of great use) and press to any work or service of Christ, they are Legal Preachers, and bring people under a Covenant of works. Whereas if we preach duties, and leave them as signs, before being in Christ, they are so, but here to preach any duty of the Law, is part of the sweet will of Christ. Tell us (say they) what we should do. What can a man do? *He can do all things through Christ. True, but Christ*

must come to act it. Yea, but he hath a faith to fetch it, 1 John 1:6. Many said they had communion with him, 1 John 2:3, 4. It seems, they said *they had no sin*, as now some say; God sees no sin in justified people, God looks to the new creature only, **'tis not I but sin: if the Spirit help not, 'tis not my fault.** Not many days since it did lie upon the spirit of one, who seeing Christ, hath undertaken all, closed with him, rejoiced in him, not for this end, not from the beauty they saw in holiness, nor bitterness of sinfulness, but because they should be eased of the work. I have known them that have lived in some sin, and promised the Lord shall be blessed if he save them in their sin, and conceiting he would, have loved him; thus these. **In a word, the soul of man desires rest and peace, seeks for it in creatures, seeks to satisfy itself there; there it cannot; hence seeks for it (as many dying men do) in Christ, not in the grace, but in the joy of Christ; not in Christs holy presence, but in his comforting presence; seeking the utmost perfection of a Christian in the seal of the Spirit, not in the mighty actings of the Spirit for God. Hence, he is deluded, and fancies he hath Christ, and hence joy.** Sin is the great evil, hence the end of Christs coming is to take it away. **Hence if a man close with Christ to remove horror, not sin, and so hath not closed with him for his holiness, you never closed with Christ for the end of his coming, nor for his, but only for your own ends,** and so 'tis not him, but his, 2Cor. 2:15. The Gospel is *a savior to them that perish*, if of Death to death. **Oh consider of these things if it be not thus.** 1 John 5:11, 12. Hast the Son for thy portion? Dost see his Glory full of Grace to accept and sanctify thee, thou hast life; **if not the Son, but only something from him, Oh death and not life!** the bonds of Death (not life) are upon thee, which no creature can unloose unless the Lord come to they grave-side and unloose thee.

2 Cor. 2

¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

Spiritual Sloth

Beware of a False Rest

Code473

Excerpt from

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

By Thomas Shepard

Pg 398-402

[This is one of the best commentaries on the deceitfulness of the sin of spiritual sloth!](#)

SECT. IV.

Use 1. Hence see the reason why many Christians at their first beginnings grow, and thrive, and abound in the fruits of Righteousness; but afterward so poor and ragged; Oh the two or three first years, how frequently in prayer, meditation! Oh what sorrow and peace! but after this, now they can find little good they can get; little growth they make, unless it be downward; little life they have, and what ado to keep it, or to get a good spiritual meals meat! this is the reason of it; when they first began, then the enemy was out, and they were up, and now they conquered and had the spoils; **but since, they have grown secure, and loved to sleep**, I say love to sleep; and hence, little to be seen about them but rags; hence (Prov. 6:11), *lest thy poverty come as an armed man*, Prov. 20:13. 11, truly this is it, and hence no wonder you are ever so full of complaints in midst of means; where God gives you matter of fulness, joy, peace, everlasting glory, yet you find nothing; so that sometimes you think there is no grace, or are almost of the mind that there is no grace to be looked for in us; if not, yet finding so little, there's no evidence for it: **Oh your sloth it is the cause**; hence 'tis you marvel at the Lord he helps not; Oh you do not awake, to awaken the arm of the Lord; you shall know, if you follow on to know the Lord, but that you do not; **and hence the pricks and vexations you made your peace with, and are again vexed by them, this is the reason of it.** Oh therefore go in secret and say, I complain of my sins; the ordinances and God that I seek, and have not, when my heart should be otherwise; but oh it is not because I cannot, but because I care not; it is not because of the strength of my enemy without, **but because of my neglect of watch and diligence within.** I know it was a sin for *Pharaoh* to charge Israel with idleness, because he commanded work without means; but is the Lords work so? look up to him for strength, he gives it them that have none; **put forth that strength thou hast, he will accept thy will, but will never allow thee in thy sloth, but you shall to beggary at the last.** Hence men *roast not what they take in hunting*, (Prov. 12:27.) after ordinances; Oh there's world there; never shall you see a soul careful, but he finds every sabbath something.

Use 2. Hence we may learn the reason why many Christians, when the Lord begins to work upon them, have many combats and sore conflicts with various temptations, and one corruption after another, and scarce any breathing time wherein they are freed from such; and then many strong cries, &c. but afterward they are freed from all, and even these also; and they find nothing either within or without that greatly troubles them; but they go on smoothly in a course of profession also, without very much ado with their own hearts; their consciences are at peace, their distempers are at peace, and lie not heavy upon them; and they think God is at peace with them, and hence they are quiet; the reason is because they are quiet, and fall asleep, and let their sin and Satan alone, and hence they let

them alone. A sluggard saith, *there is a Lion in the way, and it's hedge of thorns*; many difficulties God sets before him; now if a man meets with no lions, no thorns, pressed with no great difficulties in his course, it is certain sloth hath seized upon that soul, and he is carried away captive by it, Prov. 22:13. For -

Look upon men, why should they be quiet? Is it because sin and Satan are quite vanquished, that they have no agonies and wrestlings with them? The apostle denies that, Eph. 6:12 [*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...*]. Indeed while he keeps the palace then he is all peace, and it is a sign he is entered again if you have this peace. But else Paul himself, and all that are in the field, are opposed, and will have fiery darts; and hence the apostles exhorts to *put off the works of darkness, and put on the whole armor of light*; why not works of light? because then a Christian will find many assaults, Rom. 13:12. Or it is because they are men of such a refined faith, and such pure metal that there needs no knocking, nor melting, nor temptations? I confess the Lord doth not see at all times the like need, but gives his servants many sweet seasons; but yet 1 Pet. 1:6, 7, 8, *they were begotten to a lively hope, and they did rejoice greatly in that hope*; yet they had their seasons of trials, *manifold temptations, &c.* It may be they thought, did the Lord ever love us, when such desertions, such fierce oppositions? &c. I know the Lord may leave David thus, Ps. 30:6, but then God was angry, and he saw it before many days. No, no, there is both reason for it, and need of it; and why are you at peace now? it is because of your sloth, Jer, 48:11, *Moab is at rest*; and hence settled on her lees, that they neither feel nor know their sin, and their scent is in them, though none is smelt or runs out; **hence never stirred by any word they hear, nor by any blow unless it be very heavy; they are now at peace with sin, death and hell, and are at league with them**, Isa. 28:15. And hence as it is, where there be two kingdoms met, what's the reason that there is no hurt that the one do to the other? the reason is, because there is a peace; why so? **because war was so troublesome, and rest was good: So it is here: Why are men never troubled? but only because they are at peace with their sin; and why so? because rest is good. Oh they love to sleep; I shall never overcome it, or I have other work to follow, say men**, and hence they spiritually war no more; and hence Satan and sin are at peace. This is the guise of men, they think the man is sure; they maintain a name to live before men, keep duties upon the wheels before God, and have comfort often; and though a world of vanity is in their hearts, yet it never oppresses them, because they oppose not it, and so are quiet.

SECT. V.

Objection. But is not Christ's yoke easy and his burden light, full of sweetness, etc.?

Ans. There is a life of faith, and a life of sloth; a rest which Faith gives, and Christ gives; and a rest which mans own sloth and security gives: but there is a wide difference between them.

First, a believing heart cleaves to the Lord, and so finds rest in the Lord, and that with purpose and decree of heart, to cleave to him in one thing as well as in another; **the heart is not at peace with Satan, and at war with God**, but joins to the Lord, and stands armed with a strong resolution against every temptation; and hence peace with Christ is maintained, not with sloth: as Barnabas, Acts 11:23, *exhorted with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, when he saw the grace of God*; seeing you find such mercy from him, Oh cleave unto him. But now a secure heart cleaves to the Lord in some desires; and if he be resolved of any thing, **it is only of that which he can do with ease, and will not be**

what he would be; he would be better, and know the Lord more, and this quiets him; but he will not be what he would be, because his compact and covenant of peace is made with another; he will be sluggish and secure, and not use the means; **Oh sleep is sweet**, Prov. 12:27. *The sluggard roasts not what he took in hunting*; he will not roast it, there is trouble there.

Secondly. A believing heart, or faith, finds and feels its rest by trouble. Unto the righteous there ariseth light out of darkness, Ps. 37. *After you have suffered, God settle you*, 1 Pet. 5:10. *Not as the world gives peace, give I it unto you*, John 14:27. For the life of a Christian is a life of faith, which is a life contrary to sense and reason. When the Lord kills, what - doth he intend then to save me? and when he blinds me, doth he intend to teach me? yes that he doth, and by their warfare they find peace. Hence Paul at the end of his life makes his triumph, *I have finished my course*, 2 Tim. 4:6, 7, 8, this makes promises precious; when, though a man feels the strength of sin, yet sees the Lord will subdue it; when a man finds guilt of sin, yet sees the Lord will pardon it for his own names sake. It's a strange place 2 Cor. 1:8, 9, *We were oppressed without reason, Why? that we might not trust in our selves*, (why, was there no way but this?) why, this is the life of faith, **to find life in death, peace in sorrow. But a slothful heart finds not rest by denying itself, and walking through trouble; but by pleasing it self, and easing it self of trouble, because it is at league with it: One that hath broken league, finds peace by war, and then takes spoils; but another è contra, etc.** [This is awesome!!! Read on!]

1. A man denies the power of godliness, that's a burden; his slothful heart will not bear that, that's too hot; for the world carries a condemned carriage of them; and hence he keeps a name to live, and thereby hath peace with the world.
2. He wrestles not against Satan, and his lusts, pursuing them daily, carries not the sense and feeling of them; and hence being luke-warm, he *thinks he is rich, and wants [lacks] nothing, when poor, and blind, and naked*.
3. Hence, not wrestling against sin, he feels not sin, and so conscience is at peace with him; *sin is alive without the law*.
4. Keeping a constant course of private duties, he thinks God is at peace also, and so his peace gives him rest, and sloth makes him make a league, because he loves rest; and hence we find, a Christian most oppressed in times of trouble, many times has most peace; and *è contra*. Because as it was with *Gideon*, he had his peace by trouble, they had their peace by rest whose flesh he tore with thorns, *Judges 8:7*. Oh therefore fear and tremble at their condition.

SECT. VI.

Use 3. Hence see the reason why many a Christian, after he hath seen and felt the work of Gods grace in his heart and soul, and hence hath been filled with peace and joy unspeakable, that yet after long profession loses the sight of it, and knows not whether there be any dram of grace in his heart or no; and consequently hath no assurance. But ask him, have you not known it? Yes; but 'tis a question whether ever it was immortal seed or no, for then it would not die, as I see it hath; **the reason of this is,**

a man falls to a secure condition, fast asleep, forgets God and himself; and hence though there be grace, yet it is not exercised, Matt. 25:6 [*And as the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept*], and hence not seen at all, 2 Pet. 1:8, 9, and one grace to another, and then an open entrance is made; this makes calling sure; if this they do not, they will not see afar off; why? **because they forget the Lord, which is one part of security.** Hence we shall find in times of persecution, never such assurance as then, Zach. 13. ult., **because grace is never so exercised as then;** and hence men much in prayer abound with much assurance (when Christ was in his agony he prays more fervently **because then a man is watchful, and grace most exercised;** when a man dies in prayer, and grows secure, and hath little exercise of grace, now it is a question whether there is grace at all or no; and hence when men come to sacraments, how oft are they put to it whether the Lord be theirs or no! and hence when men come to the word, they lose all comfort, because they know now whether these promises are theirs or no, because they are asleep, and not waking with the Lord. Oh, therefore lay no blame upon the Lord, but thyself - I have had grace, but I have not exercised it; I have lived a life of sloth and security. Had I lived a life of thankfulness, prayer, watchfulness, and been ever awake, I should have seen my own heart, and what the Lord hath done for my soul. **Here, here lies the security of a Christian, not in losing all grace he had, but in losing the exercise of it.**

SECT. VII.

Quest. How shall I do this?

Ans. 1. **Look that your eye be single, that the Lord be your last end, and that with an infinite love you cleave to that, and then the whole body will be full of light;** but if your eye be double, etc., Matt. 6:24 [*No one can serve two masters...*], A ship that hath but one place to go to, will get thitherward in open sea with every wind. Who is so great as the Lord? who minds thee but the Lord? does he provide, protect and pity thee, when thou seekest thy self? will he not do it much more when thou art set for him?

2. Consider the sweetness of this life. 1. In this life, 1 Cor. 15. ult., *be ever abounding;* why? Oh you know *your labor shall not be in vain.* And what will it be when you come to die? Isa. 38:1, 2, 3. *Remember I have walked with thee:* And 2. After death, Rev. 14:13, it may be you account them nothing, but they shall follow thee; do you not find bitterness in the end of another life? You will find your pillow hard enough before you die; Oh therefore get something to make it easy.

3. Take heed of forgetfulness of the Lord, for this is the reason why many a man is not ever up in walking with the Lord, because he forgets the Lord; It is not because he will not, or because he cannot, but he remembers not the Lord's love, the glory of his ways, *what an evil thing and bitter it is to depart from the Lord,* Psal. 22:11, *They shall remember and turn,* Jer. 2:1, 6. The Lord complains of apostacy, *they said where is the Lord? I remember thee, etc.* So I say to you, the Lord of glory remembers you, thou art written on the palms of his hand, and like show-bread before the ark, so thou dost ever stand before the Lord; hence every moment he is pardoning, purging, preserving and devising how to do thee good; nay, he remembers thy love, prayers, seekings after him, nay, thy house and walls of it where thou dwellest. Oh, therefore forget not the Lord, that so you may be ever seeking after, and cleaving to the Lord.

SECT. VIII.

Use 4. Hence see the reason why men after long profession fall into many slothful opinions, because their hearts are surprised with this enemy of sloth first; and **it is God's just judgement upon men, that seeing they love their sleep and laziness, they shall be lazy by rule,** and so be forever hardened in it.

Quest. What are those slothful opinions?

Ans. First, What is this but one, to make the law no rule to a Christian's life? as though a Christian should be like a man at sea, and carried by the wind, but he must have no compass to sail by also. **In these last times Christ's kingly office is chiefly opposed;** men are glad of Christ's righteousness and death to save them, but when he comes to plant his laws (as all conquerors do amongst men) **they do then shake them off,** and under a color of love to their Prince, make his laws no bonds to bind them; so these think this is the liberty of a Christian, the liberty of a Prince to be lawless, 2 Pet. 2:19.

Secondly. That there is no activity of grace received, no power to stir till stirred; and **therefore leave all upon Christ, they can do nothing;** if he gives nothing, they cannot help it; if he does, then all is well, etc. It is true, till the Lord does help what can we do? But there is an immutable assistance of spirit, whereby the Lord does enable his to act more or less like himself, when stirred up. And if you find none, because you fall short of Christ, do not think that the Lord will be a cover to such a cap; nor a pillow for a slothful heart; there is a sickness in the best, and must be followed, else we die.

Thirdly. That Ministers must not exhort. Why? What can men do? If servants cannot abide to be spoken unto when there is need, from what can it come but idleness? What can words make better? Yes, the Lord's words have a power to help or ruin, when you shall say, Oh the exhortations, Oh the intreaties I have had, etc., one main means of reconciliation is now abolished, 2 Cor. 5:20.

Fourthly. That Christians must gather no evidence from sanctification; we shall find the root of it to be difficulty, which is never sloth's bed-fellow.

1. It is difficult to be holy always, but there will be many weaknesses and sins, etc.
2. When we do so, it will be hard to discern what holiness it is, whether counterfeit or not.
3. When we do so, 'tis hard to keep it, but you will lose it again, and be put to farther search, and so off and on. **I believe Christians make them more difficult than indeed they are;** but yet it is the Lord's way. Scripture is plain for it; and if avoided because difficult (which to many is sweet) **what is this but an invention of sloth?**

Fifthly. That what a man cannot do, is always a weakness which the Lord will pardon. Sometimes it is; but not here; for a man's chief sin may be kept unsubdued from this ground, which sloth makes warrantable.

Sixthly. That if once the main be wrought, though he never grow better, yet he is to keep his peace and confidence; Oh intreat the Lord to keep your heads sound (though hearts be sluggish) so as you may not love, and defend your security, and then go and leave Christ.

SECT. IX.

Let this be a warning to all, that there is such an enemy to be slain; truly I had thought if I could have got my heart broken, if I could seek the Lord till I had gotten a promise, then I should be well enough.

Oh no, there is a slothful heart yet continues; and let it be encouragement to war against it; Oh 'tis the last enemy, and then comes your crown, and then your warfare is ended; and therefore do as Sampson; *Lord, help this one time, that I may be avenged for my two eyes*; so, thou hast been made a slave to it in private duties, and God hath neglected thee. In public, at meetings you have been forced to sleep, that an Indian it may be, if he had stood by would have jogged thee; therefore pray, Oh help Lord this one time (though I die) against this one enemy. Thus Paul 1 Cor.9, ult. Is an immortal crown nothing? Will it be no sorrow to you when you awake, to lose eternal rest in God, for a little rest in thy sloth? Oh therefore beat down thy body; it is the last, hence the worst enemy; say as Judges 9:54, What; shall I fall by a woman? Shall I fall by the worst? Why did I oppose lust and pride? Oh, because vile; why, this is worse; it is the last, and hence Christ hates it most; and hath he given strength against any sin, and will he not against this? Oh, therefore pray God that you fall not here.

Judges 9:54 - Then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

Men Naturally God's Enemies

code304

by Jonathan Edwards

SECT. VII.

Why natural men are not willing to come to Christ, and their dreadful condition.

Hence we may learn the reason why natural men will not come to Christ: they do not come because they will not come. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." [John v. 40](#). When we say that natural men are not willing to come to Christ, it is not meant that they are not willing to be delivered from hell; for without doubt, no natural man is willing to go to hell. Nor is it meant, that they are not willing that Christ should keep them from going to hell. Without doubt, natural men under awakenings often greatly desire this. But this does not argue that they are willing to come to Christ: for, notwithstanding their desire to be delivered from hell, their hearts do not close with Christ, but are averse to him. They see nothing in Christ wherefore they should desire him; no beauty nor comeliness to draw their hearts to him. And they are not willing to take Christ as he is; they would fain divide him. There are some things in him that they like, and others that they greatly dislike; but consider him as he is, and as he is offered to them in the gospel, and they are not willing to accept of Christ; for in doing so, they must of necessity part with all their sins; they must sell the world, and part with their own righteousness. But they had rather, for the present, run the venture of going to hell, than do that.

When men are truly willing to come to Christ, they are freely willing. It is not what they are forced and driven to by threatenings; but they are willing to come, and choose to come without being driven. But natural men have no such free willingness; but on the contrary have an aversion. And the ground of it is that which we have heard, viz., that they are enemies to God. Their having such a reigning enmity against God, makes them obstinately refuse to come to Christ. If a man is an enemy to God, he

will necessarily be an enemy to Christ too; for Christ is the Son of God; he is infinitely near to God, yea, has the nature of God, as well as the nature of man. He is a Saviour appointed of God; he anointed him, and sent him into the world. And in performing the work of redemption, he wrought the works of God; always did those things that pleased him; and all that he does as a Saviour, is to his glory. And one great thing he aimed at in redemption, was to deliver them from their idols, and bring them to God. The case being so, and sinners being enemies to God, they will necessarily be opposite to coming to Christ; for Christ is of God, and as a Saviour seeks them to bring them to God only; but natural men are not of God, but are averse to him.

Hence we see, how dreadful is the condition of natural men. Their state is a state of enmity with God. If we consider what God is, and what men are, it will be easy for us to conclude that such men as are God's enemies, must be miserable. Consider, ye that are enemies to God, how great he is. He is the eternal God who fills heaven and earth, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. He is the God that made you; in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways; the God in whom you live, and move, and have your being; who has your soul and body in his hands every moment.

.....

Consider, What will it be to have this enmity to be mutual, and maintained for ever on both sides? For as God will for ever continue an enemy to you, so you will for ever continue an enemy to God. If you continue God's enemy until death, you will always be his enemy. And after death your enmity will have no restraint, but it will break out and rage without control. When you come to be a fire-brand of hell, you will be so in two respects, viz. As you will be full of the fire of God's wrath; and as you will be all on a blaze with spite and malice towards God. You will be as full of the fire of malice, as you will with the fire of divine vengeance, and both will make you full of torment. Then you will appear as you are, a viper indeed. You are now under great disguise; a wolf in sheep's clothing: but then your mask will be pulled off; you shall loose your garments, and walk naked. [Rev. xvi. 15.](#) Then will you vent your rage and malice in fearful blasphemies. That same tongue, to cool which you will wish for a drop of water, will be eternally employed in cursing and blaspheming God and Christ. And that not from any new corruption being put into your heart; but only from God's withdrawing his hand from restraining your old corruption. And what a miserable way will this be of spending your eternity!

Notes on God's immutability, sovereignty and Arminian's view of man's will by Hermon Bavinck

This immutability of God, however, was frequently combated from the side of both deism and pantheism. In the opinion of Epicurus the gods totally resemble excellent human beings, who make changes with respect to location, activity, and thought (etc.); and according to Heraclitus and later the Stoics, the deity as the immanent cause of the world was also caught up in its perpetual flux.[25] Opposition to God's immutability in Christian theology was of the same nature. On the one hand, there is the **Pelagianism, Socinianism, Remonstrantism, and rationalism**, which especially opposes the immutability of God's knowing and willing and makes the will of God dependent on—and hence change in accordance with—the conduct of humans. Especially Vorstius, in his work On God and His Attributes, criticized the immutability of God. He made a distinction between God's essence, which is simple and unchangeable, and God's will, which being free does not will everything eternally and does not always will the same thing.[26] Bavinck, God & Creation, Vol. 2 pg 155

Van Til states:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.] Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, pg 369

Free Will, Contingency

Arminian liberty vs. God's Sovereignty

code305

The next several discourses add further light to God's sovereignty in the communication of his grace, his goods, the fullness of which is in the Son which he gives it to whom he will.

The Arminian concept of contingency or chance. Owen explains this below and then I took it to apply it to that same spirit that masquerades in all this talk regarding the foundation of evolutionary thought, i.e., where did this idea of chance come from and why. Well, this is it: my comments in [blue], red for emphasis and to note important terms. See also code481, Van Til on *chance*.

From John Owen's book, *A Display of Arminianism*

Chapter XII.

Of free-will, the nature and power thereof.

Our next task is to take a view of the idol himself, of this great deity of **free-will**, whose original being not well known, he is pretended, like the Ephesian image of Diana, to have fallen down from heaven, and to have his endowments from above [i.e., many say that God gave us free-will]. But yet, considering what a nothing he was at his first discovery in comparison of that vast giant-like hugeness to which now he is grown, we may say of him as the painter said of his monstrous picture, which he had mended or rather marred according to everyone's fancy, "Hunc populus fecit," — it is the issue of the people's brain. Origen¹⁹⁹ is supposed to have brought him first into the church; but among those many sincere worshippers of divine grace, this setter forth of new demons found but little entertainment. It was looked upon but like the stump of Dagon, with his head and hands laid down before the ark of God, without whose help he could neither know nor do that which is good in any

kind, still accounted but “truncus ficulnus, inutile lignum,” — “a fig-tree log, an unprofitable piece of wood.” “Incerti patres scamnum facerentne?” The fathers of the succeeding ages had much debate to what use they should put it, and though some exalted it a degree or two above its merits, yet the most concluded to keep it a block still; until at length there arose a stout champion,²⁰⁰ challenging on his behalf the whole church of God, and, like a knight-errant, wandered from the west to the east to grapple with any that should oppose his idol; who, though he met with divers adversaries,²⁰¹ one especially,²⁰² who in the behalf of the grace of God continually foiled him and cast him to the ground, and that in the judgment of all the lawful judges assembled in councils, and in the opinion of most of the Christian bystanders, yet, by his cunning insinuation, he planted such an opinion of his idol’s deity and **self-sufficiency** in the hearts of divers [many], that to this day it could never be rooted out.

Now, after the decease of his Pelagian worshippers, some of the corrupter schoolmen, seeing him thus from his birth exposed without shelter to wind and weather, to all assaults, out of mere charity and self-love built him a temple, and adorned it with **natural lights, merits, uncontrolled independent operations**, with many other gay attendances. But in the beginning of the Reformation, — that fatal time for idolatry and superstition, together with abbeyes and monasteries, — the zeal and learning of our forefathers, with the help of God’s word, demolished this temple, and brake this building down to the ground; in the rubbish whereof we well hoped the idol himself had been so deeply buried as that his head should never more have been exalted, to the trouble of the church of God, until not long since some curious wits, whose weak stomachs were clogged with manna and loathed the sincere milk of the word, raking all dunghills for novelties, lighted unhappily upon this idol, and presently, with no less joy than did the mathematician at the discovery of a new geometrical proportion, exclaim, “We have found it! we have found it!” And without more ado, up they erected a shrine, and until this day continue offering of praise and thanks for all the good they do to this work of their own hands.

And that the idol may be free from ruin, **to which in himself they have found by experience that he is subject, they have matched him to contingency**, a new goddess of their own creation, who, having proved very fruitful in monstrous births upon their conjunctions, they nothing doubt they shall never want [lack] one to set on the throne and **make president of all human actions**: so that after he hath, with various success, at least twelve hundred years, contended with the providence and grace of God, he boasteth now as if he had obtained a total victory. But yet all his prevailing is to be attributed to the diligence and varnish of his new abettors, with (to our shame be it spoken!) the negligence of his adversaries [referring to the negligence of Christians that should have opposed this false teaching]. In him and his cause there is no more real worth than was when by the ancient fathers [Augustine vs Pelagius in 300AD] he was exploded and cursed out of the church: so that they who can attain, through the many winding labyrinths of curious distinctions, to look upon the thing itself, shall find that they have been, like Egyptian novices, brought through many stately frontispieces and goodly fabrics, with much show of zeal and devotion, to the image of an ugly ape.

[comment on the first sentence to explain this notion of chance, aka, contingency. What he is saying here is that those people who advocate the power of our free-will have, by experience, found it to be a dead end street, wrought with failure and confusion; so they erected an excuse or a plausible explanation in the room thereof! -that being that things just happen by chance, to help explain away their failures or confoundedness that their idol of free, which vaunts itself against God's sovereign

disposal of things which God has decreed in eternity that should take place, naturally tends to. If they don't go there for this lame excuse of contingency, then they necessarily must submit and acquiesce to God's complete sovereign control of things which they despise. This is the same avenue most people on the "left" do go down when trying to explain the origin of man, the universe, etc. So instead of attributing creation to the Almighty hand of God, they attribute it to chance (or contingency), the foundation of evolutionary theory. This is the vain imagination of their brains that is put on the altar of their minds to which they bow down. Otherwise they must concede and confess the Lord which they abhor by nature. 1Cor2:14 - "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And that's why this idea of contingency has taken front stage in unregenerate minds as a "god" or *an unprofitable piece of wood...that cannot hear, etc....* (Isaiah 44:15-20, below), which sheds light on man's vain attempts to manufacture a idol out of the imagination of his darkened mind:

Then it shall be for a man to burn,
 For he will take some of it and warm himself;
 Yes, he kindles *it* and bakes bread;
 Indeed he makes a god and worships *it*;
 He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.
¹⁶He burns half of it in the fire;
 With this half he eats meat;
 He roasts a roast, and is satisfied.
 He even warms *himself* and says,
 "Ah! I am warm,
 I have seen the fire."
¹⁷And the rest of it he makes into a god,
 His carved image.
 He falls down before it and worships *it*,
 Prays to it and says,
 "Deliver me, for you *are* my god!"
¹⁸They do not know nor understand;
 For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see,
 And their hearts, so that they cannot understand.
¹⁹And no one considers in his heart,
 Nor *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say,
 "I have burned half of it in the fire,
 Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals;
 I have roasted meat and eaten *it*;
 And shall I make the rest of it an abomination?
 Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"
²⁰He feeds on ashes;
 A deceived heart has turned him aside;
 And he cannot deliver his soul,
 Nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

So man who knows not the true God makes one up to try to explain why things happen the way they do. First, he thinks that all is due to his own industry or control. When he finds out that that is

woefully inadequate to what he actually experiences in life, he attributes it to contingency or chance, or in other words, nothing. What else has he who is still blind to the things of God, the sovereign pleasure of his will, his divine providence, those wheels that turn round and round, noted in Ezekiel? That's why the Arminians hate the idea of God having decreed all things; it takes away man's vain idea that he is the center of things and not God, until God reveals himself to that person. He will not surrender his own idol of free will or contingency until God tears it away from him at conversion, when God takes away the heart of stone (Ezek. 36:23-31!) This is what had to have happened to the tax collector prior to his exclamation in Luke, where he exclaims, "God, be mercy to me, a sinner!" And Jesus said *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* All man's foolish and vain thoughts about his self-sufficiency leave him when he sees the King, when the glory of God is revealed to him. This man was exhibiting a fruit of saving faith, that being humility and a contrite spirit; it wasn't his saying what he said that saved him; it was what he said that evidenced his justified state. See James 2:17, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." So when you examine yourself, look for those works of the spirit that should bring forth fruit.

Owen continues on free will:

Yet here observe, that we do not absolutely oppose free-will, as if it were "nomen inane," a mere figment, when there is no such thing in the world, but only in that sense the Pelagians and Arminians do assert it. About words we will not contend. We grant man, in the substance of all his actions, as much power, liberty, and freedom as a mere created nature is capable of [called "creaturely freedom" in theological circles]. We grant him to be free in his choice from all outward coercion, or inward natural necessity, to work according to election and deliberation, spontaneously embracing what seemeth good unto him. Now, call this power free-will, or what you please, so you make it not supreme, independent, and boundless [that's the key! Arminians will not yield this point.], we are not at all troubled. The imposition of names depends upon the discretion of their inventers. Again; even in spiritual things, we deny that our wills are at all debarred, or deprived of their **proper liberty**: but here we say, indeed, **that we are not properly free until the Son makes us free** [Amen!]; — no great use of freedom in that wherein we can do nothing at all. **We do not claim such a liberty as should make us despise the grace of God** [i.e., to resist the effectual call of God is to despise it; same thing. Arminians believe that your self-directed free will is autonomous and that it is unfair nor like unto God to violate man's liberty by imposing Himself upon them by forcing the issue of believing; but this notion of conversion is a misunderstanding of God's sovereign disposal of his grace regarding the regenerating the soul, his divine and sovereign prerogative to do as he pleases...*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, Rm9:15* In other words, when God calls someone to save him, he will effect it; you cannot resist it or despise it. Jesus says himself, *My sheep hear my voice and I know them (to love them, to show them favor...) and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*" "God will fulfill his promises, not maybe fulfill them. This calling is synonymous with conversion; they are one in the same.], whereby we may attain true liberty indeed; which addeth to, but taketh nothing from, our original freedom. But of this after I have showed **what an idol the Arminians make of free-will.** Only take notice in the entrance that we speak of it now, **not as it was at first by God created, but as it is now by sin corrupted**; yet, being considered in that estate also, they ascribe more unto it than it was ever capable of. As it now

standeth, according to my formerly-proposed method, I shall show, — first, **what inbred native virtue they ascribe unto it** [i.e., they oppose the doctrine of Original Sin, in that we are wholly corrupt, unwilling and unable to come to God for salvation.], **and with how absolute a dominion and sovereignty over all our actions they endow it**; secondly, what power they say it hath in preparing us for the grace of God; thirdly, how effectually operative it is in receiving the said grace, and with how little help thereof it accomplisheth the great work of our conversion; — all briefly, with so many observations as shall suffice to discover their proud errors in each particular.

“Herein,” saith Arminius, “consisteth the liberty of the will, that all things required to enable it to will anything being accomplished, it still remains **indifferent** to will or not.” And all of them at the synod: “There is,” say they, “accompanying the will of man an inseparable property, which we call **liberty**, from whence the will is termed a power, which, when all things pre-required as necessary to operation are fulfilled, may will anything, or not will it;” that is, our free-wills have such an **absolute and uncontrollable power** in the territory of all human actions, that **no influence of God’s providence, no certainty of his decree, no unchangeableness of his purpose, can sway it at all in its free determinations, or have any power with his highness to cause him to will or resolve on any such act as God by him intendeth to produce.** [that is the idol in action, right here! what follows here is excellent:] Take an instance in the great work of our conversion. “All unregenerate men,” saith Arminius, “have, by virtue of their free-will, a power of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the offered grace of God, of contemning the counsel of God concerning themselves, of refusing the gospel of grace, of not opening the heart to him that knocketh.” What a stout idol is this, whom neither the Holy Spirit, the grace and counsel of God, the calling of the gospel, the knocking at the door of the heart, can move at all, or in the least measure prevail against him! **Woe be unto us, then, if when God calls us our free-will be not in good temper, and well disposed to hearken unto him!** for it seems there is no dealing with it by any other ways, though powerful and almighty. “For grant,” saith Corvinus [a chief Arminian, follower of Arminius], **“all the operations of grace which God can use in our conversion, yet conversion remaineth so in our own free power that we can be not converted; that is, we can either turn or not turn ourselves;”** where the idol plainly challengeth the Lord to work his utmost, and tells him that after he hath so done he will do what he please. His infallible prescience, his powerful predetermination, the moral efficacy of the gospel, the infusion of grace, the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, all are nothing, not at all available in helping or furthering our independent wills in their proceedings. Well, then, in what estate will you have the idol placed? “In such a one wherein he may be suffered to sin, or to do well, at his pleasure,” as the same author intimates. It seems, then, as to sin, so nothing is required for him to be able to do good but God’s permission? No! For the Remonstrants [side bar here: It was the Arminians, aka, the Remonstrants – followers of Arminius, that opposed the Reformers in 1618 at the The Synod of Dort, aka, the Synod of Dordrecht. It was an international synod held in Dordrecht in 1618–1619, by the Dutch Reformed Church, to settle a divisive controversy initiated by the rise of Arminianism.] as they speak of themselves “do always suppose a free power of obeying or not obeying, as well in those who do obey as in those who do not obey;” — that he that is obedient may therefore be counted obedient, because he obeyeth when he could not obey, and so on the contrary:” where all the praise of our obedience, whereby we are made to differ from others, **is ascribed to ourselves alone, and that free power that is in us** [that is key! man claiming his independence from God or claiming to be God who alone is sovereign! Man will not accept any notion that his decisions are influence by any outside force because it violates his so called liberty; that

all his actions must be from himself and not from without himself; but this is the definition of a god! Only God wills things from the *counsel of his own will* see Eph 1:11] *"I" Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.*" "That is, he does not consider things or influences without himself; he is the potter; the clay cannot contend with him. But man in his fallen state is blind to this and thinks he is self-willed, that the will determines itself, that it is autonomous when the contrary is true.]

Now, this they mean not of any one act of obedience, but of faith itself, and the whole consummation thereof. "For if a man should say, that every man in the world hath a power of believing if he will, and of attaining salvation, and that this power is settled in his nature, what argument have you to confute him?" saith Arminius triumphantly to Perkins; where the sophistical innovator as plainly confounds grace and nature as ever did Pelagius [that is, Pelagius thought that man in his unregenerate state, has in him by nature, a power to savingly come to God without the saving grace given by the Holy Spirit]. That, then, which the Arminians claim here in behalf of their free-will is, an absolute independence on God's providence in doing anything, and of his **grace** in doing that which is good, — **a self-sufficiency in all its operations, a plenary indifferency of doing what we will**, this or that, **as being neither determined to the one nor inclined to the other by any overruling influence from heaven**. So that the good acts of our wills have no dependence on God's providence as they are acts, nor on his grace as they are good; but in both regards proceed from such a principle within us as is no way moved by any superior agent. Now, the first of these we deny unto our wills, because they are created [think about that - anything created by God must by definition be wholly dependent upon God otherwise God is not God, man is, that is, he is not dependent upon any outside power or influence to sustain him!]; **and the second, because they are corrupted** [due to Adam's fall]. Their creation hinders them from **doing anything of themselves without the assistance of God's providence** [that's the key]; **and their corruption, from doing anything that is good without his grace**. **A self-sufficiency for operation, without the effectual motion of Almighty God, the first cause of all things, we can allow neither to men nor angels, unless we intend to make them gods; and a power of doing good, equal unto that they have of doing evil, we must not grant to man by nature, unless we will deny the fall of Adam, and fancy ourselves still in paradise**. [masterful words!! Isn't that what Satan proposed to Eve? You can become like God! i.e., independent and sovereign in our own right. But, on the other hand and in a very profound way, we do and will become like God; for when we partake of the divine nature we become like God! So little did Satan realize that what he tempted Eve with actually happened in a different way, to his utter amazement and confoundedness.]

But let us consider these things apart.

First, I shall not stand to decipher the nature of human liberty, which perhaps would require a larger discourse than my proposed method will bear. It may suffice that, according to my former intimation, we grant as large a freedom and dominion to our wills over their own acts as a creature, **subject to the supreme rule of God's providence**, is capable of. Endued we are with such a liberty of will as is free from all outward compulsion and inward necessity, having an elective faculty of **applying itself unto that which seems good unto it**, in which it is a free choice; **notwithstanding, it is subservient to the decree of God** [which all unregenerate hate], as I showed before, chap. iv. Most free it is in all its acts, both in regard of the object it chooseth and in regard of that vital power and faculty whereby it

worketh, infallibly complying with God's providence, and working by virtue of the motion thereof; **but surely to assert such a supreme independency and every way unbounded indifferency as the Arminians claim, whereby, all other things requisite being pre-supposed, it should remain absolutely in our own power to will or not to will, to do anything or not to do it, is plainly to deny that our wills are subject to the rule of the Most High.**

[e.g., see Proverbs 21:1 "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."]

It is granted that in such a chimerical, fancied consideration of free-will, wherein it is looked upon as having no relation to any act of God's but only its creation, abstracting from his decree, it may be said to have such a liberty in regard of the object; but the truth is, this divided sense is plain nonsense, a mere fiction of such an estate as wherein it never was, nor ever can be, so long as men will confess any deity but themselves, to whose determinations they must be subject. Until, then, **more significant terms may be invented for this free power in our nature, which the Scripture never once vouchsafed to name**, I shall be content to call it with Prosper, a "**spontaneous appetite of what seemeth good unto it,**" **free from all compulsion, but subservient to the providence of God.** And against its exaltation to this height of independency, I oppose, —

This will exercise your reason: [code305a](#)

First, Everything that is independent of any else in operation is **purely active, and so consequently a god**; for nothing but a divine will can be a pure act, possessing such a liberty **by virtue of its own essence** [this is the same with what Arminians contend man's will is endowed with, that their will determines itself]. Every created will must have a liberty by participation, which includeth such an imperfect potentiality as cannot be brought into act without some promotion (as I may so say) of a superior agent. Neither doth this motion, being extrinsical, at all prejudice the true liberty of the will, [i.e., God does not work by coercion] which requireth, indeed, that the internal principle of operation be active and free, but not that that principle be not moved to that operation by an outward superior agent. **Nothing in this sense can have an independent principle of operation which hath not an independent being.** It is no more necessary to the nature of a free cause, from whence a free action must proceed, that it be the first beginning of it, than it is necessary to the nature of a cause that it be the first cause.

Secondly, If the free acts of our wills are so subservient to the providence of God as that he useth them to what end he will, and by them effecteth many of his purposes, then **they cannot of themselves be so absolutely independent as to have in their own power in every necessary circumstance and condition, that they may use or not use at their pleasure.** Now, the former is proved by all those reasons and texts of Scripture I before produced to show that the providence of God overruleth the actions and determineth the wills of men freely to do **that which he hath appointed** [in his eternal decree, e.g., see Acts 13:48!!!

"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

And, truly, were it otherwise, God's dominion over the most things that are in the world were quite excluded; he had not power to determine that any one thing should ever come to pass which hath any reference to the wills of men. [And so as Jonathan Edwards points out, that God being the promiser, certainly it is in his providential power to also be the disposer of those things and not just the predictor of them!]

Thirdly, All the acts of the will being positive entities, were it not previously moved by God himself, "in whom we live, move, and have our being," must needs have their essence and existence solely from the will itself; which is thereby made αὐτὸ ὄν, a first and supreme cause, endued with an underived being. And so much to that particular.

Let us now, in the second place, look upon the power of our freewill in doing that which is morally good; where we shall find not only an essential imperfection, inasmuch as it is created, but also a contracted effect, inasmuch as it is corrupted [by sin]. The ability which the Arminians ascribe unto it in this kind, of doing that which is morally and spiritually good, is as large as themselves will confess to be competent unto it in the state of innocency, even a power of believing and a power of resisting the gospel, of obeying and not obeying, of turning or of not being converted.

The Scripture, as I observed before, hath no such term at all, nor anything equivalent unto it. But the expressions it useth concerning our nature and all the faculties thereof, in this state of sin and unregeneration, seem to imply the quite contrary; as, that we are in "bondage," [Heb. ii. 15](#); "dead in sins," [Eph. ii. 1](#), and so "free from righteousness," [Rom. vi. 20](#); "servants of sin," [verse 17](#); under the "reign" and "dominion" thereof, [verses 12, 14](#); all "our members being instruments of unrighteousness," [verse 13](#); not "free indeed," until "the Son make us free." So that this idol of free-will, in respect of spiritual things, is not one whit better than the other idols of the heathen. Though it look like "silver and gold," it is the "work of men's hands." "It hath a mouth, but it speaketh not; it hath eyes, but it seeth not; it hath ears, but it heareth not; a nose, but it smelleth not; it hath hands, but it handleth not; feet, but it walketh not; neither speaketh it through its throat. They that made it are like unto it; and so is every one that trusteth in it. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord," etc., [Ps. cxv. 4–9](#). That it is the work of men's hands, or a human invention, I showed before. For the rest, it hath a mouth unacquainted with the "mystery of godliness," "full only of cursing and bitterness," [Rom. iii. 14](#); "speaking great swelling words," [Jude 16](#); "great things, and blasphemies," [Rev. xiii. 5](#); a "mouth causing the flesh to sin," [Eccles. v. 6](#); — his eyes are blind, not able to perceive those things that are of God, nor to know those things that are "spiritually discerned," [1 Cor. ii. 14](#); "eyes before which there is no fear of God," [Rom. iii. 18](#); — his "understanding is darkened, because of the blindness of his heart," [Eph. iv. 18](#); "wise to do evil, but to do good he hath no knowledge," [Jer. iv. 22](#); so that without farther light, all the world is but a mere "darkness," [John i. 5](#); — he hath ears, but they are like the ears of the "deaf adder" to the word of God, "refusing to hear the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," [Ps. lviii. 5](#); being "dead" when his voice first calls it, [John v. 25](#); "ears stopped that they should not hear," [Zech. vii. 11](#); "heavy ears" that cannot hear, [Isa. vi. 10](#); — a nose, to which the gospel is "the savour of death unto death," [2 Cor. ii. 16](#); — "hands full of blood," [Isa. i. 15](#); and "fingers defiled with iniquity," [chap. lix. 3](#); — feet, indeed, but, like Mephibosheth, lame in both by a fall, so that he cannot at all walk in the path of goodness; but "swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in his ways, and the way of peace hath he not known," [Rom. iii. 15–17](#). These, and divers other such endowments

and excellent qualifications, doth the Scripture attribute to this idol, which it calls "The old man," [aka, the likeness of Adam! Gen. 5:3. See 1Cor15:49, *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*] as I shall more fully discover in the next chapter. And is not this a goodly reed whereon to rely in the paths of godliness? a Powerful deity whereunto we may repair for a power to become the sons of God, and attain eternal happiness? The abilities of free-will in particular I shall consider hereafter; now only I will, by one or two reasons, show that it cannot be the sole and proper cause of any truly good and spiritual act, well-pleasing unto God.

First, All spiritual acts well-pleasing unto God, as faith, repentance, obedience, are supernatural; **flesh and blood revealeth not these things**: "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God," [John i. 13](#); "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," [chap. iii. 6](#). Now, to the performance of any supernatural act it is required that the productive power thereof be also supernatural; **for nothing hath an activity in causing above its own sphere.** "*Nec imbelles generant feroces aquilas columbæ.*" **But our free-will is a merely natural faculty, betwixt which and those spiritual, supernatural acts there is no proportion,** unless it be advanced **above its own orb, by inherent, habitual grace.** Divine, theological virtues, differing even in the substance of the act from those moral performances about the same things to which the strength of nature may reach (for the difference of acts ariseth from their formal objects, which to both these are diverse), must have another principle and cause above all the power of nature in civil things and actions morally good, inasmuch as they are subject to a natural perception, and do not exceed the strength of our own wills. **This faculty of free-will may take place, but yet not without these following limitations**:—First, that it always requireth the general concurrence of God, whereby the whole suppositum in which free-will hath its subsistence may be sustained, [Matt. x. 29, 30](#). Secondly, That we do all these things imperfectly and with much infirmity; every degree, also, of excellency in these things must be counted a special gift of God, [Isa. xxvi. 12](#). Thirdly, **That our wills are determined by the will of God to all their acts and motions in particular; but to do that which is spiritually good we have no knowledge, no power.**

Secondly, That concerning which I gave one special instance, in whose production the **Arminians attribute much to free-will, is faith.** This they affirm (as I showed before) **to be inbred in nature,** everyone having in him from his birth a **natural power to believe in Christ and his gospel;** for Episcopius denies that **"any action of the Holy Spirit upon the understanding or will is necessary, or promised in the Scripture, to make a man able to believe the word preached unto him."** [[can you believe what that guy said!!](#)] **So that it seems every man hath at all times a power to believe, to produce the act of faith upon the revelation of its object: which gross Pelagianism is contrary,** —

First, To the doctrine of the church of England, alarming that a man cannot so much as prepare himself by his own strength to faith and calling upon God, until the grace of God by Christ prevent [[to come before or precede or antecedently](#)] him, that he may have a good will. — Artic. x.

Secondly, To the Scripture, teaching that it is "the work of God that we do believe," [John vi. 29](#). It is **"not of ourselves; it is the gift of God."**, [Eph. ii. 8](#).

To some “it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” [Matt. xiii. 11](#). And what is peculiarly given to some cannot be in the power of everyone: “To you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him,” [Phil. i. 29](#). Faith is our access or coming unto Christ; which none can do “except the Father draw him,” [John vi. 44](#); and he so *draweth* [[remember, to draw is essentially to convert](#)], or “hath mercy, on whom he will have mercy,” [Rom. ix. 18](#). And although Episcopius rejects any immediate action of the Holy Spirit for the ingenerating of faith, yet St Paul affirmeth that there is no less effectual power required to it than that which raised Christ from the dead; which, sure, was an action of the almighty Godhead. “That ye may know,” saith he, “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,” [Eph. i. 18–20](#). So that, let the Arminians say what they please, recalling that I write to Christians, I will spare my labour of farther proving that faith is the free gift of God; and their opposition to the truth of the Scripture in this particular is so evident to the meanest capacity that there needs no recapitulation to present the sum of it to their understandings.

This is an excellent explanation of Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, common grace, saving grace or efficacious grace, and Rome’s view of grace. Bavinck clears up the objection that many have that if God elects people for salvation, then he must have to force his will upon them, forcing their will against their will (which is a contradiction, actually), to comply with the gospel command to believe, thus doing violence to the liberty of their will. Clearly this is not the case. Bavinck clears up the difficulty just as the Flavel, Edwards and others have done. Many of the footnotes have been abbreviated in brackets.

Pelagius and Augustine

From **Reformed Dogmatics**

code412

by Hermon Bavinck
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PELAGIUS AND AUGUSTINE

Pelagius strayed much farther from the doctrine of grace than any of his predecessors; he abandoned the Christian foundation on which all of them still based themselves and renewed the self-sufficient principle of pagan philosophy, specifically that of the Stoics. **Not only did he sever all connections between Adam’s sin and ours, so that neither guilt nor pollution nor even death was a consequence of the first transgression, but Christianity itself lost its absolute significance.** Salvation was not bound to Christ but could also be obtained by following the natural law (*lex naturae*) and positive law (*lex positiva*). Hence, in Pelagius’s theology there could be no internal grace, no regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit which not only illumined the mind but also bent the will. He admittedly did speak of grace

but meant by it only: (a) natural ability, the gift of being able to will, which God grants to every person—creating grace; (b) the objective grace of the proclamation of the law or the gospel and of the example of Christ, which was directed to the human intellect and instructed people in the way of salvation—illuminating grace; and (c) the forgiveness of sins and future salvation, which would be granted to the person who believed and did good works. Grace of the first kind, therefore, was proper to all humans. Grace of the second kind was not strictly necessary but served only to make it easier for people to acquire salvation. It was not efficacious grace (*gratia operans*) but only a form of assistance to people. Nor was it granted to all, but only to those who had made themselves worthy of it by the proper use of their natural powers. It was not a preparatory (or arousing) grace, nor was it irresistible grace, which is more truly “fate under the name of grace.” Finally, it was not necessary and was not granted by God or by the performance of every good deed (individual acts) but only of some. Many good works were performed by humans without any grace. [G. Wiggers, etc.]

Semi-Pelagianism moderated this system. It taught that though humanity was not spiritually dead as a result of Adam’s sin, it was ill; that its freedom of the will had not been lost but was weakened; and that humans therefore—to do the good and to obtain salvation—needed the assistance of divine grace. However, the grace that illumines the mind and supports the will may never be detached from but must always be viewed in connection with the freedom of will still remaining in humans. Grace and will work together and do so in such a way that in God’s intent grace is universal and meant for all but in fact only profits those who make the proper use of their freedom of will. It is ours to will [the good], God’s to carry it to its conclusion (*Nostrum est velle, Dei perficere*). Sometimes, as in Paul, grace may be antecedent; yet, as a rule, the will is first. The beginning of faith and persevering in it is a matter of the will; grace is needed only for the increase of faith. **God helps those who help themselves.** An efficacious or irresistible grace does not exist, and even prevenient grace is usually denied. [G. Wiggers]

Proceeding, as he did, from humanity’s total moral corruption as a result of Adam’s sin and of its total inability to do any spiritual good, Augustine arrived at a completely different doctrine of grace. Frequently he also described the objective benefits—the gospel, baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and so on—with the word “grace. But this grace is not enough. Still another grace is needed, an internal and spiritual kind that illumines the intellect and bends the will. First, Augustine had taught another doctrine, namely, that though God called us, believing was something we had to do. But later, around AD 396, especially as a result of reflection on 1 Corinthians 4: 7, he arrived at a different insight.[In *To Simplicianus*, written from the year 386 and in *On Free Will* from 388 to 395] Now he writes that grace not only consists in the external preaching of the law and the gospel, which instructs and admonishes us and in that sense offers help, but is above all “a hidden inspiration of God, an inspiration of faith and the fear of God, an aid in doing well, joined to nature and to doctrine by the inspiration of a burning and most dazzling love, a supply of virtue, an inspiration of love through the Holy Spirit.”[Augustine] A fruit of election, “the effect of predestination itself,” grace is distributed according to the divine mercy, not according to merit. [G. Wiggers...]

For that reason it is of course gratuitous. **It would not be grace were it not wholly free.** [Augustine] The Holy Spirit blows where he wills, “not following merits but producing them.”[Augustine] Grace is anterior to all merits; it is prevenient, preparatory, antecedent, and efficacious. It “is prevenient to the unwilling to make him will.” [Augustine] It inwardly illumines the intellect and frees it from blindness.

[Augustine] It produces faith, which is a gift of God, and creates a good will, love for the good, and the capacity to do good and removes the weakness from it. **“Let us acknowledge that it is by a secret, wonderful, and ineffable power operating within that God works in human hearts, not only revelations of the truth, but even good dispositions of the will.”** [Augustine] This grace, furthermore, is irresistible; it inexorably and insuperably has its way with the human will. [Augustine] It is not rejected by any heart, however hard, for God by grace takes away the heart of stone and puts a heart of flesh in its place. [Augustine] The elect, who receive this grace, are not only enabled to come to Christ by it but actually also come to him.

This does not mean, however, that God by his grace suppresses or destroys the free will of humans, for, to the contrary, grace rather liberates the will from the slavery of sin. “Do we then by grace make void free will? God forbid! No, rather we establish free will. For even as the law is established by faith, so free will is not made void by grace but established, for grace restores the health of the will.”

[Augustine] For that reason Augustine could also say: “To yield our consent to God’s summons or to withhold it is the proper function of our own will,” [Augustine] for both those who believe and those who do not believe do this voluntarily: **“No one believes except by the consent of the will.”** So far was he removed from again putting the decision back into human hands by this statement, however, that he immediately continues by saying: “This word does not invalidate but rather confirms the word of the apostle: ‘What have you that you did not receive?’ For the soul cannot receive and possess these gifts, which are here referred to, except by yielding its consent. And thus whatever it possesses, and whatever it receives, is from God; and yet the act of receiving and having belongs, of course, to the receiver and possessor. Now, should any man be for constraining us to examine into this profound mystery, why this person is so persuaded as to yield, and that person is not, there are only two things occurring to me, which I should like to advance as my answer: **‘O the depth of the riches!’** and ‘Is there unrighteousness with God?’” [Augustine] Like the beginning, so also the progress of faith and love is due solely to God’s grace. Operative grace turns into cooperating, consequent, and subsequent grace. **It effects not only the willing but also the working and the fulfilling.** Without Christ we can do nothing. Therefore, “as we begin, it is said: ‘his mercy shall go before me’; as we finish, it is said: ‘his mercy shall follow me.’” [Augustine] It is God “who prepares the will and perfects in us by his cooperation what he initiates by his operation. . . . He therefore operates without us in order that we may will, but when we will, and so will that we may act, he cooperates with us. We can, however, do nothing ourselves to effect good works of piety without him either working that we may will or co-working when we will.” [Augustine] God’s mercy “follows the willing that he may not will in vain.” [Augustine] And that grace is necessary not just for the performance of some good deeds but for all. “The human will must be assisted by the grace of God to every good movement of action, speech, or thought.” [Augustine] Objectively and subjectively, from beginning to end, the work of salvation is a work of God’s grace and of his grace alone. [Wiggers, *Augustine and Pelag.*]

Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Carthage (418), whose canons were endorsed by Pope Zosimus and later by Celestine I, and again at the Council of Ephesus (431) and the Synod of Orange (529). This last synod also rejected semi-Pelagianism, and its canons were confirmed by Boniface II. Consequently, it became official church doctrine that as a result of Adam’s sin, **the whole person is corrupted, and that both the beginning and the increase of faith is owing, not to ourselves or our natural powers, but to the grace of God.** That grace of God not only teaches us what we must do and

not do but also enables us “to know what ought to be done, even to love and to be able to do it.” It is due to the infusion, operation, inspiration, and illumination of the Holy Spirit in us, which precedes and prepares our will, reforms (*corrigen*s) our will from infidelity to faith, and causes us to will and to work. Since then, the necessity of internal and prevenient grace has been taught by all. Also the Synod of Quiercy (853), which condemned Gottschalk, confessed: “We have free will for good, preceded and aided by grace . . . freed by grace and by grace healed from corruption,” just as Rabanus said that God “by his Holy Spirit rules within and comforts without by spiritual zeal.” The scholastics followed the same track. Lombard says that by sin humans lost the freedom of the will and that now “they do not have the strength to rise up either to actually willing the good or doing it unless they are liberated and assisted by grace: liberated indeed so that they may will, and assisted so that they may actually do it.” Hence the difference between operative grace and cooperative grace is, as in Augustine, that the former “precedes the good will: **by it the human will is liberated and prepared, so that it may will good things and effectively do the good.**” But “cooperative grace follows the-now-good will with assistance.” According to Aquinas, a person can indeed do a number of naturally good things without grace, but that person needs grace “to be healed and to perform the good of supernatural virtue,” to love God, to keep the law, to acquire eternal life, to prepare for the grace of justification, to rise up again from sin, to refrain from sinning, and each time he or she needs new grace to know and do the good and to persevere in it. Similarly, Trent established that adults, to prepare themselves for the grace of justification, needed prevenient grace, so that those who “by sin were turned away from God, through his stimulating and assisting grace are disposed to convert themselves to their own justification.” Rome, therefore, definitely teaches the necessity of prevenient (actual, stimulating, or arousing) grace and hence rejects the Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism that attributed the beginning and increase of faith to the powers of [unregenerate] human nature.

SEMI-PELAGIANISM?

There is reason to ask, however, whether Rome, in speaking of prevenient grace, has in mind anything more than the external call of the gospel, which exerts moral impact on the intellect and will, and which was also recognized by Pelagius and his followers. Sometimes, in any case, its description of that grace is very weak: Trent identifies it with the calling “whereby they are called without any existing merits on their part.” **Yet Rome understands by prevenient grace an inward influence of the Holy Spirit on intellect and will.** The **Synod of Orange** spoke of an infusion and operation in us of the Holy Spirit. Trent called it “arousing” or “stimulating” (*excitans*) and described it in the words: “God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.” Aquinas says that the grace by which an adult prepares himself or herself for justification consists not in “some habitual grace” but in “an operation of God by which the soul is turned toward himself,” some “assistance of God moving the soul within or inspiring a good purpose.” Bonaventure sometimes also calls it a “grace freely given” and says that humans need it to prepare for justification and that it “arouses” (*excitat*) their free will. Bellarmine describes it as a “grace of special assistance,” as a “motion” or “action by which God moves a human toward activity” and as “special assistance,” grace that arouses and assists extrinsically,” contrasting it with “indwelling grace,” “infused grace,” “the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.” Among theologians there was much disagreement also about the characteristic nature of that preparatory grace. Thomists considered it a “physical quality supernaturally infused,” “a certain physical entity.”

Molina, Lessius, Ripalda viewed it as “an illumination of the mind and an inspiration of the will.” Suárez, Tanner, and others thought that it was not anything created but that the Holy Spirit himself moved the will immediately. Yet it is generally viewed as “gratuitous assistance,” “an internal and **supernatural gift** of God,” “an illumination of the mind,” and “an immediate movement of the will,” which conveys to humans not only “moral strengths” but also “physical powers” and enables them to prepare for justification.⁷⁰ [[for more on Aquinas’ views and the *donum superadditum*, go to codeaquinas1](#)]

⁷⁰On this difference in understanding “actual grace” (*gratia actualis*), [cf. numerous authors listed...](#) Stated somewhat more precisely, the issue was this: on the one hand, these theologians unanimously rejected the opinion of Lombard (*Sentences*, I, dist. 17–18), who equated grace with love and love with the Holy Spirit; on the other hand, there was also little openness to Dechamps’s opinion (in Heinrich and Gutberlet, *Dogmatische Theologie*, VIII, 23) that grace consists in the illumination of the mind and not in the inspiration of the will, since the will always follows the intellect. Hence, according to everyone, grace consisted in the illumination of the mind and the inspiration of the will. But is grace totally exhausted in these two operations, and does it totally coincide with them? Were they directly and immediately effected by the Spirit in people? Or was there still something else between them? Did the Holy Spirit perhaps first infuse in them a “physical and supernatural quality,” not “habitual but fluid,” of which “the illumination of the mind” and “the inspiration of the will” was then the result? The latter is the view of the neo-Thomists and is, for example, accepted by Heinrich and Gutberlet, and Manzoni.

But with that Rome’s rejection of semi-Pelagianism was over: in any case, in a roundabout way it was again smuggled back in. For, in the first place, **Rome taught that the freedom of the will, though weakened by sin, is not lost**; [Synod of Orange, 529] [[go to codefreewill1 for more on this](#)] even without grace humans can perform many naturally and civilly good works, which are absolutely not sinful. They can know and love God as creator and lead a decent life. And even though in the long run it is difficult to observe the whole law and to resist all temptations, as such this is not impossible. The “natural man” as such is a complete human. Second, **Rome departs from Augustine in that it views “prevenient grace” as a grace that confers the capacity to believe but not the act of believing itself**. On the contrary, prevenient (actual) grace is granted to all adults within hearing of the gospel, but it lies in their power to accept or reject it. “According to the Catholic faith,” said the Council of Orange II, “we believe this also, that after grace has been received through baptism, all the baptized with the help and cooperation of Christ can and ought to fulfill what pertains to the salvation of the soul, if they will labor faithfully.” [H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, #169] And Trent declared that humans can consent to prevenient grace and cooperate with it but also reject it. [Council of Trent, session VI, canon 5 and canon 6] Among theologians, however, there was much disagreement on this point. The Augustinians, among whom Berti is the most notable, teach that prevenient (actual, sufficient) grace confers the capacity (*posse*) but not the will (*velle*) to believe. Needed—in order that people may be not only capable but also desirous of believing and may actually believe, and that sufficient grace may in fact become efficacious—is a “victorious delight” (*delectatio victrix*) that overcomes “carnal delight” (*delectatio carnalis*), which is its opposite, and which transforms “being able” into “being willing.” Hence the will must be transformed by “victorious delight,” which is stronger than desire (*concupiscentia*). Thomists, [such as] Báñez, Gonet, Lemos, Billuart, and others, similarly say that sufficient grace confers the capacity but not the will to believe; to produce the latter must be augmented by a “physical action of God,” that is, a “physical advancement” or “predetermination.”

Augustinians and Thomists accordingly agree in teaching that efficacious grace depends not on the human will but on grace itself and that the act of believing infallibly follows “victorious delight.” They differ, however, in that the latter accept an essential, objective distinction between “sufficient” and “efficacious” grace, whereas the former believe that the two do not basically differ but that there are degrees in grace, so that a grace that is only “sufficient” for one person may—because of a lesser hardening—be efficacious in another. But one cannot say that this idea does justice to the Tridentine “capacity to assent or to reject.” The **Molinists therefore made the efficacy of grace depend on the human will**, and Congruists like Bellarmine let it be determined by a “foreseen congruence or incongruence of grace” with the condition or circumstances of those to whom at any given time grace was offered.

Catholic doctrine comes down to the following: in baptism the children born in the church receive regeneration (justification; infused grace) but those who hear the gospel at a later age receive “sufficient grace,” which consists in an illumination of the intellect and a reinforcement of the will by the Holy Spirit. A person can reject this grace but also assent to it. If he or she assents to it, this “arousing” grace (*gratia excitans*) passes into aiding or cooperative grace. A person works with it to prepare himself or herself for justification (*gratia infusa; habitualis*). This preparation has the following seven components: that humans, aided by God’s grace, begin to believe God’s Word, discover that they are sinners, learn to hope for God’s mercy, begin to love him, begin to hate sin, resolve to have themselves baptized and to lead a new life. [Council of Trent VI, 6] Faith here does not occupy a central place but is coordinate with the other six preparations for the grace of justification. **It is, accordingly, no more than an ascent to the truth of Christianity**, that is, to the doctrine of the church (unformed faith), and only acquires its justifying power by love (faith formed by love), which is imparted by the grace infused. Taken by itself it cannot justify; it is only called justifying faith because it is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, that is, the first of the above preparations. Now if a person has thus prepared himself or herself and has done what was in him or her [materially in the proposition: “If a person does what is in him, God gives him grace.”]—whether this consists in the proper use of his or her grace-sustained [T. Aquinas] or natural [ibid] powers—God cannot refuse the infused grace. Admittedly, the person has not merited this grace, for the grace given far surpasses it in value; yet it is fair that God should, by the standard of a merit of congruity, reward those who thus do their very best with infused grace.⁸²

⁸²According to Ripalda, Vázquez, and others, pre-Tridentine theologians generally taught that people could with their natural powers prepare themselves positively for the reception of grace. There is disagreement only over Aquinas’s opinion and his view of the expression “doing what is in oneself.” After Trent, however, theologians usually construed the expression a bit differently. It is true that over against Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, Rome tried to retain the absolute unmeritability of the first grace (*gratia prima*). The grace of God is not granted according to our merit, neither according to a merit of condignity nor according to a merit of congruity, as (since Eck) merit was usually differentiated (J. Pohle, *Dogmatik*, II, 401). This is why today the expression “*facere quod in se est*” is generally interpreted by saying that the person who makes the proper use of his or her natural powers prepares himself or herself negatively for grace, in the sense that he or she does not pose an obstacle to grace. And some, like Vázquez, Glossner, and others, even reject this negative preparation.

This is granted in baptism and consists in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the infusion of supernatural virtues, participation in the divine nature, and is followed by the forgiveness of sins, which jointly with infused grace constitutes the two parts of justification.[Aquinas] Hence, in the theology of Rome, the forgiveness of sins is the negative counterpart of a person's positive renewal. Sin is forgiven because and insofar as it has been eradicated.

Now if in baptism a person has become the recipient of this infused grace, **he or she can in fact lose it** again as a result of mortal sins and also must do penance for venial sins, not only with contrition of the heart but also with oral confession and penance. Nonetheless, in infused grace a person has received the supernatural power to do good works and hence all subsequent grace, indeed even to merit eternal life according to a merit of condignity. **For the good works one performs flow from a supernatural principle and are therefore deserving of a supernatural reward.** From this perspective, finally, the underlying aim of this Catholic doctrine of grace becomes clear. **Grace serves only to make it possible for human beings to again merit heavenly beatitude** [go too codeB]. That was basically the case even in **Augustine**. In his work, grace, however granted without merit, consisted primarily not in the forgiveness of sins but in regeneration, in the infusion of love, which renders a person capable of doing good works and thus of obtaining eternal life. “[Humans] therefore receive righteousness that, on account of it, they may deserve to receive blessedness.” While merits do not precede grace and faith, they do follow them. [Augustine] “Merit is prepared by believing.” “Grace precedes merit: grace does not arise from merit but merit arises from grace; grace precedes all merits in order that the gifts of God may follow my merits.” Similarly, **Ambrose** wrote: “Grace itself deserves to be increased in order that, having been increased, it may also deserve to be perfected, one's will accompanying, not leading [it], following, not preceding [it].”

Later, when the doctrine of the image of God as “**superadded gift**” [see code294a] arose, this [trend] became even worse. The concept of grace underwent an important modification. Grace then became something that was needed not only for fallen humanity; by it, even Adam had to be elevated from being an ordinary “natural” human to being the image of God. After the fall, therefore, grace played a double role: first, to redeem humans from sin (the grace of healing, medicinal grace) and, second, to raise them up to the supernatural order (elevating grace). [Aquinas] For the former, grace is only accidentally necessary—only in a moral sense; for the latter, it is absolutely and “physically” necessary. The latter, accordingly, increasingly forces the former into the background. The ethical antithesis between sin and grace yields to the “physical” difference between natural and supernatural. By grace the Catholic Church does not, at least not primarily, mean the free favor of God by which he forgives sins. Instead, it takes grace to mean a quality infused in human beings by which they become partakers in the divine nature, [Aquinas] a supernatural, created, hyperphysical power—magically infused into natural humans through the mediation of priest and sacrament—which lifts them up to the supernatural order and enables them, by the performance of good works, to merit all the following graces as well and in the end heavenly blessedness by the merit of condignity [merit or worthiness].

Pelagianism and the Order of Salvation

[From *Reformed Dogmatics* by Hermon Bavinck, pg 572-3 Vol. 3]

And so, on the day of Pentecost, he sends that Spirit in order by the Spirit to apply all his benefits to his church. The Holy Spirit does not acquire those benefits nor add a single benefit, for Christ has accomplished everything. In no respect is the Spirit the meriting cause of our salvation. That is Christ alone, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and whose work therefore does not need to be augmented or improved. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit takes everything from Christ: as the Son came to glorify the Father, so the Holy Spirit in turn came down to glorify the Son. To that Son he bears witness; out of his fullness, he communicates grace upon grace; he leads people to that Son and through the Son to the Father. He applies all Christ's benefits, to each in his measure, at his time, according to his order. He does not stop his activity before he has made the fullness of Christ to dwell in his church and the church has reached maturity, "the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13). The activity of the Holy Spirit is therefore nothing but an applicatory one. The order of redemption is the application of salvation (*applicatio salutis*). The relevant question, therefore, is decidedly not, What must a person do to be saved? but only, What is God doing in his grace to make the church participate in the complete salvation acquired by Christ? Also the "application of salvation" is a work of God that must be viewed theologically, not anthropologically, which from beginning to end ("economically" speaking) has the Holy Spirit as its author and may be called his special work. The whole "way of salvation" is the "applicatory grace of the Holy Spirit."

Against this view of the order of salvation and from the side of **Pelagianism**, however, the objection is always raised that in that way the right of humanity is denied, human self-activity is suppressed, and an ungodly life is fostered. Insofar as this objection is fundamentally calculated to overturn the scriptural testimony that by the works of the law no human being will be justified (Rom. 3: 20), it is not, from the Christian position, admissible. Those who would to some extent agree with it would at the same time and to the same extent leave the scriptural basis behind. Insofar as it is really an objection and deserves consideration, it is untrue and based on misunderstanding. For the view of the "application of salvation" as God's work does not exclude but includes the full recognition of all those moral factors that, under the guidance of God's providence, affect the intellect and heart of the unconverted person. They may not suffice for salvation, as Scripture and experience clearly indicate, but on a truly reformational position there can be no failure to appreciate their value, even for the work of grace. It is God himself, after all, who thus leads his human children, witnesses to them, and showers benefits down on them from heaven [cf. Acts 14: 17] that they should seek God in hope of finding him [cf. Acts 17: 27]. We do not see, moreover, why the Holy Spirit, who calls people to faith and repentance by his Word, should nullify that moral effect of the Word on the human heart and conscience that Pelagianism attributes to it.

Reformed doctrine contains not less but more than what is recognized by Pelagius and his followers. They think they can be content with that **moral effect**. **Augustine** and his allies, however, while considering it inadequate, still fully included it in the Holy Spirit's working of grace. In addition, the application of salvation is and remains a work of the Spirit, a work of the Holy Spirit, **the Spirit of Christ, and is therefore never coercive and violent but always spiritual, lovely, and gentle, treating humans not as blocks of wood but as rational beings, illuminating, persuading, drawing, and bending them. The Spirit causes their darkness to yield to the light and replaces their spiritual powerlessness with spiritual power. Grace and sin are opposites; the latter is overcome only by the power of the former, but as**

soon as and to the same degree that the power of sin is broken, the opposition between God and humans ceases: It is God's Spirit who "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (cf. Rom. 8: 16). "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God" (cf. Gal. 2: 20). "It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" and who himself wants us to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (cf. Phil. 2: 12–13). This theological view is so far removed from fostering an ungodly life that, instead, it alone guarantees the reality of a new Christian life, assures believers of the certainty of their salvation, infallibly vouches for the victory of the kingdom of God, and causes the work of the Father and of the Son to attain completion in that of the Spirit. Pelagianism, by contrast, makes everything wobbly and uncertain— even the victory of the good and the triumph of the kingdom of God— because it hangs everything on the incalculable arbitrariness of humans. Standing up for the rights of humankind, it tramples on the rights of God and for humans ends up with no more than the right to be fickle. But the Reformation, standing up as it did for the rights of God, has by that very fact again gained recognition for the rights of humankind. For here, too, the word of Scripture applies: "those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt" [1 Sam. 2: 30]. The theological view of the order of salvation gathers up all the good that is concealed in the anthropological view, but the reverse does not happen. Those who start with God can also do justice to humans as his rational and moral creatures; **but those who start with humans and first of all seek to secure their rights and liberties always end up limiting the power and grace of God.**

Notes on God's immutability, sovereignty and Arminian's view of man's will

This immutability of God, however, was frequently combated from the side of both deism and pantheism. In the opinion of Epicurus the gods totally resemble excellent human beings, who make changes with respect to location, activity, and thought (etc.); and according to Heraclitus and later the Stoics, the deity as the immanent cause of the world was also caught up in its perpetual flux.[25] Opposition to God's immutability in Christian theology was of the same nature. On the one hand, there is the **Pelagianism, Socinianism, Remonstrantism, and rationalism**, which especially opposes the immutability of God's knowing and willing and makes the will of God dependent on—and hence change in accordance with—the conduct of humans. Especially Vorstius, in his work *On God and His Attributes*, criticized the immutability of God. He made a distinction between God's essence, which is simple and unchangeable, and God's will, which being free does not will everything eternally and does not always will the same thing.[26] Bavinck, *God & Creation*, Vol. 2 pg 155

Excerpt form Hermon Bavinck on God's immutability, sovereignty vs Arminianism

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Van Til states:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.] Van Til, *Systematic Theology*, pg 369

Freedom of the Will

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Arminian liberty vs. God's Sovereignty and Almighty Power
A Display of Arminianism by John Owen

Arminian error on human free will and liberty vs. God's Sovereignty – my comments in blue]

excerpts from *A Display of Arminianism*, Chp 12
by John Owen

“Herein,” saith Arminius [[founder of Arminianism](#)], “consisteth the liberty of the will, that all things required to enable it to will anything being accomplished, it still remains indifferent to will or not.” And all of them at the synod: “There is,” say they, “accompanying the will of man an inseparable property, which we call liberty, from whence the will is termed a power, which, when all things pre-required as necessary to operation are fulfilled, may will anything, or not will it;” that is, our free-wills have such an absolute and uncontrollable power in the territory of all human actions, that no influence of God’s providence, no certainty of his decree, no unchangeableness of his purpose, can sway it at all in its free determinations, or have any power with his highness to cause him to will or resolve on any such act as God by him intended to produce. Take an instance in the great work of our conversion. “All unregenerate men,” saith Arminius, “have, by virtue of their free-will, a power of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the offered grace of God, of contemning the counsel of God concerning themselves, of refusing the gospel of grace, of not opening the heart to him that knocketh.” What a stout idol is this, whom neither the Holy Spirit, the grace and counsel of God, the calling of the gospel, the knocking at the door of the heart, can move at all, or in the least measure prevail against him! Woe be unto us, then, if when God calls us our free-will be not in good temper, and well disposed to hearken unto him!

for it seems there is no dealing with it by any other ways, though powerful and almighty. “For grant,” saith Corvinus [an Arminian], “all the operations of grace which God can use in our conversion, yet conversion remaineth so in our own free power that we can be not converted; that is, we can either turn or not turn ourselves;” where the idol plainly challengeth the Lord to work his utmost, and tells him that after he hath so done he will do what he please. His infallible prescience, his powerful predetermination, the moral efficacy of the gospel, the infusion of grace, the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, all are nothing, not at all available in helping or furthering our independent wills in their proceedings. Well, then, in what estate will you have the idol placed? [210](#)“In such a one wherein he may be suffered to sin, or to do well, at his pleasure,” as the same author intimates. It seems, then, as to sin, so nothing is required for him to be able to do good but God’s permission? No! For the Remonstrants (as they speak of themselves) “do always suppose a free power of obeying or not obeying, as well in those who do obey as in those who do not obey;” — that he that is obedient may therefore be counted obedient, because he obeyeth when he could not obey, and so on the contrary:” where all the praise of our obedience, whereby we are made to differ from others, is ascribed to ourselves alone, and that free power that is in us. Now, this they mean not of any one act of obedience, but of faith itself, and the whole consummation thereof. “For if a man should say, that every man in the world hath a power of believing if he will, and of attaining salvation, and that this power is settled in his nature, what argument have you to confute him?” saith Arminius triumphantly to Perkins; where the sophistical innovator as plainly confounds grace and nature as ever did Pelagius. **That, then, which the Arminians claim here in behalf of their free-will is, an absolute independence on God’s providence in doing anything, and of his grace in doing that which is good, — a self-sufficiency in all its operations, a plenary indifferency of doing what we will, this or that, as being neither determined to the one nor inclined to the other by any overruling influence from heaven. So that the good acts of our wills have no dependence on God’s providence as they are acts, nor on his grace as they are good; but in both regards proceed from such a principle within us as is no way moved by any superior agent. Now, the first of these we deny unto our wills, because they are created; and the second, because they are corrupted. Their creation hinders them from doing anything of themselves without the assistance of God’s providence; and their corruption, from doing anything that is good without his grace. A self-sufficiency for operation, without the effectual motion of Almighty God, the first cause of all things, we can allow neither to men nor angels, unless we intend to make them gods; and a power of doing good, equal unto that they have of doing evil, we must not grant to man by nature, unless we will deny the fall of Adam, and fancy ourselves still in paradise. But let us consider these things apart.**

code306a First, **Everything that is independent of any else in operation is purely active, and so consequently a god**; for nothing but a divine will can be a pure act, possessing such a liberty by virtue of its own essence. Every created will must have a liberty by participation, which includeth such an imperfect potentiality as cannot be brought into act without some premotion (I may so say) of a superior agent. Neither doth this motion, being extrinsical, at all prejudice the true liberty of the will, which requireth, indeed, that the internal principle of operation be active and free, but not that that principle be not moved to that operation by an outward superior agent. Nothing in this sense **can have an independent principle of operation which hath not an independent being**. It is no more necessary to the nature of a free cause, from whence a free action must proceed, that it be the first beginning of it, than it is necessary to the nature of a cause that it be the first cause.

Secondly, If the free acts of our wills are so subservient to the providence of God as that he useth them to what end he will, and by them effecteth many of his purposes, then they cannot of themselves be so absolutely independent as to have in their own power every necessary circumstance and condition, that they may use or not use at their pleasure. Now, the former is proved by all those reasons and texts of Scripture I before produced to show that the providence of God overruleth the actions and determineth the wills of men freely to do that which he hath appointed. And, truly, were it otherwise, God's dominion over the most things that are in the world were quite excluded; he had not power to determine that any one thing should ever come to pass which hath any reference to the wills of men.

Thirdly, All the acts of the will being positive entities, were it not previously moved by God himself, "in whom we live, move, and have our being," must needs have their essence and existence solely from the will itself; which is thereby made αὐτὸ ὄν, a first and supreme cause, endued with an underived being. And so much to that particular.

-- First, for the nature of grace: "God hath appointed to save believers by grace, — that is, a soft and sweet persuasion, convenient and agreeing to their free-will, — and not by any almighty action," saith Arminius. It seems something strange, that "the carnal mind being enmity against God," and the will enthralled to sin, and full of wretched opposition to all his ways, yet God should have no other means to work them over unto him but some persuasion that is sweet, agreeable, and congruous unto them in that estate wherein they are. Ch 14

Reformed doctrine

Arminian Doctrine

"Believing on him that justifieth the ungodly," [Rom. iv. 5](#). "Being justified freely by his grace," [Rom. iii. 24](#).

"True conversion and the performance of good works is a condition required on our part before justification," *Filii Armin.*

"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" [1 Cor. iv. 7](#).

"There is nothing truer than that one man maketh himself differ from another. He who believeth when God commendeth, maketh himself differ from him who will not," *Rem. Apol.*

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are taught to do evil," [Jer. xiii. 23](#).

"I may boast of mine own, when I obey God's grace, which it was in my power not to obey, as well as to obey," Grevinch.

"We retain still after the fall a power of believing and of

“Of ourselves we can do nothing,” [John xv. 5](#).
 “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves,” [2 Cor. iii. 5](#). “We are by nature the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins,” [Eph. ii. 1–3](#).

repentance, because Adam lost not this ability,” *Rem. Declar. Sen. in Synod.*

Great stuff, I wish to merely add my own thoughts on the concepts of free will. The doctrine of prayer upends any belief of the doctrine of free will. Let us look to the Lord's prayer. Jesus opens up his prayer with thy kingdom come THY Will be done (as opposed to ours)..He ends with Lead us Not into Temptation and deliver us from evil. Prayer is a plea to the Sovereign God to align our hearts (wills) and to control our lives (actions) in such a way that brings Him glory. It is the recognition of His sovereignty over every aspect of our life (especially our wills). If one is willing to reject the sovereignty of God in salvation, on the basis of free will, they must then logically conclude that prayer is rendered wholly ineffective; for God can not impede upon the free choice and actions of man. And so the best hope for change would not be prayer to God, but pleas to men. The doctrine of God's sovereignty is not something that can be dabbled in an applied to only the areas we find comfortable; he either is all Sovereign or he is not, you cannot have it both ways - Blake Hart

Freedom of the Will

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The Son upholding and disposing all things - John Owen p 104-108 v19 (127-132 online)

[This will help you understand the correct view on what man's creaturely freedom consists of in relation to God's sovereignty. This is amazing and will clear up many wrong presuppositions and conceits about this subject which will then make clear the truth of unconditional election, man's depravity and other like doctrines.](#)

Our next inquiry is after the manner whereby the Son thus holdeth and disposeth of all things. He doth it “by the word of his power,” — τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως. Ρημα in the New Testament is used in the same latitude and extent with *rbek* in the Old. Sometimes it denotes any matter or thing, be it good or evil, as Matthew 5:11, 12:36, 18:16; Mark 9:32; Luke 1:37, 2:15, 18:34; — a word of blessing by Providence, Matthew 4:4; — any word spoken, Matthew 26:75, 27:14; Luke 9:45; — of promise, Luke 1:38; — and Ρηματα βλασφημα, “blasphemous words,” Acts 6:11; — the word of God, the word of prophecy, Luke 3:2; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 5:26, 6:17; 1 Peter 1:25; — an authoritative command, Luke 5:5. In this epistle it is used variously. In this only it differs from λόγος [[reason in Greek according to Google](#)], that it never denotes the eternal or essential Word of God. That which in this place is denoted by it, with its adjunct of της δυναμewς, the λόγος ενδιάθετος, or the divine power, executing the counsels of the will and wisdom of God, or the efficacy of God's providence, whereby he worketh

and effecteth all things according to the counsel of his will. See Genesis 1:3; Psalm 147:15, 18, 148:8; Isaiah 30:31. And this is indifferently expressed by ρημα and λογος. Hence the same thing which Paul expresseth by the one of them, Hebrews 11:3, Πιστει νοουμεν χατμρτισθαι τους αιωνας ρηματι Θεου, "By faith we know that the worlds were made by the word of God," Peter doth by the other, 2 Peter 3:5, Συνεστωσα τω του Θεου λογω.

Now, this **efficacy of divine Providence is called the word of God**, to intimate that as rulers accomplish their will by a word of command, in and about things subject to their pleasure, Matthew 8:9, so doth God accomplish his **whole mind and will** in all things by his power. And therefore τής δυνάμεως, "of his power," is here added by way of difference and distinction, to show what word it is that the apostle intends. It is not Λογος ουσιωδης, "the essential Word" of God, who is the person spoken of; nor λογος προφοριχος, the word spoken by him in the revelation of himself, **his mind and will**; but a word that is **effectual and operative**, — namely, **the putting forth of his divine power, with easiness and authority accomplishing his will and purpose in and by all things [aka, his secret will vs. his prescriptive will.]**.

This in the vision of Ezekiel is the **communication of a spirit of life** to the cherubs and wheels, to act and move them as seems good to Him by whom they are guided; for as it is very probable that the apostle in these words, setting forth the divine power of the Son in ruling and governing the whole creation, did intend to mind the Hebrews that the Lord Christ, the Son, is he who was represented in the form of a man unto Ezekiel, ruling and disposing of all things, and the γDævæ, "the Almighty," whose voice was heard amongst the wheels, so it is most certain that the same thing is intended in both places. And this expression of "upholding" (or "disposing of") "all things by the word of his power," doth fully declare the glorious providence emblematically expressed in that vision. The **Son being over all things made by himself**, as on a throne over the cherubim and wheels, **influenceth the whole creation with his power, communicating** unto it respectively **subsistence, life, and motion, acting, ruling, and disposing of all according to the counsel of his own will**.

This, then, is that which the apostle assigns unto the Son, thereby to set out the dignity of his person, that the Hebrews might well consider all things before they deserted his doctrine. He is one that is partaker essentially of the nature of God, "being the brightness of glory and the express image of his Father's person," who exerciseth and manifesteth his divine power **both in the creation of all things, as also in the supportment, rule, and disposal of all, after they are made by him**. And hence will follow, as his power and authority to change the Mosaical institutions, so his truth and faithfulness in the revelation of the will of God by him made; which it was their duty to embrace and adhere unto. The several passages of this verse are all of them conjoined by the apostle, and used unto the same general end and purpose; but themselves are of such distinct senses and importance, considered absolutely and apart, that we shall in our passage take out the observations which they singly afford unto us. And from these last words we may learn: —

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, hath the weight of the whole creation upon his hand, and **disposeth** of it by his power and wisdom.

II. Such is the nature and condition of the universe, that it could not subsist a moment, nor could anything in it act regularly unto its appointed end, without the continual supportment, guidance, influence, and disposal of the Son of God.

We may briefly consider the sum of both these jointly, to manifest the power and care of Christ over us, as also the weak, dependent condition of the whole creation in and by itself. The things of this creation can no more support, act, and dispose themselves, than they could at first make themselves out of nothing. The greatest cannot conserve itself by its power, or greatness, or order; nor the least by its distance from opposition. **Were there not a mighty hand under them all and every one, they would all sink into confusion and nothing; did not an effectual power influence them, they would become a slothful heap.** It is true, God hath in the creation of all things implanted in every particle of the creation a special natural inclination and disposition, according unto which it is ready to act, move, or work regularly; but he hath not placed this nature and power absolutely in them, and independently of his own power and operation. [This is a very important distinction! i.e., man is not autonomous as most people and Arminians suppose which leads them to think that their will is totally self-directed.] The sun is endued with a nature to produce all the glorious effects of light and heat that we behold or conceive, the fire to burn, the wind to blow, and all creatures also in the like manner; but yet neither could sun, or fire, or wind preserve themselves in their being, nor retain the principles of their operations, **did not the Son of God, by a constant, continual emanation of his eternal power, uphold and preserve them; nor could they produce any one effect by all their actings, did not he work in them and by them.** And so is it with the sons of men, with all agents whatever, whether natural and necessary, or free and proceeding in their operations by election and choice. **Hence Paul tells us that “in God we live, and move, and have our being,”** Acts 17:28. He had before asserted that he had “made of one blood all nations,” verse 26; that is, all men of one, whom he first created. To which he adds, that we may know that he hath not so left us to stand by ourselves on that first foundation as that we have any power or ability, being made, to do or act **anything without him**, that in him, — **that is, in his power, care, providence, and by virtue of his effectual influence, — our lives are supported and continued, that we are acted, moved, and enabled thereby to do all we do, be it never so small, wherein there is any effect of life or motion.** So Daniel tells Belshazzar that his “breath” and “all his ways” were in the hand of God, **Daniel 5:23** ; — his breath, in the supportment and continuance of his being; and his ways, in his effectual guidance and disposal of them. Peter speaks to the same purpose in general concerning the fabric of the heavens, earth, and sea, 2 Peter 3:5.

Now, what is thus spoken of God in general is by Paul particularly applied unto the Son: Colossians 1:16, 17, “All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” He did not only make all things, as we have declared, and that for himself and his own glory, but also he continues at the head of them; **so that by him and by his power they consist**, — are preserved in their present state and condition, kept from dissolution, in their singular existence, and in a consistency among themselves.

And the reason hereof is taken, first, **from the limited, finite, dependent condition of the creation, and the absolute necessity that it should be so. It is utterly impossible, and repugnant to the very nature and being of God, that he should make, create, or produce any thing without himself, that should have either a self-subsistence or a self-sufficiency, or be independent on himself.** **All these are**

natural and essential properties of the divine nature. **Where they are, there is God;** so that no creature can be made partaker of them. [This discovers the error of people's thinking that they think themselves independent beings, that they are in effect saying that they are God when in fact they are blind, naked, worms of the dust wholly dependent creatures. This is the key issue here when trying to see the vanity of Arminian thinking and the thinking of the unregenerate.] When we name a creature, we name that which hath a derived and dependent being. **And that which cannot subsist in and by itself cannot act so neither.**

Secondly, **The energetical efficacy of God's providence, joined with his infinite wisdom in caring for the works of his own hands, the products of his power, requires that it should be so.** He worketh yet. **He did not create the world to leave it to an uncertain event,** — to stand by and to see what would become of it, to see whether it would return to its primitive nothing (of which cask it always smells strongly), or how it would be tossed up and down by the adverse and contrary qualities which were implanted in the several of it; but the same power and wisdom that produced it doth still accompany it, powerfully piercing through every parcel and particle of it. To fancy a providence in God, without a continual energetical operation; or a wisdom without a constant care, inspection, and oversight of the works of his hands; **is not to have apprehensions of the living God, but to erect an idol in our own imaginations.**

Thirdly, This work is *peculiarly* assigned unto the Son, not only as he is the eternal power and wisdom of God, but also because by his *interposition*, as undertaking the work of mediation, **he reprieved the world from an immediate dissolution upon the first entrance of sin and disorder, that it might continue, as it were, the great stage for the mighty works of God's grace, wisdom, and love, to be wrought on.** Hence the care of the continuance of the creation and the disposal of it is delegated unto him, as he that hath undertaken to bring forth and consummate the glory of God in it, notwithstanding the great breach made upon it by the sin of angels and men. This is the substance of the apostle's discourse, Colossians 1:15- 20. Having asserted him to be the **image of God**, in the sense before opened and declared, and to have made all things, **he affirms that all things have also their present consistency in him and by his power**, and must have so, until the work of reconciliation of all things unto God being accomplished, the glory of God may be fully retrieved and established for ever.

1. **We may see from hence the vanity of expecting any thing from the creatures, but only what the Lord Christ is pleased to communicate** unto us by them. They that cannot sustain, move, or act themselves, by any power, virtue, or strength of their own, are very unlikely by and of themselves to afford any real assistance, relief, or help unto others. They all abide and exist severally, and consist together, in their order and operation, by the word of the power of Christ; and what he will **communicate** by them, that they will yield and afford, and nothing else. In themselves they are **broken cisterns that will hold no water; what he drops into them may be derived unto us, and no more.** **They who rest upon them or rest in them, without the consideration of their constant dependence on Christ, will find at length all their hopes disappointed, and all their enjoyments vanish into nothing.**

2. **Learn hence also the full, absolute, plenary self-sufficiency and sovereignty of the Son, our Savior.** We showed before the universality of his kingdom and moral rule over the whole creation; but this is not all. **A king** hath a moral rule over his subjects in his kingdom: but he doth not really and physically

give them their being and existence; he doth not uphold and act them at his pleasure; but every one of them stands therein **upon the same or an equal bottom with himself**. He can, indeed, by the permission of God, take away the lives of any of them, and so put an end to all their actings and operations in this world; **but he cannot give them life or continue their lives at his pleasure one moment**, or make them so much as to move a finger. **But with the Lord Christ it is otherwise. He not only rules over all the whole creation, disposing of it according to the rule and law of his own counsel and pleasure, but also they all have their beings, natures, inclinations, and lives from him; by his power are they continued unto them, and all their actions are influenced thereby. And this, as it argues an all-sufficiency in himself, so an absolute sovereignty over all other things. And this should teach us our constant dependence on him and our universal subjection unto him.**

3. And this abundantly discovers the vanity and folly of them who make use of the creation in an opposition unto the Lord Christ and his peculiar interest in this world. **His own power is the very ground that they stand upon in their opposition unto him, and all things which they use against him consist in him.** They hold their lives absolutely at the pleasure of him whom they oppose; and they act against him without whose continual supportment and influence they could neither live nor act one moment: which is the greatest madness and most contemptible folly imaginable.

This discourse goes into great detail on the subject of man's total depravity; what it really means. This is very helpful for self-examination and to help you see the worth of what Christ really did, the gravity of it, which when seen more clearly, will lead you to a more devout worship and a more circumspect walk with God.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

code408

From

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3, pg 119-125

As extensive as original sin is in humanity as a whole, so it is also in the individual person. **It holds sway over the whole person, over mind and will, heart and conscience, soul and body, over all one's capacities and powers.** A person's heart is evil from his or her youth and a source of all sorts of evils (Gen. 6: 5; 8: 21; Ps. 51: 5; Jer. 17: 9; Ezek. 36: 26; Mark 7: 21). One cannot renew one's self (Jer. 13: 23; Ezek. 16: 6), understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2: 14), **or submit to the law of God** (John 8: 34, 36; Rom. 6: 17, 20; **8: 7**), and one is dead through trespasses and sins (Eph. 2: 1). **Rebirth, accordingly, is a prerequisite to entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3: 3). The whole of salvation is objectively and subjectively a work of divine grace** (John 6: 44; 15: 5; 1 Cor. 4: 7; 15: 10; Phil. 2: 13; etc.). Upon

these firm pronouncements of Holy Scripture, Augustine and his followers, and later the Reformers, built the doctrine of humanity's incapacity for good. Inasmuch as in Adam all of human nature has been corrupted, nothing truly good can any longer proceed from it, any more than a bad tree can produce good fruit. **Human persons are now under the hard necessity of not being able not to sin.** Their virtues are vices rather than virtues; they are by nature inclined to all evil, inclined even to hate God and their neighbor. This reasoning is undoubtedly hard, and it is not surprising that it has at all times encountered strong contradiction. Besides the natural aversion that spontaneously arises in the human heart against the doctrine of the total moral depravity of humans, there is undoubtedly also much incomprehension on the part of its opponents. Certainly, if this doctrine is clearly elucidated, it is daily confirmed by everyone's experience and vindicated by the witness of its opponents themselves.

1. The teaching of Scripture, after all, is not that every human lives at all times in all possible actual sins and is in fact guilty of violating all God's commandments. **It only refers to the deepest inclination, the innermost disposition, the fundamental directedness of human nature and confesses that it is not turned toward God but away from him.** If a human being is an organic unity, then one of these two things has to be true. Many people brush this aside by saying that humans are by nature neither or both at the same time, [Hegel] but this betrays a lack of reflection, is contrary to the nature of the good, and was therefore very seriously opposed even by Kant. [Kant] A person who commits one sin is in principle guilty of violating all the commandments; and a person who truly possesses one virtue in principle possesses them all. The human being is at the center of his or her being either good or evil—there is no third option.

2. **Sin, however, is not a substance.** [If it was, then God would have created it and been the originator of it which he can't be.] It does indeed inhabit and infect all of us, but it is not and cannot be the essence of our humanity. Also, after the fall, we human beings remained humans. We have retained our reason, conscience, and will, can therefore control our lower sensual drives and inclinations, and thus force them in the direction of virtue. **Augustine**, who called the virtues of Gentiles "**splendid vices,**" candidly acknowledged this truth. Many of their actions not only do not deserve to be reprimanded but are worthy of our praise and emulation. [G.F. Wiggers] While Lutherans spoke of the "natural man" as stocks and blocks in matters spiritual, in the so-called lower hemisphere of civic life they still credited "him" with all sorts of powers for good. [F.H.R. Frank] And more than them all, **Calvin** and the Reformed have honored the virtues of unbelievers and frequently held them up as examples to Christians themselves. The doctrine of the total corruption of human nature by no means implies, therefore, that the sinful disposition that lies at the bottom of the human heart always erupts in the kind of deeds that betray clear hostility and hatred toward God and one's neighbor. There are various circumstances that intervene and keep the disposition from fully expressing itself. **Not only are many sinful deeds restrained by the sword of the government, common civil decency, public opinion, the fear of disgrace and punishment, and so on, but a variety of factors—such as the natural love still inherent in every person;** the moral character fostered by upbringing and struggle; favorable circumstances of constitution, environment, or job; and so on—all these frequently lead people to practice beautiful and praiseworthy virtues. **Note, however, that while these factors may subdue the sinful disposition of the heart, they do not eradicate it.** In all kinds of nasty considerations, thoughts, and desires, it keeps rising to the surface. When conditions are favorable and the need arises, it often

breaks through the dams and dikes that restrained it. And those who show by their appalling words and deeds that they hate God and their neighbor have no other nature than the one all people share.

3. When we are taught that as a result of sin humans are incapable of any good and this inability is called “natural,” this does not refer to physical necessity or fatalistic coercion. Humans have not, as a result of sin, lost their will and their increased freedom: the will, in virtue of its nature, rules out all coercion and can only will freely. What humans have lost is the free inclination of the will toward the good. They now no longer want to do good; they now voluntarily, by a natural inclination, do evil. **The inclination, the direction, of the will has changed.** “The will in us is always free but it is not always good.” [Augustine] In this sense the incapacity for good is not physical **but ethical in nature: it is a kind of impotence of the will.** Some theologians therefore preferred to speak of a moral rather than a natural impotence—Amyraut, Testard, Venema, and especially **Jonathan Edwards** among them. Edwards in his day, one must remember, had to defend the moral impotence of humans against **Whitby** and **Taylor**, who denied original sin and deemed humans able to keep God’s law. They argued, against Edwards, that if humans could not keep God’s law, they did not have to, and if they did not keep it, they were not guilty. To defend himself, Edwards made a distinction between natural and moral impotence, saying that fallen humans did have the natural but not the moral power to do good. And he added that only natural impotence was real impotence, but moral impotence could only be figuratively so called. For sin is not a physical defect in nature or in the powers of the will; **but it is an ethical defect, a lack of inclination toward or love for the good.** [Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*] Now Edwards did say that human beings could not give themselves this inclination toward the good nor change their will. In this respect he was completely on the side of Augustine and Calvin. But by his refusal to call this disinclination toward the good “natural impotence,” he fostered a lot of misunderstanding and actually aided the cause of Pelagianism.

The Reformed, therefore, consistently spoke of **natural impotence**. This word “natural,” however, can have different meanings. One may use it to refer to the original human nature, created by God in Adam according to his image, in the sense used by Protestants when they said that the image of God is natural. In that case, the incapacity for good is not natural, but rather contrary to nature, unnatural, and subnatural. [Augustine] One can mean by it the physical substance or power of any creature, and in that case, too, this incapacity—since all substance and power is created by God—cannot be called natural. Incapacity for good is not a physical impossibility, like the inability of human beings to put their hands on the stars. But, speaking of natural impotence, one can also have in mind the characteristics of fallen human nature and mean by it that the incapacity for good in this fallen state is “by nature” characteristic for all human beings, congenital and not first introduced in them from without by custom, upbringing, or imitation. **In this sense the term “natural impotence” is absolutely correct, and the term “moral impotence” open to misunderstanding.** “Morally impossible,” after all, is the phrase often used to describe what is considered impossible for a given person on the basis of that person’s character, custom, or upbringing. It is morally impossible for a virtuous person all at once to become a thief, for a mother to hate her child, or a murderer to strangle an innocent child. Such a moral “impossibility” nonetheless definitely does occur under certain circumstances. This kind of moral impotence is not what describes the incapacity for good. Though ethical in nature, and an incapacity of the will, natural impotence belongs to humans by nature; it is innate, and a property of the volition itself. And precisely because the will, in its present fallen state, in virtue of its nature cannot do other

than to will freely, it cannot do other than what it wills, than that to which it is by nature inclined. [T. Aquinas]

4. Finally, one must bear in mind that Scripture and the church, in teaching the total depravity of humanity, apply the highest standard, namely, the law of God. The doctrine of the incapacity for good is a religious confession. In light of the standard people usually follow in their daily life or in philosophical ethics, one can wholeheartedly admit that much of what people do is good and beautiful. The follower of **Augustine**, using this standard in the assessment of human virtues, can be even more generous and broad-minded than the most confirmed **Pelagian**. But there is still another, higher, ideal for us humans. There is a divine law with which we must comply. Virtues and good works are distinct. Good, true good—good in the eyes of a holy God—is only what is done out of faith, according to God’s law, and to God’s glory. [saving faith, with a spiritual sight of Christ, his glory, etc.] And measured by this standard, who would dare to say that any work performed by humans is completely pure and does not need forgiveness and renewal? To divide persons in two—like Rome and in part like the Lutherans—and to say that in the realm of the supernatural and spiritual they are incapable of any good but in the natural realm they can do things that are totally good is contrary to the unity of human nature, to the unity of the moral law, and to the teaching of Scriptures that humans must always be images of God, do everything they do to the glory of God, and always and everywhere love God with all their heart, mind, and strength. Now if that is true, if the human essence consists in being the image and likeness of God, then nothing in them, as they now live and work, can stand before the face of God. Weighed in the scales of God’s sanctuary, all their works are found to be wanting.

One can disagree about this standard and, to reach a more favorable conclusion, bring down the law of God and tailor it to human behaviors. But given this standard, the only possible judgment is that of Scripture: “There is no one who does good, no, not one” (Pss. 14: 3; 53: 3). And this judgment of Scripture is confirmed by a variety of testimonies. Let those who do not believe Scripture listen to the voices of the greatest people of our race! As soon as one, both in one’s own life or that of others, goes beyond words and deeds and inquires into the **hidden motives** and **secret intentions**, the sinful nature of all human striving comes to light. “Our virtues are often no more than vices in disguise” (Rochefoucauld). “Man is only a disguise, a lie and hypocrisy, both within himself and with respect to others” (**Pascal**). “Man to man is a wolf.” **Without the state, human society would degenerate into “a war of all against all”**(Hobbes). According to **Kant**, humans are by nature evil. There is in them a natural tendency toward evil, a radical inborn evil. The appalling facts evidenced to us by the history of humankind are sufficient proof of this. “Every man has his price, for which he will sell himself.” What the apostle says is a universal truth; there is no one who does good, not one.[Kant] “Those who maintain the bondage of the will and characterize humans as stocks and blocks are completely correct.”[Fichte] “The natural heart in which a human is caught up is the enemy one must fight.”[Hegel] “Humans have from eternity entangled **themselves in themselves** and in **self-seeking**, and all who have been born were born with the attached dark principle of evil. This original evil in humans, which only those can dispute who have only a superficial acquaintance with people as they are in themselves and in their relation to others, in its origin is their own deed.”[Schelling] “The main and fundamental motive in people as in animals is **egoism**, that is, the drive to exist and to prosper. This egoism, in animals as it is in humans, is most intimately connected, yes, identical with their inner core and essence.” **This egoism is restrained by the bonds of decency, fear, punishment, government,**

and so on, but when these restraints are removed, [common graces, divine providence] “insatiable greed, despicable money-hunger, deeply concealed falseness, and spiteful evil again spring to the surface. One must read the histories of criminals and accounts of anarchic states to recognize what humans really are from a moral perspective. Thousands of people who before our eyes are peacefully commingling in public must be viewed as just so many tigers and wolves whose mouth has been secured by a strong muzzle.” Even the composition of the human conscience is one-fifth fear of other humans, one-fifth superstition, one-fifth prejudice, one-fifth vanity, and one-fifth custom. [Kant] The adherents of the theory of evolution have returned to the teaching of Mandeville, Helvetius, Diderst, d’Alembert, and others that egoism is the basis of morality and the norm of all human conduct. Humans are descended from animals and fundamentally remain animals guided by egoistic instincts. Civilization can tame humans but can never make of them something other than what they originally and temperamentally are. What we call moral life is an accidental product of circumstances of the life of people in a specific society. Under different circumstances and in another society, good and evil would have a very different content. [Darwin] In his *Ethisch Idealisme*, De Bussy makes a sharp distinction between the moral person whose self-centered nature has been curbed in its capriciousness by the community but not annihilated, whose virtues are often **splendid vices**, and the moral person in whom a new principle has been implanted.

It is truly not Scripture alone that judges humans harshly. It is human beings who have pronounced the harshest and most severe judgment on themselves. And it is always better to fall into the hands of the Lord than into those of people, for his mercy is great. **For when God condemns us, he at the same time offers his forgiving love in Christ, but when people condemn people, they frequently cast them out and make them the object of scorn. When God condemns us, he has this judgment brought to us by people—prophets and apostles and ministers—who do not elevate themselves to a level high above us but include themselves with us in a common confession of guilt.** By contrast, philosophers and moralists, in despising people, usually forget that they themselves are human. When God condemns, he speaks of sin and guilt that, though great and heavy, can be removed because they do not belong to the essence of humanity. But moralists frequently speak of egoistic animal tendencies that belong to humans by virtue of their origin and are part of their essence. They put people down but do not lift them up. If by origin we are animals, why then should we live as children of God.

For a good summary of human depravity by **Van Til** go to [codeHD](#)

A great dissertation on the doctrine of sin and its heretical views by Pelagius, philosophers like Plato, Plotinus, Cicero, etc. This gives you great depth in understanding sin, the corruptness of the human will, that man ruthlessly defends his autonomy, his self-reliance, his independence from God.

The Origin of Sin

code371

From

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3, pg 25, 30-33, 39-44

The fallen world in which we live rests on the foundations of a creation that was good. Yet, it had scarcely been created before sin crept into it. The origin of sin is a mystery; it is not from God, and at the same time it is not excluded from his counsel. God decided to take humanity on the perilous path of covenantal freedom rather than elevating it by a single act of power over the possibility of sin and death.

Genesis 2:9 speaks of two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both are integral to the Genesis narrative, and attempts to discount one or the other destroy narrative meaning. Similarly, efforts to explain the meaning of either of the trees in terms of progress and development (tree of life as awakening of sexuality) ignore the plain reading of prohibition and punishment associated with eating the trees' fruit. No, the story is a unity, and it is about the fall of humanity and the origin of sin. Genesis 3 is not a step of human progress but a fall.

This fall, however, is not simply human effort to achieve cultural power as a means of becoming independent from God. The Bible does not portray human cultural formation as an evil in itself so that rural simplicity is preferable to a world-dominating culture. The point of the "fall" narrative in Genesis is to point to the human desire for autonomy from God. To "know good and evil" is to become the determiner of good and evil; it is to decide for oneself what is right and wrong and not submit to any external law. In short, to seek the knowledge of good and evil is to desire emancipation from God; it is to want to be "like God."

The entry into sin comes by way of the serpent's lie. The serpent's speaking has often been mistakenly considered an allegory for lust, sexual desire, or errant reason. The various mythical interpretations and even attempts to explain the narrative in terms of animal capacity for speech before the fall all fail to meet the intent of the passage and the teaching of Scripture as a whole. The only appropriate explanation is to recognize, with ancient exegesis, the entrance of a spiritual superterrestrial power. The rest of the Bible, however, is relatively silent about this, though its entire narrative rests on this spiritual conflict between the two kingdoms. Sin did not start on earth but in heaven with a revolt of spiritual beings. In the case of humanity, the temptation by Satan resulted in the fall. Scripture looks for the origin of sin solely in the will of rational creatures.

The Christian church has always insisted on the historical character of the fall. In our day this is challenged by historical criticism as well as evolutionary dogma. Those who would challenge this

notion attempt instead to accommodate it by demonstrating the reality of the fall from experience, thus validating Genesis 3 as a description of reality rather than as history. This rests on a misunderstanding; it ignores the fact that we need the testimony of Scripture in order to “read” our experience aright. Neither the Genesis account nor its historical character can be dispensed with. In fact, objections to the reality of the fall are themselves increasingly under review by more recent trends in the biblical and archeological/anthropological sciences. The Genesis account, especially of the unity of the human race, speaks positively to our conscience and our experience.

Though no true parallel to the biblical account has been found, it is clear from the myths of other ancients that underlying the religious and moral convictions of the human race are common beliefs in the divine origin and destiny of humanity, in a golden age and decline, in the conflict of good and evil, and in the wrath and appeasement of the deity. The origin and essence of sin, however, remain unknown to them. The origin of sin is sometimes found in the essence of things, its existence even denied by moralists and rationalists, treated as illusion or desire as in Buddhism, or dualistically traced to an ultimately evil power. Philosophers have treated sin as hubris that can be overcome by human will, as ignorance to be overcome by education in virtue, or even as a fall of preexistent souls. However, outside of special revelation sin is either treated deistically in terms of human will alone or derived pantheistically from the very necessary nature of things.

Both views also found their way into Christianity. The British monk Pelagius rejected all notions of original sin and considered every person as having Adam’s full moral choice of will. The fall did not happen at the beginning but is repeated in every human sin. Though the church rejected Pelagianism in its extreme form, Roman Catholicism maintained the notion of a less than completely fallen will, limiting the fall to the loss of the *donum superadditum*, [see Van Til @ code490] which can only be restored by sacramental grace.

When the Reformation rejected Roman Catholic dualism, streams within Protestantism, notable rationalist groups such as the **Socinians** as well as the **Remonstrants** **robbed Christianity of its absolute character by dispensing with the need for grace in some measure. The image of God is regarded as the fully free will, which, like that of the pre-fall Adam, remains intact. While we are born with an inclination to sin, this inclination is not itself culpable; atonement is needed only for actual sin. Suffering is not necessarily linked to sin; it is simply part of our human condition.**

Interesting attempts have been made to reconcile Pelagius with Augustine. Ritschl agrees with Pelagius that the human will and actual sin precede the sinful state or condition. But he also then insists that these singular sinful acts mutually reinforce each other and create a collective realm of sin that exerts influence on us, a reinforcing reciprocity that enslaves all people. Others combine Ritschl’s approach with evolutionary theory. When this is envisioned in strictly materialistic and mechanistic terms, all notions of good and evil, the possibility of a moral life, vanish behind physical and chemical processes. A more acceptable route is to see the evolution of moral life as one in which human beings rise above their primitive animal nature as they become more humanized, more civilized. From this evolutionary viewpoint, sin is the survival of or misuse of habits and tendencies left over from our animal ancestry, from earlier stages of development, and their sinfulness lies in their anachronism. The remaining animal nature is shared by all people; sin is universal, but so is moral responsibility and guilt.

This attempt to reconcile Augustine and Pelagius fails at several levels. Apart from the lack of proof for materialistic evolution, the major obstacle is explaining the origin of a free human will in the evolutionary process. To think of the will as somehow outside of human nature and unrelated to it is psychologically inconceivable. In fact, moral freedom not only becomes precarious, moral improvement becomes virtually impossible. Sin's power increases, and explanations for its origin flounder. Thinkers move from attributing it to human nature to cosmic explanations—all matter is evil. From there it was an easy step to locate evil in a tension of potencies within God himself as in the theosophical tradition of Böhme and Schelling. Hegel even considered the fall as the Ur-fact of history when the Absolute realized itself in the world as its own alternative existence. From here it is a small step to Buddhism, which considers existence itself as the greatest sin.

The question of sin's origin, like the question of existence itself, is an enigma. The philosophical tradition provides evidence for the scriptural teaching that this world is inexplicable without a fall but provides no satisfactory explanation. Sin cannot be inferred from the sensual nature of humanity since the "spiritual" sins of those who are older are often more appalling than the "fleshly" sins of youth. Asceticism does not solve the problem of sin; monks take sin with them into the cloister in their hearts. Appealing to the Pauline understanding of "flesh" to defend this view fails. "Flesh" is a sinful direction of the heart in opposition to the Holy Spirit and is not a contrast between material and immaterial or spiritual. From attributing sin to human nature it is a natural move to attribute it to the Creator. Consistent with our experience of life's contradictions, sin is the necessary obstacle to our moral development and perfection. Sin is God's own will; it is his design for creation. While there is a semblance of truth here, sin is made eternal, inferred from physical matter, necessary not accidental, seen not as the antithesis of good but as a lower grade of the good; this view makes God the author of sin. Scripture and human moral consciousness rebel against these conclusions. Pessimism and libertinism are the natural consequence of this view.

The question of God's will in relation to sin is vexing. Those who speak of God's permission with respect to sin rightly seek to avoid making him the author of sin. However, because this formulation risks denying God's full sovereignty, Reformed theology, following Augustine, was never satisfied with the idea of permission. At the risk of using "hard sayings," Reformed theologians insist that while God does not sin or cause sin, sin is yet not outside his will. In addition, God created human beings holy and without sin; sin's origin is in the will of the rational creature. God most certainly created human beings to be capable of sin; he willed the possibility of sin. How that possibility became reality is, however, a mystery. Sin defies explanation; it is a folly that does not have an origin in the true sense of the word, only a beginning. Attempting to locate the time of the fall, too, is impossible. Attempts to identify that time in the preformed chaos of Genesis 1:1 or in notions of preexistent souls are theologically and philosophically, as well as scripturally, without ground. We must be satisfied with the straightforward account of Scripture: humanity was created good and by its own volition, at a given time in the beginning, fell from that state and plunged into sinful alienation from God, who incorporates sin into his purposes, even as something that had to be there though it ought not to be there.

Pg 30-33 [\[What is Sin?\]](#)

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is undoubtedly so named because humans, by eating of it, would acquire a knowledge of good and evil such as they had not had until then, one that was forbidden to them and denied to them. The question, however, is what that knowledge of good and evil amounts to. The usual explanation is that, by eating of the tree, humans would gain empirical knowledge of good and evil. But this has rightly prompted the objection that this knowledge of good and evil would make humans like God— as not just the snake (in Gen. 3: 5) but also God himself (in 3: 22) says— and God certainly has no empirical knowledge of evil, nor can he have it. In addition, by eating of the tree, humans especially lost the empirical knowledge of the good. Finally, [in this view] Genesis 3: 22a must then be interpreted as irony, which by itself is already implausible but specifically in conflict with verse 22 as a whole. Others therefore came up with the idea that Genesis 3 relates the development of the human race from an animal state to self-consciousness and reason, and they therefore viewed the fall as the first hazardous undertaking of reason, the genesis of moral life, the origin of culture, the happiest event in the history of humanity.

pg 32: The paradisaical story, therefore, absolutely does not describe the human person as an intellectual or moral tabula rasa on which everything still has to be inscribed from without. Therefore, it cannot mean by the knowledge of good and evil an awakening to self-consciousness and reason nor the origination of conscience. But by the knowledge of good and evil that is prohibited, they say, we must understand the achievement of a mature intellect (3: 6), the ability to distinguish between the useful and the harmful (Deut. 1: 39; 2 Sam. 19: 35– 36; Isa. 7: 16; Jonah 4: 11); independent insight enabling persons to help themselves and not be dependent on others; intellectual knowledge of the world, the metaphysical knowledge of things in their connectedness, their value or worthlessness, their utility or inutility for people. **In other words, this refers to wisdom, to the skills of controlling the world, the culture that is said to make humans independent of God and like God.**

...Here's the sum of it: pg 32 cont.

Hence the knowledge of good and evil that is prohibited to human beings has to mean something different. Marti points in the right direction when he describes it as **the ability to stand on one's own feet and to find one's own way and speaks of the desire of humans to emancipate themselves from God by cultivating that ability.** In Genesis 3, **the issue is not primarily the content of the knowledge that humans would appropriate by disobedience but the manner in which they would obtain it.** The nature of the knowledge of good and evil in view here is characterized by the fact that humans would be like God as a result of it (Gen. 3: 5, 22). By violating the command of God and eating of the tree, they would make themselves like God in the sense **that they would position themselves outside and above the law and, like God, determine and judge for themselves what good and evil was.** The knowledge of good and evil is not the knowledge of the useful and the harmful, of the world and how to control it, but (as in 2 Sam. 19: 36; Isa. 7: 16) **the right and capacity to distinguish good and evil on one's own.** The issue in Genesis is indeed whether humanity will want to develop in dependence on God, whether it will want to have dominion over the earth and seek its salvation in submission to God's commandment; or whether, violating that commandment and withdrawing from God's authority and law, it will want to stand on its own feet, go its own way, and try its own "luck." [J. Koberle] When humanity fell, it got what it wanted; **it made itself like God, "knowing good and evil" by its own insight and judgment.** Genesis 3: 22 is in dead earnest. This emancipation from God, however, did not

lead and cannot lead to true happiness. For that reason, God by the probationary command forbade this drive to freedom, this thirst for independence. But humanity voluntarily and deliberately opted for its own way, thereby failing the test. [There you have it! The cesspool of sin flows from this fountain, **man's declaring his independence from God.** Now you can see why false religions prosper, why, for example, Deism is what it is....God is off in the distance and man is left to rely upon his own so called strength, stock and furniture.]

Picking up at *The Fall a History*, pg 39

For if humankind is one, then it has descended from one ancestral couple; then it has spread out over the whole world from one specific location; then from the beginning it held in common a complex of intellectual, religious, and moral ideas and traditions; then a moral deviation must have occurred at the beginning in the life of the first human couple, for sin is universal. All in all, the science of nature and history to this day lacks the right to make a pronouncement on the truth of the state of integrity and the fall of the first humans. The witness pertaining to these things contained in Genesis, confirmed by the later appeal made to it by prophets and apostles and Christ himself, and intertwined as a necessary constituent in the whole revelation of salvation, continues to maintain itself in people's conscience and meshes perfectly with the reality our daily experience informs us about.

Pg40

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS OF SIN

Indirectly this witness of Scripture is also borne out by the traditions, sagas. Or myths that among various peoples speak of a fall into sin....

...All these stories and others like them have no higher meaning other than to show that the human race from ancient times and everywhere wanted to give an account of the horrendous destruction the world exhibited, by seeing in it the result of a fall that took place in the life of humanity. But in that light they are valuable. Underlying the religious and moral convictions of human beings, more or less clearly articulated or unconscious, **there is belief in the divine origin and destiny of humanity, in a golden age and subsequent decline, in the battle between good and evil, and in the wrath and appeasement of the deity.**

At the same time, they bring out how pagans, though they gropingly searched for God, did not find him [cf. Acts 17:27]. Both the origin and the essence of sin remained unknown to them. Even the Jews, who recognized the fall and the temptation by Satan (Wis. 2:24) and therefore frequently called him the "ancient serpent," sometimes taught that Satan was created simultaneously with Eve on the sixth day, that, being sensually titillated, he tried to tempt man, and that even before the fall humans received, along with an impulse toward the good (הטוב יצר), an impulse toward evil (יצר הרע), in order to overcome it and so to make their works truly meritorious. Similarly, in the pagan world, the origin of sin was found, not in the will of rational creatures, but in the essence of things.

The fall is simply unknown. **Confucianism** is a shallow form of rationalism and moralism that considered humans naturally good and sought the way of salvation in a virtuous life in keeping with the world order. According to **Buddhism**, the Atman, or Brahman, the divine substance, is the only reality; the world of phenomena is but a dream, is fundamentally *maya*, illusion, and in a state of perpetual becoming and change. Suffering and sorrow, accordingly, are universal, for all things are subject to transitoriness, to birth, aging, and death. **The cause of that suffering is to be found in desires, in the desire for existence, in the will to exist.** **Salvation therefore consists in extinguishing the consciousness or in the annihilation of existence: nirvana.** Parsism traced evil to an original evil spirit, Ahriman, who is opposed to the supreme god, Ahuramazda, has his own kingdom of darkness and corrupts the creation of God, but is subordinate to Ahuramazda and will someday yield to him. The **Greeks** and the Romans, though in their sagas of a golden age, of Prometheus and Pandora, they possessed something reminiscent of the biblical stories, originally knew nothing of evil spirits that were opposed to the good and attributed to the gods all sorts of evil desires and misdeeds. The human race did not fall all at once but gradually degenerated. **And the human will still possesses the power to live a virtuous life, to stay within moral bounds, and thus to conquer sin, which is essentially hubris.**

[Note man tends to defend his own will, his autonomy, his independence from God, in matters of religion, life and philosophy. It's all will worship. You see this come out in Arminianism, Pelagianism, etc. which has permeated almost all churches. Amazing!]

Philosophy, as a rule, took the same position. According to **Socrates**, the cause and essence of sin consists solely in ignorance. No one is voluntarily evil, that is, unfortunate. Hence the person who knows the good is good and acts according to the good. **All that is needed is education to guide humans, who are by nature good, to the practice of virtue.** **Plato** and **Aristotle** indeed understood the inadequacy of this view. **Reason**, they said, is certainly far from always being able to control the passions. **Sin is too deeply rooted in human nature to be overcome by knowledge alone.** **Plato** even arrived at a totally different theory about the origin of sin, locating it in a fall of preexistent souls. **Still, both maintained free will and continued to believe that virtue remains within our power.** Our external lot may be determined, but virtue is without a master (ἀδεσποτος) **and depends on the human will alone.** **“Both virtue and evil depend upon us.”** The **Stoics** could not, on the basis of its pantheistic and deterministic position, **locate the cause of sin in the human will** and therefore attempted to fit both physical and moral evil into the order and beauty of the whole. It was not even possible for the deity to keep human nature free from every defect. **Sin is as necessary as diseases and disasters and is something good to the degree that it serves and brings out the good.** Still also the **Stoics** knew no way to overcome sin and to practice virtue **other than the human will.** Finally, in the works of **Cicero**, **Seneca**, **Plotinus**, and others, there was the ever-recurring thought **that sin was an act of the will and could also be undone by the will.** **Outside the area of special revelation, therefore, sin was always either interpreted deistically in terms of the human will and construed purely as an act of the will or derived pantheistically from the essence of things and incorporated as a necessary component in the order of the universe as a whole.**

Both views also found their way into Christianity and repeatedly met, in smaller or larger circles, with agreement and had their defenders. The practical Christianity that prevailed in the churches following the death of the apostles and is known to us from the so-called **Apostolic Fathers** and other writings

already contained all kinds of religious and ethical notions that deviated from the New Testament and especially from Paul and were formed under the influence of Jewish piety and popular pagan philosophy, especially that of Cicero. Believers were indeed convinced that in Christ they had received great benefits, especially the forgiveness for all past sins in baptism; but if after that event they saw themselves called to a holy life, they already opened up a large space for free will, for their own power, and for the meritoriousness of good works. When, at the beginning of the fifth century, **Pelagius** proposed his theories, he could appeal to countless statements made by others before him. Still he isolated them from the context in which they occurred and combined them into a single whole in such a way that they ran fundamentally counter to the Christian doctrine of sin and grace.

To this monk from Britain everything **depended on the free will**. He saw it as the characteristic feature of human nature, **the image of God, the first principle and foundation of the dominion granted him**. Human nature has been so created by God that, depending on its free choice, it is able to and able not to sin; and this equal possibility in either direction, as a natural good, as a constituent of human nature, cannot be lost. As a result Pelagius had to reject all notions of original sin. Adam only brought sin into the world as an example or form. There is indeed a power of evil custom, but this does not so completely control humans that, if they seriously wanted to avoid sin and lead a holy life, they would be prevented from doing so. In any case, sin is not innate; it is always—and cannot be anything but—a free act of the will. The fall, accordingly, did not just occur once, in Adam, and take the whole human race with it, but every human being is still born in the same state in which Adam was, granted that, as a result of the power of custom, conditions are less favorable now. And all humans therefore stand or fall by themselves. Sin originates anew in every person; in every human life there occurs a fall when the power of free will is neglected or applied in a wrong direction.

These ideas of **Pelagius** were so obviously at odds with the teaching of Scripture and the faith of the church that they could not possibly be accepted by the church. They were, accordingly, modified and toned down in various ways. Specifically, to Adam's transgression was ascribed a stronger influence on the state of human nature, and, correspondingly, grace was credited with more vigorous cooperation at the beginning and in the development of the new Christian life. **But, fundamentally, the final decision at all these points was again reserved for the free will.** In **Roman Catholicism**, Adam's transgression did result for him and his descendants in the loss of the superadded gift [see code294a]; and insofar as God had granted this gift to Adam and he therefore should have enjoyed it, the loss of it can be called culpable. **But original sin is no more than this privation; it does not consist in the concupiscence that by itself is not sin, nor in an innate evil of the will, for though the will may have been weakened, it is neither lost nor corrupted.** Thus fallen nature is actually totally identical with uncorrupted nature; true, the supernatural gifts have been lost, but the natural gifts continue intact. In the abstract, therefore, a person could possibly abstain from all actual sins and, like unbaptized children dying in infancy, acquire a natural state of bliss. In this connection Rome could still maintain the absolute necessity of Christianity, however, inasmuch as humans, although in the most favorable scenario they could also acquire a natural state of bliss, could never by their free will receive supernatural righteousness and salvation. To that end the church with its sacraments is the only proper road. But when this Roman Catholic **dualism** was cast aside by the **Reformation**, the modalities that, within the circle of Protestantism, took over the Roman Catholic assumptions about original sin and free will virtually automatically had to relapse into the ancient **errors of Pelagius** and Coelestis or in any

case into those of Hilary of Arles and John Cassian. For if Adam's fall did not, or did only in part, deprive the will of the freedom and power to do good, and original sin did not consist either in a culpable loss of an original supernatural gift, then in that same measure grace became dispensable and Christianity was robbed of its absolute character.

Sin as an Act of Will

This is actually what happened in **Socinianism**, **Remonstrantism**, and **rationalism**, in which, despite small modifications, the basic idea was always **that sin is not rooted in a nature and is not a disposition or a state, but always an act of the will.** In the case of humans, the image of God then primarily or exclusively consisted in dominion. To the extent that a state of integrity was assumed, it consisted mainly in childlike innocence, in the freedom of indifference, in the possibility of opting for either good or evil. The fall itself, when it is still recognized as a historical fact, loses its appalling significance and is an event rather like what occurs at every moment in human life when evil is chosen over the good. **And the consequences of the fall are therefore also of little weight.** Children are born in the same state as that in which Adam lived before his disobedience. **Freedom of the will**, that is, the **image of God**, remains intact. **At most a certain tendency toward sin is transplanted from person to person, but such a tendency is not really the result of the first sin of Adam but of all the sins of all our ancestors. Nor is it a sin by itself; it only becomes a sin when the free will gives free rein to that tendency.**

Reconciling Augustine and Pelagius

Adam's trespass, therefore, cannot have been the origin of sin in the human race; perhaps it was the first of a series of subsequent trespasses, but it is neither their source nor their first principle. **Is sin, then, rooted in human nature?** **Ritschl** denies this in the strongest possible terms. Sin is sin: its cause is not in God; it is not a functional element in his world order. It is, after all, the opposite of the good and experienced by us as guilt. But in the interpretation of the origin of sin, Ritschl can concur neither with Augustine nor with Pelagius. The former made humanity or human nature the subject of sin. But in that case every human already participates in the highest degree of sin in participating in original sin, and actual sins virtually no longer count. As a result of original sin, after all, humanity is already a "lost mass" (*massa perdit*), deserving of eternal punishment. But this cannot be true, for such a doctrine not only leads to untruth and makes all nurture impossible, but actual sins, according to everyone's mind, are something other and more than the mere phenomena and accidents [accidents: properties of, like white is to snow] of original sin. Also, **Pelagius's** view, according to which not human nature but the will of the individual is the subject of sin, is untenable, for sin is in fact something communal. Ritschl, therefore, tries to bridge the difference between the two, thinking he can achieve this by saying that the subject of sin is indeed humanity as a whole but the latter viewed as the sum of all individuals. He therefore agrees with **Pelagius** insofar as he, like Pelagius, **has the sinful deed precede the sinful state, not the sinful state the sinful deed.** **All sin is grounded in the self-determination of each person's own will.** And granted, under the existing circumstances and especially as a result of

human ignorance, sin is indeed a “seemingly unavoidable testimony” to his will; **still, the possibility of a sinless life cannot a priori be denied.** So far Ritschl agrees with Pelagius. But he then tries to approximate Augustine’s position by viewing sins as a unity that arises, not in virtue of their origin from a single principle, but as a result of mutual interpenetration and connectedness. **Sin begins with an act of the will, but every act retroactively shapes the will**, gives it a nature and a character, produces an egoistic tendency in it, and so cooperates in establishing the dominion of the law of sin. [It’s amazing how these guys twist things around, like the blind leading the blind, trying to avoid the truth of their nakedness before an infinitely holy God!] But this is not all; sinful human acts and tendencies in turn exert influence on each other. Just as a sinful environment accustoms us to sin and dulls our moral judgment, so our own sinful deeds call those of others into being. In short: there is no original sin, but out of the sinful acts of all people collectively arises a collective unity, a realm of sin.

But also after Ritschl, Pelagius’s theory of the origin of sin has been defended and in a unique way connected with the theory of **evolution**. When this evolution is construed along purely and consistently materialistic-mechanical lines, there is no longer any room for a typically moral life, for sin and virtue. **In that case, so-called good and evil acts are chemical products in the same sense as vitriol and sugar, only somewhat further and more finely distilled.** But since nature is usually stronger than theory, the proponents of a **mechanical evolution** also continue to speak of good and evil, of moral law and moral obligation, of a culture of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Materialistic atheism, moreover, has lost credibility in recent years, and since the rebirth of philosophy and the revival of metaphysics, many thinkers do their best to restrict mechanical evolution to the material world and to make it subservient to a teleological ethical idealism

What is Sin

[Sin: not a substance, but an active principle of a privation of good]

Reformed Dogmatics, Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 3 pg 127, 136-138

The Nature of Sin, pg 127

Original sin, by contrast, has passed to all humans and characterizes all of them to the same extent. It is, after all, nothing other than the sin of Adam himself, imputed to all his descendants; it regards every one of them as born with the same guilt, the same impurity, and the same perverseness as, in the case of Adam, made their appearance immediately after his violation of God’s commandment. [i.e., as Bavinck notes, not *mediately* after they were conceived in iniquity, referring to *mediate imputation*, but immediately upon Adam’s transgression.]

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If sin were a substance, there would exist an entity that either was not created by God or was not caused by God. Sin, accordingly, has to be understood and described neither as an existing thing nor as

being in things that exist but rather as a **defect, a deprivation, an absence of the good, or as weakness, imbalance**, just as blindness is a deprivation of sight. [Athanasius, *Against the Heathens*] In the West especially Augustine brought out and upheld this privative character of sin in his opposition to the Manicheans. All being is per se good. All that is natural, to the degree that it is natural, is good. Evil can therefore only be something about the good. There cannot be any evil at all except in something good, because it cannot be except in something natural. It is itself not nature, but a lack, privation, or corruption of the good, a vice or defect of nature; for good to be diminished is evil. [Augustine, *City of God*] It therefore has no efficient but only a deficient cause. [Augustine, *City of God*] Scholastics and Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed theologians similarly reduced the concept of sin in a metaphysical sense to that of privation. [in addition to the literature already mentioned, see e.g., also M. Becanus, *Summa theologiae scholasticae...*]

On the other hand, it is also clear that sin cannot be adequately described with the concept of privation. Certainly it is not a mere lack, pure nonbeing, but an active and corrupting principle, a dissolving, destructive power. Scripture usually speaks of it in a very positive sense as an act of transgression, wrongness, disobedience, lawlessness, and so on and ascribes to it the activity of witnessing, ruling, moving, thinking, fighting, and so on. Various theologians have therefore rejected the distinction between matter and form in their definition of sin. They based their views on the premise that blasphemy, idolatry, hatred against God, and so on are sinful actions and can never assume a good form, and so they described sin rather as a “certain real and positive something,” as a “real something.” [Cajetan in M. Becanus, *Summa theologiae scholasticae...*]

To understand this correctly, however, we must note the following: (1) When the majority of Christian theologians conceive sin as privation, they first of all have opposition to **Manicheism** in view. To that extent their opinion is completely correct and to be accepted without reservation. Sin is not a substance, neither spiritual nor material, for then it would either have God as its cause or else God would not be the creator of all things. (2) Also the nature of sin itself keeps us from viewing it as a substance, for sin is not a physical but an ethical phenomenon. It is a state and act of the will and is rooted in the will; it is not given with creation but originated after the creation as a result of disobedience. Accordingly, it cannot be a material thing that existed eternally or was created in time by God but only exists as a **deformation of existence**; in that sense it can even be called something that does not exist, a “nothing.” [Dr. R. P. Mees 1907] (3) This is not to be understood as meaning that sin is a nonnegative. The case is rather that Christian theology has at all times very firmly opposed the **pantheistic view** of sin as pure negation, as a state of not yet being, as a necessary component in the development of a finite being, as an illusion of thought. Sin was no “mere negation” but a “privation,” the difference between them being that “negation” is only a matter of “being without” (*carere*), while “privation” is lacking something essential to life (*egere*). The fact that a stone does not see is a negation, but that a human should not see is a privation, since sight belongs to the essential functions of a human being. **Sin is a privation of the moral perfection a human ought to possess.** (4) The characterization of sin as privation, accordingly, by no means excludes its being also—viewed from a different angle— **an action**. It is not a “substance” or thing, but in its being deprived of the good, it is an activity (*ἐνεργεῖα*), just as the limp of a cripple is not the absence of walking but a defective kind of walking. Augustine, who over and over describes sin as “privation,” therefore calls it a transgression of the law (*transgressio legis*), [Augustine, *The Consensus of the Evangelists*] the will to hang on to or

pursue something that justice forbids, [Augustine, *On the Two Souls, Against the Manicheans*] a defect that includes a tendency, a defect that is not altogether nothing but tends toward nothingness, [Augustine, *Against Secundus the Manichee*] a leaning away from what is more to what is less. [ibid] He then gives this definition: “Sin is something done, or said, or desired contrary to eternal law; the law that is truly eternal is the divine reason or will of God, which demands the preservation of the natural order and forbids its disturbance.” [idem, *Against Faustus the Manichee*] Later this definition was universally accepted: **sin is not mere or pure privation but an action deprived of due order**, [P. Lombard] **a privation having a positive quality and action, that is, an active privation.** [J. Zanchi, *Op. Theol.*, IV]

Man’s Misery by the Fall

A Body of Divinity

by Thomas Watson

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My comments in [blue]; red for emphasis

5. Man's Misery By The Fall

Q-19: WHAT IS THE MISERY OF THAT ESTATE WHEREINTO MAN FELL?

A: All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.

'And were by nature children of wrath.' [Eph 2:3](#). Adam left an unhappy portion to his posterity, Sin and Misery. Having considered the first of these, original sin, we shall now advert to the misery of that state. In the first, we have seen mankind offending; in the second, we shall see him suffering. The misery ensuing from original sin is two-fold.

I. *Privative*. By this first hereditary sin we have lost communion with God. Adam was God's familiar, his favourite; but sin has put us all out of favour. **When we lost God's image**, we lost his acquaintance. God's banishing Adam out of paradise hieroglyphically showed how sin has banished us out of God's love and favour. [balance Watson’s statement about the image of God being lost with other comments on this. I think what Watson means is that we lost the principle part of the image, that being holiness consisting in a love for God and also the image of the knowledge of God. We still retain remnants of God’s image, namely a rational soul, reasoning mind, etc.]

II. *Positive*. In four things. 1. Under the power of Satan. 2. Heirs of God's wrath. 3. Subject to all the miseries of this life. 4. Exposed to hell and damnation.

[1] The first misery is, that by nature we are ‘under the power of Satan,’ who is called ‘The prince of the power of the air.’ [Eph 2:2](#). Before the fall man was a free denizen, now a slave; before, a king on the

throne, now in fetters. And whom is man enslaved to? To one that is a hater of him. This was an aggravation of Israel's servitude. 'They that hated them ruled over them.' [Psa 106:41](#). By sin we are enslaved to Satan, who is a hater of mankind, and writes all his laws in blood. Sinners before conversion are under Satan's command; as the ass at the command of the driver, so he does all the devil's drudgery. No sooner Satan tempts but he obeys. As the ship is at the command of the pilot, who steers it which way he will, so is the sinner at the command of Satan; and he ever steers the ship into hell's mouth. **The devil rules all the powers and faculties of a sinner.**

(1.) He rules the understanding. He blinds men with ignorance, and then rules them; as the Philistines first put out Samson's eyes, and then bound him. Satan can do what he will with an ignorant man; because he does not see the error of his way, the devil can lead him into any sin. You may lead a blind man any whither. *Omne peccatum fundatur in ignorantia* [Every sin is founded upon ignorance].

(2.) **Satan rules the will. Though he cannot force the will, yet he can, by temptation, draw it.** The lusts of your father ye will do. [John 8:44](#). He has got your hearts, and him ye will obey. 'We will burn incense to the queen of heaven.' [Jer 44:17](#). When the devil spurs a sinner by a temptation, he will over hedge and ditch break all God's laws, that he may obey Satan. **Where then is free will, when Satan has such power over the will?** 'His lusts ye will do.' There's not any member of the body but is at the devil's service: **the head to plot sin, the hands to work it,** [see [code-beast](#). [Watson shows the symbolic language of the mark of the beast as Dean Davis does. Very good.](#)] the feet to run the devil's errand. *Grave jugum servitutis*. Cicero. 'Slavery is hateful to a noble spirit.' Satan is the worst tyrant; the cruelty of a cannibal, or Nero, is nothing to his. Other tyrants do but rule over the bodies, he over the conscience. Other tyrants have some pity on their slaves; though they work in the galley, they give them meat, let them have hours for rest; but **Satan is a merciless tyrant**, he lets them have no rest. What pains did Judas take! The devil would let him have no rest till he had betrayed Christ, and afterwards imbrued his hands in his own blood.

Use one: See here our misery by original sin; enslaved to Satan. [Eph 2:2](#). Satan is said to work effectually in the children of disobedience. What a sad plague is it for a sinner to be at the will of the devil! Just like a slave, if the Turks bid him dig in the mines, hew in the quarries, tug at the oar, the slave must do it, he dares not refuse. If the devil bids a man lie or steal, he does not refuse; and, what is worse, he willingly obeys this tyrant. Other slaves are forced against their will: 'Israel sighed by reason of their bondage,' [Exod 2:23](#); but sinners are willing to be slaves, they will not take their freedom; **they kiss their fetters.**

Use two: Let us labour to get out of this deplorable condition into which sin has plunged us, and get from under the power of Satan. If any of your children were slaves, you would give great sums of money to purchase their freedom; and when your souls are enslaved, will ye not labour for their freedom? Improve the gospel. **The gospel proclaims a jubilee to captives. Sin binds men, but the gospel looses them.** [But the Spirit must work it. [John 3](#)] Paul's preaching was 'to turn men from the power of Satan to God.' [Acts 26:18](#). The gospel star leads you to Christ; and if you get Christ, **then you are made free**, though not from the being of sin, **yet from Satan's tyranny.** [[Pharoah was a type of Satan keeping the Israelites in bondage, but were set free \(to worship\) by Moses, a type of Christ.](#)] 'If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' [John 8:36](#). [[Again, free to worship the true God; before Satan blinded you from this](#)] You hope to be kings to reign in heaven, and will you let Satan reign in you now? Never think to be kings when you die, and slaves while you live. The crown of glory is for conquerors, not for captives. Oh get out of Satan's jurisdiction; get your fetters of sin filed off by repentance.

Chapter Two

Sin

By Geerhardus Vos

Reformed Dogmatics

Pgs. 239-249, 269-288

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What are the principal philosophical theories concerning sin, and what must be introduced against them?

We have:

a) The **dualistic theory**, that sin is an inseparable characteristic of matter. Spirit = good, matter = evil.

Against it counts:

1. This theory, if it does not wish to see God as author of sin, must posit something that exists as a substance independently of God.
2. It removes the moral element from the concept of sin to replace it with a physical element and thereby weakens the concept of sin.
3. It also removes the responsibility of man by making sin necessary.

b) The theory that sin is merely a limitation of existence. All existence is good, only the lack of existence, that is, finitude and limitedness, is evil. Finite man must always remain sinful. This view: 1) is **pantheistic**. 2) **Removes all responsibility**. Only weakness, viewed in this way, is evil. Might is right.

c) The theory that sin is a necessary reaction against what is good. For its existence, everything in the world rests on opposition. There is no rest without weariness, no joy without sorrow, no desire without pain, no good without evil. This also makes sin necessary.

d) Schleiermacher's theory. Sin is the imperfection that arises because the higher principle of God-consciousness does not rule the lower principle of self-consciousness and world-consciousness.

According to this conception,

1. Sin is general and absolutely necessary. Even in the original state of man it was unavoidable.
2. Here the concepts of sin and guilt become merely subjective.

e) The theory that the sensual nature of man is the seat and origin of sin. However:

1. The worst and most sinful beings, namely the devil and the demons, are not sensual because they have no body.
2. The most hateful of all sins have nothing to do with the body; for example, pride.
3. This view would justify the **monastic** system and asceticism, which, however, are not approved by Scripture.
4. According to this theory, the older a man gets and the more the sensual nature in him dies down, the more he should also grow in holiness. This is not the case.
5. When Scripture speaks of sin as “flesh,” this has another basis, for thereby is expressed not one’s sensual character but ungodliness, Godforsakenness, the spiritual death of the state of sin.

f) *The theory that all sin is selfishness.*

Of all theories, this one comes closest to the truth. Against it, however, we have to note the following:

1. There is unselfish sin. When, for example, a mother, out of an excessive love for her deceased child, in despair takes her own life, this suicide is sin. This, however, is plainly not to be called selfishness.
2. In some sense there is selfish virtue. Man has duties toward himself. He has to esteem the image of God that is in him and he cannot hate his own flesh. God’s word requires love to our neighbor as ourselves.

3. All attempts to give a material definition of sin proceed from the presupposition that what they describe as sin also contains the property of sin per se, apart from any relationship to God. That is, one searches for a definition that will not only be material but also excludes God. And every definition that satisfies this demand is **rationalistic** and **deistic** in character, therefore useless for the Christian concept of sin. Sin, in the strict sense, is only conceivable as sin against God, and one can speak of sin against one’s neighbor only in a derivative and figurative sense. The feature of a relationship to God is essential for the concept of sin, and so has to be made part of the definition. **If there were no God, one could not speak of sin.** There would be selfishness and sensuality and love of the world, but all this, though one could call it evil, does not have a specifically sinful character because it is entirely lacking any relationship to God. **It is absolutely necessary to grasp this clearly. It is not selfishness as such that constitutes the essence of sin, but selfishness as shutting oneself off toward God, as seeking after our own honor while not wanting God’s honor.** [My note: Everything done outside of faith is sin, see Romans 14:23. The reason is because it flows from natural principles of self-love, self-preservation, seeking one’s own honor, to be seen of men, and other by-ends. As Jesus said in John 5:44, ⁴⁴ *How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? So even if you do good things but they flow from these principles, it is sin. All that we do must proceed from a principle of love to God, that new living principle, that seeks his honor and glory; this can only come from a regenerate person who has the love of God in them.*] If one remains committed to the negative concept of selfishness, sin is still presented as separate from relationship to God. However, to the negative side turned inward corresponds a positive side turned outward: enmity

against God. **Conversely, if one seeks the essence of the good in love, then this love, too, if it is thought of apart from relationship to God, is not the genuine, holy, spiritual love to which the predicate “good” can be attributed in the fullest sense of the word.** So, if the mother commits suicide out of love for her deceased child, then love toward God, which should be more to her, recedes into the background and her first love becomes sin to her. And if one spares oneself and out of self-love does not follow a blind impulse to self-sacrifice because one knows that because of God’s will one may not sacrifice or endanger oneself, then in such selfishness a kernel of genuine, spiritual good can be veiled. One sees, therefore, **how relationship to God determines everything, making sin to be sin and good to be good.**

2. *What characteristics, in consequence, belong to the scriptural concept of sin?*

a) Sin is a specific evil. It is not to be confused with physical evil, with what is unpleasant. Above the terrain of the physical lies that of the ethical, where the antithesis between good and evil reigns. All beings that belong to this reasoning sphere must be one or the other, good or evil. An in-between state, a neutral state between these two, is not possible. There are stages in good and stages in evil, but there are no stages between good and evil. The transition between evil and good is qualitative, not quantitative. A being that is good becomes evil not by a decrease in his goodness but by a radical change in it, by passing over to sin. And one is not to think of stages in evil and good, as if in being less advanced in evil an element of goodness still lurks and, vice versa, in a less developed holiness an element of sin still lurks. In the former, everything is sin, and in the latter, everything is good. But as with the former all the sin potentially present need not yet have come to development, so with the latter goodness can be present as a seed while it has not yet increased. Thus on both sides, progression is possible without thereby sin and virtue having to be set in opposition to each other as quantitative entities. It is certainly true that everything less good is an evil, but that only says that for man the quantitative lessening of the good is impossible without it being accompanied by the qualitative changing of good to evil. Only in the case of a reduction of the entire development of man would a reduction of good be conceivable in which evil does not immediately enter in. All that man is should, as moral power, work goodness in him. But also in the good man there is expansion, the capacity for growth. It is likewise with sinful man. He is entirely evil, but his evil nature can develop, and to the same degree the level of sin also increase.

b) **Sin always has reference to a law**—and not just to a law in general, but specifically to a law of God. Precisely because they saw clearly that one cannot arrive at a correct understanding of sin if one does not establish it beginning with God, the old dogmatists placed much emphasis on this element when they said that sin is nonconformity to God’s law. **That is the formal aspect of sin.** If one can now describe the content of the law materially, then the problem would be solved as to what the material aspect of sin is. **Now Scripture teaches that the law is fulfilled in love, and all its demands may be reduced to the one demand of love.** That law, however, is the expression of God’s being insofar as it is a norm. **Therefore, we cannot go further than to affirm that love for God is the material aspect of moral goodness and that the opposite of this is the material aspect of moral evil.**

c) God’s law has to do not merely with already actually present persons, but also with representative and ideally present persons. Without yet being nonconformed to it *habitu* and *actu* [in disposition and act], one can be so by imputation, by reckoning. That is why sin extends to status, to being reckoned in

the judgment of God. And here the rule holds that originally in Adam the actus [act] determined the status, but that subsequently for all his posterity status has determined *actus*. **To give a complete definition of sin, we will have to say that it is nonconformity to God's law in status [status], habitus [disposition], and actus [act].**

d) **Sin includes guilt and pollution.** Pollution is understood as spiritual, inherent depravity to which a sinful soul falls prey. Pollution is therefore not present before the soul itself is present. It is inconceivable without antecedent and subsequent guilt. Guilt, however, is conceivable without pollution. In Adam's first sinful motion, guilt and pollution coincided. Guilt does not necessarily presuppose the actual presence of the soul. One can be guilty covenantally. It is not something that was a reality in man but a reality with respect to man. Guilt exists in the judgment of God. It is called *reatus* [liability] by the theologians. One distinguishes, then, between a) *reatus culpae* [liability to guilt] and b) *reatus poenae* [liability to punishment]. By *reatus culpae*, one means the turpitude and criminality that is inseparable from any sin in the judgment of God and men. As something individual, it cannot be transmitted to another. It is otherwise for *reatus poenae*, **obligation to punishment**. This is transferable.

e) **As concerns its center, sin resides in the will of man. Its effects extend also to the intellect and the capacity for emotions, to the entire man, the body included.** The entire man is, in his sinful state, the object of God's displeasure. In its origination, however, sin comes from the will, namely from the will understood as *voluntas*, as the deeper spiritual orientation of man. To conceive of a human being that at the same time would possess a perfect will and a deficient intellectual and emotional life is impermissible. But if we imagine such a being, it could not be called sinful. In Christ there was something like this during His state of humiliation, but in His will there was nothing sinful and therefore He was pure in Himself and had no need of ethical sanctification, just as He did not need justification for Himself. One should keep in view, however, **that the will of man is a reasoning will and not blind instinct**, and furthermore that it is the will of a responsive being that necessarily has to react to the objects of its will. Man can only desire by means of his intellect and emotions, and so these three are closely connected such that they act together in every sinful deed. And the same is true for the habitus [disposition]. Our *voluntas* [will], too, is a moral tendency and inclination, going together with emotion. One may never forget that the three faculties of the soul in their distinctions are abstractions of what is given to us in our experience only as a living unity.

f) We can be in a sinful status without possessing pollution, but guilt and pollution are both connected to a sinful *habitus* [disposition]. According to the **Pelagians, in contrast, one cannot speak of a sinful habitus in a proper sense. Every sin, according to their conception, exists in actus [as act]. Only with the free act, with the choice of the will, do guilt and pollution emerge for man. [i.e., they object to the imputation of Adam's sin to all of mankind.]**

3. Describe in its general features the **Pelagian doctrine** of sin.

The principal position of the Pelagians is that our ability is the measure of our obligation and our responsibility to do good. In contrast, Augustine's consciousness of his dependence is expressed in the

prayer: “*Da quod jebes et quod vis*” [“Give what you command, and command what you will”]. The following positions were contained in the **Pelagian** postulate:

- a) The freedom of the will is *liberum arbitrium* [free will] as abstract possibility at every moment to turn in either direction. **The will is thus formed, concerning its quality, without a cause.** The will arises from a willing subject, but in this subject no basis is to be found or indicated in advance exactly why the will becomes good or evil. [this is where Pelagianism/Arminianism gets crazy; anything to avoid accountability for sin. It is this so-called nebulous idea of equilibrium in the will that they insist that God cannot or should not do violence to, by his divine influence which is directly contrary to scripture, e.g., Phil. 2:13 – God works in you *to will and to do*; For Arminians, *et al*, everything originates from man’s so-called self-determined will. See Owen’s book, *A Display of Arminianism*].
- b) Accordingly, all sin exists in a clear, conscious, direct choice of evil.
- c) There is no original sin. Men today are born without virtue and without sin, morally neutral. Heredity and sin are two concepts that clearly exclude each other.
- d) This postulate also has a retroactive effect. That is to say, as little as innate virtue or innate sin is conceivable, just as little may innate holiness be thought of in Adam before the fall of our first parents. He was created by God in a state of innocence that stood below developed reasoning. Adam was neither good nor evil. He could only become either by his own free choice.
- e) When Adam fell, only his own nature was thereby changed. Cain, Abel, and Seth only became worse as the bad example of their parents was constantly before their eyes. The power of this example, however, does not at all necessarily lead to sin in all situations. Thus, every man is put to the test individually. Death is not a punitive evil, because children, who cannot have sinned, also die. There have also been adults, however, who have actually lived without sin.
- f) Redemption from sin apart from the gospel is possible. The light of the gospel makes easy, however, the complete obedience that is required. When the Pelagians nevertheless speak of grace, then by that they do not understand, as we do, the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit but everything we receive from God’s goodness in the broadest sense of this word.
- g) Children do not have a moral character. Their baptism is only to be viewed as a sign of dedication to God. Augustine uses infant baptism as one of his most powerful arguments against the teaching of Pelagius. This is one of the strongest historical proofs for the antiquity of infant baptism, for if Pelagius had seen any chance to challenge the apostolic character of the baptism of infants, he surely would not have neglected to do it. He, to the contrary, had to make do with a symbolic interpretation of baptism and left the fact, as fact, stand untouched.

4. On what basis does this **Pelagian doctrine** of sin have to be condemned?

- a) The main proposition that our ability is the measure of our responsibility to do good **conflicts with all testimonies of our conscience. It is an indisputable truth that with the increase of sin our inability to**

do good increases. Now if the Pelagian teaching were true, sin would free its own victims by relieving them of their responsibility. The more sinful a man would become, the smaller would be his responsibility. One may flatter oneself here and there with such a conception, and the sinful heart may try to hide behind its own inability; the conscience continues to testify against it. It teaches that our obligation and our responsibility are independent of what we are able to do in our sinful condition. **Not what we can but what we ought to be determines our responsibility.**

b) To say that man by nature does not possess a moral character is to call him an animal. Everything that is not expressly a conscious choice of the will is thereby robbed of its moral quality. Now every man feels that his inclinations, his moods, his expressions of emotion are subject to the contrast between good and evil, that they possess a moral character. God's children delight in His law according to the inner man [Rom 7:22]. Sin and virtue that are not connected with the root of his life are made superficial appendages to man.

c) An uncaused choice of free will is not only metaphysically and psychologically inexplicable but also ethically worthless. If no other ground than coincidence can be given why a good deed did not turn out differently, then there is also no essential distinction in the deed itself by means of which both these products, respectively, would be produced. If the man as a character does not stand behind his act, the latter loses all value. Only as an exponent of character does an act possess the ethical quality that we are accustomed to ascribe to it.

d) The **Pelagian** theory leaves the universality of sin entirely unexplained. The bad example of parents and ancestors is no basis of explanation. The possibility that all have sinned, as an abstract possibility, does not explain why they all have actually sinned. It is much more plausible to assume a universal predisposition to sin as basis for the universality of sin.

e) **The theory leaves no room for the activity of God's grace.** It is irreligious insofar as the essence of religion is situated in our dependence (both in willing and working) on God. **The prayer for the influence of God's Spirit to fit us for doing good is for the Pelagian an impossibility.** Or if he can pray, he becomes in the same moment in which he prays rightly an Augustinian Christian.

5. *What are the causes of the ambiguity of Roman Catholic teaching concerning sin?*

- a) Before the Council of Trent little consensus ruled among theologians.
- b) The pronouncements of the council itself are not unambiguous.
- c) They are interpreted in different senses.

6. *In what difficulty did the Tridentine Council find itself?*

On the one hand, it had to reject the teaching of the Reformers, and on the other hand, it could not openly abandon the teaching of Augustine. And yet both agreed with each other. Augustine had taught what the Reformers taught.

7. *What appears to be the actual Roman Catholic teaching concerning sin as natural or inherent evil?*

- a) That sin in its essence must always exist in a conscious act of the will.
- b) That, consequently, indwelling concupiscence, which through the loss of original righteousness has the upper hand, can as such not yet be considered punishable sin.
- c) That the sinfulness of Adam's posterity is a status rather than a condition, or at least is only a negative condition. It exists in the lack of something that should be present; it is the absence of original righteousness.
- d) Just for that reason it is removed in baptism *quoad materiam* [materially]. Concupiscence does remain, but does not have the character of sin.

8. What is meant by *original sin*, *peccatum originale*?

By that we understand:

- a) The sinful, guilty state into which we have come by Adam's first sin.
- b) The inherent corruption with which, as the result of this state, we are born, is called (a) hereditary guilt, (b) hereditary pollution.

9. Do all assume a connection between Adam's sin and ours?

No.

- a) As was shown above, *Pelagian teaching on sin denies any real connection*.
- b) The older Arminian theory teaches a natural impotence inherited from Adam, which, however, does not include any guilt for which we are not responsible and for which, rather, God owes us a remedy.
- c) The later *Wesleyan Arminianism* no longer denied that guilt adheres to this inborn corruption but still gave no explanation regarding on what legal ground this guilt rested.
- d) The New school theory teaches that the ground for their later becoming sinful is inborn in all men, but that this ground in itself cannot be called sin because sin exists exclusively in the clearly conscious, intentional violation of law.

10. What different theories have been formed to explain the data of Scripture concerning Adam's fall and our sinful condition?

- a) The federal theory, which, by positing a covenant of works, has Adam representing us in his probation, as a consequence of which his sin becomes legally our sin. This is called immediate imputation.
- b) The theory of *mediate imputation*. This means that we are responsible for Adam's sin only insofar as we possess the same sinful nature with him.

c) The **realistic theory**, also called the Augustinian theory, according to which Adam's sin has become our sin not only representatively but also really because we existed in Adam and sinned with him (compare also the preexistence theory).

Pgs. 266-288 on Sin cont.

Love for God, the principal from which all our acts should flow.
& the mystery of sin's first appearance in Adam

25. What is the rationale for the probation command?

That God made a morally neutral thing the point of decision appears, as was just noted, to have had the purpose of ridding sin of all incidental features and to lay it bare at its core. If man sinned against this command, then it could be for no other reason than that he chose evil as evil and rejected good as good. **Because God's will is for us the binding power, and love toward God should permeate all our moral relationships**, a command that depended solely on God's will was extremely well suited to place man before the pointed choice: only because of God's will, or not.

Now, however, it has been proposed that only by such a probation command did the possibility exist for Adam to do something because of God's will. This is not the case. By the probation command, the possibility was given that it would come to light how Adam could also do good only because of God's will. Even considered apart from the probation command, Adam was obligated not do anything because of his own will, and he did nothing only because his inclination urged him to do it. In everything, **the deepest motivation had to be love to God, and it was in fact so as long as Adam remained unfallen**. Thus if one maintains that Adam could do something on account of God's will only through the probation command and the choice before which it placed him, then one has accepted in principle the Pelagian theory of a state of innocence in which man has inclinations that lead to doing good but in which the good as a moral power is still not yet awakened in him. Thus one must reject this view. One ought to also hold, despite all difficulties, that the abstract and in itself neutral command, "You shall not eat of it," resonated in Adam and that he, being perfectly holy, felt an inclination and natural tendency of the soul to obey the command. So for Adam, the choice was not between his inclination to eat the fruit and an abstract command that aroused no resonance in him but between two inclinations: the one toward the fruit, the other toward keeping God's command. The question, then, was which of those two he would follow. And when he followed the former, then this could only reside in the fact that the other inclination **out of love for God** to fulfill His command had receded or was weakened. **Additional comment on this subject of lack of love for God in the unregenerate on page 276 regarding man's total depravity:**

Total depravity, on the other hand, does mean that by nature no love for God is present as the motivating principle of our life: that it does not dwell in us as a disposition and therefore never determines our deeds, thoughts, and words; and, conversely, that in our entire life there is an undertow of hostility toward God that only needs an external stimulus to develop into conscious opposition toward the Lord. There is no spiritual good in us.

With this, we stand before the **mystery of sin** and of its first appearance. In Adam's disposition toward God Himself lies the mysterious ground of the origin of sin. In an inexplicable way, that inclination ceased, reversed. In it itself lay the beginning point of sin. The rationale for the probation command is thus to be sought in the fact that it only isolated Adam's holy disposition to fulfill God's will entirely from other considerations and influences in order then in a mysterious way to place before it the occasion for decision. It does not appear that the sensual inclination to eat the fruit came into conflict with the initial spiritual inclination. The way in which Satan approached Eve is not along the line of sensual inclination. He first arouses unbelief, distrust, desire for illicit knowledge, then achieves the latter with her consideration of the fruit in this respect with a view to the act of eating. From all this it is apparent what little logical warrant one has in saying that Adam and Eve could not fall other than in this way. We know absolutely nothing about how they are now fallen and could fall. How then should we presume to make a judgment about whether or not they could have fallen in another way?

29. In what is the material principle of Eve's or Adam's first sin to be sought?

a) This matter has been judged very differently. In general, we can anticipate from the outset that what **generally constitutes the essence of sin** will also have constituted the seed in this first sin. Our consideration of the probation command given above leads directly to this conclusion.

b) We find the essence of sin in general to be this: that man **(1) divorces himself and his relationships from God; (2) places them as a separate center in opposition to God; (3) makes them act against God.** We will have to discover all three of these traits in the first sin. We find, in fact, that Satan incites Eve to regard God's prohibition as a limitation of human rights and freedoms. In his question he presents it as worse than it is and asks whether God has also forbidden eating of every tree. Eve does deny that this prohibition was general, but she takes up the representation of the evil One insofar as she, in turn, presents the prohibition more strictly than it was given ("nor touch it"), speaks about it with a note of an aggrieved sense of justice, and ascribes to God the obligation above all to have to care for man's well-being ("in order that you do not die"). One sees here how all three elements mentioned above are already potentially present. The two spheres of divine justice and human justice are already separated. **They are no longer concentric.** This happened as soon as Eve began to reflect on the relationship there was between **her own rights and freedoms and the prohibition of God. This is temptation: to shift the center of our lives from God to a point outside God; and this, therefore, is already the actual fall.**

c) This fall equally underlies all the different forms in which sin immediately appears outwardly. It is, therefore, a hopeless task to say that this or that sin has been the first. At the most, one can say that this or that form of sin has manifested itself first. And so we find:

1. The manifestation of this fall is in the consciousness; there man recognizes himself **as no longer living from God and for God. This is the sin of unbelief.** Man no longer feels solidarity with God. He has the sense that God wishes to deceive him and therefore considers His words to be untruth.
2. The manifestation of the fall is in the alignment of the will of man. He no longer makes himself subject to God but seeks to be like God, above all not less than God.
3. The manifestation is in the emotional life of man. That he looks with lust and desire at the fruit that was forbidden by God shows how his emotion, too, functions in a wrong way, **that it is no longer an enjoying of things in God but a godless losing of himself in things outside God.**

d) Although all these were only manifestations of sin and not the real root itself, they still belong to the fullness of the first sin. Because it is of the essence of sin that it does not remain hidden but acts itself out, in this respect the first sin, too, had to be typical. The relation that exists between sinful disposition, sinful thoughts, the summoning up of the will, and sinful action is not external but organic. That it turns into action reveals just how deeply sin has taken hold. It is, therefore, useless speculation to ask what would have happened if Adam and Eve had not proceeded to the sinful act. Humanly speaking, the act could not have remained in abeyance.

e) The difficulty that remains in all this is here: We can certainly understand how inciting motives from the outside can be at work on man, provided that first from within, in an immediate way, the disposition is produced to which those motives are directed. God acts in this manner in the re-creation of man. He also works from the outside through His word. That can be because He has first awakened life from within in a direct manner. But Satan could not do that. He cannot reorder the inner being of man, and if he had been able to, then man could hardly be considered responsible for it. From this follows the mysteriousness of this conjoining process. Just as it is, it seems to be nothing but an enticing to outward expression of a **sinful principle that was present already from within.** Yet it is more. What we can understand is the working of sin from the inside out. To that precedes the penetration of sin from the outside to the inside. This precedence, this wonder, we do not understand. With us, the disposition determines the deed, both in the natural state and in regeneration; with Adam, the deed determined the disposition.

f) One may not say that Adam fell because the grace of God left him, but through his fall, one must say, Adam fell in an incomprehensible way from the grace of God.

30. *What were the consequences of Adam's first sin for himself?*

- a) Coinciding immediately with the first sin, and therefore not to be called a consequence in the strict sense, was the total corruption of human nature— thus, that there was now nothing more in it that was in accord with the demand of God’s law.
- b) Related most closely to this was the loss of the gift of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. This is just the other side of what is noted in a). Both can be summarized in the proposition that man **by his first sin lost the image of God—that is, insofar as it was losable.**
- c) This radical change in man took place not only in the reality of his condition, but it also was reflected immediately in his consciousness. Hence the accusing conscience, the fear of God, the sense of shame.
- d) From His side, God also showed by actions how the condition of man and the relationship to Him was changed. Because paradise and the tree of life had been images and seals of the blessings promised in the covenant of works, man must be deprived of the sight of them. Hence banishment from paradise, the cherubim with the burning blade of a sword, and the declaration that “he may not reach out his hand and take of the tree of life.”
- e) The relationship of guilt is discussed above.

Pgs 272-288 – on **Original Sin**: [many good comments on bondage of the will, natural and moral inability, etc., and dangers of the sinner’s prayer \(go to code457a\)](#)

31. *With what designation do theologians indicate what we in Dutch call erfzonde [“hereditary sin”]?*

For that they use the term *peccatum originale* (English, “**original sin**”).

32. *Why is this terminology more accurate than the one used in Dutch?*

Because it comports better with everything considered to be hereditary sin. If one distinguishes two things, **(a) the guilt imputed to us for Adam’s first sin**, and **(b) the corruption inherent in us as punishment for this imputed guilt**, then one sees immediately that, strictly speaking, only the latter is inherited. **The former is not inherited but is imputed to us.** It is transmitted from Adam to us **in the tribunal of God, but in an immediate way, not by heredity.** *Peccatum originale* [original sin] expresses that better than hereditary sin [Dutch *erfzonde*].

33. *How then is the expression *peccatum originale* [original sin] to be understood?*

- a) Sin is called *peccatum originale* insofar as in its origin it stems from the root of the human race.
- b) Insofar as it has originated in us, not, according to the Pelagian conception, by imitation, but is original in us. We bring it with us inherently.

c) Insofar as it is the origin of all other sin, namely actual sinning. Although the terminology was not consciously calculated by someone to express all these ideas, still it is, once in use, an excellent instrument to summarize all this in just a couple of words.

34. *In what does this original sin consist insofar as it is inherited (= peccatum inhaerens = hereditary pollution; in distinction from peccatum imputatum = hereditary guilt)? It consists of two parts:*

a) **The absence of the original righteousness.** This is an inherited deficiency, a **privation**, the lack of something that should be there. Man is not only obliged to the bearing of punishment when he sins, because this sin is positively against God, but also because through this sin God is denied the obedience that is due Him. As was seen above, **Roman Catholics make this the only element in inherited original sin.**

b) The presence of positive evil that has entered in place of positive good.

35. *What must be observed concerning this second, positive element of inherent original sin?*

a) That it is sin essentially and in the proper sense of the word. In opposition to all who go along with us only halfway and here want to speak of sin in the figurative sense (the Greek fathers, the Remonstrants), one has only to pose the question whether personal guilt adheres to it. The answer to that decides everything. Whoever denies it does not hold to the biblical doctrine of inherent corruption.

b) That, nevertheless, **it is not a substance** that is infused into the human soul, nor a change of substance in the metaphysical sense of this word. **[if it were a substance then God would have created it, which clearly cannot be, for God would be the author of sin.]** This was the error of the Manicheans and of Flacius Illyricus at the time of the Reformation. By making sin a substance, one outstrips one's self in zeal to maintain it as a reality. Sin as substance ceases to be sin. It is inseparable from the concept of sin in that it is within the sphere of quality and not of substance.

c) In his polemic against the **Manicheans**, **Augustine** introduced a philosophical element into the concept of sin that subsequently has never disappeared from it. **He taught not only that sin is not a substance, but further that it is deprivation of being, that is, a negation.** He used here the terminology of the **Neoplatonists** and of **Origen**. This view in its turn, however, is related to the **pantheistic theory that sin is limitation**. Therefore, it is better to exclude this philosophical element from the concept of sin. **Augustine wanted to point out that sin was not necessary and was not caused by God, and therefore he thought he had to make it negative.** **With him, we believe both, but deem it unnecessary to make this philosophical consideration the foundation of this belief.**

1. It shows only that God need not be the cause of sin, but it does not prove that He is not the cause. There we also stand. We reject with indignation the proposition that God has in any way

caused sin, but we cannot make it clear logically that He has nothing to do with the origin of sin. **We recognize a mystery here.**

2. It seems to us dangerous for the right view of sin to describe it as negative. **It is a positive power in life.**

3. **Orthodox theology** of later times has dropped this philosophical element in the teaching of Augustine, where it has insisted that sin should not be viewed as *mera privatio* (“mere deprivation”), but as *actuosa privatio* (“active privation”).

d) **Thus sin is not a substance**, [for God would have had created it making him the author of sin] but it is also not mere privation. Rather, it should be called a habitus, a **disposition**, that is inherent in the substance and can be changed without essential change of the latter. Furthermore, it is a habitus [disposition] that forms an antithesis with what is opposed to it, from which the substance of the soul cannot escape. As it belongs to the nature of matter to possess extension, so it belongs to the nature of the substance of the human soul to possess a moral disposition, good or evil.

e) Because the sinful *habitus* is inherent in the soul as a whole, it extends to every capacity of the soul, to the entire life of the soul, and leaves nothing untouched. The corruption of sin resides not only in the lower capacities, as if the higher remain sound, but in both lower and higher. Everything is alienated from God and therefore the object of his displeasure. One calls this “total depravity.” The meaning of this term is to be derived from the description we gave of the essence and the form of sin. If the distinguishing characteristic of sin is in relation to God, so total depravity will also have to be thought of in relation to God. By it is not meant:

1. That everyone is as bad as he can be or become. Although alienated from God and hostile toward God, in this hostility man can still have different grades of intensity.

2. Nor does it mean that the sinner carries about no **knowledge of the will of God in his conscience**. **The conscience is an action of the moral consciousness of man**. Even this moral consciousness is affected by sin, but since man has remained a rational being, the recognition of this fact can never disappear entirely from his consciousness. The conscience is the recognition of it. That it has remained, however, does not in the least prove that there is any good toward God in him. It is something cognitive. **The conscience** does operate on the will and on the emotions, but it does so through selfish motives.

3. Nor thereby is it meant that the one man cannot be more selfish than the other. All are sinful and selfish toward God, but within this circle of selfishness, in which the natural man moves, there are many concentric circles. A sinner, despite his selfishness toward God, can have a generous heart for his surroundings. Thus, while the one person includes much within himself in order to set it with himself against God, the other remains in almost complete isolation

toward both God and world. There is thus a *justitia civilis* [civil righteousness], although at the same time for God everything that belongs to it is sin.

4. Sin has different forms in which it can manifest itself. No one ever has displayed all these forms in himself. The adjective “total” in the expression “total depravity” does not have in view that all possible depravity would be present in man. **Total depravity, on the other hand, does mean that by nature no love for God is present as the motivating principle of our life:** that it does not dwell in us as a disposition and therefore never determines our deeds, thoughts, and words; and, conversely, that in our entire life there is an **undertow of hostility toward God** that only needs an external stimulus to develop into conscious opposition toward the Lord. **There is no spiritual good in us.**

f) Considered from another side, this inherent depravity is “inability for spiritual good.” If man is sinful in everything and nothing but sinful, then from that it already follows that the sinner does no good. In this sense, inability is the impossibility of doing spiritual good. Inability, however, is also understood in another sense, namely as the impossibility of reversing the direction of one’s own will, so that from being evil it would become good. In this second sense, too, man is incapable.

36. *What is meant by the distinction between **natural** and **moral inability**, and why should it be rejected?*

Many wish to deny the natural inability of man and maintain our moral inability. By that they mean that man, even in his fallen state, possesses the natural capacities that could be used in doing spiritual good. He has a rational understanding, a capacity of the will, etc. The basis for what is good is completely present in him. He is, however, morally incapable—that is, not able to put these natural capacities into operation in a right way. Against this distinction the following should be noted:

a) **The opposition between moral and natural is wrong and misleading. Moral and natural do not exclude each other.** Something can be both at the same time. When it is said of man that he is incapable of spiritual good, **this inability is natural because it is innate to his corrupt nature and with this corrupt nature is passed down from parent to child.** Whoever then denies that the inability is natural appears to deny that it is natural in any sense of the word, while he only means what is explained above.

b) One usually uses the opposition between natural and moral inability to emphasize man’s responsibility. Because both adjectives, “natural” and “moral,” belong with the word “inability,” the appearance arises as if there are two degrees of inability, one less strong that is “moral” and one stronger called “natural.” In common usage, in a more or less **Pelagian** manner, one associates with the

term “moral” an idea of variability that is not associated with the term “natural.” So the misconception arises that the inability of man for spiritual good is only a relative inability.

c) The distinction conceives of the will far too much as an abstraction. It is true that the sinful and good habitus [disposition] of the will have in common this abstract character of the will that they are both dispositions of the will. By that is not meant, however, that this abstraction exists in itself, apart from its inherent determination. Only if that were the case would it have any meaning to say that man is incapable because he has an evil will but still not incapable by nature because he has a will. One senses that the possession of a will takes away nothing from its inability unless one conceives of this will in a Roman Catholic-supernaturalistic sense, undetermined by nature. Then its natural presence can be viewed as a lessening of inability. The entire distinction, therefore, belongs in the Roman Catholic system and not on Reformed terrain.

d) The element of truth in it amounts to this: When it is said of man that he is spiritually incapable, then the idea appears to be present that he would want to change himself if only he could. This idea is completely wrong. In fallen man there is no spark present of this desire to change himself. Now the advocates of the distinction being discussed here say that man could do spiritual good, if only he wanted to. They stress that he is willingly evil. To place emphasis on that is far from unnecessary. Still, the idea is too much in vogue, as if spiritual inability is our fate and not our will, as if we groan under it but with the best will cannot escape it. This idea is prevalent especially in circles where one hides behind his inability and by appealing to it tries to avoid responsibility toward the gospel. Therefore, it must always be pointed out that inability and unwillingness are two sides of one and the same matter. We do not will what is good, and we cannot change our will. Still, it is not necessary, in order to put emphasis on this point, to adopt the distinction between natural and moral inability. One could just as well appeal to the continuing presence of the image of God in the broader sense. In it is already included that man has not lost his capacities of the will, intellect, and emotion.

e) The proposition that man is naturally not incapable also seems to deny that his capacities of intellect, will, etc., are weakened by sin to the greatest extent. The reason man is and remains evil is not only that those capacities operate in a perverse direction. Even if this moral direction were changed for a time, if with that change a change of these capacities themselves did not also take place by which they received their old power and perfection again, man could still not do a single deed that counts as perfect for God. The clarity of the intellect, the power of the will, the tone of the emotions—all are damaged in sinful man. In that, too, his inability exists, and this is one of the reasons why, for example, the good deeds of God’s children here on earth are never perfect. So, even if one would accept the distinction between natural and moral, natural inability must still be maintained.

37. *Does the spiritual inability of man consist of the loss of his free will, his liberum arbitrium?*

This question should be answered in different ways. If by “free will” one means the spontaneity that the soul works from itself without compulsion, this characteristic is inseparably connected with the concept of will. An unfree, enslaved will, then, is a *contradictio in adjecto*, something that never has existed and never can exist.

If, however, by “free will” one means the abstract possibility that the will of man turns from good to evil or from evil to good, then this *liberum arbitrium* existed before the fall but no longer after the fall. This is also what theologians meant when they listed the loss of the *liberum arbitrium* as one of the consequences of sin. Man did possess the capacity to make evil from good, but not the capacity to make good again from evil. The latter, the bringing about of something good as well as the abolishing of something evil, is the exclusive prerogative of the omnipotence of God. And inasmuch as now, after his fall, man must always do evil contrary to the testimony of his conscience, and sin hinders the development and free movement of all his powers, one may speak in this sense, too, of a lack of freedom and bondage in which he exists as sinner.

38. How can you prove this teaching of the inability of man for doing spiritual good?

It is proven:

- a) From the fact that Scripture nowhere ascribes to fallen man any capacity to do good of himself.
- b) From the express declaration of Scripture that the opposite is the case. Compare John 15:4, 5; 6:44; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14.
- c) From the form in which Scripture presents to us the doctrine of original sin. In this connection two features especially must be noted. The natural condition of sinful man is portrayed as a condition of death and as a fleshly condition. The point of comparison in both of these images includes the utter inability for spiritual good. As little as a dead person can stir or lifeless flesh can achieve an expression of life, just so little can the natural man do what is good toward God.
- d) From the explanation of Scripture that man is not only negatively dead toward God and fleshly passive but also, moreover, that in this death lurks a principle of development and of hostility against God. Man, therefore, is not shackled in total inability by a single bond, but by two bonds.
- e) From the necessity that the favor and fellowship of God are indispensable for man if he will produce spiritual good. As long as the wrath of God rests on him, nothing in his life can prosper. The consciousness of the judgment under which he lies, without having yet reckoned with other things, cuts off every good deed at the root. f) From the necessity of the immediate working of grace by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. This is the other side of what was said under c). Everywhere the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who awakes life and the source of life. Nowhere in Scripture does the human soul appear as a self-changing subject, but always as an object that becomes changed from the outside

by affecting grace. Hence there is spoken of a new birth, a new creation, a resurrection from the dead. g) From the experience of the children of God. None will assert that he is capable of doing what the law demands of him. The awareness of guilt of an awakened sinner also includes, among other things, the conviction that he is bound by sin and cannot save himself. This sense of helplessness is precisely the characteristic of true repentance. Inasmuch, then, as the latter is nothing other than a coming to be aware of the real condition of man, we can infer from it that this in fact is a condition of inability.

The following point addresses the wicked presumption of the sinner's prayer, especially pt. (c).

code457a

39. Which objections have been advanced against this doctrine of *total inability*?

a) That it is incompatible with the moral responsibility of man. To this we respond with the following:

1. *Inability to do good is only incompatible with responsibility if this inability has a non-moral origin.* For man this is not the case. He cannot, but that is because the direction of his will is wrong, *going against God*. It is not a natural capacity to will that is lacking in him, *but the good moral quality of his capacity*. This is what we found to be the kernel of truth in the distinction between natural and moral inability. Only we would also want to call this moral inability natural, inasmuch as it belongs to the nature of man to be moral and to be good.

2. In human judicial proceedings, which are carried out in the name of God, responsibility is not limited by inability. No judge will maintain that the guilty person was always capable of desisting from the act for which he was condemned. Nevertheless, he pronounces the verdict on it. Still more than this, the judge will rightly seek the ground for his verdict in the relationship between character and deed. That is why it always counts as valid evidence when one seeks to show that there is no correspondence between the character of the accused and the deed with which he is charged.

b) That it removes every impulse to act. However, it does so only with respect to doing *acts of holiness*. Hence it is presented more clearly in the New Testament than under the old covenant, *when the economy was still a legal one*. With respect to the activities of the soul directed toward receiving the benefits of the covenant of grace, there can be no thought of removing an impulse, simply because these activities do not come into consideration as spiritually good acts but as instrumental acts. When the demand of the covenant of grace for faith and repentance comes to someone, the meaning of it is not, "perform a spiritually good deed, then you will be saved," but "acknowledge that your salvation is in Christ." Of course, it therefore remains the case for faith and repentance that in them a principle of spiritual good is present, for we teach that they are impossible without regeneration. But in the appropriation of the benefits of the covenant of grace, they do not figure under this aspect. Moreover, even the faith by which one is justified, viewed materially, is still an expression of a soul stained with

sin and unrighteousness, which for its cleansing, which faith itself imparts, is in need of the righteousness of Christ. The faith, by which we are justified, is itself not righteous before God.

this is a key point here! code457a

c) **That it leads to postponing conversion.** One says that it leads man to the thought, “I must wait on God’s time.” This, however, is by no means the case. If man lives with the consciousness of being able of his own power and on his own initiative to effect his conversion or even his regeneration, this could be for him a source of indifference and carelessness. It is capable of psychological proof that those actions that are in our own power result in no deeper movement in the life of our soul, while, on the contrary, the consciousness of inability and helpless passivity in important concerns can shake man in his deepest depths. So too here. Whoever preaches to man that he can change himself must expect that he will delay this easy change from one hour to the next. On the other hand, it can never have harmful consequences to tell man the full truth concerning his condition, provided that one but takes care that this inability itself is impressed on the conscience as guilt and responsibility.

40. *From what can one determine extensively the scope of original sin?*

a) Scripture everywhere teaches that all flesh is sinful and has corrupted its way before God (Job 14:4; John 3:6; Rom 3:9ff.; 1 Kgs 8:46; Psa 143:2; Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20; Gal 3:22; 1 John 1:8). If now every man, for whom this holds true, committed no actual sin (for example, newborn children), then that involves that they are guilty because of original sin.

b) Sin reveals itself in man so early that there can be no thought of becoming sinful by imitating the example of others. Scripture teaches that this sin clings to us from the first moment of our existence (Psa 51:5). (One should note that in this psalm David does not cite indwelling corruption as an excuse but as an aggravating circumstance for his sin of adultery.) “By nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3; cf. Psa 58:3). That sin is nature means that it is given with our being human and follows the natural line of reproduction. Moreover, this text includes that this innate sin is under the wrath of God—**thus not in the Zwinglian or Arminian sense of sickness or defect but fully doom-worthy sin.**

c) The consequences of sin are common. Temporal death extends to all, even to children who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s sin. Where the consequence is present, the cause has to be present. Therefore, it was rightly seen by the Socinians and Remonstrants that, according to their system, corporal death could have no ethical meaning but must be a process of nature. Compare Romans 5:12–14. New School theology has seen itself compelled to return to this un-Christian and unscriptural position and to consider children before their use of reason to be on the same level with animals, although there are many who dare not take this position.

d) Scripture everywhere teaches that every single person has need of redemption through Christ. Now this redemption is in the first place redemption from the guilt of sin and the power of sin. If one wishes to limit the scope of original sin, then at the same time one thereby limits the necessity of

redemption through Christ. Children are baptized as a sign and seal that they are washed in Christ's blood. Infant baptism, then, is a proof of the reality of original sin. To say that for children redemption is not deliverance from evil (but merely a means of preventing evil) is of no avail because it conflicts directly with the continuous significance of the means of grace. Compare John 3:3, 5, where the absolute necessity of regeneration for every person is taught (cf. Acts 17:30; Mark 16:16). If one does not believe in Christ, then one does not only then come under the wrath of God, but the wrath of God remains on such a person (John 3:36).

e) If some places in Scripture seem to teach that sin is not universal to man, then one must consider three things in that regard.

1. There is a *justitia civilis* [civil righteousness]. In civil matters, one can be free from intentional violation of the law without therefore being sinless before God.

2. There is a covenantal righteousness within Israel. The one who, as much as is within him, fulfills all the ceremonial commandments of the Mosaic law, possesses this covenantal righteousness, which at the most has only a typical significance but is not the righteousness of faith itself, much less the righteousness of works. Many places in the Psalms should be understood in this way.

3. There is an imputed righteousness that one possesses in Christ, which, instead of presupposing inherent righteousness, pointedly excludes it. One will be able to take all texts that speak of the righteousness and sinlessness of man back to one of these three groups.

f) Experience shows that no sinless creature has lived. Even those who deny original sin in principle cannot deny this fact and try to give it as good an explanation as possible. Every other explanation than that of an inborn depravity that extends to all is, however, unsatisfactory. That not everyone recognizes himself as such is no proof of the contrary. **Sin has a blinding power by which it tries to conceal its own presence**, and, on the contrary, it is a fact that progress in **grace** goes along with a deeper insight into sin and the inability of the natural heart.

41. *What answer should be given to the question how this inherent depravity of Adam is transmitted to us?*

- a) Negatively, the answer to that question given by most Reformed theologians was that sin as something immaterial cannot lurk in the seed of the father—that therefore the propagation of sin must have another ground than the origin of the body from this seed.

- b) That neither can the propagation of sin be ascribed to the sinful quality of the actus [act] of generation. This was the opinion of Augustine. It is tied to a one-sided view of sin as *concupiscentia carnis* [the lust of the flesh]. That the act by which a man is born is entirely sinful still need not be the

cause that the product of this seed also becomes sinful, **for sin is a quality and not a substance**; it is resident only in the soul of those who perform the act, and in their body only insofar as it is the organic instrument of this soul. In the deed as such, taken metaphysically or physically, there is nothing sinful.

c) A third conception, likewise rejected by the leading dogmatists, has the sinfulness of the soul taking its origin from its contact with the body. The soul would then be created without sin and first become sinful at the moment of union with the body. One then adds, however, to avoid materialistic (or, as well, traducianist) consequences, that it is not the corruption of the body or of the embryo in itself that causes sin—that it is much more the union of a soul, deprived of its original righteousness, with such a disharmonious body that does this. So, while sin in the strict sense cannot reside in the body in itself, it is possible, one thinks, that a certain condition of the body appropriated by the soul can become sin for it, because it lacks the positive holiness to suppress the passions of the flesh. And so sin would reside neither in the body in itself nor in the soul in itself but in nature, because it is just the nature of man that consists in the organic bond of body and soul. Peter Martyr Vermigli, Polanus, Benedictus Aretius, Hyperius, and Keckermann hold this view.

d) The opinion of most is that:

1. God imputes to the soul the guilt of Adam's first sin by virtue of the covenant.

2. After this has already occurred (in the judgment of God), before the actual existence of the soul, God appears, where it concerns the origination of souls, in the double capacity of creator and judge. **As creator, He calls forth the substance of the soul out of nothing. As Judge, He withholds from this substance, already at the point of this creation, the *habitus* of original righteousness.** (Only a few, Zanchi for example, teach that for a short while the soul possesses *justitia originalis* [original righteousness], then loses it immediately thereafter.)

3. A human soul thus coming into being without original righteousness must immediately pass over into positive inherent depravity. This, therefore, is a necessary and immediate consequence of what God withholds from the soul. It is a reality, a real process, but it is not something God does to the soul, only something that the soul undergoes through the **particular way in which God creates it.**

This last explanation appears to us to be the most probable. We have to admit, however, that it does not remove all objections. The great difficulty present here is that one: (a) wills to keep God free from creating sin; (b) will not have the soul existing a single moment without sin. Now both conditions appear unable to be united in a consistent theory. If God does not cause sin, then it must originate in the already-existing soul. It is then a transition from not being sinful to being sinful, and if one posits this starting point and this end point, one is obliged to let the soul exist sinless for at least in a small moment of time; hence what Zanchi taught regarding the initial possession and immediately following loss of original righteousness. The difficulty here is the same as we found in the section on providence

with respect to God's involvement in the evil deeds of man. There, too, we could not specify a point where the activity of God can be excluded. **Everything that was in the deed had to be sustained and brought about by God, and yet at the same time this deed had to take a direction and a quality that could not be called God's work.** One may transfer that to the origin of the soul, and one will feel the difficulty. One could produce images here in great number, but they would all give only a more or less accurate general view of the matter; they cannot resolve the true problem.

Further, it should be observed that the soul is not created by God outside the body but in close communion with it. Insofar as the embryo is no longer formed from the outside by the maternal organism but itself bears within itself a forming principle, this principle must be found in the soul. And insofar as the embryo developing in this way thus still constitutes a part of the maternal organism, the soul enters also into the closest connection with the latter. Herein is the truth of traducianism. Soul and body stand in the most intimate connection with each other and are organically one. So if the body still constitutes a part of the mother, then this cannot remain without influence on the soul. However, it does not seem permissible to draw this out to the point where it would also extend to the propagation of sin. Thinking, the will, and the emotions are entirely or in part tied to bodily mechanisms, from which it follows that, conversely, their development is determined by the formation of these organs. The same cannot be said of sin. It may manifest itself by means of the body, and that it manifests itself by means of the body might be a measure of its intensity. In the strict sense, sin is purely psychological in nature.

Sin belongs to the natural condition of man once it became so by the fall. Everything that belongs to nature has to reproduce. God's ordinance is such that natural traits and characteristics will be common to parents and children. Conversely, what is purely personal and individual need not reproduce. Nature is the term under which we summarize everything that is common to man. Personality is not something specific to all in the same sense, but differs for everyone. We must hold that sin is natural sin and therefore follows the line of natural reproduction. How this happens we cannot explain further. The ground on which it happens is not located only in a natural law. And the natural character of this sin does not exclude that it also takes on a personal shape for each person. All have a sinful will and a darkened intellect and a depraved emotional life, but because the personality that possesses these capacities is different in each particular instance, sin will nowhere occur equally and develop equally in two individuals.

42. *What is meant by the distinction between original sin and actual sin?*

In this contrast, "act" should be taken in a broader sense than the word usually has. Here it does not mean external action that is manifested by means of our body, but every conscious welling up of the depravity that is unconsciously present in us. Evil thoughts in this way fall under this concept of actual sins as well as evil words and deeds. One can make the following division:

I.

Peccatum Originale [original sin]a) Adam's first deed imputed to us = *peccatum imputatum*.b) Inherent depravity as punishment for that = *peccatum inhaerens*.1. *absentia justitiae originalis* = absence of original righteousness.2. *praesentia mali* = presence of positive evil as *habitus* [disposition].

II.

Peccatum Actualis [actual sin]a) Sinful thoughts by which inherent depravity enters into our consciousness = *peccata interna sive cordis*.b) Sinful words and deeds by which sinful thoughts take shape externally = *peccata externa sive oris et operis*.

43. Can one defend the distinction between "mortal sins" (*peccata mortalia*) and "venial sins" (*peccata venialia*)?

Some of the older theologians, proceeding on the true proposition that there are degrees of intensity in the development of sin and that therefore all sins cannot be placed on the same line, wished to adopt this Roman Catholic distinction. Very quickly, however, one saw that it had a completely erroneous meaning for Rome. According to Rome, there are still sins that, considered in themselves, are not worthy of eternal death but only of temporal punishments or punishments in purgatory. Such sins are called *peccata venialia*. Contrary to this, Scripture teaches that every sin, without distinction, renders [one] guilty of death. All sins, viewed in this way, are mortal sins. There are no sins pardonable in themselves. If, on the other hand, one wishes to call pardonable those sins for which, by God's mercy, forgiveness can be received, all sins are pardonable, the sin against the Holy Spirit excepted. Then the latter is the only mortal sin. In Lutheran dogmatics, the distinction between *peccata mortalia* and *venialia* has yet another sense. Namely, it was taught that man can fall from the state of grace by certain transgressions because they are irreconcilable with faith. These are called *peccata mortalia*. Other sins of a less serious sort are compatible with the continuance of faith and for that reason are called *peccata venialia*. Since we reject the teaching of the falling away of the saints, we also naturally cannot accept this distinction.

44. *What should be observed concerning the distinction between sins of commission and omission (peccata commissionis et omissionis)?*

That in the strict sense true **sins of omission** do not exist. At the basis of all omission is a principle of commission in a wrong direction. If I love God less and forget God, then it is because something else has taken the place of God in my heart. Still, the sin of commission is greater if to this forgetting of God it adds conscious opposition to God.

Entering Into the New Covenant by Human Prayer?

code308

p 131, (p159-161 online)

Covenants in general, the covenant with Adam, etc.

John Owen Hebrews 8 10-12 vol. 23

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Now, God thus uttered his severity towards them, that they might consider how he will deal with all those who despise, break, or neglect his covenant. ‘So,’ saith he, ‘I dealt with them; and so shall I deal with others who offend in an alike manner.’

This was the issue of things with them with whom the first covenant was made. They received it, **entered solemnly** into the bonds of it, **took upon themselves expressly the performance of its terms and conditions, were sprinkled with the blood of it;** but they “continued not in it,” and were dealt with accordingly. God used the right and authority of a husband with whom a wife breaketh covenant; he “neglected them,” shut them out of his house, deprived them of their dowry or inheritance, and slew them in the wilderness.

On this declaration, God promiseth to make another covenant with them, wherein all these evils should be prevented. This is the covenant which the apostle designs to prove better and more excellent than the former. And this he doth principally from the mediator and surety of it, compared with the Aaronical priests, whose office and service belonged wholly unto the administration of that **first covenant**. And he confirms it also from the **nature of this covenant** itself, especially with respect unto its efficacy and duration. And hereunto this testimony is express, evidencing how this covenant is everlastingly, by the grace administered in it, **preventive of that evil success which the former had by the sin of the people.** [So this new covenant is a more clear declaration of what was promised to Adam in Gen 3:15, essentially God promised he would change the natures of the seed of the woman so as to break that league between them and the Serpent - his was obscurely expressed by this verse and later made more clear in Jer. 31:33 and other places regarding the taking out of the heart of stone, etc.]

Hence he says of it, Οὐ κατὰ τήν, —"Not according unto it;" a covenant agreeing with the former neither in promises, efficacy, nor duration. For what is principally promised here, namely, the giving of a new heart, Moses expressly affirms that it was not done in the administration of the first covenant. [therefore, since one who is praying to get saved is still under the covenant of works and thus does not have this new heart and all that goes with it! That's why he is praying; he thinks it is attained by works!! You can tell what covenant people are under by how they act regarding God's free grace; whether they think it is something to be earned or not.] It is neither a renovation of that covenant nor a reformation of it, but utterly of another nature, by whose introduction and establishment that other was to be abolished, abrogated, and taken away, with all the divine worship and service which was peculiar thereunto. And this was that which the apostle principally designed to prove and convince the Hebrews of. And from the whole we may observe sundry things.

Obs. VII. No covenant between God and man ever was, or ever could be stable and effectual, as unto the ends of it, that was not made and confirmed in Christ. —God first made a covenant with us in Adam. There was nothing therein but the mere defectibility of our natures as we were creatures that could render it ineffectual. [i.e., he did not have the Spirit of Adoption, was not "in Christ" "herein all things hold together. Col. 1:17] And from thence did it proceed. In him we all sinned, by breach of covenant. The Son of God had not then interposed himself, nor undertaken on our behalf. The apostle tells us that "in him all things consist;" —without him they have no consistency, no stability, no duration. So was this first covenant immediately broken. It was not confirmed by the blood of Christ. And those who suppose that the efficacy and stability of the present covenant do depend solely on our own will and diligence, had need not only to assert our nature free from that depravation which it was under when this covenant was broken, but also from that defectibility that was in it before we fell in Adam. And such as, neglecting the interposition of Christ, do betake themselves unto imaginations of this kind, surely know little of themselves, and less of God. [Hence, the sinner's prayer is presumption.]

Obs. VIII. No external administration of a covenant of God's own making, no obligation of mercy on the minds of men, can enable them unto steadfastness in covenant obedience, without an effectual influence of grace from and by Jesus Christ. —For we shall see in the next verses that this is the only provision which is made in the wisdom of God to render us steadfast in obedience, and his covenant effectual unto us. [another proof of the atonement being limited to those who actually produce fruit]

Obs. IX. God, in making a covenant with any, in proposing the terms of it, retains his right and authority to deal with persons according to their deportment in and towards that covenant: "They brake my covenant, and I regarded them not."

Obs. X. God's casting men out of his especial care, upon the breach of his covenant, is the highest judgment that in this world can fall on any persons. And we are concerned in all these things. For although the covenant of grace be stable and effectual unto all who are really partakers of it, yet as unto its external administration, and our entering into it by a visible profession, it may be broken, unto the temporal and eternal ruin of persons and whole churches. Take heed of the golden calf. [Another reason why the sinner's prayer, our entering into this covenant by a visible profession, is a dangerous presumption.]

Insights on Free Will

*One Reason Why People Arrive at Free Will as a Reason For
One's Conversion is Due To a Wrong Idea of the Nature of God's Power*

Code432

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 459-560
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

The power of the human word also depends on the extent to which a person puts one's heart and soul into it, on the distance existing between the person and one's speech. But in the case of God that is different. It is always his word; he is always present in it; he consistently sustains it by his almighty and omnipresent power. It is always God himself who, in whatever form and by whatever means, brings it to people and calls them by it. Therefore, even though the word of God that is freely proclaimed by ministers or conveyed to people by way of personal admonition, public address, a book or other writing, is indeed taken from Scripture but not identical with Scripture, it is still a word from God, a word that comes to human beings but is originally from God, is spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore always effective. The word of God is never separate from God, from Christ, from the Holy Spirit; it has no permanence or existence in itself. It cannot be deistically separated from its creator and author. Just as Scripture was not just inspired at one time by the Holy Spirit, but is continually sustained, preserved, and made powerful by that Spirit, so it is with the word of God that, taken from Scripture, is preached in some fashion to people. Jesus spoke through the Spirit (John 6: 63); the apostles who received the Spirit (Matt. 10: 20; Luke 12: 12; 21: 15; John 14: 26; 15: 26) proclaimed the gospel not only in words but also "in power and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1: 5-6), with a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2: 4), and handled it as "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6: 17). In that respect, the Lutherans are completely correct: always and everywhere the word of God is a power of God, a sword of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is always present with that word." [Formula at Concord, II. 3]

At the same time both Scripture and experience teach that the word does not always have the same effect. In a sense it is always efficacious; it is never powerless. If it does not raise people up, it strikes them down. If it is not "for the rising of many," it is for "the falling of many" [Luke 2: 34]; if it is not "a fragrance from life to life," it is "a fragrance from death to death" [2 Cor. 2: 16]. The question, then, is when that word of God is efficacious in the sense that it leads to faith and repentance. Now to render human beings inexcusable, Lutherans lock this divine and supernatural efficacy up in the word, but do not secure any advantage by it and, to explain the variable outcome of the word in people, have to resort to free will. The Reformed, however, taking into account that double outcome, did not view the efficacy as an impersonal magical power that had been put into that word, but always associated that word with its author, with Christ, who administers it by the Holy Spirit. And that Holy Spirit is not an unconscious power but a person who is always present with that word, always sustains it and makes it active, though not always in the same manner. In accordance with the unsearchable good pleasure of God, he uses that word for bringing people to repentance but also for hardening; for the rising but also for the falling of many. He always works through the word but not always in the same way. And when

he wants to work through it so that it leads to faith and repentance, he does not objectively have to add anything to the word. That word is good and wise and holy, a word of God, a word of Christ, and the Holy Spirit takes everything from Christ.

Nonetheless, for the seed of the word to bear good fruit, it has to fall in soil that has been well prepared. Also the field has to be made ready for the reception of the seed. Hence the subjective activity of the Holy Spirit has to be added to the objective word. In the nature of the case, it cannot be enclosed in the word; it is another activity, an additional activity, a subjective activity, not through but along with the word, an opening of the heart (Acts 16: 14), an internal revelation (Matt. 11: 25; 16: 17; Gal. 1: 16), an act of drawing a person to Christ (John 6: 44), an enlightenment of the mind (Eph. 1: 18; Col. 1: 9–11), a working both to will and to do (Phil. 2: 13), and so forth.[36] In saying these things we are not detaching or separating the Spirit from the word, not even when, as in the case of infants, he effects regeneration without any means of grace. For the Spirit who regenerates is not the Spirit of God in general, but the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit acquired by Christ, through whom Christ governs, who takes all things only from Christ, and whom Christ has poured out in the church and is therefore the Spirit of the believing community. Aside from whether the Holy Spirit sometimes also works and can work in pagans, something that is in any case exceptional, as a rule he effects regeneration only in those who live under the administration of the covenant. Also the infants he regenerates are children of the covenant, of the covenant that has the word of God as its content and received the sacrament as its sign and seal. The Holy Spirit, accordingly, follows Christ in his journey through history. He binds himself to the word of Christ and works only in the name, and in accordance with the command, of Christ. Individually and subjectively, for example when a child is considered in isolation from one's environment, the church in which the child was born, it may seem as if the Spirit worked without the word; objectively and materially the Holy Spirit only works in places where the covenant of grace, with the administration of Word and sacraments, has expanded itself. Therefore, in the case of infants, their regeneration is always known and proved to be genuine when they mature and it becomes manifest in acts of faith and repentance and links up with the word of God, which lies objectively before us in Scripture. The Holy Spirit, who in regeneration applies nothing other than the word, power, and merit of Christ, also automatically leads the conscious life of the person toward the word that he took from Christ and caused to be recorded by the prophets and apostles.

Error of the Sinner's Prayer

code309

Clear proof of the false teaching behind the sinner' prayer all of which derogates from the glory of God and ascribes it to man. Grounds for boasting.

Vain Confidence in Things as Well as the Wicked Presumption
of the Sinner's Prayer [see code278a]

Notes on man coming to God without being called / resting in a virtue that seems to be saving but is really only self-love and common or temporary faith. This excerpt from Owen sheds light on this subject. Saving Faith is opposed to a temporary or common faith which, boiled down, is Legalism or works.

p38-41 (p46-50 online)

Owen: Hebrews Commentary, Heb. 8:1-10

“The law had only a shadow of good things to come, and not the express image of the things themselves.” Heb 10:1

But properly it is taken naturally, and opposed unto a body, or substance: Colossians 2:17, “Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ.” It is indifferent in whether sense we here take the word, for what is affirmed is true in both. If we take it in the first way, it intends that obscure delineation of heavenly mysteries which was in the legal institutions. They did represent and teach them, and so were taught and represented in the divine service of those priests; but it was so obscurely, that none could see their beauty and excellency therein. If it be used in the latter way, then it declares that the substance of what God intended in all his worship was not contained nor comprised in the services of those priests. There were some lines and shadows, to represent the body, but the body itself was not there. There was something above them and beyond them, which they reached not unto.

(2.) The things themselves whence they are restrained by this limitation are expressed; “of heavenly things.” The things intended in these words are no other than what God showed unto Moses in the mount; and therefore we shall defer our inquiry into them until we come unto those words. This, therefore, is the meaning of the words: ‘The whole ministry of the priests of old was in and about **earthly things**, which had in them only a **resemblance and shadow of things above**.’ And we may observe by the way, —

Obs. I. God alone limits the signification and use of all his own institutions. —We ought not to derogate from them, nor to take anything out of them which God hath put into them; nor can we put anything into them that God hath not furnished them withal. And we are apt to err in both extremes. The Jews to this day believe that the ministration of their priests contained the heavenly things themselves. They do so, **contrary to the nature and end of them**, which the Scripture so often speaks

unto. This is one occasion of their **obstinacy in unbelief**. They will imagine that there was nothing above or beyond their **legal institutions**, no other **heavenly mysteries of grace and truth** but what is comprised in them. **They put more in them than ever God furnished them withal, and perish in their vain confidence.**

It hath so fallen out also under the new testament. God hath instituted his holy sacraments, and hath put this virtue into them, that they should represent and exhibit unto the faith of believers the grace which he intendeth and designeth by them. But men have not been contented herewith; and therefore they will put more into them than God hath furnished them withal. They will have them to contain the grace in them which they exhibit in the way of a promise, and to communicate it unto all sorts of persons that are partakers of them. Thus, some would have baptism to be regeneration itself, and that there is no other evangelical regeneration but that alone, with the profession which is made thereon. Everyone who is baptized is thereby regenerated. The sign and figure of grace, they would have to be the grace itself. Nothing can be invented more pernicious unto the souls of men; **for all sorts of persons may be brought to a ruinous security about their spiritual condition by it**, and **diverted** from endeavors after that real internal work, in the change of their hearts and natures, **without which none shall see God**. This is to put that into it which God never placed there. Some suppose it to be such a distinguishing, or rather separating ordinance, that the administration of it in such a way or at such a season, is the fundamental rule of all church fellowship and communion; whereas God never designed it unto any such end.

[And in like fashion, people put common grace for saving grace thus making what is common thing a special thing (in effect, this is making the blood of Christ a common thing; that the blood of Christ was shed for all and everyone, as opposed to just the elect). And so, what is really only a common or temporary faith is presumed to be a saving faith; so that anyone by his own industry or supposed inherent virtue, as he thinks he has, can pray this sinner's prayer to recommend himself to God for salvation when in fact the foundation of his asking is self-love and not true virtue, being not grounded on a spiritual sight of Christ, all of which leads one to a carnal security. This is the "c"rnal imagination" wen describes below]

In the supper of the Lord, the church of Rome in particular is not contented that we have a representation and instituted memorial of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the signs of his body as broken and his blood as shed for us, **with an exhibition of grace in the word of promise**, or the gospel; but they will have the natural body and blood of Christ, **his flesh and bones, to be contained therein, and to be eaten or devoured by all that partake of the outward signs!** **This is to put that into the ordinance which God never put into it, and so to overthrow it.**

And there are two grounds or ends of what they do. **The first is, to turn the wisdom of faith into a carnal imagination.** It requires the light and wisdom of faith to apprehend the spiritual exhibition of Christ in the sacrament unto us. **It is a great spiritual mystery, not at all to be apprehended but by the supernatural light of faith.** **This, the vain, darkened minds of men like not,** they cannot away with it; **it is foolishness unto them.** Wherefore, under the name of a "mystery," they have invented the most horrible and monstrous figments that ever befell the minds of men. This is easily received and admitted by a **mere act of carnal imagination; and the more blind and dark men are, the more are they pleased with it.**

Secondly, **They do it to exclude the exercise of faith in the participation of it.** As they deal with the wisdom of faith as unto its nature, so they do with the exercise of faith as unto its use. God hath given **this measure** unto this ordinance, that it shall exhibit and communicate nothing unto us, that we shall receive no benefit by it, but in the actual exercise of faith. **This the carnal minds and hearts of men like not. It requires a peculiar exercise of this grace, and that in a peculiar manner, unto a participation of any benefit by it.** But this, under the notion of bringing more into the ordinance than ever. God put into it, they exclude, and ease all men of. **Let them but bring their mouths and their teeth**, and they fail not of eating the body and drinking the very blood of Christ. So, under a pretense of putting that in the ordinance which God never put into it, they have cast out of the hearts of men the necessity of those duties which alone render it useful and beneficial.

Some, on the other side, do derogate from them, and will not allow them that station or use which God hath appointed unto them in the church. (1.) Some do so from their dignity. They do so, by joining their own appointments unto them, as of equal worth and dignity with them. (2.) Some do so from their necessity, practically setting light by or disregarding the participation of them. (3.) Some do so from their use, openly denying their continuance in the church of God.

The reasons why men are so prone to deviate from the will of God in his institutions, and to despise the measures he hath given them, are, (1.) Want of faith in its principal power and act, which is **submission and resignation of soul unto the sovereignty of God.** Faith alone renders that an all-sufficient reason of obedience. (2.) Want of spiritual wisdom and understanding to discern the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in them.

Obs. II. It is an honor to be employed in any sacred service that belongs unto the worship of God, though it be of an inferior nature unto other parts of it. —It is so, I say, if we are called of God thereunto. This was the greatest honor that any were made partakers of under the old testament, that they “served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” only. And if now God call any of us into his service, wherein yet, by the meanness of our gifts, or want of opportunities, we cannot serve him in so eminent a manner as some others do, yet if we abide in our station and duty, there is great honor in the meanest divine service.

Obs. III. So great was the glory of heavenly ministration in the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that God would not at once bring it forth in the church, until he had prepared the minds of men, by types, shadows, examples, and representations of it. —This was the end of all legal institutions of divine worship and service. And herein the wisdom of God provided in these to cases that were necessary.

(1.) He filled them with glory and beauty, that they might affect the minds of men with an admiration and expectation of that greater glory which they represented and pointed unto. And this they did among all them who truly believed; so that they continually looked and longed after the coming of Him, the glory of whose ministry was represented in them. In these two things did their faith principally act itself: [1.] In a diligent inquiry into the mediation and ministry of Christ, with the glory which it was to be accompanied withal, 1 Peter 1:10, 11. 50 [2.] In earnest desire after the enjoyment of what they saw afar off, and which was obscurely represented unto them, Song of Solomon 2:17, 4:6. From both these arose that fervent love unto, zeal for, and delight in those ordinances of worship, which did so lead them unto these things that were so glorious; which in the Scripture are everywhere expressed, and which were so well-pleasing unto God.

(2.) On the other hand, because these institutions were to be so glorious, that they might be shadows of heavenly things, and the people unto whom they were given were carnal, and given to rest themselves in present outward appearances, God was pleased to intermix with them many services that we hard to be borne, and many laws with penalties severe and dreadful. This provision was laid in by divine wisdom, that they might not rest in what he designed only to prepare their minds for the introduction of that which was far more glorious. And well is it for us if we have a due apprehension of the glory of the heavenly ministration of Christ, now it is introduced. It is too evident that with many, yea, with most that are called Christians, it is far otherwise; for they are still seeking after the outward glory of a carnal worship, as though they had no view of the spiritual glory of the heavenly ministration of the gospel in the hand of Jesus Christ, our high priest. Nor will it be otherwise with any of us, unless **we are enabled by faith** to look within the veil, and see the beauty of the appearance of Christ at the right hand of God. The apostle tells us, that “the ministration of the law was glorious; yet had it no glory in comparison of that which doth excel.” **But if we are not able to discern this more excellent glory, and satisfy ourselves therein, it is a great sign that we ourselves are carnal, and therefore are delighted with those things that are so.** But we must proceed with our exposition.

--*Foundation of the Gospel of Free Grace vs. Arminianism* code324

p 169 (p205 online) Heb. 8:12-14 John Owen

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Obs. 28 Free and sovereign, undeserved grace in the pardon of sin, is the original spring and foundation of all covenant mercies and blessings. — Hereby, and hereby alone, is the glory of God and the safety of the church provided for. And those who like not God’s covenant on these terms (as none do by nature) will eternally fall short of the grace of it. Hereby all glorying and all boasting in ourselves is excluded; which was that which God aimed at in the contrivance and establishment of this covenant, Romans 3:27; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31. For this could not be, if the fundamental grace of it did depend on any condition or qualification in ourselves. If we let go the free pardon of sin, without respect unto anything in those that receive it, we renounce the gospel. Pardon of sin is not merited by antecedent duties, but is the strongest obligation unto future duties. He that will not receive pardon unless he can one way or other deserve it, or make himself meet for it; or pretends to have received it, and finds not himself obliged unto universal obedience by it, neither is nor shall be partaker of it.

This will give you more insight into the true nature fallen man, their effort to maintain their independence from God, their so-called autonomy and the supremacy of the liberty of their will, and hence this will make clear the motive behind Arminianism, Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, Pantheism, Deism, and so on. This is the fountain from which flows all of our sin, our declaration that we are, in practice, God, putting ourselves in the room of God; we decide what is good and what is evil.

The Problem of Pantheism & Deism

code363

from Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 2 pg 598-604

NON-CHRISTIAN COMPETITORS

The Christian doctrine of providence as an omnipotent act of God by which he preserves and governs all things must be distinguished not only from pagan “fate” and “chance” but consequently also from pantheism and Deism, which keep cropping up in revived forms over the centuries of Christianity. After all, “there are but three alternatives for the sum of existence: chance, fate, or Deity. With chance there would be variety without uniformity, with fate there would be uniformity without variety; but variety in uniformity is the demonstration of primal design and the seal of the creative mind. In the world as it exists, there is infinite variety and amazing uniformity.”

The Problem of Pantheism

Pantheism knows of no distinction between the being of God and the being of the world and—idealistically—lets the world be swallowed up in God or—materialistically—lets God be swallowed up in the world. On that position there is no room for the [act of] creation and therefore no room, in the real sense, for preservation and government. Providence, then, coincides with the course of nature. The laws of nature are identical with the decrees of God, and the rule of God is nothing other than “the fixed and immutable order of nature” or “the concatenation of natural things.” On that view there is no room for miracle, the self-activity of secondary causes, personality, freedom, prayer, sin, and religion as a whole. While pantheism may present itself in ever so beautiful and seductive a form, it actually takes its adherents back into the embrace of a pagan fate. On its premises there is no existence other than the existence of nature; no higher power than that which operates in the world in accordance with ironclad law; no other and better life than that for which the materials are present in this visible creation. For a time people may flatter themselves with the idealistic hope that the world will perfect itself by an immanent series of developments, but soon this optimism turns into pessimism, this idealism into materialism.

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and **God becomes severely limited**. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states again on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

Over against this pantheism it was the task of Christian theology to maintain the distinction between creation and preservation, the self-activity of secondary causes, the freedom of personality, the character of sin, the truth of religion. It did this by rejecting fate and by clearly elucidating the confession of God's providence in distinction from it. The distinguishing feature of the theory of fate is not that all that exists and occurs in time is grounded and determined in God's eternal counsel, but the idea that all existence and occurrence is determined by a power that coincides with the world and that, apart from any consciousness and will, determines all things through blind necessity. According to Cicero, the fate of the Stoa was "an order and series of causes, with one cause producing another from within itself." A further distinction made was that between a *mathematical* or *astral* fate, when events on earth were thought to be determined by the stars, and a *natural* fate, when they were deemed to be determined by the nexus of nature. **It is in this latter form that the theory of fate presently appears in pantheism and materialism**. It is noteworthy, however, that in recent times also belief in astral fate has been reinvigorated and has its enthusiastic advocates. Now, Christian theology by no means opposes the idea that all things were known and determined by God from eternity. To that extent it even recognized a "fate," and some theologians believed they could also use the word in a good sense. If we remember, says Augustine, that *fatum* is a derivative of *fari* and then describe by means of it the eternal and unchanging word by which God sustains all things, the name can be justified. Boethius referred to fate as "a disposition inherent in changeable things by which Providence connects all things in their due order." And even Maresius believed he could make Christian sense of the word. But as a rule people were more cautious. Belief in fate, after all, proceeded from the idea that all things happen as a result of an irresistible blind force having neither consciousness nor will, and those events were called *fatalia*, which happen apart from the will of God and men by the necessity of a certain order. In this sense, "fate" was most firmly opposed by all Christian theologians, by Augustine and his followers no less than by those who championed free will. "So far from saying that everything happens by fate, we say that nothing happens by fate." **On the Christian position, the only "necessity of order" is the**

wise, omnipotent, loving will of God. This is not to deny, as will appear later, that in the world of creatures there is a nexus of causes and consequences, and that there are firm ordinances. However, the natural order is not behind and above, nor outside of and opposed to, God's will, but grounded in the will of an omnipotent and loving God and Father, governed by that will and serviceable to that will. Nor does it stand, as a blind coercive power, outside of and in opposition to our will, for "the fact is that our choices fall within the order of the causes, which is known for certain to God and is contained in his foreknowledge."

The Problem with Deism

On the other side of this spectrum (from pantheism) stands Deism, which separates God and the world. This position is one that, in total or in part, separates the creatures from God, once they have been created; and then, again in larger or smaller part, it allows them to exist and function on their own power, a power received at the time of creation. Deism thus basically revives the pagan theory of chance. Jerome once stated—more or less echoing Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero, the Sadducees, and others whose slogan was that “the gods take care of the big things but ignore the small”—that God's providential care did not cover all small insects. Pelagianism, like Cicero, attributed virtue to people's own will and power, while semi-Pelagianism divided the work, attributing some to both God and man. Later, when this system penetrated Catholic theology, no small dissension arose over God's cooperation in providence. The Thomists conceived it as a “natural predetermination,” “an application of energy for the purpose of making it work.” The Molinists, on the other hand, understood by it a kind of “simultaneous concurrence, a merely formal cooperation, by which God—with the concurrence of the other—exerted influence on the same act and effect.”

Socinianism so abstractly and dualistically opposed the infinite to the finite that God could not even create the world out of nothing but only from an eternally existing finite substance. In accordance with this view it also withdrew a large area of the world from God's providence, leaving it to the independent insight and judgment of mankind. By nature the human will is so free that God cannot even beforehand calculate what a person will do in a given case. Only when a decision has been made does God adapt his own action to it. Free causes, accordingly, function in complete independence alongside and outside of God. The relation between God and the world is like that between a mechanical engineer and a machine. After making it and starting it, he leaves it to its own devices and only intervenes if something has to be repaired. The Remonstrants similarly judged that at the creation creatures were endowed with powers enabling them to live independently. Preservation, therefore, was a negative act of God, implying that he did not wish to destroy the essences, powers, and faculties of created things but to leave them to their own vigor to the extent that they were able to flourish and endure by the power with which they had been endowed by creation—at least this view was not judged incorrect. In this connection, concurrence—defined “as a certain natural influence in all things emanating from the perfection of the divine nature”—was rejected. The idea of the predestination of the number of people, of marriages, of the end of life, of the elect, and of the lost, was contested; free will was defended; and all “efficacious providence with respect to sin” was replaced by a negative “permission” or “nonobstruction.” Although Arminianism was condemned at Dordrecht and expelled from the Reformed domain, as an intellectual trend it found acceptance everywhere and penetrated all Christian countries and churches.

The period beginning in the middle of the seventeenth century was marked by a powerful effort to emancipate nature, world, humanity, science, and so forth from God and to make them self-reliant in relation to him, to Christianity, church, and theology. In this respect latitudinarianism, **Deism**, **rationalism**, and the **Enlightenment** were all in agreement. This is the best of all possible worlds; endowed with intellect and will, **humanity is self-sufficient**; natural law, the forces of nature, natural religion, and natural morality together comprise a reserve of energies with which God endowed the world at the creation and which are now entirely adequate for its existence and development. Revelation, prophecy, miracles, and grace are totally redundant. **Deism** did not deny the existence of God, creation, or providence. On the contrary, it loved to refer to the "Supreme Being" and discoursed at length on providence. But there was no longer any vitality in this belief. Deism in principle denied that God worked in creation in any way other than in accordance with and through the laws and forces of nature. Thus it was, from the outset, **antisupernaturalistic**. Preservation was enough; a kind of cooperation or divine influx operative along with every act of a creature was unnecessary. In its eighteenth-century form, this Deism indeed belongs to the past. But in substance in both theory and practice it still holds sway in wide circles. Since, especially in the present [nineteenth] century, our knowledge of nature has greatly expanded and the stability of its laws has been recognized, many people are inclined to separate nature in its pitiless and unchanging character from God's government, to let it rest independently in itself, and to restrict the providence of God to the domain of religion and ethics. But here, of course, providence cannot be taken absolutely either and finds its limit in human freedom. It is not surprising that with such a view the old doctrine of "concurrence" was no longer understood and was set aside as superfluous or incorrect.

On those premises it even follows naturally to do what the "ethical" modernists have done in our country, namely, juxtapose and contrapose natural power and moral power as it were like two deities in the Manichaean manner. This runs the risk that the domain of the latter, like that of the Native Americans, will increasingly shrink and finally be taken over completely by blind irrational forces. This consequence is probably the most serious objection to **Deism**. **By separating God from the world, the infinite from the finite, and placing them dualistically side by side, it turns the two into competing powers that are continually at loggerheads as they vie for sovereignty.** Whatever is ascribed to God is taken from the world. **The more God's providence is expanded, the more the creature loses its independence and freedom, and conversely, the creature can only maintain its self-activity if it drives God back and deprives him of his sovereignty.** Peace between the two is therefore possible only on condition of complete separation.

Deism is essentially irreligious. For the Deist the salvation of humanity consists not in communion with God but in separation from him. The Deist's mind is at ease only in detachment from God, that is, if he can be a practical atheist. **And because he realizes he can never free himself from God, he is a fearful creature, always afraid that he will be deprived of a part of his domain.** For that reason there are always gradations in Deism; the boundaries between God's activity and that of the world are ever being drawn differently. There are entire, one-half, and three-quarters Pelagians, and so forth, depending on whether the world and humanity are completely or in greater or smaller part withdrawn from God's control. **In principle, Deism is always the same: it deactivates God, but one Deist will walk**

that road further than another. A Deist is a person who in his short life has not found the time to become an atheist. Now, the area that Deism takes out from under God's rule then falls under the sway of another power, be it fate or chance. Also in this regard, **Deism** constantly gets into conflict with itself. Especially today, now that everyone is so deeply convinced of the stability of the natural order, there is no room in it for chance, and **Deism** again falls back into the embrace of ancient fate, while chance is mainly reserved for the domain of religious and ethical concerns. But the doctrine of chance is no better than that of fate. "Fate" could, in a pinch, still have a good meaning in the Christian world-and-life view; but chance (*casus*) and fortune (*fortuna*) are un-Christian through and through. Something is "fortuitous" only in the eyes of people when at that moment they are ignorant of its cause. But nothing is or can be objectively "fortuitous." All things have a cause, and that cause is ultimately a component in the almighty and all-wise will of God.

AN ATTEMPT AT DEFINITION

The providence of God, thus distinguished from God's knowledge and decree and maintained against **pantheism** and **Deism**, is—in the beautiful words of the **Heidelberg Catechism**—"the almighty and ever-present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures and so rules them that . . . all things, in fact, come to us, not by chance but from his fatherly hand" (Lord's Day 10, Q. & A. 27). Even thus defined, the doctrine of providence has enormous scope. It actually encompasses the entire implementation of all the decrees that have bearing on the world after it has been called into being by creation. If the act of creation is excepted from providence, it is as full as the free knowledge of God (*scientia libera*) and the decrees of God, as is everything that exists and occurs in time. It extends to everything that is treated in dogmatics after the doctrine of creation and includes both the works of nature and of grace. All the works of God ad extra, which are subsequent to creation, are works of his providence. Only, the locus of providence does not discuss these works themselves but describes in general the nature of the relation in which God stands to the created world, which is always the same, notwithstanding the many different works that he in his providence accomplishes in the world. For that reason it is also not desirable for us to bring up in this locus a vast array of topics such as miracles, prayer, the end of life, the freedom of the will, sin, theodicy, and so forth, for in part these topics have already been treated earlier in the context of the doctrine of the attributes and decrees of God, and in part they will be fully treated in their own place. The task of theodicy is not confined to the locus of providence alone but rests on the whole field of dogmatics. Hence, the **doctrine of providence** does not include the material to be considered in the following loci but limits itself to a description of the relation—one that remains the same in all the various works—in which God stands toward his creatures. That relation is expressed by the words "**preservation,**" "**concurrence,**" and "**government,**" which over time were viewed as aspects of providence. Whatever God may do in nature and grace, it is always he who preserves all things, who empowers them by the influx of his energy, and who governs them by his wisdom and omnipotence. Preservation, concurrence, and government, accordingly, are not parts or segments in which the work of providence is divided and which, being materially and temporally separate, succeed one another. Nor do they differ from one another in the sense that preservation relates only to the existence of creatures, concurrence only to their activities, and government exclusively to guidance toward the final

goal of these creatures. **But they are always integrally connected; they intermesh at all times. From the very beginning preservation is also government, and government is concurrence, and concurrence is preservation.** Preservation tells us that nothing exists, not only no substance, but also no power, no activity, no idea, unless it exists totally from, through, and to God. Concurrence makes known to us the same preservation as an activity such that, far from suspending the existence of creatures, it above all affirms and maintains it. And government describes the other two as guiding all things in such a way that the final goal determined by God will be reached. And always, from beginning to end, providence is one simple, almighty, and omnipresent power.

Conceived as such a power and act of God, providence is most intimately connected with, while nevertheless being essentially distinct from, the activity of God in creating the world. **Pantheism and Deism, in addressing the problem that is present here, seek to solve it by denying either creation [pantheism] or providence [Deism].** But **theism [the orthodox Christian view of God]** maintains both and attempts to elucidate for theoretical as well as practical reasons both the unity and the distinction between the two. Always to be a **theist [the orthodox Christian view]** in the full and true sense of the word, that is, to see God's counsel and hand and work in all things and simultaneously, indeed for that very reason, to develop all available energies and gifts to the highest level of activity—that is the glory of the Christian faith and the secret of the Christian life.

Scripture itself leads the way in taking this approach. On the one hand, it describes the activity of providence as an activity of creation (Ps. 104:30), of making alive (Neh. 9:6), of speaking (Ps. 33:9; 105:31, 34; 107:25; Job 37:6), of sending out his Word and Spirit (Ps. 104:30; 107:25), of commanding (Ps. 147:15; Lam. 3:37), of working (John 5:17), of upholding (Heb. 1:3), of willing (Rev. 4:11), so that all things without exception exist from, through, and to God (Acts 17:28; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:17). **God is never idle.** He never stands by passively looking on. With divine potency he is always active [see code438 and code305a, ref. pure act, etc.] in both nature and grace. **Providence, therefore, is a positive act, not a giving permission to exist but a causing to exist and working from moment to moment.** If it consisted merely in a posture of non-destruction, it would not be God who upheld things, but things would exist in and by themselves, using power granted at the creation. And this is an absurd notion. **A creature is, by definition, of itself a completely dependent being: that which does not exist of itself cannot for a moment exist by itself either.** If God does not do anything, then nothing exists and nothing happens. “For the power and might of the Creator, who rules and embraces all, makes every creature abide, and if this power ever ceased to govern creatures, their essences would pass away and all nature would perish.” And just as providence is a power and an act, so it is also an almighty and everywhere present power. God is immanently present with his being in all creatures. His providence extends to all creatures; all things exist in him. Scripture posits with the utmost certainty that nothing, however insignificant, falls outside of God's providence. Not just all things in general (Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), but even the hairs of one's head (Matt. 10:30), sparrows (Matt. 10:29), the birds of the air (Matt. 6:26), the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28), the young ravens (Ps. 147:9)—all are the objects of his care. In any case, what is small or large to him who is only great? In the context of the cosmos that which is small is as important in its setting as that which is large, as indispensable and as necessary, and often of even greater significance and of weightier consequence. While providence may be differentiated as “general” (Ps. 104; 148:1–13), “special” (Ps. 139:15ff.; Job 10:9–12; Matt. 12:12; Luke 12:7), and “most special” (1 Tim. 4:10), as a power of God it nevertheless encompasses every single

creature. Though Habakkuk (1:14) complains that God by his chastisements makes people like the fish of the sea that are caught in a net and like crawling things that have no ruler (i.e., to protect them from their enemies), he is not thereby saying that God's providence does not extend to all his creatures. In defense of the limited scope of God's providence, people appeal with greater semblance of veracity to 1 Corinthians 9:9 ("Is it for oxen that God is concerned?"). Still, Paul, who everywhere else takes God's sovereignty to be absolute (Acts 17:28; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:17), by no means denies here that God's concern also includes oxen; he only indicates that this saying is included in the law of God for humanity's sake, not for the sake of oxen. Also, this saying concerning the oxen is there "for our sake" (*di' hēmas*, 1 Cor. 9:10; cf. Rom. 4:23–24; 15:4; [1 Cor. 10:6;] 2 Tim. 3:16) so that we might learn from it that the gospel worker is worthy of his wages. So then, providence as an activity of God is as great, all-powerful, and omnipresent as creation; it is a continuous or continued creation. The two are one single act and differ only in structure.

When earlier theologians used this language, it was by no means their intention to erase the distinction that exists between creation and providence, as Hodge for one fears.[58] Scripture, on the other hand, represents providence as a resting from the work of creation (Gen. 2:2; Exod. 20:11; 31:17), and further as a seeing (Ps. 14:2; 33:13), and observing (Ps. 33:15; 103:3), all of which presuppose the existence, the self-activity, and the freedom of the creature. These scriptural givens may not be neglected either. **Creation and providence are not identical.** If providence meant a creating anew every moment, creatures would also have to be produced out of nothing every moment. In that case, the continuity, connectedness, and "order of causes" would be totally lost, and there would be no development or history. All created beings would then exist in appearance only and be devoid of all independence, freedom, and responsibility. God himself would be the cause of sin. Although many theologians called providence a "continuous creation," they by no means meant to erase the difference between the two. They all regarded providence rather as simultaneously also an act of causing creatures to persist in their existence, as a form of preservation that presupposes creation. Augustine, for example, writes that God rested on the seventh day and no longer created any new species, and continues by describing the work of providence in distinction from that of creation as follows: "God moves his entire creation by a hidden power. . . . It is thus that God unfolds the generations that He laid up in creation when first He founded it; and they would not be sent forth to run their course if He who made creatures ceased to exercise His provident rule over them." [59] Providence may sometimes be called a creation, therefore, but it is always distinguished from the first and actual creation by the fact that it is a "continuous creation."

So the two agree in that it is the same omnipotent and omnipresent power of God that is at work both in creation and in providence. The latter act is not inferior to the former since power, divine power, is required for both. Also, creation and providence are naturally not distinct in God himself either, for in him, the Eternal One, there is no variation or shadow due to change. He did not pass from not-creating to creating, nor from creating to preserving. He is invariably the same. Creation and preservation, accordingly, are not objectively and materially distinct as acts of God in God's being, but only in reason. But that understanding is not to say that the distinction is arbitrary and only exists in our mind. No: that distinction is most definitely grounded in God's revelation and derived from it by our thinking. There is a difference between creation and preservation, but that difference does not lie in God's being as such but in the relation that God assumes toward his creatures. What happens to

things as a result of creation is one thing; what happens with them as a result of preservation is another. The relation in which God's creatures are placed vis-à-vis God by these two actions differs in each case. This difference cannot be indicated by saying that creation is "out of nothing" and preservation concerns that which exists. Rather, **creation** calls into being the things that are not, things that have no other existence than that of ideas and decrees in the being of God. By **preservation**, with the same power, God summons those things that have received an existence distinct from his being and are nevertheless solely and exclusively from, through, and to God. **Creation yields existence, while preservation is persistence in existence.** The difficulty for the mind to maintain both creation and preservation always arises from the fact that by creation God's creatures have received their own unique existence, which is distinct from God's being, **and that that existence may and can never even for a moment be viewed as an existence of and by itself, independent from God.**

We are confronted here by a mystery that far surpasses our understanding, and we are always inclined to do less than justice to either one or the other. **It is this inclination that underlies pantheism and Deism.** Both of these trends proceed from the same error and oppose God and the world to each other as two competing entities. The former sacrifices the world to God, creation to providence, and believes that God's existence can only be a divinely infinite existence if it denies the existence of the world, dissolves it into mere appearance, and allows it to be swallowed up by divine existence. The latter sacrifices God to the world, providence to creation, and believes that creatures come into their own to the extent that they become less dependent on God and distance themselves from God. The Christian, however, confesses that the world and every creature in it have received their own existence, but increase in reality, freedom, and authenticity to the extent that they are more dependent on God and exist from moment to moment from, through, and to God. A creature is the more perfect to the degree that God indwells it more and permeates it with his being. In that respect preservation is even greater than creation, for the latter only initiated the beginning of existence, but the former is the progressive and **ever increasing self-communication of God to his creatures.** Providence is "the progressive expression in the universe of his divine perfection, the progressive realization in it of the archetypal ideal of perfect wisdom and love."

Notes on Pantheism by Van Til

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God **too near to him**; he has identified the Creator with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and **God becomes severely limited.** See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

Inspiration of the Scriptures Explained

code322

(also, confirms the doctrine of compatibility)

Excerpt from Reformed Dogmatics

by Herman Bavinck, pg 431-432

my inserts in blue

Bavinck is explaining inspiration; that it is not man acting as a mindless recording device or secretary in the hands of God, the *mechanical* version, but it is God the Holy Spirit who moves upon certain men that God had prepared in advance, and causes them (God being the *first cause*) to write down His thoughts without doing violence to their liberty or freedom, i.e., not by coercion. By the way, this is the same *modus operandi* in God converting the soul, not by coercion, but by a secret power that sweetly moves upon the soul and makes it willing to believe, (see Ps 110:3, *Your people shall be volunteers* [i.e., willing] *in the day of your power*. See also, Ezek. 36:26, etc.) That's why it is called *amazing grace* that saved a wretch like me. This confirms the doctrine of compatibility - –hat God's sovereignty in his eternal decrees, is consistent with man's liberty or *creaturely* freedom of his will.

A mechanical notion of revelation one-sidedly emphasizes the new, the supernatural element that is present in inspiration, and disregards its connection with the old, the natural. This detaches the Bible writers from their personality, as it were, and lifts them out of the history of their time. In the end it allows them to function only as mindless, inanimate instruments in the hand of the Holy Spirit. To what extent theologians in the past held to such a mechanical view cannot be said in a single sweeping statement and would have to be explored separately in each individual case. It is true that the church fathers already started comparing the prophets and apostles, in the process of writing, with a cither, a lyre, a flute, or a pen in the hand of the Holy Spirit. But we dare not draw too many conclusions from these comparisons. In using these similes they only wanted to indicate that the Bible writers were the secondary authors and that God was the primary author. This is evident from the fact that, on the other hand, they firmly and unanimously rejected the error of the Montanists, who claimed that

prophecy and inspiration rendered their mouth-pieces unconscious, and often clearly recognized the self-activity of the biblical authors as well. Still, from time to time, one encounters expressions and ideas that betray a mechanical view. In general, it can be said without fear of contradiction that insight into the historical and psychological mediation of revelation – now taken in a favorable sense – only came to full clarity in modern times and that the mechanical view of inspiration, to the extent that it existed in the past, has increasingly made way for the organic.

This organic view, far from weakening the doctrine of Scripture at this point, enables it more fully to come into its own. It is Scripture itself that requires us to conceive inspiration – like prophecy – organically, not mechanically. Even what it teaches us in general about the relationship between God and this creature prompts us to suspect that also the leading of God's Spirit in divine inspiration will confirm and strengthen, not destroy the self-activity of human beings. For in creation God confers on the world a being of its own, which, though not independent, is distinct from his. In the preservation and government of all things, God maintains this distinct existence of his creatures, causes all of them to function in accordance with their own nature, and guarantees to human being their own personality, rationality, and freedom. God never coerces anyone. He treats human beings, not as blocks of wood, but as intelligent and moral beings. The Logos [Christ], in becoming flesh, does not take some unsuspecting person by surprise, but he enters into human nature, prepares and shapes it by the Spirit into his own appropriate medium. In regeneration and conversion he does not suppress and destroy the powers and gifts of human persons but restores and strengthens them by cleansing them from sin. In short, the revelation between God and his [human] creation, according to Scripture, is not deistic [that God is not involved with his creation at all] or pantheistic [that God and creation are one and the same; God has no personality] – but theistic [belief in one god as creator of the universe, intervening in it and sustaining a personal relation to his creatures], and that is how it will therefore have to be in inspiration as well. Scripture itself teaches this directly and concretely. The Spirit of the Lord entered into the prophets and apostles themselves and so employed and led them that they themselves examined and reflected, spoke and wrote as they did. It is God who speaks through them; at the same time it is they themselves who speak and write. Driven by the Spirit, they themselves yet spoke (2Pet1:21). In the NT the OT Scriptures are frequently quoted by reference to the primary author (Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 4:25; 28:25), and always in the Letter to the Hebrews (1:5ff), but no less often by reference to the secondary authors [*second causes, God being the first cause*]. This demonstrates that Moses, David, Isaiah, and others, though led by the Spirit, were in fact in the full sense of the word the authors of their books (Matt. 13:14; 22:43; John 1:23; 45; 5:46; 12:38). All the various components that come under consideration in divine inspiration show that the Spirit of the Lord, so far from suppressing the personality of the prophets and apostles, instead heightens the level of their activity. This is evident first of all from the fact that they were set apart, prepared, and equipped from their youth on, for the task to which God would later call and them (Exod. 3, 4; Jer. 1:5; Acts 7:22; Gal. 1:15). Their native disposition and bent, their character and inclination, their intellect and development, their emotions and willpower are not undone by the calling that later comes to them but, as they themselves had been already shaped by the Holy Spirit in advance, so they are now summoned into service and used by that same Spirit. Their whole personality with all of their gifts and powers are made serviceable to the calling to which they are called.

All this took place in order that the excellency of the power, also of the power of Scripture, may be God's and not ours. **Just as every human thought and action is the fruit of the action of God in whom we live and have our being, and is at the same time the fruit of the activity of human beings, so also Scripture is totally the product of the Spirit of God, who speaks through the prophets and apostles, and at the same time totally the product of the activity of the authors. "Everything is divine and everything is human" (θεια παντα και ανθρωπινα παντα).** See also page 1174, Edwards' quote on this.

Scriptures on the Doctrine of Original Sin

code325

Scriptures having to do with the [Doctrine of Original Sin](#) - total Depravity and the Sovereignty of God in Election and in the sovereign disposal of his gifts as opposed to man being sovereign (Arminian's idea of human liberty – his will being independent and self determined)

1Cor2:14 - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Rom 8:7-8 - –or to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom 6:17-18 - But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Rom 3:11-12 - –There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

¹²They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

Jer 13:23 - –an the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?

Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Mt 7:18 - A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.

Jer4:22 "For My people *are* foolish,

They have not known Me.

They *are* silly children,

And they have no understanding.

They *are* wise to do evil,

But to do good they have no knowledge."

Heb 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Rom 11:35 - "Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?" [**Job 41:11** Who has preceded Me, that I should pay *him*? Everything under heaven is Mine.]

Jn 15:4-5 - -Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Eph 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. [[The law of faith and the gospel excludes all human boasting. Taking credit for the decisive cause of salvation, man's will in choosing, provides the foundation for man's boasting.](#)]

Eph 2:5 - even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

1Cor 4:7 - -For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

Jn 1:12-13 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn 5:21 - -or as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

Rom 10:20 - -But Isaiah is very bold and says:

"I was found by those who did not seek Me;

I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

1Cor 1:30 - But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

Rom 9:16 - -So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Col 2:11-13 - In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins^[a] of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹²buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Ps 23

Pr 21:1 - The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *Like* the rivers of water;

He turns it wherever He wishes. [[God overrules the wills of men. see Pr16:9 below](#)]

Pr 16:9 - -- man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Jer. 10:23 - O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself;

It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

Rom 9:19- You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Ps 50:16 - But to the wicked God says:

"What *right* have you to declare My statutes,

Or take My covenant in your mouth,

¹⁷Seeing you hate instruction

And cast My words behind you? [[Sinner's prayer is a wicked presumption; see Pr. 21:27, Pr. 15:8 below, see also code278a](#)]

Pr 21:27 - The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination; How much more *when* he brings it with wicked intent!

Pr 15:8 - The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD,
But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight.

Rom 9:11- for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls)

Mt 11:27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.

Jn 3:3 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." [[see Jn 1:12-13, 1Jn4:4](#)]

Jn 3:6 - That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Jn 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Jn 6:65 - And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Jn 6:63 - -It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.

Jn 6:44 - --o one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jn 8:36 - Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Jn 9:31 - Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

Jn 10:3 -To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

Jn 10:26 - But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Jn 10:28 - And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Jn 15:4-5 - --bide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine,

you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

"**Jn 4:4** - --Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes." " **But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict?**

- [Jonathan Edwards](#) pg 554

Ps 110:3 Your people *shall be* volunteers [or willing] In the day of Your power;

Acts 16:14 - The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

1Pet1:23 - having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

2Cor3:5 - Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,

2Cor3:15 - But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. -t-en see Lam5:21 [It is the Lord who is the decisive cause of this turning, not man's will in deciding. see Ezek 36 & 11 below]

Lam 5:21 - --urn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored;
Renew our days as of old, see Deut 30:6

Ps 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me. - --hen see Deut. 30:6
[rationale: although God commands, *get yourselves a new heart* (Ezek. 18:31), this is not proof that we are able to do it as Arminians suppose. Then later in the text God says that he will do it which is the key promise in the new covenant, grace! Hence Deut. 30:6, Ezek. 36:24, 11:19, Ps 51:10 & Lam 5:21 above, etc. Also see 2Cor3:5, John 6:44, 63, 65, Ps 110:3, Jn6:29, Jn 5:21 above. Col 2:11 below]

Deut 30:6 - And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Deut 29:4 - --et the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this *very* day.

Ezek 36:24-26 - Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart

and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

Ezek 11:19 - Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them,^[a] and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them

Jer 31:33 - But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [\[God will do it infallibly; it is not up to man's deciding or free will in the case; God's glory is not left in the hands of fickle worms of the dust. See Matt 1:21\]](#)

Col 2:11 - --n Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins^[a] of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Phil 1:29 - For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Phil 2:13 - --or it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Rom 9:16 - So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

2Pet1:3 - Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

2Thes1:2 - --race to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Jn5:1 - Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

1Jn3:9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

1Jn 4:7 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸

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More on God's Sovereign Disposal of His Gifts

code326

It is God who makes one to differ from another, not the person's self-directed will
J Owen

The doctrine of the preference and pre-eminence of Christ is insisted on by the apostle unto the end of this chapter, and therefore I shall not treat of it until we have gone through all the proofs of it produced; nor then but briefly, having already in part spoken of it, in our consideration of his sovereignty and lordship over all.

That which we are peculiarly instructed in by these words is that,-

All pre-eminence and exaltation of one above others depends on the supreme counsel and will of God.

The instance he gives of him who is exalted over all sufficiently confirms our general rule. He had his "name", **denoting his glory and excellency**, by "inheritance," — a heritage designed for him and given unto him in the **counsel, will, and good pleasure of God [aka, his secret will]**. He gave him that "name above every name," Philippians 2:9, and that of his own will and pleasure: "It pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell," that so "in all things he might have the pre-eminence," Colossians 1:16-19. He foreordained him unto it from eternity, 1 Peter 1:20; and actually exalted him according to his eternal counsel in the fullness of time, Acts 2:36, 5:31.

This prelation, then, of Christ above all depends on the counsel and pleasure of God; and he is herein a pattern of all privilege and preeminence in others.

Grace, mercy, and glory, spiritual things and eternal, are those wherein really there is any difference among the sons of men. Now, that any one in these things is preferred before another, **it depends merely on the sole good pleasure of God. No man in these things makes himself to differ from another, neither hath he any thing that he hath not received.** " God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." And this discrimination of all things by the supreme will of God, especially spiritual and eternal, is the spring, fountain, and rule of all that glory which he will manifest and be exalted in unto eternity. [hence the sinners prayer, where man thinks that his own will in choosing makes him differ from another who did not exercise his free will, is presumption.]

The Communication of the Knowledge of God the Father

code327

thru the Son and his sovereign disposal thereof.

Very good. by John Owen - Heb 1:3

Heb. 1, Ver. 3. — *Who being the brightness of glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding [or, disposing of] all things by the word of his power, having by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

pg 97:

We have been somewhat long in our explication of this description of the person of the Son of God; yet, as we suppose, not any longer than the nature of the things treated of and the manner of their expression necessarily required us to be. We shall therefore here stay a while, before we proceed to the ensuing words of this verse, and take some observations, from what hath been spoken for our direction and refreshment in our passage.

I. All the glorious perfections of the nature of God do belong unto and dwell in the person of the Son. Were it not so, he could not gloriously represent unto us the person of the Father; nor by the **contemplation** of him could we be led to an acquaintance with the person of the Father. This the apostle here teacheth us, as in the explication of the words we have manifested. Now, because the confirmation of this allusion depends on the proofs and testimonies given of and unto the divine nature of Christ, which I have elsewhere largely insisted on and vindicated from exceptions, I shall not here resume that task, especially considering that the same truth will again occur unto us.

II. The whole manifestation of the nature of God unto us, and all communications of grace, are immediately by and through the person of the Son. He represents him unto us; and through him is everything that is communicated unto us from the fullness of the Deity conveyed [hence we are made partakers of his nature, 2Pet.1:4]. There are sundry signal instances wherein God reveals himself, and **communicates** from his own infinite fullness unto his creatures, and in all of them he doth it immediately by the Son [that he doesn't go through anybody but directly to the person to whom he communicates]: —

1. In the creation of all things;
2. In their providential rule and disposal;
3. In the revelation of his will and institution of ordinances;
4. In the communication of his Spirit and grace: in none of which is the person of the Father any otherwise immediately represented unto us than in and by the person of the Son.

1. In the creation of all things, God both gave them their being and imparted unto them of his goodness, and manifested his nature unto those that were capable of a holy apprehension of it. Now, all this God did immediately by the Son; not as a subordinate instrument, but as the **principal efficient**, being his own power and wisdom. This we have manifested in our explication of the last words of the verse foregoing. In express testimony hereunto, see John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 8:6. The Son, as the power and wisdom of the Father, made all things; so that in that work the glory of the Father shines forth in him, and no otherwise. By him was there a **communication** of being, goodness, and existence unto the creation.

2. In the providential rule and disposal of all things created, God further manifests himself unto his creatures, and further communicates of his goodness unto them. That this also is done in and by the Son, we shall further evidence in the explication of the next words of this verse.

3. The matter is yet more plain as to the revelation of his will, and the institution of ordinances from first to last. It is granted that after the entrance of sin, God did not graciously reveal nor communicate himself unto any of his creatures but by his Son. This might fully be manifested by a consideration of the first promise, the foundation of all future revelations and institutions, with an induction of all ensuing instances. But whereas all revelations and institutions springing from the first promise are completed and finished in the gospel, it may suffice to show that what we assert is true with peculiar reference thereunto. The testimonies given unto it are innumerable. This is the substance and end of the gospel: — **to reveal the Father by and in the Son unto us**; to declare that **through him alone** we can be made **partakers of his grace and goodness**, and that no other way we can have either **acquaintance** or **communion** with him. See John 1:18. The whole end of the gospel is to give us **“the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,”** 2 Corinthians 4:6; that is, **the glory of the invisible God**, whom none hath seen at any time, 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12. **That is to be communicated unto us, But how is this to be done?** absolutely and immediately, as it is the glory of the Father? No, but as it “shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ,” or as it is in his person manifested and represented unto us; for he is, as the same apostle says in the same place, 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the image of God.” And herein also, as to the **communication of grace and the Spirit**, the Scripture is express, and believers are daily instructed in it. See **Colossians 1:19; John 1:16**; especially **1 John 5:11, 14**. Now, the grounds of this order of things lie, —

1. In the essential inbeing of the Father and Son. This our Savior expresseth, John 10:38, “The Father is in me, and I in him.” The same essential properties and nature being in each of the persons, by virtue thereof their persons also are said to be in each other. The person of the Son is in the person of the Father, not as such, not in or by its own personality, but by union of its nature and essential properties, which are not alike, as the persons are, but the same in the one and the other. And this inbeing of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in him, our Savior affirms to be manifested by the works that he wrought, being wrought by the power of the Father, yet as in him, and not as in the Father immediately. See to the same purpose chapter 14:10, 11, and chapter 17:21.

2. The Father being thus in the Son, and the Son in the Father, whereby all the glorious properties of the one do shine forth in the other, the order and economy of the blessed Trinity in subsistence and operation require that the manifestation and communication of the Father unto us be through and by the Son; for as **the Father is the original and fountain of the whole Trinity as to subsistence**, so as to operation he works not but by the Son, who, **having the divine nature communicated unto him by eternal generation** [see pg 1289], is to communicate the effects of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, by temporary operation. And thus he becomes “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” namely, **by the receiving his glorious nature from him**, the whole and all of it, and **expressing him in his works of nature and grace unto his creatures**.

3. Because in the dispensation and counsel of grace God hath determined that all communication of himself unto us shall be by the Son as incarnate. This the whole gospel is given to testify. So that this

truth hath its foundation in the very subsistence of the persons of the Deity, is confirmed by the order, and operation, and voluntary disposition in the covenant of grace.

And this discovers unto us, first, the necessity of coming unto God by Christ. God in himself is said to be “in thick darkness,” as also to dwell “in light,” whereunto no creature can approach; which expressions, though seeming contrary, yet teach us the same thing, — namely, the infinite distance of the divine nature from our apprehensions and conceptions, “no man having seen God at any time.” But this God, invisible, eternal, incomprehensibly glorious, hath implanted sundry characters of his excellencies and left footsteps of his blessed properties on the things that he hath made; that, by the consideration and contemplation of them, we might come to some such acquaintance with him as might encourage us to fear and serve him, and to make him our utmost end. **But these expressions of God in all other things, besides his Son Christ Jesus, are all of them partial, revealing only something of him, not all that is necessary to be known that we may live unto him here and enjoy him hereafter; and obscure, not leading us unto any perfect stable knowledge of him [because they are external things].** And hence it is that those who have attempted to come unto God by the light of that manifestation which he hath made of himself any other way than in and by Christ Jesus, bare all failed and come short of his glory. But now, the Lord Christ being “the brightness of his glory,” in whom his glory shines out of the thick darkness that his nature is enwrapped in unto us, and beams out of that inaccessible light which he inhabits; and “the express image of his person,” representing all the perfections of his person fully and clearly unto us, — in him alone can we attain a saving acquaintance with him. On this account he tells Philip, John 14:9, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” the reason of which assertion, taken from the mutual inbeing of Father and Son, and his expression of his mind and glory, he asserts in the next verses. He, then, is the only way and means of coming unto the knowledge and enjoyment of God, because in and by him alone is he fully and perfectly expressed unto us. And therefore this, secondly, is our great guide and direction in all our endeavors after an acceptable access unto Him. Would we come to that acquaintance with the nature, properties, and excellencies of the Father, which poor, weak, finite creatures are capable of attaining in this world, — which is sufficient that we may love him, fear him, serve him, and come unto the enjoyment of him? would we know his love and grace? would we admire his wisdom and holiness? — let us labor to come to an intimate and near acquaintance with his Son Jesus Christ, in whom all these things dwell in their fullness, and by whom they are exhibited, revealed, unfolded unto us; seek the Father in the Son, out of whom not one property of the divine nature can be savingly apprehended or rightly understood, and in whom they are all exposed to our **faith** and **spiritual contemplation**. This is our wisdom, to abide in Christ, to abide with him, to learn him; and in him we shall learn, see, and know the Father also.

Φέρων τε τά παντα τω ρηατι της δυναυεως αυτου After the description of the person, the apostle returns unto an assertion of the power of Christ, the Son of God, and therein makes his transition from the kingly and prophetic unto his sacerdotal office; on all which he intends afterwards to enlarge his discourse.

--he Communication of God's Fullness by Christ to the Elect

p59-67 (p 71 online)

..Ind this is the second instance of the first head of the dominion of Christ in this world. He is Lord over persons, angels and men.

The SECOND part of the heirship and dominion of Christ consisteth in his lordship over all things besides; which added to the former comprise the whole creation of God. In the distribution of these premised, the first that occur are spiritual things, which also are of two sorts: — **First, Temporal**, or such as in this life we are made partakers of; and, Secondly, Eternal, the things that are reserved for them that believe in the state of glory. The former may be reduced unto two heads; for they are all of them either grace or gifts, and Christ is Lord of them all.

First, All that which comes under the name of grace in Scripture, which, flowing from the **free and special love of God** [free meaning that God's counsel is uninfluenced by any outward force or influence, or by internal necessity - necessity, meaning that the nature of God requires God act accordingly, e.g., people say that because God is love that by necessity, he must love all the same and hence make salvation available to all. But this is not so; he will have mercy on whom he will. He is not bound by this. He is *free* in the disposal of his gifts. On other things, he is bound, that is, due to the justice of God or his righteousness, to punish all sin - —o exceptions. e.g., either the sinner is punished eternally or the Son is punished in his place; but God cannot simply decide to not punish sin.], tends directly to the **spiritual and eternal good** of them on whom it is bestowed, may be referred unto four heads; for as the fountain of all these (or the gracious free purpose of the will of God, from whence they all do flow), being antecedent to the mission of Christ the mediator, and immanent in God, it can be no otherwise granted unto him but in respect of its effects; which we shall show that it is. Now, these are: —

1. **Pardon of sin**, and the free acceptance of the persons of sinners in a way of mercy. This is grace, Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5-7; and a saving effect and fruit of the covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12.

2. **The regenerating of the person of a dead sinner**, with the purifying and sanctifying of his nature, in a way of spiritual power. This also is grace, and promised in the covenant. And there are three parts of it: — (1.) The infusion of a *quickenning principle* into the soul of a dead sinner, Romans 8:2; Titus 3:5; John 3:6; Ephesians 2:1-6. (2.) The *habitual furnishment* of the spiritually-quickenened soul with abiding, radical principles of light, love, and power, fitting it for spiritual obedience, Galatians 5:17. (3.) *Actual assistance*, in a communication of supplies of strength for every duty and work, Philippians 4:13; John 15:5.

3. **Preservation** in a condition of acceptance with God, and holy obedience unto him unto the end, is also of especial grace. It is the grace of perseverance, and eminently included in the covenant, as we have elsewhere showed at large.

4. **Adoption**, as a privilege, with all the privileges that flow from it, is also grace, Ephesians 1:5, 6.

All these, with all those admirable and inexpressible mercies that they branch themselves into, — giving deliverance unto sinners from evil temporal and eternal, raising them to communion with God here, and to the enjoyment of him for ever hereafter, — **are called grace**, and do belong to the lordship of Christ, as he is heir, lord, and possessor of them all. All the stores of this grace and mercy

that are in heaven for sinners are given into his hand, and resigned **up to his sovereign disposal**, as we shall intimate in general and particular : —

1. In general, Colossians 1:19, “It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” There is a fourfold fullness in Christ: — (1.) Of the Deity in his divine nature, Romans 9:5. (2.) Of union in his person, Colossians 2:9. (3.) Of grace in his human nature, John 1:14, 3:34; Luke 2:52, 4:1. (4.) An authoritative fullness, to communicate of it unto others. That is the fullness here intended; for it is in him as the head of the church, verse 18, so as that from him, or that fullness which it pleased the Father to intrust him withal, believers might receive “**grace for grace**,” John 1:16, 17. Thus he testifies that “all things are delivered to him of his Father,” Matthew 11:27, — put into his power and possession. And they are the **things** he there intends, on the account whereof he invites sinners weary and laden to come unto him, verse 28, namely, all mercy and grace; which are the things that burdened sinners need and look after. The same is testified John 3:35, 36; and fully chapter 16:15, “**All things that the Father hath are mine;**” chapter 17:10. **All the grace and mercy that are in the heart of God as Father to bestow upon his children, they are all given into the hand of Christ, and are his, or part of his inheritance.**

2. In **particular**: —

(1.) **All pardoning grace**, for the acceptance of our persons and forgiveness of our sins, is his; he is the Lord of it. Acts 5:31, He is made “a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness of sin is wholly given unto him as to the administration of it, **nor doth any one receive it but out of his stores**. And what is the dominion of ten thousands of worlds in comparison of this inheritance? Sure he shall be my God and King who hath all forgiveness at his disposal. All that this world can do or give is a thousand times lighter than the dust of the balance, if compared with these good things of the kingdom of Christ.

(2.) **All regenerating, quickening, sanctifying, assisting grace is his**. [1.] John 5:21, He quickeneth whom he pleaseth. He walks among dead souls, and says to whom he will, ‘Live.’ And, 74 [2.] He sanctifies by his Spirit whom he pleaseth, John 4:14. All the living waters of saving grace are committed to him, and he invites men unto them freely, Cant. 5:l; Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17. And, [3.] All grace actually assisting us unto any duty is his also, for without him we can do nothing, John 15:5; for it is he alone that gives out suitable help in the time of need, Hebrews 4:16. **No man was ever quickened, purified, or strengthened, but by him; nor can any dram of this grace be obtained but out of his treasures. Those who pretend to stores of it in their own wills, are so far antichrists.**

(3.) The **grace of our preservation** in our acceptation with God and obedience unto him is solely his, John 10:28. And so also,-

(4.) Are all the blessed and gracious privileges whereof we are made partakers in our adoption, John 1:12. Hebrews 3:6, he is so Lord over the house and family of God as to have the whole inheritance in his power, and **the absolute disposal of all the good things belonging unto it.**

These are the **riches and treasures of the kingdom of Christ, the good things of his house, the revenues of his dominion**. The mass of this treasure that lies by him is infinite, the stores of it are inexhaustible; and he is ready, free, gracious, and bountiful, in his **communications of them to all the subjects of his dominion**. This part of his heirship extends unto, — 1. All the grace and mercy that the Father could find in his own gracious heart to bestow, when he was full of counsels of love, and designed to exalt himself by the way of grace, Ephesians 1:6. 2. To all the grace and mercy which he himself could purchase by the effusion of his blood, Hebrews 9:14; Ephesians 2:13; and indeed these are commensurate, if things in respect of us altogether boundless may be said to be commensurate. 3. All that grace which hath saved the world of sinners which are already in the enjoyment of God, and that shall effectually save all that come to God by him. 4. All that grace which, in the promises of it in the Old Testament, is set out by all that is rich, precious, glorious, — all that is eminent in the whole creation of God; and in the New is called “treasure,” “**unsearchable riches**,” and “**exceeding excellency**,” which, **being communicated by him to all the subjects of his kingdom**, makes every one of them richer than all the potentates of the earth who have no interest in him.

The especial foundation of all this trust is in an eminent manner expressed, Isaiah 53:10-12. **His suffering for the sins of all those to whom he intends to communicate of this his fullness [his internal glory], according to the will of God, and the purchase he made in his death, according to the tenor of the covenant of the mediator**, makes it just and righteous that he should enjoy this part of his inheritance, Hebrews 2:14, 9:12. The Father says unto him: ‘Seest thou these poor wretched creatures that lie perishing in their blood and under the curse? **They had once my image gloriously enstamped on them**, and were every way meet for my service; but behold the misery that is come upon them by their sin and rebellion. Sentence is gone forth against them upon their sin; and they want nothing to shut them up under everlasting ruin but the execution of it. Wilt thou undertake to be their savior and deliverer, to save them from their sins, and the wrath to come? Wilt thou make thy soul an offering for their sins, and lay down thy life a ransom for them? Hast thou love enough to wash them in thine own blood, in a nature to be taken of them, being obedient therein unto death, the death of the cross?’ Whereunto he replies: ‘I am content to do thy will, and will undertake this work, and that with joy and delight. Lo, I come for that purpose; my delight is with these sons of men, **Psalm 40:8; Proverbs 8:31**. What they have taken, I will pay. What is due from them, let it be required at my hand. I am ready to undergo wrath and curse for them, and to pour out my soul unto death.’ ‘It shall be,’ saith the Father, ‘as thou hast spoken, and thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul and be satisfied. I will give thee for a covenant and a leader unto them, and thou shalt be the captain of their salvation. To this end take into thy power and disposal all the treasures of heaven, all mercy and grace, to give out unto them for whom thou hast undertaken. Behold, here are unsearchable hidden treasures, not of many generations, but laid up from eternity. Take all these riches into thy power, and at thy disposal shall they be for ever.’ This is the noble peculiar foundation of this part of the inheritance of Christ.

From what hath been spoken, the rule also whereby the Lord Christ proceedeth in disposing these treasures to the sons of men is made evident. **Though he hath all grace committed unto him, yet he bestows not grace upon all**. The rule of his procedure herein is God’s **election**; for the foundation of this whole truth is his undertaking for them **who were given him of his Father**. See Acts 13:48; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:3-8. And the variety which is seen in his **actual communication of grace and mercy**

unto sinners depends upon the sovereign and eternal designation of the persons of them who by him were to obtain mercy, and be made heirs of salvation.

But although the persons are designed and allotted unto him from eternity who were to receive this grace and mercy at his hands, yet as to the manner and all circumstances of his **dispensation and communication of them**, they are wholly committed unto his **own sovereign will and wisdom**. Hence some he calls at one time, some at another; some in the morning, that they may glorify grace in working all the day; some in the evening of their lives, that they may exalt pardoning mercy to eternity: on some he bestows much grace, that he may render them useful in the strength of it; on others less that he may keep them humble in a sense of their wants: some he makes rich in light, others in love; some in faith, others in patience; that they may all peculiarly praise him, and set out the fullness of his stores. **And hereby**, — 1. He glorifies every grace of his Spirit, by making it shine eminently in one or other, as faith in Abraham and Peter, love in David and John, patience in Job; and, 2. He renders his subjects useful one to another, in that they have opportunities upon the defects and fullness of each other to exercise all their graces; and, 3. So he renders his whole body uniform and comely, 1 Corinthians 12:14-27; 4. Keeping every member in humility and dependence, whilst it sees its own wants in some graces that others excel in, Colossians 2:19.

This is another most eminent part of the inheritance and kingdom of Christ.

An Application of the Knowledge of Christ's Glory

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- that it be the main object of our contemplation by which we are transformed into his image from glory to glory 2Cor3:18...2Cor4:18 "look *not at the things which are seen..*", Rms 12:1-2, *be transformed by the renewing of your mind...*

John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews Ch3 vs 3-6

XI. A **diligent, attentive** consideration of the person, offices, and work of Jesus Christ, is the most effectual means to free the souls of men from all entanglements of errors and darkness, and to keep them constant in the profession of the truth.

These are the ends for which it is here called for by the apostle. These Hebrews were yet entangled in their old Judaism, and by reason of their temptations, prejudices, and persecutions, were ready to decline from the truth. To free them from the one, and to prevent the other, the apostle calls them to the consideration of what he had delivered, and what he was yet to deliver, **concerning the person, offices, and work of Christ**. This being the principal intention of the place, we shall abide a little in the confirmation and application of our observation.

What is in this duty considered subjectively was declared in the exposition of the words; what is in its **manner** of performance, and **especial object**, must be now further unfolded. And, — 1. There are in it these things ensuing: —

(1.) **A diligent searching into the word**, wherein Christ is revealed unto us. This himself directs unto, John 5:39. The Scriptures reveal him, declare him, testify of him. To this end are they to be searched, that we may learn and know what they so declare and testify. And this Peter tells us was done by the prophets of old, 1 Peter 1:10, 11. They “**searched diligently**” into the revelation made in them by the Spirit of the person, suffering, and grace of Christ, with the glory that ensued thereon. Christ is exhibited unto us in the gospel; which is therefore called “The gospel of Christ,” and “The word of Christ,” — that is, concerning him, as our apostle declares, Romans 1:1-3. Both the prophets of old, saith he, and the gospel also, treat concerning the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. Herein, then, consists the first part of this great duty. “SEARCH the Scriptures,” with all the advantage of help afforded, that you may find out, discern, and understand, **what is revealed concerning him in them, as he is the end of the law** and the fullness of the gospel, the center in whom all the prophecies, promises, rules, and precepts of them do meet. **Without this aim in our reading, hearing, searching the word, we labor in vain, and contend uncertainly, as men beating the air.** Unto him, and the knowledge of him, is all our study of the Scripture to be referred. And the reason why some, in the perusal of it, have no more light, profit, or advantage, is, because they have not more respect unto Christ in their inquiry. If he be once out of our eye in searching the Scripture, we know not what we do, nor whither we go, no more than doth the mariner at sea without regard to the pole-star. Truths to be believed are like believers themselves. All their life, power, and order, consist in their relation unto Christ; separated from him, they are dead and useless.

(2.) Meditation upon what is discovered unto us is also included in this duty. When a revelation was made of Christ and his work unto the blessed virgin his mother, it is said, she kept the sayings, “and pondered them in her heart,” Luke 2:19; as Eliphaz adviseth all to do, Job 22:22. And the apostle bids us take care that “**the word of Christ may dwell in us richly,**” **Colossians 3:16**; — that it may not pass through our minds with some transient effects, as it doth in reading and hearing, if it only casts some glances of light upon the understanding, some motions on the affections; **but make its abode and dwell with us, that is, by constant meditation.** But this duty is by many spoken unto, and the evil of the neglect of it sufficiently declared.

(3.) A spiritual endeavor, in this search and meditation, to **bring the soul unto a conformity with that revelation which is made of Christ in the word.** This is the genuine effect of them, if duly attended unto, 2 Corinthians 3:18. The glory of Christ is revealed in the gospel, as a face is represented in a glass. **This we behold by a spiritual search into it, and meditation on it. By this intuition we are assimilated unto the glory so revealed. The Holy Ghost thereby brings upon our hearts that very likeness and image which we so contemplate.** And although properly this be rather an effect of the duty treated of than any part of it, yet because it is that which we ought continually to aim at, and without the attainment whereof we labor in vain, I reckon it thereunto. When the **image of Christ** is wrought upon our hearts, and the dying and life of Christ made manifest in us, 2 Corinthians 4:10, then hath this duty its perfect work.

2. The object of it is to be considered. This in our proposition, following the apostle, is **confined unto his person, his offices, and his work**. These he dealeth with the Hebrews about.

(1.) He treateth about his person, and concerning that proposeth two things especially unto consideration; — [1.] **His glorious excellency**; [2.] **His condescension and grace**. The one is the sole subject of the first chapter; the other the principal subject of the second. [1.] **He calls them to consider the glorious excellency of the person of Christ**. He had instructed them how in his divine nature he was the eternal Son of God, “the brightness of his glory, and the **express image of his person**,” by whom the worlds were made; and therefore deservedly exalted, even as mediator, being incarnate, incomparably above the most glorious beings of all God’s creation. This he would have us especially to regard in our consideration of him. So did the apostles of old. **They considered his glory as “the only-begotten of the Father,” therefore “full of grace and truth,”** John 1:14. **This excellency of the person of Christ brancheth itself into many instances, not here to be recapitulated. It may suffice in general that this is to be the principal object of our meditation. The revelation which he made of himself under the old testament had an especial respect unto this glory.** Such is the description of him, Psalm 68:17, 18, applied unto him, Ephesians 4:8; as that also, Isaiah 6:1-3, applied unto him, John 12:41. And it is a signal promise, that under the gospel we shall “see the king in his beauty,” Isaiah 33:17, **or see by faith the uncreated excellencies and glory of this king of saints**. And indeed the faith of the saints of the old testament did principally respect the glorious person of the Messiah. In other things they were very **dark**, and little can be gathered from the Scripture of what spiritual apprehension they had concerning other things whereby they were instructed; but their minds and faith were distinctly **fixed on his person and his coming**, leaving his work and the **mystery of redemption** unto his own wisdom and grace. Hence had they so many glorious descriptions of him granted unto them; **which were always to keep up their hearts in a desire and expectation of him**. And now under the new testament, it is the greatest trial of faith, whether it be evangelical, genuine, and thriving, namely, by the respect that it hath to the person of Christ. If that be its immediate and principal object, if it respect other things with regard unto him and in subordination unto him, it is assuredly of a heavenly extract; if otherwise, it may justly be suspected. This is that head of gold which the spouse admires in her beloved, Cant. 5:11. And unspeakable is the influence which the consideration of this **glorious excellency of Christ**, attended with infinite wisdom and power, hath into our preservation in the truth. [2.] **His grace and condescension**. This the apostle insists upon, Hebrews 2. His design therein is to show what this glorious and excellent person submitted himself unto, that he might save and deliver sinners. And this he greatly presseth, Philippians 2:5-8. This glorious one humbled himself into the form of a man, of a servant, unto death, the death of the cross. A due mixture of greatness and grace or goodness is the most powerful attractive and loadstone of affections. Hence God, who is infinitely great and infinitely good, is the ultimate object of them. In the person of Christ it is incomparably and inimitably, so that there is nothing in the creation to shadow it out unto us. See Revelation 1:5, 6, 11, 13-16. He who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the prince of the kings of the earth, even he loved us, and washed us in his own blood. Hence unto a believing soul, he becomes “white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand,” Cant. 5:10. See Psalm 45:2-4. This is a means of preservation. Hence the apostle wonders at the Galatians, that they should depart from the truth, after that Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified amongst them, Galatians 3:1; for an evident declaration of him, and representation of his love in the preaching of the gospel, is a sufficient means to preserve men from such miscarriages. We see what a warm, natural, blind devotion will be stirred up in the

Papists by the superstitious pictures of Christ which they have amongst them. **And if a false means shall be effectual to stir up a false love and devotion, shall not the true, proper, instituted means of the representation of the glory of Christ,** in the gospel, be effectual to beget constancy and perseverance in faith and obedience? These things the apostle minds them off concerning his person, to be improved unto the ends proposed.

(2.) **Consider him as to his offices.** In these verses the apostle minds the Hebrews of his prophetic and sacerdotal; but he directs them to his regal also, which he had treated of, chapter 1. Neither doth he mind them so directly of the offices themselves, as the qualifications of his person on their account. His authority as a **king**, his mercifulness as **our high priest**, and his faithfulness as a **prophet**, or God's apostle, are the things he would have them consider.

[1.] His **authority**, as king, lord, and heir of all, chapter 1:1-3. His dealing with the Hebrews was principally about the institution of new ordinances of worship, and abolishing of the old. This, sovereign authority was required unto. This the Lord Christ was furnished withal, as the Son, as the heir and lord of all. A due consideration hereof would thoroughly remove all doubts and scruples in this matter. And the neglect hereof is the cause of all that confusion and disorder that is at this day in the world about the worship of God. Men not considering the authority of Christ, either as instituting the ordinances of the gospel, or as judging upon their neglect and abuse, are careless about them, or do not acquiesce in his pleasure in them. This hath proved the ruin of many churches, which, neglecting the authority of Christ, have substituted their own in the room thereof. The consideration, therefore, of this kingly, legislative authority of the Lord Christ by men, as to their present duty and future account, must needs be an effectual means to preserve them in the truth and from backslidings. See Romans 14:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10.

[2.] His **mercifulness**, as the high priest of his church. This he had asserted, chapter 2:17, and that upon a full and evident previous demonstration. Consider him that is so, and as he is so. This, because of its importance, he often presseth, chapter 4:14-16, 7:25-28, 9:11-14, 10:21, 22. **And this is of singular use to preserve believers from decays and fainting in the profession of the truth; for from his mercifulness, unspeakable encouragement, strength, and consolation, in obedience and profession of the gospel, may be educed, as in our progress, God assisting, we shall manifest.** Want of a due improvement of this encouragement, and the assistance that may be obtained thereby, is the occasion of all the **decays and backslidings** that are found among professors. What can thrive in the soul, if the **love, care, kindness, and ability to save, that are in Christ, — all which are included in this mercifulness, — are neglected?**

[3.] His **faithfulness**. This relates unto his office prophetic, which is by the apostle ascribed unto him, and confirmed to be in him in these verses. Yea, this is that which he would have them immediately and in the first place to consider, and which being once fixed on their minds, those other things must needs have the more effectual influence upon them. For if he be absolutely faithful in his work, his authority and mercy ought surely diligently to be heeded. To this end the apostle compares him in particular with Moses in these verses, and in the next exalts him above him. And no better medium could be used to satisfy the Hebrews, who were sufficiently persuaded of the faithfulness of Moses. He being, then, ultimately to reveal the will of God, and being absolutely faithful in his so doing, is to be attended unto. Men may thence learn what they have to do in the church and worship of God,

even to observe and to do whatever he hath commanded, and nothing else, Matthew 28:20; Revelation 1:5, 3:14.

(3.) As his person and offices, **so his work** also is proposed unto our consideration, for the ends mentioned. This the apostle fully discourseth, chapter 2:9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18. The specialties of this work are too many to be here so much as recounted. **In general, the love and grace that were in it, the greatness of it, the benefit we receive by it, the glory of the wisdom, goodness, grace, holiness, and righteousness that shines forth in it, are the principal immediate objects of our faith and consideration.**

These things we have instanced in particular, as those which, being of great importance in themselves, we are likewise directed unto by the series of the apostle's discourse; but we mention them not exclusively unto other concernments of the Lord Christ. Whole Christ, and all of him, is by us diligently to be considered, that we may attain, and we shall attain, the ends laid down in the precedent observation: for, —

1. Our faith and our obedience are our walking with God, Genesis 17:1, or our walking in the truth, 2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:4: and that which is principally incumbent on them that would walk aright, is to have a due regard unto their way. This way is Christ, John 14:6. "I am the way," saith he; "no man cometh unto the Father but by me:" such a way as wayfaring men shall not err in, Isaiah 35:8; such a "living way" as is also a guide. **In attendance, therefore, unto him, we shall neither err nor miscarry. And as all mistakes in faith arise from a want of a due respect unto him as the real way of going unto God, so all aberrations in doctrine or worship spring out of a neglect of a due consideration of his person and offices, wherein all truths do center, and whereby they are made effectual and powerful.**

2. They that consider him in the way and manner explicated, cannot but take him for their only guide in the things of God. See John 1:14, with chapter 6:68, 69. To whom else should they go or betake themselves? This is foretold concerning him, Isaiah 42:4. And for this duty we have the command of God, Matthew 17:5, "HEAR HIM." This they will do who consider him. And to them who do so, he is given to be a guide and a leader, Isaiah 55:4; and a light, chapter 51:4; and a shepherd, to direct them in the fresh pastures of the gospel with care and tenderness, chapter 40:11. And no soul shall miscarry under his conduct, or wander into danger under his care. **But here lies the root of men's failings in this matter, — they seek for truth of themselves and of other men, but not of Christ.** What they can find out by their own endeavors, what other men instruct them in or impose upon them, that they receive. **Few have that faith, love, and humility, and are given up unto that diligent contemplation of the Lord Christ and his excellencies, which are required in those who really wait for his law so as to learn the truth from him.**

If it be yet inquired whether these who duly consider Jesus Christ may not yet mistake the truth and fall into errors? I answer, they may; but, —

(1.) Not into any that are pernicious. He will assuredly preserve such persons from destructive errors. As he hath not prayed that they may be taken out of the world, but preserved in it, so he doth not take them out of all possibility of errors or mistakes, but from such only as may prejudice the eternal condition of their souls.

(2.) They shall not act their mistakes and errors with a spirit of envy, malice, and disquietment against the truth; for none that duly considereth Jesus Christ can be captivated under the power of such a frame of spirit, seeing there is nothing more unlike unto him.

(3.) Even their mistakes are from failures in their consideration of the Lord Christ, either in the matter or manner of it. Either they search not after him with that spiritual diligence which they ought, or they meditate not on the discoveries that are made of him in the word, or they labor not after assimilation and conformity unto him; and upon these neglects it is no wonder if errors and mistakes do arise.

3. **Because “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ,”** Colossians 2:3; and therefore from him alone are they to be received, and in him alone to be learned. Now, wisdom and knowledge have both of them respect unto truth. Where they are obtained, there truth itself doth dwell. **In the due consideration of the Lord Christ are these treasures opened unto us.** And although we may not at once clearly and fully discern them, yet we are in the proper way to know them and possess them. There is not the least line of truth, how far soever it may be extended, and how small soever it may at length appear, but the springs of it lie in the person of Christ. And then we learn it aright, when we learn it in the spring, or as it is in him, Ephesians 4:21; which when we have done, we may safely trace it down, and follow it unto its utmost extent. But he that looks on gospel truths as sporades, scattered up and down 645 independently one of another, — who sees not the root, center, and knot of them in Jesus Christ, — it is most probable that when he goes about to gather them for his use, he will also take up things quite of another nature. They say that all moral virtues are knit up in one, that is, righteousness; so that he who hath that hath all the rest, at least radically and virtually. This I know, that all spiritual truths are knit up and centered in him who is “the truth;” and they who have “learned him,” as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 4:20, have with him received the seeds of all truth: which being watered and attended as they ought, will in due time flourish into all their proper branches and fruits; for all things are gathered into one head in him, Ephesians 1:10.

4. **The right performance of this duty enlivens, excites, and acts all those graces and gracious affections, which are effectual to preserve us in the truth, and to keep us from decays in our profession.** The Lord Christ being the proper object of them, and this consideration consisting in the application of the faculties of our souls unto that object, by a due exercise of those graces, they must needs be increased and augmented thereby; **as all grace grows and thrives in and by its exercise, and ordinarily not otherwise. And when any grace is so applied unto Christ as spiritually to touch him, virtue goes forth from him for its strengthening.** The neglect then also hereof must of necessity produce the contrary effect, John 15:5, 6. Thus in particular is faith increased; for according as the object of it is cleared, manifested, represented suitable and desirable unto the soul, so is faith itself exited, stirred up, and strengthened. **Now, this is no otherwise done but when the soul is enabled graciously to ponder on the person and offices of Christ.** There it finds all that is needful unto it to make it happy and blessed, — to procure pardon, peace, righteousness, and glory for it. **This faith receives, and is improved by it. So the apostle informs us, 2 Corinthians 3:18. Having boldness and liberty given us in the gospel to consider and behold by faith the glory of Christ, we are thereby transformed into his likeness and image, — namely, by an increase of faith, whereby we “grow up into him who is the head.”** And this brings along with it an increase in all other graces, whereby we are preserved in the profession and practice of the truth.

By this means, also, a fountain of godly sorrow is opened in the hearts of believers; which is a precious grace, Zechariah 12:10. **The consideration of the Lord Christ as pierced for us, or by us, will melt and humble the soul,** or it will never yield unto any ordinance of God.

The spouse, in like manner, in the Canticles, giving an account of her great and incomparable love unto her beloved, **manifests that it arose from the exact consideration that she had taken of his person and all that belonged thereunto,** chapter 5:9-16. **The like may be said of all other graces; and by these must we be preserved, or utterly fail. As to the use of these things, — [this is why doctrine is vital!]**

(1.) We may see hence the reason why so many turn aside, and fall off from the truth and ways of the gospel. **They have given over a due consideration of Jesus Christ, his person, offices, and mediation, and so have lost the means of their preservation.** They have been weary of him, not seeing form or comeliness in him for which he should be desired. What a sad instance have we hereof in those poor deluded creatures, who, neglecting him, pretend to find all light and life within themselves! This is their Beth-el, the beginning of their transgression; for when men have neglected the person of Christ, is it any wonder if they despise his ways and ordinances, as is their manner? **Indeed, the ordinances of the gospel, its worship and institutions, have no excellency, no beauty in them, but what ariseth from their relation unto the person and offices of Christ;** and if they are neglected, these must needs be burdensome and grievous. **And as it is in vain to draw men unto the embracement of them who know him not,** who are not acquainted with him, seeing they appear unto them the most grievous and intolerable of all things that can be imposed on them; **so they who on any account cease to consider him by faith, as he is proposed unto them in the gospel, cannot long abide in their observation.** Give such men the advantages of liberty, and keeping up a reputation of profession without them, — which they suppose a new and singular opinion will furnish them withal, — **and they will quickly cast them off as a burden not to be borne.** And as it is with gospel worship, so it is with all the articles of faith, or important truths that we are to believe. The center and knot of them all is in the person of Christ. If they are once loosed from thence, if their union in him be dissolved, if men no more endeavor to learn “the truth as it is in Jesus,” or to acquaint themselves with the will of God, as he hath “gathered all things unto a head in him,” they scatter, as it were, of their own accord from their minds; so that it may be they retain no one of them, or if they do so, yet not in a right manner, **so as to have an experience of the power of them in obedience. This is the cause of the apostasies amongst us; Christ is neglected, — not considered, not improved. A light within, or a formal worship without, is enthroned in his stead; and thence all sorts of errors and evils do of their own accord ensue.** Deal with any whom you see to neglect his ways and truths, and you will find this to be the state of things with them: — **they have left off to value and esteem the person of Christ; or they had never any acquaintance with him. And in vain is it to dispute with men about the streams whilst they despise the fountain.** The apostle gives us a threefold miscarriage in religion, Colossians 2:18: — [1.] A pretense of a voluntary, uncommanded humility, a pretended mortification, indeed a bare covering of base and filthy pride; [2.] A worshipping of angels, an instance to express all false, self-invented worship; and, [3.] Curiosity in vain speculations, or men’s intruding themselves into the things which they have not seen, setting out things with swelling words of vanity, wherewith in truth they have no acquaintance, whereof they have no experience. And all these, saith he, verse 19, proceed from hence, that they “**hold not the Head;**”

they have let go the Lord Christ, from whom all truths are to be derived, and consequently all truth itself. **Here lies the spring of our frequent apostasies.**

(2.) Again, we may hereby examine and try ourselves. Do we at any time find any of the ways, institutions, or ordinances of Christ grievous or burdensome unto us? **do we find a secret dislike of them, or not that delight in them which we have formerly enjoyed? If we search into the root of our distempers, we shall find that our hearts and spirits have not been exercised with that consideration of the person and offices of Christ which our duty calls for. We have not been kept in a constant adoration of his majesty, admiration of his excellency, delight in his beauty, joy in his undertaking, holy thoughtfulness of his whole mediation.** This hath betrayed us into our **lukewarmness and indifferency**, and made us faint and weary in his ways. Hence also all endeavors for a recovery from such a frame, that regard only the particular instances that we are sensible of, are languid and successless. He that finds himself faint in or weary of any of the ways of Christ or any duties of obedience unto him, or that discovers an undervaluation of any of the truths of the gospel, as to their use or importance, and thinks to recover himself and retrieve his spirit only by applying himself unto that particular wherein he is sensible of his failure, will labor in the fire and to no purpose. It may be that after some days, or months, or years, he will find himself more at a loss than ever; and that because although he striveth, yet he striveth not lawfully. If we would recover ourselves, we must go to the source and beginning of our decays.

(3.) This tends directly unto our instruction in these perilous days, such as the latter days are foretold to be. All means that ever the devil made use of from the foundation of the world, **to draw off or deter men from gospel obedience**, are at this day displayed. **The world smiles upon apostates, and promiseth them a plentiful supply of such things as the corrupt nature of man esteems desirable.** Errors and false worship, with temptations from them, spread themselves with wings of glorious pretences over the 'face of the whole earth. Trials, troubles, storms, persecutions, attend and threaten on every hand; and "he only that endureth unto the end shall be saved." He that, like Jonah, is asleep in this tempest, is at the door of ruin; **he that is secure in himself from danger, is in the greatest danger of falling by security.** What, then, shall we do? what means shall we use for our preservation? Take the counsel of our blessed apostle, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, **consider the apostle and high priest of our profession;**" and again, chapter 12:3, "**Consider him** who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." **Be much in the consideration of the person, offices, and work of Christ. This will conform you unto him, derive strength from him, arm you with the same mind that was in him, increase all your graces, keep you from being weary, and give you assured victory. He deserves it, you need it; let it not be omitted.**

5. **This will give direction unto them who are called unto the work of teaching others.** The **person and offices of Christ** are the things which principally they are to insist upon; **for that which is the chiefest object of the church's faith ought to be the chiefest subject of our preaching.** So Paul tells the Galatians, that in his preaching Christ was evidently crucified before their eyes, Galatians 3:1. He proposed Christ crucified unto their consideration, "determining," as he speaks in another place, "to know nothing amongst them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." For if the consideration of Christ be such an important duty in believers, certainly the due proposal of him unto their consideration is no less in preachers. Christ alone is to be preached absolutely, and all other truths as they begin, end, and

center in him. To propose the Lord Christ as amiable, desirable, useful, and every way worthy of acceptation, is the great duty of the dispensers of the gospel. I have insisted the longer on this observation, because it compriseth the main design of the apostle's words, and is also of singular use to all that profess the gospel. Those which remain shall be only named.

Strive to be Christ-like, as ever you would be lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is the Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you, which only can make you lovely persons; the more you resemble him in holiness, the more will you discover of true excellency and loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your converse and communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, **changing you into the same image, from glory to glory.** John Flavel p 224 v2

Needs must the glory of Christ be unspeakable, who reflects glory upon all that are with him, [John 17: 24](#), and stamps glory upon all that belong to him. Flavel, p 327 v2

Eighthly, To conclude, The teachings of God are transforming teachings; [2 Cor. 3:18](#). they change the soul into the same image; God casts them, whom he teacheth, into the very mold of those truths which they learn of him, [Rom. 6: 17](#). Flavel p319 sermon 23

Self-examination, trials, afflictions and difficulties code362

John Owen, Heb 2:5-9 - --ore on 2Cor. 3:18 re duty of Christians; things upon which to meditate - very important. Self-examination, help in going through trials, afflictions and difficulties. Holy admiration in the affections necessary fruit of saving faith.

p313-317 (382-389 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_1.3-6.pdf

Now, from all that hath been spoken unto this proposition, we may learn,—

1. To admire the riches of the grace of God, which hath provided so great salvation for poor sinners. Such and so great as it is, we stood in need of it. Nothing could be abated without our eternal ruin. But when divine wisdom, goodness, love, grace, and mercy, shall set themselves at work, what will they not accomplish? And the effect of them doth the Scripture set forth in these expressions: “So God loved the world;” “God commendeth his love unto us;” “Greater love hath no man than this;” “Riches of grace;” “Treasures of wisdom;” “Exceeding greatness of power;” and the like. **In this will God be glorified and admired unto all eternity. And in the contemplation hereof are we to be exercised here and hereafter; and thereby may we grow up into the image of God in Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18.** Which way soever we look, whatever we consider in it, here is that which will entertain our souls with **delight and satisfaction.** [delight is a grace; God gives us this ability and desire to delight in Him - – spiritual palate so to speak, a point of self-examination, by the way, too, to examine if we have it.] The eternal counsel of God, the person of Christ, his mediation and grace, the promises of the gospel, the evil and wrath we are freed from, the redemption and glory purchased for us, the privileges we are admitted unto a participation of, the consolations and joys of the Spirit, the communion with God that we are called unto, — how glorious are they in the eyes of believers! or assuredly at all times they ought so to be. **How can we enough bewail that vanity, whence it is that the mind suffereth itself to be possessed and filled with other things!** [Hence, Phil 4:8!! ..think on these things.] Alas, what are they, if compared with the excellency of this love of God in Christ Jesus! **Here lies our treasure, here lies our inheritance; why should not our hearts be here also? Were our minds fixed on these things as they ought, how would the glory of them cast out our cares, subdue our fears, sweeten our afflictions and persecutions, and take off our affections from the fading, perishing things of this world, and make us in every condition rejoice in the hope of the glory that shall be revealed!** And, indeed, we lose the sweetness of the life of faith, the benefit of our profession, the reward that is in believing, and are made a scorn to the world and a prey unto temptations, because we dwell not enough in the contemplation of this great salvation.

To stir us up, then, hereunto we may consider, —

(1.) The excellency of the things themselves that are proposed unto our meditations. They are the great, the deep, the **hidden things of the wisdom and grace of God.** Men justify themselves in spending their time and speculations about the things of nature: and indeed such employment is better and more noble than what the generality of men do exercise themselves about; for some seldom raise their thoughts above the dunghills whereon they live, and some stuff their minds with such filthy imaginations as make them an abomination to God, Micah 2:1, 2, — they are conversant only about their own lusts, and making provision to fulfill and satisfy them. But yet what are those things which the better and more refined part of mankind do search and inquire into? Things that came out of nothing, and are returning thitherward apace; things which, when they are known, do not much enrich the mind, nor better it at all as to its eternal condition, nor contribute anything to the advantage of their souls. **But these things are eternal, glorious, mysterious, that have the character of all God’s excellencies enstamped upon them, whose knowledge gives the mind its perfection and the soul its blessedness,** John 17:3. **This made Paul cry out that he accounted all things to be “but loss and dung” in comparison of an acquaintance with them,** Philippians 3:8; and the prophets of old to “search diligently” into the nature of them, 1 Peter 1:10-12, as the things which alone deserved to be

inquired after; and which inquiry renders them “noble” in whom it is, Acts 17:11, and is that which alone differenceth men in the sight of God, Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

(2.) Our interest and propriety in them. If we are believers, these are our things. The rich man is much in the contemplation of his riches, because they are his own; and the great man, of his power, because of his propriety in it. Men take little delight in being conversant in their minds about things that are not their own. [this is a point of examination to see whether or not you be in the faith!] Now, all these things are ours, if we are Christ’s, 1 Corinthians 3:22, 23. This salvation was prepared for us from all eternity, and we are the heirs of it, Hebrews 1:14. It was purchased for us by Jesus Christ; we have redemption and salvation by his blood. It is made over unto us **by the promise** of the gospel, and conferred upon us by the Spirit of grace. **Are these things to be despised? are they to be cast aside among the things wherein we are least concerned? or can there be any greater evidence that we have no propriety in them than that would be, if our hearts should not be set upon them? What! all these riches ours, all these treasures, this goodly inheritance, this kingdom, this glory, and yet not be constant in thoughts and meditations about them! It is doubtless a sign, at least, that we question our title unto them,** and that the evidences we have of them will not endure the trial. **But woe unto us if that should be the end of our profession!** and if it be otherwise, **why are not our minds fixed on that which is our own, and which no man can take from us?**

(3.) The profit and advantage which we shall have hereby, which will be much every way; for,

[1.] **By this means we shall grow up into a likeness and conformity unto these things in our inward man [or the new man/creation]. Spiritual meditation will assimilate our minds and souls unto that which is the object of it.**

So the apostle tells the Romans that they were **delivered into the form of the doctrine** preached unto them, chapter 6:17. Obeying it by faith, **the likeness of it was brought forth upon their souls;** and, **by the renewing of their minds, they were transformed quite into another image in their souls,** chapter 12:2. This the apostle most excellently expresseth, **2 Corinthians 3:18.**

A constant believing contemplation of the glory of God in this salvation by Christ, will change the mind into the image and likeness of it, and that by various degrees, until we attain unto perfection, when “we shall know even as we are known.”

Accustoming of our minds unto these things will make them heavenly; and our affections, which will be conformed unto them, holy. **This is the way to have Christ dwell plentifully in us, and for ourselves to “grow up into him who is our head.”** And is it nothing, to get our minds purged from an evil habit, inclining unto earthly things, or continually forging foolish and hurtful imaginations in our hearts? This **meditation will cast the soul into another mold and frame,** making the heart “a good treasure,” out of which may be drawn at all times good things, new and old.

[2.] **Consolation and supportment** under all afflictions will from hence spring up in the soul. When the apostle would describe **that property of faith** whereby it enables a believer to do and suffer great things joyfully and comfortably, **he doth it by its work and effect in this matter.** It is, saith he, “the

substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Hebrews 11:1; **that is, it brings into the soul, and makes evident unto it, the great things of this salvation, the great things of the love and grace of God therein. And this it doth no otherwise than by a constant contemplation and holy admiration of them.** And when this is once done, he multiplies instances to evince what great effects it will produce, **especially in its enabling of us to go through difficulties, trials, and afflictions.** **And the same also he ascribeth unto hope;** which is nothing but the soul's waiting and expectation to be made partaker of the fullness of this salvation, **whose greatness and satisfactory excellency it doth admire,** Romans 5:2-5. When any affliction or tribulation presseth upon a believer, he can readily divert his thoughts from it unto the rich grace of God in this salvation; which will fill his heart with such a sense of his love as shall carry him above all the assaults of his trouble. And a direction to this purpose the apostle pursues at large, Romans 8:15-18, 24, 25, 31- 39. This is a safe harbor for the soul to betake itself unto in every storm; as he teacheth us again, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. **Whatever befalls us in our "outward man," though it should press so sore upon us as to ruin us in this world, yet "we faint not," we despond not; and the reason is, because those things which we suffer bear no proportion unto what we enjoy or expect. And the way whereby this consideration is made effectual unto us, is by a constant contemplation by faith on the great unseen things of this salvation, which takes off our minds and spirits from a valuation of the things which we presently suffer and endure.** And this experience assures us to be our only relief in afflictions; which undoubtedly it is our wisdom to be provided for.

[3.] The same may be said concerning persecution, one especial part of affliction, and commonly that which most entangles the minds of them that suffer. Now, no man can endure persecution quietly, patiently, constantly, according to the will of God, especially when the devil pursues his old design of bringing it home unto their persons, Job 2:5, unless he hath in readiness a greater good, which shall in itself and in his own mind outbalance the evil which he suffers. And this the grace of this salvation will do. **The soul that is exercised in the contemplation and admiration of it, will despise and triumph over all his outward sufferings which befall him on the account of his interest therein,** as all persecution doth. This the apostle declares at large, **Romans 8. Verses 31-34,** he **directs us unto a holy meditation on God's electing love, and on the death and mediation of Christ,** the two springs of this meditation; and thence leads us, verses 35, 36, to a supposition of the great and sore persecutions that may befall us in this world; and from the former consideration triumphs over them all, verse 37, with a joy and exultation beyond that of conquerors in a battle, which yet is the greatest that the nature of man is capable of in and about temporal things. **When the soul is prepossessed with the glory of this grace and his interest therein, it will assuredly bear him up against all the threatenings, reproaches, and persecutions of this world,** even as it did the apostles of old, making them esteem that to be their glory and honor which the world looked on as their shame, Acts 5:41; and without this the heart will be very ready to sink and faint.

[4.] **This also will greatly tend unto the confirmation of our faith, by giving us a full experience of the things that we do believe.** Then the heart is immovable, **when it is established by experience, when we find a substance, a reality, a spiritual nourishment in things proposed unto us.** Now, how can this be obtained, **unless we are conversant in our minds about them? unless we dwell in our thoughts and affections upon them? for thereby do we taste and find how good the Lord is in this work of his**

grace. Thus this duty being on many accounts of so great importance, we may do well to consider wherein it consisteth. And there are these four things belonging unto it: —

(1.) **Intense prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation**, to give us an acquaintance with the mystery and grace of this great salvation. In ourselves we have no inbred knowledge of it, nor can we by our own endeavors attain unto it. We must have a new understanding given us, or we shall not “know him that is true,” 1 John 5:20. **For notwithstanding the declaration that is made of this mystery in the gospel, we see that the most of men live in darkness and ignorance of it.** It is only the Spirit of God which can search these “deep things of God,” and reveal them unto us, 1 Corinthians 2:10. **By him must “he who commanded light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4:6.**

And therefore the apostle prays for the Ephesians that God would give unto them “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that, the eyes of their understandings being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,” chapter 1:17-19; and for the Colossians, that they might come unto “all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to **the acknowledgment of the mystery of God**, and of the Father, and of Christ,” chapter 2:2, — that is, **that they might have a spiritual and saving acquaintance with the mystery of this great salvation, the love, grace, and wisdom of God therein, which without this Spirit of wisdom and revelation from above we shall not attain unto.**

This, then, in the first place, is to be sought after, this are we to abide in, — constant prayers and supplications for the teaching, instructing, revealing, enlightening work and efficacy of this Spirit, that we may be enabled to look into these deep things of God, that we may in some measure with all saints **comprehend them, and grow wise in the mystery of salvation.** Solomon tells us how this wisdom is to be obtained: **Proverbs 2:3-5**, “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seeketh her as for silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.” **It is by praying, crying, supplications, with diligence and perseverance, that we attain this wisdom.** Abide herein, or all other attempts will prove but vain. How many poor souls, otherwise weak and simple, have by this means grown exceeding wise in the mystery of God! and how many more, wise in this world, through the neglect of it, do walk in darkness all their days!

(2.) **Diligent study of the word**, wherein this mystery of God is declared and proposed unto our faith and holy contemplation; but this hath been spoken unto in part already, and must again be considered, and so need not here be insisted on.

(3.) **Sincere love unto and delight** in the things that are by the Spirit of God revealed unto us, is another part of this duty. Herein our apostle declares what was his **frame of heart**, Philippians 3:8. **How doth his heart, triumph in and rejoice over the knowledge he had obtained of Jesus Christ!** and then, indeed, do we know anything of the grace of God aright, when our hearts are affected with what we know. Peter tells us that the saints of old, in their believing, “**rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory,**” 1 Epist. 1:8. They discovered that in Christ which **made their hearts leap within them, and all their affections to overflow with delight and joy. And this is an essential part of this holy admiration,**

which distinguisheth it from that barren, fruitless, notional speculation of it, which some are contented withal. This are we to stir up our hearts unto in all our meditations of the grace of God, and not to rest until we find them affected, satisfied, and filled with a holy complacency; which is the most eminent evidence of our interest in and union unto the things that are made known unto us.

(4.) **All these things are to be attended with thankfulness and praise.** This the apostle was full of, and broke forth into, when he entered upon the description of this grace, Ephesians 1:3, 4; and this will be the frame of his heart who is exercised unto a holy admiration of it. When our Lord Jesus Christ considered the grace of God in revealing the mysteries of this salvation unto his disciples, it is said of him that he “rejoiced in spirit,” ἠγαλλιάσατο, Luke 10:21, “his spirit leaped in him;” and he breaks forth into a solemn doxology, giving praise and glory unto God. And is it not their duty to whom they are revealed to do that which, out of love unto them, our Lord Jesus Christ did on their behalf? Thankfulness for the things themselves, thankfulness for the revelation of them, thankfulness for the love of God and the grace of Jesus Christ in the one and the other, is a great part of this duty.

Reflections and Observations on Brainerd's Memoirs .

Code396

The following is an excerpt from the memoirs of David Brainerd by Jonathan Edwards. This has a bearing on the above 270+ pages regarding the glory of God in this respect - —hat God's glory is not revealed in conversions that are false. People are moved by other principles, primarily self-love and other false impressions on their minds. The main purpose of spending so many pages on this subject of God's glory revealed to the elect is to show God's infinite wisdom and power at work in this business and that due to the manifold infinite wisdom and power involved, it will infallibly accomplish its end - that the death of Christ has a specific purpose - to save those that the Father gave him. To say that this might happen if man cooperates with God, that man can resist this effectual call, this glory revealed, is to assign weakness to the Godhead or a wisdom that is not wise enough, or a power that is not powerful enough, a grace that is just a common thing, all of which is blasphemy or heresy.

SECT. V.

Besides what has been already related of Mr. Brainerd's sentiments in his dying state concerning true and false religion, we have his deliberate and solemn thoughts on this subject, further appearing by his preface to Mr. Shepard's diary, before mentioned; which, when he wrote it, he supposed to be (as it proved) one of the last things he should ever write. I shall here insert a part of that preface, as follows:

“How much stress is laid by many upon some things as being effects and evidences of exalted degrees of religion, when they are so far from being of any importance in it, that they are really irreligious, **a mixture of self-love, imagination, and spiritual pride, or perhaps the influence of Satan transformed**

into an angel of light; I say, how much stress is laid on these things by many, I shall not determine: but it is much to be feared, that while God was carrying on a glorious work of grace, and undoubtedly gathering a harvest of souls to himself, (which we should always remember with thankfulness,) numbers of others have at the same time been fatally deluded by the devices of the devil, and their own corrupt hearts. It is to be feared, that the conversions of some have no better foundation than this; viz. that after they have been under some concern for their souls for a while, and, it may be, manifested some very great and uncommon distress and agonies, they have on a sudden imagined they saw Christ, in some posture or other, perhaps on the cross, bleeding and dying for their sins; or it may be, smiling on them, and thereby signifying his love to them: and that these and the like things, though mere imaginations, which have nothing spiritual in them, have instantly removed all their fears and distresses, filled them with raptures of joy, and made them imagine, that they loved Christ with all their hearts; when the bottom of all was nothing but self-love. For when they imagined that Christ had been so good to them as to save them, and as it were to single them out of all the world, they could not but feel some kind of natural gratitude to him; although they never had any spiritual view of his divine glory, excellency, and beauty, and consequently never had any love to him for himself. [this is what Arminianism tends to or is the result of Arminian doctrine, particularly, the sinner's prayer]. Or that instead of having some such imaginary view of Christ as has been mentioned, in order to remove their distress, and give them joy, some having had a passage, or perhaps many passages, of Scripture brought to their minds with power, (as they express it,) such as that, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," and the like, they have immediately applied these passages to themselves, supposing that God hereby manifested his peculiar favour to them, as if mentioned by name; never considering, that they are now giving heed to new revelations, there being no such thing revealed in the word of God, as that this or that particular person has, or ever shall have, his sins forgiven; nor yet remembering, that Satan can, with a great deal of seeming pertinency, (and perhaps also with considerable power,) bring Scripture to the minds of men, as he did to Christ himself. And thus these rejoice upon having some scripture suddenly suggested to them, or impressed upon their minds, supposing they are now the children of God, just as did the other upon their imaginary views of Christ. And it is said that some speak of seeing a great light which filled all the place where they were, and dispelled all their darkness, fears, and distresses, and almost ravished their souls. While others have had it warmly suggested to their minds, not by any passage of Scripture, but as it were by a whisper or voice from heaven, "That God loves them, that Christ is theirs," &c. which groundless imaginations and suggestions of Satan have had the same effect upon them, that the delusions before mentioned had on the others. [this is the danger of Pentecostalism or like beliefs where people say they hear from God or God spoke to me on this or that subject, either verbally or by unction; it's design is to get people away from diligent study of scripture and from relying on scripture as the final authority in all religious matters.] And as is the conversion of this sort of persons, so are their after experiences; the whole being built upon imagination, strong impressions, and sudden suggestions made to their minds; whence they are usually extremely confident (as if immediately informed from God) not only of the goodness of their own state, but of their infallible knowledge, and absolute certainty, of the truth of everything they pretend to, under the notion of religion; and thus all reasoning with some of them is utterly excluded.

"But it is remarkable of these, that they are extremely deficient in regard of true poverty of spirit, a sense of exceeding vileness in themselves, such as frequently makes truly gracious souls

to groan, being burdened; as also in regard of meekness, love, gentleness towards mankind, and tenderness of conscience in their ordinary affairs and dealings in the world. And it is rare to see them deeply concerned about the principles and ends of their actions, and under fears lest they should not eye the glory of God chiefly, but live to themselves; or this at least is the case in their ordinary conduct, whether civil or religious. But if any one of their particular notions, which their zeal has espoused, be attacked, they are then so conscientious, they must burn, if called to it, for its defense. Yet at the same time, when they are so extremely deficient in regard of these precious divine tempers which have been mentioned, they are usually full of zeal, concern, and fervency in the things of religion, and often discourse of them with much warmth and engagement: and to those who do not know, or do not consider, wherein the essence of true religion consists, namely, in being conformed to the image of Christ, not in point of zeal and fervency only, but in all divine tempers and practices they often appear like the best of men."

It is common with this sort of people to say, that "God is amongst them, his Spirit accompanies their exhortations, and other administrations, and they are sealed by the Holy Ghost," in the remarkable success they have, in the great affections that are stirred up in God's people, &c. but to insinuate, on the contrary, that "he is not with their opponents;" and particularly, "that God has forsaken the standing ministry; and that the time is come, when it is the will of God that they should be put down, and that God's people should forsake them; and that no more success is to be expected to attend their administrations." But where can they find an instance among all their most flaming exhorters, who has been sealed with so incontestable and wonderful success of his labours, as Mr. Brainerd, not only in quickening and comforting God's children, but also in a work of conviction and conversion, (which they own has in a great measure ceased for a long time among themselves,) with a most visible and astonishing manifestation of God's power? And this was on subjects extremely unprepared, and who had been brought up and lived, some of them to old age, in the deepest prejudices against the very first principles of Christianity; and yet we find the divine power accompanying his labours, producing the most remarkable and abiding change, turning the wilderness into a fruitful field, and causing that which was a desert indeed to bud and blossom as the rose! And this, although he was not only one of their greatest opponents in their errors; but also one of those they call the standing ministry; first examined and licensed to preach by such ministers, and sent forth among the heathen by such ministers; and afterwards ordained by such ministers; always directed by them, and united with them in their consistories and administrations: and even abhorring the practice of those who give out, that they ought to be renounced, and separated from, and that teachers may be ordained by laymen.

It cannot be pretended by these men that Mr. Brainerd condemned their religion, only because he was not acquainted with them, and had not opportunity for full observation of the nature, operation, and tendency of their experiences; for he had abundant and peculiar opportunities of such observation and acquaintance. He lived through the late extraordinary time of religious commotion, and saw the beginning and end, the good and the bad of it. He had opportunity to see the various operations and effects that were wrought in this season, more extensively than any person I know of. His native place was about the middle of Connecticut; and he was much conversant in all parts of that colony. He was conversant in the eastern parts of it, after the religion which he condemned began much to prevail there. He was conversant with the zealous people on Long Island, from one end of the island to the other; and also in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; with people of various nations. He had special

opportunities in some places in this province, (Massachusetts Bay,) where there has been very much of this sort of religion, and at a time when it greatly prevailed. He had conversed and disputed with abundance of this kind of people in various parts, as he told me; and also informed me, that he had seen something of the same appearances in some of the Indians, to whom he had preached, and had opportunity to see the beginning and end of them. Besides, Mr. Brainerd could speak more feelingly concerning these things, because there was once a time when he was drawn away into an esteem of them, and for a short season had united himself to this kind of people, and partook, in some respects, of their spirit and behaviour. But I proceed to another observation on the foregoing Memoirs.

REFLECT. II.

This history of Mr. Brainerd's may help us to make distinctions among the high **religious affections**, and remarkable impressions made on the minds of persons, in a time of great awakening, and revival of religion; and may convince us, that there are not only distinctions in theory, invented to save the credit of pretended revivals of religion, and what is called the **experience of the operations of the Spirit**; but distinctions that do actually take place in the course of events, and have a real and evident foundation in fact.

Many do and will confound things, blend all together, and say, "It is all alike; it is all of the same sort." So there are many that say concerning the religion most generally prevailing among the Separatists, and the affections they manifest, "It is the same that was all over the land seven years ago." And some that have read Mr. Brainerd's Journal, giving an account of the extraordinary things that have come to pass among the Indians in New Jersey, say, "It is evidently the same thing that appeared in many places amongst the English, which has now proved naught, and come to that which is worse than nothing." And all the reason they have thus to determine all to be the same work, and the same spirit, is, that the one manifested high affections, and so do the other; the great affections of the one had some influence on their bodies, and so have the other; the one use the terms conviction, conversion, humiliation, coming to Christ, discoveries, experiences, &c. and so do the other; the impressions on the one are attended with a great deal of zeal, and so it is with the other; the **affections** of the one dispose them to speak much about things of religion, and so do the other; the one delight much in religious meetings, and so do the other. The agreement that appears in these, and such like things, make them conclude, that surely all is alike, all is the same work. Whereas, on a **closer inspection** and **critical examination**, it would appear, that notwithstanding an agreement in such circumstances, yet indeed there is a vast difference, both in essence and fruits. A considerable part of the religious operations that were six or seven years ago, especially towards the latter part of that extraordinary season, was doubtless of the same sort with the religion of the Separatists; but not all: there were many, whose experiences were, like Mr. Brainerd's, in a judgment of charity, genuine and incontestable.

Not only do the opposers of all religion consisting in powerful operations and affections, thus confound things; but many of the pretenders to such religion do so. They who have been the subjects

of some sort of vehement, but vain operations on their mind, when they hear the relation of the experiences of some real and eminent Christians, say, that their experiences are of the same sort: and that they are just like the experiences of eminent Christians in former times, of which we have printed accounts. So, I doubt not, but there are many deluded people, if they should read the preceding account of Mr. Brainerd's life, who, reading without much understanding, or careful observation, would say, without hesitation, that some things which they have met with, are of the very same kind with what he expresses: when the agreement is only in some general circumstances, or some particular things that are superficial, and belonging as it were to the profession and outside of religion; but the inward temper of mind, and the fruits in practice, are as opposite and distant as east and west.

Many honest, good people also, and true Christians, do not very well know how to make a difference. The glistening appearance of false religion dazzles their eyes; and they sometimes are so deluded by it, that they look on some of these impressions, which hypocrites tell of, as the brightest experiences. And though they have experienced no such things themselves, they think, it is because they are vastly lower in attainments, and but babes, in comparison of these flaming Christians. Yea, sometimes from their differing so much from those who make so great a show, they doubt whether they have any grace at all. And it is a hard thing, to bring many well-meaning people to make proper distinctions in this case; and especially to maintain and stand by them. Through a certain weakness under which they unhappily labour, they are liable to be overcome with the glare of outward appearances. Thus, if in a sedate hour they are by reasoning brought to allow such and such distinctions, yet the next time they come in the way of the great show of false religion, the dazzling appearance swallows them up, and they are carried away. Thus the devil by his cunning artifices, easily dazzles the feeble sight of men, and puts them beyond a capacity of a proper exercise of consideration, or hearkening to the dictates of calm thought, and cool understanding. When they perceive the great affection, earnest talk, strong voice, assured looks, vast confidence, and bold assertions, of these empty assuming pretenders, they are overcome, lose the possession of their judgment, and say, "Surely these men are in the right, God is with them of a truth:" and so they are carried away, not with light and reason, but, like children, as it were with a strong wind.

This confounding of all things together, that have a fair show, is but acting the part of a child, that going into a shop, where a variety of wares are exposed to sale all of a shining appearance; vessels of gold and silver; diamonds and other precious stones; toys of little value, which are of some base metal gilt; glass polished and painted with curious colours, or cut like diamonds, &c. should esteem all alike, and give as great a price for the vile as for the precious. Or it is like the conduct of some unskillful, rash person, who, finding himself deceived by some of the wares he had bought at that shop, should at once conclude all he there saw was of no value; and pursuant to such a conclusion, when afterwards he has true gold and diamonds offered him, enough to enrich him and enable him to live like a prince all his days, he should throw it all into the sea.

But we must get into another way. The want of distinguishing in things that appertain to experimental religion, is one of the chief miseries of the professing world. It is attended with very many most dismal consequences: multitudes of souls are fatally deluded about themselves, and their own state; and thus are eternally undone. Hypocrites are confirmed in their delusions, and exceedingly puffed up with pride; many sincere Christians are dreadfully perplexed, darkened, tempted, and drawn aside from the

way of duty; and sometimes sadly tainted with false religion, to the great dishonour of Christianity, and hurt of their own souls. Some of the most dangerous and pernicious enemies of religion in the world (though called bright Christians) are encouraged and honoured; who ought to be discountenanced and shunned by everybody: and prejudices are begotten and confirmed in vast multitudes, against everything wherein the power and essence of godliness consists; and in the end deism and atheism are promoted. [Arminianism and like doctrines lead to these problems. Many say they are saved because they said the sinner's prayer which is coming to God without being called, and so believe that God has accepted them when in fact they never were accepted. In this way many come into the church and corrupt it and contaminate many sincere believers with false teaching, ungodly life styles, etc., for a false conversion still leaves that person an enemy to God in his heart with no desire to be holy. Besides, Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord? Isa 40:13 And again in Rm 11:34-35, For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him? God initiates conversion and directs himself thereto by his own counsel. See also John 3:8.

One of God's Great Purposes: code351 *To show the emptiness and vanity of the creature and to magnify Christ.*

"Because God's design was to show the emptiness of the creature, and its exceeding insufficiency, therefore God suffered both angels and men quickly to fall, and the old creation quickly to go to ruin." Jonathan Edwards

Fall of the Angels, by Jonathan Edwards pg 610 vol. 2

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xii.ii.html>

Corol. V. Lucifer, while a holy angel, in having the excellency of all those glorious things that were about him, all summed up in him, was a type of Christ, in whom all the glory and excellency of all elect creatures is more properly summed, as the head and foundation of all, just as the brightness of all, that reflects the light of the sun, is summed up in the sun.

And as the devil was the highest of all the angels, so he was the very highest of all God's creatures; he was the top and crown of the whole creation; he was the brightest part of the heaven of heavens, that brightest part of all the creation; he was the head of the angels, that most noble rank of all created beings; and, therefore, when spoken of under that type of him, the Behemoth, he is said to be "the chief of the ways of God," [Job xl. 19](#). And since it is revealed that there is a certain order and government among the angels, the superior angels having some kind of authority over others that are of lower rank; and since Lucifer was the chief of them all, we may suppose that he was the head of the whole society, the captain of the whole host. He was the archangel, the prince of the angels, and all did obeisance unto him. And as the angels, as the ministers of God's providence, have a certain

superintendency and rule over the world, or at least over some parts of it that God has committed to their care, hence they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. Therefore, seeing Lucifer was the head, and captain, and prince of all, and the highest creature in the whole universe, we may suppose that he had, as God's chief servant, and the grand minister of his providence, and the top of the creation, in some respect committed to him power, dominion, and principality over the whole creation, and all the kingdom of providence; and as all the angels are called the sons of God, Lucifer was his first-born, and was the firstborn of every creature. But when it was revealed to him, high and glorious as he was, that he must be a ministering spirit to the race of mankind which he had seen newly created, which appeared so feeble, mean, and despicable, so vastly inferior, not only to him, the prince of the angels, and head of the created universe, but also to the inferior angels, and that he must be subject to one of that race that should hereafter be born, he could not bear it. This occasioned his fall; and now he, with the other angels whom he drew away with him, are fallen, and elect men are translated to supply their places, and are exalted vastly higher in heaven than they. And the Man Jesus Christ, the Chief, and Prince, and Captain of all elect men, is translated and set in the throne that Lucifer, the chief and prince of the angels, left, to be the head of the angels in his stead, the head of principality and power, that all the angels might do obeisance to him; for God said, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and God made him his first-born instead of Lucifer, higher than all those thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, and made him, yea, made him in his stead the first-born of every creature, or of the whole creation, and made him also in his stead the bright and morning star, and head and prince of the universe; yea, gave this honour, dignity, and power unto him, in an unspeakably higher and more glorious manner than ever he had done to Lucifer, and appointed him to conquer, subdue, and execute vengeance upon that great rebel. Lucifer aspired to be "like the Most High," but God exalted one of mankind, the race that he envied, and from envy to whom he rebelled against God, to be indeed like the Most High, to a personal union with the eternal Son of God, and exalted him in this union to proper divine honour and dignity, set him at his own right hand on his own throne, and committed to him proper divine power and authority, constituting him as God man, the supreme, absolute, and universal Lord of the universe, and Judge of every creature, the darling of the whole creation, the brightness of God's glory, and express image of his person; as, in his divine nature, he is the NATURAL IMAGE of God. God, in his providence, was pleased thus to show the emptiness and vanity of the creature, by suffering the insufficiency of the highest and most glorious of all creatures, the head and crown of the whole creation, to appear, by his sudden fall from his glorious height into the lowest depth of hatefulness, deformity, and misery. God's design was first to show the creature's emptiness in itself, and then to fill it with himself in eternal, unalterable fullness and glory. To show the emptiness of the creature, the old creation, or the old heavens and earth, were to go to ruin and perish, in some sense, or at least all was to be emptied. Great part of the old creation was actually to sink into total and eternal perdition, as fallen angels and some of fallen men; all mankind was in a sense to be totally: though some of them were to be restored, after they had sensibly been emptied of themselves. And though the highest heaven never was to be destroyed, yet, before it should have its consummate and immutable glory, the highest and most glorious part of it was to perish, and a considerable part of the glorious heavenly inhabitants; and the rest **were hereby to be brought to see their own emptiness and utter insufficiency**, and so as it were to perish or die as to self-dependence and all self-fulness, and to be **brought to an entire dependence on the sovereign grace and all-sufficiency of God**, to be **communicated to them by his Son as their head**. And thus the whole old creation, both heaven and earth, as to all its natural glory and creature-fulness, **was to be pulled**

down; and thus, way was to be made for the creation of the new heavens and new earth, or the setting forth of the whole elect universe in its consummate, everlasting, immutable glory in the fullness of God, in a great, most conspicuous, immediate, and universal dependence on his power and sovereign grace, and also on the glorious and infinitely excellent nature and essence of God, as the infinite fountain of glory and love; the beholding and enjoying of which, and union with which, being the elect creature's all in all, all its strength, all its beauty, all its life, its fruit, its honour, its blessedness.

[So many believe that before conversion, man is in the complete image of God when he is not otherwise it wouldn't need to be restored; he is in the likeness or image of Adam, (Gen. 5:3; and see 1Cor15:49, *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*) , with no virtue/holiness, i.e., with no true love for God) that would be pleasing to God; he is "empty" of anything good (Romans 7:18 and others). This most disagreed by the Arminians. When God communicates his glory to a person in conversion he is not improving something already there but is putting in something new, hence he is now a new creation. This is the whole point of contention; Arminians believe that man is not totally debased, that he has some spiritual strength or virtue (love for God) or capacity, that enables him to savingly come to God (to believe in Christ) whereas Scripture says he has nothing and can do nothing apart from Christ, Jn15:5. The one view glorifies man; the other glorifies God. That's the battle. You will always have the Judaizers, or the man-centered, synergistic religions, man's efforts contending with God's freedom as the potter over the clay. Man says that free grace is insufficient, that man needs to do something or work something in addition it; that God is not the decisive efficient in salvation - --an is, his deciding is; and God is just waiting for man make up his mind...to make the big choice to choose Christ and then God will respond by saving him. So this communication of God's fullness, his internal glory to the creature is the communicating of himself; communicating his nature to the creature so that he is now a partaker of his nature, the image of God being re-stamped upon his soul or his mind. This is entirely the result of God's free choice and good pleasure of his will and has nothing to do with any merit in or pleading from the creature. To plead otherwise is a gross contradiction. These excerpts will paint this picture clearer. What I am also saying is that this communication is not a common thing; not all have faith (2Thes.3:20). For if this communication is common to all, then there is no hell and all are in heaven. For as Edwards said, "The communion of saints with Christ certainly consist in receiving of his fullness and partaking of his grace, which is spoken of, [John i. 16](#). "Of his **fullness** have we all received, and **grace for grace**." And the partaking of that Spirit which God gives not by measure unto him, the partaking of Christ's holiness and grace, his nature, inclinations, tendencies, affections, love, desires, must be a part of communion with him." "his the diagram I made clearly represents. It unites us to Christ, hence it infallibly saves! This is self evident. This is that glory that Christ said he gave to the elect in John 17:22 to effect their conversion, to unite them to himself. Arminianism appeals to man's carnal notion of self sufficiency - --hat is why it is so attractive to multitudes. It's great thrust is to derogate from the total sufficiency of the free grace of Christ, that man is not spiritually dead but has some degree of true virtue in himself remaining after the fall of Adam to contribute to Christ's work in a cooperative effort to attain salvation (synergism - --an cooperates with God); that God's grace is not sufficient; hence Arminianism is anti-Christ. And in this sense, Arminians believe that one can resist this call of God which is absurd.]

Corol. I. From the last paragraph. This may show us the necessity of a work of humiliation in men as the **necessity of man's being emptied of himself** in order to a partaking of the benefits of the new creation, and the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Corol. II. This shows that even the elect angels have their eternal life in a way of humiliation, and also dependence on sovereign grace, as well as elect men, though not the same sort of humiliation and dependence in all respects.

To show the **emptiness** of all creatures in themselves, the ruin of the creation began in heaven, in the very best and highest part of the creation, and in the highest creature in it, the crown and glory of the whole creation; because it was the will of God that a mere creature should not be the head of the creation, but a divine person, and that he should be the crown and glory of the creation. Heaven was the first of the creation that was subject to ruin, and it shall be the last part that shall be renewed or amended by a new creation. There are two parts of the creation connected with the work of redemption; one is the world of man, and that is this visible world; and the other is the world of angels, and that is heaven. The whole is to be changed: the former shall be destroyed, because all men fell, and only an elect number are saved out of it; the other shall not be destroyed, because all the angels did not fall, those that stood supported it, a blessing was left in it, and therefore God said, Destroy it not, and therefore the change that is to be made in that is to be of a contrary nature to destruction; it is to be made infinitely more glorious by a new creation. And therefore God's dealings with respect to the world of angels, are contrary to his dealings with the world of men. The world of men is to be destroyed, and therefore, elect men are taken out of it, and carried into the world of angels, and reprobate men left in it to perish and sink with it. The world of angels is not to be destroyed, but renewed and glorified; and therefore, reprobate angels are taken out of it, and cast into the world of men, and elect angels are kept in it, to be renewed and glorified with it.

Because God's design was to show the emptiness of the creature, and its exceeding insufficiency, therefore God suffered both angels and men quickly to fall, and the old creation quickly to go to ruin.

Some may be ready to think it to be incredible, and what the wisdom of the Creator would not suffer, that the most glorious of all his creatures should fall and be eternally ruined, or that it should be so that the elect angels, those that are beloved of God, should none of them be of equal strength and largeness of capacity with the devil. To this I would say,

1. That the man Christ Jesus that is exalted into the place of Lucifer in heaven, though he be of a rank of creatures of a nature far inferior in capacity to that of the angels, and especially far below the highest of all the angels, yet God can and hath exalted that little worm of littleness and weakness to an immensely greater capacity, dignity, and glory, than Lucifer ever had.
2. God can reward the elect angels that originally are inferior to Lucifer, and can increase their capacity and strength; and there is no reason to think but that he has rewarded, or will reward, elect angels, as well as elect men, with a great exaltation of their nature. And probably Christ did, at his ascension, exalt the natures of some of them at least, so as to exceed all that ever Lucifer had. It seems probable, by [Rev. xx.](#) at the beginning; and probably at the day of judgment, the natures of all the angels will be so exalted as to be above the devil in capacity.

Seeing that this was the case with the devil, that before his fall he was the head of the creation, the captain and prince of the angels, and had some kind of superintendency over the whole universe, and seeing his sin was his pride, and affecting to be like the Most High, no wonder that he seeks to reign as god of this world, and affects to be worshipped as God.

That the devil so restlessly endeavours to set p himself in this world, and maintain his dominion here, and to oppose God, and fight against him to the procuring his own continual disappointment and vexation, and to work out his own misery, and at last to bring on his own head his own greatest torment, his everlasting and consummate misery, is the fruit of a curse that God has laid him under for his first ambition, and envy, and opposition to God in heaven. He is therefore made a perfect slave to those lusts that reign over him, and torment him, and will pull down on him eternal destruction.

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Concerning Divine Decrees

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§ 77. *If the grace of God is not disposing and determining, then a gracious man's differing in this respect from another, is not owing to the goodness of God. He owes no thanks to God for it; and so owes no thanks to God, that he is saved, and not others. But how contrary is this to Scripture! Seeing the Scripture speaks of the gift of virtue, and of the possession of it, as a fruit of God's bounty.*

§ 78. A man's conformity to the rule of duty, is partly owing to assistance or motive; if his conformity be to ten degrees; and it is in some measure, e. g., to the amount of five degrees, owing to sovereign assistance; then only the remaining five degrees are to be ascribed to the man himself, and therefore there are but five degrees of virtue.

§ 79. Dr. Stebbing says, "that a man is indeed both passive and active in his own conversion," and he represents God as partly the cause of man's conversion, and man himself as partly the cause, p. 208.

Again, Stebbing says, p. 254. "Faith and regeneration are our works, as well as his gifts, i.e., they arise partly from God and partly from ourselves." But if so, on this scheme, they imply virtue so far only as they are our works.

Men's salvation is attributed wholly and entirely to men in their scheme, and none of the praise of it is due to God, as will most evidently appear, if the matter be considered with a little attention. For, 1. They hold that man's salvation is given as a reward of man's virtue; so is pardon of sin, deliverance from hell, and eternal life and glory in heaven; all is for man's virtue. 2. Rewardable virtue wholly consists in the exercise of a man's own free will. They hold that a man's actions are no farther virtuous nor rewardable, than as they are from man himself. If they are partly from some foreign cause, so far they are not rewardable. It being so, that that virtue which is rewardable in man, is entirely from man

himself; hence it is to himself wholly that he is to ascribe his obtaining the reward. If the virtue, which is that thing, and that thing only, which obtains the reward, be wholly from man himself, then it will surely follow, that his obtaining the reward is wholly from himself.

All their arguments suppose, that men's actions are no farther virtuous and rewardable, than as they are from themselves, the fruits of their own free will and self-determination. And men's own virtue, they say, is the only condition of salvation, and so must be the only thing by which salvation is obtained. And this being of themselves only, it surely follows, that their obtaining salvation is of themselves only.

They say, their scheme gives almost all the glory to God. "That matter, I suppose, may easily be determined, and it may be made to appear beyond all contest, how much they do ascribe to the man, and how much they do not.

By them, salvation is so far from God, that it is God that gives opportunity to obtain salvation; it is God that gives the offer and makes the promise: **but the obtaining of, the thing promised is of men.** The being of the promise is of God; but their interest in it is wholly of themselves, **of their own free will.** And furthermore, it is to be observed, that even God's making the offer, and giving the opportunity to obtain salvation, at least that which consists in salvation from eternal misery, is not of God, so as to be owing to any proper grace or goodness of his. For they suppose he was obliged to make the offer, and it would have been a reproach to his justice, if he had not given an opportunity to obtain salvation. For they hold, it is unjust for God to make men miserable for Adam's sin; and that it is unjust to punish them for that sin that they cannot avoid; and that, therefore, it is unjust for God not to preserve or save all men that do what they can, or use their sincere endeavours to do their duty; and therefore it certainly follows, that it is unjust in God not to give all opportunity to be saved or preserved from misery; and consequently, it is no fruit at all of any grace or kindness in him to give such opportunity, or to make the offer of it. So that, all that is the fruit of God's kindness in man's salvation, is the positive happiness that belongs to salvation. But neither of these two things are in any respect whatsoever the fruit of God's kindness, neither his deliverance from sin, nor from misery in his virtue and holiness; and when hereafter he shall see the misery of the damned, he will have it to consider, that it is owing in no respect to God that he is delivered from that misery. And that good men differ from others that shall burn in hell to all eternity, is wholly owing to themselves. When they, at the day of judgment, shall behold some set on the left hand of the Judge, while they are on his right hand, and shall see how they differ, they may, and, as they would act according to truth, they ought to take all the glory of it unto themselves; and therefore the glory of their salvation belongs to them. For it is evident that a man's making himself to differ with regard to any great spiritual benefit, and his not receiving it from another, but his having it in distinction from others, being from himself, is ground of a man's boasting and glorying in himself, with respect to that benefit, and of boasting of it: I say, it is evident by the apostle's words, "Who maketh thee to differ? Why boastest thou, as though thou hadst not received it?" These words plainly imply it.

It is evident, that it is God's design to exclude man's boasting in the affair of his salvation. Now, let us consider what does give ground for boasting in the apostle's account, and what it is that in his account excludes boasting, or cuts off occasion for it. It is evident by what the apostle says, [1 Cor. i.](#) latter end,

that the entireness and universality of our dependence on God, is that which cuts off occasion of boasting; as, our receiving our wisdom, our holiness, and redemption through Christ, and not through ourselves; that Christ is made to us wisdom, justification, holiness, and redemption; and not only so, but that it is of God that we have any part in Christ; Of him are ye in Christ Jesus: nay, further, that it is from God we receive those benefits of wisdom, holiness, &c. through the Saviour that we are interested in.

The import of all these things, if we may trust to scripture representations, is, that God has contrived to exclude our glorying; that we should be wholly and every way dependent on God, for the moral and natural good that belongs to salvation; and that we have all from the hand of God, by his power and grace. And certainly this is wholly inconsistent with the idea that our holiness is wholly from ourselves; and that we are interested in the benefits of Christ rather than others, is wholly of our own decision. **And that such a universal dependence is what takes away occasion of taking glory to ourselves, and is a proper ground of an ascription of all the glory of the things belonging to man's salvation to God**, is manifest from [Rom. xi. 35, 36.](#) **“Or who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and to him, and through him, are all things; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

The words are remarkable, and very significant. If we look into all the foregoing discourse, from the beginning of [chapter ix.](#) of which this is the conclusion, by not giving to God, but having all this wholly from, through, and in God, is intended that these things, these great benefits forementioned, are thus from God, without being from or through ourselves. That some of the Jews were distinguished from others in enjoying the privileges of Christians, was not of themselves; not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. It is of him who has mercy on whom he will have mercy. It is of God who makes of the same lump, a vessel to honour and a vessel unto dishonour. It is not of us, nor our works, but of the calling of God, or of him that calleth, [chap. ix. 11. and 23, 24.](#) **Not first of our own choice**, but of election, [chap. ix. 11-27.](#) and [chap. xi. 5.](#) It is all of the grace of God in such a manner, as not to be of our works at all; yea, and so as to be utterly inconsistent with its being of our works; [chap. xi. 5, 6, 7.](#) In such a manner as not first to be of their seeking; their seeking does not determine, but God's election; [chap. xi. 7.](#) It is of God, and not of man, that some were gathered in, that were wild olive branches in themselves, and were more unlikely as to anything in themselves to be branches, than others, [verse 17.](#) Their being grafted in, is owing to God's distinguishing goodness, while he was pleased to use severity towards others, [ver. 22.](#) Yea, God has so ordered it, on purpose that all should be shut up in unbelief; be left to be so sinful, that he might have mercy on all; **so as more visibly to show the salvation of all to be merely dependent on mercy.** Then the apostle fitly concludes all this discourse, [Rom. xi. 35, 36.](#) **“Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and to him, and through him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”**

Again, in the apostle's account, **a benefit's being of our works, gives occasion for boasting, and therefore God has contrived that our salvation shall not be of our works, but of mere grace**, [Rom. iii. 27.](#) [Eph. ii. 9.](#) And that neither the salvation, nor the condition of it, shall be of our works, but that, with regard to all, we are God's workmanship and his creation antecedently to our works; **and his grace and**

power in producing this workmanship, and his determination or purpose with regard to them, are all prior to our works and the cause of them. See also [Rom. xi. 4, 5, 6.](#)

And it is evident, that man 'saving virtue from himself, and not receiving it from another, and making himself to differ with regard to great spiritual benefits, does give ground for boasting, by the words of the apostle in [Rom. iii. 27.](#) And this is allowed by those men in spiritual gifts. And if so in them, more so in greater things; more so in that which in itself is a thousand times more excellent, and of ten thousand times greater importance and benefit.

By the Arminian scheme, that which is infinitely the most excellent thing, viz. **virtue** and holiness, which the apostle sets forth as being infinitely the most honourable, and will bring the subjects of it to infinitely the greatest and highest honour, that which is infinitely the highest dignity of man's nature of all things that belong to man's salvation; in comparison of which, all things belonging to that salvation are nothing; that which does infinitely more than anything else constitute the difference between them and others, as more excellent, more worthy, more honourable and happy; **this is from themselves.** With regard to this they have not received of another. With regard to this great thing, they, and they only, make themselves to differ from others; and this difference proceeds not at all from the power or grace of God.

Again, in the apostle's account, this scheme will give occasion to have a great benefit, that appertains to salvation, not of grace, but of works.

Virtue is not only the most honourable attainment, but it is that which men, on the supposition of their being possessed of it, are more apt to glory in, than in anything else whatsoever. **For what are men so apt to glory in as their own supposed excellency, as in their supposed virtue? And what sort of glorying is that, which, it is evident in feet, the Scriptures do chiefly guard against? It is glorying in their own righteousness, their own holiness, their own good works.** [[see Shepard's comment on this! p317](#)]

It is manifest, that in the apostle's account, it is a proper consideration to prevent our boasting, that our distinction from others is not of ourselves, not only in being distinguished in having better gifts and better principles, but in our being made partakers of the great privileges of Christians, such as being engrafted into Christ, and partaking of the fatness of that olive-tree. [Rom. xi. 17, 18.](#) "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, boast not against the branches."

Here it is manifest, it is the distinction that was made between some and others, that is the thing insisted on; and the apostle, [verse 22.](#) calls upon them to consider this great distinction, **and to ascribe it to the distinguishing goodness of God only.** "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness." **And its being owing, not to them, but to God and his distinguishing goodness, is the thing the apostle urges as a reason why they should not boast, but magnify God's grace or distinguishing goodness.** And if it be a good reason, and the scheme of our salvation be every way so contrived (as the apostle elsewhere signifies) that all occasion of boasting should be precluded, and all reasons given to ascribe all to God's grace; then it is doubtless so ordered,

that the greatest privileges, excellency, honour, and happiness of Christians, should be that wherein they do not distinguish themselves, **but the difference is owing to God's distinguishing goodness.**

Stebbing strongly asserts, God is not the author of that difference that is between some and others, that some are good, and others bad.

§ 80. The Arminians differ among themselves. Dr. Whitby supposes what God does, is only proposing moral motives; but that in attending, adverting, and considering, we exercise our liberty. But Stebbing supposes, that the attention and consideration is itself the thing owing to the Spirit of God; p. 217.

§ 81. Stebbing changes the question, pages 223, 224. He was considering who was the chief glory of our conversion, or of our virtue; and there, answering objections, endeavours to prove the affirmative of another question, viz. whether God is the author of that pardon and salvation, of which conversion and virtue are the condition.

§ 82. Stebbing supposes that one thing wherein the assistance of the Spirit consists, is the giving of a meek, teachable, disinterested temper of mind, to prepare men for faith in Christ; pages 217, 259, and that herein consists that drawing of the Father, [John vi. 44.](#) viz. in giving such a temper of mind.

This he calls the **preventing grace of God**, that goes before conversion. He often speaks of a part that we do, and a part that God does. And he speaks of this as that man which God does. Therefore this, if it be the part which God does, in distinction from the part which we do, (for so he speaks of it,) is wholly done by God. **And consequently, here is virtue wholly from God, and not at all from the exercise of our own free will; which is inconsistent with his own, and all other Arminian principles.** Stebbing speaks of these **preparatory dispositions** as virtue, p. 30, 31, 32. yea, as that wherein virtue does in a peculiar manner consist, p. 31. And he there also, viz. page 259. talks inconsistently with himself; for he supposes that this meek and teachable temper **is given by God**, by his **preventing grace**; and also supposes, that all that have this, shall surely come to the Father. He says, page 256. "It is certainly true of the meek, disinterested man, that as he will not reject the gospel at first, so he will not be prevailed on by any worldly considerations to forsake it afterwards."

"He who is under no evil bias of mind, by which he may be prejudiced against the truth, (which is the notion of a meek and disinterested man,) such a one, I say, cannot possibly foil of being wrought upon by the preaching of the word, which carries in it all that evidence of truth which reason requires," &c. and his words, page 259 are, [John vi. 37, 39.](#) "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me;" **for to be given of the Father signifies the same thing with being drawn of the Father**, as has been already shown. And to be drawn of the Father, signifies to be prepared or fitted for the reception of the gospel, by the **preventing grace of God**, as has also been proved. Now, this preparedness consisting, as has likewise been shown, in being endued with a meek and disinterested temper of mind; those who are given of the Father, will be the same with Christ's sheep. And the sense of the place is the same with the preceding, where our Saviour says that his sheep hear his voice and follow him, i. e., become his obedient disciples. This text, therefore, being no more than a declaration of what will be certain, and (morally speaking) the necessary effect of that disposition, upon the account of which men are said to be given of the Father, (to wit, that it will lead them to embrace the gospel, when once proposed to

them). By these things, the **preventing grace of God**, the part that God does, in distinction from the part that we do, and that which prevents or goes before what we do, thoroughly decides and determines the case as to our conversion, or our faith and repentance and obedience, notwithstanding all the hand our free will is supposed to have in the case; and which he supposes is what determines man's conversion; and insists upon it most strenuously and magisterially through his whole book. Stebbing supposes the influence of the Spirit necessary to prepare men's hearts, pages 15-18. He (pages 17,18.) speaks of this as what the Spirit does, and as being his **preventing grace**; and speaks of it as always effectual; so that all such, and only such as have it, will believe. See also pages 28-30. That these dispositions must be effectual; see pages 46-48. This teachable, humble, meek spirit is what Stebbing speaks of everywhere as what the Spirit of God gives antecedent to obedience. He insists upon it, that God's assistance is necessary in order to obedience. In pages 20, 21 he plainly asserts that it is necessary in order to our obedience, and declares that our Saviour has asserted it in express terms in these words, John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing;" i. e. as he says, no good thing. Hence it follows, that this teachable, humble, meek disposition, this good and honest heart, is not the fruit of any good thing we do in the exercise of our free will; but is merely the fruit of divine operation. Here observe well what Stebbing says concerning God's giving grace sufficient for obedience, in answer to prayer. Pages 103-106.

§ 83. No reason in the world can be given, why a meek, humble spirit, and sense of the importance of Christian things, should not be as requisite in order to acceptable prayer, as in order to acceptable hearing and believing the word. It is as much so spoken of. A praying without a good spirit in these and other respects, is represented as no prayer, as ineffectual, and what we have no reason to expect will be answered.

§ 84. If that meekness, &c. depends on some antecedent, self-determined act of theirs, and they be determined by that; then their being Christ's, being his sheep, **and therein distinguished from others that are not his sheep, is not properly owing to the Father's gift, but to their own gift.** The Father's pleasure is not the thing it is to be ascribed to at all; for the Father does nothing in the case decisively; he acts not at all freely in the case, but acts on an antecedent, firm obligation to the persons themselves; but their own pleasure, undetermined by God, is that which disposes and decides in the matter. How impertinent would it be to insist on the gift of the Father in this case, when the thing he speaks of is not from thence!

& 85. He supposes that the assistance that God gives in order to obedience is giving this good and honest heart; see p. 46, 47. together with p. 40. 45.; and therefore, this good and honest heart is not the fruit of our own obedience, but must be the fruit of assistance that precedes our good works, as he often calls it the preventing grace of God. **And therefore, if this grace determines the matter, and will certainly be followed with faith and obedience, then all Arminianism, and his own scheme, comes to the ground.** [in short, Arminians contradict themselves often, noted again in §89 below.]

§ 86. Stebbing interprets that passage, Luke xix. 16, 17. which speaks of our being little children, and receiving the kingdom of God as little children, of that meekness and humility, &c. that is antecedent to conversion, which it is apparent Christ elsewhere speaks of as consequent on conversion, at Matt. xviii.

§ 87. It is manifest the power of God overcomes resistance, and great resistance of some sort; otherwise there would be no peculiar greatness of power, as distinguishing it from the power of creatures, manifested in bringing men to be willing to be virtuous; which it is apparent there is, by [Matt. xix. 26](#). “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

§ 88. **The Arminian scheme naturally, and by necessary consequence, leads men to take all the glory of all spiritual good (which is immensely the chief, most important, and excellent thing in the whole creation) to ourselves; as much as if we, with regard to those effects, were the supreme, the first cause, self-existent, and independent, and absolutely sovereign disposers.** We leave the glory of only the meaner part of creation to God, and take to ourselves all the glory of that which is properly the life, beauty, and glory of the creation, and without which it is all worse than nothing. So that there is nothing left for the great First and Last; no glory for either the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in the affair. This is not carrying things too far, but in a consequence truly and certainly to be ascribed to their scheme of things.

§89. He may be said to be the giver of money that offers it to us, without being the proper determiner of our acceptance of it. But if the acceptance of an offer itself be the thing which is supposed to be given, he cannot, in any proper sense whatsoever, be properly said to be the giver of this, who is not the determiner of it. But it is the acceptance of offers, and the proper improvement of opportunities, wherein consists virtue. He may be said to be the giver of money or goods that does not determine the wise choice; but if the wise and good choice itself be said to be the thing given, it supposes that the giver determines the existing of such a wise choice. But now, this is the thing that God is represented as the giver of, when he is spoken of as the giver of virtue, holiness, &c. for virtue and holiness (as all our opponents in these controversies allow and maintain) is the thing wherein a wise and good choice consists. [\[see pg 106\]](#)

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Conversion & The Excellency of Christ

code353

More on conversion, coming to Christ, the excellency of Christ, Faith, the Spirit of Faith, Adam having life in himself vs. saving faith, coming to the lord - —he effectual call, the affections at conversion vs. a carnal heart. My comments in blue.

THOMAS SHEPARD

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS, CH 21 SECT III

PG 317-323

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SECTION III.

III. Fullness of faith, in the room of unbelief.

For it is not unknown how strongly this sin keeps every man's palace, and that not Moses, but the Lord Jesus, is the stumbling stone even of the Jews, the peculiar people of God. When men are at their last cast, that the Lord intends to wait to pity no more, at last the Son comes, and an unbelieving heart casts the balance and refuseth him. After that the Lord hath tried men by miraculous preservations, deliverances from Pharaohs, provision as Massah, then Canaan comes to be entered, and men cannot enter because of unbelief. This sin stands in open view, and keep the breach, when all other sins in appearance are beaten out of the field. Now, there is a **Spirit of faith**, which comes in the room of this unbelief, dispossesseth the soul of the power of it; for there may be some lighter strokes of the Spirit, which are lighter skirmishes with it, but yet it [unbelief] wins field again; as in the stony ground, that believed, but unbelief got head again in time of persecution and temptation, and then they fell away.

Quest. 1. What is this faith, or that fullness or full measure of it?

Ans. I shall not speak here of **historical or miraculous faith**; the first of which is in the devils, the second in some men only, that may perish afterward. Nor yet of that **faith which we call of assurance**, we shall not come yet to that. But of that which we call **justifying faith, and that which doth first unite to Christ, and justify**. Now, this faith is the coming of the soul to Christ. This is the general. **For Adam had his life in himself**, but now it is lost in us, but laid up in Christ. Col. iii. 3. Now, hence they that would have this life, must go out of themselves to the Lord for it. Now, the **motion of the soul** between these two extremes of emptiness and death here, to life and fullness there, what is it but faith? **Which Adam had not, nor could have in that estate; and, therefore, none of the sons of Adam naturally can share in it.**

And that this is faith it appears —

1. From John vi. 35. "I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst."

". Because unbelief is the departing of the soul from the God of life, Heb. iii. 12. Not from a holy law, but from a living God.

3. Faith is the proper effect of vocation; or rather the chief part thereof. Now, look, as ineffectual vocation is when the Lord calls, but the soul never comes, so **effectual vocation is whereby the Lord calls, and the soul answers, and so comes**. So that to sit still and see nothing, and do nothing, is not faith, but sloth. No, Christ cannot be in that soul that is yet in himself. Therefore faith is not a passive possibility of the soul to receive Christ, though that may prepare for him, but the going out of a man's self unto Christ.

~ *Quest.* 2. But may not a man come to Christ, that never shall have mercy from Christ?

Ans. Yes, there may be many **lighter strokes**, as in **temporary believers**. The world is at this day full of faith; every man thinks and saith he believes, though his faith be weak. It is men's buckler against all means, they know these sins, but as long as they believe all is well. And it is their comfort in all their troubles, though the Lord kills, yet they will believe. And I say, some men have departed indeed from the Lord; the gospel hath been preached, and they have made out of themselves to Christ, but missed of him. There is a bramble faith that I catcheth and scratcheth Christ, kisseth and betrays him. That coming to Christ therefore which none else have the full measure of, it appears in these particulars.

It is that work of the Spirit whereby a sinner, sensible of his extreme nakedness, emptiness, and wants, being called of God, **his whole soul comes out of himself to Christ, for himself**. I speak not of assurance, for if that were faith, all reprobates then were bound to believe an untruth, viz., that God the Father loves, and Christ hath died for them.

1. **It is a work of God's Spirit**, and hence it is called the Spirit of faith, not only because wrought by it, but because the Spirit is in an admirable manner fastened to it, and clasped to the soul, and the soul to Christ by it.

2. **The subject in which it is wrought; a sinner sensible of his extreme wants; for faith springs out of the destruction of our own excellency, and ruins of it**; like Christ, that did arise a root out of a dry ground; for the Lord's great plot is to advance Christ and his rich grace. Now, look, as it is obscured by bringing anything of our own to it, so it is advanced by fetching all from it; this can never be till the soul **is sensible of his nakedness, emptiness, and wants; let Christ be never so sweet, a full soul will loathe him; and I say extreme want**. The prodigal never comes home till he dies for hunger; for such is the senselessness of men, and dislike of Christ, that extremities only drive them hither, as Judges v. 6. When the Midianites came, they ran like beasts to their den, and until bread was taken from them, they cry not unto the Lord, but then they do; so men have neither hearts, or, if so, no heads to come to Christ till now; and usually the Lord makes this the ground of the soul's first motion towards Christ. I die here, and because of my wants I therefore come. Pardon sin, because great. Ps. xxv.

11. *lie* merciful, because it is a stiff-necked people. Exod. xxxiv. 9. That so when the Lord pardons, the soul may have nothing to boast of but misery, and now it is hard to believe. But this is not all.

3. **It must be called of God**; for else the soul, though never so sensible of misery, **could not, would not, durst not come** [1Cor. 2:14]; but it would either sink under its burden, or plead against all means; it shall presume, as Judas that had no look of Christ (as Peter had) hangs himself; and hence, (Jer. iii. 23), "Come unto me; their heart answered, We come." For this is usually the objection of the soul when it sees the riches of mercy, What have I to do with it, that am so vile, and have fallen so oft, and

rejected the Lord, and am like to do so? I shall sin the more by this means. No, the command of the gospel comes, O, come, notwithstanding all this, nay, because of this, for I will heal you of them. **Now, this call hath two things in it.** 1. It is particular; for general invitations to believe and come in are made **particular** to the elect, who else would not come in; and hence, (Is. xliii. 1,) "I have called thee by name." For we shall find that the hearts of men, when they see a promise, cannot think it concerns them; all that hunger shall be satisfied, but shall I? And hence show them it is as particular as the law, they cannot think it is to them; and hence they say sometime the word *all* is not put in. **Now, that is the mighty power of unbelief, a word spoken to all is regarded by none till the Lord make it particular;** and hence (Is. ii,) Christ is said to judge the nations: now, when judges ride their circuits, they do not make laws, but only apply laws. One man is brought before them to be condemned; he hopes better, but he is so; now he trembles. Another to be acquitted; he fears, being falsely accused; he is freed, and now he rejoiceth. 2. **It is a living call, or powerful call.** John v. 25. **And hence a man may live under the calls of the minister long, and never come, because it is not made living from the Lord of life; and hence not irresistible.** [John 5:25 "*Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.*" Now opposed to this is the remark that Jesus makes to the Jews, those who are not his sheep: "You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."³⁸ But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe." "John 5:37-38]

4. Upon this call the whole soul comes out of itself to Christ; for if a man could climb the clouds, and unlock the doors of heaven, and come Elias-like in his body to Christ, he might miss of Christ, as well as those that came and followed Christ, for a time, with their bodies while he lived on the earth. A man may come to Christ with half his soul or heart; there may be some hope and some desires, some love and some cleaving to him, and choice of him really, inwardly, and yet not savingly, because the whole soul is not here come, but half of it. James i. 7, 8. Now, the whole soul then comes, **when all the affections and will take their flight to the Lord, and fasten there. When all the affections are gathered from all other things and changed, and so they come to, and embrace the Lord;** so that hope waits only here. When will the Lord pity me? **Desires that were set on a thousand things before, all long after him, love only tasteth him;** the Lord letting in some sight of the freeness of mercy, hope looks out hither; the Lord showing the way, and the way to it, **desire breaks down stone walls and all means, and the difficulty of them, to have him.** The Lord letting the soul taste the sweetness of Jesus and his grace, the soul joys, and love embraceth, and the will fosters; **a carnal heart desires, loves, joys, in other things, and the Lord also, and so hath a false heart.** But the whole heart comes hither, and when it is here, thinks one heart too little; nay, one life, one soul; and when any part of the affections are left anywhere else, then the soul mourns, hates that bondage, is ashamed of it, etc. So that the stream of the whole soul runs now hither. Ps. cxix. 2; Jer. iii. 10; Ps. xlv. 10. So it is with the soul, as with them when they were to come out of Egypt, they would not leave child nor hoof behind, lest there should be any occasion of return; as it is with the soul departed from the body, it only minds the Lord it hath taken leave of all, so by faith the whole soul leaves all and comes to the Lord; otherwise the soul is not come to Christ, but reacheth after Christ; like men that waded after the ark, but perished in the waters. Their arms are not long enough, their desires and love are not long enough, to reach Christ; the bent and stream of the soul is set and runs here. It is with the soul as it is with two rivers, both run with all their strength to the sea, but the great river is bigger, and runs faster, yet the other's stream, is wholly carried thither. So some men may be more full of faith than others, yet both run to the sea, and as

rivers, they run in their circles, this way and that way, and are sometimes dammed up, yet end there. So the souls of all saints run to this and the other creature, yet they end in the Lord at last. As Peter and John, that ran to the sepulcher, though one outran the other, yet they came both to the Lord at last; when both of them had, for a time, forsook him, though all the world draw the soul back, it cannot live without the Lord; nay, though the Lord beat away the soul from him, yet it follows after him.

5. **It is to the Lord for himself**; for (John vi,) some came to Christ for loaves, and could have been glad if Christ had been king for it, but did not care for himself; and hence (ver. 27) he points and turns them to himself: some came to him for higher ends, therefore were his disciples, that is, for life from him. But "his flesh and blood, or else you die," it was a hard saying; they could not understand nor see what that meant, and hence forsook him; but when they come and receive him himself, now life is, indeed, theirs.

So that it is Christ's person that this faith first pitcheth on, as it is in marriage, and those that come for this were never sent away. Now, the soul is truly come to him for himself, 1. When himself gives rest to the soul in the want of all things. Heb. iv. 3. If friends, protection, strength, life, glory, be wanting, yet having him, in him I have all these; when all is sold away, not the treasure only, but the field contents him; for it looks on this as better than heaven, than glory; it comforts the soul that the Lord himself should be mine. 2. The soul that taketh him, it is not only to make boast of him, as Capernaum had him, nor to cover sloth, and sin, and delusion by him. I have Christ, and I have no more to care for, etc., but to live on him; (John vi. 57,) "He that eateth me shall live by me." Phil. iii. 9, 10. **A man takes not Christ as medicine to ease him, nor as stately hangings to adorn him, but as bread to receive life from him.** For many receive Christ, rest they do upon him, and rest, they say, in him, but they do not suck any good from him; nay, before they had any Christ or assurance of him they were better than now. You have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus, you are out of your place. As in Jotham's parable, the olive and vine would not be pulled out of their places, to be set on the tops of other trees, as kings, lest they lose their fatness and sweetness; so, since you have closed with Christ, you have lost your fatness and sweetness that once you had, you are now out of your place; go to your horrors and sorrows again, till the Lord so give himself to you as that you may receive life from him.

Quest. 3. But must all come thus to Christ with their whole soul? will not part of the price serve?

Ans. No, the whole soul must come, and cannot but come.

1. In regard of the jealousy of God; who is like a jealous husband, can bear with many weaknesses, but will have the whole heart; and they that do not shall be destroyed for spiritual whoredom. Ps. 73:27. He should dishonor Christ else, to sell him so cheap.

2. In regard of the **excellency of Christ; the Lord draws the soul by the revelation of him.** Rom. i. 16, 17; Is. lv. 3, 4. Now, look as men in this world, when they see a seeming good, their whole soul is overpowered to be drawn after it. So here, when such an object is seen, especially the soul having been at his sepulcher weeping, as iron never stirs till the loadstone comes, and then it makes to that only, not to things touched with it; for as "we love him because he loved us first," so Christ loving the soul with all his heart, and his whole heart set upon him, the whole soul is, *e contra*, set on Christ.

3. In regard else a man can receive nothing from the Lord. Jer. xxix. 12, 13. As it is with conduit pipes, let them be laid, but not reach the conduit head, no water can come to that family, so here; and this is

the reason why men live and pray, and receive nothing, their hearts reach not hither. Men's hearts reach but half way to Christ. Tell me else, did you ever not receive?

4. **Because else it is, indeed, no coming to him, but a leaning on him or toward him.** So as it is with trees, if not cut off quite, or not pulled up quite by the roots, they cannot be set in another orchard; if the tree be left with never so little twigs in the ground, so here; nay, the Lord accounts this worse than if a man had not come at all. Jer. iii. 10. **The Lord abhors a double heart, that, Judas-like, forsakes all for the Lord, but then loves the Lord and the bag too.** You are not the Lord's. As it was with that man that quarreled about the tree, it leaned over the pales, but the root being found to be there, his it was; so, though he lean on Christ, he is none of his.

Quest. 4. But do all saints come to this measure?

Ans. Ponder these grounds else.

Object. But are not our hearts partly carnal, and so close with the creature?

Ans. True; but yet, —

1. **So far as it is carnal, it is lamented heavily;** so that they grow not there, but are dying, withering daily. Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. **When a man's affections grow out of the world, and there is no fear nor sorrow, in this respect now, no Christ is there.**

2. The **bent and bias** of the soul carries the whole soul hither. For I would not judge of this so much by **sudden pangs**, as by an inward bent; for the whole soul, in affectionate expressions and actions, may be carried unto Christ, **but being without this bent and change of affections, it is unsound**, as in Gideon, they would on a hurry make him king; he would not; he knew it was a sudden pang which would die. **And the reason is, the true turn of the whole soul is not by turning old affections upon another object, but changing them first by this bent, and so turning them.** For a carnal heart may have the first, as the same eye may see the sun and a dunghill, and the eye not changed; so here. Now, when the whole soul is set here, it is never at rest till here.

Quest. 5. But may not hypocrites come to this?

Ans. 1. Then they may be blessed. Ps. cxix. 2.

2. Then they shall never be cast off from Christ. John vi. 37.

3. Then they may partake of that which the Lord only looks for. For why is the Lord angry? The heart is gone from him. Why is the ministry ordained, but to win the whole heart to him? John iii. 19-21. O, therefore, consider whether it hath been thus with you or no. If not, woe to you! O, be very careful here. It is a thousand to one if some part of your heart be not fixed elsewhere. If Christ were at judgment, and should say, "Come, ye blessed," how glad would ye be! O, he saith now, Come, and take myself.

Lawful Blessings Do the Most Hurt

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By Thomas Shepard

More notes on various spiritual experiences by Thomas Shepard Vol. 3

Meditations and Spiritual Experiences

pg 431 His Diary ref. lawful blessings do the most hurt

Oct. 29. I was much troubled about the poverty of the churches; and I saw it was such a misery as I could not well-discern the cause of, nor see any way out; yet I saw we might find out the cause of any evil by the Lord's stroke. Now, he struck us in outward blessings, and hence it is a sign there was our evil: (1.) In not acknowledging all we have from God, (Hos. ii. 8 ;) (2.) In not serving God in the having of them; (3.) In making ourselves secure and hardhearted; **for lawful blessings are the secret idols, and do most hurt.** And it is then a sign our greatest hurt lies in having, and that the greatest good lies in God's taking them away from us. Whereupon I, considering this, did sweetly content myself that the Lord should take all from us, if it might be not in wrath, but in love, viz., hereby to glorify himself the more, and to take away the fuel of our sin. I saw that if God's people could be joyfully content to part with all to the Lord, prizing the gain of a little holiness more than enough to overbalance all their losses, that the Lord then would do us good.

Nov. 3. On a fast day, at night, in preparation for the duty, the Lord made me sensible of these sins in the churches: (1.) **Ignorance of themselves, because of secret evils;** (2.) Ignorance of God, because most men were full of dark and doubtful consciences; (3.) Not cleaving to Christ dearly, only; (4.) **Neglect of duties,** because of our place of security; (5.) Standing against all means, because we grow not better; (6.) **Earthliness, because we long not to be with Christ.** And I saw sin as my greatest evil. ...I was vile, but God was good only, whom my sins did cross. And I saw what cause I had to loathe myself, and not to seek honor to myself. Will any desire his dunghill to be commended? Will he be grieved if it be not? So my heart began to fall off from seeking honor. The Lord also gave me some glimpse of myself; and a good day and time it was to me.

Nov. 4. On the end of the fast (1.) I went to God, and rested on him as **sufficient;** (2.) waited on him as **efficient,** and said, "Now, Lord, do for thy churches, and help in mercy."

" In the beginning of this day I began to consider whether all the country did not fare the worse for my sins; and I saw it was so. And this was a humbling thought to me: and I thought if everyone in particular did think so, and was humbled, it would do well. I saw also that if repentance turn away judgments, then if the question be, who they are that bring judgments, the answer would be, They that think their sins so small as that God is not angry with them at all.

p414 A way of believing for pardon

July 9. Being suddenly surprised by a sin before the sacrament, my conscience was awakened, and my heart checked me for it. Yet the Lord turned the meditation of the evil of this sin to great good to me, viz., not only to set my heart against it and all other sins, but the Lord thereby let in a most glorious light (as I thought) of his gospel, and of the way of believing for pardon, more than ever I had; which was this: —

I saw that the nature and practice of a man awakened with sin was this, viz., when conscience smites him with the fear and terror of God, "Dost think God loves thee, or hath sanctified thee, who dost rush upon such evils again and again? No, he is angry with thee for thy sin." "Hereupon the heart, being desirous of favor, thinks secretly thus: As sin hath provoked God's anger, so, he being merciful, I hope the leaving off my sin, and turning from my sin, will pacify and please the Lord again; and so doth secretly think to please God and pacify God, and so indeed to satisfy God for that sin, and so forsakes sin; and now, in time of sickness or horror, thinks, that the Lord is pacified and pleased with this, according as some scriptures seem to speak. Or else it secretly thinks faith in Christ's blood and turning from sin also, both together, do please, and that now all is quiet. Hereupon, remembering that Christ's blood apprehended by faith was the only atonement, I conceived this was not the way that I should walk in; but rather this: —

1. I saw that when the least sin, as well as the greatest, was committed, my first work was to see that I (in myself considered) must die eternally for that sin, and so should pass sentence upon myself for it. And here I saw that by this the elect did, and that I should, see how cross, and contrary, and grievous sin is to God, who is so incensed by it, as he will be the death of a sinner for it. And so I saw that hereby my soul should be humbled aright, feeling sin by this means, not only as bringing eternal death on me, but as being cross and provoking to God. And this I saw was to be done, not only at first conversion, but all my life; (Jer. xxxi. 20;) that so hereby the soul might increase in humiliation and in a high esteem of the blood of Jesus Christ.

2. I saw that next to this I was to fly to Christ's blood and righteousness for satisfaction and peace. And here I saw three things: (1.) That this was faith, to fly to Christ's death in sense of my own death; (2.) **That this act was exceeding pleasing to God, even after all sins; nay, that it did pacify God, not because of the merit of the act, but because of the worth of the object, which is the satisfaction of Christ's death it apprehends**, and that this doth please him, because of his good pleasure and purpose of grace, and because he will be so pleased; (3.) **That this satisfaction alone, thus apprehended, did perfectly, and without any holiness or reformation of mine, pacify and please the Father; or else I saw that Christ's death and merits were imperfect and insufficient**. And if so, if this alone pleased him, then the condition of the gospel was not thus, viz., If you believe in Christ's death for righteousness, pacification, and life, and if you be sanctified and obey the will of Christ, you shall then live, and God the Father will be pacified toward you by both these means; but if you believe in Christ Jesus and his death, by this only you shall please God for whatever sin you have committed. I saw the conscience of a sinner could never be quieted until it did rest on this testimony only, in seeing God pleased that moment wherein it flies out of self to the death of Christ. Now, because I knew the Lord required obedience and sanctification, hence a third thing came clearly to mind.

3. I saw that resting thus on Christ, my conscience should be quieted, that God was now pacified, and that I did now please him fully in point of satisfaction; yet I saw I was now required to do the whole will of God, and to conform thereunto, not in way of satisfaction, to pacify God's eternal anger, but in way of thankfulness for this the Lord's love, in being pleased with me, and that wherein I fell short of it I should be deeply humbled, with Paul, (Rom. vii), but wherein I did anything according thereto, to be thankful for it, as Paul also was, (Rom. vii.), when he was glad that in his mind he served the law of God. Now, because I saw I could do nothing, **my will being desperately averse from Christ's will**, hence I saw, (1.) **If Christ had pacified the Father and pleased divine justice for my sin, that he would also by his death deliver me from my sins.** (2.) I saw that Christ did not require me now justified to subsist in myself, and to be self-confident, and to do with and from my own strength, but that he would give me the **law of the Spirit of life, which would enable me**; and that the obedience he would accept, as a token of thankfulness, was this: (1.) **That I should rest and rely upon his death for the Spirit of life, and on his Spirit for the power of it to enable me to do his will continually.** (2.) That if the Lord did **enable me**, I should be **exceedingly thankful** for it; if not, that I should be **exceedingly humbled daily** under it; and so still forget things which be behind, and reach to things that be before. **Relying on Christ for his Spirit, I saw, did and doth come and arise in all the saints from the law writ in the heart**, after it feels God pacified, and the law of God without, which being reconciled together, and the soul feeling its own weakness to please it, hence it relies on the Spirit of Christ Jesus, and thereby finds help; the Spirit within us living on the Spirit without us, as the elementary bodies on the elements in other bodies. So I saw that **by faith in Christ's death** I pleased the provoked justice and pacified the anger of God; by the law of God writ in my heart and obedience of the Spirit, I was pleased and did now please the law of God, as now given to me by Christ Jesus.

Now, when the Lord did show me all this, I did bless him with my soul for it, and I was taught how to walk more orderly. I saw, (1.) This was the right way of believing and finding favor, because it carried the soul humbly from the beginning to the end, and **exalted God's grace.** (2.) **I saw that hereby the saints came to mourn more for sin** (which **Familists** do not) than any other men. **For when I see I must die for sin, that makes me mourn; when I see how cross it is to God, that makes me mourn still; when I believe and see only Christ's death can pacify, and that, I being come to it, it shall pacify, this makes me mourn more, and that bitterly, which no graceless heart can do, or hath cause to do.** (3.) I saw that, in preaching duties of obedience to the saints, I should be careful how I set them a measure, or set them to do them, either to pacify anger, or to perform them in their own strength, or to make doing of them an evidence of grace, without inserting, "Unless they go to Christ, and rely on him for his grace," enabling them thereunto; and to preach them to them only as duties of thankfulness; to others as handwritings of death. (4.) Hereby I saw how sanctification was an evidence of reconciliation. (1.) I saw where it was not, there was no reconciliation; (2.) That where it was, there was reconciliation; (3.) That **mediately** it was an evidence, and I was to take it as an evidence, of reconciliation. **Mediately**, I say, because faith in Christ's blood doth immediately assure me of it. But this (viz., sanctification) assures me that my faith hath truly apprehended Christ Jesus. (4.) I saw that faith did immediately evidence reconciliation. (1.) **Because faith [which is a gift and a promise of the new covenant] is required in the gospel as the only condition; sanctification is required to come after it, is wrought after it, and commanded after it.** (2.) Because I saw the apostles had their reconciliation by this evidence. Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." "3.) I saw that sanctification was not to come in to pacification of God's anger and displeasure, and therefore not

immediately to the pacification of conscience. For conscience being smitten with sense of eternal death, **nothing can pacify conscience but that which can pacify justice, and that is the death of Christ Jesus, apprehended by faith.** Conscience only hath quiet in Christ's death; my peace is only in it; but **faith** only is that by which I came by it; **because faith makes it mine own, brings it near me**, and now it quiets me. **It is not by an immediate testimony that Christ's death is mine; for that may be a delusion, being without the word;** but Christ's death apprehended by me, and so testified by the word and Spirit; the word speaking, every believer shall live; the Spirit of adoption (enabling the soul to see the work of faith in itself) speaking, thou, believer, shalt live. Which Spirit is given immediately after my justification by faith, viz., in my adoption to sonship.

Now having peace by faith, my conscience will question, Is thy faith right? Now my sanctification bears witness to that, and so mediately shows me, that my peace is right. In a word, the matter of my peace, or that wherein I have peace, is Christ's death. **The means of this my peace is faith only.** The immediate evidence of my peace and pacification is faith apprehending Christ's death. The evidences being, (1.) The **word** of the gospel; (2.) The **Spirit of adoption** discovering the work of faith in the heart- **The evidence of the truth of faith, and so of my peace, is sanctification.** This only I question, whether faith saith, My peace is made, and sanctification saith, Thy faith is good. Only I add, it is possible for some sincere Christians first to see their sanctification and holiness, and so their faith and peace. But the question is, whether they should not **first see their faith and peace, and so their sanctification arising from thence**; and so, as **Mr. Culverwell notes, not build their faith upon their life, but their life upon their faith, and their faith upon God's free grace.**

(5.) I saw that the reason why faith in Christ's blood, and not simply in Christ, did justify and pacify, **was because a humbled sinner ever feels and sees death before him; and hence the Lord, according to his need, opens Christ and presents him thus to him.** As also why Paul called sin a **body of death.** (1.) **Because he saw he must die for it; the remnants of sin were death.** (2.) **Because they were cross to the life of Christ in him.** All this was the day before the sacrament, July 10, 1641. And I thought now I felt some growth, which I came for in other sacraments.

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Mourning for Sin

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pg 413 T Shepard

July 7. I saw that, notwithstanding all my sins, I should see there was no condemnation to me, nor should I fear it; (1.) being in Christ by faith; (2.) walking after the Spirit, because I resisted and mourned under the flesh and body of death, as Paul did. Yet I saw I should look upon all my sins with an eye of lamentation, as being (1.) cross to God; (2.) so contrary to the life of Christ in me. For I saw that I made a difference of some sins in a Christian: (1.) Some did cause God's fatherly anger, and were more willful, and conscience upbraided me for them; (2.) Others were weaknesses, for which Christ pitied me. And here my heart began to think, What need of such bitter mourning for them? Now I saw the apostle (Rom. vii.) mourned alike for all. He feared none for condemnation; he mourned for all with bitter lamentation. So I was sweetly enlightened, and purposed thus to walk, and not to mourn only for such sins as did hide the face of my God, but for sin in general, which goes against his life, yea, is contrary to the end of Christ's death, and cross to the will of God. And I saw it my duty to mourn, and that bitterly, with unutterable daily sighings under them.

Living by Prayer

pg 412

July 2. I saw I was no debtor to the flesh, to serve it, either, (1.) for any good it ever did me, (2,) or by any power over me, by divine justice satisfied in Christ. I saw it my duty not only to pray, but to live by prayer and begging; for I observed how some of God's people did so. Hence I saw I was not to live by providence only, but by prayer, (1.) For myself, body, soul; (2.) For my children and family, at home and abroad; (3.) For the churches. Hereupon I asked the question, Would the Lord have me to live by prayer thus? And I saw he would have me, because he had given me, a heart frameable to his will therein; and it did much refresh me to think that the Lord should desire me to live thus, as if he took delight in my sinful prayers. And so I considered how I might live by prayer. And I saw, (1.) I should see what evils accompany everything I go about; (2.) What good I need to have conveyed by every thing. There are special evils of sin to be avoided, and special good things to be conveyed. And I asked why I was to live by prayer. And I thought, (1.) Because it did honor God; (2.) Kept me from many unknown evils which else would befall me; (3.) Because else I could not have assurance any other prayers should be heard which were not my life. To pray by fits is not the way to find help in time of trouble.

Prayer cont. pg 435

I concluded this day, 1. With some measure of faith; for after prayer I left all I prayed for unto God's rich, free grace. And hence I saw, (1.) That the Lord did take pleasure in such as hope in his mercy ; (2.) That whatsoever I or any had prayed for, God had promised, and therefore purposed to give; and thence I might quiet my heart about God's secret purpose: 2. With resolution, (1.) Whatever God should give me, to attribute it unto grace; (2.) To walk in a way of holiness for the future.

I saw also that my heart was ready to think, I have prayed enough after such a day and such hopes. But I saw, (1.) That though God purposeth mercy, yet he withal intendeth the decree shall bring forth by prayer; (2.) He will therefore have «s pray till the thing be granted; (3.) When the decree hath begun to bring forth, **I saw that all the degrees of mercy arise by several degrees of prayer; as when faith is begun, but it is imperfect, prayer must be continued still for all the rest; as the chapped ground opens still wider and wider, till rain fall.** -

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The nature of saving faith
pg 411

June 20. On the Sabbath day, in reading Beza on the 6th^{of} Romans, I saw clearly two things: (1.) That the saints, receiving Christ by faith, have good cause to be at perfect peace in their own conscience, there being by Christ no more conscience of sin. (2.) That by this faith they had, by Christ's death, abolishment of sin. And I saw that this faith was an adherence to Christ, and such a kind of adherence to him, and resting on him, as that the soul, by dear esteem and love, **clings** so to him as that it gets **into** him. It is so close an adherence, **even as the branch gets into the stock.** And so I saw faith doth not only cleave to Christ, **but it sticks in Christ, and so sucks life and vigor from Christ by esteem and love; and this I prayed for.** And by this I saw how many fall short of true faith, whose faith never makes them stick close unto Christ Jesus.

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Summary of the Plan of Salvation by the Father

A good summary of the plan of the Father of salvation, the role of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Note all the key terms I highlighted in red. My comments in blue.

John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews 2, pg 378-382 (357-367 online)
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_1.3-6.pdf

Verse 10. — For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

There are in the words, — 1. The causal connection unto the verse foregoing, — “for.” 2. A design of God intimated as the foundation of the discourse, — which was, to “bring many sons unto glory.” 3. The means he fixed on for the accomplishment of that design, — namely, the appointing unto them a “captain of their salvation.” 4. The especial way of his dedicating him unto that office, — he “made him perfect by sufferings” 5. The reason of this his proceeding and dealing with him, — it “became him” so to do. 6. An amplification of that reason, in a description of his condition, — “him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things.”

1. A reason is rendered in the words of what he had asserted in the foregoing verse, namely, that Jesus, the **Messiah**, was to suffer death, and by the grace of God to “taste of death for all.” Why he should do this, on what account, what ground, necessity, and reason there was for it, is here declared. It was so to be, “for it became him,” etc.

2. **The design of God** is expressed in this whole matter, and that was, to “bring many sons unto glory.” And herein the apostle declares the nature of the salvation which was to be wrought by the Messiah, **about which the Jews were so greatly mistaken**, and consequently in and about the way whereby it was to be wrought. His purpose herein was not now to **carry his children into a new Canaan**, to bring them into a wealthy country, an **earthly kingdom**; which must or might have been done by might, and power, and arms, as of old: but his design towards his sons, in and by the Messiah, was of **another nature**; **it was to bring them unto glory, eternal glory with himself in heaven**. And so it is no wonder if the way whereby this is to be accomplished be quite of **another nature** than that whereby their **temporal deliverance** was wrought, namely, by the death and sufferings of the Messiah himself. And here, in reference unto this design of God, it is supposed, — First, That some who were created for the glory of God had by sin come short of it; so that without a new way of bringing them unto it, it was impossible that they should ever be made partakers of it. This is here supposed by the apostle, and is the foundation of all his doctrine concerning the Messiah. Secondly, That the way whereby God will at length bring them who are designed unto glory thereunto, is by taking of them first into a state of sonship and reconciliation with himself; they must be sons before they are brought to glory. There is a **double act of God’s predestination**: the first is his **designation of some unto grace, to be sons**, Ephesians 1:5; the other, his **appointment of those sons unto glory**; both to be **wrought and accomplished by Christ**, the captain of their salvation. The latter, and the execution of it, — namely, the bringing of those unto glory who by grace are made sons, — is that which the apostle here expresseth. He dealeth not with the Hebrews in this epistle about the conversion of the elect, the traduction of them into a **state of grace and sonship**, but of the government of them being made sons, and their **guidance unto glory**. And therefore the sufferings of Christ, which absolutely and in themselves are the cause of our sonship and reconciliation with God, are mentioned here only as the **means** whereby Christ entered into a condition of leading sons unto glory, or of saving them who, upon the account of his sufferings, are **made sons by grace**. But yet this is not so precisely respected neither, but that the apostle withal intimates the necessity of the suffering of Christ, as to the whole effect of it **towards the elect**. Now these sons, thus to be brought unto glory, are said to be “**many**,” [i.e., **not all**] — not all absolutely, not a few, or of the Jews only, which they looked for, **but all the elect of God, who are many**, Revelation 7:9. And this work, of bringing many sons unto glory, is here signally assigned by the apostle unto God the Father; whose love, wisdom, and grace, believers are principally to eye in the whole work of their salvation, wrought out and accomplished by Jesus Christ. This, therefore, we shall a little insist upon, to declare the grounds and reasons on the account whereof it is to be ascribed unto him, or what acts are peculiarly assigned unto the **Father** in this work of bringing many sons unto glory; which will secure the ascription of it unto him, and therein our interpretation of the place.

(1.) The **eternal designation** of them unto that glory whereunto they are to be brought is peculiarly assigned unto him. He “predestinates them to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Romans 8:28-30.

The “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chooseth us before the foundation of the world,” and “predestinateth us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself,” Ephesians 1:3-5; and “he hath from the beginning chosen us unto salvation,” 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14. And this electing love of God, this eternal purpose of his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, is the fountain and spring of all other immediate causes of our salvation. From hence **faith**, Acts 13:45, **sanctification**, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, **holiness**, Ephesians 1:4, **preservation in grace**, 2 Timothy 2:19, the death of Christ for them, John 3:16, and final glory itself, 2 Timothy 2:10, do all ensue and proceed: so that on the account hereof he may be justly said to be the bringer of many sons to glory.

(2.) He was the **spring and fountain of that covenant** (as in all other operations of the Deity) that was of old **between himself and his Son** about the salvation and glory of the elect. See Zechariah 6:13; Isaiah 42:1; Proverbs 8:22-31; Isaiah 1:4-9, 53:10-12; Psalm 16:10, 110. He, in his love and grace, is still declared as the proposer both of the duty and of the reward of the mediator, the Son incarnate, as the Son accepts of his terms and proposals, Hebrews 10:5-9. And hence the **intenseness of his love, the immutability of his counsel, the holiness of his nature, his righteousness and faithfulness, his infinite wisdom, do all shine forth in the mediation and sufferings of Christ**, Romans 3:25, 26, 5:8; 1 John 4:9; Hebrews 6:17, 18; Titus 1:2. Rather than his love should not be satisfied and his counsel accomplished, he spared not his own Son, but gave him unto death for us.

(3.) He **signally** gave out the **first promise**, that great **foundation of the covenant of grace**; and afterwards **declared, confirmed, and ratified by his oath**, that covenant wherein all the **means of bringing the elect unto glory are contained**, Genesis 3:15; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12. The **person of the Father** is considered as the **principal author of the covenant**, as the person **covenanting and taking us into covenant with himself**; the Son, as the Messiah, being considered as the **surety and mediator of it**, Hebrews 7:22, 9:15, and the **purchaser of the promises of it**.

(4.) He gave and sent his Son to be a Savior and Redeemer for them and unto them; so that in his whole work, in all that he did and suffered, he obeyed the command and **fulfilled the will of the Father**. **Him did God the Father “send,” and “seal,” and “give,” and “set forth,”** as the Scripture everywhere expresseth it. And our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere remits us to the consideration of the love, will, and **authority of his Father**, in all that he did, taught, or suffered; **so seeking the glory of God that sent him**.

(5.) He **draws his elect, and enables them to come to the Son, to believe in him, and so to obtain life, salvation, and glory by him**. “No man,” saith our Savior, “can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him,” John 6:44. No man, no, not any one of the elect, can come to Christ, unless the Father, in the pursuit of that love from whence it was that he sent the Son, do put forth the **efficacy of his grace to enable** him thereunto [**this the Arminians object as insufficient; our own wills must cooperate...**]: and accordingly he reveals him unto some, when he is hidden from others, Matthew 11:25; for the revelation of Christ unto the soul is the immediate act of the Father, Matthew 16:17.

(6.) Being **reconciled** unto them **by the blood** of his Son, he reconciles them unto himself, by giving them pardon and forgiveness of sins in and by the promises of the gospel; without which they cannot

come to glory. **He is in Christ reconciling us unto himself**, by the non-imputation or forgiveness of our sins, **2 Corinthians 5:18-21**; forgiving us all our trespasses for Christ's sake, **Ephesians 4:32**. There are many things concurring unto the pardon of sin that are **peculiar acts of the Father**.

(7.) He **quickens them and sanctifies them by his Spirit**, to make them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light;" that is, for the enjoyment of glory. "He that raised up Jesus from the dead quickens us by his Spirit," **Romans 8:11**; so "saving us by the **washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**, which he shed on us richly by Jesus Christ," Titus 3:5, 6. This renovation and sanctification by the Holy Ghost, and **all supplies of actual grace, enabling us unto obedience [which Adam had not]**, are everywhere asserted as the **grant and work of the Father**, "who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And so in especial is the **saving illumination of our minds**, to know the **mystery of his grace**, and **discern** the things that are of God, **2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 2:2; Ephesians 3:14-19; Matthew 11:25**.

(8.) As the great **Father of the family he adopts them**, and makes them his **sons**, that so he may bring them unto glory. He gives them the power or privilege to become the sons of God, **John 1:11**; making them **heirs** and **co-heirs with Christ**, Romans 8:14-17; sending withal into their hearts the **Spirit of adoption [Adam did not have the Spirit of Adoption]**, **enabling** them to cry, "Abba, Father," **Galatians 4:6**. **The whole right of adopting children is in the Father**; and so is the **authoritative translation** of them out of the world and kingdom of Satan into his own family and household, with their investiture in all the rights and privileges thereof.

(9.) He **confirms them in faith, establisheth them in obedience, preserveth them from dangers and oppositions of all sorts, and in manifold wisdom keeps them through his power unto the glory prepared for them**; as **2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 3:20, 21; 1 Peter 1:5; John 17:11**.

(10.) He gives them the Holy Ghost as their comforter, with all those blessed and unspeakable benefits which attend that gift of his, **Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13; John 14:16, 17; Galatians 4:6**.

In brief, in **bringing the elect unto glory, all the sovereign acts of power, wisdom, love, and grace exerted therein, are peculiarly assigned unto the Father**, as all ministerial acts are unto the Son as mediator; so that there is no reason why he may not be said, by the way of eminency, to be the ἀγῶγευς, the leader or bringer of his sons unto glory.

And herein lies a great direction unto believers, and a great supportment for their faith. Peter tells us that "by Christ we do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that our faith and hope might be in God," 1 Peter 1:21. **Jesus Christ, considered as mediator, is the next, but not the ultimate object of our faith and hope. We so believe in him as by him to believe in God, that is, the Father, whose love is the supreme fountain and spring of our salvation**; which the apostle manifests in that double instance of his raising up Christ and giving him glory, thereby declaring himself the principal author of the great work of his mediation. **This he directs us unto, so to believe in Christ as that, discerning in and by him the grace, good-will, and love of the Father himself towards us, we may be encouraged to fix our faith and hope on him, seeing he himself loveth us**. So that Christ himself had no need to pray for the love of the Father unto us, **but only for the communication of the effects of**

it, John 16:26, 27. **And this is the work of faith, when, as we are directed, we pray to the Father in the name of Christ**, John 16:23, 24; and **we thus place our faith in God the Father**, when we conceive of him as the sovereign leader of us unto glory, by all the instances before mentioned. **And then doth faith find rest in him, delight, complacency, and satisfaction, as we have elsewhere declared.**

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The Glory of Christ

code397

Superb on the glory of Christ. Diligence in the exercise of saving faith on contemplating God's glory, things to consider for self-examination. What is the glory of God, etc.

(see 2Cor4:6, Rm6:4)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.i.v.html>

Chapter II.

The glory of the person of Christ, as the only representative of God unto the church.

The glory of Christ is the glory of the person of Christ. So he calls it Τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν, [John xvii. 24](#), "That glory which is mine," which belongeth to me, unto my person.

The person of Christ may be considered two ways:— 1. Absolutely in itself. 2. In the susception and discharge of his office, with what ensued thereon. His glory on these distinct accounts is distinct and different; but all equally his own. How in both respects **we may behold it by faith** [the instrument of faith given at conversion enables us to behold it although imperfectly], is that which we inquire into.

The first thing wherein we may behold the glory of the person of Christ, God and man, which was given him of his Father, consists in the **representation of the nature of God, and of the divine person of the Father**, unto the church in him; for we behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," [2 Cor.](#)

[iv. 6](#). Otherwise we know it not, we see it not, we see nothing of it; that is the way of seeing and knowing God, declared in the Scripture as our duty and blessedness. **The glory of God comprehends both the holy properties of his nature and the counsels of his will; and “the light of the knowledge” of these things we have only “in the face” or person “of Jesus Christ.” [wholly depicted on the diagram...knowledge of God, and his will...holiness and virtue... love for God] Whatever obscure, imperfect notions we may have of them in other ways, we cannot have φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ, “the light of the” illuminating, irradiating “knowledge of the glory of God,” which may enlighten our minds and sanctify your hearts, but only ἐν προσώπῳ, “in the face” or person “of Jesus Christ:” for he is “the image of God,” [2 Cor. iv. 4](#); “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” [Heb. i. 3](#); “the image of the invisible God,” [Col. i. 15](#). I do here only mention these things because I have handled them at large in my discourse of the “Mystery of Godliness,” or the Person of Christ; whereunto I refer the readers for their full declaration and vindication. Herein is he glorious, in that **he is the great representative of the nature of God and his will unto us**; which without him would have been eternally hid from us, or been invisible unto us, — we should never have seen God at any time, here nor hereafter, [John i. 18](#). [see also [John 5:37](#) - “You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.”]**

In his divine person absolutely considered, he is the **essential image of God**, even the Father. He is in the Father, and the Father in him, in the unity of the same divine essence, [John xiv. 10](#). Now he is with the Father, [John i. 1](#), in the distinction of his person, so is he **his essential image**, [Col. i. 15](#); [Heb. i. 3](#). In his incarnation he becomes the representative image of God unto the church, [2 Cor. iv. 6](#); without whom our understandings can make no such approach unto the **divine excellencies** but that God continues to be unto us what he is in himself, — the “invisible God.” In the face of Jesus Christ we see his glory.

This is the **original glory of Christ, given him by his Father** [[Jn 17:22](#)], and which **by faith** we may behold. He, and he alone, declares, represents, and makes known, unto angels and men, the **essential glory of the invisible God**, his **attributes and his will**; without which, a perpetual comparative darkness would have been the whole creation, especially that part of it here below.

This is the **foundation of our religion**, the **Rock** whereon the church is built, the **ground of all our hopes of salvation, of life and immortality: all is resolved into this**, — namely, the representation that is made of the **nature and will of God in the person and office of Christ**. If this fail us, we are lost forever; if this Rock stand firm, the church is safe here, and shall be triumphant hereafter.

Herein, then, is the Lord Christ exceedingly glorious. Those who cannot behold this glory of his by faith, — namely, as he is the **great divine ordinance to represent God unto us**, — they know him not. In their worship of him, they worship but an image of their own devising.

Yea, **in the ignorance and neglect hereof consists the formal nature of unbelief**, even that which is inevitably ruinous unto the souls of men. He that discerns not the representation of the glory of God in the person of Christ unto the souls of men, is an unbeliever. Such was the state of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of old; they did not, they would not, they could not, behold the glory of God in him, nor how he did represent him. **That this was both the cause and the formal nature of their unbelief, the**

apostle declares at large, [1 Cor. i. 21–25](#). Not to see the **wisdom of God, and the power of God, and consequently all the other holy properties of his nature, in Christ, is to be an unbeliever.**

The essence of faith consists in a **due ascription of glory to God**, [Rom. iv. 20](#). This we cannot attain unto without the manifestation of those divine excellencies unto us wherein he is glorious. **This is done in Christ alone, so as that we may glorify God in a saving and acceptable manner. He who discerns not the glory of divine wisdom, power, goodness, love, and grace, in the person and office of Christ, with the way of the salvation of sinners by him, is an unbeliever.** [So all the ways of salvation, all the doctrines of salvation, the wisdom of the way of it, e.g., election, God's sovereignty, the Priesthood of Christ, Original sin, etc., even though not fully understood, should be seen as beautiful in the eyes of believers due to their new spiritual palate and hence believed, leading one to a holy admiration and fear of God. Many like some doctrines but still have enmity in their hearts for others as the Arminians, Socinians, do. To be staunchly opposed to these doctrines argues one's hypocrisy. All who are still blind, hate the mysteries of the Kingdom or anything truly spiritual.]

Hence the **great design of the devil**, in the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, was to blind the eyes of men, and **fill their minds with prejudices**, that they might not behold this glory of his; so the apostle gives an account of his success in this design, [2 Cor. iv. 3, 4](#), “If our gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” By various ways and methods of deceit, to secure the reputation he had got of being “god of this world,” by pretences and appearances of supernatural power and wisdom, he labored to blind the eyes of men with prejudices against that glorious light of the gospel which proposed the Lord Christ as the only image of God. **This blindness, this darkness is cured in them that believe, by the mighty power of God;** for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has irradiated our hearts with the **knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ, verse 6, — **wherein true saving faith does consist.** Under this darkness perished the unbelieving world of Jews and Gentiles: and such is the present condition of all by whom the divine person of Christ is denied; **for no mere creature can ever make a perfect representation of God unto us.** But we must a little farther inquire into this mystery.

I. **Since men fell from God by sin**, it is no small part of their misery and punishment, that they are **covered with thick darkness and ignorance of the nature of God.** **They know him not, they have not seen him at any time.** Hence is that promise to the church in Christ, [Isa. lx. 2](#), “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”

The ancient philosophers made great inquiries into, and obtained many notions of, the Divine Being — its existence and excellencies. And these notions they adorned with great elegance of speech, to allure others unto the admiration of them. Hereon they boasted themselves to be the only wise men in the world, [Rom. i. 22](#), φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοί, — they boasted that they were the wise. But we must abide in the judgment of the apostle concerning them in their inquiries; he assures us that the world in its wisdom — that is, these wise men in it by their wisdom — knew not God, [1 Cor. i. 21](#). And he calls the authors of their best notions, Atheists, or men “without God in the world,” [Eph. ii. 12](#). For, —

1. They had no certain guide, rule, nor light, which, being attended unto, might lead them infallibly into the knowledge of the divine nature. All they had of this kind was their own λογισμοὶ, **their reasonings or imaginations**; whereby they commenced συζητητὰ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, “the great disputes of the world;” but in them they “waxed vain, and their foolish heart was darkened,” [Rom. i. 21](#). They did at best but endeavour ψηλαφᾶν, “to feel after God,” as men do in the dark after what they cannot clearly discern, [Acts xvii. 27](#). Among others, Cicero’s book, “De Natura Deorum,” gives us an exact account of the intention of the apostle in that expression. **And it is at this day not want of wit, but hatred of the mysteries of our religion, which makes so many prone to forego all supernatural revelation, and to betake themselves unto a religion declared, as they suppose, by reason and the light of nature**; — like bats and owls, who, being not able to bear the light of the sun, betake themselves unto the twilight, to the dawns of light and darkness.

2. Whatever they did attain, as unto rational notions about things invisible and incomprehensible, yet could they never deliver themselves from such principles and practices in idolatry and all manner of flagitious sins, as that they could be of any benefit unto them. This is so effectually demonstrated by the apostle in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, as that we need not to insist upon it.

Men may talk what they please of a **light within them**, or of the **power of reason** to conduct them unto that knowledge of God whereby they may live unto him; but if they had nothing else, if they did not boast themselves of that light which has its foundation and original in divine revelation alone, they would not excel them who, in the best management of their own reasonings, “knew not God,” but waxed vain in their imaginations.

With respect unto this universal darkness, — that is, ignorance of God, with horrid confusion accompany it in the minds of men, — Christ is called, and is, the “light of men,” the “light of the world;” because in and by him alone this darkness is dispelled, as he is the “Sun of Righteousness.”

II. This darkness in the minds of men, this ignorance of God, **his nature and his will**, was the original of all evil unto the world, and yet continues so to be. For, —

1. Hereon did Satan erect his kingdom and throne, obtaining in his design until he bare himself as “the god of this world,” and was so esteemed by the most. He **exalted himself by virtue of this darkness** (as he is the “prince of darkness”) into the place and room of God, as the object of the religious worship of men. For the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed unto devils, and not to God, [1 Cor. x. 20](#); [Lev. xvii. 7](#); [Deut. xxxii. 17](#); [Ps. cvi. 37](#); [Gal. iv. 8](#). This is the territory of Satan; yea, the power and sceptre of his kingdom in the minds of the “children of disobedience.” Hereby he maintains his dominion unto this day in many and great nations, and with individual persons innumerable.

2. This is the **spring of all wickedness** and **confusion** among men themselves. Hence arose that flood of abominations in the old world, which God took away with a flood of desolation: hence were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he revenged with “fire from heaven.” In brief; all the rage, blood, confusion, desolations, cruelties, oppressions, villainies, which the world has been and is filled withal, whereby the souls of men have been and are flooded into eternal destruction, **have all arisen from this corrupt fountain of the ignorance of God**.

3. **Of such as those described we are the posterity and offspring.** Our forefathers in this nation were given up unto as brutish a service of the devil as any nation under the sun. It is therefore an effect of infinite mercy, that the day has dawned on us, poor Gentiles, and that the “day-spring from on high hath visited us.” See the glory of this grace expressed, [Eph. iii. 5–10](#). God might have left us to perish in the blindness and ignorance of our forefathers [[which he does to most - —.e., reprobation](#)]; but of his own accord, and by his own powerful grace alone, he has “translated us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” But, alas! the horrible ingratitude of men for the glorious light of the Gospel, and the abuse of it, will issue in a sore revenge.

God was known under the Old Testament by the revelation of his Word, and the institution of his worship. **This was the glory and privilege of Israel**, as the Psalmist declares, [Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20](#), “He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation.” The church then knew him; yet so as that they had an apprehension that he dwelt in “thick darkness,” where they could not have any clear views of him, [Exod. xx. 21](#); [Deut. v. 22](#); [1 Kings viii. 12](#); [2 Chron. vi. 1](#). **And the reason why God so represented himself in darkness unto them, was, to instruct them in their imperfect state, wherein they could not comprehend that glory which should afterward be revealed.** For as he is now made known in Christ, we see that “he is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.”

4. Hitherto darkness in general covered the earth, and **gross darkness** the people, as unto the knowledge of God; only there was a twilight in the church. The day did not yet dawn, the “shadows did not flee away,” nor the “day-star shine” in the hearts of men. But when the “Sun of Righteousness” did arise in his strength and beauty, when the Son of God “appeared in the flesh,” and in the discharge of his office, — **God himself, as unto his being, and manner of existence in three distinct persons, with all the glorious properties of the divine nature, was illustriously manifested unto them that did believe; and the light of the knowledge of them dispelled all the shadows that were in the church, and shone into the darkness which was in the world, so as that none continued ignorant of God but those who would not see.** See [John i. 5, 14, 17, 18](#); [2 Cor. iv. 3, 4](#).

Herein is the Lord Christ glorious. And this is that which I shall now speak unto, — namely, how we may behold the glory of Christ in the representation and revelation that is made of God and his glory, in his person and office, unto all that do believe. For it is not so much the declaration of the nature of the things themselves, wherein the glory of Christ does consist, as our way and duty in the beholding of them, which at present is designed.

He calls unto us, saying, “Behold me, — look unto me, — and be saved,” [Isa. xlv. 22](#). What is it that we see in Christ? what do we behold in him? He asketh that question concerning his church, “What will ye see in the Shulamite?” Whereto he answers, “As it were the company of two armies,” [Cant. vi. 13](#); or the two churches of the Old and New Testament, in order and beauty. We may inquire, What shall we, what do we see in him? Do we see him as “the image of the invisible God,” representing him, **his nature, properties, and will unto us**? Do we see him as the “character,” the “express image of the person of the Father,” so that we have no need of Philip’s request, “Lord, show us the Father?” because having seen him, we have seen the Father also, [John xiv. 9](#).

This is our [first saving view of Christ](#), the first instance of our beholding his glory by faith. **So to see him as to see God in him, is to behold his glory**; for herein he is eternally glorious. **And this is that glory whose view we ought to long for and labour after. And if we see it not, we are yet in darkness**; yea, though we say we see, we are blind like others. So David longed and prayed for it, when yet he could behold it only **in types and shadows**, [Ps. lxiii. 1, 2](#), “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee; — **to see thy power and thy glory**, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” For there was in the sanctuary an obscure representation of the glory of God in Christ. **How much more should we prize that view of it which we may have with open face, though yet “as in a glass!”** [2 Cor. iii. 18](#).

Moses, when he had seen the works of God, which were great and marvellous, yet found not himself satisfied therewith; wherefore, after all, he prays that God “would show him his glory”, [Exod. xxxiii. 18](#). **He knew that the ultimate rest, blessedness, and satisfaction of the soul, is not in seeing the works of God, but the glory of God himself.** Therefore did he desire some immediate dawns of it upon him in this world: **“I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”** **And if we have right apprehensions of the future state of blessedness, we cannot but have the same desire of seeing more of his glory in this life.** But the question is, How we may attain it? If we are left unto ourselves in this inquiry, if we have no other way for it but the **immediate rising of our thoughts** [[Arminianism/Pelagianism](#)] on the immensity of the divine nature, we must come every one to the conclusion that Agur makes on the like consideration, “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? who has gathered the wind in his fists? who has bound the waters in a garment? who has established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” [Prov. xxx. 2–4](#).

It is in Christ alone that we may have a clear, distinct view of the glory of God and his excellencies. For him, and him alone, has he appointed the representative of himself unto us; and we shall take an account hereof in one or two especial instances. See [John i. 18, xiv. 7–10](#); [2 Cor. iv. 6](#); [Col. i. 15](#); [Eph. iii. 4–10](#); [Heb. i. 3](#).

1. **Infinite wisdom** is one of the most glorious properties of the divine nature; it is that which is directive of all the external works of God, wherein the glory of all the other excellencies of God is manifested: wherefore the manifestation of the whole glory of God proceeds originally from infinite wisdom. But, as Job speaks, “Where shall [this] wisdom be found; and what is the place of understanding?” [chap. xxviii. 12](#). “Can we by searching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto perfection?” [chap. xi. 7](#). As it is in itself an essential, eternal property of the divine nature, we can have no comprehension of it, — **we can but adore it** in that infinite distance wherein we stand from God; **but in its operations and effects it may be discerned**, for they are designed of God for its manifestation. Among these, the most excellent is the contrivance of the great work of the salvation of the church. So it is celebrated by the apostle, [Eph. iii. 9, 10](#), “To make all men see what is the fellowship of the **mystery**, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, **might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.**”

If we have any interest in God, if we have any hopes of blessedness in beholding of his glory unto eternity, we cannot but desire a view (such as is attainable) of this infinite, manifold wisdom of God in this life. **But it is in Christ alone that we can discern anything of it; for him has the Father chosen and sealed to represent it unto us. All the treasures of this wisdom are hid, laid up, and laid out in him; — herein lies the essence and form of faith. Believers by it do see the wisdom of God in Christ, in his person and office, — Christ the wisdom of God. Unbelievers see it not, as the apostle argues, [1 Cor. i. 22–24.](#)**

In beholding the glory of this infinite wisdom of **God in Christ**, we behold his own glory also, — the glory given him of his Father; **for this is his glory, that in and by him, and him alone, the wisdom of God is manifested and represented unto us.** When **God appointed him** as the **great and only means of this end [an ordinance]**, he gave him honour and glory above the whole creation; for it is but little of divine wisdom which the works of it declare, in comparison of what is manifested in Christ Jesus. We no way deny or extenuate the manifestation that is made of the wisdom of God in the works of creation and providence. It is sufficient to detect the folly of atheism and idolatry; and was designed of God unto that end. But its comparative insufficiency — **with respect unto the representation of it in Christ as to the ends of knowing God aright and living unto him — the Scripture does abundantly attest.** And the abuse of it was catholic [i. e., universal], as the apostle declares, [Rom. i. 20](#), &c. **To see this wisdom clearly is our wisdom; and a due apprehension of it fills the souls of believers “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”**

2. We may also instance in the **love of God**. The apostle tells us that “God is love,” [1 John iv. 8](#). Divine love is not to be considered only in its effects, but in its nature and essence; and so it is God himself, for “God is love.” **And a blessed revelation this is of the divine nature; it casts out envy, hatred, malice, revenge, with all their fruits, in rage, fierceness, implacability, persecution, murder, into the territories of Satan.** They belong not unto God in his nature or acting; for “God is love.” So the same apostle tells us, that he who “slew his brother was of the wicked one,” [1 John iii. 12](#). He was of the devil, his father, and his works did he do.

But the inquiry is as before, — How shall we have a view of this love, of God as love? by what way or means shall we behold the glory of it? It is hidden from all living, in God himself. The wise philosophers, who discoursed so much of the love of God, knew nothing of this, that “God is love.” **The most of the natural notions of men about it are corrupt, and the best of them weak and imperfect. Generally, the thoughts of men about it are, that he is of a facile and easy nature, one that they may make bold withal in all their occasions; as the Psalmist declares, [Ps. l. 21.](#)** And whereas it must be learned in its effects, operations, and divine ways of its manifestation, those who know not Christ know nothing of them. And many things in providence do interpose to hinder our views of this love; — **for although, indeed, “God is love,” yet “his wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men;” as all things at this day are filled with evidences of his anger and displeasure. How, then, shall we know, wherein shall we behold, the glory of God in this, that he is love?** The apostle declares it in the next words, [1 John iv. 9](#), “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” This is the only evidence given us that “God is love.” Hereby alone is the divine nature as such made known unto us, — namely, **in the mission, person, and**

office of the Son of God; without this, all is in darkness as unto the true nature and supreme operation of this divine love.

Herein do we behold the glory of Christ himself, even in this life. **This glory was given him of the Father**, — namely, that he now should declare and evidence that “God is love;” and he did so, “that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” Herein we may see how excellent, how beautiful, how glorious and desirable he is, seeing in him alone we have a due representation of God as he is love; which is the most joyful sight of God that any creature can obtain. **He who beholds not the glory of Christ herein is utterly ignorant of those heavenly mysteries; — he knoweth neither God nor Christ, — he has neither the Father nor the Son. He knows not God, because he knows not the holy properties of his nature in the principal way designed by infinite wisdom for their manifestation; he knows not Christ, because he sees not the glory of God in him.** Wherefore, whatever notions men may have from the **light of nature**, or from the works of Providence, that there is love in God, — however they may adorn them in elegant, affecting expressions, — yet from them no man can know that “God is love.” In the revelation hereof Christ has the pre-eminence; nor can any man comprehend anything of it aright but in him. It is that which the whole light of the creation cannot discover; for it is the spring and centre of the **mystery of godliness**.

These things are of the **deep things of God**, such as belong unto that wisdom of God in a mystery which they that are carnal cannot receive, as the apostle testifies, [1 Cor. ii. 14](#). But the meanest believer who lives in the exercise of faith, may have an understanding of them so far as is needful unto his love and obedience. The sum of the whole is this: **If you would behold the glory of Christ as the great means of your sanctification and consolation, as the only preparation for the beholding of his glory in eternal blessedness, consider what of God is made known and represented unto you in him, wherein God purposed and designed to glorify himself in him. Now, this is all that may be known of God in a saving manner, — especially his wisdom, his love, his goodness, grace, and mercy, whereon the life of our souls does depend; — and the Lord Christ being appointed the only way and means hereof, how exceeding glorious must he be in the eyes of them that do believe!**

These things being premised, I shall close this first consideration of that glory of Christ which we behold by faith in this world, with some such observations as may **excite** us unto the practice of this great duty, and **improvement of this great privilege**, — the greatest which on this side heaven we can be made partakers of.

There are some who regard not these things at all, but rather despise them. They never entertain any serious thoughts of obtaining a view of the glory of God in Christ, — which is to be unbelievers. They look on him as a teacher that came forth from God to reveal his will, and to teach us his worship; and so indeed he was. But this they say was the sole use of his person in religion, — which is Mohammedanism. **The manifestation of all the holy properties of the divine nature, with the representation of them unto angels above and the church in this world, as he is the image of the invisible God, in the constitution of his person and the discharge of his office, are things they regard not; yea, they despise and scorn what is professed concerning them: for pride and contempt of others were always the safest covert of ignorance; otherwise it would seem strange that men should openly**

boast of their own blindness. But these conceptions of men's minds are influenced by that unbelief of his divine person which maketh havoc of Christianity at this day in the world.

I speak of them whose minds are better disposed towards heavenly things; and unto them I say, Wherefore do you love Jesus Christ? for so you profess to do. Wherefore do you trust in him? wherefore do you honour him? wherefore do you desire to be in heaven with him? **Can you give a reason of this hope that is in you, — an account why you do all or any of these things? If you cannot, all that you pretend towards him is but fancy and imagination; you fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. Or is one of your reasons hereof, that in him you do by faith behold that glory of God, with the holy properties of his nature, and their principal operations, in order unto your own salvation and blessedness, which otherwise would have been eternally hid from you? Herein is he “precious unto them that do believe.”**

Let us, therefore, as many as are spiritual, be thus minded. Let us make use of this privilege with rejoicing, and be found in the discharge of this duty with diligence. For thus to behold the glory of God is both our privilege and our duty. The duties of the Law were a burden and a yoke; but those of the Gospel are privileges and advantages.

It is a promise concerning the days of the New Testament, that our “eyes shall see the King in his beauty,” [Isa. xxxiii. 17](#). We shall behold the glory of Christ in its lustre and excellency. **What is this beauty of the King of saints? Is it not that God is in him, and he is the great representative of his glory unto us? Wherefore, in the contemplation of this glory consists the principal exercise of faith. And who can declare the glory of this privilege, that we who are born in darkness, and deserved to be cast out into utter darkness, should be translated into this marvellous light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?”**

What are all the stained glories, the fading beauties of this world? of all that the devil showed our Saviour from the mount? what are they in comparison of one view of the glory of God represented in Christ, and of the glory of Christ as his great representative?

The **most pernicious effect** of unbelief under the preaching of the gospel is, that, together with an influence of power from Satan, **“it blinds the eyes of men's minds, that they should not see this glory of Christ;”** whereon they perish eternally, [2 Cor. iv. 3, 4](#).

But the most of those who at this day are called Christians are strangers unto this duty. Our Lord Jesus Christ told the Pharisees, that notwithstanding all their boasting of the knowledge of God, they had not **“heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape;”** that is, as Moses did. **They had no real acquaintance with him, — they had no spiritual view of his glory. And so it is amongst ourselves; notwithstanding the general profession that is of the knowledge of Christ, they are but few who thus behold his glory; and therefore few who are transformed into his image and likeness.**

Some men speak much of the imitation of Christ, and following of his example; and it were well if we could see more of it really in effect. But no man shall ever become “like unto him” by bare imitation of his actions, **without that view or intuition of his glory** which alone is **accompanied with a transforming power** to change them into the same image.

The truth is, the best of us all are woefully defective in this duty, and many are discouraged from it because a pretence of it in some has degenerated into **superstition**; but we are loath at any time seriously to engage in it, and come with an unwilling kind of willingness unto the exercise of our minds in it.

Thoughts of this glory of Christ are too high for us, or too hard for us, such as we cannot long delight in; we turn away from them with a kind of weariness: yet are they of the same nature in general with our beholding of the glory of Christ in heaven, wherein there shall be no weariness, or satiety, unto eternity. **Is not the cause of it, that we are unspiritual or carnal, having our thoughts and affections wonted to give entertainment unto other things?** For this is the principal cause of our unreadiness and incapacity to exercise our minds in and about the great mysteries of the Gospel, [1 Cor. iii. 1–3](#). And it is so with us, moreover, because we do not stir up ourselves with watchfulness and diligence in continual acting of faith on this blessed object. **This is that which keeps many of us at so low an ebb, as unto the powers of a heavenly life and spiritual joys.**

Did we abound in this duty, in this exercise of faith, our life in walking before God would be more sweet and pleasant unto us, — our spiritual light and strength would have a daily increase, — we should more represent the glory of Christ in our ways and walking than usually we do, **and death itself would be most welcome unto us.**

The angels themselves desire to look into the things of the glory of Christ, [1 Peter i. 12](#). There is in them matter of inquiry and instruction for the most high and holy spirits in heaven. **The manifold wisdom of God in them is made known unto “principalities and powers in heavenly places by the church,”** [Eph. iii. 10](#). And **shall we neglect** that which is the object of angelical diligence to inquire into; especially considering that we are more than they concerned in it?

Is Christ, then, thus glorious in our eyes? Do we see the Father in him, or by seeing of him? Do we sedulously daily contemplate on the wisdom, love, grace, goodness, holiness, and righteousness of God, as revealing and manifesting themselves in him? **Do we sufficiently consider that the immediate vision of this glory in heaven will be our everlasting blessedness?** Does the imperfect view which we have of it here increase our desires after the perfect sight of it above? With respect unto these inquiries I shall briefly speak unto sundry sorts of men.

Some will say they understand not these things, nor any concernment of their own in them. **If they are true, yet are they notions which they may safely be without the knowledge of; for, so far as they can discern, they have no influence of Christian practice, or duties of morality; and the preaching of them does but take off the minds of men from more necessary duties.** But “if the gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that perish.” And unto the objection I say, —

1. Nothing is more fully and clearly revealed in the gospel, than that unto us Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God;” that he is the **character of the person** of the Father, so as that in seeing him we see the Father also; that we have “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in his face alone,” as has been proved. **This is the principal fundamental mystery and truth of the Gospel;** and which if it be not received, believed, owned, all other truths are useless unto our souls. To refer all the testimonies

that are given hereunto to the doctrine which he taught, in contradistinction unto his person as acting in the discharge of his office, is anti-evangelical, anti-christian, — turning the whole Gospel into a fable.

2. It is so, that the light of faith is given unto us principally to enable us to behold the glory of God in Christ, — to contemplate on it, as unto all the ends of its manifestation. So is it expressly affirmed, [2 Cor. iv. 6](#). If we have not this light, as it is communicated by the power of God unto them that do believe, [Eph. i. 17–19](#), we must be strangers unto the whole mystery of the gospel, [2 Cor. iv. 3, 4](#).

3. That in the beholding of the glory of God in Christ, we behold his glory also. For herein is he infinitely glorious above the whole creation, **in that in and by him alone the glory of the invisible God is represented unto us**. Herein do our souls live. This is that whereby the image of God is renewed in us, and we are made like unto the first-born.

4. This is so far from being unnecessary unto Christian practice, and the sanctified duties of morality, that he knows not Christ, he knows not the Gospel, he knows not the faith of the catholic church, **who imagines that they can be performed acceptably without it**. Yea, this is the root whence all other Christian duties do spring, and whereon their grow, whereby they are distinguished from the works of heathens. He is no Christian who believes not that faith in the person of Christ is the spring of all evangelical obedience; or who knows not that faith respects the revelation of the glory of God in him.

If these things are so, as they are the **most important truths of the Gospel**, and whose denial overthrows the foundation of faith, and is ruinous to Christian religion, certainly it is our duty to live in the **constant exercise of faith with respect unto this glory of Christ**. And we have sufficient experience of what kind of morality the ignorance of it has produced.

Others there are who may be some way strangers, but are no way enemies, unto this mystery, and to the practical exercise of faith therein. To such I shall tender the ensuing directions:—

1. Reckon in your minds, that this beholding of the glory of Christ by beholding the glory of God, and all his holy properties in him, is the **greatest privilege** whereof in this life we can be made partakers. The dawning of heaven is in it, and the first-fruits of glory; for this is life eternal, to know the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, [John xvii. 3](#). **Unless you value it, unless you esteem it as such a privilege, you will not enjoy it; and that which is not valued according unto its worth is despised**. It is not enough to think it a privilege, an advantage; but it is to be valued above other things, **according unto its greatness and excellency**. **“Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears,”** [Job xxviii. 22](#). **And if we do no more, we shall die strangers unto it; we are to “cry after this knowledge, and lift up our voice for this understanding,” if we design to attain it.**

2. **As it is a great privilege, which requires a due valuation**; so it is a great mystery, which requires much spiritual wisdom to the right understanding of it, and to direct in its practice, [1 Cor. ii. 4, 5](#). Flesh and blood will not reveal it unto us, but we must be taught of God to apprehend it, [John i. 12, 13](#); [Matt. xvi. 16, 17](#). **Mere unsanctified reason will never enable us unto, nor guide us in, the discovery of this duty**. **Men are not so vain as to hope for skill and understanding in the mystery of a secular art or trade, without the diligent use of those means whereby it may be attained; and shall we suppose that**

we may be furnished with spiritual skill and wisdom in this sacred mystery, without diligence in the use of the means appointed of God for the attaining of it? The principal of them is fervent prayer. Pray, then, with Moses, that God would show you this his glory; pray with the apostle, that “the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened to behold it;” pray that the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” Fill your minds with spiritual thoughts and contrivances about them. Slothful and lazy souls never obtain one view of this glory; the “lion in the way” deters them from attempting it. Being carnal, they abhor all diligence in the use of spiritual means, such as prayer and meditation on things unto them uneasy, unpleasing, and difficult. Unto others the way partakes of the nature of the end; the means of obtaining a view of the glory of Christ are of the same kind, of the same pleasantness, with that view itself in their proportion.

3. Learn the use hereof from the acting of contrary vicious habits. When the minds of men are vehemently fixed on the pursuit of their lusts, they will be continually ruminating on the objects of them, and have a thousand contrivances about them, until their “eyes become full of adulteries, and they cannot cease from sinning,” as the apostle speaks. The objects of their lusts have framed and raised an image of themselves in their minds, and transformed them into their own likeness. Is this the way of them who “go down to the chambers of death?” Do they thus frame their souls, and make them meet for destruction, until their words, gestures, actions, proclaim the frame of their minds unto all that look upon them? And shall we be slothful and negligent in the contemplation of that glory which transforms our minds into its own likeness, so as that the eyes of our understandings shall be continually filled with it, until we see him and behold him continually, so as never to cease from the holy acts of delight in him and love to him?

4. Would we, then, behold the glory of God as he manifesteth it in and by the holy properties of his nature, with their blessed operations and effects? — without which we have nothing of the power of religion in us, whatever we pretend: this alone is the way of it. Go to the whole creation, and all things contained in it; they can say no more, but, “We have heard the fame and report of these things,” and what we have heard we declare; but it is but a little portion of them that we are acquainted withal. “The heavens,” indeed, “declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.” “The invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” But, comparatively, it is but little that we can hence learn of these things, as to that we may behold of them in Christ Jesus. How blind herein was the best philosopher in comparison of the meanest of the apostles; yea, of him who is least in the kingdom of heaven!

But herein it is required that we rest not in the notion of this truth, and a bare assent unto the doctrine of it. The affecting power of it upon our hearts is that which we should aim at. Wherein does the blessedness of the saints above consist? Is it not herein, that they behold and see the glory of God in Christ? And what is the effect of it upon those blessed souls? Does it not change them into the same image, or make them like unto Christ? Does it not fill and satiate them with joy, rest, delight, complacency, and ineffable satisfaction? Do we expect, do we desire, the same state of blessedness? It is our present view of the glory of Christ which is our initiation thereinto, if we are exercised in it, until we have an experience of its transforming power in our souls.

These things are, it may be, of little use unto some. **Such as are babes in spiritual knowledge and understanding, — either because they are carnal, [1 Cor. iii. 1, 2](#), or slothful in hearing, [Heb. v. 12–14](#), — are not capable of these divine mysteries.** And therefore the apostle did, in an especial manner, declare this wisdom of God in a mystery unto them that were perfect, [1 Cor. ii. 6, 7](#); — that is, who were more grown in spiritual knowledge, and had their “senses exercised to discern good and evil.” **It is unto them who are exercised in the contemplation of invisible things, who delight to walk in the more retired paths of faith and love, that they are precious.**

Some few inferences from the whole of what has been declared shall put a close to this part of our Discourse.

1. The holy properties of the divine nature are not only represented unto our faith in Christ, as to their own essential glory, but as they are in the exercise of their powers for the salvation of the church. In him do we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy, and power of God, **acting themselves in the contrivance, constitution, and efficacious accomplishment** of the great work of our redemption and salvation. This gives, as unto us, an unutterable lustre unto the native amiableness of the divine excellencies. The wisdom and love of God are in themselves infinitely glorious, — infinitely amiable; — nothing can be added unto them, — there can be no increase of their essential glory. Howbeit, as they are eternally resident in the divine nature, and absolutely the same with it, we cannot so comprehend them as to have an endearing, satiating view of their glory, but as they are exerted in the work of the redemption and salvation of the church, — **as they are expressed, communicating their blessed effects unto the souls of them that do believe**, — which is done only in Christ; **so the beams of their glory shine unto us with unspeakable refreshment and joy, [2 Cor. iv. 6](#).** Hence the apostle, **on the consideration of the acting of the holy properties of God in this blessed work, falls into that contemplation,** “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor for who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen,” [Rom. xi. 33–36](#).

2. In and through Christ we do believe in God, [1 Pet. i. 21](#). This is the life of our souls. **God himself, in the infinite perfections of his divine nature, is the ultimate object of our faith.** But he is not here the immediate object of it; but the divine way and means of the manifestation of himself and them unto us, are so. **Through Christ we believe in God. By our belief in him we come to place our faith ultimately in God himself;** and this we can no otherwise do but by beholding the glory of God in him, as has been declared.

3. **This is the only way whereby we may attain the saving, sanctifying knowledge of God.** Without this, every beam of divine light that shines on us, or gleams from without (as the light shineth into darkness when the darkness comprehendeth it not, [John i. 5](#)), every spark that ariseth from the remainders of the light of nature within, **does rather amaze the minds of men than lead them into the saving knowledge of God.** So a glance of light in a dark night, giving a transient view of various objects, and passing away, does rather amaze than direct a traveller, and leave him more exposed unto wandering than before. Such were all those notions of the Divine Being and his excellencies, which those who boasted themselves to be wise among the heathen embraced and improved. **They did but fluctuate in**

their minds; they did not transform them into the image and likeness of God, as the saving knowledge of him does, Col. iii. 10.

“and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,”

So the apostle expresseth this truth, “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power of God**, and the **wisdom of God**,” [1 Cor. i. 20–24](#).

After it was evident unto all, that the world, the wise, the studious, the contemplative part of it, in the wisdom of God, disposing them into that condition wherein they were left unto themselves, in their own wisdom, their **natural light and reason**, did not, could not, come to the saving knowledge of God, but were **puffed up into a contempt** of the only way of the revelation of himself as weakness and folly; — it pleased God then to manifest all their wisdom to be folly, and to establish the only means of the knowledge of himself in Christ Jesus.

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Doctrine of Imputation

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A Discussion of the doctrine of imputation, the glory of Christ and conjunction between Christ and the church by John Owen from his book, [The Glory of Christ](#). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.i.xii.html>

The infinite evil of Sin and God's justice in the punishment of it. How is this justice meted out? Why is there so much misery in the world? This goes a long way in explaining one of the biggest objections to Christianity and the existence of a God who is reported to be merciful, loving, etc. My comments in [blue] and Owen's in red for emphasis.

Chapter IX.

The glory of Christ in his intimate conjunction with the church.

What concerns the glory of Christ in the mission of the Holy Ghost unto the church, with all the divine truths that are branched from it, I have at large declared in my discourse concerning the whole dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Here, therefore, it must have no place amongst those many other things which offer themselves unto our contemplation as part of this glory, or intimately belonging thereunto. I shall insist briefly on three only, which cannot be reduced directly unto the former heads.

And the first of these is, — That intimate conjunction that is between Christ and the church; whence it is just and equal in the sight of God, according unto the rules of his eternal righteousness, that what he did and suffered in the discharge of his office, should be esteemed, reckoned, and imputed unto us, as unto all the fruits and benefits of it, as if we had done and suffered the same things ourselves. For this conjunction of his with us was an act of his own mind and will [as opposed to being influenced by any influence from without, i.e., God is sovereign; we are not. This is how God always acts. God is not dependent upon the creature for anything; he does all things according to the counsel of his will, not the counsel of others.] wherein he is ineffably glorious.

The enemies of the glory of Christ and of his cross do take this for granted, that there ought to be such a conjunction between the guilty person and him that suffers for him, as that in him the guilty person may be said, in some sense, to undergo the punishment himself. But then they affirm, on the other hand, that there was no such conjunction between Christ and sinners, — none at all; but that he was a man, as they were men; and otherwise, that he was at the greatest distance from them all as it is possible for one man to be from another, Socin. de Servat. lib. iii. cap. 3 [Socinianism - they do not believe in Christ's deity]. The falseness of this latter assertion, and the gross ignorance of the Scripture, under a pretence of subtlety, in them that make it, will evidently appear in our ensuing Discourse.

The apostle tells us, [1 Peter ii. 24](#), that in “his own self he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;” and, [chap. iii. 18](#), that he “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” But this seems somewhat strange unto reason. Where is the justice, where is the equity, that the just should suffer for the unjust? Where is divine righteousness herein? For it was an act of God: “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,” [Isa. liii. 6](#). The equity hereof, with the grounds of it, must be here a little inquired into.

First of all, it is certain that all the **elect**, the whole church of God, fell in Adam under the curse due to the transgression of the law. It is so also, that in this curse death, both temporal and eternal, was contained. This curse none could undergo and be saved. **Nor was it consistent with the righteousness, or holiness, or truth of God, that sin should go unpunished.** Wherefore there was a necessity, upon a supposition of God's **decree** to save his church, of a translation of punishment, — namely, from them who had deserved it, and could not bear it, unto one who had not deserved it, but could bear it.

A supposition of this translation of punishment by divine dispensation is the foundation of Christian religion, yea, of all supernatural revelation contained in the Scripture. This was first intimated in the first promise [[Gen3:15](#)]; and afterward explained and confirmed in all the institutions of the Old Testament. For although in the sacrifices of the law, there was a revival of the greatest and most fundamental principle of the law of nature, — namely, that God is to be worshipped with our best, — **yet the principal end and use of them was to represent this translation of punishment from the offender unto another**, who was to be a sacrifice in his stead.

The reasons of the equity hereof, and the unspeakable glory of Christ herein, is what we now inquire into. And I shall reduce what ought to be spoken hereunto to the ensuing heads:—

I. It is not contrary unto the nature of divine justice, it does not interfere with the principles of natural light in man, that in sundry cases some persons should suffer punishment for the sins and offences of others.

I shall at present give this assertion no other confirmation, but only that God has often done so, who will, who can, do no iniquity.

So he affirms that he will do, [Exod. xx. 5](#), “Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.” It is no exception of weight, that they also are sinners, continuing in their fathers’ sins; for the worst of sinners must not be dealt unjustly withal: but they must be so if they are punished for their fathers’ sins, and it be absolutely unlawful that any one should be punished for the sin of another.

So the church affirms, “Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities,” [Lam. v. 7](#). And so it was; for in the Babylonish captivity God punished the sins of their forefathers, especially those committed in the days of Manasseh, [2 Kings xxiii. 26, 27](#); as afterward, in the final destruction of that church and nation, God punished in them the guilt of all bloody persecutions from the beginning of the world, [Luke xi. 50, 51](#).

So Canaan was cursed for the sin of his father, [Gen. ix. 25](#). Saul’s seven sons were put to death for their father’s bloody cruelty, [2 Sam. xxi. 9, 14](#). For the sin of David, seventy thousand of the people were destroyed by an angel, concerning whom he said, “It is I that have sinned and done evil; these sheep, what have they done?” [2 Sam. xxiv. 15–17](#). See also [1 Kings xxi. 29](#). So was it with all the children or infantry that perished in the flood, or in the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah. And other instances of the like nature may be assigned.

It is therefore evident that there is no inconsistency with the nature of divine justice, nor the rules of reason among men, that in sundry cases the sins of some may be punished on others.

II. It is to be observed, that this administration of justice is not promiscuous, — that any whatever may be punished for the sins of any others. **There is always a special cause and reason of it**; and this is a **peculiar conjunction** between them who sin and those who are punished for their sins. And two things belong unto this conjunction. 1. Especial relation; 2. Especial mutual interest.

1. **There is an especial relation required unto this translation of punishment**; such as that between parents and children, as in most of the instances before given; or between a king and subjects, as in the case of David. **Hereby the persons sinning and those suffering are constituted one body, wherein if one member offend, another may justly suffer**: the back may answer for what the hand takes away.

2. It consists in mutual interest. Those whose sins are punished in others have such an interest in them, as that their being so is a punishment unto themselves. Therefore are such sinners threatened with the punishment and evils that shall befall their posterity or children for their sakes; which is highly penal unto themselves, [Numb. xiv. 33](#), “Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms.” The punishment due to their sins is in part transferred unto their children; and therein did the sting of their own punishment also consist.

III. There is a greater, a more intimate conjunction, a nearer relation, a higher mutual interest, between Christ and the church, than ever was or can be between any other persons or relations in the world, whereon it became just and equal in the sight of God that he should **suffer for us, and that what he did and suffered would be imputed unto us**; which is farther to be cleared.

There neither is nor can be any more than a **threefold conjunction between divers distinct persons**. The first is natural; the second is moral, whereunto I refer that which is spiritual or mystical; and the third **federal**, by virtue of mutual compact [e.g., **Adam was the federal head of all humanity, so that when he sinned, all sinned; his sin was imputed to all his posterity; that's why we are all born sinners. See Rom5:12 Arminians do not believe in this imputation because they see it as unfair.**]. In all three ways is Christ in conjunction with his church, and in every one of them in a way singular and peculiar. [Christ is the federal head of the church, those chosen in eternity to be saved, Eph. 1, to be united to Christ. So what Christ did to atone for sin, etc., resulted in the imputation of righteousness to all the members of his body, the church.]

1. The **first conjunction** of distinct periods is **natural**. God has made all mankind “of one blood,” [Acts xvii. 26](#), — whereby there is a cognation and alliance between them all. Hence every man is every man’s brother or neighbour whom loving-kindness is to be showed, [Luke x. 36](#). And this conjunction was between Christ and the church, as the apostle declares, [Heb. ii. 14, 15](#), “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hence “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one,” verse 11. His **infinite condescension** [**The Son of God leaving heaven and coming down to our level, humbling himself, suffering, etc.**], in coming into this communion and conjunction of nature with us, was before declared; but it is not common, like that between all other men, partakers of the same nature. There are two things wherein it was **peculiar** and **eminent**.

(1.) This conjunction between him and the church did not arise from a **necessity** of nature, but from a voluntary act of his will. [**nothing in God's nature required him to do it as opposed to his holiness which requires all sin to be punished; no exceptions; he has to do it and will. Either the guilty person is punished or someone in his place.**] The conjunction that is between all others is **necessary**. Every man is every man’s brother, Whether he will or no, by being a man. Natural generation, communicating to everyone his subsistence in the same nature, prevents [**comes before**] all acts of their own will and choice. With the Lord Christ it was otherwise, as the text affirms. For such reasons as are there expressed, he did, by an act of his own will, partake of flesh and blood, or came into this conjunction with us. He did it of his own choice, because the children did partake of the same. He would be what the children were. **Wherefore the conjunction of Christ in human nature with the church is ineffably distinct from that common conjunction which is amongst all others in the same nature.** And, therefore, although it should not be meet amongst mere men, that one should act and suffer in the stead of others, because they are all thus related to one another, as it were, whether they will or no; yet this could not reach the Lord Christ, who, in a strange and wonderful manner, came into this conjunction by a mere act of his own.

(2.) He came into it on this design, and for this only end, — namely, **that in our nature, taken to be his own, he might do and suffer what was to be done and suffered for the church**: so it is added in the text, “That by death he might destroy him who had the power of death; and deliver them who through fear of death were subject to bondage.” This was the only end of his conjunction in nature with the church; and this puts the case between him and it at a vast distance from what is or may be between other men.

It is a foolish thing to argue, that because a mere participation of the same nature among men is not sufficient to warrant the righteousness of punishing one for another, — therefore the conjunction in the same nature betwixt Christ and the church is not a sufficient and just foundation of his suffering for us, and in our stead. For, by an act of his own will and choice, **he did partake of our nature, and that for this very end, that therein he might suffer for us; as the Holy Ghost expressly declares**. Amongst others, there neither is nor can be anything of this nature, and so no objection from what is equal or unequal amongst them can arise against what is equal between Christ and the church. And herein is he glorious and precious unto them that believe, as we shall see immediately.

2. There is a **mystical conjunction** between Christ and the church, which answers all the most strict, real, or moral unions or conjunctions between other persons or things. **Such is the conjunction between the head of a body and its members, or the tree of the vine and its branches**, which are real; **or between a husband and wife**, which is moral and real also. That there is such a conjunction between Christ and his church the Scripture plentifully declares, as also that it is the **foundation of the equity of his suffering in its stead**. So speaks the apostle, [Eph. v. 25–32](#), “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,” — that is, his wife, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, — “and gave himself for it,” &c. Being the head and husband of the church, which was to be sanctified and saved, and could be so no otherwise but by his blood and sufferings, he was both meet so to suffer, and it was righteous also that what **he did and suffered should be imputed unto them for whom he both did it and suffered**. Let the adversaries of the glory of Christ assign any one instance of such a conjunction, union, and relation between any amongst mankind, as is between Christ and the church, and they may give some countenance unto their cavils against his obedience and sufferings in our stead, with the imputation of what he did and suffered unto us. **But the glory of Christ is singular herein, and as such it appears unto them by whom the mystery of it is, in any measure, spiritually apprehended.** [[see 1Cor2:14](#)]

But yet it will be said, that this mystical conjunction of Christ with his church is consequential unto what he did and suffered for it; for it ensues on the conversion of men unto him. For it is by faith that we are implanted into him. Until that be actually wrought in us, we have no mystical conjunction with him. He is not a head or a husband unto unregenerate, unsanctified unbelievers, whilst they continue so to be; and such was the state of the whole church when Christ suffered for us, [Rom. v. 8](#); [Eph. ii. 5](#). There was, therefore, no such mystical conjunction between him and the church as to render it meet and equal that he should suffer in its stead. Wherefore the church is the effect of the work of redemption, — that which rose out of it, which was made and constituted by it; and cannot be so the object of it as that which was to be redeemed by virtue of an antecedent conjunction with it. I answer, —

(1.) Although this mystical conjunction is not actually consummate without an actual participation of the Spirit of Christ, yet the **church of the elect** was designed antecedently unto all his sufferings to be

his spouse and wife, so as that he might love her and suffer for her; so it is said, [Hos. xii. 12](#), “Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.” Howbeit she was not his married wife until after he had served for her, and thereby purchased her to be his wife; yet as he served for her she is called his wife, because of his love unto her, and because she was so designed to be, upon his service. So was the church designed to be the spouse of Christ in the **counsel of God** [[see Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...](#)]; whereon he loved her and gave himself for her.

Hence, in the work of redemption the church was the object of it, as **designed** to be the spouse of Christ; and the effect of it, inasmuch as that thereby it was made meet for the full consummation of that alliance; as the apostle expressly declares, [Eph. v. 25–27](#).

(2.) Antecedently unto all that the Lord Christ did and suffered for the church, there was a **supreme act of the will of God the Father, giving all the elect unto him, intrusting them with him, to be redeemed, sanctified, and saved; as himself declares, [John xvii. 6, 9; x. 14–16](#). And on these grounds this mystical conjunction between Christ and the church has its virtue and efficacy before it be actually consummate.**

3. There is a **federal conjunction** between distinct persons: and as this is various, according unto the variety of the interests and ends of them that enter into it; so that is most eminent, where one, by the common consent of all that are concerned, undertakes to be a **sponsor** or **surety** for others, to do and answer what on their part is required of them for attaining the ends of the covenant. **So did the Lord Christ undertake to be surety of the new covenant in behalf of the church, [Heb. vii. 22](#), and thereon tendered himself unto God, to do and suffer for them, in their stead, and on their behalf, whatever was required, that they might be sanctified and saved.** These things I have treated of at large elsewhere, as containing a great part of the mystery of the **wisdom of God** in the salvation of the church. Here, therefore, I do only observe, that this is that whereby the **mystical conjunction** that was between Christ and the church, whereon it was meet, just, and equal in the sight of God, **that what he did and suffered should be imputed unto us,** is completed.

These are some of the foundations of that mystery of transmitting the sins of the church, as to the guilt and punishment of them, from the sinners themselves unto another, every way innocent, pure, and righteous in himself, — which is the life, soul, and centre of all Scripture revelations. **And herein is he exceedingly glorious and precious unto them that believe.** [[to them that do not believe, this is all foolishness, a rock of offense, etc. 1Pet1:8](#)] **No heart can conceive, no tongue can express the glory of Christ herein.** Now, because his **infinite condescension** [[The Son of God coming down from an infinite height, to take on human flesh, to suffer, be spit upon, to die on the cross for the sins of his people. See Phil2:5-8](#)] and love herein have been spoken to before, I shall here only instance its greatness in some of its effects.

1. It shines forth in the exaltation of the righteousness of God in the forgiveness of sins. There is no more adequate conception of the **divine nature, than that of justice in rule and government.** **Hereunto it belongs to punish sin according unto its desert;** and herein consisted the **first actings of God as the governor of the rational creation.** They did so in the eternal punishment of the angels that sinned, and the casting of Adam out of Paradise, — an emblem also of everlasting ruin. Now, all the church, all the elect of God, are sinners; — they were so in Adam, — they have been and are so in themselves. What does become the justice of God to do thereon? Shall it dismiss them all unpunished? Where, then, is

that justice which spared not the angels who sinned, nor Adam at the first? Would this procedure have any consonance thereunto, — be reconcilable unto it? **Wherefore the establishment of the righteousness of God on the one hand, and the forgiveness of sin on the other, seem so contradictory, as that many stumble and fall at it eternally.** See [Rom. x. 3, 4.](#)

But in this interposition of Christ, in this translation of punishment from the church unto him, by virtue of his conjunction therewith, there is a blessed harmony between the righteousness of God and the forgiveness of sins; — the exemplification whereof is his **eternal glory.** “O blessed change! O sweet permutation!” as Justin Martyr speaks.

By **virtue of his union with the church,** which of **his own accord** he entered into, and his undertaking therein to answer for it in the sight of God [[the Father](#)], it was a righteous thing with God to lay the punishment of all our sins upon him, so as that he might freely and graciously pardon them all, **to the honour and exaltation of his justice, as well as of his grace and mercy,** [Rom. iii. 24–26.](#)

Herein is he glorious in the sight of God, angels, and men. In him there is at the same time, in the same divine acting, a glorious resplendence of justice and mercy; — of the one in punishing, of the other in pardoning. The appearing inconsistency between the righteousness of God and the salvation of sinners, wherewith the consciences of convinced persons are exercised and terrified, and which is the rock on which most of them split themselves into eternal ruin, is herein removed and taken away. **In his cross were divine holiness and vindictive justice exercised and manifested; and through his triumph, grace and mercy are exerted to the utmost.** This is that glory which ravisheth the hearts and satiates the souls of them that believe. [[Hence John 1:17, For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.](#)] For what can they desire more, what is farther needful unto the rest and composure of their souls, than at one view to behold God eternally well pleased in the **declaration of his righteousness and the exercise of his mercy,** in order unto their salvation? In due apprehensions hereof let my soul live; — in the faith hereof let me die, and let present admiration of this glory make way for the eternal enjoyment of it in its beauty and fullness.

2. He is glorious in that the law of God in its preceptive part [[what God commands, e.g., The 10 Commandments... thou shall not murder](#)], or as to the obedience which it required, was perfectly fulfilled and accomplished. **That it should be so, was absolutely necessary, from the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of him by whom it was given.** For what could be more remote from those divine perfections, than to give a law which never was to be fulfilled in them unto whom it was given, and who were to have the advantages of it? **This could not be done by us; but through the obedience of Christ, by virtue of this his mystical conjunction with the church, the law was so fulfilled in us by being fulfilled for us,** as that the glory of God in the giving of it, and annexing eternal rewards unto it, is exceedingly exalted. See [Rom. viii. 3, 4.](#)

This is that **glory of Christ** whereof **one view by faith will scatter all the fear, answer all the objections, and give relief against all the despondencies, of poor, tempted, doubting souls;** and an **anchor** it will be unto all believers, which they may cast within the veil, **to hold them firm and steadfast in all trials, storms, and temptations in life and death.**

The upshot of all this regarding this truth of the execution of God's wrath on sin is that many say that God is not fair! First, we humans, finite creatures with minds darkened and corrupted by sin, grossly misunderstand the infinite evil of sin. God hates it with an infinite hatred. What's fair is for God to cast all of humanity into hell which is what we all deserve. That's fair. But because God in his sovereign will, according to his good pleasure, extended mercy to some in saving a remnant for himself. Because of what the Son of God did in his humiliation and bloody death on the cross to pay for sin on behalf of those for whom he died, and because of his perfect obedience to the law, his righteousness is imputed to them, the church, those who were chosen before the foundation of the world, who he will call in each generation, to take them into favor with himself when they deserved it not. This is the same principle by which many were made sinners by Adam's fall and consequently made obnoxious unto judgment (Adam's in imputed to all his posterity, i.e., all are born sinners), are made righteous by the one man Jesus Christ. So if anyone insists on God being fair, one ought to be careful what one says!

Notes on Happiness and Peace

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Notes on the happiness and peace of that the saints have, which is part of that which is given to them at conversion depicted in the diagram; that the saints participate in the happiness that God has and have great joy for it. More on what glory is and the image of God. Before our conversion we did not have this image. We were in Adam's likeness; otherwise, why would God give it to us if we already are in possession of it? What are true riches?

This sermon is by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xv.viii.html>

SERMON VIII.

romans ii. 10.

But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.

The apostle, having in the preceding verses declared what is the portion of wicked men; viz. indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; in this verse declares what is the portion assigned to good men. In the words of the text we should observe,

1. The description of a good man; viz. [namely] the man that worketh good. Such men are here described by the fruit which they bring forth. Christ has taught us that the tree is known by its fruit. Paul here describes them by that which most distinguishes them; not by the **external privileges** which they enjoy, or the light under which they live; but by the fruits which they bring forth. For as the apostle says, in verse 13. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified." That which distinguishes good men from bad, is not that they hear good, or that they profess good, or that they intend good; but that they do good. They are workers of good.

2. The reward of such a man; viz. "glory, honour, and peace;" in which are mentioned three sorts of good that are assigned to them as their portion. 1. Their moral good, expressed by the word glory. Glory shall be given them; i. e. they shall be made excellent and glorious. [see Jn17:22] [this glory, or holiness is most excellent and is the foundation from which all truly virtuous affections] They shall be endued with those excellent and glorious qualifications, which will render them beautiful and lovely. They shall have the image of God, and be partakers of his holiness. Thus the word glory is used by St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 18. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory. 2. Their relative good; Honour. They shall be in most honourable circumstances. They shall be advanced to great dignity, receive a relation to God, and Christ, and the heavenly inhabitants, and God shall put honour upon them. 3. Their natural good; Peace: which, as it is used in the Scriptures, signifies happiness; and includes all comfort, joy, and pleasure.

I shall endeavour to show from the text, that glory, honour, and peace are the portion which God has given to all good men. In describing their happiness, I shall consider the successive parts of it; both here and hereafter.

First. I propose to treat of their happiness in this world. Those who are truly good men have been the subjects of a real thorough work of conversion, and have had their hearts turned from sin to God. Of such persons it may be said, that they are truly blessed. They are often pronounced blessed by God. He is infinitely wise, and sees and knows all things. He perfectly knows who are blessed, and who are miserable. He hath said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven." "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." "Blessed are the poor in spirit" "the meek" "the merciful" "the pure in heart"

In considering the **happiness** of the righteous in this world, I shall pursue the method which the text obviously points out, and shall consider, 1. The excellency; 2. The honour; and, 3. The peace and pleasure, which God bestows upon them in the present life.

I. **The excellency or glory.** The sum of this consists in their having the **image of God** upon them. When a person is converted, he has the image of God instamped on him. Coloss. iii. 10. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." And Ephes. iv. 23, 24. "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness." They have their eyes opened, and are led into such a sight of God and thorough acquaintance with him, as changes the soul into the image of God's glory.

What can render a creature more excellent than to have the very image of the Creator? and how blessed a change is that which is wrought in conversion, which brings a man thus to be in the image of God! For though the image of God in Christians in this world is very imperfect, yet it is real. The real image of God is most excellent, though it be imperfect.

Hence, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor and "the saints are the excellent of the earth." The image of God is their glory, and it may well be called glory, for imperfect as it is, it renders them glorious in the eyes of the angels of heaven. The image of God is a greater beauty in their eyes, than the brightness and glory of the sun in the firmament.

Indeed the saints have no excellency, as they are in and of themselves. In them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. They are in themselves poor, guilty, vile creatures, and see themselves to be so; but they have an excellency and glory in them, because they have Christ dwelling in them. The excellency that is in them, though it be but as a spark, yet it is something ten thousand times more excellent than any ruby, or the most precious pearl that ever was found on the earth; and that because it is something divine, something of God.

This holy heavenly spark is put into the soul in conversion, and God maintains it there. [We are kept by the power of God. 1Pet1:5] All the powers of hell cannot put it out, for God will keep it alive, and it shall prevail more and more. Though it be but small, yet it is powerful; it has influence over the heart to govern it, and brings forth holy fruits in the life, and will not cease to prevail till it has consumed all the corruption that is left in the heart, and till it has turned the whole soul into a pure, holy, and heavenly flame, till the soul of man becomes like the angels, a flame of fire, and shines as the brightness of the firmament.

II. I would consider the honour to which Christians are advanced in this world; and the sum of this is, that they are the children of God. This is an excellent and glorious degree of honour and dignity to which they are admitted; and that because the Being to whom they are related is an infinitely glorious being, a being of incomprehensible majesty and excellency; and also because the relation is so near and honourable a relation. It is a great honour to be the servant of God. John the Baptist said of Christ, that he was not worthy to stoop down to loose the latchet of Christ's shoes. But Christians are not only admitted to be the servants of God, but his children; and how much more honourable in a family is the relation of children than that of servants! [Gal. iv. 7.](#) "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." [Rom. viii. 16, 17.](#) "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." [1 John iii. 1.](#) "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The honour appears the greater if it be considered how Christians are brought into their relation to God; and that is by Christ. **They become the children of God by virtue of their union with the only-begotten and eternal Son of God;** they are united to him as his spouse, and members of his body, as his flesh and his bones, and as one spirit; and, therefore, as Christ is the Son of God, so they are sons; therefore are they joint heirs with Christ, because they are joint sons with him. To this end God sent forth his Son, that so they might through him also be sons. [Gal. iv. 4, 5.](#) "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And therefore they partaking of the relation of the Son, so are they also of the spirit of the Son; as it follows in the next verse, "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Herein Christians are the children of God in a more honourable way than the angels themselves; for the angels are the sons of God by virtue of that relation which they have to God, as they are in themselves singly and separately. But Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only-begotten Son, in his sonship, whose sonship is immensely more honourable than that of the angels. And Christians, being the children of God, are honoured of God as such. They are sometimes

owned as such by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God. For, as it is found in the verse already cited from Romans, “the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.” They are treated as such in the great value God puts upon them, for they are his jewels, those which he has set apart for himself; and he is tender of them as of the apple of his eye. He disregards wicked men in comparison of them. He will give kings for them and princes for their life. He is jealous for them. He is very angry with those that hurt them. If any offend them, it were better for them that a mill-stone were cast about their neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea. He loves them with a very great and wonderful love. He pities them as a father pities his children. He will protect them, and defend them, and provide for them, as a father provides for his children. This honour have all they that fear and love God, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. **Peace and pleasure are also the portion of Christians in this world.** Their peace and **joy in God** begin in the present life, and are no less excellent than the glory with which he invests them, and the honour to which he advances them. We ought here to consider, 1. What foundation they have for peace and joy. 2. What peace and joy they actually have.

1st: Their foundation for peace and joy is in their **safety and their riches.**

1. They have ground for peace because of their safety. They are safe in Jesus Christ from the wrath of God and from the power of Satan. They that are in Christ shall never perish, for none shall pluck them out of his hand. They are delivered from all their dreadful misery, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which shall come on ungodly men. They were naturally exposed to it, but they are delivered from it; their sins are all forgiven them. The hand-writing is eternally blotted out. Their sins are all done away; God has cast them behind his back, and buried their sorrows in the depths of the sea, and they shall no more come into remembrance. They are most safe from misery, for they are built on Christ their everlasting rock. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. They have the faithful promise of God for their security, that is established as a sure witness in heaven. They have an interest in that covenant, that is well ordered in all things and sure. “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.”

2. They have a foundation of unspeakable comfort and joy, **because of their riches. They have true and infinite riches.** They are the possessors and heirs of something real and substantial, and that is worthy to be called by the name of **riches**. The things they possess are excellent, more precious than gold and than rubies; all the desirable things of this world cannot equal them, and they have enough of it. **The riches that they have given them of God are inexhaustible.** It is sufficient for them; there is no end of it. They have a fountain of infinite good for their comfort, and contentment, and joy; for God has given himself to them to be their portion, and he is a God of infinite glory. There is glory in him to engage their contemplation forever and ever, without ever being satiated. And he is also an **infinite fountain of love**; for God is love, yea, an ocean of love without shore or bottom! The glorious Son of God is theirs; that lovely one, who was from all eternity God’s delight, rejoicing always before him. All his beauty is their portion, and his dying love is theirs, his very heart is theirs, and his glory and happiness in heaven are theirs, so far as their capacity will allow them to partake of it; for he has promised it to them, and has taken possession of it in their name. **And the saints are also rich in the**

principle that is in them. They have inward riches which they carry about with them in their own hearts. They are rich in faith. James ii. 5. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" They have the grace of God in their hearts, which is a most excellent treasure, and a good foundation of joy; for it is the seed of joy. [Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. 1John3:9 In other words, one cannot continue a life of sin in the manner that he did before he was converted. To be delivered from the dominion of sin necessarily leads to this joy; and saints ought to look ahead to when we are fully redeemed and able to worship God without sin and its hindrances, etc.] Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And the seed that is sown in their hearts, is the grace of God there. That is a seed that, however it lies hid, will certainly in due time spring up, and put forth itself, and will bud, and blossom, and will bring forth rich fruit. These riches are the true riches. This is that good which God reserves for his friends. God distributes silver and gold and such like things among his enemies [Abraham gave gifts to his servants [Gen 25:6], because he slights them and regards them not. [hence the insidious consequents of the prosperity gospel] They are contemptible things in his eyes, as we throw husks to swine. But he has reserved better things for his children, of which no ungodly man, though a prince or monarch, shall partake. This is the ground which Christians have of peace and pleasure in this world. However, the saints cannot always take comfort, and do not always taste the sweetness that there is in store for them, by reason of the darkness and clouds that sometimes interpose. But though they may walk in great darkness for a long time, yet they are happy notwithstanding.

2d. They sometimes in this world have the actual enjoyment of peace and pleasure, that are most excellent. Sometimes the clouds that are in the way are removed, and Christians are enabled to behold the ground they have for rejoicing. Though God's glory and love be often hid from them, as it were with a veil, or at least, so as to hinder a clear view of it, yet God sometimes is pleased to remove the veil, to draw the curtain, and to give the saints sweet visions. Sometimes there is, as it were, a window opened in heaven, and Christ shows himself through the lattice; they have sometimes a beam of sweet light breaking forth from above into the soul; and God and the Redeemer sometimes come to them, and make friendly visits to them, and manifest themselves to them. Sometimes Christians have seasons of light and gladness for some considerable period, and at other times their views are more transient. Sometimes their light and joy arise in reading of the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in hearing the word preached, sometimes at the Lord's table, sometimes in the duty of prayer, sometimes in Christian conference, sometimes in meditation when they are about their occupations, as in the time of more set and solemn meditations; and sometimes in the watches of the night.

Those spiritual joys and pleasures which believers possess in this world, are chiefly of three sorts.

1. The joy which they have in a sense of their own good estate; in the sense they have of the pardon of their sins, and their safety from hell; and a sense of the favour of God, and in the hope they have of eternal life.

2. The **joy and delight** which they have in the apprehension and view of God's excellency and love. The joy of a Christian does not consist merely in the sense of his own good estate, as natural men often are ready to imagine; but there is an **excellent, transcendent, soul-satisfying sweetness** that sometimes fills the soul in the apprehension of the **excellency of God**. The soul dwells upon the thought, fixes on it, and takes complacency in God as the greatest good, the most delightful object of its contemplation. This pleasure is the sweetest pleasure that a Christian ever feels, and is the **foretaste of the pleasures of heaven** itself. Herein sometimes the saints do boast of the clusters of Canaan. This sort of joy is evidence of sincerity above any other joy, a more sure evidence than a rejoicing in our own good estate. From the joy which the Christian has in the view of the glory and excellency of God; the consideration of the love of God to him cannot be excluded. When he rejoices in God as a glorious God, he rejoices in him the more because he is his God, and in consideration of there being a union between him and this God; otherwise, if there were a separation, the view of God's excellency, though it would raise joy one way, would proportionally excite grief another. God is sometimes pleased to manifest his love to the saints, and commonly at those times, when a Christian has the greatest views of God's excellency, he has also of his love; the soul is spiritually sensible of God as being present with it, and as manifesting and communicating himself; and it has sweet communion with God, and tastes the sweetness of his love, and knows a little what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge.

3. The third kind of **joy** is found in doing that which is to the glory of God. The true love of God makes this sweet and delightful to the soul. The joy of a Christian not only arises in knowing and viewing but also in doing; not only in apprehending God, but also in doing for God. For he loves God not only with a love of complacency, but a love of benevolence also; **and as a love of complacency delights in beholding, so does a love of benevolence delight in doing for, the object beloved** [delight is a grace!]. The peace and pleasure which the Christian has in these things, is far better and more desirable than the pleasures that this world can afford, and especially than the pleasures of wicked men; and that on the following accounts.

1. There is **light** in this pleasure. **The peace and pleasures of wicked men have their foundation in darkness**. When wicked men have any quietness or joy, it is because they are blind, and do not see what is their real condition. If it were not for blindness and delusion, they could have no peace nor comfort in anything. There needs nothing but to open a wicked man's eyes, and let him look about him and see where he is, and it would be enough to destroy all the quietness and comfort of the most prosperous wicked man in the world. But on the contrary, the peace of a godly man, is a peace that arises from light; when he sees things most as they are, then he has most peace; and the distress and trouble which he sometimes feels, arise from clouds and darkness. When a godly man is in the greatest fear and distress, if he did not know what a happy state he were in, he would at the same time rejoice with unspeakable joy; so that his pleasure is not founded, like that of wicked men, in stupidity, but in sensibleness; not in blindness, but in light and sight, and knowledge.

2. There is **rest** in this pleasure. He that has found this joy, finds a sweet repose and acquiescence of the soul in it. **It sweetly calms the soul** and allays its disappointments. Christ says, [Matt. xi. 28](#). "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is a sweet contentment in it; the soul that tastes it, desires no better pleasure. There is a satisfaction in it. The soul that has

been wandering before, when it comes to taste of this fountain, finds in it that which satisfies its desires and cravings, and discovers that in it which it needs in order to its happiness. [John iv. 14.](#) “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” It is quite otherwise with the pleasures of ungodly men. There is no true rest in them, they are not enjoyed with inward quietness, there is no true peace enjoyed within, neither do they afford contentment. But those wicked men that have the most worldly pleasures, are yet restlessly inquiring, “Who will show us any good?” “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Wicked men in the midst of their enjoyment of pleasure have no true rest, neither do their reflections on it afford rest; but only remorse of conscience, and disquietude of soul, under the guilt that is contracted. But the pleasures of the godly afford rest in the enjoyment, and rest and sweetness in the reflection; it oftentimes calms and refreshes the soul to look on past comforts.

3. There is life in it. It is a pleasure that strengthens and nourishes and preserves the soul, and gives it life, and does not corrupt and destroy and bring it to death, as do sinful pleasures. The pleasures of the wicked are poison to the soul, they tend to enfeeble it, to consume it, and kill it. But the pleasures of the godly feed the soul, and do not consume it; they strengthen, and do not weaken it; they exalt, and do not debase it; they enrich, and do not impoverish it. Death and corruption are the natural fruit of the pleasures of sin, but life is the fruit of spiritual pleasures. [Gal. vi. 8.](#) “For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” The life in which this joy consists, and to which it tends, is the most excellent life, and the only life worthy of the name; it is spiritual, and the beginning of eternal life: this pleasure is a fountain springing up to everlasting life. [John iv. 14.](#)

4. There is substance in it. This pleasure is not a mere shadow, an empty delight, as earthly pleasures are, but it is substantial joy. The pleasures of sin last but a little season, they are the crackling of thorns under a pot, or as the blazing meteors of the night, that appear for a moment, and then vanish. But this pleasure is like the durable light of the stars or the sun. Worldly pleasures are easily overthrown; a little thing will spoil all the pleasures of a king’s court. Haman, in the midst of all his prosperity and greatness, could say, “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” But the joys of the saints are such as the changes of time cannot overthrow. If God lifts up the light of his countenance, this will compose and rejoice the heart under the saddest tidings. They joy in affliction. **Their enemies cannot overthrow this joy**; the devil and even death itself cannot overthrow it; but oftentimes it lives, and is in its greatest height, in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. When in the most tormenting death, how often have the martyrs sung in the midst of the flames, and under the hands of their cruel tormentors! [Job xxxv. 10.](#) “But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night.”

5. **There is holiness in it.** It is the **excellency of these joys that they are holy joys**. They are not like the polluted stream of sinful pleasures, but they are pure and holy. [Rev. xxii. 1.](#) “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” **These pleasures do not defile the soul, but purify it**; they do not deform, but beautify it; they not only greatly delight the soul, but render it more excellent; they impart something more of God, more of a divine disposition and temper, dispose to holy actions, and cause the soul to shine as Moses’s face did when

he had been conversing with God in the mount, and as Stephen's face, which was as the face of an angel, when he saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. **Thus these pleasures make the soul more excellent, and more divine, as well as more happy.**

6. **There is sometimes glory in it.** God sometimes unveils his face, and lets in light more plentifully. This is a delight and joy, the excellency, and sweetness, and admirableness of which cannot be expressed. It is a kind of glory that fills the soul. **So excellent is its nature, that the sweetest earthly delight vanishes into nothing,** and appears as base and vile as dross and dirt, or as the mere mire of the street. It is bright above all that is earthly, as the sun is brighter than the glow-worm. Of this, the apostle takes notice. [1 Peter i. 8.](#) "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Secondly. I proceed to consider the **happiness of the saints in death.** It may seem a mystery to the world that men should be happy in death, which the world looks upon as the most terrible of all things; but thus it is to the saints. Their happiness is built upon a rock, and it will stand the shock of death: when the storm and floods of death come with their greatest violence, it stands firm, and neither death nor hell can overthrow it. **[this is largely a result of one who is spiritually minded as he ought, growing in knowledge and grace as opposed to one who is negligent in this vital duty. See Owen's book, The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded. So if believers are not experiencing peace, joy and are greatly fearful of death, then it is because they are not being diligent in their duty of being spiritually minded, studying the scriptures, contemplating on spiritual things, all the mysteries of the Kingdom, etc.; they are being earthly minded and hence are not as stable and joyful, while even in going through trials, as they ought to be.]**

Here,

1. **Death is rendered no death to them.** It is not worthy of the name of death. As the life of a wicked man is not worthy of the name of life, so the death of a godly man is not worthy of the name of death. It is not looked upon as any death at all in the eyes of God, who sees all things as they are, nor is it called death by him. Hence Christ promises, that those who believe in him shall not die. [John vi. 50, 51.](#) "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." It is no death to the saints, because it is no destruction to them. The notion of death implies destruction, or perishing, in it; but the godly are not destroyed by death, death cannot destroy them; for as Christ says, they shall never perish. [John iii. 15.](#) "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." A godly man, when he dies, in no wise perishes. There is no end put to his life as a Christian, for that is a spiritual life that remains unquenched by death. A wicked man, when he dies, dies indeed, because then an end is put to all the life which he has; for he has no other life but temporal life; but the life of a Christian is hid with Christ, and safely laid up with him in heaven; and therefore death cannot reach his life, because it cannot reach heaven. Death can no more reach the believer's life than Christ's life. No death can reach Christ our life now, though he died once: but now he has for ever sat down at the right hand of God. He says, for the comfort of his saints, [Rev. i. 18.](#) "I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." Death not only cannot destroy a Christian, but it cannot hurt him; Christ carries him on eagle wings aloft on high, out of the

reach of death. **Death, with respect to him, is disarmed of his power: and every Christian may say, "O death, where is thy sting?"** [but, "faith plucks the thorn out of the conscience, Flavel see p 141] Death was once indeed a terrible enemy, but now he has become weak. He spent all his strength on Christ; in killing him, he killed himself; he was conquered then, and has now no power to hurt his followers. Death is now but the shadow of what he would have been if Christ had not conquered him; he was once a lion, but now he is but a lamb. A good man may indeed be harassed with fears of death, and may be much terrified when going through the valley of the shadow of death, but that is no just ground of any terror, and if the saints are terrified, it is only through their infirmity and darkness. As a child is frightened in the dark where there is no danger, because he is a child, so a good man may be affrighted at the terrible looks of death. But he will find this awful appearance to be only a shadow, that can look terribly, but can do nothing terrible. **Death may, through the weakness of the saints, trouble them, and exercise them**, but he cannot destroy the ground they have for comfort and support. When death comes to a wicked man, all those things on which he built his comfort fail, their foundation is overflowed with a flood. [Job xxii. 16.](#) But the foundation of the peace and comfort of the godly man is not shaken at such a time. Oftentimes the saints are actually carried above all the fears and terrors of death; they see that it is but a shadow, and are not afraid: not only their foundation of comfort remains, but that peace and comfort itself is undisturbed, the light shines through the darkness, and the lamb-like nature of death appears through the shadow of the lion. The godly have a God to stand by them when they come to die, in whose love and favour they may shelter themselves, in whose favour is life, yea, life in death; and they have a blessed Saviour to be with them, to uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness. These are the friends they have with them, when they are going to take their leave of all earthly friends. God will be with them when their flesh and heart fails; God will be the strength of their heart, when they are weak and faint, and nature fails. God will put underneath his everlasting arms to support them, and will make all their bed for them in their sickness. [Psal. xxxvii. 37.](#) "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

2. **Death is not only no death to them, but it is a translation to a more glorious life, and is turned into a kind of resurrection from the dead. Death is a happy change to them**, and a change that is by far more like a resurrection than a death. It is a change from a state of much sin, and sorrow, and darkness, to a state of perfect light, and holiness, and joy. **When a saint dies, he awakes, as it were, out of sleep.** This life is a dull, lifeless state; there is but a little spiritual life, and a great deal of deadness; there is but a little light, and a great deal of darkness; there is but a little sense, and a great deal of stupidity and senselessness. But when a godly man dies, all this deadness, and darkness, and stupidity, and senselessness are gone forever, and **he enters immediately into a state of perfect life, and perfect light, and activity, and joyfulness.** A man's conversion is compared to a resurrection, because then a man rises from spiritual death. [Eph. ii. 1.](#) "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." But though spiritual life is then begun, yet there are great remains of spiritual death after this, and but little life. But when a godly man dies, he rises from all remains of spiritual death, and comes into a state of perfect life. **This body is like a prison to the holy soul, it exceedingly clogs, and hinders, and cramps it in its spiritual exercises and comforts. But when a saint dies, the soul is released from this prison,** this grave, and comes into a state of glorious freedom and happiness. **So that death is not only deprived of his sting, but is made a servant to the saints, to bring them to Christ in heaven,** who is their life. [faith plucks the thorn out of the conscience - —Flavel,] And their ground of comfort

does not only last when they are going out of the world, but it is in some respects increased, for then their perfect happiness draws nigh. It is "far better" to depart and be with Christ, than to continue here. **And when the saints are enabled to see their own happiness in death, they are enabled exceedingly to rejoice in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death,** and to triumph joyfully over the king of terrors. Death to the saints is always a passage or avenue, leading out of a world of vanity, and sin, and misery, into a world of life, light, and glory; but though often a dark avenue, it is at times full of light, the darkness all vanishes away, and the light shines out of that glorious city into which they are entering. It shines through the darkness and fills the soul, and the clouds of death vanish before it. **The awful appearance of death is but a mask or disguise that death wears. It is not terrible but joyful in reality,** and this light of the new Jerusalem sometimes so clearly shines, that it shines through the frightful disguise, and shows the saints that death is but a servant. Yea, sometimes it is so when death has on its most terrible disguise that ever it wears, and comes in its most dreadful forms, as when the saints are burnt at the stake, and put to all cruel and tormenting deaths. It is oftentimes joyful to the saints when dying, to think that they are now going into the glorious, presence of God, to enjoy God and Christ to the full. The joyful expectation sometimes makes them ready to cry out, [Rev. xxii. 20.](#) "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and [Judges v. 28.](#) "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

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Happiness and Joy of The Saints

code359

with notes on the Doctrine of God

This is a good explanation of the happiness and joy of the saints, the causes and design of it. Subjects: God's favor, seeing God by sight vs. by faith *through a glass*, true delights, faculty of reason and understanding, the will, the knowledge of God

Excerpt from Sermon IX by Jonathan Edwards p 906-910

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xv.ix.html>

God's favour is sometimes in Scripture called his face: [Psal. cxix. 58.](#) where it is translated, "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart;" it is in the original "thy face:" and God's hiding his face, is a very common expression to signify his withholding the testimonies of his favour.

To see God, as in the text, implies the sight of him as glorious and as gracious; a vision of the light of his countenance, both as it is understood of the effulgence of his glory, and the manifestations of his favour and love.

The discoveries which the saints have in this world of the glory and love of God, are often in Scripture called the sight of God. Thus it is said of Abraham, that he saw him who is invisible. [Heb. xi. 27.](#) So the saints are said to see as in a glass the glory of the Lord. [2 Cor. iii. 18.](#) "**But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.**" Christ speaks of the spiritual knowledge of God. [John xiv. 7.](#) "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." The saints in this world have an earnest of what is future, they have the dawnings of future light.

But the more perfect view which the saints have of God's glory and love in another world, is what is especially called the seeing of God. Then they shall see him as he is. That light which now is but a glimmering, will be brought to clear sunshine; that which is here but the dawning, will become perfect day.

Those intellectual views which will be granted in another world, are called seeing God.

1st: Because the view will be very direct; as when we see things with the bodily eyes. God will, as it were, immediately discover himself to their minds, so that the understanding shall behold the glory and love of God, as a man beholds the countenance of his friend. **The discoveries which the saints here have of God's excellency and grace, are immediate in a sense; that is, they do not mainly consist in ratiocination; but yet in another sense they are indirect, that is, they are by means of the gospel, as through a glass; but in heaven God will immediately excite apprehensions of himself, without the use of any such means.**

2d. It is called seeing, because it will be most certain. When persons see a thing with their own eyes, it gives them the greatest certainty they can have of it, greater than they can have by any information of others. So the sight that they will have in heaven will exclude all doubting. The knowledge of God which the saints have in this world, has certainty in it, but yet the certainty is liable to be interrupted with temptations, and some degree of doubtings, but there is no such thing in heaven. The looking at the sun does not give a greater nor fuller certainty that it shines.

3d. It is called seeing, because the apprehension of God's glory and love is as clear and lively as when any thing is seen with bodily eyes. When we are actually beholding any thing with our eyes in the meridian light of the sun, it does not give a more lively idea and apprehension of it than the saints in heaven have of the divine excellency and love of God. When we are looking upon things our idea is much more clear and perfect, and the impression stronger on the soul, than when we only think of a thing absent. But the intellectual views that the saints in heaven will have of God, will have far the advantage of bodily sight, it will be a much more perfect way of apprehending. The saints in heaven will see the glory of the body of Christ after the resurrection with bodily eyes, but they will have no more immediate and perfect way of seeing that visible glory than they will of beholding Christ's divine and spiritual glory. They will not want eyes to see that which is spiritual, as well as we can see anything that is corporeal; they will behold God in an ineffable, and to us now inconceivable, manner.

4th: The intellectual sight which the saints will have of God will make them as sensible of his presence, and give them as great advantages for conversing with him, as the sight of the bodily eyes doth an earthly friend; yea, and more too; for when we see our earthly friends with bodily eyes, we have not the most full and direct sight of their principal part, even their souls. We see the qualities, and dispositions, and acts of their minds, no otherwise than by outward signs of speech and behaviour; strictly speaking, we do not see the man, the soul, at all, but only its tabernacle or dwelling.

But their souls will have the most clear sight of the spiritual nature of God itself. They shall behold his attributes and disposition towards them more immediately, and therefore with greater certainty, than it is possible to see anything in the soul of an earthly friend by his speech and behaviour; and therefore their spiritual sight will give them greater advantage for conversing with God, than the sight of earthly friends with bodily eyes, or hearing them with our ears, gives us for conversing with them.

2. I shall now give the reasons why the thus seeing God is that which will make the soul truly **happy**.

First. It yields a **delight** suitable to the nature of an intelligent creature. God hath made man, and man only, of all the creatures here below, an intelligent creature; and his **reason and understanding are that by which he is distinguished from all inferior ranks of beings.** **Man's reason** is, as it were, a heavenly ray, or, in the language of the wise man, it is "the candle of the Lord." **It is that wherein mainly consists the natural image of God, it is the noblest faculty of man, it is that which ought to bear rule over the other powers; being given for that end, that it might govern the soul.**

Therefore those delights are most suitable to the nature of man, that are intellectual, which result from the exercises of this **noblest, this distinguishing faculty.** **God, by giving man understanding, made him capable of such delights, and fitted him for them, and designed that such pleasures as those should be his happiness.**

Intellectual pleasures consist in the beholding of spiritual excellencies and beauties, but the **glorious excellency and beauty of God are far the greatest.** God's excellence is the supreme excellence. When the understanding of the reasonable creature dwells here, it dwells at the fountain, and swims in a boundless, bottomless ocean. The love of God is also the most suitable entertainment of the soul of man, which naturally desires the happiness of society, or of union with some other being. The love of so glorious a being is infinitely valuable, and the discoveries of it are capable of ravishing the soul above all other love. **It is suitable to the nature of an intelligent being also, as it is that kind of delight that reason approves of.** There are many other delights in which men indulge themselves, which, although they are pleasing to the senses and inferior powers, yet are contrary to reason; reason opposes the enjoyment of them, so that unless reason be suppressed and stifled, they cannot be enjoyed without a war in the soul. Reason, the noblest faculty, resists the inferior rebellious powers; and the more reason is in exercise, the more will it resist, and the greater will be the inward war and opposition.

But this delight of seeing God the understanding approves of; it is a thing most agreeable to reason that the soul should delight itself in this, and the more reason is in exercise, the more it approves of it. So that when it is enjoyed, it is with inward peace, and a sweet tranquility of soul; there is nothing in human nature that is opposite to it, but everything agrees and conforms to it.

Secondly. The pleasure which the soul has in seeing God, is not only its delight, but it is at the same time its highest perfection and excellency. **Man's true happiness is his perfection and true excellency.** **When any reasonable creature finds that his excellency and his joy are the same thing, then he is come to right and real happiness, and not before.** If a man enjoys any kind of pleasure and lives in it, how much soever he may be taken with what he enjoys, yet if he be not the more excellent for his pleasures, it is a certain sign that he is not a truly happy man. There are many pleasures that men are wont violently to pursue, which are no part of their dignity or perfection, but which, on the contrary, debase the man and make him vile. Instead of rendering the mind beautiful and lovely, they only serve to pollute it; instead of exalting its nature, they make it more akin to that of beasts.

But it is quite the contrary with the pleasure that is to be enjoyed in seeing God. To see God is the highest honour and dignity to which the human nature can attain; **that intellectual beholding of him is itself the highest excellency of the understanding.** **The great cart of the excellency of man is his**

knowledge and understanding; but the knowledge of God is the most excellent and noble kind of knowledge.

The delight and joy of the soul in that sight are the highest excellency of the other faculty, the will. The heart of man cannot be brought to a higher excellency than to have delight in God, and complacency in the divine excellency and glory. The soul, while it remains under the power of corruption and depravity, cannot have any delight in God's glory: and when its moral relish is so far changed that it is **disposed to delight in it [delight is a grace]**, it is most excellently disposed; and when it actually exercises delight in God, it is the most noble and exalted exercise of which it is capable. So that the soul's seeing of God, and having pleasure and joy in the sight, is the greatest excellency of both the faculties.

Thirdly. The happiness of seeing God is a blessing without any mixture. That pleasure has the best claim to be called man's **true happiness**, which comes unmixed, and without alloy. But so doth the joy of seeing God; it neither brings any bitterness, nor will it suffer any.

1. This pleasure brings no bitterness with it. That is not the case with other delights, in which natural men are wont to place their happiness; they are **bitter sweets**, yielding a kind of momentary pleasure in gratifying an appetite, but wormwood and gall are mingled in the cup. He who plucks these roses, finds that they grow on thorns; he who tastes of this honey is sure to find in it a sting. If men place their happiness in them, reason and conscience will certainly give them inward disturbance in their enjoyment. There will be the sting of continual disappointments, **for carnal delights are of such a nature that they keep the soul, that places its happiness in them, always big with expectation and in eager pursuit; while they are evermore like shadows, and never yield what is hoped for.** They who give themselves up to them, unavoidably bring upon themselves many heavy inconveniences. If they promote their pleasure in any way, they destroy their comforts in many other ways; and this sting ever accompanies them, that they are but short-lived, they will soon vanish, and be no more.

And as to the pleasure found in the enjoyment of earthly friends, there is a bitterness goes also with that. An intense love to any earthly object, though it may afford high enjoyment, yet **greatly multiplies our cares and anxieties through the defects and blemishes, the instability and changeableness, of the object, the calamities to which it is exposed, and the short duration of all such friendships, and of the pleasures thence arising.**

Some men take a great deal of pleasure in study, in the increase of knowledge: but Solomon, who had great experience, long ago observed that this also is vanity, because he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. [Eccles. i. 17,18.](#) "And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and lie that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." But the delight which the sight of God affords to the soul, brings no bitterness with it, there is no disappointment accompanies it, it promises not more than it yields, but on the contrary the pleasure is greater than could be imagined before God was seen. It brings no sting of conscience along with it, it brings no vexing care nor anxiety, it leaves no loathing nor disrelish behind it. [\[faith plucks the thorn out of the conscience Flavel, see pg 141\]](#)

There is nothing in God which gives uneasiness to him who beholds him. The view of one attribute adds to the joy that is raised by another. **A sight of the holiness of God, gives unspeakable pleasure to the mind; the idea of it is a perception beyond measure, the most delightful that can exist in a created mind.** And then the beholding of God's grace adds to this joy, for the soul then considers that the Being who is so amiable in himself, is so communicative, so disposed to love and benevolence. **The view of the majesty of God greatly heightens this joy:** to behold such grace and goodness, and such goodness and majesty, united together. Especially will the sight of God's love to himself, the person beholding, increase the pleasure, when he considers that so great and glorious a being loves him, and is his God and friend. Again, the beholding of God's infinite power will still add to the pleasure, for he reflects that he, who is his friend, and loves him with so great a love, can do all things for him. For the beholding of his wisdom, because he thereby knows what is best for him, and knows how so to order things as shall make him most blessed. So the consideration of his eternity and immutability; it will rejoice him to think that his friend and his portion is an eternal and unchangeable friend and portion. The beholding of God's happiness will increase the joy, to consider that he is so happy, who is so much the object of his love. That love of God, in those who shall see God, will cause them exceedingly to rejoice in the happiness of God. Even the sight of God's vindictive justice will add to their joy. This justice of God will appear glorious to them, and will make them prize his love.

2d. This joy is without mixture, not only as it brings not bitterness with it, but also as it will not suffer any. The sight of God excludes everything that is of a nature different from delight. This light is such, as who He excludes darkness.

It is not in the power of any earthly enjoyment to drive and shut out all trouble from the heart. If a man has some things in which he takes comfort and pleasure, there are others that yield him uneasiness and sorrow; if he has some things in the world that are sweet, there are others that are bitter, against which it is not in the power of his pleasures to help him. We never can find anything here below that shall make us so happy, but that we shall have grief and pleasure mixed together. This world, let us make the best of it, will be spotted with black and white, varied with clouds and sunshine, and to them who yield their hearts to it, it will yield pain as well as pleasure. But this pleasure of seeing God can suffer no mixture; for this pleasure of seeing God is so great and strong that it takes the full possession of the heart, it fills it perfectly full, so that there shall be no room for any sorrow, no room in any corner for anything of an adverse nature from joy. There is no darkness that can bear such powerful light. It is impossible that they who see God face to face, who behold his glory and love so immediately as they do in heaven, should have any such thing as grief or pain in their hearts. When once the saints are come into God's presence, tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The pleasure will be so great, as fully and perfectly to employ every faculty; the sight of God's glory and love will be so wonderful, so engaging to the mind, and it shall keep all the powers of it in such strong attention, that the soul will be wholly possessed and taken up.

Again. There will be in what they shall see, a sufficient antidote against everything that would afford uneasiness, or that can have any tendency thereto. If there were sin in the heart before, that used by its exercise to disturb its peace and quiet, and was a seed and spring of trouble, **the immediate and full sight of God's glory will at once drive it all away. Sin cannot remain in the heart which thus beholds God, for sin is a principle of enmity against God; but there can no enmity remain in one, who after this**

manner sees God's glory. It must and will wholly drive away any such principle, and change it into love. The imperfect sight that the saints have of God's glory here, transforms them in part into the same image; but this perfect sight will transform them perfectly. If there be the hatred of enemies, the vision of the love and power of God will be a sufficient antidote against it; so that it can give no uneasiness. If the saint is removed by death from all his earthly friends, and earthly enjoyments, that will give no uneasiness to him, when he sees what a fullness there is in God. He will see that there is all in him, so that he who possesses him can lose nothing: whatever is taken from him he sustains no loss. And whatever else there may be, that would otherwise afford grief and uneasiness to the soul, it cannot affect him who is in the presence of God and sees his face.

Fourthly. This joy of seeing God is the true blessedness of man, because the fountain that supplies it is equal to man's desire and capacity.

When God gave man his capacity of happiness, he doubtless made provision for the filling of it. There was some good which God had in his eye, when he made the vessel, and made it of such dimensions, which he knew to be sufficient to fill it; and doubtless that, whatever it be, is man's true blessedness; and that good which is found not to be commensurate to man's capacity and natural desires, and never can equal it, is certainly not that wherein man's happiness consists. Man's desires and capacities are commensurate one with another. When once the capacity is filled, the soul desires no more.

Now in order to judge how great man's capacity is, we must consider the capacity of his principal and leading faculty, his understanding. So great as is the capacity of that faculty, so great is man's capacity of enjoyment; so great a good as the soul is capable of understanding, so great a good it is capable of enjoying. As great a good as the soul is capable of comprehending in its perception and idea, so great a good is it capable of receiving with the other faculty, the will, which keeps pace with the understanding; and that good which the soul can receive with both faculties, of that is it capable of being made the possessor and enjoyer.

But it is easy to perceive that there is nothing here below that can give men such delight as shall be equal to this faculty. Let a man enjoy as great an affluence of earthly comforts as he will, still there is room; man's nature is capable of a great deal more, there are certain things wanting to which the understanding can extend itself, which he could wish were added.

But the fountain that supplies that joy and delight, which the soul has in seeing God, is sufficient to fill the vessel, because it is infinite. He that sees the glory of God, in his measure beholds that of which there is no end. The understanding may extend itself as far as it will; it doth but take its flight into an endless expanse, and dive into a bottomless ocean. It may discover more and more of the beauty and loveliness of God, but it never will exhaust the fountain. The body of man may as well swallow up the ocean, or his soul embrace immensity, as he can extend his faculties to the utmost of God's excellency.

So in like manner it may be said of the love of God. We can never by soaring and ascending come to the height of it; we can never by descending come to the depth of it; or by measuring, know the length and breadth of it. [Eph. iii. 18, 19.](#)

"That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

So that let the thoughts and desires extend themselves as they will, here is space enough for them, in which they may expand forever. How blessed therefore are they that do see God, who are come to this exhaustless fountain! They have obtained that delight which gives full satisfaction; having come to this pleasure, they neither do nor can desire any more. They can sit down fully contented, and take up with this enjoyment forever and ever, and desire no change. After they have had the pleasure of beholding the face of God millions of ages, it will not grow a dull story; the relish of this delight will be as exquisite as ever, there is enough still for the utmost employment of every faculty.

Fifthly. This delight in the vision of God hath an unfailing foundation. God made man to endure forever, and therefore that which is man's true blessedness, we may conclude has a sure and lasting foundation. As to worldly enjoyments, their foundation is a sandy one, that is continually wearing away, and certainly will at last let the building fall. If we take pleasure in riches, riches in a little while will be gone; if we take pleasure in gratifying our senses, those objects whence we draw our gratifications will perish with the using; and our senses themselves also will be gone, the organs will be worn out, and our whole outward form will turn to dust. If we take pleasure in union with our earthly friends, that union must be broken; the bonds are not durable, but will soon wear asunder.

But he who has the immediate intellectual vision of God's glory and love, and rejoices in that, has his happiness built upon an everlasting rock. [Isaiah xxvi. 4.](#) "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In the Hebrew it is, "in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of ages."

The **glory of God is subject to no changes nor vicissitudes**, it will never cease to shine forth. History gives us an account of the sun's light failing, and becoming more faint and dim for many months together; but the glory of God will never be subject to fade. Of the light of that Sun there never will be any eclipse or dimness, but it will shine eternally in its strength. [Isa. lx. 19.](#) "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." So the love of God, to those who see his face, will never fail, or be subject to any abatement; he loves his saints with an everlasting love. [Jer. xxxi. 3.](#) "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Those streams of pleasure which are at God's right hand, are never dry, but ever flowing and ever full.

How much doth the sense of the sureness of this foundation confirm and heighten the joy! The soul enjoys its delight in a sense of this, free from all fears and jealousies, and with an unspeakable quietness and assurance. [Isa. xxxii. 17.](#) "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

From this part of the subject we may derive several important and useful reflections.

1. Here we may see one instance wherein the revelation of Jesus Christ excels all human wisdom. It was a thing that had been beyond the wisdom of the world, **to see wherein man's true happiness consisted**; there was a vast variety of opinions about it among the wise men and philosophers of the heathen; indeed on no other subject was there so great difference among them. If I remember right, there were several hundred different opinions reckoned up respecting it, which shows that they were woefully in the dark. Though there were many very wise men among them, men famed through all succeeding ages for their knowledge and wisdom; yet their reason was not sufficient to find out man's true happiness.

We can give reasons for it now that it is revealed, and it seems so rational, that one would think the light of nature sufficient to discover it; but we having always lived in the enjoyment of gospel light, and being accustomed to it, are hardly sensible how dependent we are upon it, and how much we should be in the dark about things that now seem plain to us, if we never had had our reason assisted by revelation.

God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world by the gospel.

1 Cor. i. 20. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" i. e. he hath shown the foolishness of their wisdom by this brighter light of his revelation.

For all that philosophy and human wisdom could do, it was the gospel that first taught the world wherein mankind's true blessedness consisted, and that taught them the way to attain to it.

2. Hence we learn the great privilege we have, who possess such advantages to come to the blessedness of seeing God. We have the true God revealed to us in the word of God, who is the Being in the sight of whom this happiness is to be enjoyed. We have the glorious attributes and perfections of God declared to us. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is discovered in the gospel which we enjoy, his beauties and glories are there as it were pointed forth by God's own hand to our view; so that we have those means which God hath provided for our obtaining those beginnings of this sight of him which the saints have in this world, in that spiritual knowledge which they have of God, which is absolutely necessary in order to our having it perfectly in another world.

The knowledge which believers have of God and his glory, as appearing in the face of Christ, is the imperfect beginning of this heavenly sight, it is an earnest of it, it is the dawning of the heavenly light; and this beginning must evermore precede, or a perfect vision of God in heaven cannot be obtained; and all those that have this beginning, shall obtain that perfection also. Great therefore is our privilege, that we have the means of this spiritual knowledge. We may in this world see God as in a glass darkly, in order to our seeing him hereafter face to face; and surely our privilege is very great, that he has given us that glass from whence God's glory is reflected. We have not only the discoveries of God's glory in the doctrine of his word, but we have abundant directions how to act, so that we may obtain a perfect and beatific sight of God; one of which we have in our text, and of which I shall speak particularly hereafter.

3. This doctrine may lead us to a sense of the blessedness of the heavenly state, and justly cause us to long after it. In heaven the saints do see God, they enjoy that vision of him of which we have been seeking in its perfection. All clouds and darkness are there removed, they there behold the glory and love of God more immediately, and with greater certainty, and a more strong and lively apprehension, than a man beholds his friend when he is with him, and sees his face by the noon-day sun, and with far greater advantages for conversation and enjoyment.

Well may this make the heavenly state appear a blessed state to us, and make us to breathe after it; well may the consideration of these things make the saints wait for and desire their happy change; well may it make them long for the appearing of Christ. This they know, that when he shall appear, they shall "see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

This may well be comforting to the saints under the apprehensions of death, and it is a consideration sufficient to take away the sting of it, and uphold them while walking through the midst of that valley. This also may well comfort and uphold them in all troubles and difficulties they meet with here, that after a little while they shall see God; which will immediately dry up all tears, and drive away all sorrow and sighing, and expel for ever every darksome thought from the heart.

4. Hence we learn that a life of holiness is the pleasantest life in this world, because in such a life we have the imperfect beginnings of a blessed and endless sight of God; and so they have somewhat of true happiness while here, they have the seeds of blessedness sown in their souls, and they begin to shoot forth.

As for all others, those who do not live a holy life, they have nothing at all of true happiness, because they have nothing of the knowledge of God.

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More on Joy & Happiness with emphasis on the doctrine of God:

Doctrine of God Seen in the Writings of Jonathan Edwards

Immutability, Self-sufficiency, Perfection, Eternal

Miscellaneous Observations – Heaven

Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2, pg 626

Goodness of God - Love of God Happiness of heaven. God stands in no need of creatures, and is not profited by them; neither can his happiness be said to be added to by the creature. But yet God has a real and proper delight in the excellency and happiness of his creatures: he hath a real delight in the excellency and loveliness of the creature, in his own image in the creature, as that is a manifestation, or expression, or shining forth of his own loveliness. God has a real delight in his own loveliness, and he also has a real delight in the shining forth, or glorifying of it. As it is a fit and condecant thing that God's glory should shine forth, so God delights in its shining forth. So that God has a real delight in the spiritual loveliness of the saints; **which delight is not a delight distinct from what he has in himself, but is to be resolved into the delight he has in himself; for he delights in his image in the creature, as he delights in his own being glorified; or as he delights in it, that his own glory shines forth, and so he hath real proper delight in the happiness of his creatures, which also is not distinct from the delight that he has in himself,** for it is to be resolved into the delight that he has in his own goodness; for as he delights in his own goodness, so he delights in the exercise of his goodness, and therefore he delights to make the creature happy, and delights to see him made happy, as he delights in exercising goodness, or communicating happiness. **This is no proper addition to the happiness of God, because it is that which he eternally and unalterably had. God hath no new delight when he beholds his own glory shining forth in his image in the creature, and when he beholds the creature made happy from the exercises of his goodness; because those and all things are from eternity equally present with God. This delight in God cannot properly be said to be received from the creature, because it consists only in a delight in giving to the creature; neither will it hence follow that God is dependent on the creature for any of his joy, because it is his own act only that this delight is dependent on, and the creature is absolutely dependent on God for that excellency and happiness that God delights in. God cannot be said to be the more happy for the creature, because he is infinitely happy in himself, and he is not**

dependent on the creature for any thing, nor does he receive any addition from the creature. But yet in one sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight for the loveliness and happiness of the creature, viz. as God would be less happy if he were less good, or if it were possible for him to be hindered in exercising his own goodness, or to be hindered from glorifying himself. God has no addition to his happiness, when he exercises any act of holiness towards his creatures; and yet God has a real delight in the exercises of his own holiness, and would be less happy if he were less holy, or were capable of being hindered from any act of holiness.

The Unreasonableness of Wicked Men

code360

by Jonathon Edwards

[And excellent sermon on how sinful men are unreasonable and contradict themselves.](#)

SERMON XI.

[Matthew xi. 16, 17, 18, 19.](#)

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

The occasion of this discourse was John's sending to Christ two of his disciples, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" When the messengers had gone back, Christ enters into a discourse with the multitude concerning John, of which the verses read are a part, in which Christ reproves the unreasonableness of the Jews in rejecting God's messengers. We may observe in the words the following things:

1. The messengers of God that are here instanced in that they had been

rejected, viz. John the Baptist and Christ. The former is spoken of in the context as being on some accounts the greatest of all the prophets that ever came before Christ, as you may see, [ver. 9, 10, 11](#). "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The latter, even Christ, was the great prophet of God, the Head and Lord of the prophets, God's only-begotten Son.

2. In what the unreasonableness of their rejecting these messengers of God appears, viz. in their inconsistency with themselves in those objections which they made against them. And here we may observe,

1st: The nature of their objections against these two messengers of God; they objected against their manner of living with respect to their meat and drink.

2d. The different manner of living of those two messengers of God. Christ came eating and drinking, but John came neither eating nor drinking, i. e. John lived on a very coarse and spare diet, as we read, [Matt. iii. 4.](#) "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." He carefully abstained from that free use of pleasant meats and drinks that others allowed themselves in. But Christ came eating and drinking, i. e. freely using the comforts and enjoyments of life, taking indifferently all kinds of food or drink that were wholesome, comfortable, and lawful. This diverse manner of living of John the Baptist and Christ, was agreeable to the diverse errands that they came upon. John's errand was to call men to repentance, to awaken them to a sense of their sin and misery, to bring them to mourn for their sins, and humble themselves before God for them, that they might be prepared for the comforts and blessings of the kingdom of heaven that were to be introduced by Jesus Christ. A life of abstinence from the pleasant things of this world was agreeable to the purpose of awakening the soul, and of leading it to mourning and humiliation for sin, which it was especially John's business to preach and set an example of.

But after John had thus prepared the way with awakenings and repentance, then Christ came to administer comfort to those that were thus prepared for it, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort those that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. [Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3.](#) And freely eating and drinking, and enjoying the comforts and pleasant things of life, was agreeable to such an errand as this, and therefore Christ, in his first beginning of his public ministry which succeeded John's, declares this to be the business he was come upon. [Luke iv. 16, 17, 18, 19.](#) "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

3d. Their **unreasonableness** appears in the fact, that though the way of living of these two persons was in this respect so diverse, yet they objected against both. John came neither eating nor drinking; and for that they objected against him, and reviled him, as though he was one that was very odd and strange, and beside himself, and under the influence of a diabolical spirit. This objection seemed to manifest a dislike of such a way of living, as though it was their opinion that a man ought not to live

thus abstemiously, but should eat and drink freely as other people did. But yet when Christ came and did that, then they objected against that too, and bitterly reproached him for that, and called him a glutton, and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. So that there was no escaping their reproaches. If a man of God lived a life of trial and abstinence, they spoke of it as matter of great reproach, and yet if he did not so, they made that a matter of no less reproach. It was a crime with them for a prophet to eat and drink, and it was also a crime to let it alone. So inconsistent were they with themselves, that there was no such thing as a prophet's suiting them; they condemned the doing of that which at the same time they condemned the not doing of, and both they condemned with great bitterness, and virulent and contemptuous reproaches. This plainly showed that their objections against John the Baptist and Christ, were but vain pretences, and that the true reason why they disliked them, was, not the manner of living of either of them with respect to eating and drinking, but because they hated their persons and the business they came upon. When men have a prejudice against other persons they will be ready to find fault with every thing in them, they will find out bad names for their virtues, and will reproach those things in them which they will approve of and commend in others to whose persons they have a liking.

3. The thing to which Christ compares their inconsistency with themselves, to wit, to children who meet their companions in the streets or market-places, and endeavour to aid them in their play, in things of a diverse and contrary nature; for if they pipe unto them with notes manifesting cheerfulness and mirth, that does not suit them; they refuse to fall in with this, as though they did not like such cheerfulness, and as though mourning would suit them better; and then, when they see that they took a contrary course, they mourned with them, but yet neither do they fall in with that, they do not lament with them; so that they comfort them in nothing, neither mirth nor mourning.

So John the Baptist preaching repentance came with tokens of sorrow and mourning, and mean apparel, with a garment of camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, and with great abstinence. But Christ when he comes, [919](#) comes eating and drinking with tokens of comfort and joy; but neither of them suited them. From the text thus explained we shall derive the following-

Doctrine. Wicked men are very inconsistent with themselves. They are so in the following respects: [*wicked meaning unconverted; but saved men are not exempt from the effects of sin since much corruption remains after one is converted.*]

- I. The dictates of their darkened understandings are inconsistent with themselves.
- II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason.
- III. Their wills are inconsistent with themselves.
- IV. Their outward show is inconsistent with their hearts.
- V. Their profession is inconsistent with their practice.
- VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hopes.
- VII. Their practice is inconsistent with itself.

I. Their understandings are inconsistent with themselves. I do not mean, that the faculty of reason and understanding is inconsistent with itself; for the faculty of understanding with which God has endowed man is wholly good and right. It is that wherein the natural image of God consists, and is the

excellency of man's nature; and if the faculty of reason be duly improved, it will lead men right. Light is never inconsistent with itself. But the understandings of natural men are perverted and blinded by sin, and are inconsistent with themselves in two ways:

1. Their practical judgment is inconsistent with their own reason. By their practical judgment, I mean that judgment which they make of things that prevail, so as to determine their actions and govern their practice. This in wicked men is in innumerable things contrary to their own reason; for, in forming their judgment of things by which they govern themselves, they do not inquire at the mouth of reason, but at the mouth of their inclinations. Their lusts have a far greater hand in the judgments that they make of things, and by which they govern themselves, than their reason. As for instance; their practical judgment is, that the things of this fading world, the enjoyments of this short life, are things of greater importance than the things of the eternal world; and yet if they inquire at the mouth of their own reason, that tells them the contrary. Their reason tells them that it is most plain and evident that eternal things, things that are to last forever, are of vastly greater importance than the things of time.

So their **reason** tells them, that it must needs be the part of wisdom and prudence to improve the present time with the utmost diligence and earnestness, and to make ready for death; and yet they are not convinced of it, but their governing opinion is, that it is best to neglect the business of religion for the present, and to enjoy their ease, and sloth, and lusts awhile longer.

Their **reason** tells them, that it is well worth the while for every man to deny himself outward pleasure for the good of his soul. But their governing opinion or judgment is contrary, viz. that it is not best; and that pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts, are worth more than any benefit they would obtain by seeking their salvation.

The reason of young people tells them that it is their true wisdom to improve the time of youth. Reason tells them that life is very uncertain. But when such persons hear ministers preach concerning the infinite importance of eternal things; the uncertainty of life, the peace and comfort that will be found in a state of happier existence with God; are told how light a thing the difficulty and sufferings of a holy life are in comparison; their reason assents to all this, but their practical judgments are the contrary. When a person has lately died, either in extreme terror and amazement, under a sense of the guilt of a mispent life, or full of joy and comfort, in consequence of a life of holy walking with God; their reason tells them that it would be well worth their while to labour and deny themselves all their lifetime to be ready for death, and to have a solid foundation of peace and comfort laid up against such an hour. But yet their practice is directly the reverse.

2. **Some of their judgments of things are inconsistent with others.** For instance, in temporal things, they judge that the good which is of long continuance is to be preferred before that which is of short continuance, and that a long-continued calamity is more to be dreaded and avoided than a short one. Their governing judgment is thus in these things, but yet it is the reverse in spiritual things.

Again. Such arguments as they judge to furnish good and clear evidence with them in those things that are agreeable to their sinful inclination, they think not to have any evidence in those things that are contrary to them. In temporal things they think it to be their wisdom to improve times of special advantage, and to watch against that which might insnare them, or endanger their welfare, but in

other things they think the reverse. In these things, and many more that might be mentioned, their judgments are inconsistent with themselves.

II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason. This inconsistency is a consequence of the foregoing; for if their practical judgment be contrary to their own reason, it will follow that their wills are contrary to their reason; for the will ever follows the dictate of the practical judgment.

Their wills are contrary to their reason in two respects.

1. They will those things which their reason tells them are inconsistent with their duty; and so they are inconsistent with themselves, as their wills are inconsistent with their consciences. Conscience is a principle implanted in the heart of every man, and is as essential to his nature as the faculty of reason, for it is a natural and necessary attendant of that faculty. But the wills of wicked men are contrary to it, and inconsistent with it. They choose those things which they know to be evil, and ought not to be chosen; they choose that which their own reason tells them is unreasonable and vile, and unbecoming men, and justly provoking to their Maker, and contrary to the end for which they are made.

Hence arises an inward war in their own minds: their wills and their consciences warring one against another. There is no true peace in their hearts, for they are at war with themselves, and therefore they are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, unless by a course of horrible violations of the dictates of their own conscience, they have proceeded so far in their war against their own consciences as to stupefy conscience, and lay it as it were dead, which is the case of some persons.

2. They will those things which their reason tells them are contrary to their own interest, yea, those things which their own reason tells them are the way to their ruin and misery. At the very same time that wicked men are tempted to commit some sin, and their reason then tells them that it will expose them to the eternal wrath of God, and that it will therefore be a dreadful folly for them to do it, yet they will do it. Or when their reason tells them that the course in which they are going leads to destruction, and represents to them that it is the greatest folly, yet they will go on in it, and run the venture of being everlastingly undone.

So inconsistent are they with themselves, that they do and allow that of which they hope to repent, they choose that now for choosing which at the same time they expect and hope hereafter to charge themselves with great folly, and to be convinced that it is folly, and to lament and bewail it; nay, they would not do it, if they did not expect hereafter to see that it is very foolish in them so to do, and heartily to mourn for it.

In this respect they are so inconsistent with themselves that they are their own worst enemies. They are inconsistent with themselves, as two mortal enemies cannot consist together, or walk together. By choosing those things which their own reason tells them is contrary to their own interest, and tends to their own undoing, they may be said to hate their own souls, and to love their own ruin. Prov. viii. 36. "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death."

III. **Their wills and dispositions are inconsistent with their wills.** The Jews would neither have a prophet to come eating and drinking, nor would they have him otherwise. They knew not what they would have themselves, there was no pleasing them [as are most liberals, politicians, etc. Hence, the reason why is because sin has deceived them and blinded them to a due exercise of reason in concert with corrupt affections.] To eat and drink did not please them; that they reproached as drunkenness, and gluttony: nor did it please them anymore not to eat nor drink; this they reproached no less virulently, as though it were an argument that a man was out of his wits, and possessed by the devil. The inconsistency of wicked men's wills with themselves appears in the following things:

1st They do, in some respects, choose and refuse the same things.

I shall mention some instances.

First. In some respects, many of them wish to be converted from sin to God. They think that they should be ready to give almost all that they have in the world to be converted, and they pray to God to convert them, and seek for conversion, and take advice to that end, and use a great deal of labour for it. **But yet if it be considered what conversion is, or what is meant by conversion, viz. the being turned from all their sins to God; they have no desire to be converted,** they will not have conversion when it is offered them, when it comes to them they are not willing to be saved from sin, **for they are not willing to part with their sins. When they think of the thing in the general, they wish that they were turned from sin; but when it comes to particulars they cannot comply with it, they love their sins too well.** When a particular lust comes, and pleads to be indulged and gratified, then in this instance they have no wish to be converted, they are not willing to be turned from their sin altogether, they cannot bear entirely and forever to renounce and reject it. They have a wish to be converted, but not from enjoying their right hands, and right eyes. They pray that they may be thoroughly and savingly converted, and seem to wish and pray for it; but yet when it comes to them, they are not willing for any more than a partial conversion. They cannot comply with a thorough conversion, for a thorough conversion is a turning from every one of their sins; and that proves that they would be willing to be converted from their sins for a little while, but to part with them finally is what they cannot find it in their hearts to comply with.

Secondly. **Some wicked men do in certain respects desire that a work of humiliation may be wrought in them, and yet are utterly opposed to humiliation.** They do many things that they may be humbled, and pray that they may be brought off from their own righteousness, and yet would by no means let it go, but are indeed building up their own righteousness all the time.

They seem in some respects to wish that they might submit to the justice and sovereignty of God in their condemnation, but yet are utterly averse to any such thing as owning God's justice. They are averse to this submission, as appears from their showing such a spirit of strife with God. They do not believe that God is just and sovereign, and how therefore is it possible that they should desire really to submit to God's justice and sovereignty? They cannot heartily and fervently desire to submit to God as just and sovereign, when they do not believe that he possesses those attributes, but think him unjust and tyrannical.

Thirdly. They in some respects wish that they might come to Christ, but indeed are utterly averse to come to him, so that their will is in this also inconsistent with itself. They pray that they may come to Christ, they are ready to say that they would give all the world for an interest in Christ; and yet they will not have an interest in him, for that is what is offered them, and what Christ is continually inviting and urging them to accept, but they refuse it. It is true they like some things in Christ, they like salvation from the pains of hell, they like that safety from everlasting misery which they hear is to be had in him; **but there are other things in him which they do not like, his holiness, his salvation from sin, his kingly office, and therefore they will not accept him as he is. If they could have a part of Christ without the rest they would, but they will not accept of the whole of Christ.** Indeed they are not willing to come to Christ and cordially accept of him as a Saviour from hell, for they do not see that he is sufficient to save; and besides, they are not convinced that they have deserved it. There is no such thing as being cordially willing to accept of a Saviour, who offered to deliver us from an unjust and undeserved punishment; for the hearty accepting of him as a Saviour from the punishment, would be allowing the punishment to be just; and God's offering a Saviour from undeserved punishment, is an imposition upon them; a man therefore can never heartily and sincerely accept such an offer. At the same time that natural men seem to wish, and pray, and strive to come to Christ, they are in their hearts bitter enemies to him; and there is no such thing as a sincere willingness to accept of one towards whom at the same time we are bitter enemies.

Fourthly. Natural men in some respects are desirous to go to heaven, and yet are averse to heaven. They are full of designs as to what they will do hereafter that they may go to heaven, but yet have no inclination to that wherein heaven really consists. **The employments of heaven, which consist altogether in holy acts and holy contemplation, in holy exercises and holy praises, are that for which they have no desires nor inclination. And for the happiness of heaven they have no relish, but on the contrary, a dislike and an aversion; for the happiness of heaven consists in holy communion with God and Christ, to which their natures are opposite.** Nor have they any desire for the company of heaven; and when it is observed what heaven really is, they choose this world before heaven.

Fifthly. **They wish to have salvation from misery, but yet are averse to those things wherein salvation consists;** and at the same time that they pray to Christ to serve them, they undo themselves as fast as they can, they spend their time daily in working out their own ruin. **They pray that they may be delivered from hell, and yet are all the while piling up fuel, and kindling and blowing the fire.** Thus their wills are inconsistent with themselves, as they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things.

2. **They dislike and refuse spiritual things as they are, and yet refuse to have them otherwise.** This was the very case with the Jews in the text, they would not have a prophet come eating and drinking, if he did so, they looked on him very reproachfully; nor yet would they have him not come eating and drinking, for if he did so they called him a mad man, and possessed with a devil, which is a lively specimen of the inconsistency of wicked men, of which we are speaking.

I will mention several instances of this inconsistency on the part of wicked men.

First. **They do not like God as he is, and yet they would not like him if he were otherwise.** They would not like him if he were otherwise than he is in those very things for which they most dislike him.

1st: **They dislike God because he is a holy God. This is the main foundation of the enmity that wicked men have against God.** His perfect purity and holiness make them enemies to him, because from this perfection of his nature he necessarily hates sin, and so hates their sins, which they love, and he will not and cannot allow of any sin in them. They are utter enemies to such a holy God. And yet they would not like him if they supposed him to be an unholy being, or if they supposed him to be at all wanting in perfect holiness, for then he could not be depended upon. If he were unholy, they know that if he promised them anything they could have no certain dependence upon it, for an unholy being is liable to break his promises; if he were unholy they could have no dependence on his faithfulness, and therefore they would never be willing to give up themselves to him as their God, for they would not know how he would dispose of them, what he would do with them. If he were to obligate himself by covenant, yet they could have no dependence upon it: and therefore they would by no means accept of such a God to be their God, to rule over them, and dispose of them.

2d. **They do not like God, because he is a God of justice. This indeed is a branch of his holiness, for being strictly and perfectly just, he is disposed to execute just punishment on all iniquity. Therefore they are exceeding enemies to him,** for they are the persons who are obnoxious, being those that have committed iniquity, and exposed themselves to just punishment; and yet they would not like God if he were an unjust God. **If he were an unjust being, that would be an insuperable objection with them against accepting him as their God, for then they would think with themselves, “how do I know how unjustly he may deal with me;”** and wicked men, however unjust they are, never like injustice against themselves. And they never would be persuaded to accept of such a God as their Lord and King, for they should then expect to be wronged and abused by him. **They would dread committing themselves into the hands of a God that is infinite in power, and can do what he will with them, and has no principle of holiness or justice to keep him from using that power in the most unjust and abusive manner towards them.**

Though they are enemies to God because of his justice, yet whenever at any time they think God deals unjustly, they quarrel with him for it. How frequent is it for natural men, when there are any of God's methods of providence, the justice of which they cannot see through, to have their hearts swell with enmity, and to be full of blasphemous, malignant thoughts against God, if they do not even manifest it outwardly by a fretful, discontented behaviour, and murmuring speeches?

3d. **They do not like God, because he is an Almighty God, and is able to destroy them when he pleases; nor yet would they like him if he were a weak being and of but little power.** They would on this account refuse to close with him as their God, for they would have a God able to do great things for them; they wish to have many things done for them, and they would have a God that can do them.

4th: **They do not like God because he is an omniscient God, for hereby he sees all their wickedness. But yet neither would they like him if he did not know all things, for then in many cases he would not know what their case is, and what it requires, and what is best for them.** He might ruin them in the disposal of them through mistake, he might not know how to extricate them out of difficulties in which they are or may be involved.

5th: **Natural men oftentimes dislike God in the exercises of his infinite sovereign mercy, when it is exercised towards others.** They are greatly displeased at God's being so gracious to others; they dislike it much that God bestows converting grace upon them and pardoning mercy, and a title to eternal life upon them. When they hear of their conversion it is unpleasant news, and they find fault with it the more when the persons who seem to have received such mercy are very unworthy, and have been very great sinners; they think of the sins of which they have been guilty, and reckon up all the instances of wickedness they can think of, so that the mercy exercised towards them is the more displeasing because it appears so great in being bestowed on one so unworthy; like the elder brother, [Luke xv. 30](#). "But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." And yet they would not like God if he were not infinitely merciful, for then they would have less hopes of obtaining mercy themselves. They are angry because God appears so merciful in the exercises of his grace to others; but yet they would have God merciful, and are at the same time afraid that he is not merciful enough to be willing to pardon their sins, and bestow his blessing on them. Thus natural men do not like God as he is, nor yet would they like him if he were otherwise.

Secondly. **They do not like men that are holy, nor yet do they like men that are wicked. They do not like holy men, for they know that such do not approve of that which themselves love,** and the lives of the godly are a condemnation of the wickedness of their own hearts and lives. **Hence there is an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.** [Gen. iii. 15](#). "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel." **But although they do not like men if they are godly, so neither do they like them if they are ungodly; they are more forward than the godly are to reprove others for their vice and wickedness, and bitterly to reflect on others for their pride, their covetousness, and their idleness.** [This one reason why church is, primarily, not for unbelievers because of the inevitable contamination of the one upon the other, the saints, and hence, why membership rules and statements of faith be agreed upon before being granted membership to keep wolves or false teachers from sneaking in unawares. See Jude 4: "for certain men have crept in unnoticed,"] None are more apt to find fault with wickedness in others than those who are wicked themselves, and one great reason is that other men's lusts clash with theirs. Thus one man's pride crosses the pride of another, for it is the nature of pride to desire to be alone in advancement, to make the person in whom it is affect to be a God, to appropriate all power and all honour to himself as his own prerogative. But such an aim in one man clashes with such an aim in another. Hence there are none that can bear pride in others so ill, as those that are very proud themselves, and there never are such strife and enmity as between proud, haughty men. Proud men love to have others walk humbly before them, and nothing enrages them so much as to have others carry themselves proudly. For the same reason covetous men dislike covetous men, for this lust clashes with the same lust in another. Every covetous man strives to get all into his own hands, to get and keep all that he can to himself from his neighbor. So the lusts of envy, and malice, and revenge, are hated in others by envious and malicious men; because none are so obnoxious to malice, and envy, and revenge, as those that have the most of these qualities. Hence the wicked world on earth, who are at enmity with the church of God for its holiness, do not at all agree together. Though they agree in being alike under the power of wickedness, yet how full is the world of wicked men of strife and contention, of perpetual jars, animosities, and confusion! [Rom. i. 29, 30, 31, 32](#). "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate,

deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." So [Titus iii. 3.](#) "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And hence also it comes to pass that devils and wicked men in hell, though they hate angels and saints in heaven for their holiness, have yet no love one to another; though they all agree in being perfectly wicked, yet they hate one another with implacable hatred, and are continually mortifying and tormenting one another; so that hell is a world of perfect malice and contention.

Thirdly. They refuse to accept of heaven as it is; yet they would not like it if it were otherwise. As has been observed before, they have no relish for the holy enjoyments and employments of heaven. [They dislike heaven for its holiness, and yet they would not like it if it were unholy;](#) for then they would be liable to the same troubles and vexations in heaven that they meet with in this world. If it were not that heaven differs from this world in holiness, it would be as full of pride and malice, envy, revenge, contention, injustice, violence, and cruelty, as this world is, and so would be as vexatious a world as this is. Wicked men are as liable to the trouble and vexation of the world, which arise from those things, as godly men, and in some respects more so, for they have no divine supports against those things, no safer portion to which their hearts betake themselves.

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The Sovereignty of God In Election Seen In God's Exercise of Mercy To His Enemies Is Most Reasonable

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Argument against the sinner's prayer - Presumption.

Men Naturally God's Enemies

by Jonathan Edwards

ECT. VIII.

God may justly withhold mercy.

If natural men are God's enemies, hence we may learn, how justly God may refuse to show you mercy. **For is God obliged to show mercy to his enemies? Is God bound to set his love on them that have no love to him; but hate him with perfect hatred?** Is he bound to come and dwell with them that have an aversion to him, and choose to keep at a distance from him, and fly from him as one that is hateful to them? Even should you desire the salvation of your soul, is God bound to comply with your desires, when you always resist and oppose his will? Is God bound to put honour upon you, and to advance you to such dignity as to be a child of the King of kings, and the heir of glory, while at the same time you set him too low to have even the lowest place in your heart?

This doctrine affords a strong argument for the absolute sovereignty of God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. If God is pleased to show mercy to his haters, it is certainly fit that he should do it in a sovereign way, without acting as any way obliged. God will show mercy to his mortal enemies; but then he will not be bound, he will have his liberty to choose the objects of his mercy; to show mercy to what enemy he pleases, and to punish and destroy which of his haters he pleases. **And certainly this is a fit and reasonable thing. It is fit that God should distribute saving blessings in this way, and in no other, viz. in a sovereign and arbitrary way.** And that ever anybody thought of or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, **must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God.** But consider here the following things:

1. How causelessly you are enemies to God. You have no manner of reason for it, either from what God is, or from what he has done. You have no reason for this from what he is. For he is an infinitely lovely and glorious Being; the fountain of all excellency, all that is amiable and lovely in the universe, is originally and eminently in him. Nothing can possibly be conceived of that could be lovely in God, that is not in him, and that in the greatest possible degree.

And you have no reason for this, from what God has done. For he has been a good and bountiful God to you. He has exercised abundance of kindness to you; has carried you from the womb, preserved your life, taken care of you, and provided for you, all your life long. He has exercised great patience and long-suffering towards you. If it had not been for the kindness of God to you, what would have become of you? What would have become of your body? And what, before this time, would have become of your soul? And you are now, every day and hour, maintained by the goodness and bounty of God. Every new breath you draw, is a new gift of his to you. How causelessly then are you such

dreadful enemies to God! And how justly might he for it eternally deprive you of all mercy, seeing you do thus requite God for his mercy and kindness to you!

2. Consider, how you would resent it, if others were such enemies to you, as you are to God. If they had their hearts so full of enmity to you; if they treated you with such contempt, and opposed you, as you do God; how would you resent it! Do you not find that you are apt greatly to resent it, when any oppose you, and show an ill spirit towards you? **And though you excuse your own enmity against God from your corrupt nature that you brought into the world with you, which you could not help; yet you do not excuse others for being enemies to you from their corrupt nature that they brought into the world, which they could not help; but are ready bitterly to resent it notwithstanding.**

Consider therefore, if you, a poor, unworthy, unlovely creature, do so resent it, when you are hated, how may God justly resent it when you are enemies to him, an infinitely glorious Being; and a Being from whom you have received so much kindness!

3. How unreasonable is it for you to imagine that you can oblige God to have respect to you by anything that you can do, continuing still to be his enemy. If you think you have prayed, and read, and done something considerable for God; **yet who cares for the seeming kindness of an enemy?** [Hence the wicked presumption of the sinner's prayer!] What value would you yourself set upon a man making a show of friendship, when you knew at the same time, that he was inwardly your mortal enemy? Would you look upon yourself obliged for such respect and kindness? Would you not rather abhor it? Would you count such respect to be valued, as Joab's towards Amasa, who took him by the beard, and kissed him, and said, Art thou in health, my brother? And smote him at the same time under the fifth rib, and killed him! What if you do pray to God? Is he obliged to hear the prayers of an enemy? **What if you have taken a great deal of pains, is God obliged to give heaven for the prayers of an enemy?** He may justly abhor your prayers, and all that you do in religion, as the flattery of a mortal enemy.

Summary/Review of Conversion

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Pneumatologia A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit

by John Owen

Summary/review of conversion, the Holy Spirit, the image of God and its purpose, a new spiritual principle, the grace of regeneration, Original Sin, Pelagianism, warnings of false conversions by John Owen, pg 154-159

This **new creature**, [remember, there are two creations; the old consisting in natural things, the earth and all its creatures, etc., and then the new creation, the Church, the body of believers with Christ as the head.] therefore, doth not consist in a new course of actions, but in **renewed faculties, with new dispositions, power, or ability to them and for them**. Hence it is called the "**divine nature**:" 2 Peter 1:4,

"He hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."

This $\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, this “divine nature,” is not the nature of God, whereof in our own persons we are not subjectively partakers; and yet a nature it is which is a principle of operation, and that divine or spiritual, — namely, an habitual holy principle, wrought in us by God, and bearing his image. By the “promises,” therefore, we are made partakers of a divine, supernatural principle of spiritual actions and operations; which is what we contend for. So the whole of what we intend is declared, Ephesians 4:22-24,

“Put off concerning the former conversation the **old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

It is the **work of regeneration**, with respect both to its foundation and progress, that is here described.

1. The foundation of the whole is laid in our being “renewed in the spirit of our mind;” which the same apostle elsewhere calls being “transformed in the renovation of our minds,” Romans 12:2. That this consists in the participation of a new, saving, **supernatural light, to enable the mind unto spiritual actings**, and to guide it therein, shall be afterward declared. Herein consists our “renovation in knowledge, after the image of him who created us,” **Colossians 3:10**. And,

2. The principle itself infused into us, created in us, is called the “new man,” Ephesians 4:24, — that is, the new creature before mentioned; and it is called the “**new man**,” because it consists in the universal change of the whole soul, as it is the **principle** of all **spiritual and moral action**. And,

(1.) It is opposed unto the “old man,” “Put off the old man, and put on the new man,” verses 22, 24. **Now, this “old man” is the corruption of our nature**, as that nature is the principle of all religious, spiritual, and moral actions, as is evident, Romans 6:6. It is not a corrupt conversation, but the principle and root of it; for it is distinguished both from the conversation of men, and those corrupt lusts which are exercised therein, as to that exercise. And,

(2.) It is called the “new man,” because it is the effect and product of God’s creating power, and that in a way of “**a new creation**,” see Ephesians 1:19; Colossians 2:12, 13; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; and it is here said to be “created after God,” Ephesians 4:24. Now, **the object of a creating act is an instantaneous production**. Whatever preparations there may be for it and dispositions unto it, the bringing forth of a new form and being by creation is in an instant. This, therefore, cannot consist in a mere reformation of life. So are we said herein to be the “workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” chapter 2:10. There is a work of God in us preceding all our good works towards him; for before we can work any of them, in order of nature, we must be the workmanship of God, created unto them, or enabled spiritually for the performance of them.

Again: This **new man**, whereby we are born again, is said to be created in **righteousness** and true **holiness**. That there is a respect unto man created in innocency, wherein he was made in the image of God, I suppose will not be denied. It is also expressed Colossians 3:10,

“Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

Look, then, what was, or wherein consisted, **the image of God** in the first man, thereunto answers this new man which is created of God. Now, this did not consist in reformation of life, no, nor in a course of virtuous actions; for he was created in the image of God before he had done anyone good thing at all, or was capable of so doing. **But this image of God consisted principally, as we have evinced elsewhere, in the uprightness, rectitude, and ability of his whole soul, his mind, will, and affections, in, unto, and for the obedience that God required of him.** This he was endowed withal **antecedently** unto all voluntary actions whereby he was to live to God. Such, therefore, must be our regeneration, or the creation of this new man in us. **It is the begetting, infusing, creating, of a new saving principle of spiritual life, light, and power in the soul, antecedent unto true evangelical reformation of life, in [the] order of nature, [and] enabling men thereunto, according unto the mind of God.**

Hereunto accords that of our Savior, Luke 6:43,

“A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit;”

compared with Matthew 7:18. The fruit followeth the nature of the tree; and there is no way to change the nature of the fruit, but by changing the nature of the tree which brings it forth. Now, all amendment of life in reformation is but fruit, chapter 3:10; **but the changing of our nature is antecedent hereunto.** This is the constant course and tenor of the Scripture, to distinguish between the grace of regeneration, which it declares to be an immediate supernatural work of God in us and upon us, and all that obedience, holiness, righteousness, virtue, or whatever is good in us, which is the consequent, product, and effect of it. Yea, God hath declared this expressly in his covenant, **Ezekiel 36:25-27; Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39, 40.** The method of God’s proceeding with us in his covenant is, that he first washeth and cleanseth our natures, takes away the heart of stone, gives a heart of flesh, writes his law in our hearts, puts his Spirit in us; wherein, as shall be evidenced, the grace of regeneration doth consist. The effect and consequent hereof is, that we shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments and do them, — that is, reform our lives, and yield all holy obedience unto God. Wherefore these things are distinguished as causes and effects. See to the same purpose, Romans 6:3-6; Colossians 3:1-5; Ephesians 2:10, 4:23-25. This I insist upon still, on supposition that by “reformation of life” all actual obedience is intended; for as to that kind of life which is properly called a moral course of life, in opposition to open debaucheries and unrighteousness, which doth not proceed from an internal principle of saving grace, it is so far from being regeneration or grace, as that it is a thing of no acceptance with God absolutely, whatever use or reputation it may be of in the world.

And yet farther: This work is described to consist in the sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. And if this be that which some men intend by “reformation of life” and “moral virtue,” they must needs win much esteem for their clearness and perspicuity in teaching spiritual things; for who would not admire them for such a definition of morality, — namely, that it is the principal sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body, of a believer, by the Holy Ghost? But not

to dwell longer on this subject, there is no description of the work of regeneration in the Scripture, in its nature, causes, or effects, no name given unto it, no promise made of it, nothing spoken of the ways, means, or power, by which it is wrought, but is inconsistent with this bold Pelagian figment, which is destructive of the grace of Jesus Christ.

The ground of this imagination, that regeneration consists in a moral reformation of life, ariseth from a denial of original sin, or an inherent, habitual corruption of nature; for the masters unto the men of this persuasion tell us that whatever is of vice or defilement in us, it is contracted by a custom of sinning only. And their conceptions hereof do regulate their opinions about regeneration; for if man be not originally corrupted and polluted, if his nature be not depraved, if it be not possessed by, and under the power of, evil dispositions and inclinations, it is certain that he stands in no need of an inward spiritual renovation of it. It is enough for such an one that, by change of life, he renounce a custom of sinning, and reform his conversation according to the gospel; which in himself he hath power to do. But as it hath been in part already manifested, and will fully, God assisting, be evinced afterward, that in our regeneration the native ignorance, darkness, and blindness of our minds are dispelled, saving and spiritual light being introduced by the power of God's grace into them; that the pravity and stubbornness of our wills are removed and taken away, a new principle of spiritual life and righteousness being bestowed on them; and that the disorder and rebellion of our affections are cured by the infusion of the love of God into our souls: so the corrupt imagination of the contrary opinion, directly opposite to the doctrine of the Scriptures, the faith of the ancient church, and the experience of all sincere believers, hath amongst us of late nothing but ignorance and ready confidence produced to give countenance unto it.

Thirdly, The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration doth not consist, in **enthusiastical raptures, ecstasies, voices, or anything of the like kind**. It may be some such things have been, by some deluded persons, apprehended or pretended unto; but the countenancing of any such imaginations is falsely and injuriously charged on them who maintain the powerful and effectual work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration. And this some are prone to do; wherein whether they discover more of their ignorance or of their malice I know not, but nothing is more common with them. All whom in this matter they dissent from, so far as they know what they say or whereof they affirm, **do teach men to look after enthusiastic inspirations or unaccountable raptures, and to esteem them for conversion unto God, although, in the meantime, they live in a neglect of holiness and righteousness of conversation**. I answer, If there be those who do so, we doubt not but that, without their repentance, the wrath of God will come upon them, as upon other children of disobedience. And yet, in the meantime, we cannot but call aloud that others would discover their diligence in attendance unto these things, who, as far as I can discern, do cry up the names of virtue and righteousness in opposition to the grace of Jesus Christ, and that holiness which is a fruit thereof. But for the reproach now under consideration, it is, as applied, no other but a calumny and false accusation; and that it is so, the writings and preachings of those who have most diligently labored in the declaration of the work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration will bear testimony at the great day of the Lord. We may, therefore, as unto this **negative principle**, observe three things: —

1. That the Holy Spirit in this work doth ordinarily put forth his power in and by the use of means. He worketh also on men suitably unto their natures, even as the faculties of their souls, their minds, wills,

and affections, are meet to be affected and wrought upon. He doth not come upon them with involuntary raptures, using their faculties and powers as the evil spirit wrests the bodies of them whom he possesseth. His whole work, therefore, is rationally to be accounted for by and unto them who believe the Scripture, and have received the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. The formal efficiency of the Spirit, indeed, **in the putting forth the exceeding greatness of his power in our quickening**, — which the ancient church constantly calleth his “inspiration of grace,” both in private writing and canons of councils, — is no otherwise to be comprehended by us than any other creating act of divine power; for as we hear the wind, but know not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, “so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Yet these two things are certain herein: —

(1.) That he worketh nothing, nor any other way, nor by any other means, than what are determined and declared in the word. By that, therefore, may and must everything really belonging, or pretended to belong, unto this work of regeneration, be tried and examined.

(2.) That he acts nothing contrary unto, puts no force upon, any of the faculties of our souls, but works in them and by them suitably to their natures; and being more intimate unto them, as Austin speaks, than they are unto themselves, by an almighty facility he **produceth the effect which he intendeth**.

This great work, therefore, neither in part nor whole consists in raptures, ecstasies, visions, enthusiastic inspirations, but in the effect of the power of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, by and according to his word, both of the law and the gospel. And those who charge these things on them who have asserted, declared, and preached it according to the Scriptures, do it, probably, to countenance themselves in their hatred of them and of the work itself. Wherefore, —

2. Where, by reason of distempers of mind, disorder of fancy, or long continuance of distressing fears and sorrows, in and under such **preparatory works of the Spirit**, which sometimes cut men to their hearts in the sense of their sin, and sinful, lost condition, any do fall into **apprehensions or imaginations** of anything extraordinary in the ways before mentioned, if it be not quickly and strictly brought unto the rule, and discarded thereby, it may be of great danger unto their souls, and is never of any solid use or advantage. Such apprehensions, for the most part, are either conceptions of distempered minds and discomposed fancies, or delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, which the doctrine of regeneration ought not to be accountable for. Yet I must say, —

3. That so it is come to pass, that many of those who have been really made partakers of this gracious work of the Holy Spirit have been looked on in the world, which knows them not, as mad, enthusiastic, and fanatical. So the captains of the host esteemed the prophet that came to anoint Jehu, 2 Kings 9:11. And the kindred of our Savior, when he began to preach the gospel, said he was “beside himself,” or ecstatical, Mark 3:21, and “they went out to lay hold on him.” So Festus judged of Paul, Acts 26:24, 25. And the author of the Book of Wisdom gives us an account what acknowledgments some will make when it shall be too late, as to their own advantage: Chapter 5:3-5, “They shall say, crying out, because of the trouble of their minds, This is he whom we accounted a scorn, and a common reproach. We fools esteemed his life madness, and his latter end to have been shameful, but

how is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his lot is among the holy ones!" From what hath been spoken it appears, —

Fourthly, **That the work of the Spirit of God in regenerating the souls of men is diligently to be inquired into by the preachers of the gospel**, and all to whom the word is dispensed. For the former sort, there is a peculiar reason for their attendance unto this duty; for they are used and employed in the work itself by the Spirit of God, and are by him made instrumental for the effecting of this new birth and life. So the apostle Paul styles himself the father of them who were converted to God or regenerated through the word of his ministry: 1 Corinthians 4:15,

"Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

He was used in the ministry of the word for their regeneration, and therefore was their spiritual father, and he only, though the work was afterward carried on by others. And if men are fathers in the gospel to no more than are converted unto God by their personal ministry, it will be no advantage unto any one day to have assumed that title, when it hath had no foundation in that work as to its effectual success. So, speaking of Onesimus, who was converted by him in prison, he calls him "his son, whom he had begotten in his bonds," Philemon 10. And this he declared to have been prescribed unto him as the principal end of his ministry, in the commission he had for preaching the gospel, Acts 26:17, 18. Christ said unto him,

"I send thee unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;"

which is a description of the work under consideration. And this is the principal end of our ministry also. Now, certainly it is the duty of ministers to understand the work about which they are employed, as far as they are able, that they may not work in the dark and fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. What the Scripture hath revealed concerning it, as to its nature and the manner of its operation, as to its causes, effects, fruits, evidences, they ought **diligently** to inquire into. To be spiritually skilled therein is one of the principal furnishings of any for the work of the ministry, without which they will never be able to divide the word aright, nor show themselves workmen that need not be ashamed. Yet it is scarcely imaginable with what rage and perversity of spirit, with what scornful expressions, this whole work is traduced and exposed to contempt. Those who have labored herein are said

"to prescribe long and tedious trains of conversion, to set down nice and subtle processes of regeneration, to fill people's heads with innumerable swarms of superstitious fears and scruples about the due degrees of godly sorrow, and the certain symptoms of a thorough humiliation," f85 pp. 306,

Could any mistake be charged on particular persons in these things, or the prescribing of rules about conversion to God and regeneration that are not warranted by the word of truth, it were not amiss to reflect upon them and refute them; but the intention of these expressions is evident, and the reproach in them is cast upon the work of God itself: and I must profess that I believe the degeneracy from the truth and power of Christian religion, the ignorance of the principal doctrines of the gospel, and that

scorn which is cast, in these and the like expressions, on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by such as not only profess themselves to be ministers, but of a higher degree than ordinary, will be sadly ominous unto the whole state of the reformed church amongst us, if not timely repressed and corrected. But what at present I affirm in this matter is, —

1. That it is a duty indispensably incumbent on all ministers of the gospel to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of this work, that they may be able to comply with the will of God and grace of the Spirit in the effecting and accomplishment of it upon the souls of them unto whom they dispense the word. Neither, without some competent knowledge hereof, can they discharge any one part of their duty and office in a right manner. **If all that hear them are born dead in trespasses and sins, if they are appointed of God to be the instruments of their regeneration, it is a madness, which must one day be accounted for, to neglect a sedulous inquiry into the nature of this work, and the means whereby it is wrought. And the ignorance hereof or negligence herein, with the want of an experience of the power of this work in their own souls, is one great cause of that lifeless and unprofitable ministry which is among us.**

2. **It is likewise the duty of all to whom the word is preached to inquire also into it.** It is unto such to whom the apostle speaks, 2 Corinthians 13:5,

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

It is the concernment of all individual Christians, or professors of Christian religion, to try and examine themselves what work of the Spirit of God there hath been upon their hearts; and none will deter them from it but those who have a design to hoodwink them to perdition. And, —

(1.) The doctrine of it is revealed and taught us; for “secret things belong unto the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law,” Deuteronomy 29:29. 282 And we speak not of curious inquiries into or after hidden things, or the secret, veiled actions of the Holy Spirit; but only of an upright endeavor to search into and comprehend the doctrine concerning this work, to this very end, that we might understand it.

(2.) **It is of such importance unto all our duties and all our comforts to have a due apprehension of the nature of this work, and of our own concernment therein, that an inquiry into the one and the other cannot be neglected without the greatest folly and madness.** Whereunto we may add,

(3.) **The danger that there is of men being deceived in this matter, which is the hinge whereon their eternal state and condition doth absolutely turn and depend.** And certain it is that very many in the world do deceive themselves herein: for they evidently live under one of these pernicious mistakes, — namely, either,

[1.] **That men may go to heaven, or “enter into the kingdom of God,” and not be “born again,” contrary to that of our Savior, John 3:5; or,**

[2.] **That men may be “born again,” and yet live in sin, contrary to 1 John 3:9.**

The Ordo Salutis

Regeneration - Justification

Code466

By G Vos, RD, pg 611

1. *What is understood under the ordo salutis, the “order of salvation”?*

The series of acts and steps in which the salvation obtained by Christ is subjectively **appropriated by the elect**. In Scripture *sōtēria, salus*, has a double meaning, one more subjective and one more objective, according to whether it includes the act of saving or of being saved. In the first sense it naturally extends much farther than in the subjective appropriation of salvation. Christ is called *sōtēria* not merely because He applies His merits but because He has likewise obtained them. His satisfaction was the principal act of salvation. In the second sense it is narrower in scope and in fact covers what one understands under the designation “soteriology.”

2. *What is further contained in the term ordo salutis, “order of salvation”?*

That the subjective application of the salvation obtained by Christ does not occur at once or arbitrarily. In the abstract, it would be possible for God to take hold of and relocate each one of the elect into the heaven of glory at a single point in time. He has His good reasons that He did not do this. There are a multiplicity of relationships and conditions to which all the operations of grace have a certain connection. If the change came about all at once, then not a single one of these would enter into the consciousness of the believer, but everything would be thrown together in a chaotic revolution. None of the acts or steps would throw light on the others; the base could not be distinguished from the top or the top from the base. **The fullness of God’s works of grace and the rich variety of His acts of salvation would not be prized and appreciated.**

The opposite of all this is true. There is order and regularity in the application of salvation as well as in every other area of creation. The acts and operations each have their own fixed place, from which they cannot be uprooted. They are connected to each other from what follows and from what precedes; they have their basis and their result. Consequently, the Scripture gives us an ordered sequence (e.g., Rom 8:28–30). At the same time, this order shows us that even in what is most subjective the purpose of God may not be limited to the satisfaction of the creature’s longing for blessedness. If this were so, then the order that is slow and in many respects tests the patience of the children of God would be lost. But here, too, God works first of all to glorify Himself according to the principles of an eternal order and an immanent propriety.

3. *Does unanimity rule among the theologians in the identification of the different steps that belong to the order of salvation?*

No, a great variety rules in sequence as well as in completeness. All do not enumerate the same steps. When they all have the same things, they are given in a different sequence. Different terms are used for one and the same thing.

4. *Enumerate some points of difference that are important for proper differentiation.*

a) An important point is the varying and unclear definition of the concept of regeneration. For many theologians the locus on regeneration is completely lacking, although many federalists are an exception here. At the same time these theologians do of course know of regeneration, and its specific character has not escaped them entirely.

1. Some identify “**regeneration**” (*regeneratio*) with “conversion” (*conversio*). This is quite customary with the dogmatists of the 17th century. The Canons of Dort teach in chapters 3 and 4, article 11: “Furthermore, when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect or works true conversion in them ... He not only powerfully illumines their mind by the Holy Spirit ... but by the effective power of the same regenerating Spirit, He penetrates to the inmost parts of the man, opens the closed heart ... infuses new qualities into the will, and makes the dead living ... (article 12) and this is that—so often proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures—regeneration, new creation, resurrection from the dead and making alive, which God, without us, works in us.” Owen also expresses himself in a similar way.

Some, however, sought to avoid the lack of clarity that may originate from this usage by a more precise distinction between two kinds of conversion. So Turretin makes mention of a double *conversio*. The first is **habitual and passive. It consists in producing a habit or disposition of the soul**: “Habitual or passive conversion occurs through the infusion of **supernatural habits by the Holy Spirit.**” The second conversion is called **active** and effective conversion. It is the exercising in faith and repentance of the already implanted habitus: “Active or effective conversion occurs through the exercise of those good habits by which the acts of faith and of repentance are both given by God and elicited in man.” He then adds, however, that it is better to call the first kind of conversion “regeneration,” **because it refers to the new birth by which man is renewed according to the image of his Maker**, and to limit the term “conversion” to the second kind, since in it the activity of man is not excluded.

2. The majority by far summarize regeneration and conversion under the concept of internal calling. Wollebius says, “Particular calling is termed: (a) new creation, (b) regeneration, etc.” In the schools it is called (a) effectual election, (b) effectual calling, (c) internal calling. Accordingly, some speak first about calling, then about faith, then about conversion, so that calling apparently takes the place of regeneration (e.g., the

Leiden Synopsis). Calling is often enough described as an implanting into Christ, a union with Christ, an indissoluble joining of the person of the elect with the person of the Mediator, all of them concepts that bring regeneration to mind clearly enough.

3. Others take the concept of regeneration in a very wide sense, as almost completely synonymous with *sanctificatio*, “sanctification,” and under that notion understand the entire process by which the old nature of man is transformed into a new nature resembling the image of God. Calvin says (Institutes, 3.3.9), “Therefore, in a word, I describe *poenitentia* [repentance] as regeneration, of which the goal is none other than that the image of God, defiled and nearly wiped out in us by the transgression of Adam, is restored in us.... And this restoration is not completed in one moment or in one day or one year; but with continual, yes, even slow steps God removes corruption from his elect.” Later we will see why this wider use of the term has a certain right.

b) Another important point that lacks clarity lies in the concept of **calling**. While for this concept some still have all the emphasis fall on the immediacy of the action and thus identify internal calling with regeneration, others hold to the obvious thought that **calling already presupposes a life and the capacity to hear**, and so must be distinguished from the initial begetting of life.

c) Also, the concept of *poenitentia*, “repentance,” is not always clearly distinguished. Sometimes this word is taken to mean long processes that accompany the whole of life here on earth, sometimes for instantaneous actions at a critical moment. As seen above, Calvin identifies *poenitentia*, *regeneratio*, *sanctificatio*.

5. Does one also find here and there an attempt to divide the different stages of the way of salvation in an orderly manner?

Yes, we can find an example of that in the classification of Voetius. He distinguishes three kinds of acts of God as belonging to the application of salvation:

a) Acts that only effect a change in our state in relation to God. To these belong *reconciliatio*, “reconciliation”; *justificatio*, “justification”; *adoptio*, “adoption as children.”

b) Acts that are directed to the will of man with moral suasion but do not take hold or transform inwardly and omnipotently, such as external calling and what belongs to it. Voetius calls these “moral acts.”

c) Acts that bring about a real and inherent change in the subject. Regeneration, glorification, etc., are counted among them. As we will see, the main features are drawn quite correctly here.

6. What distinctions must we make with a view to arriving at a clear overview of these different acts in their mutual connection?

a) The first great distinction that needs to be kept in view is the one between judicial acts, which change a judicial relationship of man, and **re-creating acts** (in the widest sense of the word), which **bring about a change in the actual condition of man**. An act of the first kind, for example, is justification; one of the second kind is sanctification. The first kind changes the status; the second changes the condition of the one regarding whom or in whom it takes place.

b) Another distinction of equally great importance teaches us to **divide between what occurs under, and in, or for the consciousness of the sinner**. Some acts in the application of salvation derive their meaning completely from the fact that they are executed in the light of the consciousness, be it by God or by the man in whom God works. Others, by their nature, can only affect the deeper essence of man that does not appear in the light of the consciousness. Accordingly, they occur without man himself being able to understand and observe them. An example of this latter kind is regeneration. **A sinner is as little conscious of his rebirth as a child is conscious of its birth, apart from the consequences by which it makes itself known**. An example of the other kind is justification, consisting in a communication to the sinner's consciousness of acquittal and the merits of Christ.

c) Next, one can distinguish between the removal of the old and the establishment of the new in man. **Sin is not a mere lack. If it were this, it could suffice for the Holy Spirit to make up what is lacking, and the distinction in view here would make no sense.** Sin, however, is more—a positive power that must be removed and destroyed—and in its place must be introduced a positively operating principle of good. Regeneration, preferably, is an act that belongs to the establishment of the new. Repentance, by contrast, we can better reckon to the removal of the old, although here, as in the two earlier cases, we cannot sharply separate the two. Rather, these two—removing the old and establishing the new— accompany each other at every point of their way.

d) Finally, one must carefully distinguish between the beginning, the sudden breakthrough, of an act of grace and its further impact and development. The beginning of God's work of grace always has something distinctive by which it is sharply delineated from the development that follows. Now, in a certain sense one can maintain that regeneration and sanctification are parts of a **great process of renewal that begins where the Holy Spirit first lays a hand on someone** and ends where the heaven of glory is reached. Still, regeneration and sanctification are essentially distinguished. No less different from each other are the initial crisis in the conscious life of man that one is accustomed to call conversion and the further killing of the old man that continues throughout the whole of life.

7. *What may be established further concerning the relationship between these different groups?*

a) Our first principle is that the judicial relationships are the basis on which the moral acts of re-creation rest in their entirety. However, one should be completely clear what is intended here: **it is not that justification as it takes place in the consciousness of the sinner must precede his regeneration in time.** This would presuppose an impossibility. Justification surely occurs by faith, and faith as an expression of life in no way tolerates separation from the principle of life that is imparted in the essence of man. **Believing without regeneration is no more conceivable than consciousness in a child without natural birth. So, in relation to time, the change of the unconscious condition certainly precedes the change in the conscious state.** In contrast, it is completely otherwise if we ask about the logical relationship and put the question as follows: Is someone justified because he is regenerated, or is he regenerated because he will be justified? The answer here according to all of Scripture and according to the Protestant principle can only be the latter. For God, justification in His view is the basis, regeneration the consequence. If wrath and a relationship of punishment continued to exist, no new life would be able to germinate. God cannot communicate subjective habitual grace unless objective satisfaction of His justice is offered with specific application to the individual person. And not only does God, in infusing habitual grace, have in view the judicial relationship, restored or to be restored, but also in his conscious justification the sinner receives the insight that all that is habitual, which is already or will be worked in him, has its basis and origin in acquittal for the sake of Christ. And, accordingly, in the consciousness of God and in the consciousness of the sinner what occurs outwardly **in the sphere of justice precedes what occurs inwardly in his moral condition.**

b) It is equally necessary to hold firmly that for habitual grace, action on the unconscious essence precedes action on the conscious life. This is but an application of the general rule that what lies on the surface of life stems from the hidden impetus of the depth of life. **From the root comes the mysterious life that is at work in the stem and the branches and causes fruit to ripen.** So, if we place regeneration and conversion, or regeneration and faith, next to each other, conversion and faith cannot be first in time; on the contrary, regeneration precedes. If one sometimes hears the opposite sequence defended, this rests on a misconception to which we will have to return later.

c) One certainly needs to pay attention to the fact that the two distinctions, of acts that fall within the sphere of justice and acts that fall within the sphere of habitual grace, on the one hand, and of acts of grace that affect the root and acts of grace that affect the branches, on the other, do not run in parallel. Certainly, a saving act that falls in the judicial sphere is always a conscious act, in the original sense for the consciousness of God, in a derivative sense for the consciousness of the sinner. An act that produces habitual grace, however, is not always an act that works in the unconscious life. It can do so, and does, for example, in regeneration, but it need not do that and does not in sanctification and glorification. These two distinctions intersect each other.

9. *Are the distinctions made here based on Scripture or are they merely human attempts to bring about an order in the multiplicity of phenomena of the work of grace?*

They are based on Scripture and not only have practical significance but also reflect real relationships that exist between the different virtues of God. Therefore, one cannot change them without the greatest danger, for what one changes is not a subsidiary viewpoint, a perspective, but the fundamental conception of religion. That can be shown in particular on each of the points advanced above.

Concerning the first, the distinction between judicial actions and re-creating acts of grace, on this point the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches diverge. The former thinks that the changed judicial relationship must have for its basis a change in the moral condition of the sinner, and so with that reintroduces the principle of justification by works that the Apostle Paul so powerfully combated. The latter maintains that all improvement and conversion must have acquittal in God's tribunal as its starting point, and so, on the contrary, makes works a consequence of justification. In the first case, man gets part of the honor for himself; in the second, God gets all the glory. But danger threatens here not only from the side of historic Roman Catholicism. There is a neo-Romanism that unconsciously honors the same principle. The endeavor is fairly common at present to deny the necessity of change in the judicial sphere as a condition for moral improvement. Almost all the emphasis falls on the ethical, on the reformation of man, as if there is no need to take account of God's justice. This is the opposite of antinomianism; it is a denial rather than a misuse of free grace. The character and capacities of man are elevated as a measure of the favor of God, and moral perfection is insisted on with full force. One would characterize this direction as moral legalism and distinguish it, as such, from the ceremonial legalism of the Jews and the Roman Catholic legalism that coincides with it. Under the appearance of holding high the moral ideal, it is in fact active in attacking this ideal at its heart, for only one who has a thorough sense of the guilt and inner accursedness of evil can possess an unadulterated appreciation and admiration of the good, which is a normal consequence of the former. **Whoever preaches transformation without justification does not have the right conception of sin and improvement.** He reckons only with the external side of sin under a utilitarian aspect; its deeper spiritual significance totally escapes him. By far the greatest part of the ethics presently preached from pulpits is of this kind. It demands a sanctification under which the indispensable foundation of justification is utterly lacking. From this, in part, is to be explained the ease with which some, despite the clear witness of Scripture, eliminate the doctrine of eternal punishment. The foundation of this doctrine is lacking in the conscience—namely, a deep sense of the necessity that God's justice be maintained. And the end of all this will be the weakening and falsifying of all moral distinctions.

It is almost superfluous to show that Scripture never loses sight of the order indicated above against Roman Catholicism and neo-Romanism. Paul's entire teaching rests on this distinction between sanctification and justification. A Christian loves much after much has been forgiven him, not the

reverse: that much has been forgiven him because he loves much. The lost son received forgiveness before anything else. And the same thought recurs everywhere, so strongly in Paul that his opponents could take the occasion to hurl at him the recrimination of antinomianism (cf. Rom 6:1ff.), and he was forced to show expressly how moral transformation infallibly followed imputation—indeed, how in one and the same baptism both were pictured and the images of both fused together.

Also on the second point, Scripture does not leave us in the dark. **It always distinguishes between what occurs beneath and in the consciousness.** Romans 8:28–30 presents the chain of salvation with its different links. The practical purpose that the apostle has with this is to strengthen the believer in the consciousness that future glory cannot elude him. In line with that, he now enumerates precisely the acts of salvation that fall within the light of the consciousness, which enable looking forward and backward—namely, calling and justification as lying between election and glorification. This is a proof, therefore, of the genuinely biblical character of the distinction made, for what moves Paul here to limit himself to calling and justification is nothing other than the principle of **that distinction that while some operations of grace are recognizable by the consciousness, others are not.**

This principle, too, is of utmost weight. Whoever doubts that, along with the influence of grace in the conscious life, God's acts of grace intervene much more deeply and affect the inner essence of man, can do so only on the basis of a superficial view of sin. To allow everything to terminate in conscious life presupposes a Pelagian view of sin and all that is connected with it. What occurs in the consciousness naturally works mediately, persuasively, countering resistance. Only insofar as it surges from the inside out is grace entirely grace, a supernatural operation of power, an exclusive work of God. The distinction between foundational acts of grace at the outset, which intervene in a creative manner at critical moments, and the further ongoing uniform activity of grace is in no need of demonstration as scriptural. It is necessary, however, to emphasize that distinction because here, too, **some seek to substitute slow development from natural causes for a sudden change worked by God.**

10. *What points must be examined in general before we proceed to discussing the particular acts of grace?*

- a) The relationship between these operations of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of nature.
- b) The relationship between the operations of special grace and common grace, *gratia communis*.
- c) The relationship between special grace and Holy Scripture. d) The relationship between special grace and the person of the Mediator and the person of the Holy Spirit.

11. *What is the nature of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of nature and that of grace?*

a) A relationship of analogy or correspondence. In the kingdom of nature the Holy Spirit has His specific task, as well as the Father and the Son. He is the person who by His working leads things to their destined goal and development—who creates and maintains life in the realm of the organic, the rational, the reasonable. Likewise, in the kingdom of grace the Holy Spirit is the one who leads the elect sinner to his destined goal and development by creating and maintaining new life in him.

b) A relationship of subordination. What God does for someone through the Holy Spirit in the sphere of nature is not unconnected with what He intends for him in the kingdom of grace. The entire life of the elect, including that part that precedes their implanting into Christ, is ordered by God with a view to its final destined end. It is not immaterial how and where someone is born, which influences work on him, how he is raised, which direction the development of his life takes. Since the place to be occupied by someone in the kingdom of grace is determined by God and coheres closely with all of his earlier development, the latter cannot be left out of consideration in determining the former.

c) Notwithstanding this analogy and this subordination, there exists an essential difference between the working of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of nature and in the kingdom of grace. The latter is a new order of things that cannot be explained by the former, but rests on an immediate intervention of God's Spirit. Grace is not nature. It is certainly true that one also calls grace the natural guiding actions of God, with which He deals with the elect before their regeneration (*gratia praeparans*). But taking the word in this broad sense is not meant to deny the specific difference between the operations of the Spirit in nature and in grace. The word "grace" still has a twofold sense: (1) An attribute in God is called grace; (2) an influence on man that transcends natural influence bears that name. If now something that falls within the sphere of nature is called grace, then it is because the gracious purpose of God adheres to it. One and the same act can occur with respect to two persons and be grace in this sense for the one but not for the other. Still, the act remains specifically the same, and by this purpose is not set outside the sphere of nature. It is absolutely necessary to maintain the sharpest contrast between nature and grace.

12. *What is the relationship between the operations of common grace and the special grace of the Holy Spirit?*

To understand correctly the difference between these two in connection with the preceding distinction, we must move out of the sphere of nature into the sphere of revelation. This revelation is itself the product of a wholly supernatural act of grace. The announcement of the truth of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit lie both beyond and above nature. At the same time, however, that truth is given in natural forms. It is expressed in words written with letters, words that can be heard by the natural ear and read by the natural eye. As we hope to see, it is not the most proper and highest end of

the truth to accomplish its work outwardly in this way; rather, it reaches its proper goal only when an entirely supernatural work of the Holy Spirit accompanies it. That it works in this way as well, however, no one can doubt. The only question, though, is how? **If it were simply directed to man and nothing more, this encounter would only result in opposition and reaction from a soul that is sinful and hostile to God.** That this nevertheless does not occur, but that even in those who are not regenerate the moral power of the truth is manifested, shows that there is an accompanying working of God's Spirit. **That working of the Spirit is given to all in greater or lesser degree. It comes down, then, to separating it sharply from special grace, in which only the elect share.** So that the distinction would already appear in the term, it has been called common grace, and what contrasts with it, special or particular grace. One further needs to give attention to making distinctions on the following points:

a) **Common grace brings about no change in the nature of man as special grace does.** Whatever may also be its external manifestations, it does not regenerate man.

b) A second distinction is connected with this. Common grace is also limited to making man receptive to the influence of the truth that works on him from his consciousness. **It works persuasively**, by offering motives to the will and by *making use of inclinations that are already present*, **not by creating new habits in man.** It can certainly bring the external good still present in man to development, but it cannot produce what is spiritually good from that. It can cause a seed of external righteousness to germinate, **but it is not capable of implanting the seed of regeneration.**

c) All that works in this manner can also be resisted. Since it is directed toward individual motives from outside, the possibility always exists that the unrenewed nature will overrule all these motives and render common grace powerless. It is otherwise with efficacious grace. It does not offer motives for doing good to a will that in its nature is evil, but transforms the will itself from the innermost recesses of its nature, **not by countering it but by re-creating it.** **Hence, common grace is termed resistible; efficacious grace, with a somewhat oblique label, irresistible.**

13. *Does one sometimes also speak of "common grace" in a still broader sense?*

Yes, one sometimes also applies the word to the restraining action of the Holy Spirit that, where revelation is not known, is joined with the natural knowledge of God and hinders the breaking out of sin in its most dreadful extremes.

14. *From what may we discern in some measure what should be ascribed to the operation of this common grace?*

We have seen in the doctrine of election that **God's Word rightly ascribes the hardening of sinners to the withdrawal of common grace.** It calls this being given over to a perverse mind and shows from

experience what dreadful dimensions sin assumes where this hardening sets in. On the other hand, it also describes for us the fate of the lost who are devoid of common grace. Consequently, everything that hinders the process of death that sin brings in producing the complete dissolution of moral and social life for the individual and for society is to be ascribed to *gratia communis* in the broadest sense of the word.

15. *Can you show that Scripture teaches such an operation of the Holy Spirit?*

Yes, it is said of the generation that lived before the flood that God's Spirit contended with them and contended in vain, that the patience of God at the time of this contending held back His punishment, but that finally this operation of grace ceased since it was resisted and scorned (Gen 6:3; cf. 1 Pet 3:19–20; 4:6). Stephen cried out to the Jews, "You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). Also, Isaiah 63:10 mentions a grieving of the Holy Spirit.

16. *How far can this common operation of the Holy Spirit go?*

We must assume that it always remains distinguished specifically from regenerating grace. So, concerning the operation itself, one really cannot speak of it approaching the grace of regeneration. What lies between these two is not a gradual but a principial difference. Whatever else one may do to a dead person, one cannot say that actions are performed on him that bring him close to life. Since, however, the infusion of life eludes our sight and we can judge it only by its outward manifestation, so the possibility always continues to exist that common grace reveals itself in forms that are hardly to be distinguished from the actions of the regenerate. **Temporary faith**, of which Scripture speaks in very strong terms, must be counted among these cases. And often the sole criterion for recognition lies in the passing of time itself.

17. Are the effects of common grace divorced from any connection with regenerating grace, which works only in the elect? No; if by common grace someone has received a certain measure of insight into the truth prior to his regeneration, be it then also in a non-saving way, its fruits are not lost. When saving grace comes upon us, it imparts new worth to all the old that was already present with us earlier. It only must be maintained that it never is the old as such that continues to work after regeneration, but the old is placed in a new light and with completely new qualities. The knowledge of saving faith is very much connected with historical knowledge that someone gained prior to his regeneration, but it would still certainly be wrong to maintain that a regenerate person does not know, in his faith, in an essentially different way than the unregenerate person.

18. *Has the doctrine of common grace also been misused? [very good here!]*

Yes, some have wished to find in it a solution to the question why saving grace befalls only some and not all—in other words, an explanation of God's sovereign election. Shedd says the following: "The non-elect receives common grace, and common grace would incline human will if it were not defeated by the human will. If the sinner should make no hostile opposition, common grace would be equivalent to saving grace. To say that common grace if not resisted by the sinner would be equivalent to regenerating grace is not the same as to say that common grace if assisted by the sinner would be

equivalent to regenerating grace. In the first instance, God would be the sole author of regeneration; in the second He would not be.” Yet in another place he maintains, “**Regeneration rests upon God’s election ... upon special grace and not upon common grace.**” Thus it is not very clear what he intends. If, of themselves, all sinners already resist common grace, then it makes no sense to say that it would regenerate them if they did not resist it, **for non-resisting means the same as being no longer sinful.** If, on the other hand, a sinner is able to resist and not resist common grace, and some are really in the latter category, then for them, according to this conception, regenerating grace becomes completely superfluous. Common grace should work on them and regenerate them. This idea is completely false. God’s election lies above every consideration of the use of common grace. One can only go this far: Those who resist common grace such that God withdraws it do not belong to the elect. They are then abandoned to the hardening from which salvation is no longer possible. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that a good use of common grace always leads to receiving saving grace or is even a characteristic of election. Certainly in a negative sense, if someone resists common grace, then this is a bad sign. But we may not go further.

Regeneration and the Effectual Calling

Are They the Same Thing?

[born of water & the Spirit, Jn 3]

An Excerpt from

Reformed Dogmatics

By Geerhardus Vos

Pages 639-652

Code465

Regeneration and Calling

1. *What is regeneration?*

Regeneration is an immediate re-creation of the sinful nature by God the Holy Spirit and an implanting into the body of Christ.

2. *Is it a judicial or a re-creating act?*

The latter. In regeneration the condition and not the state of man is changed.

3. *Does regeneration occur in the **consciousness** or below the consciousness?*

Below the consciousness. It is totally independent from what occurs in the consciousness. It can therefore be effected where the consciousness slumbers.

4. *Is regeneration a slow process or an **instantaneous** action?*

It is an instantaneous action that is the basis for a long development in grace.

5. *Is regeneration concerned with the removal of the old or the enlivening of the new?* Regeneration includes both. However, one can rightly maintain that the latter has prominence.

6. *Is regeneration a mediate or an immediate act of God?*

It is immediate in the strict sense. No instrument is employed for it.

7. Which words in Scripture designate regeneration?

a)The first term is *gennēthēnai anōthen* [Greek word], which appears in John 3:3, 7; *gennēthēnai ex hydatos kai pneumatatos* (John 3:5); *palinngenesia* (Titus 3:5); *anagennēthēnai* (1 Pet 1:3, 23); *ek theou gennēthēnai* (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

1.Concerning the places where *gennēthēnai* appears, the **passive** meaning of this term must be noted first. It literally means “to be generated.” By this is expressed as strongly as possible that regeneration is an act of God, in which man remains passive. When one considers the birth of a child it could perhaps still be maintained that it is accompanied by some movement of the child itself. But “to be regenerated” **excludes any such movement in principle and fixes us on the activity of the one who regenerates.**

2.*Anōthen gennēthēnai* does not mean, as Meyer and others assert, “being born from above.” It is certainly true that *anōthen* can have this local meaning, but the context shows that this is not the case here. After all, in John 3:4 *anōthen* is replaced by *deuteron*, “for the second time.” And Nicodemus is not surprised by the fact that this birth must come from above, but by the fact that it must take place a second time. If he had thought “from above,” he could not have posed the question, “Can someone enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” “Again,” however, has the deeper meaning “anew” here, so what is required is an absolute beginning. Not that half of what is connected with generation or birth must be repeated, but man must again undergo being born anew. Compare Galatians 4:9: “which you want to serve again [*palin*] anew [*anōthen*].”

3.Thus, something occurs that is a repetition of the first birth. The point of similarity is this: In natural birth man has received from his father and mother a carnal, corrupt nature: “What is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6); “... are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man” (John 1:13). In regeneration he receives a spiritual nature. The similarity does not go further. It is by no means being denied that the first birth is connected with the genesis of the substance of the soul and the formation of the person, while by regeneration the substance is not removed and replaced by another, but, like the person, it remains the same as it was before.

4.It is a birth *ex hydatos kai pneumatatos*, “of **water and Spirit.**” This refers to baptism, and, according to a sacramental manner of speaking, what is attributed to the sign belongs to the thing signified. Baptism portrays two things: the washing away and cleansing of what is sinful, and the imparting of what is pure and new. “Water” and “Spirit” thus stand for the two sides of God’s re-creative work: “the removal of the old” and “the imparting of the new.” Compare Ezekiel 36:25–27, where they are likewise placed side by side: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.... And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.... And I will give you my Spirit.” One should note

that “water” and “Spirit” occur here without an article, because baptism does not so much have in view a specific application of water and a specific activity of the Spirit as the character of water and Spirit in general. **The water is the cleansing element; the Spirit is the generator of life.** Thus, all told: “For someone a renewal of nature must take place, in which he is **cleansed of sin and receives new life within himself.**”

5. The same sense is present in Titus 3:5. Baptism is a bath from which one emerges washed and renewed. Thus, the work of regeneration has two sides: cleansing and renewal. The Holy Spirit is the one who effects this, and He is richly poured out by Jesus Christ the Savior (Titus 3:6). The *palingenesia* spoken of here puts the emphasis more on what occurs in man; it is literally “regeneration.”

We believe, accordingly, that by regeneration is to be understood: (1) an act done **exclusively by God**; (2) a renewal of nature; (3) an act that has two sides—**the removal of the old life [by the cleansing of water] [and an imparting of a new life [by the Spirit]**; (4) an act in which the Holy Spirit appears as the one who produces this new life; (5) an act in which the Holy Spirit works out of Christ and jointly with Christ.

b) In Paul we have a series of terms that clearly express the same matter: “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation [*kainē ktisis*]” (Gal 6:15). “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10). “Even when we were dead in trespasses, He made us alive with Christ” (Eph 2:5). “From Him you are in Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). “We then were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

Here, too, we reach the same result: (1) **Regeneration is an immediate work of God by which man is totally passive, a new creation**; (2) it effects **a renewal of nature**; (3) it has two sides, **a burial of the old man and an enlivening of the new**; (4) **the Holy Spirit is the one who produces this new life**; (5) **the Holy Spirit does this jointly with Christ; it is the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ that frees from the law of sin and of death.**

c) Particular mention is due those scriptural passages that speak of regeneration as a renewal of the heart. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit deep within me” (Psa 51:10). “I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (**Ezek 11:19**). It is necessary at this point to keep in view accurately the biblical concept of “**heart**,” *levav*, *lev*, *kardia*, in contrast to *psychē* and *pneuma*, *nephesh*, and *ruach*, which were already discussed earlier. **The heart is the seat of the potency that determines our nature, the center of our being that indicates the direction and predisposition of all that occurs in our spiritual life. It is therefore something that lies still more deeply than personal self-consciousness**, for the latter is merely the reflection in the conscious life of the unity and uniformity of the soul, as we saw earlier in the scriptural terms *psychē*, *nephesh*. What is meant by “**heart**” can become clear from Proverbs 4:23, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for out of it flow the issues of life.” The heart is therefore also the place where the Holy

Spirit, who renews the nature and governs the new life, makes His abode. “The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Gal 4:6). To the heart is ascribed the predisposition and basic inclinations in which the personality and nature manifest themselves: “according to your hardness and your impenitent heart” (Rom 2:5); “an honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15); “love from a pure heart” (1 Tim 1:5); “an evil, unbelieving heart” (Heb 3:12); “a true heart” (Heb 10:22); “the pure in heart” (Matt 5:8). In all these cases, *psychē* could not be used. The “heart,” therefore, is something that man cannot judge, that evades our observation, and that only God in His omniscience knows and searches (Matt 15:8; Luke 16:15). All that is good wells up from the heart, and all that is evil arises from the heart. “The good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart” (Luke 6:45). “For from within, out of the heart of man, arise evil thoughts, sexual immorality, etc.” (Mark 7:21).

It is now of the greatest importance for the doctrine of regeneration that it is presented as a **renewal of the heart**. Over the heart lies the veil, and in the heart shines the **light** [see diagram!] (2 Cor 3:15; 4:6; 2 Pet 1:19); with the heart one believes (Rom 10:10); the heart is directed **to the love of God** [holiness communicated to the will – see Edwards on this at [code34b](#), and Vos at [code453](#)] (2 Thess 3:5). Therefore, by this, every conception that in the renewal of man God works from the circumference to the center is excluded. On the contrary, He works from the center to the periphery, **regenerates the heart, and by this in principle the nature is reversed in all its expressions**, or at least given a formative capacity that works against the old nature.

8. *How is the usage of scriptural language regarding “calling” connected with the doctrine of regeneration?*

As we know, many older theologians treat regeneration under “calling.” They speak of a twofold calling: an external calling (*vocatio externa*) that occurs through the preaching of the Word, and an internal or effectual calling (*vocatio interna, vocatio efficax*) that occurs through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. These terms are not chosen arbitrarily. They occupy a rather large place in scriptural usage, and since theological terminology ought to keep as closely as possible to God’s Word, we may not push them aside. However, the question arises whether in Scripture “calling” is in fact understood as the same thing that we have come to know as “regeneration.” The answer to this must be twofold: yes, concerning the essence of the thing; no, concerning the viewpoint from which the same thing is considered. The difference is in the following two points:

- a) **Regeneration occurs below the consciousness**; it cannot be observed by man himself and is altogether independent of every relationship that he could adopt toward it. To speak with complete precision, one cannot assume a stance toward his regeneration, since it is not placed objectively before his consciousness. It is otherwise with calling. This occurs in the consciousness, is directed to the consciousness, and demands a certain relationship to the consciousness. This is already contained in the term “calling.” A calling comes from outside; a rebirth works from the inside out.
- b) **Connected with this, regeneration is a physical act. Calling is a teleological act, directed to a certain end.** One is regenerated from one condition into another; one is called to something.

With calling a certain endpoint is brought into view, with the prospect that one would reach this endpoint, or also a certain rule prescribed that one should follow. One would now be able to say that if this representation is correct (as will presently be shown in detail), then it is a contradiction in adjecto [in terms] to speak of an “internal calling.” If “calling” is always something that comes from outside and presupposes a hearing, then calling cannot be internal, and it is a misuse of the word to indicate regeneration by it.

It cannot be doubted that by the use of “calling” in the sense described above, the older theology has obscured the two points of difference mentioned. Still, in this use it was led by a correct consideration. What drove it was the conviction that the working of God’s grace may not be detached from the Word of God. **If one speaks solely of regeneration, that still does not include anything that recalls that the Word is a necessary concomitant element of re-creating grace.** If, on the other hand, one speaks of calling, everyone immediately senses that saving grace closely follows the proclamation of objective truth and does not go beyond the limits drawn by this proclamation, even though it is not coextensive with the external hearing of the gospel. Hence some have spoken of an “external calling.” To that is then tied the internal calling, in order by the similarity of the name to be reminded anew what connection God had laid between His Word and grace.

With that, however, the use of **the term “internal calling” for “regeneration” is not yet fully justified.** While a thing may be always accompanied by another thing, I still have no right to designate it by the name of the other, especially if the specific essence of the thing is thereby overlooked. **Thus, there must be another ground for the designation “internal calling.”** That ground is as follows: One can present God’s work of grace under two viewpoints—**as it occurs below the consciousness**, and as it is reflected in the consciousness. The former is a more complete and theological view, the latter a more partial and practical view.

Vos states later: At regeneration that spiritual death is broken in principle, in sanctification the struggle is continued,” pg 1101

Is there a space of time between regeneration the effectual calling? This is interesting and makes sense.

Now, the fact that the first Christian congregations were mostly gathered by the sudden conscious addition of believers led inadvertently to the last, more practical view. The implanting of life in the heart and the hearing of that newly awakened life at the calling of the gospel occurred practically in the same moment. **There were no reasons to presuppose a passing of time between the two.** Because it coincided in this way with calling, regeneration could appropriately be termed “calling.” Or, expressed more precisely, regeneration, as the invisible background, could for the moment be left out of consideration. The first thing one noted about it was calling. And now it needs to be granted that calling did not enter the consciousness as an external, general conception and offer of the gospel. It entered the consciousness of those who were being added as it was applied (made personal and compelling by the Holy Spirit), so that they immediately realized that an internal change had taken place that had been accomplished by an act of God’s power. When a sinner hears this calling of God, he does not deliberate or reason, but is drawn and irresistibly compelled to follow. [That’s the way it

was with me!! There was no choice involved; one moment I was blind; the next moment I could see and believed; it wasn't a choice between serving Satan or God as though I was before a candy bar and was trying to decide which candy bar I wanted. It was one moment I was in darkness, not believing, then in a flash, I was believing!] **Thus a certain reflex of the nature of regeneration appears in his consciousness, and that is calling.** One will therefore easily perceive what ground there is for continuing to speak of an internal calling and to place it next to external calling as distinguished from it and yet closely connected with it by name. **When regeneration has worked on the consciousness, it immediately manifests itself as a totally new perception of the omnipotent might of the Word of God, to which one must submit, a Word that speaks as a word of power and, as it were, creates the obedience of faith.** Thus, as one is called with power in his conscious life and comes, so at the center of his being one is called out with creating omnipotence from death and brought over into life as by a powerful creating word of God. And both lie so closely to one another that one may designate them with one name.

By this, however, is indicated the particular limitation of the concept of "calling." It cannot be applied everywhere. Only in a place where, without remaining hidden for a long time, internal re-creation immediately manifests itself in the consciousness can one rightly speak of regeneration as "internal calling." [It is] not with the same right, on the other hand, when one has to do with children. For them, regeneration does not as yet take the form of a calling—that is, it does not manifest itself in their consciousness as an act of God by which, also for their own awareness, they are called out from the one condition into the other. Of a child one says that it is regenerated and not that it is called.

The question now is only whether one has grounds to assume for adults that regeneration and calling are separated by a considerable period of time. A further distinction must be made here. For those who do not yet live under the administration of the covenant of grace, there is no ground to suppose such an interval. **There the seed of regeneration is implanted and usually sprouts immediately.** **With the children** of the covenant, the possibility always exists that they were born again long before their consciousness is awakened. If such is the case with those who die before they are able to comprehend, it is difficult to see why this could not also be the case with many who later give evidence of true godliness and yet who are unable to point to a specific time in their conscious life at which they were effectually called. **Conversely**, however, there is no evidence that such early regeneration is the rule for children of the covenant. We cannot bind God here. In particular, **the idea that someone would be regenerated, and yet in his own consciousness would remain uncalled for years on end, seems unacceptable**, for it presupposes an illusory connection between what is internal and what is external.

9. *Show from Scripture that calling is viewed in this way.*

a) First, concerning the use of the term for external calling, that is, the proclamation of the gospel, we have the use of the word as of an invitation to a wedding (Matt 22:3, 9; Luke 14:8; cf. John 2:2, "and Jesus was also called," that is, invited; 1 Cor 10:27). In Matthew 20:16 [Textus Receptus] we have a contrast between the many "called," *klētoi*, and the few "chosen," *eklektōi*. Here, external calling is not only distinguished from internal calling but even *separated* from it. What is spoken of is a calling of sinners to conversion (Luke 5:32).

b) That calling is a work of grace taking place in the consciousness is established from Romans 8:30, as developed above. Besides, it follows from the imagery of 1 Peter 2:9: “So that you may proclaim the excellencies of the one who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” **Clearly, light nowhere stands for life as something unconscious, but always for life as it manifests itself in the consciousness.** To be brought out of darkness into the light thus means to be brought from the alienation of the consciousness from God into clarity in the awareness of being allied with God, and to a clear knowledge of the truth.

c) Next, as we have said, calling is an act directed to a certain goal and revealing that goal to the consciousness of the one called. Also, where the word of internal efficacious calling is present, it clearly never loses this character of a concept of purpose, as already appears from the fact that it can be connected with the preposition “to,” eis, or “in,” en. God calls believers “to” eternal life (1 Tim 6:12); “into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9); “to freedom” (Gal 5:13); “not to impurity but to sanctification” (1 Thess 4:7); “to peace” (1 Cor 7:15); “to one hope of calling” (Eph 4:4); “in one body” (Col 3:15); “so that you may inherit blessing” (1 Pet 3:9).

Calling, then, is also always presented by Paul as a **ground of comfort** for the believer that enables him to look beyond his own shortcomings and instances of unfaithfulness and to the unfaltering faithfulness of the God who calls. In calling, God, as it were, has bound Himself to the believer and established the covenant bond, so that from now on there is no longer any doubt whether he will reach the goal. “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). “He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it” (1 Thess 5:24). **The idea of calling deserves more attention than it has so far had. The fact that it has become the general name for regeneration has caused its specific meaning to be lost from sight.** And yet in its distinctiveness it is a rich concept that in the letters of Paul, for example, occupies a prominent place.

d) Naturally, **all this does not detract from calling as an act of power.** This is already included in the word. **“Calling” is not persuading or discussing, but bringing about an instantaneous effect by a word or the naming of a name, so that the one who is called comes.** In this sense calling—as internal, **efficacious calling**—extends just as far as election. “Those He foreordained, these He also called, and those He called, these He also justified” [Rom 8:30]. The called are the same as the elect. They are “called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28); named “called saints” (1 Cor 1:2; Rom 1:7; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7). It is expressly said, then, that calling is an act of omnipotence: “God calls the things that are not as though they were” (Rom 4:17, where the reference is to the extraordinary birth of Isaac). And in Romans 9:11, it is said “that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls.” Here calling stands as God’s work par excellence over against man’s work, and it is testified of God’s election that it is intended to reveal how salvation is entirely of the God who calls.

10. *How then can you define external calling?*

As the presentation of the gospel to sinners in general by the preaching of the Word.

11. *How, on the other hand, can internal or effectual calling be defined?*

As the transferring of the elect sinner in his own consciousness from the state of alienation from God into the state of fellowship with God (the covenant of grace), and that certainly by means of the external word, applied internally by the Holy Spirit.

12. *How can one relate internal calling and regeneration to each other?*

By saying that:

a) If we consider the one who calls, God, regeneration is an effect of calling. "Calling" then means the act of calling, as it is in God and as it embraces the sinner.

b) If we consider being called as what occurs in the one who is called, then calling is the effect of regeneration, for the ear is first opened by the latter so that it can recognize the voice of the God who calls. "Calling" then means being called and knowing oneself to be called.

c) If we take the matter in its full scope, we must say that calling, as it were, encompasses regeneration from beginning to end. It precedes and follows it, according to whether one draws attention to the consciousness of God or to the consciousness of the sinner who is called. It hardly needs to be mentioned that this preceding and following is not to be taken in a strictly temporal sense.

13. *Is it necessary to say that the sequence of the acts of grace is: (1) calling, (2) regeneration?*

Some have proposed that in order to, in this way, arrive at a clear distinction. Although one can now readily say, in the sense just described, that regeneration follows calling, there are still objections to this manner of representation.

a) In doing this one runs the danger of losing sight of **the fact that calling has an essential significance for the consciousness of the sinner**. In fact, one then restricts the name to the action of God in order to call the other, the effect of the action as that which causes change, regeneration.

b) On the other hand, it is wrong to so restrict regeneration that it becomes only the product, the outcome, the transition, while the activity of God is omitted. Scripture emphasizes that we are regenerated, that God regenerates us according to His will, etc. (Jas 1:18).

14. *What ground does one have to understand the concept of regeneration in the wider sense, which, for example, Calvin ascribes to it?*

This is based on some scriptural passages that do not speak directly of regeneration but of "a putting off of the old man" and "a putting on of the new man" and "a being renewed in the spirit of the mind" (Eph 4:22–24). Romans 12:2 speaks of the same thing. Second Corinthians 4:16 speaks of a renewal in the inner man that takes place day by day.

All these expressions, however, have in view more the transformation of something old than the creation of something new. And it is just the **new principle of life** poured into the sinner that in its outworking brings about this transformation of the old. Renewal is not regeneration, **but presupposes regeneration**. Thus the command can come to man that he must make for himself “a new heart and a new spirit.” However, nowhere in Scripture is the command directed to someone that he must regenerate himself. That command always comes in the form of “arise from the dead.”

15. Who is the author of regeneration?

a) **It is God the Father by way of eminence**. Since regeneration appears as something completely new, it fits with the economy of the Father that regeneration is ascribed to Him. “According to his great mercy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3; cf. also Jas 1:18; Eph 2:5; and the expression “born of God,” 1 John 5:1, 4, 18).

b) The Son is related to regeneration in more than one way.

1. **He is the meriting cause**. He has obtained the Holy Spirit, who works all **subjective grace**, and so has also obtained regeneration (Rom 5:18).

2. He is the **head** to whom believers are joined as members by regeneration, and who thus lives in them and expresses His life in them (Gal 2:20).

3. He is the image into which the believers are transformed in regeneration and to which continually they are also being increasingly conformed (1 Cor 15:49; Gal 4:19).

c) The **Holy Spirit** is the one who effects regeneration for the sake of the Father and the Son in the heart of the sinner, as He in general organizes the mystical body of Christ.

16. *Is regeneration a mediate or immediate act of God? Is it or is it not brought about by any instrument?*

God does not use any kind of instrument in regenerating a sinner. An instrument is never used to create something new, but always only to effect a change in what already exists. With a surgical instrument some part of a living body can be treated, a diseased part removed, but the most advanced instrument cannot possibly produce life in a dead body.

17. Is not the Word of God an instrument by which regeneration is achieved? No. On the one hand, this would lead us to the Pelagian or semi-Pelagian view, or, on the other hand, cause us to revert to the Lutheran idea of an inherent magical capacity for the Word of God. In order to reach clarity on this point, one must make plain how truth works on man. It in fact works in a spiritual sense, as every physical instrument does in a physical sense, but then not in such a way that the act would lie entirely in the cause. It is always the case that the cause acts, and that to which it is directed then reacts, and

so the effect occurs. The result, therefore, depends as much on the object that undergoes the action as on the acting cause.

Now, if the truth is the cause, then it will only produce effects in us because our soul responds, reacts to it. If the truth is to have an effect in which there is life, then this can only be as it brings about an expression of life in my soul as the response. **So, in order for the truth to become effective instrumentally for life, I already need to have life in me.** Therefore, anyone who has the truth accomplishing regeneration through motivations teaches that man is not entirely dead. [Key point to counter Pelagian/Arminianism] That is, he teaches in a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian fashion. A motivation works on me only through what I am. A motivation that awakens a reaction in me will leave my neighbor unmoved, not because the motivation is different, but simply because the person with whom it is brought in contact differs from me. If we want to escape this **Pelagianism**, then nothing remains except, with the Lutherans, to locate life in the Word.

However, one may then perceive clearly that every analogy between the Word as *causa efficiens* [efficient cause] and every ordinary *causa instrumentalis* [instrumental cause] collapses. Not one instrument works in this way, by causing an overflowing of an inherent power. On close inspection, then, for Lutherans, too, the Word is no longer a means of grace or an instrument of grace; it has become a source of grace. It takes the place of God, for it belongs only to God to act so immediately on things that His effective power does not engage their reaction. Rather, as He works entirely alone, He imparts qualities to them or changes their habits. Basically, therefore, the Lutherans gain nothing when they suppose they are maintaining the instrumentality of the Word. The Word slips out of their hands and becomes a magic wand.

18. What by nature is the disposition of man toward the truth?

Scripture declares that by virtue of his natural birth, man is flesh, and the mind of the flesh is enmity against God [Rom 8:7]. Now, it is in the truth that God Himself is brought into contact with this sinful flesh. For this reason already, the result of this contact cannot be the beginning of spiritual life. Indeed, it cannot change hate when the hated object is brought nearer. That would rather incite hate. Yet, according to this instrumental understanding of regeneration, it would be sufficient to place the object of enmity before the inimical consciousness in order immediately to change enmity into love.

Notes on Regeneration cont.

26. *Does regeneration consist in a change of the soul's capacities, of either one or more of these capacities?*

This, too, cannot be said. Such a change does indeed flow from regeneration. When God re-creates man, **there is in fact an enlightening of his mind, a reversing of his will, and a purifying of his affections.** But these three sides of the spiritual life of man are most closely tied to each other; in its **root**, they are one. That unity may be incomprehensible and inconceivable for us, since it never comes into the light of our consciousness. And all of which we ourselves are aware is always thinking, willing, and feeling. But still, that unity exists as surely as the unity of our soul exists. There is a hidden source from which

our life springs where these three streams are one, a stem from which these three branches sprout. At this source, God performs His miracle of regeneration. There He infuses the new **principle of life**. And since it is the source that pollutes the water, the stem that sends up the sap of life into the branches, so from this **implanting of life a new disposition** and efficacy flows for our understanding, our will, and our affections (Matt 12:33, 35; 15:19). Pg 657

27. Can you show that the re-creation of a single capacity is not sufficient to regenerate the sinner if God does not renew the root of his life and thereby also regenerate the other capacities?

This can easily be shown. If we assume, as some have done, that God produces only an enlightening in the intellect of the sinner and leaves the person's will unchanged, what will be the consequence of this? Man, with his enlightened intellect, will then see for himself the things of God, all the truths of salvation in their proper objective relations, and be able to explain the ins and outs of everything in the minutest detail, as a mechanic takes apart a machine and puts it together. His will, however, will directly oppose the truth, even though he grasps with his intellect the obligation to submit himself to it. The intellect alone cannot overturn the will or incline it. One is indeed accustomed to saying [that] the intellect pronounces its judgment, and then the will follows the final judgment of the intellect. This, however, is very misleading without further explanation. Clearly, the will follows the judgment of the intellect in a moral being, but what this final judgment of the intellect will be depends again, in turn, on the will. In expressing its judgment, the intellect is subservient to the will. Our will has a certain tendency: good or evil, holy or unholy, acting with God's will or against it. Our intellect judges what decision of our will squares with it, and on that basis the will follows this judgment of the intellect. The opposite view is purely rationalistic. Our will does not simply let itself be commanded by the intellect. The known truth always works through the reaction of the inclinations of our will. If, now, every good tendency is lacking in the will, then there is nothing on which the truth can act and to which it can react, and all the knowledge of angels will not produce a better disposition of the will. A sinner whose intellect was enlightened and who kept his old, completely sinful will would be the most miserable and terrifying creature in the world—the victim of the most dreadful disharmony—for his sinful will and his sinful pure knowledge would constantly work against each other. But such cases do not occur. God gives no one a saving enlightening of the intellect without at the same time renewing the will.

The situation is no different with the relationship between the will and the affections, or the capacity for emotion. Our will does not work apart from our emotional life any more than the intellect works apart from the will. In all the operations of the will, the impulse of the emotions plays a part that accompanies every spiritual function to a greater or lesser degree. He whose will is united with God's will engenders a delight in the law of God according to the inner man [Rom 7:22]. On the other hand, he whose will works against God's will finds enjoyment in sin.

If we now were to assume that God has re-created the will but left the capacity for emotion unchanged, the result would again be an untenable situation. Man would will what God wills, but it would leave him entirely unmoved and unfeeling, without any involvement of the heart. He would fulfill the commandments of the Lord with his will like a machine. Every warmth and ardor would be

absent. Indeed, worse than this, if his unclesed affections were still in him, at the same time he fulfilled the Lord's will he would detest it, so that his condition would be called most lamentable.

Finally, without an enlightened intellect neither a sanctified will nor a cleansed emotional life would avail. It is true: Someone who has a good will and pure emotions knows more and better than someone whose will is hardened and whose emotions are depraved. But that is only true where the condition of the intellect is the same for both. The best will and purest emotions cannot enlighten a darkened intellect. The light must come, not from within the will, but from outside it. And as long as that is lacking, the will and the emotions cannot work rightly.

28. To what extent can one say that the enlightenment of the intellect precedes the operation of the will and emotions?

It does not precede so far as proper, immediate regeneration is concerned. In regeneration, **the re-creation of intellect, will, and emotion occurs simultaneously in a single moment**, without one of these three preceding the others. On the other hand, certainly one can speak of a precedence concerning the manifestation of regeneration in the consciousness. The will and the affections cannot operate unless they have content, **an object with which they are occupied**. This object, this content, must have been given to them by the capacity to know, and certainly been given in the right form— that is, **by an enlightened intellect**. For this reason, the enlightened intellect is first in order of the three capacities in which regeneration manifests itself. And so it can appear that the will only need be suffused with the light of the intellect in order to reach out immediately toward what is known. However, this is no more than appearance. Basically, the will was already changed, for that will, too, was embedded in the root of life, in which the miraculous change was wrought by God's Spirit.

29. Show that regeneration produces an enlightening of the intellect.

This is presupposed everywhere, even to the extent that the images in which regeneration is pictured to us are often derived from the noetic life. "For God, who said that light should shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). "The natural man does not understand the things that are of the Spirit of God ... and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual man judges all things, but he himself is judged by no one" (1 Cor 2:14–15). In this last passage it is even said of believers that they have the mind, the gift of spiritual discernment, of Christ (1 Cor 2:16; cf. further Eph 1:18; Phil 1:9; Col 3:10; 1 John 4:7; 5:20).

The difference between this knowledge of one who is regenerated and that of a natural man may only be experienced and can never be sufficiently described. It does not exclusively consist in the degree of more or less clarity, but it is a difference in quality. It rests on the entire change of being. Before regeneration, one can certainly have in himself and reproduce logical concepts and the connection of these concepts—indeed, make himself thoroughly familiar with them—but the right consciousness of the reality to which they correspond is lacking. One cannot empathize with them and penetrate them. It is, in a word, an external and not an experiential knowledge that one has of the truth. This analogy cannot be maintained in all respects, but still it has been said: As someone blind

from birth cannot form a conception of colors, so someone who is unregenerate has no comprehension of the spiritual sense of God's truth.

30. *Show that regeneration produces a renewing of the will.*

This is taught, among other places, in Philippians 2:13: "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." If this applies to the continuation of spiritual life, so will it apply all the more to its beginning (cf. Heb 13:21; Psa 110:3; 2 Thess 3:6).

31. *How does God move the will of man?*

In a manner that accords **with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force** [see code380b]; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.

32. Do we mean that the Holy Spirit only changes the expressions of the will—"willing"—or that He also renews the more deeply lying will, the direction of the will, the tendency of the soul?

The latter is meant. What takes place is not merely a change in actions but a change in the permanent disposition of the will. Even if for an instant there is no expression of the will—if, for example, a regenerate person is in an unconscious condition—even then there is a great difference between him and an unregenerate person in an unconscious condition. The will of the former is directed toward God; the will of the latter away from God. Single actions of the will are only manifestations of this difference in disposition. The so-called "exercise scheme" of Emmons teaches that there is nothing in the soul but a succession of expressions of the will, "exercises," and that to initiate such a succession is the work of regeneration. This is both theologically and psychologically wrong. There is much more in the soul than its substance and expressions of conscious life. The substance has its capacities, and these have their dispositions that must first be reversed before a good action can begin.

33. *Show that regeneration also produces a recreation of the emotional life of man.*

Scripture speaks of believers having a joy in Christ Jesus that is inexpressible and glorious (1 Pet 1:8). Through regeneration, a life comes into existence that can hunger and thirst after God and His righteousness. Hunger and thirst presuppose not merely a tendency of the will toward God but also that emotion accompanies it. Natural hunger and thirst create a physical feeling; spiritual hunger and thirst a spiritual feeling (Psa 42:1–2; 63:1–2). No less is spiritual sorrow mentioned as the characteristic of a regenerated person (Matt 5:4; Psa 34:18; Isa 66:2).

34. Is the entire nature of man renewed by regeneration, so that nothing remains to be renewed?

No, for everything would then be included in regeneration, and sanctification would become superfluous. The conception of Scripture is much more that the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit does not immediately remove all evil from us and replace it with a completely holy and good person, but that He effects renewal at one point in order from there to cause His renewing and sanctifying work to take hold in increasingly wider circles. Thus, there is sin within the regenerate as well as within the unregenerate. Also, as long as the former is here on earth, he cannot perform anything into which sin does not flow. His best works are still tainted with evil. But while in the sinner before his regeneration there cannot be a single thought or motion of the will or expression of emotion that arises from a good foundation, since evil always lurks in the deepest foundation of life, in the regenerate person another foundation has now been laid, a new principle created; spiritual life is present. Now, it does remain true that all the actions of this spiritual life, as soon as they press toward the circumference of life, inevitably become tarnished by the sinful remnants of his nature. But in their origin they are still something entirely different than the most pleasing deeds of the sinner dead in sin. It is also true that this new principle of life, worked by the Holy Spirit, does not have the power in itself to be able to survive. If it were left to itself, it would soon be overgrown and smothered by the weeds. But it does not exist on its own. The eternal power of life of the Holy Spirit is behind it and works in it. Therefore, not only can it not die, but it must also prove to be more powerful than the sin that has remained in its nature.

Every attempt, however, to try explaining psychologically how this new principle of life relates to sin committed after regeneration will certainly have to fail. We only know from Scripture and experience that in the regenerate a noticeable conflict exists, so that occasionally some have spoken of two persons, which of course can only apply in a very figurative sense. Still, to make the matter clear, one perhaps gets the farthest with images. We are reminded of the grafting-in of a cultivated sprig on a wild stem, by which the latter, although not immediately becoming completely cultivated, still so functions that it produces cultivated fruit. Some have used the image of a body maimed, damaged, and already in the process of disintegration, in which by a miracle the principle of life has been restored. The body will start to move and raise itself up; a dead body cannot do that. In no way, however, will the mutilation and the traces of disintegration therefore disappear. More likely, for a long time these will still recall death and will hinder the body in its expressions of life. Although such images remain deficient, they still provide a general idea of the characteristic situation in which the regenerate is placed by his re-creation.

The apostle has depicted the discord meant here in Romans 7:14–25. The facts established by him here are the following:

a) In the regenerate there is sin not only existing in single actions but a deeply rooted evil: “I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” [Rom 7:18]. The apostle has called this sin “indwelling sin” (Rom 7:17, 20), which proves sufficiently that it is continually present; it is a sinful disposition, inherited pollution. It is a law in the members, thus something permanent.

b) Yet in the regenerate there is also something good. That already appears from the specific form in which the previous statement was expressed—“in me, that is, in my flesh” dwells no

good (Rom 7:18). Thus, the apostle can speak of himself from two angles. If he spoke of himself as he was in himself, apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit, thus as flesh, then no good dwells in him. If, on the other hand, he spoke of himself insofar as the Holy Spirit maintained a new life in him, then there was something good in him.

c) This **new principle**, worked by the Holy Spirit and based on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and **only maintained by that indwelling**, touches the deepest ground of his life. It was deeper than indwelling sin. [Owen denominates this new principle as faith, love and grace all in one principle. Also, keep in mind that even faith, its operation, is dependent upon God as all other graces are. They don't act of themselves; our dependence upon God is absolute; we are not self-sufficient autonomous beings - see Code465b] That appears from the words with which the apostle sets these two against each other. He no longer does it (namely, the evil), but the sin that dwells in him. Thus: he over against the sin that dwells in him. This is not said to excuse the evil, but only to show that the power of sin was still so great and even at work against the new life. So, in verses 22 and 23, the "inner man" and "the mind" are against "the members." The "inner" here is what is regenerated and new in man (cf. 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16; 1 Pet 3:4). The "members" are the same again as "flesh"—that is, the depraved nature as it is apart from the new implanted principle of life. The "mind" is the same again as the "inner man." All this shows that the new principle of life in the regenerate Christian confronts his still-sinful nature (both soul and body) as a living soul confronts a dead, decomposing body. This, then, is also the image the apostle uses in verse 24. Indwelling sin is like a body of death. It is as if a hideous corpse embraces and captures him. He cannot save himself from that embrace.

d) Nevertheless, the new life within him also pervades his conscious thinking, willing, and feeling. After all, in him there is a willing of the good (Rom 7:19) and a not willing of the evil, a taking delight in the law of God after the inner man, a disapproval of what he himself does, a consenting that the law is good. **These are all expressions of the new life**, however much the apostle also had to add that it was not granted to him to fulfill this good to which his new man testified.

e) The conclusion that the apostle finally draws from this state of affairs is that only the grace of God can deliver him from this indwelling corruption. It is not by the native activity of the new life in obedience to the law that the corruption is purged, but by the continuing grace of God. The law alone does not bring about sanctification. As the Holy Spirit has created the new life, He must also continue working it out and mortifying the flesh (cf. Gal 2:20; 5:17).

35. Is regeneration to be viewed such that in it this new principle of life is infused into man and what is contained in that principle now comes to expression of itself?

No. Also, this coming-to-expression of the life once given—its impact on the intellect, will, and emotional life—cannot occur independent of the ongoing grace of God. But the difference lies in this: that in regeneration proper, the soul is wholly passive. It does not work, but is worked on, undergoes change, while in further stages this soul, made alive by God, becomes itself the subject of its

expression of life. Nevertheless, it is also the case that it must be continuously enabled for these expressions by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

36. In what relation does regeneration stand to the subsequent saving actions of God?

It has already been noted that in these subsequent actions man himself is made the thinking, willing, and feeling subject of what takes place in him. **Conversion and faith, worked by God, do not merely pass from God onto the root of his life (like regeneration), but through the root of his life outwardly. It is man himself who repents of his sins, who exercises faith, is with Christ, etc., while it is not man himself who regenerates himself or lets himself be regenerated.** Clearly, these spiritual activities of repenting, believing, etc., presuppose a principle of spiritual life that in fact has become man's own. The renewed life must be his life if he is to be able to manifest repentance and exercise faith. However, to possess life in general is not sufficient. Or, expressed more precisely, life in general and in the abstract without some determination of powers and capacities does not exist. It belongs to the nature of life that it comprises a multiplicity in unity. In every seed the functions of life are present, and therefore we must assume that in the regenerate and in the life of the regenerate God also gives the capacity in principle to be able to perform the different activities of life. Thus, regeneration first makes possible all that subsequently takes place in a sinner. It not only precedes but is in a living connection with all that takes place subsequently. However, one may not think of the capacities of this spiritual life as developed dispositions. They are only present as a predisposition, as potentiality in seed form. Indeed, the seed of what a child learns to do later is given at its birth. But that does not mean that the habitus to perform certain activities is the same with a child as with an adult. This is the same in regeneration. With and in the spiritual life infused, a regenerated child certainly receives the disposition to believe. But that disposition develops. A regenerate adult, who has exercised faith for years on end, possesses that disposition in a much different condition. And yet in principle, the habitus in both is one.

37. What distinguishes more recent views concerning regeneration?

a) First, we have here the theory of trichotomy, which develops a distinctive doctrine of regeneration from its basic tenets. There are three parts in man: "body," "soul," and "spirit." In general, sin has its seat only in the life of the soul, not in the pneuma, or "spirit." As soon as it penetrates to the spirit, man becomes incapable of being saved, for that is to commit the sin against the Holy Spirit. The angels are incapable of being saved, since being only spirit, they are completely imprisoned in sin. In regeneration the Spirit of God produces a strengthening of the pneuma in man. This is no longer sinful, but still weakened. All that is necessary exists in this strengthening. When the spirit, thus strengthened, begins to govern the lower passions again, man has become "spiritual."

One sees immediately that this is merely a "refined rationalism." Sin in man, the depravity of his nature, is sought in a discrepancy between the lower and higher capacities. **He is saved as the higher capacities of his reason** (for this concept of "spirit" finally amounts to that) **suppress the lower. He is called "spiritual," not because the Holy Spirit has made His abode in him, but because he again is led by his own "spirit" or "reason."**

b) Then we have the decidedly **pantheistic** or pantheistically tinted soteriology of the “mediating theologians.” Their Christology is false and, like it, their soteriology also proceeds from the idea of the unity between God and man. In the Mediator there are not two unmixed natures, but one mingled divine-human nature. God and man are melded together into a third entity: a divine-human life. This is the same life, then, that is communicated to man in regeneration. He partakes of the life that is in Christ. Not in our sense—as he is united to Christ the Head by the Spirit and as the Spirit, who is at work from Christ, works and maintains a personal life in him—but literally, as a part of the life of Christ passes over into him. Here, therefore, the mystical union is misused in a pantheistic sense.

It is accompanied, further, by another misconception: that this life, since it is the same in substance in each regenerated person as in Christ, need not be generated anew each time by the Holy Spirit, but that it is resident in the Church and passes from the Church to the individual. Communion with the Church brings the higher life. This is a return to Romanism. The entire judicial work of the Mediator is pushed to the background.

Finally, on this view, one cannot speak of regeneration so long as the divine-human life of Christ did not yet exist. During the Old Testament dispensation, no one was regenerated. All this is sufficient to make us see that here we no longer have to do with a Christian but with a philosophical system that, as much as it still can, uses Christian terms in order to be accredited within Christian circles and to preserve for itself the name of Christian.

38. *What name do the theologians use to express the uniqueness of regenerating grace?*

They use the word “physical.” Regeneration consists of a physical action wrought by God. “Physical” here contrasts with “moral.” They intend with that to emphasize that God’s work is not morally persuasive. Currently, however, the word “physical” is currently used in a sense that can lead to misunderstanding. Physics is a natural science, and it is usually knowledge of material nature. Physical is what works in a natural or material way. In that sense, regeneration is the opposite of physical. **It is therefore better to say that it is supernatural, hyperphysical.** Also, God’s omnipotent activity is not the same everywhere as to its manner of working. It works differently on matter than on spirit. But on the spirit it can work in a twofold fashion: by means of the consciousness, **and below the consciousness. The latter occurs in regeneration.**

39. *Is regeneration **resistible**—that is, can a person resist it and undo it?*

It is irresistible. And not in the sense that regeneration is merely more powerful than all resistance, but that even the thought of resistance is out of the question. Regeneration lays hold of the subject that would wish or be able to offer resistance, even in its deepest depth, and changes it. **Saying that it can be resisted would always be based on the conception that it confronts its object. It does not do this but works immanently within the heart of man.**

Conversion *Reformed Dogmatics*

By Geerhardus Vos

Pgs. 668-681

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[Greek words didn't copy over in actual Greek letters, but English letters]

1. *What words in Scripture are used for the concept of conversion?*

The first and most important word is *metanoia*. The verb that belongs with it is *metanoein*. Both words are composed of the preposition *meta* and the noun *nous*. *Metanoia*, therefore, is a change, an alteration of *nous* [mind]. Now we need only to specify what is meant by *nous*. *Nous* is related to *gignōskein*, Latin *noscere*, English “to know.” This already points us to conscious life. Conversion is a change of what occurs in our consciousness. However, one would take the concept of *nous* far too narrowly if one were to limit it to intellectual, theoretical consciousness. It is much wider. *Nous* is synonymous with *syneidēsis*, “conscience,” moral consciousness: “both their mind and their conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15); “one person regards one day above the others, but another regards all days alike. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind [*nous*]” (Rom 14:5). When one changes his *nous*, this means more than receiving new knowledge, new concepts, and a new conscious content. The direction, the quality of his conscious life is changed. While previously all his thinking and endeavoring moved apart from God and something else stood in the center, now it is so reversed that it moves around God and for God, and He comes to stand in the center. The word *metanoia*, however, does not put the emphasis so much on the point of departure and the point of arrival as on the change and reversal.

The change expressed by this word has reference further:

a) To **intellectual life**, thus theoretical **consciousness**: “with meekness instructing those that oppose, if God may someday grant them repentance leading to a **knowledge of the truth**” (2 Tim 2:25). The unconverted consciousness finds itself entangled in a world of erroneous concepts. For that person, God’s truth is not the highest reality. **His train of thought does not revolve around God.** Through conversion, that becomes different. The consciousness, insofar as it involves thinking, **loses its worldly sinful independence and submits to the wisdom of God.** In this respect, conversion thus coincides with the faith of the regenerate. Above it has already been pointed out that what the regenerate knew and believed previously in a solely historical way he now also knows and believes in an essentially different way. His faith, which has now become spiritual, is directed entirely to the testimony of God. Thereafter, the knowledge of saving faith and all that accompanies it must also be brought to bear. The doctrine of sin and grace in the consciousness of the converted sinner **receives the weight due it.** The knowledge of

spiritual faith in the wider sense belongs essentially to the manifestation of conversion. Faith is a part of conversion.

b) By no means, however, does *metanoia* remain limited to the consciousness of the intellect. The consciousness of the life of the will likewise shares in it. In **the conscious willing of the unconverted there is an impulse that is active against God and self-seeking**. In the conscious volition of the converted there is an impulse that is active toward God and away from himself. **The will was first turned away from God and is now converted to God.** On this point, too, faith coheres most closely with conversion. In all believing, there is a letting go of ourselves and a resting in another. **In conversion, faith—of which the seed was given in regeneration—turns to God to rest in His testimony.** The **will, insofar as it is involved in believing, now turns to God** (Acts 8:22, “Therefore repent of this your wickedness; Heb 6:1, “Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works”).

c) Conversion also extends to the life of the **emotions**. **[or the affections]** While for the unconverted the spiritual things of God are an arid desert, for the converted they become a source of lively delight. While formerly the reality of the relationship to which he stood toward God left him cold and indifferent, **his heart now reacts immediately to it.**

d) **In all three respects, however, *metanoia* includes a conscious opposition to the former condition.** This is an **essential element** in the concept, and one should therefore attend to it very carefully. Being converted does not mean simply going from one direction of consciousness to another so far as the intellect, will, and emotions are concerned. It means, in doing this, that at the same time there is present in the new direction of intellect, will, and emotions a **conscious aversion to the former direction**. In other words, *metanoia* has a positive side, but it also has a negative side. **A new knowledge arises in the one converted, but at the same time he is conscious that his old knowledge was foolishness and ignorance.** A new volition impels the one converted, but at the same time he becomes conscious of a deep aversion toward his old volition that worked against God. A new emotion controls the one converted, but in it he similarly has a consciousness of a deep sorrow over his former condition.

Conversion, therefore, looks back as well as forward. In their functioning, the new capacities that are now turned toward God look back in a conscious fashion on their former activity that was turned away from God. This is the element of repentance in conversion along with the element of faith. All the activities mentioned under (a), (b), and (c) go back to faith, insofar as it **has its seat in the intellect and will, and at the same time is accompanied by the emotions**. What is meant here is repentance—that is, a true, deep-seated knowledge of and a strong aversion, **an active abhorrence**, toward the earlier relationship toward God. “Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved but because you were grieved leading to repentance [*eis metanoian*]. For **godly sorrow produces repentance without regret that leads to salvation**, but the **sorrow of the world produces death**” (2 Cor 7:9–10). “And if he sins against

you seven times in a day, and returns to you seven times in a day saying, ‘I repent’ [*metanoēō*], you must forgive him” (Luke 17:4).

2. What is another word used in Scripture for “conversion”?

The word *epistrophē*, which occurs only once in the New Testament, in Acts 15:3. On the other hand, the verb *epistrephein* is used much more. It has a somewhat wider scope than *metanoein*. It not only puts the emphasis on the change of direction in the conscious life, but it also expresses that a new relationship comes about by this change. Hence it can be used with *metanoein*; for example, “Repent [*metanoein*], therefore, and turn back [*epistrephein*]” (Acts 3:19). While *metanoein* is sometimes used exclusively for repentance, in *epistrephein* faith is necessarily included. Repentance (*metanoia*) and faith can be mentioned together, but not conversion (*epistrophē*) and faith: “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21)—here one finds *metanoia*. Where these two words [*epistrophē* and *metanoia*] are distinguished, the former lets the focus fall more on the positive direction of faith, the latter more on the retrospective attitude of repentance.

3. What word does the Hebrew use for conversion?

The noun *shuvah* and the verb *shwb*. In the Septuagint this is nearly always translated by *epistrephein* (1 Sam 7:3; 1 Kgs 8:33).

4. Is there still another word that is used by the New Testament?

The word *metamelesthai*. This literally means “to be concerned about something afterwards”: “and afterward he repented and went”; “and even when you saw it, afterward you did not repent in order to believe” (Matt 21:29, 32). Thus the emphasis here is on the element of repentance. However, from the texts just cited above, it appears that it is incorrect to understand the difference between this word and *metanoein* as if the former merely indicates a sensation of emotion by which the will is not yet changed—thus **superficial sorrow**, **worldly sadness**, that is a result of the **common grace of the Holy Spirit** but that faith need not follow—while the latter always indicates heartfelt conversion that presupposes regeneration. *Metanoia* can occur a few times for regret. For example, “And if he is sorrowful, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). The difference lies only in this: that *metamelesthai* points exclusively to the negative, retrospective side of repentance. *Metanoia* is richer in content. Included in it is the element of will; it consists of a firm intention, of an active change of the will; there is action. Hence, *metanoein* appears in the imperative mood: “be converted.” But, in contrast, *metamelesthai*, “be sorrowful,” never does, for emotion as such cannot be commanded.

5. What is distinctive of most of these words?

They are almost always **active** terms, something by which they are distinguished in use from the words for regeneration. There it was “to be regenerated” (*anagennasthai*). Here it is “to convert oneself”—a

proof that **after regeneration, as soon as it penetrates into the conscious life, the gracious activity of God makes the subject itself active. Here, man is no longer purely passive; he is not only acted on but impelled to action.**

6. *What is conversion called in Latin?*

In Latin three words are used:

a) Poenitentia, “**having remorse,**” connected with *poena*, “punishment.” In it the element of “penitence,” “contrition,” comes to the fore. One may compare this with the English word “repentance” (from *repenitere*). In the Roman Catholic church, however, poenitentia more and more received an external sense. “Penance” was placed as an independent sacrament alongside the others. It has reference to a Christian who has fallen into mortal sin, and so does not have initial conversion in view. It consists of three parts:

1. *Contritio*, sincere remorse, to be distinguished from *attritio*. The latter abhors and hates sin because of its terrible consequences; *contritio*, on the other hand, for its own sake. If, however, *attritio* is concerned with the eternal consequences of sin and not merely its temporal consequences, it is also sufficient.
2. *Confessio*, or “confession,” acknowledgement of sin before an ecclesiastical judge.
3. *Satisfactio*, “satisfaction” of temporal punishment, likewise prescribed by an ecclesiastical judge. Through this wholly external understanding, the word poenitentia acquired a bad sound, so that some preferred not to use it any longer.

b) Another Latin word is *conversio*. This is essentially the same in meaning as *epistrophē*. It comes from *convertere*, “to turn around,” and therefore points to the about-face and the changed direction that comes into the life of the sinner at conversion.

c) A third term is the much-used *resipiscentia*, literally, “becoming wise again,” from *resipiscere*, “to return to one’s senses.” It agrees to a great extent with metanoia. The difference is only that the prefix “re” calls to mind the abnormality of the former state of the consciousness. What supervenes in becoming wise again is not something new but just what should have been present originally—what is normal.

7. *How do you best describe conversion according to what we have found?*

It is active: that act of God by which He turns the regenerate man in his consciousness to Himself by faith and repentance. **It is passive:** that conscious act of the regenerate man in which by God’s grace he turns to God in repentance and faith.

8. *Does conversion take place in the judicial sphere, or in the sphere of dispositional re-creating grace?*

Properly speaking, conversion lies in the sphere of re-creating grace. It does not change the state but the condition of man. However, in conversion, an awareness that the sinner is worthy of damnation is awakened in him, and in connection with that, faith is given, which in its turn leads to justification. Conversion, therefore, is also connected with what occurs in the judicial sphere.

9. *Is conversion an act of grace that takes place below the consciousness or in the consciousness?*

As we saw from the name *metanoia*, **conversion does not take place below the consciousness but in the consciousness**. There is, of course, a transition of the activity of life from the new principle of life into the consciousness. The first dawning of conversion must thus start from below the consciousness. But, as the whole work of God, it is itself reflected in the light of man's consciousness.

10. *Does conversion have in view the removal of the old man or the enlivening of the new man?*

Actually, already in regeneration the old is replaced at the core of our being by a new principle of life. And, conversely, conversion flows from the outworking and penetration of this new life into the consciousness. Thus, to this extent one cannot say that conversion removes the old; rather, it is a continuation and extension of the activity of the new. Still, with that, not everything is said. When a new principle of life has been introduced at the core of a man's being, then his entire existence is still not yet reversed by it. In his consciousness, particularly, he still holds on to the old, lives in the old, and turns away from God. The center of the circle of his life may lie in God, while he does not see or seek that center in God but elsewhere. This, then, is what is changed in conversion. In his consciousness, in his own awareness, the sinner learns to see the lostness and untenability of his former position and his former condition, and the result of this is that he is also loosed from the old in his conscious life. And conversely, he learns to understand and appropriate with a clear consciousness the permanency and safety of his new position and his new condition. He adopts the standpoint of someone who lives for God. Thus we find that, for the consciousness, conversion in fact has the same two sides that we encounter in regeneration, but nevertheless for both the second, positive side of regeneration is the basis.

11. *Is conversion something that occurs at once in a crisis or does it consist of a slowly continuing process?*

Different answers must be given to this question. For regeneration, it was impossible to speak of a continuation or repetition. By the nature of the case, someone can only be born once. On the other hand, the consciousness of man goes up and down—is now darker, then clearer, subject to fluctuations and changes. It lies on the surface, on the outside of life, and consequently can be seized by the still-continually-impure nature, so that in a certain sense it again turns away from God. Thus, the possibility exists for a continuing and repeated conversion. The Christian needs to **die daily in repentance** and made alive in faith. **The old man must be crucified anew again and again so that the new man can arise with all the more power.**

Still, it remains true that in its specific sense, conversion is something that occurs once and can only occur once, and that consequently it stands out as a crisis in the life of sinners. Thus, the old theologians had every right **to bring conversion into the closest connection with regeneration** and to regard conversion as the reverse side of the latter. Only where the consciousness is wholly fallen and turned away from God can it experience this great reversal, to which some give the designation of “first conversion.” Afterward, the contrast between the old and the new can no longer appear with the sharpness that it has in the first days of the activity of the new life. And at a later point it is tempered by the consciousness of justification that can never be entirely lost where it has once occurred. Although one must thus agree that the distance between first conversion and continuing conversion is not the same as the absolute difference between regeneration and the development of life, there still remains sufficient place for a distinction.

12. *Is conversion exclusively a work of God, or is man also active in it?*

In it, **man is worked on by God’s grace such that he converts himself**—that is, **consciously turns from sin and turns to God. The subject that is active here is, however, the regenerated man, not the old, natural man.**

13. *What is the connection of conversion to effectual calling?*

The closest connection. **Conversion is the direct consequence of this calling.** It is not as if the sinner converted himself to God by his own hand. Rather, conversion is always accompanied by a lively awareness that it is God who calls us to Himself. In the concept of calling, precisely that is expressed as clearly as possible. The difference between true conversion and a superficial moral improvement lies precisely in this point. The moral reformation of which the unregenerate speaks is a work that he himself performs and by which he places himself against the Lord. It is something, moreover, by which he continually relies on himself and exclusively considers himself and his own interests. It is a sorrow of a sinner according to himself.

In genuine conversion, man feels that he is under the working God. It may be that under the crushing and the death of repentance, he does not draw from conversion the comfort that he should be able to draw from it. But with that, he already senses that he is still placed in a direct relationship with God, to be approved by Him. And no less does the converted person reckon with and think of God, and is primarily concerned for His holy rights. In discussing calling above, it was pointed out how the man in whom the consciousness of the new life awakens for the first time is under the impression that God effectually draws him to Himself and omnipotently calls forth life from him. He says, “Convert me, so I shall be converted!” Precisely by that it comes about that, for his consciousness, regeneration and calling nearly fuse.

14. *What is the connection of conversion to faith?*

Conversion consists of repentance and faith. So faith is a part of conversion. Still, to arrive at clarity one needs to make a twofold distinction: There is a faith in the wider and in the narrower sense.

In the wider sense, we understand faith to be an acceptance as true of all that God declares; in the narrower sense, it is an acceptance as true of the declaration of God that in Christ He will forgive sin. By the former is not meant ordinary historical faith that can also be present in a sinner apart from regeneration and conversion. With conversion, a new faith awakens in the sinner with respect also to what he formerly believed in a merely historical fashion. An unconverted and unregenerate sinner can know that he is a sinner and deserving of condemnation in Adam. He knows this by historical faith. **When conversion comes, however, he now begins to believe this in a much deeper sense, so that it becomes a reality for him with which he reckons and that is effective in his life.** This is not saving faith in the narrower sense of the word, but it is still something entirely different than **historical faith [or temporary faith; a faith that does not save]**. Here, for the consciousness of the sinner **by the action of the Holy Spirit, the content of historical faith is made into living, active truth, to which he must react.** He knows it differently and agrees to it differently than was the case previously. Now, that truth is directly addressed by God **to his consciousness** and the power of the presence of God speaks from it. Also, it is now regarded as a truth that has a special, personal application to the sinner himself, **while previously it was regarded as a general**, collectively applicable truth. It is indifferent what name one gives to all this, whether one calls it conviction, repentance, or awareness of sin, provided one only recognizes that it falls under the general concept of the **illuminating and enlightened knowledge that is only encountered in the regenerate in conversion** and by which they learn to take into account the relationship in which they stand to God.

In this wider sense, one will have to say that faith accompanies conversion from its inception. Conversion is never a blind impulse by which man, without knowing why, would be driven to God. Knowledge is an essential element that never can be completely missing. It is a calling that draws and impels man, not a mystical something that has nothing to do with the truth.

It is another question how far saving faith in the narrower sense belongs to conversion. If someone is under conviction of sin and the reality of his situation is placed before his eyes by the faith just described, that does not yet actually include that he also exercises a faith that surrenders. Awareness of sin and of deserving damnation is logically a different concept than trusting in the Mediator. It is not only a different concept, but also a concept that must precede the latter. **Without the conviction of sin, the act—the exercise—of faith is unthinkable.** Also, **believing in Christ is something reasonable that occurs in the light of truth, not a blind, mystical urge.** Thus it is not subject to any doubt that, in order, repentance and the knowledge of sin precede surrendering faith. However, one should keep the following in view:

- a) That this can only apply to the act of faith and not to its disposition. The latter is given in regeneration and so, in order, also precedes repentance. It underlies faith in the wider sense as

well as in the narrower sense. Only by this disposition does it become possible for the sinner to see the reality of his relationship with God. It is the basis of both the **activity of the intellect of the converted person, by which he sees the things of God correctly**, and the **inclination of his will**, by which he agrees with God's declaration. Indeed, when God declares that the sinner is lost and deserving damnation, **then there belongs to believing this witness not only an enlightened intellect but also a will bent to His**. And the disposition that is the root of both of these can only precede repentance if it is to be the true repentance of conversion.

b) The distinction made here is a logical one and not a chronological one or a distinction in time. It is not as if the sinner is first brought to the knowledge of himself, of his lost condition and of his relationship as a sinner toward God, and then, after having spent considerable time in this situation, suddenly comes to the knowledge of Christ and His righteousness. Without doubt such cases do occur. There have been those converted who have wrestled before God for days and weeks almost without hope as lost, without the glimmer of faith occurring in their consciousness. But we may not make the presence or absence of such a condition a distinguishing mark of true conversion. One can even assume that this experience does not occur in the majority of those converted. Still, it is so that a historical knowledge of Christ is present from the outset in all those converted who come to repentance. God's way of proceeding is such that He only works conversion where one lives under the ministry of the Word, and so where a certain degree of knowledge of the truths of salvation is found. Where the notion of the Mediator is already in the consciousness, then from the first moment of conversion on it will generate a lesser or greater activity of the faith that accompanies repentance. In this way the activity of repentance and faith can coincide chronologically, and the one can affect the other. The knowledge of Christ and His righteousness do not remain without influence on the sinner's consciousness of guilt, but shape it. And in many cases it will be impossible to indicate precisely what first entered the consciousness clearly: repentance, or faith.

c) Conversion also includes the source of sanctification. Now, the rule is firm that there cannot be genuine Christian sanctification that does not grow on **the root of justification**. And justification, in turn, is only given to saving faith. At the same time, this includes that conversion as a source of sanctification presupposes the activity of faith. It is also entirely impossible that the sinner would try to do something good for God and devote himself to God as a pleasing sacrifice as long as he feels that he lies under the curse and does not have the consciousness, at least in principle, to be cleansed by the merits of Christ and to be accepted by God. The entire positive side of conversion—actively turning toward God—is inseparable from justifying faith. We see here again how the various saving acts of God, however much they can and must be distinguished logically, nevertheless may not be separated from one another as if they did not affect each other. Rather, they involve each other at every point and are interwoven with each

other. **We found that regeneration is included in effectual calling.** We now find, in approximately the same sense, that justification is surrounded by the various activities of conversion.

15. Who is the author of conversion?

God, as we are taught in Acts 11:18: “So then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.” Here, it is called a gift of God. “Whether God may at some time grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 2:25).

16. *In conversion, does God work solely through means, or is there in addition also an immediate working?*

In conversion there is a twofold working of God:

a) Mediate working through the Word of God. Both through the law as well as through the gospel, **God affects the consciousness of sinners in order to bring about conversion in them.** Through the law, repentance is generated, for by the law is the knowledge of sin [Rom 3:20]. Through the gospel, faith is generated, for faith is by hearing [Rom 10:17]. Still, one must not separate these two too sharply. In the law there is already an adumbration of the gospel, and in the gospel there is an eloquent testimony to, a crushing proclamation of, the law. The cross of the Mediator not only proclaims that satisfaction is accomplished and pardon may be obtained, but at the same time points to what the sinner had deserved for himself and what would happen with him if God were to deal with him in justice. Hence, Scripture describes the crisis of repentance, in which man abandons himself and learns to distance himself from all self-righteousness, as a “being crucified with Christ,” a “mortifying of the old man.” “For through the law I died to the law”—something that is further clarified by the words, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:19–20). “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be abolished, so that we no longer serve sin” (Rom 6:6). In baptism there is a picturing of this repentance as death: “Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death” (Rom 6:4).

b) Besides this mediate working of God, in conversion there is also a direct, immediate working—a working linked with the **new principle of life** already infused into the soul but that then directly, without the intervention of any means, implements this principle. Also, **this new principle does not possess in itself the capacity to flow outwardly and lay hold of the consciousness of the sinner.** It is Lutheran and Remonstrant [**Arminianism**] to think that **God gives powers in the regenerate man over which he can now dispose freely, which he can use or can leave unused or, if need be, can discard and lose.** Conversion is as little an uncertain work as regeneration. God works in His children to will and to work for His good pleasure. Even the best seed does not germinate and grow **without the fructifying and nourishing working of the**

Spirit. In this working of the Spirit, **there is an immediate working** (Phil 2:13). Not only the disposition of faith but also the **act of believing is sustained by the working of God's grace.** [Hence, 1Pet. 1:5, who are *kept by the power of God* through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. It is an ongoing action by the Spirit; we are dependent upon God for everything! Ongoing believing, repenting, living, thinking, etc.! See Edwards' comments at code] The old theologians distinguish these two acts of conversion, or of the converting God, as moral and physical, ethical and material action. The word "physical" is used here in the same sense as in regeneration.

17. *Is the word "conversion" always used in the same sense in Scripture?*

No, it occurs with more than one meaning, and one must take the greatest care not to confuse these with each other or to apply to the one what is meant by another.

- a) Conversion is used for a change in the outlook of a nation—thus, in an external religious sense. So, for example, it occurs of the Ninevites, who were converted by Jonah's preaching (Jonah 3:10; Matt 12:41; cf. Isa 19:22).
- b) A godless person can convert in his outward life to a virtuous one without being regenerated (Psa 7:12; Jer 18:11).
- c) After being caught in a condition of lifelessness and barrenness, a believer can convert from it to a new faith (Rev 2:5; Jas 5:19–20).
- d) A regenerate person can come for the first time to exercise repentance and faith. This is conversion as discussed here.

18. *Is conversion absolutely necessary?*

Everyone who is saved must come to a **true knowledge of his sins** and to a **believing appreciation of the merits of the Mediator.** If he is regenerated in adult life, he has lived in a conscious estrangement from God. It can therefore not be otherwise than that the about-face of this consciousness must be registered very sharply in his life, and in such a case, one beholds the crisis that is called conversion.

The possibility exists, however, that children are regenerated before they come to exercise discernment. To what extent that takes place cannot be decided. The Bible provides us with only two instances: namely, those of the Prophet Jeremiah and John the Baptist. However, where such a case occurs, the possibility also exists that the child does not first need to be brought over from a conscious condition of estrangement from God into that of conversion to God, but that of its own accord, in growing up, it already lives in the latter condition. There are young people who cannot point to a particular time for their conversion, and who can recall that, as far back as their consciousness reaches, they have always been active for God with a repentant and believing heart. There, the course is not

marked by crisis, but is more protracted. Still, there too the essential elements of conversion are present. But they are more diffused.

Arminianism, Impetration & Intercession of Christ

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More on the limited atonement, impetration and intercession of our high priest, Jesus Christ, what he purchased and for whom, Arminianism examined further, the general ransom, faith, the blood of Christ procuring [impetration] the good *things* and applying them to the elect in due time, etc.

Death of Death in the Death of Christ

by John Owen
Book II Chapter IV.

*Of the distinction of **impetration and application** — The use and abuse thereof; with the opinion of the adversaries upon the whole matter in controversy unfolded; and the question on both sides stated.*

The farther reasons whereby the precedent discourse may be confirmed, I defer until I come to oppose some argument to the **general ransom**. For the present, I shall only take away that general answer which is usually given to the places of Scripture produced, to waive the sense of them; which is φάρμακον πάνσοφον to our adversaries, and serves them, as they suppose, to bear up all the weight wherewith in this case they are urged:—

I. They say, then, that in the oblation of Christ, and concerning the **good things** by him **procured**, two things are to be considered:— First, The **impetration**, or obtaining of them; and, secondly, The application of them to particular persons. “The first,” say they, “is general, in respect to all. Christ obtained and procured all **good things** by his death of his Father, — **reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness of sins**, — for all and every man in the world, if they will believe and lay hold upon him: but in respect of **application**, they are actually bestowed and conferred but on a few; because but a few believe, which is the condition on which they are bestowed. And in this latter sense are the texts of Scripture which we have argued, all of them, to be understood. So that they do no whit impeach the universality of merit, which they assert; but only the **universality of application**, which they also deny.” Now, this answer is commonly set forth by them in various terms and divers dresses, according as it seems best to them that use it, and most subservient to their several opinions; for, —

First, Some of them say that Christ, by his death and passion, did absolutely, according to the intention of God, purchase for all and every man, dying for them, remission of sins and reconciliation with God, or a restitution into a state of grace and favour; all which shall be actually beneficial to them, provided that they do believe. So the **Arminians**.

Secondly, Some, [26](#) again, that Christ died for all indeed, but conditionally for some, if they do believe, or will so do (which he knows they cannot of themselves); and **absolutely for his own**, even them on whom he purposeth to bestow faith and grace, so as actually to be made possessors of the good things by him purchased. So Camero, and the divines of France, which follow a new method by him devised.

Thirdly, Some [27](#) distinguish of a twofold reconciliation and redemption; — one wrought by Christ with God for man, which, say they, is general for all and every man; secondly, a reconciliation wrought by Christ in man unto God, bringing them actually into peace with him.

And sundry other ways there are whereby men express their conceptions in this business. The sum of all comes to this, and the weight of all lies upon that distinction which we before recounted; — namely, **that in respect of impetration, Christ obtained redemption and reconciliation for all; in respect of application, it is bestowed only on them who do believe and continue therein.**

II. Their arguments whereby they prove the generality of the ransom and universality of the reconciliation must afterward be considered: for the present, we handle only the distinction itself, the **meaning and misapplication** whereof I shall briefly declare; which will appear if we consider, —

First, The true nature and meaning of this distinction, and the true use thereof; for we do acknowledge that it may be used in a sound sense and right meaning, which way soever you express it, either by impetration and application, or by procuring reconciliation with God and a working of reconciliation in us. **For by impetration we mean the meritorious purchase of all good things made by Christ for us with and of his Father; and by application, the actual enjoyment of those good things upon our believing**; — as, if a man pay a price for the redeeming of captives, the paying of the price supplieth the room of the impetration of which we speak; and the freeing of the captives is as the application of it. Yet, then, we must observe, —

First, That this distinction hath no place in the intention and purpose of Christ, but only in respect of the things procured by him; **for in his purpose they are both united, his full end and aim being to deliver us from all evil, and procure all good actually to be bestowed upon us.** But in respect of the things themselves, they may be considered either as procured by Christ, or as bestowed on us.

Secondly, **That the will of God is not at all conditional in this business**, as though he **gave Christ to obtain peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness of sins, upon condition that we do believe**. There is a condition in the things, but none in the will of God; that is **absolute** that such things should be procured and bestowed.

Thirdly, That all the things which Christ obtained for us are not bestowed upon condition, but some of them absolutely. And as for those that are bestowed upon condition, the condition on which they are **bestowed is actually purchased and procured for us, upon no condition but only by virtue of the purchase.** For instance: Christ hath purchased remission of sins and eternal life for us, to be enjoyed on our believing, upon the condition of faith. **But faith itself, which is the condition of them, on whose performance they are bestowed, that he hath procured for us absolutely, on no condition at all; for what condition soever can be proposed, on which the Lord should bestow faith, I shall afterward show it vain, and to run into a circle**

Fourthly, That both these, impetration and application, have for their objects the same individual persons; that, look, for whomsoever Christ obtained any good thing by his death, unto them it shall certainly be applied, upon them it shall actually be bestowed: so that it cannot be said that he obtained any thing for any one, which that one shall not or doth not in due time enjoy. For whomsoever he wrought reconciliation with God, in them doth he work reconciliation unto God. The one is not extended to some to whom the other doth not reach. Now, because this being established, the opposite interpretation and misapplication of this distinction vanisheth, I shall briefly confirm it with reasons:—

First, If the application of the good things procured be the end why they are procured, for whose sake alone Christ doth obtain them, then they must be applied to all for whom they are obtained; for otherwise Christ faileth of his end and aim, which must not be granted. But that this application was the end of the obtaining of all good things for us appeareth, — First, Because if it were otherwise, and Christ did not aim at the applying of them, but only at their obtaining, then might the death of Christ have had its full effect and issue without the application of redemption and salvation to any one soul, that being not aimed at, and so, notwithstanding all that he did for us, every soul in the world might have perished eternally; which, whether it can stand with the dignity and sufficiency of his oblation, with the purpose of his Father, and his own intention, who “came into the world to save sinners, — that which was lost,” and to “bring many sons unto glory,” let all judge. Secondly, God, in that action of sending his Son, laying the weight of iniquity upon him, and giving him up to an accursed death, must be affirmed to be altogether uncertain what event all this should have in respect of us. For, did he intend that we should be saved by it? — then the application of it is that which he aimed at, as we assert: did he not? — certainty, he was uncertain what end it should have; which is blasphemy, and exceeding contrary to Scripture and right reason. Did he appoint a Saviour without thought of them that were to be saved? a Redeemer, not determining who should be redeemed? Did he resolve of a means, not determining the end? It is an assertion opposite to all the glorious properties of God. [you'll find that the assertions of the Arminians necessarily lead to many absurdities.]

Secondly, If that which is obtained by any do, by virtue of that action whereby it is obtained, become his in right for whom it is obtained, then for whomsoever any thing is by Christ obtained, it is to them applied; for that must be made theirs in fact which is theirs in right. But it is most certain that whatsoever is obtained for any is theirs by right for whom it is obtained. The very sense of the word, whether you call it merit, impetration, purchase, acquisition, or obtaining, doth bespeak a right in them for whose good the merit is effected and the purchase made. [right reason, which Arminian thought is void of] Can that be said to be obtained for me which is no wise mine? When I obtain anything by prayer or entreaty of any one, it being obtained, it is mine own. That which is obtained by one is granted by him of whom it is obtained; and if granted, it is granted by him to them for whom it is obtained. But they will say, “It is obtained upon condition; and until the condition be fulfilled no right doth accrue.” I answer, If this condition be equally purchased and obtained, with other things that are to be bestowed on that condition, then this hinders not but that every thing is to be applied that is procured. But if it be uncertain whether this condition will be fulfilled or not, then, — first, This makes God uncertain what end the death of his Son will have; secondly, This doth not answer but deny the thing we are in proving, which is confirmed. [again, right reasoning!]

Thirdly, Because the Scripture, **perpetually conjoining these two things together**, will not suffer us so to sever them as that the one should belong to some and not to others, as though they could have several persons for their objects: as [Isa. liii. 11](#), **“By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,” — there is the application of all good things; “for he shall bear their iniquities,” — there is the impetration.** He justifieth all whose iniquities he bore. As also [verse 5 of that chapter](#), “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.” **His wounding and our healing, impetration and application, his chastisement and our peace, are inseparably associated.** So [Rom. iv. 25](#), “He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” So [chap. v. 18](#), “By the righteousness of one” (that is, his **impetration**), “the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,” in the application. See there who are called “All men,” most clearly. [Chap. viii. 32–34](#), “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” From which words we have these several reasons of our assertion:— *First*, That for whom God gives his Son, to them, in him, he freely gives all things; **therefore, all things obtained by his death must be bestowed, and are, on them for whom he died, verse 32.** *Secondly*, They for whom Christ died are justified, are God’s elect, cannot be condemned, nor can anything be laid to their charge; all that he hath purchased for them must be applied to them, for by virtue thereof it is that they are so saved, [verses 33, 34](#). *Thirdly*, For whom Christ died, for them he maketh intercession. Now, his intercession is for the application of those things, as is confessed, and therein he is always heard. Those to whom the one belongs, theirs also is the other. So, [John x. 10](#), the coming of Christ is, that “his might have life, and have it abundantly;” as also [1 John iv. 9](#). [Heb. x. 10](#), “By the which will we are sanctified,” — that is the application; **“through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ,” — that is the means of impetration:** “for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” [verse 14](#). In brief, it is proved by all those places which we produced rightly to assign the end of the death of Christ. So that this may be rested on, as I conceive, as firm and immovable, **that the impetration of good things by Christ, and the application of them, respect the same individual persons.**

Secondly, We may consider the meaning of those who seek to maintain universal redemption by this distinction in it, and to what use they do apply it. “Christ,” say they, “died for all men, and by his death purchased reconciliation with God for them and forgiveness of sins: which to some is applied, and they become actually reconciled to God, and have their sins forgiven them; but to others not, who, therefore, perish in the state of irreconciliation and enmity, under the guilt of their sins. **This application,”** say they, **“is not procured nor purchased by Christ, — for then, he dying for all, all must be actually reconciled and have their sins forgiven them and be saved, — but it attends the fulfilling of the condition which God is pleased to prescribe unto them, that is, believing:”** which, say some, they can do by their own strength, though not in terms, yet by direct consequence; others not, but God must give it. So that when it is said in the Scripture, Christ hath reconciled us to God, redeemed us, saved us by his blood, underwent the punishment of our sins, and so made satisfaction for us, they assert that no more is meant but that Christ did that which upon the fulfilling of the condition that is of us required, these things will follow. To the death of Christ, indeed, they assign many glorious things; but what they give on the one hand they take away with the other, **by suspending the enjoyment of**

them on a condition by us to be fulfilled, not by him procured; and in terms assert that the proper and full end of the death of Christ was the doing of that whereby God, his justice being satisfied, might save sinners if he would, and on what condition it pleased him. — that a door of grace might be opened to all that would come in, and not that actual justification and remission of sins, life, and immortality were procured by him, but only a possibility of those things, that so it might be. Now, that all the venom that lies under this exposition and abuse of this distinction may the better appear, I shall set down the whole mind of them that use it in a few assertions, that it may be clearly seen what we do oppose.

First, “God,” say they, “considering all mankind as fallen from that grace and favour in Adam wherein they were created, and excluded utterly from the attainment of salvation by virtue of the covenant of works which was at the first made with him, yet by his infinite goodness was inclined to desire the happiness of them, all and every one, that they might be delivered from misery, and be brought unto himself;” which inclination of his they call his **universal love** and **antecedent will**, whereby he would desirously have them all to be saved; out of which love he sendeth Christ.

Obs. 1. **That God hath any natural or necessary inclination, by his goodness, or any other property, to do good to us, or any of his creatures, we do deny.** Every thing that concerns us is an act of his free will and good pleasure, and not a natural, necessary act of his Deity, as shall be declared.

Obs. 2. **The ascribing an antecedent conditional will unto God, whose fulfilling and accomplishment should depend on any free, contingent act or work of ours, is injurious to his wisdom, power, and sovereignty, and cannot well be excused from blasphemy;** and is contrary to [Rom. ix. 19](#), “Who hath resisted his will?” I say, —

Obs. 3. **A common affection and inclination to do good to all** doth not seem to set out the freedom, fulness, and dimensions of that most intense love of God which is asserted in the Scripture to be the cause of sending his Son; as [John iii. 16](#), “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.” [Eph. i. 9](#), “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” [Col. i. 19](#), “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” [Rom. v. 8](#), “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” These two [28](#) I shall, by the Lord’s assistance, fully clear, if the Lord give life and strength, and his people encouragement, to go through with the second part of this controversy.

Obs. 4. We deny that all mankind are the object of that love of God which moved him to send his Son to die; God having “made some for the day of evil,” [Prov. xvi. 4](#); “hated them before they were born,” [Rom. ix. 11, 13](#); “before of old ordained them to condemnation,” [Jude 4](#); being “fitted to destruction,” [Rom. ix. 22](#); “made to be taken and destroyed,” [2 Pet. ii. 12](#); “appointed to wrath,” [1 Thess. v. 9](#); to “go to their own place,” [Acts i. 25](#).

Secondly, “The justice of God being injured by sin, unless something might be done for the satisfaction thereof, that love of God whereby he wouldeth good to all sinners could no way be brought forth into act, but must have its eternal residence in the bosom of God without any effect produced.”

Obs. 1. That neither Scripture nor right reason will enforce nor prove an utter and absolute want of power in God to save sinners by his own absolute will, without satisfaction to his justice, [in other words, God just can't forgive sin by his will of forgiving alone; he must punish it which his justice requires by necessity, either the violator or a substitutionary sacrifice, i.e., Christ.] supposing his purpose that so it should be; indeed, it could not be otherwise. But, without the consideration of that, certainly he could have effected it. It doth not imply any violating of his holy nature.

Obs. 2. An actual and necessary velleity, for the doing of anything which cannot possibly be accomplished without some work fulfilled outwardly of him, is opposite to his eternal blessedness and all-sufficiency.

Thirdly, "God, therefore, to fulfil that general love and good-will of his towards all, and that it might put forth itself in such a way as should seem good to him, to satisfy his justice, which stood in the way, and was the only hinderance, he sent his Son into the world to die."

The failing of this assertion we shall lay forth, when we come to declare that love whereof the sending of Christ was the proper issue and effect.

Fourthly, "Wherefore, the proper and immediate end and aim of the purpose of God in sending his Son to die for all men was, that he might, what way it pleased him, save sinners, his justice which hindered being satisfied," — as Arminius; or, "That he might will to save sinners," — as Corvinus. "And the intention of Christ was, to make such satisfaction to the justice of God as that he might obtain to himself a power of saving, upon what conditions it seemed good to his Father to prescribe."

Obs. 1. Whether this was the intention of the Father in sending his Son or no, let it be judged. Something was said before, upon the examination of those places of Scripture which describe his purpose; let it be known from them whether God, in sending of his Son, intended to procure to himself a liberty to save us if he would, or to obtain certain salvation for his elect.

Obs. 2. That such a **possibility of salvation**, or, at the utmost, a velleity or willing of it, upon an uncertain condition, to be by us fulfilled, should be the full, proper, and only immediate end of the death of Christ, will yet scarcely down with tender spirits.

Obs. 3. The expression, of procuring to himself ability to save, upon a condition to be prescribed, seems not to answer that certain purpose of our Saviour in laying down his life, which the Scripture saith was to "save his sheep," and to "bring many sons to glory," as before; nor hath it any ground in Scripture.

Fifthly, "Christ, therefore, obtained for all and every one reconciliation with God, remission of sins, life and salvation; not that they should actually be partakers of these things, but that God (his justice now not hindering) might and would prescribe a condition to be by them fulfilled, whereupon he would actually apply it, and make them partake of all those good things purchased by Christ." And here comes their distinction of **impetration and application**, which we before intimated; and thereabout, in the explication of this assertion, they are wondrously divided.

Some say that this proceeds so far, that all men are thereby received into a new covenant, in which redemption Adam was a common person as well as in his fall from the old, and all we again restored in him; so that none shall be damned that do not sin actually against the condition where they are born, and fall from the state where into all men are assumed through the death of Christ.

So Boræus, Corvinus; and one of late, in plain terms, that all are reconciled, redeemed, saved, and justified in Christ; though how he could not understand (More, p. 10). But others, more warily, deny this, and assert that by nature we are all children of wrath, and that until we come to Christ the wrath of God abideth on all, so that it is not actually removed from any: so the assertors of the efficacy of grace in France.

Again, some say that Christ by this satisfaction removed original sin in all, and, by consequent, that only; so that all infants, though of Turks and Pagans, out of the covenant, dying before they come to the use of reason, must undoubtedly be saved, that being removed in all, even the calamity, guilt, and alienation contracted by our first fall, whereby God may save all upon a new condition. But others of them, more warily, observing that the blood of Christ is said to “cleanse from all sin,” ([1 John i. 7](#); [1 Pet. i. 18, 19](#); [Isa. liii. 6](#)), say he died for all sinners alike; absolutely for none, but conditionally for all. Farther, some of them affirm that after the satisfaction of Christ, or the consideration of it in God’s prescience, it was absolutely undetermined what condition should be prescribed, so that the Lord might have reduced all again to the law and covenant of works; so Corvinus: others, that a procuring of a new way of salvation by faith was a part of the fruit of the death of Christ; so More, p. 35.

Again, some of them, that the condition prescribed is by our own strength, with the help of such means as God at all times, and in all places, and unto all, is ready to afford, to be performed; others deny this, and affirm that effectual grace flowing peculiarly from election is necessary to believing: the first establishing the idol of free-will to maintain their own assertion; others overthrowing their own assertion for the establishment of grace. So Amyraldus, Camero, etc.

Moreover, some say that the love of God in the sending of Christ is equal to all: others go a strain higher, and maintain an inequality in the love of God, although he send his Son to die for all, and though greater love there cannot be than that whereby the Lord sent his Son to die for us, as [Rom. viii. 32](#); and so they say that Christ purchased a greater good for some, and less for others. And here they put themselves upon innumerable uncouth distinctions, or rather (as one calleth them), extinctions, blotting out all sense, and reason, and true meaning of the Scripture. [The final issue of all Arminian thinking.] Witness Testardus, Amyraldus, and, as everyone may see that can but read English, in T. M[ore.] Hence that multiplicity of the several ends of the death of Christ, — some that are the fruits of his ransom and satisfaction, and some that are I know not what; besides his dying for some so and so, for others so and so, this way and that way; — hiding themselves in innumerable unintelligible expressions, that it is a most difficult thing to know what they mean, and harder to find out their mind than to answer their reasons.

In one particular they agree well enough, — namely, in denying that faith is procured or merited for us by the death of Christ. So far they are all of them constant to their own principles, for once to grant it would overturn the whole fabric of universal redemption; but, in assigning the cause of faith they go asunder again.

Some say that God sent Christ to die for all men, but only conditionally, if they did and would believe; — as though, if they believed, Christ died for them; if not, he died not; and **so make the act the cause of its own object**: other some, that he died absolutely for all, to procure all good things for them, which yet they should not enjoy until they fulfil the condition that was to be prescribed unto them. **Yet all conclude that in his death Christ had no more respect unto the elect than others, to sustain their persons, or to be in their room, but that he was a public person in the room of all mankind.**

III. Concerning the close of all this, in respect of the event and immediate product of the death of Christ, divers have diversely expressed themselves; some placing it in the power, some in the will, of God; some in the opening of a door of grace; some in a right purchased to himself of saving whom he pleased; some that in respect of us he had no end at all, but that all mankind might have perished after he had done all. Others make divers and distinct ends, not almost to be reckoned, of this one act of Christ, according to the diversity of the persons for whom he died, whom they grant to be distinguished and differenced by a foregoing decree; but to what purpose the Lord should send his Son to die for them whom he himself had determined not to save, but at least to pass by and leave to remediless ruin for their sins, I cannot see, nor the meaning of the twofold destination by some invented. **Such is the powerful force and evidence of truth that it scatters all its opposers, and makes them fly to several hiding-corners**; who, if they are not willing to yield and submit themselves, they shall surely lie down in darkness and error. None of these, or the like intricate and involved impedites distinctions, hath [truth] itself need of; into none of **such poor shifts and devices** doth it compel its abettors; it needeth not any windings and turnings to bring itself into a defensible posture; it is not liable to contradictions in its own fundamentals: for, without any farther circumstances, **the whole of it in this business may be thus summed up:—**

“God, out of his infinite love to his elect, sent his dear Son in the fulness of time, whom he had promised in the beginning of the world, and made effectual by that promise, to die, pay a ransom of infinite value and dignity, for the purchasing of eternal redemption, and bringing unto himself all and every one of those whom he had before ordained to eternal life, for the praise of his own glory.” So that freedom from all the evil from which we are delivered, and an enjoyment of all the good things that are bestowed on us, in our traduction from death to life, from hell and wrath to heaven and glory, are the proper issues and effects of the death of Christ, as the meritorious cause of them all; which may, in all the parts of it, be cleared by these few assertions:—

First, The fountain and cause of God’s sending Christ is **his eternal love to his elect**, and to them alone; which I shall not now farther confirm, reserving it for the second general head of this whole controversy.

Secondly, The value, worth, and dignity of the ransom which Christ gave himself to be, and of the price which he paid, was infinite and immeasurable; fit for the accomplishing of any end and the procuring of any good, for all and every one for whom it was intended, had they been millions of men more than ever were created. Of this also afterward. See [Acts xx. 28](#), “God purchased his church with his own blood.” [1 Pet. i. 18, 19](#), “Redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ;” and that answering the mind and intention of Almighty God, [John xiv. 31](#), “As the Father gave

me commandment, even so I do;" who would have such a price paid as might be the foundation of that economy and dispensation of his love and grace which he intended, and of the way whereby he would have it dispensed. [Acts xiii. 38, 39](#), "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." [2 Cor. v. 20, 21](#), "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Thirdly, The intention and aim of the Father in this great work was, a bringing of those many sons to glory, — namely, his elect, whom by his free grace he had chosen from amongst all men, of all sorts, nations, and conditions, to take them into a new covenant of grace with himself, the former being as to them, in respect of the event, null and abolished; of which covenant Jesus Christ is the first and chief promise, as he that was to procure for them all other good things promised therein, as shall be proved.

Fourthly, The things purchased or procured for those persons, — which are the proper effects of the death and ransom of Christ, in due time certainly to become theirs in possession and enjoyment, — are, remission of sin, freedom from wrath and the curse of the law, justification, sanctification, and reconciliation with God, and eternal life; for the will of his Father sending him for these, his own intention in laying down his life for them, and the truth of the purchase made by him, is the foundation of his intercession, begun on earth and continued in heaven; whereby he, whom his Father always hears, desires and demands that the good things procured by him may be actually bestowed on them, all and every one, for whom they were procured. So that the whole of what we assert in this great business is exceedingly clear and apparent, without any intricacy or the least difficulty at all; not clouded with strange expressions and unnecessary divulsions and tearings of one thing from another, as is the opposite opinion: which in the next place shall be dealt withal by arguments confirming the one and everting the other. But because the whole strength thereof lieth in, and the weight of all lieth on, that one distinction we before spoke of, by our adversaries diversely expressed and held out, we will a little farther consider that, and then come to our arguments, and so to the answering of the opposed objections.

One important reason why I am adding these excerpts to this exposition is to show the preciousness of this whole process, the preciousness of what Christ did; it is not a common thing! It is so immense, incorporating all the wisdom and power of God to do what he willed to do, that to say that this is common to all is to attribute gross imperfection in the Godhead, everting all common sense, calling that which is good evil and what is evil good. So by spending much time in the contemplation of these things you should gain a greater appreciation for them and put them upon the high pedestal on which they belong, leading you to approach God with a holy admiration and fear.

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isa5:20

This excerpt adds to the previous one on particularity in redemption, reprobation, election, did Christ die for all, the meaning of the word to know or foreknow which is to show favor or love. So in Romans 8:29, *foreknew* means those who God chose to love or show favor, a saving favor.

Book III Ch2 Death of Death by Owen

Chapter II.

Containing three other arguments.

Arg. III. If Jesus Christ died for all men, — that is, purchased and procured for them, according to the mind and will of God, all those things which we recounted, and the Scripture setteth forth, to be the effects and fruits of his death, which may be summed up in this one phrase, “**eternal redemption,**” — then he did this, and that according to the purpose of God, **either absolutely** or upon some **condition** by them to be fulfilled. If absolutely, then ought all and every one, absolutely and infallibly, to be made actual partakers of that eternal redemption so purchased; for what, I pray, should hinder the enjoyment of that to any which God absolutely intended, and Christ absolutely purchased for them? If upon condition, then he did either procure this condition for them, or he did not? If he did procure this condition for them, — that is, that it should be bestowed on them and wrought within them, — then he did it either absolutely again, or upon a condition. If absolutely, then are we as we were before; **for to procure anything for another, to be conferred on him upon such a condition, and withal to procure that condition absolutely to be bestowed on him, is equivalent to the absolute procuring of the thing itself. For so we affirm, in this very business: Christ procured salvation for us, to be bestowed conditionally, if we do believe; but faith itself, that he hath absolutely procured, without prescribing of any condition.** Whence we affirm, that the purchasing of salvation for us is equivalent to what it would have been if it had been so purchased as to have been absolutely bestowed, in respect of the event and issue. So that thus also must all be absolutely saved. But if this condition be procured upon condition, let that be assigned, and we will renew our quære [query] concerning the procuring of that, whether it were absolute or conditional, and so never rest until they come to fix somewhere, or still run into a circle.

But, on the other side, is not this condition procured by him on whose performance all the good things purchased by him are to be actually enjoyed? Then, first, This condition must be made known to all, as Arg. ii. Secondly, All men are able of themselves to perform this condition, or they are not. If they are, then, seeing that condition is faith in the promises, as is on all sides confessed, are all men of themselves, by the power of their own free-will, able to believe [which Arminians hold to]; which is contrary to the Scriptures [doctrine of Original Sin; see 1Cor2:14], as, by the Lord’s assistance, shall be declared. If they cannot, but that this faith must be bestowed on them and wrought within them **by the free grace of God,** then when God gave his Son to die for them, to procure eternal redemption for them all, upon condition that they did believe, he either purposed to work faith in them all by his grace, that they might believe, or he did not? If he did, why doth not he actually perform it, seeing “he is of one mind, and who can turn him?” why do not all believe? why have not all men faith? Or doth he fail of his purpose? If he did not purpose to bestow faith on them all, or (which is all one) if he purposed not to bestow faith on all (for the will of God doth not consist in a pure negation of anything, — what he doth not will that it should be, he wills that it should not be), then the sum of it comes to this:— That God gave Christ to die for all men, but upon this condition, that they perform that which of

themselves without him they cannot perform, and purposed that, for his part, he would not accomplish it in them.

Now, if this be not extreme madness, to assign a will unto God of doing that which himself knows and orders that it shall never be done, of granting a thing upon a condition which without his help cannot be any good at all should arise to any by such a purpose as this, such a giving of a Redeemer? Is it agreeable to the goodness of God to intend so great a good as is the redemption purchased by Christ, and to pretend that he would have it profitable for them, when he knows that they can no more fulfil the condition which he requires, that it may be by them enjoyed, than Lazarus could of himself come out of the grave? Doth it beseem the wisdom of God, to purpose that which he knows shall never be fulfilled? If a man should promise to give a thousand pounds to a blind man upon condition that he will open his eyes and see, — which he knows well enough he cannot do, — were that promise to be supposed to come from a heart-pitying of his poverty, and not rather from a mind to illude and mock at his misery? If the king should promise to pay a ransom for the captives at Algiers, upon condition that they would conquer their tyrants and come away, — which he knows full well they cannot do, — were this a kingly act? Or, as if a man should pay a price to redeem captives, but not that their chains may be taken away, without which they cannot come out of prison; or promise dead men great rewards upon condition they live again of themselves; — are not these to as much end as the obtaining of salvation for men upon condition that they do believe, without obtaining that condition for them? Were not this the assigning such a will and purpose as this to Jesus Christ: — “I will obtain eternal life to be bestowed on men, and become theirs, by the application of the benefits of my death; but upon this condition, that they do believe. But as I will not reveal my mind and will in this business, nor this condition itself, to innumerable of them, so concerning the rest I know they are no ways able of themselves, — no more than Lazarus was to rise, or a blind man is to see, — to perform the condition that I do require, and without which none of the good things intended for them can ever become theirs; neither will I procure that condition ever to be fulfilled in them. That is, I do will that that shall be done which I do not only know shall never be done, but that it cannot be done, because I will not do that without which it can never be accomplished”? Now, whether such a will and purpose as this beseem the wisdom and goodness of our Saviour, let the reader judge. In brief; an intention of doing good unto any one upon the performance of such a condition as the intender knows is absolutely above the strength of him of whom it is required, — especially if he know that it can no way be done but by his concurrence, and he is resolved not to yield that assistance which is necessary to the actual accomplishment of it, — is a vain fruitless flourish. That Christ, then, should obtain of his Father eternal redemption, and the Lord should through his Son intend it for them who shall never be made partakers of it, because they cannot perform, and God and Christ have purposed not to bestow, the condition on which alone it is to be made actually theirs, is unworthy of Christ, and unprofitable to them for whom it is obtained; which that anything that Christ obtained for the sons of men should be unto them, is a hard saying indeed. Again; if God through Christ purpose to save all if they do believe, because he died for all, and this faith be not purchased by Christ, nor are men able of themselves to believe, how comes it to pass that any are saved?

[If it be answered], “God bestows faith on some, not on others,” I reply, Is this distinguishing grace purchased for those some comparatively, in respect of those that are passed by without it? If it be, then did not Christ die equally for all, for he died that some might have faith, not others; yea, in comparison, he cannot be said to die for those other some at all, not dying that they might have faith,

without which he knew that all the fulfilled, and which help he purposed not to grant, let all judge. Is this anything but to delude poor creatures? Is it possible that rest would be unprofitable and fruitless. But is it not purchased for them by Christ? **Then have those that be saved no more to thank Christ for than those that are damned; which were strange, and contrary to [Rev. i. 5, 6](#), “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” etc. For my part, I do conceive that Christ hath obtained salvation for men, not upon condition if they would receive it, but so fully and perfectly that certainly they should receive it.** He purchased salvation, to be bestowed on them that do believe; but withal faith, that they might believe. Neither can it be objected, that, according to our doctrine, God requires anything of men that they cannot do, yea, faith to believe in Christ: for, — *First*, **Commands do not signify what is God’s intention should be done, but what is our duty to do;** which may be made known to us whether we be able to perform it or not: it signifieth no intention or purpose of God. *Secondly*, For the promises which are proposed together with the command to believe:— *First*, they do not hold out the intent and purpose of God, that Christ should die for us if we do believe; which is absurd, — that the act should be the constituter of its own object, which must be before it, and is presupposed to be before we are desired to believe it: nor, *secondly*, the purpose of God that the death of Christ should be profitable to us if we do believe; which we before confuted: but, *thirdly*, only that faith is the way to salvation which God hath appointed; so that all that do believe shall undoubtedly be saved, these two things, faith and salvation, being inseparably linked together, as shall be declared.

Arg. IV. If all mankind be, in and by the eternal purpose of God, distinguished into two sorts and conditions, severally and distinctly described and set forth in the Scripture, and Christ be peculiarly affirmed to die for one of these sorts, and nowhere for them of the other, then did he not die for all; for of the one sort he dies for all and every one, and of the other for no one at all. But, —

First, There is such a discriminating distinguishment among men, by the eternal purpose of God, as those whom he “loves” and those whom he “hates,” [Rom. ix. 13](#); whom he “knoweth,” and whom he “knoweth not:” [John x. 14](#), “I know my sheep;” [2 Tim. ii. 19](#), “The Lord knoweth them that are his;” [Rom. viii. 29](#), “Whom he did foreknow;” [chap. xi. 2](#), “His people which he foreknew;” “I know you not,” [Matt. xxv. 12](#): so [John xiii. 18](#), “I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen.” Those that are appointed to life and glory, and those that are appointed to and fitted for destruction, — “elect” and “reprobate;” those that were “ordained to eternal life,” and those who “before were of old ordained to condemnation:” as [Eph. i. 4](#), “He hath chosen us in him;” [Acts xiii. 48](#), “Ordained to eternal life;” [Rom. viii. 30](#), “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” So, on the other side, [1 Thess. v. 9](#), “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation;” [Rom. ix. 18–21](#), “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?” [Jude 4](#), “Ordained to this condemnation;” [2 Pet. ii. 12](#), “Made to be taken and destroyed;” “Sheep and goats,” [Matt. xxv. 32](#); [John x.](#) passim. Those on whom he hath “mercy,” and those whom he “hardeneth,” [Rom. ix. 18](#). Those that are his “peculiar people” and “the children of promise,” that are “not of the world,” his “church;” and those that, in opposition to them, are “the world,” “not prayed for,” “not his people:”

as [Tit. ii. 14](#); [Gal. iv. 28](#); [John xv. 19, xvii. 9](#); [Col. i. 24](#); [John xi. 52](#); [Heb. ii. 10, 12, 13](#). Which distinction of men is everywhere ascribed to the purpose, will, and good pleasure of God: [Prov. xvi. 4](#), "The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." [Matt. xi. 25, 26](#), "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." [Rom. ix. 11, 12](#), "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." [Verses 16, 17](#), "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." [Chap. viii. 28–30](#), "Who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified." So that the first part of the proposition is clear from the Scripture.

Now, Christ is said expressly and punctually to die for them on the one side: for his "people," [Matt. i. 21](#); his "sheep," [John x. 11, 14](#); his "church," [Acts xx. 28](#), [Eph. v. 25](#), as distinguished from the world, [Rom. v. 8, 9](#), [John xi. 51, 52](#); his "elect," [Rom. viii. 32–34](#); his "children," [Heb. ii. 12, 13](#); — as before more at large. Whence we may surely conclude that Christ died not for all and every one, — to wit, not for those he "never knew," whom he "hateth," whom he "hardeneth," on whom he "will not show mercy," who "were before of old ordained to condemnation;" in a word, for a reprobate, for the world, for which he would not pray. That which some except, that though Christ be said to die for his "sheep," for his "elect," his "chosen," yet he is not said to die for them only, — that term is nowhere expressed, is of no value; for is it not without any forced interpretation, in common sense, and according to the usual course of speaking, to distinguish men into two such opposite conditions as elect and reprobate, sheep and goats, and then affirm that he died for his elect, [is it not] equivalent to this, he died for his elect only? Is not the sense as clearly restrained as if that restrictive term had been added? Or is that term always added in the Scripture in every indefinite assertion, which yet must of necessity be limited and restrained as if it were expressly added? as where our Saviour saith, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," [John xiv. 6](#); — he doth not say that he only is so, and yet of necessity it must be so understood. As also in that, [Col. i. 19](#), "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" — he doth not express the limitation "only," and yet it were no less than blasphemy to suppose a possibility of extending the affirmation to any other. So that this exception, notwithstanding this argument, is, as far as I can see, unanswerable; which also might be farther urged by a more large explication of God's purpose of election and reprobation, showing how the death of Christ was a means set apart and appointed for the saving of his elect, and not at all undergone and suffered for those which, in his eternal counsel, he did determine should perish for their sins, and so never be made partakers of the benefits thereof. But of this more must be spoken, if the Lord preserve us, and give assistance for the other part of this controversy, concerning the cause of sending Christ.

Arg. V. That is not to be asserted and affirmed which the Scripture doth not anywhere go before us in; but the Scripture nowhere saith Christ died for all men, much less for all and every man (between which two there is a wide difference, as shall be declared): therefore, this is not to be asserted. It is

true, Christ is said to give his life “a ransom for all,” but nowhere for all men. And because it is affirmed expressly in other places that he died for many, for his church, for them that believe, for the children that God gave him, for us, some of all sorts, though not expressly, yet clearly in terms equivalent, [Rev. v. 9, 10](#), it must be clearly proved that where all is mentioned, it cannot be taken for all believers, all his elect, his whole church, all the children that God gave him, some of all sorts, before a universal affirmative can be thence concluded. And if men will but consider the particular places, and contain themselves until they have done what is required, we shall be at quiet, I am persuaded, in this business.

Arminianism Defined

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This is an excellent definition of Arminianism, part of the introduction to John Owen's book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* by John Owen

Reader,

There are two rotten pillars on which the fabric of late Arminianism (an egg of the old Pelagianism, which we had well hoped had been long since chilled, but is sit upon and brooded by the wanton wits of our degenerate and apostate spirits) doth principally stand.

The one is, That God loveth all alike, Cain as well as Abel, Judas as the rest of the apostles.

The other is, That God giveth (nay is bound, “*ex debito*,” so to do) both Christ, the great gift of his eternal love, for all alike to work out their redemption, and “*vires credendi*,” power to believe in Christ to all alike to whom he gives the gospel; whereby that redemption may effectually be applied for their salvation, if they please to make right use of that which is so put into their power.

The former destroys the free and special grace of God, by making it universal; the latter gives cause to man of glorying in himself rather than in God, — God concurring no farther to the salvation of a believer than a reprobate. Christ died for both alike; — God giving power of accepting Christ to both alike, men themselves determining the whole matter by their free-will; Christ making both savable, themselves make them to be saved.

This cursed doctrine of theirs crosseth the main drift of the holy Scripture; which is to abase and pull down the pride of man, to make him even to despair of himself, and to advance and set up the glory of God’s free grace from the beginning to the end of man’s salvation. His hand hath laid the foundation of his spiritual house; his hand shall also finish it.

The reverend and learned author of this book hath received strength from God (like another Samson) to pull down this rotten house upon the head of those Philistines who would uphold it. Read it diligently, and I doubt not but you will say with me, there is such variety of choice matter running through every vein of each discourse here handled, and carried along with such strength of sound and deep judgment, and with such life and power of a heavenly spirit, and all expressed in such pithy and pregnant words of wisdom, that you will both delight in the reading and praise God for the writer. That

both he and it may be more and more profitable shall be my hearty prayers. — The unworthiest of the ministers of the gospel, Stanley Gower.[2](#)

Impetration, Oblation and Intercession of Christ

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The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

By John Owen

Book II p70

Chapter VII.

Containing reasons to prove the oblation and intercession of Christ to be one entire means respecting the accomplishment of the same proposed end, and to have the same personal object.

Book II p120

Chapter V.

Of application and impetration.

The allowable use of this distinction, how it may be taken in a sound sense, the several ways whereby men have expressed the thing which in these words is intimated, and some arguments for the overthrowing of the false use of it, however expressed, we have before intimated and declared. Now, seeing that this is the $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu$ $\psi\epsilon\ddot{\upsilon}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ of the opposite opinion, understood in the sense and according to the use they make of it, I shall give it one blow more, and leave it, I hope, a-dying.

I shall, then, briefly declare, that although these two things may admit of a distinction, **yet they cannot of a separation, but that for whomsoever Christ obtained good, to them it might be applied; and for whomsoever he wrought reconciliation with God, they must actually unto God be reconciled.** So that the blood of Christ, and his death in the virtue of it, cannot be looked on, as some do, as a medicine in a box, laid up for all that shall come to have any of it, and so applied now to one, then to another, without any respect or difference, as though it should be intended no more for one than for another; so that although he hath obtained all the good that he hath purchased for us, yet it is left indifferent and uncertain whether it shall ever be ours or no: for it is well known, that notwithstanding those glorious things that are assigned by the Arminians to the death of Christ, which they say he purchased for all, as remission of sins, reconciliation with God, and the like, yet they for whom this purchase and procurement is made may be damned, as the greatest part are, and certainly shall be. Now, that there should be such a distance between these two, —

First, It is contrary to common sense or our usual form of speaking, which must be wrested, and our understandings forced to apprehend it. When a man hath obtained an office, or any other obtained it for him, can it be said that it is uncertain whether he shall have it or no? If it be obtained for him, is it not his in right, thorough perhaps not in possession? That which is impetrated or obtained by petition is his by whom it is obtained. It is to offer violence to common sense to say a thing may be a man's, or it may not be his, when it is obtained for him; for in so saying we say it is his. And so it is in the purchase made by Jesus Christ, and the good things obtained by him for all them for whom he died.

Secondly, It is contrary to all reason in the world, that the death of Christ, in God's intention, should be applied to any one that shall have no share in the merits of that death. God's will that Christ should die for any, is his intention that he shall have a share in the death of Christ, that it should belong to him, — that is, be applied to him; for that is, in this case, said to be applied to any that is his in any respect, according to the will of God. But now the death of Christ, according to the opinion we oppose, is so applied to all, and yet the fruits of this death are never so much as once made known to far the greatest part of those all.

Thirdly, [It is contrary to reason] that a ransom should be paid for captives, upon compact for their deliverance, and yet upon the payment those captives not be made free and set at liberty. The death of Christ is a ransom, [Matt. xx. 28](#), paid by compact for the deliverance of captives for whom it was a ransom; and the promise wherein his Father stood engaged to him at his undertaking to be a Saviour, and undergoing the office imposed on him, was their deliverance, as was before declared, upon his performance of these things: on that [being done, that] the greatest number of these captives should never be released, seems strange and very improbable.

Fourthly, It is contrary to Scripture, as was before at large declared. See [also book iii.] chap. x.

But now, all this our adversaries suppose they shall wipe away with one slight distinction, that will make, as they say, all we affirm in this kind to vanish; and that is this: "It is true," say they, "all things that are absolutely procured and obtained for any do presently become theirs in right for whom they are obtained; but things that are obtained upon condition become not theirs until the condition be fulfilled. Now, Christ hath purchased, by his death for all, all good things, not absolutely, but upon condition; and until that condition come to be fulfilled, unless they perform what is required, they have neither part nor portion, right unto nor possession of them." Also, what this condition is they give in, in sundry terms; some call it a not resisting of this redemption offered to them; some, a yielding to the invitation of the gospel; some, in plain terms, faith. Now, be it so that Christ purchaseth all things for us, to be bestowed on this condition, that we do believe it, then I affirm that, —

First, Certainly this condition ought to be revealed to all for whom this purchase is made, if it be intended for them in good earnest. All for whom he died must have means to know that his death will do them good if they believe; especially it being in his power alone to grant them these means who intends good to them by his death. If I should entreat a physician that could cure such a disease to cure all that came unto him, but should let many rest ignorant of the grant which I had procured of the physician, and none but myself could acquaint them with it, whereby they might go to him and be healed, could I be supposed to intend the healing of those people? Doubtless no. The application is easy.

Secondly, This condition of them to be required is in their power to perform, or it is not. If it be, then have all men power to believe; which is false: if it be not, then the Lord will grant them grace to perform it, or he will not. **If he will, why then do not all believe? why are not all saved?** if he will not, then this **impetration, or obtaining salvation and redemption for all by the blood of Jesus Christ**, comes at length to this:— *God intendeth that he shall die for all, to procure for them remission of sins, reconciliation with him, eternal redemption and glory; but yet so that they shall never have the least good by these glorious things, unless they perform that which he knows they are no way able to do, and which none but himself can enable them to perform, and which concerning far the greatest part of them he is resolved not to do.* Is this to intend that Christ should die for them for their good? or rather, that he should die for them to expose them to shame and misery? Is it not all one as if a man should promise a blind man a thousand pounds upon condition that he will see.

Thirdly, **This condition of faith is procured for us by the death of Christ, or it is not.** If they say it be not, then the **chiefest grace**, and without which redemption itself (express it how you please) is of no value, doth not depend on the grace of Christ as the meritorious procuring cause thereof; — which, first, **is exceedingly injurious to our blessed Saviour, and serves only to diminish the honour and love due to him**; secondly, is contrary to Scripture: **Tit. iii. 5, 6; 2 Cor. v. 21**, “He became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” And how we can become the righteousness of God but by believing, I know not. Yea, expressly saith the apostle, **“It is given to us for Christ’s sake, on the behalf of Christ, to believe in him,” Phil. i. 29**; “God blessing us with all spiritual blessing in him,” **Eph. i. 3**, whereof surely faith is not the least. **If it be a fruit of the death of Christ, why is it not bestowed on all, since he died for all, especially since the whole impetration of redemption is altogether unprofitable without it?** If they do invent a condition upon which this is bestowed, the vanity of that shall be afterward discovered. For the present, if this condition be, So they do not refuse or resist the means of grace, then I ask, if the fruit of the death of Christ shall be applied to all that fulfil this condition of not refusing or not resisting the means of grace? If not, then why is that produced? If so, then all must be saved that have not, or do not resist, the means of grace; that is, all pagans, infidels, and those infants to whom the gospel was never preached.

Fourthly, **This whole assertion tends to make Christ but a half mediator, that should procure the end, but not the means conducing thereunto.** So that, notwithstanding this exception and new distinction, our assertion stands firm, — **That the fruits of the death of Christ, in respect of impetration of good and application to us, ought not to be divided; and our arguments to confirm it are unshaken.**

For a close of all; that which in this cause we affirm may be summed up in this: Christ did not die for any upon condition, if they do believe; but he died for all God’s elect, that they should believe, and believing have eternal life. Faith itself is among the principal effects and fruits of the death of Christ; as shall be declared. **It is nowhere said in Scripture, nor can it reasonably be affirmed, that if we believe, Christ died for us, as though our believing should make that to be which otherwise was not, — the act create the object [which is essentially witchcraft]; but Christ died for us that we might believe. Salvation, indeed, is bestowed conditionally; but faith, which is the condition, is absolutely procured.** The question being thus stated, the difference laid open, and the thing in controversy made known, we proceed, in the next place, to draw forth some of those arguments, demonstrations, testimonies, and proofs, whereby the truth we maintain is established, in which it is contained, and upon which it is

firmly founded: only desiring the reader to retain some notions in his mind of those fundamentals which in general we laid down before; they standing in such relation to the arguments which we shall use, that I am confident not one of them can be thoroughly answered before they be everted.

Universalism Explained - Arguments Against It

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The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

by **John Owen**

Book 3 Ch 1 p124-126

Book III Chapter I.

Arguments against the universality of redemption — The two first; from the nature of the new covenant, and the dispensation thereof.

Argument I. The first argument may be taken from the nature of the covenant of grace, which was established, ratified, and confirmed in and by the death of Christ; that was the testament whereof he was the testator, which was ratified in his death, and whence his blood is called “The blood of the new testament,” [Matt. xxvi. 28](#). Neither can any effects thereof be extended beyond the compass of this covenant. But now this covenant was not made universally with all, but particularly only with some, and therefore those alone were intended in the benefits of the death of Christ.

The assumption appears from the nature of the covenant itself, described clearly, [Jer. xxxi. 31, 32](#), “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them, saith the Lord;” — and [Heb. viii. 9–11](#), “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Wherein, first, the condition of the covenant is not said to be required, but it is **absolutely promised**: “I will put my fear in their hearts.” **And this is the main difference between the old covenant of works and the new one of grace, that in that the Lord did only require the fulfilling of the condition prescribed, but in this be promiseth to effect it in them himself with whom the covenant is made.** **And without this spiritual efficacy, the truth is, the new covenant would be as weak and unprofitable, for the end of a covenant (the bringing, of us and binding of us to God), as the old.** For in what consisted the weakness and unprofitableness of the old covenant, for which God in his mercy

abolished it? Was it not in this, because, by reason of sin, we were no way able to fulfil the condition thereof, “Do this, and live?” Otherwise the connection is still true, that “he that doeth these things shall live.” And are we of ourselves any way more able to fulfil the condition of the new covenant? Is it not as easy for a man by his own strength to fulfil the whole law, as to repent and savingly believe the promise of the gospel? This, then, is one main difference of these two covenants, — that the Lord did in the old only require the condition; now, in the new, he will also effect it in all the federates, to whom this covenant is extended. And if the Lord should only exact the obedience required in the covenant of us, and not work and effect it also in us, the new covenant would be a show to increase our misery, and not a serious imparting and communicating of grace and mercy. If, then, this be the nature of the new testament, — as appears from the very words of it, and might abundantly be proved, — that the condition of the covenant should certainly, by free grace, be wrought and accomplished in all that are taken into covenant, then no more are in this covenant than in whom those conditions of it are effected.

But thus, as is apparent, it is not with all; for “all men have not faith,” — it is “of the elect of God:” therefore, it is not made with all, nor is the compass thereof to be extended beyond the remnant that are according to election. Yea, every blessing of the new covenant being certainly common, and to be communicated to all the covenantees, either faith is none of them, or all must have it, if the covenant itself be general. But some may say that it is true God promiseth to write his law in our hearts, and put his fear in our inward parts; but it is upon condition. Give me that condition, and I will yield the cause. Is it if they do believe? Nothing else can be imagined. That is, if they have the law written in their hearts (as everyone that believes hath), then God promiseth to write his law in their hearts! Is this probable, friends? is it likely? I cannot, then, be persuaded that God hath made a covenant of grace with all, especially those who never heard a word of covenant, grace, or condition of it, much less received grace for the fulfilling of the condition; without which the whole would be altogether unprofitable and useless. The covenant is made with Adam, and he is acquainted with it, [Gen. iii. 15](#), — renewed with Noah, and not hidden from him, — again established with Abraham, accompanied with a full and rich declaration of the chief promises of it, [Gen. xii.](#); which is most certain not to be effected towards all, as afterwards will appear. Yea, that first distinction, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is enough to overthrow the pretended universality of the covenant of grace; for who dares affirm that God entered into a covenant of grace with the seed of the serpent?

Most apparent, then, it is that the **new covenant of grace**, and the **promises thereof**, are all of them of **distinguishing mercy**, restrained to the people whom God did foreknow; and so not extended universally to all. Now, the blood of Jesus Christ being the blood of this covenant, and his oblation intended only for the procurement of the good things intended and promised thereby, — for he was the surety thereof, [Heb. vii. 22](#), and of that only, — it cannot be conceived to have respect unto all, or any but only those that are intended in this covenant.

pg 304-309

1. Begin we with the first, — that the extending of the death of Christ unto a universality, in respect of the object, hath nothing in it, as peculiar unto it, that can give the least ground of consolation unto them whom God would have to be comforted. **That gospel consolation, properly so called, being a fruit of actual reconciliation with God, is proper and peculiar only to believers**, I laid down before, and suppose it to be a truth out of all question and debate. Now, that no consolation can be made out to them as such, from any thing which is peculiar to the persuasion of a general ransom, is easily proved by these following reasons:—

(1.) No consolation can arise unto believers from that which is nowhere in the Scripture proposed as a ground, cause, or matter of consolation, as the general ransom is not: for, — first, That which hath no being can have no affection nor operation; secondly, All the foundations and materials of consolation are things particular, and peculiar only to some, as shall be declared.

(2.) No consolation can accrue unto believers from that which is common unto them with those whom, — first, God would not have comforted; secondly, that shall assuredly perish to eternity; thirdly, that stand in open rebellion against Christ; fourthly, that never hear one word of gospel or consolation. Now, to all these, and such as these, doth the foundation of consolation, as proposed with and arising from the general ransom, equally appertain with the choicest of believers.

(3.) Let a man try in the time, not of disputation, but of desertion and temptation, what consolation or peace to his soul he can obtain from such a collection as this, “Christ died for all men; I am a man: therefore, Christ died for me.” Will not his own heart tell him, that notwithstanding all that he is assured of in that conclusion, the wrath of God may abide on him for evermore? Doth he not see that, notwithstanding this, the Lord showeth so little love unto millions of millions of the sons of men, of whom the former collection (according to the present opinion) is true as well as of himself, as that he doth not once reveal himself or his Son unto them? **What good will it do me to know that Christ died for me, if notwithstanding that I may perish forever? If you intend me any consolation from that which is common unto all, you must tell me what it is which all enjoy which will satisfy my desires, which are carried out after assurance of the love of God in Christ.** If you give me no more to comfort me than what you give, or might have given, to Judas, can you expect I should receive settlement and consolation? Truly, miserable comforters are ye all, physicians of no value, Job’s visitors, — skillful only to add affliction unto the afflicted.

“But be of good comfort,” will **Arminians** say; “Christ is a propitiation for all sinners, and now thou knowest thyself so to be.” Ans. True; but is Christ a propitiation for all the sins of those sinners? If so, how can any of them perish? If not, what good will this do me, whose sins perhaps (as unbelief) are such as for which Christ was not a propitiation? “But exclude not thyself; God excludeth none; the love which caused him to send his Son was general towards all.” Tell not me of God’s excluding; I have sufficiently excluded myself. Will he powerfully take me in? Hath Christ not only purchased that I shall be admitted, but procured me ability to enter into his Father’s arms? “Why, he hath opened a door of salvation to all.” Alas! is it not a vain endeavour, to open a grave for a dead man to come out? Who lights a candle for a blind man to see by? To open a door for him to come out of prison who is blind, and lame, and bound, yea dead, is rather to deride his misery than to procure him liberty. Never tell

me that will yield me strong consolation, under the enjoyment whereof the greatest portion of men perish everlastingly.

2. The opinion concerning a general ransom is so far from yielding firm consolation unto believers from the death of Christ, that it quite overthrows all the choice ingredients of strong consolation which flow there hence; and that, — first, **By strange divisions and divulsions of one thing from another, which ought to be conjoined to make up one certain foundation of confidence;** secondly, By denying the efficacy of his death towards them for whom he died: both which are necessary attendants of that persuasion.

First, They so divide the impetration of redemption and the application thereof, — the first being in their judgments the only proper immediate fruit and effect of the death of Christ, — that the one may belong to millions who have no share in the other; yea, that redemption may be obtained for all, and yet no one have it so applied unto them as to be saved thereby. Now, the first of these, such as it is, is an **ineffectual possible redemption**, notwithstanding which all the sons of men might perish everlastingly, being the whole object of the death of Christ (as is asserted), **separated and divided from all such application of redemption unto any as might make it profitable and useful in the least measure** (for they deny this application to be a fruit of the death of Christ; if it were, why is it not common to all for whom he died?) What comfort this can in the least degree afford to any poor soul will not dive into my apprehension. “What shall I do?” saith the sinner; “the iniquity of my heels compasseth me about. I have no rest in my bones by reason of my sin: and now, whither shall I cause my sorrow to go?” Be of good cheer; Christ died for sinners. “Yea, but shall the fruits of his death be certainly applied unto all them for whom he died? If not, I may perish forever.” Here let them that can, answer him, according to the principles of Universalists, without sending him to his own strength in believing, or that which, in the close, will be resolved into it, “et erit mihi magnus Apollo:” and if they send him thither, they acknowledge the consolation concerning which they boast properly to proceed from ourselves, and not from the death of Christ.

Secondly, Their separating between the oblation and intercession of Jesus Christ makes little for the consolation of believers, yea, indeed, quite everts it.

There are, amongst others, two eminent places of Scripture wherein the Holy Ghost holdeth forth consolation to believers, **against these two general causes of all their troubles and sorrows, — namely, their afflictions and their sins.** The first is [Rom. viii. 32–34](#), the other [1 John ii. 1, 2](#); in both which places the apostles make the bottom of the consolation which they hold out to believers in their afflictions and failings to be that strait bond and **inseparable connection that is between these two, with the identity of their objects, — namely, the oblation and intercession of Jesus Christ.** Let the reader consult both the texts, and he shall find that on this lies the stress, and herein consists the strength, of the several proposals for the consolation of believers; which, in both places, is principally intended. A more direct undertaking for this end and purpose cannot be produced. Now, the authors of universal redemption do all of them divide and separate these two; they allow of no connection between them, nor dependence of one upon another, farther than is effected by the will of man. His oblation they stretch to all; his intercession to a few only. Now, the death of Christ, separated from his resurrection and intercession, being nowhere proposed as a ground of consolation, yea, positively declared to be

unsuitable to any such purpose, [1 Cor. xv. 14](#), certainly they who hold it out as so done are no friends to Christian consolation.

*Thirdly, **Their denial of the procurement of faith, grace, holiness, — the whole intendment of the new covenant,** — and **perseverance therein,** by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ, unto all them, or any of them, for whom he died, doth not appear to be so suitable an assertion for to raise consolation from his cross as is vainly pretended. I pray, **what solid consolation can be drawn from such dry breasts as from whence none of these things do flow?** That they have not immediate dependence on the death of Christ, according to the persuasion of the assertors of universal grace, hath been before declared, and is by themselves not only confessed, but undertaken to be proved. Now, where should a soul look for these things, but in the purchase of Christ? Whence should they flow, but from his side? Or is there any consolation to be had without them? Is not the strongest plea for these things, at the throne of grace, the procurement of the Lord Jesus? What promise is there of anything without him? **Are not all the promises of God yea and amen in him? Is there any attainment of these things in our own strength? Is this the consolation you afford us, to send us from free grace to free will?** Whither, I pray, according to this persuasion, should a poor soul go that finds himself in want of these things? “To God, who gives all freely.” But doth God bless us with any spiritual blessings but only in Jesus Christ? Doth he bless us with anything in him but what he hath procured for us? **Is not all grace as well procured by as dispensed in a Mediator? Is this a way to comfort a soul, and that from the death of Christ, to let him know that Christ did not procure those things for him without which he cannot be comforted?** “Credat Apella.”*

It is, then, most apparent, that the general ransom (which is pretended) is so far from being the bottom of any solid consolation unto them whose due it is, that it is directly destructive of, and diametrically opposed unto, all those ways whereby the Lord hath declared himself willing that we should receive comfort from the death of his Son, drying up the breast from whence, and poisoning the streams whereby, it should be conveyed unto our souls.

3. The next thing we have to do is, to manifest that the doctrine of the **effectual redemption of the elect only** by the blood of Jesus is not liable to any just exception as to this particular, nor doth any way abridge believers of any part or portion of that consolation which God is willing they should receive. That alone which, by the opposers of it, with any colour of reason, is objected (for as for the exclamation of shutting out innumerable souls from any share in the blood of Christ, seeing confessedly they are reprobate unbelievers and persons finally impenitent, we are not at all moved at it), comes to this head:— “That there is nothing in the Scripture whereby any man can assure himself that Christ died for him in particular, unless we grant that he died for all.”

*First, **That this is notoriously false,** the experience of all believers who, by the grace of God, have assured their hearts of their share and interest in Christ as held out unto them in the promise, without the least thought of universal redemption, is a sufficient testimony. Secondly, That the assurance arising from a practical syllogism, whereof one proposition is true in the word, and the second by the witness of the Spirit in the heart, is infallible, hath hitherto been acknowledged by all. Now, such assurance may all believers have that Christ died for them, with an intention and purpose to save their souls. For instance: all believers may draw out the truth of the word and the faith created¹ in their*

hearts into this conclusion:— [First,] “Christ died for all believers,” — that is, all who choose him and rest upon him as an all-sufficient Saviour; not that he died for them as such, but that all such are of those for whom he died. He died not for believers as believers, though he died for all believers; but for all the elect as elect, who, by the benefit of his death, do become believers, and so obtain assurance that he died for them. [As] for such of those that are elected who are not yet believers, though Christ died for them, yet we deny that they can have any assurance of it whilst they continue such. You suppose it a foul contradiction, if a man should be said to have assurance that Christ died for him in particular, and yet continue an unbeliever. This first proposition, as in the beginning laid down, is true in the word, in innumerable places. Secondly, The heart of a believer, in the witness of the Spirit, assumes, “But I believe in Christ;” that is, “I choose him for my Saviour, cast and roll myself on him alone for salvation, and give up myself unto him, to be disposed of unto mercy in his own way.” Of the truth of this proposition in the heart of a believer, and the infallibility of it, there are also many testimonies in the word, as is known to all; from whence the conclusion is, “Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ died for me in particular, with an intention and purpose to save me.”

¹ Faith is created by God; Vos states: “He gives His covenant as a testament, establishes the covenant relationship, by creating grace.” p.301 Reformed Dogmatics [And as such is the case with all created things out of nothing, “implies the most perfect, absolute and universal derivation and dependence.” Jonathan Edwards. That is, even our faith is dependent upon the Spirit of God, Phil. 2:13. See the Doctrine of Concurrence]

This is such a collection as all believers, and none but believers, can justly make, so that it is peculiar to them alone; and unto those only is this treasure of consolation to be imparted. The sufficiency of the death of Christ for the saving of every one, without exception, that comes unto him, is enough to fill all the invitations and entreaties of the gospel unto sinners, to induce them to believe; which when, by the grace of Christ, they do, closing with the promise, the fore-mentioned infallible assurance of the intention and purpose of Christ to redeem them by his death, [Matt. i. 21](#), is made known unto them. Now, whether this be not a better bottom and foundation for a man to assure his soul unto rest and peace upon, than that reasoning which our opposers in this business must, suitably to their own principles, lay as a common stone, — namely, “Christ died for all men; I am a man: therefore Christ died for me,” — let any man judge; especially considering that indeed the first proposition is absolutely false, and the conclusion, if it could be true, yet, according to their persuasion, can be no more ground of consolation than Adam’s fall. All this is spoken not as though either one opinion or other were able of itself to give consolation, which God alone, in the sovereignty of his free grace, can and doth create; but only to show what principles are suitable to the means whereby he worketh on and towards his elect.

4. The drawing of gospel consolation from the death of Christ, as held out to be effectual towards the elect only, for whom alone he died, should close up our discourse; but considering, first, how abundantly this hath been done by divers eminent and faithful labourers in the vineyard of the Lord already; secondly, how it is the daily task of the preachers of the gospel to make it out to the people of God; thirdly, how it would carry me out, besides my purpose, to speak of things in a practical, so atheological way, having designed this discourse to be purely polemical; and, fourthly, that such things are no more expected nor welcome to wise and learned men, in controversies of this nature, than knotty, crabbed, scholastic objections in popular sermons and doctrinal discourses, intended

merely for edification, — I shall not proceed therein. Only, for a close, I **desire the reader to peruse that one place, Rom. viii. 32–34;** and I make no doubt but that he will, if not infected with the leaven of the error opposed, conclude with me, that if there be any comfort, any consolation, any assurance, any rest, any peace, any joy, any refreshment, any exultation of spirit, to be obtained here below, it is all to be had in the blood of Jesus long since shed, and his intercession still continued; **as both are united and appropriated to the elect of God, by the precious effects and fruits of them both drawn to believe and preserved in believing, to the obtaining of an immortal crown of glory, that shall not fade away.**

Μόνω σοφῷ Θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

The Meaning of the Word, *World*

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[An analysis of the word world by John Owen, The Death of Death in the Death of Christ; my comments in \[blue\]](#)

Book IV Ch II p213-217 (p325 online)

Secondly, The second thing controverted is the object of this love, pressed by the word “**world**;” which our adversaries would have to signify all and every man; we, **the elect of God scattered abroad in the world**, with a tacit opposition to the nation of the Jews, who alone, excluding all other nations (some few proselytes excepted), before the actual exhibition of Christ in the flesh, had all the benefits of the promises appropriated to them, [Rom. ix. 4](#); in which privilege now all nations were to have an equal share. To confirm the exposition of the word as used by the Universalists, nothing of weight, that ever yet I could see, is brought forth, but only the word itself; for neither the love mentioned in the beginning, nor the design pointed at in the end of the verse, will possibly agree with the sense which they impose on that word in the middle. Besides, how weak and infirm an inference from the word world, by reason of its ambiguous and wonderful various acceptations, is, we have at large declared before.

Three poor shifts I find in the great champions of this course, to prove that the word world doth not signify the elect. Justly we might have expected some reasons to prove that it signified or implied all and every man in the world, which was their own assertion; but of this ye have a deep silence, being conscious, no doubt, of their disability for any such performance. Only, as I said, three pretended arguments they bring to disprove that which none went about to prove, — namely, that by the world is meant the elect as such; for though we conceive the persons here designed directly men in and of the world, to be all and only God’s elect, yet we do not say that they are here so considered, but rather under another notion, as men scattered over all the world, in themselves subject to misery and sin. So that whosoever will oppose our exposition of this place must either, first, prove that by the world here must be necessarily understood all and every man in the world; or, secondly, that it

cannot be taken indefinitely for men in the world which materially are elect, though not considered under that formality. So that all those vain flourishes which some men make with these words, by putting the word elect into the room of the word world, and then coining absurd consequences, are quite beside the business in hand. Yet, farther, we deny that by a supply of the word elect into the text any absurdity or untruth will justly follow. Yea, and that flourish which is usually so made is but a bugbear to frighten weak ones; for, suppose we should read it thus, “God so loved the elect, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,” what inconvenience will now follow? “Why,” say they, “that some of the elect, whom God so loved as to send his Son for, may perish.” Why, I pray? Is it because he sent his Son that they might not perish? or what other cause? “No; but because it is said, that whosoever of them believeth on him should not perish; which intimates that some of them might not believe.” Very good! But where is any such intimation? God designs the salvation of all them in express words for whom he sends his Son; and certainly all that shall be saved shall believe. But it is in the word **whosoever**, which is **distributive** of the world into those that believe and those that believe not. **Ans.** First, If this word whosoever be **distributive**, then it is **restrictive** of the love of God to some, and not to others, — to one part of the distribution, and not to the other. And if it do not restrain the love of God, intending the salvation of some, then it is not distributive of the fore-mentioned object of it; and if it do restrain it, then all are not intended in the love which moved God to give his Son. Secondly, I deny that the word here is distributive of the object of God’s love, but only **declarative** of his end and aim in giving Christ in the pursuit of that love, — to wit, that all believers might be saved. So that the sense is, “God so loved his elect throughout the world, that he gave his Son with this intention, that by him believers might be saved.” And this is all that is by any (besides a few worthless cavils) objected from this place to disprove our interpretation; which we shall now confirm both positively and negatively:—

First, Our first reason is taken from what was before proved concerning the nature of that love which is here said to have the world for its object, which cannot be extended to all and everyone in the world, as will be confessed by all. Now, such is the world, here, as is beloved with that love which we have here described, and proved to be here intended; — even such a **love** as is, first, **the most transcendent and remarkable**; secondly, an **eternal act of the will of God**; thirdly, **the cause of sending Christ**; fourthly, **of giving all good things in and with him**; fifthly, **an assured fountain and spring of salvation to all beloved with it**. So that the world beloved with this love cannot possibly be all and everyone in the world.

Secondly, The word world in the **next verse**, which carries along the sense of this, and is a continuation of the same matter, being a discovery of the intention of God in giving his Son, must needs signify the elect and believers, at least only those who in the event are saved; therefore so also in this. It is true, the word world is three times used in that verse in a dissonant sense, by an inversion not unusual in the Scripture, as was before declared. It is the latter place that this hath reference to, and is of the same signification with the world in **verse 16**, **“That the world through him might be saved,”** — ἵνα σωθῆ, **“that it should be saved.”** It discovers the aim, purpose, and intention of God, what it was towards the world that he so loved, even its salvation. Now, if this be understood of any but believers, God fails of his aim and intention, which as yet we dare not grant.

Thirdly, It is not unusual with the Scripture to call God's chosen people by the name of the world, as also of all flesh, all nations, all families of the earth, and the like general expressions; and therefore no wonder if here they are so called, the intension of the place being to exalt and magnify the love of God towards them, which receives no small advancement from their being every way a world. **So are they termed where Christ is said to be their Saviour, John iv. 42; which certainly he is only of them who are saved. A Saviour of men not saved is strange.** Also [John vi. 51](#), where he is said to give himself for their life. Clearly, [verse 33](#) of the same chapter, he "giveth life unto the world:" which whether it be any but his elect let all men judge; for Christ himself affirms that he gives life only to his "sheep," and that those to whom he gives life "shall never perish," [chap. x. 27, 28](#). So [Rom. iv. 13](#), Abraham is said by faith to be "heir of the world;" who, [verse 11](#), is called to be father of the faithful. And [Rom. xi. 12](#), the fall of the Jews is said to be "**the riches of the world;**" which world compriseth only believers of all sorts in the world, as the apostle affirmed that the word bare fruit "in all the world," [Col. i. 6](#). This is that "world" which "God reconcileth to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," [2 Cor. v. 19](#); which is attended with blessedness in all them to whom that non-imputation belongeth, [Rom. iv. 8](#). And for divers evident reasons is it that they have this appellation; as, — First, to distinguish the object of this love of God from the nature angelical, which utterly perished in all the fallen individuals; which the Scripture also carefully doth in express terms, [Heb. ii. 16](#), and by calling this love of God $\phi\lambda\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\acute{\iota}\alpha$, [Tit. iii. 4](#). Secondly, To evert and reject the boasting of the Jews, as though all the means of grace and all the benefits intended were to them appropriated. Thirdly, To denote that great difference and distinction between the old administration of the covenant, when it was tied up to one people, family, and nation, and the new, when all boundaries being broken up, the fulness of the Gentiles and the corners of the world were to be made obedient to the sceptre of Christ. Fourthly, To manifest the condition of the elect themselves, who are thus beloved, for the declaration of the free grace of God towards them, they being divested of all qualifications but only those that bespeak them terrene, earthly, lost, miserable, corrupted. So that thus much at least may easily be obtained, that from the word itself nothing can be opposed justly to our exposition of this place, as hath been already declared, and shall be farther made manifest.

Fourthly, **If everyone in the world be intended, why doth not the Lord, in the pursuit of this love, reveal Jesus Christ to everyone whom he so loved? Strange! that the Lord should so love men as to give his only-begotten Son for them, and yet not once by any means signify this his love to them, as to innumerable he doth not! — that he should love them, and yet order things so, in his wise dispensation, that this love should be altogether in vain and fruitless! — love them, and yet determine that they shall receive no good by his love, though his love indeed be a willing of the greatest good to them!**

Fifthly, Unless ye will grant, — first, Some to be beloved and hated also from eternity; secondly, The love of God towards innumerable to be fruitless and vain; thirdly, The Son of God to be given to them who, first, never hear word of him; secondly, have no power granted to believe in him; fourthly, That God is **mutable** in his love, or else still loveth those that be in hell; fifthly, **That he doth not give all things to them to whom he gives his Son, contrary to [Rom. viii. 32](#);** sixthly, That he knows not certainly beforehand who shall believe and be saved; — unless, I say, all these blasphemies and absurdities be granted, it cannot be maintained that by the world here is meant all and every one of mankind, but only men in common scattered throughout the world, which are the elect.

The third difference about these words is, concerning the means whereby this love of the Father, whose object is said to be the world is made out unto them. Now, this is by believing, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων, — “that whosoever believeth,” or “**that every believer.**” The intention of these words we take to be, the designing or manifesting of the way whereby the elect of God come to be partakers of the fruits of the love here set forth, — namely, **by faith in Christ, God having appointed that for the only way whereby he will communicate unto us the life that is in his Son.** To this something was said before, having proved that the term whosoever is not distributive of the object of the love of God; to which, also, we may add these following reasons:—

First, If the object be here restrained, so that some only believe and are saved of them for whose sake Christ is sent, then this restriction and determination of the fruits of this love dependeth on the will of God, or on the persons themselves. If on the persons themselves, then make they themselves to differ from others; contrary to [1 Cor. iv. 7](#). If on the will of God, then you make the sense of the place, as to this particular, to be, “God so loved all as that but some of them should partake of the fruits of his love.” To what end, then, I pray, did he love those other some? Is not this, “Out with the sword, and run the dragon through with the spear?”

Secondly, Seeing that these words, that whosoever believeth, do peculiarly point out the aim and intention of God in this business, if it do restrain the object beloved, then the salvation of believers is confessedly the aim of God in this business, and that distinguished from others; and if so, the general ransom is an empty sound, having no dependence on the purpose of God, his intention being carried out in the giving of his Son only to the salvation of believers, and that determinately, **unless you will assign unto him a nescience of them that should believe.**

These words, then, whosoever believeth, containing a designation of the means whereby the Lord will bring us to a participation of life through his Son, whom he gave for us; and the following words, of having life everlasting, making out the whole counsel of God in this matter, subordinate to his own glory; it followeth, —

That God gave not his Son, — 1. For them who never do believe; 2. Much less for them who never hear of him, and so evidently want [lack] means of faith; 3. For them on whom he hath determined not to bestow effectual grace, that they might believe.

Let now the reader take up the several parts of these opposite expositions, weigh all, try all things, especially that which is especially to be considered, the love of God, and so inquire seriously whether it be only a general affection, and a natural velleity to the good of all, which may stand with the perishing of all and every one so beloved, **or the peculiar, transcendent love of the Father to his elect,** as before laid down; and then determine whether a general ransom, fruitless in respect of the most for whom it was paid, or the effectual redemption of the elect only, have the firmest and strongest foundation in these words of our Saviour; withal remembering that they are produced as the strongest supportment of the adverse cause, with which, it is most apparent, both the cause of sending Christ and the end intended by the Lord in so doing, as they are here expressed, are altogether inconsistent.

Dangers of False Doctrine, Arminianism

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by Thomas Shepard

This is heavy -

This is the danger of promoting or holding to false doctrine (e.g. Arminianism) or not preaching the whole council of God. And this would include a person just being satisfied with the elementary principles of Christ and not going into the mysteries of God...just staying or being content with staying on the surface of things. Angels desire to look into these mysteries; should we not also? hence 2Cor3:18, Rom. 12:1, etc. Mysteries include the hypostatic union, unconditional election, limited atonement, God's decrees, foreknowledge, freedom of the will, God's sovereignty, man's total dependence upon God morally and physically...the wisdom and way of salvation, the offices of Christ: prophet, king and priest, and so on. This is the problem of not preaching the whole council of God to the church (i.e., just preaching a sugar coated messages and stories or a message without salt so as not to offend); first, it plays to the carnal apprehensions of men and hence keeps them in bondage to their lusts; secondly, it does not feed the sheep. Such preaching is subject to God's displeasure as Jesus exhibited to the lawyers, "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." Lk 11:52.

And Matt 23:15, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

My comments in [blue]; Shepard's in red for emphasis

A Wholesome Caveat - A Time for Liberty

By Thomas Shepard - 1640s

pg 287-297

When people break covenant with God, and loathe him, then saith the Lord, I will not feed, and then he sets over them idol shepherds. [Wow!]

This is certain: when the soul will not subject itself to God, he goes about to subject God to him, nay, to his lusts. Is 43:24 "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." (KJV) For one of them must stoop, and a man would have the Lord be merciful, patient and pitiful to him, when he is in league with his lusts: now this the Lord will not do. [And this is the main reason why the sinner's prayer is a sham, a wicked presumption. It is a person, a *natural man*, wanting the Lord to stoop to him while he is yet still in league with his lusts! (see Ps50:16-) That is the real language of the heart of the person making this prayer; for this person is not saved while he is making this prayer, hence cannot *receive* or *know* anything truly spiritual (1Cor.2:14) the supposed object of his prayer. All he wants is what God has but does not truly want God for who he is. Hence the sinner's prayer or any attempt to come to God by a human prayer, is the height of man's rebellion and declaration of his independence from God and is

exceedingly provoking. The only way to God is by effectual vocation.] And hence, if he does not destroy him, he withdraws himself from serving of the creature, and hence other evils take hold of it, and bring it under. When Adam stood and was for God, all creatures served him, and the riches of God's goodness preserved him, the Lord communicated the sweet of his government or service to him; but when turned away from the right ways of God, now, if the Lord should serve him by governing of him in goodness, he should serve a lust, and bow to the creature, nay, to a lust, which is a viler thing than for one creature to fall down and worship another. Therefore, now, hence it comes to pass, because the Lord will not be a servant to any man's lust, there must be some other government that must seize upon them. [see Rom. 1:26] Hence set all the saints in the churches with their faces subjected to the Lord, his good will and righteous ways, and then his goodness shall flow down upon them in and through Christ; for otherwise we have nothing to do with good, but when we are set right for God. Hos. 2:19 "I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, and mercy," etc. The Lord will then command all creatures to be serviceable to his church and people. Ver. 21, 22 But on the contrary, misery must needs seize upon the soul that doth cast off the government of the Lord Jesus. Thus much for the general explication of the point. Now, in particular –

1. What is this government or service of God?
2. What is that bondage he captivates his unto?
3. Why doth the Lord do thus?

Ques. 1. What is this government or service of God which being shaken off, the Lord gives them over to bondage?

Ans. There is a double government of the Lord over his people.

1. Internal or inward, of which our Saviour speaks. Luke xvii 21. The kingdom of God (saith Christ) comes not by observation and outward pomp; "For behold the kingdom of God is within you." And this is nothing else in general, but when the Lord does by his Spirit in the word of his grace cause the whole soul willingly to submit and subject itself to the whole will of God so far as it is made known to it; this is the inward kingdom of God and government of Christ in the soul. Rom viii 14 "So many as are led by the Spirit are the sons of God." Ps cx 2 "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion," etc., 2 Cor. x 4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Ver. 5, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are mighty boisterous distempers but the Lord, when he comes in his kingdom, to sit upon the royal throne of the hearts of his people, now they fly; and this is the inward kingdom of Christ, like a poor subject pardoned and received to favor, he is before the face of the prince continually attending on him. Rev vii 14, 15 "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Ver. 15 "Therefore are they before the throne of God. and serve him day and night in his temple," etc. Now, this is meant in part by God's service in these days; do you think the Lord cared for thousands of rams? No, but to walk humbly. Micah vi. Did he care for temple and ordinances? No, but (Isa. 1:19) "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Neh. ix 20 "In these days he gave them his good Spirit to instruct them."

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2. External or outward, the end and instigation of which was to set up and help forward the inward; for external ordinances are nothing in themselves, mean things but as they are appointed and sanctified for this end, they are most glorious; and therefore Christ threatens the Jews (Matt xxi 43) that the kingdom should be taken from them. What was that? Surely not inward, for that they had, not but the outward and external means called God's kingdom; all these helps and means shall be taken from you and all laid ruinous. Now, his external kingdom of Christ is double.

1. The **external kingdom or government of God** by his church in the administration and execution, and subjection to the blessed ordinances of God, wherein the power and kingdom of Christ is seen; and thus, (Dan ii 44 45 vii 27) "It shall be given to the saints of the Most High," etc. Not to profane herds of beasts or cages of unclean birds, but to the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all the princes of the world shall subject themselves to this kingdom of Christ.

This outward kingdom Christ administereth amongst his people in this world: and this was part of the Lord's government over his people herein, though various from our form now.

2. Of the commonwealth which may have divers forms, and had in the time of Israel; but it receiving its law from God and governing for God, hence it was the government of God, and subjection hereunto was subjection and service to God himself. And hence. when the people cast off Samuel, 1 Sam viii 7, "They have not rejected thee but me." Rev xi 15, "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." For although the commonwealth of Israel was made up of the church and hence Josephus calls it a theocracy where the Lord governed and yet the same thing had divers (yootc-greek), forms and respects, and hence there was a diverse government then, and hence made diverse, 2 Chron xix 5 8 "Jehoshaphat sets judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities." Such is the wildness, boldness, and carelessness of men's hearts, that they do not only need laws but watchmen over them to see they be kept, and hence the Lord appointed some chief, some judges in every city, and also some in every village, as by proportion may be gathered, Exod xviii; every ten men had one over them. Now, this was the blessed wisdom of God to put all into sweet subordination one unto another for himself.

1. Everyone professing his name is made for God, for Christ, "as Lord of lords unto whom every knee must bow," and inwardly subject.

2. Hence the Lord (it being not good to leave man to himself) erects a kingdom of the church with his own power and authority and government in it for that end.

3. This being poor and shiftless against inward and outward revenge, hence the Lord sets up kingdoms of the world, which either rule for this end or these ends or not. If they do not, they are to answer it and shall one day to Christ, "whom God hath made head over all things to the church." Eph. i 22. If they do, then their government, judgment and kingdom is the Lord's in a special manner; and hence break the yoke of subjection to any one of these, you cast off Christ the Lord's government and service; and being so linked together, in truth if you break one you break all, and this will provoke the

Lord to make you kiss the clink, and to put your necks under iron bondage that refuse subjection to him.

Ques 2. What is that bondage or other government to which the Lord gives over his people when they have cast off his government: this will provoke the Lord if the Lord be cast off, and the casting off the government of Christ will bring the most famous kingdoms, churches and families into bondage; you will say, What is this bondage? When is it that the Lord takes his season for the execution of it?

Ans 1. The Lord takes his own times to do it; these were a twelvemonth before the Lord sent Shishak. Here he was more quick. Nebuchadnezzar comes at last, and many years it is before the Lord doth it.

2. The Lord is various in working as he is wonderful and hath divers ways or means of bondage, he hath more prisons and chains than one.

1. Sometimes the Lord opens the door of a kingdom or state for the inroad of some foreign, or it may be barbarous enemy, breaking in sometimes by power, coming in sometimes by craft, and then ruling like lions, which the Lord makes to vex and prick the people of God; thus here their lives were spared, but liberties lost. Thus, Judg. ii 13 14, "They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth;" and in verse 14, "The anger of the Lord waxed hot against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them." Ver 15, "Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil." And this the Lord doth many times suddenly, that one would never think that ever the Lord should be so sudden; the Lord can be as quick to punish as man to sin, and that [pg 291](#) unexpectedly. Eccl ix 12, "Man knows not his time, but is taken like fish in an evil net suddenly." Lam iv 12, "The kingdoms of the earth and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed." Judg. v 8, "They set up new gods and war was in the gate."

2. Sometimes the Lord turns the edge of that lawful authority God hath set over them against themselves, to be a heavy scourge from God upon them. Thus it was with Israel in Egypt, Ex i 8, 9 there arose a king which knew not Joseph, and it is said then they were oppressed. Thus Jeroboam, whom the ten tribes chose, (Hos v 11) he oppressed the people, he will be innovating, and this becomes their oppression. Thus the people under the reign of degenerate Solomon, (though their complaint might be in part unjust). Such is the venom of sin and unsubduedness to the kingdom of God, that the Lord turns light into darkness and makes an aching head matter of sorrow to all the state and body of people. Eccl x 16, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." And one man shall do a world of hurt, one Shebna or Amaziah, and this the Lord doth in justice many times for casting off his government justice many for casting off his government.

3. Sometimes the Lord gives a people up into the hands of one another to be mutual oppressors of each other, that a man's neighbor shall be his oppressor. Zech xi 9, "I will pity no more the inhabitants of the land, I will deliver them every one into his neighbor's hands. I will feed you no more; that which dieth, let it die, and that which is cut off, let it be cut off and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." Sometimes the Lord is pleased to send marvelous straits into a place that men are forced to imbondage themselves sometimes by words as bitter as death, as sharp as arrows; the Lord is pleased for the forsaking of his righteous ways, to make a man's self rip his own bowels, the father against the child, the master shall be a scourge to the servant, and the servant shall be a scourge to his master,

weary him of his life, the government of the Lord in a man's heart or family being cast off; (Micah vii 4 5), "Trust not in a friend." No greater bondage in the world than for men professing the Lord to be desperately set one against another.

4. By taking from a people all that righteous power of government the Lord hath set over them, when a people despising the Lord and inward government first, (for there all begins), and so not prizing what they have, nor praying for them, nor subjecting to them, the Lord hereupon sends some sickness or some other evil that they are either suddenly taken away or gradually; and when they are gone, all sink, or else such cross carriages that as Moses said, so say they, "I cannot bear this people." Thus Judges xxi 25 "Men did what was right in own eyes when there was no king in Israel." No state so miserable as an anarchy, when everyone is a slave, because everyone will be a master. Thus, Isa. 3:1,2,6, "Be a ruler to us." No, I will not undertake to rule. So 2Chron xv 3, 5, when without a teaching priest, then no peace at all; men will not be under government of them, you shall not have them; they shall rest in peace; and you shall then know the want of them.

5. By giving them over to Satan's and their own hearts' lusts, that seeing they will not serve the Lord, they shall serve their lusts and their sins, that now the Lord he hath left off chastising of men, and conscience shall check no more, prosper, saith the Lord, and go on in thy sin. Ps 81:12 "So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts and they walked after their own counsels." Rev 22:11, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still.'

When the Lord shall give a man over to Satan not only to winnow him, to let out the chaff and so to make the grain the purer, or to buffet them as he did Paul, but to insnare them and hold them, that he shall not only tempt, but his temptations shall take and not only take, but holds (2 Tim ii ult) "who are taken captive by him at his will;" taken alive, as a snare doth, that now a man is beyond the reach of all means, only peradventure God may give repentance. Is i 5, "Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt yet more and more." The Lord leaves smiting and says, Go on and prosper in thy sin; and which is the worst of all, Satan shall so Wind him and harden him, fill him with pride, passion, lying hatred of God's people, caviling against the Lord's ways of grace, slighting of his betters, despising of wholesome counsel from his dearest friends, that he knows not that gray hairs are upon him. And after this, when God hath cast out, it may be the church doth also, a most fearful bondage that the Lord gives such a soul over unto.

There are two reasons of this point which I collect only from the story in this chapter.

Reason 1. In regard of the righteous judgment of God. It is just and equal that he that will not be ruled by this blessed Lord Jesus, he should be ruled by his lusts; he that will not be in subjection to a merciful Christ, he should be in bondage to unmerciful men: this a humbled heart will acknowledge, as these do here. (Ver 6) They acknowledged the Lord to be righteous. Man being fallen, it had been righteous with God to have left all men as the angels that fell in chains of darkness forever. But among his church and people the Lord sends the gospel to proclaim liberty, and with it sends Christ with his Spirit, to come to the prison doors of poor sinners, to give repentance as well as remission of sins; and now, if they will not come out of their bondage, accept of the Lord's liberty, it is exceeding righteous to deal with them as we do with prisoners condemned to die; if the prince comes to the prison doors, and

says, I am come to give thee thy life, nay, and here is pardon, nay, favor, and to pull off thy chains also; now, if he says, No, I had rather be in prison, everyone will say it is just, and as it was in the year of jubilee, he that would not go free was to be a bondman forever. It is very righteous to give men their own choice; it is no wrong to let them have their own will: if, indeed, the laws of Christ were Draco's laws, hard and heavy, there were something to object; but they are most sweet, and for which of all other blessings men have cause to bless him. Ps cxlvii ult.

Reason 2. In regard of the mercy or merciful wisdom of the Lord toward his church and people, especially his peculiar ones, that hereby they keep the closer to the Lord, set a higher price upon the rules and government of the Lord, love his kingdom the more and the liberties thereof and use them better when they have them again, so here, "that they may know my service," etc. How sweet it is. Experience, we say, is the mistress of fools; such is the foolishness of men's hearts that men are many times never truly taught a truth till they are taught it by sense, Prov. v 11, "and thou mourn at last when thy flesh is consumed:" tell a man of all the glory of the saints, they never understand it till they feel it; tell men of the woe of their ways, they will not believe it till they see it. Ps xxxii 9, "Be not as the horse or mule, that hath no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Hos x 11, "Ephraim is like a heifer that is taught." Like untamed horses that will cast their rider unless they be held under and backed, and then they are gentle, so it is here; and truly it is long before a man can learn the sweet of Christ's government; hence Israel must be long in Egyptian bondage, and many long miseries, so that, if there be either justice or mercy in the Lord, he will do this and this point shall be true.

Use 1. Hence, then, see that the greatest liberty and sweetest liberty is to be under the government of Christ Jesus, although men do not think so; hence the Lord tells them here "they shall know my service:" they might have replied, "We do know it. No, till they be in bonds they know it not, nor can not learn it. So it is now; and hence, let men observe while they live loosely, and are guided by their own wisdom, for their own ends, according to their own will, at peradventures, at rovers, as they please, they do think this liberty very sweet and it is better than to be curbed in. But let the Lord strike an arrow in the heart of these wild bucks that have broke park and pale, send affliction and an iron yoke of sorrow upon them, or distress of conscience, if there be any sense and feeling left, they will bemoan themselves and say, **I did think my liberty sweet, but now I see it is bitter in a sinful way**, and the Lord's way was most sweet by their own confession. Hence Ps ii 3, "Let us break their bands," etc. But O, now hence learn this truth, and digest it thoroughly that the greatest liberty lies here. Do not, in thy judgment, think Christian liberty lies in being freed from the law as a rule of obedience in respect of the matter of it to be done, nor in thy practice. But know though thou didst meet with a thousand sorrows with it and griefs yet it is sweet. Christ's "yoke" Matt xi 30 "is easy and his burden light." What, when not a hole to hide his head in, when a reproach of men, a worm and no man, when he bore the Father's wrath? Yes, when he was meek under it, "Not mine but thy will be done," it was then most sweet, 1 Kings ix 21, 22 To be a servant to Solomon is no bondage, Ps cxix 32, "I will run, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Use 2. Hence see the reason why the Lord hath deprived his churches of their liberty, and his government over them at sundry times, and hath put them under iron yokes and bonds and sore pressures; the reason is shown; **they have either openly or more secretly cast off the government of**

the Lord; here hath been the very wound, the ail of all churches famous and glorious. Ps lxxxix 14 "O, that they had hearkened! I should then soon have subdued their enemies.' The cause is not so hard to find to a discerning spirit who is privy in any measure to the counsels of God, 1 Kings ix 8 9, Solomon hath a promise that "the Lord's eyes and heart shall be to his people" which are under him; but if once they slip the collar, then woe, and why? "Because they forsook the Lord that brought them out of Egypt;" they had liberty but they cast it off.

What do you think was the moving cause of all those bloody persecutions when the blood of dogs was more precious than of Christian churches? Were not they godly? Yes, I do not doubt of it. But as it was here, though humbled, they must be in bondage, because they had cast off the government of the Lord Jesus. And hence in the apostle's time evil times were come, sad apostasies from the truth, and because it was long before they were low enough. And hence, (Rev vi), till the fifth seal was opened; no crying, as it was with Israel in bondage, no prayer to purpose, and because the Lord saw they would abuse all liberties if they had them. And hence in Constantine's time when peace came in, contention came with it, and so abused all that their peace was their poison. And hence, in the primitive churches, they began to cast off the government of the Lord Jesus murmurings there were; hence came persecution; but they were a precious people and made blessed use of it. And the Lord couples their chief persecution with their rest. And it is said, Acts ix 31, "Then had the churches rest." etc.

And what do you think of the reason of the long reign of Antichrist, exalting himself above God and all that is called God, bringing the church under the heaviest bondage for body and soul that ever the earth saw. Men did not love the truth, either speculative to guide their minds, or practical to rule their wills, and hence left to this day.

What is the cause of bleeding Germany's woe? O, poor Germany! whence the gospel first brake out in its full strength, that now it is a field of blood, that men in woods like satyrs are afraid of men and men in cities glad to eat the entrails of beasts and sometimes the flesh of their own babes to preserve their lives. What, was there no evil. but the common condition of the church to be under the cross? Ask them, they cannot tell what ails them but curse the emperor and Swedes, etc. O, think of it with sorrow, in secret for them that know it not themselves, they have secretly, I say, secretly cast off the government of a merciful Christ, and hence are under the hand of unmerciful men.

What is the cause in our native country, notwithstanding all prayers and tears no deliverance? Truly men do not know it, but the Lord sees it, they know not how to use their liberty.

And for ourselves what shall I say? I cannot but bless God and wonder to see how it is with many and rejoice to see many precious holy ones to whom one day in God's court is sweeter than a thousand elsewhere; but I must profess, and cannot but mourn for others, men that were eminent under bondage but never worse than here; as if the Lord should say, Look, here be your eminent ones; look and fear and mourn, you ministers of my house; here be the people you had thought had been converted and that of all others such a one would never have fallen so; one an opinion takes him, another a lot, another loose company, another his lust, another goes proud, another fierce, another murmuring. What, should I name all? O, that my words might be healing! etc.

Use 3. Hence see what will become of us that are now under the government of the Lord, if ever we cast it off, either inward or outward, or both. We are not dearer to him than his people Israel here, nay, Judah. When old Israel, the great and numerous tribes of Israel, had set up calves, little Judah and Benjamin received the priests; and yet they fell, and were in bondage. I know we are not yet in bondage; yet it is not more unseasonable to speak now than for the Lord to Solomon, 1 Kings ix.

Quest. But there being much unsubduedness in the hearts of the best, how shall one know when there be such sins for which the Lord will cast from under his government?

Ans. 1 When men do not loathe their own hearts for the unprofitableness, but loathe God's ordinances secretly and grow weary of them as of their burdens because of the unprofitableness of them, when a people find not that special good by them, which recompenseth all losses, and so prize them, but lay blame on them because unfruitful to them, Mai iii 13. He speaks to a people got out of captivity, "Your words have been stout against me;" no, say, they, "It is in vain to serve the Lord; what profit is there in this?" You must conceive they had profit they many losses, were very poor, as ver. 11, a temptation which a proud heart can not endure above any; here is now no profit in mourning, fasting, etc., and God's own people began to think so; and hence ver 16, "Then they spake often one to another;" there was good effect of his sermon. Now what follows"? Chapter iv 1, Hence the wicked shall come and cut off branch and root in Antiochus's time; there is a burning day a coming that shall burn down house, root and branch; and hence, Matt xxi 43, "The kingdom shall be given to them that bring forth fruit." You will say, We do; no, thy own mouth shall condemn thee: you do not you find no good by all the ordinances of God and hence come those questions; what warrant for such an ordinance? The bottom is, they never felt good of it, and hence grow weary of it. Well, if it be your burden, the Lord will ease you of it.

2. When you see men (professing the fear of God) mutually naturally contentious and continuing so; I say contentious with saints which they say they love, and which they are by covenant bound to love, either from some conceived wrong, and hence can not forgive, as Christ doth them; or from a prejudice groundless opinion, They care not for me, nor I for them; or from a spirit of scornful censoriousness, what are such and such? or because distasted because of some reproof in their sin or by some opinion or by some worldly conveniency or laying out lots or restraint of some liberty, etc., or because of some sin; now can sit and censure; and I say, when this is mutual; for a godly man may be contended with, but he prays and mourns and pities, unless it be at some time, but when it shall continually abide so fierce and implacable, Eccles vii 9, "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." When a man shall be glad of an occasion of difference, that so he may depart and have something to quiet conscience for breach of covenant, that there can be no healing, but bellies of pigs are more dear than bowels of saints, and when quiet, upon the least occasion apt to pick holes and quarrel; now, it is time for the Lord to give over to another government. Zech xi 14 15, When brotherhood is broken, then an idol shepherd is set up. Ex ii, Moses was sent to deliver Israel, but he finds two Hebrews oppressed, striving, and must not be checked neither; well then farewell deliverance if you be of that spirit; you shall love one another better if ever the Lord doth that for you. It hath been the wisdom of some princes, when their subjects have been at civil wars, to call them forth to a common enemy, and there they can agree. O, brethren there is no sin like this and yet none so slighted. You shall know what it is

either by being yoked under enemies or sins; the first of these breaking bonds of union to Christ, the other with his members.

Use 4. Hence see the reason why many men are delivered up to the bondage of their own lusts, the most sad bondage and power of Satan, who have seemed to be delivered from it; truly they have cast off the government of the Lord. Men wonder why in this country men are more vile than ever they were, men that gave great hopes; the reason is this; they have seemed to be under Christ's government, but secretly cast it off; and hence filthy and vile lusts are their apparitors and pursuivants etc.

The Eternal Counsel of His Will – explained

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The implications. Particular redemption - limited atonement, consolation to all that believe explained, the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, the deceitfulness of sin, man's corruption and pretenses to unbelief. The cities of refuge explained. *Hope* explained.

Heb 6:17-20 John Owen, *Commentary on Hebrews* Vol. 21 pg 252-280

Ver. 17-20. — Wherein God, willing more abundantly to manifest unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed himself by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to deceive, we might have strong [prevailing] consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, both safe and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Sundry things are observable in these words. 1. The introduction unto the application of the foregoing discourse to the use of all believers. Wherein [we have], 2. The design of God in the confirmation of his promise by his oath; which was to “**manifest the immutability of his counsel.**” And this is amplified, (1.) By the frame, purpose, or mind of God therein; he was “willing.” (2.) By the manner how he would declare his mind herein; “more abundantly,” — namely, than could be done by a single promise. It gave not a further stability unto his word, but manifested his willingness to have it believed. 3. The persons are described unto whom God was thus willing to show the immutability of his counsel; who are “**the heirs of promise,**” — that is, all and only those who are so. 4. The way is expressed whereby God would thus manifest the immutability of his counsel; namely, “by two immutable things,” — that is, **his promise and his oath:** which, 5. Are proved to be sufficient evidences thereof, from the nature of him by whom they are made and given; it was “impossible that God should lie.” 6. The especial end of this whole design of God, with respect unto all the heirs of promise, is said to be that “they might have **strong consolation.**” 7. And thereon they are further described by the way

and means they use to obtain the promise and the consolation designed unto them therein; they “flee for refuge to the hope set before them.” 8. The efficacy whereof is declared from the nature of it, in comparison unto an anchor; “which we have as an anchor:” further amplified, (1.) From its properties, — it is “sure,” or “safe and steadfast;” and also, (2.) From its use, — “it enters into that within the veil.” 9. And this use is so expressed that occasion may be thence taken to return unto that from which he had digressed Hebrews 5:11, namely, the priesthood of Christ. And, 10. The mention thereof he so introduceth, according to his usual manner, as also to manifest the great benefit and advantage of our entering by hope into that within the veil; namely, (1.) Because Christ is there; (2.) Because he is entered thither as “our forerunner;” (3.) From the office wherewith he is there vested, “made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,” as he had declared, Hebrews 5:10: all which must be opened as they occur in the text.

1. *Ev ω*— that is, say many, *ἐφ' ᾧ* “for which cause.” Respect may be had unto the words immediately foregoing, “An oath” among men” is to them an end of all strife:” so a reason is thence inferred why God should interpose himself by an oath in this matter. And the words are rendered by some, as we have seen, “propter quod,” or “propterea;” “in” for “propter” is not unusual. And this then is the coherence, ‘Whereas mankind doth consent herein, that an **oath**, in things capable of no other proof or demonstration, shall end controversies, satisfy doubts, and put an issue to contradictions, differences, and strife; God took the same way, in an infinite gracious condescension, to give full satisfaction in this matter unto the “heirs of promise.” For what could they require further? Will they not rest in the oath of God, who in doubtful cases do and will acquiesce in the oaths of men? **What way could be more suited unto their peace and consolation?** And such is God’s love and grace, that he would omit nothing that might tend thereunto, though in such a way of condescension as no creature would, or could, or ought to have expected, before infinite wisdom and mercy had declared themselves therein.’ Or, this expression may respect the whole subject-matter treated of; and so the words are rendered “in quo,” or “in qua re;” “in which case or matter.” And this our translation seems to respect, rendering it “wherein.” Then the words direct unto the introduction of the end of God’s oath, expressed in the words following, ‘In this matter God sware by himself, that thereby the “heirs of promise,” might not only be settled in faith, but moreover receive therewithal strong consolation.’ And this import of the words we shall adhere unto.

Θεός βουλόμενος, “God willing.” Hereinto all that follows is resolved; it is all founded in the will of God. And two things may be denoted hereby: (1.) **The inclination and disposition of the mind of God; he was free**, he was not averse from it. This is that which is generally intended, when we say we are willing unto anything that is proposed unto us; that is, we are free, and not averse unto it. So may God be said to be willing, to have an inclination and an affection unto the work, or to be ready for it, as he speaks in another place, “with his whole heart, and with his whole soul,” Jeremiah 32:41. But although there be a truth herein, as to the mind and will of God towards believers and their consolation, yet it is not what is here peculiarly intended. Wherefore, (2.) **A determinate act and purpose of the will of God is designed herein**, Θεός βουλόμενος is “God purposing” or “determining.” So is the same act of God expressed by Θελων ο Θεος, Romans 9:22, — “What if God, willing to shew his wrath;” that is, purposing or determining so to do, And this Θεός βουλόμενος, as it respects το αμεταθετον της βουλης, is the same with χατα την βουλην του ζεληματος, Ephesians 1:11. Wherefore “God willing,” is

God in sovereign grace, and from especial love, freely “purposing” and “determining” in himself to do the thing expressed, unto the relief and comfort of believers.

The sovereign will of God is the sole spring and cause of all the grace, mercy, and consolation, that believers are made partakers of in this world. So is it here proposed; thereinto alone is all grace and consolation resolved. God wills it should be so. Man being fallen off from the grace and love of God, and being every way come short of his glory, had no way left, in nor by himself, to obtain any grace, any relief, any mercy, any consolation. **Neither was there any the least obligation on God, in point of justice, promise, or covenant, to give any grace unto, to bestow any mercy or favor upon, apostatized sinners; wherefore these things could have no rise, spring, or cause, but in a free, gracious act of the sovereign will and pleasure of God.** [That is the key which most oppose, i.e., Arminians, Catholics, etc.] And thereunto in the Scripture are they constantly assigned. Whether absolutely, that grace is bestowed on any, or comparatively, on one and not another, it is all from the will of God. “For herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,” 1 John 4:10. Christ himself, with all the grace and mercy we have by him, is from the free love and will of God. **So is our election**, Ephesians 1:4, 5; our vocation, 1 Corinthians 1:26, 27; our regeneration, John 1:13, James 1:18; our recovery from sin, Hosea 14:4; so is our peace and all our consolation; whence he is called “the God of all grace,” 1 Peter 5:10; and “the God of patience and consolation,” Romans 15:5; — the author and sovereign disposer of them all.

So is it also with respect unto grace and mercy considered comparatively, as collated on one and not on another, Romans 9:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 4:7. There is no other spring or fountain of any grace or mercy. **It may be some may hope to educe grace out of their own wills and endeavors, and to obtain mercy by their own duties and obedience** [e.g., the sinner's prayer or any other human prayer as opposed to being called; after conversion, this call, we are to seek God for more grace, but saving or converting grace is all from God's will and act and not of ourselves, our own merit or anything we do; we receive it and he enables us to do so - Eph. 2:8]; but the Scripture knows no such thing, nor do believers find it in their experience.

Let them who have received the least of grace and mercy know from whence they have received it, and whereunto they are beholding for it. [Hence, 1Cor.4:7: “For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?”] A due consideration of this sovereign spring of all grace and consolation will greatly influence our minds in and unto all the principal duties of obedience: such as thankfulness to God, Ephesians 1:3-5; humility in ourselves, 1 Corinthians 4:7; compassion towards others, 2 Timothy 2:25, 26.

Let those who stand in need of grace and mercy (as who doth not?) expect them wholly from the sovereign will and pleasure of God, James 1:5; who is “gracious unto whom he will be gracious” Our own endeavors are means in this kind for obtaining grace in the measures and degrees of it; **but it is the will of God alone that is the cause of it all**, 2 Timothy 1:9.

2. What God was thus willing unto is expressed; and that was “more abundantly to declare the immutability of his counsel.” And we may inquire concerning it, (1.) What is meant by the “counsel” of

God; (2.) How that counsel of God was and is “immutable;” (3.) How it was “declared” so to be; (4.) How it was “abundantly” so declared: —

(1.) **The “counsel” of God is the eternal purpose of his will**, called his counsel because of the infinite wisdom wherewith it is always accompanied. So that which is called the “**good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself**,” Ephesians 1:9, is termed “**the counsel of his own will**,” verse 11. Counsel among men, is a rational deliberation about causes, means, effects, and ends, according to the nature of things advised about, and the proper interests of them who do deliberate. In this sense counsel is not to be attributed unto God. **For as the infinite, sovereign wisdom of his being admits not of his taking counsel with any other; so the infinite simplicity of his nature and understanding, comprehending all things in one single act of his mind, allows not of formal counsel or deliberation.** The first, therefore, of these the Scripture explodes, Isaiah 40:13, Romans 11:34; and although in the latter way God be frequently introduced as one deliberating, or taking counsel with himself, it is not the manner of doing, but the effect, or the thing done, which is intended. So it is in like manner where God is said to hearken, to hear, to see; whereby his infinite knowledge and understanding of all things are intended, these being the mediums whereby we who are to be instructed do come to know and understand what so we do. Whereas, therefore, the end of counsel, or all rational deliberation, is to find out the true and stable directions of wisdom, the acts of the will of God being accompanied with infinite wisdom are called his counsel. **For we are not to look upon the purposes and decrees of God as mere acts of will and pleasure, but as those which are effects of infinite wisdom**, and therefore most reasonable, although the reasons of them be sometimes unknown unto us. Hence the apostle issueth his discourse of God’s eternal decrees of election and reprobation in an admiration of the infinite wisdom of God whence they proceeded, and wherewith they were accompanied, **Romans 11:33-36.**

In particular, the counsel of God in this place, is the holy, wise purpose of his will, to give his Son Jesus Christ to be of the seed of Abraham, for the salvation of all the elect, or heirs of promise; and that in such a way, and accompanied with all such good things, as might secure their faith and consolation. This is the counsel of God, which contained all the grace and mercy of the promise, with the securing them unto believers.

(2.) Of this counsel it is affirmed that it was “immutable,” not subject unto change. To ἀμεταθετον, is “quod μετατιθεσθαι nequit,” “that cannot be altered.” But the design of God here was, not to make his counsel unchangeable, but to declare it so to be; for all the purposes of God, all the eternal acts of his will, considered in themselves, are immutable. See Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 19:21, 21:30. **And their immutability is a necessary consequent of the immutability of the nature of God**, “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” James 1:17. “The Strength of Israel is not a man, that he should repent,” 1 Samuel 15:29. And in opposition unto all change or mutability, it is said of God, [Greek word] Psalm 102:27; which the apostle renders by Σὺ ὁ αὐτός εἰ, “Thou art He,” - always in all respects one and the same. Hence among the Jews [Hebrew word], “He,” is a name of God, expressing his immutable self-subsistence. But it will be said, that there are in the Scriptures many declarations of God’s altering his purposes and counsels, and repenting him of what he had before determined, being grieved at what he had done, Genesis 6:6; 1 Samuel:2:30.

It is agreed by all that those expressions of” repenting, “grieving,” and the like, are figurative, wherein **no such affections are intended as these words signify in created natures**, but only an event of things like that which proceedeth from such affections.

And as to the changes themselves expressed, the schoolmen say not amiss, “Vult Deus mutationem, non mutat voluntatem;” — “He willeth a change, he changeth not his will.”

But fully to remove these difficulties, the purposes of God and the counsels of his will may be considered either in themselves, or in the declaration that is made concerning their execution. In themselves they are absolutely immutable, no more subject unto change than is the divine nature itself. The declarations which God makes concerning their execution or accomplishment are of two sorts: —

[1.] There are some of them wherein there is necessarily included a respect unto some antecedent moral rule, which puts an express condition into the 315 declarations, although it be not expressed, and is always in like cases to be understood. Thus God commands the prophet to declare, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” Jonah 3:4. Here seems to be an absolute declaration of the purpose of God, without any condition annexed, a positive prediction of what he would do, and should come to pass. Either God must change his purpose, or Nineveh must be overthrown. [But whereas this destruction was foretold for sin, and impenitency therein, there was an antecedent moral rule in the case, which gives it as complete a condition as if it had been expressed in words; and that is, that repentance from sin will free from the punishment of sin. So that the prediction had this limitation, by an antecedent rule, “Unless they repent.” And God declares that this rule puts a condition into all his threatenings, Jeremiah 18:7, 8. And this was the course of God’s dealing with the house of Eli, 1 Samuel 2:30. **God doth neither suspend his purpose on what men will do, nor take up conditional resolutions with respect thereunto. He doth not purpose one thing, and then change his resolution upon contingent emergencies; for “he is of one mind, and who can turn him?”** Job 23:13 [comment: in other words, God is not the “great responder” as Edwards notes. Salvation is not something made available if man repents and believes as Arminians suppose (and in doing so deny man’s total depravity), from out of the goo the *sinner’s prayer* emerged, coming to God without being called.] Nor doth he determine that if men do so on the one hand, that he will do so; and if otherwise, that he will do otherwise. For instance, there was no such decree or purpose of God, as that if Nineveh did repent it should not be destroyed, and if it did not repent it should perish. For he could not so purpose unless he did not foresee what Nineveh would do; which to affirm is to deny his very being and Godhead. But in order to accomplish his purpose that Nineveh should not perish at that time, he threatens it with destruction in a way of prediction; which turned the minds of the inhabitants to attend unto that antecedent moral rule which put a condition into the prediction, whereby they were saved.

[2.] In the declaration of some of God’s counsels and purposes, as to the execution and accomplishment, there is no respect unto any such antecedent moral rule as should give them either limitation or condition. [similar to my comment above; God is not dependent upon what man does.] God takes the whole in such cases **absolutely on himself, both as to the ordering and disposing of all things and means unto the end intended.** Such was the counsel of God concerning the sending of his Son to be of the seed of Abraham, and the blessing that should ensue thereon. No alteration could possibly, on any account, be made herein, neither by the sin nor unbelief of them concerned, nor by anything that might befall them in this world. Such was the counsel of God, and such the immutability of it, here intended: as it was absolutely unchangeable in itself, so, as to man’s concern and interest in it, it was attended with no condition or reserve.

(3.) This immutability God was willing επιδειξαι, to “show,” “manifest,” “declare,” “make known.” It is not his counsel absolutely, but the immutability of his counsel, that God designed to evidence. His counsel he made known in his promise. **All the gracious actings of God towards us are the executing of his holy, immutable purposes**, Ephesians 1:11. And all the promises of God are the declarations of those purposes. **And they also in themselves are immutable; for they depend on the essential truth of God**: Titus 1:2, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” God’s **essential veracity is engaged in his promises**. And they are so expressly the declaration of his purposes, that when God had only purposed to give us eternal life in Christ, he is said to have promised it; namely, before the world began. And this declareth the nature of unbelief: “He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar,” 1 John 5:10; **because his essential truth is engaged in his promise**. And to make God a liar, is to deny his being; which every unbeliever doth as he is able. But whereas God intended not only the confirmation of the faith of the heirs of promise, but also their consolation under all their difficulties and temptations, he would give a peculiar evidence of the immutability of that counsel which they embraced by faith as tendered in the promise. For what was done did not satisfy the fullness of grace and love which he would declare in this matter, no, though it were done so “abundantly;” but, —

(4.) He would do it περισσοτερον, “more abundantly;” that is, beyond what was absolutely necessary in this case. The promise of God, who is the “God of truth,” is sufficient to give us security; nor could it be by us discovered how the goodness of God itself should require a further procedure. Yet because something further might be useful, for the reasons and ends before declared, he would add a further confirmation unto his word. And herein as the divine goodness and condescension are evidently manifested, so it likewise appears what weight God lays upon the assuring of our faith and confidence. For in this case he swears by himself, who hath taught us not so to use his name but in things of great consequence 317 and moment. This is the sense of the word if it respect the assurance given, which is “more abundant” than it could be in or by a single promise. But περισσοτερον may refer unto God himself, who gives this assurance; and then it is as muck as “ex abundantia:” — when God, who is truth itself, might justly have required faith of us on his single promise, yet, “ex abundantia,” from a superabounding love and care, he would confirm it by his oath. Either sense suits the apostle’s design.

3. It is declared who they were to whom God intended to give this evidence of the immutability of his counsel; and that is, τοις κληρονομοις της επαγγελιας, — to **“the heirs of promise;”** that is, **believers**, all believers both under the old and new testament. It may be, indeed, that those of the Hebrews were in the first place intended; **for unto them did the promise belong in the first place, as they were the natural seed of Abraham**, and unto them was it first to be declared and proposed upon its accomplishment, Acts 2:39, 3:25, 26, 13:46. But it is not they alone who are intended. **All the children of the faith of Abraham are heirs also**, Galatians 4:28, 29. It is therefore with respect unto all believers absolutely that God confirmed his promise with his oath, **though the natural seed of Abraham were respected in the first place**, until they cut off themselves by their unbelief. See Luke 1:72, 73; Micah 7:20.

Believers are called “**heirs of the promise**” on a double account: (1.) With respect unto the promise itself; (2.) With respect unto the matter of the promise, or the thing promised. This distinction is evidently founded on Hebrews 11:13, 17, 39, compared. For look in what sense they are said to be “heirs of the promise,” **therein they are not actually possessed of it; for an heir is only in expectancy of**

that whereof he is an heir. Wherefore take the promise in the first sense formally, and it is the **elect of God as such who are the heirs of it. God hath designed them unto an interest therein and a participation thereof; and he confirmed it with his oath, that they might be induced and encouraged to believe it, to mix it with faith, and so come to inherit it, or to be made actual partakers of it.** To this purpose our apostle disputeth at large, Romans 9:6-12. In the latter sense, taking the promise materially for the thing promised, they are heirs of it who have an actual interest in it by faith; and partaking of the present grace and mercy wherewith it is accompanied, as pledges of future glory, have a right unto the whole inheritance. **Thus all believers, and they only, are “heirs of the promise,”** Romans 8:17; “heirs of God,” — that is, of the whole inheritance that he hath provided for his children. And I take the words in this latter sense: for it is not the first believing of these heirs of the promise, that they might be justified, which is intended; **but their establishment in faith, whereby they may be comforted, or have “strong consolation.”** But whereas this declaration of the immutability of God’s counsel is made in the promise of the gospel, which is universal, or at least indefinitely proposed unto all, how it comes here to be cast under this limitation, **that it is made to elect believers, or the heirs of promise only**, shall be immediately declared.

4. What God did in this matter, for the ends mentioned, is summarily expressed; *εμεστευσεν ορχψ*, — “he interposed himself by an oath,” “fidejussit jurejurando.” He that confirmeth anything by an oath is “fidejussor,” — “one that gives security to faith.” And “fidejussor” in the law is interventor,” — “one who interposeth or cometh between and engageth himself to give security.” This state of things is therefore here supposed: — God had given out that promise whose nature we have before declared. Hereon he required the faith of them unto whom it was given, and that justly; for what could any reasonably require further, to give them sufficient ground of assurance? But although all things were clear and satisfactory on the part of God, yet many fears, doubts, and objections, would be ready to arise on the part of believers themselves; as there did in Abraham, unto whom the promise was first made, with respect unto that signal pledge of its accomplishment in the birth of Isaac. In this case, though God was no way obliged to give them further caution or security, **yet, out of his infinite love and condescension**, he will give them a higher pledge and evidence of his faithfulness, and interposeth himself by an **oath**. He mediated by an oath, — he interposed himself between the promise and the faith of believers, to undertake under that solemnity for the accomplishment of it; and swearing by himself, he takes it on his life, his holiness, his being, his truth, to make it good [i.e., He, Christ, is our surety]. The truths which from these words thus opened we are instructed in, are these that follow: —

Obs. I. The purpose of God for the saving of the elect by Jesus Christ is an act of infinite wisdom as well as of sovereign grace.

Hence it is called “the counsel of his will,” or an act of his will accompanied with infinite wisdom, which is the counsel of God. And among all the holy properties of his nature, the **manifestation of whose glory he designed therein**, there is none more expressly and frequently mentioned than his wisdom. And it is declared, —

1. As that which no created understanding, of men or angels, is able perfectly to comprehend, neither in the counsel nor in the effects of it. Hence our apostle shutteth up his contemplation of the ways, paths, and effects of this wisdom, with that rapture of admiration, **Romans 11:33- 36**, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments,

and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.” **The whole issue of our contemplation of the wisdom of God**, in the eternal projection of our salvation by Jesus Christ, is only an admiration of that abyss which we cannot dive into, with a humble ascription of glory to God thereon. And as to the especial effects of this wisdom, the angels themselves desire to bow down, with a humble diligence in their inquiry into them, 1 Peter 1:12. And on these considerations our apostle concludes, that “without controversy” the work hereof is a “great mystery,” 1 Timothy 3:16; which we may adore, but cannot comprehend. See the name of Christ, Isaiah 9:6.

2. **As that wherein God hath expressly designed to glorify himself unto eternity. This is the end of all the free acts and purposes of the will of God; neither can they have any other**, though all other things may be subordinate thereunto. Now no property of the divine nature is so conspicuous, in the disposal of things unto their proper end, as that of wisdom, whose peculiar work and effect it is. **Wherefore the great end which God will ultimately effect being his own glory in Christ, and the salvation of the elect by him, the wisdom whereby it was contrived must needs be eminent and glorious**. So the apostle tells us, “Then is the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom unto God, even the Father,” and he also in his human nature subjects himself unto him, “that God may be all in all,” 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28: — that is, when the Lord Christ hath finished the whole work of his mediation, and brought all his **elect** unto the enjoyment of God, then shall “God be all in all;” or, therein, or thereby, he will be forever exalted and glorified, when it shall be manifest how all this great work came forth from him, and is issued in him, Jude 1:25, 1 Timothy 1:17.

3. The whole work is therefore expressly called “**the wisdom of God**,” because of those **characters** and **impressions** thereof that are upon it, and because it is a peculiar effect thereof. So our apostle tells us that Christ crucified “is the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” 1 Corinthians 1:24; and that the gospel whereby it is declared “is “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” 1 Corinthians 2:7: and the whole intended is both expressly and fully laid down, Ephesians 3:8-11, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The “**purpose**” mentioned in the close of these words, is the same with the “**counsel**” of God’s will in this place. **And this purpose was the fountain, spring, and cause, of all those glorious and admirable things** whose declaration was committed unto the apostle, as the great publisher of the gospel unto the Gentiles; **by the effects whereof such mysteries were unfolded** as the angels themselves in heaven did not before understand. ‘And what was it,’ saith the apostle, ‘that was declared, manifested, and known thereby? It was πολυποικιλος σοφια του Θεου, “the manifold wisdom of God,” or the **infinite wisdom of God**, exerting **itself in such wonderful variety of holy, wise operations**, as no mind of men nor angels can comprehend.’ [So that if God left salvation up to man's will, his corrupt will, then, as Arminians suppose, it is possible that no one would choose Christ! (which would actually be the case) But, not only is this not the case, but it would argue God as being unwise and lacking in power, that he cannot prosecute the desires of his heart; i.e., imperfection in the Godhead.] And, —

4. On this account are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge said to be hid in Jesus Christ, Colossians 2:3. There is not only in him, and the work of his mediation, “the wisdom of God,” — that is, both exerted and manifested, — but “all the treasures of it;” that is, God will not produce any effect out of the stores of his infinite wisdom, but what is suitable and subservient unto what he hath designed in and by Jesus Christ. And may we not, —

(1.) Hence see the horrible depravation of nature which by sin is befallen the minds, reasons, and understandings of men? For from hence alone it is that this purpose of God, which was an act of infinite wisdom; that the work which he hath wrought pursuant thereof, whereon are impressed the characters of his manifold wisdom; are esteemed folly, or foolish things unto them. **So far are men by nature from seeing an excellency of divine wisdom in them, that they cannot suffer them to pass as things tolerably rational, but brand them as foolish, or folly itself.** This our apostle declares and at large insisteth on, 1Corinthians 1. Had the mind of man fixed on any other reason for the rejection of this counsel of God, some excuse might be pretended for it; but to reject that as folly which God sets forth and declares as the principal instance of his infinite wisdom, **this discovereth the horror of its depravation.** And those in whom this blindness is prevalent may be referred unto three sorts: —

[1.] Such as by whom the gospel is absolutely rejected as a foolish thing, unbecoming the wisdom of God to propose, and their own wisdom to receive. As this was the state of the Jews, and Pagan world of old, and as it is the condition of the Mohammedans and relics of the Heathens at this day, so I wish that the poison and contagion of this wickedness were not farther diffused. But, alas! we see many every day who, on the account of their outward circumstances, live in some kind of compliance with the name and profession of the gospel, who yet discover themselves sufficiently to hate, despise, and condemn the mystery of it, and the wisdom of God therein. [So many deny the limited atonement or believe in a general ransom, etc., due to prejudices, traditions and other conceits.]

[2.] Such as *own the gospel in the letter of it, but look on the mystery of it, or the counsel of God therein, as foolishness.* Hence all the principal parts of it, as the incarnation of Christ, the hypostatical union of his person, his sacrifice and oblation, the atonement and satisfaction made by his death, the imputation of his righteousness, the election of grace, with the power and efficacy of it in our conversion, are all of them either directly exploded as foolish, or wrested unto senses suited unto their own low and carnal apprehensions. And this sort of men do swarm amongst us at this day like to locusts when a north-east wind hath filled every place with them. [Wow! Well said.]

[3.] There are multitudes, whose choice of their outward conditions being prevented by the providence of God, so that they are brought forth and fixed where the gospel passeth current in the world without any open control, who do see no reason why, with the first sort, they should openly reject it, nor will be at the pains, with the second sort, to corrupt it, **but yet practically esteem it a foolish thing to give place unto its power on their hearts, and do really esteem them foolish who labor so to do. And this is openly the condition of the generality of those who live under the dispensation of the gospel in the world.**

I have named these things only to reflect thereby on that **horrible depravation which, by corruption of nature, is come upon the mind and reason of mankind.** And it is in none more evident than in those who most boast of the contrary. And, —

(2.) We may learn from hence, that there is no greater evidence of thriving in spiritual light and understanding, than when we find our souls affected with, and raised unto a holy admiration of the wisdom and counsel of God, which are declared in the gospel.

Obs. II. The life and assurance of our present comfort and future glory depend on the immutability of God's counsel. — To secure these things unto us, God shows us that immutability. Our own endeavors are to be used to the same end; for we are to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." But all depends on the unchangeable purpose of the will of God, which alone is able to bear the charge of so great a work. But this must be further spoken unto on the next verse.

Obs. III. The purpose of God concerning the salvation of the elect by Jesus Christ became immutable from hence, that the determination of his will was accompanied with infinite wisdom. It was his "counsel."

All the certainty that is amongst men, as to the accomplishment of any end designed by them, depends on the exercise of wisdom in finding out and applying suitable means thereunto. And because their wisdom is weak in all things, and in most no better than folly, — whence generally they fix first on ends unprofitable, and then make use of means weak and unsuited unto their purpose, — it is that all their affairs are wrapped up in uncertainties, and most of them end in disappointment and confusion. But as God fixeth on those ends which perfectly comply with his own infinite holiness and sovereignty, whence they are necessarily good and holy; so he doth not first do so, and then make choice of various means that proffer themselves unto those ends. But, in his infinite wisdom, ends and means lie before him in one vein, and fall together under his unalterable determination. Two things, therefore, may be considered in the wisdom of God giving immutability to his counsel concerning the salvation of the elect by Jesus Christ: —

1. Thereby he saw at once not only whatever was needful for the accomplishing of it, but that which would infallibly effect it. He chose not probable and likely means for it, and such as might do it, unless some great obstruction did arise, — such as whose efficacy might be suspended on any conditions and emergencies; but such as should infallibly and inevitably reach the end intended. In the first covenant, wherein God had not immutably decreed to preserve mankind absolutely in their primitive estate, he made use of such means for their preservation as might effect it in case they were not wanting unto themselves, or that obedience which they were enabled to perform. This man neglecting, the means appointed of God as to their success depending thereon by God's own appointment, that end which in their own nature they tended unto was not attained; and that because God had not immutably determined it. But now, whereas God engaged himself in an unchangeable purpose, in his infinite wisdom he fixeth on such means for its accomplishment as shall not depend on any thing whereby their efficacy might be frustrated. Such were his sending of his Son to be incarnate, and the dispensation of grace of the new covenant, which is in its nature infallibly effectual unto the end whereunto it is designed. [Remember, Adam was not promised continual supplies of grace, whereas in the new covenant, believers are!]

2. God, in his infinite wisdom, foresaw all the interveniencies on our part that might obstruct the certain accomplishment of the promise. The promise was first given indefinitely unto all mankind, in

our first parents; but soon after, the wickedness of the whole world, with their absolute contempt of the grace of the promise, was such as that any creature would conceive that it would be of none effect, being so visibly, so universally rejected and despised. But a perfect view hereof lying under the wisdom of God, he provided against it, for the immutability of his purpose and infallibility of his promise, by singling out first one, then another, **and at last the whole posterity of Abraham, towards whom the promise should be accomplished.** But yet, after a long season, there came the last and uttermost trial of the whole matter: for the generality of the seed of Abraham rejected the promise also; whereby it appeared really to have been frustrated, and to be of none effect, as our apostle declares in his answer to that objection, **Romans 9:6. But instead of changing his purpose, God then more fully discovered wherein the immutability of his counsel did consist, and whereon it did depend;** as Galatians 3:8. And this was, that all along, and under all those apostasies, **he ever had, and ever will have in the world, an elect people, chosen by him before the foundation of the world, in and towards whom his purpose is immutable and his promise infallible.** No interveniency can possibly shake or alter what hath been settled by infinite wisdom. There is not a particular believer but is made so sensible of his own unworthiness, that, at one time or another, he cannot but be almost brought to a loss how it should be that such a one as he should ever inherit the promise; but God foresaw all that hath befallen us, or will do so, and hath, in his infinite wisdom, provided against all interveniencies, that his purpose might not be changed, nor his promise frustrated.

Obs. IV. Infinite goodness, as acting itself in Christ, was not satisfied in providing and preparing good things for believers, but it would also show and declare it unto them, for their present consolation.

God was “willing to show to the heirs of promise;” and the end was, that they might have “**strong consolation.**” As it is with a good, wise father and an obedient son: The father is possessed of a large and profitable estate, and as the son hath a present allowance suitable to his condition, so, being obedient, he hath a just expectation that in due time he shall enjoy the whole inheritance: this being usual amongst men, and that which the law of nature directs unto; for parents are to lay up for their children, and not children for their parents. But the whole being yet absolutely in the father’s power, it is possible he may otherwise dispose of it, and it may not come to the right heir. **But now, if the father seeth his son on some occasion to want encouragement, or he be to put him on any difficult service, where he may meet with storms and dangers, he will show unto him his deed of settlement, wherein he hath irrevocably confirmed unto him the whole inheritance.** **So God deals with believers,** with his children, in this case. He is rich in grace, mercy, and glory; and all his children are heirs of it, “**heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ,**” Romans 8:17; — that is, of the whole inheritance that God hath provided for his children. This they have an expectation of by the promise, **according to the law of the new covenant.** But although their state be thus secured by their being heirs of the promise, yet God, knowing that they have a difficult work and warfare to go through withal, and what it is to serve him in temptations, for their encouragement and consolation he produceth and showeth them his irrevocable deed of settlement; **namely, his promise confirmed by his oath,** whereby the whole inheritance is infallibly secured unto them. He was free and willing to “show it unto the heirs of promise.” At first God gave out a mere precept as the declaration of his will, and a promise couched in a threatening. This was that which divine goodness, acting in a way of nature, did require, and whereof man had no cause to complain; for as the mind of God was sufficiently declared therein, so man in himself had no grounds of discouragement from a compliance therewith. And God might so deal with us all, giving out

the whole revelation of his will in a system of precepts, as some seem to suppose that he hath done. But things are now changed on two accounts. For, —

1. It was herein the peculiar design of God to glorify his goodness, love, grace, and mercy, by Jesus Christ; and he will do it in an abundant manner. He had before glorified his eternal power and infinite wisdom, in the creation of the world and all things therein contained, Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:20. And he had glorified his holiness and righteousness, in giving of the law accompanied with eternal rewards and punishments. But “grace and truth” (in the provision of it, and the accomplishment of the promise) “came by Jesus Christ,” John 1:17. And therefore, that the Lord Christ in all this may have the pre-eminence, he will do it in an abundant and unconceivable manner, above the former declarations of his glory in any other of his attributes. Hence in the Scripture the communication of grace is expressed in words that may intimate its exceeding, and passing all understanding: Romans 5:20, Υπερπερισσευσεν η χαρις— “Grace” did by Christ “more than abound.” To abound, expresseth the largest comprehensible measures and degrees; but that which doth “more than abound,” who can conceive? 1 Timothy 1:14, Υπερπλεονασε δε η χαρις του Κυριου, — “The grace of our Lord did more than abound;’ it exceeded all comprehension. So that glory which is the effect of this grace is said to be given υπερξολην εις υπερξολην, 2 Corinthians 4:17; that is, in an excellency and exceeding greatness no way to be conceived. So, plainly the apostle calls the grace of God in Christ υπερζαλλοντα πλουτον, Ephesians 2:7, — “excelling riches.” That we may know his meaning, he calls it again, Ephesians 3:8, ανεξιχνιαστον αλουον, — “riches whereof there is no investigation.” In the pursuit of this design to exercise and manifest the infinite fullness of his love and goodness, he will not satisfy himself with a mere declaration of his will, but he will have those concerned in it to know it, to understand it, to have the present comfort of it; and because they could not do that without satisfaction in the immutability of his counsel, he evidenceth that unto them by all means possible. And thereby he sufficiently manifests how willing he is, how well-pleasing it is unto him, that our faith in him should be firm and steadfast.

2. Man is now fallen into a condition of sin and misery. And herein is he filled with so many fears, discouragements, and despondencies, that it is the difficultest thing in the world to raise him unto any hopes of mercy or favor from God. In this lost, forlorn estate, divine goodness, by an infinite condescension, accommodates itself unto our weakness and our distress. He doth not, therefore, only propose his mind and will unto us as unto grace and glory, but useth all ways possible to ingenerate in us a confidence of his willingness to bring us unto a participation of them. He doth everything that may direct and encourage us to take a steadfast view of the excellency and immutability of his counsel in this matter. Hence a great part of the Scripture, the revelation of God’s will, is taken up in promises, exhortations, invitations, discourses and expressions of love, kindness, and compassion. And in particular, although the promise itself was an abundant security for faith to rest upon, as to the immutability of God’s counsel, yet, to obviate all pretences and cast out all excuses, he confirms it with his oath. And although he did this in particular and expressly unto Abraham, yet he takes all believers, who are his seed, into a participation of the same privilege with him, and manifests how that in swearing unto him he sware also unto them all. And two things do hence naturally ensue: —

(1.) The unspeakable encouragement unto believing, which is given unto all unto whom this counsel of God and its immutability are proposed. The essential truth of God and his oath are openly and

manifestly engaged unto these two things. [1.] That nothing but unbelief shall keep off any from the enjoyment of the promise; [2.] That all believers, whatever difficulties they may meet withal in themselves, or objections against themselves, shall certainly and infallibly enjoy the promise and be saved. And the immutability of God's counsel herein he hath made so evident, that there is no room for any objection against it. This is tendered unto you unto whom the gospel is proposed. Greater encouragement unto believing, and more certainty of the event, you shall never have in this world, you cannot have, — God will not, God cannot give. All persons not yet come up unto believing, unto whom this peace with God is preached, are distinguished into two sorts, — “them that are nigh,” and “them that are afar off,” Ephesians 2:17. This, in the first place, expresseth the Jews and Gentiles; but, in a parity of reason, it must be extended unto others. Some are comparatively “nigh,” such as have been affected with the word, and brought unto inquiries whether they should believe or no; and there are some “afar off,” who as yet have taken little notice of these things. Herein is both a call and encouragement unto both. To the first, to determine their wills in the choice of Christ in the promise; unto the other, to look up unto him, though from the ends of the earth. But I must not enlarge.

(2.) **It discovers the heinous nature of unbelief.** The gospel, which is a message of love, peace, mercy, and grace, yet never makes mention of unbelief but it annexeth damnation unto it: “He that believeth not shall be damned.” And although they shall also perish unto whom the gospel is not preached, Romans 2:12, yet the gospel, though it speaks not exclusively unto others, yet principally it declares the inevitable destruction, the everlasting damnation, of them who believe not when the promise is declared to them, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; however, it declares that they shall fall under a sorer death and destruction than any others, 2 Corinthians 2:16. And the reason of this severity is taken partly from the nature of unbelief, and partly from the aggravation of it. **The nature of unbelief consists in a refusal of the testimony of God, so making him a liar,** 1 John 5:10; and in esteeming that which he proposeth as his power and wisdom, to be weakness and folly. Hence there is no way of sin or rebellion against God whatever that casts such scorn and indignity upon him. **So that it is in itself the greatest of sins, as well as the root and cause of them.** Yet such is the blindness of corrupted nature, that many who will boggle at other sins, especially such as look with a severe threatening aspect on a natural conscience, as adultery, theft, and murder, yet concern themselves not at all in this unbelief, but rather approve themselves in their infidelity. Yet is there not one unto whom the gospel is preached, but if he do not really receive the Lord Christ as tendered in the promise, he doth what lies in him to declare God to be a liar, foolish in his counsels and weak in his operations. And what account this will come unto is not hard to discern. Moreover, it is also from the aggravation that it is accompanied withal, from the nature of the thing itself and the way whereby it is proposed unto us: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” Hebrews 2:3. We may look only on that which lies before us; namely, the infinite condescension of divine goodness, in showing, manifesting, and declaring, the immutability of his counsel by oath. Whereas, therefore, he hath done all to this end that was possible to be done, and more than ever would have entered into the heart of any creature to desire or expect, the woeful condition of unbelievers, both as to this sin and the misery which will follow thereon, is inexpressible. For those that will despise all that God will do, yea all that he can do, to give them assurance of the truth and stability of his promises, given in a way of grace, have no reason to expect, nor shall receive any thing, but what he will do and can do in a way of justice and vengeance.

Obs. V. It is not all mankind universally, but a certain number of persons, under certain qualifications, to whom God designs to manifest the immutability of his counsel, and to communicate the effects thereof.

It is only the “**heirs of promise**” whom God intendeth. But herein two things are to be considered 1. The outward revelation or administration of these things; and, 2. God’s purpose therein. The former is made promiscuously and indefinitely unto all to whom the gospel is preached; for therein is contained a declaration of the immutability of God’s counsel and his willingness to have it known. But if God did design the communication of the effect of it in the same latitude with the outward administration of it, then must he be thought to fail in his purpose towards the greatest part of them, who receive it not. This is that which the apostle disputes upon, Romans 9. Having supposed that the generality of the Jews, of the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, were cut off from the promise by unbelief, and declared his sense thereon, verses 1-3, he raiseth an objection against that supposition, verse 6, ‘That if it were so, “the promise of God was of none effect,” for unto them all it was given and declared.’ Hereunto the apostle answers and replies in that and the following verses, 7-21. And the substance of his answer is, that although the promise was promiscuously proposed unto all, yet the grace of it was intended only unto the elect; as he also further declares, Hebrews 11:7. But why then doth God thus cause the declaration to be made promiscuously and indefinitely unto all, if it be some only whom he designs unto a participation of the effects of his counsel and good things promised? I answer, —

Let us always remember that in these things we have to do with Him who is greater than we, and who giveth no account of his matters. What if God will take this way of procedure, and give no reason of it? who are we, that we should dispute against God? Wherefore our apostle having at large discoursed this whole matter, and pleaded the absolute freedom of God to do whatever he pleaseth, winds up the whole in a resignation of all unto his sovereignty, with a deep admiration of his unsearchable wisdom; wherein it is our duty to acquiesce, **Romans 11:33-36**. But yet I may add, —

That the nature of the thing itself doth require this dispensation of the promise indefinitely to all, though the benefit of it be designed to some only; for the way whereby God will give a participation of the promise unto the heirs of it being by the administration of his word, and such means as are meet to work on the minds of men to persuade and prevail with them unto faith and obedience, he would not do it by immediate revelation or respiration, and the like extra-ordinary operations of his Spirit alone, but by such ways as are suited to glorify himself and his grace **in the rational minds** of his creatures capable thereof. Now this could no way be done, nor can unto this day, but by the declaration and preaching of the promise, with commands, motives, and encouragements unto believing. **In this work all those whom he employs are utterly ignorant who they are who are heirs of the promise, until they are discovered by their actual believing**: wherefore they have no other way, but in the first place to propose the promise promiscuously unto all that will attend unto it, leaving the singling out of its proper heirs unto the sovereign grace of God. So the word is preached unto all indefinitely, and “the election obtaineth,” whilst “the rest are hardened.”

Obs. VI. God alone knows the due measure of divine condescension, or what becomes the divine nature therein. — Who could have once apprehended, who durst have done so, that the holy God

should swear by himself, to confirm his word and truth unto such worthless creatures as we are? Indeed there is yet a more transcendent act of divine condescension, namely, the incarnation of the Son of God, the glory whereof will be the object of the admiration of men and angels unto eternity; for, alas! what created understanding could ever have raised itself unto a thought that the eternal Word should be made flesh? God alone, who is infinitely wise, only wise, knew what became the holiness of his being and his goodness therein. And so is it, in its measure, in this of his oath. And as we are with holy confidence to make use of what he hath done in this kind, seeing not to do so is to despise the highest expression of his goodness; so we are not in any thing to draw divine condescension beyond divine expressions.

Obs. VII. **So unspeakable is the weakness of our faith, that we stand in need of unconceivable divine condescension for its confirmation.** — The immutability of God's counsel is the foundation of our faith; until this be manifest, it is impossible that ever faith should be sure and steadfast. But who would not think that God's declaration thereof by the way of promise were every way sufficient thereunto? But God knew that we yet stood in need of more; not that there was want of sufficient evidence in his promise, but such a want of stability in us as stood in need of a superabundant confirmation, as we shall see in the next verse: —

Ver. 18. — "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Two things in general the apostle further designs in this verse: 1. That the declaration which God had made of the immutability of his counsel in this matter was every way sufficient and satisfactory. 2. What was the especial end and design which he had therein towards the heirs of promise.

For the FIRST, he doth it by declaring the evidence given and the nature of it; which consisted in "two immutable things," — δια δυο πραγματος αμεταθετων. Πραγμα is an "act" or deed, such as we make and deliver when we convey anything from one to another, — an instrument of an assurance. This is the promise and the oath of God. **Security is given by them, both from their own nature, and also because they are two, — two witnesses whereby the thing intended is established.** But what need was there of two such things? Is it because one of these was weak, infirm, alterable, such as may be justly challenged or excepted against, that the other is added to strengthen and confirm it? 'No,' saith the apostle, 'both of them are equally "immutable."' Wherefore we must still carry along with us the infinite and unconceivable **condescension** of God in this matter, who, **to obviate our temptations, and relieve us under our weaknesses,** is pleased to give this **variety** unto his divine testimony, which he did "ex abundantia;" **not only beyond what he was any way obliged unto,** but whatever we could desire or expect.

For, secondly, this makes the evidence absolute and uncontrollable, that as they are two things which are produced to make it good, so they are both of them equally immutable, — such as neither in their own nature nor in their execution were any way exposed or liable unto alteration. For the promise itself was absolute, and the thing promised depended on no condition in us, — on nothing without God himself. [Arminians say that we must believe first; that's the condition in order to receive the good

things of the gospel; but the very thing given is the ability to believe, i.e., faith! This is why the sinner's prayer approach is so widely accepted.] For there was in the promise itself all the springs of all that is good, and of deliverance from all that is evil; so that on every side it brings along with it the condition of its own accomplishment. But whereas God in the covenant of works did give no promise unto mankind but what was conditional, and suspended on such things on our part as might or might not be, — whence it came to pass that we sinned and came short of it, — God in the giving out of this promise, which is the foundation of the covenant of grace, to assure us that it is utterly of another nature, and such as on no occurrence is liable unto change, confirms it with his oath.

Moreover, the apostle confirmeth this testimony yet further from the nature of Him by whom it was given: ἵνα οὐκ ἄδυνατον ψευσασθαι Θεον, — “In” (or “by”) “which it was impossible that God should lie” or “deceive.” is not absolutely “to lie,” but by any means “to deceive” him who hath cause to trust what we say or do. The highest security among men consists in a promise confirmed with an oath; and this is, and must be, unto them “an end of all strife,” for higher they cannot go. But yet it is possible there may be a lie and deceit in their testimony, and he who trusts unto them may be deceived, as it often falls out in the world; for although the things themselves are good, and such as would secure the interest of truth only, **yet men that use them are changeable**, yea liars. But it is God who makes use of them in our case; and therefore it is impossible that he should lie. God having made this double engagement of his truth and faithfulness, it is utterly impossible that he should deceive any one thereby.

But why doth the apostle put an emphasis upon this, that by these things it was impossible that God should lie, or deceive? for it is necessary unto God, from his own being, that it should in all things be impossible for him to lie. He cannot lie, he cannot deceive, he cannot deny himself, or his word; these things are repugnant unto his being. I answer, that the apostle speaks not of the nature of the things themselves, but of their manifestation with respect unto us. Nothing was added to the promise of God to render it more certain, firm, and stable; but an addition was made unto it **to give our minds greater security**. God's immutability in promising, and impossibility in deceiving, are both equally from his nature; but the distinct proposition of them is needful unto our encouragement and establishment.

Obs. VIII. **Fallen, sinful man stands in need of the utmost encouragement that divine condescension can extend unto, to prevail with him to receive and lay hold of the promise of grace and mercy by Jesus Christ.**

There is nothing that we are so prone unto, as to distrust the promises of God; nothing that we are with more difficulty won over unto, than to **mix them with faith** [**And this we do by the duty of contemplation or meditation on all those things we are supposed to learn by studying the word and being thus spiritually minded thereby. Contemplation of bible truths is an act of saving faith; we contemplate those things we love, the love of God being given to us upon our conversion; hence faith worketh by love. See 2Cor3:18**] To evidence this we may consider, —

1. That the first entrance of sin into the world was by a disbelief of the truth of God; yea, that very sin formally consisted in an apprehension that God, in his promises and threatenings, had a mind to deceive us, Genesis 3:4-6. **And as sin thus laid its foundation by the craft of Satan, so it endeavors to**

carry on its building. It continually suggests to the hearts and minds of men that they shall certainly be deceived in trusting to God's promises. For, —

(1.) Secret thoughts there are in the hearts of men, — which are “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” — **that neither the promises nor threatenings of God are true,** in the terms and sense wherein they are proposed unto them. They neither think that it shall be so bad with any as he threateneth, nor so well as he promiseth. Did men believe the threatenings of God as to the fearful and eternal ruin of sinners, it were not possible they should live in sin as they do, without any endeavor of amendment, so to flee from the wrath to come. Nor do they think in their hearts that it shall be with them that believe according as God hath promised. They say in their hearts, “The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil,” Zephaniah 1:12, — namely, as he hath either promised or threatened.

(2.) Men think that there are still some reserves and latent conditions in the promises and threatenings of God, and that God knows it shall be otherwise than they seem to portend. By this imagination Satan deceived our first parents as to the truth of God in his threatening. He persuaded them that there was a reserve therein, that was directly contrary unto what the words of it declared; and that by transgressing of his command they should not die, but be wise and like himself. And still men suppose that the promises propose a fair ground, indeed, but that if they should go to build upon it, there is a mine under it, which would be sprung at one time or another, unto their ruin. They cannot apprehend that it shall be with them according unto and as the promise doth declare. If they should attempt to believe, yet one latent condition or other would defeat them of obtaining it; whereas, indeed, the whole and entire condition of enjoying the promise is faith alone.

(3.) Whatever may be the truth of the promise, yet they cannot conceive that God intends them therein; whereas yet there is no declaration or intention of God, whereby our duty is to be regulated and whereon we shall be judged, but what is contained and expressed in the proposal of the promise itself.

On these and the like grounds, the great contest in the world, between God and man, is whether God be true or a liar in his promise. It is not thus directly stated in the minds of men, **for they have many other pretences why they do not believe; but this is that which it is resolved into.** For “he that receiveth not the testimony of God, maketh him a liar.” So was it with the people in the wilderness, whose carcasses fell therein because of their unbelief. **The reasons they pretended and pleaded why they would not attempt to enter the land of Canaan, were, that the people were strong, and giants among them, and the cities walled,** Numbers 13:28, 32, 33; but the true reason was, their unbelief of God's promise: wherefore God expresseth the sense of his indignation against them with that scheme of reproach, “Ye shall bear your iniquities, and ye shall know my breach of promise,” Numbers 14:34, or ‘see what your unbelief hath brought you unto.’ And no otherwise is it with all unbelievers at present, as our apostle at large declares, Hebrews 3 of this epistle. **Other things are pretended as the causes of their unbelief, but it is their dissatisfaction in the truth of God that is the true and only cause of it. And as this sufficiently manifests the heinousness of unbelief, so it glorifies the righteousness of God in the condemnation of unbelievers.**

2. The curse of the law having, by the guilt of sin, been admitted unto a dominion over the whole soul, it is a great thing to receive and admit of a testimony to the contrary, such as the promise is. **What the law speaks, it speaks unto them that are under it, as all men are by nature.** And it speaks in the heart of every man that the sinner must die. Conscience complies also, and adds its suffrage thereunto. This fixeth a conclusion in the mind that so it will be, whatever may be offered unto the contrary. But so is the testimony of God in the promise, namely, that there is a way of life and salvation for sinners; and that God offereth this way and an interest therein unto us. Nothing but the exceeding greatness of the power of grace can enable a guilty sinner in this case to “set to his seal that God is true.”

3. When the promise comes, and is proposed unto us, for the most part it finds us deeply engaged into, and, as to ourselves, immutably fixed on other things, that are inconsistent with faith in the promises. Some are interested in divers lusts and pleasures; some are filled with inveterate prejudices, through a vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers; and some have some good hopes in themselves, that in the way wherein they are, by the religion which they profess, and the duties which they perform, they may in time arrive unto what they aim at. **When the promise is proposed, the first thing included therein is an utter relinquishment of all these things.** As it is a promise of grace, so it excludes everything but grace. Wherefore, when it is proposed unto any, it doth not only require that it be believed, or God be believed therein, but also, that in order thereunto we part with and utterly renounce all hopes and confidences in ourselves, from what we are or expect to be, and betake ourselves for life and salvation unto the promise alone. Some imagine that it is a very easy thing to believe, and that the souls of men are but deceived, when they are called off from the duties that light and conviction put them upon to the way of faith in the promise; but the truth is, that what from its own nature, and from what is required thereunto or comprised therein, it is, as the most important, so the highest and greatest duty that we are called unto, and which men would of their own choice rather grind in a mill of the most burdensome duties than once apply their minds unto.

4. **The guilt of sin hath filled the mind of every sinner with innumerable fears, doubts, and confusions, that are very difficultly satisfied or removed;** yea, the remainders of them do abide in believers themselves, and oftentimes fill them with great **perplexities**. And these, when the promise is proposed unto them, arise and follow one another like the waves of the sea, James 1:6. No sooner is one of them answered or waived, but immediately another supplies its room. And in them all doth unbelief put forth its power.

And on these grounds it is that poor sinners have such need of the reduplication of divine assurances, that, notwithstanding all pretences unto the contrary, the promise of grace in Christ shall be made good and be accomplished unto them.

SECONDLY, The especial design of God, in this dispensation and condescension, *ἵνα εἰχόμεν ἰσχυρὰν παραχρησῶν*, etc.; — “that we might have a strong consolation.” Being engaged in the application of his instance, in the promise and oath of God given unto Abraham, the apostle here plainly dismisseth the consideration of things past under the old testament, in those blessings and temporal things which were typical of things spiritual, and applies the whole unto present believers, and therein unto all those of future ages, — “that we might have.” And herein he builds on this principle, that whatever

God promised, designed, sware unto Abraham, that he did so promise unto all believers whatever; so that every promise of the covenant belongeth equally unto them with him or any other. And two things the apostle lays down concerning such believers: 1. What God designs unto them; 2. Such a description of them as contains the qualifications necessary unto a participation of what is so designed:

1. The first is παρακλησις. It sometimes signifies “exhortation,” an encouraging, persuasive **exhortation**. And in that sense it is here taken by some expositors, as Theophylact and OEcumenius; — ‘that we might have thereby a prevalent “exhortation” unto faith and patience in believing.’ But “**comfort**” or “**consolation**” is the most usual signification of the word in the New Testament, as I have showed elsewhere; and that sense of the word alone can be here intended. A consolation it is that ariseth from the assurance of faith, and of our interest thereby in the promises of God. This is that which relieves our souls against all fears, doubts, and troubles; for it either obviates and prevents them, or it outbalanceth them, and bears up our souls against them. For comfort is the relief of the mind, whatever it be, against sorrow and trouble.

And this consolation which God intends and designs for believers is ισχυρα— “solamen fortissimum,” “forte,” “validum,” “potens;” “strong,” “powerful,” “prevalent.” Strong so as to be prevalent against opposition, is that which is intended. There are comforts to be taken, or are often taken, from earthly things; but they are weak, languid, and such as fade and die upon the first appearance of a vigorous opposition; but this consolation is strong and prevalent against all creature-oppositions whatever. Strong; that is, such as will abide against all opposition, — a strong tower, an impregnable fortress, a munition of rocks. For it is not the abounding of consolation in us, but the prevalency of the causes of it against opposition, that is intended.

2. There is the description of the persons unto whom God designs this consolation by the promise, confirmed with his oath: Οι χαταφυγοντες χρατησαι της προχειμενης. There are three things in this description of believers, or the heirs of the promise: (1.) The way whereby they seek for relief; they “flee for refuge.” (2.) The relief itself which they seek after; which is “the hope set before them.” (3.) The way whereby they are made partakers of it; they “lay hold upon it:” —

(1.) They are Οι χαταφυγοντες : say we, that “flee for refuge;” “qui cursum corripunt.” It is the judgment of many that here is an allusion unto him who had slain a man unawares under the law, whose safety and life depended on his speedy flight into one of the **cities of refuge**, Numbers 35:11, 12. And hereunto our translators had undoubtedly respect, whereon they rendered the word, “fleeing for refuge.” And indeed the word itself signifies such an action as is there ascribed unto the man-slayer. For χαταφυγειν, properly, “cursum corripere,” hath respect unto two things: [1.] An apprehension of danger, or a real surprisal with it, whereon a man takes his flight for deliverance. And so it was with the man-slayer; his apprehension of the approach of the avenger of blood, to take away his life, stirred him up χαταφυγειν, — to flee from the place and condition wherein he was, lest evil should overtake him. [2.] *Speed and diligence* in an endeavor to attain that place, or company, or end, which a man proposeth unto himself as the means of his deliverance, and whereby he hopes to find safety. **He that doth so flee casts off all tergiversation [equivocating, or making excuses]**, stirs up himself, gives no place to sloth or vain hopes, and useth his utmost diligence in the pursuit of his safety. And hereby doth the Holy Ghost lively express the state and condition of all the heirs of promise in this matter. In themselves by nature, as they are children of the first Adam, they are all exposed,

upon the guilt of sin original and actual, unto the sentence of the law. **God by various means is pleased to awaken them unto the consideration of the danger wherein they are,** the execution of that curse which they are obnoxious unto being impendent over them. In this condition they see a necessity of seeking out for relief, as knowing that if it be not obtained they must perish, and that eternally. **Love of sin, compliance with the world, hopes of righteousness of their own, do all endeavor variously to retard and hinder them in their design; but when God proceeds to shut them up, to sharpen their convictions, and continually to represent their condition unto them,** giving them to conclude that there is no hope in their present condition, at length they stir up themselves unto a speedy flight to the “hope set before them” in the promise. And, —

(2.) That is the second thing to be inquired into, namely, what is this “hope” that is “set before us,” and how it is so: [1.] Most expositors take “hope” here, by a metonymy of the subject, for the thing hoped for; that is, grace and glory, justification and salvation by Jesus Christ. **These things are the subject-matter of the promises,** which we desire and hope after. And unto these we may **be said to flee for relief or refuge, when in our expectation of them we are supported and comforted.** [2.] Some take “hope” **subjectively, for the grace of hope itself.** And this we are said to “flee unto,” — that is, speedily to betake ourselves unto the exercise of it, as founded in the promises of God, foregoing all other expectations; wherein we shall find assured consolation. [3.] **“Hope,” by a metonymy of the effect for the cause, may express the promise itself, which is the cause and means of ingenerating hope in us. And this I take to be the proper meaning of the place, and which is not exclusive of the other senses mentioned.** The promise being proposed unto us, is the cause and object of our faith, on the account of the faithfulness of God therein. **Faith brings forth hope, whose object is the same promise, or the good things thereof,** as proposed from the same faithfulness. Thence is itself called “the hope,” as that without which we could have none, there being neither cause of it nor object for it. And this hope is said to be “set before us,” or to be proposed unto us; **which it is in the declaration of the promise or the dispensation of the gospel.** Therein it is proposed as the object of our faith and hope, as the means of the strong consolation which God is so abundantly willing that we should receive. And this renders the whole metaphor plain and easy: for it is evident how the promise, with all that we hope for thereby, is “set before us” and proposed unto us in the gospel; as also how we “flee” or betake ourselves thereunto in all distresses for relief. **And it is more natural to allow of this metonymical expression in the word “hope,” than to admit of so rough a catachresis in the other part of the words, wherein the grace of hope within us should be said to be “set before us.”**

(3.) With respect hereunto we are said to “flee κρατησαι;” that is, εις το κρατησαι, — “to lay hold on,” “fortiter apprehendere,” “constanter retinere.” The signification of this word, frequently used by our apostle, I have on sundry occasions before declared. It is “injecta manu, totis viribus retinere;” — to hold fast what we lay hold on, with all our might and power. There will be many endeavors to strike off the hand of faith from laying hold on the promise; and many more to loosen its hold when it hath taken it; but it is in its nature, and it is a part of our duty, “strongly to lay hold upon,” and “firmly to retain” the promise, when we have reached unto it. And there seems in the whole metaphor to be an allusion unto those who run in a race: for whereas they have a prize or βραζειον set before them, they first stir up themselves with all their strength to speed towards the mark; which when they have attained, they both lay fast hold on and bear it away with them as their own. So it is with believers, as to the promise proposed unto them or set before them. They reach out after it, lay hold upon it,

reserve it, as to their interest in it, as the only means of their deliverance and salvation, and of that consolation which in every condition they stand in need of. And from the words so opened we may observe, that, —

Obs. IX. **Sense of danger and ruin from sin** is the first thing which occasions a soul to look out after Christ in the promise. — It is implied in the word *χταφυγειν*, which includes a respect unto danger to be avoided; whence we render it, “flee for refuge.” As the Lord Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance, to be a physician to the sick and not to the whole; so if men are not sensible of their lost condition, of the sin and sickness of their souls, they will never in good earnest look out after him. And therefore, as those by whom conviction of sin and humiliation for it are despised, as they are by many, despise Christ himself also, who is “the end of the law” and all its convictions “for righteousness;” so the profession of Christ and hopes of salvation by him, is in vain in all those who were never truly made sensible of sin, and the danger of eternal ruin thereby.

Obs. X. **A full conviction of sin is a great and shaking surprisal unto a guilty soul.** — Hence is such a one here tacitly compared unto him who had killed a man at unawares, He was just before in a condition of peace and safety, fearing no man, but with **quietness and assurance** attending his own occasions; but having now slain a man at unawares, he finds all things on a sudden changed round about him. Fear within and danger from without do beset him on every hand. If he seeth any man, he supposeth him the avenger of blood; and if he seeth no man, solitude is dreadful unto him. **No otherwise is it with them who are thoroughly convinced of sin.** They were alive, as the apostle speaks, Romans 7, and at peace; fearing no more evil than they felt, — perhaps persuading themselves that all things were well between God and their souls, or not much solicitous whether they were or no. In this state the commandment comes and discovers their guilt, and danger thereon; and unveils the curse, which until now was hidden from them, as the avenger of blood ready to execute the sentence of the law. This being a thing which they never expected nor feared, fills them with great **surprisals**. Hence are those cries of such persons, “**What shall we do to be saved?**” that argue a great distress and no small amazement. **And those who know nothing of these things are utterly ignorant both of sin and grace.**

Obs. XI. The revelation or discovery of the promise, or of Christ in the promise, is that alone which directs convinced sinners into their proper course and way. **This is the setting of a hope before them**, wherein they are called to look unto their strong tower as prisoners of hope, that they may be brought out of the pit through the blood of the everlasting covenant. — The man-slayer probably might have many contrivances suggested in his mind how he might escape the danger whereunto he was exposed. To leave his present habitation, to lie hid, to betake himself unto woods or deserts, and the like vain hopes, might present themselves unto him. But all these things did but keep him out of his way, and divert him from his duty; and the longer he entertained them in his thoughts, the more his danger was increased and his life hazarded. **It was the remembrance alone of the city of refuge, set before him in the law, that directed him to his proper duty, and set him in his way unto safety. It is no otherwise with persons under the convictions of sin.** Many things present themselves unto their minds, with hopes of relief attending them. **Sin itself with a continuance therein will do so; so also will sloth, and the procrastination of present duty; but especially some duties themselves,** — **a righteousness by the works of the law will do so, and with many is effectual unto their ruin.** Whilst these, or any of them, are attended unto, the way of duty and safety is hidden from the eyes of sinners. But when the promise,

Christ in the promise, is proposed unto them, is “set before them,” so soon as they direct their eyes that way, they see their course plain before them, and what it is they must betake themselves unto, if they intend a deliverance out of the condition wherein they are.

Obs. XII. **Where there is the least of saving faith, upon the first discovery of Christ in the promise it will stir up the whole soul to make out towards him, and a participation of him. — As faith is begotten in the soul by the promise, so the first natural, genuine act of it tends unto a further interest in and participation of that promise.** In going to Christ upon his call and invitation, in laying hold upon him in the promise, consists the nature, life, and being of the duty, obedience, and grace, of that faith which is in the heirs of promise.

Obs. XIII. It is the duty and wisdom of all those unto whom Christ in the promise is once discovered, by any gospel means or ordinance once set before them, **to admit of no delay of a thorough closing with him.** — Many things, yea, things innumerable, will offer themselves with subtlety and violence unto that end; yea, all the craft and power of the gates of hell will engage to the same purpose; but as faith, being really set on work, will prevail against them all, so it is our duty to avoid them, as those which, under specious pretences, strike at the life and eternal welfare of our souls.

Obs. XIV. There is a spiritual strength and vigor required unto the securing of our interest in the promise, — *χρατησαι*, “to lay fast and firm hold upon it.” — The greatness of our concern therein, the opposition that will be made thereunto, the love wherewith our faith ought to be accompanied, do require the utmost of our strength and diligence herein.

Obs. XV. The promise is an assured refuge unto all sin-distressed souls who betake themselves thereunto.

Obs. XVI. Where any souls, convinced of sin by the charge of the law, and of their own lost condition thereon, do betake themselves unto the promise for relief, God is abundantly willing that they should receive strong consolation. For herein doth the nature of that faith consist which hath the promise of pardon, justification, and salvation, given unto it. And hereon I might enlarge, to manifest the true nature of that faith which hath the promises, but I must not too far digress.

The Doctrine of Predestination
& A Well-Proportioned Body of Christ!
 And other proofs
 Foreknowledge defined;
 First in the Foundation of Election: Father's Love or Mercy?

Excerpt from *Reformed Dogmatics*

By Geerhardus Vos

Pgs. 107-116, 118-119

Code455

Chapter Five
The Doctrine of Predestination

1. What parts, in succession, come up for discussion concerning this doctrine?

a) The grounds why we assign it a separate place in the doctrine of the decrees. b) The scriptural terms that are important for predestination and election. c) The systematic development of the doctrine of election in connection with other areas of doctrine. d) The major deviating opinions and our criticism of them.

2. Why in Reformed dogmatics is the doctrine of election treated separately after the doctrine of the decrees?

In order to show the importance of this doctrine in the entire system. Also, as the doctrine of salvation follows consideration of creation and providence, so here the particular decree of predestination follows the general decree of God.

3. Did Lutheran dogmatics also usually put predestination toward the beginning in its treatment?

Yes; certainly initially. Melanchthon began his *Loci Communes* with its treatment. Later, it was different. The doctrine of election was now placed at the beginning of soteriology. This came about because Lutheran theology had undergone a total change.

4. At what points is the doctrine of predestination or election related to the rest of Reformed doctrine as a whole?

a) It is a direct consequence of the Reformed concept of God's sovereignty, as that has been shaped based on Scripture. In the century of the Reformation one arrived at the doctrine of election along a twofold path. Luther came to predestination from man and his salvation. Zwingli and Calvin did so from

God. Zwingli deduced predestination directly from providence (the decrees) and comes close to pantheism. Calvin expressed himself more soberly. But he, too, postulated that God is everything and the creature is nothing, that the creature, even in its highest importance, remains subordinate to God and must serve Him. Whoever gives up the doctrine of predestination must therefore also drop the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and subsequently falsify biblical teaching at numerous places.

b) The doctrine of human inability after the fall is inseparably connected with predestination, so that one must maintain them both together or drop them both together. One of the two; it depends on God or it depends on man who will be saved. If one chooses the first, then one has accepted predestination. If one chooses the second, then this is possible only under two presuppositions. Either one must be Pelagian and say man has not become lacking in ability through his fall; then he is able to decide for himself. Or one must say man was at first lacking in ability, but God does something to man, in fact to all men without distinction, whereby they again become able to make a decision. But then A, who is saved, must have something good that B, who is not saved, does not have. And A must have this good of himself because he received precisely the same grace as B. In any case, here the inability of man is denied, whether one propounds that denial in a Pelagian or a semi-Pelagian fashion. Luther arrived at election by reasoning back to it from man's inability (Concerning the Bondage of the Will, against Erasmus). Later Lutheran theology had to give up absolute predestination. To the same extent that it did this, however, it had to diminish the inability of man. According to it, man has the ability to resist supernatural grace.

c) Predestination or election is related to mystical union and the body of Christ. The elect form a body. In a body the members must be fitted to each other and are intended for each other. **If this body of Christ originated accidentally by the free-will choice of individual men, then there would be no guarantee that it would become a properly proportioned body.** God must decide in advance how many ought to belong to it, who those many shall be, and when they should be fitted into it. Predestination is nothing other than the decision of God concerning these matters.

d) Predestination is no less related to the doctrine of the merits of Christ. This, too, cannot remain the same if one denies election. If we ask what Christ earned for us, the answer is:

1. Satisfaction of our debt of guilt by His passive obedience. 2. Eternal life by His active obedience. According to Scripture, however, to eternal office belongs the application of the merits of the Mediator in its entirety. To that application belongs the Holy Spirit, who works regeneration, faith, conversion. If now man himself decides by not believing or believing of himself, then faith is a work of man and no longer a fruit of the merits of Christ. Christ cannot have merited for us what we ourselves provide. And so it is, not only with faith but with all other parts of the application of salvation. Denial of predestination includes, so viewed, a denial of the actual merits of the Mediator.

e) Predestination also relates to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Four possibilities exist:

1. God lets both coming into the state of grace and remaining in the state of grace depend on the free will of man.

2. God, by sovereign election, decides both coming into the state of grace and the persevering of those who have once come into it.

3. God leaves it to man in his free will the decision whether he will come into the state of grace, but decides sovereignly that whoever is once in that state cannot fall from it again. 4. God sovereignly determines that certain persons will come into the state of grace, but for the rest leaves it to their free decision whether they will again fall from it or persevere in it. One sees immediately how absurd the third conception is. Sinful man in his entirety is said to be able to decide, but not the regenerate man. Nor is the fourth conception tenable. Once God's sovereignty is at play, man can no longer thwart it subsequently. Conception 1 is completely Pelagian. So then, what remains is the conception mentioned under 2, and this is precisely the Reformed opinion.

5. What is the first term to be treated here, which is used by Scripture in connection with the doctrine of predestination?

The Hebrew, יָדָע; Greek, γινώσκειν, προγινώσκειν, "to know," "to foreknow"; πρόγνωσις, "foreknowledge." In Romans 8:29–30, προέγνω, "those He has foreknown," stands at the beginning.

6. In order to understand this term correctly, what must be decided first?

Whether it is meant and used in its Classical Greek meaning or its HebrewHellenistic meaning. "Knowing" for the Jew is an entirely different concept than for the Greek mind. The question now is simply: How does God's word understand it?

7. Where would the Classical Greek meaning lead us?

To a Remonstrant understanding of election. In Classical Greek usage, "to know" is "to become acquainted with something" or "to acquire knowledge regarding something." In this sense Arminian theology has always insisted that God's "foreknowledge" is an awareness in advance of one or another quality in sinners, which then guided Him in His election. For example, God knew the elect beforehand as believers who would persevere in good works. This is why He chose them.

8. Is the concept "foreknowing" in this sense completely absent in the New Testament?

It appears, but nowhere in relation to election as having for its object foreseen faith and good works. See 2 Peter 3:17: "You ... knowing this beforehand, take care lest you are led astray by the seduction of heinous men"; Acts 26:5: "As they have previously known me for a long time."

9. From what at the outset does it appear that the concept cannot have such a meaning in the places it is used for election?

From the fact that nowhere is added what God had known in advance in man. If we had to do with foreknowledge in this sense, such an addition would be essential. If I know something beforehand, then everything depends on what I know or sense beforehand.

Now, “foreknowing” and “foreknowledge” occur for election (in Rom 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet 1:2, 20). “Knowing” in its special meaning is used (in Matt 7:23; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2 Tim 2:19). Nowhere here is it mentioned that God has foreknown or known in persons. Compare that with the two texts mentioned in the answer to question 8, where something is mentioned.

10. Prove that in Romans 8:28–29, God’s “foreknowledge” cannot mean foreseeing.

The context as a whole and the aim of the apostle’s argument as a whole make that impossible here. The apostle intends to show that for those who love God, all things work together for good. He reasons as follows: Love for God is a consequence of the calling of God, that is, of that omnipotent act by which God has made alive those who are His.

This calling of God as an act in time does not stand alone. It had a reverse side in eternity. Believers are called according to the purpose of God. Again, however, this purpose did not stand alone as a cold determination of will, but something lay behind it that the apostle calls “foreknowledge.”

Here the ascent backward from link to link ceases: calling—purpose— foreknowledge, and the descent begins from foreknowledge. The foreknowledge was such that a predestinating to the form of son resulted: “Those whom He has known beforehand, He has also ordained beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Hereby the sense of “foreknowledge” is already decided in principle. It is something like what a father feels toward his son, his future son. It is a knowing of love. Since behind God’s purpose such a fatherly love functioned with respect to the elect, it ordained the form of son for all those who were the objects of its free choice. Given the fatherly and free character of this love, it is absolutely excluded for the apostle that this fatherly love can be blocked by anything in the realization of its being decreed. With divine certainty and with irresistible power this love aims at its highest goal, the complete glorification of the children in the image of likeness to Christ. It must carry through step by step in its working: “Those whom He knew, those He also called; those whom He called, those He also justified; those whom He justified, those He also glorified.” That is the sense of the sequence. Everything follows with infallible certainty from the unique character of the foreknowledge of God.

Now one may wonder whether anything still remains of this beautiful argument and this natural tie, if one is forced to give “foreknowledge” the meaning of “foreseeing.” Then everything becomes unintelligible and artificial. The divine act that stands at the beginning of the entire sequence then becomes something dependent and is no longer fit to be the basis, firm in itself, of the rest. We have a root that must draw its sap from the trunk and branches and at the same time must still also guarantee that trunk and branches will not wither—a contradiction.

Further, it may be noted that the likeness to the image of the Son to which believers are predestined refers to His glory as Mediator, not to the divine glory that He possessed from eternity. Only of the former will the elect obtain a likeness (though at a far distance).

11. Prove that in Romans 11:2, as well, “foreknowledge” must have a similar meaning and cannot be “foreseeing.”

Here the apostle intends to show how impossible, indeed, how absurd it would be that God would reject Israel, His people. “Rejecting” and “knowing in advance” therefore exclude each other according to the thinking of the apostle. In the midst of Israel’s apostasy and disobedience, he maintains its future salvation, for God, having once foreknown His people, cannot again reject them. One need only attempt to insert the concept of “obtaining knowledge beforehand” and the argument immediately becomes nonsense. In the face of Israel’s actual apostasy how can it ever serve as an argument for its future restoration that God has still foreseen something good in Israel? It is completely the reverse: Precisely because in His free choice God took into account not what Israel would be in itself but exclusively His own good pleasure, precisely because the covenant relationship did not originate with Israel but with Him, precisely because of that, He cannot reject them.

12. May something be deduced from 1 Peter 1:2 concerning the nature of God’s foreknowledge?

No, but certainly from 1 Peter 1:20. Here Christ is the object of foreknowledge. And then, of course, according to His human nature. Now by the nature of the case it makes no sense to say that the Father knew something beforehand in the human nature of the Mediator, for that human nature was entirely the result of God’s election itself. Without election the Son would not have assumed a human nature. What is a result cannot at the same time be a ground or source. Therefore, it is certain that here this foreknowledge cannot be considered foresight of something that already existed for God outside His counsel.

13. What is the meaning of the word “know” in Matthew 7:23?

Here the word does not refer to “election” in the strict sense but is nonetheless used in a way that can shed light on its meaning elsewhere. Christ says that on the day of judgment He will say to many, “I never knew you.” This cannot mean, “I did not know anything of or about you, ... you worker of iniquity.” A knowing in the sense of “having knowledge of” is thus certainly present, but not a knowing in the other sense. Christ means to say, “I have not entered into a personal relationship with you.” On the day of judgment the lost, as it were, will insist forcefully on the knowledge Christ has by saying: “Did we not prophesy in your name?” However, He says to them, “I never knew you!” On His side had been lacking just that knowing love, that friendship, to which from their side they now appeal.

14. What about 1 Corinthians 8:3?

Here Paul contrasts with the pride of those who think they know something love for God as that in which the inner worth of Christian character lies. That worth must not be sought in knowledge that puffs up. That it lies in love is shown by Paul from this, that all who love God are known by God, as Calvin says, are valued, highly esteemed. Here there is a fine play on words in the contrast between the knowledge of man in his confusion and being known by God that truly settles everything.

15. How about Galatians 4:9?

First, the fact that the Galatians know God is advanced by the apostle as the ground why they must not turn back again to the weak and impoverished elementary principles of the world. But according to the apostle, there is something else that weighs even more heavily. God has known them. That is, He has placed Himself to them in a relationship of love, as a father to His children. If now, knowing this, they turn back to the weak and impoverished elementary principles of the world, they make themselves guilty of ingratitude to the worst degree. All this shows that being known by God must be something still greater and more glorious than knowing God. That rules out the explanation that foreseeing is in view.

16. What is the case in 2 Timothy 2:19?

Here, too, the words, "The Lord knows those who are His," must not be taken as an intellectual knowledge. It means that God stands in the closest relationship to His children. The apostasy of those who had occupied a prominent place in the congregation is spoken of, and that from their apostasy one could despair of his own perseverance, especially since the pernicious doctrine of these erring spirits was spreading like gangrene. It is of no comfort in the face of that to consider that God indeed knows who are His and who will remain faithful to Him. But it is certainly a comfort in such circumstances to be able to remember that the Lord stands in the closest relationship of love to His own and therefore cannot allow them to fall away. Compare in John 10:27–28 the bond there is between the shepherd's knowing and the sheep's not perishing.

17. What is the main objection to the conception of God's foreknowledge maintained here?

That it does not indicate what it is that God could have foreknown in the objects of His choice.

a) Some answer, faith. That is the old Remonstrant answer, but it is simply inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture that calls faith a gift of God and in particular, with the Pauline contrast between faith and works that does not permit that one make of the former a kind of work of man, an evangelical obedience.

b) Others say, love. This conflicts even more with the antithesis just mentioned, which would then have to say that man is saved not by external works but by internal works of the law.

c) There is no place for something that God would have been able to foresee or to know beforehand in man. However subtly one may also sublimate the little He must have seen in man by speaking of a kind of receptivity that must be the opposite of all doing and working, it is still always a receptivity that man himself has rendered and to that extent an activity must correspond to it so that again it is "of those who work" and not of the God who shows mercy.

18. What is the development of the idea of foreknowledge?

The Hebrew יָדַע, “to know,” is as good as the same in meaning as בָּחַר, “to choose,” “to know.” It takes on that meaning as follows: To take note of something closely, to be interested in it, to penetrate to its essence, to care about it—it is in all cases a sign of loving interest that wants to be most closely united with its object. We say, “To understand someone in some matter,” or, “He has not understood me in this.” Accordingly, divine knowing includes the following:

a) God was first in this act of predestination. The relationship between Him and the objects of His choice originated entirely from Him. Only because He willed to know them and in fact did know them did they become something for Him. That is the element of sovereignty. As an earthly sovereign, if he is pleased with his knowledge of someone or takes note of him, only through this knowledge makes him something of significance, so it is with the knowing of God.

b) This knowledge or foreknowledge of God is not an act of cold arbitrariness but an act of love in which the Lord, as it were, has been absorbed in knowing and contemplating His beloved from eternity. c) It does not stand on its own but carries in itself the impulse for a range of divine acts of salvation. The knowing of God is fruitful; it brings forth grace and glory.

19. Can you show this by some citations from the Old Testament?

Yes, in Hosea 13:4–5, just where Israel’s sin and declensions are spoken of, “But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt ... I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought”; in Amos 3:2, where Israel’s unfaithfulness is no less in the foreground, it is said, “You only of all the families of the earth have I known; therefore I will afflict you for your unrighteousness.” In Psalm 144:3 the question is raised: “O LORD, what is man that you know him, or the son of man that you consider him?” (cf. also Psa 8:4). By means of the Septuagint the Hebrew meaning was then transferred to the Greek word.

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29. What is the third word mentioned here?

Προορίζειν, which we find used in Romans 8:29, where it immediately follows “**foreknow.**” It means “**to predestine.**” It is distinguished from both preceding terms because it requires an addition. To say that someone is foreknown or elect provides, at least in the language of Scripture, a complete thought. To say that someone is predestined immediately elicits the question, “To what?” Ὀρίζειν means “to establish boundaries,” “to make a determination, a reckoning.” Furthermore, it is a completely neutral word, that is, it can be used for good as well as for evil. Election and foreknowledge have only a good sense; predestination also has a bad sense. Compare Acts 2:23, where the ὠρισμένη βουλή ... τοῦ θεοῦ, “the determined counsel of God,” occurs as that by which Christ was handed over (cf. also 4:28).

Besides in Romans 8:29, the more specific meaning of “predestined” appears in Ephesians 1:5, 11, “Who has predestined us for adoption as sons,” and, “in Him we have obtained an inheritance, we who were predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”

The purpose of election is a certain relationship; the purpose of predestination is a certain status, a condition, an image, a destiny. Compare “those whom He has also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Thus, here it is a likeness, conformity to Christ, which is the object of predestination. In this connection one should think of His glory as Mediator, as was noted above.

30. Are the two concepts of “election” and “predestination” always so sharply differentiated?

No, sometimes the former can also be used for the latter; for example, in James 2:5, “Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?”

31. Is there still another word in use for election?

Yes, namely the word “purpose,” for example in Romans 8:28, “who are called according to His purpose.”

Purpose, πρόθεσις from προτιθέναι. The word differs from προορίζειν by the emphasis falling more on the willing side of God’s decree of predestination. In all God’s decree there is an act of the mind and an act of the will; [See Owen on this *act of the will* – code455b] so also in the decree of predestination. By the former the idea is formed, its destiny delineated, by the latter God with a resolute will establishes what He has thus determined for Himself in order to bring about its reality.

Sometimes “purpose” can also be understood in a more comprehensive sense, so that it includes “foreknowledge” and “election”; 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who has saved us and called us to a holy calling ... in His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.”

Romans 9:11 speaks of a “purpose according to election.” By this the apostle means that God’s purpose was an electing, approving purpose, a purpose that makes distinctions. It was a purpose of choice.

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56. *What was the starting point of predestination with respect to believers?*

Scripture teaches us that it is to be found in God’s eternal love. To begin with, that is present in the word “foreknowledge” as we have developed its meaning above. **This foreknowledge is a free sovereign love.** And “foreknowledge” is put first by the apostle in the series of acts that form the foundation of the salvation of the sinner (Rom 8:29). Furthermore, this love of God is characterized **for us by foreknowledge as a personal love.** God did not merely love a part, a kernel, a remnant of humanity. God, we must say, loved particular people, a John, a Paul, etc. **It was a knowing by name, a personal knowing, something moreover already included in the term “knowing” itself. A love other than personal is in itself not possible. Love is in its nature something personal.** Finally, we must hold that for us nothing lies in back of this love. **One may not even put mercy in back of it.** And certainly not for the following reasons: Mere mercy is not something personal. Anyone who is in misery has as such a claim to our mercy. Mercy distinguishes itself just by this natural, general character from love. **Thus, if in election one wishes to make mercy the starting point, one abandons a personal starting point.** It would then have to be said: God saw us in our sin and by this, our miserable condition, was moved to

compassion to save us in Christ. And that compassion then set God's love into motion. But then one could rightly ask whether all sinners did not stand equally miserable before God and whether equal misery should not have produced equal mercy for all. If one answers "no," then one concedes that besides mercy there was still something else that caused it to remain specifically with certain specific persons. **And this something else can only lie in the love of God.** It was there before mercy. **And by it mercy was awakened and actuated. Only so is it also true that the ground of election does not in any respect lie in us, not even in our miserable lost condition.** God loved us and saved us not because but despite our being miserable. Scripture considers this from the same point of view: "God who is rich in mercy on account of His great love with which He has loved us ..." (Eph 2:4). Here mercy is clearly derived from love and not the reverse.

Limited Atonement

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The Blessings or Better things in the promise include faith!

Let reason be put back on the throne and cast all prejudice aside, this following explanation is excellent in helping to understand the atonement being limited to God's elect. Subjects covered: The good things procured by the death of Christ - faith and other graces, eternal life, Arminianism's problem regarding the giving of faith.

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ by John Owen, Book III Ch. IV

Arg. IX. Before I come to press the argument intended, I must premise some few things; as, —

1. Whatever is freely bestowed upon us, in and through Christ, that is all wholly the procurement and merit of the death of Christ. Nothing is bestowed through him on those that are his which he hath not purchased; the price whereby he made his purchase being his own blood, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; for the covenant between his Father and him, of making out all spiritual blessings to them that were given unto him, was expressly founded on this condition, "That he should make his soul an offering for sin," Isa. liii. 10.

2. That confessedly, on all sides, faith is, in men of understanding, of such absolute indispensable necessity unto salvation, — there being no sacrifice to be admitted for the want of it under the new covenant, — that, whatever God hath done in his love, sending his Son, and whatever Christ hath done or doth, in his oblation and intercession for all or some, without this in us, is, in regard of the event, of no value, worth, or profit unto us, **but serveth only to increase and aggravate condemnation**; for, whatsoever is accomplished besides, that is most certainly true, "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. (So that if there is in ourselves a power of believing, and the act of it do proceed from that power, and is our own also, then certainly and undeniably it is in our power to make

the love of God and death of Christ effectual towards us or not, and that by believing we actually do the one by an act of our own; which is so evident that the most ingenious and perspicacious of our adversaries have in terms confessed it, as I have declared elsewhere).²⁹ Such being, then, the absolute necessity of faith, it seems to me that the cause of that must needs be the prime and principal cause of salvation, as being the cause of that without which the whole would not be, and by which the whole is, and is effectual.

3. I shall give those that to us in this are contrary-minded their choice and option, so that they will answer directly, categorically, and without uncouth, insignificant, cloudy distinctions, whether our Saviour, by his death and intercession (**which we proved to be conjoined**), did merit or procure faith for us, or no? or, which is all one, whether faith be a fruit and effect of the death of Christ, or no? And according to their answer I will proceed.

First, if they answer affirmatively, that it is, or that Christ did procure it by his death (provided always that they do not wilfully equivocate, and when I speak of faith as it is a grace in a particular person, taking it subjectively, they understand faith as it is the doctrine of faith, or the way of salvation declared in the gospel, taking it objectively, which is another thing, and beside the present question; although, by the way, I must tell them that we deny the granting of that new way of salvation, in bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel in Christ, to be procured for us by Christ, himself being the chiefest part of this way, yea, the way itself: and that he should himself be procured by his own death and oblation is a very strange, contradictory assertion, beseeming them who have used it (More, p. 35.) It is true, indeed, a full and plenary carrying of his elect to life and glory by that way we ascribe to him, and maintain it against all; but the granting of that way was of the same free grace and unprocured love which was also the cause of granting himself unto us, [Gen. iii. 15.](#)); — if, I say, they answer thus affirmatively, then I demand whether Christ procured faith for all for whom he died **absolutely**, or upon some condition on their part to be fulfilled? If **absolutely**, then surely, if he died for all, **they must all absolutely believe; for that which is absolutely procured for any is absolutely his, no doubt.** He that hath absolutely procured an inheritance, by what means soever, who can hinder, that it should not be his? But this is contrary to that of the apostle, “**All men have not faith,**” [2 Thess. iii. 2](#); and, “Faith is of the elect of God,” [Tit. i. 1](#). **If they say that he procured it for them, that is, to be bestowed on them conditionally, I desire that they would answer bona fide, and roundly, in terms without equivocation or blind distinctions, assign that condition, that we may know what it is, seeing it is a thing of so infinite concernment to all our souls.** Let me know this condition which ye will maintain, and *en herbam amici!* the cause is yours. Is it, as some say, **if they do not resist the grace of God? Now, what is it not to resist the grace of God? is it not to obey it?** **And what is it to obey the grace of God? is it not to believe? So the condition of faith is faith itself.** Christ procured that they should believe, **upon condition that they do believe! Are these things so?** But they can assign a condition, on our part required, of faith, that is not faith itself. Can they do it? Let us hear it, then, and we will renew our inquiry concerning that condition, whether it be procured by Christ or no. If not, then is the cause of faith still resolved into ourselves; Christ is not the author and finisher of it. If it be then are we just where we were before, and must follow with our queries whether that condition was procured absolutely or upon condition. *Depinge ubi sistam.*

But, secondly, if they will answer negatively, as, agreeably to their own principles, they ought to do, and deny that faith is procured by the death of Christ, then, —

1. **They must maintain that it is an act of our own wills**, so our own as not to be wrought in us by grace; and that it is wholly situated in our power to perform that spiritual act, nothing being bestowed upon us by free grace, in and through Christ (as was before declared), but what by him, in his death and oblation, was procured: which is contrary, — (1.) To express Scripture in exceeding many places, which I shall not recount: (2.) To the very nature of the being of the new covenant, which doth not prescribe and require the condition of it, but effectually work it in all the covenantees, [Jer. xxxi. 33, 34](#); [Ezek. xxxvi. 26](#); [Heb. viii. 10, 11](#): (3.) To the advancement of the free grace of God, in setting up the power of free-will, in the state of corrupted nature, to the slighting and undervaluing thereof. (4.) To the received doctrine of our natural depravedness and disability to anything that is good; yea, by evident unstrained consequence, overthrowing that fundamental article of original sin: yea, (5.) To right reason, which will never grant that the natural faculty is able of itself, without some spiritual elevation, to produce an act purely spiritual; as [1 Cor. ii. 14](#).

2. **They must resolve almost the sole cause of our salvation into ourselves ultimately, it being in our own power to make all that God and Christ do unto that end effectual, or to frustrate their utmost endeavours for that purpose**: for all that is done, whether in the Father's loving us and sending his Son to die for us, or in the Son's offering himself for an oblation in our stead, or for us (in our behalf), is confessedly, as before, of no value nor worth, in respect of any profitable issue, unless we believe; which that we shall do, Christ hath not effected nor procured by his death, neither can the Lord so work it in us **but that the sole casting voice** (if I may so say), **whether we will believe or no, is left to ourselves**. Now, whether this be not to assign unto ourselves the cause of our own happiness, and to make us the chief builders of our own glory, let all judge.

These things being thus premised, I shall briefly prove that which is denied, namely, that faith is procured for us by the death of Christ; and so, consequently, he died not for all and every one, for "all men have not faith:" and this we may do by these following reasons:—

1. **The death of Jesus Christ purchased holiness and sanctification for us**, as was at large proved, Arg. viii.; but faith, as it is a grace of the Spirit inherent in us, is formally a part of our sanctification and holiness: therefore he procured faith for us. The assumption is most certain, and not denied; the proposition was sufficiently confirmed in the foregoing argument; and I see not what may be excepted against the truth of the whole. If any shall except, and say that Christ might procure for us some part of holiness (for we speak of parts, and not of degrees and measure), but not all, as the sanctification of hope, love, meekness, and the like, I ask, — first, What warrant have we for any such distinction between the graces of the Spirit, **that some of them should be of the purchasing of Christ, others of our own store?** secondly, Whether we are more prone of ourselves to believe, and more able, than to love and hope? and where may we have a ground for that?

2. All the fruits of election are purchased for us by Jesus Christ; for "we are chosen in him," [Eph. i. 4](#), as the only cause and fountain of all those good things which the Lord chooseth us to, for the praise of his glorious grace, **that in all things he might have the pre-eminence**. [That even the act of believing is not from us but the work of God, [John 6:29](#) and [Phil. 1:29](#), [Eph. 2:8](#) thereby eliminating any grounds for

man's boasting in himself.] I hope I need not be solicitous about the proving of this, that the Lord Jesus is the only way and means by and for whom the Lord will certainly and actually collate upon his elect all the fruits and effects or intendments of that love whereby he chose them. But now faith is a fruit, a principal fruit, of our election; for saith the apostle, “**We are chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy,**” [Eph. i. 4](#), — **of which holiness, faith, purifying the heart, is a principal share.** “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called,” [Rom. viii. 30](#); that is, with that calling which is according to his purpose, **effectually working faith in them by the mighty operation of his Spirit, “according to the exceeding greatness of his power,”** [Eph. i. 19](#). And so they “believe” (God making them differ from others, [1 Cor. iv. 7](#), in the enjoyment of the means) “who are ordained to eternal life,” [Acts xiii. 48](#). Their being ordained to eternal life was the fountain from whence their faith did flow; and so “the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded,” [Rom. xi. 7](#).

3. **All the blessings of the new covenant are procured and purchased by him in whom the promises thereof are ratified,** and to whom they are made; for all the good things thereof are contained in and exhibited by those promises, through the working of the Spirit of God. Now, concerning the promises of the covenant, and their being confirmed in Christ, and made unto his, as [Gal. iii. 16](#), with what is to be understood in those expressions, was before declared. Therefore, all the good things of the covenant are the effects, fruits, and purchase of the death of Christ, he and all things for 257him being the substance and whole of it. Farther; that faith is of the good things of the new covenant is apparent from the description thereof, [Jer. xxxi. 33, 34](#); [Heb. viii. 10–12](#); [Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27](#), with divers other places, as might clearly be manifested if we affected copiousness in *causa facili*.

4. That without which it is utterly impossible that we should be saved must of necessity be procured by him by whom we are fully and effectually saved. Let them that can, declare how he can be said to procure salvation fully and effectually for us, and not be the author and purchaser of that (for he is the author of our salvation by the way of purchase) without which it is utterly impossible we should attain salvation. Now, without faith it is utterly impossible that ever any should attain salvation, [Heb. xi. 6](#), [Mark xvi. 16](#); but Jesus Christ, according to his name, doth perfectly save us, [Matt. i. 21](#), procuring for us “eternal redemption,” [Heb. ix. 12](#), being, “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,” [chap. vii. 25](#): and therefore must faith also be within the compass of those things that are procured by him.

5. The Scripture is clear, in express terms, and such as are so equivalent that they are not liable to any evasion; as [Phil. i. 29](#), “It is given unto us, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, on the behalf of Christ, for Christ’s sake, to believe on him.” Faith, or belief, is the gift, and Christ the procurer of it: “God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him in heavenly places,” [Eph. i. 3](#). If faith be a spiritual blessing, it is bestowed on us “in him,” and so also for his sake; if it be not, it is not worth contending about in this sense and way: so that, let others look which way they will, I desire to look unto Jesus as the “author and finisher of our faith,” [Heb. xii. 2](#). Divers other reasons, arguments, and places of Scripture might be added for the confirmation of this truth; but I hope I have said enough, and do not desire to say all. The sum of the whole reason may be reduced to this head, — namely, if the fruit and effect procured and wrought by the death of Christ absolutely, not depending on any condition in man to be fulfilled, be not common to all, then did not Christ die for all; but the supposal is true, as is evident in the grace of faith, which

being procured by the death of Christ, to be absolutely bestowed on them for whom he died, is not common to all: therefore, our Saviour did not die for all.

Arg. X. We argue from the type to the antitype, or the thing signified by it; which will evidently restrain the oblation of Christ to God's elect. The people of Israel were certainly, in all remarkable things that happened unto them, typical of the church of God; as the apostle at large [declares], [1 Cor. x. 11](#). Especially, their institutions and ordinances were all representative of the spiritual things of the gospel; their priests, altar, sacrifices, were but all shadows of the good things to come in Jesus Christ; their Canaan was a type of heaven, [Heb. iv. 3, 9](#); as also Jerusalem or Sion, [Gal. iv. 26](#), [Heb. xii. 22](#). The whole people itself was a type of God's church, his elect, his chosen and called people: whence as they were called a "holy people, a royal priesthood;" so also, in allusion to them, are believers, [1 Pet. ii. 5, 9](#). Yea, God's people are in innumerable places called his "Israel," as it is farther expounded, [Heb. viii. 8](#). A true Israelite is as much as a true believer, [John i. 47](#); and he is a Jew who is so in the hidden man of the heart. I hope it need not be proved that that people, as delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought into Canaan, was typical of God's spiritual church, of elect believers. Whence we thus argue:— Those only are really and spiritually redeemed by Jesus Christ who were designed, signified, typified by the people of Israel in their carnal, typical redemption (for no reason in the world can be rendered why some should be typed out in the same condition, partakers of the same good, and not others); but by the people of the Jews, in their deliverance from Egypt, bringing into Canaan, with all their ordinances and institutions, only the elect, the church of God, was typed out, as was before proved. And, in truth, it is the most senseless thing in the world, to imagine that the Jews were under a type to all the whole world, or indeed to any but God's chosen ones, as is proved at large, Heb. ix., x. Were the Jews and their ordinances types to the seven nations whom they destroyed and supplanted in Canaan? were they so to Egyptians, infidels, and haters of God and his Christ? We conclude, then, assuredly, from that just proportion that ought to be observed between the types and the things typified, that only the elect of God, his church and chosen ones, are redeemed by Jesus Christ.

This is a very good proof of the better things promised in the new covenant are to be applied, and infallibly so, to those for whom Christ died - that these two things are inseparable which Arminians separate. Those who are in hell never had these things communicated to them, hence Christ did not die for them. Had he died for them, they would have received them and been saved.

Death of Death in the Death of Christ

by John Owen

Book III Chapter IV. p137

Of sanctification, and of the cause of faith, and the procurement thereof by the death of Christ.

Arg. VIII. Another argument may be taken from the **effect and fruit of the death of Christ** unto sanctification, which we thus propose:— **If the blood of Jesus Christ doth wash, purge, cleanse,**

and sanctify them for whom it was shed, or for whom he was a sacrifice, then certainly he died, shed his blood, or was a sacrifice, only for them that in the event are washed, purged, cleansed, and sanctified; — which that all or every one is not is most apparent, faith being the first principle of the heart's purification, Acts xv. 9, and "all men have not faith," 2 Thess. iii. 2; it is "of the elect of God," Tit. i. 1. The consequence, I conceive, is undeniable, and not to be avoided with any distinctions. But now we shall make it evident **that the blood of Christ is effectual for all those ends of washing, purging, and sanctifying**, which we before recounted. [Note the appeal to reason. The scriptures are reasonable. But do to sin and God's judgments, many are bereft of reason and have been given over to futile thinking. Also, traditions, religious conceits and prejudices cloud our thinking - this affects all of us to varying degrees.] And this we shall do; — first, from the types of it; and, secondly, by plain expressions concerning the thing itself:—

First, For the type, that which we shall now consider is the sacrifice of expiation, which the apostle so expressly compareth with the sacrifice and oblation of Christ. Of this he affirmeth, Heb. ix. 13, that it legally sanctified them for whom it was a sacrifice. "For," saith he, "the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh." Now, that which was done carnally and legally in the type must be spiritually effected in the antitype, — the sacrifice of Christ, typified by that bloody sacrifice of beasts. This the apostle asserteth in the verse following. "**How much more,**" saith he, "**shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**" If I know anything, that answer of Arminius and some others to this, — namely, that the sacrifice did sanctify, not as offered but as sprinkled, and the blood of Christ, not in respect of the oblation, but of its application, answereth it, — is weak and unsatisfactory; for it only asserts a division between the oblation and application of the blood of Christ, which, though we allow to be distinguished, yet such a division we are now disproving. And to weaken our argument, the same division which we disprove is proposed; which, if any, is an easy, facile way of answering. We grant that the blood of Christ sanctifieth in respect of the application of the good things procured by it, but withal prove that it is so applied to all for whom it was an oblation; and that because it is said to sanctify and purge, and must answer the type, which did sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.

Secondly, It is expressly, in divers places affirmed of the blood-shedding and death of our Saviour, **that it doth effect these things**, and that it was intended for that purpose [This is true. Arminians object; they say, as do many nowadays, that salvation is just made available; you have to chose it before these things are granted to you, that is, the condition of receiving the gift of faith is that you believe or have faith, which as stated before, is a gross inconsistency, the cart before the house so to speak, as Owen pointed out earlier.] Many places for the clearing of this were before recounted. I shall now repeat so many of them as shall be sufficient to give strength to the argument in hand, omitting those which before were produced, only desiring that all those places which point out the end of the death of Christ may be considered as of force to establish the truth of this argument.

Rom. vi. 5, 6, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The words of the latter verse yield a reason of the former assertion in verse 5, — namely, **that a participation in the death of Christ shall**

certainly be accompanied with conformity to him in his resurrection; that is, both to life spiritual, as also to eternal: “Because our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” That is, our sinful corruption and depravation of nature are, by his death and crucifying, effectually and meritoriously slain, and disabled from such a rule and dominion over us as that we should be servants any longer unto them; which is apparently the sense of the place, seeing it is laid as a foundation to press forward unto all decrees of sanctification and freedom from the power of sin.

The same apostle also tells us, [2 Cor. i. 20](#), that “all the promises of God are in him yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” “Yea, and Amen,” — confirmed, ratified, **unchangeably established, and irrevocably made over to us. Now, this was done “in him,” — that is, in his death and blood-shedding, for the confirmation of the testament, whereof these promises are the conveyance of the legacies to us, — confirmed by the “death of him, the testator,”** [Heb. ix. 16](#): for he was “the surety of this better testament,” [chap. vii. 22](#); which testament or “covenant he confirmed with many,” by his being “cut off” for them, [Dan. ix. 26, 27](#). Now, what are the promises that are thus confirmed unto us, and established by the blood of Christ? **The sum of them you have, [Jer. xxxi. 33, 34](#); whence they are repeated by the apostle, [Heb. viii. 10–12](#), to set out the nature of that covenant which was ratified in the blood of Jesus, in which you have a summary description of all that free grace towards us, both in sanctification, [verses 10, 11](#), and in justification, [verse 12](#). Amongst these promises, also, is that most famous one of circumcising our hearts, and of giving new hearts and spirits unto us: as [Deut. xxx. 6](#); [Ezek. xxxvi. 26](#). So that our whole sanctification, holiness, with justification and reconciliation unto God, is procured by, and established unto us with, unchangeable promises in the death and blood-shedding of Christ, “the heavenly or spiritual things” being purified with that sacrifice of his, [Heb. ix. 23](#); “For we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” [Col. i. 14](#); “By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” that he might “deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” [Heb. ii. 14, 15](#). [See? The death of Christ has inseparably attached to it the blessings or better things that will infallibly be applied to those for whom Christ died. But those who are under the covenant of works reject this because they have a strong tendency to trust in their own righteousness like the Pharisees did.]**

Do but take notice of those two most clear places, [Tit. ii. 14](#), [Eph. v. 25, 26](#): **in both which our cleansing and sanctification is assigned to be the end and intendment of Christ the worker**; and therefore the certain effect of his death and oblation, which was the work, as was before proved. And I shall add but one place more to prove that which I am sorry that I need produce any one to do, — to wit, that the blood of Christ purgeth us from all our sin, and it is, [1 Cor. i. 30](#), “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Of which, because it is clear enough, I need not spend time to prove that he was thus made unto us of God, inasmuch as he set him forth to be “a propitiation through faith in his blood;” as [Rom. iii. 25](#). **So that our sanctification, with all other effects of free grace, are the immediate procurement of the death of Christ. And of the things that have been spoken this is the sum:— Sanctification and holiness is the certain fruit and effect of the death of Christ in all them for whom he died; but all and every one are not partakers of this sanctification, this purging, cleansing, and working of holiness: therefore, Christ died not for all and every one, “quod erat demonstrandum.”**

It is altogether in vain to except, as some do, that the death of Christ is not the sole cause of these things, for they are not actually wrought in any without the intervention of the Spirit's working in them, and faith apprehending the death of Christ: for, — First, Though many total causes of the same kind cannot concur to the producing of the same effect, yet several causes of several kinds may concur to one effect, and be the sole causes in that kind wherein they are causes. **The Spirit of God is the cause of sanctification and holiness; but what kind of cause, I pray? Even such an one as is immediately and really efficient of the effect. Faith is the cause of pardon of sin; but what cause? in what kind? Why merely as an instrument, apprehending the righteousness of Christ.** Now, do these causes, whereof one is efficient, the other instrumental, both natural and real, hinder that the blood of Christ may not only concur, but also be the sole cause, moral and meritorious, of these things? Doubtless, they do not. Nay, they do suppose it so to be, or else they would in this work be neither instruments nor efficient, that being the sole foundation of the Spirit's operation and efficiency, and the sole cause of faith's being and existence. A man is detained captive by his enemy, and one goes to him that detains him, and pays a ransom for his delivery; who thereupon grants a warrant to the keepers of the prison that they shall knock off his shackles, take away his rags, let him have new clothes, according to the agreement, saying, "Deliver him, for I have found a ransom." Because the jailer knocks off his shackles, and the warrant of the judge is brought for his discharge, shall he or we say that the price and ransom which was paid was not the cause, yes, the sole cause of his delivery? Considering that none of these latter had been, had not the ransom been paid, they are no less the effect of that ransom than his own delivery. In our delivery from the bondage of sin, it is true, there are other things, in other kinds, which do concur besides the death of Christ, as the operation of the Spirit and the grace of God; but these being in one kind, and that in another, these also being no less the fruit and effect of the death of Christ than our deliverance wrought by them, it is most apparent that that is the only main cause of the whole. Secondly, **To take off utterly this exception, with all of the like kind, we affirm that faith itself is a proper immediate fruit and procurement of the death of Christ in all them for whom he died**; which (because, if it be true, it utterly overthrows the general ransom, or universal redemption; and if it be not true, I will very willingly lay down this whole controversy, and be very indifferent which way it be determined, for go it which way it will, free-will must be established), I will prove apart by itself in the next argument.

Some Objections to Particular Redemption (or Limited Atonement) Answered

G Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*,

pg 507

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64. *To what do the opponents of particular satisfaction appeal?*

Mainly to three things:

- a) To the universal offer of the gospel, concerning which all agree.
- b) To a series of Scriptural passages that speak of bearing the sins of the entire world and of dying for all.
- c) To some passages that make mention of a death of those for whom Christ has already died.

65. *How should the first of these (the universal offer of the gospel) be judged?*

The objection is that the presentation of the gospel becomes a meaningless form for those who do not share in the satisfaction of Christ. If we look more closely, this general objection involves three specific objections that are usually not sharply distinguished from each other, yet are essentially different.

- a) It is irreconcilable with the truthfulness of God that He would offer the gospel and the merits of Christ in it to those for whom He Himself did not intend them. God would thereby give the impression that He wills to do something that in fact He does not will.
- b) On our position, ministers of the gospel, one thinks, lose the right to direct a general invitation to people.
- c) The hearers of the gospel could not have confidence to rely on the suretyship and the satisfaction of Christ as long as they have not received infallible assurance that they personally belong to the elect. My confidence in believing can only rest on the fact that Christ has suffered for me. If He has not suffered for all, then I will first need to know whether I belong among those for whom He has surely suffered before I can have solid ground under me.

66. *What may be said to counter the first form of this objection?*

- a) That the offer of the gospel is not and does not present itself to be a revelation of God's secret will or of the will of His decree. If this were so, a contradiction would in fact exist that would detract from God's love of truth. If the following had to be concluded: God has the firm intention to bring them personally to salvation and now it depends on A or B whether you will

meet God's purpose or disappoint Him—if this was the content of the gospel—then particular election and satisfaction would indeed be excluded. This, however, is not the content of our gospel or of the gospel of Scripture. This gospel does not express itself concerning the secret will of God but speaks of His revealed will. We understand this revealed will to include the command of God that comes to man and in each particular instance is determined by the specific relationship of man to God. Now, there is no doubt that it is the obligation of man to accept the possibility of redemption that is offered to him in the gospel, hopefully and gratefully. God can make that demand, and the gospel comes with that demand to all men.

b) That the content of the gospel, as it is presented to all without distinction, **is a declaration of the will of God that A and B, etc., may personally be saved, but that still in this regard should always be considered a conditional will.** It is not only that we are not dealing with God's secret will; we are also dealing with **His revealed will** under a specific condition. In God there is no unsatisfied desire that has silence imposed on it by His secret will. The desire of God can be understood as follows: If you believed, then the good pleasure of God would rest upon this act of faith. This conditional character is thus always to be kept in view and kept in the foreground.

c) **It is true that in the sense just described the gospel comes to many for whom Christ has not died. But at the same time it is true that these are precisely those who willfully despise the sacrifice of Christ. It may never be portrayed as if countless sinners who, eager for salvation, are seeking a ransom [and] now have to be dismissed with the explanation, "This ransom was not meant for you." In doing that, one would be entertaining purely abstract possibilities that under the present circumstances could never become reality. The truth is that not a single instance of this kind can occur.** God's ordaining is such that all those for whom Christ in His purposing has not died are precisely the same as those who reject Christ by their unbelief. Even if satisfaction were universal, this can make no difference regarding their personal attitude toward it. In reality, they would no more share in it then than now.

d) **As noted above, the gospel is intended to deprive man of every excuse and to place the magnitude of his corruption in the clearest light. That is why God does not let the gospel be proclaimed only to the elect but also brings it indiscriminately to all men** (as far as it in fact reaches them and, in principle, as far as we can bring it to them). Now a sifting takes place. But now, too, sin in its inner essence comes to full flowering because it becomes unbelief in the face of grace. It belongs to God's righteousness toward sin that it will also reveal its true character to sinners themselves. The preaching of the gospel contributes to this. This came out most clearly at the time of the appearance of the Mediator on earth in the flesh. Unbelief reacted against Him, the incarnation of grace, in the most decisive way. Naturally, aggravation of guilt is inseparable from this reaction of sin and its related development. However, no one can dispute God's right to bring man into contact with the gospel, even if by that his judgment becomes more severe. Whoever disputes this right takes an Arminian standpoint and tacitly assumes that God owed satisfaction to man. It is the obligation of man to accept in faith everything that God presents to him. And once this obligation is present, God cannot act unjustly when He punishes the failure to meet this obligation, regardless of whether man is able to fulfill his duty.

e) Preaching has as its goal to call everyone it reaches: “If you will, take freely from the water of life” [Rev 22:17]; and “If you come, He will by no means cast you out” [John 6:37]. But it has neither the calling nor the right to make of this “willing” something other than Scripture means by it. It is not to be presented in a Methodistic manner as a sudden, uncaused act of will, a kind of experiment that can be independent of all antecedent conditions. The willing to which Scripture alludes is the willing of faith, of saving faith, the deepest act a person can do, in which his entire being shares and concurs—an act that becomes entirely impossible and incomprehensible without a prior attitude of repentance, to which it is linked and from which it in part results. Thus to will, along with putting aside all confidence in one’s self, is to have such a delight in the work of Christ and such an inner conviction of its sufficiency that we reach out for it with all the strength that is in us.

Now, the freest preaching of the gospel must make clear that such a willing is the only means by which we can become partakers of Christ. If one will not be untruthful, then the significance of faith may never disappear. And the preventive against this difficulty is a preaching of the law accompanying the preaching of the gospel. Whoever does not first bring the sinner to an awareness of his lost condition will also not elicit true faith in his heart by preaching. It is simply not true that everyone has a right to Christ who just chooses to believe at whim. The faith to which the recent methods of evangelism incite is something irrational. The faith of Scripture is a faith supernaturally wrought by the Spirit of God but still not an unnatural faith.

Love, the Two Kinds, Common and Special

code180

John Owen on the two major types of love, common and special (saving). This is very important.

From

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

Book 4 Chap 2 p 21 p207 Love

1. The first place we pitch upon is that which by our adversaries is first propounded, and not a little rested upon; and yet, notwithstanding their clamorous claim, there are not a few who think that very text as fit and ready to overthrow their whole opinion as Goliath's sword to cut off his own head, many unanswerable arguments against the universality of redemption being easily deduced from the words of that text. The great peaceable King of his church guide us to make good the interest of truth to the place in controversy which through him we shall attempt; — first, by opening the words; and, secondly, by balancing of reasonings and arguments from them. And this place is [John iii. 16](#), “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This place, I say, the Universalists exceedingly boast in; for which we are persuaded they have so little cause, that we doubt not but, with the Lord's assistance, to demonstrate that it is destructive to their whole defence: to which end I will give you, in brief, a double paraphrase of the words, the first containing their sense, the latter ours. Thus, then, our adversaries explain these words:— “ ‘God so loved,’ had such a natural inclination, velleity, and propensity to the good of ‘the world,’ Adam, with all and every one of his posterity, of all ages, times, and conditions (whereof some were in heaven, some in hell long before), ‘that he gave his only-begotten Son,’ causing him to be incarnate in the fulness of time, to die, not with a purpose and resolution to save any, but **‘that whosoever,’** what persons soever of those which he had propensity unto, ‘believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,’ should have this fruit and issue, that he should escape death and hell, and live eternally.” In which explication of the sense of the place these things are to be observed:—

First, **What is that love which was the cause of the sending or giving of Christ;** which they make to be a natural propensity to the good of all. Secondly, Who are the objects of this love; all and every man of all generations. Thirdly, Wherein this giving consisteth; of which I cannot find whether they mean by it the appointment of Christ to be a recoverer, or his actual exhibition in the flesh for the accomplishment of his ministration. Fourthly, **Whosoever**, they make **distributive** of the persons in the world, and **so not restrictive in the intention to some**. Fifthly, That life eternal is the fruit obtained by believers, but not the end intended by God.

Now, look a little, in the second place, at what we conceive to be the mind of God in those words; **whose aim we take to be the advancement and setting forth of the free love of God to lost sinners,**

[free, meaning according to *his good pleasure* and not because one asks for it, in which case it would not be free, i.e., not grace but work. See Rms11:6] in sending Christ to procure for them eternal redemption, as may appear in this following paraphrase:—

“ ‘God’ the Father ‘so loved,’ had such a peculiar, transcendent love, being an unchangeable purpose and act of his will concerning their salvation, towards ‘the world,’ miserable, sinful, lost men of all sorts, not only Jews but Gentiles also, which he peculiarly loved, ‘that,’ intending their salvation, as in the last words, for the praise of his glorious grace, ‘he gave,’ he prepared a way to prevent their everlasting destruction, by appointing and sending ‘his only-begotten Son’ to be an all-sufficient Saviour to all that look up unto him, ‘that whosoever believeth in him,’ all believers whatsoever, and only they, ‘should not perish, but have everlasting life,’ and so effectually be brought to the obtaining of those glorious things through him which the Lord in his free love had designed for them.”

In which enlargement of the words, for the setting forth of what we conceive to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, these things are to be observed:—

First, What we understand by the “love” of God, even that act of his will which was the cause of sending his Son Jesus Christ, being the most eminent act of love and favour to the creature; for love is *velle alicui bonum*, “to will good to any.” And never did God will greater good to the creature than in appointing his Son for their redemption. Notwithstanding, I would have it observed that I do not make the purpose of sending or giving Christ to be absolutely subordinate to God’s love to his elect, as though that were the end of the other absolutely, but rather that they are both co-ordinate to the same supreme end, or the manifestation of God’s glory by the way of mercy tempered with justice; but in respect of our apprehension, that is the relation wherein they stand one to another. Now, this love we say to be that, greater than which there is none.

Secondly, By the “world,” we understand the elect of God only, though not considered in this place as such, but under such a notion as, being true of them, serves for the farther exaltation of God’s love towards them, which is the end here designed; and this is, as they are poor, miserable, lost creatures in the world, of the world, scattered abroad in all places of the world, not tied to Jews or Greeks, but dispersed in any nation, kindred, and language under heaven.

Thirdly, “*ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*,” is to us, “that every believer,” and is declarative of the intention of God in sending or giving his Son, containing no distribution of the world beloved, but a direction to the persons whose good was intended, that love being an unchangeable intention of the chiefest good.

Fourthly, “Should not perish, but have life everlasting,” contains an expression of the particular aim and intention of God in this business; which is, the certain salvation of believers by Christ. And this, in general, is the interpretation of the words which we adhere unto, which will yield us sundry arguments, sufficient each of them to evert the general ransom; which, that they may be the better bottomed, and the more clearly convincing, we will lay down and compare the several words and expressions of this place, about whose interpretation we differ, with the reason of our rejecting the one sense and embracing the other:—

The first difference in the interpretation of this place is about the cause of sending Christ; called here **love**. The second, about the object of this love; called here the **world**. Thirdly, Concerning the intention of God in sending his Son; said to be that believers might be saved.

For the First, **By “love” in this place, all our adversaries agree that a natural affection and propensity in God to the good of the creature, lost under sin, in general, which moved him to take some way whereby it might possibly be remedied, is intended. We, on the contrary, say that by love here is not meant an inclination or propensity of his nature, but an act of his will [code455b] (where we conceive his love to be seated), and eternal purpose to do good to man, being the most transcendent and eminent act of God’s love to the creature.**

That both these may be weighed, to see which is most agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost, I shall give you, first, some of the reasons whereby we oppose the former interpretation; and, secondly, those whereby we confirm our own.

First, **if no natural affection, whereby he should necessarily be carried to any thing without himself, can or ought to be ascribed unto God, then no such thing is here intended in the word love;** for that cannot be here intended which is not in God at all. But now, that there neither is nor can be any such natural affection in God is most apparent, and may be evidenced by many demonstrations. I shall briefly recount a few of them:—

First, **Nothing that includes any imperfection is to be assigned to Almighty God:** he is God all-sufficient; he is our rock, and his work is perfect. **But a natural affection in God to the good and salvation of all, being never completed nor perfected, carrieth along with it a great deal of imperfection and weakness;** and not only so, but it must also needs be exceedingly prejudicial to the absolute blessedness and happiness of Almighty God. Look, how much anything wants **[lacks, comes short of]** of the fulfilling of that whereunto it is carried out with any desire, natural or voluntary, so much it wanteth of blessedness and happiness. **So that, without impairing of the infinite blessedness of the ever-blessed God, no natural affection unto anything never to be accomplished can be ascribed unto him, such as this general love to all is supposed to be.**

Secondly, **If the Lord hath such a natural affection to all, as to love them so far as to send his Son to die for them, whence is it that this affection of his doth not receive accomplishment? whence is it that it is hindered, and doth not produce its effects? why doth not the Lord engage his power for the fulfilling of his desire? “It doth not seem good to his infinite wisdom,” say they, “so to do.” Then is there an affection in God to that which, in his wisdom, he cannot prosecute. This among the sons of men, the worms of the earth, would be called a brutish affection.**

Thirdly, **No affection or natural propensity to good is to be ascribed to God which the Scripture nowhere assigns to him,** and is contrary to what the Scripture doth assign unto him. Now, the Scripture doth nowhere assign unto God any natural affection whereby he should be naturally inclined to the good of the creature; the place to prove it clearly is yet to be produced. And that it is contrary to what the Scripture assigns him is apparent; **for it describes him to be free in showing mercy, every act of it being by him performed freely, even as he pleaseth, for “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.”**

Now, if every act of mercy showed unto any do proceed from the free distinguishing will of God (as is apparent), certainly there can be in him no such natural affection. [See [code439](#), [Common Love vs. Divine Love](#) for more in depth comment in Owen's alluding to God's *impassibility*.] And the truth is, if the Lord should not show mercy, and be carried out towards the creature, merely upon his own distinguishing will, but should naturally be **moved to show mercy to the miserable, he should, first, be no more merciful to men than to devils, nor, secondly, to those that are saved than to those that are damned: for that which is natural must be equal in all its operations; and that which is natural to God must be eternal**. Many more effectual reasons are produced by our divines for the denial of this natural affection in God, in the resolution of the Arminian distinction (I call it so, as now by them abused) of God's antecedent and consequent will, to whom the learned reader may repair for satisfaction. So that the love mentioned in this place is not that natural affection to all in general, which is not. But, —

Secondly, It is the **special love of God to his elect**, as we affirm, and so, consequently, not any such thing as our adversaries suppose to be intended by it, — namely, **a velleity or natural inclination to the good of all. For, —**

First, The love here intimated is absolutely the most eminent and transcendent love that ever God showed or bare towards any miserable creature; yea, the intention of our Saviour is so to set it forth, as is apparent by the emphatical expression of it used in this place. The particles "so," "that," declare no less, pointing out an **eximiousness peculiarly remarkable** in the thing whereof the affirmation is [made], above any other thing in the same kind. Expositors usually lay weight upon almost every particular word of the verse, for the exaltation and demonstration of the love here mentioned. "So," that is, in such a degree, to such a remarkable, astonishable height: "God," the glorious, all-sufficient God, that could have manifested his justice to eternity in the condemnation of all sinners, and no way wanted them to be partakers of his blessedness: "loved," with such an earnest, intense affection, consisting in an eternal, unchangeable act and purpose of his will, for the bestowing of the chiefest good (the choicest effectual love): "the world," men in the world, of the world, subject to the iniquities and miseries of the world, lying in their blood, having nothing to render them commendable in his eyes, or before him: "that he gave," did not, as he made all the world at first, speak the word and it was done, but proceeded higher, to the performance of a great deal more and longer work, wherein he was to do more than exercise an act of his almighty power, as before; and therefore gave "his Son;" not any favourite or other well-pleasing creature; not sun, moon, or stars; not the rich treasure of his creation (all too mean, and coming short of expressing this love); but his Son: "begotten Son," and that not so called by reason of some near approaches to him, and filial, obediencial reverence of him, as the angels are called the sons of God; for it was not an angel that he gave, which yet had been an expression of most intense love; nor yet any son by adoption, as believers are the sons of God; but his begotten Son, begotten of his own person from eternity; and that "his only-begotten Son;" not any one of his sons, but whereas he had or hath but one only-begotten Son, always in his bosom, his Isaac, he gave him:— **than which how could the infinite wisdom of God make or give any higher testimony of his love?** especially if ye will add what is here evidently included, though the time was not as yet come that it should be openly expressed, namely, whereunto he gave his Son, his only one; not to be a king, and worshipped in the first place, — but he "spared him not, but delivered him up" to death "for us all," [Rom. viii. 32](#). Whereunto, for a close of all, cast your eyes upon his design and purpose in this

whole business, and ye shall find that it was that believers, those whom he thus loved, “might not perish,” — that is, undergo the utmost misery and wrath to eternity, which they had deserved, — “but have everlasting life,” eternal glory with himself, **which of themselves they could no way attain**; and ye will easily grant that “greater love hath no man than this.” Now, if the love here mentioned be the greatest, highest, and chiefest of all, certainly it cannot be that common affection towards all that we discussed before: for the love whereby men are actually and eternally saved is greater than that which may consist with the perishing of men to eternity.

Secondly, The Scripture positively asserts this very love as the chiefest act of the love of God, and that which he would have us take notice of in the first place: [Rom. v. 8](#), “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” and fully, [1 John iv. 9, 10](#), “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” In both which places the eminency of this love is set forth exceeding emphatically to believers, with such expressions as can no way be accommodated to a natural velleity to the good of all.

Thirdly, That seeing all love in God is but velle alicui bonum, to will good to them that are beloved, they certainly are the object of his love to whom he intends that good which is the issue and effect of that love; but now the issue of this love or good intended, being not perishing, and obtaining eternal life through Christ, happens alone to, and is bestowed on, only elect believers: therefore, they certainly are the object of this love, and they alone; — which was the thing we had to declare.

Fourthly, **That love which is the cause of giving Christ is also always the cause of the bestowing of all other good things:** [Rom. viii. 32](#), “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Therefore, if the love there mentioned be the cause of sending Christ, as it is, **it must also cause all other things to be given with him, and so can be towards none but those who have those things bestowed on them; which are only the elect, only believers.** Who else have grace here, or glory hereafter?

Fifthly, The word here, which is ἠγάπησε, signifieth, in its native importance, valde dilexit, — **to love so as to rest in that love; which how it can stand with hatred, and an eternal purpose of not bestowing effectual grace, which is in the Lord towards some**, will not easily be made apparent. And now let the Christian reader judge, whether by the love of God, in this place mentioned, **be to be understood a natural velleity or inclination in God to the good of all, both elect and reprobate, or the peculiar love of God to his elect**, being the fountain of the chiefest good that ever was bestowed on the sons of men. This is the first difference about the interpretation of these words.

[go to Book IV Ch VI Owen](#) [more on love](#)

Book 4 Ch 6 p283 (395 online)

Proof 13. “The blessing of life hath streamed in this doctrine of the love of God to mankind; yea, in the tender and spiritual discovery of the grace of God to mankind (in the ransom given and atonement

made by Christ for all men, with the fruits thereof) hath God, in the first place, overcome his chosen ones to believe and turn to God, [Acts xiii. 48](#); [Tit. ii. 11, 13](#), [iii. 4, 5](#).”

Ans. First, That the [freedom of God's grace](#), and the transcendency of his eternal love towards men, with the sending of his Son to die for them, to recover them to himself from sin and Satan, is a most effectual motive, and (when set on by the Spirit of grace) a most certain operative principle of the conversion of God's elect, we most willingly acknowledge. It is that wherein our hearts rejoice, whereby they were endeared, and for which we desire to return [thankful obedience](#) every moment. But that ever this was effectual, extending this love to all, or at least that any effectualness is in that aggravation of it, we utterly deny; and that, — 1. Because it is false, and a corrupting of the word of God, as hath been showed; and of a lie there can be no good consequence. 2. It quite enervates and plucks out the efficacy of this heavenly motive, [by turning the most intense and incomparable love of God towards his elect into a common desire, wishing, and affection of his nature](#) (which, indeed, is [opposite to his nature](#)), failing of its end and purpose; which might consist with the eternal destruction of all mankind, as I shall abundantly demonstrate, if Providence call me to the other part of this controversy, concerning the cause of sending Jesus Christ.

Secondly, There is nothing of this common love to all in the places urged; for, — 1. The “grace” mentioned, [Tit. ii. 11, 13](#), is the grace that certainly brings salvation, [which that common love doth not, and was the cause of sending Christ, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;”](#) where our [redemption and sanctification](#) are asserted to be the [immediate end](#) of the [oblation of Jesus Christ](#); which how destructive it is to universal redemption hath been formerly declared. 2. So also is that “love and kindness” mentioned, [chap. iii. 4, 5](#), such as by which we receive the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” [verse 5](#); and justification, and adoption to heirship of eternal life, [verse 7](#); — which, whether it be a common or a peculiar love, let all men judge. 3. [Acts xiii. 47](#) (for [verse 48](#), there cited, contains as clear a restriction of this love of God to his elect, as can be desired) [sets out the extent of the mercy of God in Christ](#), through the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles also, and not only to the Jews, as was foretold by [Isaiah, chap. xlix. 6](#); which is far enough from giving any colour to the universality of grace, it being nothing but the same affirmation which ye have [John xi. 52](#), of [“gathering together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”](#)

The Love Gospel

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Evangelism: Is it ok to tell someone that Jesus loves him? Impetration and Intercession of Christ

I have some thoughts on that approach in evangelism; first, I can't see anywhere in the bible where any of the apostles or Jesus used that approach, saying to someone that Jesus loved them. Certainly Jesus would have said this to Nicodemus or the Jews, or the woman at the well, or the children that were coming to him or the lady begging bread at the table or anyone else. Are you thinking that Jesus loves all and everyone salvifically, the love described in John 3:16? If so then certainly all shall be saved since God does all his pleasure (Isa46:10). But that can't be since most go to hell and few are saved. So if Christ loves everyone, then he died for everyone; and if he died for everyone, then he purchased all those things that are yea and amen for those who are in Christ. As the surety of the covenant and our mediator, He purchased with his blood all those things that are for ones' eternal blessedness such as faith, sanctification, justification and eternal life, right? And certainly these are given to those for whom he died which are those whom he loves and prays for! - the two are inseparable. But there's the same problem; most go to hell. Now your response may be that the reason why they go there is due to their unbelief. But did not Christ die for all our sins including unbelief? And was not the ability to believe part of the promise for which Christ died to obtain which is given to those for whom he died, i.e., the gift of faith? (See Acts 2:8 and Phil 1:29, "*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*") which we do not ask for otherwise it is no gift but a wage and if it is a wage then it is no longer grace! Rm11:6 As **Martin Luther** said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God." Did Paul not say in Romans 9:32 say, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? i.e., faith, grace, and eternal life hereafter! And then you have John saying in Rev. 1:5-6, "*To Him who loved us and washed^[a] us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." These two things, impetration, the procuring of those things, and his intercession are inseparable - those he loved in eternity are those he died for and are those who will infallibly receive all those good things. Christ's intercession is inseparable from his oblation, which are the duties of a high priest. Christ, as our high priest, prays for those for whom he died just as the high priest under the law prayed for the people; and his prayers are always heard by God, i.e., are successful so that *He is able to save to the uttermost.* (Rm 8:34, Heb7:25)*

Certainly those in hell were not given *all things* else they wouldn't be there. And if they didn't get those things, then by definition, God did not favor them or love them, i.e., he did not die for them. And now the passage where Jesus says to many, depart from me you workers of iniquity, for I never knew you makes this more evident. Certainly if he loves all and everyone he would "know" them; that is, he would show them favor, i.e., love them enough to die for them and save them. To argue otherwise is to assign imperfection to the Godhead among other things.

So this is what I would say to someone if the opportunity arose: Repent from your sin and believe in Christ for salvation; say to them as Jesus told Nicodemus, You must be born again. People need to know that they are exposed to eternal torments. Paul said "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" 2Cor5:1. Then let the Holy Spirit convert or not according to His good pleasure, for his love, his transcendent love to the Church, the highest form of love, is this: an act of his will: *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* Rm9:15 This love in John 3:16 is not an affection in God that desires or wishes the good of all, else he would be obliged to save all, and it would be contrary to his nature for him not to save all. John Owen distinguishes between a common love or desire to do good to all vs. a saving or special love which is an act of his distinguishing will:

... No affection or natural propensity to good is to be ascribed to God which the Scripture nowhere assigns to him, and is contrary to what the Scripture doth assign unto him. Now, the Scripture doth nowhere assign unto God any natural affection whereby he should be naturally inclined to the good of the creature; the place to prove it clearly is yet to be produced. And that it is contrary to what the Scripture assigns him is apparent; for it describes him to be free in showing mercy, every act of it being by him performed freely, even as he pleaseth, for "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." Now, if every act of mercy showed unto any do proceed from the free distinguishing will of God (as is apparent), certainly there can be in him no such natural affection. And the truth is, if the Lord should not show mercy, and be carried out towards the creature, merely upon his own distinguishing will, but should naturally be moved to show mercy to the miserable, he should, first, be no more merciful to men than to devils, nor, secondly, to those that are saved than to those that are damned: for that which is natural must be equal in all its operations; and that which is natural to God must be eternal. Many more effectual reasons are produced by our divines for the denial of this natural affection in God, in the resolution of the Arminian distinction (I call it so, as now by them abused) of God's antecedent and consequent will, to whom the learned reader may repair for satisfaction. So that the love mentioned in this place is not that natural affection to all in general, which is not. But, —

Secondly, It is the special love of God to his elect, as we affirm, and so, consequently, not any such thing as our adversaries suppose to be intended by it, — namely, a velleity or natural inclination to the good of all. For, — John Owen

There are many logical/reasonable consequents to this doctrine that do not flow from the doctrine of the general ransom (that God loves all equally and died for all and wants to save all) that time doesn't permit to go into now.

The death of Christ procured faith, grace and holiness for those for whom he died. "*He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and without blame before Him in love.*" Eph1:4 We are purified by faith: Acts 15:8-9 - "*So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*" We are given faith as a gift. Eph 2:8 All this is in one big package not to be separated. Therefore, if God's will is that the elect would be made holy and faith is that instrument that enables one to be so (purifying their hearts by faith), then Christ by his death procured faith to be bestowed on his elect ones. This is the essence of the main difference between the old and new covenants, what makes the new better than the old. The condition to eternal life under the old

covenant was obedience; do this and live. But the law could not effect it due to sinful flesh. In the new, the condition is promised - Christ, our surety, did what we could not do under the old, and provides this condition by bestowing it (faith, grace and holiness; faith, grace and truth in another place Owen notes) on his elect enabling them to obey, believe and please God.

The following commentary by John Owen will expound on this truth and then I will give some concluding remarks at the end.

Book 1 Ch VI p67 John Owen *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*

Chapter VI.

The means used by the fore-recounted agents in this work.

Our next employment, following the order of execution, not intention, will be the discovery or laying down of the means in this work; which are, indeed, no other but the several actions before recounted, but now to be considered under another respect, — **as they are a means ordained for the obtaining of a proposed end**; of which afterward. Now, because the several actions of Father and Spirit were all exercised towards Christ, and terminated in him, as God and man, he only and his performances are to be considered as the means in this work, the several concurrences of both the other persons before mentioned being presupposed as necessarily antecedent or concomitant.

The means, then, used or ordained by these agents for the end proposed is that whole economy or dispensation carried along to the end, from whence our Saviour **Jesus Christ is called a Mediator**; which may be, and are usually, as I mentioned before, distinguished into two parts: — **First, his oblation**; **secondly, his intercession**.

By his **oblation** we do not design only the particular offering of himself upon the cross an offering to his Father, as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish, when he bare our sins or carried them up with him in his own body on the tree, which was the sum and complement of his oblation and that wherein it did chiefly consist; **but also his whole humiliation, or state of emptying himself, whether by yielding voluntary obedience unto the law, as being made under it**, that he might be the end thereof to them that believe, Rom. x. 4, **or by his subjection to the curse of the law**, in the antecedent misery and suffering of life, as well as by submitting to death, the death of the cross: for no action of his as mediator is to be excluded from a concurrence to make up the whole means in this work. Neither by his **intercession** do I understand only that heavenly appearance of his in the most holy place for the applying unto us all good things purchased and procured by his oblation; but also every act of his exaltation conducing thereunto, from his resurrection to his “sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him.” Of all which his **resurrection**, being the basis, as it were, and the foundation of the rest (“for if he is not risen, then is our faith in vain,” 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14; and then are we “yet in our sins,” verse 17; “of all men most miserable,” verse 19), is especially to be considered, as that to which a great part of the effect is often ascribed; for “he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” Rom. iv. 25; — where, and in such other places, by his resurrection the whole following dispensation and the

perpetual intercession of Christ for us in heaven is intended; for “God raised up his son Jesus to bless us, in turning every one of us from our iniquities,” [Acts iii. 26](#).

Now, this whole dispensation, with especial regard to the death and blood-shedding of Christ, is the means we speak of, agreeably to what was said before of such in general; for it is not a thing in itself desirable for its own sake. The death of Christ had nothing in it (we speak of his sufferings distinguished from his obedience) that was good, but only as it conduced to a farther end, even the end proposed for the manifestation of God’s glorious grace. What good was it, that Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, should, with such horrid villainy and cruelty, gather themselves together against God’s holy child, whom he had anointed? [Acts iv. 27](#): or what good was it, that the Son of God should be made sin and a curse, to be bruised, afflicted, and to undergo such wrath as the whole frame of nature, as it were, trembled to behold? What good, what beauty and form is in all this, that it should be desired in itself and for itself? Doubtless none at all. It must, then, be looked upon as a means conducing to such an end; the glory and lustre thereof must quite take away all the darkness and confusion that was about the thing itself. And even so it was intended by the blessed agents in it, by “**whose determinate counsel and foreknowledge he was delivered and slain,**” [Acts ii. 23](#); there being done unto him “**whatsoever his hand and counsel had determined,**” [chap. iv. 28](#): which what it was must be afterward declared. Now, concerning the whole some things are to be observed:—

That though the **oblation and intercession** of Jesus Christ are distinct acts in themselves and have distinct immediate products and issues assigned oftentimes unto them (which I should now have laid down, but that I must take up this in another place), **yet they are not in any respect or regard to be divided or separated,** as that the one should have any respect to any persons or anything which the other also doth not in its kind equally respect. But there is this manifold union between them:—

First, **In that they are both alike intended for the obtaining and accomplishing the same entire and complete end proposed, — to wit, the effectual bringing of many sons to glory, for the praise of God’s grace; of which afterward.**

Secondly, **That what persons soever the one respecteth, in the good things it obtaineth, the same, all, and none else, doth the other respect, in applying the good things so obtained;** for “he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” [Rom. iv. 25](#). That is, in brief, **the object of the one is of no larger extent than the object of the other;** or, for whom Christ offered himself, for all those, and only those, doth he intercede, according to his own word, “For their sake I sanctify myself” (to be an oblation), **“that they also might be sanctified through the truth,”** [John xvii. 19](#).

Thirdly, **That the oblation of Christ is, as it were, the foundation of his intercession, inasmuch as by the oblation was procured everything that, by virtue of his intercession, is bestowed;** and **that because the sole end why Christ procured anything by his death was that it might be applied to them for whom it was so procured.** The sum is, that the oblation and intercession of Jesus Christ are one entire means for the producing of the same effect, the very end of the oblation being that all those things which are bestowed by the intercession of Christ, and without whose application it should certainly fail of the end proposed in it, be effected accordingly; so that it cannot be affirmed that the death or offering of

Christ concerned any one person or thing more, in respect of procuring any good, than his intercession doth for the collating of it: for, interceding there for all good purchased, and prevailing in all his intercessions (for the Father always hears his Son), it is evident that every one for whom Christ died must actually have applied unto him all the good things purchased by his death; which, because it is evidently destructive to the adverse cause, we must a little stay to confirm it, only telling you the main proof of it lies in our following proposal of assigning the proper end intended and effected by the death of Christ, so that the chief proof must be deferred until then. I shall now only propose those reasons which may be handled apart, not merely depending upon that.

The Love Gospel

Arguments against witnessing to people that Jesus loves them, etc. Love to God from natural principles and self-love vs. from a true sight of His glory.

Excerpts from [On Religious Affections](#) by Jonathan Edwards p275 Vol. 1

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.vii.iv.iii.html>

That kind of affection to God or Jesus Christ, which thus properly arises from **self-love**, **cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual love**; as appears from what has been said already. **For self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as angels**; and therefore surely nothing that is the mere result of it, can be supernatural and divine, in the manner before described.*

[*footnote: "There is a natural love to Christ, as to one that doth thee good, and for thine own ends; and spiritual, for himself, whereby the Lord only is exalted." Shepard's Par. of the Ten Virgins, P. I. p. 25] (pg. 49 in the book, Ch6 Sect. 5)

Christ plainly speaks of this kind of love, as what is nothing beyond the love of wicked men, [Luke vi. 32](#). "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them." And the devil himself knew that a **mercenary respect to God**, only for benefits received or depended on, (which is all one,) is worthless in the sight of God; [Job i. 9, 10](#). "Doth Job serve God for nought? hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house," etc. [[hence the insidious nature of the Prosperity Gospel](#)] God would never have implicitly allowed the objection to have been good, in case the accusation had been true, by allowing that matter to be tried, and Job to be so dealt with, that it might appear in the event, whether Job's respect to God was thus mercenary or no. Whereas the proof of the goodness of his respect was put upon that issue. [[Telling people that God loves them as a witnessing method will foster this kind of returned love that is common to all and thus may easily be mistaken for a divine love for God when it is nothing more than what is common to all yet consistent with going to hell and hence is a fatal security most popular in today's evangelism, serving much in the way of quieting conscience and stifling any serious self-examination.](#)]

It is unreasonable to think otherwise, than that the **first foundation of a true love to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of his nature**. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a man or any creature lovely, is his

excellency; and so what chiefly renders God lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love, is his excellency.

footnote: *Thomas Shepard: "For faith springs out of the destruction of our own excellency, and ruins of it; like Christ, that did arise a root out of dry ground; for the Lord's great plot is to advance Christ and his rich grace. Now, look, as it is obscured by bringing anything of our own to it, so it is advanced by fetching all from it; this can never be till the soul is sensible of his nakedness, emptiness, and wants; let Christ be never so sweet, a full soul will loathe him till he dies of hunger; for such is the senselessness of men, and dislike of Christ, that extremities only drive them hither, as Judges 5:6."* p318-19 Parable of the Ten Virgins

God's nature, or the divinity, is infinitely excellent; yea it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true Love of this excellent and lovely nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness! How can that be true love of beauty and brightness, which is not for beauty and brightness' sake? how can that be a true prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the sake of its worthiness and preciousness? This **infinite excellency of the divine nature, as it is in itself, is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect; but how can a man truly love God, without loving him for that excellency, which is the foundation of all that is good or desirable in him? They whose affection to God is founded first on his profitableness to them, begin at the wrong end; they regard God only for the utmost limit of the stream of divine good, where it touches them, and reaches their interest. They have no respect to that **infinite glory of God's nature, which is the original good, and the true fountain of all good, and of loveliness of every kind.****

A natural principle of self-love may be the foundation of great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing anything of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. There is a certain gratitude that is a mere natural thing. Gratitude is one of the natural affections, as well as anger; and there is a gratitude that arises from self-love, very much in the same manner that anger does. Anger in men is an affection excited against, or in opposition to, another, for something in him that crosses self-love: gratitude is an affection one has towards another, for loving or gratifying him, or for something in him that suits self-love. **And there may be a kind of gratitude, without any true or proper love;** as there may be anger without hatred; as in parents towards their children, with whom they may be angry, and yet at the same time have a strong habitual love to them. Of this gratitude Christ declares, ([Luke vi.](#)) Sinners love those that love them; even the publicans, who were some of the most carnal and profligate sort of men, ([Matt. v. 46.](#)) This is the principle wrought upon by bribery, in unjust judges; and which even the brute beasts exercise; a dog will love his master that is kind to him. And we see in innumerable instances, that mere nature is sufficient to excite gratitude in men, or to affect their hearts with thankfulness to others for kindnesses received; and sometimes towards them against whom at the same time they have an habitual enmity. Thus Saul was once and again greatly affected, and even dissolved with gratitude towards David, for sparing his life; and yet remained an habitual enemy to him. And as men, from mere nature, may be thus affected towards men; so they may towards God. Nothing hinders, but that the same self-love may work after the same manner towards God, as towards men. And we have manifest instances of it in Scripture; as indeed the children of Israel, who sang God's praises at the Red sea, but soon forgot his works. Naaman the Syrian was greatly affected with the miraculous cure of his leprosy. His heart was engaged thenceforward to

worship the God who had healed him, excepting when it would expose him to be ruined in his temporal interest. So was Nebuchadnezzar greatly affected with God's goodness to him, in restoring him to his reason and kingdom, after his dwelling with the beasts.

Gratitude being thus a **natural principle**, ingratitude is so much the more vile and heinous; because it shows a dreadful prevalence of wickedness, when it even overbears and suppresses the better principles of human nature. It is mentioned as an evidence of the high degree of wickedness in many of the heathen, that they were without natural affection, [Rom. ii. 31](#). But that the want of gratitude, or natural affection, are evidences of a high degree of vice, **is no argument that all gratitude and natural affection has the nature of virtue, or saving grace**.

Self-love, through the exercise of a mere natural gratitude, may be the foundation of a sort of love to God many ways. A kind of love may arise from a false notion of God, that men have some way imbibed; as though he were only goodness and mercy, and no revenging justice; or as though the exercises of his goodness were necessary, and not free and sovereign; or as though his goodness were dependent on what is in them, and as it were constrained by them. Men on such grounds as these, **may love a God of their own forming in their imaginations, when they are far from loving such a God as reigns in heaven.** [The term *necessary*: in other words God, by necessity, must show kindness and favor to all, hence God is not free to chose to whom he will have mercy. God is the potter and he does as he pleases; he is not bound to show mercy all the time, i.e., by *necessity*, which would make him not free to do as he pleases, to show favor on some and not on others, e.g., as he does in election.]

Did Christ Die For All And Every One?

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John Owen, from his work, [The Death of Death of the Death of Christ](#), speaks to the doctrine of limited atonement or particularity in redemption, that is, did Christ die for all? Did He purchase all things for those for whom he died? Are the benefits of his death common to all? Does everyone have the ability to believe on his own? I highly recommend reading the whole book.

Book III, Ch IV

Arg. IX. Before I come to press the argument intended, I must premise some few things; as, —

1. Whatever is freely bestowed upon us, in and through Christ, that is all wholly the procurement and merit of the death of Christ. **Nothing is bestowed through him on those that are his which he hath not purchased**; the price whereby he made his purchase being his own blood, [1 Pet. i. 18, 19](#); for the covenant between his Father and him, of making out all spiritual blessings to them that were given unto him, was expressly founded on this condition, “That he should make his soul an offering for sin,” [Isa. liii. 10](#).

2. That confessedly, on all sides, faith is, in men of understanding, of such absolute indispensable necessity unto salvation, — there being no sacrifice to be admitted for the want of it under the new covenant, — that, whatever God hath done in his love, sending his Son, and whatever Christ hath done or doth, in his [oblation and intercession](#) [[which are inseparable](#)] for all or some, without this in us, is, in regard of the event, of no value, worth, or profit unto us, but serveth only to increase and aggravate condemnation; for, whatsoever is accomplished besides, that is most certainly true, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” [Mark xvi. 16](#). (So that if there is in ourselves a power of believing, and the act of it do proceed from that power, and is our own also, then certainly and undeniably it is in our power to make the love of God and death of Christ effectual towards us or not, and that by believing we actually do the one by an act of our own; which is so evident that the most ingenious and perspicacious of our adversaries have in terms confessed it, as I have declared elsewhere [[the Arminian position](#)]).²⁹ Such being, then, the absolute necessity of faith, it seems to me that the cause of that must needs be the prime and principal cause of salvation, as being the cause of that without which the whole would not be, and by which the whole is, and is effectual.

3. I shall give those that to us in this are contrary-minded, their choice and option, so that they will answer directly, categorically, and without uncouth, insignificant, cloudy distinctions, whether our Saviour, by his **death and intercession (which we proved to be conjoined)**, did merit or procure faith for us, or no? or, which is all one, whether faith be a fruit and effect of the death of Christ, or no? And according to their answer I will proceed.

First, If they answer affirmatively, that it is, or that Christ did procure it by his death (provided always that they do not willfully equivocate, and when I speak of faith as it is a grace in a particular person, taking it subjectively, they understand faith as it is the doctrine of faith, or the way of salvation declared in the gospel, taking it objectively, which is another thing, and beside the present question;

although, by the way, I must tell them that we deny the granting of that new way of salvation, in bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel in Christ, to be procured for us by Christ, himself being the chiefest part of this way, yea, the way itself: and that he should himself be procured by his own death and oblation is a very strange, contradictory assertion, beseeming them who have used it (More, p. 35.) It is true, indeed, a full and plenary carrying of his elect to life and glory by that way we ascribe to him, and maintain it against all; but the granting of that way was of the same free grace and unprocured love which was also the cause of granting himself unto us, [Gen. iii. 15.](#) [[the original promise in obscure terms](#)]; — if, I say, they answer thus affirmatively, then I demand whether Christ procured faith for all for whom he died **absolutely**, or upon some condition on their part to be fulfilled? If **absolutely**, then surely, if he died for all, they must all absolutely believe; for that which is absolutely procured for any is absolutely his, no doubt. He that hath absolutely procured an inheritance, by what means soever, who can hinder, that it should not be his? **But this is contrary to that of the apostle, “All men have not faith,” [2 Thess. iii. 2](#);** and, **“Faith is of the elect of God,” [Tit. i. 1](#).** If they say that he procured it for them, that is, to be bestowed on them **conditionally** [[which is the Arminian position](#)], I desire that they would answer bona fide, and roundly, in terms without equivocation or blind distinctions, assign that condition, that we may know what it is, seeing it is a thing of so infinite concernment to all our souls. Let me know this condition which ye will maintain, and *en herbam amici!*[30](#) the cause is yours. Is it, as some say, if they do not **resist the grace of God**? Now, what is it not to resist the grace of God? is it not to obey it? And what is it to obey the grace of God? is it not to believe? **So the condition of faith is faith itself** [[the Arminian position!](#)]. **Christ procured that they should believe, upon condition that they do believe!** [[seen in the Sinner's prayer!](#)] Are these things so? But they can assign a condition, on our part required, of faith, that is not faith itself. Can they do it? Let us hear it, then, and we will renew our inquiry concerning that condition, whether it be procured by Christ or no. **If not, then is the cause of faith still resolved into ourselves;** Christ is not the author and finisher of it. If it be, then are we just where we were before, and must follow with our queries whether that condition was procured **absolutely or upon condition.** *Depinge ubi sistam.*

But, secondly, if they will answer negatively, as, agreeably to their own principles, they ought to do, and deny that faith is procured by the death of Christ, then, —

1. **They must maintain that it is an act of our own wills,** so our own as not to be wrought in us by **grace**; and that it is wholly situated in our power to perform that spiritual act, nothing being bestowed upon us by free grace, in and through Christ (as was before declared), but what by him, in his death and oblation, was procured: which is contrary, — (1.) To express Scripture in exceeding many places, which I shall not recount: (2.) To the **very nature of the being of the new covenant, which doth not prescribe and require the condition of it, but effectually work it in all the covenantees,** [Jer. xxxi. 33, 34](#); [Ezek. xxxvi. 26](#); [Heb. viii. 10, 11](#); (3.) To the advancement of the free grace of God, in setting up the power of free-will, in the state of corrupted nature, to the slighting and undervaluing thereof [[to the undervaluing of God's free and sovereign grace which is a gift not of ourselves](#)]. (4.) To the received doctrine of our natural depravedness and disability to anything that is good; yea, by evident unstrained consequence, overthrowing that **fundamental article of original sin;** yea, (5.) **To right reason, which will never grant that the natural faculty is able of itself, without some spiritual elevation, to produce an act purely spiritual;** as [1 Cor. ii. 14](#).

2. They must resolve almost the sole cause of our salvation into ourselves ultimately, it being in our own power to make all that God and Christ do unto that end effectual, or to frustrate their utmost endeavours for that purpose: for all that is done, whether in the Father's loving us and sending his Son to die for us, or in the Son's offering himself for an oblation in our stead, or for us (in our behalf), is confessedly, as before, of no value nor worth, in respect of any profitable issue, unless we believe [the condition]; which that we shall do, Christ hath not effected nor procured by his death, neither can the Lord so work it in us but that the sole casting voice (if I may so say), whether we will believe or no, is left to ourselves. **Now, whether this be not to assign unto ourselves the cause of our own happiness, and to make us the chief builders of our own glory, let all judge.**

These things being thus premised, I shall briefly prove that which is denied, namely, that faith is procured for us by the death of Christ; and so, consequently, he died not for all and every one, for "all men have not faith:" and this we may do by these following reasons:—

1. The death of Jesus Christ purchased holiness and sanctification for us, as was at large proved, Arg. viii.; but faith, as it is a grace of the Spirit inherent in us, is formally a part of our sanctification and holiness: therefore he procured faith for us.

[hence Eph1:4 - "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," see this point below

The assumption is most certain, and not denied; the proposition was sufficiently confirmed in the foregoing argument; and I see not what may be excepted against the truth of the whole. If any shall except, and say that Christ might procure for us some part of holiness (for we speak of parts, and not of degrees and measure), but not all, as the sanctification of hope, love, meekness, and the like, I ask, — first, What warrant have we for any such distinction between the graces of the Spirit, that some of them should be of the purchasing of Christ, others of our own store? secondly, Whether we are more prone of ourselves to believe, and more able, than to love and hope? and where may we have a ground for that?

2. All the fruits of election are purchased for us by Jesus Christ; for "we are chosen in him," Eph. i. 4, as the only cause and fountain of all those good things [those things noted in Romans 8:32...how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? that is, all graces and glory hereafter!] which the Lord chooseth us to, for the praise of his glorious grace, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. I hope I need not be solicitous about the proving of this, that the Lord Jesus is the only way and means by and for whom the Lord will certainly and actually collate upon his elect all the fruits and effects or intendments of that love whereby he chose them. But now faith is a fruit, a principal fruit, of our election; for saith the apostle, "We are chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," Eph. i. 4, — of which holiness, faith, purifying the heart, is a principal share. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30; that is, with that calling which is according to his purpose, effectually working faith in them by the mighty operation of his Spirit, "according to the exceeding greatness of his power," Eph. i. 19. And so they "believe" (God making them differ from others, 1 Cor. iv. 7, in the enjoyment of the means) "who are ordained to

eternal life," [Acts xiii. 48](#). Their being ordained to eternal life was the fountain from whence their faith did flow; and so "the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded," [Rom. xi. 7](#).

3. All the blessings of the new covenant are procured and purchased by him in whom the promises thereof are **ratified**, and to whom they are made; for all the good **things** thereof are contained in and exhibited by those promises, **through the working of the Spirit of God**. Now, concerning the promises of the covenant, and their being confirmed in Christ, and made unto his, as [Gal. iii. 16](#), with what is to be understood in those expressions, was before declared. Therefore, **all the good things of the covenant are the effects, fruits, and purchase of the death of Christ**, he and all things for him being the substance and whole of it. Farther; **that faith is of the good things of the new covenant is apparent from the description thereof**, [Jer. xxxi. 33, 34](#); [Heb. viii. 10–12](#); [Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27](#), with divers other places, as might clearly be manifested if we affected copiousness in causa facili. [\[excellent analysis!\]](#)

4. That without which it is utterly impossible that we should be saved must of necessity be procured by him by whom we are fully and effectually saved. Let them that can, declare how he can be said to procure salvation fully and effectually for us, and not be the author and purchaser of that (for he is the author of our salvation by the way of purchase) without which it is utterly impossible we should attain salvation. Now, without faith it is utterly impossible that ever any should attain salvation, [Heb. xi. 6](#), [Mark xvi. 16](#); but Jesus Christ, according to his name, doth perfectly save us, [Matt. i. 21](#), procuring for us "eternal redemption," [Heb. ix. 12](#), being, "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him," [chap. vii. 25](#): and therefore must faith also be within the compass of those things that are procured by him.

5. The Scripture is clear, in express terms, and such as are so equivalent that they are not liable to any evasion; as [Phil. i. 29](#), "It is given unto us, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, on the behalf of Christ, for Christ's sake, to believe on him." **Faith, or belief, is the gift, and Christ the procurer of it:** "God hath blessed us with all **spiritual blessings in him in heavenly places**," [Eph. i. 3](#). If faith be a spiritual blessing, it is bestowed on us "in him," and so also for his sake; if it be not, it is not worth contending about in this sense and way: so that, let others look which way they will, I desire to look unto Jesus as the "author and finisher of our faith," [Heb. xii. 2](#). Divers other reasons, arguments, and places of Scripture might be added for the confirmation of this truth; but I hope I have said enough, and do not desire to say all. The sum of the whole reason may be reduced to this head, — namely, if the fruit and effect procured and wrought by the death of Christ absolutely, not depending on any condition in man to be fulfilled, be not common to all, then did not Christ die for all; but the supposal is true, as is evident in the grace of faith, which being procured by the death of Christ, to be absolutely bestowed on them for whom he died, is not common to all: therefore, our Saviour did not die for all.

Arg. X. We argue from the **type to the antitype**, or the thing signified by it; which will evidently restrain the oblation of Christ to God's elect. The people of Israel were certainly, in all remarkable things that happened unto them, typical of the church of God; as the apostle at large [declares], [1 Cor. x. 11](#). Especially, their institutions and ordinances were all representative of the spiritual things of the gospel; their priests, altar, sacrifices, were but all shadows of the good things to come in Jesus Christ; their Canaan was a type of heaven, [Heb. iv. 3, 9](#); as also Jerusalem or Sion, [Gal. iv. 26](#), [Heb. xii. 22](#). The whole people itself was a type of God's church, his elect, his chosen and called people: whence as they

were called a “holy people, a royal priesthood;” so also, in allusion to them, are believers, [1 Pet. ii. 5, 9](#). Yea, God’s people are in innumerable places called his “Israel,” as it is farther expounded, [Heb. viii. 8](#). A true Israelite is as much as a true believer, [John i. 47](#); and he is a Jew who is so in the [hidden man of the heart](#). I hope it need not be proved that that people, as delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought into Canaan, was typical of God’s spiritual church, of elect believers. Whence we thus argue:— Those only are really and spiritually redeemed by Jesus Christ who were designed, signified, typified by the people of Israel in their carnal, typical redemption (for no reason in the world can be rendered why some should be typed out in the same condition, partakers of the same good, and not others); but by the people of the Jews, in their deliverance from Egypt, bringing into Canaan, with all their ordinances and institutions, only the elect, the church of God, was typed out, as was before proved. And, in truth, it is the most senseless thing in the world, to imagine that the Jews were under a type to all the whole world, or indeed to any but God’s chosen ones, as is proved at large, Heb. ix., x. Were the Jews and their ordinances types to the seven nations whom they destroyed and supplanted in Canaan? were they so to Egyptians, infidels, and haters of God and his Christ? We conclude, then, assuredly, from that just proportion that ought to be observed between the types and the things typified, that only the elect of God, his church and chosen ones, are redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Salvation perfected for the Church

code183

John Owen, Heb 9:1, on covenants, the [certainty of them being carried out by God](#) due to his good pleasure of his will which is always accomplished despite man's stubbornness, hard heart or declaration of his so called liberty or autonomy, and also by the excellency, dignity, merit and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ above the legal sacrifices under the old covenant.

Commentary on Hebrews 8:1-10

pg 184-189

Ver. 1. —Then verily even that first [covenant] had ordinances of worship, and also a worldly sanctuary
skip to page 184 (225 online)

Obs. I. Every covenant of God had its proper privileges and advantages. — Even the first covenant had so, and those such as were excellent in themselves, though not comparable with them of the new. For to make any covenant with men, is an eminent fruit of goodness, grace, and condescension in God; whereon he will annex such privileges thereunto as may evince it so to be.

(2.) This first covenant had two things in general: —

[1.] Διχαίωματα λατρειας [*right worship in Greek*]. Both translations and interpreters have cast some difficulty on the meaning of these words, in themselves plain and evident. Διχαίωματα are מִצְוָה [Hebrew word]. And the word is generally rendered by δικαίωμα in the Greek versions, and next unto that by νομιχον; that which is “legal” and “right.” The Vulgar Latin renders it by “justificationes;” from the inclusion of “jus,” “justum” in the signification of it. In the New Testament it is used, Luke 1:6; Romans 1:32, 2:26, 5:16, 8:4; Hebrews 9:1, 10; Revelation 15:4, 19:8. And in no one place doth it signify “institution;” but it may be better rendered “righteousness”. When alone we so translate it, Romans 5:16. In the context and construction wherein it is here placed, it can have no signification but that of “ordinances,” “rites,” “institutions,” “statutes;” — the constant sense of מִצְוָה, determined both by its derivation and invariable use. Wherefore all inquiries on these words, in what sense the rites of the law may be called “justifications,” or whether “because the observation of them did justify before men,” or were signs of our justification before God, are all useless and needless. What there is of just and right in the signification of the word, respects the right of God in the constitution and imposition of these ordinances. They were appointments of God, which he had right to prescribe; whence their observation on the part of the church was just and equal.

These ordinances or statutes were so λατρειας, “of service;” that is, as we render it, “divine service.” *Latreia* is originally of as large a signification as Λατρεία [*worship*], and denotes any service whatever. But it is here, and constantly in the New Testament, as is also the verb λατρεύω [*worship*], restrained unto “divine service,” John 16:2; Romans 9:4, 12:1; “cultus,” “of worship:” and so were it better rendered than by “divine service.” In one place it signifies by itself as much as δικαίωματα λατρειας doth here, Romans 9:4, “Unto whom belongeth the giving of the law, χαί η λατρεία, —”and the worship;” that is, δικαίωματα λατρειας, “the ordinances of worship,” — the ordinances of the ceremonial law. For although God was served in and according to the commands of the moral law, or the unchangeable prescriptions, “the ten words;” and also in the duties required in the due observance of the judicial law; yet this λατρεία, or [Hebrew word], was the immediate worship of the tabernacle, and the services of the priests that belonged thereunto. Hence the Jews call all idolatry and superstition [*Hebrew word*], — “strange worship.”

And this was that part of divine worship about which God had so many controversies with the people of Israel under the old testament; **for they were always apt to run into noxious extremes about it [same with a lot of Christian churches especially in the Pentecostal churches].** For the most part they were prone to neglect it, and to run into all manner of superstition and idolatry. **For the law of this worship was a hedge that God had set about them, to keep them from those abominations; and if at any time they brake over it, or neglected it, and let it fall, they failed not to rush into the most abominable idolatry.** On the other hand, oftentimes they placed all their trust and confidence, for their acceptance with God and blessing from him, **on the external observance of the ordinances and institutions of it.** And hereby they countenanced themselves not only in a neglect of moral duties and spiritual obedience, but in a course of flagitious sins and wickednesses. To repress these exorbitancies with respect unto both these extremes, the ministry of the prophets was in an especial manner directed. And we may observe some things here in our passage, as included in the apostle’s assertion, though not any part of his present design: —

Obs. II. **There was never any covenant between God and man but it had some ordinances or arbitrary institutions of external divine worship annexed unto it.** —The original covenant of works had the

ordinances of the **tree of life**, and of the **knowledge of good and evil**; the laws whereof belonged not unto that of natural light and reason. The **covenant of Sinai**, whereof the apostle speaks, had a multiplication of them. Nor is the new covenant destitute of them or their necessary observance. **All public worship, and the sacraments of the church are of this nature**. For whereas it is ingrafted in natural light that some external worship is to be given unto God, he would have it of his own prescription, and not, as unto the modes of it, left unto the inventions of men. And because God hath always, in every covenant, prescribed the external worship and all the duties of it which he will accept, it cannot but be dangerous for us to make any additions thereunto. Had he prescribed none at any time, seeing some are necessary in the light of nature, it would follow by just consequence that they were left unto the finding out and appointment of men; but he having done this himself, **“let not us add unto his words, lest he reprove us, and we be found liars.”** And in his institution of these ordinances of external worship there is both a demonstration of his sovereignty and an especial trial of our obedience, in things whereof we have no reason but his mere will and pleasure.

Obs. III. It is a hard and rare thing to have the minds of men kept upright with God in the observation of the institutions of divine worship. — **Adam lost himself and us all by his failure therein**. The old church seldom attained unto it, but continually wandered into one of the extremes mentioned before. And at this day there are very few in the world who judge a diligent observation of divine institutions to be a thing of any great importance. By some they are neglected, by some corrupted with additions of their own, and by some they are exalted above their proper place and use, and turned into an occasion of neglecting more important duties. And the reason of this difficulty is, because faith hath not that assistance and encouragement from innate principles of reason, and that sensible experience of this kind of obedience, as it hath in that which is moral, internal, and spiritual.

[2.] That these ordinances of divine worship might be duly observed and rightly performed under the first covenant, there was a place appointed of God for their solemnization. It had to τε αγιον χοσμιχον, —“also a worldly sanctuary.” He renders wsivhek [Hebrew word] by αγιον properly a” holy place,” a “sanctuary” And why he calls it χοσμιχον, or “worldly,” we must inquire. And some things must be premised unto the exposition of these words: —

1st. The apostle, treating of the services, sacrifices, and place of worship, under the old testament, doth not instance in nor insist upon the temple, with its fabric and the order of its services, but in the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness And this he doth for the ensuing reasons: —

(1st.) Because his principal design is to confirm the pre-eminence of the new covenant above the old. To this end he compares them together in their first introduction and establishment, with what did belong unto them therein. And as this in the new covenant was the priesthood, mediation, and sacrifice of Christ; so in the old it was the tabernacle with the services and sacrifices that belonged unto it. These the first covenant was accompanied with and established by; and therefore were they peculiarly to be compared with the tabernacle of Christ, and the sacrifice that he offered therein. This is the principal reason why in this disputation he hath all along respect unto the tabernacle, and not unto the temple.

(2dly.) Although the temple, with its glorious fabric and excellent order, added much unto the outward beauty and splendor of the sacred worship, yet was it no more but a large exemplification of

what was virtually contained in the tabernacle and the institutions of it, from whence it derived all its glory; and therefore **these Hebrews principally rested in and boasted of the revelation** made unto Moses, and his institutions. And the excellency of the worship of the new covenant being manifested above that of the tabernacle, there is no plea left for the additional outward glory of the temple.

2dly. Designing to treat of this holy tent or tabernacle, he confines himself unto the first general distribution of it, Exodus 26:33, "And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy and the most holy;" the holy utensils of which two parts he afterwards distinctly describes. The whole was called *vD;q]mi*; which he renders by *to< a[gion*, "the holy place," or "sanctuary." The tabernacle of witness erected in the wilderness in two parts, the holy and the most holy, with the utensils of them, is that whose description he undertakes.

It is observed by the apostle, that the first covenant had this sanctuary; 1st. Because so soon as God had made that covenant with the people, he prescribed unto them the erection and making of this sanctuary, containing all the solemn means of the administration of the covenant itself. 2dly. **Because it was the principal mercy, privilege, and advantage, that the people were made partakers of by virtue of that covenant.** And it belongs unto the exposition of the text, as to the design of the apostle in it, that we consider what that privilege was, or wherein it did consist. And, —

(1st.) This tabernacle, with what belonged thereunto, was a **visible pledge of the presence of God among the people, owning, blessing, and protecting of them;** and it was a pledge of God's own institution. **In imitation whereof, the superstitious heathens invented ways of obliging their idol gods to be present among them for the same ends.** Hence was that prayer at the removal of the tabernacle and the ark therein, Numbers 10:35, 36, "Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." And when it rested he said, "Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel." And thence the ark was called "**the ark of God's strength**" (see Psalm 68:1, 2, 132:8; 2 Chronicles 6:41), **because it was a pledge of God's putting forth his strength and power in the behalf of the people.** **And according unto this institution, it was a most effectual means to strengthen their faith and confidence in God; for what could they desire more, in reference thereunto, than to enjoy such a gracious earnest of his powerful presence among them?** **But when they ceased to trust in God, and put their confidence in the things themselves, — which were no otherwise useful but as they were pledges of his presence, — they proved their ruin.** Hereof we have a fatal instance in their bringing the ark into the field, in their battle against the Philistines, 1 Samuel 4:3-11. **And it will fare no better with others who shall rest satisfied with outward institutions of divine worship, neglecting the end of them all, which is faith and trust in God,** Jeremiah 7:4. **But men of corrupt minds had rather place their trust in anything but God: for they find that they can do so and yet continue in their sins; as those did in the prophet,** verses 8-10. **But none can trust in God unless he relinquish all sin whatever; all other pretended trust in him is but the entitling of him unto our own wickedness.** [this is the key, the *ark of God's strength* points to Christ our high priest who by his merit and strength, **will save his people!** Matt.1:21. Not maybe, if man cooperates with God, which Arminians and most other people believe, but he will do it for who can stay his hand or resist his will? Dan 4:35 & Rom 9:19. But unregenerate minds don't see it this way; they see themselves as autonomous, not dependent upon

God; they see their wills as self-directed and so forth - so God's eternal decrees are a threat to this autonomy or liberty and so they reject it.

(2dly.) It was the **pledge** and means of God's residence or dwelling among them, which expresseth the peculiar manner of his presence, mentioned in general before. The tabernacle was God's house; nor did he promise at any time to dwell among them but with respect thereunto, Exodus 15:17, 25:8, 29:44-46; Numbers 5:3. **And the consideration hereof was a powerful motive unto holiness, fear, and reverence; unto which ends it is everywhere pressed in the Scripture.** [And this is the point of the infallibility of the new covenant; that sin would be atoned and God's people, his elect, would be delivered, that the ministry of Christ as our high priest, being pre-eminent, would not fail. These outward ceremonies and ordinances mainly served to encourage old testament believers because they saw through the eyes of faith what they pointed to, that is, Christ the Redeemer. That the real salvation and will of God would not fail, is not up to man's deciding or his will as Arminians suppose. Thus these privileges are a help to believers but serve as aggravations of the sins of reprobates at the last day - and to God's glory in his justice. And I think this is why the ordinance of infant baptism is seen as a privilege for the same reason behind these other ordinances - it acts as a means to strengthen faith or to center one's attention and confidence in God - not in the child at this young age since he cannot exercise reason yet, but in the believing parents who are over him and have responsibility to raise him up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. John Owen speaks more in infant baptism as does Thomas Shepard.

(3dly.) It was a fixed seat of all divine worship, wherein the truth and purity of it were to be preserved. Had the observation of the ordinances of divine service been left unto the memories of private persons, it would quickly have issued in all manner of foolish practices, or have been utterly neglected; but God appointed this sanctuary for the preservation of the purity of his worship, as well as for the solemnity thereof. See Deuteronomy 12:8-11. Here was the book of the law laid up; according unto the prescript whereof the priests were obliged in all generations to take care of the public worship of God.

(4thly.) **It was principally the privilege and glory of the church of Israel, in that it was a continual representation of the incarnation of the Son of God; a type of his coming in the flesh to dwell among us,** and, by the one sacrifice of himself, to make reconciliation with God and atonement for sins. It was such an expression of the idea of the mind of God concerning the person and mediation of Christ, as in his wisdom and grace he thought meet to intrust the church withal. Hence was that severe injunction, that all things concerning it should be made "according unto the pattern showed in the mount;" for what could the wisdom of men do in the prefiguration of that mystery, which they had no comprehension of?

But yet this sanctuary the apostle calls *kosmikon*, "worldly." Expositors both ancient and modern do even weary themselves in their inquiries why the apostle calls this sanctuary "worldly." But I think they do so without cause, the reason of the appellation being evident in his design and the context. And there is a difficulty added unto it by the Latin translation, which renders the word "seculare," which denotes "continuance" or duration. This expresseth the Hebrew [Hebrew word]; but that the apostle renders by *aijwn*, and not by *kosmov*, and therefore here hath no respect unto it. The sense that many

fix upon is, that he intends the outward court of the temple, whereinto the Gentiles or men of the world were admitted, whence it was called “worldly,” and not sacred. But this exposition, though countenanced by many of the ancients, is contrary unto the whole design of the apostle. For, 1st. He speaks of the tabernacle, wherein was no such outward court; nor indeed was there any such belonging to the temple, whatever some pretend. 2dly. The whole sanctuary whereof he speaks he immediately distributes into two parts, as they were divided by the veil, namely, the holy and the most holy place; which were the two parts of the tabernacle itself. 3dly. He treats of the sanctuary only with respect unto the divine service to be performed in it by the priests, which they did not in any outward court whereinto the Gentiles might be admitted.

Wherefore the apostle terms this sanctuary “worldly,” because it was every way in and of this world. For, 1st. The place of it was on the earth, in this world; in opposition whereunto the sanctuary of the new covenant is in heaven, Hebrews 8:2. 2dly. Although the materials of it were as durable as any thing in that kind that could be procured, as gold and shittim-wood, because they were to be of a long continuance, yet were they “worldly;” that is, “*caduca*,” fading and perishing things, as are all things of the world; God intimating thereby that they were not to have an everlasting continuance. Gold, and wood, and silk, and hair, however curiously wrought and carefully preserved, are but for a time. 3dly. All the services of it, all its sacrifices, in themselves, separated from their typical, representative use, were all worldly; and their efficacy extended only unto worldly things, as the apostle proves in this chapter. 4thly. On these accounts the apostle calls it worldly; yet not absolutely so, but in opposition unto that which is heavenly. All things in the ministration of the new covenant are heavenly. So is the priest, his sacrifice, tabernacle, and altar, as we shall see in the process of the apostle’s discourse. And we may observe from the whole, —

Obs. IV. That divine institution alone is that which renders anything acceptable unto God. — Although the things that belonged unto the sanctuary, and the sanctuary itself, were in themselves but worldly, yet being divine ordinances, they had a glory in them, and were in their season accepted with God.

Obs. V. God can animate outward, carnal things with a hidden, invisible spring of glory and efficacy. — So he did this sanctuary with its relation unto Christ; which was an object of faith, which no eye of flesh could behold.

Obs. VI. All divine service or worship must be resolved into divine ordination or institution. — A worship not ordained of God is not accepted of God. “It had ordinances of worship.” Obs. VII. A worldly sanctuary is enough for them whose service is worldly; and these things the men of the world are satisfied with.

p469-481 (579-594 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Obs. XIV. There is a signal glory put upon the undertaking of Christ to make reconciliation for the church by the sacrifice of himself.

3. This undertaking of Christ is signaled by the remark that is put on the declaration of it, ἰδοῦ, "Behold." A glorious spectacle it was, to God, to angels, and to men. To God, as it was filled with the highest effects of infinite goodness, wisdom, and grace; which all shone forth in their greatest elevation and were glorified therein. It was so unto angels, as that whereon their confirmation and establishment in glory did depend, Ephesians 1:10; which therefore they endeavored with fear and reverence to look into, 1 Peter 1:12. "And as unto men, that is, the church of the elect, nothing could be so glorious in their sight, nothing so desirable. By this call of Christ, "Behold, I come," the eyes of all creatures in heaven and earth ought to be fixed on him, to behold the glorious work he had undertaken, and the accomplishment of it.

4. There is what he thus proposed himself for, saying, "Behold me."

(1.) This in general is expressed by himself, "I come." This coming of Christ, what it was and wherein it did consist, was declared before. It was by assuming the body that was prepared for him. This was the foundation of the whole work he had to do, wherein he came forth like the rising sun, with light in his wings, or as a giant rejoicing to run a race.

The faith of the old testament was, that he was thus to come: and this is the life of the new, that he is come. They by whom this is denied do overthrow the faith of the gospel. This is the **spirit of antichrist**, 1 John 4:1-3. And this may be done two ways:

[1.] Directly and expressly;

[2.] By just consequence.

Directly it is done by them who deny the reality of his human nature, as many did of old, affirming that he had only an ethereal, aerial, or phantastical body; for if he came not in the flesh, he is not come at all. So also it is by them who deny the divine person of Christ, and his pre-existence therein, before the assumption of the human nature; for they deny that these are the words of him when resolved, and spoken before his coming. He that did not exist before in the divine nature, could not promise to come in the human. **And indirectly it is denied by all those who, either in doctrines or practices, deny the ends of his coming; and they are many,** — which I shall not now mention. [Matt 1:21, he came to save his people from their sins; as I said before this does not depend on man's cooperation as Arminians suppose, making salvation only a possibility. But Christ came to do the will of the Father as our surety which was to save those who were given to him (John 6:37-39 and other places) Our very cooperation, if you want to call it that which is summed up in our obedience in believing, is the very thing promised in the covenant, that being by free donation, is the gift of faith that is not of ourselves! By Christ being our surety, he did what we were not able to do, due to the weakness of sinful flesh, hence he will infallibly succeed in his mission as our high priest; that's the whole point of him being our surety. He will not fail of his mission. And also he intercedes for us so as to be able to save to the uttermost Heb 7:25. Otherwise we have little consolation or peace resting in our own ability to believe.]

It may be objected against this fundamental truth, 'That if the Son of God would undertake this work of reconciliation between God and man, why did he not do the will of God by his mighty power and

grace, and not by this way of coming in the flesh, which was attended with all dishonor, reproaches, sufferings, and death itself.' But besides what I have at large elsewhere discoursed concerning the necessity and suitableness of this way of his coming unto the manifestation of all the glorious properties of the nature of God, I shall only say, that God, and he alone, knew what was necessary unto the accomplishment of his will; and if it might have been otherwise effected, he would have spared his only Son, and not have given him up unto death.

(2.) The end for which he thus promiseth to come, is to do the will of God: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

The will of God is taken two ways: First, for his eternal purpose and design, called "**the counsel of his will**," Ephesians 1:11; and most commonly his "**will**" itself, — the will of God as unto what he will do, or cause to be done. Secondly, for the declaration of his will and pleasure as unto what he will have us to do in a way of duty and obedience; that is, the rule of our obedience [or prescriptive will]. It is the will of God in the former sense that is here intended; as is evident from the next verse, where it is said that "by this will of God we are sanctified;" that is, our sins were expiated according to the will of God. But neither is the other sense absolutely excluded; for the Lord Christ came so to fulfill the will of God's purpose, as that we may be enabled to fulfill the will of his command. **Yea, and he himself had a command from God to lay down his life for the accomplishment of this work.** [Arminians in saying that salvation depends on man's will in deciding infers that Christ will fail in his mission which is blaspheme.]

This following description of the will of God will help you see the impropriety of the sinner's prayer ref. the word *freely*.

Wherefore this **will of God**, which Christ came to fulfill, is that which elsewhere is expressed by εὐδοχία, προθεσις, βουλή, του ζηληματος, Ephesians 1:5, 11 etc.; — his "good pleasure," his purpose, the "counsel of his will," his "good pleasure which he purposed in himself;" **that is, freely, without any cause or reason taken from us**, to call, justify, sanctify, and save to the uttermost, or to bring them unto eternal glory. **This he had purposed from eternity, to the praise of the glory of his grace.** How this might be effected and accomplished, God had hid in his own bosom from the beginning of the world, Ephesians 3:8, 9; so as that it was beyond the wisdom and indagation [a **searching or inquiring**] of all angels and men to make a discovery of. Howbeit, even from the beginning he declared that such a work he had **graciously designed**; and he gave in the first **promise [Gen3:15]**, and otherwise, some obscure intimations of the nature of it, for a foundation of the faith in them that were called. Afterwards God was pleased, in his sovereign authority over the church, for their good, and unto his own glory, to make a representation of this whole work in the institutions of the law, especially in the sacrifices thereof. But hereon the church began to think (at least many of them did so) that those sacrifices themselves were to be the only means of accomplishing this will of God, in the expiation of sin, with the salvation of the church. But God had now, by various ways and means, witnessed unto the church that indeed he never appointed them unto any such end, nor would rest in them; and the church itself found by experience that they would never pacify conscience, and that the strict performance of them was a yoke and burden. In this state of things, when the fullness of time was come, the **glorious counsels of God**, namely, of the Father, Son, and Spirit, brake forth with light, like the sun in its strength from under a cloud, in the tender made of himself by Jesus Christ unto the Father, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." [Heb10:9] This, this is the way, the only way, whereby the

will of God might be accomplished. Herein were all **the riches of divine wisdom displayed**, all the treasures of grace laid open, all shadows and clouds dispelled, and the open door of salvation evidenced unto all.

(3.) This will of God Christ came to do, του ποιησαι, to effect, **“to establish and perfectly to fulfill it.”** How he did so the apostle fully declareth in this epistle. He did it in the **whole work of his mediation**, from the susception of our nature in the womb, unto what he doth **in his supreme agency in heaven** at the right hand of God. He did all things to accomplish this eternal purpose of the will of God. [As you get a clearer view of this you should see the error of the Arminian view, that after all Christ has done, man is able to frustrate his will. Arminians separate what God has put together, e.g., the death of Christ is applied to all, but his intercession is not, since most acknowledge that there is a hell and many go there. Take for instance 1Cor5:21 *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* **He was made sin for us** is inseparably connected to **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**. The word “might” is not a statement of probability but a necessary consequent; that he will do it. There are many such like passages as this. So for all those for whom Christ died, salvation has been perfected, made *sure*. Another example is the Golden Chain of Redemption, Rom. 8:29-39 - for those he calls he justifies and glorifies and intercedes for. All these acts of God are inseparable. It can be concluded therefore that those in hell God never called or spoke to; he never knew them - Matt7:23.]

This seems to me the first sense of the place. Howbeit I would not, as I said before, exclude the former mentioned also; for our Lord in all that he did was the servant of the Father, and received especial command for all that he did. “This commandment,” saith he, “have I received of my]Father.” Hence in this sense also he came to do the will of God. He fulfilled the will of his purpose, by obedience unto the will of his command. Hence it is added in the psalm, that he “delighted to do the will of God;” and that “his law was in the midst of his bowels.” His delight in the will of God, as unto the laying down of his life at the command of God, was necessary unto this doing of his will. And we may observe, —

Obs. XV. **The foundation of the whole glorious work of the salvation of the church was laid in the sovereign will, pleasure, and grace of God, even the Father. Christ came only to do his will.**

Obs. XVI. **The coming of Christ in the flesh was, in the wisdom, righteousness, and holiness of God, necessary to fulfill his will, that we might be saved unto his glory.**

Obs. XVII. **The fundamental motive unto the Lord Christ, in his undertaking the work of mediation, was the will and glory of God: “Lo, I come to do thy will.”**

5. The last thing in this context is the ground and rule of this undertaking of the Lord Christ and this is the glory of the truth of God in his promises recorded in the Word: **“In the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfill thy will, O God.”** There is a difficulty in these words, both as to the translation of the original text and as unto the application of them. And therefore critical observations have been multiplied about them; which it is not my way or work to repeat. Those that are learned know where to find them, and those that are not so will not be edified by them. What is the true meaning and intention of the Holy Spirit in them is what we are to inquire into.

The **Socinian** expositors have a peculiar conceit on this place. They suppose the apostle useth this expression, *εν κεφαλιδι*, to denote some especial chapter or place in the law. This they conjecture to be that of Deuteronomy 17:18, 19: “And it shall be, when he” (the king to be chosen) “sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.” David, they say, spoke those words in the psalm; and it is nowhere said that he should come to do the will of God but in this place of Deuteronomy, as he was to be the king of that people. But there can be nothing more fond than this empty conjecture. For, —

(1.) David is not at all intended in these words of the psalmist, any otherwise but as he was the penman of the Holy Ghost, and a type of Christ, on which account he speaks in his name. They are the words of Christ, which David was inspired by the Holy Ghost to declare and utter. Neither would David speak these words concerning himself; because he that speaks doth absolutely prefer his own obedience, as unto worth and efficacy, before all God’s holy institutions: he presents it unto God, as that which is more useful unto the church than all the sacrifices which God had ordained. This David could not do justly.

(2.) There is nothing spoken in this place of Deuteronomy concerning the sacerdotal office, but only of the regal. And in this place of the psalmist there is no respect unto the kingly office, but only unto the priesthood; for comparison is made with the sacrifices of the law. But the offering of these sacrifices was expressly forbidden unto the kings; as is manifest in the instance of king Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:18-20. Besides, there is in that place of Deuteronomy no more respect had unto David than unto Saul, or Jeroboam, or any other that was to be king of that people. There is nothing in it that belongs unto David in a peculiar manner.

(3.) The words there recorded contain a mere prescription of duty, no prediction of the event; which for the most part was contrary unto what is required. **But the words of the psalmist are a prophecy, a divine prediction and promise, which must be actually accomplished.** Nor doth our Lord Christ in them declare what was prescribed unto him, but what he did undertake to do, and the record that was made of that undertaking of his.

(4.) There is not one word in that place of Moses concerning the removal of sacrifices and burnt-offerings; which, as the apostle declares, is the principal thing intended in those of the psalmist. Yea, the contrary, as unto the season intended, is expressly asserted; for the king was to read in the book of the law continually, that he might observe and do all that is written therein, a great part whereof consists in the institution and observation of sacrifices.

(5.) This interpretation of the words utterly overthrows what they dispute for immediately before; that is, that the entrance mentioned of Christ into the world, was not indeed his coming into this world, but his going out of it, and entering into heaven. For it cannot be denied but that the obedience of reading the law continually, and doing of it, is to be attended unto in this world, and not in heaven; and this they seem to acknowledge, so as to recall their own exposition. Other absurdities, which are very many in this place, I shall not insist upon.

Ev κεφαλιδι, we with many others render, in answer unto the Hebrew, “in the volume” or “roll.” Ribera contends that this translation of the word, “the volume” or “roll of the book,” is absurd “Because,” saith he, “the book itself was a volume or a roll; and so it is as if he had said, in the roll of the roll.” But *rpise* [Hebrew word], which we translate a “book,” doth not signify a book as written in a roll, but only an enunciation or declaration of anything. We now call any book of greater quantity a volume. But *hogim* [Hebrew word] is properly a “roll;” and the words used by the psalmist do signify that the declaration of the will of God made in this matter was written in a roll, the roll which contains all the revelations of his mind. And the word used by the apostle is not remote from this signification, as may be seen in sundry classic authors; — κεφαλis, “volumen;” because a roll is made round, **after the fashion of the head of a man.**

As the book itself was one roll, **so the head of it, the beginning of it, amongst the first things written in it, is this recorded concerning the coming of Christ to do the will of God.** This includeth both senses of the word; in the head, in the beginning of the roll, namely, of that part of the Scripture which was written when David penned this psalm. **Now this can be no other but the first promise, which is recorded, Genesis 3:15.** Then it was first declared, then it was first written and enrolled, that the Lord Christ, the Son of God, should be made of the seed of the woman, and in our nature come to do the will of God, and to deliver the church from that woeful estate whereinto it was brought by the craft of Satan. In this promise, and the writing of it **in the head of the volume**, lies the verification of the psalmist’s assertion, **“In the volume of the book it is written.”** Howbeit the following declarations of the will of God herein are not excluded, nor ought so to be. **Hence are we herein directed unto the whole volume of the Law; for indeed it is nothing but a prediction of the coming, of Christ, and a presignification of what he had to do.** ‘That book which God has given to the church as the only guide of its faith, — the Bible; (that is, the book, all other books being of no consideration in comparison of it;) that book wherein all divine precepts and promises are enrolled or recorded: in this book, in the volume of it, **this is the principal subject, especially in the head of the roll, or the beginning of it, namely, in the first promise,** it is so written of me.’ God commanded this great truth of the coming of Christ to be so enrolled, **for the encouragement of the faith of them that should believe.** And we may observe, that, —

Obs. XVIII. **God’s records in the roll of his book are the foundation and warranty of the faith of the church, in the Head and members.** [This, Arminians, Catholics, and all false religions including unregenerate men seek to undermine by vain philosophies, by corrupting true doctrine and twisting the scriptures, etc.]

Obs. XIX. The Lord Christ, in all that he did and suffered, had continual respect unto what was written of him. See Matthew 26:24.

Obs. XX. In the record of these words, (1.) God was glorified in his truth and faithfulness, (2.) Christ was secured in his work, and the undertaking of it. (3.) A testimony was given unto his person and office. (4.) Direction is given unto the church, in all wherein they have to do with God, what they should attend unto, — namely, what is written. (5.) The things which concern Christ, the mediator, are the head of what is contained in the same records.

Ver. 8-10. — “Above when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt offerings, and [offerings] for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure [therein]; (which are offered by the law;) then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all].”

The use and signification of most of the words of these verses have already in our passage been spoken unto.

There are two things in these three verses: 1. The application of the testimony taken out of the psalmist unto the present argument of the apostle, verses 8, 9. 2. An inference from the whole, unto the proof of the only cause and means of the sanctification of the church, the argument he was now engaged in, verse 10.

As to the first of these, or the application of the testimony of the psalmist, and his resuming it, we may consider, —

1. What he designed to prove thereby: and this was, that by the introduction and establishment of the sacrifice of Christ in the church there was an end put to all legal sacrifices. And he adds thereunto, that the ground and reason of this great alteration of things in the church, by the will of God, was the **utter insufficiency of those legal sacrifices in themselves for the expiation of sin and sanctification of the church.** In verse 9 he gives us this sum of his design, “He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.” [The sinner's prayer is legal by its nature and all preachers that promote are legal preachers; it is no different than all the legal sacrifices of the old testament that could not take away sin or please God in any way because they are not of faith; the only way to God is by effectual vocation or the effectual call of God where he opens the eyes, takes out the heart of stone, gives faith, etc. Prior to that no one seek God aright. 1Cor2:14, Phil 1:29, Eph2:8]

2. The apostle doth not here directly argue from the matter or substance of the testimony itself, but from the order of the words, and the regard they have in their order unto one another. For there is in them a twofold proposition; one concerning the rejection of legal sacrifices, and the other an introduction and tender of Christ and his mediation. And he declares, from the order of the words in the psalmist, that these things are inseparable; namely, the taking away of legal sacrifices, and the establishment of that of Christ.

3. This order in the words of the apostle is declared in that distribution of *ανωτερον* and *τοτε*, “above” and “then.” *Ανωτερον*, “above;” — that is, in the first place, — these his words or sayings, recorded in the first place.

4. There are in the words themselves these three things: —

(1.) There is a distribution made of the legal sacrifices into their general heads, with respect unto the will of God concerning them all: “Sacrifices and offering, and whole burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin.” And in that distribution he adds another property of them, namely, they were required according to the law.

[1.] He had respect not only unto the removal of the sacrifices, but also of the law itself, whereby they were retained; so he enters on his present disputation with the imperfection of the law itself, verse 1.

[2.] Allowing these sacrifices and offerings all that they could **pretend unto, namely, that they were established by the law, yet notwithstanding this, God rejects them as unto the expiation of sin and the salvation of the church.** For he excludes the consideration of all other things which were not appointed by the law, as those which God abhorred in themselves, and so could have no place in this matter And we may observe, that, —

Obs. XXI. Whereas the apostle doth plainly distinguish and distribute all sacrifices and offerings into those on the one side which were offered by the law, and that one offering of the body of Christ on the other side, the pretended sacrifice of the mass is utterly rejected from any place in the worship of God.

Obs. XXII. God, as the sovereign lawgiver, had always power and authority to make what alteration he pleased in the orders and institutions of his worship.

Obs. XXIII. That sovereign authority is that; alone which our faith and obedience respect in all ordinances of worship.

(2.) After this was stated and delivered, when the mind of God was expressly declared as unto his rejection of legal sacrifices and offerings, *tote*, “then he said;” — after that, in order thereon, upon the grounds before mentioned, “he said, Sacrifice,” etc. In the former words he declared the mind- of God, and in the latter his own intention and resolution to comply with his will, in order unto another way of atonement for sin: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;” — which words have been opened before.

(3.) In the last place, he declares what was intimated and signified in this order, or in those things being thus spoken unto; sacrifices, on the one hand, which was the first; and the coming of Christ, which was the second, in this order and opposition. It is evident, —

[1.] That these words, [Hebrew word], “He taketh away the first,” do intend sacrifices and offerings. But he did not so do it immediately at the speaking of these words, for they continued for the space of some hundreds of years afterwards; but he did so declaratively, as unto the indication of the time, namely, when the “second” should be introduced.

[2.] The end of this removal of the “first,” was “the establishment of the second.” This “second,” say some, is the will of God; but the opposition made before is not between the will of God and the legal sacrifices, but between those sacrifices and the coming of Christ to do the will of God. Wherefore it is the way of the expiation of sin, and of the complete sanctification of the church by the coming, and mediation, and sacrifice of Christ., that is this “second,” the thing spoken of in the second place; this God would “establish,” approve, confirm, and render unchangeable.

Obs. XXIV. As all things from the beginning made way for the coming of Christ in the minds of them that did believe, so everything was to be removed out of the way that would hinder his coming, and the discharge of the work he had undertaken law, temple, sacrifices, must all be removed to give way

unto his coming. So is it testified by his forerunner, Luke 3:4- 6, "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." So it must be in our own hearts; all things must give way unto him, or he will not come and make his habitation in them.

Ver. 10. — "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all.]"

From the whole context the apostle makes an inference, which is comprehensive of the substance of the gospel, and the description of the grace of God which is established thereby.

Having affirmed, in Christ's own words, that he came to do the will of God, he shows what was that will of God which he came to do, what was the design of God in it and the effect of it, and by what means it was accomplished; which things are to be inquired into: as, 1. What is the will of God which he intends; "By the which will." 2. What was the design of it, what God aimed at in this act of his will, and what is accomplished thereby; "We are sanctified." 3. The way and means whereby this effect proceedeth from the will of God; namely, "**Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ,**" in **opposition to legal sacrifices.** 4. The manner of it, in opposition unto their repetition; it was "once for all." But the sense of the whole will be more clear, if we consider, —

1. The end aimed at in the first place, namely, the sanctification of the church. And sundry things must be observed concerning it: —

(1.) That the apostle changeth his phrase of speech into the first person, "We are sanctified;" that is, all those believers whereof the gospel church-state was constituted, in opposition unto the church-state of the Hebrews and those that did adhere unto it: so he speaks before, as also Hebrews 4:3, "We who have believed do enter into rest." For it might be asked of him, 'You who thus overthrow the efficacy of legal sacrifices, what have you yourselves attained in your relinquishment of them?' 'We have,' saith he, 'that sanctification, that dedication unto God, that peace with him, and that expiation of sin, that all those sacrifices could not effect.' And observe, —

Obs. XXV. Truth is never so effectually declared, as when it is confirmed by the experience of its power in them that believe it and make profession of it. [Those who have been truly converted know by experience that they had nothing to do with it; they were entirely passive; they did not do the sinner's prayer or any other work to recommend themselves to God. One minute they were blind; the next instant they could see.] This was that which gave them the confidence which the apostle exhorts them to hold fast and firm unto the end.

Obs. XXVI. **It is a holy glorying in God, and no unlawful boasting, for men openly to profess what they are made partakers of by the grace of God and blood of Christ.** Yea, it is a necessary duty for men so to do, when anything is set up in competition with them or opposition unto them.

Obs. XXVII. It is the best security in differences in and about religion, (such as these wherein the apostle is engaged, the greatest and highest that ever were,) when men have an internal experience of the truth which they do profess. [If you profess free grace, then God called you out of darkness, not you calling God.]

(2.) The words he useth are in the preterperfect tense, ηγιασμενοι εσμεν, and relate not only unto the things, but the time of the offering of the body of Christ. For although all that is intended herein did not immediately follow on the death of Christ, yet were they all in it, as the effects in their proper cause, to be produced by virtue of it in their times and seasons; and the principal effect intended was the immediate consequent thereof.

(3.) This end of God, through the offering of the body of Christ, was the sanctification of the church: **“We are sanctified.”** The principal notion of sanctification in the New Testament, is the effecting of real, internal holiness in the persons of them that do believe, by the change of their hearts and lives. But the word is not here so to be restrained, nor is it used in that sense by our apostle in this epistle, or very rarely. It is here plainly comprehensive of all that he hath denied unto the law, priesthood, and sacrifices of the old testament, with the whole church-state of the Hebrews under it, and the effects of their ordinances and services; as, [1.] **A complete dedication unto God, in opposition unto the typical** one which the people were partakers of by the sprinkling of the blood of calves and goats upon them, Exodus 24. [2.] **A complete church-state for the celebration of the spiritual worship of God, by the administration of the Spirit,** wherein the law could make nothing perfect. [3.] **Peace with God upon a full and perfect expiation of sin;** which he denies unto the sacrifices of the law, verses [4.] **Real, internal purification or sanctification of our natures and persons from all inward filth and defilement of them;** which he proves at large that the carnal ordinances of the law could not effect of themselves, reaching no farther than the purification of the flesh. [5.] Hereunto also belong the privileges of the gospel, in **liberty, boldness, immediate access unto God,** the means of that access, by Christ our high priest, and confidence therein; **in opposition unto that fear, bondage, distance, and exclusion from the holy place of the presence of God, which they of old were kept under. All these things are comprised in this expression of the apostle, “We are sanctified.”**

The designation of such a state for the church, and the present introduction of it by the preaching of the gospel, is that whose confirmation the apostle principally designs in this whole discourse; the sum whereof he gives us, Hebrews 11:40, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

2. The whole **fountain and principal cause of this state,** this grace, is the **will of God,** even that will which our Savior tendered to accomplish, **“By the which will we are sanctified.”** In the original it is, **“In which will;”** “in” for “by,” which is usual. Wherefore we say properly, “by which will;” for it is the **supreme efficient cause** of our sanctification that is intended. [This is a far cry from the Arminian view, that salvation is up to man's deciding and not God's will!] And in that expression of our Savior, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,” it is evident, (1.) That it was the will, that is, the counsel, the purpose, the **decree of God, that the church should be sanctified.** (2.) That our Lord Christ knew that this was the **will of God,** the **will of the Father, in whose bosom he was** [intimately familiar with His will]. And, (3.) That God had determined (which he also knew and declared) that **legal sacrifices** could not accomplish

and make effectual this his will, so as the church might be sanctified thereon. Wherefore the will of God here intended (as was intimated before) is nothing but the eternal, gracious, free act or purpose of his will, whereby he determined or purposed in himself to recover a church out of lost mankind, to sanctify them unto himself, and to bring them unto the enjoyment of himself hereafter. See Ephesians 1:4-9. [To say otherwise as Arminians, Catholics, etc., do is to say that God did not accomplish his will and could not because man frustrated it which argues weakness in God, disagreement in the Godhead and many other absurdities.]

And this act of the will [see *code455b ref. act of the will*] of God was, (1.) **Free and sovereign, without any meritorious cause, or anything that should dispose him thereunto without himself:** “He purposed in himself.” There are everywhere blessed effects ascribed to it, but no cause anywhere. **All that is designed unto us in it, as unto the communication of it in its effects, were its effects, not its cause.** See Ephesians 1:4, and this place. The whole mediation of Christ, especially his death and suffering, was the means of its accomplishment, and not the procuring cause of it. (2.) It was accompanied with infinite wisdom, whereby provision was made for his own glory, and the means and way of the accomplishment of his will. He would not admit the legal sacrifices as the means and way of its accomplishment, because they could not provide for those ends; for “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” (3.) **It was immutable and irrevocable, it depended not upon any condition in anything or person without himself: “He purposed in himself.”** Nor was it capable of any change or alteration from oppositions or interveniencies. (4.) It follows hereon that it must be infallibly effectual, in the actual accomplishment of what was designed in it, — everything in its order and season; it cannot in anything be frustrated or disappointed. The whole church in every age shall be sanctified by it. This will of God some would have not to be any internal act of his will, but only the thing willed by him, name]y, the sacrifice of Christ; and that for this reason, because it is opposed to legal sacrifices, which the act of God’s will cannot be. But the mistake is evident; for the will of God here intended is not at all opposed unto the legal sacrifices, but only as to the means of the accomplishment of it, which they were not, nor could be.

Obs. XXVIII. The sovereign will and pleasure of God, acting itself in infinite wisdom and grace, is the sole, supreme, original cause of the salvation of the church, Romans 9:10, 11.

3. The means of accomplishment and **making effectual** of this **will of God**, is the “**offering of the body of Jesus Christ.**” Some copies after *ἡγιασμενοι εσμεν* read *οι*, and then the sense must be supplied by the repetition of *ἡγιασμενοι* in the close of that verse, “who by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ were once sanctified.” But there is no color for this supply, for the word “once” doth directly respect the offering of Christ, as the following verses, wherein it is explained, and the dignity of this sacrifice thence demonstrated, do prove. Wherefore this article belongs not unto the text, for it is not in the best copies, nor is taken notice of in our translation. Why and in what sense the sacrifice of Christ is called the “offering of his body,” was before declared. And “by which,” *δια της*, refers not to the cause of our sanctification, which is the will of God, but unto the effect itself. Our sanctification is wrought, effected, accomplished by the offering of the body of Christ, (1.) In that the expiation of our sin and reconciliation with God were perfectly wrought thereby: (2.) In that the whole church of the elect was thereby dedicated unto God; which privilege they are called into the actual participation of through faith in the blood of Christ: (3.) In that thereby all the old legal sacrifices, and all that yoke, and

burden, and bondage wherewith they were accompanied, are taken out of the way, Ephesians 2:15, 16: (4.) **In that he redeemed us thereby from the whole curse of the law, as given originally in the law of nature, and also renewed in the covenant of Sinai:** (5.) **In that thereby he ratified and confirmed the new covenant, and all the promises of it, and all the grace contained in them, to be effectually communicated unto us:** (6.) In that he thereby **procured** for us, and received into his own disposition, in the behalf of the church, **effectually to communicate all grace and mercy unto our souls and consciences.** **In brief, whatever was prepared in the will of God for the good of the church, it is all communicated unto us through the offering of the body of Christ, in such a way as tendeth unto the glory of God and the assured salvation of the church.**

This “offering of the body of Jesus Christ” is the glorious center of all the counsels of the wisdom of God, of all the purposes of his will for the sanctification of the church. For, (1.) No other way or means could effect it: (2.) **This will do it infallibly; for Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto this end.** This is the anchor of our faith, whereon alone it rests.

4. The last thing in the words gives us the manner of the offering of the body of Christ. It was done ἐφάπαξ: “once for all,” say we, — once only; it was never before that one time, nor shall ever be afterwards, — “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” **And this demonstrates both the dignity and efficacy of his sacrifice. Of such worth and dignity it was, that God absolutely acquiesced therein, and smelled a savor of eternal rest in it: and of such efficacy, that the sanctification of the church was perfected by it, so that it needed no repetition.** It also made way for the following state of Christ himself, which was to be a state of glory, absolute and perfect, inconsistent with the repetition of the same sacrifice of himself. For, as the apostle shows, verses 12, 13, after this sacrifice offered, he had no more to do but to enter into glory. So absurd is that imagination of the **Socinians**, that he offered his expiatory sacrifice in heaven, that he did not, he could not enter into glory, until he had completely offered his sacrifice, the memorial whereof he carried into the holy place. And the apostle lays great weight on this consideration, as that which is the foundation of the faith of the church. He mentions it often, **and argues from it as the principal argument to prove its excellency above the sacrifices of the law. And this very foundation is destroyed by those who fancy unto themselves a renewed offering of the body of Christ every day in the mass.** Nothing can be more directly contrary unto this assertion of the apostle, whatever color they may put upon their practice, or whatever pretense they may give unto it.

Wherefore the apostle in the next verses argues from the **dignity and efficacy** of the **sacrifice of Christ**, by its difference from and opposition unto the legal sacrifices, which were often repeated. **[And this and what is said in the previous few pages is why salvation is ordered in all things, and sure! 2Sam23:5]**

Hence the purpose of Christ's sufferings and death was designed without fail to procure the salvation of God's elect infallibly with the ultimate end, to give God all the glory due to him. The nature of God; the end for which God entered into covenant to save man, a manifestation of his **glory.**

(2.) Again, some things are made lawful or good, or suited unto the glory, honor, or satisfaction and complacency, of them that make the covenant, by virtue of somewhat arising in or from the covenant itself. And of this sort are most of the things that are disposed in the covenant between the Father and the Son under consideration. They become good and desirable, and suited unto their glory and honor, not as considered absolutely and in themselves, but with respect unto that order, dependence, and mutual relation, that they are cast into by and in the covenant.

Such was the penal suffering of the human nature of Christ under the sentence and curse of the law. This in itself absolutely considered, without respect unto the ends of the covenant, would neither have been good in itself, nor have had any tendency unto the glory of God; for what excellency of the nature of God could have been demonstrated in the penal sufferings of one absolutely and in all respects innocent? Nay, it was utterly impossible that an innocent person, considered absolutely as such, should suffer penally under the sentence and curse of the law; for the law denounceth punishment unto no such person. Guilt and punishment are related; and where the one is not, real, or supposed, or imputed, the other cannot be. But now, in the terms of this covenant, leading unto the limitations and use of these sufferings, they are made good, and tend unto the glory of God, as we shall see. So the pardoning and saving of sinners absolutely could have had no tendency unto the glory of God; for what evidence of righteousness would there have been therein, that the great Ruler of all the world should pass by the offenses of men without animadverting upon them? What justice would have appeared, or what demonstration of the holiness of the nature of God would there have been therein? Besides, it was impossible, seeing it is the judgment of God that they who commit sin are worthy of death. But, as we shall see, through the terms and conditions of this covenant, this is rendered righteous, holy, and good, and eminently conducing to the glory of God.

15. The matter of this covenant, or the things and ends about which and for which it was entered into, are nextly to be considered. These are the things which, as we observed before, are to be disposed of unto the honor, and as it were mutual advantage, of them that make the covenant. And the matter of this covenant in general is the saving of sinners, in and by ways and means suited unto the manifestation of the glory of God. So it is compendiously expressed where the execution of it is declared, John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And upon the coming of the Son into the world he was called Jesus, because he was to "save his people from their sins," Matthew 1:21; even Jesus the deliverer, who saves us from the wrath to come, 1 Thessalonians, 1:10. To declare this design of God, or his will and purpose in and by Jesus Christ to save his elect from sin and death, to bring his many sons unto glory, or the full enjoyment of himself unto eternity, is the principal design of the whole Scripture, and whereunto the whole revelation of God unto men may be reduced. This was that on the prospect whereof the Son or Wisdom of God rejoiced before him, and had his delights with the children of men before the foundation of the world, Proverbs 8:30, 31. Man having utterly lost himself by sin, coming short thereby of the glory of God, and being made obnoxious unto everlasting destruction, the prevision whereof was in order of nature antecedent unto this covenant, as hath been declared, the Father and Son do enter into a holy mutual agreement concerning the recovery and salvation of the elect in a way of grace. This we place as the matter of this covenant, the thing contracted and agreed about. The distinction of the parts of it into persons and things, the order and respect in it of one thing unto another, are not of our present consideration; the explanation of them

belongs unto the covenant of grace which God is pleased to enter into with believers by Jesus Christ. But this was that in general that was to be disposed of unto the mutual complacency and satisfaction of Father and Son.

16. The end of these things, both of the covenant and the disposition of all things made thereby, was the especial glory both of the one and the other. **God doth all things for himself. He can have no ultimate end in anything but himself alone, unless there should be anything better than himself or above himself.** But yet in himself he is not capable of any accession of glory by anything that he intendeth or doth. He is absolutely, infinitely, eternally perfect, in himself and all his glorious properties, so that nothing can be added unto him. **His end therefore must be, not the obtaining of glory unto himself, but the manifestation of the glory that is in himself.** When the holy properties of his nature are exercised in external works, and are thereby expressed, declared, and made known, then is God glorified. **The end therefore in general of this covenant, which regulated the disposal of the whole matter of it, was the exercise, exaltation, and manifestation, of the glorious properties of the divine nature;** other supreme end and ultimate it could have none, as hath been declared. Now, such is the mutual respect of all the holy properties of God in their exercise, and such their oneness in the same divine being, that if any one of them be exerted, manifested, and thereby glorified, the residue of them must be therein and thereby glorified also, because that nature is glorified in which they are, and whereunto they do belong. But yet, in several particular works of God, his design is firstly, immediately, and directly, to exercise in a peculiarly eminent manner, and therein to advance and glorify, one or more of his glorious properties, and the rest consequentially in and by them. So in some of his works he doth peculiarly glorify justice, in some mercy, in some his power. We may therefore, **as to the end of this holy, eternal compact, consider what are those properties of the divine nature which were peculiarly engaged in it,** and are peculiarly exerted in its execution, and were therefore designed to be exalted in a peculiar manner. **Now these are three:** —

(1.) **Wisdom, attended with sovereignty. (2.) Justice, springing from holiness. (3.) Grace, mercy, goodness, love, which are various denominations of the same divine excellency.**

That this covenant sprang from these properties of the divine nature, that the execution of it is the work and effect of them all, and that it is designed to manifest and glorify them, or God in and by them, unto eternity, the Scripture doth fully declare.

(1.) **The infinite, sovereign wisdom of God,** even the Father, exerted itself, — [1.] In passing by the angels in their fallen condition, and fixing on the recovery of man, Hebrews 2:16; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. [2.] In the projection or provision of the way in general to bring about the salvation of man, by the interposition of his Son, with what he did and suffered in the pursuit hereof, Acts 2:23, 4:28. [3.] In the disposal of all things in that way in such a holy and glorious order, as that marks and footsteps of infinite divine wisdom should be imprinted on every part and passage of it, 1 Corinthians 1:23-31; Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 3:10, 11.

(2.) **His justice, accompanied with or springing from holiness,** gave as it were the especial determination unto the way to be insisted on for the accomplishment of the end aimed at, and it was effectually exerted in the execution of it; for upon a supposition that God would pardon and save

sinners, it was his eternal justice which required that it should be brought about by the sufferings of the Son, and it was itself expressed and exercised in those sufferings, as we shall afterwards more fully declare, Romans 3:25, 26, 8:3; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

(3.) **Grace, love, goodness, or mercy**, chiefly induced unto the whole. And these the Scriptures most commonly cast the work upon, or resolve it into. See John 3:16, 17; Romans 5:8, 11:6; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31; Ephesians 1:5-7, 3:7, 8.

In these things, in the exercise, manifestation, and exaltation, of these glorious excellencies of the divine nature, with their effects in and upon the obedience of angels and men, doth consist that peculiar glory which God, even the Father, aims at in this covenant, and which supplies the place of that security or advantage which amongst men is intended in such compacts.

17. There must also, moreover, be an especial and **peculiar honor of the Son**, the other party covenanting, intended therein; and was so accordingly, and is in like manner accomplished. And this was twofold: — First, what he had conjunctly with the Father, as he is of the same nature with him, “over all, God blessed for ever;” for on this account the divine excellencies before mentioned belong unto him, or are his, and in their exaltation is he exalted. But as his undertaking herein was peculiar, so he was to have a peculiar honor and glory thereby, not as God, **but as the Mediator of the covenant of grace**, which sprang from hence. **For the accomplishment of the ends of this covenant, as we shall see, he parted for a season with the glory of his interest in those divine perfections, emptying himself, or making himself of no reputation**, Philippians 2:5- 9. And he was to have an illustrious recovery of the glory of his interest in them, when he was “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,” Romans 1:4, when he was again glorified with the Father, with that glory which he had with him before the world was, John 17:5, — namely, that peculiar glory which he had and assumed upon his undertaking to be a Savior and Redeemer unto mankind, then **when his delights were with the sons of men, and he rejoiced before the Father**, and was his delight on that account. And this, secondly, was attended with that peculiar glorious exaltation which in his human nature he received upon the accomplishment of the terms and conditions of this covenant. What this glory was, and wherein it doth consist, I have manifested at large in the Exposition on Hebrews 1:3. See Isaiah 53:12; Psalm 110:1, 6, 2:8, 9; Zechariah 9:10; Psalm 72:8; Romans 14:11; Isaiah 45:23; Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 12:2, etc.

Perseverance of the Saints

Code428

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 269-270
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther's works]
My inserts in [\[blue\]](#), [red](#) for emphasis
Some Footnotes modified or deleted for smoother reading

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Scripture speaks of the perseverance of the saints in the same way it does about sanctification. It admonishes believers to persevere to the end (Matt. 24: 13; Rom. 2: 7–8); to remain in Christ, in his word, in his love (John 15: 1–10; 1 John 2: 6, 24, 27; 3: 6, 24; 4: 12ff.); to continue in the faith, not shifting (Col. 1: 23; Heb. 2: 1; 3: 14; 6: 11); to be faithful to death (Rev. 2: 10, 26). Sometimes it speaks as if apostasy is a possibility: “If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall” (1 Cor. 10: 12); it warns against superciliousness and threatens heavy punishment for unfaithfulness (Ezek. 18: 24; Matt. 13: 20–21; John 15: 2; Rom. 11: 20, 22; 2 Tim. 2: 12; Heb. 4: 1; 6: 4–8; 10: 26–31; 2 Pet. 2: 18–22). It even seems to name various persons in whose lives there was a falling away: David in committing adultery, Solomon in his idolatry, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1: 19–20; 2 Tim. 2: 17–18), Demas (2 Tim. 4: 10), false prophets and teachers who deny the Lord who bought them (2 Pet. 2: 1), believers who have fallen away from grace and the faith (Gal. 5: 4; 1 Tim. 4: 1). **On the basis of these texts, Pelagians, Roman Catholics, Socinians, Remonstrants, Mennonites, Quakers, Methodists, and so forth, and even Lutherans have taught the possibility of a complete loss of the grace received.** [C. Vitringa, Doctr. III, 415ff.] Augustine, on the other hand, arrived at the confession of the perseverance of the saints. However, since he deemed uncertainty and fear with respect to salvation beneficial in the life of believers, he held that those who had been born again in baptism could lose the grace they had received, but if they belonged to the number of the predestined, they would in any case receive it back before their death. Hence while believers could totally lose the grace received, the elect could not finally lose it. In the Catholic and later Roman church, many theologians, in earlier and later times, agreed with him; still the Reformed, and the Reformed alone, maintained this doctrine and linked it with the assurance of faith. [U. Zwingli]

Now the question with respect to this doctrine of perseverance is not whether those who have obtained a true saving faith could not, if left to themselves, lose it again by their own fault and sins; nor whether sometimes all the activity, boldness, and comfort of faith actually ceases, **and faith itself goes into hiding under the cares of life and the delights of the world.** The question is whether God upholds, continues, and completes the work of grace he has begun, or whether he sometimes permits it to be totally ruined by the power of sin. **Perseverance is not an activity of the human person but a gift from God.** Augustine saw this very clearly. Only he made a distinction between two kinds of grace and considered possible a grace of regeneration and faith that by itself was amissible and that, for its continued existence, had to be augmented from without by a second grace, the grace of perseverance.

That second grace, then, is a superadded gift, has no connection with the first, and has in fact no influence whatever outside the Christian life. Among the Reformed the doctrine of perseverance was very different. It is a gift of God. He watches over it and sees to it that the work of grace is continued and completed. He does not, however, do this apart from believers but through them. **In regeneration and faith, he grants a grace that as such bears an inamissible character; he grants a life that is by nature eternal; he bestows the benefits of calling, justification, and glorification that are mutually and unbreakably interconnected.** All of the above-mentioned admonitions and threats that Scripture addresses to believers, therefore, do not prove a thing against the doctrine of perseverance. **They are rather the way in which God himself confirms his promise and gift through believers. They are the means by which perseverance in life is realized.** After all, perseverance is also not coercive but, as a gift of God, impacts humans in a spiritual manner. It is precisely God's will, by admonition and warning, morally to lead believers to heavenly blessedness and by the grace of the Holy Spirit to prompt them willingly to persevere in faith and love. **It is therefore completely mistaken to reason from the admonitions of Holy Scripture to the possibility of a total loss of grace.** This conclusion is as illegitimate as when, in the case of Christ, people infer from his temptation and struggle that he was able to sin. **The certainty of the outcome does not render the means superfluous but is inseparably connected with them in the decree of God.** Paul knew with certainty that in the case of shipwreck no one would lose one's life, yet he declares, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved" (Acts 27: 22, 31).

As for the examples Scripture is said to cite as instances of real apostasy, it is impossible to prove that all these persons (1) either had truly received the grace of regeneration (Hymeneus, Alexander, Demas, persons referred to in 1 Tim. 4: 1; 2 Pet. 2: 1); (2) or really lost it in their fall and later received it back again (David, Solomon); (3) or really did receive it but never got it back (Heb. 6: 4–8; 10: 26–31; 2 Pet. 2: 18–22). These last texts seem to present the most formidable obstacle to the confession of the perseverance of the saints. Still this is an illusion. For, also those who hold to the possibility of falling away have to accept that the reference here is to a very particular sin. Even according to themselves, while grace is amissible, it can be regained after total loss. The opinion of Montanists and Novatians, who infer from these passages that the lapsed may never be readmitted to membership in the church, has been universally rejected by Christian churches. When Scripture expressly states that it is impossible to restore to repentance those who are in view in these texts (Heb. 6: 4; 10: 26; 2 Pet. 2: 20; 1 John 5: 16), it cannot be denied that the reference is to a sin that carries with it a judgment of hardening and that makes repentance impossible. And of such a sin—also according to the confession of those who hold to the impossibility of a falling away—there is only one, namely, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Now if this is true, then the doctrine of the falling away of saints leads to the conclusion that either the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit can be committed also, or even perhaps only, by those who are born again, or the above-mentioned texts lose all their evidential value against the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. But this is not all. **For those who consider total apostasy a possibility have to make a distinction between the sins by which the grace of regeneration is lost and other sins by which it is not lost.** In other words, they are compelled to resort to the Roman Catholic distinction between **mortal** and **venial** sins, unless they would hold that that grace is lost by every—even the most minor—sin. But by adopting this view, they would falsify the whole of morality, misconstrue the nature of sin, and introduce an oppressive casuistry that would ensnare the believer's conscience. **Furthermore, on this view one cannot arrive at the assurance of**

faith, achieve the ability to work in peace, and experience the quiet development and growth of the Christian life. Continuity can be lost at any moment. Hollaz tries to argue that regeneration can be lost three, four, or more times and still be recovered. Finally, the doctrine of the possible apostasy of the saints is so far from escaping the difficulties it seeks to avoid that it rather magnifies and increases them. For if in this connection it holds on to the immutability of God's foreknowledge, then finally only those are saved whom God has eternally known would be, and the human will cannot undo the certainty of this outcome. Or it must proceed to deny predestination and foreknowledge in every sense of these terms, thus making everything uncertain and unstable, including the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. God may have manifested his love; Christ may have died for sinners; the Holy Spirit may have implanted rebirth and faith in the heart of people; the believer may be able to say with Paul: "I delight in the law of God in my inmost self" (Rom. 7: 22). Yet ultimately, right up until the hour of one's death—indeed, why not also on the other side of the grave?—the human will remains the decisive and all-controlling power [the very thing that Arminians staunchly defend just as most everyone else does especially the unregenerate]. Everything will be as that will determines it will be.

Scripture, however, teaches a very different doctrine. The Old Testament already clearly states that the covenant of grace does not depend on the obedience of human beings. It does indeed carry with it the obligation to walk in the way of the covenant but that covenant itself rests solely in God's compassion. If the Israelites nevertheless again and again become unfaithful and adulterous, the prophets do not conclude from this that God changes, that his covenant wavers and that his promises fail. On the contrary: God cannot and may not break his covenant. He has voluntarily—with a solemn oath—bound himself by it to Israel. His fame, his name, and his honor depend on it. He cannot abandon his people. His covenant is an everlasting covenant that cannot waver. He himself will give to his people a new heart and a new spirit, inscribe the law in their inmost self, and cause them to walk in his statutes. And later, when Paul confronts the same fact of Israel's unfaithfulness, his heart filled with grief, he does not conclude from this that the word of God has failed, but continues to believe that God has compassion on whom he will, that his gifts and calling are irrevocable, and that not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel (Rom. 9–11).

Similarly, John testifies of those who fell away: they were not of us or else they would have continued with us (1 John 2: 19). Whatever apostasy occurs in Christianity, it may never prompt us to question the unchanging faithfulness of God, the certainty of his counsel, the enduring character of his covenant, or the trustworthiness of his promises. One should sooner abandon all creatures than fail to trust his word. And that word in its totality is one immensely rich promise to the heirs of the kingdom. It is not just a handful of texts that teach the perseverance of the saints: the entire gospel sustains and confirms it. The Father has chosen them before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1: 4), ordained them to eternal life (Acts 13: 48), to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8: 29). This election stands (Rom. 9: 11; Heb. 6: 17) and in due time carries with it the calling and justification and glorification (Rom. 8: 30). Christ, in whom all the promises of God are Yes and Amen (2 Cor. 1: 20), died for those who were given him by the Father (John 17: 6, 12) in order that he might give them eternal life and not lose a single one of them (6: 40; 17: 2); he therefore gives them eternal life and they will never be lost in all eternity; no one

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John Owen

Commentary on Hebrews

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Ver. 25. — “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Obs. VII. The consideration of the office-power of Christ is of great use unto the faith of the church. To this end we may observe,—

1. That the foundation of all the benefits which are received by Christ, — that is, of the spiritual and eternal salvation of the church, — is laid in his **condescending to undertake the office of a mediator between God and man**. And as this was the greatest effect of divine wisdom and grace, **so it is the first cause, the root and spring, of all spiritual blessings unto us**. This the whole Scripture beareth testimony unto, Hebrews 10:7; 1 John 3:16. This is the fundamental article of faith evangelical. And the want of laying this foundation aright, as it occasioneth many to apostatize from the gospel unto a natural religion, **so it weakeneth and disordereth the faith of many believers. But this is the first ground of all friendship between God and man**.

2. Having undertaken that office, all the actings of it for us and towards us, or towards God in our behalf, are circumscribed and limited by that office. We have no ground of faith to expect anything from him or by him but what belongs unto the office that he hath undertaken. **Neither are we, in our addresses unto him and expectations from him, to consider him absolutely as God, the eternal Son of God only, but as the mediator between God and man**. We can look for no more from a king but what he can justly do as a king, nor from any other person in office; no more are we to look for from Christ himself.

3. This office of Christ in general, as the mediator and sponsor of the new covenant, is distinguished into three especial offices, of a **king, a prophet, and a priest**. Whatever, therefore, we receive from Christ, or by him, we do it as he acts in that threefold capacity, or in one of those offices, a king, a priest, or a prophet. Whatever he hath done for us, or continueth to do, whatever he doth over us, for us, or towards us, **he doth it in and under one of these capacities**; for unto them may all his office-relation unto us be reduced. And the kindness of all those other relations wherein he stands unto us, — as of a shepherd, the bishop of our souls, of an husband, of a brother, a friend, — he puts forth and exerciseth in the acts and actings of these offices.

4. All these offices, whether vested jointly in any one other person, or severally and distinctly in several persons, as they were under the old testament, could never extend their acts and effects unto all the occasions and necessities of the church. **The business of our apostle, in this chapter, is to prove**

that the office of the priesthood as vested in Aaron and his successors made nothing perfect, did not consummate the church-state, nor could effect its salvation. The kingly office, as it was typically managed by David and others, was remote from answering that rule and safety which the church stood in need of. Neither did nor could anyone prophet, no, nor yet all the prophets together, reveal and declare the whole counsel of God. But, —

5. These offices as they were in Christ did perfectly answer, and yet do, all that belongs to the **redemption, sanctification, protection, and salvation, of the church**. And this they do on two accounts: —

(1.) **Because they were committed unto him in a more full, ample, and unlimited manner, than either they were or could be unto others, on purpose that they might answer all the ends of God's grace towards the church**. So, as he was made a king, not this or that degree or enlargement of power was committed unto him, **but "all power in heaven and in earth,"** over all the creation of God, in all things, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. See our description and delineation of this power, on Hebrews 1:2, 3. As a prophet, he did not receive this or that particular revelation from God, **but "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were laid up in him,"** and he knew the whole mind and counsel of God, as coming forth from his divine bosom. And as unto his sacerdotal office, we are now engaged in an inquiry into its especial nature, as differing from, and exalted above, whatever was committed unto any of the sons of men under that name.

(2.) The principal reason of the *all-sufficiency of the office-power and ability of Christ* is taken from his own person, which alone was capable of a trust of such a power, and able to execute it unto all the ends of it. He alone, who was God and man in one person, was capable of being such a king, priest, and prophet, as was able to save the church unto the uttermost.

Wherefore, in the consideration of this **office-power of Christ, wherein all our salvation doth depend**, we have two things to attend unto: (1.) His person who bears these offices, and who alone is fit and able so to do; and, (2.) The especial nature of the office as committed unto him. On these grounds he was **able to do infinitely more as a priest than all the priests of the order of Aaron could do**. So the apostle expresseth it in the next words.

Thirdly, "He is able to save;" $\chi\alpha\iota\ \sigma\omega\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$, — "even to save," "to save also;" not for this or that particular end, **but absolutely**, — "even to save." The general sense of this word is limited and determined in the use and application of it throughout the Scripture. Not any temporal deliverances, but that which is supernatural, spiritual, and eternal, is intended thereby. And, —

1. The notion of the word includeth in it a supposition of some evil or danger that we are delivered from. This is sin, with its consequents of misery, in the curse of the law and the wrath to come. Wherefore it is said of Christ, that "he saves his people from their sins," Matthew 1:21; "from the curse," Galatians 3:13; and "from the wrath to come," 1 Thessalonians 1:10. In these things all that is or can be evil unto our nature, here or unto eternity, are included.

2. The bringing of us into an estate of present grace and right unto future blessedness, with the enjoyment of it in its appointed season, is intended in it; for although this be not included in the first notion of the word, yet it belongs unto the nature of the thing intended. This salvation, called

therefore “great’ and “eternal salvation,” doth not merely respect the evil we are delivered from, but the contrary good also, in the present favor and future enjoyment of God. And concerning this salvation two things are to be considered: —

1. That there is power and ability required unto this work: “he is able to save.” It was no easy thing to take away sin, to subdue Satan, to fulfill the law, to make peace with God, to procure pardon, to purchase grace and glory, with all other things great and glorious, that belong unto this salvation. And it is the great concernment of faith well to fix this principle, that he who hath undertaken this work is able to accomplish it, and that by the means he hath designed to use, and the way wherein he will proceed. We are apt to pass this over without any inquiry into it, and to take it for granted that God is able to do whatever he pleaseth; but it is not of the absolute power of God whereof we speak, but of the power of God, or of Christ, put forth in such a peculiar way. **And the want of faith herein is the first and most proper part of unbelief. Wherefore, as God engageth his omnipotency, or all-sufficiency, as the foundation of all his covenant actings towards us, Genesis 17:1; so he often pleadeth the same power to assure us of the accomplishment of his promises, Isaiah 40:28, 29.** And it is expressly asserted as the principal ground of faith, Romans 4:21, 11:23; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 1:24; and often in this epistle.

2. **It is here supposed that the discharge of Christ’s priestly office is the way designed to save us by, or to effect this great work of salvation. No other way or means is appointed of God unto this end.** Here we must look for it, or go without it. Wherefore the inquiry is necessary, whether, in the discharge of this office, and within the bounds and limits of it, he be able to save us with this salvation. For indeed many are like those “sons of Belial” who said of Saul, when God had anointed him king, “**How shall this man save us? and despised him,**” 1 Samuel 10:27. **They understand not how Christ is able to save them by his priesthood; and therefore, under various pretences, they trust to themselves, and despise him.** All false religion is but a choice of other things for men to place their trust in, with a neglect of Christ. And all **superstition** grows on the same root, in all effects or instances of it, be they great or small. Wherefore I say, we are to consider whether this office, and the acts of it, be suited and meet for the effecting of all things that belong to this salvation. For if we find them not so, we cannot believe that he is a priest able to save us. But they evidence themselves to be otherwise, unless our minds are darkened by the power of unbelief; as we shall see in the particulars afterwards insisted on by our apostle. And we are here taught, that, —

Obs. VIII. **It is good to secure this first ground of evangelical faith, that the Lord Christ, as vested with his offices, and in the exercise of them, is able to save us.**

Salvation is that which all sinners, who have fallen under any convictions, do seek after. And it is from God they look for it. He alone, they know, can save them; and unless he do so, they cannot be saved. And that he can do so, they seem for a while to make no question, although they greatly doubt whether he will or no. **Here, under these general apprehensions of the power of God, they cannot long abide, but must proceed to inquire into the way whereby he will save them, if ever they be saved.** And this the whole Scripture testifieth to be no otherwise but by Jesus Christ. For “there is no salvation in any other; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved,” Acts 4:12. **When their thoughts are thus limited unto Christ alone, their next inquiry is, “How**

shall this man save us?" And hereon are they directed unto his offices, especially his priesthood, whereby he undertakes to deliver them from the guilt of their sins, and to bring them into favor with God. **Is it not therefore highly incumbent on them to satisfy themselves herein, that Christ is able to save them in the exercise of this office?** for if he be not, there is no salvation to be obtained. And when men are come thus far, as that they will not question in general but that the Lord Christ, in the discharge of his sacerdotal office, **is able to save sinners in general, yet unbelief will keep them off from acquiescing in this power of his, as so limited, for their own salvation.** As Naaman had thoughts in general that Elisha could cure men of their leprosy, yet he would not believe that he could cure them in the way and by the means he prescribed. He thought he would have taken another course with him, more suited unto his apprehensions, as a means for his recovery. Hereon he turns away in a rage; which if he had not by good advice been recalled from, he had lived and died under the plague of his leprosy, 2 Kings 5:10-14. When persons are reduced to look for salvation only by Christ, and do apprehend in general that he can save sinners, yet oftentimes, when they come to inquire into the way and manner of it, by the exercise of his priestly office, they cannot close with it. Away they turn again into themselves; from which if they are not recovered, they must die in their sins. Unless, therefore, we do well and distinctly fix this foundation of faith, that Christ as a priest is able to save us, or is able to do so in the discharge of his sacerdotal office, we shall never make one firm step in our progress. To this end we must consider, —

That the Lord Christ as **mediator**, and in the discharge of his office, is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." So saith our apostle, "Christ crucified is, to them that believe, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24. His death is both an effect of divine power and wisdom; and thereby do they exert their efficacy unto the utmost, for the attaining of the end designed in it. **Wherefore we are to look unto this priesthood of Christ, as that which divine wisdom hath appointed as the only way and means whereby we may be saved.** And if there be any defect therein, — if Christ, in the discharge of it, be not able to save us, notwithstanding the difficulties which unto us seem insuperable, — it must be charged on divine wisdom, as that which was wanting in the contrivance of a due means unto its end. **And so it is done by the world;** for the apostle testifieth that this "wisdom of God" is looked on and esteemed by men as mere "foolishness." The way proposed in it, to save sinners by the cross of Christ, is accounted as folly by all unbelievers, whatever else they pretend as the reason of their unbelief. But this faith is to fix upon; namely, that although we yet see not how it may be done, nor have the experience of it in our own souls, yet this being the way which infinite wisdom hath fixed on, there is no defect in it, but Christ by it is able to save us. For the very first notion which we have of wisdom as divine and infinite, is, that we are to acquiesce in its contrivances and determinations, though we cannot comprehend the reasons or ways of them. Besides, the Lord Christ is herein also "the power of God." **God in him and by him puts forth his omnipotent power for the accomplishing of the effect and end aimed at. Wherefore, although we are not to look for our salvation from the power of God absolutely considered, yet are we to look for it from the same omnipotency as acting itself in and by Jesus Christ.** This is the way whereby infinite wisdom hath chosen to act omnipotent power; **and into them is faith herein to be resolved.**

1. He is able to save also εἰς τὸ παντελές. The word may have a double sense; for it may respect the perfection of the work, or its duration: and so it is variously rendered; "to the uttermost," that is, completely; or "evermore," that is, "always" or "forever." So the Syriac translation carries it.

Take the word in the first sense, and the meaning is, that he will not effect or work out this or that part of our salvation, do one thing or another that belongs unto it, and leave what remains unto ourselves or others; but “he is our Rock, and his work is perfect.”

Whatever belongs unto our entire, complete salvation, he is able to effect it. The general notion of the most that are called Christians lies directly against this truth. In the latter sense two things may be intended: (1.) That after an entrance is made into this work, and men begin to be made partakers of deliverance thereby, there may great oppositions be made against it, in temptations, trials, sins, and death, before it be brought unto perfection; but our Lord Christ, as our faithful high priest, fainteth not in his work, but is able to carry us through all these difficulties, **and will do so**, until it be finished forever in heaven. (2.) That this salvation is durable, perpetual, eternal, Isaiah 45:17. “Salvare in aeternum;” to procure “salutem aeternam.” But “favores sunt ampliandi,” and there is nothing hinders but that we may take the words in such a comprehensive sense as to include the meaning of both these interpretations. He is able to save completely as to all parts, fully as to all causes, and for ever in duration. And we may observe, —

Obs. IX. Whatever hinderances and difficulties lie in the way of the salvation of believers, whatever oppositions do rise against it, the Lord Christ is able, by virtue of his sacerdotal office, and in the exercise of it, to carry the work through them all unto eternal perfection.

In the assertion of the ability of Christ in this matter, there is a supposition of a work whereunto great power and efficacy is required; and whereas it is emphatically affirmed, that “he is able to save unto the uttermost,” it is supposed that great oppositions and difficulties do lie in the way of its accomplishment. But these things are commonly spoken unto by our practical divines, and I shall not therefore insist upon them.

2. The whole is further declared by instancing in those who are to be saved, or made partakers of this salvation. “He is able to save to the uttermost,” but yet all are not to be saved by him; yea, they are but few that are so. Of the most it may be said, “They will not come unto him that they may have life.” Wherefore those whom he is thus able to save, and doth save accordingly, are all those, and only those, “who come unto God by him.”

To “come to God” hath a double sense in the Scripture; for it is sometimes expressive of faith, sometimes of worship.

(1.) To come to God, is to believe. Faith or believing is a coming to God. So Christ calling us unto faith in him, calleth us to come unto him, Matthew 11:28. And unbelief is a refusal to come to him, “Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.” Faith in God through him, is coming to the Father by him, John 14:6; so to come to God by Christ, is through him to believe in God, 1 Peter 1:21.

(2.) Our access unto God in his worship, is our coming unto him. So is it most frequently expressed in the Old Testament, — “Drawing nigh unto God.” And the expression is taken from the approach that was made unto the tabernacle in and with all holy services. Worship is an approximation unto God, Psalm 78:28. So our apostle calls those who worshipped God in the ordinances of the law, τοῦς

προσερχομενους, Hebrews 10:1, — the “comers,” the worshippers; not those that come to the worship, but those who by that worship come to God. In answer hereunto, our evangelical worship is προσαγωγη, — an “access,” an approximation, a drawing nigh or coming to God, Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 10:22.

The latter sense is principally here intended; for the discourse of the apostle is concerning the state of the church under the new testament, with the advantage of it above that of old, by its relation unto the priesthood of Christ. **They came of old to God with their worship by the high priest of the law; but those high priests could not save them in any sense. But the high priest of the new testament can “save to the uttermost” all gospel worshippers, — “all that come to God by him.”** But the former sense of the word is also included and supposed herein. They that come unto God by Christ, are such as, believing in him, do give up themselves in holy obedience to worship God in and by him.

So is the way expressed of this coming unto God, δι αυτου— that is, “by him” as a high priest; as it is at large explained by the apostle, Hebrews 10:19-22.

Now, to come unto God by Jesus Christ in all holy worship, so as thereon to be interested in his saving power as the high priest of the church, is so to come. (1.) In obedience unto his authority, as to the way and manner of it; (2.) With affiance in his mediation, as to the acceptance of it; (3.) With faith in his person, as the foundation of it.

(1.) It is to come in obedience unto his authority, and that on a double account: [1.] Of the way of coming. **It is not by legal institutions**, it is not by our own inventions; **it is only by his appointment**, Matthew 28:20. To come to God any other way, gives us no interest in the care or saving power of Christ, John 15:7, 8. [2.] Of that especial respect which we have in our souls and consciences unto his sovereign rule over us.

(2.) With affiance in his mediation. And therein faith hath respect unto two things: [1.] The sacrifice he hath offered, the **atonement** and reconciliation he hath made for us, whereon our whole liberty of access unto God doth depend, Hebrews 10:19-22. [2.] To his **intercession**, **whereby he procures actual acceptance for our persons and our duties**, Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1.

(3.) The foundation of the whole is faith in his person as vested with his holy office, and in the discharge of it. It is so to believe in him, as to believe that “he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” This is the ground whereon, in our holy worship we assemble in his name, Matthew 18:20; and make all our supplications unto God in his name, John 16:26; — that is, by an exercise of faith and trust in him, that by and through him we shall be accepted with God.

Obs. X. The salvation of all sincere gospel worshippers is secured by the actings of the Lord Christ in the discharge of his priestly office.

Obs. XI. Attendance unto the service, the worship of God in the gospel, is required to interest us in the saving care and power of our high priest. — Men deceive themselves, who look to be saved by him, but take no care to come to God in holy worship by him. Nor is it an easy or common thing so to do. All men pretend unto divine worship, some one way, some another, and in words they interpose the name of Christ therein; but really to come to God by him is a matter of another import. **Two things are**

indispensably required thereunto: (1.) That the **principle of saving faith be antecedent unto it;** (2.) **That the exercise of faith be concomitant with it. Unless we are true believers, our worship will not be accepted; and unless we are in the exercise of faith on God through Christ in the performance of it, it gives no glory to him, it brings no advantage unto ourselves.**

Obs. XII. Those who endeavor to come unto God any other way but by Christ, as by saints and angels, may do well to consider whether they have any such office in heaven as **by virtue whereof they are able to save them to the uttermost.** — That this is done by those of the Roman church, cannot with any modesty be denied; yea, it is avowed by them. For when they are charged with the wickedness of their doctrine and practice in this matter, evacuating the mediation of Christ, they reply, that they admit of no mediators of reconciliation with God, but only of intercession. Be it so. Ability to save to the utmost is here ascribed unto our high priest upon the account of his intercession. **A respect unto his oblation, whereby he made reconciliation, is included; but it is the efficacy of his intercession that is expressly regarded:** for being **“reconciled by his death, we shall be saved by his life,”** Romans 5:10. He, therefore, alone is the mediator of intercession, who is able, by virtue of his office, to save us to the utmost, through that intercession of his.

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The [Priesthood of Christ](#). His offices: king, prophet and priest - this further describes the wisdom of the way of salvation, its divine purpose in perfecting the salvation of the elect - that it will infallibly be accomplished as this text further delineates and make clearer. It is the duty of Christ our high priest to do certain things to accomplish God's will in saving his church, which he will [infallibly accomplish](#) otherwise it argue weakness and imperfection in the Godhead. This is common sense or right reason to unprejudiced minds. Most people do not realize all that goes into Christ's mission and so on the weakest grounds are ready to unwittingly assign weakness and imperfection to the Godhead by believing sophisms and crafty arguments of the opposers to this doctrine. This Owen describes here in a closely related instance:
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Such a loathsome appearance of vizards and pretenses for the extenuating of sin, and countenancing of men in the practice of it, was never before presented to the eyes of men. **The main of their design, as is now manifest, has been so to interpret Scripture laws, rules, and precepts, as to accommodate them all to that course of corrupt conversation which prevails generally in the world, even among them who are called Christians,** — “Gratum opus agricolis;” — a work exceedingly acceptable and obliging to all sorts of men, who, if not given up to open atheism, would rejoice in nothing more than in a reconciliation between the rule of their consciences and their lusts, that they might sin freely, without trouble or remorse. To this end, having learned the inclinations and temptations of men from their private confessions, and finding it a thing neither possible in itself, nor at all conducive to their own interest, to endeavor their reformation by and recovery to the fixed, stable rule of truth and duty,

they have, by their false glosses, subtle distinctions, and refined imaginations, made it to justify and countenance them in the highest abominations, and in ways leading constantly to the practice of them.

And there is nothing, in their whole course, which faithful interpreters of the mind of God ought more carefully to avoid, than a falling in any instance into that evil which these men have made it their design to promote and pursue. The world, indeed, seems to be weary of the just, righteous, holy ways of God, and of that exactness in walking according to his institutions and commands which it will be one day known that he does require. **But the way to put a stop to this declension, is not by accommodating the commands of God to the corrupt courses and ways of men.** The truths of God and the holiness of his precepts must be pleaded and defended, though the world dislike them here and perish hereafter. **His law must not be made to lackey after the wills of men, nor be dissolved by vain interpretations, because they complain they cannot, indeed because they will not, comply with it.** **Our Lord Jesus Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them, and to supply men with spiritual strength to fulfill them also.** It is evil to break the least commandment; but there is a great aggravation of that evil in them that shall teach men so to do. And this cannot be done but by giving such expositions of them as by virtue whereof men may think themselves freed from an obligation to that obedience which indeed they do require. Wherefore, though some should say now, as they did of old, concerning any command of God, "Behold, what a weariness it is! and what profit is it to keep his ordinances?" yet the law of God is not to be changed to give them relief. We are therefore, in this matter, to have no consideration of the present course of the world, nor of the weariness of professors in the ways of strict obedience. The sacred truth and will of God in all his commands is singly and sincerely to be inquired after.

I proceed with the Priesthood of Christ and its necessary consequents:

The Nature of the Priesthood of Christ by John Owen p 149-155 (180-87 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_Introduction_Observations.pdf

It is so in like manner with his prophetic office. God raised him up from among his brethren **to be the prophet of his church, to reveal his will**; and by him he spake to us. See Exposition on Hebrews 1:1, 2. His whole work as a prophet is to reveal the will of God, and therein to teach and instruct us. Men, therefore, are the immediate object of the powers, duties, and acts of this office.

And that which we further observe from hence is this, that there is no one thing that the Lord Christ acts immediately towards the church, **but that it belongs unto and proceeds from one or the other of these powers or offices.** If anyone be otherwise minded, let him prove the contrary by instances, if he be able. The Scripture affordeth none to that purpose. **It followeth hence, therefore, that God is the object of the actings of Christ in his priestly office.** For if he be not so, then, — (1.) There is no room nor place in his whole mediation for any such office, seeing all he performs towards us belongs unto the other. And therefore those by whom this is denied do upon the matter at length contend that indeed he hath no such office. And if this be so, — (2.) It doth not belong unto Christ as mediator to deal with God in any of the concerns of his people; **for he must do so as a priest, or not at all. And then we have no advocate with the Father; which is utterly abhorrent from the common faith of Christianity.** And this absurd supposition shall be afterwards removed by express testimonies to the contrary. Take away this fundamental principle, that Christ as mediator deals with God for us, and you overthrow the faith of all

Christians. (3.) This would render the whole instruction intended for the church in the Aaronical priesthood and sacrifices useless and impertinent, nothing of the like nature being signified thereby; for that, as we have proved, openly respected God in the first place. And on this supposition the accommodation of it unto the priesthood of Christ by our apostle would be altogether vain. (4.) It is contrary to the common notion of the nature of the priesthood amongst mankind; for none yet ever owned such an office in things religious, but apprehended the use of it to be in doing the things with God that were to be done on the behalf of men. And hereby, as was observed, would the faith and consolation of all believers, which are resolved into what the Lord Christ hath done and doth for them with God, be utterly overthrown.

5. Again; the same truth is undeniably evinced from the nature of sacerdotal acts and duties. These are, as it is stated by common consent, **those two of oblation and intercession**. **And both these are expressly ascribed unto the Lord Jesus Christ as he is a high priest, and nothing else immediately as he is so.** The actual help and aid which he gives us is the fruit and effect of these sacerdotal actings. The sole inquiry, therefore, in this matter is, What or who is the immediate object of oblation and intercession? Is this God, or man? Did Christ offer himself as a sacrifice unto God, or unto us? Doth he intercede with God for us, or with us only? A man would suppose that the absurdity of these imaginations, so expressly contrary to the Scripture and the common sense of mankind, should even shame our adversaries from the defense of them. But they are not so obtuse or so barren in their invention as to want [lack] evasions at any time. “*Quid si manifesto tenentur? anguilla sicut elabentur.*” They therefore tell us, “It is true, if you take oblation and intercession in their proper sense, then God, and none other, must be their immediate object; but as they are ascribed unto Christ they are used only metaphorically, and do indeed denote such actions of his towards the church as have some allusion unto oblation and intercession properly so called.” But I say, — (1.) There was never such a metaphor heard of before, as that one thing should be called by the name of another, between which there is no peculiar similitude, as there is none between offering unto God and giving grace unto men. (2.) Who hath given them this authority to turn what they please into metaphors; by which means they may, when they have a mind to it, make an allegory, and consequently a fable, of the whole Scripture? It is expressly affirmed that the Lord Christ is a high priest. Nothing is in the notion of that office, taken properly, that is unworthy of him, no more than in those of king and prophet. No intimation is given us, directly or indirectly, that this office is ascribed unto him metaphorically. As such he is said to make oblation and intercession to God, — the things wherein the exercise of the priestly office doth consist. What confidence is it, now, to deny that he doth these things properly and immediately with God as a high priest, by an arbitrary introduction of a metaphor which the Scripture giveth not the least countenance unto!

6. We might, moreover, plead the use and end of the sacrifice which he offered as a high priest, which was to make expiation of sin and atonement for it. But because we differ with our adversaries about the sense of these expressions also, I shall not make use of them as the medium of an argument until the precise signification of them be evinced and determined; which shall be done, God willing, in our consideration of the nature of the sacrifice itself. Wherefore I shall close this head of our disputation with some express testimonies confirming the truth in hand.

To this purpose speaks our apostle, Hebrews 8:3, "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." The things which the high priests had of old to offer as gifts and sacrifices, they offered unto God. This I presume is unquestionable; for God commanded them that all their gifts and sacrifices should be offered unto him upon his altar, consecrated for that purpose. To have done otherwise had been the highest idolatry. But Christ, if he be a high priest, must, saith the apostle, of necessity have somewhat to offer, as they did, and after the same manner; that is, unto God. If this he did not, there is nothing of reason or sense in the apostle's inference; for what necessity can there be, because the high priests of old did offer sacrifices to God, that then if Jesus Christ be a high priest he must do something of another kind? **They have nothing to say upon these instances, but to confess the words and deny the thing, and then tell us that they agree to the words, but differ about their interpretation, — the interpretation they suggest being a direct denial of the thing itself**; whereof more afterwards.

To the same purpose speaks our apostle, chap. 5:1; which place hath been before vindicated, and is so fully in the ensuing Exposition, whereunto the reader is referred. And this consideration discovereth much of the **general nature, use, and end, of the priesthood of Christ**, which we inquire after; for it is hence evident that it is the power, office, and duty, **whereby he makes an interposition between God and us, — that is, with God on our behalf**. And there are **two general ends** of this interposition, as the Scripture testifies, and which the common faith of Christians relies upon. And these are, — (1.) "Averruncatio mali," the removal of all sorts of evil from us, every thing that did or might befall us in a way of evil, hurt, damage, or punishment, on the account of our sins and apostasy from God. (2.) "Acquisitio boni," **the procuring and obtaining for us everything that is good, with respect unto our reconciliation to God, peace with him, and the enjoyment of him**. And these are intended in the general acts of his office; for, — first, his oblation principally and firstly respects the making atonement for sin, and the turning away of the wrath that was due unto us as sinners; wherein he was Jesus, the deliverer, who saves us from the wrath to come. And this is all that is included in the nature of **oblation** as absolutely considered: But as the **oblation** of Christ was founded on the **covenant** before described, it had a further prospect. **For with respect unto the obedience which therein he yielded unto God, according to the terms of that covenant, it was not only satisfactory, but meritorious**; that is, by the sacrifice of himself he did not only turn away the wrath which was due unto us, but also obtained for us "eternal redemption," with all the grace and glory thereunto belonging. There remains nothing to be done on our behalf, after the once offering of himself, **whereby he "perfected for ever them that are sanctified," but only the actual application of these good things unto us, or our actual instating in the possession of them**. Hereunto is his intercession, the second duty of his priestly office, designed; the especial nature whereof must be elsewhere declared and vindicated.

7. For the further clearing of the whole subject of our inquiry, we must yet consider both the call of Christ unto this office, his actual inauguration, and his discharge of it, both when and where; for all these belong unto its nature.

The call of the Lord Christ unto this office is expressly asserted by our apostle, chap. 5:4-6, "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of

Melchisedec.” If the reader desire to see the particulars wherein the call of Christ consisted, its comparison with the call of Aaron, preference before it, or exaltation above it, he may consult our Exposition on that place, from whence I shall repeat nothing here. In general I say, **that the call of Christ unto the office of the priesthood consisted in that eternal covenant which was between the Father and him concerning his undertaking the work of our recovery and salvation**, which I have at large before described. He was not made a priest by virtue of any vocal command, as Aaron was called by a command given unto Moses unto that purpose, Exodus 28:1; nor by virtue of any established law, which gave the posterity of Aaron their succession to that office; but **he was called by an immediate transaction between him and the Father before the world was**. This call of his, therefore, may be considered either with respect unto designation or manifestation. As it intends the designation of Christ unto his office, so it is expressed in these words of God the Father to him, **“Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;”** which what they import in the covenant transactions between the Father and the Son hath been before declared. The manifestation of this call consisted originally in the first promise given concerning his incarnation and undertaking of the work of our redemption, **Genesis 3:15**. With respect hereunto he says, Psalm 40:7 — **“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book,”** — that is, “in the beginning of the sacred volume,” as our apostle renders it, ἐν κεφαλίδι, “in the head” of it, **Hebrews 10:7**; that is, **in that first promise, recorded in the beginning of the Scripture**, wherein his own consent was tacitly included, and the virtue of his office and sacrifice established, whence he became the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And more need not be added in this place concerning this call of Christ unto the office of the priesthood.

8. His actual inauguration into it, and susception of it, is next to be considered. And he was vested with all his offices from his conception and nativity. There was no time wherein he was, as to his human nature, and was not the **king, priest, and prophet** of his church; for he received all his offices **by the unction of the Spirit, when God “anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.”** And this was done fundamentally in his incarnation, when he was conceived and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, **communicated unto him not by measure**. And so he was born “Christ the Lord,” Luke 2:11. He was born one anointed by the Holy Ghost, Lord, and consequently priest and prophet, — **all which offices were communicated by unction. Together with those graces, gifts, and abilities, which were necessary to their discharge, right, title, and authority for their exercise in their proper seasons were conveyed unto him thereby.** [this is more proof that what Jesus came down from heaven to do, he will do! Mt1:21, not maybe if man so decides to cooperate. To say otherwise is to say that Jesus failed in his mission which is blaspheme. If Christ be made wisdom for us then to say that he failed in his mission to save all and everyone that he allegedly died for is to say that his way of salvation is unwise or not wise enough.] And in these two doth all office and power consist.

The actual exercise of all the offices of Christ was regulated by the will of the Father, his own wisdom and compliance therewithal, with the order and nature of the things themselves about which he was to be conversant therein. He was anointed to be the great prophet of the church from the womb; yet he entered not upon the public discharge of that office until after his baptism, when his commission and call thereunto were proclaimed from heaven, Matthew 3:17. So also was he “Christ the Lord,” — that is, the king of the church; yet began he not visibly to exercise that office in his own person until the mission of his apostles with authority from him to preach the gospel, Matthew 10. **So had God disposed of things, and so did the nature of the work which he had to do require.** **And as to his priestly office, he neither did nor could enter upon the exercise and discharge of it until the end of his**

prophetical ministry; for he could not do it but by his death, which was to put an end unto that ministry here on the earth, excepting only the instructions which he gave to his apostles after his resurrection, Acts 1:3.

But to propose the whole matter somewhat more distinctly, there are three things that concurred unto the inauguration of the Lord Christ unto this office, or there were degrees of it: — (1.) **His real unction by the Holy Ghost with an all-fullness of gifts and graces, at his incarnation.** This whole work of the Spirit, with its effects, I have elsewhere at large discussed, and shall not further insist upon it. (2.) His declarative unction at his baptism, when the Spirit descended upon him, **and filled him with power for the exercise of all the gifts and graces he had received for the discharge of his whole office.** [Christ was given the tools to do what he came to do. This connotes divine power toward the infallible accomplishment of his eternal purpose and it is thus it is being willingly stupid to say that Christ might do it if man cooperates thus defeating the whole purpose of Christ having these gifts and powers from the Father.] (3.) Unto both these there succeeded an especial dedication to the actual performance of the duties of this office. And this was his own act, **which he had power for from God.** This himself expresseth, John 17:19, “I sanctify,” **that is, I consecrate or dedicate, “myself.”** For of real sanctification, by purification and further infusion of grace, he was not capable; and the communication of real grace to the human nature was the work of the Holy Ghost; he did not so sanctify himself. **But he did dedicate, separate, and consecrate himself unto God, in the discharge of this office.** It doth also respect the sacrifice which he was to offer: ‘I consecrate and give up myself to be a sacrifice.’ But he who was to be the sacrifice was also to be the sacrificer. This consecration, therefore, respected his person, and what he was to do as the sacrificer, no less than what he was to suffer as a sacrifice; for this also was necessary, and every high priest was so consecrated.

In that prayer, therefore, of our Savior, John 17, do I place the beginning and entrance of the exercise of his priestly office. Whatever he did after this unto the moment of his death belonged principally thereunto. Sundry things, I confess, fell in occasionally afterwards, wherein he acted his prophetical office in bearing witness unto the truth; but the scope of all his 187 ensuing actions and passions respect his priestly office only: for although his sacrifice, precisely considered, consisted in his actual offering of himself on the cross, yet his sacerdotal actings with reference unto it are not to be confined thereunto. And what these actings were, without an inquiry into the nature of his sacrifice, which I have designed for the subject of another discourse, I shall briefly recount.

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The three offices of Christ (Kingly, Prophetic and Priestly), particularly his priestly office with his intercession for the saints, perfecting forever their salvation, those who are being sanctified - that is, his saving work is not up to man's will but God's and is therefore perfected in its accomplishment; all the good things in the covenant will infallibly be applied to the elect - it is certain for those for whom he died, thus making his atonement limited in scope as opposed to universal. Other subjects covered: perseverance of the saints, the spring of all gracious communications to the saints. The purpose of this excerpt by John Owen is to cement in your mind the certainty of the salvation of God's elect as opposed to the Arminians' notion that God intends no specific persons to be saved but that whosoever chooses to be saved will be saved which leaves open the possibility that none might be saved if no one chooses Christ, which they hold to. But that's not the case due to God's eternal counsel of his will, his good pleasure that is always accomplished, that he determined to save some, namely, the elect or the remnant, i.e., his church. So, because Christ liveth forever, we will live; i.e., not die eternal death but be saved, hence, infallibly saved. Life of the Son by eternal generation (see pg1289). The false way of Catholicism.

Heb. 7:23-25

by John Owen

pg 531-545 vol. 21

Commentary on Hebrews

Ver. 23-25. — And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this [man], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them also to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The apostle in these words proceedeth unto his last argument from the consideration of the priesthood of Christ, as typed and represented by that of Melchisedec. And his intention is still to prove the excellency of it above the Levitical, and of his person above theirs. And in particular, he makes it manifest that “the bringing in of the better hope” did “perfect” or “consummate” all things, which the law could not do.

[skip to pg 531, 649 online](#)

Obs. X. The salvation of all sincere gospel worshippers **is secured by the actings of the Lord Christ in the discharge of his priestly office.** [That is a huge point! For if Christ does not save all that he desires to save, then he failed in his mission which imperfection to assign to God is blaspheme.]

Obs. XI. Attendance unto the service, the worship of God in the gospel, is required to interest us in the saving care and power of our high priest. — **Men deceive themselves, who look to be saved by him, but take no care to come to God in holy worship by him.** Nor is it an easy or common thing so to do. All

men pretend unto divine worship, some one way, some another, and in words they interpose the name of Christ therein; but really to come to God by him is a matter of another import. Two things are indispensably required thereunto: (1.) That the principle of saving faith be antecedent unto it; (2.) That the exercise of faith be concomitant with it. **Unless we are true believers, our worship will not be accepted; and unless we are in the exercise of faith on God through Christ in the performance of it, it gives no glory to him, it brings no advantage unto ourselves.**

Obs. XII. Those who endeavor to come unto God any other way but by Christ, as by saints and angels, may do well to consider whether they have any such office in heaven as by virtue whereof they are able to save them to the uttermost. — That this is done by those of the Roman church, cannot with any modesty be denied; yea, it is avowed by them. For when they are charged with the wickedness of their doctrine and practice in this matter, evacuating the mediation of Christ, they reply, that they admit of no mediators of reconciliation with God, but only of intercession. Be it so. Ability to save to the utmost is here ascribed unto our high priest upon the account of his intercession. A respect unto his oblation, whereby he made reconciliation, is included; **but it is the efficacy of his intercession that is expressly regarded: for being “reconciled by his death, we shall be saved by his life,” Romans 5:10. He, therefore, alone is the mediator of intercession, who is able, by virtue of his office, to save us to the utmost, through that intercession of his.** [[Heb 7:25](#)]

Those by whom they choose to go to God are able to save them, or they are not. If they are not, is it not the greatest folly and madness imaginable, whilst we seek after salvation, to set Him aside on any occasion, in any one instance, who can save us to the utmost, and betake ourselves unto them who cannot save us at all? If they are able to save us in any sense, it is either by virtue of some office and office-power that they are invested withal in heaven, (as ministers are, in the discharge of their office, said to “save them that hear them,” **1 Timothy 4:16**; that is, ministerially and instrumentally,) or without any such office. If they can do so without any office, they can do more than Jesus Christ can do; for he is able to do it by virtue of his office only. And if it might have been otherwise, what need was there that Christ should undertake and discharge this office of the priesthood, and that our apostle should so labor to prove the excellency of this his office, only to satisfy us that he is able to save them that come to God by him? If they do it by virtue of any office committed to them, let it be named what it is. Are they priests in heaven for ever after the order of Melchisedec? Dishonor enough is done unto Christ, by making any sacrificing priests on the earth, as they do in their **mass**; but to make interceding priests in heaven also, is the highest reproach unto him. Or are they the kings or prophets of the church? or under what name or title is this power intrusted with them? Such imaginations are most foreign from true Christian religion. A holy, painful minister on the earth can do much more towards the saving of the souls of men, than any saint or angel in heaven. For the work of doing it ministerially, by the dispensation of the word, is committed unto them in the way of office; but office in the church beareth none in heaven, but only Jesus Christ.

And what is the reason why men should so readily close with other means, other mediators of intercession, to go to God by them? For when they pray to saints, although they should only pray unto them to intercede for them, as some of them pretend, (however openly and manifestly against their express and avowed practice,) yet do they go to God by them. For to speak of any religious prayer, and yet not to look on it in general as a going or coming to God, is a fond and senseless imagination.

Wherefore, whenever they pray to saints, — as most of them do more than to Jesus Christ, — their design is to go to God by them. But what is it that should induce them hereunto? Our Lord Christ hath told us that “he is the way;” and that “no man cometh unto the Father but by him,” John 14:6. What reason can any man give why he should not believe him, but, although he hath said that “no man cometh unto the Father but by him,” should yet attempt to go another way? Have others more power in these things than he, so as it is advisable on that account to make our application unto them? Where is it said of any saints or angels, or all of them together, that they are able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by them? or where is any one word spoken of their power or interest in heaven unto that purpose? But it will be said, ‘That we may be relieved and saved, we stand not in need of power only, but of love, pity, and compassion: and although the saints have less ability than Christ, yet they may have more of love and compassion for us. For some of them, it may be, were our kindred, or progenitors, or countrymen, or such as may have an especial kindness for us: especially the blessed Virgin, and other female saints, are, by their natural constitution as well as their grace,’ (who would not think so?) ‘mightily inclined unto pity and compassion.’ And indeed they are marvellous things which some of them tell us concerning the blessed Virgin in this case, and her condescension in the pursuit of her love and pity. **But yet this imagination is the highest pitch of folly and ingratitude. Certainly nothing can more stir up the indignation of God, than to have any creatures in heaven or earth, or all together, equaled in love and compassion to Jesus Christ.** He that doth not know that there is an unparalleled eminency of these in him, who is not in some measure instructed in the cause and effect of them, knows no more of the gospel than a Jew. There is more love, pity, and compassion, in Christ Jesus, towards every poor sinner that comes unto God by him, than all the saints in heaven are able to comprehend. And if kindred or alliance may be of consideration in this matter, he is more nearly related unto us than father or mother, or wife or children, or all together; we being not only “bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh,” but so joined to him as to be “one spirit” with him.

But it will yet be said, ‘That it is on none of these considerations that men choose to go unto God by other mediators of intercession; only whereas the Lord Christ is so great, and so gloriously exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, they dare not always presumptuously intrude into his glorious presence; and therefore they make use of the saints, who are more cognate unto us, and not clothed with such terrible majesty. And in going unto God by the friends of Christ, they please him as well as if they went immediately by himself.’ Ans. (1.) **He is an unbeliever, unto whom the glorious exaltation of the Lord Christ is a discouragement from going unto him, or by him unto God on the throne of grace. For all the glory, power, and majesty of Christ in heaven, are proposed unto believers, to encourage them to come unto him, and to put their trust in him.** But this is the talk of men who, whatever devotion they pretend unto, indeed know nothing really of what it is to pray, to believe, to trust in Christ, or by him to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace. See Hebrews 4:14-16. (2.) All the glory, power, and majesty of Jesus Christ, as exalted in heaven as our mediator, are but means effectually to exert and exercise his love and compassion towards us: “He liveth for ever to make intercession for us.” But we proceed.

Fourthly, The close of this verse gives us the special reasons and confirmation of all the efficacy that the apostle hath assigned unto the priesthood of Christ: ζων εις το εντμυχανειν υπερ αυτων, — “Always living to make intercession for them.” And three things must be considered in these words: —

1. The *state and condition of Christ as a high priest*: “he liveth always,” or “forever.” 2. What he doth as a high priest in that state and condition: he “maketh intercession for us.” 3. The connection of these things, their mutual regard, or the relation of the work of Christ unto his state and condition; the one is the end of the other: “**he liveth for ever to make intercession for us.**”

First, As to his state and condition, “**he liveth for ever.**” He is always living. The Lord Christ, in his divine person, hath a threefold life in heaven. The one he lives in himself; the other for himself; and the last for us.

1. The *eternal life of God* in his divine nature. This he liveth in himself: “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself,” John 5:26. He hath given it him by **eternal generation** [see pg 1289], in a communication unto him of all the divine properties. And he that hath “life in himself,” **a life independent on any other**, he is the “living one,” the “living God.” **No creature can have life in himself; for “in God we live, and move, and have our being.”** He is hereby “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,” — the beginning and end of all, Revelation 1:11; because he is the “living one,” verse 18. And this life of Christ is the foundation of the efficacy of all his mediatory actings, namely, that he was, in his own divine person, the living God, Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 1 John 3:16. But this is not the immediate cause of his mediatory effects, nor is it here intended.

2. There is a life which he liveth for himself; namely, a life of inconceivable glory in his human nature, He led a mortal life in this world, a life obnoxious unto misery and death, and died accordingly. This life is now changed into that of immortal, eternal glory. “Henceforth he dieth no more, death hath no more power over him.” And not only so, but this life of his is unto him the cause of, and is attended with, all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself; it is his reward, the glory and honor that he is crowned withal All the endowments, all the enjoyments, and the whole eternal exaltation of the human nature in the person of Christ, belong unto this life of glory. And the glorious exaltation of that individual human nature which the Son of God assumed, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, in this world, or the world to come, is the principal part of the design of infinite wisdom in the work of the new creation. But neither is this life here intended.

3. **The Lord Christ lives a mediatory life in heaven, a life for us.** So saith our apostle, **he was made a “priest after the power of an endless life;”** whereof we have treated before. He lives as king, prophet, and priest, of the church. So he describes himself, Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death.” As he died for us, so he liveth for us; and is intrusted with all power over the church’s adversaries, for its good. As he died for us, so he liveth for us in heaven; and therefore he tells us, that “**because he liveth we shall live also,**” John 14:19. Now this life differeth not essentially from that life of glory in the human nature which he liveth for himself in heaven; only it denoteth one especial end of it, and that only for a season. The Lord Christ will have the life in himself, the divine life, unto all eternity; and so also will he have the life of glory in the human nature; but he shall cease to live this mediatory life for us when the work of his mediation is accomplished, 1 Corinthians 15:28; but he shall lead this life always for us, until the whole work committed unto him be accomplished, and shall lead it as a life of glory in himself unto eternity.

Obs. XIII. **It is a matter of strong consolation unto the church, that Christ lives in heaven for us.**

It is a spring of unspeakable joy unto all true believers, that he lives a life of immortality and glory in and for himself in heaven. Who can call to mind all the miseries which he underwent in this world, all the reproach and scorn that was cast upon him by his enemies of all sorts, all the wrath that the whole world is yet filled withal against him, and not be refreshed, rejoiced, transported, with a spiritual view by faith of all that majesty and glory which he is now in the eternal possession of? So was it with Stephen, Acts 7:56, And therefore, in all the appearances and representations which he hath made of himself since his ascension into heaven, he hath manifested his present glory, Acts 26:13; Revelation 1:13-18. And the due consideration hereof cannot but be a matter of unspeakable refreshment unto all that love him in sincerity.

Secondly, But herein lieth the life of the church's consolation, that he continues to live a mediatory life in heaven for us also. It is not, I fear, so considered nor so improved as it ought to be. That Christ died for us, all who own the gospel profess in words; though some so explain their faith, or rather their infidelity, as to deny its proper use, and to evacuate its proper ends. That so he lived for us here in this world, as that his life was some way or other unto our advantage, at least thus far, that he could not have died if he had not lived before, all men will grant, even those by whom the principal end of this life, namely, to fulfill the law for us, is peremptorily denied; but that Christ now lives a life of glory in heaven, that most men think is for himself alone. But the text speaks to the contrary: "He liveth for ever to make intercession for us." Neither is this the only end of his present mediatory life in heaven, though this only be here expressed. Should I undertake to show the ends of the present mediatory life of Christ for the church, it would be too great and long a decursion from the text. However, the whole of the work of this life of his may be reduced into these three heads: 1. His immediate actings towards the church itself, which respects his prophetic office. 2. His actings for the church in the world, by virtue and power of his kingly office. 3. His actings with God the Father in their behalf, in the discharge of his sacerdotal office.

1. The first consisteth in his sending and giving the Holy Ghost unto the church. **He lives forever to send the Holy Spirit unto his disciples. Without this constant effect of the present mediatory life of Christ the being of the church would fail, it could not subsist one moment. For hereon depends**, (1.) All saving light to understand the word of God, or spiritual things in a spiritual manner; wherein he continueth the exercise of his prophetic office: (2.) All habitual grace, whereby the souls of the elect are quickened and regenerated: (3.) All supplies of actual grace; which the whole church hath from him every moment, and without which it could yield no obedience unto God: (4.) All spiritual gifts, the sole foundation and means of the church's edification, and without which it can have no real benefit by any gospel ordinances or administrations: (5.) All comfort and all consolation, which in all variety of occurrences the church doth stand in need of: which things I have elsewhere spoken unto at large.

2. His actings by virtue of his mediatory life for the church in the world are also various; **wherein he exerciseth his kingly power, that power which is given unto him as he is "head over all things unto the church,"** Ephesians 1:22. Hence is the whole preservation of the church in this world by glorious effects of divine wisdom and power. Hence doth proceed the present controls that are given unto its adversaries. And hence will proceed their future destruction; **for he must reign until all his enemies be made his footstool**. In the exercise of this life, wherein the keys of hell and of death are committed

unto him, doth he put forth his mighty power over the world, Satan, death, the grave, and hell, for the eternal security and salvation of the church. Did he not live this life for us in heaven, neither the whole church nor any one member of it could be preserved one moment from utter ruin. But hereby are all their adversaries continually disappointed.

3. **By virtue of this life** he acts with God on the behalf of the church. And the only way whereby he doth this, in the discharge of his priestly office, is expressed here in the text, "He liveth for ever to make intercession for them." Now this expression containing the whole of what the Lord Christ, as the high priest of the church, doth now with God for them, and whereon the certainty of our salvation doth depend, it must with some diligence be inquired into.

Expositors, especially those of the Roman church, inquire with many disputes into the external form of the intercession of Christ, as namely, whether it be oral and vocal, or no. And they produce many testimonies out of the ancients upon the one side and the other. And great weight is laid by some on the difference and determination of it. For whereas Ribera grants that the dispute is more about words and the manner of expression, than the matter itself; Tena affirms that what he says is most false. And it is evident that the testimonies produced by themselves out of the ancients, as Chrysostom, Theophylact, Ambrose, Austin, and so to Rupertus and Thomas, are expressly contradictory to one another. Now, although our principal concernment lieth in the internal form and efficacy of the intercession of our high priest, rather than in the outward manner of it, yet, so far as that also is revealed, we may inquire into it. And we shall find that the true stating of it tends unto the encouragement and establishment of our faith. And the things ensuing may be observed unto this purpose: —

(1.) The Socinian figment about the nature of the intercession of Christ is of no consideration; for, **by a strange violence offered unto the nature of things, and the signification of words**, they contend that this intercession is nothing but the power of Christ to communicate actually all good things, the whole effect of his mediation, unto believers. That Christ hath such a power is no way questioned; but that this power in the exercise of it is his intercession, is a most fond imagination. That which casts them on this absurd conception of things, is their hatred of the priestly office of Christ, as exercised towards God on our behalf. But I have elsewhere sufficiently disputed against this fiction.

(2.) **The intercession of Christ** was under the old testament typed out three ways: [1.] By the living fire that was continually on the altar. Herewith were all sacrifices to be kindled and burned; which thence were called *μυγναι*, "firings." [But this principally typified his prayers; when he "offered himself unto God through the eternal Spirit;" which he did with "strong cries and supplications," or "intercessions," Hebrews 5:7. Hereby, and the actings of the eternal Spirit therein, he kindled and fired in himself a" sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor," Ephesians 5:2. 658 [2.] [By the *dymit*, or "daily sacrifice" of morning and evening for the whole people. See the institution of it, Exodus 29:38-42. For although that sacrifice had in it the nature of an expiatory oblation, **because it was by blood, yet the principal end of it was to make continual application of the great, solemn, annual expiation, unto the consciences of the people**. [3.] **By the incense that was burned in the sanctuary**. And this was of two sorts: 1st. That wherewith the high priest entered once a-year into the most holy place, on the day of expiation. For he might not enter in, yea, he was to die if he did, unless in his entrance he filled the

place and covered the **ark and mercy-seat with a cloud of incense**, Leviticus 16:12, 13; — which incense was to be fired with burning coals from the **altar of burnt-offerings**. So did our high priest: he filled heaven at his entrance with the **sweet savor of his intercession**, kindled with the coals of that eternal Fire wherewith he offered himself unto God. 2dly. The incense that was burned every day in the sanctuary by the priests in their courses. This represented prayer, Psalm 141:2; and was always accompanied with it, Luke 1:9, 10. This also was a **type of the continual efficacy of the intercession of Christ, Revelation 8:4**. But the former was the most solemn representation of it. In that **anniversary sacrifice**, whereof we must treat afterwards at large, there was atonement made for all the sins and transgressions of the people, **Leviticus 16:21**. And it was consummated by carrying some of the blood, as a representation of it, into the most holy place, **sprinkling it before the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat**. This was done but once in the year. To keep this in remembrance, and to make application of the benefits of it unto the consciences of the worshippers, the daily sacrifice was appointed. **So doth the intercession of Christ make continual application of his great sacrifice and atonement, whence it derives its efficacy. And as the fire on the altar kindled all the renewed sacrifices, which were to be repeated and multiplied, because of their weakness and imperfection; so doth the intercession of Christ make effectual the one perfect sacrifice** which he offered once for all, in the various applications of it unto the consciences of believers, Hebrews 10:2.

(3.) The actual intercession of Christ in heaven, as the second act of his sacerdotal office, is a fundamental article of our faith, and a principal foundation of the church's consolation. So is it asserted to be, 1 John 2:1, 2. And it is expressed by our apostle as that whereby the death of Christ is made effectual unto us, Romans 8:34; for it compriseth the whole care and all the actings of Christ, as our high priest, with God in the behalf of the church. This, therefore, is the immediate spring of all gracious communications unto us. For hereby doth he act his own care, love, and compassion; and from thence do we receive all mercy, all supplies of grace and consolation needful unto our duties, temptations, and trials. Hereon depends all our encouragement to make our application unto God, to come with boldness of faith unto the throne of grace, Hebrews 4:15, 16, 10:21, 22. Wherefore, whatever apprehensions we may attain of the manner of it, the thing itself is the center of our faith, hope, and consolation.

(4.) It is no way unworthy or unbecoming the human nature of Christ, in its glorious exaltation, to pray unto God. It was in and by the human nature that the Lord Christ exercised and executed all the duties of his offices whilst he was on earth; and he continueth to discharge what remains of them in the same nature still. And however that nature be glorified, it is the same essentially that it was when he was in this world. To ascribe another kind of nature unto him, under pretense of a more divine glory, is to deny his being, and to substitute a fancy of our own in his room. So, then, the human nature of Christ, however exalted and glorified, is human nature still, subsisting in dependence on God and subjection unto him. Hence God gives him new revelations now, in his glorified condition, Revelation 1:1. With respect hereunto he acted of old as the angel of the covenant, with express prayers for the church, Zechariah 1:12, 13. **So the command given him to intercede by the way of petition, request, or prayer, Psalm 2:8, "Ask of me,"** respects his state of exaltation at the right hand of God, when he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," **Psalm 2:7, 8; Romans 1:4**. And the **incense** which he offereth with the prayers of the saints, Revelation 8:3, 4, is no other but **his own intercession**, whereby their prayers are made acceptable unto God.

(5.) This praying of Christ at present is no other but such as may become him who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There must, therefore, needs be a great difference, as to the outward manner, between his present intercession in heaven and his praying whilst he was on the earth, especially at some seasons. For being encompassed here with temptations and difficulties, he cast himself at the feet of God, with “strong cries, tears, and supplications,” Hebrews 5:7. This would not become his present glorious state; nor is he liable or exposed unto any of the causes or occasions of that kind of treating with God. And yet at another time whilst he was in this world, he gave us the best estimate and representation of his present intercession that we are able to comprehend. And this was in his prayer recorded **John 17**. **For therein his confidence in God, his union in and with him, the declaration of his will and desires, are all expressed in such a manner as to give us the best understanding of his present intercession.** For a created nature can rise no higher, to express an interest in God, with a oneness of mind and will, than is therein declared. **And as the prayers with cries and tears, when he offered himself unto God, were peculiarly typed by the fire on the altar;** so was this solemn prayer represented by that **cloud of incense wherewith the high priest covered the ark and the mercy-seat at his entrance into the most holy place.** In the virtue of this holy cloud of incense did he enter the holy place not made with hands. **Or we may apprehend its relation unto the types in this order:** His prayer, John 17, was the preparation of the sweet spices whereof the incense was made and compounded, Exodus 30:34. His sufferings that ensued thereon were as the breaking and bruising of those spices; wherein all his graces had their most fervent exercise, as spices yield their strongest savor under their bruising. At his entrance into the holy place this incense was fired with coals from the altar; that is, the efficacy of his oblation, wherein he had offered himself unto God through the eternal Spirit, rendered his prayer as incense covering the ark and mercy-seat, — that is, procuring the fruits of the atonement made before God. [Amen!! In other words the office of Christ was not made for Him to sit back and just make salvation available if man decides he wants it; God purposely and actively works, using this means, his office of priest, to atone for sin, intercede for those for whom he died, procure those good things necessary for man's eternal blessedness and to apply it to them for that end without fail. Otherwise he fails at his task as a high priest which is impossible. See point 7 & 8 below]

(6.) It must be granted that there is no need of the use of words in the immediate presence of God. God needs not our words whilst we are here on earth, as it were absent from him; for he is present with us, and all things are naked and open before him. But we need the use of them for many reasons, which I have elsewhere declared. But in the glorious presence of God, when we shall behold him as the Lord Christ doth, in the most eminent manner, face to face, it cannot be understood what need or use we can have of words to express ourselves unto God, in prayers or praises. And the souls of men, in their separate state and condition, can have no use of voice or words; yet are they said to cry and pray with a loud voice, because they do so virtually and effectually, Revelation 6:9, 10. However, I will not determine what outward transactions are necessary, unto the glory of God in this matter, before the angels and saints that are about his throne. For there is yet a church-state in heaven, wherein we have communion, Hebrews 12:22-24. What solemn outward, and, as it were, visible transactions of worship, are required thereunto, we know not. And, it may be, the representation of God's throne, and his worship, Revelation 4:5, wherein the “Lamb in the midst of the throne” hath the principal part, may not belong only unto what is done in the church here below. And somewhat yet there is which shall cease, and not be any more after the day of judgment, 1 Corinthians 15:26, 28.

(7.) **It must be granted, that the virtue, efficacy, and prevalency of the intercession of the Lord Christ, depends upon and flows from his oblation and sacrifice.** This we are plainly taught from the types of it of old. For the incense and carrying of blood into the holy place, after the expiatory sacrifice, the great type of his oblation of himself, did both of them receive their efficacy and had respect unto the sacrifice offered without. Besides, it is expressly said that the Lord Christ, “by the one offering of himself, obtained for us eternal redemption,” and “forever perfected them that are sanctified.” Wherefore nothing remains for his intercession but the application of the fruits of his oblation unto all them for whom he offered himself in sacrifice, according as their conditions and occasions do require. Wherefore, —

(8.) The safest conception and apprehension that we can have of the intercession of Christ, as to the manner of it, is his continual appearance for us in the presence of God, by virtue of his office as the “high priest over the house of God,” representing the efficacy of his oblation, accompanied with tender care, love, and desires for the welfare, supply, deliverance, and salvation of the church. Three things, therefore, concur hereunto: [1.] The presentation of his person before the throne of God on our behalf, Hebrews 9:24. This renders it sacerdotal. His appearance in person for us is required thereunto. [2.] The representation of his death, oblation, and sacrifice for us; which gives power, life, and efficacy unto his intercession. Thence he appears “in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that had been slain,” Revelation 5:6. Both these are required to make his intercession sacerdotal. But, [3.] Both these do not render it prayer or intercession; for intercession is prayer, 1 Timothy 2:1, Romans:8:26. Wherefore there is in it, moreover, a putting up, a requesting, and offering unto God, of his desires and will for the church, attended with care, love, and compassion, Zechariah 1:12.

Thus far, then, may we proceed: (1.) It is a part of his sacerdotal office; **he intercedes for us as the “high priest over the house of God.”** (2.) It is the first and principal way whereby he acts and exerciseth his love, compassion, and care towards the church. (3.) **That he hath respect therein unto every individual believer, and all their especial occasions: “If any man sin, we have an advocate.”** (4.) That there is in his intercession an effectual signification of his will and desire unto his Father; for it hath the nature of prayer in it, and by it he expresseth his dependence upon God. (5.) That it respects the application of all the fruits, effects, and benefits, of his whole mediation unto the church; for this is the formal nature of it, that it is the way and means appointed of God, in the holy dispensation of himself and his grace unto mankind, whereby the continual application of all the benefits of the death of Christ, and all effects of the promises of the covenant, shall be communicated unto us, unto his praise and glory. (6.) **The efficacy of this intercession as it is sacerdotal depends wholly on the antecedent oblation and sacrifice of himself;** which is therefore as it were represented unto God therein. **This is evident from the nature and order of the typical institutions whereby it was prefigured,** and whereunto by our apostle it is accommodated. But what belongs unto the manner of the transaction of these things in heaven I know not.

The third thing observed, was the connection of the two things mentioned, or their relation one unto another; namely, the perpetual life of Christ and his intercession: “He liveth for ever to make intercession.” His intercession is the end of his mediatory life; not absolutely, nor only, but principally. **He lives to rule his church; he lives to subdue his enemies, for he must reign until they are all made his footstool; he lives to give the Holy Spirit in all his blessed effects unto believers.** But because all

these things proceed originally by an emanation of power and grace from God, and are given out into the hand of Christ upon his intercession, that may well be esteemed the principal end of his mediatory life. So he speaks expressly concerning that great fruit and effect of this life of him, in sending of the Spirit: "I will pray the Father," I will intercede with him for it, "and he shall send you another comforter," John 14:16. And the power which he exerts in the subduing and destruction of the enemies of his kingdom, is expressly promised unto him upon his intercession for it, Psalm 2:8, 9; for this intercession of Christ is the great ordinance of God for the exercise of his power towards, and the communication of his grace unto the church, unto his praise and glory. So doth our high priest live to make intercession for us. Many things we may from hence observe: —

Obs. XIV. So great and glorious is the work of saving believers unto the utmost, that it is necessary that the Lord Christ should lead a mediatory life in heaven, for the **perfecting and accomplishment of it; "He liveth for ever to make intercession for us."** — It is generally acknowledged that sinners could not be saved without the death of Christ; **but that believers could not be saved without the life of Christ following it, is not so much considered.** See Romans 5:10, 8:34, 35, etc.

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."
Romans 5:10

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Romans 8:34-35

It is, it may be, thought by some, that when he had declared the name of God, and revealed the whole counsel of his will; when he had given us the great example of love and holiness in his life; when he had fulfilled all righteousness, redeemed us by his blood, and made atonement for our sins by the oblation of himself; confirming his truth and acceptation with God in all these things by his resurrection from the dead, wherein he was "declared to be the Son of God with power;" that he might have now left us to deal for ourselves, and to build our eternal safety on the foundation that he had laid. But, alas! when all this was done, if he had only ascended into his own glory, to enjoy his majesty, honor, and dominion, without continuing his life and office in our behalf, we had been left poor and helpless; so that both we and all our right unto a heavenly inheritance should have been made a prey unto every subtle and powerful adversary. He could, therefore, no otherwise comfort his disciples, when he was leaving this world, but by promising that "he would not leave them orphans," John 14:18; that is, that he would still continue to act for them, to be their patron, and to exercise the office of a mediator and advocate with the Father for them. Without this he knew they must be orphans; that is, such as are not able to defend themselves from injuries, nor secure their own right unto their inheritance.

The sure foundations of our eternal salvation were laid in his death and resurrection. So it is said, that when God **laid the foundation of the earth**, and placed the corner-stone thereof, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job 38:7. Although the foundations were only laid, yet that being done by infinite power and wisdom, which would infallibly accomplish and perfect the whole, it was a blessed cause of praise and ascribing glory to God. Yet were the continued

actings of the same power required unto the perfection of it. The foundation of the new creation was laid gloriously in the death and resurrection of Christ, so as to be the matter of triumphant praises unto God. [The foundation being the Promise given to Adam in Gen. 3:15] Such is the triumph thereon described, Colossians 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:16.

"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Col. 2:15

[Notice he triumphed over them. He did not fail of his mission to save all that were given him of the Father. See John 6:39 Christ lost no one! One has to be completely bereft of all reason and filled with much prejudice to deny this fact, that Christ died only for those whom were chosen before time began, i.e., the elect. Anything coming short of this robs God of his glory due to Him.]

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

***God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory."*** 1Tim. 3:15

And it may be observed, that as on the laying of the foundation of the earth, all the holy angels triumphed in the expression and demonstration of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God, which they beheld; so in the foundation of the new creation, the apostate angels, who repined at it, and opposed it unto their power, were led captives, carried in triumph, and made the footstool of the glory of Christ. But all this joy and triumph is built on the security of the unchangeable love, care, and power of Jesus Christ, gloriously to accomplish the work which he had undertaken; for had he left it when he left the earth, it had never been finished; for great was that part of the work which yet remained to be perfected.

Neither could the remainder of this work be committed unto any other hand. He employeth others under him in his work, to act ministerially in his name and authority. So he useth the ministry of angels and men. But did not he himself continue to act in them, by them, with them, and without them, the whole work would fail and be disappointed. In one instance of the revelation of the will of God concerning the state of the church, by the opening of the book wherein it was recorded, there was none found worthy in heaven or earth to do it, but the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Revelation 5:1-7. How much less is any creature able to accomplish all that remains for the saving of the church unto the utmost!

Who can express the opposition that continues to be made unto this work of completing the salvation of believers? What power is able to conflict and conquer the remaining strength of sin, the

opposition of Satan and the world? How innumerable are the temptations which every individual believer is exposed unto, each of them in its own nature ruinous and pernicious!

God alone knoweth all things perfectly, in infinite wisdom, and as they are. He alone knows how great a work it is to save believers unto the utmost; **what wisdom, what power, what grace and mercy, are requisite thereunto. He alone knows what is meet unto the way and manner of it, so as it may be perfected unto his own glory. His infinite wisdom alone hath found out and determined the glorious and mysterious ways of the emanation of divine power and grace unto this end.** Upon all these grounds, unto all these purposes, hath he appointed the continual intercession of the Lord Christ in the most holy place. This he saw needful and expedient, unto the salvation of the church and his own glory. **So will he exert his own almighty power unto those ends.** The good Lord help me to believe and adore the mystery of it. [Anyone who says as Arminians suppose, that man's salvation is up to man's will in choosing, that that is the efficient cause of his salvation; that if man doesn't make this choice God cannot save him, then that person is against Christ, is denigrating his infinite wisdom and power; i.e., is anti-Christ.]

Obs. XV. The most glorious prospect that we can take into the things that are within the veil, into the remaining transactions of the work of our salvation in the most holy place, is in the representation that is made unto us of the intercession of Christ. — Of old when Moses went into the tabernacle, all the people looked after him, until he entered in; and then the pillar of the cloud stood at the door of it, that none might see into the holy place, Exodus 33:8, 9. And when the Lord Christ was taken into heaven, the disciples looked after him, until a cloud interposed at the tabernacle door, and took him out of their sight, Acts 1:9. And when the high priest was to enter into the tabernacle, to carry the blood of the sacrifice of expiation into the most holy place, no man, be he priest or not, was suffered to enter into or abide in the tabernacle, Leviticus 16:17. Our high priest is now likewise entered into the most holy place, within the second veil, where no eye can pierce unto him. Yet is he there as a high priest; which makes heaven itself to be a glorious temple, and a place as yet for the exercise of an instituted ordinance, such as the priesthood of Christ is. But who can look into, who can comprehend the glories of those heavenly administrations? Some have pretended a view into the orders and service of the whole choir of angels, but have given us only a report of their own imaginations. What is the glory of the throne of God, what the order and ministry of his saints and holy ones, what is the manner of the worship that is given unto Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, the Scripture doth sparingly deliver, as knowing our disability, whilst we are clothed with flesh and inhabit tabernacles of clay, to comprehend aright such transcendent glories. The best and most steady view we can have of these things, is in the account which is given us of the intercession of Christ. For herein we see him by faith yet vested with the office of the priesthood, and continuing in the discharge of it This makes heaven a temple, as was said, and the seat of instituted worship, Revelation 7:15. Hence, in his appearance unto John, he was “clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle;” both which were sacerdotal vestments, Revelation 1:13. Herein is God continually glorified; hereby is the salvation of the church continually carried on and consummated. This is the work of heaven, which we may safely contemplate by faith.

Obs. XVI **The intercession of Christ is the great evidence of the continuance of his love and care, his pity and compassion, towards his church.** — Had he only continued to rule the church as its king and

lord, he had manifested his glorious power, his righteousness, and faithfulness. “The scepter of his kingdom is a scepter of righteousness.” But mercy and compassion, love and tenderness, are constantly ascribed unto him as our high priest. See Hebrews 4:15, 5:1, 2. So the great exercise of his sacerdotal office, in laying down his life for us, and expiating our sins by his blood, is still peculiarly ascribed unto his love, Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2; Revelation 1:5. Wherefore these properties of love and compassion belong peculiarly unto the Lord Christ as our high priest. All men, who have any spiritual experience and understanding, will acknowledge how great the concernment of believers is in these things, and how all their consolation in this world depends upon them. He whose soul hath not been refreshed with a due apprehension of the unspeakable love, tenderness, and compassion of Jesus Christ, is a stranger unto the life of faith, and unto all true spiritual consolation. But how shall we know that the Lord Christ is thus tender, loving, and compassionate, that he continueth so to be; or what evidence or testimony have we of it? It is true he was eminently so when he was upon the earth in the days of his flesh, and when he laid down his life for us. We know not what change may be wrought in nature itself, by this investiture with glory; nor how inconsistent these affections are, which in us cannot be separated from some weakness and sorrow, with his present state and dignity. Nor can any solid satisfaction be received by curious contemplations of the nature of glorified affections. But herein we have an infallible demonstration of it, that he yet continueth in the exercise of that office with respect whereunto all these affections of love, pity, and compassion, are ascribed unto him. As our high priest, δύναται συμπαθεῖν, he is “able to suffer,” to “condole with,” to have “compassion on” his poor tempted ones, Hebrews 4:15. All these affections doth he continually act and exercise in his intercession. From a sense it is of their wants and weaknesses, of their distresses and temptations, of their states and duties, accompanied with inexpressible love and compassion, that he continually intercedes for them. **For he doth so, that their sins may be pardoned, their temptations subdued, their sorrows removed, their trials sanctified, and their persons saved;** and doing this continually as a high priest, he is in the continual exercise of love, care, pity, and compassion.

Union with Christ

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expounded regarding believers being *a kingdom of priests*

from *The Duty of Pastors*

1. by John Owen, Ch3 p39

(1.) All faithful ministers of the gospel, inasmuch as they are **ingrafted** into Christ and are true believers, may, as all other true Christians, **be called priests**; but this inasmuch as they are members of Christ, not ministers of the gospel. It respecteth their persons, not their function, or not them as such. Now, I conceive it may give some light to this discourse if we consider the grounds and reasons of this metaphorical appellation, in divers places of the gospel ascribed to the worshippers of Christ,[28](#) and how the analogy which the present dispensation holds with what was established under the administration of the Old Testament may take place; for there we find the Lord thus bespeaking his

people, “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation,” [Exod. xix. 6](#): so that it should seem that there was then a twofold priesthood; — a [ritual priesthood, conferred upon the tribe of Levi](#); and a [royal priesthood, belonging to the whole people](#). The first is quite abrogated and swallowed up in the priesthood of Christ; the other is put over unto us under the gospel, being ascribed to them and us, and every one in covenant with God, not directly and properly, as denoting the function peculiarly so called, but comparatively, with reference had to them that are without: for as those who were properly called priests had a nearer access unto God than the rest of the people, especially in his solemn worship, so all the people that are in covenant with God have such an approximation. Unto him by virtue thereof, in comparison of them that are without, that in respect thereof they are said to be priests. Now, the [outward covenant, made with them who were the children of Abraham after the flesh](#), was representative of the covenant of grace made with the children of promise, and that whole people typified the [hidden elect people of God](#); so that of both there is the same reason. Thus, as “the priests the sons of Levi” are said to “come near unto God,” [Deut. xxi. 5](#), and God tells them that “him whom he hath chosen, he will cause to come near unto him,” [Num. xvi. 5](#), — chosen by a particular calling “ad munus,” to the office of the ritual priesthood; so in regard of that other kind, comparatively so called, it is said of the whole people, “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” [Deut. iv. 7](#). [Their approaching nigh unto God made them all a nation of priests, in comparison of those “dogs” and unclean Gentiles that were out of the covenant](#). Now, this prerogative is often appropriated to the faithful in the New Testament: for “through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father,” [Eph. ii. 18](#); and [chap. iii. 12](#), “We have boldness and access with confidence;” so [James iv. 8](#), “[Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you;](#)” — which access and approximation unto God seemed, as before was spoken, to be uttered in allusion to the priests of the old law, who had this privilege above others in the public worship, in which respect only things then were typical; since, because we enjoy that prerogative in the truth of the thing itself, [which they had only in type, we also are called priests](#). And as they were said to “draw nigh” in reference to the rest of the people, so we in respect of them who are “strangers from the covenants,” that now are said to be “afar off,” [Eph. ii. 17](#), and hereafter shall be “without;” for “without are dogs,” etc., [Rev. xxii. 15](#). [Thus, this metaphorical appellation of priests is, in the first place an intimation of that transcendent privilege of grace and favour which Jesus Christ hath purchased for every one that is sanctified with the blood of the covenant](#).

(2.) [We have an interest in this appellation of priests by virtue of our union with Christ](#). [Being one with our high priest, we also are priests](#). There is a [twofold union](#) between Christ and us; — the one, by his taking upon him our nature; the other, by bestowing on us his Spirit: for as in his incarnation he took upon him our flesh and blood by the work of the Spirit, so in our regeneration he bestoweth on us his flesh and blood by the operation of the same Spirit. Yea, so strict is this latter union which we have with Christ, that as the former is truly said to be a union of two natures into one person, so this of many persons into one nature; for by it we are “made partakers of the divine nature,” [2 Pet. i. 4](#), [becoming “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” Eph. v. 30](#). We are so parts of him, of his [mystical body](#), that we and he become thereby, as it were, one Christ: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ, [1 Cor. xii. 12](#). And the ground of this is, because the same Spirit is in him and us. In him, indeed, dwelleth the fulness of it, when it is bestowed upon us only by measure; but yet it is still the same Spirit, and so makes us, according to his own prayer, [one with him, as the soul of man, being](#)

one, makes the whole body with it to be but one man. Two men cannot be one, because they have two souls; no more could we be one with Christ were it not the same Spirit in him and us. Now, let a man be never so big or tall, so that his feet rest upon the earth and his head reach to heaven, yet, having but one soul, he is still but one man. Now, though Christ for the present, in respect of our nature assumed, be never so far remote and distant from us in heaven, yet, **by the effectual energy and inhabitation of the same Spirit, he is still the head of that one body whereof we are members,** still but one with us. Hence ariseth to us a twofold right to the title of priests:—

[1.] Because being in him, and members of him, we are accounted to have done, in him and with him, whatsoever he hath done for us: We are “dead with him,” [Rom. vi. 8](#); “buried with him,” [verse 4](#); “quicken together with him,” [Eph. ii. 5](#); “risen with him,” [Col. iii. 1](#); being “raised up,” we “sit together with him in heavenly places,” [Eph. ii. 6](#). Now, all these in Christ were in some sense sacerdotal; wherefore we, having an interest in their performance, by reason of that heavenly participation derived from them unto us, and being united unto him that in them was so properly, are therefore called priests.

[2.] By virtue of this union there is such an analogy between that which Christ hath done for us as a priest and what he worketh in us by his Holy Spirit, that those acts of ours come to be called by the same name with his, and we for them to be termed priests. Thus, because Christ’s death and shedding of his blood, so offering up himself by the eternal Spirit, was a true, proper sacrifice for sin, even our spiritual death unto sin is described to be such, both in the nature of it, to be an offering or sacrifice (for, “I beseech you, brethren,” saith St Paul, “by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,” etc., [Rom. xii. 1](#)), and for the manner of it; our “old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,” [Rom. vi. 6](#).

(3.) We are priests as we are Christians, or partakers of a holy unction, whereby we are anointed to the participation of all Christ’s glorious offices. We are not called Christians for nothing. If truly we are so, then have we an “unction from the Holy One,” whereby we “know all things,” [1 John ii. 20](#). And thus also were all God’s people under the old covenant, when God gave that caution concerning them, “Touch not my Christians, [29](#) and do my prophets no harm,” [Ps. cv. 15](#). The unction, then, of the Holy Spirit implies a participation of all those endowments which were typified by the anointing with oil in the Old Testament, and invests us with the privileges, in a spiritual acceptation, of all the sorts of men which then were so anointed, — to wit, of kings, priests, and prophets: so that by being made Christians (everyone is not so that bears that name), we are ingrafted into Christ, **and do attain to a kind of holy and intimate communion with him in all his glorious offices; and in that regard are called priests.**

(4.) The sacrifices we are enjoined to offer give ground to this appellation. Now, they are of divers sorts, though all in general eucharistical; — as, *first*, Of prayers and thanksgivings: [Ps. cxvi. 17](#), “I will offer unto thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord;” and again, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands **as the evening sacrifice.**” [Ps. cxli. 2](#): so [Heb. xiii. 15](#), “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God,” — that is, the “fruit of our lips.” *Secondly*, Of good works: [Heb. xiii. 16](#), “To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” *Thirdly*, Αὐτοθυσίας, or self slaughter, **crucifying the old man,** killing sin, and offering up our souls and bodies an acceptable sacrifice unto God, [Rom. xii. 1](#). Fourthly,

The sweet incense of martyrdom: “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, etc., [Phil. ii. 17](#). Now, these and sundry other services acceptable to God, receiving this appellation in the Scripture, denominate the performers of them priests. Now, here it must be observed, that these aforenamed holy duties are called “sacrifices,” not properly, but metaphorically only, — not in regard of the external acts, as were those under the law, but in regard of the **internal purity of heart** from whence they proceed. And because pure sacrifices, by his own appointment, were heretofore the most acceptable service of Almighty God, therefore now, when he would declare himself to be very much delighted with the **spiritual acts of our duty, he calls them “oblations,” “incense,” “sacrifices,” “offerings,” etc.**; to intimate, also, a participation with Him in his offices who properly and directly is **the only priest of his church**, and by the communication of the virtue of whose sacrifice we are made priests, not having authority in our own names to go unto God for others, but having liberty, through him, and in his name, to go unto God for ourselves.

Not to lose myself and reader in this digression, the sum is, — **The unspeakable blessings which the priesthood of Christ hath obtained for us are a strong obligation for the duty of praise and thanksgiving; of which that in some measure we may discharge ourselves, he hath furnished us with sacrifices of that kind to be offered unto God**. For our own parts, we are poor, and blind, and lame, and naked; neither in the field nor in the fold, in our hearts nor among our actions, can we find anything worth the presenting unto him: **wherefore, he himself provides them for us; especially for that purpose sanctifying and consecrating our souls and bodies with the sprinkling of his blood and the unction of the Holy Spirit**. Farther; he hath erected an altar (to sanctify our gifts) in heaven, before the throne of grace, which, being spread over with his blood, is consecrated unto God, that the sacrifices of his servants may for ever appear thereon. Add to this, what he also hath added, the eternal and never-expiring fire of the favour of God, which kindleth and consumes the sacrifices laid on that altar. And to the end that all this may be rightly accomplished, he hath consecrated us with his blood to be kings and priests to God for evermore. **So that the close of this discourse will be, that all true believers, by virtue of their interest in Jesus Christ, are in the holy Scripture, by reason of divers allusions called priests**; which name, in the sense before related, belonging unto them as such, cannot, on this ground, be ascribed to any part of them distinguished any ways from the rest by virtue of such distinction.

2. The second thing I observe concerning the business in hand is, that the offering up unto God of some **metaphorical sacrifices**, in a peculiar manner, is appropriate unto men set apart for the work of the ministry; **as the slaying of men’s lusts, and the offering up of them, being converted by the preaching of the gospel, unto God**. So St Paul of his ministry, [Rom. xv. 16](#), “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable,” etc. **Ministers preaching the gospel to the conversion of souls are said to kill men’s lusts, and offer them up unto God as the fruit of their calling**, as Abel brought unto him an acceptable sacrifice of the fruit of his flock; and so also in respect of divers other acts of their duty, which they perform in the name of their congregations.

Christ: *Putting away sin* explained

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This explains what Christ did with respect to sin, what is "sin" and what is "putting it away." This will further clear the certainty of Christ's work as our high priest, that all for whom Christ died will surely be saved, hence 2Sam23:5 "ordered in all things, sure". This is opposed to the Arminian view that insists that all hinges on man's cooperation with God, whether they decide to accept Christ or not. Many do not see all that this duty of the priesthood entails which contributes much to their minimizing the import of this important act. It is central to understanding the scope of the atonement as being limited and the consequent awe experienced on one's heart.

pg 402-405 *Commentary on Hebrews 8:1-10*

With respect unto this season so stated, three things are affirmed of Christ in the following words: 1. What he did; "he appeared." 2. Unto what end; "to take away sin." 3. By what means; "by the sacrifice of himself."

But there is some difficulty in the distinction of these words, and so variety in their interpretation, which must be removed. For these words, δια της ξυσιας αυτου, "by the sacrifice of himself," may be referred either unto εις αθητησιν αμαρτιας, "the putting away of sin," that goes before; or unto πεφανερωται, "was manifest," that follows after. In the first way the sense is, 'He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;' — in the latter, 'He appeared by the sacrifice of himself to put away sin;' which confines his appearance unto his sacrifice; which sense is expressed by the Vulgar translation, "per hostiam suam apparuit." "He appeared by his own host," say the Rhemists. But the former reading of the words is evidently unto the mind of the apostle; for his appearance was what he did in general with respect unto the end mentioned, and the way whereby he did it.

1. There is what he did, — "he appeared," "he was manifested." Some say that this appearance of Christ is the same with his appearance in the presence of God for us, mentioned in the foregoing verse. But it is, as another word that is used, so another thing that is intended. That appearance was after his sacrifice, this is in order unto it; that is in heaven, this was on earth; that is still continued, this is that which was already accomplished, at the time limited by the apostle. Wherefore this "appearance," this φανερωσις or "manifestation" of Christ in the end of the world, is the same with his being "manifested in the flesh," 1 Timothy 3:16; or his coming into the world, or taking on him the seed of Abraham, to this end, that he might suffer and offer himself unto God. For what is affirmed is opposed unto what is spoken immediately before, namely, of his suffering often since the foundation of the world. This he did not do, but appeared, was manifested, (that is, in the flesh,) in the end of the world, to suffer and to expiate sin. Nor is the word ever used to express the appearance of Christ before God in heaven. His [Hebrew word] is his coming into the world by his incarnation, unto the discharge of his office; his appearance before God in heaven is his εμφανισμος; and his illustrious appearance at the last day is his φανερωσις, though that word be used also to express his glorious manifestation by the gospel, 2 Timothy 1:10. See 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 3:8; Titus 2:13. This, therefore, is the meaning of the word: 'Christ did not come into the world, he was not manifested in the flesh, often since the foundation of

the world, that he might often suffer and offer; but he did so, he so appeared, was so manifested, in the end of the world.’

2. The end of this appearance of Christ was to “put away sin.” And we must inquire both what is meant by “sin,” and what by the “putting of it away.” Wherefore by “sin,” the apostle intends the whole of its nature and effects, in its root and fruits, in its guilt, power, and punishment; sin absolutely and universally; sin as it was an apostasy from God, as it was the cause of all distance between God and us, as it was the work of the devil; sin in all that it was and all that it could effect, or all the consequents of it; sin in its whole empire and dominion, — as it entered by the fall of Adam, invaded our nature in its power, oppressed our persons with its guilt, filled the whole world with its fruits, gave existence and right unto death and hell, with power to Satan to rule in and over mankind; sin, that rendered us obnoxious unto the curse of God and eternal punishment. **In the whole extent of sin, “he appeared to put it away;” — that is, with respect unto the church, that is sanctified by his blood, and dedicated unto God.**

Αθετησις, which we render “putting away,” is “abrogatio,” “dissolutio,” “destructio;” an “abrogation,” “disannulling,” “destroying,” “disarming.” It is the name of taking away the force, power, and obligation of a law. The power of sin, as unto all its effects and consequents, whether sinful or penal, is called its law, the “law of sin,” Romans 8:2. And of this law, as of others, there are two parts or powers: (1.) Its obligation unto punishment, after the nature of all penal laws; hence it is called “the law of death,” that whereon sinners are bound over unto eternal death. This force it borrows from its relation unto the law of God and the curse thereof. (2.) Its impelling, ruling power, subjectively in the minds of men, leading them captive into all enmity and disobedience unto God, Romans 7:23. Christ appeared to abrogate this law of sin, to deprive it of its whole power, (1.) **That it should not condemn us any more, nor bind us over to punishment.** This he did by making atonement for it, by the expiation of it, undergoing in his own suffering the penalty due unto it; which of necessity he was to suffer as often as he offered himself. Herein consisted the Αθετησις or “abrogation” of its law principally. (2.) **By the destruction of its subjective power,** purging our consciences from dead works, in the way that hath been declared. This was the principal end of the appearance of Christ in the world, 1 John 3:8. [If Christ did this for all that were ever born, how can anyone go to hell?? Hence Christ did not die for all but only the church for whom he shed his blood, washed in His blood, etc. Hence many have this wrong view due to an undervaluation of Christ's work and its necessary consequents.]

3. The way whereby he did this, was “by the sacrifice of himself,” — δια της ξυσιας αυτου for εαυτου: that sacrifice wherein he both suffered and offered himself unto God. For that both are included, the opposition made unto his often suffering doth evince. This, therefore, is the design and meaning of these words: — to evidence that Christ did not offer himself unto God often, more than once, as the high priest offered every year, before his entrance into the holy place, the apostle declares the end and effect of his offering or sacrifice, which rendered the repetition of it needless. It was one, once offered, in the end of the world; nor need be offered any more, because of the total abolition and destruction of sin at once made thereby. What else concerns the things themselves spoken of will be comprised under the ensuing observations.

Obs. III. It is the prerogative of God, and the effect of his wisdom, to determine the times and seasons of the dispensation of himself and his grace unto the church. — Hereon it depended alone that Christ “appeared in the end of the world,” not sooner nor later, as to the parts of that season. Many things

do evidence a condescency unto divine wisdom in the determination of that season; as, 1. **He testified his displeasure against sin, in suffering the generality of mankind to lie so long under the fatal effects of their apostasy, without relief or remedy,** Acts 14:16, 17:30; Romans 1:21-24, 26. 2. **He did it to exercise the faith of the church, called by virtue of the promise, in the expectation of its accomplishment.** And by the various ways whereby God cherished their faith and hope was he glorified in all ages, Luke 1:70; Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24; 1 Peter 1:10, 11; Haggai 2:7. 3. **To prepare the church for the reception of him, partly by the glorious representation made of him in the tabernacle and temple with their worship, partly by the burden of legal institutions laid on them until his coming,** Galatians 3:24. 4. To give the world a full and sufficient trial of what might be attained towards happiness and blessedness by the excellency of all things here below. Men had time to try what was in wisdom, learning, moral virtue, power, rule, dominion, riches, arts, and whatever else is valuable unto rational natures. They were all exalted unto their height, in their possession and exercise, before the appearance of Christ; and all manifested their own insufficiency to give the least real relief unto mankind from under the fruits of their apostasy from God. See 1 Corinthians 1:5. **To give time unto Satan to fix and establish his kingdom in the world, that the destruction of him and it might be the more conspicuous and glorious.** These, and sundry other things of a like nature, do evince that there was a condescency unto divine wisdom in the determination of the season of the appearance of Christ in the flesh; **howbeit it is ultimately to be resolved into his sovereign will and pleasure.**

Obs. IV. **God had a design of infinite wisdom and grace in his sending of Christ, and his appearance in the world thereon, which could not be frustrated. "He appeared to put away sin."** The footsteps of divine wisdom and grace herein I have inquired into in a peculiar treatise, and shall not here insist on the same argument.

Obs. V. **Sin had erected a dominion, a tyranny over all men, as by a law. — Unless this law be abrogated and abolished, we can have neither deliverance nor liberty.** Men generally think that they serve themselves of sin, in the accomplishment of their lusts and gratification of the flesh; **but they are indeed servants of it and slaves unto it.** **It hath gotten a power to command their obedience unto it, and a power to bind them over to eternal death for the disobedience unto God therein.** As unto what belongs unto this law and power, see my discourse of Indwelling Sin.

Obs. VI. No power of man, of any mere creature, was able to evacuate, disannul, or abolish this law of sin; for, —

Obs. VII. **The destruction and dissolution of this law and power of sin, was the great end of the coming of Christ for the discharge of his priestly office in the sacrifice of himself; No other way could it be effected.** And, —

Obs. VIII. It is the glory of Christ, it is the safety of the church, that by his one offering, by the sacrifice of himself once for all, **he hath abolished sin as unto the law and condemning power of it.**

God's Chief End in Creation

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by Jonathan Edwards -

This will help in understanding the primary or ultimate end in why God created the universe; it puts everything in perspective - that it is all about God's glory - God is the center of it, not man. The focus nowadays is one what God can do for me whether it be saving me or giving me peace or any other good thing. So much of modern Christianity is about what man can get from God. This is the wrong view and creates many pernicious effects often to the ruin of a multitude of souls. Understanding this will help you approach God with reverence and godly fear as opposed to a carnal confidence which God hates. Also, excellent comments on the image of God, its purpose.

SECT. I.

pg 97-99

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.i.html>

Some things observed in general, which reason dictates. Having observed these things, to prevent confusion, I now proceed to consider what may, and what may not, be supposed to be God's ultimate end in the creation of the world.

Indeed this affair seems properly to be an affair of divine revelation. In order to be determined what was designed, in the creating of the astonishing fabric of the universe we behold, it becomes us to attend to, and rely on what HE has told us, who was the architect. He best knows his own heart, and what his own ends and designs were, in the wonderful works which he has wrought. Nor is it to be supposed that mankind—who, while destitute of revelation, by the utmost improvements of their own reason, and advances in science and philosophy, could come to no clear and established determination who the author of the world was—would ever have obtained any tolerable settled judgment of the end which the author of it proposed to himself in so vast, complicated, and wonderful a work of his hands. And though it be true, that the revelation which God has given to men, as a light shining in a dark place, has been the occasion of great improvement of their faculties, and has taught men how to use their reason; and though mankind now, through the long-continued assistance they have had by this divine light, have come to great attainments in the habitual exercise of reason; yet I confess it would be relying too much on reason, to determine the affair of God's last end in the creation of the world, without being herein principally guided by divine revelation, since God has given a revelation containing instructions concerning this very matter. Nevertheless, as objections have chiefly been made, against what I think the Scriptures have truly revealed, from the pretended dictates of reason, I would, in the first place, soberly consider in a few things, what seems rational to be supposed concerning this affair;—and then proceed to consider what light divine revelation gives us in it.

As to the first of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from the creature, or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being. [This again shows that "all" that the Father gave the Son will be saved infallibly! John 6:37-39; that God will not fail of his purpose to save "all" of them; that God did not die for *all and everyone* that was ever born with the desire to save them all as many suppose, but only those he chose in eternity, the elect. So "all" is used in the restrictive sense, meaning the elect; those God will not fail to save. Otherwise, if one assumes that Christ died for *all and everyone*, acknowledging that most go to hell, then God failed in his purpose which is to assign imperfection to the Godhead which is blaspheme. "For we may justly infer what God intends, by what he actually does; because he does nothing inadvertently, or without design" as Edwards points out later in his discourse, p99; and because God is not dependent upon the creature's wills as fickle and corrupt as they are, then God only intended to save his elect.] (code465b) The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature? (code156a & code319a [see Hermon Bavinck's similar comments on this:

He has no goal outside himself but is self-sufficient, all-sufficient (Ps. 50:8ff.; Isa. 40:28ff.; Hab. 2:20). He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself. Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, he may not love anything else except with a view to himself. He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection. When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts. P211 Vol. 2 Reformed Dogmatics, God's delight in his creatures is part and parcel of his delight in himself. p251; He does not seek the creature [as an end in itself], but through the creature he seeks himself. He is and always remains his own end. P435]

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. He made man perfect. And loving mankind, he offered them eternal life. It was seriously meant. It was no farce. All men disobey God. All came under his wrath and curse. God continued to love himself; he therefore had to punish every insult to his holiness. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

2. Whatsoever is good and valuable in itself, is worthy that God should value it with an ultimate respect. It is therefore worthy to be made the last end of his operation; if it be properly capable of being attained. For it may be supposed that some things, valuable and excellent in

themselves, are not properly capable of being attained in any divine operation; because their existence, in all possible respects, must be conceived of as prior to any divine operation. Thus God's existence and infinite perfection, though infinitely valuable in themselves, cannot be supposed to be the end of any divine operation; for we cannot conceive of them as, in any respect, consequent on any works of God. But whatever is in itself valuable, absolutely so, and is capable of being sought and attained, is worthy to be made a last end or the divine operation—Therefore,

3. Whatever that be which is in itself most valuable, and was so originally, prior to the creation of the world, and which is attainable by the creation, if there be any thing which was superior in value to all others, that must be worthy to be God's last end in the creation; and also worthy to be his highest end.—In consequence of this it will follow,

4. That if God himself be, in any respect, properly capable of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to himself, as his last and highest end, in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings. All things else, with regard to worthiness, importance, and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. **And therefore, if God has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself. It would be against the perfection of his nature, his wisdom, holiness, and perfect rectitude, whereby he is disposed to do everything that is fit to be done, to suppose otherwise.** At least, a great part of the moral rectitude of God, whereby he is disposed to everything that is fit, suitable, and amiable in itself, consists in his having the highest regard to that which is in itself highest and best. The moral rectitude of God must consist in a due respect to things that are objects of moral respect; that is, to intelligent beings capable of moral actions and relations. And therefore it must chiefly consist in giving due respect to that Being to whom most is due; **for God is infinitely the most worthy of regard. The worthiness of others is as nothing to his; so that to him belongs all possible respect. To him belongs the whole of the respect that any intelligent being is capable of. To him belongs all the heart.** Therefore, if moral rectitude of heart consists in paying the respect of the heart which is due, or which fitness and suitableness requires, fitness requires infinitely the greatest regard to be paid to God; and the denying of supreme regard here would be a conduct infinitely the most unfit. **Hence it will follow, that the moral rectitude of the disposition, inclination, or affection of God chiefly consists in a regard to himself, infinitely above his regard to all other beings; or, in other words, his holiness consists in this. [This is key!! See code469a]**

And if it be thus fit that God should have a supreme regard to himself, then it is fit that this supreme regard should appear in those things by which he makes himself known, or by his word and works, i.e. in what he says, and in what he does. If it be an infinitely amiable thing in God, that he should have a supreme regard to himself, then it is an amiable thing that he should act as having a chief regard to himself; or act in such a manner, as to show that he has such a regard: that what is highest in God's heart, may be highest in his actions and conduct. **And if it was God's intention, as there is great reason to think it was, that his works should exhibit an image of himself their author, that it might brightly appear by his works what manner of being he is, and afford a proper representation of his divine excellencies, and especially his moral excellence, consisting in the disposition of his heart; then it is reasonable to suppose that his works are so wrought as to show this supreme respect to himself, wherein his moral excellence primarily consists.** See code469a

SECT. II.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.ii.html>

pg 99-100

Some further observations concerning those things which reason leads us to suppose God aimed at in the creation of the world.

From what was last observed, it seems to be the most proper way of proceeding—as we would see what light reason will give us, respecting the particular end or ends, God had ultimately in view in the creation of the world—to consider, what thing or things are actually the effect or consequence of the creation of the world, that are simply and originally valuable in themselves. And this is what I would directly proceed to, without entering on any tedious metaphysical inquiries, wherein fitness, or amiableness, consists; referring what I say to the dictates of the reader’s mind, on sedate and calm reflection.

1. **It seems a thing in itself proper and desirable, that the glorious attributes of God, which consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects, should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, &c. If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any exercise. The power of God, which is a sufficiency in him to produce great effects, must for ever have been dormant and useless as to any effect.** The divine wisdom and prudence would have had no exercise in any wise contrivance, any prudent proceeding, or disposal of things; for there would have been no objects of contrivance or disposal. The same might be observed of God’s justice, goodness, and truth. Indeed God might have known as perfectly that he possessed these attributes, if they never had been exerted or expressed in any effect. But then, if the attributes which consist in a sufficiency for correspondent effects, are in themselves excellent, the exercises of them must likewise be excellent. If it be an excellent thing, that there should be a sufficiency for a certain kind of action or operation, the excellency of such a sufficiency must consist in its relation to this kind of operation or effect; but that could not be, unless the operation itself were excellent. A sufficiency for any work is no further valuable, than the work itself is valuable.¹⁹⁵

footnote 195:

“The end of wisdom (says Mr. G. Tennent, in his sermon at the opening of the Presbyterian church of Philadelphia) is design; the end of power is action; the end of goodness is doing good. To suppose these perfections not to be exerted would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God’s wisdom be, if it had nothing to design or direct? To what purpose his almightiness, if it never brought anything to pass? And of what avail his goodness, if it never did any good?”

As God therefore esteems these attributes themselves valuable, and delights in them; **so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper exercise and expression.** For the same reason that he esteems his own sufficiency wisely to contrive and dispose effects, **he also will esteem the wise contrivance and disposition itself.** And for the same reason, as he delights in his own disposition to do justly, and to dispose of things according to truth and just proportion; so he must delight in such

a righteous disposal itself. [This is a main reason why salvation is perfected for the elect so as to display this excellency of his nature - that unconditional election is true; to say that salvation depends on the feeble, corrupt wills of men is to completely take away from this objective and detract greatly from the glory of God and argues weakness and imperfection in God who can't do what his heart most wants to do. God is not dependent upon the creature but the creature wholly dependent upon God; he is the potter not man! Arminian theology is grossly inconsistent with God's glory. This is very important to see.]

2. It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen, by other beings besides himself. If it be fit that God's power and wisdom, &c. should be exercised and expressed in some effects, and not lie eternally dormant, then it seems proper that these exercises should appear, and not be totally hidden and unknown. For if they are, it will be just the same, as to the above purpose, as if they were not. God as perfectly knew himself and his perfections, had as perfect an idea of the exercises and effects they were sufficient for, antecedently to any such actual operations of them, and since, [was "since. If"] if therefore, it be nevertheless a thing in itself valuable, and worthy to be desired, that these glorious perfections be actually exhibited in their correspondent effects; then it seems also, that the knowledge of these perfections and discoveries is valuable in itself absolutely considered; and that it is desirable that this knowledge should exist. It is a thing infinitely good in itself, that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings. And that there should be in them an increasing knowledge of God to all eternity, is worthy to be regarded by him, to whom it belongs to order what is fittest and best. If existence is more worthy than defect and non-entity, and if any created existence is in itself worthy to be, then knowledge is; and if any knowledge, then the most excellent sort of knowledge, viz. that of God and his glory. This knowledge is one of the highest, most real, and substantial parts of all created existence, most remote from non-entity and defect.

3. As it is desirable in itself that God's glory should be known, so when known it seems equally reasonable it should be esteemed and delighted in, answerably to its dignity. There is no more reason to esteem it a suitable thing, that there should be an idea in the understanding corresponding unto the glorious object, than that there should be a corresponding affection in the will. If the perfection itself be excellent, the knowledge of it is excellent, and so is the esteem and love of it excellent. And as it is fit that God should love and esteem his own excellence, it is also fit that he should value and esteem the love of his excellency. And if it becomes a being highly to value himself, it is fit that he should love to have himself valued and esteemed. If the idea of God's perfection in the understanding be valuable, then the love of the heart seems to be more especially valuable, as moral beauty especially consists in the disposition and affection of the heart. [Hence true virtue, i.e., holiness, consists in a love for God]

4. [code190] As there is an infinite fulness of all possible good in God—a fulness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness—and as this fulness is capable of communication, or emanation ad extra [outside himself]; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams. And as this is in itself excellent, so a disposition to this in the Divine Being, must he looked upon as an excellent disposition. Such an emanation of good is, in some sense, a multiplication of it. So far as the stream may be looked upon as anything besides the fountain, so far it may be looked on as an increase of good. And if the fulness of

good that is in the **fountain**, is in itself excellent, then the emanation, which is as it were an increase, repetition, or multiplication of it, is excellent. Thus it is fit, since there is an infinite fountain of light and knowledge, that this light should shine forth in beams of communicated knowledge and understanding [1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;" - also the *light* in 2Cor. 4:6!]; and, as there is an infinite fountain of holiness, moral excellence, and beauty, that so it should flow out in communicated holiness. And that, as there is an infinite fulness of joy and happiness, so these should have an emanation, and become a fountain flowing out in abundant streams, as beams from the sun.

Thus it appears reasonable to suppose, that it was God's last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fulness of good ad extra, or without himself; and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own fulness,¹⁹⁶ **was what moved him to create the world.**

footnote 196:

I shall often use the phrase God's fulness, as signifying and comprehending all the good which is in God natural and moral, either excellence or happiness; partly, because I know of no better phrase to be used in this general meaning; and partly, because I am led hereto by some of the inspired writers, particularly the apostle Paul, who often useth the phrase in this sense.

But here I observe, that there would be some impropriety in saying, that a disposition in God to communicate himself to the creature, moved him to create the world. For an inclination in God to communicate himself to an object, seems to presuppose the existence of the object, at least in idea. But the diffusive disposition that excited God to give creatures existence, was rather a communicative disposition in general, **or a disposition in the fulness of the divinity to flow out and diffuse itself.** Thus the disposition there is in the root and stock of a tree to diffuse sap and life, is doubtless the reason of their communication to its buds, leaves, and fruits, after these exist. But a disposition to communicate of its life and sap to its fruits, is not so properly the cause of its producing those fruits, as its disposition to diffuse its sap and life in general. Therefore, to speak strictly according to truth, we may suppose, that a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fulness, was what excited him to create the world; and so, that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation. [See Bavinck's comments on the Eternal Generation of the Son, and God's fecundity, at [code192a](#)]

Interesting comments on this subject of why God created the world from an excerpt from Thomas Weinandy in his book, *Does God Suffer*, pp143-144 & 79. The key idea described here is God's freedom in what he does as opposed to having to do something as though he is indebted to mankind. The main point of these quotes is to show that God is self-sufficient and does not need anything from the creature nor can he receive anything from the creature, or be affected by the creature (God's impassibility/immutability/simplicity prohibits this). So the only reason why God created the world was to display his glory and the infinite love that he has for himself – in fact, he loves the creature with a view to himself and believers - this is the amazing part - participate in that love for God. I think Edwards' reasons give a more complete answer to this question than Weinandy or Philo.

The transcendent independence of the Trinity, as Wholly Other, allows the act of creation to be a sheer act of goodness and freedom. Because they possess no self-fulfilling needs, they are motivated

solely by their beneficent and altruistic love to bring others into existence and so bestow upon them their goodness. Commenting on Dionysius, Aquinas states:

Divine love did 'not' allow 'him to remain in himself without fruit,' that is, without the production of creatures, but love 'moved him to operate according' to a most excellent mode of operation according as he produced all things in being (*esse*). For from love of his goodness it proceeded that he willed to pour out and to communicate his goodness to others, insofar as it is possible, namely, by way of similitude, and that his goodness did not remain in him, but flowed out to others.⁸⁴

⁸⁴W. Hill states that 'Divine loving cannot be conceived as an accidental or contingent accretion; it is rather constitutive of God's very being in its pure actuality and so cannot be thought of as enhancing his own being intrinsically. The sole beneficiaries of such love are creatures loved for their own sakes.'

R. Sokolowski also states:

Finally, it should be apparent that what seemed like a kind of indifference of God toward the world, in the claim that God is not perfected by creation, is really the condition for a greater generosity and benevolence in creation. If God is not perfected by creating, then he does not create out of any sort of need, and his creating is all the more free and generous. There is no self-interest and no ambiguity in the goodness and benevolence of creation. And the pure generosity of creation tells us about the nature of the giver of this gift. The nature of the action tells us what the agent is like, and along with the generosity of redemption, it establishes the context for our own response in charity, first toward God and then toward others...Because of the abundance of the life of the Trinity, God becomes even more independent in his nature of any involvement with anything that is not divine. This independence of nature, of course, does not become indifferent rather it defines both creation and redemption as all the more generous and necessitated. 'Creation and Christian Understanding,' pp184 and 186.

In a similar fashion, Weinandy (pg 79) comments again and quotes Philo's view:

God is impassible in that he does not undergo change of emotional states as do humans, but he is nonetheless utterly passionate in his love, mercy and goodness because, as the eternal and self-existing God, he is all perfect and unchanging in these attributes. Implicitly for Philo, the attributes which establish that God is immutable and impassible – being imperishable, incorruptible, eternal, self-existent, and all perfect – are the same attributes which allow him to be the living, merciful, loving and providential creator. As Philo states:

But God has given nothing to himself, for he has not need of anything; but he has given the world to the world, and its parts he has bestowed on themselves and on one another, and also on the universe, and without having judged anything to be worthy of grace, (for he gives all his good things without grudging to the universe and to its parts), he merely has regard to his own

everlasting goodness, thinking the doing of good to be a line of conduct suitable to his own happy and blessed nature; so that if any one were to ask me, what was the cause of the creation of the world, having learnt from Moses, I should answer, that the goodness of the living God, being the most important of his graces, is in itself the cause.

God's Chief End in Creation - God's Glory

code191

Jonathan Edwards

Ch II SECT. VI.

Wherein is considered what is meant by the glory of God and the name of God in Scripture, when spoken of as God's ends in his works.

Having thus considered, what are spoken of in the Holy Scriptures, as the ends which God had ultimately in view in the creation of the world, I now proceed particularly to inquire what they are, and how the terms are to be understood?

1. Let us begin with the phrase, the glory of god—And here I might observe, that it is sometimes used to signify the second person in the Trinity; but it is not necessary, at this time, to prove it from particular passages of Scripture. Omitting this, I proceed to observe some things concerning the Hebrew word (Hebrew word) which is most commonly used in the Old Testament, where we have the word glory in the English Bible. The root it comes from, is either the verb, (Hebrew word) which signifies to be heavy, or make heavy, or from the adjective (Hebrew word) which signifies heavy or weighty. These, as seems pretty manifest, are the primary signification of these words, though they have also other meanings, which seem to be derivative. The noun (Hebrew word) signifies gravity, heaviness, greatness, and abundance. Of very many places it will be sufficient to specify a few. [Prov. xxvii. 3.](#) [2 Sam. xiv. 26.](#) [1 Kings xii. 11.](#) [Psal. xxxviii. 4.](#) [Isa. xxx. 27.](#) And as the weight of bodies arises from two things, density and magnitude; so we find the word used to signify dense, [Exod. xix. 16.](#) (NOT ENGLISH) *nubes gravis*, *Vulg. densissima*;) a dense cloud; and is very often used for great. [Isa. xxxii. 2.](#) [Gen. v. 9.](#) [1 Kings x. 2.](#) [2 Kings vi. 14.](#) and xviii. 17. [Isa. xxxvi. 2.](#) etc.

The Hebrew word (תפארת) which is commonly translated glory, is used in such a manner as might be expected from this signification of the words from whence it comes. Sometimes it is used to signify what is **internal, inherent, or in the possession of the person: and sometimes for emanation, exhibition, or communication of this internal glory; and sometimes for the knowledge, or sense of these, in those to whom the exhibition or communication is made; or an expression of this knowledge,**

sense or effect. And here I would note, that agreeable to the use of this word in the Old Testament, is the Greek word (Hebrew word) in the New. For as the word (Hebrew word) is generally translated by the just mentioned Greek word (Hebrew word) in the Septuagint; so it is apparent, that this word is designed to be used to signify the same thing in the New Testament with the other in the Old. This might be abundantly proved, by comparing particular places of the Old Testament; but probably it will not be denied. I therefore proceed particularly to consider these words, with regard to their use in Scripture, in each of the forementioned ways.

1. **The word glory denotes sometimes what is internal.** When the word is used to signify what is within, or in the possession of the subject, it very commonly signifies **excellency, dignity, or worthiness of regard**. This, according to the Hebrew idiom, is, as it were, the weight of a thing, as that by which it is heavy; as to be light, is to be worthless, without value, contemptible. [Numb. xxi. 5.](#) "This light bread." [1 Sam. xviii. 2 3.](#) "Seemeth it a light thing." [Judg. ix. 4](#) "Light persons," i.e. worthless, vain, vile persons. So [Zeph. iii. 4.](#) To set light by is to despise, [2 Sam. xix. 43.](#) Belshazzar's vileness in the sight of God is represented by his being Tekel, weighed in the balances and found light, [Dan. v. 27.](#) And as the weight of a thing arises from its magnitude, and its specific gravity conjunctly; so the word glory is very commonly used to signify the excellency of a person or a thing, as consisting either in greatness, or in beauty, or in both conjunctly; as will abundantly appear by considering the places referred to in the margin. [209](#)

Sometimes that internal, great and excellent good, which is called glory, is rather in possession, than inherent. Any one may be called heavy, that possesses an abundance; and he that is empty and destitute, may be called light. Thus we find riches are sometimes called glory. [Gen. xxxi. 1.](#) "And of that which was our fathers' hath he gotten all this glory." [Esth. v. 11.](#) "Haman told them of the glory of his riches." [Psal. xlix. 16, 17.](#) "Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him." [Nah. ii. 9.](#) "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is none end of the store and glory out of the pleasant furniture."

And it is often put for a great height of prosperity, and fulness of good in general. [Gen. xlv. 13.](#) "You shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt." [Job xix. 9.](#) "He hath stripped me of my glory." [Isa. x. 3.](#) "Where will you leave your glory." [Ver. 16.](#) "Therefore shall the Lord of hosts send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory shall he kindle a burning, like the burning of a fire." [Isa. xvii. 3, 4.](#) "The kingdom shall cease from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel. And in that day, it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall he made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall be made lean." [Isa. xxi. 16.](#) "And all the glory of Kedar shall fail." [Isa. lxi. 6.](#) "Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." [Chap. 11, 12.](#) "That ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.—I will extend peace to her, like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." [Hos. ix. 11.](#) "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away as a bird." [Matt. iv. 8.](#) "Showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." [Luke xxiv. 26.](#) "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" [John xvii. 22.](#) "And the glory which thou gavest me, have I given them." [Rom. v. i.](#) "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." [Chap. viii. 18.](#) "The sufferings of this present time, are not worthy

to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (See also [chap. ii. 7, 10.](#) and [ii. 7, 10.](#) and [ix. 23.](#)) [1 Cor. ii. 7.](#) "The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory." [2 Cor. iv. 17.](#) "Worketh out for us a far more exceeding arid eternal weight of glory." [Eph. i. 18.](#) "And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." [1 Pet iv. 13.](#) "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." [Chap. i. 8.](#) "Ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. [210](#)

2. [The word glory is used in Scripture often to express the exhibition, emanation, or communication of the internal glory.](#) Hence it often signifies an [effulgence, or shining brightness, by an emanation of beams of light.](#) Thus the brightness of the sun, and moon, and stars, is called their glory, in [1 Cor. xv. 41.](#) But in particular, the word is very often thus used, when applied to God and Christ. As in [Ezek. i. 28.](#) "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." And [chap. x. 4.](#) "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory." [Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3.](#) "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim—And one cried to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Compared with [John xii. 41.](#) "[These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him.](#)" [Ezek. xliii. 2.](#) "And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east.—And the earth shined with his glory." [Isa. xxiv. 23.](#) "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." [Isa. lx. 1, 2.](#) "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." Together with verse 19. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." [Luke ii. 9.](#) "The glory of the Lord shone round about them." [Acts xxii. 11.](#) "And when I could not see for the glory of that light." In [2 Cor. iii. 7.](#) the shining of Moses's face is called the glory of his countenance. And to this [Christ's glory](#) is compared, [verse 18.](#) "[But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.](#)" And so [chap. iv. 4.](#) "Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." [Ver. 6.](#) "[For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.](#)" [Heb. i. 3.](#) "Who is the [brightness of his glory.](#)" The apostle Peter, speaking of that emanation of exceeding brightness, from the bright cloud that overshadowed the disciples in the mount of transfiguration, and of the shining of Christ's face at that time, says, [2 Pet. i. 17.](#) "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [Rev. xviii. 1.](#) "Another angel came down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory." [Rev. xxi. 11.](#) "Having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." [Ver. 23.](#) "And the city had no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it,: for the glory of God did lighten it." See the word for a visible effulgence or emanation of light in the places to be seen in the margin. [211](#)

The word glory, as applied to God or Christ, sometimes evidently signifies the [communications of God's fulness, and means much the same thing with God's abundant goodness and grace](#). So [Eph. iii. 16](#). "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." The expression, "According to the riches of his glory," is apparently equivalent to that in the same epistle, [chap. i. 7](#). "According to the riches of his grace." And [chap. ii. 7](#). "The exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." In like manner is the word glory used in [Phil. iv. 19](#). "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." And [Rom. ix. 23](#). "And that he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of his mercy." In this and the foregoing verse, the apostle speaks of God's making known two things, his great wrath, and his rich grace. The former on the vessels of wrath, [ver. 22](#). The latter, which he calls the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy, [ver. 23](#). So when Moses says, "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" [212](#) God granting his request, makes answer, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee [Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. 213](#)

What we find in [John xii. 23-32](#), is worthy of particular notice in this place. The words and behaviour of Christ, of which we have here an account, argue two things.

(1.) That the [happiness and salvation of men](#), was an end that Christ ultimately aimed at in his labours and sufferings. The very same things which were observed before, (chapter second, section third,) concerning God's glory, are in the same manner observable, concerning the salvation of men. Christ, in the near approach of the most extreme difficulties which attended his undertaking, comforts himself in a certain prospect of obtaining the glory of God, as his great end. And at the same time, and exactly in the same manner, is the salvation of men mentioned, as the end of these great labours and sufferings, which satisfied his soul in the prospect of undergoing them. (Compare [the 23rd and 24th verses](#); and also the 28th and 29th verses; [ver. 31 and 32](#).)

(2.) [The glory of God, and the emanations and fruits of his grace in man's salvation](#), are so spoken of by Christ on this occasion in just the same manner, that it would be quite unnatural to understand him as speaking of two distinct things. Such is the connexion, that what he says of the latter, must most naturally be understood as exegetical of the former. He first speaks of his own glory, and the glory of his Father, as the great end that should be obtained by what he was about to suffer; and then explains and amplifies this, in what he expresses of the salvation of men that shall be obtained by it. Thus, in the [23rd verse](#), he says, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." And in what next follows, he evidently shows how he was to be glorified, or wherein his glory consisted: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." [214](#) [As much fruit is the glory of the seed](#), so is the multitude of redeemed ones, which should spring from his death, his glory. [215](#) [\[This glory is that which was designed in the eternal counsel of God, in that covenant between the Father and the Son; surely this glory will not suffer imperfection as Arminian doctrine tends to, that those for whom Christ died will surely be saved and only them.\]](#)

footnote 215: *Here may be remembered what was before observed of the church being so often spoken of as the glory and fulness of Christ.*

So concerning the glory of his Father, in the [27th and following verses](#). "Now is my soul troubled, and

what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." In an assurance of this, which this voice declared, Christ was greatly comforted and his soul even exulted under the view of his approaching sufferings. [See [Isa 53:10](#)] And what this glory was, in which Christ's soul was so comforted on this occasion, his own words plainly show. When the people said, it thundered; and others said, an angel spake to him; then Christ tells them what this voice meant. [Ver. 30-32](#). "Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." By this behaviour and these speeches of our Redeemer, it appears, that the expressions of divine grace, in the sanctification and happiness of the redeemed, are especially that glory of his, and his Father, which was the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame: and that this glory especially was the end of the travail of his soul, in obtaining which end he was satisfied. ([Isa. liii. 10, 11.](#))

This is agreeable to what has been just observed, of **God's glory being so often represented by an effulgence, or emanation, or communication of light, from a luminary or fountain of light**. What can so naturally and aptly represent [118](#) the emanation of the internal glory of God; or the flowing forth and abundant communication of that infinite fulness of good that is in God? **Light is very often in Scripture put for comfort, joy, happiness, and for good in general.**²¹⁶

footnote 216: [Exod. vi. 3](#) — "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." In the original, His glory is the fulness of the whole earth: which signifies much more than the words of the translation. God's glory, consisting especially in his holiness, is that, in the sight or communications of which man's fulness, i.e. his holiness and happiness, consists. By God's glory here, there seems to be respect to those effulgent beams that filled the temple: these beams signifying God's glory shining forth and communicated. This effulgence or communication, is the fulness of all intelligent creatures, who have no fulness of their own.

3. Again, the word glory, as applied to God in Scripture, implies the **view or knowledge of God's excellency**. The exhibition of glory is to the view of beholders. The manifestation of glory, the emanation or effulgence of brightness, has relation to the eye. Light or brightness is a quality that has relation to the sense of seeing; we see the luminary by its light. **And knowledge is often expressed in Scripture by light**. The word **glory** very often in Scripture signifies, or implies, **honour**, as any one may soon see by casting his eye on a concordance. **But [Heb. 3:3] honour implies the knowledge of the dignity and excellency of him who hath the honour; and this is often more especially signified by the word glory, when applied to God.** [Num. xiv. 21](#). "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," i. e. All the inhabitants of the earth shall see the manifestations I will make of my perfect holiness and hatred of sin, and so of my infinite excellence. This appears by the context. So [Ezek. xxxix. 21, 22, 23](#). "And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity." And it is manifest in many places, where we read of God glorifying himself, or of his being glorified, that one thing, directly intended, **is making known his divine greatness and excellency**. [[Arminians and many others cast doubts on this by their false teachings on the scope of the](#)

atonement as I have mentioned earlier.]

4. Again, **glory**, as the word is used in Scripture, often signifies or implies **praise**. This appears from what was observed before, **that glory very often signifies honour, which is much the same thing with praise**, viz. high esteem and the expression of it in words and actions. And it is manifest that the **words glory and praise, are often used as equivalent expressions in Scripture**. [Psal. i. 23](#). "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." [Psal. xxii. 23](#). "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Israel, glorify him." [Isa. xlii. 8](#). "My glory I will not give unto another, nor my praise to graven images." [Ver. xlii 12](#). "Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands." [Isa. xlvi. 9-11](#). "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger; for my praise will I refrain for thee.—For mine own sake will I do it; for—I will not give my glory unto another." [Jer. xiii. 11](#). "That they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory." [Eph. i. 6](#). "To the praise of the glory of his grace." [Ver. 12](#). "To the praise of his glory." So [Ver. 14](#). The phrase is apparently equivalent to this, [Phil. i. 11](#). "Which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." [2 Cor. iv. 15](#). "That the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

It is manifest the praise of God, as the phrase is used in Scripture, implies the high esteem and love of the heart, exalting thoughts of God, and complacence in his excellence and perfection. This is manifest to everyone acquainted with the Scripture. However, if any need satisfaction, they may, among innumerable other places which might be mentioned, turn to those in the in the margin. [218](#)

It also implies joy in God, or rejoicing in his perfections, as is manifest by [Psal. xxxiii. 2](#). "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright." [Certainly God would not be rejoicing if he couldn't save all that he desired to save, right? But because he only desired to save and does save all his elect, those he chose before the foundation of the world, he rejoices! How can anything be excellent in God if he can't do that which his heart most desires to do?? Hence he desires to save *all* in the restrictive sense, i.e., the elect, and he does it perfectly. Hence false doctrine leads to an undervaluation of God.] Other passages to the same purpose, see in the margin. [219](#) How often do we read of singing praise! But singing is commonly an expression of joy. It is called, making a joyful noise. And as it is often used, it implies gratitude or love to God for his benefits to us. [220](#)

II. Having thus considered what is implied in the phrase, the glory of God, as we find it used in Scripture; I proceed to inquire what is meant by the **name of God**.

God's name and his glory, at least very often, signify the same thing in Scripture. As it has been observed concerning the glory of God, that it sometimes signifies the second person [221](#) in the Trinity; the same might be shown of the name of God, if it were needful in this place. But that the name and glory of God are often equipollent expressions, is manifest by [Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19](#). When Moses says, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," and God grants his request, he says, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." [Psal. viii. 1](#). "O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens," [Psal. lxxix. 9](#). "Help us! O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins for **thy name's sake**." [Psal. cii. 15](#). "So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord; and all the kings of the earth thy glory." [Psal. cxlviii. 13](#). "His name alone is excellent, and his glory is above the earth and heaven." [Isa. xlvi. 9](#). "For

my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee." [Ver. 11.](#) "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another." [Isa. lix. 19.](#) "They shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." [Jer. xiii. 11.](#) "That they might be unto me for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory." As glory often implies the manifestation, publication, and knowledge of excellency, and the honour that any one has in the world; so does name. [Gen. xi. 4.](#) "Let us make us a name." [Deut. xxvi. 19.](#) "And to make thee high above all nations, in praise, in name, and in honour." [222](#)

So it is evident, **that by name is sometimes meant much the same thing as praise**, by several places which have been just mentioned, (as [Isa. xlvi. 9.](#) [Jer. xiii. 11.](#) [Deut. xxvi. 19.](#)) And also by [Jer. xxxiii. 9.](#) "And it shall be unto me for a name, a praise, and an honour, before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear of all the good I do unto them." [Zeph. iii. 20.](#) "I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth."

And it seems that the expression or exhibition of **God's goodness** is especially called his name, in [Exod. xxxiii. 19.](#) "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." And [chap. 5, 6, 7.](#) "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands," &c.

And the same illustrious brightness and effulgence in the pillar of cloud that appeared in the wilderness, and dwelt above the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple, (or rather the spiritual, divine brightness and effulgence represented by it,) so often called the glory of the Lord, is also often called the name of the Lord. Because God's glory was to dwell in the tabernacle, therefore he promises, [Exod. xxix. 43.](#) "There will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory." And the temple was called the house of God's glory, [Isa. lx. 7.](#) In like manner, the name of God is said to dwell in the sanctuary. Thus we often read of the place that God chose, to put his name there: or, as it is in the Hebrew, to cause his NAME to inhabit there. So it is sometimes rendered by our translators. As [Deut. xii. 11.](#) "Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there." And the temple is often spoken of as built for God's name. And in [Psal. lxxiv. 7.](#) the temple is called the dwelling-place of God's name. The mercy-seat in the temple was called the throne of God's [119](#) name or glory, [Jer. xiv. 21.](#) "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake do not disgrace the throne of thy glory." Here God's name and his glory seem to be spoken of as the same.

SECT. VII.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

Showing that the ultimate end of the creation of the world is but one, and what that one end is.

From what has been observed in the last section, it appears, if the whole of what is said relating to this affair be duly weighed, and one part compared with another, we shall have reason to think, that the design of the Spirit of God is not to represent God's ultimate end as manifold, but as ONE. For though it be signified by various names yet they appear not to be names of different things, but various names involving each other in their meaning either different names of the same thing, or names of several parts of one whole; or of the same whole viewed in various lights or in its different respects and relations. For it appears, that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as a ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, the glory of God; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing.

The thing signified by that name, the glory of God, when spoken of as the supreme and ultimate end of all God's works, is the emanation and true external expression of **God's internal glory and fulness**; meaning by his **fulness** what has already been explained; or, in other words, **God's internal glory**, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it. It is confessed, that there is a degree of obscurity in these definitions; but perhaps an obscurity which is unavoidable, through the imperfection of language to express things of so **sublime a nature**. And therefore the thing may possibly be better understood, by using a variety of expressions, by a particular consideration of it, as it were, by parts, than by any short definition.

It includes the exercise of God's perfections to produce a proper effect, [as opposed to incomplete or imperfect effects as all false teaching tends to] in opposition to their lying eternally dormant and ineffectual: as his power being eternally without any act or fruit of that power; his wisdom eternally ineffectual in any wise production, or prudent disposal of anything, etc., The manifestation of his internal glory to created understandings¹. The communication of the infinite fulness of God to the creature. The creature's high esteem of God, love to him, and complacency and joy in him; and the proper exercises and expressions of these. Continued on page 1234

skipping to page 120: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

And God had regard to it in this manner, as he had a supreme regard to himself, and value for his own infinite, internal glory. **It was this value for himself that caused him to value and seek that his internal glory should flow forth from himself. It was from his value for his glorious perfections of wisdom, righteousness, &c. that he valued the proper exercise and effect of these perfections, in wise and righteous acts and effects.** It was from his infinite value for his internal glory and fulness, that he valued the thing itself communicated, which is something of the same, extant in the creature. Thus, because he infinitely values his own glory, consisting in the knowledge of himself, love to himself, and complacency and joy in himself; he therefore valued the image, communication, or participation of these in the creature. **And it is because he values himself, that he delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being himself the object of this knowledge, love, and complacency.** For it is the necessary consequence of true esteem and love, that we value others' esteem of the same object, and dislike the contrary. For the same reason, God approves of others' esteem and love of himself. [see also, Rm 6:4, "that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."]

Thus it is easy to conceive, how God should seek the good of the creature, **consisting in the creature's knowledge and holiness, and even his happiness**, from a supreme regard to himself; as his

happiness arises from that which is an image and participation of God's own beauty; and consists in the creature's exercising a supreme regard to God, and complacence in him; in beholding God's glory, in esteeming and loving it, and rejoicing in it, and in his exercising and testifying love and supreme respect to God: which is the same thing with the creature's exalting God as his chief good, and making him his supreme end.

And though the emanation of God's fulness, intended in the creation, is to the creature as its object; and though the creature is the subject of the fulness communicated, which is the creature's good; yet it does not necessarily follow, that even in so doing, God did not make himself his end. It comes to the same thing. God's respect to the creature's good, and his respect to himself, is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself. The creature is no farther happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end, than he becomes one with God. The more happiness the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like to that between God the Father and the Son; who are so united, that their interest is perfectly one. If the happiness of the creature be considered in the whole of the creature's eternal duration, with all the infinity of its progress, and infinite increase of nearness and union to God; in this view, the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite strictness.

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It is no solid objection against God aiming at an infinitely perfect union of the creature with himself, that the particular time will never come when it can be said, the union is now infinitely perfect. God aims at satisfying justice in the eternal damnation of sinners; which will be satisfied by their damnation, considered no otherwise than with regard to its eternal duration. But yet there never will come that particular moment, when it can be said, that now justice is satisfied. But if this does not satisfy our modern free-thinkers who do not like the talk about satisfying justice with an infinite punishment; I suppose it will not be denied by any, that God, in glorifying the saints in heaven with eternal felicity, aims to satisfy his infinite grace or benevolence, by the bestowment of a good infinitely valuable, because eternal: and yet there never will come the moment, when it can be said, that now this infinitely valuable good has been actually bestowed. [224](#)

Excerpts from footnote 224:

2. By the creation and disposal of the **physical part** of the universe, the glory of God's natural perfections, as of sovereign wisdom, power, and goodness, is chiefly displayed. But by the creation and government of the **moral part**, the glory of the **moral perfections of Deity**, that is, of infinite moral rectitude, or equity, and of sovereign benevolence and mercy, is made to appear.

18. The ultimate and chief end of God in the creation and government of the moral part of the universe, is the glory of his moral perfections; which are virtually included in strict rectitude and sovereign benevolence.

19. If strict rectitude be exercised towards the degenerate part of the system, the restoration of those who are the objects of it is not possible; that is, to suppose it is possible involves a contradiction. Therefore,

20. If any degenerate moral agent be restored, it must be necessarily be by the exercise of that sovereign benevolence which we call mercy.

21. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God! on them who fell, severity; but toward thee

goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Goodness and severity are but other words for sovereign benevolence and strict equity, **the glory of which is abundantly conspicuous** in the various divine dispensations towards the children of men, even in this life; but will appear still more transcendent in the day when God shall judge the world in righteousness, and in the day of eternity.—W.

¹ God, as a rational being, marked by infinite knowledge, created us also as rational beings and capable of knowing. In this way, the *imago Dei* **extends to the existence of the faculty in us**¹. Confessing the Impassible God, Steve Garrick w/Ronald S. Baines, Pg 102

¹ [This is similar to Edwards’ comments - *God’s internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God’s glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God’s external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will. God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God.* (see pg 1235)] link to Edwards’ quote: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

Also, **Philip Schaff** describes this similarly: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: **to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart**; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God’s Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845

What is the Glory of God

And the Communication of It

code11

Study this to understand more fully what the glory of God is so that when God communicates his glory to the elect you will more clearly see in what it consists and hence place a more due valuation upon it, from which should spring a due praise to God which he is owed. Knowledge of this is key. God's fullness described too.

Application: God communicates his glory (John 17:22) to his elect, forming an image upon their souls (re-enstamping the image of God, his moral image) consisting in the knowledge of God, holiness or love to God and happiness consisting in joy in God - and all this is designed so that we return this glory to him in praise and worship - that this glory redounds back to God by our obedience to him and praise to him, us being moral and rational creatures, all to the glory of God. Now scripture is fulfilled - *"For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."* Romans 11:36 To think that man can savingly come to God without first receiving this glory implanted upon their soul turns the wisdom and works of God and the Gospel on its head; because man who is brought into this world with a natural image, the likeness of Adam, who hates God, hates all spiritual things, is blind, naked, spiritually dead, a slave to sin and Satan cannot and will not come to God, therefore it is a gross presumption and a great provocation to God to think that a person can have holy thoughts and desires when the truth is that he doesn't, but that the foundation of his so called coming to God by some kind of prayer recommending himself to God is nothing but the consequent of self-love and not a love for God for who he is. It is man saying, I want my independence (my sin), I want what God has and I want God to bless or accommodate me in it, which he will not do. Psalm 50:16, Heb. 11:6

"This is certain: when the soul will not subject itself to God, he goes about to subject God to him, nay, to his lusts. Is 43:24 "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." (KJV) For one of them must stoop, and a man would have the Lord be merciful, patient and pitiful to him, when he is in league with his lusts: now this the Lord will not do."

- Thomas Shepard

[This is why I am going into such in depth in the examination of these subjects; it is the only way to see it. If God communicated his glory to everyone that was ever born, then all would infallibly be saved; but he doesn't. *"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy,"* Romans 9:15.]

The Communication of God's Glory in the Gospel

code11

to the Understanding and Then to the Will
(Saving Faith)

By Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer, pg 284

Because as the gospel first reveals Christ to the mind, and then offers him to the will [see code11a— Edwards, code34b]; so faith, which runs parallel with the gospel, first sees Christ, (there the mind, one part of the soul goes out) then receives Christ gladly, (there the other part, the will goes out) and so the whole soul comes to Christ. The gospel comes to all the elect, First, in Great clearness and evidence of the truth of it, 1Thes. 1:5, to which the understanding assents, and is persuaded of; Secondly, In great grace and goodness, surpassing beauty and sweetness, Lam. 3:24, with which the will is drawn, and so the whole soul comes unto Christ. For the gospel is not only true, but glad tidings to all the elect, especially when humbled at God's feet, 1Tim1:15, *In whom*, says the apostle, Eph. 1:12, 13, *you believed, after that ye heard the word of truth*, (**there is the object of the understanding**) the gospel of your salvation, (**there is the goodness of it, the object of the will**) so that the whole soul is drawn to Christ in the work of faith. He that understands how *liberum arbitrium* may be in two faculties must not wonder, if one grace be seated in both faculties of the understanding and will; no grace can be completely seated in diverse faculties, but gradually and imperfectly it may; the work of faith is not complete, when the understanding is opened, only to see and wonder at the mysteries of the mercy in the gospel, but when the will adheres and clasps about that infinite and surpassing good it sees, then it is perfected, and not before, John 6:40. And this is the reason why saving faith (as it is called) does not look only to the bare testimony and assent unto it, as human faith does, because in the gospel, not only divine truth is propounded to the mind to assent unto, but an infinite and eternal good is offered to the heart, and will of man to embrace. And thence it is, that it is not sufficient for a Christian to believe God, or to believe Christ, but he must also believe in him, or else he cannot be saved; the object of believing of him being *verum*, or truth; the object of the second, *bonum*, or good. Take heed, therefore, a poor, lost sinner, undone in its own eyes forever; not knowing what to do, unless it be to lie down, and lie still at God's feet, as worthy of nothing but hell. What does the Lord now do? The Lord Christ, by his gospel, first lets in a new light [to the understanding], and it sees the Lord Jesus there bleeding before its eyes, and held forth as a propitiation to all that believe, to all that come to him; **the mind sees this mystery**, this exceeding rich grace and free mercy, and thinks, **Happy are they that share in this mercy!** [there the communication to the will, that it is good] But will the Lord look upon such a nothing as I? Can such infinite treasures be my portion? The Lord, therefore, calls, and bids him come away and enter into the possession of it.

Hereupon the **heart and will** come, and rest, and roll themselves upon these bowels, and there rest; **thus the whole soul comes**, and this, I say again, is faith. Just as it is with the loadstone drawing the iron; who would think that iron should be drawn by it? but there is a **secret virtue** coming from the stone which draws it, **and so it comes and is united to it**; so who would think that ever such an iron, heavy, earthy heart should be drawn unto Christ? **yet the Lord lets out a secret virtue of truth and sweetness from himself**, which draws the soul to Christ, and so it comes. [willingly & gladly, Ps 110:3. Jonathan Edwards describes this communication similarly...communicates the knowledge of God to the faculty of understanding and holiness, love of God to the faculty of the will. John Flavel describes this *secret efficacy* in converting the soul in similarly as well,]

Philip Schaff says likewise: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: **to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart**; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845 [See Edwards on this communication of holiness to the faculty of the will, code34b]

The Glory of Christ

code390

by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.i.xv.html>

excerpt from Ch 12

A short summary of the glory of Christ in relation to what has been spoken to in a point of application.

To sum up briefly what has been spoken: There are three things to be considered concerning the glory of Christ, three degrees in its manifestation, — the shadow, the perfect image, and the substance itself. Those under the Law had only the shadow of it, and of the things that belong unto it; — they had not the perfect image of them, [Heb. x. 1](#). Under the Gospel we have the perfect image, which they had not; or a clear, complete revelation and declaration of it, presenting it unto us as in a glass: but the enjoyment of these things in their substance is reserved for heaven; we must be “where he is, that we may behold his glory.” Now, there is a greater difference and distance between the real substance of anything and the most perfect image of it, than there is between the most perfect image and the lowest shadow of the same thing. If, then, they longed to be freed from their state of types and shadows, to enjoy the representation of the glory of Christ in that image of it which is given us in the Gospel; much more ought we to breathe and pant after our deliverance from beholding it in the image of it, that we may enjoy the substance itself. For, whatever can be manifest of Christ on this side heaven, it is granted unto us for this end, that we may the more fervently desire to be present with him.

And as it was their wisdom and their grace to rejoice in the light they had, and in those typical administrations of divine worship which shadowed out the glory of Christ unto them, yet did always pant after that more excellent light and full discovery of it which was to be made by the Gospel; so it will be ours also thankfully to use and improve the revelations which we enjoy of it, and those institutions of worship wherein our faith is assisted in the view thereof, — yet so as continually to breathe after that perfect, that glorifying sight of it which is reserved for heaven above.

And may we not a little examine ourselves by these things? Do we esteem this pressing towards the perfect view of the glory of Christ to be our duty? and do we abide in the performance of it? If it be otherwise with any of us, it is a signal evidence that our profession is hypocritical. If Christ be in us, he is the hope of glory in us; and where that hope is, it will be active in desires of the things hoped for. Many love the world too well, and have their minds too much filled with the things of it, to entertain desires of speeding through it unto a state wherein they may behold the glory of Christ. They are at home, and are unwilling to be absent from the body, though to be present with the Lord. They hope, it may be, that such a season will come at one time or another, and then it will be the best they can look for when they can be here no more. But they have but a little sight of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, if any at all, who so little, so faintly desire to have the immediate sight of it above. I cannot understand how any man can walk with God as he ought, or has that love for Jesus Christ which true faith will produce, or does place his refreshments and joy in spiritual things, in things above, that does not on all just occasions so meditate on the glory of Christ in heaven as to long for an admittance into the immediate sight of it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ alone perfectly understood wherein the eternal blessedness of them that believe in him does consist. And this is the sum of what he prays for with respect unto that end, — namely, that we may be where he is, to behold his glory. And is it not our duty to live in a continual desire of that which he prayed so earnestly that we might attain? If in ourselves we as yet apprehend but little of the glory, the excellency, the blessedness of it, yet ought we to repose that confidence in the wisdom and love of Christ, that it is our best, — infinitely better than any thing we can enjoy here below.

Unto those who are inured unto these contemplations, they are the salt of their lives, whereby everything is condited and made savoury unto them, as we shall show afterward. And the want of spiritual diligence herein is that which has brought forth a negligent, careless, worldly profession of religion, which, countenancing itself with some outward duties, has lost out of it the power of faith and love in their principal operations. Hereby many deceive their own souls. Goods, lands, possessions, relations, trades, with secular interests in them, are the things whose image is drawn on their minds, and whose characters are written on their foreheads, as the titles whereby they may be known. As believers, beholding the glory of Christ in the blessed glass of the Gospel, are changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord; so these persons, beholding the beauty of the world and the things that are in it in the cursed glass of self-love, are in their minds changed into the same image. Hence perplexing fears, vain hopes, empty embraces of perishing things, fruitless desires, earthly, carnal designs, cursed, self-pleasing imaginations, feeding on, and being fed by, the love of the world and self, do abide and prevail in them. But we have not so learned Christ Jesus.

[God has given all believers a desire for holiness, a delight in holiness and a hunger and thirst for holiness. With all the corruption in this world and that remaining in our souls we ought to hunger after Christ and his coming. These desires ought to shape our behavior and our thoughts to be spiritually minded, to mourn that we be delivered from this body of death to behold and see him as he is and be changed completely into his likeness.]

The Nature of True Virtue

code41

by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.v.i.html>

This describes true virtue, that which is given to the elect that enables them to love God.

Chap. I

Excerpts from pg 122 -

But virtue is the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind, that are of a moral nature, i.e. such as are attended with desert or worthiness of praise or blame. Things of this sort, it is generally agreed, so far as I know, do not belong merely to speculation; but to the disposition and will, or (to use a general word, I suppose commonly well understood) to the heart. **Therefore, I suppose, I shall not depart from the common opinion, when I say, that virtue is the beauty of the qualities and exercises of the heart, or those actions which proceed from them.** So that when it is inquired, what is the nature of true virtue? this is the same as to inquire, what that is, which renders any habit, disposition, or exercise of the heart truly beautiful?

True virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general [And this refers to the most worthy of beings, who is God]. Or perhaps, to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity, and union of heart to being in general, which is immediately exercised in a general good will. [That is, true virtue has respect to God and is based on a love for God.]

The things before observed respecting the nature of true virtue, naturally lead us to such a notion of it. If it has its seat in the heart, and is the general goodness and beauty of the disposition and its exercise, in the most comprehensive view, considered with regard to its universal tendency, and as related to everything with which it stands connected; what can it consist in, but a consent and good will to being in general? Beauty does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and agreement. And if every intelligent being is some way related to being in general, and is a part of the universal system of existence; and so stands in connexion with the whole; what can its general and true beauty be, but its union and consent with the great whole?

Chap II (pg 126-127)

From hence also it is evident, that the divine virtue, or the virtue of the divine mind, must consist primarily in love to himself [God], or in the mutual love and friendship which subsists eternally and necessarily between the several persons in the Godhead, or that infinitely strong propensity there is in these divine persons one to another. There is no need of multiplying words, to prove that it must be thus, on a supposition that virtue, in its most essential nature, consists in benevolent affection or propensity of heart towards being in general; and so flowing out to particular beings, in a greater or lesser degree, according to the measure of existence and beauty which they are possessed of. It will also follow, from the foregoing things, that God's goodness and love to created beings, is derived from and subordinate to his love to himself. [230](#)

With respect to the manner in which a virtuous love in created beings, one to another, is dependent on, and derived from love to God, this will appear by a proper consideration of what has been said; that it is sufficient to render love to any created being, virtuous, **if it arise from the temper of mind wherein consists a disposition to love God supremely.** Because it appears from what has been already observed, all that love to particular beings, which is the fruit of a benevolent propensity of heart to being in general, is virtuous love. **But, as has been remarked, a benevolent propensity of heart to being in general, and a temper or disposition to love God supremely, are in effect the same thing.** Therefore, if love to a created being comes from that temper, or propensity of the heart, it is virtuous. However, every particular exercise of love to a creature may not sensibly arise from any exercise of love to God, or an explicit consideration of any similitude, conformity, union, or relation to God, in the creature beloved.

The most proper evidence of love to a created being, arising from that temper of mind wherein consists a **supreme propensity of heart to God**, seems to be the agreeableness of the kind and degree of our love to God's end in our creation, and in the creation of all things, and the coincidence of the exercise of our love, in their manner, order, and measure, with the manner in which God himself exercises love to the creature in the creation and government of the world, and the way in which God, **as the first cause and supreme disposer of all things**, has respect to the creature's happiness, in subordination to himself as his own supreme end. **For the true virtue of created beings is doubtless their highest excellency, and their true goodness, and that by which they are especially agreeable to the mind of their Creator.** But the true goodness of a thing, must be its agreeableness to its end, or its fitness to answer the design for which it was made. Therefore, they are good moral agents, whose temper of mind, or propensity of heart, is agreeable to the end for which God made moral agents. But, as has been shown, the last end for which God has made moral agents, must be the last end for which God has made all things: it being evident, that the moral world is the end of the rest of the world; the inanimate and unintelligent world being made for the rational and moral world, as much as a house is prepared for the inhabitants.

By these things, it appears, **that truly virtuous mind, being as it were under the sovereign dominion of love to God, above all things, seeks the glory of God, and makes this his supreme, governing, and ultimate end.** **This consists in the expression of God's perfections in their proper effects,—the manifestation of God's glory to created understandings¹,—the communications of the infinite fulness of God to the creature,—the creature's highest esteem of God, love to, and joy in him,—and in the proper exercises and expressions of these.** And so far as a virtuous mind exercises true virtue in benevolence to created beings, it chiefly seeks the good of the creature; consisting in its **knowledge or view of God's glory and beauty, its union with God, conformity and love to him, and joy in him.** And that disposition of heart, that consent, union, or propensity of mind to being in general, which appears chiefly in such exercises, is virtue, truly so called; **or in other words, true grace and real holiness.** And no other disposition or affection but this is of the nature of true virtue.

Corollary. Hence it appears, that those schemes of religion or moral philosophy, which—however well in some respects they may treat of benevolence to mankind, and other virtues depending on it, **yet—have not a supreme regard to God, and love to him, laid as the foundation, and all other virtues**

handled in a connexion with this, and in subordination to it, are not true schemes of philosophy, but are fundamentally and essentially defective. And whatever other benevolence or generosity towards mankind, and other virtues, or moral qualifications which go by that name, any are possessed of, that are not attended with a love to God, which is altogether above them, and to which they are subordinate, and on which they are dependent, there is nothing of the nature of true virtue or religion in them. And it may be asserted in general, that nothing is of the nature of true virtue, in which God is not the first and the last; or which, with regard to their exercises in general, **have not their first foundation and source in apprehensions of God's supreme dignity and glory, and in answerable esteem and love of him, and have not respect to God as the supreme end.**

For God *is* the King of all the earth;
Sing praises **with understanding**. Ps 47:7

Without us being given an understanding by divine revelation, the effulgence or shining forth of the light of the knowledge of God's glory into our hearts, this communicated to the elect (2Cor. 4:4-6), we are unable to have an object worthy to be praised. So unregenerate men devise other gods out of their own fancy to worship. Their so called faith creates its own object [which is essentially what the sinner's prayer does]. Hence without the *gift of faith* which is a gift of God, as is understanding, you cannot please God! Remember what Peter answered to Jesus' question, Who do you say that I am? And Peter said *you are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Then Jesus said to him, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in heaven.*" Matt 16:17

This virtue or holiness is that which is communicated to the elect at their conversion; it is the efficient cause of their conversion or them being born again. This is by design, where the Holy Spirit applies the goods things purchased by Christ (faith, grace, eternal life and glory hereafter), our great high priest, to his elect creatures that are scattered abroad all over the world. Those who are in hell were never acted on as such; God never spoke to them.

¹ God, as a rational being, marked by infinite knowledge, created us also as rational beings and capable of knowing. In this way, the *imago Dei* **extends to the existence of the faculty in us**¹. Confessing the Impassible God, Steve Garrick w/Ronald S. Baines, Pg 102

¹ [This is similar to Edwards' comments - *God's internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God's glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God's external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will. God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God.* (see code34b)] link to Edwards' quote: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

Philip Schaff comments similarly: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845

The Promise in Genesis 3:15

code374

(see also page 189)

by John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews, Vol. 17 p 170

23. The first intimation that God gave of this work of his grace in redeeming mankind from sin and misery, is contained in the promise subjoined unto the curse denounced against our first parents, and their posterity in them: Genesis 3:15 "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent shall bruise his heel." Two things there are contained in these words; — a promise of relief from the misery brought on mankind by the temptation of Satan; and an intimation of the means or way whereby it should be brought about. That the first is included in these words is evident; for, —

First, If there be not a promise of deliverance expressed in these words, whence is it that the execution of the sentence of death against sin is suspended? Unless we will allow an intervention satisfactory to the righteousness and truth of God to be expressed in these words, there would have been a truth in the suggestion of the serpent, namely, that whatever God had said, yet indeed they were not to die. The Jews, in the Midrash Tehillim, — as Kimchi informs us on Psalm 92, whose title is, "A Psalm for the Sabbath-day," which they generally assign unto Adam, — say that Adam was cast out of the garden of Eden on the evening of the 238 sixth day, after which God came to execute the sentence of death upon him; but the Sabbath being come on, the punishment was deferred, whereon Adam made that psalm for the Sabbath-day. Without an interposition of some external cause and reason, they acknowledge that death ought immediately to have been inflicted; and other besides what is mentioned in these words there was none.

Secondly, The whole evil of sin, and curse, that mankind then did, or was to, suffer under, proceeded from the friendship contracted between the woman and the serpent, and her fixing faith in him. God here declares that he will break that league, and put enmity between them. Being now both of them under the same condition of sin and curse, this could not be without a change of condition in one of them. Satan is not divided from himself, nor is at enmity with them that are left wholly in his estate. **A**

change of condition, therefore, on the part of the woman and her seed is plainly promised; that is, by a deliverance from the state of sin and misery wherein they were. Without this the enmity mentioned could not have ensued.

Thirdly, In pursuit of this enmity, the Seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent.

The head is the seat of his power and craft. Without the destruction of the evil and pernicious effects which by his counsel he had brought about, his head cannot be bruised. By his head he had contrived the ruin of mankind; and without the destruction of his works and a recovery from that ruin, he is not conquered nor his head bruised. And as these things, though they may now seem somewhat obscurely expressed in these words, are yet made plain unto us in the gospel, so the importance of them was evident unto our first parents of old, being expounded by all the circumstances wherewith the matter of fact was attended. Again, there is an intimation of the manner how this work shall be performed. **This, first, God takes upon himself: ‘I will do it; “I will put enmity.”’** It is an issue of his sovereign wisdom and grace. But, secondly, he will do it in and by the nature of man, “the Seed of the woman.” And two things must concur to the effecting of it; — first, That this Seed of the woman must conquer Satan, bruise his head, destroy his works, and procure deliverance for mankind thereby; secondly, That he must suffer from, and by the means of, Satan in his so doing, — the serpent must “bruise his heel.” This is the remedy and relief that God hath provided for mankind. **And this is the MESSIAH, or God joining with the nature of man to deliver mankind from sin and eternal misery.**

24. This promise of relief by the Seed of the woman is, as the first, so the only intimation that God gave unto our first parents of a way of deliverance from that condition whereinto they, and the whole creation, were brought by the entrance of evil or sin. It was likewise the first discovery that there was in him— benignity, grace, kindness, or mercy, compassion, pardon. Hereby he declared himself to be [Hebrew phrase], Nehemiah 9:17, — “a God of pardons, gracious, and tenderly merciful;” as also, Psalm 86:5, “good and pardoning, and much in mercy.” And if this be not acknowledged, it must be confessed that all the world, at least unto the flood, if not unto the days of Abraham, — in which space of time we have testimony concerning some that they walked with God, and pleased him, — were left without any certain ground of faith, or hope of acceptance with him; for without some knowledge of this mercy, and the provision of a way for its exercise, they could have no such persuasion. This, then, we have obtained, that God, presently upon the entrance of sin into the world, and the breach of its public peace thereby, promised a reparation of that evil, in the whole extent of it, to be wrought in and **by the Seed of the woman, — that is, the Messiah.**

by John Owen, Commentary on Hebrews, Vol. 17 p 176 (244 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_Introduction_Background.pdf

27. Against this seducer it is denounced that “his head should be bruised.” The head of Satan is his craft and power. From these issued all that evil whereinto mankind was fallen. In the bruising, therefore, of his head, the defeat of his counsel, the destruction of his work, and the deliverance of mankind, are contained, as our apostle most excellently declares, Hebrews 2. Death must be removed, and righteousness brought in, and acceptance with God procured, or the head of Satan is not bruised. This, therefore, is openly and plainly a promise of the deliverance inquired after. Moreover, there is a

declaration made how this victory shall be obtained and this deliverance wrought; and that is by the “**seed of the woman.**” This seed is twice repeated in the words: once expressly, “**and her seed;**” and, secondly, it is included in the pronoun [Hebrew], “**it.**” **And as by “seed,” in the first place, the posterity of the woman,** some to be born of her race, partakers of human nature, may be intended, as the subjects of the enmity mentioned; **so in the latter some single person some one of her posterity or seed, that should obtain the victory, is expressly denoted:** for as all her seed in common do never go about this work, the greatest part of them continuing in a willing subjection unto Satan, so if all of them should combine to attempt it, they would never be able to accomplish it, as we have before proved at large. Someone, therefore, to come of her, with whom God would be present in an especial and extraordinary manner, is here expressly promised; and this is the Messiah.

28. God having, in infinite wisdom and grace, provided this way of relief, and given this intimation of it, that revelation became the foundation and center of all the religion that ensued in the world: for as those who received it by faith, and adhered unto it, continued in the worship of the true God, expressing their faith in the sacrifices that he had appointed typically to represent and exemplify before their eyes the work itself, which by the promised Seed was to be accomplished; so also all that false worship which the generality of mankind apostatized unto was laid in a general persuasion that there was a way for the recovery of the favor of God, but what that was they knew not, and therefore wandered in woeful uncertainties.

CHRISTIAN CAUTIONS

code12

OR,

THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

PSALM cxxxix. 23, 24.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.vi.v.html>

Jonathan Edwards

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**

SECT. I.

All men should be much concerned to know whether they do not live in some way of sin.

David was much concerned to know this concerning himself: he searched himself, he examined his own heart and ways; but he did not trust to that; he was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him, which had escaped his notice: therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. 174” He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of.

1. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a state of sin. All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin; every

unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Saviour. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians, [2 Cor. xiii. 5.](#) "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved.

Every unconverted person lives in a sinful way. He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole course of his life is sinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good, [Psal. xiv. 3.](#) "They are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one." Sin is an unconverted man's trade; it is the work and business of his life; for he is the servant of sin. And ordinarily hypocrites, or those who are wicked men, and yet think themselves godly, and make a profession accordingly, are especially odious and abominable to God.

2. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some particular way which is offensive and displeasing to God: this is what I principally intend. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of some lust, either in practice or in our thoughts: whether we do not live in the omission of some duty, something which God expects we should do; whether we do not go into some practice or manner of behaviour, which is not warrantable. We should inquire whether we do not live in some practice which is against our light, and whether we do not allow ourselves in known sins.

We should be strict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and mistaken notions of our duty: whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive to God, through want of care and watchfulness, and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the profession we make; and whether our practice in some things be not unbecoming Christians, contrary to christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the holy Jesus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, because,

(1.) **God requires of us, that we exercise the utmost watchfulness and diligence in his service.** **Reason** teaches, that it is our duty to exercise the utmost care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to use our utmost diligence in every thing to do it; because the service of God is the great business of our lives, it is that work which is the end of our beings; and God is worthy, that we should serve him to the utmost of our power in all things. This is what God often expressly requires of us; [Deut. iv. 9.](#) "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." And [y. 15, 16.](#) "Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves." And [Deut. vi. 17.](#) "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes which he hath commanded thee." And [Prov. iv. 23.](#) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." So we are commanded by Christ to "watch and

pray;" [Matt. xxvi. 41.](#) and [Luke xxi. 34, 36.](#) "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." [Eph. v. 15.](#) "See that ye walk circumspectly." So that if we be found in any evil way whatsoever, it will not excuse us, that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it; as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulness in us, which we ought to have maintained.

(2.) If we live in any way of sin, we live in a way whereby God is dishonored; but the honour of God ought to be supremely regarded by all. If everyone would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live justly and holily, to walk in everything according to Christian rules; and would maintain a strict, watchful, and scrupulous eye over himself, to see if there were no wicked way in him; would give diligence to amend whatsoever is amiss; would avoid every unholy, unchristian, and sinful way; and if the practice of all were universally as becometh Christians [[which unbelieving church members are averse to!](#)]; [how greatly would this be to the glory of God,](#) and of Jesus Christ! How greatly would it be to the credit and honour of religion! [How would it tend to excite a high esteem of religion in spectators, and to recommend a holy life!](#) How would it stop the mouths of objectors and opposers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified in the lives of Christians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true shape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If those who call themselves Christians, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, [the conviction of sinners, and the propagation of religion among unbelievers,](#) than all the sermons in the world, so long as the lives of those who are called Christians continue as they are now. For want of this concern and watchfulness in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly persons adorn not their profession as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in some things dishonour it. For want of being so much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether they do not walk in some way that is unbecoming a Christian, and offensive to God; their behaviour in some things is very unlovely, and such as is an offence and stumbling-block to others, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. [[This is why it is important to require people to agree and confess to a sound statement of beliefs, e.g., the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith or the Westminster Confession of Faith before being admitted into the church as members. Also, presumptuous ways of coming to God without being called such as the sinner's prayer greatly increases the odds of false conversions and thus mixing unregenerate people with the "sheep" with all its pernicious effects described above.](#)]

(3.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, as we would regard our own interest. If we live in any way of sin, it will be exceedingly to our hurt. Sin, as it is the most hateful evil, is that which is most prejudicial to our interest, and tends most to our hurt of anything in the world. If we live in any way that is displeasing to God, it may be the ruin of our souls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one sinful way, which they do not forsake, it may prove their everlasting undoing.

Discerning good from evil

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By duly being exercised in the word of truth - through constant use, studying of the word and being spiritually minded. This is vital. Be knowledgeable in the scriptures which is out duty, **1Tim4:16**, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." Why is it needful to be skillful in the word of righteousness? Causes of apostasy.

from
Commentary on Hebrews
 by John Owen
 Heb. 3:7 to 5:14
 593 Vol. 20

Heb 5, Ver. 12-14. — For whereas for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one should teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth unto them that are of full age. even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

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It may be spoken with a confidence which the truth will warrant, that the reasons why so many do fall from the faith of the gospel unto Popery, Quakerism, or the like, may be reduced unto these two heads: — [1.] The satisfaction of some special lust, perverse humor or inclination; and, [2.] Want of skill in the word of righteousness, as it is such: all other pretences are but shades and coverings of these two reasons of apostasy.

And so there are two sorts of persons that fall from the faith: —

[1.] Such as principally seduce themselves by their own lusts and several interests. Ανθρωποι χατεφθαρμενοι τον νουν αδοχιμοι περι την πιστιν, 2 Timothy 3:8; 1 Timothy 6:5; — men of corrupt minds, that refuse and reject the truth for the love of their lusts and sins. And, —

[2.] Such as are deceived and seduced; and they are αχαχοι, not perversely evil, Romans 16:18, but unstable, because unskilful in the word.

There are two ways whereby, or two cases wherein, we have need to secure our faith against the oppositions of men, and both of them depend on our skillfulness in the word: —

[1.] When we are to prove and confirm the truth against them. So it is said of Apollos, that "he mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ," Acts 18:28. But how was

he able so to do? **Because he himself was “mighty in the Scriptures,”** verse 24; that is, he was ready and skillful in the word of righteousness, — and this whilst he was only a private disciple.

[2.] When we are to defend it against the opposition of gainsayers, and their mouths can no otherwise be stopped. **If men be but skillful and ready in the Scriptures, though destitute of all advantages of learning, it is inexpressible how able they will be, and such persons have been, in confounding all the sophistry of the most subtle adversaries of the truth.** When without this ability, men lie to be seized on as a prey by the next seducer. Wherefore, without the duty here enjoined, we may easily see what, on all accounts, our condition is with respect unto our faith.

2. The next end of the doctrines of the gospel, which we need this skill to manage them unto, is the guidance of us in the whole course of our duty, that we be not out of our way, nor at a loss about it. **The word is our rule, our guide, our light, in all our walking before God; but if we have not an acquaintance with it, if we are not ready to use and apply it, we shall never walk steadily nor uprightly.**

(1.) This is our guide in the whole course of our lives. **“Thy statutes,” saith David, “are the men of my counsel,”** — those with whom he advised on all occasions. Those who are skillful in the word, in the precepts, directions, and instructions of it, have their rule in a readiness for all occasions of duty, and in the whole course of their affairs. The way wherein they should walk will still be represented unto them; whilst others wander in the dark, and at best walk at “peradventure,” or hazard, with God; which we render “walking contrary” unto him, Leviticus 26:21.

(2.) In particular difficult cases, which often befall us in the course of our conversation in this world. Such as these, where men are unskillful in the word, do either entangle them and fill them with perplexities, so as that they are at their wit’s end, and know not what to do, **or else they violently and presumptuously break through them, to the wounding of their consciences, and the hardening of their spirits against a sense of sin.** But he who is thoroughly acquainted with the word, and is able dexterously to apply it unto all occasions of duty, will extricate himself from these straits in a due manner; for there is no case of this nature can befall us, but there are rules and directions in the Scripture that will guide us safely through it, if we are skillful in their application.

(3.) **The right discharge of all duties towards others depends hereon, and without it we fail more or less in them all.** Hence are we enabled to admonish, exhort, instruct, comfort, and reprove, those in whom we are concerned, **and that with such authority as may have an influence upon their minds and consciences.** Without this, we know neither the true nature, grounds, nor reasons, of any one duty we perform towards others, nor can make use of those things which only will make what we say or do effectual. As therefore it is so with respect unto the increase and preservation of our faith, so also with regard unto all our duties, the whole course of our obedience, — it is necessary that we should be skillful in the word of righteousness.

3. *Consolation* in distress depends hereon. This the Scripture is the only storehouse of. Whatever is taken from any other stores and applied unto that purpose, is but vanity and froth. Here all the springs, principles, causes, reasons, arguments, for true consolation of mind in distress, are treasured up. And on what various occasions, and how frequently, these cases occur wherein we stand in need of especial consolation, we all **know by experience.** And in them all, it is unavoidable that we must either be left unto darkness and sorrow, or betake ourselves unto reliefs that are worse than our troubles, **if**

we have not in a readiness those grounds of solid consolation which the Scripture is stored withal. But whatever are our sorrows or troubles, however aggravated or heightened, whatever be their circumstances, from what cause soever they rise, of sins or sufferings, our own or others in whom we are concerned, **if we are skillful in the word of righteousness, we may at all times and places, in prisons, dungeons, exiles, have in readiness wherewith to support and refresh our souls.** And this I thought meet to add for the discovery of the importance of that duty, a defect whereof is here blamed in the Hebrews by our apostle.

Again; the word signifies "**want of experience,**" and so it respects the things of the gospel. With respect unto them it is said, '**They have not experience of the word of righteousness;**' that is, **of the things contained in it, and their power.** [And this is the danger of false conversions; they have not any experience with the converting power of God but only have the appearance of godliness and so will inevitably they will mislead people as to the real sense of the scriptures, clouds without rain - the blind leading the blind.] And in this sense also it deserves our consideration; for the want of this experience, where we have had time and means for it, is both our great fault and our great disadvantage. **Now, by this experience I intend a spiritual sense, taste, or relish, of the goodness, sweetness, useful excellency, of the truths of the gospel, endearing our hearts to God, and causing us to adhere unto him with delight and constancy.** And this experience, which is of so great use and advantage, consists in three things: —

1. **A thorough mixture of the promises with faith.** This I shall not enlarge upon, because I have spoken unto it expressly in the second verse of the fourth chapter. In brief, it is that lively acting of faith which the Scripture expresseth by "tasting," "eating," "drinking;" which gives a **real incorporation of the things we are made partakers of.** When faith is assiduously acted upon the promises of God, so as that the mind or soul is filled with the matters of them, and virtue goes forth from them in all its actings, as they will be influenced by every object that it is filled withal, then the foundation is laid of their experience. This the apostle intends, Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Faith, by its frequent lively actings on Christ, brings him, as it were, to make a constant residence in the heart, where he always puts forth his power, and the efficacy of his grace. [read Owen's book, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*. Contemplation of spiritual truths, the promises, Christ, etc., is an act of saving faith that works itself by love. You tend to contemplate those things you love and since you now love God, you contemplate Him, his nature, his works, his word!]

2. In a spiritual sense of the **excellency** of the things believed, wherewith the **affections are touched and filled.** This is our taste, how that the Lord is gracious. And hence are we said to be "filled with joy in believing," as also to have the "**love of God** shed abroad in our hearts;" which, with sundry things of the same nature belong unto this experience. And no tonic can express that satisfaction which the soul receives in the **gracious communication of a sense of divine goodness, grace, and love unto it in Christ, whence it "rejoiceth with joy unspeakable and full of glory."** And this is different from the evanid [**faint or weak, transitory**] joys of hypocrites. They are all from without, occasional, depending merely on something peculiar in the dispensation of the word, and on some circumstances of their own condition which they are commensurate unto; **not engaging the heart unto greater love and more firm adherence unto God, but issuing absolutely in the present satisfaction of the affections.** **But that love, delight, and joy, which are a part or effect of spiritual experience, have their root within, — namely, in those actings of faith we before described. They are the fruits and flowers of it,** which may be excited

by external occasions, but proceed not from them; and therefore are they abiding, though liable to depressions and interruptions. But to be sure, they always increase our love of, and strengthen our adherence unto God.

3. In experiments of the power of the word, on all occasions, especially as it is a word of righteousness. Sundry useful instances might here be insisted on; I shall mention two only:—

(1.) There is in it a sense of the power of the word in giving peace with God. This is the difficultest thing in the world to be impressed on the mind of a man really and seriously convinced of the guilt of sin. Many ways such an one cannot but try, to find some rest and satisfaction; but all, after some vain promises, do issue in disappointments. But when the soul doth really close with that way which it is directed unto by the gospel, — that is, when it mixeth it with faith as a word of righteousness, — the authority of the word in the conscience doth secure it that its peace is firm and stable. This it is to have an experiment of the word, when we find our souls satisfied and fortified by the authority of it, against all oppositions, that through Christ we are accepted of God, and are at peace with him.

(2.) In satisfying the heart to choose and prefer spiritual, invisible, and eternal things, before those that are present, and offer us the security of their immediate enjoyment. When we are satisfied that it is good for us, that it is best for us, to forego present earthly things, which we see and handle, and know full well the comfort, benefit, and advantage of, for those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can they by any reasonings of our own take place in the conceptions of our hearts, merely on the authority of the word, testifying to the excellency and certainty of these invisible things, then have we an experiment of the power of the word. Now, as the experience intended consists in these things, so it is easy to discern of how great importance it is, and how much it is our duty to endeavor it.

Ver. 14- But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

In the 14th verse, which completes the antithesis proposed, and wherein the apostle issues his discourse on this matter, four things are expressed : 1. The subject concerning whom he speaks, in opposition unto them whom he called νηπιοι, or “babes; and these are οι τελιοι, “those that are of full age.” 2. The food that is proper for them, in opposition to the milk of babes; and that is στερεα τροφη, — “strong meat,” or sound, solid nourishment. 3. A description of them, giving an account of what is said concerning the meetness of strong meat unto them; and that is, because they are such as have αισθητηρια γεγυμνασμενα, — “their senses exercised to discern good and evil:” which belongs unto the description of the subject of the proposition, “those of full age.” 4. The means whereby they came into this condition; it was δια την εξιν “by reason of habit,” “use,” or “practice,” that had got.

And these things must be explained.

1. Τελιοι as opposed to νηπιοι naturally, are persons adult, grown up, come to “full age.” So our apostle makes the opposition, Ephesians 4:13, 14. He would have us come by the knowledge of God εις ανδρα τελιον, — “to a perfect man;” that we should be no more νηπιοι, “children, tossed up and down: which things in both places are morally to be understood. As νηπιοι, therefore, are persons

weak, ignorant, and unstable in spiritual things, so τελειοι are those who have their understandings enlarged, and their minds settled in the knowledge of Christ, or the mysteries of the gospel.

Τελειος, also, without respect to νηπιος, taken absolutely, is “perfect and complete,” such a one as to whom nothing is wanting. μῦμιT; “integer,” “rectus;” “upright,” “sincere, perfect.” In that sense were they said to be “perfect” under the old testament, who were upright and sincere in their obedience. But this in general is not the perfection here intended; for it only respects an **especial qualification** of the mind with regard unto the truths of the gospel. This our apostle mentions, 1 Corinthians 2:6, Σοφίαν λαλοῦμεν ἐν τελείοις, — “We speak wisdom” (**that is, declare the mysteries of the gospel**) “among them that are perfect;” that is, **such whose minds, being freed from corrupt prejudices, are enlightened by the Spirit of God, and themselves thereby initiated into the mysteries of Christ.** And these he afterwards calls “**spiritual men**,” or such as have received the Spirit of Christ, whereby we know the things that are freely given us of God, verses 12, 15.

And there are also degrees in this perfection, seeing it is not absolute. For that which is so the apostle denies to have been in himself, Philippians 3:12. Much less is it in any of us, or attainable by us. But to “every one of us grace is given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” **An equal measure is not designed unto all**, Ephesians 4:13. Everyone hath his distinct size, stature, or age, which he is to arrive unto. So everyone may grow up to be a “perfect man,” though one be taller and stronger than another. **And to bring every man to perfection, according to his measure, is the design of the ministry**, Colossians 1:28. So when any grace is raised to a constant sincere exercise, it is said to be “**perfect**,” 1 John 4:18. Wherefore the τελειοι here, “the perfect,” or “those of full age,” are such as being instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, and **using diligence in attending thereunto, have made a good progress, according to their means and capacities, in the knowledge of Christ and his will.**

2. **Unto this sort of hearers “strong meat” doth belong;** that is, **it is to be provided for them and proposed unto them.** [the duty of pastors!] This is useful for their state and condition. What is intended by this strong meat, food, or nourishment, hath been declared already.

3. The reason is subjoined whence it is that strong meat belongs unto these persons; or rather, a further description is added, whence it will appear that it doth so. They have “**their senses exercised to discern good and evil.**” And we must inquire, — (1.) What are the senses intended. (2.) How they are exercised. (3.) What it is to discern both good and evil.

(1.) For the first, the allusion is still continued between infants and those that are adult. Infants have all their senses. For αἰθητηρια are properly “sensuum organs,” the organs of the **external senses**. These infants have, even eyes, ears, and the like. And they have their internal sense in its principle. But they know not how to use them, unto any advantage. They cannot by their taste distinguish between food which is good and wholesome, and that which is noxious or pernicious. **And the senses intended are the faculties of understanding and judging spiritual things; the abilities of the mind to discern, judge, and determine concerning them.** And these, in several degrees, are really in all sorts of hearers, babes and those of full age. But, —

(2.) In those of full age these senses are λελμυνασμενα, “exercised.” This makes the distinction. They are not so in babes. Hence they are not ready and expedite in their acts about their proper objects. **They can neither make a right judgment about spiritual truths, nor duly apprehend the mysteries of the gospel when proposed unto them; and that because the intellectual faculties of their minds are not exercised spiritually about them.** And the word doth not denote an actual exercise, but that readiness, ability, and fitness for anything, **which is attained by an assiduous exercise;** as a soldier who is trained is ready for his duty, or a wrestler for prizes (whence the allusion is taken) unto his strivings. **Wherefore, to have our senses exercised in the way intended, is to have our understandings and minds, through constant, sedulous study, meditation, prayer, hearing of the word, and the like means of the increase of grace and knowledge, to become ready, fit, and able to receive spiritual truths, and to turn them into nourishment for our souls.** For so it follows, they are thus exercised, —

(3.) Προς διακρισιν χαλου τε και χαχου, “to the discerning of good and evil.” Διακρισις, is an exact judgment, putting a difference between things proposed to us; a determination upon a right discerning of the different natures of things. And that which this judging and determining faculty is here said to be exercised about, is good and evil. But whereas they are doctrines and propositions of truth that the apostle treats concerning, it might be expected that he should have said, ‘to the discerning, or dijudication, of what is true and false.’ But, [1.] The allusion to food, which he still carries on, requires that it should be thus expressed. Of that which is or may be proposed as food unto us, some is wholesome and nourishing, some hurtful and noxious; the first is good, the latter evil. [2.] Though the first consideration of doctrines be, whether they be true or false, yet on that supposition the principal consideration of them concerns their subject-matter, whether it be good or evil unto our souls, whether it tend unto our edification or destruction. But whereas it is the oracles of God that are the food proposed, and no evil can be supposed to be in them, what need of this faculty of discerning in this case between good and evil? [1.] The similitude required a respect to both, because food of both sorts may be proposed or set before us. [2.] Though nothing but what is good be prepared for us in the Scripture, in the oracles of God, yet this ability of judging or discerning between good and evil is necessary unto us in the dispensation of them. For, 1st, **That may, by some, be proposed unto us as taken from the Scripture, which indeed is not so, which is not wholesome food, but mere poison to the souls of men.** Such are those hurtful and noisome opinions which men of corrupt minds do vent, pretending that they are derived from the Scripture, wherein indeed they are condemned. Or, 2dly, **Without this spiritual ability we may ourselves misapprehend or misapply that which is true in its proposal, whereby it may become evil and noxious unto us. To avoid these dangers, it is necessary that we have our senses exercised unto the discerning both of good and evil.**

Wherefore these persons of full age, are such as are meet to have the mysteries of the gospel, and those especially about the **priesthood and sacrifice of Christ**, preached unto them, seeing their minds and understandings are so exercised about things evangelical, as that they are able to judge aright about the things proposed unto them, discerning their goodness and suitableness unto the nourishment of their souls, as also to discover what is evil, and to reject it.

4. This ability is attained δια την εζω **“by reason of use”** it is a “habit;” and a habit is a firm, rooted disposition, giving readiness unto and facility in acts about its proper object. **Now the apostle intends such a habit as is acquired by use and exercise;** whence we render it “use.” **The first principle or spring**

of spiritual light is infused by the Holy Ghost. The improvement hereof into a fixed habit is by constant and continual exercise. Now this habit or use respects all the ways and means that are appointed for our increase in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. For hereby the mind, being accustomed unto the senses of the word of God, is enabled to make a right judgment of what is proposed unto it. And the observations further clearing the sense of the words, wherewith we shall close our exposition of this chapter, are these that ensue: —

1. **No judgment is so to be feared and deprecated as a deprivation of the dispensation of the word.** **No judgment is like famine:** “They that are slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field,” Lamentations 4:9. And no famine like that of the word, which God threateneth as the sorest of his judgments, Amos 8:11. This is as much to be dreaded above the other as the soul is to be preferred before the body, and spiritual life above natural. To be deprived of the food of our souls is of all distresses the most dreadful. And we may do well to consider, that when Egypt was in the midst of its plenty, — which no doubt was sufficiently abused, — it was then that their consuming famine was at the door. [This is the reason why the Prosperity Gospel is so insidious and a judgment upon them that sit under its preaching; it gives the hearers what they want or lust after, tickling their ears, and not what they need. see the next point, 2. immediately following]

2. **No temporal mercy is so liable unto abuse as fullness of bread.** This, joined with pride and idleness, which usually accompany it in the world, produced the sins of Sodom, Ezekiel 16:49. So is it with the fullness of this spiritual food, — spiritual pride and spiritual sloth are apt to grow up with it, to corrupt and abuse it. It requires much wisdom and heedfulness to manage ourselves aright under the plentiful dispensation of the word, such as at this time we enjoy. Some apparently are proud and delicate, waxing wanton under their enjoyment, so that wholesome food is despised by them, — nothing will serve them but some poisonous dainties of fond and foolish imaginations. And some are slothful, thinking all pains and charge too much that they take or are at about the word. The curiosity and sloth of these days bode no good. I am almost persuaded that the generality of the Egyptians derided Joseph, when they saw him make such diligent and vast preparations in the years of plenty, when for so long a time together “the earth brought forth by handfuls.” If they did not think his labor altogether needless, why did they not do in like manner, why did they make no provision for themselves? — which afterwards they so smarted for. Learn, therefore, of him as well as you are able, to lay in provision of this spiritual food in a time of plenty, that you may have some stores for your use in an evil day that may be approaching.

3. **Those who by any means endeavor to obstruct the dispensation of the word, they do their endeavor to famish the souls of men.** They keep their food from them, without which they cannot live. Whether this be done by negligence, ignorance, or disability in those who take upon themselves to be God’s stewards, but have none of his provision under their disposal, or whether it be done out of a real hatred to the word, the cruelty is dreadful, and the crime will be avenged. The people will curse him who hoardeth corn in a time of dearth; and God will curse them who, at any time, detain from others the bread of life.

4. The word is to be esteemed, valued, and sought after, as our daily food. Negligence and carelessness about the food of our souls is too great an evidence that there is no principle of life in us. Think not too much of your pains.

Obs. 2. Whereas the word is food, it is evident that it will not profit our souls until it be eaten and digested.

It is called here τροφή, “nourishment;” which food is not as it is prepared, but as it is received. When manna was gathered and laid up, and not eaten, it “stank and bred worms.” We see that some take great pains to come and hear the word. This is but the gathering of manna, What do you do with it afterwards? If it lie by you, it will be of no use. But what is required unto this eating and digestion, was, as I remember, before declared.

Obs. 3. It is an evidence of a thriving and healthy state of soul, to have an appetite unto the deepest mysteries of the gospel, or most solid doctrines of truth, and to be able profitably to digest them.

This is the substance of the character which the apostle here gives of such persons; and he blames these Hebrews that such they were not: and therefore such we ought all to be, who live under circumstances and advantages like to theirs. This is the property of a thriving soul, of a good proficient in the school of Christ. **He is naturally inclined to desire the declaration of the most weighty and substantial truths of the gospel; in them is he particularly delighted, and by them is he profited: whereas if you take others beyond milk, or first principles, ordinarily they are at a loss, and very little benefited by any provision you can make for them.** But yet sometimes it falls out in these things spiritual as it doth in things natural. Some persons under sickness and distempers, having their appetite corrupted, and their taste vitiated, do greatly desire, and impetuously long after strong food; which is no way meet for them, and which, when they have eaten it, does but increase their indisposition and heighten their distemper. **So some, altogether unmeet for the right understanding and due improvement of the deep mysteries of the gospel, yet, out of pride and curiosity, do neglect and despise the things which are suited unto their edification, and desire nothing, delight in nothing but what is above them, and indeed beyond their reach.** That we may not be deceived, nor deceive ourselves herein, I shall give some differences between this property of sound, thriving, and healthy souls, desiring, delighting in, and profiting by the strong meat of gospel mysteries, and the **inordinate longing of spiritually sick and distempered minds** after those things which are not meet for them:

1. The desires and appetite of the former are kept always within the bounds of what is written and plainly revealed in the word; for we have showed that the deepest mysteries have the plainest revelations. Offer them anything that is not plainly attested by the word, and they turn from it as poison. They have learned in all things to “think soberly,” according to the **analogy of faith**, Romans 12:3. They would be wise, but unto sobriety, and not above what is written. But for the other sort, if anything be new, curious, seemingly mystical, removed from the common sense and apprehensions of Christians, without any due consideration whether it be a truth of God or no, that is it which they run greedily after, and catch at the empty cloud of. Their principal business is to “intrude themselves into the things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds,” Colossians 2:18.

2. The **former sort**, upon the declaration and discovery of any deep, important mysteries of the gospel, are greatly taken up with a holy admiration and reverence of God, whose these things are. So our apostle, having in the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, treated of the **deep mysteries of electing grace**, and the effects of it, he shuts up his whole discourse in an admiration of God, and an ascription of glory unto him, Romans 11:8-36. **So is it with all holy and humble souls**, upon their instruction in and view they have of the mysteries of the gospel, in that marvellous light whereinto they are translated. The **other sort** satisfy themselves in their own speculation, without being much affected with the greatness or glory of God, in the things they imagine themselves to know.

3. **The former sort do find real food and nourishment in this strong meat, so that their faith is strengthened, their love increased, and holiness promoted in their souls by them.** They find by experience that such things do not only sound in their ears or float in their minds in the notion of them, but that really and truly their faith feeds upon them; and their whole souls being affected with them, they are encouraged and directed by them in the course of their obedience. **Others, whose desires proceed from the distempers of pride and curiosity, find none of those things; and so their itching ears are suited, and their inquisitive minds satisfied, they regard them not.** Hence it is hard to see one of these notional persons either fruitful or useful; neither can they bear those parts of the yoke of Christ which would make necessary the constant exercise of faith and love.

4. **The former sort are always more and more humbled, the latter more and more puffed up**, by what they attain unto. But I must not further enlarge on these things. There yet remain two observations more, with the naming whereof we shall shut up our discourses on this chapter.

Obs. 4. **The assiduous exercise of our minds about spiritual things, in a spiritual manner, is the only means to make us to profit in hearing of the word.** [And that is we must be spiritually minded and not earthly minded, contemplating those truths continually, meditating on his law day and night...and then we will good success...against the enemies of your soul.]

When our spiritual senses are exercised by reason of constant use, they are in a readiness to receive, embrace, and improve, what is tendered unto them. Without this we shall be dull and slow in hearing, — the vice here so severely reprov'd.

Obs. 5. **The spiritual sense of believers, well exercised in the word, is the best and most undeceiving help in judging of what is good or evil, what is true or false, that is proposed unto them.**

Common Grace vs. Special/Saving Grace Described

code13

Self-examination - what to look for to judge of yourself if you have saving grace, what the Spirit does in the Soul. Christ's blood purchases common graces. The foundation for the contempt of grace. The importance of the mind and understanding. Light and affections together is vital. The value of Christian knowledge; to grow in it. Grace and knowledge are inseparable. Instructions on being spiritually minded.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

by Thomas Shepard (Vol. II)

Part I, SECT. V. p332

V. Sanctification, in the room of Self-seeking.

This work of the Spirit hath had many scratches, and passed under divers censures, that if that question should be asked of it, which once Christ made concerning himself, "Whom say men that I am?" We shall find five several apprehensions of it.

1. Some have made it **common**, and that this treasure may be digged out of dung-hills, that the Lord casts these pearls to swine, that a carnal heart may have all these gifts and graces which the righteous have, and Adam had, and perish at last. And hence no evidence from it at all.

2. Some have not made it thus common, but proper to the elect, and that none are justified but they are sanctified, and e contra. But it hath been, and, they think it is so disguised with the mixture of sin and temptation, and cannot be known or very hardly. If so, that though the Lord Jesus "come unto his own," and dwell not only in their houses, but in their hearts, yet they know him not.

3. Some say it may be known, but not as dwelling in our hearts, but as inherent in Christ, making the inherent grace of Christ in Christ himself to be our sanctification, which the apostle makes to be our righteousness. And so as the Papists abolish Christ's righteousness for justification, by making it to consist only in infusion of grace in us; these abolish Christ to be our sanctification, by making all our sanctification to consist in inhesion [[the action or state of inhering in something- inherent](#)] in Christ out of us.

4. Some say there is a sanctification in us; but wherein doth it consist? Not in any habitual holiness, or graces in us, but in the immediate actings of Christ in us, and so the Lord makes his music without any strings, and reveals things to us without eyes, and makes us live without any power of life: and so after justification they put a Christian in such an estate of sanctification as that he is a mere patient, in next disposition to move, if he be moved; like a weather-cock, which hath no power at all to move, but as the wind blows it, good or bad.

5. Some grant that there is a sanctification proper to the faithful, and in the faithful an habitual holiness, and consisting in a most blessed, inward, total change. But when they come to application of this to themselves, they think that if they have some reformation with some inward affection, they think every overly change is sanctification, and this must be a good evidence to them. And so like some herbalists that treat of the sovereign excellencies of several herbs, but when they come to gather them in the garden, they rake their counterfeits in the room of them. The causes of which variety of apprehensions is the rareness of it (and therefore it is unknown), and the corrupt experience of men.

I shall therefore lay level these things, by shewing you what that measure of sanctification is which is in us, **and which is peculiar to the elect, and which also may be known by them which have it:** and therefore shall not speak of sanctification at large, which is the change of the whole man by the death of Christ, whereby he is separated from sin, and sin mortified in him; and by the life of Christ, whereby he is dedicated unto Christ, and lives his life. But I still treat of it now, so far forth especially as this change may be known by it; and therefore I oppose it to self-seeking.

Question. But why do you oppose sanctification to self-seeking'?

Answer 1. Because this sanctification, I now speak of it so far forth as it may be seen; now it is seen here chiefly, because it may be said, here it is. But hypocrites have a change. Wherein may it be known to be different from theirs? **Why, the change of the heart chiefly appears in the change of the utmost end.**

2. Because as the pollution of the whole man, and all his actions, civil, moral and religious, consist chiefly, and appear in this **self-seeking, or making ourselves our utmost end. This makes the most glorious actions vile, and stains them all. So the sanctification of a man consists chiefly, and appears in making the Lord our utmost end in all we do:** So that though the actions be never so mean and poor, yet this puts a glory and lustre on them, and is the crown of them, even of the "giving of a cup of cold water," Matt. vi. 22. "If thy eye be single." Look therefore, as before the Lord justifies the soul, every man living seeks himself as his last end and good; and out of this captivity no power can redeem them, **Dan. iv. 30, Gen. xi. 4. So after it, the Lord sanctifies the soul with such a measure of his grace, as makes the Lord his utmost end: And this no other have.**

Let me, therefore, shew you what this sanctification is more fully, and that with all the chief ingredients in it, that so it may be the better known.

It is the renovation of the whole man, appearing in the change of a man's utmost end. But more particularly,

It is that work of the Spirit in the soul, whereby the soul **beholding the glory of Christ**, and feeling his love, hereupon **closeth with the whole will of Christ, and seeketh to please him, as his happiness and utmost end.**

For look, as in **self-seeking** there are four things:

1. A man beholds himself, and some good in himself.

2. Loves himself abundantly.
3. Pleaseth his own will.
4. Doth this as his utmost and last end. So here in its description of sanctification, which I oppose chiefly to self-corruption, are four things.

1. The soul beholds the Lord in all his glory, seeing of him present with him, in all his glory, and set before him. Psal. xvi. 8. For this is one necessary ingredient to his sanctification and seeking the Lord as his utmost end. For why doth a man seek himself?. He fees some glory and good in himself, non in the Lord. And hence we say of some men, whose pride spoils their parts, they know themselves too well, and hence saints, when they see their own vileness, and fee the Lord, they are so far from seeking, as that they loathe themselves. Therefore when the Lord reveals himself to the soul in his glory, this makes them seek him and not themselves, I Cor. i. 30. "Christ is made wisdom, righteousness," &c. "that all might glory in him." For this is the glory of Christ, and the first principle of seeking the Lord, the soul fees his good laid up in the Lord more than in himself; nay, wholly in the Lord, not at all in himself [As Shepard says in another place, "Faith springs from the destruction of our own excellency and the ruins of it." See pg 100]. His wisdom is in him; he cannot but wilder till utterly lost without him. His righteousness is in him, he could never have one sin pardoned by angels' holiness without him. His sanctification is in him, he could not have the least thought nor desire, but the Lord must work it in him. His redemption is in him, there could not be freedom one hour from unknown evils but by him. Hence seeing him such an one, he seeks him. As why do men seek men, especially if great? Why do men desire to stand before princes, and please them, so that they will not gladly offer them the least distaste? Because they see them before them, beholding of them, apt to be angry, if displeased; and their greatness awes them. So here. Why is not the Lord Jesus pleased? He is not seen in his glory, nor made really present; and hence, Rev. v. 12,13. When they saw him "on his throne, they cast down their crowns, and gave him glory."

2. The soul also feels his love, and so abundantly loves him again. For how come men to seek themselves in everything, and they cannot but do it? It is because they love themselves, and that abundantly, necessarily, as fire burns; so, though they burn so hot in this love, that at last they consume themselves. So how do any, can any seek the Lord? We know the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, "Love seeks not her own." When the Sun hath put out this fire of our self-love, when the sense of the Lord's love hath kindled that love to the Lord again, as that it abundantly loves Christ, now it will seek the things of Christ, and not its own things. And as there is abundance of self-love, that men are eaten up with it; so there must be much love, which must be abundantly shed in the heart, so as to eat up that, arising from the sense of the Lord's love, and that abundantly. For many a man comes to have some good will and affection and love to the Lord, but yet never comes to seek the Lord as his last end, and live to him. Why? Because he hath not tasted abundantly of the Lord's mercy, grace, and love, Psal. lxxxvi. 12, 13. And hence the incomparable spirit of Paul, "I seek not yours, but you:" Wherein? In being "willing to spend." But, save yourself Paul. Nay, "and to be spent;" With much ado? Nay, "most gladly." Though you love me not, because I love you. So here, though Christ should not love, yet he is worthy, he hath done enough, and now the soul will not only do, but rejoice, nay, in sufferings; because his love is not dropped, but shed in our hearts. And hence it is a never-failing rule, little love or assurance of it, little seeking the Lord; much assurance, much seeking him.

3. Hereupon the soul closeth with the whole will of Christ, and pleaseth it, because it pleaseth him. It is with every man, as it was with Sampson, he would needs have a wife of the Philistines. Why so? Judges xiv. 3. Because "she pleaseth me." So, why will men seek themselves, lave themselves, love themselves, and please their own wills? Because it pleaseth them. Look therefore as the soul when he loved himself, did seek to please only his own will in everything, and it is good because it pleaseth me; so the soul, whose heart is now endeared to Christ, though he cannot perfectly do it (that is in heaven) yet he seeks to give the whole will of Christ content, because it pleaseth Christ. And this is that God hath sworn his people shall have, Luke i. 74, 75. "And that Christ hath delivered us from all our enemies," (for the great reason why men cleave not to the Lord, and please, which we account friends, which are the Lord's enemies, Satan and world) "to serve him without fear," i; e. in love, and "in holiness and righteousness," i.e., his whole will, "all our days." And hence, Eph. v. 8, 9, "They were darkness, but now are light," by faith, now there is sanctity; "walk as children of light." Wherein consists that? "Proving what is acceptable to God." Hence, Eph. vi. 6, They should "please Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." And this is so necessary, that, Gal. i. 10, the apostle saith, "If I please men," i. e., their wills, "I am not Christ's." And this is "walking worthy" of the Lord, pleasing him in all things," and this is fruit, the end of the tree and leaves also, and differencing a tree from all other, that be beautiful, but barren, Col. i. 10.

Quest. But why do you make this to consist in pleasing the whole will of Christ, and not of God the Creator?

Answer 1. Because our sanctification now cannot please God as a Creator, though it may please him that is the Creator in Christ, because only perfect holiness can please him.

2. **Because Christ hath pleased the Father by the holiness of himself:** now this being done, and therefore God having put all things into his hands, having done that for us, we are to give content to him. **And herein our sanctification is differing from the image Adam had,** who in closing with the will of God, looked upon him as a Creator; ours respects a Redeemer, who hath bought us to himself, and hence we are to respect him in our actions now.

pg 206-210

CHAP. XV. SECT. I.

Shewing that there is a vast difference betwixt a sincere Christian, and the closest hypocrite.

Doct. 3. That there is a vast and great internal difference between those that are sincere indeed, and the closest hypocrites. Or, there are certain qualifications within, and operations of God upon the souls of the faithful, which make a very great difference between them, and the closest hypocrites.

For the Lord Jesus here sees the difference, and shows the difference, though but generally, I confess, in this verse: "Some were wise, others were foolish." Wisdom and folly are different qualities, and though these keep their residence **chiefly in the mind**, yet the Lord never did infuse any true wisdom into the mind, but there was a great change of the heart, nor never was any man left unto his own folly, but it did not only argue an-evil heart, but did ever arise from thence, Eph. iv. 18. So that

Christ not only sees, but discovers to the churches a vast difference for them to take notice of. I confess the difference was not only in regard of open profaneness, or common conversation in living like men of the world, yet a difference here there is. For the opening of this point, I shall open these particulars.

1. That the Lord does make this inward difference.
2. That it is so great that the faithful do see it.
3. That it is so great that others cannot receive it when it is offered.
- 4- That it is so great that they cannot understand it.
5. The reasons why the Lord makes this internal difference.

1. That the Lord does make it. Only some scriptures now, Eph. v. 8, "You were darkness, now are light;" Eph. ii. 1. "You were dead, now are alive." It is true, there is a life hypocrites have which puts much difference between them and others; but if that does, what does the life of Christ in a man arising from the death of every sin? Acts xxvi.18. The Lord turns not only from "darkness to light, but from the power of Satan to God," together with which arises remission of sins. What is this, then, but a greater change than from hell to heaven? Is it not worse than hell to be under his, not only temptations, but power? And is it not better to be with God, and be in heaven?

2. It is so great that the faithful do see it. I confess at first work it is like a confused chaos; they know not what to make of it, but afterwards they can and do, 1 John v. 18, 19. We know we are "born of God, free from the dominion of sin," of which he speaks, and that the whole world lies in wickedness. **Before a man is born again, he sees no difference between him and other men, but now he doth**; and hence it is frequent in scripture for saints to express their experience of their double estate, Tit. iii. 2, 3 [² to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. ³ For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.] and they are commanded to try themselves, and may not only see Christ out of them, but Christ in them, except they be reprobates, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, and hence commanded to give thanks for this, Col. i. 12, which commands being evangelical, have a power to all the elect.

3. It is so great that others cannot receive it when it is offered, they are so far from having it in them, or counterfeiting, or making this inward work, that they cannot receive it, no not when the Spirit itself comes to work it, John xiv. .17, "The Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive." **It doth receive prophetic gifts, and common graces; but there is a higher and more divine work which they cannot receive**, Rom. viii. 7, "It is not subject, nor can be subject to the law of God," where the holiness of God appears.

4. It is so great that they cannot understand it [grace]; what it is spiritually, **only in fancy**, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "neither can he know them;" and hence **men lie groping all their life for grace, and ask and have not, because they know not the thing they would have**, John iv. 10, "If thou knewest, thou would ask, and he would give." [So, regarding the sinner's prayer, the praying sinner has no idea what he is asking for since he is still unsaved, blind, and spiritually dead; i.e., if he did know, "he would give", but since he

doesn't, he (Jesus) won't. Hence this is another proof of the sin of presumption of the sinners prayer¹.] A beast cannot conceive what a life a man leads.

¹ Another point by John Flavel, Treatise of the Soul of Man, pg 45: But to me it is clear that the soul receives not its beginning by traduction or generation; for that which is generable, is also corruptible; but the spiritual, immortal soul (as it has been proved to be) is not subject to corruption. Nor is it imaginable how a soul should be produced out of matter, which is not endued with reason: or, how a bodily substance can impart that to another, which it has not in itself. If it be said, the soul of the child proceeds from the souls of the parents, that cannot be; for spiritual substances are impartible, and nothing can be descended from them. "And it is absurd to think the soul of Adam should spring from one original, and the souls of his offspring from another, while both his and theirs are of one and the same nature and species." To all which let me add, that as the assertion of their creation is most reasonable, so it is most scriptural. It is reasonable to think and say, "That no active power can act beyond, or above the proper sphere of its activity and ability". But if the soul be elicited out of the power of matter, here would be an effect produced abundantly more noble and excellent than its cause. And as it is most reasonable, so it is most scriptural. [And so in conversion, it is the Spirit that quickens, not the will of man, for "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." See also, John 1:13 and Romans 9:16; hence the fruitlessness of the sinner's prayer or any like prayer or petition of an unregenerate man. This is one reason why Thomas Shepard called the sinner's prayer a *wicked presumption*.]

5. Now follow the reasons why the Lord doth make this internal difference, or showing that there is this difference.

SECT. II

Reason 1. In regard of the infinite love of the Father, which he bears to the meanest believer above the more glorious hypocrite that ever lived. It is an everlasting love, and it is like that love he bears towards his own Son, John xvii. 16. Now if the Lord's love be not common to both, neither is the work or fruits of his love common in both, but a great difference there must be; for as it is with men, so it is with the Lord. There are three expressions of love. 1. Their looks. 2. Their promises of love. 3. Their works of love; so the Lord doth, ---

1. Create in his people glorious apprehensions of his blessed face appearing in the glass of the gospel, Rev. xxii. 4. ["They shall see His face, and His name *shall be on their foreheads.*"]

2. The Lord makes many promises of love unto his people, which go to the very heart to cheer them, Hos. ii. 14. ["Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her."]

3. The Lord confines not his love to looks and words, though it is wonderful to have the least of them; but you may read his love in his works of love. Now, those works peculiar to them, are first and chiefly

the donation of Christ, for a man in redemption to a man in vocation; and then the peculiar fruits of this love expressed in peculiar operations upon the soul, and in the soul, which God's truth in the new covenant promises, and God's faithfulness executeth, Jer. xxxi. 33. and xxxii. 40, to take away the "stony heart," to write "laws in the heart," to "put fear into the heart." These are the **peculiar effects of this new covenant**, and they are operations in a man, which only the elect feel and wonder at grace for; Ephes. ii. 4, 5. "According to his great love hath he quickened us together with him." There is a kind of resurrection of a man's soul when it is brought home to Christ. Look as the bodies of the saints shall be different at the last day, so when God raiseth their souls from the dead here, there is a difference now.

Reason 2. In regard of the death and blood of the Lord Jesus, which was shed not only that he might be a God unto them, but that they might be a "peculiar people" unto him, Tit. ii. 14, "He gave himself for his people," not only to justify his people, but also to cleanse his church, Eph. v. 26, 27. **For this has been God's great plot, first to perfect his people in their head**; and then, lest there should be a golden head, and feet and hands of iron and clay, and because the church is not found lovely, therefore the Lord makes it lovely by little and little here, until it "appear without spot or wrinkle" at the last day. **Do you think, brethren, that Christ's blood was shed to work no more in his people than in hypocrites?** Was it only shed to take away guilt of sin from God's sight, and then to let a man wallow in the sins of his own heart? **It is true, there is a work of sanctification which hypocrites have, which Christ's blood purchases, for I believe all common mercy and patience comes by Christ's blood,** and so all common gifts and graces; but yet, beloved, there is a vast difference, **their wills were never changed, though their minds were much enlightened**; hence they sinned willfully. The Lord never was dear to them, hence secret despite grew up, that at last they committed the unpardonable sin, Heb. x. 26, 29.

Reason 3. Because those graces or qualifications, together with the operations of them which are in the faithful, are the same with Christ's, the same in kind and nature, John i. 16. "**From his fulness we have received grace for grace.**" hence we are said to "**bear his image**", and because it is but little at first, hence "**from glory to glory,**" 2 Cor. iii. 18. Now the Lord Jesus had not only the Spirit which he had without measure, but also he had many divine qualities, habits, or graces, **which it is blasphemy to think that they were hypocritical or common**, which the faithful receive from his fulness, and wherein they are made in their measure like unto him. **So the saints have not only the Spirit, but also those peculiar operations of it wrought in them by the Spirit**, whereby they come to be made like unto the Lord Jesus. Hence, as there was an infinite distance between the Lord Jesus and the best hypocrite, so the likeness that they have of the Lord Jesus, makes a difference now. And look, as there is a difference between a plant and a beast, a beast and a man, so there is a glorious life which saints have begun here in this life, which none have but themselves, 1 Pet. v. 10. They have the "first fruits," that which is meat and drink, which no man knows of that lies in hypocrisy and sins.

Reason 4. If there should be no difference, then these evils would follow: **1. This lays a foundation of contempt of grace**, and of the beauty of holiness in the hearts and lives of God's people: for look as it is in the work of the Son in redemption, if Christ should have died as much for Judas as for Peter, and suspended the act of faith to apply this on the free will of either, then Judas had as much cause to thank Christ for his kindness as Peter and Peter had no more cause of blessing Christ for his love in redeeming him than Judas; and what **cold praises** will he then give him! **So if the Spirit of Christ should**

sanctify or call a saint no more than an hypocrite, then the one has no more cause to be thankful for the work of the Spirit than the other: and when a man comes to look upon the work of the Spirit, and the graces of it, there is cold water cast upon those; this is no more than what a hypocrite has. Christ has not only redeemed by price, but also by power, from the power of Satan, sin, darkness, delusion, and not to be thankful for this, is not to be thankful for the redemption of Christ. Thou shalt never have it then that dost despise the Spirit of grace, whereby thou art but commonly sanctified.

2. Because this abolishes the use of all conditional promises made in the word; for you know they are made to some qualification or work of the Spirit in a man, some to mourning, poverty, faith, hunger, lostness, &c. now, if there should be no difference between seeming works in hypocrites and these, then, 1. The truth of the promises is destroyed; for the Lord saith, "They that hunger shall be satisfied." I will answer, hypocrites may hunger, and yet not be satisfied. 2. The use of these promises should be lost; for why should a man then cast his soul upon God's faithfulness in the promise, when it is but common love to him and hypocrites? If it be replied, the one has Christ, the other not. I answer, it is very true; but then I ask, Who is he a Christ to? It must needs be to a particular people described in the word by their peculiar qualities, flowing from their forms and subjects by which they are known? and now consider, Rev. xxii. 19. "Is God a God of the dead, and not of the living only?"

3. Because this makes the most holy men that ever lived deceivers of themselves and others; only look upon John, Christ's beloved disciple, and bosom-companion, he had received the anointing to know him that is true, "and he knew him, that is: true," 1 John ii. 3. But how did he know that? He might be deceived (as it is strange to see what a melancholy fancy will do, and the effects of it; as honest men are reputed to have weak brains, and never saw the depths of the secrets of God.) What is his last proof? "Because we know his commandments," i. e., we have them writ in our hearts, and keep, them, though we cannot fulfill them, it makes us every way more holy: Christ doth not keep them only, but we, through his grace, keep them: thus he proves it by a work in him. Now, thus I reply: if all works in the souls of saints be common to hypocrites, then John went upon false grounds, deceived himself, and all that heard him, and all the churches that ever were to this day.

p229-232

CHAP. XVI. SECT. I.

Shewing that the hypocrisy of the heart proceeds from a want of saving illumination in the understanding.

The spring or the great cause and original of evangelical truth and hypocrisy is the mind of man.

For here there was an apparent difference between virgins in their practice and in their wills, as has been shewn; yet the Lord expresses it in general thus, that some of them were wise, (which is one part of the perfection of the understanding) and some of them were foolish (which is the great defect of light in the mind or understanding) because the truth of the one and the falsehood of the other,

manifested that their hearts were, in their heads and minds; and the truth in the one, and hypocrisy in the other did arise and was maintained by wisdom in some of their minds, and by folly in the mind of some others. **Folly or want of divine light** made the one unready for Christ, wisdom or having of divine light, made the other prepared for him: not that it doth exclude the evil or change of the will and affections, but because they manifest themselves, and are maintained in the mind. **Hence I say, one great reason or original of both lies in the mind.** Matt. vi. 22, 23. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body is light," &c. **The eye or mind of a man** fits like a coach-man, and guides the head-strong affections; **if now this be blind, there will be falls and deviations in crooked ways,** John iii. 19, 20. "Light is come." Now what is the condemnation? Men love darkness," i.e., will be blind, and having sore minds and hearts, will not look up to the sun. They see not, nor receive not the truth in love, and hence condemned, and *e contra*. Hence, Deut. xxix. 1, 2, 3, 4. Moses sets down the causes of all their evils: **"The Lord has not given you eyes to see to this day." They did see and hear by natural and acquired knowledge, but not by a divine, created, infused knowledge,** all that God had wrought and done for them. Hence when the Lord intends to seal down the Jews under unbelief, Isaiah vi. 10, the Lord then said, "Shut their eyes lest they see, and so be converted." The heart makes the eyes blind, and the mind makes the heart fat. A man that is at enmity with God, the Lord sets him against himself. Hence men are left of God to their own lusts, Luke xix. 42, 44. "O that thou hadst known! and they knew not the day of visitation." Hence, Deut. xxxii. 29. "O that this people had been wise to consider their latter end!" You know it is, in the Proverbs of Solomon the frequent title of those that are sincere and false-hearted, the one is called wise, and the other foolish; insomuch, that some divines have made a **necessity of a change and turning about of the will, when there is fulness and clearness of light in the mind.** Else they say a man might be sapiens and yet impious too, which cannot be. But I dispute not about that; **there be many brute creatures that imitate the knowledge of man, yet there is no mind of man or reasonable soul in them [see pg 703, 405, 712, 712, 97]; so hypocrites may have excellent abilities of reason, and yet fall short of that new mind, the eye and director of the whole man, that the saints have. It is ever dark night with them, the sun of glory never did yet arise upon them.**

Section II

Because all divine light of glory is ever powerful through Christ to change the heart. Hence if hypocrites had it, their hearts would be sincere, which is not so, and hence they ever want [lack] it, whatever light else they have; and hence those that have it must be sincere, John viii. 32. "You shall know the truth, and it shall make you free," i.e., from your bondage of fears and sins; hence David prays for light, Psalm cxix. 33, 34, and then he shall be set at liberty. As iron is drawn to the load-stone **by a secret hidden virtue,** so **there is a secret virtue of divine light that draws the most iron heart;** nay, **changes it,** John xvii. 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth," &c. For this is the difference between God and man's teaching: and hence when the gospel comes in power, it comes in demonstration; **whereby the heart is mightily overpowered,** that it cannot but fall down before God, whose voice and truth it hears. And hence the young man saw some worth in Christ, but not enough, and hence he forsook Christ. **Truth is not stones, but bread to them that see it indeed.**

2. **Because the mind is the first inlet of all sin and grace** and hence all hypocrisy springs from thence. Hence when Satan laid his train to blow up all the world by sin, he first enters into dispute and parley with Eve, and as the apostle speaks, deceived her, Tim. ii. 14. "The woman was first deceived." And hence when Satan came with his last and strongest temptation, to draw away the heart of Christ to

him, he attempted it by a **sudden presenting to his mind** the glory of all the world, hoping hereby to get in. Nay in the unpardonable sin there *issumma excitas*, to call evil good; and good evil. And hence the Pharisees that did commit it, were called blind; and when sin is entered, it **strengthens itself by the mind**, Heb. iii. 13. "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." As it is with cities, they might easily be taken, but for the forts that are built about them, and the soldiers that are in them: **so men set up their hearts and minds above, and against the Lord Jesus**. The power of sin lies in the power of darkness, as the power of a weak state in the wisdom of its counsel. And hence when the Spirit comes, all the work of it is expressed by conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment, because convince one effectually, and you convert him. And hence when the Lord comes with his life, he comes in by light, Ephesians v. 14. "Christ shall give thee light." **And hence when the gospel comes to take away all darkness and sin, it is said, Satan's chief policy lies in this, to blind men's eyes**, 2 Cor. iv. 4. **either by obscuring the light, or by kindling a false light in their minds, that they shall think they see, when their darkness remains**; not but that there is filth enough in the will, but Satan knows that Christ shines into the heart by the mind; and hence he blinds men, and then he knows he shall damn men. Beloved, if men had the Spirit, it would lead them into all truth, now this the world cannot receive, because, John xiv. 17. "It knows him not." This is that which opens and shuts to all life and sin; **not that bare light can change the will, but the Lord doth it by the power of his truth and light: and as it is with water coming through some mines, there is a healing virtue in it, so light coming from everlasting love, it heals men of their evils.**

SECT. III.

Use 1. Hence see the danger of two sorts of men especially.

1. Of those that fly from the light, which is done sundry ways. I will mention only one that is used by a false heart. A man is troubled in mind concerning his estate, fears death and hell, and so few shall be saved, how can I be one, &c. How comes he to fear? The Lord has by his Spirit in the word discovered and found out his sin, the thief is taken and apprehended, and condemned, he hears still, but yet can find no peace. Why? Because he lives in those sins that he is convinced of. Hence the word raiseth damps and heart-qualms, that he has no peace, but is ever pulled from his own bottom and hypocrisy, and the word discovers more sins, and hence has no peace. The word will not give nor offer Christ and a base lust together, nor will not suffer any to have them both in peace. Hereupon the soul, finding no rest nor peace (**which the false heart seeks for chiefly**) flies from the light, especially if it has found out a shorter cut to its peace, by any device or golden delusions of men. And now they will hear there no more, and now the publishers of God's truth are tyrannical tormenters of the consciences of them that be weak, false prophets, that lead them out of the way of peace. **And because of this, they think they were led out of the way of truth, because out of the way of peace**. Or if they do come, they can sit with disdain and contempt of men (alas! they speak according to their light) and of all the truths of God, which shall one day be preached over again in flames of fire to their eternal horror. Revelation vi. 2. It is said, "Christ rides on a white horse, conquering and to conquer." Men have unruly hearts and strong hearts, and they will not die, nor yield presently. And hence when one sin is cast away, another steps into the room of it, and when that is gone, another supplies the place of it, and commonly the strongest sin and temptation is the last. Now, hence Christ goes on, rides on in the chariot of the word, conquering and to conquer still. Those that do yield, he saves; those that will not, he slays. Now these

poor creatures have had Christ's arrows in them, and are wounded for some sin, but the Lord discovers more still; hence at last they fly away with the arrows in their hearts for ease. O poor creatures, know it, the Lord Jesus will find you out! You will not be conquered by him, you shall never be saved by him. **You have light, you shall have delusions, endless unknown hypocrisy and darkness to be your portion.** There is never a plain heart but he accounts that wound and trouble greatest mercy, and blesseth the Lord, that **he will not give him his sins and peace with them too.**

2. Those that fly not from the light of the truth, but give it the hearing, but yet let it slip; either not minding it, then, or **not pondering it afterwards**; that before they come, **thirst not for more light**, look not up for it, **nor are mourning when the Lord hides it from their eyes**. Some there be that be such all-sufficient men, so good they need be no better, so wise that they need no more; some insufficient indeed to know, and hence ever learning, hearing, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. If light breaks not in, they can lie in darkness still, and not mourn; and think no more of it than a tale that is told, or news that is brought. O look to your standing: for you are in the high road to hypocrisy, and it is impossible you should be kept from it that lie so; John xii. 35. "Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." **Satan knew, if light came in, Christ would come in: And therefore know it, all that time thou hast heard and heard, but not with divine light, hast got only somewhat to prate on now, to be of another opinion now from what thou wast: O, now, Satan has been let loose, by the dreadful vengeance of almighty God, to blind the, that so thou mightst die in thy hypocrisy and sin.** O poor captives! **mourn under this**, and behold your danger for time to come.

Use 2. Hence see the reason why many that have had mighty strong affections at first conversion, afterwards become dry, and wither, and consume, and pine, and die away, and now their hypocrisy is manifest, if not to all the world by open profaneness, yet to the discerning eye of living Christians, by a formal, barren, unsavoury, unfruitful heart and course, **because they never had light to conviction as yet.** You shall have some ignorant creatures awakened by some thundering ministry, weep and mourn for sin, and after vanish into smoke, being never convinced of sin. Land floods of sorrow, without a spring of light, are dried up, and make the heart more fruitful in sin afterward. Many go under fears of wrath, and never get peace because never convinced of wrath. Many are affected with Christ, and with joy of the gospel, as the stony ground, but they wanting depth of earth, of conviction, die away again; and hence all the world can never stop a Christian in his shining profession, no more than they can the sun in his course, as Paul, 2 Cor. v. 11. "We knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men." And hence Moses, Heb. xi. 27, feared no frowns of Pharaoh, cared for no honours from Pharaoh; he saw the God that was invisible; and hence Christ prays for his disciples, to be kept from evil. "The world has not known me, but these have known me," John xvii. When men are condemned to die, they take on, because now they see death, but here in time of health they see it not. If men wrong a child, their heart smites them, and grieves; but the Lord is abased, dishonoured, and men are not affected, because they want **[lack]** light, and see it not. If men be to match with a prince, or stand before him, it is counted blessedness; but before Christ, it is a burden, because men know it not. It is strange to see some people carried with mighty affection against sin and hell, and after Christ. And what is hell you fear? A dreadful place. What is Christ? They scarce know so much as devils do, but that is all. O, trust them not! Many have, and these will all, away to some lust, or opinion, or pride, or world; and the reason is, they never had light enough, John v. 35, "John was a burning and shining light, and they did joy in him for a season," yet as glorious as it was, they saw not Christ by it, especially not with divine

light. It is rare to see Christians full both of light and affection. And, therefore, consider of this, many a man has been well brought up, and is of a sweet, loving nature, mild, and gentle, and harmless, likes and loves the best things, and his meaning, and mind, and heart is good, and has more in heart than in show, and so hopes all shall go well with him. **I say, there may lie greatest hypocrisy under greatest affections; especially if they want light.** You shall be hardened in your hypocrisy by them. I never liked violent affections and pangs, but only such as were dropped in by light; **because those come from an external principle, and last not, but these do.** Men are not affrighted by the light of the sun, though clearer than the lightning.

Use 3. Hence take heed of contenting yourselves with every kind of knowledge. Do not worship every image in your own heads, especially you that fall short of truth or the knowledge of it; for when you have some, there may be yet that wanting which may make you sincere. There are many men of great knowledge, able to teach themselves and others too, and yet their hearts are unsound. How comes this to pass? Is it because they have so much light? **No, but because they want much; and therefore content not yourselves with every knowledge.** There is some knowledge which men have by the light of nature, (which leaves them without excuse) from the book of creation, some by power of education, some, by the light of the law, whereby men may know their sin and evils, some by the letter of the gospel, and so men may know much, and speak well, and so "in seeing see not;" some, by the Spirit may see much, so as to prophesy in Christ's name, and yet be bid depart, Mat. vii. **Now there is a light of glory, whereby the elect see things in another manner;** to tell you how, they cannot, it is the beginning of light in heaven, and the same Spirit that fills Christ, filling their minds, that they know, by this anointing, all things, which if ever you have, you must become babes and fools in your own eyes. God will never write his law in your minds, till all the scribblings of it are blotted out. Account all your knowledge loss for the gaining of this. **It is sad to see many a man pleasing himself in his own dreaming delusions, yet the poor creature in seeing sees not, which is God's heavy curse upon men under greatest means,** and which lays all waste and desolate, Isaiah vi. "How long? Until all be waste," ver. 11.

Use 4. Hence see the right way of living a life of truth, of "being an Israelite in whom is no guile." Keep light in your minds, and you will keep truth alive in your hearts and lives. Many a sincere heart may have hypocrisy and much unsoundness in him, though he be no hypocrite. But how comes it so to be? And whence so little truth? and whence so many fears and doubts about their estates continually? O, men lose that glorious light that sometimes they have. For when you have it in an ordinance, O how sweet is the Lord and all his ways to you! Afterward you have lost your hearts, truly it is because you have lost your light.

Two ways hypocrisy vents itself, which God's people oppose.

1. In secret withdrawing of the heart to sin. O, now get light; for sin never draws away, **but by appearance of some good** at least, *pro hic et nunc*. James i. 14. Now put off the covering, keep the mind from being deceived, you will keep the heart from being hardened, deadened and withdrawn from God.

2. In performing duties, but not for Christ, **as their utmost end;** now the heart is bent this way, yet it fails, because light is gone, to see and behold the glory and blessedness of this. **Men that have honour**

or gain in their eye, are carried violently after it. Men that are bound for a voyage, will go through, their eye leads them. Stephen speaks till the stones were about his ears, "I see Jesus," (saith he) at the right hand of God." 2 Cor. xv. 58. "Be abundant in the Lord's work, knowing that your labour is not in vain." Hence David, Psalm cxix. **begs for knowledge of this and that, and then he will do it.** O therefore keep it in your minds as precious, Prov. ii. 10. "If knowledge be pleasant," etc. And pray to God to keep it for you. Light is in the sun, and not ceased to this day: so if the Lord would put in this light, and be the perpetual fountain thereof to you, it would abide, etc. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart," &c. Psalm cxix. 11.

Section IV

Hence, learn the cure of hypocrisy, viz. remove the cause, which is folly, and if you would be sincere, **O prize, and beg for more light, and love it, and you shall then after you have digged for it, find it.** Would it not be sad to be led blind-fold like them till they were in the midst of Samaria, so till in the midst of hell? Would it not be sad to be like Sodomites, groping for the door, especially you that are come over to this country for more of the knowledge of Christ. **O then beloved, take heed you bury not your minds in the earth, lose not your thoughts in the dung.** And you must stand one day before God, when the book of the secrets of your hearts shall be opened, when if found too light, then would it not be a doleful parting to lose the Lord Jesus after such light and affections, for want of a little more light? **O look to yourselves now!**

*Means 1. **Stick close to the guidance of the scriptures, and love them.*** Moses saith, "Then other nations shall say, what people so wise?" Deut. iv. 6. And these make "the men of God (a Tim. iii. 15.) full of God's Spirit, wise unto salvation;" and for neglect of **this, the Lord gave, and does give men up to strong delusions, that they believe lies,** viz. "because they loved not the truth." Never a truth but is unsealed by blood, and **revealed to be the infinite wisdom** of the Father, and **love** to poor lost men, where God opens all his heart; if men will despise these, it is a pity but they should be blinded. Do **not scoff at those that know the Lord here; they are scripture-learned men;** if not, never Spirit learned. Take this for your counsellor, in all your doubts and fears it will teach you. A man gets an opinion, or falls in love with a sinful corruption, both deceive him. Why so? Is there no word against against it? O, yes, but they will not hear it, but make God and scripture bow down to them, they will not be led by it. O, entreat the Lord to keep thee from that.

*Means 2. **Be abundant in meditation daily,*** Psalm cxix. 99. It is a hundred to one else if not miserably deluded. And as the Spirit convinceth first of sin, righteousness and judgment, so let your thoughts be. This makes a man see far, and see much.

*Means 3. **Practice what you know, and taste the sweetness of it there,*** Psalm cxix. 100. **And then the heart will grow savingly full of divine light.** Nothing makes men foolish but this. "O taste and see!" O, if men knew the sweet of this way of truth, they would ever walk in it, and bring others to submit to it! "Shall I hide from Abraham, that will teach his family?" Gen. xviii. 17. 19.

Means 4. Cast up your eyes to Christ glorified, being full of the Spirit for thee, and beg of him, as if he were with thee to send it down. As Solomon asked this. See John vii. 39.

Use 6. O learn to be exceeding thankful for any saving light the Lord has kindled in you, if ever it has been powerful to discover and remove the hidden hypocrisy of thy heart, that now the Lord has made thee plain and serious for him, that it is death not to live, heaven for to live unto him. O, then bless the

Lord for that means that did it for thee, thou mightst have perished in thy own delusions and dreams. Time was, when thou wast deceived; now the Lord has made thy eyes brighter than the sun, to see such things as are hid from great ones in the world. O though it be but a little, yet if real and saving light, bless him. A man that has been in midst of sands, and without a pilot, afterwards looks back, and saith. There I might have split. O, this is wonderful to him! O, Christ did thus !" I thank thee thou hast hid," &c. Mat. xi. 25. The Lord has hid them from heads and hearts of many wise and prudent, and ever they shall be hid, and e contra, reveal -ed them to thee, a babe, a weak one, a poor ignorant one, Mat. xvi. 17. "Flesh and blood has not revealed it," so as to build here on this righteousness, to bring all light and life from Christ, and cleave alone to him.

O, remember you are called "out of darkness into "marvellous light, to show forth his virtues!" What canst thou desire more than eternal life? And this is it, 1 John v. 20. John xvii. 30.

Self-examination, Evaluating Experience

code14

The value of one's true spiritual experience for our consolation, a work of grace in us. One good reason why we partake of the divine nature, to discern our hearts. Judging between common and saving grace. How to know if you are really saved.

from

Thomas Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins, p221-225 (Vol. 2)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=XE3xP-pLMM4C&pg=PA227&focus=viewport&output=text>

SECTION V.

O, therefore, content not yourselves with any hopes your estate is right, until you find this difference; for the Lord speaks peace only to his people, and his people are differenced from all others. Hence how can you say peace is yours, till this be cleared up unto you?

I shall speak to two sorts of people.

1. **Those that content themselves with anything that may stop and quiet conscience,** any slight work, any poor desires, any hedge faith, any moral performances, any groundless conjectures will serve their turn. And, being full, they can hear all sermons, no wind will shake them, no searching, threatening truths concern them; they are all so good, that they think the Lord means not them. Well, I say no more to you but this: Know it, that the time is coming that the Lord Jesus will try you, and examine you to the

very bran; and will descry all thy paint, and open all thy lusts and thoughts; and thy nakedness, and shame, and confusion shall be seen of all the world.

2. **Those that content themselves with the revelation of the Lord's love, without the sight of any work, or not looking to it.** I desire the Lord to reveal himself abundantly more and more, to all that have the Lord savingly revealed unto them. For this is the misery, Christ is a hidden thing, and so is his love. Yet consider,—

1. **God reveals not his love to any hypocrite,** but to his people that have a work far beyond them.

2. **That the testimony of the Spirit does not make a man a Christian, but only evidenceth it.** As it is the nature of a witness, not to make a thing to be true, but to clear and evidence it. And, therefore, whether the Spirit in the first or second place clears God's love, I dispute not, because it is doubtful; yet be sure you find out the difference, viz., **some work in you, that no hypocrite under heaven has.** Else what peace can you have?

1. Hereby you come to prevent the strongest delusion that Satan has to keep men in bondage to himself, viz., **to give men great peace, and sometimes great ravishment, while they are in their sins, that so he may harden them there still.** Luke xi. 21. Now, by taking this course, and going to Christ to untie the knots of Satan, you do now undermine the main plot of Satan, you break his head, having recourse to Christ to do this. **His policy is, let your heart alone, let Christ alone with that.** But now you may be sure all your consolation is of the right make.

2. Otherwise you quench the Spirit, and resist the testimony of the Spirit, at least one great part of it. For the Spirit when it does come to witness God's love, it answers all the doubts and objections of the soul that it had before. Now, the great doubt of God's people is not only,

Am I elected, am I justified and accepted? but, Am I called, am I sanctified, are not my desires, my faith, my love counterfeit, which I may have, and yet go to hell?

Now, the Spirit, when it comes, clears all doubts, not fully, but gradually; for it is the most clearing witness, and, therefore, (John xiv. 18,20), "At that day you shall know that I am in you, and you in me, and I in the Father." The Spirit does not only say, Christ is out of you in heaven, preparing and interceding; but in you, sanctifying, preparing thee

for glory, that art a vessel of glory; "and you in me," by faith, by love, desire, etc. Now, when a man shall say, I look to no work, but only for the Spirit to reveal the Lord's love; in seeming to desire the Spirit, he doth resist the Spirit of God.

3. Otherwise you shall be deprived of all that abundant consolation which the word holds out before you. For suppose you say, I look not to the work of God in me, to receive any consolation from that, or any promise made to that; I look only to the revelation of the Spirit.

Ans. 1. There is never a promise but the Comforter is in it, and they are given for that end, to give strong consolation; now, if you look to no work, nor no conditional promise, nor to find the condition in you, (which yet Christ must and doth work,) Lord, what abundance of sweet peace do you lose! Rev. vii. 17, The Lamb leads them to the "living fountain of waters, and God wipes away all tears." And, for aught I know, you shall die for thirst that refuse to do it. "O, slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have writ"—all that God has spoken. Ought you not thus to be comforted?

But, 2. If you look to a Spirit without a work, whilst you do seek consolation from the Spirit, you cannot avoid the condemnation of the word. **You say,** the Spirit has spoken peace to you. But do you love Christ? I look not to that, but to the Spirit. Why, the word saith, "He that loves not him, let him be anathema." So, is the league between your sins and your souls broken? **Ans.** I look not to that. Why, John saith, " He that committeth sin is of the devil." 1 John iii. 8, 9. Are you new creatures? I look not to that. Why, the word saith, " Unless you be born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And the Lord knows, but on your death beds, thus Satan may assault you, and then will the Lord say, Nay, look to yourself. The word shall be Belshazzar's terror. Consider Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

4. Look to it, else you shall be deprived of further manifestation and communion with the Lord Jesus. **The Lord reveals not all of himself at once;** the day dawns before the sun riseth, and there is a further manifestation of the Lord in this life to his people, not for, but when they, indeed, maintain such works before him ; (John xiv. 21,) "I will manifest myself unto him" How? O, saith Christ, "I'll come and sup with him." Never! think the Lord will dishonor himself so far as to come into a filthy heart. Sin does and will grieve God's Spirit, that he will only accuse, not speak peace to you, till all is mended.

5. Else you may fall everlastingly away, as those, (Heb. x. 29,) They had " received the knowledge of the truth and were sanctified," but their wills and hearts never changed.

O, take heed there be left "only a fearful looking for of vengeance." You stand on the brim of destruction every moment that do it not. **For it is plain hypocrisy not to bring works to the light; it is not ceasing to go on in a covenant of work.** John iii. 20. And if the Lord does love you, and you will not take the counsel of the word, the fire of the Lord shall try you. And when that comes, and conscience shall ask, Wherefore comes all this great evil upon me? when your miseries shall be great, O, it shall be said, This was because I loved not the Lord, I forsook the Lord, etc. O, therefore, look to the Lord now to cleanse you! Zech. xiii. 9.

Object. It is true there is a difference but is it possible to know it seeing that a false heart may go so far especially to know it in itself?

Ans. It is true, it is difficult for men ministers or angels to reveal it yet it is easy for the Lord Jesus to reveal it and this he does do. This light discovers hidden things as they are; his "**Spirit leads unto all truth.**" And this is a peculiar privilege and honor as for God to know; **so they, partaking of the divine nature, for them to know their own hearts,** Jer xvii 9. **And although it be an easy thing for hypocrites that never knew what grace meant, to be mistaken,** yet after the Lord has made it known to the elect, it is no easy matter to deceive them. As it is with apothecaries that know when they meet with counterfeit drugs or jewelers that know the difference between Bristol stones and pearls. As the blind man saith, "Whereas I was blind, now I see;" so I was dead, now behold I live. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new." 1 Pet ii 9. They are "**called out of darkness into marvelous light.**" **If they could not know a difference, why would the Lord command them to add one grace to another and "grow in grace"?** **May they not well reply, Alas! Lord, I know not trash from treasure? I know nothing thou hast commanded me to do, but hypocrites may have and do. I say, therefore, the work may be seen in itself, and that by a threefold light.**

I. **The light of the Word,** which is a divine revelation of or concerning God and man, and of man, not only as fallen in Adam, (which discovers all his sins, their nature, their end, etc.,) but as risen again and recovered in Christ; the birth, being, breeding of the new creature. It discovers all hypocrisy of the heart, so that they shall be forced to say, The Lord has found me out; and saints shall say, The Lord has done me good. As if the question be, Whom doth the Lord Jesus love? You need not go to heaven for it; "the word is nigh thee." Those that love Christ: who are those?" Those that keep his commandment*," etc. **So that the word is a light to discover truth from falsehood, the work of grace from the work of hypocrisy; and by this light saints may and do know**

what the work is. And it argues dreadful unbelief and hypocrisy not to do thus. John iii. 19-21. And this all the saints are commanded to do. 2 Pet. i. 19. "We (sealed with the Spirit) have a sure word of prophecy," etc. "Which is a light in a dark place," **both to reveal God's heart and our hearts unto us; hence "it makes us wise to salvation."**

2Tim3:15

II. **The light of the Spirit going with the word reveals the work**, without which the work cannot be seen no more than a book written in the fairest hand or print can be seen without light to see it by. And hence God's people cannot presently read what the Lord has written, etc. 1 John iii. 24. **That look as it is with Scripture, Papists say they are obscure, and how do we know them?** We answer, there are divine characters of majesty and glory stamped upon them, whereby we, by the same Spirit that writ them, see them, and are persuaded of them; so here. Or as it is in the work of creation: how can any see God in it? We say, in the very workmanship appears his power and eternity, wisdom, goodness, etc. Now, although atheists cannot see these, yet others do and can. So in the workmanship of the elect it is so. It is the glass of God's peculiar mercy and love. Now, they that never had it know it not, but the saints do, by the Spirit especially. Thus far we grant the Spirit's testimony, that it must reveal it.

III. **The light of experience and sense.** For saints have an experimental knowledge of the work of grace, by virtue of which they come to know it as certainly — as we dispute against the Papists — as by feeling heat, we know fire is hot; by tasting honey, we know it is sweet. Now, this is diversely apparent to experience.

1. By meditation of the work, in comparing it with the rule; for no dead creature can perform one spiritual living act of life **[another argument against the sinner's prayer];** no, not a good thought, though they may think of good things. Now, the Lord has given to his people a most exact rule of life; hence, by meditation, they may see how far it agrees or disagrees with the rule, and judge of a living act by it; and so of the God and Lord of life to be there. Hence, "try **yourselves; know you not that Christ is in you?**" etc. And hence I never knew yet a thinking Christian deceived, and hence I fear all that make not this their trade, will be to seek, and so to begin again. O, the Lord teacheth his people hidden mysteries by this.

2. **By the operation and working of it;** for grace may be in the heart, and yet lying asleep, and raked up under the ashes, not seen, not felt; but in the operation of it, it may, which is peculiar as the form is. For how do we know we love or delight in any creature? **By the operation of love and delight.** **[remember, delight in God is a grace.]**

How did Christ manifest to the Pharisees that they were "of their Father the devil"? Why, "his lusts they would do." So how can any tell he knows the Lord, or loves the Lord, or believes in the Lord? The operation discovers it. James ii. 22. And hence, (Gal. v. 6,) "faith which works by love." [that is, if you've been given a love for God, you will contemplate the things of God habitually, and take great delight in it!] And though hypocrites act like them, yet there is a peculiar virtue in the one that is not in the other.

3. **By their temptations and trials.** Deut. viii. 2, "The Lord has led thee forty years to prove thee, and show thee what was in thy heart." Rom. v. 4,5, "Tribulation breeds experience, and that hope," or expectation of that which shall never make us ashamed. I will name no more. But look as we said to them that cried out against prayer without a book, we answer, Has a man dwelt in his own heart so many years, and not known his wants, to make him pray? nor the Lord's work of mercy to make him bless; so here.

Object. 2. But if a man looks to his work, this will interrupt and break his peace.

Ans. 1. It may and doth break and interrupt a **false peace**; as many say, yet they trust in the Lord's mercy, O, it is a **presumptuous peace**.

2. Neglect of this yields most unpeaceableness, even in them that are sincere. You have peace, and then break out into pride and passion again; then question all. The Spirit will sigh, not sing in that bosom. Ps. xxxi. 1-3; Judg. xvi. 20. Neither can you avoid the condemnation of the word, though you maintain consolation from the Spirit, nor suspicion of hypocrisy.

3. This is the way to peace. 2 Pet. i. 7-9; Matt. xi. 29, 30.

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." 2Pet1:5-9

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light." Matt. 11:29-30

Christ's "yoke is easy," and yields peace in life and after life, too. Rev. xiv. 13, " Their works follow them." So that hereby comes double peace and rest.

1. From horror.

2. From sin, which is wonderful great.

Object. 3. But I look to Christ, I look to no work. If I have him I have all.

Ans. True. First look to have him, to be comprehended by him, that so you may comprehend him. But because you look for all in him, will you look for nothing from him? Will you have Christ sit in heaven, and not look that he subdue your lusts by the work of his grace, and so sway in your hearts? You despise his kingdom then. Do you seek for pardon in the blood of Christ, and never look for the virtue and end of that blood to wash you and make you without spot? etc. You despise his priesthood and blood then. Do you look for Christ to do work for you, and you not to do Christ's work and bring forth fruit to him? You despise his honor then. John xv. 8. **If I were to discover a hypocrite or a false heart, I would say, It is he that shall set up Christ, but loathe his work. To have Christ is sweet, as Capernaum; to follow Christ is heavy.** John xiv. 21,23.

Object. 4. But if I have the witness of the Spirit, what need I have any other difference?

Ans. The witness of the Spirit makes not the first difference. For, first, a man is a believer and in Christ, and justified, called, sanctified, before the Spirit does witness it, else the Spirit should witness to an untruth and a lie. For unbelievers are under wrath.

2. If the Spirit does not witness this peculiar work to be in you, and clear it to you, tell me how you can escape the anguish of conscience and the terrors of hell in your hearts, unless conscience be seared and blinded. When the Lord shall set conscience to ask and say, I choose none but whom I call, I call none but whom I justify, I justify none but whom I sanctify, and that not with a common, **but a peculiar work. Is it so with you?** If it be dark or doubtful, can you but think all your joys have been dreams and your witness delusions? Therefore look unto this.

Object. 5. But if I should do this, I should look to find some cleanness in myself, whereas I am to see nothing but ungodliness. Goats are clean creatures.

Ans. 1. When you stand before Christ's judgment seat to receive pardon, you are here to look upon all as unclean and yourselves ungodly.

2. When you come to look upon your sanctification, you are to see it as it is, mixed with sin and corruption, and so cause of being abased as low as hell for what is done; yet that cleanness and truth there is you must see too. Rom. vii. He felt "a law warring against the law of his mind;" **yet he felt another law, too, which he made an evidence of his being in Christ.** Rom. viii. 1.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,^[a] who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:1

Giving all the glory of it to Christ, "Not I, but Christ." And yet Paul was no goat. It is one thing to see grace in myself, another thing to look upon it as mine, to clear me withal. **You are to see the Lord's work, and not appropriate it to yourself.** And this, let me say, if there be no more than ungodliness in thee, and thou seest no more, thou shalt never see God in heaven. Heb. xii. 14. Nor didst never see him yet. 1 John iii. 6, 8. O, therefore, look to a work!

1. If you do not, you have no peace. For the Lord's sake do it before fire try you, or you stand scorching before the tribunal of God.

2. The sweet of it will be great; as there is nothing more bitter than Christ's departing with his holy presence, so nothing so sweet as Christ's cleaving to thee in his holy presence. **And truly sin was never bitter to that soul to which the work of the Lord Jesus was not sweet,** though it is accounted by some almost Popery to speak so. To this all promises are made; (1 Tim. iv. 8,) "Godliness hath them." It is true, they are made to Christ; i. e., to Christ mystical. 1 Cor. xii. 12. Yet to the head as the foundation and conveyer of all to the elect. Eph. i. 23; 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. **If you despise work, you despise promises, and so despise Christ;** and the Lord knows what use you may have of them before you die.

Distinguishing Gold from Dross

Code448

Troubles for Sin and Trials for Grace

Signs of Sin in Dominion

By John Flavel,

Vol. V, pg. 538-

Good for Self-examination

Fourthly, the behavior and carriage of the soul with respect to subjection to the commands of sin, shows what our estate and condition is. This will separate dross from gold. **All unregenerate men are the servants of sin, they subject themselves to its commands.** This the scripture sometimes calls a “conversation in the lusts of the flesh,” Eph. 2:3. Sometimes the “selling themselves to sin,” 1Kings 21:20. Now, as a judicious divine observes, though the children of God complain with Paul, Rom. 7:14,15, that they are “sold under sin,” yet there is a vast difference between these two. **The saints are sold to it by Adam, but others by their own continued consent.** But to show you the difference in this matter, I conceive it necessary to show wherein the reigning power of sin does not consist, and then wherein it does; that you may plainly discern who are in subjection to the reigning power of their corruptions, and who are not. Now there be divers things common both to the regenerate and unregenerate; and we cannot say the dominion of sin lies in any or in all of them, namely, abstractly and simply considered.

1. *First*, Both one and the other having original corruption dwelling in them, may also find this fountain breaking forth into gross and scandalous sins. But we cannot say that because original corruption thus breaks forth into gross and scandalous sins in both,

therefore it must needs reign in the son as well as in the other; a righteous man may “fall before the wicked,” as it is, Ps. 25:26. He may fall into the dirt of grosser iniquities, and furnish them with matter of reproach. So did David, Peter, Abraham, and many more of the Lord’s upright-hearted ones, whose souls nevertheless sin did not reign over by a voluntary subjection to its commands, nor must this embolden any to sin with more liberty.

2. *Secondly*, Though an upright soul fall once and again into sin, though he reiterate the same act of sin which he has repented of before; yet it cannot merely from thence be concluded, that therefore sin reigns over him as it does over a wicked man that makes it his daily trade. I confess every reiteration of sin puts a further aggravation upon it. And it is sad we should repent and sin, and sin and repent; but yet you read, Prov. 24:16, “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.” Job’s friends were good men, yet he tells them, “Theses ten times have ye reproached me,” Job 19:3. This indeed shows a heart that greatly needs purging; for it is with relapses into spiritual as it is with relapse into natural diseases. A recidivation or return of the disease shows that the morbid matter was not duly purged; but though it shows the foulness, it does not always prove the falseness of the heart.

3. *Thirdly*, Though the one may be impatient of the reproof of his sin, as well as the other; yet that alone will not conclude sin to be in full dominion over the one as it is over the other.

It is pity any good man should storm at a just rebuke of sin; that such a precious oil as is proper to heal, should be conceited to break his head; but yet flesh will be tender and touchy, even in good men. Asa was a good man, and yet he was wroth with the prophet who reprovved him, as you find, 2Chron. 16:10, yet I doubt not but their consciences smite them for it, when pride suffers not another to do it; a reproof may be well-timed and ill managed by another, and so may provoke, but they will hear the voice of conscience in another manner.

4. *Fourthly*, though in both some one particular sin may have more power than another, yet neither does this alone conclude, that therefore that sin must reign in one, as it does in another. Indeed the beloved lust of every wicked man is king over his soul; but yet a godly man’s constitution, calling, etc., may incline him more to one sin than another; and yet neither that nor any other may be said to be in dominion; for though David speaks of his iniquity, i.e., his special sin, Ps. 18:19, yet you see in one place he

begs God to keep him from it, and in the other, he tells us he kept himself from it, and both show he was not the servant of it.

5. *Fifthly*, though both may sin against knowledge, yet it will not follow from thence, that therefore sins against knowledge must needs be sins in dominion in the one, as they are in the other; here was too much light abused, and violence offered in David's deliberated sin, as he confesses, Ps. 51:6, and the sad story itself too plainly shows; and yet, in the main, David was an upright man still; though this consideration of the fact shrewdly wounded his integrity, and stand upon record for a caution to all others.

Section VII

We have seen what does not infer the dominion of in in the former particulars, being simply considered; I shall next show you what does, and how the sincere and false hearts are distinguished in this trial. And,

1. *First*, Assent and consent upon deliberation notes the soul to be under the dominion of sin; when the mind approves sin, and the will gives its plenary consent to it, this sets p sin in its throne, and puts the soul into subjection to it; for the dominion of sin consists in its authority over us, and our voluntary subjection to it. This you find to be the character of a wicked graceless person, Ps. 36:4, "He diviseth mischief upon his bed; he sitteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil."

The best men may fall into sin through mistake, or precipitated into sin through the violence of temptation; but to devise mischief, and set himself in an evil way, this notes full assent of the mind; and then, not to abhor evil, notes full consent of the will; and these two being given to sin, not only antecedently to the action of it, but also consequently to it, to like it afterwards as well as before; this pouts the soul fully under the power of sin? What can it give more?

This (as Mr. Caryl says) in direct opposition to the apostle, Rom. 12:1, is to present their bodies a dead sacrifice, unholy, and abominable to God; acceptable to the devil, which is their unreasonable service; all men by nature are given to sin, but these men give themselves to it.

2. *Secondly*, the customary practice of ins subjects the soul to the dominion of sin; and so “he that is born of God does not commit sin, 1 John 3:9. Fall into sin, yea, the same sin he may, and that often; but then it is not without reluctance, repentance, and a protest entered by the soul in heaven against it; so that sin has not a quiet possession of the soul; he is not the servant of sin, nor does he willingly walk after its commandments; but so do its own servants; it is their daily practice, Jer. 9:3, “They proceed from evil to evil.”

3. Thirdly, **Delight in sin** proves the dominion of sin. So the servants of sin are described, Isa. 66:3, “They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.”

Look, as our delight in God is the measure of our holiness, so our delight in sin is the measure of our sinfulness. **Delight** in sin is the uppermost round of the ladder, and much higher the soul of a sinner cannot go, till it be turned off into hell; “It is a sport to a fool to do mischief,” Prov. 10:23. Never merrier than when he has the devil for his playfellow, says one (Mr. Trap) upon that place.

4. *Fourthly*, impatience of Christ’s yoke and government, argues the soul to be the subject of sin. This is clear from the apostle’s reasoning in Rom. 6:17,18, “But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Where you see plainly, that no man can have his *manumission* or freedom from sin, that comes not into Christ’s service, and yields himself up to his obedience.

So then, to fret at Christ’s laws, that tie us up from our lusts, to be weary of all spiritual employments as a burden intolerable, never to be in our element and centre till we are off from God, and plunging in the world and our lusts; this is a sad note of a soul in subjection to sin.

Oject. But may not an upright soul find some weariness in spiritual things?

Sol. Doubtless he may, for he has flesh as well as spirit; and though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak; he is sanctified by in part, and his delight in the law of God is by according to or after the inner man, Rom. 7:22. [\[the inner man is the image of God re-stamped upon the soul at conversion, a new creation, “the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,” Col. 3:10. This](#)

is a restoring of the image of God, the chief part of it anyway (holiness; knowledge, etc.) that Adam lost at the fall.] But he sees another law in his members, i.e., contrary inclinations. However, if he be weary sometimes in the duties of godliness, to be sure he is more weary out of them, and is not centered and at rest till he be with his God again; but the carnal heart is where it would be, when it is in the service of sin; and as a fish upon dry land, when engaged in spiritual duties; especially such as are secret, and have no external allurements of reputation to engage him to them.

But what surprisals or captivities to sin soever may befall an upright soul, yet it appears by these eight following particulars, that he is not the servant of sin, nor in full subjection to it. For,

1. though he may be drawn to sin, yet he cannot reflect upon his sin without shame and sorrow; which plainly show it to be an involuntary surprise. So Peter wept bitterly, Matt. 26. And David mourned for his sin heartily. Others can fetch new pleasures out of their old sins, by reflecting on them; and some can glory in their shame, Phil. 3:9, some are stupid and senseless after sin; and the sorrow of a carnal heart for it, is but a morning dew; but it is far otherwise with God's people.

2. *Secondly*, though a saint may be drawn to sin, yet it is not with a deliberate and full consent of his will; their delight is in the law of God, Rom. 7:22, "They do that which they would not," ver. 16, i.e., there are inward dislikes from the new nature; and as for that case of David, which seems to have so much of counsel and deliberation in it, yet it was but in a single act; it was not in the general course of his life; he was upright in all things, i.e., in the general course and tenor of his life, 1 Kings 15:5.

3. *Thirdly*, though an upright soul may fall into sin, yet he is restless and unquiet in that condition, like a bone out of joint; and that speaks him to be none of sin's servants; as on the contrary, if a man be engaged in the external duties of religion, and be restless, and unquiet there, his heart is not in it, he is not at rest till he be again in his earthly business; this man cannot be reckoned Christ's servant; a gracious heart is much after that rate employed in the work of sin, that a carnal heart is employed in the work of religion. That is a good rule, *Ea tantum dicuntur inesse, quae insunt per modum quietis*: that is a man's true temper, wherein he is at rest. Poor David fell into sin, but he had no rest in his bones, because of it, Ps. 51:10-12. If his heart be off from God and duty for a little while, yet he recollects himself, and say, as Ps.96:7, "Return to thy rest, O my soul."

4. *Fourthly*, though a sincere Christian fall into sin and commit evil; yet he proceeds not from evil to evil as the ungodly do, Jer. 9:3, but makes his fall into one sin a caution to prevent another sin. Peter, by his fall, got establishment for the time to come. If God will speak peace to them, they are careful to return no more to folly; Ps 85:8, "In that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought? Yea, what fear?" 2Cor. 7:11. It is not so with the servants of sin, one sin leaves them much more disposed to another sin.

5. *Fifthly*, a sincere Christian may be drawn to sin, but yet he would be glad with all his heart to rid of sin; it would be more to him than thousands of gold and silver, that he might grieve and offend God no more; and that shows sin is not in dominion over him; he that is under the dominion of sin, is loath to leave his lusts. Sin's servants are not willing to part with it, they hold it fast, and refuse to let it go, as that text expresses it, Jer. 8:5. But the great complaint of the upright is expressed by the apostle according to the true sense of their hearts, in Rom. 7:24, "Who shall deliver me from the body of death?"

6. *Sixthly*, It appears they yield not themselves willingly to obey sin, inasmuch as it is the matter of their joy when God orders nay providence to prevent sin in them; "Blessed be the Lord, (said David to Abigail) and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou that hast kept me this day from shedding blood." 1 Sam16:32-33.

Here is blessing upon blessing from a sin-preventing providence. The author is blessed, the instrument blessed, the means blessed. O it is a blessed thing in the eyes of a sincere man to be kept from sin! He reckons it a great deliverance, a very happy escape, if he be kept from sin.

7. *Seventhly*, this shows that some who may be drawn to commit sin, yet are none of the servants of sin, that they do heartily beg the assistance of grace to keep them from in: "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin, (saith the Psalmist, Ps. 19:13), let them Not have dominion over me;" that is, Lord, I find propensions to sin in my nature, yea, and strong ones too; if thou leave me to myself, I am carried into sin as easily as a feather down the torrent. "O Lord, keep back thy servant." And there is no petition that upright ones pour out their hearts to God in, either more frequently or more ardently than in this, to be kept back from sin.

8. *Eighthly, and Lastly*, this shows the soul not to be under the dominion of sin, that it does not only cry to God to be kept back from sin, but uses the means of prevention

himself.; he resists it, as well as prays against it; Ps 18:23, I was also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity.” So Job 31:1, “I have made a covenant with mine eyes.” And yet more fully in Isa. 33:15, “He shaketh his hands from holding bribes, and stoppeth his ears from hearing blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.” See with what care the portals are shut at which sin uses to enter. **All these things are very relieving considerations to poor souls questioning their integrity under the frequent surprisals of sin.** And the next trial no less.

Sect. VIII

(5.) Fifthly, our opposition to, and conflicts with sin discover what we are, gold or dross.

There are conflicts with sin in both the regenerate and in the unregenerate; but there is a vast difference betwixt them, as will appear in the following account.

1. *First*, there is a universal, and there is a particular opposition to sin: the former is found in regenerate, the latter is unregenerate souls: a gracious heart hates every false way, Ps. 119:104, and must needs do so, because he hates and opposes sin as sin; so that he can have no *peccatum in deliciis*, no excepted or reserved lust, **but fights against the whole body, and every limb and member of the body of sin.**

But it is not so with the hypocrite or carnal professor; he has overcome some reserved sin, that he cannot part with.

2. *Secondly*, there is an opposition between the new nature and sin, and there is an opposition between a natural conscience and sin; the former is the case of an upright soul, the latter may be a self-deceiver.

A regenerate person opposes sin because there is an irreconcilable antipathy between it and the new nature in him, as is clear from Gal. 5:17, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to the one to the other.” By flesh, understand corrupt nature; by spirit, not only the spirit of man but the Spirit of God, or principle of regeneration in man. **[that new principle of life that is communicated to the soul, consisting of, as Owen puts it, grace, truth, faith.]** By the lusting of these two against each other, understand the desire and endeavors of each other’s destruction and ruin; and the ground of all this is the contrariety of all these two natures.

These are contrary one to the other; there is a twofold opposition between them, one formal, their very natures are opposite, as it is between fire and water.

But the opposition found in unrenewed souls against sin, is not from their natures, for sin is suitable enough to that; but from the light that is in their minds and consciences, which scares and terrifies them. Such was that in Darius, Dan. 6:14, "He was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." Here the contest was between sense of honor upon one side, and conviction of conscience on the other side.

Sometimes a generous and noble disposition opposes sordid and base actions: *Major sum, et ad majora natus; qua mut corporis mei sim mancipium*. I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to my body, said a brave heathen.

3. *Thirdly*, there is a permanent, and there is a transient opposition to sin; the former is the case of God's people, the latter of temporary and unsound professors.

The saint when he draws the sword in this warfare against sin, throws away the scabbard; no end of this combat with sin till life end; their life and their troubles are finished together; 2 Tim. 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, and have finished my course."

But in other men it is but a transient quarrel; out with sin one day, and in another; and the reason is plain by what was noted before; it is not the opposition of two natures; it is like the opposition of the wind and tide, these may be contrary and make a stormy sea today, but the wind may come about, and go as the tide goes tomorrow; but in a Christian it is the opposition of the river and the dam; one must give way to the other; there is not reconciling them; but the other "like the dog, returns to his vomit," 2Pet 2 ult.

4. *Fourthly*, there is an opposition to the root of sin, and an opposition to the fruits of sin. **A gracious soul opposes root and fruit, but others the latter only.** The great design of an upright soul is not only to loop off this or that branch, but to kill the toot of sin, which is in his nature; Rom. 7:24, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the great care and endeavors of others is to suppress outward acts of sin and escape the mischievous consequences of it. Yea, their study is, as Lactantius phrases it, *Potius abscondere, quam abscindere vitia*: To hide, rather than to kill their lusts.

5. *Fifthly*, There is an opposition to sin in the strength of god, and an opposition to sin in our own strength; the former is proper to real Christians, the latter is found

frequently with unsanctified persons; when a Christian goes forth against any sin, it is in the strength of God; so you read their rule directs them, Eph. 6:10, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; take unto you the whole armor of god;” And suitably, you shall find them frequently upon their knees begging strength from heaven against their lusts – 2Cor12:8, “For this cause I besought the Lord thrice,” saith Paul, i.e., often and earnestly, that the temptation might depart from him.

But others go forth against sin only in the strength of their own resolutions; so did Pendleton in our story; these resolutions, or vows, which they have put themselves under, are as frequently frustrated as made.

6. *Sixthly*, there is a successful opposition to sin, and an opposition that comes to nothing. The former is that of true Christians, the latter is fond among unregenerate men.

The work of mortification in the saints is progressive and increasing. Hence Rom. 6:6, “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” Sin dies in believers much as crucified persons use to die, namely, a slow, lingering, gradual, but sure death; its vigor and life expires by degrees, or as a consumptive person dies; for to that also he alludes here. There is a disease, which is called *consumption totius*, a consumption of the whole; and those that die of that disease, languish more and more, till at last they drop *sensim sine sensu*, by imperceptible degrees and steps into the grave.

But in the unregenerate, whatever conflicts they have with sin, no corruption falls before it. It may be said of them, as the church in another case complains of herself, Isa. 26:18, “We have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind. We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.” [here is the ESV, “...we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.” So it fares with these professors; they pray, they hear, they vow, they resolve, but when all is done, their lusts are as strong and vigorous as ever. No degree of mortification appears after all.

And thus much of the trial of our sincerity by our carriage towards sin.

The Promise

code15

Subjects: **The Promise**. What is meant by to *draw nigh unto God*. The Priests, the Aaronical priesthood and the law of institution. The *better hope*. Oblation and intercession. Guilt and its removal necessary and consequently, what follows: boldness, faith, liberty, confidence, assurance. The distance between God and Man, mutual enmity. The wrath of God abides on them. The flaming sword of the law. A summary of Adam, the fall, sin, recovery of gospel grace, etc. The offices of Christ, king, priest and prophet. The importance of knowing the wisdom of this way, his priesthood, etc. as an object of our faith and how unbelief in this or ignorance of it leads to trusting in other things, fancies or ourselves. What does *come to God* mean?

pg 477-482 (pg 583-589 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_6.1-7.28.pdf

Ver. 18, 19. — For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God.

Obs. VIII. Believers of old, who lived under the law, did not live upon the law, but **upon the hope of Christ, or Christ hoped for**. — Christ is “the same” (that is, unto the church) “yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” If justification, if salvation could be had any other way, or by any other means, then was his coming needless, and his death in vain. **It was the promise of him, and not of the law which he had broken**, which was the relief and salvation of Adam. This being the first thing that was proposed unto fallen man [Gen 3:15], as the only means of his restoration, justification, and salvation, if anything were afterwards added unto the same purpose, it would declare this to be insufficient; which would be an impeachment of divine wisdom and grace. On the same promise of Christ, which virtually contained and exhibited unto believers all the benefits of his mediation, as it was frequently renewed and variously explained, did all the saints live under the old testament. **And the obscurity of the revelations of him in comparison of that by the gospel, respected only the degrees, but not the essence of their faith.**

Obs. IX. The Lord Christ, by his priesthood and sacrifice, makes perfect the church, and all things belonging thereunto, Colossians 2:10.

FIFTHLY, In the last place, the apostle illustrates the work wrought through the introduction of “the better hope,” by the effect of it in them that do believe: Δι ης εγγιζομεν τω Θεω, — “By which we draw nigh unto God.” Δι ης, “by which,” may refer either to the remote antecedent, επεισαγωγή “the introduction” or “bringing in;” or unto the next, which is ελπιδος, “the hope;” being both of the same gender. “By the introduction of the better hope we draw nigh to God;” or, “By which hope we draw nigh to God.” Both come to the same, for the substance of the sense; but the application is more natural to the next antecedent, “By which hope we draw nigh unto God.” It remaineth only that we inquire what it is thus to draw nigh to God.

Εγγιζω is a word belonging unto the sacerdotal office, denoting the approach of the priests unto God in his worship. So the LXX for the most part render bræq;, the general term for all access unto God with sacrifices and offerings. And this doth the apostle intend. Under the Levitical priesthood, the priests in their sacrifices did draw nigh unto God. The same now is done by all believers, under the sacerdotal ministration of Jesus Christ. They now, all of them, draw nigh unto God. And in all their worship, especially in their prayers and supplications, they have by him an access unto God, Ephesians 2:18.

There is a similitude in these things, and an allusion in the one unto the other; yet so as that the one doth far excel the other, as to grace and privilege. For, 1. **Under the law it was the priests alone who had this privilege of drawing nigh unto God**, in the solemn worship of the temple and tabernacle. The people were kept at a distance, and might never come near the sacred services of the holy place. **But all believers being made a royal priesthood, every one of them hath an equal right and privilege, by Christ, of drawing nigh unto God.** 2. The priests themselves did draw nigh only unto outward pledges, tokens, and symbols of God's presence. Their highest attainment was in the entrance of the high priest once a-year into the most holy place. Yet was the presence of God there only in things made with hands, only instituted to represent his glory. **But believers do draw nigh to God himself, unto the throne of his grace, as the apostle declares,** Hebrews 10:19-22.

It may therefore be granted that there is this intention in the words. For as, by the law of old, the priests in the solemn worship of the church did draw nigh to God in those **visible pledges of his presence which he had appointed**; and this they did by virtue of the Aaronical priesthood and the **law of its institution, which was the utmost that could be attained in their imperfect state**; so now, **upon the introduction of "the better hope," and by virtue thereof, believers in all their solemn worship do draw nigh unto God himself and find acceptance with him.**

And there are two reasons for the admission of this interpretation. For, 1. One part of the apostle's design is **to manifest the glory and preeminence of gospel-worship above that of the law.** And the **excellency** hereof consists, **not in outward forms and pompous ceremonies, but in this, that all believers do therein draw nigh unto God himself with boldness.** 2. **Whereas it is peculiarly the priesthood of Christ, and his discharge of that office in his oblation and intercession, which he intends by "the better hope,"** as he fully declares himself towards the end of the chapter, they are those which we have a peculiar respect unto, in all our approaches unto God in our holy worship. Our entrance unto the throne of grace is through the veil of his flesh as offered. **Our admission is only by virtue of his oblation, and our acceptance depends on his intercession.** Herein, therefore, in a peculiar manner, by this "better hope, we draw nigh unto God."

But yet there is a more extensive signification of this expression in the Scripture, which must not be here excluded. By nature all men are gone far off from God. The first general apostasy carried mankind to a most inconceivable distance from him. Though our distance from him by nature, as we are creatures, be infinite, yet this hinders not

but that, in his infinite goodness and condescension, we may have intercourse with him, and find acceptance before him. But the distance which came between us by sin cuts off all communion of that kind. Wherefore our moral distance from God, as our nature is corrupted, is greater, with respect unto our relation unto him, than our essential distance from him, as our nature is created. Hence, being “far off” is the expression of this state of nature: Ephesians 2:13, “Ye were sometimes far off” And whatever accompanieth that state, in wrath and curse upon men; in fear, bondage, and power of sin, and enmity against God within them; in obnoxiousness unto misery in this world, and to eternal destruction hereafter, is comprised in that expression. **It is to be far from the love and favor of God, from the knowledge of him, and obedience unto him.** Wherefore, our drawing nigh unto God denotes our delivery and recovery from this estate. So it is expressed in the place above named: “But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” To represent this, all the acts of solemn worship, which respected the sacrifice of Christ, were called “approximations.”

And hereunto, unto this **drawing nigh to God**, or that we may so do, two things are required: 1. A removal of whatever kept us at a distance from God. And the things of this nature were of two sorts: (1.) What was upon us from God, for our Sin and apostasy. This was his wrath and curse; and these were declared in the publishing of the law on mount Sinai, with the terrible appearances and dreadful voices that accompanied it. This made the people “stand afar off,” Exodus 20:21; as an emblem of their condition with respect unto the law. (2.) Guilt within, with its consequences of fear, shame, and alienation from the life of God. Unless these things, of the one sort and the other, those upon us and those within us, be taken away and removed, we can never draw nigh unto God. And to secure our distance, they were enrolled in a hand-writing, as a record against us, that we should never, on our own account, so much as endeavor any access unto him, Ephesians 2:14, Colossians 2:14. How they were removed by “the bringing in of the better hope,” that is, by the priesthood of Christ, the apostle declares in this epistle, as we shall see, God willing, in our progress, **This neither was nor could be done by the law or its ordinances; neither the moral preceptive part of it nor the ceremonial, in all its rites and sacrifices, could of itself expiate sins, make atonement for our apostasy, turn away the wrath of God, or take away guilt, fear, bondage, and alienation, out of the minds of men.**

2. There is moreover required hereunto, that, upon the justification and acceptation of our persons, we have faith, liberty, boldness, confidence and assurance, given unto us, in our coming unto God. And this cannot be without the renovation of our natures into his image, the quickening of our souls with a new principle of spiritual life, and ability unto all duties of acceptable obedience. All these things are required unto our drawing nigh unto God, or unto a state of reconciliation, peace, and communion with him. And we may observe, —

Obs. X. Out of Christ, or without him, all mankind are at an inconceivable distance from God. — And a distance it is of the worst kind; even that which is an effect of mutual enmity. The cause of it was on our part voluntary; and the effect of it, the height of misery. And however any may flatter and deceive themselves, it is the present condition of all who have not an interest in Christ by faith. They are far off from God, as he is the fountain of all goodness and blessedness, “inhabiting,” as the prophet speaks, “the parched places of the wilderness, and shall not see when good cometh,” Jeremiah 17:6; far from the dews and showers of grace or mercy; far from divine love and favor, — cast out of the bounds of them, as Adam out of paradise, without any hope or power in themselves to return. The flaming sword of the law turns every way, to keep them from the tree of life. Yet are they not so far from God but that they are under his wrath and curse, and whatever of misery is contained in them. Let them flee whither they please; wish for mountains and rocks to fall on them, as they will do hereafter; hide themselves in the **darkness and shades of their own ignorance**, like Adam among the trees of the garden; or immerse themselves in the pleasures of sin for a season; — all is one, “the wrath of God abideth on them.” And they are far from God in their own minds also; being alienated from him, enemies against him, and in all things made up with Satan, the head of the apostasy. Thus is it, and inconceivably worse, with all that embrace not this “better hope,” to bring them nigh unto God.

Obs. XI. It is an effect of infinite condescension and grace, that God would appoint a way of recovery for those who had willfully cast themselves unto this woeful distance from him. — Why should God look after such fugitives anymore? He had no need of us or our 588 services in our best condition, much less in that useless, depraved state whereinto we had brought ourselves. And although we had transgressed the rule of our moral dependence on him in the way of obedience, and thereby done what we could to stain and **eclipse his glory**, yet he knew how to repair it unto advantage, by reducing us under the order of punishment. By our sins we ourselves “come short of the glory of God;” but he could lose none by us, whilst it was absolutely secured by the penalty annexed unto the law. When, upon the entrance of sin, he came and found Adam in the bushes, wherein he thought foolishly to hide himself, who could expect (Adam did not) but that his only design was to apprehend the poor rebellious fugitive, and give him up to condign punishment? But quite otherwise, above all thoughts that could ever have entered into the hearts of angels or men. After he had declared the nature of the apostasy, and his own indignation against it, he proposeth and promiseth a way of deliverance and recovery! This is that which the Scripture so magnifies, under the names of **“grace,” and “love of God,”** which are beyond expression or conception, John 3:16. And it hath also this lustre frequently put upon it, that he dealt not so with the angels that sinned; which manifests what condition he might have left us in also, and how **infinitely free and sovereign that grace** was from whence it was otherwise. Thence it was that he had a “desire again unto the works of his hands,” to bring poor mankind near unto him. And whereas he might have recalled us unto

himself, yet, so as to leave some mark of his displeasure upon us, kept us at a greater distance from him than that we stood at before, — as David brought back his wicked Absalom to Jerusalem, but would not suffer him to come into his presence, — he chose to act like himself, in infinite wisdom and grace, to bring us yet nearer unto him than ever we could have approached by the law of our creation. And as the foundation, means, and pledge hereof, he contrived and brought forth that most glorious and unparalleled effect of divine wisdom, in taking our nature into that inconceivable nearness unto himself, in the union of it unto the person of his Son. For as all things, in this bringing of us nigh to God who were afar off, are expressive effects of wisdom and grace; so that of taking our nature into union with himself is glorious unto astonishment. And as we are thereby made inconceivably more nigh to God in our nature than we were upon our first creation, or than angels shall ever be; so by virtue thereof are we in our persons brought in many things much nearer to God than ever we could have been brought by the law of creation. “O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens!” Psalm 8:1. It is in the admiration of this unspeakable grace that the psalmist is so ravished in the contemplation of God, as hath been declared in our exposition on the second chapter of this epistle.

Obs. XII. All our approximation unto God in any kind, all our approaches unto him in holy worship, is by Him alone who was the blessed hope of the saints under the old testament, and is the life of them under the new. — These things must be afterwards spoken unto.

Why do the Promises of God take so Long to Fulfill?

code16

the sovereignty of God

470-477 (575-583 online) John Owen

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_6.1-7.28.pdf

Heb. 7 Ver. 19. — “For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God.”

FOURTHLY, The disannulling or abolition of the law was laid down in the precedent verse, as a necessary consequent of its being “**weak and unprofitable**.” For when a law hath been tried, and it is found liable unto this charge, it is equal, and even necessary, that it should be disannulled; if the end aimed at be necessary to be attained, and there be any thing else to be substituted in its room whereby it may so be. This therefore the apostle declares in this verse, giving the reasons in particular of what he had before asserted in general. So the causal connection, ga>r, “for,” doth intimate. And, 1. He

gives an especial instance, wherein it was evident that the law was “weak and unprofitable.” 2. He declares what was to be introduced in the room thereof, which would attain and effect the end which the law could not reach unto, by reason of its weakness. 3. He expresseth what that end was.

The first he doth in these words, Ουδεν γαρ ο νομος ετελειωσε, — “For the law made nothing perfect.” The subject spoken of is ο νομος, “the law;” that is, the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, as it was the covenant which God made with the people in Horeb. For the apostle takes “the commandment” and “the law” for the same in this chapter; and “the covenant,” in the next, for the same with them both. And he treats of them principally in the instance of the Levitical priesthood; partly because the whole administration of the law depended thereon; and partly because it was the introduction of another priesthood, whereby the whole was disannulled.

Of this law, commandment, or covenant, it is said that ουδεν ετελειωσε, “it made nothing perfect.” ουδεν, “nothing,” for ουδενα, “no man,” say expositors generally; “**it made no man perfect.**” So the neuter is put for the masculine. So it is in those words of our Savior, John 6:37, Παν ο διδωσι μοι ο Πατηρ προς εμε ηζει, — “All that the Father giveth me cometh unto me;” that is, “every one.” So is ουδεν, as here, put for ουjde>na, verse 63: Η σαρξ ουχ ωφελει ουδεν, — “The flesh profiteth nothing;” that is, say some, “no man.” But I am not satisfied with this exposition, but rather judge that the apostle did properly express his intention. It made “nothing,” that is, none of the things which we treat about, “perfect.” It did not make the church-state perfect, it did not make the worship of God perfect, it did not perfect the promises given unto Abraham, in their accomplishment, it did not make a perfect covenant between God and man; it had a shadow, an obscure representation of all these things, but it “made nothing perfect.”

What the apostle intends by τελειωσις, and so consequently by ετελειωσειν in this place, we have discoursed at large before on verse 11; so that we shall not here again insist upon it. **But it may be inquired why, if “the law made nothing perfect,” it was instituted or given by God himself.** He had designed a state of perfection unto the church, and seeing the law could not effect it, nay, seeing it could not be introduced whilst the law was in force, unto what end served the giving of this law?

Ans. This doubt was in part solved before, when we showed the ends for which the law was given, although it was weak and unprofitable as unto some other. But yet there

are some other reasons to be pleaded, **to represent the beauty and order of this dispensation**. For, —

1. In all these things the *sovereignty of God* is to be submitted unto; and, unto humble souls, there is beauty in divine sovereignty. When the Lord Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and thanked his heavenly Father that he had revealed the mysteries of the gospel unto babes, and hid them from the wise and prudent, he assigns no other reason but his sovereignty and pleasure, wherein he rejoiced: “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight,” Luke 10:21. **And if we cannot see an excellency in the dispensations of God, because they are his, who gives no account of his matters, we shall never delight in his ways**. So our apostle gives no other reason of this legal dispensation, but that “God had provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,” Hebrews 11:40. **Therefore did he give them this law for a season, which made nothing perfect; even so it seemed good in his sight. It is the glory of God to be “gracious to whom he will be gracious,”** and that at what time he will, and unto what degree and measure he pleaseth. **And in this glory of his are we to acquiesce**.

2. Mankind having woefully prevaricated and apostatized from God, it was just and equal that they should not be at once re-instated, in their reparation. The suddenness of it might have taken off from its greatness. Wherefore, as God left the generality of the world without the knowledge of what he intended, so he saw good to keep the church in a state of expectancy as to the perfection of liberty and deliverance intended. He could have created the world in an hour, or a moment; but he chose to do it in the space of six days, that the glory of his work might be distinctly represented unto angels and men And he could immediately after the fall have introduced the promised Seed, in whose advent the church must of necessity enjoy all the perfection whereof it is capable in this world; but to teach the church the greatness of their sin and misery, and to work in them an acknowledgment of his unspeakable grace and mercy, he proceeded gradually in the very revelation of him, as we have showed on Hebrews 1:1, and caused them to wait, **under earnest desires, longings, and expectations**, many ages for his coming. And during this season it was of necessity that they should be kept under a law that made nothing perfect. For, as our apostle speaketh, “if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void,” Romans 4:14; and “if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain,” Galatians 2:21; and “if there had been a law given which could have’ given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,” Galatians 3:21. Wherefore, until the actual exhibition of the promised Seed, it was absolutely necessary that the church should be kept under a law that made nothing perfect.

3. That people unto whom the law was peculiarly to be given, and by whom God would accomplish his further design, **were a stubborn, earthy, hard hearted people, that stood in need of a yoke to burden and subdue them unto the will of God.** So obstinate they were in what they had once received, and so proud of any privilege they enjoyed, that whereas their privileges were very many and very great, **they would never have had any thought of looking out after another state, but have foregone the promise, had they not been pinched, and burdened, and disappointed in their expectation of perfection by this law, and the yoke of it.**

4. **God had designed that the Lord Christ should in all things have the preeminence.** This was due unto him, on the account of the glory of his person and the greatness of his work. **But if the law could have made any thing perfect, it is evident that this could not have been.**

Secondly, Perfection being thus denied unto the law, it is added, Επεισαγωγή δε χρεϊπτονος ελπιδος. The words are elliptical, and without a supplement give no certain sense. And this may be made two ways: First, by the verb substantive ην, and so the whole of what is asserted is an effect of the law. **“It made nothing perfect,” but “it was the bringing in of a better hope,”** or “an introduction unto a better hope,” as some render the words. It served as God’s way and method unto the bringing in of our Lord Jesus Christ; unto this end it was variously serviceable in the church. For as its institutions, promises, instructions, and types, did represent him unto the faith of believers; **so it prepared their minds unto an expectation of him, and longing after him.** And the conjunction δε, which is adversative, seems to intimate an opposition in what the law did, unto what it is said before that it did not. It “did not make any thing perfect,” but it “did bring in a better hope;” and we know in how many things it was a preparatory introduction of the gospel. Wherefore this sense is true, though not, as I judge, directly intended in these words.

Beza first observed that δε was put for αλλα [but] in this place, as it is unquestionably in sundry others. If so, not an assignation of a contrary effect unto the law unto what was before denied is intended, but the designation and expression of another cause of the effecting of that which the law could not effect. And the defective speech is to be supplied by ετελειωσε, “made perfect;” as we do it by “did,” — that is, “did make all things perfect.” To the same purpose the apostle expresseth himself in other words, Romans 8:3. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God

sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” For the words are so to be supplied, ‘What the law could not do, that God did;’ which what it was, and how God did it, the following words declare. Thus, God had designed to bring the church into a better state, a state of comparative perfection in this world. **This the law was not a means or instrument suited unto: wherefore another way is fixed on to that end;** which being completely effective of it, the law was laid aside and disannulled, as unprofitable.

This the word *επεισαγωγή* doth lead unto: for it is as much as “*postintroductio*,” or “*superintroductio*,” the introduction of one thing after or upon another. **This was the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, which were brought in after the law, upon it, in the room of it, to effect that which the law could not do.** This our apostle further argues and confirms, Hebrews 10:1-10.

This, therefore, is the sense of the words, ‘The introduction of the better hope, after and upon the law, when a sufficient discovery had been made of its weakness and insufficiency as unto this end, did make all things perfect, or bring the church unto that state of consummation which was designed unto it.’

Thirdly, It remaineth only, therefore, that we show what this “better hope” is, whereunto this effect is ascribed. Whatever it be, it is called “better” with respect unto the law, with all things that the law contained or could effect, — somewhat of more **power and efficacy to perfect the church-state**. This neither was nor could be anything but Christ himself and his priesthood. For “we are complete in him,” Colossians 2:10; and “**by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,**” Hebrews 10:14; the heavenly things themselves being purified thereby.

“**Hope**,” therefore, is used here metonymically, to design the thing hoped for. **From the giving of the first promise, and throughout under the dispensation of the law, Christ and his coming into the world were the hope of all believers, the great thing which they desired, longed and hoped for.** Hence was he called “the Desire of all nations,” Haggai 2:7; — that which the secret desires of the whole race of mankind worked towards. And in the church, which enjoyed the promises, **they rejoiced in the foresight of it, as did Abraham**; and desired to see his day, as did the prophets, diligently inquiring into the time and season of the accomplishment of those revelations which they had received concerning him, 1 Peter 1:11, 12. **It is not, therefore, the doctrine of the gospel, with its precepts and promises, as some suppose, which is here intended, any otherwise**

but as it is a declaration of the coming of Christ, and the discharge of his office; for without a respect hereunto, without virtue and efficacy thence alone derived, the outward precepts and promises of the gospel would no more perfect the church-state than the law could do.

Obs. VII. When God hath designed any gracious end towards the church, it shall not fail, nor his work cease for want of effectual means to accomplish it. — All means, indeed, have their efficacy from his 581 designation of them unto their end. His wisdom makes them meet, and his power makes them effectual. Whatever, therefore, seems to be a means in the hand of God unto any end, and doth not effect it, was never designed thereunto; for he fails in none of his ends, nor do his means come short of what he aims at by them. Wherefore, although God designed a perfect state of the church, and after that gave the law, yet he never designed the law to accomplish that end. It had other ends, as we have already declared. But men were very apt to take up with the law, and to say of it, “Surely the LORD’S anointed is before us.” Wherefore God by many ways and means discovered the weakness of the law, as unto this end. Then were men ready to conclude that the promise itself, concerning this perfect church-state, would be of none effect. The mistake lay only herein, that indeed God had not as yet used that only means for it which his infinite wisdom had suited for, and his infinite power would make effectual unto, its attainment. And this he did in such a way, as that those who would not make use of his means, but would as it were impose that upon him which he never intended to make use of in that kind, perished in their unbelief. Thus was it with the generality of the Jews, who would have perfection by the law, or none at all.

Wherefore the promises of God concerning the church, and to it, must be the rule and measure of our faith. Three things do deeply exercise the church, as unto their accomplishment: 1. Difficulties rendering it wholly improbable. 2. Long and unexpected procrastinations. 3. Disappointment of appearing means of it. But in this instance, of the introduction of a perfect church-state in and by the person of Jesus Christ, God hath provided a security for our faith against all objections which these considerations might suggest. For —

1. What greater difficulties can possibly lie in the way of the accomplishment of any of the promises of God which yet are upon the sacred record unaccomplished, — as suppose, the calling of the Jews, the destruction of antichrist, the peace of the church, and prosperity of it in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, — but that as great, and greater, lay in 582 the way of the fulfilling of this promise? All the national provocations,

sins, and idolatries, that fell out in the posterity of Abraham; all the calamities and desolating judgments that overtook them; the cutting down of the house of David, until there was only a root of it left in the earth; the unbelief of the whole body of the people; the enmity of the world, acted by all the craft and power of Satan; were as mountains in the way of the accomplishment of this promise: but yet they all of them became at length a plain before the Spirit of God. And if we should compare the difficulties and oppositions that at this day lie against the fulfilling of some divine promises, with those that rose up against this one of perfecting the church-state in Christ, it would, it may be, abate our forwardness in condemning the Jews for incredulity, unless we found ourselves more established in the faith of what is to come than for the most part we are.

2. Long and unexpected procrastinations are trials of faith also. Now this promise was given at the beginning of the world, nor was there any time allotted for its accomplishment. Hence it is generally supposed, from the words there used in the imposition of the name of Cain on her first-born, that Eve apprehended that the promise was actually fulfilled. The like expectations had the saints of all ages; and they were continually looking out after the rising of this bright morning Star. Many a time did God renew the promise, and sometimes confirmed it with his oath, as unto Abraham and David; and yet still were their expectations frustrated, so far as confined unto their own generations. And though God accepted them in their cries, and prayers, and hopes, and longing desires, yet nearly four thousand years were expired before the promise received its accomplishment. And if we do believe that the faith and grace of the new testament do exceed what was administered under the old, and that we do enjoy that pledge of God's veracity in the accomplishment of his promises which they attained not unto, shall we think it much if we are exercised some part of that season (as yet but a small time) in looking after the accomplishment of other promises?

3. Disappointment of appearing means is of the same nature. Long after the promise was given and renewed, the law is in a solemn and glorious manner delivered unto the church, as the rule of their worship and the means of their acceptance with God. Hence the generality of the people did always suppose that this was it which would make all things perfect. Something, indeed, they thought might be added unto its glory, in the personal coming of the Messiah; but the law was still to be that which was to make all things perfect. And we may easily apprehend what a surprisal it was unto them, when it was made manifest that the law was so far from effecting this promised state, that there was a necessity for taking it out of the way, as a thing "weak and unprofitable," that "the better hope," perfecting the state of the church, might be introduced. Such appearances are sometimes presented unto us of means highly probable for the

delivery of the church, which after a while do utterly disappear, and things are rolled into a posture quite contrary unto the expectations of many. When there is an appearance of what God hath promised, of what believers have prayed for, it is no wonder if some do earnestly embrace it.. But when God hath laid aside any means, and sufficiently declared that it is not his holy pleasure to use it in such a way, or unto such a length as we would desire, for the fulfilling of his promises, it is not duty, but obstinacy and selfishness, to adhere unto it with any such expectation.

Apostasy - It's Nature and Causes

code17

(see also, pgs 1101, 1109)

This explains many things, one of which is that men can have good doctrinal knowledge and yet still be unconverted. They may know a lot but are not completely persuaded in their minds (by the instrument of faith, the gift of faith) due to the fact that they never experienced a true conversion and the power thereof. And so they are like waves being "*tossed to a fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning and craftiness of deceitful plotting,*" (Eph4:14) professing one thing for awhile, then saying or acceding to another. They are not completely persuaded of the true doctrine which is what a saving faith does; a temporary faith does not. Owen describes this below. Take notice of the term *glory*. It's meaning is partially illustrated in my diagram. It is what is given to anyone who is converted. It is the image of God's glory which consists in **understanding** (knowledge of God) and his **will** (holiness or love to God), and happiness (joy in God) - that is what is implanted in the soul consisting in a re-enstamping of the image of God (the spiritual image or moral image, i.e., the image of his holiness, which was lost at the *fall*, as opposed to the natural image - his infinite power, wisdom, majesty, etc.) See other comments on this in this report.

my comments in [blue] and I underlined key statements and put in red the same.

CHAPTER 5

DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE ANOTHER CAUSE OF APOSTASY

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Owen_V07_Nature_And_Cause_Of_Apostasy_From_The_Gospel.pdf

II. THE second spring or cause of defection from the gospel in any kind, is that spiritual darkness and ignorance which abides in the minds of men under the profession of the truth.

The gospel may fall under a double consideration:

First, Of the things themselves that are contained, revealed, and proposed therein; — these are the material objects of our faith.

Secondly, With respect unto the doctrinal way of their declaration.

With respect unto the first, there is a spiritual darkness on the minds of all men by nature, so as that they cannot discern them in their own native form and beauty. With respect unto the latter, men are said to be ignorant, namely, when they do not in a due manner understand and comprehend the doctrines of the gospel, and so perish for want of knowledge. These things being of a distinct consideration, and of different influence into this pernicious event, the first shall be first spoken unto.

1. That there is such a spiritual darkness on the minds of men by nature, and wherein their depravation by sin cloth principally consist, is fully testified in the Scripture, as I have at large elsewhere evinced. Hence all men grant, so far as I know, that there is need of spiritual illumination to enable us to discern spiritual things in a due manner, though all are not agreed in the nature and causes of that illumination. But to deny the thing itself is to deny the gospel, and to make the promises of God of none effect. Now, where illumination is needful, there darkness is to be removed; for the end of the bringing in of light is to dispel darkness. Wherefore, such a depravation of the minds of men in spiritual darkness must be acknowledged, or the gift and grace of God in illumination must be rejected; and they by whom it is done do by their own blindness give new evidence unto the truth which they do oppose, there being no more certain demonstration of the power of darkness in any than for them to affirm that they stand in no need of light to be communicated unto them by the effectual operation of the Spirit of God. As to the nature of this illumination I shall not here dispute, but take it at present for granted that it is an act of His power who of old

*“commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining in our hearts,
to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4:6.*

There is a **glory and beauty** in those spiritual things which are the subjects of the truths of the gospel. There is in them the **wisdom of God**, “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” 1 Corinthians 2:6,7, yea, “the manifold wisdom of God,” Ephesians 3:10; the glory of the Lord, which is represented unto believers in

the glass of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 3:18, or “the **glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ,” chapter 4:6; — things expressly beyond discovery by the use of any means whatever merely natural [i.e., by man's reasonings or by the creation itself], 1 Corinthians 2:9,10. Even the philosophers of old contended that there was a beauty in all truth, which would engage the minds and affections of men unto it, were they able to discern it; and if they saw and granted this in things natural and moral, which are earthly and exposed unto the common reason of mankind, how much more must it be granted of the truth of things heavenly, spiritual, and divine! See John 3:12. In brief, whatever there is of divine glory or excellency in the divine nature itself, in any or all of its holy properties, in the great and most glorious effect of them in the person and grace of Christ, **in the renovation of our nature into the image of God**, in the divine life of faith and obedience, it is proposed unto us in the truths of the gospel.

2. Whatever doctrinal proposition may be made of these things unto the minds of men, yet the things themselves **cannot be comprehended nor spiritually discerned without the illumination of the Holy Ghost** before mentioned. Hence it follows that men may be instructed in the doctrines of truth, yet, continuing under the power of natural darkness, not discern the things themselves in their own spiritual nature and glory, nor have any experience of their power and efficacy. [Hence the scripture that says they have a form of godliness but deny its power]. This all the prayers of holy men in the Scripture for spiritual light and instruction, all the promises of God **savingly to enlighten the minds of men**, and the descriptions given of that work of his grace whereby he doth effect it, do undeniably evince. One consideration will be sufficient unto our purpose. **Whosoever hath a spiritual view and knowledge of these things, his mind will be, and is, certainly changed and transformed into the image of them.** So the apostle tells us expressly, 2 Corinthians 3:18,

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.”

They are cast into the same mould with the doctrine whereunto they are given up, Romans 6:17. [“yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”] The mind is united unto the things so discerned, and the **image** of them is so brought forth therein as that there is an **exact conformity** between them. But we see by open and palpable experience, that notwithstanding the knowledge which many have of spiritual things, their minds continue **carnal and fleshly**, filled with corrupt and depraved affections, **and are no way changed into the image or likeness of the things themselves. There needs no farther demonstration that men have never had a spiritual view of or insight into the glory of gospel truths, be their doctrinal knowledge of them what it will, than this, that their minds are not renewed thereby, nor transformed into the likeness of them.**

Where it is thus with men, they have no stable grounds whereon to abide in the profession of the truth against temptation, opposition, or seduction; for their steadfastness must be an effect of such an **assurance in their minds of the truth of the things which they do believe**, as will be prevalent against all that force and artifice wherewith they may be assaulted, and such as will not suffer their own minds to be indifferent, careless, or negligent about them. But whence should this arise? **Assurance from outward natural sense in spiritual things we are not capable of, nor are they evidenced unto our minds by rational demonstration.** All the full persuasion or assurance we can have of them, which will be prevalent against temptations and oppositions, ariseth from such a spiritual view of them as gives an experience of their reality, power, and efficacy upon our minds: and this respects both the **renovation**

of the mind itself in light and faith; the adhesion of the will unto the things known and believed, with a holy, heavenly, unconquerable love; and the constant approbation of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in all things. Hence this assurance, though it be neither that of sense nor that of reason, yet in the Scripture is compared with them and preferred above them, as that which giveth the mind a more certain satisfaction than they can do, although it be of another kind. [This is *faith!* Heb. 11:1 - *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (with the natural eye and senses) Faith, the instrument God gives you at conversion, makes it real to the soul, so that these spiritual excellencies are seen by the soul through the eyes of faith, as through a glass darkly. We still do not see things as they are since faith is imperfect; in heaven faith is made perfect, in that we will live by sight there; we will see Him (and his glory) as he really is. But on earth we live by faith.] **And without this it is impossible that men should attain any such evidence or full persuasion of that evangelical truth which they may profess, as to secure them in their profession in such a juncture of circumstances and occasions as they may fall into.**

Here, therefore, I place another means and cause of apostasy from the truth of the gospel after it hath been received and professed. Multitudes in all ages have been instructed in the truth, some have been learned and knowing in the doctrines of it; but whereas, **by reason of their darkness, as being destitute of spiritual illumination, they did not discern the things themselves which they assented unto, in their supernatural, heavenly nature and glory, and therefore had no experience of their proper power and efficacy on their own minds,** affections, and lives, they could not have any such evidence of their truth as would upon trials confirm their adherence unto them or secure them from apostasy.

Had the minds of men **been transformed in their renovation to “prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,”** — had they by beholding of spiritual things **“been changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord,”** — **they would not have abandoned the most important doctrines of the gospel, as we know them to have done, nor have embraced foolish imaginations in their stead, on every plausible courtship and address unto their fancies.** How came men under the papal apostasy gradually to desert the principal truths of the gospel and all the spiritual glory of its worship? Not discerning the internal glory and beauty of things evangelical and purely divine, **not having an experience of the power of them in and upon their own minds, they chose to comply with, and give admission unto, such things whose outward painted beauty they could discern,** and whose effects on their natural and carnal affections they had experience of.

We have seen, in all ages, **men learned and skilled in the doctrines of the truth,** so as that they might have been looked on as **pillars of it,** yet to have been as forward as any unto apostasy from it **when they have been tried;** yea, such have been the leaders of others thereinto. So many of this sort fell into **Arianism** and **Pelagianism** of old, as some have done into **Socinianism,** and many into **Popery** in our days. When such fall away, usually they overthrow the faith of some, and shake the confidence of others.

But the apostle gives a double relief against this temptation: — first, **The stability of God’s purpose in the preservation of the elect;** and, secondly, The means of preservation in holiness of them that believe, 2 Timothy 2:19. **And we may be assured concerning them all, that they never had that intuition into nor comprehension of spiritual things which alone could secure their stability.** They never

saw so much or that in them for which they should be preferred above all other things. No man who forsakes the truth ever saw the glory of it, or had experience of its power.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us,” saith the apostle of such persons; “for if they had been of us” (whose fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ), “they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us,” 1 John 2:19.

Thus when the apostle had described the woeful apostasy of some among the Hebrews, he adds concerning them whose preservation he believed,

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation,” Hebrews 6:9.

Whatever knowledge men may have of the doctrines of the gospel, and whatever profession they may make, unless they have withal those things which are inseparable from salvation, such as is the saving illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby the darkness of our minds is removed, there can be no assurance that they will always “quit themselves like men,” and “stand fast in the faith.” And this consideration doth not a little evidence the danger of a defection from the truth which attends the days wherein we live. [and that was in 1680!!!]

For, first, it is from hence that we have such a numerous generation of sceptics in religion among us, — a sort of men who pretend not to renounce or forsake the truth, only they will talk and dispute about it with the greatest indifferency as to what is true or false. The Scripture, the holy Trinity, the person of Christ, his offices, the nature of justification and grace, whether it be or be not, this or that church, all or any in the world, as to their profession and worship, are weighed in the defiled, tottering scales of bold, irreverent discourses. For some reasons known to themselves, this sort of persons will own the public profession of religion, perhaps be teachers in it. But on all occasions they fully manifest that they are utterly ignorant of the fundamental difference between truth and error, and so give no firm assent unto what they do profess; for this difference lieth in their glory and beauty in themselves, and in their power and efficacy towards us. Spiritual, heavenly truth, by its relation unto the being, infinite wisdom, goodness, love, and grace of God, by the characters of all these things impressed on it and represented by it, is glorious, amiable, and desirable; — all error, as an effect of darkness, and by its relation unto Satan as the head of the apostasy which drew off our minds from the original essential Truth, is distorted, deformed, and brings the mind into confusion. Truth is powerful and effectual to conform the soul unto God, and to principle it with a love of and power unto obedience; — error turns the mind aside into crooked and by paths of folly or superstition, or pride and self-advancement. Were men practically acquainted with this difference between truth and error, it would take away that indifferency in their minds unto them which this skeptical humor doth discover. Truth so known in its nature and efficacy will beget that reverence, that love, that sacred esteem of itself, in the souls of men, as they shall not dare to prostitute it to be bandied up and down with every foolish imagination. And from this sort of men, who are commonly the most bold and forward in undertaking the conduct of others, by a pretended generous contempt of their narrow principles, groundless scruples, and

pusillanimous fears, nothing is to be expected but a wise and safe compliance with any ways or means of apostasy from the truth which shall be advantageously presented unto them.

And by the means of this darkness, it is easy to conceive how uncertain and unstable the minds of the generality of men, who perhaps also are somewhat ignorant (whereof we shall treat afterward), must needs be in their assent unto the truth and the profession of it. **They are no way able to discover it in such a way or manner as to give them an assurance which will be infallibly victorious against temptations and oppositions;** nor can they have that holy love unto it which will secure their minds and affections from being enticed and ravished from it. But, all the difference between truth and error which they can discern lying in bare different notions and apprehensions, wherein also they are dark and unskilled, it is no wonder if at any time they make an easy transcurion from the one to the other. So did the body of the people lose the truth gradually under the papal defection without any great complaint, yea, with much complacency and satisfaction; and it is to be feared that multitudes are ready at once to steer the same course if occasion be offered unto them. From this consideration we may rectify the seeming solecism [a gradual deterioration of doctrine] that is in the profession of religion, or the professors of it. Truth in every kind is the only guide of the mind in all its actings; wherein it proceeds not according unto it, it is always out of the way. **Divine truth is the sole conduct of the mind in all its actings towards God; it is the only fountain, immediate cause, and rule of all our obedience.** But yet, whereas in other things men generally walk in the light of those sparks of truth which they have received, we see that many by whom divine truth is owned and professed in its greatest purity and highest discovery are oftentimes no less wicked and vicious in their lives, no less enemies unto holiness, no less barren and unfruitful in those good and useful works it guides and directs unto, than those who, having the greatest aversion from it, are, under the conduct of other principles, erroneous and superstitious. Thus the lives of the common sort of Protestants are no better than those of the Papists, nor are theirs to be compared with those of some of the Mohammedans; yea, by the power of false and superstitious apprehensions imposed on their minds and consciences, some are carried out unto greater and more frequent acts of bounty and charity, of the mortification of the flesh, the denial of its sensual appetites and satisfactions, than are to be found among the most who profess themselves to be under the conduct and rule of truth. Hence no profession of religion, be it never so corrupt or foolish, is advanced amongst us, but instantly (at least for a season, and while it is new) it pretends an advantage as unto life and conversation against the truth, measured by the lives of its common professors; yea, this is made the principal motive and argument to prevail with honest and well-meaning people unto a compliance with the profession of their way, because of the effects which (as it is pretended) it produceth in their lives and conversations above those which profess the truth. And how prevalent this pretense hath been among us is known unto all. Wherefore, I say, we cannot allow that the lives of the common sort of professors should be esteemed a just and due representation of the doctrine which they do profess. **It is true, that where it is not so, men will have no benefit by their profession, nor will they be steadfast in it when a trial shall befall them.** Where the mind is internally and really conformed unto the truth, there the actions of the life may be allowed to represent sincerely, though not perfectly, the truths which are believed; and he is no firm Christian in any kind, he is brought into no spiritual order, **whose mind doth not receive by the Spirit of Christ the transforming influence of evangelical truth,** and who exerts not the power of it in a holy conversation, so as that he is not unwilling that what he believeth may be impartially judged by what he liveth, as to sincerity, though not as to perfection. But if we should allow the lives of men in general to be a rule

whereby judgment might be safely passed in these things, it cannot be denied but that sometimes, and in some ages and places, error would, at least for a season, carry it in glory and reputation from the truth, yea, the light of nature from grace, tradition from the Scripture, and the Alcoran [the Koran] from the Gospel.

But we have sufficient ground of exceptions unto this interpretation and exposition of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that without the least apology for the ungodly lives of its professors. Among these, that now insisted on is of the first rank and evidence. Multitudes of those who profess the truth never had a view of its spiritual glory because of the darkness of their minds, and therefore have no experience of its power and efficacy, nor are their hearts and lives influenced or guided by it; for the gospel will not have its effects on the minds of men unless it first communicates unto them those internal spiritual principles which are necessary unto all the operations that it doth require. Put this new wine into old bottles and all is lost, both bottles and wine also. The doctrine of the gospel, taken notionally into the old, unrenewed, corrupt minds of men, is utterly lost as unto all the proper ends of it. And wherever there is a **reformation of life**, with any diligent attendance unto duties moral or religious, wrought in persons by the light and dispensation of the gospel, they are the immediate effects of those doctrines which it hath in common with the light of nature and the law in its power [which is not saving, just common grace, i.e., not the power of an endless life], and not of those which are **peculiarly its own**. And this they seem to understand well enough who, finding, either in their own experience, or from the observation they have made of others, how ineffectual the truth of gospel mysteries is towards the minds of carnal men [men unconverted, still in the image of Adam, a natural man as opposed to a spiritual man. see 1Cor2:14], have upon the matter, abandoned the preaching of it, and have taken up only with those principles which are suited unto the light of nature and convictions of the law. [i.e., they turn into legal preachers! Remember, one of the purposes of the law given out at Mt. Sinai was to curb sin since the Jews were stiff-necked and a rebellious people. The other purpose of the law was to show the infinite hatefulness of sin and to engender fear and bondage causing the elect to always look forward for their redeemer that would deliver them. And so the law works with the conscience to curb sin; this is a *legal* obedience because it is primarily founded on the law as opposed to *evangelical* obedience which is founded upon on faith, a love for God from the heart, and a due esteem for God for who he is according to his glory and excellencies of his nature that is seen by the eyes of faith albeit imperfectly.]

The holiness which the gospel requireth is the transforming of our whole souls into the image and likeness of God, with the actings of renewed nature in a universal approbation of his "good, and acceptable, and perfect will," Romans 12:2. But this will not be effected unless we can "behold the glory of the Lord" in it, whereby alone we may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Corinthians 3:18. Nor can we so behold that glory unless he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness do shine in our hearts to give us the knowledge of it," chap. 4:6. Hence is the doctrine of it ineffectual in the hearts and upon the lives of many by whom its truth is openly professed. [an excellent summary!]

It is otherwise with every false religion. The motives which they make use of, and the instruments they apply, unto the hearts of men, to effect the reformation of their lives, and to engage them unto such works and duties as they require, are all of them suited either unto their natural light, or unto

their superstitions, fears, desires, pride, and other depraved affections. Those of the first sort, — namely, such as are suited unto natural light, — are common, in some degree or measure, unto all religion whatever, be it on other accounts true or false. Everything that is called religion pretends at least unto the improvement of natural light, as did the philosophers among the heathen of old. It urgeth also the law so far as it is made known unto them, though by other presumptions and prejudices some do abate and take off from its force and efficacy, making void the commandments of God through their own traditions. Whatever change is wrought or effected on the minds and lives of men by virtue of these principles, and motives taken from them, doth not belong unto any one way in religion more than another; nor is it to be accounted unto the glory or advantage of any of them. In these things Mohammedanism and all false ways in Christianity have an equal share and interest, unless where, by some corrupt opinions of their own, men deprave the light of nature and the rule of the law itself. Some finding, as they say, more of justice, temperance, veracity, righteousness in dealings, with common usefulness unto mankind, among Turks and Banians, than among the common sort of Christians, do foolishly begin to think that their religion is better than Christianity. But as this scandal will be surely required at the hands of them who give it by their flagitious lives, so it is foolishly and wickedly taken by others; for those truths and laws which produce these effects in them are common unto all religions, and are equally suited unto the light and reason of all mankind, and have more evidence and efficacy communicated unto them by the gospel than by any other kind of religion whatever. And so it is with them among ourselves who would plead an advantage unto their profession by the effects of it in their lives as to a moral conversation, when they can pretend unto no real motive thereunto, — namely, unto what is good and useful, and not mere affectation and hypocrisy, — but what is owned and pressed in the doctrine of the gospel which we adhere unto. The differences, therefore, that are in this kind are not from the doctrines men profess, but they arise from the persons themselves who embrace them, with their various lusts, inclinations, and temptations.

It is evident, therefore, that whatever there is of moral good, duty, or usefulness among men in any false way of religion, it all proceeds from those principles and is the effect of those motives which are owned and improved in that which is true; and it may be easily evinced that they are more cultivated and cleared, have more evidence, life, light, and power given them, by the truths of the gospel, than by any other means or way whatever. And where they have not an equal effect upon those who profess that truth which they have on some by whom it is deserted, it is from the power of their own cursed lusts and carnal security. The difference on the part of religion itself consists in what is superadded unto these general principles by any notions of it. Now this, in every false religion, is what is suited unto the natural principles of men's minds, their innate pride, vanity, curiosity, superstition, irregular hopes and fears. Such among the Romanists are the doctrines of merit, of outward disciplines, of satisfactions for sin, of confession, penances, of purgatory, and the like. They were all of them found out to put **some awe on the minds, and to have some influence on the lives of men, who had lost all sense of the principles and motives of gospel obedience**, though some considerable respect was had unto the benefit and advantage of them by whom they were invented; for why should men labor and beat their brains merely for others, without some income and revenue of advantage unto themselves? And it is no wonder if they produce in many, as they have done, great appearing acts of devotion, many outward works of bounty and charity, yea, in some, real austerities of life and renunciations of the pleasures of the world. I doubt not but that the sensual, wicked paradise of Mohammed doth

effectually prevail in the minds of many of his followers unto that kind of virtuous and devout life which they suppose may bring them unto its enjoyment.

The inquiry, then, on the whole matter is, wherefore the truths of the gospel do not produce, in all by whom they are professed, effects as much more excellent than those mentioned as truth is more excellent than error, heavenly light than superstition, faith than frightful apprehensions of feigned torments, true peace and tranquility of mind than outward reputation and glory. And the principal reason hereof is, because such persons as are barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ do not discern those truths in their spiritual nature, nor can therefore take in the power and efficacy of them on their souls.

There is a holiness, obedience, and fruitfulness in good works, wrought, preserved, and maintained by the truth of the gospel, in them who are **truly regenerated** and **sanctified thereby**, who **receive the proper efficacy of it on their minds and souls**, **which differ in the whole kind and nature from anything which the principles and motives before mentioned, which have their efficacy from their suitableness unto the depraved affections of men's minds, can produce**; and this alone is acceptable with God. But it must be granted, that where men are ignorant of the power made unacquainted with the internal efficacy of the gospel, their lives under the profession of the truth may be as bad, and it is a great wonder they are not worse than those of the Papists, of the most erroneous persons, or even of the Mohammedans themselves: for they have many superstitious imaginations and false principles that are suited to put some outward restraint upon their lusts, and to press them unto actions praiseworthy in themselves; but these being no way influenced by such apprehensions, and being not under the power of gospel truth, it is a wonder, I say, if they exceed them not in all manner of wicked conversation. It is not merely the outward profession of the truth, but the inward power of it, that is useful either unto the world or the souls of men.

And hence it is that the preaching of any person which principally dwelleth on and **argueth from the things which the light of nature can of itself reach unto**, and the **convictions which are by the law, is better accepted with, and appears more useful unto multitudes of common professors, than the declaration of the mysteries of the gospel is**: for such things are suited unto the natural conceptions of men and the **working of their own reason**, which gives them a sense of what efficacy they have; **but being in the dark unto the mysteries of the gospel, they neither see their excellency nor experience their power**. Nevertheless, they and they only are the true spring, cause, and rule of all acceptable obedience, even "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." **From the whole it appears how prone such persons must be unto an apostasy from the truth who have no spiritual light to discern its glory nor to let in the power of it upon their souls. WOW!!!**

If, then, we would be established in the truth, if we would stand fast in the faith, if we would be preserved from the danger of that defection from the gospel which the world is prone, disposed, and inclined unto, it must be our principal endeavor to have a spiritual acquaintance with the things themselves that are declared in the doctrine of truth which we do profess, and to have an experience of their efficacy upon our own souls. Mere notions of truth, or the knowledge of the doctrines of it, enabling us to talk of them or dispute for them, will not preserve us. And although this spiritual light be

the grace, promise, and gift of God, yet is it that which we are to endeavor after in a way of duty; and the directions ensuing may contribute somewhat towards the right discharge of our duty herein: —

1. *Pray earnestly for the Spirit of truth go lead us into all truth.* For this end is he promised by our Savior unto his disciples; and there are no teachings like his. If we learn and receive the truths of the gospel merely in the power and ability of our natural faculties, as we do other things, we shall not abide constant unto them in spiritual trials. What we learn of ourselves in spiritual things, we receive only in the outward form of it; what we are taught by the Spirit of God, we receive in its power. The apostle grants that “the spirit of man,” his mind, reason, and understanding, is able to conceive of and apprehend “the things of a man,” things merely natural, civil, or moral, which are cognate unto human nature; but saith he, “The things of God,” the mystery of his wisdom, love, and grace in Christ Jesus, “knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God,” and by him are they revealed unto them that do believe, 1 Corinthians 2:9-12. Without his especial aid, men may, by their natural sagacity and industry, attain an acquaintance with the doctrines of truth, so as to handle them (like the schoolmen) with incredible subtilty and curiosity; but they may be far enough for all that from an establishing knowledge of spiritual things. That horrible neglect which is among Christians of this one duty of earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit of Christ, that scorn which is cast upon it by some, and that self-confidence in opposition unto it which prevails in the most, sufficiently manifest of what nature is their knowledge of the truth, and what is like to become of it when a trial shall befall them. The least spark of saving knowledge inlaid in the minds of the poorest believers, by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, will be more effectual unto the r own sanctification, and more prevalent against oppositions, than the highest notions or most subtle reasonings that men have attained in leaning unto their own understanding. Wherefore the Scripture abounds in examples, instances, and directions for prayer, unto this end, that we may have the assistance of the Holy Spirit in learning of the truth of the mysteries of the gospel, without which we cannot do so in a due manner:
Ephesians 1:16-20,

“Making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”

Chap. 3:14-19,

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Colossians 2:1-3,

“I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

2. Rest not in any notions of truth, unless you find that you have learned it as it is in Jesus. What it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, the apostle fully declares,

Ephesians 4:20-25,

“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

This it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, — namely, together with the knowledge of it, **to have an experience of its power and efficacy in the mortification of sin, in the renovation of our nature, and transforming of the whole soul into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth.** When men learn that they may know, and are satisfied with what they know, without an endeavor to find the life and power of what they know in their own hearts, their knowledge is of little use, and their assent unto the truth will have no stability accompanying of it. The immediate end (with respect unto us) of the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Scripture is, that it may **put forth a spiritual, practical power in our souls, and that we may do the things which are so revealed unto us.** Where this is neglected, where men content themselves with a bare speculation of spiritual truths, they do what lies in them to frustrate the end, and “reject the counsel of God” in them. If, therefore, we would know any evangelical truths in a due manner, if we would have that evidence and assurance of them in our minds which may secure our profession against temptations and oppositions, let us not rest in any apprehensions of truth whose efficacy we have no experience of in our hearts, nor think that we know any more of the mysteries of the gospel than we find effectually working in the renovation of our minds, and the transforming of our souls into the image of the glory of God in Christ. [\[Superb!\]](#)

3. **Learn to esteem more of a little knowledge which discovers itself in its effects to be sanctifying and saving, than of the highest attainments in notions and speculations,** though gilded and set off by the reputation of skill, subtilty, eloquence, wit, and learning, which do not evidence themselves by alike operations. We are fallen into days wherein men of all sorts, sects, and parties, are vying for the reputation of skill, ability, knowledge, subtilty, and cunning in disputes about religion. And few there are who are cast under such disadvantages by apparent want of learning, but that they hope to make it up one way or other, so as to think as well of their own knowledge and abilities as of other men’s. He who hath learned to be meek, humble, lowly, patient, self-denying, holy, zealous, peaceable, to purify his heart, and to be useful in his life, is indeed the person who is best acquainted with evangelical truth. Wherefore, let this knowledge be esteemed, both in ourselves and others, above all that proud,

presumptuous, notional, puffing knowledge, which sets up for so great a reputation in the world, and we shall have experience of a blessed success in our pursuit of it.

4. Be not satisfied without a discovery of such a goodness, excellency, and beauty in spiritual things, as may attract your hearts unto them, and cause you to cleave unto them with unconquerable love and delight. [Delight is a grace! It enables you to delight in these mysteries, in God's law, his mind and will. See Ps119] This is that necessary, inseparable adjunct, property, fruit, or effect of faith, without which it is not essentially differenced from the faith of devils. That knowledge, that perception and understanding of the truth, which doth not present the things known, believed, perceived, as lovely, excellent, and desirable unto the will and affections, is a "cloud without water," which every wind of temptation will scatter and blow away. Do not, therefore, suppose that you have learned anything of God in Christ, of the mystery of his grace, of his acceptable and perfect will, unless you see therein such evidence of infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, love, in all things so suited unto the eternal glory of God and advantage of your own souls, in the uttermost rest, peace, and satisfaction that they are capable of, as that you may admire, adore, delight in them, and cleave unto them with a holy, prevalent, unconquerable love. When you do so, then will you be established in the truth, and be able to bid defiance unto the artifices of Satan, with the solicitations of men, that would withdraw or separate you from it. But I will not farther digress in these discourses.

Ignorance is another occasion of apostasy from the truth, which was named under this head of the depravation of the minds of men. It is the want of a due perception, understanding, or knowledge of the principal doctrines of the gospel, with the evidence which is given unto them, and the use of them in the Scriptures, that we intend hereby. A general knowledge of some doctrines, without an acquaintance with their grounds and reasons, their use and effects in the life of God, is of no value in these things. When persons know not in religion what they ought to know, as they ought to know it, or what it is their duty to know, and without the knowledge whereof they can perform no other duty of religion in a right manner, then are they culpably ignorant, and so as to be exposed unto all other evils that may befall them; for whether this be for want of due instruction from others, or want of diligence in themselves to learn, the event is equally pernicious. In the first way, the Holy Ghost assures us that "where there is no vision, the people perish," **Proverbs 29:18**. The people will suffer where those whose duty it is so to do are not able to instruct them; for "if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch." And in general it is affirmed, that the "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," **Hosea 4:6**. Of such ruinous consequence, by one means or other, is the people's ignorance of what it is their duty to know; and by no one way doth it so effectually operate unto their destruction as by this of disposing them to a defection from the truth which they have professed when any trial or temptation doth befall them. [i.e., knowledge is a grace; without it you will not grow in grace; knowledge and grace are inseparable.]

Multitudes, yea, whole nations, are often brought unto an outward general profession of the truth of religion, especially with respect unto the opposition of any other that is made thereunto. The influence and example of some that are in power and esteem among them, falling in with a season of encouraging circumstances, may produce this effect, where men have little knowledge of what they profess, and less sense of its power and efficacy. So the body of the people of old turned unto the profession of the true religion under the reformation made by Josiah; nevertheless, as the prophet observes, "they did it not with their whole hearts, but feignedly," Jeremiah 3:10. They did it not out of

love to the truth, or a cordial respect unto the ways of God, but in a hypocritical compliance with their ruler. The conversion of the northern nations after they had possessed the western parts of the Roman empire was a pledge of what their future profession was like to prove. The first conversion of the world was by the laborious preaching of apostles, evangelists, and others, accompanied with many miraculous operations, exemplified in holiness of life, and patience under all sorts of persecutions; and by this means none were received or admitted into the profession of Christian religion but such as were personally convinced of its truth, instructed in its mysteries, conformed in their lives to its precepts, and engaged unto its profession against persecution. [this should be required before becoming a member of a church.] But in these latter conversions, some kings, rulers, or potentates, being dealt withal by popes or other princes, and thereon (perhaps with no small influence from secular considerations) admitting of the Christian religion in opposition unto Paganism, their allies, kindred, and subjects, usually followed them therein; having indeed little more of Christianity than the administration of some external rites, and a relinquishment of their old idols for the new saints proposed unto them. By this means their first profession of Christianity was laid in profound ignorance of the principles and most important doctrines and duties of the gospel. Hence it became most easy for them who were looked on as their guides to lead them into all those foolish opinions, idolatrous practices, superstitious devotions, and blind subjection to themselves, whence at length issued the fatal apostasy. Knowing but little of what they ought to have known, and delighting not in obedience unto what they did know, they willingly embraced themselves, and God judicially gave them up unto, those strong delusions which turned them wholly from the gospel.

Thus the generality of this nation hath received and professed the protestant religion in opposition unto Popery; and no doubt many did so through a sincere and effectual conviction of its truth, upon the first reformation. But it is so come to pass, that what through their own supine negligence and carelessness about all things invisible and eternal, what through the sloth, ignorance, laziness, and wretched indifferency in religion, of some of those that should instruct them, multitudes are become shamefully ignorant of the rudiments and principles of that religion which they account themselves to profess. So hath it been almost in all ages and places after profession became national. Many will not make use of the means of instruction which they have, and more want that means in an effectual measure. Nor, it may be, can there be an instance given where there hath been sufficient care taken, or at least sufficient provision made, for the instruction of the body of the people in all parts of it; neither is that ordinary course of the ministry which is passant in the world sufficient to this purpose. Can any man who knows any thing of the gospel, or of the nature of men with respect unto spiritual things, once suppose that the reading of prayers unto a people, or the rehearsing of a sermon without zeal, life, power, or evidence of compassion for the souls of men, accompanied with a light, vain, worldly conversation (as it is with many), should answer the apostolical pattern of laying the foundation, and then carrying on of men by continual instruction unto perfection? From hence (as also from other reasons obvious unto all impartial observers) it is that "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people," ignorance prevailing on all sorts of men. Some will not learn, some have none to teach them, some are engaged in the pursuit of sensual lusts and vanities, some swallowed up in the love of and cares about the things of the world; few in any age have been conscientiously diligent in the things which are of eternal concernment unto them.

This was that which facilitated the **papal apostasy**, from whence it took its rise, and by which it received its progress. Those who would on the motives mentioned be accounted Christians, and which it was the interest of the pretended presidents in religion to have so esteemed, being profoundly ignorant, they first accommodated the practices of religion unto their carnal, superstitious minds, and then gradually led them into all errors and fables; for they were blind, and knew not whither they went. So 151 were the important truths of the gospel abandoned for monkish dreams, for legends of foolish, lying miracles, and other heathenish superstitions. It was by ignorance, I say, principally, that the people gave themselves up unto the power of seducers; which enabled the architects of the Roman apostasy to carry them into opinions, ways, and practices, suited unto their secular interest: and so sensible have they been of their advantage hereby, as that some of them have commended ignorance, as the most useful qualification of the people in religion!

We may therefore well fix this as another cause, or occasion at least, of apostasy. When men are ignorant of the religion which themselves profess, as to its doctrines, and the principal grounds of them; when they are like the Samaritans, who understood not their own religious worship, which they had received by tradition, but

“worshipped they knew not what,” John 4:22,

— they are no way able to defend themselves against the least impressions of seducers. They may plod on in the old track of some formal outward duties, but if any one meet them in their way, it is easy for him to turn them out of it. So the apostle, showing the danger that professors were in because of apostatical seducers, assigns the means of their preservation to be

“the unction which they had received, whereby they knew all things,” 1 John 2:19,20,27.

Had they not been taught and instructed in the truth, they could not, at such a season, have persevered in the profession of the faith. Yea, such persons are very ready to think that there is something worthy their consideration in what is proposed unto them by the most corrupt seducers, whereas they have really found nothing in what themselves have so long professed; for no man can find any real benefit, profit, or advantage, in that whereof he is ignorant. So it is said that some by

“good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,” Romans 16:18.

Everything they say hath a **plausible pretense and appearance** unto persons under that character, so as that they are apt to be taken and pleased with it. Hence is that advice of the apostle unto them who design establishment in faith and order:

“Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men,” 1 Corinthians 14:20.

Τελειοι γινεσθε ταις φρεσι, “perfect men,” Be ye complete, perfect,” well instructed in your minds, fully initiated into the doctrines of the gospel. Such the apostle calls τελειους, “perfect men,” 1 Corinthians 2:6; Hebrews 5:14. Those who, in opposition hereunto, are “children,” — that is, weak and

ignorant, — **will also be uncertain and unstable**. They will be as children, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,” Ephesians 4:14.

For let some **crafty** papal emissaries come among this sort of people, and let them confidently tell them that they neither have, nor ever will have, any benefit by the religion they profess, and that they have no evidence or assurance of the truth of it; — they tell them no more but what they will know to be true if once they take it into consideration; for whereas they have seemed to be “always learning,” by resorting to church, and the like outward means whereby religion is expressed, yet they “never came to the knowledge of the truth.” Wherefore, when by any means they are put unto a stand, and are forced to consider themselves, they are amazed to find how little it is that they believe of the religion which they profess, or know of the ground of what they would be thought to believe. Let such persons add (as they will not fail to do) that with them of Rome is full assurance, that none ever mistook the way who accompanied them that are of the old religion, which their forefathers professed so many ages before this new-fangledness came up, which hath filled all things with confusion, disorder, sects, and divisions, whereas before all were of one mind (which was the most plausible argument of Paganism against Christianity), every troublesome personal circumstance of their present condition makes them inclinable to believe that it may be as they say. Let them tell them, moreover, of the power granted unto the priesthood of their church to pardon all sorts of sins; of the effectual intercession of saints and angels, among whom they may choose out particular patrons and guardians for themselves; of the mercy, grace, goodness, power, and interest in heaven of the blessed Virgin, all continually exercised in the behalf of Catholics; of the miracles that are daily wrought among them; of 153 the wondrous sanctity and devotion which some among them have attained; — they begin to think that there is somewhat in these things which they can feel or see, whereas in their own religion they can understand little or nothing at all. The “great things” of the gospel are “strange things” unto them; they neither do nor can understand them by all the diligence they think meet to use in this case. But the things now proposed unto them have the nature of tales, which the mind of man is accustomed unto, and apt both to receive and retain. And it is not imaginable how easy a transition will prove from a religion whereof men know little or nothing at all, unto that which at one view presents unto their fancies and senses all that they need believe or do that they may be eternally happy.

Suppose one of another sort to come among such persons, and at once call them off from the profession of that religion which they pretend unto, confidently requiring them to attend wholly unto a light within them, which will be their guide and direct them unto God; — they find by natural experience that there is some such light within them as that which he seems to propose unto them; for there is so in all men, as the apostle declares, even the light of conscience, accusing or excusing as unto sin or duty, Romans 2:14,15. Having, therefore, by reason of their ignorance, no experience of any power or efficacy in that religion which themselves profess, they begin to think there is a reality in what is proposed unto them, and so are easily inveigled; for there is no security of his constancy for one moment, when a trial or temptation shall befall him, who hath not light or knowledge enough of the truth to give him some inward experience of the efficacy of what he doth profess.

But it is no way necessary to insist any longer on that which is so evident, both in matter of fact and in the reasons of it. An apostasy from a traditional profession of those truths which indeed men understand not, is easy, and in a time of temptation unavoidable. In all ages, multitudes have thus perished for want of knowledge; for such persons are destitute of defense against any external cause or means of defection. They have nothing in their minds to oppose to force, nothing unto seductions or fraud, nothing to the examples of great leaders, nothing to conflict with the **superstition of their own minds**; and will therefore, when wind and tide suit the design, comply with any fair pretense for a revolt. And herein lieth no small part of the danger of the public profession of the protestant religion among us. By whose defect principally God knows, but it is incredible how stupidly ignorant multitudes are. Such there are who know no difference in religion, whilst the same names of God and Christ are commonly used, and the same places frequented for worship. Yet will this sort of men show great zeal and earnestness against Popery and other heresies! None more forward to revile, contemn, and prosecute them to their power; as ready as Mohammedans are to persecute Christians, or Papists sincere believers, and that on the same grounds. **But if at any time they are put unto a stand, and necessitated to give an account unto themselves of the reason of their own religion, what it is they believe, and why they do so, their confidence will fail them, and, like unto men fallen into cross-paths and ways, they will not know what to do.** And on such occasions they are the readiest of all men, in a kind of shame of themselves, to give up the religion which they have professed for any other, wherein it is promised they shall have more skill, and by which they may have some benefit, as it is pretended, whereas by their own they have had none at all.

Whatever, therefore, is amongst us or elsewhere an occasion of ignorance among the people, it doth expose them unto a fatal defection from the truth If those upon whom it **is incumbent to instruct them in the knowledge of the truths and mysteries of the gospel are unskillful or negligent in the discharge of their duty**, they do what lieth in them to give them up bound hand and foot to the power of their spiritual adversaries; and they will be found chargeable with no less guilt who lay obstructions in the way of others who would willingly labor in the instruction of them unto their power. A man would think, from all circumstances, and all indications of the present inclinations of the minds of men, that it were the chief interest of all that really love the protestant religion to preserve its professors from apostasy or any disposition thereunto. That this will be done effectually without a continual instruction of them in the truths which are to be professed, with their grounds, reasons, and effects, is so fond an imagination as that it deserves no consideration. **It is but to build castles in the air, to suppose that men will be kept constant in the profession of religion by outward laws, the observance of external forms, and the secular advantage of some persons by it, wherein they are not concerned.** They will not be so, I say, when a trial shall befall them. There is no other means that is appointed of God, or is rational in itself, for the attaining of this end, but that those who are so concerned do what in them lies personally to instruct the people in the truth, encouraging them unto obedience by their own example; and to prevail with them who have the same design to be assisting with them therein. But to cry out of the great danger of protestant religion in the growth of Popery, and at the same time not only to be negligent themselves in the great duty of communicating the real effectual knowledge of it unto the souls of men, but also to lay needless obstructions in the way of others who would sincerely endeavor so to do, is an unaccountable solecism in religion. [So Jesus chides the Pharisees,

"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

And here we have pastors in our churches that do not vet their elders, home group leaders, and youth pastors, to see that they are proficient in Christian knowledge, i.e., in all the doctrines of grace, and are many more insane deficiencies permitted within the church.

Either we are not in earnest in our pretended zeal for the truth and our fears of the prevalency of Popery, or we believe not that instruction in the truth is the only means to preserve men in the useful profession of it; which is to renounce the gospel and all rational consideration therewithal, or we are influenced by other things, which we far more esteem than evangelical truth and the purity of religion.

The reformation of the church consisted principally in the deliverance of the people from darkness and ignorance [hence reformed theology]; and if through our neglect they should be reduced again into the same state and condition, they would be a ready prey for the Papacy to seize upon. The advice of the apostle, as to the duty of all gospel ministers and officers in such a season as we are fallen into, is that alone which will preserve us, 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

4 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at^[a] His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

But it may be supposed that so much labor and diligence in the instruction and teaching of the people, as some assert, is altogether unnecessary. It is enough if they be taught what are the general principles of religion [so typical!], and do thereon comply with the conduct of the church whereunto they do belong. Besides, if this burden be incumbent on the ministry, that those called thereunto are to have no relaxation from constant, sedulous “laboring in the word and doctrine,” and are moreover required to exemplify what they teach in the whole course of their conversation, who would ever take upon him that office that can advantage himself in the world any other way? It must needs prove very burdensome if we have a religion that will not be preserved in the minds of men without all this constant, endless toil and labor. In the Roman church we see how easy a thing it is to keep up the people unto its profession, whilst the clergy are at liberty to pursue and use the pleasures and honors of this world, nor are any of them obliged unto those irksome and endless pains which we seem to require; yea, they find by experience that ignorance in the people is the best expedient to keep them in subjection to the priests, and then all things are secure. I wish that such thoughts as these do not influence the minds of some unto a readiness for a change, if so be it might be effected without hazard. But if more pains, diligence, labor, with perseverance therein, be required by us in the ministers of the gospel and guides of the church, than the Holy Ghost in the Scripture doth plainly, positively, frequently enjoin, let it be rejected and despised. Alas! the best of us, of all that are alive, do come short in many things of the rules and examples that are proposed unto us therein, nor do I know

on what grounds or by what measures the most of us do intend to give in our accounts at the last day. **Nor is there any more impious opinion, nor more contradictory to the gospel, than that it is enough for the people to be instructed only in the general principles of religion, without any farther improvement or growth in knowledge:** for those who are thus called “The people” are, I suppose, esteemed Christians, — that is, disciples of Jesus Christ, and members of his mystical body; and if they are so, their growth in understanding, their edification in knowledge, their being carried on unto perfection, their acquaintance with the whole counsel of God, with the mysteries of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, are as necessary for them as the “saving of their souls,” indispensably depending thereon, can render them. And if we will be ministers of the gospel, it will not be best for us to prescribe unto ourselves our rules and measures of duty. It will be our wisdom to accept of that office on the terms limited by the Holy Ghost, or utterly to let it alone. And we must know, that the more exactly our profession is suited unto the gospel, the less mixture there is in it of anything human, the more difficult it is thoroughly to instruct men in the knowledge of it. The mind of man is far more apt and able to comprehend and retain fables, errors, and superstitions, than evangelical truths. The former are natural unto it; against the latter it hath a dislike and enmity, until they are removed by grace. Hence, some will make a more appearing proficiency in a false religion in four or five days than others will do in the knowledge of the truth almost in so many years. We may have well-grown Papists in a month’s time, that shall be expert^{note} in the mysteries of their devotion; and **there is another profession that two or three days will bring men unto a perfection in: but slow is the progress of most in learning the truth and mysteries of the gospel. If peculiar diligence and constant sedulity be not used in their instruction, they will be made a prey unto the next opportunity for a defection from the truth.**

Note: for more on this ‘expert’ subject go to code518. I don’t know if Owen is consciously using the term ‘expert’ in the same way Van Til uses it but it seems that he is.

Continue reading at this site: p158 Ch 6

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Owen_V07_Nature_And_Cause_Of_Apostasy_From_The_Gospel.pdf

this is also found on [ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

code18

by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/deathofdeath.i.viii.v.html>

Book II, Chapter
V. p120 (p 120)

Of application and impetration.

The allowable use of this distinction, how it may be taken in a sound sense, the several ways whereby men have expressed the thing which in these words is intimated, and some arguments for the overthrowing of the false use of it, however expressed, we have before intimated and declared. Now,

seeing that this is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος of the opposite opinion, understood in the sense and according to the use they make of it, I shall give it one blow more, and leave it, I hope, a-dying.

I shall, then, briefly declare, that although these two things may admit of a distinction, yet they cannot of a separation, but that for whomsoever Christ obtained good, to them it might be applied; and for whomsoever he wrought reconciliation with God, they must actually unto God be reconciled. So that the blood of Christ, and his death in the virtue of it, cannot be looked on, as some do, as a medicine in a box, laid up for all that shall come to have any of it, and so applied now to one, then to another, without any respect or difference, as though it should be intended no more for one than for another; so that although he hath obtained all the good that he hath purchased for us, yet it is left indifferent and uncertain whether it shall ever be ours or no [taken to is logical issue, Arminians concede that their scheme may not result in any being saved]: for it is well known, that notwithstanding those glorious things that are assigned by the Arminians to the death of Christ, which they say he purchased for all, as remission of sins, reconciliation with God, and the like, **yet they for whom this purchase and procurement is made may be damned, as the greatest part are, and certainly shall be.** Now, that there should be such a distance between these two, —

First, It is contrary to common sense or our usual form of speaking, which must be wrested, and our understandings forced to apprehend it. When a man hath obtained an office, or any other obtained it for him, can it be said that it is uncertain whether he shall have it or no? **If it be obtained for him, is it not his in right, thorough perhaps not in possession?** That which is impetrated or obtained by petition is his by whom it is obtained. It is to offer violence to common sense to say a thing may be a man's, or it may not be his, when it is obtained for him; for in so saying we say it is his. And so it is in the purchase made by Jesus Christ, and the good things obtained by him for all them for whom he died.

Secondly, It is contrary to all reason in the world, that the death of Christ, **in God's intention, should be applied to any one that shall have no share in the merits of that death.** God's will that Christ should die for any, is his intention that he shall have a share in the death of Christ, that it should belong to him, — that is, be applied to him; for that is, in this case, said to be applied to any that is his in any respect, according to the will of God. But now the death of Christ, according to the opinion we oppose, is so applied to all, **and yet the fruits of this death are never so much as once made known to far the greatest part of those all.**

Thirdly, [It is contrary to reason] that a ransom should be paid for captives, upon compact for their deliverance, and yet upon the payment those captives not be made free and set at liberty. The death of Christ is a ransom, Matt. xx. 28, paid by compact for the deliverance of captives for whom it was a ransom; and the promise wherein his Father stood engaged to him at his undertaking to be a Saviour, and undergoing the office imposed on him, was their deliverance, as was before declared, **upon his performance of these things: on that [being done, that] the greatest number of these captives should never be released, seems strange and very improbable.**

Fourthly, It is contrary to Scripture, as was before at large declared. See [also book iii.] chap. x.

But now, all this our adversaries suppose they shall wipe away with one slight distinction, that will make, as they say, all we affirm in this kind to vanish; and that is this: “It is true,” say they, “all things that are absolutely procured and obtained for any do presently become theirs in right for whom they are obtained; **but things that are obtained upon condition become not theirs until the condition be fulfilled.** Now, Christ hath purchased, by his death for all, all good things, not absolutely, but upon condition; and until that condition come to be fulfilled, unless they perform what is required, they have neither part nor portion, right unto nor possession of them.” Also, what this condition is they give in, in sundry terms; some call it a **not resisting of this redemption** offered to them; some, a **yielding to the invitation of the gospel**; some, in plain terms, **faith**. Now, be it so that Christ purchaseth all things for us, to be bestowed on this condition, that we do believe it, then I affirm that, — [follow the reasoning here!](#)

First, **Certainly this condition ought to be revealed to all for whom this purchase is made, if it be intended for them in good earnest.** All for whom he died must have means to know that his death will do them good if they believe; especially it being in his power alone to grant them these means who intends good to them by his death. If I should entreat a physician that could cure such a disease to cure all that came unto him, but should let many rest ignorant of the grant which I had procured of the physician, and none but myself could acquaint them with it, whereby they might go to him and be healed, could I be supposed to intend the healing of those people? Doubtless no. The application is easy.

Secondly, **This condition of them to be required is in their power to perform, or it is not.** If it be, then have all men power to believe; which is false: if it be not, then the Lord will grant them grace to perform it, or he will not. If he will, why then do not all believe? why are not all saved? if he will not, then this impetration, or obtaining salvation and redemption for all by the blood of Jesus Christ, comes at length to this:— God intendeth that he shall die for all, to procure for them remission of sins, reconciliation with him, eternal redemption and glory; but yet so that they shall never have the least good by these glorious things, unless they perform that which he knows they are no way able to do, and which none but himself can enable them to perform, and which concerning far the greatest part of them he is resolved not to do. Is this to intend that Christ should die for them for their good? or rather, that he should die for them to expose them to shame and misery? Is it not all one as if a man should promise a blind man a thousand pounds upon condition that he will see.

Thirdly, **This condition of faith is procured for us by the death of Christ, or it is not.** If they say it be **not**, then the chiefest grace, and without which redemption itself (express it how you please) is of no value, doth not depend on the grace of Christ as the meritorious procuring cause thereof; — which, first, is exceedingly injurious to our blessed Saviour, and serves only to diminish the honour and love due to him; secondly, is contrary to Scripture: [Tit. iii. 5, 6](#); [2 Cor. v. 21](#), “He became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” And how we can become the righteousness of God but by believing, I know not. Yea, expressly saith the apostle, “It is given to us for Christ’s sake, on the behalf of Christ, to believe in him,” [Phil. i. 29](#); “God blessing us with all spiritual blessing in him,” [Eph. i. 3](#), whereof surely faith is not the least. If it be a fruit of the death of Christ, why is it not bestowed on all, since he died for all, especially since the whole impetration of redemption is altogether unprofitable without it? If they do invent a condition upon which this is bestowed, the

vanity of that shall be afterward discovered. For the present, if this condition be, So they do not refuse or resist the means of grace, then I ask, if the fruit of the death of Christ shall be applied to all that fulfil this condition of not refusing or not resisting the means of grace? If not, then why is that produced? If so, then all must be saved that have not, or do not resist, the means of grace; that is, all pagans, infidels, and those infants to whom the gospel was never preached.

Fourthly, This whole assertion tends to make Christ but a half mediator, that should procure the end, but not the means conducing thereunto. So that, notwithstanding this exception and new distinction, our assertion stands firm, — That the fruits of the death of Christ, in respect of impetration of good and application to us, ought not to be divided; and our arguments to confirm it are unshaken.

[excellent conclusion](#) -

For a close of all; that which in this cause we affirm may be summed up in this: **Christ did not die for any upon condition, if they do believe; but he died for all God's elect, that they should believe, and believing have eternal life.** Faith itself is among the principal effects and fruits of the death of Christ; as shall be declared. It is nowhere said in Scripture, nor can it reasonably be affirmed, that if we believe, Christ died for us, as though our believing should make that to be which otherwise was not, — the act create the object [this error is the foundation of the common practice of the sinner's prayer, that someone has to ask or confess he believes to receive the promises.]; but Christ died for us that we might believe. [Again, the word *might* is not a statement of probability, depending on whether or not man believes; it means that Christ died so that your salvation would be infallibly effected.] Salvation, indeed, is bestowed conditionally; **but faith, which is the condition, is absolutely procured** [procured for the elect without any condition! It is a gift, not of ourselves. Eph. 2:8]. The question being thus stated, the difference laid open, and the thing in controversy made known, we proceed, in the next place, to draw forth some of those arguments, demonstrations, testimonies, and proofs, whereby the truth we maintain is established, in which it is contained, and upon which it is firmly founded: only desiring the reader to retain some notions in his mind of those fundamentals which in general we laid down before; they standing in such relation to the arguments which we shall use, that I am confident not one of them can be thoroughly answered before they be everted.

From all which we draw this argument:— That which the Father and the Son **intended to accomplish in and towards all those for whom Christ died**, by his death that is most certainly effected (if any shall deny this proposition, I will at any time, by the Lord's assistance, take up the assertion of it;) but the Father and his Son intended by the death of Christ to redeem, purge, sanctify, purify, deliver from death, Satan, the curse of the law, to quit of all sin, to make righteousness in Christ, to bring nigh unto God, all those for whom he died, as was above proved: therefore, Christ died for all and only those in and towards whom all these things recounted are effected; — which, whether they are all and every one, I leave to all and every one to judge that hath any knowledge in these things.

II. The second rank contains those places which lay down the actual accomplishment and effect of this oblation, or what it doth really produce and effect in and towards them for whom it is an oblation. Such are [Heb. ix. 12, 14](#), "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ... The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself

without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." Two things are here ascribed to the blood of Christ; — one referring to God, "It obtains eternal redemption;" the other respecting us, "It purgeth our consciences from dead works:" so that justification with God, by procuring for us an eternal redemption from the guilt of our sins and his wrath due unto them, with **sanctification in ourselves** (or, as it is called, [Heb. i. 3](#), a "**purging our sins**"), is the immediate product of that **blood** by which he entered into the holy place, of that **oblation** which, through the eternal Spirit, he presented unto God. Yea, this meritorious purging of our sins is peculiarly ascribed to his offering, as performed before his ascension: [Heb. i. 3](#), "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and again, most expressly, [chap. ix. 26](#), "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself:" which expiation, or putting away of sin by the way of sacrifice, must needs be the actual sanctification of them for whom he was a sacrifice, even as "the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh," [verse 13](#). Certain it is, that whosoever was either polluted or guilty, for whom there was an expiation and sacrifice allowed in those carnal ordinances, "which had a shadow of good things to come," had truly; — first, A **legal cleansing and sanctifying, to the purifying of the flesh**; and, secondly, Freedom from the punishment which was due to the breach of the law, as it was the rule of conversation to God's people: so much his sacrifice carnally accomplished for him that was admitted thereunto. Now, these things being but "shadows of good things to come," certainly the sacrifice of Christ did effect spiritually, for all them for whom it was a sacrifice, whatever the other could typify out; that is, **spiritual cleansing by sanctification**, and freedom from the guilt of sin: which the places produced do evidently prove. Now, whether this be accomplished in all and for them all, let all that are able judge.

Again; Christ, by his death, and in it, is said to "bear our sins:" so [1 Pet. ii. 24](#), "His own self bare our sins;" — where you have both what he did, "Bare our sins" (ἀνήνεγκε, he carried them up with him upon the cross); and what he intended, "That we being dead unto sins, should live unto righteousness." **And what was the effect? "By his stripes we are healed:"** which latter, as it is taken from the same place of the prophet where our Saviour is affirmed to "bear our iniquities, and to have them laid upon him" ([Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10–12](#)), so it is expository of the former, and will tell us what Christ did by "bearing our sins;" which phrase is more than once used in the Scripture to this purpose. 1. Christ, then, so bare our iniquities by his death, that, **by virtue of the stripes and afflictions** which he underwent in his offering himself for us, **this is certainly procured and effected, that we should go free**, and not suffer any of those things which he underwent for us. To which, also, you may refer all those places which evidently hold out a commutation in this point of suffering between Christ and us: [Gal. iii. 13](#), "He delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" with divers others which we shall have occasion afterward to mention.

Peace, also, and reconciliation with God, — **that is, actual peace by the removal of all enmity on both sides, with all the causes of it**, — **is fully ascribed to this oblation**: [Col. i. 21, 22](#), "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight;" as also [Eph. ii. 13–16](#), "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ: for he is our peace; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." To which add all

those places wherein plenary deliverances from anger, wrath, death, and him that had the power of it, is likewise asserted as the fruit thereof, as [Rom. v. 8–10](#), and ye have a farther discovery made of the immediate effect of the death of Christ. Peace and reconciliation, deliverance from wrath, enmity, and whatever lay against us to keep us from enjoying the love and favour of God, — a redemption from all these he effected for his church “with his own blood,” [Acts xx. 28](#). Whence all and every one for whom he died may truly say, “Who shall lay any thing to our charge? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,” [Rom. viii. 33, 34](#). **Which that they are procured for all and every one of the sons of Adam, that they all may use that rejoicing in full assurance, cannot be made appear.** And yet evident it is that so it is with all for whom he died, — that these are the effects of his death in and towards them for whom he underwent it: for by his being slain “he redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and made them unto our God kings and priests,” [Rev. v. 9, 10](#); for “he made an end of their sins, he made reconciliation for their iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness,” [Dan. ix. 24](#).

Add also those other places where our life is ascribed to the death of Christ, and then this enumeration will be perfect: [John vi. 33](#), He “**came down from heaven to give life to the world.**” Sure enough he giveth life to that world for which he gave his life. It is the **world of “his sheep, for which he layeth down his life,”** [chap. x. 15](#), even that he might “give unto them eternal life, that they might never perish,” [verse 28](#). So he appeared “to abolish death, and to bring life and immortality to light,” [2 Tim. i. 10](#); as also [Rom. v. 6–10](#).

Now, there is none of all these places but will afford a sufficient strength against the general ransom, or the universality of the merit of Christ. My leisure will not serve for so large a prosecution of the subject as that would require, and, therefore, I shall take from the whole this general argument:— If the death and oblation of Jesus Christ (as a sacrifice to his Father) doth sanctify all them for whom it was a sacrifice; doth purge away their sin; redeem them from wrath, curse, and guilt; work for them peace and reconciliation with God; procure for them life and immortality; bearing their iniquities and healing all their diseases; — **then died he only for those that are in the event sanctified, purged, redeemed, justified, freed from wrath and death, quickened, saved, etc.; but that all are not thus sanctified, freed, etc., is most apparent: and, therefore, they cannot be said to be the proper object of the death of Christ.** The supposal was confirmed before; the inference is plain from Scripture and experience, and the whole argument (if I mistake not) solid.

now go to Book 3 Chp 2

Arg. III. If Jesus Christ died for all men, — that is, purchased and procured for them, **according to the mind and will of God**, all those things which we recounted, and the Scripture setteth forth, to be the effects and fruits of his death, which may be summed up in this one phrase, “eternal redemption,” — then he did this, and that according to the purpose of God, **either absolutely or upon some condition** by them to be fulfilled.

[This, by the way, is the battle. The side that believes that there is a condition to receiving eternal life that is not absolutely provided for is the foundation of all false religion; it is man centered, synergistic, man working with God as opposed to the sovereign freedom of God to dispose of his gifts to whom he will, apart from any merit of the creature.]

If absolutely, then ought all and every one, absolutely and infallibly, to be made actual partakers of that eternal redemption so purchased; for what, I pray, should hinder the enjoyment of that to any which God absolutely intended, and Christ absolutely purchased for them? If upon condition, then he did either procure this condition for them, or he did not? If he did procure this condition for them, — that is, that it should be bestowed on them and wrought within them, — then he did it either absolutely again, or upon a condition. If **absolutely**, then are we as we were before; for to procure anything for another, to be conferred on him upon such a condition, and withal to procure that condition absolutely to be bestowed on him, is equivalent to the absolute procuring of the thing itself. For so we affirm, in this very business: Christ procured salvation for us, to be bestowed conditionally, if we do believe; but faith itself, that he hath absolutely procured, without prescribing of any condition. **Whence we affirm, that the purchasing of salvation for us is equivalent to what it would have been if it had been so purchased as to have been absolutely bestowed, in respect of the event and issue.** [Amen!] So that thus also must all be absolutely saved. But if this condition be procured upon condition, let that be assigned, and we will renew our quære concerning the procuring of that, whether it were absolute or conditional, and so never rest until they come to fix somewhere, or still run into a circle.

But, on the other side, is not this condition procured by him on whose performance all the good things purchased by him are to be actually enjoyed? **Then, first, This condition must be made known to all,** as Arg. ii. Secondly, All men are able of themselves to perform this condition, or they are not. If they are, then, seeing that condition is faith in the promises, as is on all sides confessed, are all men of themselves, **by the power of their own free-will, able to believe; which is contrary to the Scriptures,** as, by the Lord's assistance, shall be declared. If they cannot, but that this faith must be bestowed on them and wrought within them by the free grace of God, then when God gave his Son to die for them, to procure eternal redemption for them all, upon condition that they did believe, he either purposed to work faith in them all by his grace, that they might believe, or he did not? If he did, why doth not he actually perform it, seeing "he is of one mind, and who can turn him?" why do not all believe? why have not all men faith? Or doth he fail of his purpose? If he did not purpose to bestow faith on them all, or (which is all one) if he purposed not to bestow faith on all (for the will of God doth not consist in a pure negation of anything, — what he doth not will that it should be, he wills that it should not be), then the sum of it comes to this: — That God gave Christ to die for all men, but upon this condition, that they perform that which of themselves without him they cannot perform, and purposed that, for his part, he would not accomplish it in them.

Now, if this be not extreme madness, to assign a will unto God of doing that which himself knows and orders that it shall never be done, of granting a thing upon a condition which without his help cannot be fulfilled, and which help he purposed not to grant, let all judge. Is this anything but to delude poor creatures? Is it possible that any good at all should arise to any by such a purpose as this, such a giving of a Redeemer? Is it agreeable to the goodness of God to intend so great a good as is the redemption purchased by Christ, and to pretend that he would have it profitable for them, when he knows that they can no more fulfil the condition which he requires, that it may be by them enjoyed, than Lazarus could of himself come out of the grave? **Doth it beseem the wisdom of God, to purpose that which he knows shall never be fulfilled?** If a man should promise to give a thousand pounds to a blind man upon

condition that he will open his eyes and see, — which he knows well enough he cannot do, — were that promise to be supposed to come from a heart-pitying of his poverty, and not rather from a mind to illude and mock at his misery? If the king should promise to pay a ransom for the captives at Algiers, upon condition that they would conquer their tyrants and come away, — which he knows full well they cannot do, — were this a kingly act? Or, as if a man should pay a price to redeem captives, but not that their chains may be taken away, without which they cannot come out of prison; or promise dead men great rewards upon condition they live again of themselves; — are not these to as much end as the obtaining of salvation for men upon condition that they do believe, without obtaining that condition for them? Were not this the assigning such a will and purpose as this to Jesus Christ:— “I will obtain eternal life to be bestowed on men, and become theirs, by the application of the benefits of my death; but upon this condition, that they do believe. But as I will not reveal my mind and will in this business, nor this condition itself, to innumerable of them, so concerning the rest I know they are no ways able of themselves, — no more than Lazarus was to rise, or a blind man is to see, — to perform the condition that I do require, and without which none of the good things intended for them can ever become theirs; neither will I procure that condition ever to be fulfilled in them. That is, I do will that that shall be done which I do not only know shall never be done, but that it cannot be done, because I will not do that without which it can never be accomplished”? **Now, whether such a will and purpose as this beseeem the wisdom and goodness of our Saviour, let the reader judge.** In brief; an intention of doing good unto any one upon the performance of such a condition as the intender knows is absolutely above the strength of him of whom it is required, — especially if he know that it can no way be done but by his concurrence, and he is resolved not to yield that assistance which is necessary to the actual accomplishment of it, — is a vain fruitless flourish. That Christ, then, should obtain of his Father eternal redemption, and the Lord should through his Son intend it for them who shall never be made partakers of it, because they cannot perform, and God and Christ have purposed not to bestow, the condition on which alone it is to be made actually theirs, is unworthy of Christ, and unprofitable to them for whom it is obtained; which that anything that Christ obtained for the sons of men should be unto them, is a hard saying indeed. **Again; if God through Christ purpose to save all if they do believe, because he died for all, and this faith be not purchased by Christ, nor are men able of themselves to believe, how comes it to pass that any are saved? [Is your brain overheating yet?? This should unearth the hardness of your thinking so that you begin exercise your faculty of reason. This is superb reasoning.]**

[If it be answered], “God bestows faith on some, not on others,” I reply, Is this distinguishing grace purchased for those some comparatively, in respect of those that are passed by without it? If it be, then did not Christ die equally for all, for he died that some might have faith, not others; yea, in comparison, he cannot be said to die for those other some at all, not dying that they might have faith, without which he knew that all the rest would be unprofitable and fruitless. But is it not purchased for them by Christ? Then have those that be saved no more to thank Christ for than those that are damned; which were strange, and contrary to [Rev. i. 5, 6](#), “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” etc. For my part, I do conceive that Christ hath obtained salvation for men, not upon condition if they would receive it, but so fully and perfectly that certainly they should receive it. He purchased salvation, to be bestowed on them that do believe; but withal faith, that they might believe. Neither can it be objected, that, according to our doctrine, God requires anything of men that they cannot do, yea, faith to believe in Christ: for, — First, **Commands do not signify what is God’s**

intention should be done, but what is our duty to do; which may be made known to us whether we be able to perform it or not: **it signifieth no intention or purpose of God.** Secondly, For the promises which are proposed together with the command to believe:— **First, they do not hold out the intent and purpose of God, that Christ should die for us if we do believe; which is absurd, — that the act should be the constituter of its own object,** which must be before it, and is presupposed to be before we are desired to believe it: nor, secondly, the purpose of God that the death of Christ should be profitable to us if we do believe; which we before confuted: but, thirdly, **only that faith is the way to salvation which God hath appointed; so that all that do believe shall undoubtedly be saved, these two things, faith and salvation, being inseparably linked together, as shall be declared.**

Socinian Error Regarding Christ's sacrifice.

code19

The law of sin explained

The foundation for the effectual communication of all the good things of the gospel, the blood of Christ. How Socinians corrupt this. The power of the law of sin that keeps people in bondage until set free by the blood of Christ. What the blood of Christ does as the object of faith of God's elect. Also, what is redemption, how Christ obtained it and why is it called eternal.

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf
 Hebrews 9:12 Commentary on Hebrews by John Owen p271

Ver. 12. —Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the [most] holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

In this verse there is a direct entrance into the great mystery of the sacerdotal actings of Christ, especially as unto the sacrifice he offered to make atonement to sin. But the method which the apostle proceedeth in is what he was led unto by the proposal he had made of the types of it under the law; wherefore he begins with the complement or consequent of it, in answer unto that act or duty of the high priest wherein the glory of his office was most conspicuous, which he had newly mentioned.

And here, because part of our design in the exposition of this whole epistle is to free and vindicate the sense of it from the corrupt glosses which the Socinians, and some that follow them, have cast upon it, I shall on this great head of the sacrifice of Christ particularly insist on the removal of them. And indeed the substance of all that is scattered up and down their writings against the proper sacrifice of Christ, and the true nature of his sacerdotal office, is comprised in the comment on this epistle composed by Crellius and Schlichtingius I shall therefore first examine their corrupt wrestings of the words and false interpretations of them, before I proceed unto their exposition.

They begin, “Nunc etiam opponit sacrificium ipsius Christi, sacrificio pontificis antiqui.” This is the $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$ [first lie] of their interpretation of this and the following verses. If this be not so, all that they afterwards assert, or infer from it, falls of itself. But this is most false. There is not anything directly either of the sacrifice of Christ or of the high priest, but only what was consequent unto the one and the other; yea, there is that which excludes them from being intended. The entrance of the high priest into the holy place was not his sacrifice. For it supposed his sacrifice to be offered before, in the virtue whereof, and with the memorial of it, he so entered; that is, with “the blood of goats and calves.” For all sacrifices were offered at the brazen altar; and that of the high priest on the day of expiation is expressly declared so to have been, Leviticus 16. And the entrance of Christ into heaven was not his sacrifice, nor the oblation of himself. For he offered himself unto God with strong cries and supplications; but his entrance into heaven was triumphant. So he entered into heaven by virtue of his sacrifice, as we shall see; but his entrance into heaven was not the sacrifice of himself.

They add in explication hereof: “Pontifex antiquus per sanguinem hircorum et vitulorum ingrediebatur in sancta, Christus vero non per sanguinem tam vilem, sed pretiosissimum; quod aliis esse non potuit quam ipsius proprius. Nam sanguis quidem humanus sanguine brutorum, sed sanguis Christi, sanguine caeterorum omnium hominum longe est pretiosior; cum ipse quoque caeteris hominibus omnibus imo omnibus creaturis longe sit praestantior, Deoque charior et prior, utpote unigenitus eius Filius.” What they say of the “preciousness of the blood of Christ” above that of brute creatures, is true; but they give two reasons for it, which comprise not the true reason of its excellency as unto the ends of his sacrifice: 1. They say, it was “the blood of a man.” 2. That “this man was more dear to God than all other creatures, as his only-begotten Son.” Take these last words in the sense of the Scripture, and the true reason of the preciousness and efficacy of the blood of Christ in his sacrifice is assigned; take them in their sense, and it is excluded. The Scripture by them intends his eternal generation, as the Son of the Father; they, only his nativity of the blessed Virgin, with his exaltation after his resurrection. But the true excellency and efficacy of the blood of Christ in his sacrifice was from his divine person, whereby “God purchased his church with his own blood,” Acts 20:28.

Nor do I know of what consideration the “preciousness” of the blood of Christ can be with them in this matter; for it belonged not unto his sacrifice, or the oblation of himself, as they pretend. For they would have the offering of himself to consist only in his entrance into heaven, and appearing in the presence of God, when, as they also imagine, he had neither flesh nor blood.

They proceed unto a speculation about the use and signification of the preposition per, by, or δια: “Notandum est auctorem, ut elegantiae istius comparationis consuleret, usum esse in priori membro voce, ‘per;’ licet pontifex legalis non tantum per sanguinem hircorum et vitulorum, hoc est, fuso prius sanguine istorum animalium, seu interveniente sanguinis eorum fusione, sed etism cum ipsorum sanguine in sancta fuerit ingressus, ver. 7. Verum quia in Christi sacrificio similitudo eousque extendi non potuit, cum Christus non alienum sed suum sanguinem fuderit, nec sanguinem suum post mortem, sed seipsum, et quidem jam immortalem, depositis carnis et sanguinis exuviis, quippe quae regnum Dei possidere nequeant, in coelesti illo tabernaculo obtulerit; proindeque non cum sanguine, sed tantum fuso prius sanguine, seu interveniente sanguinis sui fusione in sancta fuerit ingressus; idcirco auctor minus de legali pontifice dixit quam res erat; vel potius ambiguitate particulae, ‘per,’ quae etiam idem quod ‘cum,’ in sacris literis significare solet, comparationis concinnitati consulere voluit.”

The design of this whole discourse is to overthrow the nature of the sacrifice of Christ, and to destroy all the real similitude between it and the sacrifice of the high priest; the whole of its sophistry being animated by a fancied signification of the preposition “per,” or falsely-pretended reason of the use of it by the apostle. For, 1. The high priest did indeed carry of the blood of the sacrifice into the holy place, and so may be said to enter into it with blood; as it is said he did it “not without blood,” verse 7: yet is it not that which the apostle hath here respect unto; but it is the sacrifice at the altar, where the blood of it was shed and offered, which he intends, as we shall see immediately. 2. There is therefore nothing less ascribed unto the high priest herein than belonged unto him; for all that is intended is, that he entered into the holy place by virtue of the blood of goats and calves which was offered at the altar. Less than his due is not ascribed unto him, to make the comparison fit and meet, as is boldly pretended. Yea, 3. The nature of the comparison used by the apostle is destroyed by this artifice; especially if it be considered as a mere comparison, and not as the relation that was between the type and the antitype; for that is the nature of the comparison that the apostle makes between the entrance of the high priest into the holy place and the entrance of Christ into heaven. That there may be such a comparison, that there may be such a relation between these things, it is needful that they should really agree in that wherein they are compared, and not by force or artifice be fitted to make resemblance the one of the other. For it is to no purpose to compare things together which disagree in all things; much less can such things be the types one of another. Wherefore the apostle declares and allows a treble dissimilitude in the comparates, or between the type and the antitype: for Christ entered by his own blood, the high priest by the blood of goats and calves; Christ only once, the high priest every year; Christ into heaven, the high priest into the tabernacle made with hands. But in other things he confirms a similitude between them; namely, in the entrance of the high priest into the holy place by the blood of his sacrifice, or with it. But by these men this is taken away, and so no ground of any comparison left; — only the apostle makes use of an ambiguous word, to frame an appearance of some similitude in the things compared, whereas indeed there is none at all! For unto these ends he says, “by the blood,” whereas he ought to have said, “with the blood.” But if he had said so, there would have been no appearance of any similitude between the things compared. For they allow not

Christ to enter into the holy place by or with his own blood in any sense; not by virtue of it as offered in sacrifice for us, nor to make application of it unto us in the fruits of his oblation for us. [This is probably why most Christians/pastors think that salvation is only something made available - that the promises are like medicine in a box and the only way we get it is if we choose to do so by our believing (the condition), e.g., saying the sinners prayer, as opposed to something purchased for the elect absolutely, by Christ's oblation, to be infallibly by applied to them at the appointed time.] And what similitude is there between the high priest entering into the holy place by the blood of the sacrifice that he had offered, and the Lord Christ entering into heaven without his own blood, **or any respect unto the virtue of it** as offered in sacrifice? 4. **This notion of the sacrifice or oblation of Christ to consist only in his appearance in heaven without flesh or blood, as they speak, overthrows all the relation of types or representations between it and the sacrifices of old.** Nay, on that supposition, they were suited rather to deceive the church than instruct it in the nature of the great expiatory sacrifice that was to be made by Christ. For the universal testimony of them all was, that atonement and expiation of sin was to be made by blood, and no otherwise; but according unto these men, Christ offered not himself unto God for the expiation of our sins until he had neither flesh nor blood. 5. They say, it is true, he offered himself in heaven, "fuisse prius sanguine." But it is an order of time, and not of causality, which they intend. His blood was shed before, but therein, they say, was no part of his offering or sacrifice. But herein they expressly contradict the Scripture and themselves. It is by the offering of Christ that our sins are expiated, and redemption obtained. This the Scripture doth so expressly declare as that they cannot directly deny it. But these things are constantly ascribed unto the blood of Christ, and the shedding of it; and yet they would have it that Christ offered himself then only, when he had neither flesh nor blood.

They increase this confusion in their ensuing discourse: "Aliter enim ex parte Christi res sese habuit, quam in illo antique. In antique illo, ut in aliis quae pro peccato lege divina constituta erant, non offerebatur ipsum animal mactatum, hoc est, nec in odorem suavitatis, ut Scriptura loquitur, adolebatur, sed renes ejus et aedeps tantum; nec inferebatur in sancta, sed illius sanguis tantum. In Christi autem sacrificio, non sanguis ipsius quem mactatus effudit, sed ipse offerri, et in illa sancta coelestia ingredi debuit. Idcirco infra ver. 14, dicitur, seipsum, non vero sanguinem suum Deo obtulisse; licet alias comparatio cum sacrificiis expiatoriis postulare videretur, ut hoc posterius potius doceretur."

1. Here they fully declare, that, according to their notion, there was indeed no manner of similitude between the things compared, but that, as to what they are compared in, they were opposite, and had no agreement at all. The ground of the comparison in the apostle is, that they were both by blood, and this alone. For herein he allows a dissimilitude, in that Christ's was "by his own blood," that of the high priest "by the blood of goats and calves." But according unto the sense of these men, herein consists the difference between them, that the one was with blood, and the other without it; which is expressly contradictory to the apostle.

2. What they observe of the sacrifices of old, that not the bodies of them, but only the kidneys and fat were burned, and the blood only carried into the holy place, is neither true nor any thing to their purpose. For, (1.) The whole bodies of the expiatory sacrifices were burnt and consumed with fire; and this was done without the camp, Leviticus 16:27, to signify the suffering of Christ, and therein the

offering of his body without the city, as the apostle observes, Hebrews 13:11, 12 (2.) They allow of no use of the blood in sacrifices, but only as to the carrying of it into the holy place: which is expressly contradictory unto the main end of the institution of expiatory sacrifices; **for it was that by their blood atonement should he made on the altar**, Leviticus 17:11. Wherefore there is no relation of type and antitype, no similitude for a ground of comparison between the sacrifice of Christ and that of the high priest, if it was not made by his blood. (3.) Their observation, that in verse 14 the Lord Christ is said to offer himself, and not to offer his blood, is of no value. For in the offering of his blood Christ offered himself, or he offered himself by the offering of his blood; his person giving the efficacy of a sacrifice unto what he offered. And this is undeniably asserted in that very verse. For the **“purging of our consciences from dead works,” is the expiation of sin**; but Christ, even according to the Socinians, procured the expiation of sin by the offering of himself; yet is this here expressly assigned unto his blood, “How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?” Wherefore in the offering of himself he offered his blood.

They add, as the exposition of these words, “He entered into the holiest;” — “Ingressus in sancta, necessario ad sacrificium istud requiritur. Nec ante oblatio, in qua sacrificii ratio potissimum consistit, peragi potuit, cum ea in sanctis ipsis fieri debuerit. Hinc manifestum est pontificis nostri oblationem et sacrificium non in truce, sed in coelis peractam esse, et adhuc peragi.”

Ans. 1. **What they say at first is true; but what they intend and infer from thence is false.** It is true that the entrance into the holy place, and carrying of the blood in thither, did belong unto the anniversary sacrifice intended; for God had prescribed that order unto its consummation and complement. But that the sacrifice or oblation did consist therein is false; for it is directly affirmed that both the bullock and goat for the sin-offering were offered before it, **at the altar**, Leviticus 16:6, 9.

2. It doth not therefore hence follow, as is pretended, that the Lord Christ offered not himself a sacrifice unto God on the earth, but did so in heaven only; but the direct contrary doth follow. For the blood of the sin-offering was offered on the altar, before it was carried into the holy place; which was the type of Christ’s entrance into heaven.

3. What they say, that the sacrifice of Christ was performed or offered in heaven, and is yet so offered, **utterly overthrows the whole nature of his sacrifice.** For the apostle everywhere represents that to consist absolutely in one offering, **once offered, not repeated or continued.** Herein lies the foundation of all his arguments for its excellency and efficacy. **Hereof the making of it to be nothing but a continued act of power in heaven, as is done by them, is utterly destructive.**

What they add in the same place about the nature of redemption, will be removed in the consideration of it immediately. In the close of the whole they affirm, **that the obtaining of everlasting salvation by Christ was not an act antecedent unto his entering into heaven, as the word seems to import**, — *ευραμενος* “having obtained,” but it was done by his entrance itself into that holy place; whence they would rather read the word *ευραμενος* in the present tense, “obtaining.” But whereas our redemption is everywhere constantly in the Scripture assigned unto the blood of Christ, and that alone, — Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Revelation 5:9, “Hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood,” — it is too great a confidence, to confine this work unto his entrance into heaven,

without any offering of his blood, and when he had no blood to offer. And in this place, the “redemption obtained” is the same upon the matter with the “purging of our consciences from dead works,” verse 14, which is ascribed directly unto his blood.

These glosses being removed, I shall proceed unto the exposition of the words.

The apostle hath a double design in this verse and those two that follow: 1. To declare the **dignity of the person of Christ** in the discharge of his priestly office above the high priest of old. And this he doth, (1.) From the **excellency of his sacrifice**, which was his own blood; (2.) The holy place whereinto **he entered by virtue of it**, which was heaven itself; and, (3.) The effect of it, in that by it be procured eternal redemption: which he doth in this verse. 2. To prefer the efficacy of this sacrifice of Christ for the purging of sin, or the purification of sinners, above all the sacrifices and ordinances of the law, verses 13, 14.

In this verse, with respect unto the end mentioned, the entrance of Christ into the holy place, in answer unto that of the legal high priest, described verse 7, is declared. And it is so, 1. As unto the way or means of it; 2. As unto its season 3. As unto its effect: in all which respects Christ was manifested in and by it to be far more excellent than the legal high priest.

1. The manner and way of it is expressed, (1.) Negatively; it was “not by the blood of goats and calves.” (2.) Positively; it was “by his own blood.” 2. For the time of it, it was “once,” and but once. 3. The effect of that blood of his, as offered in sacrifice, was, that he “obtained” thereby “eternal redemption.” The thing asserted is the entrance of Christ, the high priest, into the holy place. That he should do so was necessary, both to answer the type and for the rendering his sacrifice effectual in the application of the benefits of it unto the church, as it is afterwards declared at large. And I shall open the words, not in the order wherein they lie in the text, but in the natural order of the things themselves. And we must show, 1. What is the holy place whereinto Christ entered. 2. What was that entrance. 3. How he did it once; whereon will follow, 4. The consideration of the means whereby he did it, 5. With the effect of that means: —

1. For the place whereinto he entered, it is said he did so εἰς τὰ ἁγία, — “into the holies.” It is the same word whereby he expresseth the “sanctuary,” the second part of the tabernacle, **whereinto the high priest entered once a-year**. But in the application of it unto Christ, the signification of it is changed. He had nothing to do with, he had no right to enter into that holy place, as the apostle affirms, Hebrews 8:4. That, therefore, he intends which was signified thereby; that is, heaven itself, as he explains it in Hebrews 9:24. The heaven of heavens, the place of the glorious residence of the presence or majesty of God, is that whereinto he entered.

2. His entrance itself into this place is asserted: “He entered.” This entrance of Christ into heaven upon his ascension may be considered two ways: (1.) As it was regal, glorious and triumphant; so it belonged properly unto his **kingly office**, as that wherein **he triumphed over all the enemies of the church**. See it described, Ephesians 4:8-10, from Psalm 68:18. Satan, the world, death, and hell, being conquered, and all power committed unto him, he entered triumphantly into heaven. So it was **regal** (2.) As it was **sacerdotal**. **Peace and reconciliation being made** by the blood of the cross, the covenant

being confirmed, eternal redemption obtained, he entered as our high priest into the holy place, the temple of God above, **to make his sacrifice effectual unto the church, and to apply the benefits of it thereunto.**

3. This he did “once” only, “once for all.” In the foregoing description of the service of the high priest, he shows how he went into the holy place “once every year;” that is, on one day, wherein he went to offer. And the repetition of this service every year proved its imperfection, seeing it could never accomplish perfectly that whereunto it was designed, as he argues in the next chapter. In opposition hereunto, our high priest entered once only into the holy place; a full demonstration that his one sacrifice had fully expiated the sins of the church.

4. Of this entrance of Christ it is said, —

(1.) Negatively, that he did not do it “by the blood of goats and calves.” And this is introduced with the disjunctive negative, ουδε, “neither;” which refers unto what was before denied of him, as unto his entrance into the tabernacle made with hands. ‘He did not do so, neither did he make his entrance by the blood of goats and calves’ A difference from and opposition unto the entrance of the high priest annually into the holy place is intended. It must therefore be considered how he so entered.

This entrance is at large described, Leviticus 16. And, [1.] It was by the blood of a bullock and a goat, which the apostle here renders in the plural number, “goats and calves,” because of the annual repetition of the same sacrifice. [2.] The order of the institution was, that first the bullock or calf was offered, then the goat; the one for the priest, the other for the people. This order belonging not at all unto the purpose of the apostle, he expresseth it otherwise, “goats and calves.”

Τραγος is a “goat;” a word that expresseth “totum genus ca-prinum,” — that whole kind of creature, be it young or old. So the goats of his offering were yreyic, “kids,” verse 5; that is, young he-goats, for the precise time of their age is not determined. So the bullock the priest offered for himself was rp’, “juvencus ex genere bovino;” which is μωσχος, for it expresseth “genus vitulinum,” all young cattle.

Concerning these it is intimated, in this negative as unto Christ, that the high priest entered into the holy place δι αιματος, “**by their blood;**” which we must inquire into.

Two things belonged unto the office of the high priest, with respect unto this blood.

For, [1.] He was to offer the blood both of the bullock and the goat at the altar for a sin-offering, Leviticus 16:9, 11. For it was the blood wherewith alone atonement was to be made for sin, **and that at the altar**, Leviticus 17:11; **so far is it from truth that expiation for sin was made only in the holy place**, and that it is so by Christ without blood, as the **Socinians** imagine. [2.] He was to carry some of the blood of the sacrifice into the sanctuary, to sprinkle it there, to make atonement for the holy place, in the sense before declared. And the inquiry is, which of these the apostle hath respect unto.

Some say it is the latter; and that *dua* here is put for *συν*, — “by” for “with.” He entered with the blood of goats and calves; namely, that which he carried with him into the holy place. **So plead the Socinians** and those that follow them, with design to overthrow the sacrifice which Christ offered in his death and bloodshedding, confining the whole expiation of sin, in their sense of it, unto what is done in heaven. But I have before disproved this surmise. And the apostle is so far from using the particle *δια*

improperly for οὐν Leviticus 16:2, 3, 345 “Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place.... With a young bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, shall he come.” Aaron was not to bring the bullock into the holy place, but he had right to enter into it by the sacrifice of it at the altar. Thus, therefore, the high priest entered into the holy place by the blood of goats and calves; namely, by virtue of the sacrifice of their blood which he had offered without at the altar. And so all things do exactly correspond between the type and the antitype. For, —

(2.) It is affirmed positively of him that “he entered by his own blood,” and that in opposition unto the other way; δια δε ιδιου αιματος ματον (δε for αλλα), —“but by his own blood.”

It is a vain speculation, contrary to the analogy of faith, and destructive or the true nature of the oblation of Christ, and inconsistent with the dignity of his person, that he should carry with him into heaven a part of that material blood which was shed for us on the earth. This some have invented, to maintain a comparison in that wherein is none intended. The design of the apostle is only to declare by virtue of what he entered as a priest into the holy place. And this was by virtue of his own blood when it was shed, when he offered himself unto God. This was that which laid the foundation of, and gave him right unto the administration of his priestly office in heaven. And hereby were all those good things procured which he effectually communicates unto us in and by that administration.

This exposition is the center of all gospel mysteries, the object of the admiration of angels and men unto all eternity. What heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the wisdom, grace, and love, that are contained therein? **This alone is the stable foundation of faith in our access unto God.** Two things present themselves unto us: —

[1.] The unspeakable love of Christ in offering himself and his own blood for us. See Galatians 2:20; Revelation 1:5; 1 John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25-27. There being no other way whereby our sins might be purged and expiated, Hebrews 10:5-7, out of his infinite love and grace he condescended unto this way, whereby God might be glorified, and his church sanctified and saved. It were well if we did always consider aright what love, what thankfulness, what obedience, are due unto him on the account hereof.

[2.] The excellency and efficacy of his sacrifice is hereby demonstrated, that through him our faith and hope may be in God. He who offered this sacrifice was “the only-begotten of the Father,” the eternal Son of God. That which he offered was “his own blood.” “God purchased his church with his own blood,” **Acts 20:28**. How unquestionable, how perfect must the atonement be that was thus made! how glorious the redemption that was procured thereby

5. This is that which the apostle mentions in the close of this verse as the effect of his blood-shedding, “Having obtained eternal redemption.” The word ευραμενος is variously rendered, as we have seen. The Vulgar Latin reads, “redemptione aeterna inventa.” And those that follow it do say that things rare, and so sought after, are said to be found. And Chrysostom inclines unto that notion of the word. But ευρισχω is used in all good authors, for not only “to find,” but “to obtain” by our endeavors. So do we render it, and so we ought to do, Romans 4:1; Hebrews 4:16. He obtained effectually eternal redemption by the price of his blood. And it is mentioned in a tense denoting the time past, to signify that he had thus obtained eternal redemption before he entered into the holy place. How he obtained it we shall see in the consideration of the nature of the thing itself that was obtained.

Three things must be inquired into, with what brevity we can, for the explication of these words: (1.) What is “redemption;” (2.) Why is this redemption called “eternal;” (3.) How Christ “obtained” it.

(1.) **All redemption respects a state of bondage and captivity, with all the events that do attend it.** The object of it, or those to be redeemed, are only persons in that estate. There is mention, verse 15, of “the redemption of transgressions,” but it is by a metonymy of the cause for the effect. It is transgression which cast men into that state from whence they are to be redeemed. But both in the Scripture and in the common notion of the word, “redemption” is the deliverance of persons from a state of bondage. And this may be done two ways: [1.] **By power;** [2.] **By payment of a price.** That which is in the former way is only improperly and metaphorically so called. For it is in its own nature a bare deliverance, and is termed “redemption” only with respect to the state of captivity from whence it is a deliverance. It is a vindication into liberty by any means. So the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, though wrought merely by acts of power, is called their redemption. And Moses, from his ministry in that work, is called λυτρωτης, a “redeemer,” Acts 7:35. But this redemption is only metaphorically so called, with respect unto the state of bondage wherein the people were. That which is properly so is by a price paid, as a valuable consideration. Αυτρον is a “ransom,” a price of redemption. Thence are λυτρωσις, απολυτρωσις, λυτρωτης, “redemption” and a “redeemer.” **So the redemption that is by Christ is everywhere said to be a “price,” a “ransom.”** See Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Peter 1:18, 19. It is the deliverance of persons out of a state of captivity and bondage, by the payment of a valuable price or ransom. And the **Socinians** offer violence not only to the Scripture, but to common sense itself, when they contend that the redemption which is constantly affirmed to be by a price is metaphorical, and that only proper which is by power.

The price or ransom in this redemption is two ways expressed: [1.] By that which gave it its worth and value, that it might be a sufficient ransom for all; [2.] By its especial nature. The first is the person of Christ himself: “He gave himself for us,” Galatians 2:20; “He gave himself a ransom for all,” 1 Timothy 2:6; “He offered himself to God,” Hebrews 9:14; Ephesians 5:2. **This was that which made the ransom of an infinite value, meet to redeem the whole church.** “God purchased the church with his own blood,” **Acts 20:28.** The especial nature of it is, that it was by blood, “by his own blood.” See Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19. And this blood of Christ was a ransom, or price of redemption, partly from the invaluableness of that obedience which he yielded unto God in the shedding of it; and partly because this ransom was also to be an atonement, as it was offered unto God in sacrifice. For it is by blood, and no otherwise, that atonement is made, Leviticus 17:11. Wherefore he is “set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” Romans 3:24, 25.

That the Lord Jesus Christ did give himself a ransom for sin; that he did it in the shedding of his blood for us, wherein he made his soul an offering for sin; that herein and hereby he made atonement, and expiated our sins; and that all these things belong unto our redemption, is the substance of the gospel. **That this redemption is nothing but the expiation of sin, and that expiation of sin nothing but an act of power and authority in Christ now in heaven, as the Socinians dream, is to reject the whole gospel.**

Though the nature of this redemption be usually spoken unto, yet we must not here wholly put it by. And the nature of it will appear in the consideration of the state from whence we are redeemed, with the causes of it: [1.] **The meritorious cause of it was sin,** or our original apostasy from God. Hereby we

lost our primitive liberty, with all the rights and privileges thereunto belonging. [2.] The supreme efficient cause is God himself. As the ruler and judge of all, he cast all apostates into a state of captivity and bondage; **for liberty is nothing but peace with him**. But he did it with this difference: sinning angels he designed to leave irrecoverably under this condition; for mankind he would find a ransom. [3.] The instrumental cause of it was the **curse of the law**. This falling on men brings them into a state of bondage. For it separates as to all relation of love and peace between God and them, and gives life unto all the actings of sin and death; wherein the misery of that state consists. To be separate from God, to be under the power of sin and death, is to be in bondage. [4.] The **external cause**, by the application of all other causes unto the souls and consciences of men, is **Satan**. His was the power of darkness, his the power of death over men in that state and condition; that is, to make application of the terror of it unto their souls, as threatened in the curse, Hebrews 2:14, 15. Hence he appears as the head of this state of bondage, and men are in captivity unto him. He is not so in himself, but as the external application of the causes of bondage is committed unto him.

From hence it is evident that **four things** are required unto that redemption which is a deliverance by price or ransom from this state. For, [1.] It must be by such a ransom as whereby the guilt of sin is expiated; which was the meritorious cause of our captivity. Hence it is called “the redemption of transgressions,” verse 15; that is, of persons from that state and condition whereinto they were cast by sin or transgression. [2.] Such as wherewith in respect of God **atonement must be made, and satisfaction unto his justice**, as the supreme ruler and judge of all. [3.] **Such as whereby the curse of the law might be removed; which could not be without undergoing of it**. [4.] Such as whereby the power of Satan might be destroyed. How all this was done by the blood of Christ, I have at large declared elsewhere.

(2.) **This redemption is said to be “eternal.”** And it is so on many accounts: [1.] Of the subject-matter of it, which are things eternal; none of them are carnal or temporal. The state of bondage from which we are delivered by it in all its causes was spiritual, not temporal; and the effects of it, in liberty, grace, and glory, are eternal. [2.] Of its duration. It was not for a season, like that of the people out of Egypt, or the deliverances which they had afterwards under the judges, and on other occasions. They endured in their effects only for a season, and afterwards new troubles of the same kind overtook them. But this was eternal in all the effects of it; none that are partakers of it do ever return into a state of bondage. So, [3.] It endures in those effects unto all eternity in heaven itself.

(3.) **This redemption Christ obtained by “his blood.”** Having done all in the sacrifice of himself that was, in the justice, holiness, and wisdom of God, required thereunto, it was wholly in his power to confer all the benefits and effects of it on the church, on them that do believe. And sundry things we may observe from this verse.

Obs. I. **The entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ as our high priest into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to save us thereby unto the uttermost, was a thing so great and glorious as could not be accomplished but by his own blood**. — No other sacrifice was sufficient unto this end: “Not by the blood of bulls and goats.” The reason hereof the apostle declares at large, Hebrews 10:4-10. Men seldom rise in their thoughts unto the greatness of this mystery; yea, **with the most, this “blood of the covenant,” wherewith he was sanctified unto the remainder of his work, is a common thing**. The rain of Christian religion lies in the **slight thoughts of men about the blood of Christ; and pernicious errors do**

abound in opposition unto the true nature of the sacrifice which he made thereby. Even the faith of the best is weak and imperfect as to the comprehension of the glory of it. Our relief is, that the uninterrupted contemplation of it will be a part of our blessedness unto eternity. But yet whilst we are here, we can neither understand how great is the salvation which is tendered unto us thereby, nor be thankful for it, without a due consideration of the way whereby the Lord Christ entered into the holy place. And he will be the most humble and most fruitful Christian whose faith is most exercised, most conversant about it.

Obs. II. Whatever difficulties lay in the way of Christ, as unto the accomplishment and perfection of the work of our redemption, he would not decline them, nor desist from his undertaking, whatever it cost him. — “Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldest not have; **then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.**” He made his way into the holy place by his own blood. What was required of him for us, that we might be saved, he would not decline, though never so great and dreadful; and surely we ought not to decline what he requires of us, that he may be honored.

Obs. III. There was a holy place meet to receive the Lord Christ after the sacrifice of himself, and a suitable reception for such a person, after so glorious a performance. — It was a place of great glory and beauty whereinto the high priest of old entered by the blood of calves and goats; the visible pledges of the presence of God were in it, whereunto no other person might approach. But our high priest was not to enter into any holy place made with hands, unto outward, visible pledges of the presence of God, but into the heaven of heavens, the place of the glorious residence of the majesty of God itself.

Obs. IV. If the Lord Christ entered not into the holy place until he had finished his work, we may not expect an entrance thereinto until we have finished ours. — He fainted not, nor waxed weary, until all was finished; and it is our duty to arm ourselves with the same mind.

Obs.V. It must be a glorious effect which had so glorious a cause; and so it was, even “eternal redemption.”

Obs. VI. The nature of our redemption, the way of its procurement, with the duties required of us with respect thereunto, are greatly to be considered by us.

Sanctification

code20

God works in us holiness by means of discipline, trials, etc., conforming us to his image, including mortification of our lusts and corrupt affections. Evidence of divine love.

Heb 12:9 Commentary on Hebrews by John Owen p267-271 (336-341 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Ver. 9,10. — Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh, who chastened [us,] and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us,] as it seemed good unto them; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might partake of his holiness.

The design of these words is further to evince the equity of the duty exhorted unto, namely, the patient enduring of divine chastisement; which is done on such cogent principles of conviction as cannot be avoided.

It is a new argument that is produced, and not a mere application or improvement of the former; as the word *Εἰτα*, “furthermore,” or “moreover,” doth signify. The former was taken from the right of parents, this is taken from the duty of children. And the argument in the words is taken from a mixture of principles and experience. The principles whereon it proceeds are two, and of two sorts: the first is from the light of nature, namely, that children ought to obey their parents, and submit unto them in all things; the other is from the light of grace, namely, that there is the same real relation between God and believers as is between natural parents and their children, though it be not of the same nature. The whole strength of the argument depends on these undoubted principles.

For the confirmation of the first of these principles, common experience is produced. ‘It is so, for it hath been so with us; we ourselves have had such fathers,’ etc. As for the manner of the argument, it is “a comparatis,” and therein “a minori ad majus.” ‘If it be so in the one case, how much more ought it to be so in the other.’ In each of the comparates there is a supposition consisting of many parts, and an assertion on that supposition: in the first, as to matter of fact, in the latter, as unto right; as we shall see. The supposition in the first of the comparates consists of many parts; as,

1. That “we have had fathers of our flesh;” those from whom we derived our flesh by natural generation. This being the ordinance of God, and the way by him appointed for the propagation of mankind, is the foundation of the relation intended, and that which gives parents the right here asserted. That learned man did but indulge to his fancy, who would have these “fathers” to be the teachers of the Jewish church; which how they should come to be opposed unto “the Father of spirits,” he could not imagine.

2. That they were chasteners: “They chastened us.” They had a right so to do, and they did so accordingly.

3. The rule whereby they proceeded in their so doing is also supposed, namely, they used their judgment as unto the causes and measure of chastisement; they did it “as it seemed good unto them.” It is not said that they did it for or according to their pleasure,

without respect unto rule or equity; for it is the example of good parents that is intended: but they did it according to their best discretion; wherein yet they might fail, both as unto the causes and measure of chastisement.

4. The exercise of this right is “for a few days.” And this may have a double sense: (1.) The limitation of the time of their chastisement, namely, that it is but for a little while, for a few days; to wit, whilst we are in infancy, or under age. Ordinarily corporal chastisements are not longer continued. So “a few days,” is a few of our own days. Or, 338 (2.) It may respect the advantage which is to be obtained by such chastisement; which is only the regulation of our affections for a little season.

The case on the one hand being stated on these suppositions, the duty of children, under the power of their natural parents, is declared. And the word signifies “an ingenuous, modest shame, with submission;” opposite unto stubbornness and frowardness. We add the word “them” unto the original, which is necessary; “we had them in reverence.” ‘We were kept in a temper of mind meet to be applied unto duty. We did not desert the family of our parents, nor grow weary of their discipline, so as to be discouraged from our duty.’ And, —

Obs. I. As it is the duty of parents to chastise their children, if need be, and of children to submit thereunto; so, —

Obs. II. It is good for us to have had the experience of a reverential submission unto paternal chastisements; as from hence we may be convinced of the equity and necessity of submission unto God in all our afflictions. For so these things are improved by the apostle. — And they arise from the consideration of the differences that are between divine and parental chastisements. For, —

1. He by whom we are chastised is “the Father of spirits.” He is a father also, but of another kind and nature than they are. “The Father of spirits; that is, **of our spirits**: for so the opposition requires; the fathers of our flesh, and the Father of our spirits. And whereas the apostle here distributes our nature into its two essential parts, the **flesh** and the **spirit**; it is evident that by the “**spirit**,” the rational soul is intended. For although the flesh also be a creature of God, yet is natural generation used as a means for its production; **but the soul is immediately created and infused, having no other father but God himself**. See Numbers 16:22; Zechariah 12:1; Jeremiah 38:16. I will not deny but that the signification of the word here may be farther extended, namely, so as to comprise also the state and frame of our spirits in their restoration and rule, wherein also they are subject unto God alone; **but his being the immediate creator of them is regarded in the first place**.

And this is the fundamental reason of our patient submission unto God in all our afflictions, namely, that our very souls are his, the immediate product of his divine

power, and under his rule alone. May he not do what he will with his own? Shall the potsherd contend with its maker?

2. It is supposed from the foregoing verses, that this Father of our spirits doth also chastise us; which is the subject-matter treated of.

3. His general end and design therein, is “**our profit**” or advantage. This being once well fixed, takes off all disputes in this case. Men, in their chastisements, do at best but conjecture at the event, and are no way able to effect it: **but what God designs shall infallibly come to pass; for he himself will accomplish it, and make the means of it certainly effectual.** But it may be inquired, what this “profit,” this benefit or advantage, is; for outwardly there is no appearance of any such thing. This is declared in the next place.

4. The especial end of God in divine chastisements, is, “**that he may make us partakers of his holiness.**” **The holiness of God, is either that which he hath in himself, or that which he approves of and requires in us.** The **first is the infinite purity of the divine nature; which is absolutely incommunicable unto us,** or any creature whatever. Howbeit we may be said to be partakers of it in a peculiar manner, **by virtue of our interest in God, as our God: as also by the effects of it produced in us, which are his image and likeness,** Ephesians 4:24; as we are said to be made “partakers of the divine nature,” 2 Peter 1:4. **And this also is the holiness of God in the latter sense; namely, that which he requires of us and approves in us.**

Whereas, therefore, this **holiness consists in the mortification of our lusts and affections,** in the gradual renovation of our natures, and the sanctification of our souls, the carrying on and increase of these things in us is that which God designs in all his chastisements. And whereas, next unto our participation of Christ, **by the imputation of his righteousness unto us, this is the greatest privilege, glory, honor, and benefit, that in this world we can be made partakers of,** **we have no reason to be weary of God’s chastisements, which are designed unto no other end.** And we may observe, —

Obs. III. **No man can understand the benefit of divine chastisement, who understands not the excellency of a participation of God’s holiness.** — No man can find any good in a bitter potion, who understands not the benefit of health. **If we have not a due valuation of this blessed privilege, it is impossible we should ever make a right judgment concerning our afflictions.**

Obs. IV. **If under chastisements we find not an increase of holiness, in some especial instances or degrees, they are utterly lost: we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them.**

Obs. V. There can be no greater pledge or evidence of divine love in afflictions than this, that God designs by them to “make us partakers of his holiness,” — to bring us nearer to him, and make us more like him.

5. The reasons from whence they have their efficacy unto this end, and the way whereby they attain it, are, (1.) God’s designation of them thereunto, in an act of infinite wisdom; which gives them their efficacy. (2.) By weaning us from the world, and the love of it, whose vanity and unsatisfactoriness they openly discover, breaking the league of love that is between it and our souls. (3.) By calling us unto the faith and contemplation of things more glorious and excellent, wherein we may find rest and peace.

That which is required of us, as children, is, that we be “in subjection” unto him, as “the Father of spirits.” This answers unto the having of our earthly parents in reverence, before mentioned; — the same which the apostle Peter calls, “humbling of ourselves under the mighty hand of God,” 1 Peter 5:6. And there may be respect unto the disobedient son under the law, who refused to subject himself to his parents, or to reform upon their correction, Deuteronomy 21:18-21; which I the rather think, because of the consequent assigned unto it, “And live;” whereas the refractory son was to be stoned to death. And this subjection unto God consists in, 1. An acquiescency in his right and sovereignty to do what he will with his own. 2. An acknowledgment of his righteousness and wisdom in all his dealings with us. 3. A sense of his care and love, with a due apprehension of the end of his chastisements. 4. A diligent application of ourselves unto his mind and will, as unto what he calls us unto in an especial manner at that season. 5. In keeping our souls, by faith and patience, from weariness and despondency. 6. In a full resignation of ourselves unto his will, as to the matter, manner, times, and continuance of our affliction.

And where these things are not in some degree, we cast off the yoke of God, and are not in due subjection unto him; which is the land inhabited by the sons of Belial.

Lastly, The consequent of this subjection unto God in our chastisements, is, that “we shall live:” “And,” or “for so we shall live.” Though in their own nature they seem to tend unto death, or the destruction of the flesh, yet is it life whereunto they are **designed**, — which is the consequent, which shall be the effect of them, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. The increase of spiritual life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, are that whereunto they tend. The rebellious son, who would not submit himself to correction, was to die without mercy; but they who are in subjection unto God in his chastisements, shall live.

"You're delight and readiness in the paths of obedience is the very measure of your sanctification." John Flavel, Vol. VI, pg 440

The Only Way vs. Dead Works

code361

Man's dead spiritual state prevents him coming to God any other way but by God's sovereign effectual call.

excerpts from John Owen's commentary on Hebrews 9:14
pg 316-318 (p390 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

But there is something peculiar in the mention of it in this place. For, 390 1. The due consideration of God as "the living God," will discover how necessary it is that we be purged from dead works, to serve him in a due manner. 2. The nature of gospel-worship and service is intimated to be such as becomes the living God, "our reasonable service," Romans 12:1. Secondly, What is it to "serve the living God?" I doubt not but that the

whole life of faith in universal obedience is consequently required hereunto. That we may live unto the living God in all ways of holy obedience, not any one act or duty of it can be performed as it ought without the antecedent purging of our consciences from dead works. But yet it is sacred and solemn worship that is intended in the first place. They had of old sacred ordinances of worship, or of divine service. From all these those, that were unclean were excluded, and restored unto them upon their purification. There is a solemn spiritual worship of God under the new testament also, and ordinances for the due observance of it. This none have a right to approach unto God by, none can do so in a due manner, unless their conscience be purged by the blood of Christ. And the whole of our relation unto God depends hereon. For as we therein express or testify the subjection of our souls and consciences unto him, and solemnly engage into universal obedience, (for of these things all acts of outward worship are the solemn pledges,) so therein doth God testify his acceptance of us and delight in us by Jesus Christ.

Obs. VII. **Nothing could expiate sin and free conscience from dead works but the blood of Christ alone**, and that in the offering himself to God through the eternal Spirit. — The redemption of the souls of men is precious, and must have ceased forever, had not infinite wisdom found out this way for its accomplishment. The work was too great for any other to undertake, or for any other means to effect. And the glory of God is hid herein only unto them that perish.

Obs. IX. The souls and consciences of men are wholly polluted, before they are purged by the blood of Christ. And this pollution is such as excludes them from all right of access unto God in his worship; as it was with them who were legally unclean.

Obs. X. Even the best works of men, antecedently unto the purging of their consciences by the blood of Christ, are but “dead works.” — However men may please themselves in them, perhaps think to merit by them, yet from death they come, and unto death they tend. [Hence, anyone who prays the sinner's prayer is in a state of uncleanness (i.e., is dead) and hence his prayer is an abomination, presumption, highly provoking and not heard by God.]

Obs. XI. **Justification and sanctification are inseparably conjoined** in the design of God's grace by the blood of Christ: — “Purge our consciences, that we may serve the living God.”

The Purpose of The Image of God

The law of nature, moral excellencies of God, internal and positive (external) commands, influences for man's obedience to God regarding the sabbath, why 1 day in 7. Also, the law of nature, the law of creation and instinct, natural light, works of nature, the mind as part of the soul, and the will and the affections, the heart, are described. Free grace and regeneration are explained. What are the laws of God? The law of our obedience. My comments in blue.

Commentary on Hebrews by John Owen

The Origin of the Priesthood of Christ

pg 32-36 (pg 40-44 online) Vol. 18

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_Introduction_Observations.pdf

It is true, indeed, Christ was *pre-ordained*, or [rather] the Son of God was so, to be incarnate before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1:20. But how? Even as he was “manifested in these last times.” As he was preordained to be incarnate, so he was to be so of the blessed Virgin: and this neither was

nor could be but with respect unto the redemption of mankind; for he took flesh of her in answer to the first promise concerning the seed of the woman, which respected our recovery from sin [Gen3:15]. As he was born or made of her, he was the Lamb of God that was to take away the sin of the world. Besides, **he was not ordained unto the grace of union before and without the consideration of glory and exaltation.** [Think about this: He gets glory by the success of his accomplishing the will of God to save all that God the Father gave him, John 6:37. That means that he will be successful, whereas Arminian doctrine leaves open the possibility that no one might be saved, that no one from their so called self-directed will, might chose Christ.] But this included a supposition of his suffering for sin; for he was first to “suffer,” and then to “enter into his glory,” Luke 24:26. Accordingly, he ordered his own prayer, John 17:4, 5, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.” To fancy a pre-ordination of the Son of God unto incarnation not of the blessed Virgin after the entrance of sin, not as the Lamb of God, not as one to be exalted after suffering, is that which neither Scripture nor reason will admit of. It is said, indeed, that we are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,” Romans 8:29, which seems to imply an antecedency in his predestination unto ours; but “the image of Christ” there intended **includes his suffering, holiness, and exaltation unto glory on his obedience**, all which have respect unto sin and redemption. And, moreover, the predestination here intended is subordinate unto our election unto glory, being our designation unto the assured and infallible means thereof, Ephesians 1:4, 5. It is true, it was the design of God that he “in all things should have the pre-eminence,” Colossians 1:18; which, as it denotes excellency, worth, use, dignity, supremacy, nearness unto God for the receiving, and unto us for the **communicating of all good**, so no respect therein is had unto such a pre-ordination as should imply his incarnation without an intention of glorifying God in the redemption of sinners thereby, which alone we have undertaken to disprove.

18. The arguments of Osiander in this case have been discussed by others, Calvin. Institut. lib. ii. cap. xii. sect. 4, etc.; Wigandus de Osiandrismo, p. 23; Tarnovius, in cap. iii. in Evang. S. Johan. I shall only touch so far upon them as is necessary unto our present design, and that in such instances wherein they have no coincidence with what hath been already discussed. And some few things may be premised, which will take away the suppositions on which all his reasonings were founded; as, –

(1.) **The Son was the essential and eternal image of the Father** antecedent unto all consideration of his incarnation. He is in his divine person “the image of the invisible God,” Colossians 1:15; “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” Hebrews 1:3: for having his essence and subsistence from the Father by **eternal generation, or the communication of the whole divine nature and all its infinite perfections, he is the perfect and essential representation of him.**

(2.) The order of operation in the blessed Trinity, as unto outward works, answereth unto and followeth the order of their subsistence. Hence the Son is considered as the next and immediate operator of them. Thus, as he is said to have made all things, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, so the Father is said to make all things by him, Ephesians 3:9; not as an inferior, subordinate, instrumental cause, **but as acting his wisdom and power in him, to whom they were communicated by eternal generation.** Hence, the immediate relation of all things so made is unto him; and by and in his person is God even the Father immediately represented unto them, as he is his image, and as the brightness of his glory

shines forth in him. Hereon follows his rejoicing in the creation, and his delights in the sons of men, Proverbs 8:30, 31, because of their immediate relation unto him.

(3.) Therefore should he have been the immediate head and ruler of angels and men, had they all persisted in their original integrity and innocency, Colossians 1:16; for the representation of God unto them, as the cause and end of their being, the object and end of their worship and service, should have been in and by his person, as the image of the Father, **and by and through him they should have received all the communications of God unto them.** He should have been their immediate head, lord, and king, or the **divine nature in his person**; for this the order of subsistence in the blessed Trinity, and the order of operation thereon depending, did require.

These things being premised, it will not be difficult to remove out of our way the reasons of Osiander for the incarnation of Christ without a supposition of sin and grace; which we would not engage in, after they have been so long ago put into oblivion, but that they axe by some revived, and the consideration of them will give occasion unto the clearing of some truths not of small importance.

19. First, His principal plea was taken from the "image of God" **wherein man was created**: "For this," he saith, "was that human nature, consisting of soul and body, in the outward shape, lineaments, and proportion, which it hath in our persons, which the Son of God was to take upon him. God having ordained that his Son should take human nature, he created Adam in a conformity unto the idea or image thereof."

Ans. This, doubtless, is a better course for the unfolding of our creation in the image of God than that of the old Anthropomorphites, who, in the exposition of this expression, made God in the image of man; but yet is it not therefore according unto the truth. **The image of God in man was in general those excellencies of his nature wherein he excelled all other creatures here below.** In especial, it was that **uprightness and rectitude of his soul and all its faculties, as one common principle of moral operations, whereby he was enabled to live unto God as his chiefest good and utmost end,** Ecclesiastes 7:29. This by our apostle is termed "**righteousness and true holiness,**" where he treats of the **renovation of it in us by Jesus Christ,** Ephesians 4:24; whereunto he adds that which is the principle of them both, in the **renovation of our minds,** Colossians 3:10. Nor doth this image of God consist, as some fancy, in moral duties, in distinction from and opposition unto any other effect of the grace of Christ in the hearts of men, which acts itself in any duty according to the will of God. "To pray, to hear the word, to celebrate religious worship," they say, "is no part of the image of God; because God doth none of these things, and an image must always correspond unto the thing it represents." But our likeness unto God doth not consist in doing what God doth, neither is his image in us in anything more express than in our universal dependence on him and resignation of ourselves unto him, which is a thing the divine nature is incapable of; and when we are commanded to be holy as he is holy, it is not a specificative similitude, but analogical only, that is intended. **Wherefore, as the image of God consists in no outward actions of any kind whatever, so the internal grace that is acted in prayer, hearing, and other acts of sacred worship, according to the will of God, doth no less belong unto the image of God than any other grace, or duty, or virtue whatever.** In like manner **faith** doth so also, and that not only as it is an intellectual perfection, but with respect unto all its operations and effects, as the Lord Christ himself and the promises of the gospel are in their several considerations the objects of it: **for as in our first**

creation the image of God consisted in the concreated rectitude of our nature, whereby we were disposed and enabled to live unto God according to the law of our creation, — wherein there was a great representation of His righteousness, or universal, absolute rectitude of his nature, by whom we were made, — so whatever is communicated unto us by the grace of Jesus Christ, whereby our nature is repaired, disposed, and enabled to live unto God, with all acts and duties suitable thereunto, according to the present law of our obedience, belongs to the restoration of the image of God in us; but yet with special **respect unto that spiritual light, understanding, or knowledge, which is the directive principle of the whole**, for “the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him,” **Colossians 3:10**. This, therefore, being the image of God, it is evident that in the creation of man therein there was no respect unto the human nature of Christ, which, as the Son of God, he afterwards assumed. Only, it is granted that we are both formed and re-formed immediately in his image; for as he was and is, in his divine person, the express image of the Father, the divine qualifications wherein the image of God originally consisted in us were immediately wrought in us by him, as those wherein he would represent his own perfection. And in the restoration of this image unto us, as God implanted in him incarnate all fullness of that grace wherein it doth consist, who therein absolutely represents the invisible God unto us, so we are transformed immediately into his likeness and image, and unto that of God by him, **2 Corinthians 3:18**.

[skip to page pg 342-345, \(pg 413-416 online\)](#)

15. By the law of nature, then, I intend, not a law which our nature gives unto all our actions, but a law given unto our nature, as a rule and measure unto our moral actions. It is “lex naturæ naturantis,” and not “naturæ” It respects the efficient cause of nature, and not the effects of it. And this respect alone can give it the nature of a law,— that is, an obliging force and power; for this must be always from the act of a superior, seeing “par in parem jus non habet,” — “equals have no right one over another.” This law, therefore, is that rule which God has given unto human nature, in all the individual partakers of it, for all its moral actions, in the state and condition wherein it was by him created and placed, with respect unto his own government of it and judgment concerning it; which rule is made known in them and to them by their inward constitution and outward condition wherein they were placed of God. And the very heathens acknowledged that the common law of mankind was God’s prescription unto them. So Tully, lib. 2:de Legibe. cap. iv., “Hanc video sapientissimorum fuisse sententiam, legem neque hominum ingenus excogitatum, nec scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed æterni quiddam, quod universum mundum regeret, imperandi prohibendique sapientia. Ita principem legem illam et ultimam, mentem esse dicebant, omnia ratione aut cogentis, aut vetantis Dei.” Take this law, therefore, actively, and it is the will of God commanding; take it passively, and it is the conscience of man complying with it; take it instrumentally, and it is the inbred notions of our minds, with other documents from the works of God, proposed unto us. The supreme original of it, as of all authority, law, and obligation, is the will of God, constituting, appointing, and ordering the nature of things; the means of its revelation, is the effect of the will, wisdom, and power of God, creating man and all other things wherein he is concerned, in their order, place, and condition; and the observation of it, as far as individual persons are therein concerned, is committed to the care of the conscience of every man, which naturally is the mind’s acting itself towards God as the author of this law.

16. These things being premised, we shall consider what light is given unto this sacred duty from the law of our creation. The first end of any law is to instruct, direct, and guide them in their duty unto whom it is given. A law which is not in its own nature instructive and directive, is no way meet to be prescribed unto rational creatures. **What has an influence upon any creature of any other kind, if it be internal, is instinct, and not properly a law; if it be external, it is force and compulsion.** The law of creation, therefore, comprised everything whereby God instructed man, in the creation of himself and of the universe, unto his works or obedience, and his rest or reward. And whatever tended unto that end belonged unto that law. It is, then, as has been proved, unduly confined unto the **ingrafted notions of his mind concerning God and his duty towards him, though they are a principal part thereof**. Whatever was designed to give improvement unto those notions and his natural light, to excite or direct them,— I mean in the **works of nature**, not superadded positive institutions,— does also belong thereunto. Wherefore the whole instruction that God intended to give unto man by the works of creation, with their order and end, is, as was said, included herein. What he might learn from them, or what God taught him by them, was no less his duty than what his own inbred light directed him unto, **Romans 1:18-20**. Thus the framing of the world in six days, in six days of work, was intended to be instructive unto man, as well as the consideration of the things materially that were made. God could have immediately produced all out of nothing, εν ατομω, εν ριπη, οφθαλμου,— in the shortest measure of time conceivable; but he not only made all things for himself, or his glory, but disposed also the order of their production unto the same end. And herein consisted part of that covenant instruction which he gave unto man in that condition wherein he was made, that through him he might have glory ascribed unto him on the account of his works themselves, as also of the order and manner of their creation; for it is vain to imagine that the world was made in six days, and those closed with a day of rest, without an especial respect unto the obedience of rational creatures, seeing absolutely with respect unto God himself neither of them was necessary. And what he intended to teach them thereby, it was their duty to inquire and know. Hereby, then, man in general was taught obedience and working before he entered into rest; for being created in the **image of God, he was to conform himself unto God**. As God wrought before he rested, so was he to work before his rest, his condition rendering that working in him obedience, as it was in God an effect of sovereignty. And by the **rest of God**, or his satisfaction and complacency in what he had made and done, he was instructed to seek rest with God, or to enter into that rest of God, by his compliance with the ends intended.

17. And whereas the **innate light and principles of his own mind informed** him that some time was to be set apart to the solemn worship of God, **as he was a rational creature made to give glory unto him**, so the instruction he received by the works and rest of God, as made under a covenant, taught him that one day in seven was required unto that purpose, as also to be a pledge of his resting with God. It may be, it will be said that man could not know that the world was made in six days, and that the rest of God ensued on the seventh, without some especial revelation. I answer,— (1.) That I know not. He that knew the nature of all the creatures, and could give them names suited thereunto upon his first sight and view of them, might know more of the order of their creation than we can well imagine; for we know no more, in our lapsed condition, what the light of nature directed man unto as walking before God in a covenant, than men merely natural do know of the guidance and conduct of the light and law of grace in them who are taken into the new covenant. (2.) However, what God instructed him in, even by revelation, as to the due consideration and improvement of the things that belonged unto the law of his creation, that is to be esteemed as a part thereof. Institutions of things by **special**

revelation, that had no foundation in the law or light of nature, were merely positive; such were the commands concerning the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. But such as were directive of **natural light** and of the order of the creation were moral, and belonged unto the general law of obedience; such was the especial command given unto man to till and keep the garden, Genesis 2:15, or to dress and improve the place of his habitation, for this in general the **law of his creation** required. Now this God did, both as to his works and his rest. Neither do I know any one as yet that questions whether Adam and the patriarchs that ensued before the giving of the law knew that the world was created in six days. Though some seem to speak doubtfully hereof, and some by direct consequent deny it, yet I suppose that hitherto it passes as granted. Nor have they who dispute that the Sabbath was neither instituted, known, nor observed, before the people of Israel were in the wilderness, once attempted to confirm their opinion with this supposition, that the patriarchs from the foundation of the world knew not that the world was made in six days, which yet alone would be effectual unto their purpose. Nor, on the other side, can it be once rationally imagined that if they had knowledge hereof, and therewithal of the rest which ensued thereon, they had no regard unto it in the worship of God.

Image of God cont.

Hebrews 8:10-12 - John Owen

Code21b

pg 148-152 (pg180 online)

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

1. The subject spoken of is the *mind and heart*. [see code314b] When the apostle treats of the depravation and corruption of our nature, he placeth them τῆ διανοίᾳ and ἐν τῆ καρδίᾳ, Ephesians 4:18; that is, “**the mind and the heart**.” These are, in the Scripture, the seat of natural corruption, the residence of the **principle of alienation** from the life of God which is in us. Wherefore the renovation of our natures consists in the rectifying and curing of them, in the furnishing them with contrary principles of faith, love, and adherence unto God. And we may observe, that, —

Obs. 6. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the new covenant, in its being and existence, in its healing, repairing efficacy, is as large and extensive as sin is in its residence and power to deprave our natures. — This is the difference about the extent of the new covenant, and the grace of it. Some would have it to extend unto all persons, in its tender and conditional proposition; but not unto all things, as unto its efficacy in the reparation of our natures. Others assert it to extend unto all the effects of sin, in the removal of them, and the cure of our natures thereby; but as unto persons, it is really extended unto none but those in whom these effects are produced, whatever be its outward administration, which was also always limited: unto whom I do subscribe.

The *first* thing mentioned is the “**mind**.” קִרְבּ the apostle renders by δίανοια, “the inward part.” The mind is the most secret, inward part or power of the soul. And the prophet expresseth it by the “**inward part**,” because it is the only safe and useful repository of the laws of God. When they are there laid up, we shall not lose them; neither men nor devils can take them from us. And he also declares wherein the excellency of covenant obedience doth consist. It is not in the *conformity of our*

outward actions unto the law, although that be required therein also; but it principally lieth in the inward parts, where God searcheth for and regardeth truth in sincerity, Psalms 51:6. Wherefore *διάνοια* is the “mind and understanding,” whose natural depravation is the spring and principle of all disobedience; the cure whereof is here promised in the first place. In the outward administration of the means of grace, the affections, or, if I may so speak, the more outward part of the soul, are usually first affected and wrought upon: but the first real effect of the internal promised grace of the covenant is on the mind, the most spiritual and inward part of the soul. This in the New Testament is expressed by the renovation of the mind, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23; and the opening of the eyes of our understandings, Ephesians 1:17-18; God shining into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Hereby the enmity against God, the vanity, darkness, and alienation from the life of God, which the mind naturally is possessed and filled withal, are taken away and removed, — of the nature of which work I have treated at large elsewhere; ⁽¹⁰⁾ — for the law of God in the mind, is the saving knowledge of the mind and will of God, whereof the law is the revelation, communicated unto it and implanted in it. [see code314b for comments on the mind and the heart]

2. The way whereby God in the covenant of grace thus works on the mind is expressed by *διδούς*: so the apostle tenders *נָתַתִּי*, “I will give.” *διδούς*, “giving,” may by an enallage be put for *δώσα*, “I will give.” So is it expressed in the next clause, *ἐπιγράψω*, in the future tense, “I will write.” The word in the prophet is, “I will give;” we render it, “I will put.” But there are two things intimated in the word:

(1.) The *freedom* of the grace promised; it is a mere grant, gift, or donation of grace.

(2.) The *efficacy* of it. That which is given of God unto any is received by them, otherwise it is no gift. And this latter is well expressed by the word used by us, “I will put;” which expresseth an actual communication, and not a fruitless tender. This the apostle renders emphatically, *διδούς*; that is, *εἰμί*, ‘This is that which I do, am doing in this covenant; namely, freely giving that grace whereby my laws shall be implanted on the minds of men.’ [hence, the term “free grace”]

3. To show in general, before we proceed to the nature of this work, so far as is necessary unto the exposition of the words, we may here consider what was observed in the third place, namely, what it is that is thus promised to be communicated, and so carry it on with us unto the other clause of this promise.

That which is to be put into this spiritual receptacle is in these words, *τοὺς νόμους μου*, “My laws;” in the plural number. Expositors inquire what laws are here intended, whether the moral law only, or others also. But there is no need of such inquiry. There is a metonymy of the subject and effect in the words. It is that knowledge of the mind and will of God which is revealed in the law, and taught by it, which is promised. The “laws of God,” therefore, are here taken largely, for the whole revelation of the mind and will of God. So doth *תּוֹרָה* originally signify “doctrine” or “instruction.” By what way or revelation soever God makes known himself and his will unto us, requiring our obedience therein, it is all comprised in that expression of “his laws.”

From these things we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this first branch of the first promise of the covenant. And this is, the effectual operation of his Spirit in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, whereby they are habitually made conformable unto the whole law of God, — that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, — and enabled unto all acts and duties that are required of us. And this is the **first grace promised and communicated unto us by virtue of this covenant**, as it was necessary that so it should be. For,

1. The mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience.
2. The proper and peculiar actings of the mind, in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actings of the will and affections, much more all outward practices.
3. The depravation of the mind is such, by blindness, darkness, vanity, and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace upon the mind.
4. Faith itself is principally ingenerated by an infusion of saving light into the mind, 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 4:6. So, —

Obs. 7. All the beginnings and entrances into the **saving knowledge of God**, and thereon of obedience unto him, are effects of the grace of the covenant.

The *second* part of this first promise of the covenant is expressed in these words, “And will write them upon their hearts;” which is that which renders the former part actually effectual.

Expositors generally observe, that respect is had herein unto the *giving of the law on mount Sinai*, — that is, in the first covenant; for then the law (that is, “the ten words”) was written in tables of stone. And although the original tables were broken by Moses, when the people had broken the covenant, yet would not God alter that dispensation, nor write his laws any other way, but commanded new tables of stone to be made, and wrote them therein. And this was done, not so much to secure the outward letter of them, as to represent the hardness of the hearts of the people unto whom they were given. God did not, God would not by virtue of that covenant otherwise dispose of his law. And the event that ensued hereon was, that they brake these laws, and abode not in obedience. This event God promiseth to obviate and prevent under the new covenant, and that by writing these laws now in our hearts, which he wrote before only in tables of stone; that is, he will effectually work that obedience in us which the law doth require, for he “worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

The **heart**, as distinguished from the **mind**, compriseth the will and the affections; and they are compared unto the tables wherein the letter of the law was engraven. For as by that writing and engraving, the tables received the impression of the letters and words wherein the law was contained, which they did firmly retain and represent, so as that although they were stones still in their nature, yet were they nothing but the law in their use; so by the grace of the new covenant there is a durable impression of the law of God on the wills and affections of men, whereby they

answer it, represent it, comply with it, and have a living principle of it abiding in them. Wherefore, as this work must necessarily consist of two parts, namely, the removal out of the heart of whatever is contrary unto the law of God, and the implanting of principles of obedience thereinto; so it comes under a double description or denomination in the Scripture. For sometimes it is called a “taking away of the heart of stone,” or “circumcising of the heart;” and sometimes the “giving of an heart of flesh,” the “writing of the law in our hearts;” — **which is the renovation of our natures into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth.** Wherefore in this promise the whole of our sanctification, in its beginning and progress, in its work upon our whole souls and all their faculties, is comprised. And we may observe, —

Obs. 8. The work of grace in the new covenant passeth on the whole soul, in all its faculties, powers, and affections, unto their change and renovation. — The whole was corrupted, and the whole must be renewed. The image of God was originally in and upon the whole, and on the loss of it, the whole was deprived. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Obs. 9. To take away the necessity and efficacy of renewing, changing, sanctifying grace, consisting in an internal, efficacious operation of the principles, habits, and acts of internal grace and obedience, is plainly to overthrow and reject the new covenant.

Obs. 10. We bring nothing to the new covenant but our hearts, as tables to be written in, with the sense of the insufficiency of the precepts and promises of the law, with respect unto our own ability to comply with them.

The last thing in the words is the relation that ensues hereon between God and his people: “I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” This is indeed a distinct **promise** by itself, summarily comprising **all the blessings and privileges of the covenant**. And it is placed in the center of the account given of the whole, as that from whence all the grace of it doth spring, wherein all the blessings of it do consist, and whereby they are secured. Howbeit in this place it is peculiarly mentioned, as that which hath its foundation in the foregoing promise. **For this relation, which implies mutual acquiescency in each other, could not be, nor ever had been, if the minds and hearts of them who are to be taken into it were not changed and renewed.** For neither could God approve of and rest in his love towards them, whilst they were enemies unto him in the depravation of their natures; nor could they find rest or satisfaction in God, whom they neither knew, nor liked, nor loved.

This is the general expression of any covenant relation between God and men, “He will be unto them a God, and they shall be to him a people.” And it is frequently made use of with respect unto the first covenant, which yet was disannulled. God owned the people therein for his peculiar portion, and they avouched him to be their God alone.

Nor can this be spoken of God and any people, but on the ground of an **especial covenant**. It is true, God is the God of all the world, and all people are his; yea, he is a God unto them all. For as he made them, so he sustains, rules, and governeth them in all things, by his power and providence. But with respect hereunto God doth not freely promise that he will be a God unto any, nor can so do; for his power over all, and his rule of all things, is essential and natural unto him, so as it cannot otherwise

be. Wherefore, as thus declared, **it is a peculiar expression of an especial covenant relation**. And the nature of it is to be expounded by the nature and properties of that covenant which it doth respect.

Insights into the image of God

Life and Diary of David Brainerd, Part VIII.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.ix.i.viii.html>

This next excerpt is from the David Brainerd was a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards. He was a minister to the Indians in New Jersey. His comments are priceless. What I gather from this and other things having to do with the image of God, in what it consists and its designed purpose, is this: while in an unregenerate state, man is in Adam's likeness, in his image (Gen 5:3, See 1Cor15:49, *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*). Man lost God's image (the image of his glory: knowledge of God, holiness/virtue, and joy and happiness in God) at the fall, leaving him naked, not reflecting anything of God but only sin, darkness and confusion, evidencing himself in disobedience/rebellion. He is a *natural* man as opposed to being a *spiritual* man. Without this complete image, man cannot know God savingly or obey him; with it he can and will.

The confusion arises when people equate the statement that we are created or made in God's image with being born in God's image. Being created (in Adam) and being born into this world are two different things. We were created in God's image, but due to the fall, we are born into this world in Adam's image, that is, properly speaking, we are born without the principle part of God's image, the image of his *glory* more particularly, without the image of his *holiness* or love for God. For if we had even a little of the image of God's glory as described above, for example, the image of his holiness, then we would love God when in fact, unregenerate men do not love God but hate him. Many say that the image of God in unregenerate people is still there but is damaged or marred; but what does that mean? For if it is damaged then it is no longer able to serve its function to cause one to live for God, and so in reality the image is not there at all, (certainly not the principal part of it, holiness; see pg 53, 74), it is not damaged, but was erased. For if one did have a little holiness in him in this so called damaged image (which is actually a contradiction), then he would be able to love God in true holiness, hate sin, etc., which we know is not the case in the unregenerate! He would be a little bit *alive* and not *dead*. The image of God is either there or it is not; if it is, it will infallibly cause one to obey God, etc. For to be in God's image is to be a partaker of his nature; they are the same thing; consequently this issues in our love to God, our enjoyment of God,

our happiness and joy in God and worship of God. Hence, this distinction is important to make for many reasons not to mention this one - for God would surely not cast his own image into hell as Brainerd comments:

“Lord’s day, May 10. (At Had-Lime) I could not but feel some measure of gratitude to God at this time, (wherein I was much exercised,) that he had always disposed me, in my ministry, to insist on the great doctrine of regeneration, the new creature, faith in Christ, progressive sanctification, supreme love to God, living entirely to the glory of God, being not our own, and the like. God thus helped me to see, in the surest manner, from time to time, that these, and the like doctrine necessarily connected with them, are the only foundation of safety and salvation for perishing sinners; and that those divine dispositions, which are consonant hereto, are that holiness, ‘without which no man shall see the Lord.’ The exercise of these God-like tempers wherein the soul acts in a kind of concert with God, and would be and do every thing that is pleasing to him I saw, would stand by the soul in a dying hour; for God must, I think, deny himself, if he cast away his own image, even the soul that is one in desires with himself.

Ps. 17:15

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake **in Your likeness**.

Ps. 73:25

Whom have I in heaven *but You?*
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Purging the Conscience From Dead Works

code23

The blood of Christ and the blood of sprinkling explained reference to salvation and sanctification. The conscience and the purging of conscience explained. What are dead works and the purging of them? The *living God* explained.

The place where it was to be killed was on the north side of the altar, verse 11; and when it was killed, the blood was taken, or wrung out, and “sprinkled about upon the altar,” verse 5; which sprinkling of blood was used in all sacrifices of living creatures, as eminently prefiguring our sanctification, or purifying of our hearts from an evil conscience, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, - John Owen, Hebrews 9:14, 12:24 Vol. 17 pg 704

Commentary by John Owen on Hebrews 9:13-14
p286 (p352 online) Vol. 22

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Hebrews 9:13-14. — *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth unto the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!*”

The words are argumentative, in the form of a hypothetical syllogism; wherein the assumption of the proposition is supposed, as proved before. That which is to be confirmed is what was asserted in the words foregoing; namely, “That the Lord Jesus Christ by his blood hath obtained for us eternal redemption.” This the causal redditive conjunction; “for,” doth manifest; whereunto the note of a supposition, “if,” is premised as a note of a hypothetical argumentation.

There are two parts of this confirmation:

1. A most full declaration of the way and means whereby he obtained that redemption; it was by the “offering himself through the eternal Spirit without spot unto God.”
2. By comparing this way of it with the typical sacrifices and ordinances of God. For arguing “ad homines,” — that is, unto the satisfaction and conviction of the Hebrews, — the apostle makes use of their concessions to confirm his own assertions.

And his argument consists of two parts:

1. A *concession* of their efficacy unto their proper end.
2. An *inference* from thence unto the greater and more noble efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, taken partly from the relation of type and antitype that was between them, but principally from the different nature of the things themselves.

To make evident the force of his argument in general, we must observe,

1. That what he had proved before he takes here for granted, on the one side and the other. And this was, that all the Levitical services and ordinances were in themselves **carnal**, and had **carnal ends assigned unto them**, and had only an **obscure** representation of things spiritual and eternal; and on the other side, that the tabernacle, office, and sacrifice of Christ were spiritual, and had their effects in eternal things, **2. That those other carnal, earthly things were types and resemblances, in God’s appointment of them, of those which are spiritual and eternal.**

From these suppositions the argument is firm and stable; and there are two parts of it:

1. That as the ordinances of old, **being carnal**, had an efficacy unto their proper end, **to purify the unclean as to the flesh**; so the sacrifice of Christ hath a certain efficacy unto its proper end, namely, the “purging of our conscience from dead works.” The force of this inference depends on the relation that was between them in the appointment of God.
2. That there was a greater efficacy, and that which gave a greater evidence of itself, in the sacrifice of Christ, with respect unto its proper end, than there was in those sacrifices and ordinances, with respect unto their proper end: “How much more!” And the reason hereof is, because all their efficacy depended on a mere arbitrary institution. In themselves, that is, **in their own nature**, they had neither worth, value, nor efficacy, — no, not even as unto those ends whereunto they were by divine

institution designed: but in the sacrifice of Christ, who is therefore here said to “offer himself unto God through the eternal Spirit,” there is an **innate glorious worth and efficacy**, which, suitably unto the rules of eternal reason and righteousness, will accomplish and procure its effects.

Hebrews 9:13. — There are two things in this verse, which are the ground from whence the apostle argueth and maketh his inference in that which follows:

1. A *proposition* of the sacrifices and services of the law which he had respect unto.
2. An *assignation* of a certain efficacy unto them. The sacrifices of the law he refers unto two heads:

1. “The blood of bulls and of goats.”

2. “The ashes of an heifer.” And the distinction is,

1. From the matter of them;

2. The manner of their performance. For the manner of their performance, the blood of bulls and goats was “offered,” which is supposed and included; — the ashes of the heifer were “sprinkled,” as it is expressed.

1. The matter of the first is “the blood of bulls and of goats.” The same, say some, with the “goats and calves” mentioned in the verse foregoing. So generally do the expositors of the Roman church; and that because their translation reads “hircorum et vitulorum,” contrary unto the original text. And some instances they give of the same signification of μόσχων [*calves*] and ταύρων [*bulls*]. But the apostle had just reason for the alteration of his expression. For in the foregoing verse he had respect only unto the anniversary sacrifice of the high priest, but here he enlargeth the subject unto the consideration of all other expiatory sacrifices under the law; for he joins unto the “blood of bulls and of goats” the “ashes of an heifer,” which were of no use, in the anniversary sacrifice. Wherefore he designed in these words summarily to express **all sacrifices of expiation and all ordinances of purification that were appointed under the law**. And therefore the words in the close of the verse, expressing the end and effect of these ordinances, “sanctifieth the unclean unto the purifying of the flesh,” are not to be restrained unto them immediately foregoing, “*the* ashes of an heifer sprinkled;” but an equal respect is to be had unto the other sort, or “the blood of bulls and of goats.”

The Socinian expositor, in his entrance into that wresting of this text wherein he labors in a peculiar manner, denies that the water of sprinkling is here to be considered as typical of Christ, and that because it is the anniversary sacrifice alone which is intended, wherein it was of no use. Yet he adds immediately, that in itself it was a type of Christ; **so wresting the truth against his own convictions, to force his design.** But the conclusion is strong on the other hand; because it was a type of Christ, and is so here considered, whereas it was not used in the great anniversary sacrifice, it is not that sacrifice alone which the apostle hath respect unto.

Wherefore by “bulls and goats,” by a usual synecdoche [a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for a whole or a whole for a part as in 50 head of cattle for 50 cows, or the army for a soldier.], **all the several kinds of clean beasts, whose blood was given unto the people to make atonement withal, are intended.** So is the matter of all sacrifices expressed, Psalms 50:13, “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” Sheep are contained under goats, being all beasts of the flock.

*Side note on synecdoche: For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2. Paul’s words to know anything among you except Jesus Christ crucified is a **synecdoche**, a part substituted for the whole; in other words, Paul views everything through gospel-colored glasses; all our thoughts and acts should find their proper meaning as they relate to God’s ultimate end in the earth, his self-glorification. Otherwise, everything is relative, subject to our opinion, emotions, traditions, etc.*

And it is the “blood” of these bulls and goats which is proposed as the first way or means of the expiation of sin, and purification under the law. For it was by their blood, and that as offered at the altar, that atonement was made, Leviticus 17:11. Purification was also made thereby, **even by the sprinkling of it.**

2. The second thing mentioned unto the same end, is “the ashes of an heifer,” and the use of them; which was by “sprinkling.” The institution, use, and end of this ordinance, are described at large, Numbers 19. And an eminent type of Christ there was therein, both as unto his suffering and the **continual efficacy** of the **cleansing virtue of his blood in the church.** It would too much divert us from the present argument, to consider all the particulars wherein there was a representation of the sacrifice of Christ and the purging virtue of it in this ordinance [see John 15:3, “**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**”]; yet the mention of some of them is of use unto the explication of the apostle’s general design: as, —

(1.) It was to be a red heifer, and that without spot or blemish, whereon no yoke had come, verse 2. Red is the color of guilt, [Isaiah 1:18](#), yet was there no spot or blemish in the heifer: so was the guilt of sin upon Christ, who in himself was absolutely pure and holy. No yoke had been on her; nor was there any constraint on Christ, but he offered himself willingly, through the eternal Spirit.

(2.) She was to be led forth without the camp, [Numbers 19:3](#); which the apostle alludes unto, [Hebrews 13:11](#), representing Christ going out of the city unto his suffering and oblation.

(3.) One did slay her before the face of the priest, and not the priest himself: so the hands of others, Jews and Gentiles, were used in the slaying of our sacrifice.

(4.) The blood of the heifer being slain, was sprinkled by the priest seven times directly before the tabernacle of the congregation, [Numbers 19:4](#): so is the whole church purified by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

(5.) The whole heifer was to be burned in the sight of the priest, [Numbers 19:5](#): so was whole Christ, soul and body, **offered up to God in the fire of love, kindled in him by the eternal Spirit.**

(6.) Cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, were to be cast into the midst of the burning of the heifer, [Numbers 19:6](#); which were all used by God's institution in the purification of the unclean, or the sanctification and dedication of anything unto sacred use, to teach us that all spiritual virtue unto these ends, really and eternally, was contained in the one offering of Christ.

(7.) Both the priest who sprinkled the blood, the men that slew the heifer, and he that burned her, and he that gathered her ashes, were all unclean, until they were washed, verses 7-10: so when Christ was made a sin-offering, **all the legal uncleannesses**, that is, the **guilt** of the church, were on him, and he took them away.

But it is the use of this ordinance which is principally intended. **The ashes of this heifer**, being burned, were **preserved, that, being mixed with pure water**, they might be sprinkled on persons who on any occasion were legally unclean. Whoever was so, was excluded from all the solemn worship of the church. Wherefore, without this ordinance, the worship of God and the holy state of the church could not have been continued. For the means, causes, and ways of legal defilements among them, were

very many, and some of them unavoidable. In particular, every tent and house, and all persons in them, were defiled, if any one died among them; which could not but continually fall out in their families. **Hereon they were excluded from the tabernacle and congregation**, and all duties of the solemn worship of God, until they were purified. Had not therefore these ashes, which were to be mingled with living water, been always preserved and in a readiness, the whole worship of God must quickly have ceased amongst them. **It is so in the church of Christ. The spiritual defilements which befall believers are many, and some of them unavoidable unto them whilst they are in this world; yea, their duties, the best of them, have defilements adhering unto them. Were it not that the blood of Christ, in its purifying virtue, is in a continual readiness unto faith, that God therein hath opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness, the worship of the church would not be acceptable unto him. In a constant application thereunto doth the exercise of faith much consist.**

3. The nature and use of this ordinance are further described by its object, “the unclean,” — κεκοινωμένους that is, those that were made common. All those who had a liberty of approach unto God in his solemn worship were so far sanctified; that is, separated and dedicated. And such as were deprived of this privilege were made common, and so unclean.

The unclean especially intended in this institution were those who were defiled by the dead. Every one that by any means touched a dead body, whether dying naturally or slain, whether in the house or field, or did bear it, or assist in the bearing of it, or were in the tent or house where it was, **were all defiled; no such person was to come into the congregation, or near the tabernacle.** But it is certain that many offices about the dead are works of humanity and mercy, which morally defile not. Wherefore there was a peculiar reason of the constitution of this defilement, and this severe interdiction of them that were so defiled from divine worship. And this was to represent unto the people the curse of the law, whereof death was the great visible effect. The present Jews have this notion, that defilement by the dead arises from the poison that is dropped into them that die by the angel of death; whereof see our exposition on [Hebrews 2:14](#). The meaning of it is, that death came in by sin, from the poisonous temptation of the old serpent, and befell men by the curse which took hold of them thereon. But they have lost the understanding of their own tradition. This belonged unto the bondage under which it was the will of God to keep that people, that they should dread death as an effect of the curse of the law, and the fruit of sin; which is taken away in Christ, [Hebrews 2:14](#); [1 Corinthians 15:56-57](#). And these works, which

were unto them so full of defilement, are now unto us accepted duties of piety and mercy.

These and many others were excluded from an interest in the solemn worship of God, upon ceremonial defilements. And some vehemently contend that none were so excluded for moral defilements; and it may be it is true, for the matter is dubious. **But that it should thence follow that none under the gospel should be so excluded, for moral and spiritual evils, is a fond imagination; yea, the argument is firm, that if God did so severely shut out from a participation in his solemn worship all those who were legally or ceremonially defiled, much more is it his will that those who live in spiritual or moral defilements should not approach unto him by the holy ordinances of the gospel.**

4. The manner of the application of this purifying water was by sprinkling, being sprinkled; or rather, transitively, “sprinkling the unclean.” Not only the act, but the efficacy of it is intended. The manner of it is declared, Numbers 19:17-18. The ashes were kept by themselves. When use was to be made of them, **they were to be mingled with clean living water, water from the spring**. The virtue was from the ashes, as they were the ashes of the heifer slain and burnt as a sin-offering. The water was used as the means of their application. Being so mingled, any clean person might dip a bunch of hyssop (see Psalms 51:7) into it, and sprinkle any thing or person that was defiled. For it **was not confined unto the office of the priest, but was left unto every private person; as is the continual application of the blood of Christ**. And this rite of sprinkling was that alone in all sacrifices whereby their continued efficacy unto sanctification and purification was expressed. Thence is the blood of Christ called **“the blood of sprinkling,”** because of its efficacy unto our sanctification, as applied by faith unto our souls and consciences.

The effect of the things mentioned is, that they “sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh;” namely, that those unto whom they were applied might be made **Leviticallly clean [or legally clean as opposed to evangelically clean]**, — be so freed from the carnal defilements as to have an admission unto the solemn worship of God and society of the church.

“Sanctifieth.” ἀγιάζω in the New Testament doth signify for the most part, “to purify and sanctify internally and spiritually.” Sometimes it is used in the sense of שָׁדַד in the Old Testament, “to separate, dedicate, consecrate.” So is it by our Savior, John 17:19, καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν, — “And for them I sanctify myself;” that is, ‘separate and dedicate myself to be a sacrifice.’ So is it here used. **Every defiled**

person was made common, excluded from the privilege of a right to draw nigh unto God in his solemn worship: but in his purification he was again separated to him, and restored unto his sacred right.

The word is of the singular number, and seems only to respect the next antecedent, σποδὸς δαμάλεως, — “the ashes of an heifer.” But if so, the apostle mentions “the blood of bulls and goats” without the ascription of any effect or efficacy thereunto. This, therefore, is not likely, as being the more solemn ordinance. Wherefore the word is distinctly to be referred, by a zeugma [a zeugma is a figure of speech where a word applies to multiple parts of the sentence.], unto the one and the other. The whole effect of all the sacrifices and institutions of the law is comprised in this word. All the sacrifices of expiation and ordinances of purification had this effect, and no more.

They “sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh.” That is, those who were legally defiled, and were therefore excluded from an interest in the worship of God, and were made obnoxious unto the curse of the law thereon, were so legally purified, justified, and cleansed by them, as that they had free admission into the society of the church, and the solemn worship thereof. This they did, this they were able to effect, by virtue of divine institution.

This was the state of things under the law, when there was a church purity, holiness, and sanctification, to be obtained by the due observance of external rites and ordinances, without internal purity or holiness [i.e., it was only legal]. Wherefore these things were in themselves of no worth or value. And as God himself doth often in the prophets declare, that, merely on their own account, he had no regard unto them; so by the apostle they are called “worldly, carnal, and beggarly rudiments.” Why then, it will be said, did God appoint and ordain them? why did he oblige the people unto their observance? I answer, It was not at all on the account of their outward use and efficacy, as unto the purifying of the flesh, which, as it was alone, God always despised; but it was because of the representation of good things to come which the wisdom of God had inlaid them withal. With respect hereunto they were glorious, and of exceeding advantage unto the faith and obedience of the church.

This state of things is changed under the new testament. For now “neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” The thing signified, namely, internal purity and holiness, is no less necessary unto a right unto the privileges of the gospel, than the observance of these external rites was unto the privileges of the law.

Yet is there no countenance given hereby unto the impious opinion of some, that God by the law required only external obedience, without respect unto the inward, spiritual part of it; for although the rites and sacrifices of the law, by their own virtue, purified externally, **and delivered only from temporary punishments**, yet the precepts and the promises of the law required the same holiness and obedience unto God as doth the gospel.

Hebrews 9:14. — *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!”*

This verse contains the inference or argument of the apostle from the preceding propositions and concessions. The nature of the argument is “a minori,” and “a proportione.” From the first, the inference follows as unto its truth, and *formally*; from the latter, as to its greater evidence, and *materially*.

There are in the words considerable,

1. The subject treated of, in opposition unto that before spoken unto; and that is, “the blood of Christ.”
2. The means whereby this blood of Christ was effectual unto the end designed, in opposition unto the way and means of the efficacy of legal ordinances; he “offered himself” (that is, in the shedding of it) “unto God without spot, through the eternal Spirit.”
3. The end assigned unto this blood of Christ in that offering of himself, or the effect wrought thereby, in opposition unto the end and effect of **legal ordinances**; which is, to **“purge our consciences from dead works.”**
4. The benefit and advantage which we receive thereby, in opposition unto the benefit which was obtained by those legal administrations; **that we may “serve the living God.”** All which must be considered and explained.

First, The nature of the inference is expressed by, “How much more.” This is usual with the apostle, when he draws any inference or conclusion from a comparison between Christ and the high priest, the gospel and the law, to use an ἀΐξισις in expression, to manifest their absolute pre-eminence above them: See Hebrews 2:2-3; Hebrews

[3:3](#); [Hebrews 10:28-29](#); [Hebrews 12:25](#). Although these things agreed in their general nature, whence a comparison is founded, yet were the one incomparably more glorious than the ether. Hence elsewhere, although he alloweth the administration of the law to be glorious, yet he affirms that it had no glory in comparison of what doth excel, [2 Corinthians 3:10](#). The person of Christ is the spring of all the glory in the church; and the more nearly any thing relates thereunto, the more glorious it is.

There are two things included in this way of the introduction of the present inference, “How much more:” —

1. An **equal certainty of the event and effect ascribed** unto the blood of Christ, **with the effect of the legal sacrifices, is included in it.** So the argument is “a minori.” And the inference of such an argument is expressed by, “much more,” though an equal certainty be all that is evinced by it. **‘If those sacrifices and ordinances of the law were effectual unto the ends of legal expiation and purification, then is the blood of Christ assuredly so unto the spiritual and eternal effects whereunto it is designed.’** And the force of the argument is not merely, as was observed before, “a comparatis,” and “a minori,” **but from the nature of the things themselves, as the one was appointed to be typical of the other.**

2. The argument is taken from a proportion between the things themselves that are compared, as to their efficacy. This gives greater evidence and validity unto the argument than if it were taken merely “a minori.” For there is a greater reason, in the nature of things, that “the blood of Christ should purge our consciences from dead works,” than there is that “the blood of bulls and of goats should sanctify unto the purifying of the flesh.” For that had all its efficacy unto this end from the sovereign pleasure of God in its institution; **in itself it had neither worth nor dignity**, whence, in any proportion of justice or reason, men should be legally sanctified by it. The sacrifice of Christ also, as unto its original, depended on the sovereign pleasure, wisdom, and grace of God; but being so appointed, **upon the account of the infinite dignity of his person, and the nature of his oblation, it had a real efficacy**, in the justice and wisdom of God, **to procure the effect mentioned in the way of purchase and merit.** This the apostle refers unto in these words, “Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unto God.” That the offering was “himself,” that **“he offered himself through the eternal Spirit,” or his divine person**, **is that which gives assurance of the accomplishing of the effect assigned unto it by his blood**, above any grounds we have to believe that “the blood of bulls and goats should sanctify unto the purifying of the flesh.” And we may observe from this, “How much more,” that, —

Obs. 1. There is such an evidence of wisdom and righteousness, unto a spiritual eye, in the whole mystery of our redemption, sanctification, and salvation by Christ, as gives an **immovable foundation** unto faith to rest upon in its receiving of it. — The faith of the church of old was resolved into the **mere sovereign pleasure of God**, as to the efficacy of their ordinances; **nothing in the nature of the things themselves did tend unto their establishment**. But in the dispensation of God by Christ, in the work of our redemption by him, there is such an evidence of the wisdom and righteousness of God in the things themselves, as gives the highest security unto faith. It is unbelief alone, made obstinate by prejudices insinuated by the devil, that hides these things from any, as the apostle declares, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. And hence will arise the great aggravation of the sin, and condemnation of them that perish.

Secondly, We must consider the things themselves.

FIRST, The *subject* spoken of, and whereunto the effect mentioned is ascribed, is “the *blood of Christ.*” The person unto whom these things relate is Christ. I have given an account before, on sundry occasions, of the great variety used by the apostle in this epistle in the naming of him. And a peculiar reason of every one of them is to be taken from the place where it is used. Here he calls him Christ; for on his being Christ, the Messiah, depends the principal force of his present argument. It is the blood of him who was promised of old to be the high priest of the church, and the sacrifice for their sins; in whom was the faith of all the saints of old, that by him their sins should be expiated, that in him they should be justified and glorified; Christ, who is the Son of the living God, in whose person God purchased his church with his own blood. And we may observe, that, —

Obs. 2. The efficacy of all the offices of Christ towards the church depends on the **dignity of his person**. — The offering of his blood was prevalent for the expiation of sin, because it was *his blood*, and for no other reason. But this is a subject which I have handled at large elsewhere.

[skip to pg 296-299 \(364-368 online\)](#)

That which the effect intended is ascribed unto, is the blood of Christ. And two things are to be inquired hereon.

1. What is meant by “the blood of Christ.”

2. How this effect was wrought by it.

First, It is not only that material blood which he shed, absolutely considered, that is here and elsewhere called “the blood of Christ,” when the work of our redemption is ascribed unto it, that is intended; but there is a double consideration of it, with respect unto its efficacy unto this end:

1. That it was the pledge and the sign of all the **internal obedience and sufferings of the soul of Christ, of his person**. “He became obedient unto death, the death of the cross,” whereon his blood was shed. This was the great instance of his obedience and of his sufferings, whereby he made reconciliation and atonement for sin. Hence the effects of all his sufferings, and of all obedience in his sufferings, are ascribed unto his blood.

2. Respect is had unto the sacrifice and offering of blood under the law. The reason why God gave the people the blood to make atonement on the altar, was because “the life of the flesh was in it,” Leviticus 17:11; Leviticus 17:14. So was the life of Christ in his blood, by the shedding whereof he laid it down. And by his death it is, as he was the Son of God, that we are redeemed. Herein he made his soul an offering for sin, Isaiah 53:10. Wherefore this expression, “**the blood of Christ, in order unto our redemption, or the expiation of sin, is comprehensive of all that he did and suffered for those ends,** inasmuch as the shedding of it was the **way and means whereby he offered it**, or himself (in and by it), unto God.

Secondly, The second inquiry is, how the effect here mentioned was wrought by the blood of Christ. And this we cannot determine without a general consideration of the effect itself; and this is, the “purging of our conscience from dead works.” καθαριεῖ, — “shall purge.” That is, say some, shall purify and sanctify, by internal, inherent sanctification. But neither the sense of the word, nor the context, nor the exposition given by the apostle of this very expression, Hebrews 10:1-2, will admit of this restrained sense. I grant it is included herein, but there is somewhat else principally intended, namely, **the expiation of sin, with our justification and peace with God thereon**.

1. For the proper sense of the word here used, see our exposition on Hebrews 1:3. Expiation, lustration, **carrying away punishment by making atonement**, are expressed by it in all good authors.

2. The context requires this sense in the first place; for, —

(1.) The argument here used is immediately applied to prove that Christ hath “obtained for us eternal redemption;” but redemption consists not in internal sanctification only, although that be a necessary consequent of it, but it is the pardon of sin through the atonement made, or a price paid: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,” Ephesians 1:7.

(2.) In the comparison insisted on there is distinct mention made of “the blood of bulls and goats,” as well as of “the ashes of an heifer sprinkled;” but the first and principal use of blood in sacrifice was to make atonement for sin, Leviticus 17:11.

(3.) The end of this purging is **to give boldness in the service of God**, and **peace** with him therein, — that we may “serve the living God;” but this is done by the expiation and pardon of sin, with justification thereon.

(4.) It is “**conscience**” that is said to be purged. **Now conscience is the proper seat of the guilt of sin**; it is that which chargeth it on the soul, and which hinders all approach unto God in his service with liberty and boldness, unless it be removed: which, —

(5.) Gives us the best consideration of the apostle’s exposition of this expression, Hebrews 10:1-2; for he there declares, **that to have the conscience purged, is to have its condemning power for sin taken away and cease**.

There is therefore, under the same name, **a twofold effect here ascribed unto the blood of Christ**; the one in answer and opposition unto the *effect of the blood of bulls and goats being offered*; the other in answer unto the *effect of the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled*: **the first consisting in making atonement for our sins; the other in the sanctification of our persons**. And there are two ways whereby these things are procured by the blood of Christ:

1. By its *offering*, whereby sin is expiated.
2. By its *sprinkling*, whereby our persons are sanctified.

The first ariseth from the **satisfaction he made unto the justice of God**, by undergoing in his death the punishment due to us, being made therein a curse for us, that the blessing might come upon us; therein, as his death was a sacrifice, as he offered himself unto God in the shedding of his blood, he made atonement: the **other from the**

virtue of his sacrifice applied unto us by the Holy Spirit, which is the sprinkling of it; so doth the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanse us from all our sins.

The **Socinian** expositor on this place endeavors, by a long perplexed discourse, to evade the force of this testimony, wherein the expiation of sin is directly assigned unto the blood of Christ. His pretense is to show how many ways it may be so; but his design is to prove that really it can be so by none at all; for the assertion, as it lies in terms, is destructive of their heresy. Wherefore he proceeds on these suppositions: —

1. “That the expiation for sin is our deliverance from the punishment due unto sin, by the power of Christ in heaven.” But as this is diametrically opposite unto the true nature of it, so is it unto its representation in the sacrifices of old, whereunto it is compared by the apostle, and from whence he argueth. Neither is this a tolerable exposition of the words: ‘The “blood of Christ,” in answer unto what was represented by the blood of the sacrifices of the law, doth “purge our consciences from dead works;” that is, Christ, by his power in heaven, doth free us from the punishment due to sin.’
2. “That Christ was not a priest until after his ascension into heaven.” That this supposition destroys the whole nature of that office, hath been sufficiently before declared.
3. “That his offering himself unto God was the presenting of himself in heaven before God, as having done the will of God on the earth.” But as this hath nothing in it of the nature of a sacrifice, so what is asserted to be done by it can, according to these men, be no way said to be done by his blood, seeing they affirm that when Christ doth this he hath neither flesh nor blood.
4. “That the resurrection of Christ gave all efficacy unto his death.” But the truth is, it was his death, and what he effected therein, that was the ground of his resurrection. He was “brought again from the dead through the blood of the covenant.” And the efficacy of his death depends on his resurrection only as the evidence of his acceptance with God therein.
5. “That Christ confirmed his doctrine by his blood;” that is, because he rose again.

All these principles I have at large refuted in the exercitations about the priesthood of Christ, and shall not here again insist on their examination. This is plain and evident in

the words, unless violence be offered unto them, namely, that “the blood of Christ,” — that is, his suffering in soul and body, and his obedience therein, testified and expressed in the shedding of his blood, — was the procuring cause of the expiation of our sins, “the purging of our consciences from dead works,” our justification, sanctification, and acceptance with God thereon. And, —

Obs. 3. There is nothing more destructive unto the whole faith of the gospel, than by any means to evacuate the immediate efficacy of the blood of Christ. — Every opinion of that tendency breaks in upon the whole mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in him. It renders all the institutions and sacrifices of the law, **whereby God instructed the church of old in the mystery of his grace**, useless and unintelligible, and overthrows the foundation of the gospel.

Vol. 23 p 347-351 Blood of Sprinkling

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_11.1-13.25.pdf

Obs. 22. This is the blessedness and safety of the catholic church, that it is taken into such a covenant, and hath an interest in such a mediator of it, as are able to save it unto the utmost.

Obs. 23. The true notion of faith for life and salvation, is a coming unto Jesus as the mediator of the new testament. — For hereby we have an egress and deliverance from the covenant of works, and the curse wherewith it is accompanied.

Obs. 24. It is the **wisdom of faith** to make use of this mediator **continually**, in all wherein we have to do with God. — To be negligent herein, is to reflect on the wisdom and grace of God in appointing him to be the mediator of the covenant; and on his love and power for the discharge of that office.

Obs. 25. But that which we are principally taught herein is, that the glory, the safety, the pre-eminence, of the state of believers under the gospel, consists in this, that they come therein to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. — This is the center of all spiritual privileges, the rise of all spiritual joys, and the full satisfaction of the souls of all that believe. He who cannot find rest, refreshment, and satisfaction herein, is a stranger unto the gospel.

8. Again, the most signal instance wherein the Lord Jesus exercised and executed his office of mediation on the earth, **was the shedding of his blood for the confirmation of that covenant whereof he was the mediator. This blood, therefore, we are said in an especial manner to come unto.** And he gives it a double description:

(1.) From what it is; it is **“the blood of sprinkling.”**

(2.) From what it doth; it “speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” The Vulgar reads, “the aspersion” or “sprinkling of blood,” without cause, and by a mistake.

(1.) There is no doubt but that the blood of Christ is called “the blood of sprinkling,” in allusion unto the various sprinklings of blood by divine institution under the old testament. **For there was no blood offered at any time, but part of it was sprinkled.** But there were three signal instances of it:

[1.] The blood of the paschal lamb; a type of our redemption by Christ, [Exodus 12:21](#).

[2.] The blood of the sacrifices wherewith the covenant was confirmed at Horeb, [Exodus 24:6-8](#).

[3.] The sprinkling of the blood of the great anniversary sacrifice of expiation or atonement by the high priest, in the most holy place, [Leviticus 16:14](#). All these were eminent types of the redemption, justification, and sanctification of the church, by the blood of Christ, as hath been before declared. But besides these, there was an institution of the **sprinkling of the blood in all ordinary burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin.** And I no way doubt, but that in this appellation of the blood of Christ respect is had unto them all, so far as they were typical, **by justifying and cleansing**; what they all signified was efficaciously wrought thereby. But whereas it is immediately annexed unto the mention of him as mediator of the new covenant, it doth in an especial manner respect the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices wherewith the covenant at Horeb was confirmed. As that old covenant was ratified and confirmed by the mediator of it with the sprinkling of the blood of oxen that were sacrificed; so the new covenant was confirmed by the offering and sprinkling of the blood of the mediator of the new covenant himself, offered in sacrifice to God, as the apostle expounds this passage, chap. 10.

Wherefore the blood of Christ is called “the blood of sprinkling,” with respect unto the application of it unto believers, as unto all the ends and effects for which it was offered in sacrifice unto God. And to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, is, not by the imitation of his sufferings to be led unto eternal life, which is the gloss of **Grotius** on the words; nor merely the belief of his death for the confirmation of the covenant, as **Schlichtingius**; (which are wide, if not wild interpretations of these words; without the least respect unto the signification of them, or to the nature and use of legal sacrifices, whence they are taken; or to the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, which is expressed in them;) **but it is the expiating, purging, cleansing efficacy of his blood, as applied unto us, that is included herein.** See [Hebrews 9:14](#), with the exposition.

(2.) He describes the **blood of Christ** by what it doth: “**It speaketh better things than that of Abel.**” Some copies read $\pi\alpha\rho\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\acute{o}\nu$, which must refer unto the person of Abel in the

first place, “than Abel speaks.” Some, παρὰ τό, which are followed by all the ancient scholiasts; and then it must refer to αἷμα, “blood,” “the blood of Abel.”

[1.] The blood of sprinkling “speaketh.” It hath a voice; it pleads. And this must be either with God or man. But whereas it is the blood of a sacrifice, whose object was God, **it speaks to God.**

[2.] It speaks good things absolutely; comparatively better things than Abel’s. To “speak” here, is to call for, cry for, plead for. **This blood speaks to God, by virtue of the everlasting compact between the Father and the Son, in his undertaking the work of mediation, for the communication of all the good things of the covenant, in mercy, grace, and glory, unto the church. It did so when it was shed; and it continues so to do in that presentation of it in heaven, and of his obedience therein, wherein his intercession doth consist.**

[3.] Comparatively, it is said to speak “better things than that of Abel.” For it is granted here that Abel is the genitive case, to be regulated by αἷμα, or “blood.” But there was a double blood of Abel:

1st. The blood of the sacrifice that he offered: for he offered of “the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof,” [Genesis 4:4](#); which was an offering by blood.

2dly. There was his own blood, which was shed by Cain. All the ancients take “the blood of Abel” in this latter sense. Some of late have contended for the former, or the blood of the sacrifice which he offered.

The blood of Christ, they say, was better, and spake better things than did Abel in his bloody sacrifice. But (be it spoken without reflection on them) this conjecture is very groundless, and remote from the scope of the place. For,

1st. There is no comparison intended between the sacrifice of Christ and those before the law; which belonged not at all to the design of the apostle. For it was only Mosaical institutions that he considered, in the preference which he gives to the sacrifice of Christ and the gospel, as is evident from the whole epistle. Nor did the Hebrews adhere to any other. Yet the pretense hereof is pleaded in the justification of this conjecture.

2dly. The apostle hath a respect unto some Scripture record of a thing well known to these Hebrews; but there is not any one word therein of any speaking of Abel by the blood of his sacrifice.

3dly. **It is expressly recorded, that Abel’s own blood, after it was shed, did speak, cry, and plead for vengeance, or the punishment of the murderer.** So speaks God himself: “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground,” [Genesis 4:10](#). And the only speaking of Abel is assigned by our apostle to be after his death, [Hebrews 11:4](#), — that is, by his blood; whereunto express regard is had in this place.

4thly. The blood of the sacrifice of Abel did speak the very same things which the blood of Christ speaks, though in a way dark, typical, and obscure. It had nothing in itself of the same efficacy with the blood of Christ, but it spake of the same things. For being a sacrifice by blood, to make atonement in a typical representation of the sacrifice of Christ, it spake and pleaded, in the faith of the offerer, for mercy and pardon. But the opposition here between the things spoken for by the blood of sprinkling, and those spoken for by the blood of Abel, **doth manifest that they were of diverse kinds**, yea, contrary to one another.

5thly. The ground of the comparison used by the apostle is plainly this: That whereas, as unto men, the blood of Christ was shed unjustly, and he was murdered by their wicked hands, even as Abel was by the hands of Cain, — the consideration whereof might have cast many of the Jews who were consenting thereunto into Cain's desperation, — he shows that the blood of Christ never cried, as Abel's did, for vengeance on them by whom it was shed, but pleaded their pardon as sinners, and obtained it for many of them: **so speaking things quite of another nature** than did that of Abel. This, therefore, is the plain, obvious, and only true sense of the place.

We may now take a little view of the whole context, and the mind of God therein. It is a summary declaration of the two states of the law and the gospel, with their difference, and the incomparable pre-eminence of the one above the other. And three things, among others in general, are represented unto us therein.

First, **The miserable, woeful condition of poor convinced sinners under the law, and obnoxious unto the curse thereof.** For,

1. They are forced in their own consciences to subscribe unto the holiness and equity of the law, — that "the commandment is holy, and just, and good;" so that whatever evil ensues thereon unto them, it is all from themselves, they are alone the cause of it. This gives strength and sharpness, and sometimes fury, to their reflections on themselves.
2. **They are terrified with the evidences of divine severity against sin and sinners;** which, as it was evidenced and proclaimed in the first giving of the law, so it still accompanies the administration of it.
3. They have hereon a **full conviction that they are not able to abide its commands**, nor to avoid its threatenings. They can neither obey nor flee.
4. Hereon in their minds they put in a declinatory, as to its present execution; they would have God speak no more unto them about this matter.
5. Upon the whole, they must perish eternally, they know they must, unless there be **some other way of deliverance than what the law knoweth of.** What is the distress of

this state, they know alone who have been cast into it. Others, who now despise it, will also understand it when the time of relief shall be past.

Secondly, The blessed state of believers is also represented unto us herein, and that not only in their deliverance from the law, but also in the glorious privileges which they obtain by the gospel. But these having been particularly spoken unto, I shall not mention them again.

Thirdly, A representation of the glory, beauty, and order, of the invisible world, of the new creation, of the spiritual catholic church. There was originally an excellent glory, beauty, and order, in the visible world, in the heavens and the earth, with the host of them. There is a pretense unto these things amongst men, in their empire, dominion, power, and enjoyments. But what are the one or other to the beauty and glory of this new world, which is visible only to the eyes of faith! He is blind who sees not the difference between these things. This is the state and order of this heavenly kingdom, — everything that belongs unto it is in its proper place and station: **God at the head, as the framer, erector, and sovereign disposer of it; Jesus, as the only means of all communications between God and the residue of the church;** innumerable myriads of angels ministering unto God and men in this society; the spirits of just men at rest, and in the enjoyment of the reward of their obedience; all the faithful on the earth in a Sion-state of liberty in their worship, and righteousness in their persons. This is the city of the living God, wherein he dwelleth, the heavenly Jerusalem. Unto this society can no creature approach, or be admitted into it, **who is not by faith united unto Christ,** whatever pretences they may have to an interest in the visible church, framed as to its state and order by themselves unto their own advantage: without that qualification, they are strangers and foreigners unto this true church-state, wherein God is delighted and glorified. A view hereof is sufficient to discover the vain pretences unto beauty and glory that are amongst men. What are all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, but mortality, wasting itself in vanity and confusion, ending in endless misery. Herein is true, eternal, never-fading glory, etc.

Purging of conscience

pg 310-318, Vol. 22 Heb. 9:13-14 cont.

http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf

Ver. 13, 14. —For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth unto the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of

Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!"

Secondly, The effect of the blood of Christ, through the offering of himself, is the "purging of our consciences from dead works." This was somewhat spoken unto in general before, especially as unto the nature of this purging; but the words require a more particular explication And, —

The word is in the future tense, "shall purge." The blood of Christ as offered hath a double respect and effect: —

1. Towards God, in making atonement for sin. This was done once, and at once, and was now past. Herein "by one offering he forever perfected them that are sanctified."

2. Towards the consciences of men, in the application of the virtue of it unto them. This is here intended. And this is expressed as future; not as though it had not had this effect already on them that did believe, but upon a double account: —

(1.) To declare the certainty of the event, or the infallible connection of these things, the blood of Christ, and the purging of the conscience; that is, in all that betake themselves thereunto. 'It shall do it;' that is, **effectually and infallibly**. [as opposed to the Arminian scheme, that salvation is only something made available, dependent upon the will of the creature. Under this scheme it is admitted that there is a chance no one will be saved, since what if no one chooses Christ?]

(2.) Respect is had herein unto the generality of the Hebrews, whether already professing the gospel or now invited unto it. And he proposeth this unto them as the advantage they should be made partakers of, by the relinquishment of Mosaical ceremonies, and betaking themselves unto the faith of the gospel. For whereas before, **by the best of legal ordinances**, they attained no more but an **outward sanctification**, as unto the flesh, they should now have their conscience **infallibly purged** from dead works Hence it is said, "your conscience." Some copies read *hJmwn*, "our." But there is no difference in the sense. I shall retain the common reading, as that which refers unto the Hebrews, who had been always exercised unto thoughts of purification and sanctification, by one means or another.

For the explication of the words we must inquire, 1. What is meant by "dead works." 2. What is their relation unto "conscience." 3. How conscience is "purged" of them by the blood of Christ.

First, By "dead works," sins as unto their guilt and defilement are intended, as all acknowledge. And several reasons are given why they are so called; as, —

1. Because they proceed from a **principle of spiritual death**, or are the works of them who have **no vital principle of holiness in them**, Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13.

2. Because they are useless and fruitless, as all dead things are.

3. They deserve death, and tend thereunto. Hence they are like rotten bones in the grave, accompanied with worms and corruption.

And these things are true. Howbeit I judge there is a peculiar reason why the apostle calls them “dead works” in this place. **For there is an allusion herein unto dead bodies, and legal defilement by them. For he hath respect unto purification by the ashes of the heifer; and this respected principally uncleanness by the dead,** as is fully declared in the institution of that ordinance. As men were purified, by the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer mingled with living water, **from defilements contracted by the dead, without which they were separated from God and the church; so unless men are really purged from their moral defilements by the blood of Christ, they must perish forever.** Now this defilement from the dead, as we have showed, arose from hence, that death was the effect of the curse of the law; wherefore the **guilt of sin with respect unto the curse of the law** is here intended in the first place, and consequently its pollution.

This gives us the state of all men who are not interested in the sacrifice of Christ, and the purging virtue thereof. As they are dead in themselves, “dead in trespasses and sins,” so all their works are “dead works.” Other works they have none. They are as a sepulcher filled with bones and corruption. **Everything they do is unclean in itself,** and unclean unto them. “Unto them that are defiled nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled,” Titus 1:15. **Their works come from spiritual death, and tend unto eternal death, and are dead in themselves.** Let them deck and trim their carcasses whilst they please, let them rend their faces with painting, and multiply their ornaments with all excess of bravery; within they are full of dead bones, — of rotten, defiled, polluting works. **That world which appears with so much outward beauty, lustre, and glory, is all polluted and defiled under the eye of the Most Holy.**

Secondly, These dead works are further described by their relation unto our persons, as unto what is peculiarly affected with them, where they have, as it were, their seat and residence: and this is the **conscience.** **He doth not say, “Purge your souls, or your minds, or your persons,” but “your conscience.”** “And this he doth, —

1. In general, in opposition unto the purification by the law. There it was the dead body that did defile; it was the body that was defiled; it was the body that was purified; those ordinances “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh.” But the defilements here intended are **spiritual, internal, relating unto conscience;** and therefore such is the purification also.

2. He mentions the respect of these dead works unto conscience in particular, because **it is conscience which is concerned in peace with God and confidence of approach unto him.** **Sin variously affects all the faculties of the soul,** and there is in it a peculiar

defilement of conscience, Titus 1:15. But that wherein conscience in the first place is concerned, and wherein it is alone concerned, is a sense of guilt. This brings along with it fear and dread; whence the sinner dares not approach into the presence of God. It was conscience which reduced Adam unto the condition of hiding himself from God, **his eyes being opened by a sense of the guilt of sin**. So he that was unclean by the touching of a dead body was excluded from all approach unto God in his worship. Hereunto the apostle alludes in the following words, **“That we may serve the living God;”** for the word *latreumw* properly denotes that service which consists in the observation and performance of solemn worship. **As he who was unclean by a dead body might not approach unto the worship of God until he was purified; so a guilty sinner, whose conscience is affected with a sense of the guilt of sin, dares not to draw nigh unto or appear in the presence of God.** It is by the working of conscience that sin deprives the soul of peace with God, of boldness or confidence before him, of all right to draw nigh unto him. Until this relation of sin unto the conscience be taken away, until there be “no more conscience of sin,” as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 10:2, — that is, **conscience absolutely judging and condemning the person of the sinner in the sight of God,** — there is no right, no liberty of access unto God in his service, nor any acceptance to be obtained with him. Wherefore the purging of conscience from dead works, doth first respect the guilt of sin, and the virtue of the blood of Christ in the removal of it. But, secondly, there is also an inherent defilement of conscience by sin, as of all other faculties of the soul. Hereby it is rendered unmeet for the discharge of its office in any particular duties. With respect hereunto conscience is here used synecdochically for the **whole soul**, and all the faculties of it, yea, our whole spirit, souls, and bodies, which are all to be cleansed and sanctified, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. To purge our conscience, is to purge us in our whole persons.

Thirdly, This being the state of our conscience, this being the respect of dead works and their defilement to it and us, we may consider the relief that is necessary in this case, and what that is which is here proposed: —

Unto a complete relief in this condition, two things are necessary: —

1. A discharge of conscience from a sense of the guilt of sin, or the **condemning power** of it, **whereby it deprives us of peace with God, and of boldness in access unto him [not a carnal boldness which God hates, but with reverential fear]**.
2. The cleansing of the conscience, and consequently our whole persons, from the inherent defilement of sin.

The first of these was typified by the blood of bulls and goats offered on the altar to make atonement. The latter was represented by the sprinkling of the unclean with the ashes of the heifer unto their purification.

Both these the apostle here expressly ascribes unto “**the blood of Christ;**” and we may briefly inquire into three things concerning it: 1. On what ground it doth produce this blessed effect. 2. The way of its operation and efficacy unto this end. 3. The reason whence the apostle affirms that it shall much more do this than the legal ordinances could, sanctifying unto the purifying of the flesh: —

1. The **grounds of its efficacy** unto this purpose are three: —

(1.) That it was blood offered unto God. God had ordained that blood should be offered on the altar to make atonement for sin, or to “purge conscience from dead works” That this could not be really effected by the blood of bulls and goats is evident in the **nature of the things themselves**, and demonstrated in the event. Howbeit this must be done by blood, or all the institutions of legal sacrifices were nothing but means to deceive the minds of men, and ruin their souls. To say that at one time or other real atonement is not to be made for sin by blood, and conscience thereby to be purged and purified, is to make God a liar in all the institutions of the law. But this must be done by the blood of Christ, or not at all.

(2.) **It was the blood of Christ, of “Christ, the Son of the living God,”** Matthew 16:16, whereby “God purchased his church with his own blood,” Acts 20:28. The dignity of his person gave efficacy unto his office and offering. No other person, in the discharge of the same offices that were committed unto him, could have saved the church; and therefore all those by whom his divine person is denied do also evacuate his offices. By what they ascribe unto them, it is impossible the church should be either sanctified or saved. They resolve all into a **mere act of sovereign power in God**; which makes the cross of Christ of none effect.

(3.) **He offered this blood, or himself, by the eternal Spirit.** Though Christ in his divine person was the eternal Son of God, yet was it the human nature only that was offered in sacrifice. Howbeit it was offered by and with the concurrent actings of the divine nature, or eternal Spirit, as we have declared.

These things make the blood of Christ, as offered, meet and fit for the accomplishment of this great effect.

2. The **second inquiry** is concerning the **way whereby the blood of Christ doth thus purge our conscience from dead works.** Two things, as we have seen, are contained therein: —

(1.) The expiation, or taking away the guilt of sin, that conscience should not be deterred thereby from an access unto God.

(2.) The cleansing of our souls from vicious, defiling habits, inclinations, and acts, or all inherent uncleanness.

Wherefore, under two considerations doth the **blood of Christ** produce this double effect: —

(1.) As it was offered; **so it made atonement for sin, by giving satisfaction unto the justice and law of God.** This all the expiatory sacrifices of the law did prefigure, this the prophets foretold, and this the gospel witnesseth unto. To deny it, is to deny any real efficacy in the blood of Christ unto this end, and so expressly to contradict the apostle. **Sin is not purged from the conscience unless the guilt of it be so removed as that we may have peace with God and boldness in access unto him.** This is given us by the blood of Christ as offered.

(2.) **As it is sprinkled,** it worketh the **second** part of this effect. **And this sprinkling of the blood of Christ is the communication of its sanctifying virtue unto our souls.** See Ephesians 5:26, 27; Titus 2:14. So doth “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanse us from all sin,” 1 John 1:7; Zechariah 13:1.

3. The reason why the apostle affirms that this is much more to be expected from the blood of Christ than the purification of the flesh was from legal ordinances hath been before spoken unto.

The Socinians plead on this place, that this effect of the death of Christ doth as unto us depend on our own duty. If they intended no more but that there is duty required on our part unto an actual participation of it, namely, faith, whereby we receive the atonement, we should have no difference with them. But they are otherwise minded. This purging of the conscience from dead works, they would have to consist in two things: 1. Our own relinquishment of sin. 2. The freeing us from the punishment due to sin, **by an act of power in Christ in heaven.**

The first, they say, hath therein respect unto the blood of Christ, in that thereby his doctrine was confirmed, in obedience whereunto we forsake sin, and purge our minds from it. The latter also relates thereunto, in that the sufferings of Christ were antecedent unto his exaltation and power in heaven. Wherefore this effect of the blood of Christ, is what we do ourselves in obedience unto his doctrine, and what he doth thereon by his power; and therefore may well be said to depend on our duty. But all this while there is nothing ascribed unto the blood of Christ as it was offered in sacrifice unto God, or shed in the offering of himself, which alone the apostle speaks unto in this place.

Others choose thus to oppose it: This purging of our consciences from dead works is **not an immediate effect of the death of Christ,** but it is a benefit contained therein; which upon our faith and obedience we are made partakers of. But, —

1. This is not, in my judgment, to interpret the apostle’s words with due reverence. He affirms expressly, that “the blood of Christ doth purge our conscience from dead

works;” that is, it doth make such an atonement for sin, and expiation of it, as that conscience shall be no more pressed with it, nor condemn the sinner for it.

2. The blood of Christ is the immediate cause of every effect assigned unto it, where there is no concurrent nor intermediate cause of the same kind with it in the production of that effect.

3. It is granted that the actual communication of this effect of the death of Christ unto our souls is wrought according unto the method which God in his sovereign wisdom and pleasure hath designed. And herein, (1.) The Lord Christ by his blood made actual and absolute atonement for the sins of all the elect. (2.) This atonement is proposed unto us in the gospel, Romans 3:25. (3.) It is required of us, unto an actual participation of the benefit of it, and peace with God thereby, that we receive this atonement by faith, Romans 5:11; but as wrought with God, it is the immediate effect of the blood of Christ.

Thirdly, The last thing in these words, is the consequent of this purging of our consciences, or the advantage which we receive thereby: “To serve the living God.” The words should be rendered, “that we may serve;” that is, have right and liberty so to do, being no longer excluded from the privilege of it, as persons were under the law whilst they were defiled and unclean. And three things are required unto the opening of these words; that we consider, 1. Why God is here called “the living God;” 2. What it is to “serve him;” 3. What is required that we may do so.

First, God in the Scripture is called “the living God,” —

1. Absolutely, and that, (1.) As he alone hath life in himself and of himself; (2.) As he is the only author and cause of life unto all others.

2. Comparatively, with respect unto idols and false gods, which are dead things, such as have neither life nor operation.

And this title is in the Scripture applied unto God, 1. To beget faith and trust in him, as the author of temporal, spiritual, and eternal life, with all things that depend thereon, 1 Timothy 4:10. 2. To beget a due fear and reverence of him, as him who lives and sees, who hath all life in his power; so “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And this epistle being written principally to warn the Hebrews of the danger of unbelief and apostasy from the gospel, the apostle in several places makes mention of God with whom they had to do under this title, as Hebrews 3:12, 10:31, and in this place.

But there is something peculiar in the mention of it in this place. For, 1. The due consideration of God as “the living God,” will discover how necessary it is that we be purged from dead works, to serve him in a due manner. 2. The nature of gospel-worship and service is intimated to be such as becomes the living God, “our reasonable service,” Romans 12:1.

Secondly, What is it to “serve the living God?” I doubt not but that the whole life of faith in universal obedience is consequently required hereunto. That we may live unto the living God in all ways of holy obedience, not any one act or duty of it can be performed as it ought **without the antecedent purging of our consciences from dead works**. But yet it is sacred and solemn worship that is intended in the first place. They had of old sacred ordinances of worship, or of divine service. From all these, those that were unclean were excluded, and restored unto them upon their purification. **There is a solemn spiritual worship of God under the new testament also, and ordinances for the due observance of it**. This none have a right to approach unto God by, none can do so in a due manner, **unless their conscience be purged by the blood of Christ**. And the whole of our relation unto God depends hereon. For as we therein express or testify the subjection of our souls and consciences unto him, and solemnly engage into universal obedience, (for of these things all acts of outward worship are the solemn pledges,) so therein doth God testify his acceptance of us and **delight** in us by Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, What is required on our part hereunto is included in the manner of the expression of it, — “that we may serve.” And two things are required hereunto: 1. Liberty; 2. Ability. The first includes right and boldness, and is expressed by *parjrJhsia*: our holy worship is *prosagwgh ejn parjrJhsil*, — “an access with freedom and confidence.” This we must treat of on Hebrews 10:19-21. **The other respects all the supplies of the Holy Spirit, in grace and gifts. Both these we receive by the blood of Christ, that we may be meet and able in a due manner to serve the living God**. We may yet take some observations from the words: —

Obs. VI. Faith hath ground of triumph in the certain efficacy of the blood of Christ for the expiation of sin: “How much more!” **The Holy Ghost here and elsewhere teacheth faith to argue itself into a full assurance**. — The reasonings which he proposeth and insisteth on unto this end are admirable, Romans 8:31-39. Many objections will arise against believing, many difficulties do lie in its way. By them are the generality of believers left under doubts, fears, and temptations, all their days. One great relief provided in this case, is a direction to argue “a minore ad majus:” If the blood of bulls and goats did so purify the unclean, how much more will the blood of Christ purge our consciences! How heavenly, how divine is that way of arguing unto this end which our blessed Savior proposeth unto us in the parable of the unjust judge and the widow, Luke 18:1-8; and in that other, of the man and his friend that came to seek bread by night, Hebrews 11:5-9. **Who can read them, but his soul is surprised into some kind of confidence of being heard in his supplication, if in any measure compliant with the rule prescribed?** And the argument here managed by the apostle leaves no room for doubt or objection. Would we be more diligent in the same way of the exercise of faith, by

arguings and expostulations upon Scripture principles, we should be more firm in our assent unto the conclusions which arise from them, and be enabled more to triumph against the assaults of unbelief.

Obs. VII. **Nothing could expiate sin and free conscience from dead works but the blood of Christ alone, and that in the offering himself to God through the eternal Spirit.** — The redemption of the souls of men is precious, and must have ceased forever, had not infinite wisdom found out this way for its accomplishment. The work was too great for any other to undertake, or for any other means to effect. And the glory of God is hid herein only unto them that perish.

Obs. VIII. **It was God**, as the supreme ruler and lawgiver, with whom atonement for sin was to be made: “He offered himself unto God.” **It was he whose law was violated, whose justice was provoked, to whom it belonged to require and receive satisfaction.** — And who was meet to tender it unto him, but “the man that was his fellow,” who gave efficacy unto his oblation by the dignity of his person? **In the contemplation of the glory of God herein the life of faith doth principally consist.**

Obs. IX. The souls and consciences of men are wholly polluted, before they are purged by the blood of Christ. And this pollution is such as excludes them from all right of access unto God in his worship; as it was with them who were legally unclean.

Obs. X. Even the best works of men, antecedently unto the purging of their consciences by the blood of Christ, are but “dead works.” — However men may please themselves in them, perhaps think to merit by them, **yet from death they come, and unto death they tend.**

Obs. XI. **Justification and sanctification** are **inseparably conjoined** in the design of God’s grace by the blood of Christ: — “Purge our consciences, that we may serve the living God.”

Obs. XII. Gospel-worship is such, in its spirituality and holiness, as becometh “the living God;” and our duty it is always to consider that with him we have to do in all that we perform therein.

God’s Chief End in Creation

code24

This excerpt from Jonathan Edwards' treatise on God's Chief End in Creation will give you more background into the purpose of God's image, what it means, and the reasons behind it, so as to gain a better understanding of it, of our being transformed into his likeness and hence, *that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him...* Col. 1:9-10 - my comments in [blue]. Key subjects: holiness, disposition of the heart, exercise of reason & divine revelation, communication of his fullness (the divine fullness, his glory) to the elect, divine benevolence & the image of God - in what it consists and us being a partaker of it and conformed to it. This connects many important dots, the excellency of his glorious perfections, his moral excellence - in which the excellency of his glory chiefly consists, the communication of it, of his fullness, grace for grace, etc. as well as understanding this in light of his self-sufficiency (not needing anything from the creature), his sovereignty, immutability, and infinite happiness in himself, etc., in the exhibition of his infinite goodness or glory. This is huge.

CHAPTER I

WHEREIN IS CONSIDERED, WHAT REASON TEACHES CONCERNING THIS AFFAIR

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<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.i.html>

SECT. I.

Some things observed in general, which reason dictates.

HAVING observed these things, to prevent confusion, I now proceed to consider what may, and what may not, be supposed to be God's ultimate end in the creation of the world.

Indeed this affair seems property to be an affair of divine revelation. In order to be determined what was designed, in the creating of the astonishing fabric of the universe we behold, it becomes us to attend to, and rely on what HE has told us, who was the architect. He best knows his own heart, and what his own ends and designs were, in the wonderful works which he has wrought. Nor is it to be supposed that mankind—who, while destitute of revelation, by the utmost improvements of their own reason, and advances in science and philosophy, could come to no clear and established determination who the author of the world was—would ever have obtained any tolerable settled judgment of the end which the author of it proposed to himself in so vast, complicated, and wonderful a work of his hands. And though it be true, that the revelation which God has given to men, as a light shining in a dark place, has been the occasion of great improvement of their faculties, and has taught men how to use their reason; and though mankind now, through the long-continued assistance they have had by this divine light, have come to great attainments in the habitual exercise of reason; yet I confess it would be relying too much on reason, to determine the affair of God's last end in the creation of the world, without being herein principally guided by divine

revelation, since God has given a revelation containing instructions concerning this very matter. Nevertheless, as objections have chiefly been made, against what I think the Scriptures have truly revealed, from the pretended dictates of reason, I would, in the first place, soberly consider in a few things, what seems rational to be supposed concerning this affair;—and then proceed to consider what light divine revelation gives us in it.

As to the first of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. **Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that he cannot be profited by, or receive any thing from the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being.** The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. [That is, we are not autonomous creatures as Arminians and Pelagians suppose; see Bavinck below.] Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?

Bavinck states:

He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself. Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, he may not love anything else except with a view to himself. He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.

When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts. For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

2. **Whatsoever is good and valuable in itself, is worthy that God should value it with an ultimate respect.** It is therefore worthy to be made the last end of his operation if it be properly capable of being attained. For it may be supposed that some things, valuable and excellent in themselves, are not properly capable of being attained in any divine operation because their existence, in all possible respects, must be conceived of

as prior to any divine operation. Thus God's existence and infinite perfection, though infinitely valuable in themselves, cannot be supposed to be the end of any divine operation; for we cannot conceive of them as, in any respect, consequent on any works of God. But whatever is in itself valuable, absolutely so, and is capable of being sought and attained, is worthy to be made a last end or the divine operation—Therefore,

3. Whatever that be which is in itself most valuable, and was so originally, prior to the creation of the world, and which is attainable by the creation, if there be any thing which was superior in value to all others, that must be worthy to be God's last end in the creation; and also worthy to be his highest end.—In consequence of this it will follow,

4. That if God himself be, in any respect, properly capable of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to himself, as his last and highest end, in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, **being infinitely the greatest and best of beings**. All things else, with regard to worthiness, importance, and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. And therefore, if God has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself. It would be against the perfection of his nature, his wisdom, holiness, and perfect rectitude, whereby he is disposed to do everything that is fit to be done, to suppose otherwise. At least, a great part of the moral rectitude of God, whereby he is disposed to everything that is fit, suitable, and amiable in itself, consists in his having the highest regard to that which is in itself highest and best. **The moral rectitude of God must consist in a due respect to things that are objects of moral respect; that is, to intelligent beings capable of moral actions and relations.** And therefore it must chiefly consist in giving due respect to that Being to whom most is due; for God is infinitely the most worthy of regard. **The worthiness of others is as nothing to his; so that to him belongs all possible respect.** To him belongs the whole of the respect that any intelligent being is capable of. **To him belongs all the heart.** Therefore, if moral rectitude of heart consists in paying the respect of the heart which is due, or which fitness and suitableness requires, fitness requires infinitely the greatest regard to be paid to God; and the denying of supreme regard here would be a conduct infinitely the most unfit. Hence it will follow, that the moral rectitude of the disposition, inclination, or affection of God chiefly consists in a regard to himself, infinitely above his regard to all other beings; or, in other words, **his holiness consists in this.** [code453a](#) [hence, the definition of true virtue, consisting in a love for God as the foundation for all that we do.]

And if it be thus fit that God should have a supreme regard to himself, then it is fit that this supreme regard should appear in those things by which he makes himself known, or by his word and works, i.e. in what he says, and in what he does. If it be an infinitely amiable thing in God, that he should have a supreme regard to himself, **then it is an amiable thing that he should act as having a chief regard to himself;** or act in such a manner, as to show that he has such a regard: **that what is highest in God's heart, may be highest in his actions and conduct.** And if it was God's intention, as there is great reason to think it was, that his works should exhibit an **image of himself their author,** that it might brightly appear by his works what manner of being he is, and afford a **proper representation of his divine excellencies, and especially his moral excellence, consisting in the disposition of his heart;** then it is reasonable to suppose that his works are so wrought as to show this supreme respect to himself, wherein his **moral excellence primarily consists.** [Remember, it was this image of God's moral excellence or his holiness that was lost at the fall of Adam without which we cannot please God. It is this image that bears fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, that redounds to God giving glory to him.]

When we are considering what would be most fit for God chiefly to respect, with regard to the universality of things, it may help us to judge with greater ease and satisfaction, to consider, what we can suppose would be determined by some third being of perfect wisdom and rectitude, that should be perfectly indifferent and disinterested. Or if we make the supposition, that infinitely wise justice and rectitude were a distinct disinterested person, whose office it was to determine how things shall be most properly ordered in the whole kingdom of existence, including king and subjects, God and his creatures; and, upon a view of the whole, to decide what regard should prevail in all proceedings. Now such a judge, in adjusting the proper measures and kinds of regard, would weigh things in an even balance; taking care, that a greater part of the whole should be more respected, than the lesser, in proportion (other things being equal) to the measure of existence. So that the degree of regard should always be in a proportion compounded of the proportion of existence, and proportion of excellence, or according to the degree of greatness and goodness, considered conjunctly. Such an arbiter, in considering the system of created intelligent beings by itself, would determine, that the system in general, consisting of many millions, was of greater importance, and worthy of a greater share of regard, than only

one individual. For, however considerable some of the individuals might be, no one exceeds others so much as to countervail all the system. And if this judge consider not only the system of created beings, **but the system of being in general, comprehending the sum total of universal existence**, both Creator and creature; still every part must be considered according to its importance, or the measure it has of existence and excellence. To determine then, what proportion of regard is to be allotted to the Creator, and all his creatures taken together, both must be as it were put in the balance; the Supreme Being, with all in him that is great and excellent, is to be compared with all that is to be found in the whole creation: and according as the former is found to outweigh, in such proportion is he to have a greater share of regard. And in this case, as the whole system of created beings, in comparison of the Creator, would be found as the light dust of the balance, or even as **nothing and vanity**; so the arbiter must determine accordingly with respect to the degree in which God should be regarded, by **all intelligent existence, in all actions and proceedings, determinations and effects whatever**, whether creating, preserving, using, disposing, changing, or destroying. And as the Creator is infinite, and has all possible existence, perfection, and excellence, so he must have all possible regard. As he is every way the first and supreme, and as his excellency is in all respects the supreme beauty and glory, the original good, and fountain of all good; **so he must have in all respects the supreme regard**. And as he is God over all, to whom all are properly subordinate, and on whom all depend, worthy to reign as supreme Head, **with absolute and universal dominion**; so it is fit that he should be so regarded by all, and in all proceedings and effects through the whole system: The universality of things, in their whole compass and series, should look to him, in such a manner, as that respect to him should reign over all respect to other things, and regard to creatures should, universally, be subordinate and subject.

When I speak of regard to be thus adjusted in the universal system, I mean the regard of the sum total; all intelligent existence, created and uncreated. For it is fit, that the regard of the Creator should be proportioned to the worthiness of objects, as well as the regard of creatures. Thus, we must conclude, that such an arbiter as I have supposed, would determine, that the whole universe, in all its actings, proceedings, revolutions, and entire series of events, should proceed with a view to God, as the supreme and last end; that every wheel, in all its rotations, should move with a constant

invariable regard to him as the ultimate end of all; as perfectly and uniformly, as if the whole system were animated and directed by one common soul. Or, as if such an arbiter as I have before supposed, possessed of perfect wisdom and rectitude, became the common soul of the universe, and actuated and governed it in all its motions.

Thus I have gone upon the supposition of a third disinterested person. The thing supposed is impossible; but the case is, nevertheless, just the same, as to what is most fit and suitable in itself. For it is most certainly proper for God to act, according to the greatest fitness, and he knows what the greatest fitness is, as much as if perfect rectitude were a distinct person to direct him. God himself is possessed of that perfect discernment and rectitude which have been supposed. It belongs to him as supreme arbiter, and to his infinite wisdom and rectitude, to state all rules and measures of proceedings. And seeing these attributes of God are infinite, and most absolutely perfect, they are not the less fit to order and dispose, because they are in him, who is a being concerned, and not a third person that is disinterested. For being interested unfits a person to be an arbiter or judge, no otherwise, than as interest tends to mislead his judgment, or incline him to act contrary to it. But that God should be in danger of either, is contrary to the supposition of his being absolutely perfect. And as there must be some supreme judge of fitness and propriety in the universality of things, or otherwise there could be no order, it therefore belongs to God, whose are all things, who is perfectly fit for this office, and who alone is so, to state all things according to the most perfect fitness and rectitude, as much as if perfect rectitude were a distinct person. We may therefore be sure it is and will be done.

I should think that these things might incline us to suppose, that God has not forgot himself, in the ends which he proposed in the creation of the world; but that he has so stated these ends, (however self-sufficient, immutable, and independent,) as therein plainly to show a supreme regard to himself. Whether this can be, or whether God has done thus, must be considered afterwards, as also what may be objected against this view of things.

5. Whatsoever is good, amiable, and valuable in itself, absolutely and originally, (which facts and events show that God aimed at in the creation of the world,) must be supposed to be regarded or aimed at by God ultimately, or as an ultimate end of

creation. For we must suppose, from the perfection of God's nature, that whatsoever is valuable and amiable in itself, simply and absolutely considered, God values simply for itself; because God's judgment and esteem are according to truth. But if God values a thing simply and absolutely on its own account, then it is the ultimate object of his value. For to suppose that he values it only for some farther end, is in direct contradiction to the present supposition, which is, that he values it absolutely, and for itself. Hence it most clearly follows, that if that which God values for itself, appears, in fact and experience, to be what he seeks by any thing he does, he must regard it as an ultimate end. And, therefore, if he seeks it in creating the world, or any part of the world, it is an ultimate end of the work of creation. Having got thus far, we may now proceed a step farther, and assert,

6. Whatsoever thing is actually the effect of the creation of the world, which is simply and absolutely valuable in itself, that thing is an ultimate end of God's creating the world. We see that it is a good which God aimed at by the creation of the world; because he has actually attained it by that means. **For we may justly infer what God intends, by what he actually does; because he does nothing inadvertently, or without design.** But whatever God intends to attain, from a value for it, in his actions and works, that he seeks in those acts and works. Because, for an agent to intend to attain something he values by the means he uses, is the same thing as to seek it by those means. And this is the same as to make that thing his end in those means. Now, it being, by the supposition, what God values ultimately, it must therefore, by the preceding position, be aimed at by God, as an ultimate end of creating the world.

SECT. II.

Some further observations concerning those things which reason leads us to suppose God aimed at in the creation of the world.

From what was last observed, it seems to be the most proper way of proceeding—as we would see what light reason will give us, respecting the particular end or ends, God had ultimately in view in the creation of the world—to consider, what thing or things are actually the effect or consequence of the creation of the world, that are simply and originally valuable in themselves. And this is what I would directly proceed to, without entering on any tedious metaphysical inquiries, wherein fitness, or amiableness,

consists; referring what I say to the dictates of the reader's mind, on sedate and calm reflection.

1. It seems a thing in itself proper and desirable, that the **glorious attributes of God**, which consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects, should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, &c. **If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any exercise.** The power of God, which is a sufficiency in him to produce great effects, must for ever have been dormant and useless as to any effect. The divine wisdom and prudence would have had no exercise in any wise contrivance, any prudent proceeding, or disposal of things; for there would have been no objects of contrivance or disposal. The same might be observed of God's justice, goodness, and truth. Indeed God might have known as perfectly that he possessed these attributes, if they never had been exerted or expressed in any effect. **But then, if the attributes which consist in a sufficiency for correspondent effects, are in themselves excellent, the exercises of them must likewise be excellent.** If it be an excellent thing, that there should be a sufficiency for a certain kind of action or operation, the excellency of such a sufficiency must consist in its relation to this kind of operation or effect; but that could not be, unless the operation itself were excellent. A sufficiency for any work is no further valuable, than the work itself is valuable ¹⁹⁵.

fn ¹⁹⁵: "The end of wisdom (says Mr. G. Tennent, in his sermon at the opening of the Presbyterian church of Philadelphia) is design; the end of power is action; the end of goodness is doing good. To suppose these perfections not to be exerted would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God's wisdom be, if it had nothing to design or direct? To what purpose his almightiness, if it never brought anything to pass? And of what avail his goodness, if it never did any good?"

As God therefore esteems these attributes themselves valuable, and delights in them; so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper exercise and expression. For the same reason that he esteems his own sufficiency wisely to contrive and dispose effects, he also will esteem the wise contrivance and disposition itself. And for the same reason, as he delights in his own disposition to do justly, and to dispose of things according to truth and just proportion; so he must delight in such a righteous disposal itself.

2. **It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen, by other**

beings besides himself. If it be fit that God's power and wisdom, &c. should be exercised and expressed in some effects, and not lie eternally dormant, then it seems proper that these exercises should appear, and not be totally hidden and unknown. For if they are, it will be just the same, as to the above purpose, as if they were not. God as perfectly knew himself and his perfections, had as perfect an idea of the exercises and effects they were sufficient for, antecedently to any such actual operations of them, and since, if therefore, it be nevertheless a thing in itself valuable, and worthy to be desired, that these glorious perfections be actually exhibited in their correspondent effects, then it seems also, that the knowledge of these perfections and discoveries is valuable in itself absolutely considered; and that it is desirable that this knowledge should exist. It is a thing infinitely good in itself, that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings [communicated to created understandings which Edwards mentions later]. And that there should be in them an increasing knowledge of God to all eternity, is worthy to be regarded by him, to whom it belongs to order what is fittest and best. If existence is more worthy than defect and non-entity, and if any created existence is in itself worthy to be, then knowledge is; and if any knowledge, then the most excellent sort of knowledge, viz. [namely] that of God and his glory. This knowledge is one of the highest, most real, and substantial parts of all created existence, most remote from non-entity and defect.

3. As it is desirable in itself that God's glory should be known, so when known it seems equally reasonable it should be esteemed and delighted in, answerably to its dignity. There is no more reason to esteem it a suitable thing, that there should be an idea in the understanding corresponding unto the glorious object, than that there should be a corresponding affection in the will. If the perfection itself be excellent, the knowledge of it is excellent, and so is the esteem and love of it excellent. And as it is fit that God should love and esteem his own excellence, it is also fit that he should value and esteem the love of his excellency. And if it becomes a being highly to value himself, it is fit that he should love to have himself valued and esteemed. If the idea of God's perfection in the understanding be valuable, then the love of the heart seems to be more especially valuable, as moral beauty especially consists in the disposition and affection of the heart. [You see, it is not about us! It is not about our prayers being answered or our prosperity or our health which so many ministries focus upon. It is about Him; it is about knowing Him, Jer. 9:23-24: *Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for*

I delight in these things,” declares the LORD., which also leads to the first commandment - Love the Lord your God with all your heart....]

4. As there is an infinite fulness of all possible good in God—a fulness of every perfection, of all **excellency and beauty**, and of **infinite happiness**—and as this fulness is capable of **communication**, or **emanation** ad extra [**without himself**]; **so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams.** And as this is in itself excellent, so a disposition to this in the Divine Being, must be looked upon as an excellent disposition. Such an emanation of good is, in some sense, a multiplication of it. So far as the stream may be looked upon as any thing besides the fountain, so far it may be looked on as an increase of good. And if the fulness of good that is in the fountain, is in itself excellent, then the emanation, which is as it were an increase, repetition, or multiplication of it, is excellent. Thus it is fit, since there is an **infinite fountain of light and knowledge**, that this light should shine forth in beams of **communicated knowledge and understanding**; and, as there is an infinite fountain of **holiness, moral excellence, and beauty**, that so it should flow out in **communicated holiness.** And that, as there is an **infinite fulness of joy and happiness**, so these should have an emanation, **and become a fountain flowing out in abundant streams, as beams from the sun.**

Thus it appears reasonable to suppose, that it was God’s last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his **infinite fulness of good** ad extra, or without himself; **and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own fulness,¹⁹⁶ was what moved him to create the world.**

fn ¹⁹⁶ I shall often use the phrase God’s fulness, as signifying and comprehending all the good which is in God natural and moral, either excellence or happiness; partly, because I know of no better phrase to be used in this general meaning; and partly, because I am led hereto by some of the inspired writers, particularly the apostle Paul, who often useth the phrase in this sense.

But here I observe, that there would be some impropriety in saying, that a disposition in God to communicate himself to the creature, moved him to create the world. For an inclination in God to communicate himself to an object, seems to presuppose the existence of the object, at least in idea. But the diffusive disposition that excited God to give creatures existence, was rather a **communicative disposition** in general, or a **disposition in the fulness of the divinity to flow out and diffuse itself.** Thus the

disposition there is in the root and stock of a tree to diffuse sap and life, is doubtless the reason of their communication to its buds, leaves, and fruits, after these exist. But a disposition to communicate of its life and sap to its fruits, is not so properly the cause of its producing those fruits, as its disposition to diffuse its sap and life in general. Therefore, to speak strictly according to truth, we may suppose, that a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fulness, was what excited him to create the world; and so, that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation. [See Bavinck, Vol. 2 pg 308 on Eternal Generation of the Son, God's fecundity, code192a]

Chp I, SECT. III.

pg 100

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.iii.html>

Wherein it is considered how, on the supposition of God's making the forementioned things his last end, he manifests a supreme and ultimate regard to himself in all his works.

In the last section I observed some things which are actually the consequence of the creation of tire world, which seem absolutely valuable in themselves, and so worthy to be made God's last end in his work. I now proceed to inquire, how God's making such things as these his last end, is consistent with his making himself his last end, or his manifesting an ultimate respect to himself in his acts and works. Because it is agreeable to the dictates of reason, that in all his proceedings he should set himself highest; therefore, I would endeavour to show, how his infinite love to and delight in himself, will naturally cause him to value and delight in these things: or rather, how a value to these things is implied in his value of that infinite fulness of good that is in himself. Now, with regard to the first of the particulars mentioned above—God's regard to the exercise of those attributes of his nature, in their proper operations and effects, which consist in a sufficiency for these operations—it is not hard to conceive that God's, and value for his own perfections, should cause him to value these exercises and expressions of' his perfections; inasmuch as their excellency consists in their relation to use, exercise, and operation. God's love to himself, and his own attributes, will therefore make him delight in that which is the use, end, and operation of these attributes. If one highly esteem and delight in the virtues of a friend, as wisdom, justice, &c. that have relation to action, this will make him delight in the exercise and genuine effects of these virtues¹. So if God both esteem and delight in his own perfections and virtues, he cannot but value and delight in the expressions and genuine

effects of them. So that in delighting in the expressions of his perfections, he manifests a delight in himself; and in making these expressions of his own perfections his end, he makes himself his end.

¹[In God, there is no arousal of love because his love is infinitely and immutably fixed upon his own infinite and immutable goodness and the creature's unmerited participation in it. And, therefore, it is especially this fixed disposition that we call love. It is a fixed disposition of the will that takes delight and rest in union with the beloved. *Confessing the Impassible God*, pg 331]

Bavinck states:

He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself. Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, he may not love anything else except with a view to himself. He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.

When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts. For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. He made man perfect. And loving mankind, he offered them eternal life. It was seriously meant. It was no farce. All men disobey God. All came under his wrath and curse. God continued to love himself; he therefore had to punish every insult to his holiness. Pg 132 *Common Grace & the Gospel*

And with respect to the second and third particulars, the matter is no less plain. For he that loves any being, and has a disposition highly to prize and greatly to delight in his virtues and perfections, must from the same disposition be well pleased to have his excellencies known, acknowledged, esteemed, and prized by others. He that loves anything, naturally loves the approbation of that thing, and is opposite to the disapprobation of it. Thus it is when one loves the virtues of a friend. And thus it will necessarily be, if a being loves himself and highly prizes his own excellencies; and thus it is fit it should be, if it be fit he should thus love himself, and prize his own valuable qualities; that is, it is fit that he should take delight in his own excellencies being seen, acknowledged, esteemed, and delighted in. **This is implied in a love to himself and his own perfections; and in making this his end, he makes himself his end.**

And with respect to the fourth and last particular, viz. **God's being disposed to an abundant communication, and glorious emanation, of that infinite fulness of good** which he possesses, as of his own **knowledge, excellency** and **happiness, [His glory]** in the manner he does; if we thoroughly consider the matter, it will appear, that herein also God makes himself his end, in such a sense, as plainly to manifest and testify a supreme and ultimate regard to himself.

Merely in this disposition to cause an emanation of his glory and fulness—which is prior to the existence of any other being, and is to be considered as the inciting cause of giving existence to other beings—God cannot so properly be said to make the creature his end, as himself. For the creature is not as yet considered as existing. This disposition or desire in God, must be prior to the existence of the creature, even in foresight. **For it is a disposition that is the original ground even of the future**, intended, and foreseen existence of the creature. God's benevolence, as it respects the creature, may be taken either in a larger or stricter sense. In a larger sense, it may signify nothing diverse from **that good disposition in his nature to communicate of his own fulness in general**; as his **knowledge**, his **holiness**, and **happiness [i.e., His glory]**; **and to give creatures existence in order to it**. This may be called **benevolence**, or **love**, because it is the same good disposition that is exercised in love. It is the very fountain from whence love originally proceeds, when taken in the most proper sense; and it has the same general tendency and effect in the creature's well-being. But yet this cannot have any particular present or future created existence for its object; because it is prior to any such object, and the very source of the futuration of its existence. Nor is it really diverse from God's love to himself; as will more clearly appear afterwards. [[See Hermon Bavinck on this:](#)

According to Scripture, God is the sum total of all perfections (metaphysical goodness). All virtues are present in him in an absolute sense. Scripture only a few times calls God good in an absolute sense. "No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). He is perfect (τελειος, Matt. 5:48). But whatever virtue Scripture ascribes to God, it always presupposes that that virtue is his in an absolute sense. Knowledge, wisdom, power, love, and righteousness are uniquely his, that is, in a divine manner. His goodness, accordingly, is one with his absolute perfection. In him "idea" and "reality" are one. He is "pure form," "**utterly pure act**." He does not have to become anything, but is what he is eternally. **He has no goal outside himself but is self-sufficient, all-sufficient** (Ps. 50:8ff.; Isa. 40:28ff.; Hab. 2:20). He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. **He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself.** Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, **he may not love anything else except with a view to himself.** **He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.**

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Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

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But God's love may be taken more strictly, for this general disposition to communicate good, as directed to particular objects. Love, in the most strict and proper sense, presupposes the existence of the object beloved, at least in idea and expectation, and represented to the mind as future. God did not love angels in the strictest sense, but in consequence of his intending to create them, and so having an idea of future existing angels. Therefore his love to them was not properly what excited him to intend to create them. Love or benevolence, strictly taken, presupposes an existing object, as much as pity a miserable suffering object.

This propensity in God to diffuse himself, may be considered as a propensity to himself diffused; or to his own glory existing in its emanation. A respect to himself, or an infinite propensity to and delight in his own glory is that which causes him to incline to its being abundantly diffused, and to delight in the emanation of it. Thus, that nature in a tree, by which it puts forth buds, shoots out branches, and brings forth leaves and fruit, is a disposition that terminates in its own complete self. And so the disposition in the sun to shine, or abundantly to diffuse its fulness, warmth, and brightness, is only a tendency to its own most glorious and complete state. So God looks on the communication of himself, and the emanation of his infinite glory, to belong to the fulness and completeness of himself; as though he were not in his most glorious state without it. Thus the church of Christ, (toward whom and in whom are the emanations of his glory, and the communication of his fulness,) is called the fulness of Christ; as though he were not in his complete state without her; like Adam without Eve. And the church is called the glory of Christ, as the woman is the glory of the man, 1 Cor. xi. 7. Isa. xlvii. 13. I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory. 197

¹⁹⁷ Very remarkable is that place, [John xii. 23, 24.](#) And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it abideth alone; but if it die, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Christ had respect herein to the blessed fruits of his death, in the conversion, salvation, and eternal happiness of those that should be redeemed by him. This consequence of his death, he calls his glory; and his obtaining this fruit, he calls his being glorified; as the flourishing, beautiful produce of a corn of wheat sown in the ground its glory. Without this he is alone, as Adam was before Eve was created. But from him, by his death, proceeds a glorious offspring; in which are communicated his fulness and glory: As from Adam, in his deep sleep, proceeds the woman, a beautiful companion to fill his emptiness, and relieve his solitariness; by Christ's death, his fulness is abundantly diffused in many streams; and expressed in the beauty and glory of a great multitude of his spiritual offspring.

—Indeed, after the creatures are intended to be created, God may be conceived of as being moved by **benevolence** to them, in the strictest sense, in his dealings with them. His exercising his goodness, and gratifying his benevolence to them in particular, may be the spring of all God's proceedings through the universe; as being now the determined way of gratifying his general inclination to diffuse himself. Here God acting for himself; or making himself his last end, and his acting for their sake, are not to be set in opposition; they are rather to be considered as coinciding one with the other, and implied one in the other. But yet God is to be considered as first and original in his regard; and the creature is the object of God's regard, consequently, and by implication, as being as it were comprehended in God; as it shall be more particularly observed presently.

But how God's value for, and delight in, the emanations of his fulness in the work of creation, argues his delight in the infinite fulness of good in himself, and the supreme regard he has for himself; and that in making these emanations, he ultimately makes himself his end in creation; will more clearly appear by considering more particularly the nature and circumstances of these communications of God's fulness.

One part of that **divine fulness which is communicated, is the **divine knowledge****. That **communicated knowledge**, which must be supposed to pertain to God's last end in creating the world, **is the creature's knowledge of him**. For this is the end of all other knowledge; and even the **faculty of understanding** would be vain without it. **And this knowledge is most properly a communication of God's infinite knowledge, which**

primarily consists in the knowledge of himself. God, in making this his end, makes himself his end. **This knowledge in the creature, is but a conformity to God.** It is the **image of God's own knowledge of himself.** **It is a participation of the same;** though infinitely less in degree: as particular beams of the sun communicated are the light and glory of the sun itself, in part.

Besides, **God's glory is the object of this knowledge,** or the thing known; **so that God is glorified in it, as hereby his excellency is seen.** [Hence, lest one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God, see his glory.] As therefore God values himself, as he delights in his own knowledge, he must delight in everything of that nature: as he delights in his own light, he must delight in every beam of that light; **and as he highly values his own excellency, he must be well pleased in having it manifested, and so glorified.**

[Virtue and Holiness]

Another emanation of divine fulness, is **the communication of virtue and holiness to the creature:** this is a communication of God's holiness; so that hereby the creature **partakes of God's own moral excellency** [that which he lost at the fall]; which is properly the **beauty of the divine nature.** And as God delights in his own beauty, he must necessarily delight in the creature's holiness; **which is a conformity to and participation of it,** as truly as a brightness of a jewel, held in the sun's beams, is a participation or derivation of the sun's brightness, though immensely less in degree. And then it must be considered wherein this holiness in the creature consists, viz. **in love, which is the comprehension of all true virtue; and primarily in love to God, which is exercised in a high esteem of God, admiration of his perfections, complacency in them, and praise of them.** All which things are nothing else but the heart exalting, magnifying, or glorifying God; which, as I showed before, God necessarily approves of, and is pleased with, as he loves himself, and values the glory of his own nature.

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else.

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Another part of God's fulness which he communicates, is his happiness. This happiness consists in **enjoying and rejoicing in himself;** and so does also the creature's happiness. **It is a participation of what is in God;** and God and his glory are the objective

ground of it. The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God; by which also God is magnified and exalted. Joy, or the exulting of the heart in God's glory, is one thing that belongs to praise. So that God is all in all, with respect to each part of that communication of the divine fulness which is made to the creature. What is communicated is divine, or something of God; and each communication is of that nature, that the creature to whom it is made, is thereby conformed to God, and united to him: and that in proportion as the communication is greater or less. And the communication itself is no other, in the very nature of it, than that wherein the very honour, exaltation, and praise of God consists.

And it is farther to be considered, that what God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself which he intended through all eternity [see [John 17:22, 23a](#): *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected [g] in unity,*]. And if we attend to the nature and circumstances of this eternal emanation of divine good, it will more clearly show how, in making this his end, God testifies a supreme respect to himself, and makes himself his end. There are many reasons to think that what God has in view, in an increasing communication of himself through eternity, is an increasing knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him. And it is to be considered, that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God: for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and the union with him becomes more firm and close: and, at the same time, the creature becomes more and more conformed to God. The image is more and more perfect, and so the good that is in the creature comes for ever nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God. In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity [see [John 17 above](#)], it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son. So that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to an eminent fulfilment of Christ's request, in [John xvii. 21, 23](#). That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. In this view, those elect creatures, which must be looked upon as the end [purpose] of all the rest of the creation, considered with respect to the whole of their eternal duration, and as such made God's end, must be viewed as being, as it were, one with God. They were respected as brought home to

him, united with him, centering most perfectly, as it were swallowed up in him: so that his respect to them finally coincides, and becomes one and the same, with respect to himself. The interest of the creature is, as it were, God's own interest, in proportion to the degree of their relation and union to God. Thus the interest of a man's family is looked upon as the same with his own interest; because of the relation they stand in to him, his propriety in them, and their **strict union with him**. But God's elect creatures, with respect to their eternal duration, are infinitely dearer to God, than a man's family is to him. What has been said shows, **that as all things are from God, as their first cause and fountain**; so all things tend to him, and in their progress come nearer and nearer to him through all eternity: which argues, that he who is their first cause is their last end.

Why God Created the World

code25

God's Infinite Love for Himself

Excerpts from Reformed Dogmatics by Hermon Bavinck

According to Scripture, God is the sum total of all perfections (metaphysical goodness). All virtues are present in him in an absolute sense. Scripture only a few times calls God good in an absolute sense. “No one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). He is perfect (τελειος, Matt. 5:48). But whatever virtue Scripture ascribes to God, it always presupposes that that virtue is his in an absolute sense. Knowledge, wisdom, power, love, and righteousness are uniquely his, that is, in a divine manner. His goodness, accordingly, is one with his absolute perfection. In him “idea” and “reality” are one. He is “pure form,” “**utterly pure act.**” [see code305a] He does not have to become anything, but is what he is eternally. **He has no goal outside himself but is self-sufficient, all-sufficient** (Ps. 50:8ff.; Isa. 40:28ff.; Hab. 2:20). He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. **He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself.** Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, **he may not love anything else except with a view to himself.** **He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.**¹

When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts.¹ For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211

¹[In God, there is no arousal of love because his love is infinitely and immutably fixed upon his own infinite and immutable goodness and the creature’s unmerited participation in it. *Confessing the Impassible God*, pg 331]

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things,
to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

Romans 11:36

Scripture, however, also speaks of God’s will with reference to the created world. Just as God’s knowledge is twofold (necessary and free—see section on knowledge), so also his will must be distinguished as being in part his “propensity toward himself” and in part his “propensity toward his creatures.” But just as God’s “free” knowledge does not make him dependent of his creatures but is known to him from within himself, so also the will of God that is aimed at his creatures must not be dualistically set side by side to the will whose object is his own being. Scripture expressly teaches that God wills “things other than himself” and constantly speaks of his will in relation to creatures, but adds in the same breath that God wills them, not because he needs them, **but only for his own sake or name** (Prov. 16:4) [or for his glory, same thing]. The creation,

accordingly, is not to be conceived as an object existing outside of or over against him, which he lacks and strives to possess, or as something he hopes to gain, which he does not possess. For “from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). **It is not God who finds his destiny in his creatures; rather, they find their destiny in him.** “The things outside of himself that he wills are the very things that in a sense already exist in him in whom all things exist.” **He wills creatures, not for something they are or that is in them, but for his own sake. He remains his own goal. He never focuses on his creatures as such, but through them he focuses on himself.** Proceeding from himself, he returns to himself. It is one single propensity that drives him to himself as the ultimate end and to his creatures as the means to that end. **His love for himself incorporates into itself the love he has for his creatures and through them returns to himself.** Therefore, his willing, also in relation to creatures, is never a striving for some as yet unpossessed good and hence no sign of imperfection and infelicity. On the contrary: his willing is always—also in and through his creatures—absolute self-enjoyment, perfect blessedness, divine rest. In God rest and labor are one; his self-sufficiency coincides with absolute actuality. Vol. 2, pg 232

The meaning of God being blessed:

Second, implied in the words “the blessed God” is that God knows and delights in his absolute perfection. Scholasticism was divided over the question whether blessedness in God and humans consisted primarily in knowledge or in love. Now, apart from knowledge or consciousness there can be no blessedness. In pantheistic philosophy, accordingly, God is in fact needy, unblessed, pure potentiality, which is nothing and has to become everything, and if he is to become blessed, creatures must make him so. But even given this knowledge, it is never conceivable without love. God knows himself absolutely and loves himself absolutely. **Knowledge without love and love without knowledge are both inconceivable**, and neither has priority over the other. Hence, the term “the blessed God” also implies, in the third place, **that God absolutely delights in himself, absolutely rests in himself, and is absolutely self-sufficient.** His life is not a process of becoming, not an evolution, not a process of desiring and striving, as in the pantheistic life, but an uninterrupted rest, eternal peace. **God’s delight in his creatures is part and parcel of his delight in himself.** “God is his own blessedness. Blessedness and God are the same. Through his intellect God is fully aware of his own perfection, **and through his will he supremely loves it, that is, reposes peacefully in it, and from this repose springs joy, the joy with which God delights in himself as the supreme good.”¹ vol. 2, pg 251**

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

Continue to page 435

At a lower level humans labor, because they have to; they are impelled to work by need or force. But the more refined the work becomes, the less room there is for need or coercion. An artist creates his work of art not out of need or coercion but impelled by the free impulses of his genius. “I pour out my heart like a little finch in the poplars; I sing and know no other goal” (Bilderdijk). A devout person serves God, not out of coercion or in hope of reward, but out of free-flowing love. So there is also a delight in God that is infinitely superior to need or force, to poverty or riches, which embodies his artistic ideas in creation and finds intense pleasure in it. Indeed, what in the case of man is merely a weak analogy is present in God in absolute originality. A creature, like the creation of an artist, has no independence apart from, and in opposition to, God. God, therefore, never seeks out a creature as if that creature were able to give him something he lacks or could take from him something he possesses. **He does not seek the creature [as an end in itself], but through the creature he seeks himself. He is and always remains his own end.**¹ His striving is always—also in and through his creatures—total self-enjoyment, perfect bliss. The world, accordingly, did not arise from a need in God, from his poverty and lack of bliss, for what he seeks in a creature is not that creature but himself. Nor is its origination due to an uncontrollable fullness (plērōma) in God, for God uses all creatures for his own glorification and makes them serviceable to the proclamation of his perfections.

¹[In God, there is no arousal of love because his love is infinitely and immutably fixed upon his own infinite and immutable goodness and the creature’s unmerited participation in it. *Confessing the Impassible God*, pg 331]

God’s Omnipresence

His Physical vs. His Ethical Immanence Explained
In the Revelation of His Glory

Code436

Hermon Bavinck, God & Creation, Vol. 2, pg. 169-170

Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that in another sense God is present in his creatures in different ways. There is a difference **between his physical and his ethical immanence**. To suggest an analogy: people, too, may be physically very close to each other, yet miles apart in spirit and outlook (Matt. 24:40–41). The soul is present throughout the body and in all its parts, yet in each of them in a unique way, one way in the head and another in the heart, in the hands differently from in the feet.

“These things the one true God makes and does, but as the same God—that is, as he who is wholly everywhere, included in no space, bound by no chains, mutable in no part of his being, filling heaven and earth with omnipresent power, not with a needy nature. Therefore he governs all things in such a manner as to allow them to perform and exercise their own proper movements. For although they can be nothing without him, they are not what he is.” [Augustine, City of God, VII, 30] God’s immanence is not an unconscious emanation but the conscious presence of his being in all creatures. For that reason that presence of God differs in accordance with the nature of those creatures. Certainly all creatures, even the tiniest and least significant, owe their origin and existence solely to God’s power, to nothing less than the being of God himself. **God dwells in all his creatures, but not in all alike**. [Augustine, Epist. 187...] All things are indeed “in him” (*in eo*) but not necessarily “with him” (*cum eo*). [P. Lombard, Sent. I, dist. 37] God does not dwell on earth as he does in heaven, in animals as in humans, in the inanimate as in the animate creation, in the wicked as in the devout, in the church as he does in Christ. Creatures differ depending on the manner in which God indwells them. The nature of creatures is determined by their relation to God. **Therefore, though all creatures reveal God, they do so in differing degrees and along different lines. “With the pure you show yourself pure; and with the wicked you show yourself perverse” (Ps. 18:26 NRSV). God dwells in all creatures through his being, but in no one other than Christ does the whole fullness of deity dwell bodily [Col. 2:9]. In Christ he dwells uniquely: by personal union. In created beings God dwells according to the measure of their being: in some in terms of nature, in others in terms of justice, in still others in terms of grace or of glory. **There is endless diversity in order that all of them together might reveal the glory of God.****

It is not much to our advantage to deny God’s omnipresence. He makes it felt in our heart and conscience. He is not far from any of us. **What alone separates us from him is sin**. It does not distance us from God locally but spiritually (Isa. 59:2). To abandon God,

to flee from him, as Cain did, is not a matter of local separation but of spiritual incompatibility. “It is not by location but by incongruity that a person is far from God.” [Augustine, Expositions on the Psalms, on Ps. 94] **Conversely, going to God and seeking his face does not consist in making a pilgrimage but in self-abasement and repentance.** Those who seek him, find him—not far away, but in their immediate presence. For in him we live and move and have our being. “To draw near to him is to become like him; to move away from him is to become unlike him.” [Ibid. on Ps 34]

Do not think, then, that God is present in certain places. With you he is such as you have been. What is the sort of person which you have been? He is good, if you have been good; and he seems evil to you if you have been evil; a helper if you have been good, an avenger if you have been bad. There you have a judge in your own heart. When you want to do something bad, you withdraw from the public and hide in your house where no enemy may see you; from those parts of the house that are open and visible you remove yourself to go into your own private room. But even here in your private chamber you fear guilt from some other direction, so you withdraw into your heart and there you meditate. But he is even more deeply inward than your heart. Hence, no matter where you flee, he is there. You would flee from yourself, would you? Will you not follow yourself wherever you flee? But since there is One even more deeply inward than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from an angered God except to a God who is pacified. There is absolutely no place for you to flee to. Do you want to flee from him? Rather flee to him. [Ibid. on Ps 74]

God’s Chief End, (cont.) & Saving vs Temporary Faith

code26

The foundation of the first commandment, the infinite holiness of God and virtue or a love for God's holiness explained. This is more in depth explanation of the glory of God, the end for which He created the world. Understanding more of this mystery will clear up the error of Arminianism and all other synergistic religions that attribute any credit or merit to man in his conversion and add more clarity to the infinite condescension of God to man, his unspeakable mercy and love. To think that man can take any glory or credit to his being converted will be abhorred by anyone who has a thorough knowledge of these spiritual truths. God the first cause of all things...the first and the last... Also this explanation confirms the certainty of God's salvation of the elect to be infallibly accomplished which is in opposition to Arminian doctrine that claims salvation as only a possibility or just something made available; that it is up to man's will in deciding and not God's will in accomplishing and making effectual. Saving faith vs temporary faith is also described in this following section.

Chapter I, SECT. IV.

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.iv.html>

Some objections considered, which may be made against the reasonableness of what has been said of God making himself his last end.

Object. 1. Some may object against what has been said as being inconsistent with God's absolute independence and immutability: particularly, as though God were inclined to a communication of his fulness, and emanations of his own glory, as being his own most glorious and complete state. It may be thought that this does not well consist with God, being self-existent from all eternity; absolutely perfect in himself, in the possession of infinite and independent good. And that, in general, to suppose that God himself his end, in the creation of the world, seems to suppose that he aims at some interest or happiness of his own, not easily reconcilable with his being perfect and infinitely happy in himself. If it could be supposed that God needed anything; or that the goodness of his creatures could extend to him; or that they could be profitable to him; it might be fit, that God should make himself, and his own interest, his highest and last end in creating the world. But seeing that God is above all need, and all capacity of being made better or happier in any respect; to what purpose should God make himself his end, or seek to advance himself in any respect by any of his works? How absurd is it to suppose that God should do such great things, with a view to obtain what he is already most perfectly possessed of, and was so from all eternity; and therefore cannot now possibly, need, nor with any colour of reason be supposed to seek!

Ans. 1. Many have wrong notions of God's happiness, as resulting from his absolute self-sufficiency, independence, and immutability. Though it be true, that God's glory and happiness are in and of himself, are infinite and cannot be added to, and unchangeable, for the whole and every part of which he is perfectly independent of the creature; yet it does not hence follow, nor is it true, that God has no

real and proper delight, pleasure, or happiness, in any of his acts or communications relative to the creature, or effects he produces in them; or in any thing he sees in the creature's qualifications, dispositions, actions and state.

God may have a real and proper pleasure or happiness in seeing the happy state of the creature; yet this may not be different from his delight in himself; being a delight in his own infinite goodness; or the exercise of that glorious propensity of his nature to diffuse and communicate himself and so gratifying this inclination of his own heart. This delight which God has in his creature's happiness, cannot properly be said to be what God receives from the creature. For it is only the effect of his own work in and communications to the creature; in making it, and admitting it to a participation of his fulness. As the sun receives no thing from the jewel that receives its light, and shines only, by a participation of its brightness.

With respect also to the creature's holiness; God may have a proper delight and joy in imparting this to the creature, as gratifying hereby his inclination to communicate of his own excellent fulness. God may delight, with true and great pleasure, in beholding that beauty **which is an image and communication of his own beauty, an expression and manifestation of his own loveliness.** And this is so far from being an instance of his happiness not being in and from himself that it is an evidence that he is happy in himself, or delights and has pleasure in his own beauty. **If he did not take pleasure in the expression of his own beauty, it would rather be an evidence that he does not delight in his own beauty; that he hath not his happiness and enjoyment in his own beauty and perfection.** So that if we suppose God has real pleasure and happiness in the holy love and praise of his saints, as **the image and communication of his own holiness,** it is not properly any pleasure distinct from the pleasure he has in himself; but it is truly an instance of it.

And with **respect to God's being glorified in those perfections wherein his glory consists,** expressed in their corresponding effects,—as his wisdom, in wise designs and well-contrived works, his power, in great effects, his justice, in acts of righteousness, his goodness, in communicating happiness,—this does not argue that his pleasure is not in himself, and his own glory; but the contrary. It is the **necessary consequence of his delighting in the glory of his nature,** that he delights in the emanation and effulgence of it.

Nor do these things argue any dependence in God on the creature for happiness. Though he has real pleasure in the creature's holiness and happiness, yet this is not properly any pleasure which he receives from the creature. For these things are what he gives the creature. They are wholly and entirely from him. **His rejoicing therein is rather a rejoicing in his own acts, and his own glory expressed in those acts, than a joy derived from the creature.** **God's joy is dependent on nothing besides his own act, which he exerts with an absolute and independent power.** And yet, in some sense, it can be truly said, that God has the more delight and pleasure for the holiness and happiness of his creatures. Because God should be less happy if he were less good: or if he had not that perfection of nature which consists in a propensity of nature to diffuse his own fullness. And would be less happy, if it were possible for him to be hindered in the exercise of his goodness, and his other perfections, in their proper effects. **But he has complete happiness, because he has these perfections, and cannot be hindered in exercising and displaying them in their proper effects.** And this surely is not because he is dependent; but **because he is independent on any other that should hinder him.**

From this view, it appears, that nothing which has been said is in the least inconsistent with those expressions in Scripture, that signify, “man cannot be profitable to God,” &c. For these expressions plainly mean no more, than that God is absolutely independent of us; that we have nothing of our own, no stock from whence we can give to God; and that no part of his happiness originates from man.

From what has been said, it appears, that the pleasure God hath in those things which have been mentioned, is rather a pleasure in diffusing and communicating to, than in receiving from, the creature. Surely, it is no argument of indigence in God that he is inclined to communicate of his infinite fullness. It is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain, that it is inclined to overflow. Nothing from the creature alters God’s happiness, as though it were changeable either by increase or diminution. For though these communications of God—these exercises, operations, and expressions of his glorious perfections which God rejoices in—are in time; yet history in them is without beginning or change. They were always equally present in the divine mind. He beheld them with equal clearness, certainty, and fullness, in every respect, as he doth now. They were always equally present; as with him there is no variableness or succession. He ever beheld and enjoyed them perfectly in his own independent and immutable power and will.

Ans. 2. If any are not satisfied with the preceding answer, but still insist on the objection, let them consider whether they can devise any other scheme of God’s last end in creating the world, but what will be equally obnoxious to this objection in its full force, if there be any force in it. For if God had any last end in creating the world, then there was something in some respect future, that he aimed at, and designed to bring to pass by creating the world; something that was agreeable to his inclination or will; let that be his own glory, or the happiness of his creatures, or what it will. Now, if there be something that God seeks as agreeable, or grateful to him, then, in the accomplishment of it, he is gratified. If the last end which he seeks in the creation of the world be truly a thing grateful to him (as certainly it is, if it be truly his end, and truly the object of his will,) then it is what he takes a real delight and pleasure in. But then, according to the argument of the objection how can he have any thing future to desire or seek, who is already perfectly; eternally, and immutably satisfied in himself? What can remain for him to take any delight in, or to be further gratified by, whose eternal and unchangeable delight is in himself, as his own complete object of enjoyment. Thus the objector will be pressed with his own objection, let him embrace what notion he will of God’s end in the creation. And I think he has no way left to answer but that which has been taken above.

It may therefore be proper here to observe, that let what will be God’s last end, that he must have a real and proper pleasure in. Whatever be the proper object of his will, he is gratified in. And the thing is either grateful to him in itself, or for something else for which he wills it; and so is his further end. But whatever is God’s last end that he wills for its own sake; as grateful to him in itself, or in which he has some degree of true and proper pleasure. Otherwise we must deny any such thing as will in God with respect to any thing brought to pass in time, and so must deny his work of creation, or any work of his providence, to be truly voluntary. But we have as much reason to suppose, that God’s works in creating and governing the world, are properly the fruits of his will, as of his understanding. And if there be any such thing at all, as what we mean by acts of will in God, then he is not indifferent whether his will be fulfilled or not. And if he is not indifferent, then he is truly gratified and pleased in the fulfillment of his will. And if he has a real pleasure in attaining his end, then the attainment of it belongs to his happiness; that in which God’s delight or pleasure in any measure consists. To suppose

that God has pleasure in things that are brought to pass in time, only figuratively and metaphorically, is to suppose that he exercises will about these things, and makes them his end only metaphorically.

Ans. 3. The doctrine that makes God's creatures and not himself to be his last end, is a doctrine the furthest from having a favorable aspect on God's absolute self-sufficiency and independence. It far less agrees therewith than the doctrine against which this is objected. For we must conceive of the efficient as depending on his ultimate end. He depends on this end, in his desires, aims, actions and pursuits, so that he fails in all his desires, actions, and pursuits, if he fails of his end. Now if God himself be his last end, then in his dependence on his end, he depends on nothing but himself. If all things be of him, and to him, and he the first and the last, this shows him to be all in all. He is all to himself. He goes not out of himself in what he seeks; but his desires and pursuits as they originate from, so they terminate in, himself; and he is dependent on none but himself in the beginning or end of any of his exercises or operations. But if not himself, but the creature, were his last end, then as he depends on his last end, he would be in some sort dependent on the creature.

OBJECT. II. Some may object, that to suppose God makes himself his highest and last end, is dishonorable to him; as it in effect supposes, that God does everything from a selfish spirit. Selfishness is looked upon as mean and sordid in the creature; unbecoming and even hateful in such a worm of the dust as man. We should look upon a man as of a base and contemptible character, who should in everything he did, be governed by selfish principles; should make his private interest his governing aim in all his conduct in life. How far then should we be from attributing any such thing to the Supreme Being, the blessed and only Potentate! Does it not become us to ascribe to him the most noble and generous dispositions, and qualities the most remote from everything private, narrow, and sordid?

Ans. 1. Such an objection must arise from a very ignorant or inconsiderate notion of the vice of selfishness and the virtue of generosity. If by selfishness be meant, a disposition in any being to regard himself; this is no otherwise vicious or unbecoming, than as one is less than a multitude, and so the public weal is of greater value than his particular interest. Among created beings one single person is inconsiderable in comparison of the generality; and so his interest is of little importance compared with the interest of the whole system. Therefore in them, a disposition to prefer self, as if it were more than all, is exceeding vicious. But it is vicious on no other account, than as it is a disposition that does not agree with the nature of things; and that which is indeed the greatest good. And a disposition in any one to forego his own interest for the sake of others, is no further excellent, no further worthy the name of generosity, than it is treating things according to their true value; prosecuting something most worthy to be prosecuted; an expression of a disposition to prefer something to self-interest, that is indeed preferable in itself. **But if God be indeed so great, and so excellent, that all other beings are as nothing to him, and all other excellency be as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity, in comparison of his, and God be omniscient and infallible, and perfectly knows that he is infinitely the most valuable being, then it is fit that his heart should be agreeable to this—which is indeed the true nature and proportion of things, and agreeable to this infallible and all-comprehending understanding which he has of them, and that perfectly clear light in which he views them—and that he should value himself infinitely more than his creatures.**

Ans. 2. In created beings, a regard to self-interest may properly be set in opposition to the public welfare; because the private interest of one person may be inconsistent with the public good; at least it may be so in the apprehension of that person. That, which this person looks upon as his interest, may interfere with or oppose the general good. Hence his private interest may be regarded and pursued in opposition to the public. But this cannot be with respect to the Supreme Being, the author and head of the whole system; on whom all absolutely depend; who is the fountain of being and good to the whole. It is more absurd to suppose that his interest should be opposite to the interest of the universal system, than that the welfare of the head, heart, and vitals of the natural body, should be opposite to the welfare of the body. **And it is impossible that God, who is omniscient, should apprehend his interest, as being inconsistent with the good and interest of the whole.**

Ans. 3. God seeking himself in the creation of the world in the manner which has been supposed, is so far from; being inconsistent with the good of its creatures, **that it is a kind of regard to himself that inclines him to seek the good of his creature. It is a regard to himself that disposes him to diffuse and communicate himself. It is such a delight in his own internal fullness and glory, that disposes him to an abundant effusion and emanation of that glory. The same disposition, that inclines him to delight in his glory, causes him to delight in the exhibitions, expressions, and communications of it.** If there were any person of such a taste and disposition of mind, that the brightness and light of the sun seemed unlovely to him, he would be willing that the sun's brightness and light should be retained within itself. But they that delight in it, to whom it appears lovely and glorious, will esteem it an amiable and glorious thing to have it diffused and communicated through the world.

Here, by the way, it may be properly considered, whether some writers are not chargeable with inconsistency in this respect. **They speak against the doctrine of GOD making himself his own highest and last end, as though this were an ignoble selfishness—when indeed he only is fit to be made the highest end, by himself and all other beings;** inasmuch as he is infinitely greater and more worthy than all others—yet with regard, to creatures, who are infinitely less worthy of supreme and ultimate regard, they suppose, that they necessarily, at all times, seek their own happiness, and make it their ultimate end in all, even their most virtuous actions; and that this principle, regulated by wisdom and prudence, as leading to that which is their true and highest happiness, is the foundation of all virtue, and everything that is morally good and excellent in them.

OBJECT. III. To what has been supposed, that God makes himself his end—in seeking that his glory and excellent perfections should be known, esteemed, loved, and delighted in by his creatures—it may be objected, that this seems unworthy of God. It is considered as below a truly great man, to be much influenced in his conduct by a desire of popular applause. The notice and admiration of a gazing multitude, would be esteemed but a low end, to be aimed at by a prince or philosopher, in any great and noble enterprise. How much more is it unworthy the great God, to perform his magnificent works, e. g. the creation of the vast universe, out of regard to the notice and admiration of worms of the dust, that the displays of his magnificence may be gazed at, and applauded by those who are infinitely more beneath him, than the meanest rabble are beneath the greatest prince or philosopher.

This objection is specious. It hath a show of argument; but it will appear to be nothing but a show, if we consider,

1. Whether it be not worthy of God, to regard and value what is excellent and valuable in itself; and so to take pleasure in its existence.

It seems not liable to any doubt, that there could be no future existence worthy to be desired or sought by God, and so worthy to be made his end, if no future existence was valuable and worthy to be brought to effect. If, when the world was not, there was any possible future thing fit and valuable in itself, I think the knowledge of God's glory, and the esteem and love of it, must be so. Understanding and will are the highest kind of created existence. And if they be valuable, it must be in their exercise. But the highest and most excellent kind of their exercise is in some actual knowledge, and exercise of will. And, certainly, the most excellent actual knowledge and will that can be in the creature, is the knowledge and the love of God. And the most true excellent knowledge of God, is the knowledge of his glory or moral excellence; and the most excellent exercise of the will consists in esteem and love, and a delight in his glory. — If any created existence is in itself worthy to be, or any thing that ever was future is worthy of existence, such a communication of divine, such an emanation and expression of the divine glory, is worthy of existence. But if nothing that ever was future was worthy to exist, then no future thing was, worthy to be aimed at by God in creating the world. And if nothing was worthy to be aimed at in creation, then nothing was worthy to be God's end in creation.

If God's own excellency and glory is worthy to be highly valued and delighted in by him, then the value and esteem hereof by others, is worthy to be regarded by him: for this is a necessary consequence. To make this plain let it be considered, how it is with regard to the excellent qualities of another. If we highly value the virtues and excellencies of a friend, in proportion, we shall approve of others' esteem of them; and shall disapprove the contempt of them. If these virtues are truly valuable, they are worthy that we should thus approve others' esteem, and disapprove their contempt of them. And the case is the same with respect to any being's own qualities or attributes. If he highly esteems them, and greatly delights in them, he will naturally and necessarily love to see esteem of them in others, and dislike their disesteem. And if the attributes are worthy to be highly esteemed by the being who hath them, so is the esteem of them in others worthy to be proportionately approved and regarded. I desire it may be considered, whether it be unfit that God should be displeased with contempt of himself? If not, but on the contrary it be fit and suitable that he should be displeased with this, there is the same reason that he should be pleased with the proper love, esteem, and honor of himself.

The matter may be also cleared, by considering what it would become us to approve of and value with respect to any public society we belong to, e. g. our nation or country. It becomes us to love our country; and therefore it becomes us to value the just honor of our country. But the same that it becomes us to value and desire for a friend, and the same that it becomes us to desire and seek for the community, the same does it become God to value and seek for himself; that is, on supposition, that it becomes God to love himself as it does men to love a friend or the public; which I think has been before proved.

Here are two things that ought particularly to be adverted to. (1.) That in God, the love of himself and the love of the public are not to be distinguished, as in man: because God's being, as it were,

comprehends all. His existence, being infinite, must be equivalent to universal existence. And for the same reason that public affection in the creature is fit and beautiful, God's regard to himself must be so likewise.—(2.) In God, the love of what is fit and decent, cannot be a distinct thing from the love of himself; because the love of God is that wherein all holiness primarily and chiefly consists, and God's own holiness must primarily consist in the love of himself. **And if God's holiness consists in love to himself**, then it will imply an approbation of the esteem and love of him in others. [code469a] **For a being that loves himself, necessarily loves love to himself. If holiness in God consist chiefly in love to himself, holiness in the creature must chiefly consist in love to him. And if God loves holiness in himself, he must love it in the creature.**

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

Virtue, by such of the late philosophers as seem to be in chief repute, is placed in public affection, or general benevolence. And if the essence of virtue lies primarily in this, then the love of virtue itself is virtuous no otherwise, than as it is implied in, or arises from, this public affection, or extensive benevolence of mind. Because if a man truly loves the public, he necessarily loves love to the public.

Now therefore, for the same reason, if universal benevolence in the highest sense, be the same thing with benevolence to the Divine Being, who is in effect universal Being, it will follow, that love to virtue itself is no otherwise virtuous, than as it is implied in, or **arises from, love to the Divine Being**. **Consequently, God's own love to virtue is implied in love to himself: and is virtuous no otherwise than as it arises from love to himself**. So that God's virtuous disposition, **appearing in love to holiness in the creature**, is to be **resolved into the same thing with love to himself**. **And consequently, whereinsoever he makes virtue his end, he makes himself his end**. In fine, God being as it were an all-comprehending Being, all his moral perfections—his holiness, justice, grace, and benevolence—are some way or other to be resolved into a supreme and infinite regard to himself; and if so, it will be easy to suppose that it becomes him to make himself his supreme and last end in his works.

I would here observe, by the way, that if any insist that it becomes God to love and take delight in the virtue of his creatures for its own sake, in such a manner as not to love it from regard to himself; this will contradict a former objection against God taking pleasure in communications of himself; viz. that inasmuch as God is perfectly independent and self-sufficient, therefore all his happiness and pleasure consists in the enjoyment of himself. So that if the same persons make both objections, they must be inconsistent with themselves.

2. I would observe, that it is not unworthy of God to take pleasure in that which is in itself fit and amiable, even in those that are infinitely below him. If there be infinite grace and condescension in it, yet these are not unworthy of God, but infinitely to his honor and glory.

They who insist, that God's own glory was not an ultimate end of his creation of the world; but the happiness of his creatures: do it under a color of exalting God's benevolence to his creatures. But if his love to them be so great, and he so highly values them as to look upon them worthy to be his end in all his great works, as they suppose; they are not consistent with themselves, in supposing that God has so little value for their love and esteem. For as the nature of love, especially great love, causes him that loves to value the esteem of the person beloved, so, that God should take pleasure in the creature's just love and esteem, will follow from God's love both to himself and to his creatures. If he esteem and love himself, he must approve of esteem and love to himself, and disapprove the contrary. And if he loves and values the creature, he must value and take delight in their mutual love and esteem.

3. As to what is alleged, that it is unworthy of great men to be governed in their conduct and achievements by a regard to the applause of the populace; I would observe, What makes their applause worthy of so little regard, is their ignorance, giddiness, and injustice. The applause of the multitude very frequently is not founded on any just view of things, but on humor, mistake, folly, and unreasonable affections. Such applause deserves to be disregarded.—But it is not beneath a man of great dignity and wisdom, to value the wise and just esteem of others, however inferior to him. The contrary, instead of being an expression of greatness of mind, would show a haughty and mean spirit. It is such an esteem in his creatures, that God regards; for, such an esteem only is fit and amiable in itself.

OBJECT. IV. To suppose that God makes himself his ultimate end in the creation of the world, derogates from the freeness of his goodness, in his beneficence to his creatures; and from their obligations to gratitude for the good communicated. For if God, in communicating his fullness, makes himself, and not the creatures, his end; then what good he does, he does for himself, and not for them; for his sake, and not theirs.

Answer. God and the creature, in the emanation of the divine fullness, are not properly set in opposition; or made the opposite parts of a disjunction. Nor ought God's glory and the creature's good, to be viewed as if they were properly and entirely distinct, in the objection. This supposeth, that God having respect to his glory, and the communication of good to his creatures, are things altogether different: that God communicating his fullness for himself, and his doing it for them, are things standing in a proper disjunction and opposition. Whereas, if we were capable of more perfect views of God and divine things, which are so much above us, it probably would appear very clear, that the matter is quite otherwise: and that these things, instead of appearing entirely distinct, are implied one in the other. God is seeking his glory, seeks the good of his creatures; because the emanation of his glory (which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own eternal glory) implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creatures. **And in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself; because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing, but the emanation and expression of God's glory: God, in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself: and in seeking himself, i.e. himself diffused and expressed, (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fullness,) he seeks their glory and happiness.**

This will better appear, if we consider the degree and manner in which he aimed at the creature's excellency and happiness in creating the world; viz. during the whole of its designed eternal duration; in greater and greater nearness, and strictness of union with himself, in his own glory and happiness, in constant progression, through all eternity. As the creature's good was viewed, when God made the world, with respect to its whole duration, and eternally progressive union to, and communion with him: so the creature must be viewed as in infinitely strict union of himself. In this view it appears, that God's respect to the creature, in the whole, unites with his respect to himself. Both regards are like two lines, which at the beginning appear separate, but finally meet in one, both being directed to the same center. And as to the good of the creature itself, in its whole duration and infinite progression, it must be viewed as infinite; and as coming nearer and nearer to the same thing in its infinite fullness. The nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it comes to identity with God. And if any good, as viewed by God, is beheld as infinite, it cannot be viewed as a distinct thing from God's own infinite glory.

The apostle's discourse of the great love of Christ to men, ([Eph. 5:25](#), &c.) leads us thus to think of the love of Christ to his church; as considering with his love to himself, by virtue of the strict union of the church with him. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it—that he might present it to himself a glorious church. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself—even as the Lord loved the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Now I apprehend, that there is nothing in God's disposition to communicate of his own fullness to the creatures, that at all derogates from the excellence of it, or the creature's obligation.

God's disposition to cause his own infinite fullness to flow forth, is not the less properly called his goodness, because the good he communicates is what he delights in, as he delights in his own glory. The creature has no less benefit by it; neither has such disposition less of a direct tendency to the creature's benefit. **Nor is this disposition in God, to diffuse his own good, the less excellent, because it is implied in his love to himself. For his love to himself does not imply it any otherwise, but is as it implies a love to whatever is worthy and excellent.** The emanation of God's glory is in itself worthy and excellent, and so God delights in it; and this delight is implied in his love to his own fullness; because that is the fountain, the sum and comprehension of everything that is excellent. Nor does God's inclination to communicate good from regard to himself, or delight in his own glory, at all diminish the freeness in his beneficence. This will appear, if he consider particularly, in what ways doing good to others from **self-love**, may be consistent with the freeness of beneficence. And I conceive there are only these two ways,

1. When any does good to another from confined self-love, which is opposite to a general benevolence. This kind of self-love is properly called selfishness. In some sense, the most benevolent, generous person in the world, seeks his own happiness in doing good to others; because he places his happiness in their good. His mind is so enlarged as to take them, as it were, into himself. Thus when they are happy, he feels it; he partakes with them, and is happy in their happiness. This is as far from being inconsistent with the freeness of benevolence, that, on the contrary, free benevolence and kindness consists in it. The most free beneficence that can be in men, is doing good, not from a confined selfishness, but from a disposition of free benevolence, or love to begin in general.

But now, with respect to Divine Being, there is no such thing as confined selfishness in him, or a love to himself opposite to general benevolence. It is impossible, because he comprehends all entity, and all excellence, in his own essence. The eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, being in general; and comprehends universal existence. God, in his benevolence to his creatures, cannot have his heart enlarged, in such a manner as to take in beings who are originally out of himself, distinct and independent. This cannot be in an infinite Being, who exists alone from eternity. But he, from his goodness, as it were enlarges himself in an more excellent and divine manner. This is by communicating and diffusing himself; and so, instead of finding, he makes objects of his benevolence—not by taking what he finds distinct from himself, and so partaking of their good, and being happy in them, but—by flowing forth, and expressing himself in them, and making them partake of him, and then rejoicing in himself expressed in them, and communicated in them.

2. Another thing, in doing good to others from self-love that derogates from the freeness of the goodness, is acting from dependence of them for the good we need or desire. So that, in our beneficence, we are not self-moved, but as it were constrained by something without ourselves. But it has been particularly shown already, that God making himself his end, argues no dependence; but is consistent with absolute independence and self-sufficiency.

And I would here observe, that there is something in that disposition to communicate goodness, that shows God to be independent and self-moved in it, in a manner that is peculiar, and above the beneficence of the creatures. Creatures, even the most excellent, are not independent and self-moved in their goodness; but in all its exercises they are excited by some object they find; something appearing good, or in some respect worthy of regard, presents itself, and moves their kindness. But God, being all, and alone is absolutely self-moved. The exercises of his communicative disposition are absolutely from within himself; all that is good and worthy in the object, and its very being, proceeding from the overflowing of this fullness.

These things show that the supposition of God making himself his ultimate end, does not all diminish the creature's obligation to gratitude for communications of good received. For if it lessen its obligation, it must be on one of the following accounts. Either, that the creature has not so much benefit by it; or, that the disposition it flows from, is not proper goodness, not having so direct a tendency to the creature's benefit, or, that the disposition is not so virtuous and excellent in its kind; or, that the beneficence is not so free. But it has been observed, that none of these things take place, with regard to that disposition, which has been supposed to have excited God to create the world.

I confess there is a degree of indistinctness and obscurity in the close consideration of such subjects, and a great imperfection in the expressions we use concerning them; arising unavoidably from the infinite sublimity of the subject, and the incomprehensibility of those things that are divine. Hence revelation is the surest guide in these matters: and what that teaches shall in the next place be considered. Nevertheless, the endeavors used to discover what the voice of reason is, so far as it can go, may serve to prepare the way, by obviating cavils insisted on by many; and to satisfy us, that what the word of God says of the matter is not unreasonable.

Chapter II

SECT. I, pg 106

The Scriptures represent God as making himself his own last end in the creation of the world.

It is manifest, that the Scriptures speak, on all occasions, as though God made himself his end in all his works; and as though the same being, who is the first cause of all things, were the supreme and last end of all things. Thus in [Isa. xliv. 6.](#) "Thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, I also am the last, and besides me there is no God." [Chap. xlviii. 12.](#) "I am the first and I am the last." [Rev. i. 8.](#) "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and which is to come, the Almighty." [ver. 11.](#) "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." [Ver. 17.](#) "I am the first and the last." [Chap. xxi. 6.](#) "And he said unto me, it is done; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." [Chap. xxii. 13.](#) "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

When God is so often spoken of as the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning, it is implied, that as he is the first, efficient cause and fountain, from whence all things originate; so, he is the last, final cause for which they are made; the final term to which they all tend in their ultimate issue. This seems to be the most natural import of these expressions; and is confirmed by other parallel passages; as [Rom. xi. 36.](#) "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." [Col. i. 16.](#) "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him." [Heb. ii. 10.](#) "For it became him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things." And in [Prov. xvi. 4.](#) it is said expressly, "The Lord hath made all things for himself."

And the manner is observable, in which God is said to be the last, to whom, and for whom, are all things. It is evidently spoken of as a meet and suitable thing, a branch of his glory; a meet prerogative of the great, infinite, and eternal Being; a thing becoming the dignity of him who is infinitely above all other beings; from whom all things are, and by whom they consist; and in comparison with whom all other things are as nothing.

[skipping section II to pg 107](#)

Ch II, SECT. III.

Particular texts of Scripture, that show that God's glory is an ultimate end of the creation.

1. What God says in his word, naturally leads us to suppose, that the way in which he makes himself his end in his work or works, which he does for his own sake, is in making his glory his end.

Thus [Isa. xlviii. 11.](#) "For my own sake, even for in own sake, will I do it. For how should my name be polluted; and I will not give my glory to another." Which is as much as to say, I will obtain my end; I will not forego my glory; another shall not take this prize from me. It is pretty evident here, that God's name and his glory, which seem to intend the same thing, as shall be observed more particularly afterwards, are spoken of as his last end in the great work mentioned; not as an inferior, subordinate

end, **subservient to the interest of others**. The words are emphatical. The emphasis and repetition constrain us to understand, that what God does is ultimately for his own sake: "For my own sake, even for my own sake will I do it." [[That is he will save those for whom he died and none shall be lost - John 6 & John 10](#)]

So the words of the apostle, in [Rom. xi. 36](#), naturally lead us to suppose, that the way in which all things are to God, is in being for his glory. [Rom. xi. 36](#). "**For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**" In the preceding context, the apostle observes the marvellous disposals of divine wisdom, for causing all things to be to him, in their final issue and result, as they are from him at first, and governed by him. His discourse shows how God contrived this and brought it to pass, by setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world; leaving the Jews and calling the Gentiles; including what he would hereafter do in bringing in the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles; with the circumstances of these wonderful works, so as greatly to show his justice and his goodness, **to magnify his grace, and manifest the sovereignty and freeness of it, and the absolute dependence of all on him**. And then, in the four last verses, he breaks out into a most pathetic exclamation, expressing his great admiration of the depth of divine wisdom, in the steps he takes for attaining his end, and causing all things to be to him: and finally, expresses a joyful consent to God's excellent design in all to glorify himself; in saying, "**to him be glory for ever;**" **as much as to say, as all things are so wonderfully ordered for his glory, so let him have the glory of all**, for evermore.

2. The glory of God is spoken of in Holy Scripture as the last end for which those parts of the **moral world** that are good were made.

Thus in [Isa. xliii. 6,7](#). "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar; and my daughters from the ends of the earth, even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea I have made him." Again, [Isa. lx. 21](#). "Thy people also shall be all righteous. They shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting hand, that I may be glorified." Also [Isa. xli. 3](#). chap. xli. 3. "That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

In these places we see, that the glory of God is spoken of as the end of God's saints, the end or which he makes them, i. e. either gives them being, or gives them a being as saints, or both. It is said, that God has made and formed them to be his sons and daughters, for his own glory: That they are trees of his planting, the work of his hands, as trees of righteousness, that he might be glorified. And if we consider the words, especially as taken with the context in each of the places, it will appear quite natural to suppose, that God's glory is here spoken of only as an end inferior and subordinate to the happiness of God's people. On the contrary, they will appear rather as promises of making God's people happy, that God therein might be glorified.

So is that in [Isa. xliii](#). as we shall see plainly, if we take the whole that is said from the beginning of the [chapter, ver. 1-7](#). It is wholly a promise of a future, great, and wonderful work of God's power and grace, delivering his people from all misery, and making them exceeding happy; and then the end of all, or the sum of God's design in all, is declared to be God's own glory. "**I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.—I will be with thee.—When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.—Thou art precious and honourable**

in my sight. I will give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not, I am with thee.—I will bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory.”

So [Isa. lx. 21.](#) The whole chapter is made up of nothing but promises of future, exceeding happiness to God’s church; but, for brevity’s sake, let us take only the two preceding [verses 19, 20.](#) “The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of the mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous; **they shall inherit** the land for ever, **the branch of my planting, the work of my hands**; and then the end of all is added, “that I might be glorified.” All the preceding promises are plainly mentioned as so many parts, or constituents, of the great, and exceeding happiness of God’s people; and God’s glory is mentioned, as the sum of his design in this happiness.

In like manner is the promise in [chap. lxi. 3.](#) “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called tress of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” The work of God promised to be affected, is plainly an accomplishment of the joy, gladness, and happiness of God’s people, instead of their mourning and sorrow; and the end in which God’s design in this work is obtained and summed up, **is his glory. This proves, by the seventh position, that God’s glory is the end of the creation.**

The same thing may be argued from [Jer. xiii. 11.](#) “For as a girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord: that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.” That is, God sought to make them to be his own holy people; or, as the apostle expresses it, his peculiar people, zealous of good works; that so they might be a glory to him; as girdles were used in those days for ornament and beauty, and as badges of dignity and honour. [199](#)

Now when God speaks of himself, as seeking a peculiar and holy people for himself, to be for his glory and honour, as a man that seeks an ornament and badge of honour for his glory, it is not natural to understand it merely of a subordinate end, as though God had no respect to himself in it; but only the good of others. If so, the comparison would not be natural; for men are commonly wont to seek their own glory and honour in adorning themselves, and dignifying themselves with badges of honour.

The same doctrine seems to be taught, [Eph. i. 5.](#) “Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.”—And the same may be argued from [Isa. xlv. 23.](#) “For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, he hath glorified himself in Israel.” And [chap. xlix. 3.](#) “**Thou art my servant Jacob, in whom I will glorified.**” [John xvii. 10.](#) “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.” [2 Thess. i. 10.](#) “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints.” [Ver. 11, 12.](#) “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. The Scripture speaks of God's glory, as his ultimate end of the goodness of the moral part of the creation; and that end, in relation to which chiefly the value of their virtue consists.

As in [Phil. i. 10, 11](#). "That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ: being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Here the apostle shows how the fruits of righteousness in them are valuable, and how they answer their end, viz. in being "by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God." [John xv. 8](#). "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Signifying, that by this means it is that the great end of religion is to be answered. And in [1 Pet. iv. 11](#). the apostle directs the Christians to regulate all their religious performances with reference to that one end. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

And, from time to time, embracing and practicing true religion, and repenting of sin, and turning to holiness, is expressed by glorifying God, as though that were the sum and end of the whole matter. [Rev. xi. 13](#). "And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." So [Rev. xiv. 6, 7](#). "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth; saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him." As though this were the sum and end of that virtue and religion, which was the grand design of preaching the gospel, every where through the world. [Rev. xvi. 9](#). "And repented not to give him glory." Which is as much as to say, they did not forsake their sins and turn to true religion, that God might receive that which is the great end he seeks, in the religion he requires of men. (See to the same purpose, [Psal. xxii. 21-23](#). [Isa. lxvi. 19](#) and [Isa. xxiv. 15](#) and [Isa. xxv. 3](#). [Jer. xiii. 15, 16](#). [Dan. v. 23](#). [Rom. xv. 5, 6](#).)

And as the exercise of true religion and virtue in Christians is summarily expressed by their glorifying God, so, when the good influence of this on others is spoken of, it is expressed in the same manner. [Matt. v. 16](#). "Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." [1 Pet. ii. 12](#). "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

That the ultimate end of moral goodness, or righteousness, is answered in God's glory being attained, is supposed in the objection which the apostle makes, or supposes some will make, [Rom. iii. 7](#). "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I judged as a sinner?" i. e., seeing the great end of righteousness is answered by my sin, in God being glorified, why is my sin condemned and punished? and why is not my vice equivalent to virtue?

And the glory of God is spoken of as that wherein consists the value and end of particular graces. **As of faith.** [Rom. iv. 20](#). "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief: but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." [Giving glory to God is a fruit of saving faith.] [Phil ii. 11](#). "That every tongue should confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Of repentance, [Josh. vi. 19](#). "Give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." Of charity. [2 Cor. viii. 19](#). "With this grace, which is administered by us, to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind." Thanksgiving and praise. [Luke vii. 18](#). "There are not found that returned to give glory to

God, save this stranger.” [Psal. l. 23.](#) “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God.” Concerning which last place may be observed, that God seems to say this to such as supposed, in their religious performances, that the end of all religion was to glorify God. They supposed they did this in the best manner, in offering a multitude of sacrifices; but God corrects their mistake, and informs them, that this grand end of religion is not attained this way, but in offering the more spiritual sacrifices of praise and a holy conversation.

In fine, the words of the apostle in [1 Cor. vi. 20.](#) are worthy of particular notice. “**Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.**” Here, not only is glorifying God spoken of, as what summarily comprehends the end of religion, and of Christ redeeming us; but the apostle urges, that inasmuch as we are not our own, we ought not to act as if we were our own, but as God’s; **and should not use the members of our bodies, or faculties of our souls, for ourselves, but for God, as making him our end.** And he expresses the way in which we are to make God our end, viz. [in making his glory our end.](#) “Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.” [200](#) Here it cannot be pretended, that though Christians are indeed required to make God’s glory their end; yet it is but as a subordinate end, as subservient to their own happiness; for then, in acting chiefly and ultimately for their own selves, they would use themselves more as their own than as God’s which is directly contrary to the design of the apostle’s exhortation, and the argument he is upon; which is, that we should give ourselves as it were away from ourselves to God, and use ourselves as his, and not our own, acting for his sake, and not our own sakes. [\[Hence, the insidious design of the Prosperity gospel\]](#) Thus it is evident, by position the ninth, that the glory of God is the last end for which he created the world.

Now having understood the nature and excellency of God's communication of his glory to his elect creatures as explained by Jonathan Edwards, and the infallible efficacy of the will of God in saving his people for His own glory see this explanation of a common influences of the Spirit of God with which many are subject of and experience, yet are not converted by it because, as explained by John Owen, they have not saving faith (to mix with the word and thus profit by it), that is they were never the object of God's saving communication of himself to them - i.e., he never knew them! So in this respect, many partake of the Spirit's operations yet are not saved thereby and hence being deceived, they

eventually fall away, committing the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. Why are people attracted to gospel truths yet are not converted?

The Nature and Causes of Apostasy by John Owen

code27

Hebrews 6:4-6 explained

This is closely related to code75

(How can an enemy to Christ be attracted To the Gospel)

3. Hereof they are said to “**taste**,” as they were before of the heavenly gift. The apostle, as it were, studiously keeps himself to this expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ as tendered in the word of the gospel, [John vi. 35, 49–51, 54–56](#). It is as if he had said, “I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual food of their souls, and turned it into spiritual nourishment, but of such as have so far tasted of it as that they ought to have desired it as sincere milk, to have grown thereby; but they had received such an experiment of its divine truth and power as that it had various effects upon them.” And for the farther explication of these words, and therein of the description of the state of these supposed apostates, we may consider the ensuing observations, which declare the sense of the words, or what is contained in them.

I. There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God able to attract and affect the minds of men who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it.

II. There is an especial goodness in the word of the promise concerning Jesus Christ and the declaration of its accomplishment.

For the first of these propositions, we may inquire what is that goodness, and wherein it doth consist; as also, how apostatizing backsliders may taste thereof: which things tend to the explanation of the words, and what is designed by the apostle in them.

1. (1.) This goodness and excellency of the word of God consists in its spiritual, heavenly truth. **All truth is beautiful and desirable**; the perfection of the minds of men consists in the reception of it and conformity unto it; and although “true” be one consideration of anything, and “good” another, yet they are inseparable properties of the same subject. Whatever is true is also good. So are these things put together by the apostle, [Phil. iv. 8](#). **And as truth is good in itself, so is it in its effects on the minds of**

men; it gives them peace, satisfaction, and contentment. Darkness, errors, falsehood, are evils in themselves, and fill the minds of men with vanity, uncertainty, superstition, dread, and bondage. It is truth that makes the soul free in any kind, [John viii. 32](#). Now, the word of God is the only pure, unmixed, and solid truth: “Thy word is truth,” [John xvii. 17](#). In most other things, as to the best evidence attainable, men wander in the wilderness of endless conjectures. The truth of the word of God alone is stable, firm, infallible; **which gives rest to the soul.** As God is a “God of truth,” [Deut. xxxii. 4](#), the “only true God,” [John xvii. 3](#), so he is, and he alone is, essentially truth, and the eternal spring of it unto all other things. Hereof is this word the only revelation. How excellent, how desirable, therefore, must it needs be! and what a goodness, to be preferred above all other things, must it be accompanied withal! As it is infallible truth, giving light to the eyes and rest to the soul, it is the “good word of God.”

(2.) It is so in the matter of it, or the doctrines contained in it; as, — [1.] The nature and properties of God are declared therein. God being the only good, the only fountain and cause of all goodness, and in whose enjoyment all rest and blessedness do consist, the revelation made of him, his nature and attributes, reflects a singular goodness on it, [John xvii. 3](#). If it be incomparably better to know God than to enjoy the whole world and all that is in it, that word must be good whereby he is revealed unto us, [Jer. ix. 23, 24](#). [2.] It is exceeding good in the revelation of the glorious mystery of the Trinity, therein alone contained. **This is that mystery the knowledge whereof is the only means to have a right apprehension of all other sacred truths; and without it no one of them can be understood in a due manner, nor improved unto a due end.** This is that alone which will give true rest and peace to the soul. And there is not the meanest true believer in the world, who is exercised in faith and obedience, but he hath the power of this truth in and upon his mind, though he be not able to speak much of the notions of it. All grace and truth are built hereon and do centre herein, and thence derive their first power and efficacy. **Not one saving apprehension can we have of any gracious dispensation of God towards us, but it is resolved into the existence of God in a trinity of persons, and the economy of their operations with respect unto us.** It is a “good word” whereby that mystery is revealed. [3.] It is so in the revelation of the whole mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all the effects of infinite wisdom and grace thereunto belonging. What a satisfactory goodness this is accompanied withal, it is the most part of my business in this world to inquire and declare. [4.] It is so in the declaration of all the benefits of the mediation of Christ, in mercy, grace, pardon, justification, adoption, etc.

(3.) It is a good word with respect unto its blessed effects, [Ps. xix. 7–9](#); [Acts xx. 32](#); [James i. 21](#). On this account the psalmist assures us that it is “more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold;” that it is “sweeter than honey and the honey-comb,” [Ps. xix. 10](#); — that is, there is an incomparable excellency, worth, and goodness in it. And he who discerns not this goodness in the word of God is a stranger unto all real benefits by it.

2. How apostatizing persons do taste of this good word of God may be briefly declared. And their so doing hath respect unto the threefold property of it mentioned, whence it is denominated “good:” (1.) Its truth; (2.) Its subject-matter; (3.) Its effects.

And, — (1.) **They taste of it as it is true, in the convictions they have thereof, in their knowledge in it, and acknowledgment of it.** This gives (as it is the nature of truth to do) some serenity and satisfaction unto their minds, **although they are not renewed thereby.** They that heard John preach the truth rejoiced in his light, as finding much present satisfaction therein, [John v. 35](#). So was it with them, [Luke iv. 22](#), [John vii. 46](#), and others innumerable, on the like occasion of hearing our Saviour preach.

When men, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust, and them that live in error, they taste a goodness, a sweetness, in the rest and satisfaction of their minds, so as that they suppose they are really possessed of the things themselves.

(2.) With respect unto the matter of the word, **they have a taste of its goodness in the hopes which they have of their future enjoyment.** Mercy, pardon, life, immortality, and glory, are all proposed in the “good word of God.” These, upon those grounds which will fail them at last, they have such hopes to be made partakers of as that they find a great **relish and satisfaction therein, especially when they have relief thereby against their fears and convictions;** for, even in those ways wherein they deceive themselves, they have a taste of what sweetness and goodness there is in these things unto them by whom they are enjoyed. And as those who really believe and receive Jesus Christ in the word do thereon “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” [1 Pet. i. 8](#), **so those who only taste of the word do feel in themselves a great complacency in their affections,** [Matt. xiii. 20](#); for, — [for affections wear off when the music stops...or if one is near a fire, he is warmed, but when the fire dies down, so does he because he does not have that new living principle within himself, that fountain that wells up to eternal life but he is only operating on natural principles such as self-love and natural gratitude.]

The difference between tasting and eating/digesting the word

(3.) **By this taste they may receive many effects of the word on their minds and consciences, and therein have an experience of the word as unto its power and efficacy.** It belongs unto the exposition of the place to speak a little hereunto, and withal to declare what the difference is between them, and wherein this tasting comes short of that receiving and feeding on the word by faith which is peculiar unto true believers.

[1.] This taste is accompanied, or it may be so, with delight, pleasure, and satisfaction in hearing of the word preached, especially when it is dispensed by any skillful “master of assemblies,” who finds out “acceptable words,” or “words of delight,” which yet are “upright, and words of truth,” [Eccles. xii. 10, 11](#). So was it with those naughty Jews, [Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32](#); and with **Herod, who heard John the Baptist gladly**, finding delight and pleasure in his preaching. So was it with multitudes that pressed after Christ to hear the word; and so it is to be feared that it is with many in the days wherein we live.

[2.] **It gives not only delight in hearing, but some joy in the things heard.** Such are the hearers of the word whom our Saviour compared to the **stony ground**; they receive it with joy, [Matt. xiii. 20](#), as it was with the hearers of John the Baptist, [John v. 35](#). The word, as tasted only, hath this effect on their minds, that they shall rejoice in the things they hear, not with abiding solid joy, not with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but with that which is temporary and evanid. **And this ariseth from that satisfaction which they find in hearing of the good things declared; such are mercy, pardon, grace, immortality, and glory. They cannot but rejoice sometimes at the hearing of them, though they will not be at the pains of getting an interest in them.**

[3.] The word only thus tasted of will work on men a change and reformation of their lives, with a readiness unto the performance of many duties, [2 Pet. ii. 18, 20](#); [Mark vi. 20](#). And, —

[4.] What inward effects it may have on the minds and affections of men, in illumination, conviction, and humiliation, I have declared at large elsewhere. But, all this while, **this is but tasting**. The word of the gospel, and Christ preached therein, is the food of our souls; and true faith cloth not only taste it, but feed upon it, whereby it is turned into grace and spiritual nourishment in the heart. And hereunto is required:—

1st. The laying it up, or treasuring of it in the heart, [Luke i. 66, ii. 19](#). No nourishment will ever be obtained by food unless it be received into the stomach, where the means and causes of digestion and communication are placed; and if the word be not placed in the heart by [fixed meditation and delight](#), it may please for a season, but it will not nourish the soul.

2dly. Food must be mixed and incorporated with the digestive humour, power, and faculty of the stomach, whereinsoever it consists, or it will not nourish. Give a man never so much food, if there be any noxious humour in the stomach hindering it from mixing itself with the means of digestion, it will no way profit him; and until the word in the heart be mixed and incorporated with faith, it will not advantage us, [Heb. iv. 2](#); — and there is nothing hereof where there is a taste of the word only.

3dly. When men feed on the word, it is turned into a [principle of life, spiritual strength, and growth within; which a taste of it only will not give.](#) As food, when it is digested, turns into flesh and blood and spirits, so doth the word, and Christ therein, unto the souls of men spiritually. Hence Christ becometh “[our life](#),” and “[liveth in us](#),” as the efficient cause of our spiritual life, [Gal. ii. 20](#); [Col. iii. 3](#); and we grow and increase by the word, [1 Pet. ii. 2](#). A mere taste, though it may yield present refreshment, yet it communicates no abiding strength. Hence multitudes relish the word when it is preached, but never attain life, or strength, or growth by it.

4thly. The word received as it ought will transform the soul into the likeness of God, who sends us this food to change our whole spiritual constitution, and to render our nature like unto his, in “[righteousness and true holiness](#),” [Eph. iv. 21–24](#); [2 Cor. iii. 18](#). This a taste only will effect nothing towards; nor, to conclude, will it give us such a love of the truth as to abide by it in trials or temptations, [2 Thess. ii. 10](#), nor bring forth the fruits of it in universal obedience. And I might farther discourse from hence of the deplorable condition of them who [satisfy their minds in mere notions of the truth](#), and empty speculations about it, without once attaining so much as a taste of the goodness of the word, — of which sort there are many in the world; as also show the necessity, which all the hearers of the word lie under, [of a severe scrutiny into their own souls, whether they do not rest in a taste only of the word, but come short of feeding upon it and of Christ therein](#), but that I must not divert from the text. What hath been here spoken was needful to declare the true state and condition of the persons spoken of. The second proposition mentioned hath been treated of elsewhere.

Lastly, It is added, Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, — “And the powers of the world to come.” Δυνάμεις are עֲגִבּוֹרוֹת or נִפְלְאוֹת, the mighty, great, miraculous operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were, and how they were wrought among these Hebrews, hath been declared in our Exposition on [chap. ii. 4](#), whither I refer the reader; and they are known from the Acts of the Apostles, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that chapter, that by “The world to come,” our apostle in this epistle intends the days of the Messiah, that being the usual name of it in the church at that time, as the new world which God had promised to create. Wherefore these “powers of the world to come” were the gifts whereby those signs, wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, according as it was foretold by the prophets that they should be so. See [Joel ii. 28–32](#) compared with [Acts ii. 16–21](#). These the persons spoken of are supposed to have tasted, for the particle τε refers to γευσσάμενους foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had had an experience of the glorious and powerful working of the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the gospel. Yea, I do judge that themselves in their own persons were partakers of these powers, in the gift of tongues and other miraculous operations; which was the highest aggravation possible of their apostasy, and that which peculiarly rendered their recovery, impossible: for there is not in the Scripture an impossibility put upon the recovery of any but such as peculiarly sin against the Holy Ghost; — and although that guilt may be otherwise contracted, yet in none so signally as by this of rejecting that truth which was confirmed by his mighty operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an ascription of his divine power unto the devil. Yet would I not fix on extraordinary gifts exclusively unto those that are ordinary. They also are of the “powers of the world to come;” so is everything that belongs to the erection or preservation of the new world, or the kingdom of Christ. To the first setting up of a kingdom great and mighty power is required; but being set up, the ordinary dispensation of power will preserve it. So it is in this matter. The extraordinary miraculous gifts of the Spirit were used in the erection of Christ’s kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary gifts; which therefore also belong unto the “powers of the world to come.”

From the consideration of this description in all the parts of it, we may understand what sort of persons it is that is here intended by the apostle. And it appears, yea, is evident, —

1. That the persons here intended are not true and sincere believers in the strict and proper sense of that name, at least they are not described here as such; so that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are so, as to the possibility of their total and final apostasy: for, — (1.) There is in their full and large description no mention of faith or believing, either expressly or in terms equivalent. And in no other place of the Scripture are such intended, but [except where] they are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. And, (2.) There is not any thing ascribed to these persons that is peculiar to them as such, or discriminative of them, as taken either from their especial relation unto God in Christ, or any such property of their own as is not communicable unto others. For instance, they are not said to be called according to God's purpose; to be born again, not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God; not to be justified, or sanctified, or united unto Christ, or to be the sons of God by adoption; nor have they any other characteristic note of true believers ascribed to them. (3.) They are in [the following verses](#) compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briers. But this is not so with true believers; for faith itself is an herb peculiar to the enclosed garden of Christ, and meet for him by whom we are dressed. (4.) The apostle, discoursing afterwards of true believers, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as might be apostates, which is supposed of the persons here intended, as was in part before declared; for, — [1.] He ascribes unto them in general "better things," and such as "accompany salvation," as we observed, [verse 9](#). [2.] He ascribes unto them a "work and labour of love," as it is true faith alone which worketh by love, [verse 10](#), whereof he speaks not one word concerning these. [3.] He asserts their preservation, on the account, — 1st. Of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, [verse 10](#); 2dly. Of the immutability of his counsel concerning them, [verses 17, 18](#). In all these and sundry other instances doth he put a difference between these apostates and true believers. And whereas the apostle intends to declare the aggravation of their sin in falling away by the principal privileges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word, in name or thing, of those which he expressly assigns to be the chief privileges of true believers, [Rom. viii. 27–30](#).

2. Our next inquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend; and, — (1.) They were such as not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity, upon the evidence of the truth of its doctrine, and the miraculous operations wherewith its dispensation was accompanied. (2.) He intends not the common sort of them, but such as had obtained especial privileges among them; for they had received **extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost**, as speaking with tongues or working of miracles. And, (3.) They had found in themselves and others convincing evidences that the kingdom of God and

the Messiah, which they called "The world to come," was come unto them, and had satisfaction in the glories of it. (4.) Such persons as these, as they have a work of light on their minds, so, according unto the efficacy of their convictions, they may have such a change wrought upon their affections and in their conversation, as that they may be of great esteem among professors; and such these here intended might be. Now, it must needs be some horrible frame of spirit, some malicious enmity against the truth and holiness of Christ and the gospel, some violent love of sin and the world, that could turn off such persons as these from the faith, and blot out all that light and conviction of truth which they had received. **But the least grace is a better security for heaven than the greatest or privileges whatever.**

The experience of the power of God in our conversion in true converts is seen in this excerpt by Owen, in keeping people from apostasy and the lack thereof being a cause of apostasy. It is quite possible that the scripture that says that we are *kept by the power of God for salvation* in 1Pet1:5, has direct relevance on this subject. It is the image of God re-ensamped upon the soul, that new principle of life or faith, grace and truth that constitute that new living principle or Christ in me, that keeps us, without which we cannot please him, Heb11:6. Otherwise we are operating on the principle of self-love, self-preservation, under the power of our lusts, held captive by Satan to do his will with

unsubdued enmity in our hearts towards God. See 1Cor2:14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." See John Gill's commentary on what the new man is , reference to Eph. 4:24 at the end of this excerpt.

Enmity a Cause of Apostasy

code28

by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/apostasy.i.viii.html>

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3. Setting aside some few instances of violence and blood, consuming the persons of men, as among the Waldenses, Bohemians, and some others, which yet were never totally prevalent, and revolutions of government attended with the like cruelties, as in the days of Queen Mary in England, which was but of short continuance, no instance can be given of the defection of any church or nation from the truth **but where there was a neglect of implanting the power of the gospel on the minds and hearts of men** by those unto whom that charge was committed. This sinful neglect was that which constantly opened the door unto all apostasy. **Wherefore on this foundation the weight of all useful profession of the gospel among us doth depend.** And if God will be pleased to put it into the hearts of all them who are concerned in this duty to labour effectually therein, and to give unto the people an example of the power of the gospel in their own holy, humble, useful, fruitful conversation among them, and shall be pleased, moreover, to furnish them with the gifts of his Spirit, enabling them unto a successful discharge of their duty, evangelical truth would certainly receive an unconquerable establishment among us. And it may be it is not suited unto the exigence of this season that any of those who are called and enabled unto this work, being willing to engage their utmost in defence of the truth, especially in this way of its preservation, by leavening the minds of men with a sense of its power and worth, should be prohibited the discharge of their duty. But the purposes of God in all things must stand, and himself be humbly adored, where "his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

Again: **this innate and yet uncured enmity unto things spiritual and heavenly becomes a cause and means of apostasy from the truths of the gospel, by filling the hearts of men with a love of sin, and their lives with the fruits of it in wicked works;** for men are "alienated and enemies in their mind," in or "by wicked works," [Col. i. 21](#). The enmity which is in their minds doth operate and manifest itself in wicked works. And the

alienation wherewith this enmity is accompanied is from the “**life of God:**” [Eph. iv. 18](#), “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God;” that is, from **the spiritual, heavenly life of faith and holiness*** [[in which the image of God consists - see John Gill's commentary on this at the end of this excerpt.](#)], **which God requireth** [[Heb 11:6](#)], and whereof he is the end and object. Of this life the truths of the gospel are the spring, rule, and measure. See [Acts v. 20](#); [Eph. iv. 20, 21](#). Wherefore, when men are “alienated from the life of God,” and through the love of sin are given up unto wicked works, they cannot but **secretly dislike and hate that truth**, that **spiritual and heavenly doctrine, which is the spring and rule of holiness**, and whereby both the love of sin and the fruits of it in wicked works are everlastingly condemned. **Let, then, men pretend and profess what they please** [.g., [the sinner's prayer, coming to God without being called...](#)], whilst this enmity is in them as a **predominant principle of sin** and wicked conversation, they are practically and really enemies unto the gospel itself; and where any persons are so, it is easily imaginable how ready and prone they will be to part with it on any occasion, for none will retain that in their minds which is useless to them, and troublesome unto their principal inclinations, any longer than they have a fair **opportunity to part with it**. That this frame of mind is an effectual obstruction unto the due receiving of the gospel, our Saviour expressly declares: [John iii. 19, 20](#), “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.” Wherever the power of sin abideth, and men are engaged in the practice of it, so as that their deeds are evil, they will not receive the light of the gospel, — that is, in its own nature and power, and for its proper ends; **and when they are, by conviction or any other means, wrought unto a compliance with it**, yet they do it but partially and hypocritically, nor can do it otherwise whilst their deeds are evil. So was it with them who are said to believe in Christ. Being some way **convinced of the truth of his doctrine**, yet would they not confess him, because “**they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,**” [John xii. 42, 43](#). By the **reigning power** of this one sin of ambitious hypocrisy most of them were kept off from any assent unto the gospel; as our Saviour speaks unto them, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” [John v. 44](#). With the residue, who were not able wholly to withstand their convictions, it prevailed so far as that they should not receive it sincerely, but partially and hypocritically. Now, that which so effectually keeps the most from giving any admission at all unto the gospel, and which suffers none to receive it in a due manner, will easily prevail, **where it abides in its power**, unto a total relinquishment of it when occasion is offered.

Seeing, therefore, that all those whose deeds are evil, who through the enmity that is in their minds do give up themselves in their lives unto wicked works, are really alienated from the truths of the gospel, they are and will be ready at all times for a defection from them; for being kept under the dominion of sin, they have no real benefit by them, but rather find them inconsistent with their principal interests and chiefest joys.

Hence is that description which the apostle giveth of those who were evangelically converted unto God: [Rom. vi. 17, 18](#), “God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” There is no obedience from the heart unto the gospel, no possibility of being cast into the mould of the doctrine delivered in it, unless we be made free from the service of sin.

We may therefore, without scruple, fix [on] this as one principal means and cause of that apostasy from the truth of the gospel which hath been in the world, and which is yet deplorably progressive. Men who love sin and live in sin, whose works are wicked and whose deeds are evil, are all of them in their hearts alienated from the spiritual, holy doctrines of the gospel, and will undoubtedly, on any occasion of temptation or trial, fall away from the profession of them.

What reason have we to hope or judge that drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, covetous, proud, ambitious, boasters, vain, sensualists, and the like enemies of the cross of Christ, should adhere unto the truth with any constancy if a trial should befall them? “Look diligently,” saith the apostle, “lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright,” [Heb. xii. 15, 16](#). Esau’s birthright was his right unto and interest in the promise of the gospel made unto Abraham. This he, being a **profane person**, when he was pressed with a little hunger, parted withal for one morsel of meat. And if others, saith the apostle, are like him, profane persons, fornicators, or such as live in any course of sin, if a temptation befall them, and their lusts call to be satisfied, they will for morsels of bread, for the smallest earthly advantages, part with their interest in and profession of the gospel. So he tells us of them who, having put away a good conscience, did make shipwreck of the faith, [1 Tim. i. 19](#). After men have debauched their consciences by living in sin, they may for a while speed on their voyage with full sails of profession; but if a storm come, if a trial befall

them, if they meet with a rock or shelf in their way, they quickly make shipwreck of the faith, and lose that, whatever else they labour to preserve.

What should secure such persons unto any constancy in profession for whilst they are in this condition, it is altogether indifferent unto them, as to their present or future advantage, what religion they are of, or whether they are of any at all or no. It is true, one way of religion may more harden them in sin, lay more prejudices against and hinderances of their conversion, than another; but no religion can do them good or yield them the least eternal advantage whilst they abide in that condition. It will be all one at the last day what religion wicked and ungodly sinners have been of, unless it be that the profession of the truth will prove an aggravation of their sins, [Rom. ii. 11, 12](#).

Besides, when a temptation unto the relinquishment of the truth doth befall them, it hath nothing but a few traditional prejudices to contend withal. When they are taken off from them, and begin to search themselves for reasons why they should adhere unto the truth which they have outwardly professed, they **quickly find in their own hearts a predominant dislike and hatred of that light and truth which they are solicited to part withal**; for every man, as our Saviour testifieth, hateth the light whose deeds are evil.

This is that which abroad in the world hath lost the gospel so many princes, nobles, and great men, who for a while made profession of it. This is that which is of such dismal abode at this day as to the danger of a general apostasy. **All sorts of persons do give up themselves unto the service of sin**. The complaint of the prophet is not unsuited to our occasion, [Isa. i. 4–6](#). Many are openly flagitious, beyond precedent or example among the heathen. Worldliness, pride, ambition, vanity, in all its variety of occasions and objects, with sensuality of life, have even overrun the world. And that which is of the most dreadful consideration is, that the sins of many are accompanied with the highest aggravation of all provocations, — namely, that they proclaim them like Sodom, **and hide them not, but glory in their shame** [[Phil. 3:19](#), "...their God is their stomach and their glory is in their shame."]. In all these things men do really, though not in words, proclaim that they are **weary of the gospel** [[Mal. 1:13, 3:14](#)], and are ready to leave it; some for any pretence of religion, some for none at all.

And this is the most dangerous posture that any place, church, or people can be found in; for whereas men are of themselves ready and prone unto a spiritual revolt and defection, when this ariseth from and is promoted **by the love of sin and a life** therein, God is ready also **penally** to give them up unto such delusions as shall turn them off from the gospel. So the apostle expresseth it, [2 Thess. ii. 10–12](#), "They received not the

love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Where men, under the profession of the truth, will continue profligate in sin, **and take pleasure in unrighteousness**, God will not always suffer the gospel to be prostituted to give them countenance in their wickedness, but will judicially give them up unto such delusions as shall flood them away into an open apostasy from it.

This was the great cause of that general and almost catholic apostasy that was in the world before the reformation. The body of the Christian people, by such means and on such occasions as shall be afterward declared, were grown worldly, sensual, wicked, and obstinate in sin. The complaints hereof are left on record in the writings of many in those days. And in vain it was for any to attempt to reduce them unto a conformity unto the gospel, especially considering that the most of their guides were no less infected than themselves. Chrysostom was almost the only person, at least he was the most eminent, who set himself in his ministry to stem, if it were possible, the rising tide of impiety and wickedness among all sorts of persons; but instead of any success, his holy endeavours ended in his own banishment and death. All degrees and orders of men undertook the patronage of public sinning against him, and to his ruin. Wherefore there remained but two ways of dealing with the generality of men in such a condition. The one was, according to the advice of the apostle, to “turn away” or withdraw from them, [2 Tim. iii. 5](#), so leaving them out of the communion of the church; the other was, to accommodate religion unto their temper and lusts, whereby a face and appearance of Christianity might be preserved among them. And the generality of their leaders preferring their interest before their duty, the latter way was chosen and gradually promoted.

Hence were **opinions and practices invented**, advanced, and taken into religion, **that might accommodate men in their lusts, or give countenance and pretended relief unto them who were resolved to live in their sins**. Such were auricular confession, penances, absolutions, commutations of all sorts, missatical sacrifices for the living and the dead, the church’s treasury of merit and power of pardon, suffrage and help of saints, especially purgatory, with all its appendages. [\[This is also effected by pastors who water down the gospel so as not to offend people. They try to accommodate their preaching to the carnal apprehensions and lusts of men.\]](#)

Hereby was the apostasy completed; for men being grown carnal and wicked, there appeared no way to keep them up unto the profession of the gospel but by corrupting the whole doctrine and worship of it, **that their lusts might be some way accommodated**. To this end external things were substituted in the room of things internal, having the same names given unto them; ecclesiastical things in the room of things spiritual; outward offices, orders, and multiplied sacraments, with their efficacy by virtue of the work wrought, in the place of **real conversion unto God, purity of heart, with strict universal holiness**; disciplines and corporeal severities in the room of evangelical repentance and mortification; — nor could the lusts of men have possibly a higher accommodation, whilst any pretence of religion was necessary to be preserved. So formerly did wickedness of life lead the way unto apostasy from the truth. And the whole of the papal apostasy may be reduced unto these two heads:— First, An accommodation of the doctrine and worship of the gospel unto the carnal minds and lusts of men, with the state of their consciences that ensued thereon; and, secondly, The accommodation of the lusts, ignorance, and superstition of men unto the interests and worldly advantage of the pope and his clergy.

And herein lieth the danger of this age. **The great design of the generality of men is, to live in sin with as little trouble at present, and as little fear of what is future, as they can arrive unto**. And there are but two ways whereby such a posture of mind may be attempted.

The one is by obliterating all notions of good and evil, all sense of future rewards and punishments, or of God's government in the world. This some in all ages have endeavoured: for "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" and thereon are "they corrupt, and do abominable works," [Ps. xiv. 1](#). And no age could ever give more instances of this affected atheism than that wherein we live. Neither do any deceive themselves into it, but merely with this design, to live in sin without control from themselves; which is the last restraint they can acquit themselves of. And some of them do please themselves with the attainment of them in the psalmist: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts," [Ps. x. 4](#). But God hath inlaid the minds of men, antecedently unto all actings of their wills and affections, with such a tenacious and unanswerable witness to the contrary, that it is very difficult for any to bring themselves unto any tolerable satisfaction this way: for "that which may be known of God is manifest in themselves," whether they will or no, [Rom. i. 19](#); neither can they free themselves from prevailing apprehensions that it is "the judgment of God, that they who commit sin are worthy of death," [verse 32](#).

Wherefore we have not many instances of men who pretend a senselessness of these things out of principle, or that find no disquietment on the account of sin. And by the most of them this is but pretended. Their outward boasting is but a sorry plaster for their inward fears and vexations; nor will the pretended security of such impious persons endure the shock of the least of those surprisals, calamities, and dangers, which human nature is obnoxious unto in this life, much less of death itself. The end therefore mentioned, be it never so earnestly desired, is not this way to be attained.

Another way, therefore, must be found out unto the same end, and this must be by a religion. Nothing but religion can convert men from sin, and nothing but religion can secure them therein. To this purpose is that of our apostle: “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” [2 Tim. iii. 1–5](#). Had they the power of religion in them [the image of God renewed in them], they could not give themselves up unto the pursuit of such brutish lusts; and had they not some form or other of it, they could not be secure in their practice: for, —

Sin and conscience are stubborn in their conflict whilst immediately opposed, conscience pleading that there should be no sin, and sin contending that there may be no conscience; but, as nature is corrupted, they will both comply with an accommodation. Wherefore a device to satisfy sin and to deceive conscience will not fail of a ready entertainment; and this is the design in part or in whole of every false way in religion that men apostatize unto from the purity and simplicity of the gospel. See [2 Peter ii. 18, 19](#). One way or other is proposed to take men off from the necessity of regeneration and the renovation of their nature into the image of God, in the first place; for this is that lion in the way which deters all sorts of sluggards from attempting anything seriously in religion. And whereas our Lord Jesus Christ hath placed the necessity of it at the first entrance into the kingdom of God, there is no false way of religion but its first design is to destroy its nature or take away its necessity. Hence some would have it to be only baptism, with the grace it confers by the work wrought; some substitute a moral reformation of life in the room of it, which, as they suppose, is sufficiently severe; and the light within makes all thoughts of it useless; — for if this point be not well secured, all ensuing attempts to accommodate men with a religion will be in vain; it will still be returning on them, that “except they be born again, they cannot

enter into the kingdom of God." Internal sanctification of the whole person, the mortification of all the motions of sin that are in the flesh, with that universal obedience which is required unto the life of God, must also be provided for or against, and yet conscience be satisfied therewithal. Wherefore, if you can obtain that persons who live in sin, and are resolved so to do, not troubling themselves about these things, shall suppose that they may be secured eternally in such a way of religion as you propose unto them, — that what is wanting in themselves shall be done for them by absolutions and masses, and **various supplies out of the church's treasury**, with the great reserve of purgatory when things come to the worst, — there is no great fear (especially if some other circumstances fall in also to promote the design) but that you will find them very ductile and pliable unto your desires. Add hereunto, that the ways whereby any may be interested in these efficacious means of eternal salvation, — **namely, by confession, penances, and alms, — are possible, yea, easy to persons who never intend to leave their sins.** [the sinner's prayer is modern day version of the *confession* or even a form of penance, trying to appease God by what you do in hopes of being accepted.] Of this sort are the most of those visibly who every day fall off to the Roman church. And it were to be desired that the wickedness of men did not give grounds of fearing additions to their number; for if there be no assurance of the constancy of men in the profession of the truth, unless their souls and lives are transformed into the image of it (as there is not), certainly those ways wherein men are furiously engaged in the pursuit of their lusts must needs be perilous, and may, without the especial help of divine grace, bring forth a fatal defection.

[Ephesians 4:24](#) John Gill commentary

And that ye put on the new man

Which some understand of Jesus Christ, who is truly and really man, and a new or extraordinary one, ([Jeremiah 31:22](#)) and as such is God's creature, and is made after his **image**, and which appears in his **perfect holiness and righteousness**; and the phrase of putting on well agrees with him, ([Romans 13:14](#)) ([Galatians 3:27](#)) whose righteousness is a garment, pure and spotless, and which is put on by the hand of faith: though rather by the "new man" is meant, the new nature, the new principle, or work of grace in the soul, elsewhere called a new creature; and it bears this name in opposition to, and distinction from the old man, or corruption of nature, before spoken of; and

because it is "de novo", or anew, put into the hearts of men; it is not what was in them naturally; nor is it any old principle renewed, or wrought up in another and better form; but it is something that is infused, that was never there before: and because it is new in all its parts; such who have it, have new hearts and new spirits given unto them; they have new eyes to see with, and new ears to hear with, and new hands to handle and work with, and new feet to walk with; and they live a new life and conversation: so the Jews says of a man that truly repents of sin, and does not return to it, that he is (vdx xya) , "a new man": now to put on this new man, is not to make ourselves new creatures; for this is not by the power of man, but by the Spirit of God; this is God's work, and not man's; it is he who made us at first, remakes us, and not we ourselves; besides, these Ephesians the apostle writes to, were already made new men, or new creatures; but to put on the new man, is to walk in our lives and conversations agreeably to the new man, or work of grace upon the soul; as to put off the old man, respects the former conversation, or a not walking as formerly, and agreeably to the dictates of corrupt nature, so to put on the new man, is to walk according to the principles of grace and holiness formed in the soul: and of this new man it is further said,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;

the principle of the soul is "created", and therefore is not the effect of man's power, which cannot create; it is peculiar to God only to create; it is a creature, and therefore not to be trusted in, and depended on; for not grace, but the author of grace, is the object of trust: it is created "after God"; by his power, according to his mind and will, and after his image, and in his likeness; which greatly consists "in righteousness and true holiness"; called "true", in opposition to the typical and ceremonial holiness of the Jews, and to the pretended holiness of hypocrites; and denotes the truth and genuineness of the Spirit's work of sanctification upon the heart; unless this should rather be considered as the effect of his grace upon the soul; for so the words may be rendered, "unto righteousness and true holiness"; for the new man is of such a nature, and so formed, as to tend to acts of righteousness and holiness, and to engage men to the performance of them: some copies read, "in righteousness, and holiness, and truth"; and so the Ethiopic version seems to have read.

Experiencing the Power of God by the efficacy code29 of the Image of God Upon the Soul

In this chapter by John Owen, pay particular attention to the importance, efficacy and use of the image of God, the moral image, as it is re-instamped upon the souls of those who are truly converted. This is crucial. Those who do not have this happen to them

cannot experience the power of God in their alleged conversion, hence they are not truly converted, their heart was never regenerated (see the parable of the sower and Heb. 6:4-8) They never saw God's glory through the eyes of faith and therefore cannot endure temptations, trials, nor teach or preach salvation in a due manner, but only barren and legal sermons - for how can you teach effectively what you have not experienced? Also, see John 5:37, "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."

John Calvin on John 5:37: "*you have never heard his voice*. After having complained that they do not receive him, Christ breaks out in still more severe language against their blindness. When he says that *they had never heard the voice of God, or seen his shape*, these are metaphorical expressions, by which he intends to state generally that they are utterly estranged from the knowledge of God. For as men are made known by the countenance and speech, so God utters *his voice* to us by the voice of the Prophets, and, in the sacraments, takes, as it were, a visible form, from which he may be known by us according to our feeble capacity. But he who does not recognize God in his lively image, plainly shows by this very fact that he worships no Deity but what he has himself contrived. For this reason Paul says, that the Jews had *a veil placed before their eyes, that they might not perceive the glory of God in the face of Christ*, (2 Corinthians 3:14).

Chapter V.

Darkness and ignorance another cause of apostasy.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/apostasy.i.ix.html>

II. The second spring or cause of defection from the gospel in any kind, is that spiritual darkness and ignorance which abides in the minds of men under the profession of the truth.

The gospel may fall under a double consideration: First, Of the things themselves that are contained, revealed, and proposed therein; — these are the material objects of our faith. Secondly, With respect unto the doctrinal way of their declaration. With respect unto the first, **there is a spiritual darkness on the minds of all men by nature**, so as that they cannot discern them in their own native form and beauty. With respect unto the latter, men are said to be ignorant, namely, when they do not in a due manner understand and comprehend the doctrines of the gospel, and so perish for want of knowledge. These things being of a distinct consideration, and of different influence into this pernicious event, the first shall be first spoken unto.

1. That there is such a spiritual darkness on the minds of men by nature, and wherein their depravation by sin cloth principally consist, is fully testified in the Scripture, as I have at large elsewhere evinced. Hence all men grant, so far as I know, that there is need of **spiritual illumination to**

enable us to discern spiritual things in a due manner, though all are not agreed in the nature and causes of that illumination. But to deny the thing itself is to deny the gospel, and to make the promises of God of none effect. Now, where illumination is needful, there darkness is to be removed; for the end of the bringing in of light is to dispel darkness. Wherefore, such a depravation of the minds of men in spiritual darkness must be acknowledged, or the gift and grace of God in illumination must be rejected; and they by whom it is done do by their own blindness give new evidence unto the truth which they do oppose, there being no more certain demonstration of the power of darkness in any than for them to affirm that they stand in no need of light to be communicated unto them by the effectual operation of the Spirit of God. As to the nature of this illumination I shall not here dispute, but take it at present for granted that it is an act of His power who of old “commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining in our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” [2 Cor. iv. 6.](#)

There is a glory and beauty in those spiritual things which are the subjects of the truths of the gospel. There is in them the wisdom of God, “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” [1 Cor. ii. 6, 7](#), yea, “the manifold wisdom of God,” [Eph. iii. 10](#); the glory of the Lord, which is represented unto believers in the glass of the gospel, [2 Cor. iii. 18](#), or “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” [chap. iv. 6](#); — things expressly beyond discovery by the use of any means whatever merely natural, [1 Cor. ii. 9, 10](#). Even the philosophers of old contended that there was a beauty in all truth, which would engage the minds and affections of men unto it were they able to discern it; and if they saw and granted this in things natural and moral, which are earthly and exposed unto the common reason of mankind, how much more must it be granted of the truth of things heavenly, spiritual, and divine! See [John iii. 12](#). In brief, whatever there is of **divine glory or excellency in the divine nature itself**, in any or all of its holy properties, in the great and most glorious effect of them in the person and grace of Christ, in the renovation of our nature into the image of God, in the divine life of faith and obedience, it is proposed unto us in the truths of the gospel.

2. Whatever doctrinal proposition may be made of these things unto the minds of men, yet the things themselves cannot be comprehended nor spiritually discerned without the illumination of the Holy Ghost before mentioned. Hence it follows that men may be instructed in the doctrines of truth, yet, continuing under the power of natural darkness, not discern the things themselves in their own spiritual nature and glory, nor have any experience of their power and efficacy. This all the prayers of holy men in the Scripture for spiritual light and instruction, all the promises of God savingly to enlighten the minds of men, and the descriptions given of that work of his grace whereby he doth effect it, do undeniably evince. One consideration will be sufficient unto our purpose. **Whosoever hath a spiritual view and knowledge of these things, his mind will be, and is, certainly changed and transformed into the image of them.** So the apostle tells us expressly, [2 Cor. iii. 18](#), “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” **They are cast into the same mould with the doctrine whereunto they are given up,** [Rom. vi. 17](#). [*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*] **The mind is united unto the things so discerned, and the image of them is so brought forth therein as that there is an exact conformity between them.** But we see by open and palpable experience, that notwithstanding the knowledge which many have of spiritual things, their minds continue carnal and fleshly, filled with corrupt and depraved affections, and are no way changed into the image or likeness of the things themselves. There needs no farther demonstration that men have

never had a spiritual **view of or insight into the glory of gospel truths**, be their doctrinal knowledge of them what it will, than this, **that their minds are not renewed thereby, nor transformed into the likeness of them.**

Where it is thus with men, they have no stable grounds whereon to abide in the profession of the truth against temptation, opposition, or seduction; for their **steadfastness must be an effect of such an assurance in their minds of the truth of the things which they do believe**, as will be prevalent against **all that force and artifice** wherewith they may be assaulted, and such as will not suffer their own minds to be indifferent, careless, or negligent about them. But whence should this arise? Assurance from outward natural sense in spiritual things we are not capable of, nor are they evidenced unto our minds by rational demonstration. All the full persuasion or assurance we can have of them, which will be prevalent against temptations and oppositions, ariseth from such a spiritual view of them as gives an experience of their reality, power, and efficacy upon our minds: and this respects both the renovation of the mind itself in light and faith; the adhesion of the will unto the things known and believed, with a holy, heavenly, unconquerable love; and the constant approbation of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in all things. Hence this assurance, though it be neither that of sense nor that of reason, yet in the Scripture is compared with them and preferred above them, as that which giveth the mind a more certain satisfaction than they can do, although it be of another kind. And without this it is impossible that men should attain any such evidence or full persuasion of that evangelical truth which they may profess, as to secure them in their profession in such a juncture of circumstances and occasions as they may fall into.

Here, therefore, I place another means and cause of apostasy from the truth of the gospel after it hath been received and professed. Multitudes in all ages have been instructed in the truth, some have been learned and knowing in the doctrines of it; but whereas, by reason of their darkness, as being destitute of spiritual illumination, they did not discern the things themselves which they assented unto, **in their supernatural, heavenly nature and glory, and therefore had no experience of their proper power and efficacy on their own minds, affections, and lives**, they could not have any such evidence of their truth as would upon trials confirm their adherence unto them or secure them from apostasy.

Had the minds of men been transformed in their renovation to “prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” — had they by beholding of spiritual things “been changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord,” — they would not have abandoned the most important doctrines of the gospel, as we know them to have done, nor have **embraced foolish imaginations** in their stead, **on every plausible courtship and address unto their fancies**. How came men under the papal apostasy gradually to desert the principal truths of the gospel and all the spiritual glory of its worship? **Not discerning the internal glory and beauty of things evangelical and purely divine, not having an experience of the power of them in and upon their own minds, they chose to comply with, and give admission unto, such things whose outward painted beauty they could discern, and whose effects on their natural and carnal affections they had experience of.**

We have seen, in all ages, men learned and skilled in the doctrines of the truth, so as that they might have been looked on as pillars of it, yet to have been as forward as any unto apostasy from it when they have been tried; yea, such have been the leaders of others thereinto. So many of this sort fell into Arianism and Pelagianism of old, as some have done into Socinianism, and many into Popery in our

days. When such fall away, usually they overthrow the faith of some, and shake the confidence of others.

But the apostle gives a double relief against this temptation:— first, The stability of God’s purpose in the preservation of the elect; and, secondly, The means of preservation in holiness of them that believe, [2 Tim. ii. 19](#). And we may be assured concerning them all, that they never had that intuition into nor comprehension of spiritual things which alone could secure their stability. They never saw so much or that in them for which they should be preferred above all other things. **No man who forsakes the truth ever saw the glory of it, or had experience of its power.** “They went out from us, but they were not of us,” saith the apostle of such persons; “for if they had been of us” (whose fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ), “they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us,” [1 John ii. 19](#).

Thus when the apostle had described the woeful apostasy of some among the Hebrews, he adds concerning them whose preservation he believed, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation,” [Heb. vi. 9](#). Whatever knowledge men may have of the doctrines of the gospel, and whatever profession they may make, **unless they have withal those things which are inseparable from salvation, such as is the saving illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby the darkness of our minds is removed,** there can be no assurance that they will always “quit themselves like men,” and “stand fast in the faith.” And this consideration doth not a little evidence the danger of a defection from the truth which attends the days wherein we live.

For, first, it is from hence that we have such a numerous generation of **sceptics** in religion among us, — **a sort of men who pretend not to renounce or forsake the truth, only they will talk and dispute about it with the greatest indifferency as to what is true or false.** The Scripture, the holy Trinity, the person of Christ, his offices, the nature of justification and grace, whether it be or be not, this or that church, all or any in the world, as to their profession and worship, are weighed in the defiled, tottering scales of bold, irreverent discourses. For some reasons known to themselves, this sort of persons will own the public profession of religion, perhaps be teachers in it. But on all occasions **they fully manifest that they are utterly ignorant of the fundamental difference between truth and error, and so give no firm assent unto what they do profess;** for this difference lieth in their glory and beauty in themselves, and in their power and efficacy towards us. Spiritual, heavenly truth, by its relation unto the being, infinite wisdom, goodness, love, and grace of God, by the characters of all these things impressed on it and represented by it, is glorious, amiable, and desirable; — all error, as an effect of darkness, and by its relation unto Satan as the head of the apostasy which drew off our minds from the original essential Truth, is distorted, deformed, and brings the mind into confusion. **Truth is powerful and effectual to conform the soul unto God, and to princible it with a love of and power unto obedience;** — **error turns the mind aside into crooked and by paths of folly or superstition, or pride and self-advancement.** Were men practically acquainted with this difference between truth and error, it would take away that **indifferency in their minds** unto them which this sceptical humour doth discover. [\[Regarding sceptics; see History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff, Vol. 8, pg 654, 648,650, 655, e.g., Bernardino Ochino\]](#) **Truth so known in its nature and efficacy will beget that reverence, that love, that sacred esteem of itself, in the souls of men, as they shall not dare to prostitute it to be bandied up and down with every foolish imagination.** And from this sort of men, who are commonly the most bold and

forward in undertaking the conduct of others, by a pretended generous contempt of their narrow principles, groundless scruples, and pusillanimous fears, nothing is to be expected but a wise and safe compliance with any ways or means of apostasy from the truth which shall be advantageously presented unto them.

And by the means of this darkness, it is easy to conceive how uncertain and unstable the minds of the generality of men, who perhaps also are somewhat ignorant (whereof we shall treat afterward), must needs be in their assent unto the truth and the profession of it. They are no way able to discover it in such a way or manner as to give them an assurance which will be infallibly victorious against temptations and oppositions; **nor can they have that holy love unto it which will secure their minds and affections from being enticed and ravished from it.** But, all the difference between truth and error which they can discern lying in bare different notions and apprehensions, wherein also they are dark and unskilled, it is no wonder if at any time they make an easy transcurion from the one to the other. So did the body of the people lose the truth gradually under the papal defection without any great complaint, yea, with much complacency and satisfaction; and it is to be feared that multitudes are ready at once to steer the same course if occasion be offered unto them.

From this consideration we may rectify the seeming solecism that is in the profession of religion, or the professors of it. Truth in every kind is the only guide of the mind in all its actings; wherein it proceeds not according unto it, it is always out of the way. Divine truth is the sole conduct of the mind in all its actings towards God; it is the only fountain, immediate cause, and rule of all our obedience. But yet, whereas in other things men generally walk in the light of those sparks of truth which they have received, we see that many by whom divine truth is owned and professed in its greatest purity and highest discovery **are oftentimes no less wicked and vicious in their lives, no less enemies unto holiness, no less barren and unfruitful in those good and useful works it guides and directs unto, than those who, having the greatest aversion from it, are, under the conduct of other principles, erroneous and superstitious.** Thus the lives of the common sort of Protestants are no better than those of the Papists, nor are theirs to be compared with those of some of the Mohammedans; yea, by the power of false and superstitious apprehensions imposed on their minds and consciences, some are carried out unto greater and more frequent acts of bounty and charity, of the mortification of the flesh, the denial of its sensual appetites and satisfactions, than are to be found among the most who profess themselves to be under the conduct and rule of truth. Hence no profession of religion, be it never so corrupt or foolish, is advanced amongst us, but instantly (at least for a season, and while it is new) it pretends an advantage as unto life and conversation against the truth, measured by the lives of its common professors; yea, this is made the principal motive and argument to prevail with honest and well-meaning people unto a compliance with the profession of their way, because of the effects which (as it is pretended) it produceth in their lives and conversations above those which profess the truth. And how prevalent this pretence hath been among us is known unto all.

Wherefore, I say, we cannot allow that the lives of the common sort of professors should be esteemed a just and due representation of the doctrine which they do profess. It is true, that where it is not so men will have no benefit by their profession, nor will they be steadfast in it when a trial shall befall them. Where the mind is internally and really conformed unto the truth, **there the actions of the life may be allowed to represent sincerely, though not perfectly, the truths which are believed;** and he is no firm Christian in any kind, he is brought into no spiritual order, whose mind doth not receive by

the Spirit of Christ the transforming influence of evangelical truth, and who exerts not the power of it in a holy conversation, so as that he is not unwilling that what he believeth may be impartially judged by what he liveth, as to sincerity, though not as to perfection. But if we should allow the lives of men in general to be a rule whereby judgment might be safely passed in these things, it cannot be denied but that sometimes, and in some ages and places, **error would, at least for a season**, carry it in glory and reputation from the truth, yea, **the light of nature from grace, tradition from the Scripture, and the Alcoran from the Gospel**.

But we have sufficient ground of exceptions unto this interpretation and exposition of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that without the least apology for the ungodly lives of its professors. Among these, that now insisted on is of the first rank and evidence. **Multitudes of those who profess the truth never had a view of its spiritual glory because of the darkness of their minds, and therefore have no experience of its power and efficacy, nor are their hearts and lives influenced or guided by it; for the gospel will not have its effects on the minds of men unless it first communicates unto them those internal spiritual principles which are necessary unto all the operations that it doth require. Put this new wine into old bottles and all is lost, both bottles and wine also. The doctrine of the gospel, taken notionally into the old, unrenewed, corrupt minds of men, is utterly lost as unto all the proper ends of it.** And wherever there is a reformation of life, with any diligent attendance unto duties moral or religious, wrought in persons by the light and dispensation of the gospel, they are the immediate effects of those doctrines which it hath in common with the **light of nature** and the **law** in its power, and not of those which are peculiarly its own. And this they seem to understand well enough who, finding, either in their own experience, or from the observation they have made of others, **how ineffectual the truth of gospel mysteries is towards the minds of carnal men**, have upon the matter abandoned the preaching of it, and have taken up **only with those principles which are suited unto the light of nature and convictions of the law**. [Hence the barren sermons of legal preachers! see the legal principle vs. principle of life, etc. expounded by Jonathan Edwards on page 150]

The **holiness which the gospel requireth is the transforming of our whole souls into the image and likeness of God**, with the actings of renewed nature in a universal approbation of his “good, and acceptable, and perfect will,” [Rom. xii. 2](#). But this will not be effected unless we can “**behold the glory of the Lord**” in it, whereby alone we may be “**changed into the same image from glory to glory**,” [2 Cor. iii. 18](#). Nor can we so behold that glory unless he “**who commanded the light to shine out of darkness do shine in our hearts to give us the knowledge of it**,” [chap. iv. 6](#). Hence is the doctrine of it ineffectual in the hearts and upon the lives of many by whom its truth is openly professed.

It is otherwise with every false religion. The motives which they make use of, and the instruments they apply, unto the hearts of men, to effect the reformation of their lives, and to engage them unto such works and duties as they require, are all of them suited either unto their natural light, or unto their superstitions, fears, desires, pride, and other depraved affections. [Again see Edwards on pg 150] Those of the first sort, — namely, such as are suited unto natural light, — are common, in some degree or measure, unto all religion whatever, be it on other accounts true or false. Everything that is called religion pretends at least unto the improvement of natural light, as did the philosophers among the heathen of old. It urgeth also the law so far as it is made known unto them, though by other presumptions and prejudices some do abate and take off from its force and efficacy, making void the commandments of God through their own traditions. Whatever change is wrought or effected on the

minds and lives of men by virtue of these principles, and motives taken from them, doth not belong unto any one way in religion more than another; nor is it to be accounted unto the glory or advantage of any of them. In these things Mohammedanism and all false ways in Christianity have an equal share and interest, unless where, by some corrupt opinions of their own, men deprave the light of nature and the rule of the law itself.

Some finding, as they say, more of justice, temperance, veracity, righteousness in dealings, with common usefulness unto mankind, among Turks and Banians, than among the common sort of Christians, do foolishly begin to think that their religion is better than Christianity. But as this scandal will be surely required at the hands of them who give it by their flagitious lives, so it is foolishly and wickedly taken by others; **for those truths and laws which produce these effects in them are common unto all religions, and are equally suited unto the light and reason of all mankind, and have more evidence and efficacy communicated unto them by the gospel than by any other kind of religion whatever.** And so it is with them among ourselves who would plead an advantage unto their profession by the effects of it in their lives as to a moral conversation, when they can pretend unto no real motive thereunto, — namely, unto what is good and useful, and not mere affectation and hypocrisy, — but what is owned and pressed in the doctrine of the gospel which we adhere unto. The differences, therefore, that are in this kind are not from the doctrines men profess, but they arise from the persons themselves who embrace them, with their various lusts, inclinations, and temptations.

It is evident, therefore, that whatever there is of moral good, duty, or usefulness among men in any false way of religion, **it all proceeds from those principles** and is the effect of those motives which are owned and improved in that which is true; and it may be easily evinced that they are more cultivated and cleared, have more evidence, life, light, and power given them, by the truths of the gospel, than by any other means or way whatever. And where they have not an equal effect upon those who profess that truth which they have on some by whom it is deserted, it is from the power of their own cursed lusts and carnal security. The difference on the part of religion itself consists in what is superadded unto these general principles by any notions of it. Now this, in every false religion, **is what is suited unto the natural principles of men's minds, their innate pride, vanity, curiosity, superstition, irregular hopes and fears [including self-love]**. Such among the Romanists are the doctrines of merit, of outward disciplines, of satisfactions for sin, of confession, penances, of purgatory, and the like. They were all of them found out to **put some awe on the minds**, and to have some influence on the lives of men, who had lost all sense of the principles and motives of gospel obedience, though some considerable respect was had unto the benefit and advantage of them by whom they were invented; for why should men labour and beat their brains merely for others, without some income and revenue of advantage unto themselves? And it is no wonder if they produce in many, as they have done, great appearing acts of devotion, many outward works of bounty and charity, yea, in some, real austerities of life and renunciations of the pleasures of the world. I doubt not but that the sensual, wicked paradise of Mohammed doth effectually prevail in the minds of many of his followers unto that kind of virtuous and devout life which they suppose may bring them unto its enjoyment. [see pg 150]

The inquiry, then, on the whole matter is, wherefore the truths of the gospel do not produce, in all by whom they are professed, effects as much more excellent than those mentioned as truth is more

excellent than error, heavenly light than superstition, faith than frightful apprehensions of feigned torments, true peace and tranquility of mind than outward reputation and glory. And the principal reason hereof is, because such persons as are **barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** do not discern those truths in their spiritual nature, nor can therefore take in the **power and efficacy** of them on their souls.

There is a holiness, obedience, and fruitfulness in good works, wrought, preserved, and maintained by the truth of the gospel, in them **who are truly regenerated and sanctified thereby**, who receive the proper efficacy of it on their minds and souls, which **differ in the whole kind and nature from anything which the principles and motives before mentioned, which have their efficacy from their suitableness unto the depraved affections of men's minds, can produce** [see pg 150]; and this alone is acceptable with God. But it must be granted, that where men are ignorant of the power made unacquainted with the internal efficacy of the gospel, their lives under the profession of the truth may be as bad, and it is a great wonder they are not worse than those of the Papists, of the most erroneous persons, or even of the Mohammedans themselves: for they have many superstitious imaginations and **false principles that are suited to put some outward restraint upon their lusts, and to press them unto actions praiseworthy in themselves**; but these being no way influenced by such apprehensions, and being not under the power of gospel truth, it is a wonder, I say, if they exceed them not in all manner of wicked conversation. It is not merely the outward profession of the truth, but the inward power of it, that is useful either unto the world or the souls of men.

And hence it is that the preaching of any person which principally dwelleth on and argueth from the things which the light of nature can of itself reach unto, and the convictions which are by the law, is better accepted with, and appears more useful unto, multitudes of common professors, than the declaration of the mysteries of the gospel is: for such things are suited unto the natural conceptions of men and the working of their own reason, which gives them a sense of what efficacy they have;

"If a person has not that legal principle, or principle of fear, he has not that principle which the law, or that constitution which exacts obedience, was made to influence and work upon; and therefore is not a proper subject of law, because, being destitute of that principle, the law takes no hold of him, for it finds no principle in him to take hold by." -Jonathan Edwards on pg 150

but being in the dark unto the mysteries of the gospel, they neither see their excellency nor experience their power. Nevertheless, they and they only are the true spring, cause, and rule of all acceptable obedience, even "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." From the whole it appears how **prone** such persons must be unto an apostasy from the truth who have no spiritual light to discern its glory nor to let in the power of it upon their souls.

If, then, we would be established in the truth, if we would stand fast in the faith, if we would be preserved from the danger of that defection from the gospel which the world is prone, disposed, and inclined unto, it must be our principal endeavour to have a spiritual acquaintance with the things themselves that are declared in the doctrine of truth which we do profess, and to have an experience of their efficacy upon our own souls. **Mere notions of truth, or the knowledge of the doctrines of it, enabling us to talk of them or dispute for them, will not preserve us.** And although this spiritual light be the grace, promise, and gift of God, yet is it that which we are to endeavour after in a way of duty; and the directions ensuing may contribute somewhat towards the right discharge of our duty herein:—

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit of truth go lead us into all truth. For this end is he promised by our Saviour unto his disciples; and there are no teachings like his. If we learn and receive the truths of the gospel merely in the power and ability of our natural faculties, as we do other things, we shall not abide constant unto them in spiritual trials. What we learn of ourselves in spiritual things, we receive only in the outward form of it; what we are taught by the Spirit of God, we receive in its power. The apostle grants that “the spirit of man,” his mind, reason, and understanding, is able to conceive of and apprehend “the things of a man,” things merely natural, civil, or moral, which are cognate unto human nature; but saith he, “The things of God,” the mystery of his wisdom, love, and grace in Christ Jesus, “knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God,” and by him are they revealed unto them that do believe, 1 Cor. ii. 9–12. Without his especial aid, men may, by their natural sagacity and industry, attain an acquaintance with the doctrines of truth, so as to handle them (like the schoolmen) with incredible subtilty and curiosity; but they may be far enough for all that from an establishing knowledge of spiritual things. That horrible neglect which is among Christians of this one duty of earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit of Christ, that scorn which is cast upon it by some, and that self-confidence in opposition unto it which prevails in the most, sufficiently manifest of what nature is their knowledge of the truth, and what is like to become of it when a trial shall befall them. The least spark of saving knowledge inlaid in the minds of the poorest believers, by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, will be more effectual unto their own sanctification, and more prevalent against oppositions, than the highest notions or most subtle reasonings that men have attained in leaning unto their own understanding. Wherefore the Scripture abounds in examples, instances, and directions for prayer, unto this end, that we may have the assistance of the Holy Spirit in learning of the truth of the mysteries of the gospel, without which we cannot do so in a due manner: Eph. i. 16–20, “Making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” Chap. iii. 14–19, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Col. ii. 1–3, “I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

2. Rest not in any notions of truth, unless you find that you have learned it as it is in Jesus. What it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, the apostle fully declares, Eph. iv. 20–25, “But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is

created in righteousness and true holiness.” This it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, — namely, together with the knowledge of it, to have an experience of its power and efficacy in the mortification of sin, in the renovation of our nature, and transforming of the whole soul into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth. When men learn that they may know, and are satisfied with what they know, without an endeavour to find the life and power of what they know in their own hearts, their knowledge is of little use, and their assent unto the truth will have no stability accompanying of it. **The immediate end (with respect unto us) of the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Scripture is, that it may put forth a spiritual, practical power in our souls, and that we may do the things which are so revealed unto us.** Where this is neglected, where men content themselves with a bare speculation of spiritual truths, they do what lies in them to frustrate the end, and “reject the counsel of God” in them. If, therefore, we would know any evangelical truths in a due manner, if we would have that evidence and assurance of them in our minds which may secure our profession against temptations and oppositions, **let us not rest in any apprehensions of truth whose efficacy we have no experience of in our hearts, nor think that we know any more of the mysteries of the gospel than we find effectually working in the renovation of our minds, and the transforming of our souls into the image of the glory of God in Christ.**

3. Learn to esteem more of a little knowledge which discovers itself in its effects to be sanctifying and saving, than of the highest attainments in notions and speculations, though gilded and set off by the reputation of skill, subtilty, eloquence, wit, and learning, which do not evidence themselves by alike operations. We are fallen into days wherein men of all sorts, sects, and parties, are vying for the reputation of skill, ability, knowledge, subtilty, and cunning in disputes about religion. And few there are who are cast under such disadvantages by apparent want of learning, but that they hope to make it up one way or other, so as to think as well of their own knowledge and abilities as of other men’s. **He who hath learned to be meek, humble, lowly, patient, self-denying, holy, zealous, peaceable, to purify his heart, and to be useful in his life, is indeed the person who is best acquainted with evangelical truth.** Wherefore, let this knowledge be esteemed, both in ourselves and others, above all that proud, presumptuous, notional, puffing knowledge, which sets up for so great a reputation in the world, and we shall have experience of a blessed success in our pursuit of it.

4. Be not satisfied without a discovery of such a goodness, excellency, and beauty in spiritual things, as may attract your hearts unto them, and cause you to cleave unto them with unconquerable love and delight. This is that necessary, inseparable adjunct, property, fruit, or effect of faith, without which it is not essentially differenced from the faith of devils. **That knowledge, that perception and understanding of the truth, which doth not present the things known, believed, perceived, as lovely, excellent, and desirable unto the will and affections, is a “cloud without water,” which every wind of temptation will scatter and blow away.** Do not, therefore, suppose that you have learned anything of God in Christ, of the mystery of his grace, of his acceptable and perfect will, **unless you see therein such evidence of infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, love, in all things so suited unto the eternal glory of God and advantage of your own souls, in the uttermost rest, peace, and satisfaction that they are capable of, as that you may admire, adore, delight in them, and cleave unto them with a holy, prevalent, unconquerable love.** When you do so, then will you be established in the truth, and be able to bid defiance unto the artifices of Satan, with the solicitations of men, that would withdraw or separate you from it. But I will not farther digress in these discourses.

Chapter VII.

Instance of a peculiar defection from the truth of the gospel; with the reasons of it.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/apostasy.i.xi.html>

Thirdly, Want of experience of the **power and efficacy of the Spirit and grace of Christ**, of his life and death, for the mortification of sin, hath been another spring of this apostasy. How it is wrought by these means, and can be no otherwise accomplished, I have showed elsewhere at large, and must not here assume the same argument again; only, two things may be observed concerning this work and duty: as, —

1. It is that wherein or whereunto the greatest wisdom and exercise of faith doth consist, or is required. It is a matter **purely evangelical**, to derive strength and ability from Christ for the mortification of sin, by virtue of his death, in a way of believing. **Unenlightened reason can neither see nor understand anything of this matter**; yea, it is foolishness unto it, as are all other mysteries of the gospel. There is not any other way for the same end which it will not more willingly embrace.

2. It is a work and duty whereunto there is a great reluctancy in the **flesh**, in corrupted nature. There is nothing it had rather be freed from, and that whether we respect the inward nature of it or the constant continuance in it that is required of us. Yet is it such as that without it we can never attain life and salvation; for **“if we by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live,”** and not otherwise. Wherefore, when men once begin to be sensible of the powerful inward workings of sin, they will take one of these two ways, nor can they do otherwise: for either they will yield themselves up “servants unto sin,” and make “provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,” according as they are able, and as far as consists with their secular interest, as do the most; or they will betake themselves to some way or other for its restraint and mortification, either in part or in whole. And here many things will present themselves unto such persons, some, it may be, of their own devising, and some of God’s appointment, but for other ends than what they apply them unto. Hence multitudes faint in this work, and at length utterly give it over. **They begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh**; for, not striving lawfully nor in the right way, sin gets ground and strength against them, and they yield up themselves to the service of it. Hence have we so many who, having under their convictions contended against their lusts in their youth, do give up themselves unto them in their age. But so it is in this matter, that those who, through their unbelief, **cannot rise or attain unto an experience of the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ for the mortification of sin will betake themselves to somewhat else for their relief**; and this is that principally which hath brought forth that light within among some, which must do all this work for them, and much more. If any will betake themselves thereunto, they shall find that remedy against sin, and that perfection of holiness, in a few days, which they had been looking for from Christ a long season to no purpose. So would they have us to think who, it may be, never had experience what it is to derive spiritual strength from Christ, or to wait on him for it; only they have been wearied by the successlessness of their convictions, and the burdensomeness of **lifeless duties**. For some of them were for a season not only sober in their conversation (which I hope they yet continue to be), but diligent in duties of religion; but finding neither life, power, nor success in them, through their own uncured unbelief, they seem to have grown weary of them: for nothing is more grievous than the outward form of spiritual duties where there is no experience of inward power

and sweetness. Wherefore, the corrupt minds of men will be ready to relinquish them for any thing that pretends a better relief.

The Purpose of the Image of God

code30

Image of God Exacts Obedience

Self-love vs. Evangelical obedience, the foundation thereof, a saving light or illumination and regeneration of the soul with a new living principle, that *new man*, that restoration of the image of God in us, that exacts obedience, although imperfectly. The natural principles that all have are the light of nature and conviction of conscience neither of which by itself is saving, in that indwelling sin will eventually overpower them but it will not overpower the new man or that re-instamped, restored image of God. Without this new principle of life (faith) we cannot please God; all our works are dead works without this, Heb. 11:6. Also explained is the power of indwelling sin over the light of nature and convictions.

Chapter VIII.

Apostasy from the holiness of the gospel; the occasion and cause of it — Of that which is gradual, on the pretense of somewhat else in its room.

pg 168 - <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/apostasy.i.xii.html>

II. Again; **others confine the whole of their obedience unto morality, and deride whatever is pleaded as above it and beyond it, under the name of evangelical grace, as “enthusiastical folly.”** And the truth is, if those persons who plead for the necessity of gospel grace and holiness, which is more than so, do understand each other, and if somewhat of the same things are not intended by them under different expressions and diverse methods of their management, they are not of the same religion. But if they mistake the meaning of each other, and differ only in the manner of teaching the same truth, I suppose they steer the safest course, and are freest from just offence, who follow and comply with the manner wherein the things intended are taught in the Scripture, rather than those who accommodate their discourses unto the phraseology of heathen philosophers. But the truth is, the difference seems to be real, and the **principles** men proceed upon in these things are contradictory to each other; **for some do plainly affirm that the whole of gospel obedience consists in the observance of moral virtue, which they so describe as to render it exclusive of evangelical grace [i.e., it is just legal preaching].** This others judge to contain an open declension from and waiving of gospel holiness. It is granted freely, that the performance of all moral duties **evangelically**, — that is, **in the power of the grace of Christ**, unto the glory of God by him, — is an essential part of gospel obedience. And whoever they are who (under the pretence of grace or anything else) do neglect the improvement of moral virtues, or the observance of the duties of morality, they are so far disobedient unto the gospel and the law thereof. And some men do not understand how contemptible they render themselves in the management of their cause, when they charge others with an opposition unto morality or moral virtue, and setting up they know not what imaginary holiness in the room thereof; for those whom they so calumniate are not only

immediately discharged from any sense of guilt herein by the testimony of their own consciences, but all other men, so far as the rule of ingenuity is extended, do, from the knowledge of their doctrine and observation of their practice, avouch their innocence.

“But is it not so, then, that men do condemn morality, as that which is not to be trusted unto, but will deceive them that rest in or upon it?” I answer, **They do so when it is made (as it is by some) the whole of religion, and as it is obtruded into the place of evangelical grace and holiness by others.** They take moral virtue, as it always was taken until of late, for natural honesty, or such a conformity of life unto the light of nature as to be useful and approved among men. But this may be, — men may do what is morally good, and yet never do anything that is accepted with God; for they may do it, but not for the love of God above all, but for the love of self. [one motive is evangelical, the other legal] And therefore they charge morality with an insufficiency unto the end of religion, or the saving of the souls of men, —

1. Where nothing is intended by it but that whereof the **rule and measure is the light of nature**: for that doth direct unto every duty that is properly moral; and what it doth not direct unto, what is not naturally by the **law of our creation** [the law written on our hearts at creation] obligatory unto all mankind, cannot be called moral. **Now, to confine all religion, as to the preceptive and obediential part of it, unto the light of nature, is to evacuate one half of the gospel.** [that is, it leaves out the grace of faith or the faith of God's elect, the principle of life. All people have the benefit of this light of nature that teaches that God is to be submitted to and obeyed and esteemed, but this is not a saving grace but a common grace and hence not evangelical.]

2. Where it is in practice an effect of **conviction only**, and performed **in the innate strength of the rational faculties of our souls**, without the especial supernatural aid of the Spirit and grace of God. Whatever name anything may be called by that is not wrought in us by the grace of God, as well as by us in a way of duty, is foreign unto evangelical obedience. And those who reject morality as insufficient unto acceptation with God and eternal salvation, intend only what is of **that kind** performed in the power of our natural faculties externally excited and directed, without any supernatural influence or operation of especial grace; and, indeed, so to place a confidence in such duties is open **Pelagianism**.

3. Where it proceedeth not from the spiritual, supernatural renovation of our souls. The rule and method of the gospel is, that the tree be first made good, and then the fruit will be so also. Unless a person be first regenerate, and his nature therein renewed into the image and likeness of God, — unless he be endued with a new principle of spiritual life from above, enabling him to live unto God, he can do nothing, of whatsoever sort it be, that is absolutely acceptable unto God. And it is especially under this consideration that any reject morality as not comprehensive of gospel obedience, yea, as that which is apt to draw off the mind from it, and which will deceive them that trust to it, — namely, that it proceedeth not from the principle of grace in a renewed soul; for whatever doth so, though it may be originally of a moral nature in itself, yet from the manner of its performance it becomes gracious and evangelical. And we need not fear to exclude the best works of unrenewed persons from being any part of gospel holiness or obedience.

4. Where those in whom it is, or who pretend unto it, are really destitute of the internal light of saving grace, enabling them to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, and to know the mysteries

of the kingdom of God. That there is such a **saving light** wrought in the minds of believers by the Holy Ghost, that without it men cannot discern spiritual things, so as to favour, like, and approve of them, hath been elsewhere at large demonstrated. But this belongs not unto the morality contended about. It is not only independent of it, but is indeed set up in competition with it and opposition unto it. No man need fear to judge and censure that morality, as unto its interest in gospel obedience and sufficiency unto the salvation of the souls of men, which may be obtained, practiced, and lived up unto, where God doth not “**shine in the hearts of men, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;**” where no work of **spiritual illumination** hath been in their minds, enabling them to discern and know the mind of God, **which none knoweth originally but the Spirit of God, by Whom it is made [known] unto us, 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.** Yet this is that which some men seem to take up withal and rest in, unto the rejection of evangelical obedience.

Lastly, The same censure is to be passed on it wherever it is separable from those fundamental gospel graces which, both in their nature, acts, and objects, are purely supernatural, having no principle, rule, or measure, but truth supernaturally revealed. Such, in particular, is the whole regard we have unto the mediation of Christ, as also unto the dispensation of the Spirit, promised to abide with the church for ever as its comforter, with all the duties of obedience which depend thereon. **He is ignorant of the gospel that knows not that in these things do lie the fundamental principles of its doctrine and precepts, and that in the exercise of those graces in a way of duty which immediately concern them, consist the principal parts of the life of God, or of that obedience unto him by Jesus Christ which is indispensably required of all that shall be saved.** Whereas, therefore, these things cannot be esteemed merely moral virtues, nor do at all belong unto, but are considered as separate from, all that morality which is judged insufficient unto life and salvation, it is evident that it is not in the least dealt withal too severely, nor censured more harshly than it doth deserve. If, therefore, any betake themselves hereunto as to the whole of their duty, it comes under the account of that partial defection from the gospel which we inquire into.

III. Some there are who, as unto themselves, pretend they have attained unto perfection already in this world; such a perfection in all degrees of holiness as the gospel is but an introduction towards. But this proud imagination, destructive of the covenant of grace, of all use of the mediation and blood of Christ, contrary to innumerable testimonies of Scripture and the experience of all that do believe, and concerning which their own consciences do reprove the pretenders unto it, needs not detain us in its examination. It is sufficient unto our present design to have given these instances how men may, in a pretended conscientious discharge of many duties of obedience, yet fall off and decline from that which the gospel requireth. The occasions and reasons hereof (supposing those more general before considered with respect unto the truth of the gospel, which all of them take place here, and have their influence upon their dislike of its holiness) may be briefly inquired into and represented; nor shall we confine ourselves unto the instances given, but take in the consideration of every declension from it which on any account befalls them who, having had a conviction of its necessity, yet refuse to come unto its universal practice. And to this end we may observe, —

1. That the holiness which the gospel requireth will not be kept up or maintained, either in the hearts or lives of men, **without a continual conflict, warring, contending; and that with all care, diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance therein.** It is our warfare, and the Scripture abounds in the discovery of the adversaries we have to conflict withal, their power and subtlety, as also in directions and

encouragements unto their resistance. To suppose that gospel obedience will be maintained in our hearts and lives without a continual management of a vigorous warfare against its enemies, is to deny the Scripture and the experience of all that do believe and obey God in sincerity. **Satan, sin, and the world, are continually assault-hag of it, and seeking to ruin its interest in us.** The devil will not be resisted (which it is our duty to do, 1 Pet. v. 8, 9) without a sharp contest and conflict; in the management whereof we are commanded to “take unto ourselves the whole armour of God,” [Eph. vi. 12, 13](#). “Fleshly lusts” do continually “war against our souls,” [1 Pet. ii. 11](#); and if we maintain not a warfare unto the end against them, they will be our ruin. Nor will the power of the world be any otherwise avoided than by a victory over it, [1 John v. 4](#); which will not be carried without contending. But I suppose it needs no great confirmation unto any who know what it is to serve and obey God in temptations, that the life of faith and race of holiness will not be preserved nor continued in without a severe striving, labouring, contending, warring with diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance; so that I shall at present take it as a principle, notionally at least, agreed upon by the generality of Christians. If we like not to be holy on these terms, we must let it alone; for on any other we shall never be so. If we faint in this course, if we give it over, if we think what we aim at herein not to be worth the obtaining or preserving by such a severe contention all our days, we must be content to be without it. **Nothing doth so promote the interest of hell and destruction in the world as a presumption that a lazy, slothful performance of some duties and abstinence from some sins, is that which God will accept of as our obedience.** Crucifying of sin, mortifying our inordinate affections, contesting against the whole interest of the flesh, Satan, and the world, and that in inward actings of grace and all instances of outward duties, and that always while we live in this world, are required of us hereunto.

Here lies the first spring of the apostasy of many in the world, of them especially who betake themselves unto and take up **satisfaction in another way of duties** than what the gospel requireth. They had, it is possible, **by their light and convictions,** made so near approaches unto it as to see what an incessant travail of soul is required unto its attainment and preservation.

They are like the Israelites travelling in the wilderness towards the land of Canaan. When they came near unto the borders and entrance of it, they sent some to spy it out, that they might know the nature and state of the land and country whither they were going. These, for their encouragement, and to evince the fruitfulness of the earth, bring unto them “a branch with one cluster of grapes,” so great and fair that “they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought also pomegranates and figs,” [Num. xiii. 23](#). But withal, they told them of the hideous difficulties they were to conflict withal, in that the people were strong, their cities walled, and the Anakims dwelling amongst them, [verse 28](#). **This utterly disheartens the carnal people, and, notwithstanding the prospect they had of the “land that flowed with milk and honey,” back again they go into the wilderness, and there they perish.**

So it is with these persons. Notwithstanding the near approach they have made, **by light and convictions,** unto the kingdom of God (as our Saviour told the young man, who was as one of them, [Mark xii. 34](#)), and the prospect they have of the beauty of holiness, yet they turn off from it again, and perish in the wilderness: **for upon the view they have of the difficulties which lie in the conflict mentioned, they fall under many disadvantages, which at length utterly divert them from its pursuit;** as, —

(1.) *Weariness of the flesh,* not enduring to comply with that constant course of duties continually returning upon it which is required thereunto. Various pleas will be made for an exemption from them,

at least in some troublesome instances; and the carnal mind will not want pretences to countenance the flesh in its weariness. Hereon one duty after another is first omitted and then utterly foregone. Neglect of a vigorous constancy in subduing the body and bringing of it into subjection, commended by the apostle in his own example, 1 Cor. ix. 27, is with many the beginning of this kind of apostasy. These things, I say, will oftentimes fall out, that through the weariness and aversion of the flesh, countenanced by various pretences of the carnal mind, sundry duties will be omitted. But this is the faith and trial of the saints; here is the difference between sound believers and those who are acted only by convictions: Those of the first sort will, sooner or later (for the most part speedily), be humbled for such omissions, and recover their former diligence, according to the prayer of the psalmist, Ps. cxix. 176; but where this ground is won by the flesh, and men grow satisfied under the loss of any duty, it is an evidence of a hypocritical, backsliding heart.

(2.) When men are come unto the height of their convictions, and proceed no farther, indwelling sin, with its lusts and corrupt affections (which have for a while been checked and mated by light), will insensibly prevail, and weary the mind with solicitations for the exercise of its old dominion; for the spring of it being not dried, the bitter root of it being not digged up nor withered, it will not cease until it hath broke down all the bounds that were fixed unto it, and bear down convictions with force and violence.

(3.) *Ignorance of the true way of making application unto the Lord Christ for grace and supplies of the Spirit, to bring them unto or preserve them in a state of gospel holiness, is of the same importance.* Without this, to dream of being holy according unto the mind of God is to renounce the gospel. We need not look farther for men's apostasy than this, if they are satisfied with such a holiness, such an obedience, as is not derived unto us by the grace of Christ, nor wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ, nor preserved in us by the power of Christ. [hence it is legal and not evangelical; one's house built on sand.] The way hereof such persons are always ignorant of, and at length do openly despise; yet may men as well see without the sun or light, or breathe without the air, or live without natural spirits, as engage into or abide in the practice of gospel holiness without continual applications unto Christ, the fountain of all grace, for spiritual strength enabling thereunto. [which Adam did not have access to nor promise of which is why he fell. He did not have the Spirit of Adoption during his probation in the garden!] The way and means hereof these persons being ignorant of and unacquainted withal, the holiness which the gospel requireth becomes unto them a thing strange and burdensome; which therefore they desert and refuse. If, therefore, it be true that without Christ we can do nothing, — that in our life unto God he liveth in us, and efficiently is our life; if from him, as the head, nourishment is supplied unto every living member of the body; if the life which we lead be by the faith of the Son of God; and if the only way of deriving these things and all supplies of spiritual strength from him be by the exercise of faith in him, — it follows unavoidably that all those who are unacquainted with this way, who know not how to make their application unto him for this end and purpose, can never persevere in a pursuit of gospel holiness. So hath it fallen out and no otherwise with them concerning whom we speak. As ignorance of the righteousness of God, or of Christ being the end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe, is the reason why men go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God; so ignorance of the grace which is continually to be received from Christ in a way of believing, that we may be holy with gospel holiness, is the reason why so many turn off from it unto another kind of holiness of their own framing, which

yet is not another, because it is none at all. But many are so far from endeavouring after or abiding in gospel holiness on this foundation of continual supplies of grace from Jesus Christ to that end, as that they avowedly despise all holiness and obedience springing from that fountain or growing on that root; in which case God will judge. In the meantime, I say (and the matter is evident) that one principal reason why men turn off from it upon the prospect of the difficulties that attend it, and the oppositions that are made unto it, is their unbelief and ignorance of the way of making application unto Christ by faith for supplies of spiritual strength and grace.

(4.) *Unacquaintedness with the true nature of evangelical repentance* is another cause hereof. This is that grace which comfortably carrieth the souls of believers through all their failings, infirmities, and sins; nor are they able to live to God one day without the constant exercise of it. They find it as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life as faith itself. It is not only a means of our entrance into, but it belongs essentially unto, our gospel state and our continuance therein. Hereunto belongs that continual humble self-abasement, from a sense of the majesty and holiness of God, with the disproportion of the best of our duties unto his will, which believers live and walk in continually; and he that is not sensible of a gracious sweetness and usefulness therein knows not what it is to walk with God. Hereby doth God administer several encouragements unto our souls to abide in our way of obedience, notwithstanding the many discouragements and despondencies we meet withal. In brief, take it away, and you overthrow faith, and hope, and all other graces. Those, therefore, who are unacquainted with the nature and use of this grace and duty, who can taste no spiritual refreshment in all its sorrows, who know nothing of it but legal troubles, anguish, fear, and distraction, will not endure the thought of living in the practice of it all their days; which yet is as necessary unto gospel holiness as faith itself. Men, I say, falling into this condition, finding all these difficulties to conflict withal, and lying under these disadvantages, if anything will offer itself in the room of this costly holiness, will readily embrace it. Hence, as some betake themselves unto a pretence of morality (which as unto many is a mere pretence, and made use of only to countenance themselves in a neglect of the whole of that obedience which the gospel openly requireth), so others do, under other expressions, retreat unto the mere duties of their own light, and these as only required therein, with some peculiar reliefs unto the flesh in what is burdensome unto it. As, for instance: There is nothing that the flesh more riseth up in a dislike of and opposition unto than constancy in the duty of prayer, in private, in families, on all occasions, especially if attended unto in a spiritual manner, as the gospel doth require; but in itself, and as to the substance of it, it is a duty which the light of nature exacteth of us; — but whereas this may prove burdensome to the flesh, a relief is borrowed from a pretence of gospel light and liberty, that men need not pray at any time unless their own spirits or light do previously require it of them: which is to turn the grace of God into an occasion of sinning. By this means some have gotten a holiness, wherein, for the most part, it seems indifferent to them whether they pray at any time or no. And other instances of the like kind might be given. Upon the whole matter, to free themselves from this state, so uneasy to flesh and blood, so contrary unto all the imaginations of the carnal mind, some men have betaken themselves unto another, wherein they have, or pretend to have, no conflict against sin, nor to need any application unto the Lord Christ for supplies of spiritual strength; which belongs not unto that holiness which the gospel requires and which God accepts.

It may be said that in some of the instances before given, especially in that of the Papacy, there is an appearance of a greater conflict with and more hardships put on the flesh than in any other way of obedience that is pleaded for; and there is indeed such an appearance, but it is no more. The

oppositions that arise against their austerities are from without, or from nature as it is weak, but not as it is carnal. It is possible that sin may not be concerned in what they do, neither in its power nor reign; yea, so far as it is **leavened by superstition**, it acts itself therein no less than it doth in others by fleshly lusts. **But it is an internal, spiritual, immediate opposition unto its being and all its actings, that it riseth up with such rage against as to weary those who have not that living principle of faith whereto the victory over it doth peculiarly appertain.**

2. **This evangelical holiness will not allow of nor will consist with the constant, habitual omission of any one duty, or the satisfaction of any one lust of the mind or of the flesh.** As we are, in all instances of duty, to be “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” [2 Cor. vii. 1](#), so “no provision is to be made for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” [Rom. xiii. 14](#). This is that which loseth it so many friends in the world. Would it barter with the flesh, would it give and take allowances in any kind, or grant indulgence unto any one sin, **multitudes would have a kindness for it which now bid it defiance. Everyone would have an exemption for that sin which he likes best, and which is most suited to his inclinations and carnal interests.** And this would be virtually a dispensation for all unholiness whatever. But these are the terms of the gospel: **No one duty is to be neglected, no one sin is to be indulged; and they are looked upon as intolerable.** [Naaman](#) would not give himself up unto the worship of the God of Israel but with this reserve, that he might also bow in the house of Rimmon, whereon his power and preferment did depend. Many things the **young man in the Gospel** boasted himself to have done, and was doubtless willing to continue in the performance of them; but yet, through his whole course, the love of the world had the prevalency in him, and when he was tried in that instance, rather than relinquish it he gave up the whole. But this is the law of the gospel. Although it provide a merciful relief against those daily sins which we are overtaken withal by our frailty and weakness, or surprised into by the power of temptations, against the bent of our minds and habitual inclination of our wills, [1 Pet. iv. 1, 2](#), **yet it alloweth not the cherishing or practice of any one sin whatever, internal or external. An habitual course in any sin is utterly inconsistent with evangelical obedience, 1 John iii. 6–9, yea, it requireth indispensably that we be engaged, in our minds and wills, in an opposition unto all sin, and in a constant endeavour after its not-being in us, either in the root or in the fruit thereof.** It will not connive at or comply with any inordinate affection, any habitual sinful distemper, nor the first motions of sin that are in the flesh. This is that perfection which is required in the new covenant, [Gen. xvii. 1](#), that sincerity, integrity, freedom from guile, walking after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, and that newness of life, which the gospel everywhere prescribeth unto us. On no other terms but universality in obedience and opposition unto sin will it approve of us, [1 John iii. 7–10](#).

And this occasioneth the turning aside of many from the pursuit of an endeavour to be holy, according unto the rule of the gospel. **When by light and convictions they come to take a view of what is required thereunto, it disliketh them, they cannot bear it; and therefore they either at once or gradually give over all ways of pursuing their first design.** And men break with the gospel on this account by the means ensuing:—

(1.) **They cannot make the same judgment of sin that the gospel doth, nor will judge all those things to be sin and evil which the gospel declares so to be; yea, we have some come unto that pharisaism, that they scarce think anything to be sinful or worth taking notice of unless it be openly flagitious. Under this darkness and ignorance, all sorts of filthy, noisome lusts may be cherished in the hearts of**

men, keeping them at as great and real a distance from the holiness of truth as the most outrageous outward sins can do. And this neglect or refusal to comply with the rule of the gospel before laid down is grounded in and promoted by two occasions:—

[1.] They have a willing insensibility of the guilt of some unmortified lust. This they will abide in and cherish; for their minds being habituated unto it, they find no great evil in it, nor do see any cogent reason why they should forego it. So was it with the **young man** with respect unto the love of the world. He was sorry that he could not be evangelically obedient whilst he retained it; but seeing that could not be, he did not discern any such evil in, nor was sensible of any such guilt from it, nor could apprehend any such equality in or necessity of gospel holiness, that he should renounce the one for the embracing the other. So will it be when any lust is made familiar unto the mind; it will not be terrified with it, nor can see any great danger in it. It is between such a soul and sin as it is between the devil and the witch, or one that hath a familiar spirit, as we render the Hebrew “ֹס” [אֹזֵב] and “יִדְעוֹנִי,” [יִדְעֵנִי]. At the first appearance of the devil, be it in what shape it will, it cannot but bring a tremor and fear on human nature, but after a while he becomes a familiar; and when alone he is to be feared, he is not feared at all. The poor deceived wretch then thinks him in his power, so that he can use or command him as he sees good, whereas he himself is absolutely in the power of the devil. Men may be startled with sin in its first appearance, on their first convictions, or its first dangerous efforts; but when it is become their familiar, they suppose it a thing in their own power, which they can use or not use as they see occasion, though indeed themselves are the servants of corruption, being overcome thereby and brought into bondage. Hence it is inconceivable how little sense of guilt in some sins men find after they are habituated unto them. In some sins, I say, for with respect unto sins absolutely against the light of nature, conscience will not easily be bribed not to condemn them. It will not in such cases be speechless, until it be seared and made senseless. But there are sins not accompanied with so great an evidence, yet attended with no less guilt than those which directly militate against the light of nature. In this case, when the word of the gospel comes as it is “living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, as a discoverer and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart;” when it comes and discovers the secret frames, figments, imaginations, and inclinations of the mind, and condemneth what is in the least measure or manner irregular; when it will not be put off, nor accept of any composition or compensation by the most strict and rigid profession in other things, — men are ready to withdraw themselves to the rule of their own light and reason, which they find more gentle and tractable.

[2.] A dereliction of the gospel on this account, with respect unto the inwardness, spirituality, and extent of its commands, is much increased under the influence of corrupt opinions. And of this nature are all those which tend unto the extenuation of sin; for some there are who suppose that there is not such a provoking guilt, such a spiritual outrage in sin, as others pretend. Hence multitudes, as they judge, are needlessly troubled and perplexed about it. “A generous mind, free from superstitious fears and dark conceits imbibed in education, will deliver the mind of man from the trouble of such apprehensions; — a great sense of the guilt of small sins is an engine to promote the interest of preachers, and those who pretend to the conduct of conscience; — the filth and pollution of sin is a metaphor which few can understand, and none ought to be concerned in; — that the power of the remainders of indwelling sin is a foolish notion; and that the disorderly frames of the heart and the mind, through darkness, deadness, spiritual indisposition, or other secret irregularities, are fancies, not

sins, which we need not be troubled at ourselves, nor make any acknowledgment of unto God;” — these and the like opinions are the pharisaical corban of our age, corrupting the whole law of our obedience. And it were easy to manifest how perilous and ruinous they are unto the souls of men; what powerful instruments in the hand of Satan to eclipse the glory of the grace of Christ on the one hand, and to promote apostasy from holiness in the hearts and lives of men on the other. I shall only say, set the corrupt heart of men by any means at liberty from an awe and reverence of the holiness of God and his law with respect unto the inward actings and frames of the soul, with a sense of guilt where they are irregular, and a necessity of constant humiliation before God thereon, and an equally constant application of itself unto the Lord Christ for grace and mercy, and it is wholly in vain to think of fixing any bounds unto the progress of sin. The ignorance hereof is that which hath produced in some the proud imagination of perfection, when they are far enough from bringing their consciences and lives to the rule of the gospel, but only aggravate their guilt by attempting to bend that inflexible rule unto their own perverse and crooked minds.

(2.) In this case, carnal interest, which takes in and compriseth all the circumstances of men, calls for an indulgence unto some one sin or other, which the gospel will not admit of. Pride or ambition, covetousness or love of this present evil world and the perishing things of it, uncleanness or sensuality in eating and drinking, self-exaltation and boasting, vain-glory, idleness, one or other must be spared. One thing or other, I say, on the account of carnal interest, — either because small, or useful, or general, or suited unto a natural temper, or, as is supposed, made necessary by the occasions of life, — must be reserved. Where this resolution prevails, as men are absolutely excluded from any real interest in gospel holiness, which will admit of no such reserves, so it will not fail to lead them into open apostasy of one kind or other; for, —

[1.] Such persons are *unapproved of God in all that they do*, and so have no ground for expectation of his blessing or assistance; for the allowance of the least sin is such an impeachment of sincerity as casteth a man out of covenant communion with God. This is that “offending in one point” which ruins a man’s obedience, and renders him guilty against the whole law, James ii. 10. Any one actual sin makes a man guilty of the curse of the whole law as it contains the covenant of works; and the willing allowance of a man’s self in any one sin habitually breaks the whole law as it contains the rule of our obedience in the covenant of grace. And if in this disapproved condition men meet with outward prosperity in the world, their danger will be increased as well as their guilt aggravated. And the utmost care of professors is required in this matter; for there seems to be among many an open indulgence unto habitual disorders, which hazards their whole covenant interest, and must fill them with uncertainty in their own minds. High time it is for all such persons to shake off “every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and to run with redoubled diligence” the remainder of “the race that is set before them.”

[2.] This indulgence unto any one sin will make way in the minds, consciences, and affections of men, for the admission of other sins also. It will be like a thief that is hidden in a house, and only waits an opportunity to open the doors unto his other companions; to this end he watcheth for a season of sleep and darkness, when there is none to observe his actings. Let a person who thus alloweth himself to live in any sin fall into temptation whilst he is a little more than ordinary careless, his allowed corruption shall open his heart unto any other sin that offers for admission. “Look not,” saith the wise man, “upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things," [Prov. xxiii. 31, 33](#). One **sin liked and loved will make way for every other**. There is a kindred and alliance between sins of all sorts, and they agree in the same end and design. Where any one is willingly entertained, others will intrude themselves beyond all our power of resistance.

[3.] *It will divert the soul from the use of those means whereby all other sins should be resisted, and thereby apostasy prevented; for there is no means appointed or sanctified by God for the resistance or mortification of sin, but it opposeth sin as sin, and consequently everything that is so, and that because it is so. Wherefore, whoever willingly reserves any one sin from the efficacy of the means God hath appointed for its mortification doth equally reserve all. And as those means do lose their power and efficacy towards such persons, so they will insensibly fall off from a conscientious attendance unto any of those ways and duties whereby sin should be opposed and ruined.*

3. **Many of the graces in whose exercise this evangelical holiness doth principally consist are such as are of no reputation in the world.** The greatest moralists that ever were, whether Pharisees or philosophers, could never separate between their love and practice of virtue on the one hand, and their own honour, glory, and reputation on the other. There was in them, as the poet expresseth it in one instance, —

"Amor patriæ, laudumque immensa cupido."

Hence they always esteemed those virtues the most excellent which had the best acceptance and the greatest vogue of praise among men. And it seems to be ingrafted in the nature of man to have some kind of desire to be approved in what men judge themselves to do well and laudably. **Neither is this desire so evil in itself but that it may be managed in subordination unto the glory of God; which nothing that is absolutely evil, or in its own nature or any considerations or circumstances, can be.** But when at any time it swells into an excess, and the **pharisaical leaven** of being seen and praised of men puffeth it up, it is the worst poison that the mind can be infected withal. **In what degree soever it be admitted, in the same it alienates the mind from gospel holiness; and it doth so effectually, — I mean this self-love and love of the praise of others doth so, — for the reason mentioned, namely, that the graces in whose exercise it doth principally consist are of no reputation in the world.** Such are meeekness, gentleness, self-denial, poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mercy and compassion, purity of heart, openness and simplicity of spirit, readiness to undergo and forgive injuries, zeal for God, contempt of the world, fear of sin, dread of God's judgment for sin, and the like. These are those adornings **of the inner man of the heart** which with God are of great price. But as unto their reputation in the world, "weakness, softness of nature, superstitious folly, madness, hypocritical preciseness," is the best measure they meet withal. When men begin to discern that as unto this holiness of the gospel, its principal work lies within doors, in the heart and mind, in the things that no mortal eye seeth and few commend so much as in the notion of them, and which in their outward exercise meet with no good entertainment in the world, they betake themselves unto and rest in those duties which make a better appearance and meet with better acceptance; and many of them are such as, in their proper place, are diligently to be attended unto, provided they draw not off the mind from an attendance unto those despised graces and their exercise wherein the life of true holiness doth consist. [Hence, [John 5:44: How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?](#)] And it is well if we are all sufficiently aware of the deceits of Satan in this matter. In the beginnings of the general

apostasy from the power and purity of Christian religion, to countenance all sorts of persons in a neglect of the principal graces of the gospel, the necessity of regeneration, and a heavenly principle of spiritual life, they were put wholly on outward splendid works of piety and charity, as they were esteemed. Let their minds be defiled, their lusts unmortified, their hearts unhumiliated, their whole souls unfurnished of spiritual and heavenly graces, yet (as they would have it) these outward works should assuredly bring them all unto a blessed immortality and glory! But this face of the covering, this veil that was spread over many nations, being now in many places (particularly among us) rent and destroyed, both wisdom and much circumspection are required, that, either under a pretence or under a real endeavour after the inward spiritual graces of Christ and their due exercise, we do not countenance ourselves in the neglect of those outward duties which are any way useful unto the glory of God and the good of mankind.

These are some of the causes, and others there are of an alike nature, from the powerful influence whereof upon their minds men have changed gospel holiness for other ways of obedience, which also they give other names unto.

Darkness error lies and so forth are unnatural, the characteristics of fallen nature, but the **light of knowledge belongs to the image of God** which originally was introduced to human nature.

Bavinck, RD, Vol. 4 pg100

Reading what John Calvin had to say on the subject of the [image of God](#) and its being restored in the elect upon conversion further adds to the understanding of this subject.

John Calvin on the Image of God

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Institutes of the Christian Religion

First Book, CHAPTER 15.

STATE IN WHICH MAN WAS CREATED. THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL—THE IMAGE OF GOD—
FREE WILL—ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iii.xvi.html>

This chapter is thus divided:—I. The necessary rules to be observed in considering the state of man before the fall being laid down, the point first considered is the creation of the body, and the lesson taught by its being formed out of the earth, and made alive, sec. 1. II. The immortality of the human soul is proved by various solid arguments, sec. 2. III. The image of God (the strongest proof of the soul's

immortality) is considered, and various absurd fancies are refuted, sec. 3. IV. Several errors which obscure the light of truth being dissipated, follows a philosophical and theological consideration of the faculties of the soul before the fall.

Sections.

1. A twofold knowledge of God—viz. before the fall and after it. The former here considered. Particular rules or precautions to be observed in this discussion. What we are taught by a body formed out of the dust, and tenanted by a spirit.

2. The immortality of the soul proved from, 1. The testimony of conscience. 2. The knowledge of God. 3. The noble faculties with which it is endued. 4. Its activity and wondrous fancies in sleep. 5. Innumerable passages of Scripture.

3. The image of God one of the strongest proofs of the immortality of the soul. What meant by this image. The dreams of Osiander concerning the image of God refuted. Whether any difference between “image” and “likeness.” Another objection of Osiander refuted. The image of God conspicuous in the whole Adam.

4. The image of God is in the soul. Its nature may be learnt from its renewal by Christ. What comprehended under this renewal. What the image of God in man before the fall. In what things it now appears. When and where it will be seen in perfection.

5. The dreams of the Manichees and of Servetus, as to the origin of the soul, refuted. Also of Osiander, who denies that there is any image of God in man without essential righteousness.

6. The doctrine of philosophers as to the faculties of the soul generally discordant, doubtful, and obscure. The excellence of the soul described. Only one soul in each man. A brief review of the opinion of philosophers as to the faculties of the soul. What to be thought of this opinion.

7. The division of the faculties of the soul into intellect and will, more agreeable to Christian doctrine.

8. The power and office of the intellect and will in man before the fall. Man’s free will. This freedom lost by the fall—a fact unknown to philosophers. The delusion of Pelagians and Papists. Objection as to the fall of man when free, refuted. [[Go to codefreewill1 for more on this](#)]

1. We have now to speak of the creation of man, not only because of all the works of God it is the noblest, and most admirable specimen of his justice, wisdom, and goodness, but, as we observed at the outset, we cannot clearly and properly know God unless the knowledge of ourselves be added. **This knowledge is twofold**,—relating, first, to the condition in which we were at first created; and, secondly to our condition such as it began to be immediately after Adam’s fall. For it would little avail us to know how we were created if we remained ignorant of the corruption and degradation of our nature in consequence of the fall. At present, however, we confine ourselves to a consideration of our nature in its original integrity. And, certainly, before we descend to the miserable condition into which man has

fallen, it is of importance to consider what he was at first. For there is need of caution, lest we attend only to the natural ills of man, and thereby seem to ascribe them to the Author of nature; impiety deeming it a sufficient defense if it can pretend that everything vicious in it proceeded in some sense from God, and not hesitating, when accused, to plead against God, and throw the blame of its guilt upon Him. Those who would be thought to speak more reverently of the Deity catch at an excuse for their depravity from nature, not considering that they also, though more obscurely, bring a charge against God, on whom the dishonour would fall if anything vicious were proved to exist in nature. Seeing, therefore, that the flesh is continually on the alert for subterfuges, by which it imagines it can remove the blame of its own wickedness from itself to some other quarter, we must diligently guard against this depraved procedure, and accordingly treat of the calamity of the human race in such a way as may cut off every evasion, and vindicate the justice of God against all who would impugn it. We shall afterwards see, in its own place (Book 2 chap. 1 sec. 3), how far mankind now are from the purity originally conferred on Adam. And, first, it is to be observed, that when he was formed out of the dust of the ground a curb was laid on his pride—nothing being more absurd than that those should glory in their excellence who not only dwell in tabernacles of clay, but are themselves in part dust and ashes. But God having not only deigned to animate a vessel of clay, but to make it the habitation of an immortal spirit, Adam might well glory in the great liberality of his Maker.

2. Moreover, there can be no question that man consists of a body and a soul; meaning by soul, an immortal though created essence, which is his nobler part. Sometimes he is called a spirit. But though the two terms, while they are used together differ in their meaning, still, when spirit is used by itself it is equivalent to soul, as when Solomon speaking of death says, that the spirit returns to God who gave it ([Eccles. 12:7](#)). And Christ, in commending his spirit to the Father, and Stephen his to Christ, simply mean, that when the soul is freed from the prison-house of the body, God becomes its perpetual keeper. Those who imagine that the soul is called a spirit because it is a breath or energy divinely infused into bodies, but devoid of essence, err too grossly, as is shown both by the nature of the thing, and the whole tenor of Scripture. It is true, indeed, that men cleaving too much to the earth are dull of apprehension, nay, being alienated from the Father of Lights, are so immersed in darkness as to imagine that they will not survive the grave; still the light is not so completely quenched in darkness that all sense of immortality is lost. **Conscience, which, distinguishing, between good and evil, responds to the Judgment of God, is an undoubted sign of an immortal spirit.** How could motion devoid of essence penetrate to the Judgment-seat of God, and under a sense of guilt strike itself with terror? The body cannot be affected by any fear of spiritual punishment. This is competent only to the soul, which must therefore be endued with essence. Then the mere knowledge of a God sufficiently proves that souls which rise higher than the world must be immortal, it being impossible that any evanescent vigour could reach the very fountain of life. **In fine, while the many noble faculties with which the human mind is endued proclaim that something divine is engraven on it, they are so many evidences of an immortal essence.** For such sense as the lower animals possess goes not beyond the body, or at least not beyond the objects actually presented to it. But the swiftness with which the human mind glances from heaven to earth, scans the secrets of nature, and, after it has embraced all ages, with intellect and memory digests each in its proper order, and reads the future in the past, clearly demonstrates that there lurks in man a something separated from the body. We have intellect by which we are able to conceive of the invisible God and angels—a thing of which body is altogether incapable. **We have ideas of rectitude, justice, and honesty—ideas which the bodily senses cannot**

reach. The seat of these ideas must therefore be a spirit. Nay, sleep itself, which stupefying the man, seems even to deprive him of life, is no obscure evidence of immortality; not only suggesting thoughts of things which never existed, but foreboding future events. I briefly touch on topics which even profane writers describe with a more splendid eloquence. For pious readers, a simple reference is sufficient. **Were not the soul some kind of essence separated from the body, Scripture would not teach that we dwell in houses of clay, and at death remove from a tabernacle of flesh; that we put off that which is corruptible**, in order that, at the last day, we may finally receive according to the deeds done in the body. These, and similar passages which everywhere occur, not only clearly distinguish the soul from the body, but by giving it the name of man, intimate that it is his principal part. Again, when Paul exhorts believers to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, he shows that there are two parts in which the taint of sin resides. Peter, also, in calling Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, would have spoken absurdly if there were no souls towards which he might discharge such an office. Nor would there be any ground for what he says concerning the eternal salvation of souls, or for his injunction to purify our souls, or for his assertion that fleshly lusts war against the soul; neither could the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews say, that pastors watch as those who must give an account for our souls, if souls were devoid of essence. To the same effect Paul calls God to witness upon his soul, which could not be brought to trial before God if incapable of suffering punishment. This is still more clearly expressed by our Saviour, when he bids us fear him who, after he has killed the body, is able also to cast into hell fire. Again when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews distinguishes the fathers of our flesh from God, who alone is the **Father of our spirits** [God created our spirits in an immediate manner vs. our bodies being created or made by natural generation - see the section on this in this document by Owen, I think], he could not have asserted the essence of the soul in clearer terms. Moreover, did not the soul, when freed from the fetters of the body, continue to exist, our Saviour would not have represented the soul of Lazarus as enjoying blessedness in Abraham's bosom, while, on the contrary, that of Dives was suffering dreadful torments. Paul assures us of the same thing when he says, that so long as we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. Not to dwell on a matter as to which there is little obscurity, I will only add, that Luke mentions among the errors of the Sadducees that they believed neither angel nor spirit.

3. A strong proof of this point may be gathered from its being said, **that man was created in the image of God**. For though the divine glory is displayed in man's outward appearance, it cannot be doubted **that the proper seat of the image is in the soul**. I deny not, indeed, that external shape, in so far as it distinguishes and separates us from the lower animals, brings us nearer to God; nor will I vehemently oppose any who may choose to include under the image of God that

“While the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes,
Beholds his own hereditary skies.”

Only let it be understood, that the image of God which is beheld or made conspicuous by these external marks, is spiritual. For Osiander (whose writings exhibit a perverse ingenuity in futile devices), extending the image of God indiscriminately as well to the body as to the soul, confounds heaven with earth. He says, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, placed their image in man, because, even

though Adam had stood entire, Christ would still have become man. Thus, according to him, the body which was destined for Christ was a model and type of that corporeal figure which was then formed. But where does he find that Christ is an image of the Spirit? I admit, indeed, that in the person of the Mediator, the glory of the whole Godhead is displayed: but how can the eternal Word, who in order precedes the Spirit, be called his image? In short, the distinction between the Son and the Spirit is destroyed when the former is represented as the image of the latter. Moreover, I should like to know in what respect Christ in the flesh in which he was clothed resembles the Holy Spirit, and by what marks, or lineaments, the likeness is expressed. And since the expression, "Let us make man in our own image," is used in the person of the Son also, it follows that he is the image of himself—a thing utterly absurd. Add that, according to the figment of Osiander, Adam was formed after the model or type of the man Christ. Hence Christ, in as much as he was to be clothed with flesh, was the idea according to which Adam was formed, whereas the Scriptures teach very differently—viz. that he was formed in the image of God. There is more plausibility in the imagination of those who interpret that Adam was created in the image of God, because it was conformable to Christ, who is the only image of God; but not even for this is there any solid foundation. **The "image" and "likeness" has given rise to no small discussion; interpreters searching without cause for a difference between the two terms, since "likeness" is merely added by way of exposition.** First, we know that repetitions are common in Hebrew, which often gives two words for one thing; And, secondly, there is no ambiguity in the thing itself, man being called the image of God because of his likeness to God. Hence there is an obvious absurdity in those who indulge in philosophical speculation as to these names, placing the Zelem, that is the image, in the substance of the soul, and the Demuth, that is the likeness, in its qualities, and so forth. God having determined to create man in his own image, to remove the obscurity which was in this terms adds, by way of explanation, in his likeness, as if he had said, that he would make man, in whom he would, as it were, image himself by means of the marks of resemblance impressed upon him. Accordingly, Moses, shortly after repeating the account, puts down the image of God twice, and makes no mention of the likeness. Osiander frivolously objects that it is not a part of the man, or the soul with its faculties, which is called the image of God, but the whole Adam, who received his name from the dust out of which he was taken. I call the objection frivolous, as all sound readers will judge. For though the whole man is called mortal, the soul is not therefore liable to death, nor when he is called a rational animal is reason or intelligence thereby attributed to the body. Hence, although the soul is not the man, there is no absurdity in holding that he is called the image of God in respect of the soul; though I retain the principle which I lately laid down, that the image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals. **Accordingly, by this term is denoted the integrity with which Adam was endued when his intellect was clear, his affections subordinated to reason, all his senses duly regulated, and when he truly ascribed all his excellence to the admirable gifts of his Maker.** And though the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart, or in the soul and its powers, there was no part even of the body in which some rays of glory did not shine. It is certain that in every part of the world some lineaments of divine glory are beheld and hence we may infer, that when his image is placed in man, there is a kind of tacit antithesis, as it were, setting man apart from the crowd, and exalting him above all the other creatures. But it cannot be denied that the angels also were created in the likeness of God, since, as Christ declares ([Mt. 22:30](#)), our highest perfection will consist in being like them. But it is not without good cause that Moses commends the favour of God towards us by giving us this peculiar title, the more especially that he was only comparing man with the visible creation.

4. But our definition of the image seems not to be complete until it appears more clearly what the faculties are in which man excels, and in which he is to be regarded as a **mirror of the divine glory** [this gets back to the whole purpose or end of creation, that the rays of God's glory that shine into our hearts, reflect back to God giving glory to Him through our praise and obedience - see Jonathan Edwards' piece, *The End for Which God Made the World*]. This, however, cannot be better known than from the remedy provided for the corruption of nature. It cannot be doubted that when Adam lost his first estate he became alienated from God. Wherefore, **although we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that anything which remains is fearful deformity; and, therefore, our deliverance begins with that renovation which we obtain from Christ** [the image was so corrupted that it was of no use, did not resemble God's image as it ought, and hence was worthy of being cast into hell; certainly God would not cast his own image into hell, so this deformed image is really no image at all in the proper sense which is why I think Owen said that this image or this moral image of God was erased completely (see pg 53, 74). All that is left to keep us from unrestrained sin is God's common graces, our conscience, the light of nature and any remaining light regarding our duty to God which was concreated with our nature - see John Owen's comment on this.], who is, therefore, called the second Adam, because **he restores us to true and substantial integrity**. For although Paul, contrasting the **quickenings Spirit** which believers receive from Christ, with the living soul which Adam was created ([1 Cor. 15:45](#)), commends the richer measure of grace bestowed in regeneration, he does not, however, contradict the statement, that **the end of regeneration is to form us anew in the image of God**. Accordingly, he elsewhere shows that **the new man is renewed after the image of him that created him** ([Col. 3:19](#)). To this corresponds another passage, "Put ye on the new man, who after God is created," ([Eph. 4:24](#)). We must now see what particulars Paul comprehends under this renovation. In the first place, he mentions **knowledge**, and in the second, true **righteousness and holiness** [this agrees with Edwards' description of in what the glory of God consists, Knowledge of God (see [1Jn5:20](#)) , Holiness/virtue and Joy and Happiness]. Hence we infer, **that at the beginning the image of God was manifested by light of intellect, rectitude of heart, and the soundness of every part**. For though I admit that the forms of expression are elliptical, this principle cannot be overthrown—viz. that the leading feature in the **renovation of the divine image** must also have held the highest place in its creation. To the same effect Paul elsewhere says, **that beholding the glory of Christ with unveiled face, we are transformed into the same image. We now see how Christ is the most perfect image of God, into which we are so renewed as to bear the image of God in knowledge, purity, righteousness, and true holiness**. This being established, the imagination of Osiander, as to bodily form, vanishes of its own accord. As to that passage of St Paul ([1 Cor. 11:7](#)), in which the man alone to the express exclusion of the woman, is called the image and glory of God, it is evident from the context, that it merely refers to civil order. I presume it has already been sufficiently proved, that **the image comprehends everything which has any relation to the spiritual and eternal life**. The same thing, in different terms, is declared by St John when he says, that the **light** which was from the beginning, in the eternal Word of God, **was the light of man** ([John 1:4](#)). His object being to extol the singular grace of God in making man excel the other animals, he at the same time shows how he was formed in the image of God, that he may separate him from the common herd, as possessing not ordinary animal existence, but one which **combines with it the light of intelligence**. Therefore, as the image of God constitutes the entire excellence of human nature, as it shone in Adam before his fall, but was **afterwards vitiated and almost destroyed** [keep in mind that the image of God is in two part, the moral image which was erased as

Owen says and the natural image of God which is seen in the faculty of our understanding and reason which was corrupted, and our dominion over everything else], nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated, and tainted with impurity, so it is now partly seen in the elect, in so far as they are regenerated by the Spirit. **Its full lustre, however, will be displayed in heaven.** But in order to know the particular properties in which it consists, it will be proper to treat of the faculties of the soul. For there is no solidity in Augustine's speculation, that the soul is a mirror of the Trinity, inasmuch as it comprehends within itself, intellect, will, and memory. Nor is there probability in the opinion of those who place likeness to God in the dominion bestowed upon man, as if he only resembled God in this, that he is appointed lord and master of all things. **The likeness must be within, in himself. It must be something which is not external to him but is properly the internal good of the soul.**

5. But before I proceed further, it is necessary to advert to the dream of the **Manichees**, which **Servetus** has attempted in our day to revive. Because it is said that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life ([Gen. 2:7](#)), they thought that the soul was a transmission of the substance of God; as if some portion of the boundless divinity had passed into man. It cannot take long time to show how many gross and foul absurdities this devilish error carries in its train. For if the soul of man is a portion transmitted from the essence of God, the divine nature must not only be liable to passion and change, but also to ignorance, evil desires, infirmity, and all kinds of vice. There is nothing more inconstant than man, contrary movements agitating and distracting his soul. He is ever and anon deluded by want of skill, and overcome by the slightest temptations; while every one feels that the soul itself is a receptacle for all kinds of pollution. All these things must be attributed to the divine nature, if we hold that the soul is of the essence of God, or a secret influx of divinity. Who does not shudder at a thing so monstrous? Paul, indeed, quoting from Aratus, tells us we are his offspring ([Acts 17:28](#)); not in substance, however, but in quality, in as much as he has adorned us with divine endowments. Meanwhile, to lacerate the essence of the Creator, in order to assign a portion to each individual, is the height of madness. It must, therefore, be held as certain, that souls, notwithstanding of their having the divine image engraven on them, are created just as angels are. **Creation, however, is not a transfusion of essence, but a commencement of it out of nothing.** Nor, though the spirit is given by God, and when it quits the flesh again returns to him, does it follow that it is a portion withdrawn from his essence. Here, too, Osiander, carried away by his illusions entangled himself in an impious error, by denying that the image of God could be in man without his essential righteousness; as if God were unable, by the mighty power of his Spirit, to render us conformable to himself, unless Christ were substantially transfused into us. Under whatever colour some attempt to gloss these delusions, they can never so blind the eyes of intelligent readers as to prevent them from discerning in them a revival of Manicheism. But from the words of Paul, **when treating of the renewal of the image ([2 Cor. 3:18](#)), the inference is obvious, that man was conformable to God, not by an influx of substance, but by the grace and virtue of the Spirit.** He says, that by **beholding the glory of Christ, we are transformed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord; and certainly the Spirit does not work in us so as to make us of the same substance with God.**

6. It were vain to seek a definition of the soul from philosophers, not one of whom, with the exception of Plato, distinctly maintained its immortality. Others of the school of Socrates, indeed, lean the same way, but still without teaching distinctly a doctrine of which they were not fully persuaded. **Plato, however, advanced still further, and regarded the soul as an image of God.** Others so attach its

powers and faculties to the present life, that they leave nothing external to the body. Moreover, having already shown from Scripture that the **substance of the soul is incorporeal**, we must now add, that though it is not properly enclosed by space, it however occupies the body as a kind of habitation, **not only animating all its parts, and rendering the organs fit and useful for their actions, but also holding the first place in regulating the conduct.** [And this is the point of having God's image upon our souls, that moral image that animates our moral actions and thoughts, hence a good tree will bear good fruit, all to the glory of God. Without this image in its proper form, that is, re-enstamped upon the soul at conversion, we cannot please God.] This it does not merely in regard to the offices of a terrestrial life, but also in regard to the service of God. This, though not clearly seen in our corrupt state, yet the impress of its remains is seen in our very vices. For whence have men such a thirst for glory but from a sense of shame? And whence this sense of shame but from a respect for what is honourable? Of this, the first principle and source is a consciousness that they were born to cultivate righteousness,—a consciousness akin to religion. **But as man was undoubtedly created to meditate on the heavenly life, so it is certain that the knowledge of it was engraven on the soul.** And, indeed, man would want [lack] the principal use of his understanding if he were unable to discern his felicity [*his happiness, e.g., the very foundation of our felicity is the favor of God, by which we enjoy true and solid prosperity - Calvin*], the perfection of which consists in being united to God. Hence, the principal action of the soul is to aspire thither, and, accordingly, the more a man studies to approach to God, the more he proves himself to be endued with reason.

Though there is some plausibility in the opinion of those who maintain that man has more than one soul, namely, a sentient and a rational, yet as there is no soundness in their arguments, we must reject it, unless we would torment ourselves with things frivolous and useless. They tell us (see chap. 5 sec. 4), there is a great repugnance between organic movements and the rational part of the soul. As if reason also were not at variance with herself, and her counsels sometimes conflicting with each other like hostile armies. But since this disorder results from the depravation of nature, it is erroneous to infer that there are two souls, because the faculties do not accord so harmoniously as they ought. But I leave it to philosophers to discourse more subtilely of these faculties. For the edification of the pious, a simple definition will be sufficient. I admit, indeed, that what they ingeniously teach on the subject is true, and not only pleasant, but also useful to be known; nor do I forbid any who are inclined to prosecute the study. First, I admit that there are five senses, which Plato (in Theæteto) prefers calling organs, by which all objects are brought into a common sensorium, as into a kind of receptacle: Next comes the imagination (phantasia), which distinguishes between the objects brought into the sensorium: Next, reason, to which the general power of Judgment belongs: And, lastly, intellect, which contemplates with fixed and quiet look whatever reason discursively revolves. In like manner, to intellect, fancy, and reason, the three cognitive faculties of the soul, correspond three appetite faculties—viz. will—whose office is to choose whatever reason and intellect propound; irascibility, which seizes on what is set before it by reason and fancy; and concupiscence, which lays hold of the objects presented by sense and fancy.

Though these things are true, or at least plausible, still, as I fear they are more fitted to entangle, by their obscurity, than to assist us, I think it best to omit them. If any one chooses to distribute the powers of the mind in a different manner, calling one appetive, which, though devoid of reason, yet obeys reason, if directed from a different quarter, and another intellectual, as being by itself

participant of reason, I have no great objection. Nor am I disposed to quarrel with the view, that there are three principles of action—viz. sense, intellect, and appetite. But let us rather adopt a division adapted to all capacities—a thing which certainly is not to be obtained from philosophers. For they, when they would speak most plainly, divide the soul into appetite and intellect, but make both double. To the latter they sometimes give the name of contemplative, as being contented with mere knowledge and having no active powers (which circumstance makes Cicero designate it by the name of intellect, ingenii) (De Fin. lib. 5). At other times they give it the name of practical, because it variously moves the will by the apprehension of good or evil. Under this class is included the art of living well and justly. The former—viz. appetite—they divide into will and concupiscence, calling it βούλεισις, so whenever the appetite, which they call ὁρμή, obeys the reason. But when appetite, casting off the yoke of reason, runs to intemperance, they call it πάτησις. Thus they always presuppose in man a reason by which he is able to guide himself aright.

7. From this method of teaching we are forced somewhat to dissent. For philosophers, being unacquainted with the corruption of nature, which is the punishment of revolt, erroneously confound two states of man which are very different from each other. Let us therefore hold, for the purpose of the present work, **that the soul consists of two parts, the intellect and the will** (Book 2 chap. 2 sec. 2, 12),—the office of the intellect being to distinguish between objects, according as they seem deserving of being approved or disapproved; and the office of the will, to choose and follow what the intellect declares to be good, to reject and shun what it declares to be bad (Plato, in Phædro). We dwell not on the subtlety of Aristotle, that the mind has no motion of itself; but that the moving power is choice, which he also terms the appetite intellect. Not to lose ourselves in superfluous questions, let it be enough to know that the intellect is to us, as it were, the guide and ruler of the soul; that the will always follows its beck, and waits for its decision, in matters of desire. For which reason Aristotle truly taught, that in the appetite there is a pursuit and rejection corresponding in some degree to affirmation and negation in the intellect (Aristot. Ethic. lib. 6 sec. 2). Moreover, it will be seen in another place (Book 2 c. 2 see. 12-26), how surely the intellect governs the will. Here we only wish to observe, that the soul does not possess any faculty which may not be duly referred to one or other of these members. And in this way we comprehend sense under intellect. Others distinguish thus: They say that sense inclines to pleasure in the same way as the intellect to good; that hence the appetite of sense becomes concupiscence and lust, while the affection of the intellect becomes will. For the term appetite, which they prefer, I use that of will, as being more common.

8. Therefore, God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil, just from unjust, and might know what to follow or to shun, reason going before with her **lamp**; whence philosophers, in reference to her directing power, have called her τὸ ἐγεμονικόν. To this he has joined will, to which choice belongs. Man excelled in these noble endowments in his primitive condition, when reason, intelligence, prudence, and Judgment, not only sufficed for the government of his earthly life, but also enabled him to rise up to God and eternal happiness. Thereafter choice was added to direct the appetites, and temper all the organic motions; the will being thus perfectly submissive to the authority of reason. **In this upright state, man possessed freedom of will, by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life.** It were here unseasonable to introduce the question concerning the secret predestination of God, because we are not considering what might or might not happen, but what the nature of man truly was. Adam, therefore, might have stood if he chose, since it

was only by his own will that he fell; but it was because his will was pliable in either directions and he had not received constancy to persevere, that he so easily fell. [in other words, under the covenant of works, Adam did not have the promise of continual supplies of grace, hence no promise of perseverance. [see Flavel, page 1700, 1708-9] He was defectible. This was to show that our sufficiency is not in ourselves no matter what state man is in (before the fall or after), but that our sufficiency is in God, 2Cor. 3:5, that apart from Him we can do nothing, John 15. In the garden prior to the fall, Adam had not the Spirit of Adoption; he was not "in Christ" as new covenant believers are; he was on his own with the graces given him at his creation.] Still he had a free choice of good and evil; and not only so, but in the mind and will there was the **highest rectitude, and all the organic parts were duly framed to obedience,** until man corrupted its good properties, and destroyed himself. Hence the great darkness of philosophers who have looked for a complete building in a ruin, and fit arrangement in disorder. The principle they set out with was, that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil. They also imagined that the distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life. So far well, had there been no change in man. This being unknown to them, it is not surprising that they throw everything into confusion. **But those who, while they profess to be the disciples of Christ, still seek for free-will in man, notwithstanding of his being lost and drowned in spiritual destruction, labour under manifold delusion, making a heterogeneous mixture of inspired doctrine and philosophical opinions, and so erring as to both.** But it will be better to leave these things to their own place (see Book 2 chap. 2) At present it is necessary only to remember, that man, at his first creation, was very different from all his posterity; who, deriving their origin from him after he was corrupted, received a hereditary taint. At first every part of the soul was formed to rectitude. There was soundness of mind and freedom of will to choose the good. If anyone objects that it was placed, as it were, in a slippery position, because its power was weak, I answer, that the degree conferred was sufficient to take away every excuse. For surely the Deity could not be tied down to this condition,—to make man such, that he either could not or would not sin. Such a nature might have been more excellent; but to expostulate with God as if he had been bound to confer this nature on man, is more than unjust, seeing he had full right to determine how much or how little He would give. Why He did not sustain him by the virtue of perseverance is hidden in his counsel; it is ours to keep within the bounds of soberness. **Man had received the power, if he had the will, but he had not the will which would have given the power; for this will would have been followed by perseverance. Still, after he had received so much, there is no excuse for his having spontaneously brought death upon himself. No necessity was laid upon God to give him more than that intermediate and even transient will, that out of man's fall he might extract materials for his own glory.**

From the Memoirs of David Brainerd, 1745

code32

a minister to the Indians of New Jersey

Here are some excerpts from David Brainerd memoirs on subjects of

Free Will, Holiness & The Image of God.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.ix.ix.x.html>

LETTER X.

To his brother John, at Bethel, the town of Christian, Indians in New Jersey; written likewise at Boston, when he was there on the brink of the grave, in the summer before his death.

dear brother,

I am now just on the verge of eternity, expecting very speedily to appear in the unseen world. I feel myself no more an inhabitant of earth, and sometimes earnestly long to “depart and be with Christ.” I bless God, he has for some years given me an abiding conviction, that it is impossible for any rational creature to enjoy true happiness without being entirely “devoted to him.” Under the influence of this conviction I have in some measure acted. Oh that I had done more so! I saw both the excellency and necessity of holiness in life; but never in such a manner as now, when I am just brought to the sides of the grave. Oh, my brother, pursue after holiness; press towards this blessed mark; and let your thirsty soul continually say, “I shall never be satisfied till I awake in thy likeness.” Although there has been a great deal of selfishness in my views; of which I am ashamed, and for which my soul is humbled at every

view; yet, blessed be God, I find I have really had, for the most part, such a concern for his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, that it is a satisfaction to me to reflect upon these years.

And now, my dear brother, as I must press you to pursue after personal holiness, to be as much in fasting and prayer as your health will allow, and to live above the rate of common Christians; so I must entreat you solemnly to attend to your public work; labour to distinguish between true and false religion; and to that end, watch the motions of God's Spirit upon your own heart. Look to him for help; and impartially compare your experiences with his word. Read Mr. Edwards on the Affections, where the essence and soul of religion is clearly distinguished from false affections. Value religious joys according to the subject matter of them: there are many who rejoice in their supposed justification; but what do these joys argue, but only that they love themselves? Whereas, in true spiritual joys the soul rejoices in God for what he is in himself; blesses God for his holiness, sovereignty, power, faithfulness, and all his perfections; adores God that he is what he is, that he is unchangeably possessed of infinite glory and happiness. Now when men thus rejoice in the perfections of God, and in the infinite excellency of the way of salvation by Christ, and in the holy commands of God, which are a transcript of his holy nature; these joys are divine and spiritual. Our joys will stand by us at the hour of death, if we can be then satisfied that we have thus acted above self; and in a disinterested manner, if I may so express it, rejoiced in the glory of the blessed God. I fear you are not sufficiently aware how much false religion there is in the world; many serious Christians and valuable ministers are too easily imposed upon by this false blaze. I likewise fear, you are not sensible of the dreadful effects and consequences of this false religion. Let me tell you, it is the devil transformed into an angel of light; it is a brat of hell, that always springs up with every revival of religion, and stabs and murders the cause of God, while it passes current with multitudes of well-meaning people for the height of religion. Set yourself, my brother, to crush all appearances of this nature among the Indians, and never encourage any degrees of heat without light. Charge my people in the name of their dying minister, yea, in the name of him who was dead and is alive, to live and walk as becomes the gospel. Tell them, how great the expectations of God and his people are from them, and now awfully they will wound God's cause, if they fall into vice; as well as fatally prejudice other poor Indians. Always insist, that their experiences are rotten, that their joys are delusive, although they may have been rapt up into the third heavens in their own conceit by them, unless the main tenour of their lives be spiritual, watchful, and holy. In pressing these things, "thou shalt both save thyself, and those that hear thee."

God knows, I was heartily willing to have served him longer in the work of the ministry, although it had still been attended with all the labours and hardships of past years, if he had seen fit that it should be so: but as his will now appears otherwise, I am fully content, and can with utmost freedom say, "The will of the Lord be done." It affects me to think of leaving you in a world of sin: my heart pities you, that those storms and tempests are yet before you, which I

trust, through grace, I am almost delivered from. But “God lives, and blessed be my Rock:” he is the same Almighty Friend: and will, I trust, be your guide and helper, as he has been mine.

And now, my dear brother, “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you inheritance among all them that are sanctified. May you enjoy the divine presence both in private and public; and may “the arms of your hands be made strong, by the right hand of the mighty God of Jacob!” Which are the passionate desires and prayers of your affectionate dying brother,

- DAVID BRAINERD.

THIRD PAPER.

Some signs of godliness.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.ix.x.iii.html>

The distinguishing marks of a true Christian, taken from one of my old manuscripts; where I wrote as I felt and experienced, and not from any considerable degree of doctrinal knowledge, or acquaintance with the sentiments of others in this point.

1. He has a true knowledge of the glory and excellency of God, that he is most worthy to be loved and praised for his own divine perfections. [Psalm. cxlv..3.](#)
 2. God is his portion, [Psal. lxxiii. 25.](#) And God’s glory his great concern, [Matt. vi. 22.](#)
 3. Holiness is his delight; nothing he so much longs for, as to be holy as God is holy. [Phil. iii. 9-12.](#)
 - 4 Sin is his greatest enemy. This he hates, for its own nature, for what it is in itself, being contrary to a holy God, [Jer. ii. 1.](#) And consequently he hates all sin, [Rom. vii. 24. 1 John iii. 9.](#)
 5. The laws of God also are his delight, [Psal. cxix. 97. Rom. vii. 22.](#) These he observes, not out of constraint, from a servile fear of hell; but they are his choice, [Psal. cxix. 30.](#) The strict observance of them is not his bondage, but his greatest liberty, [ver. 45.](#)
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REFLECT. V.

[on David Brainerd, minister to the Indians of New Jersey 1745,
the time of Jonathan Edwards]

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.ix.xii.html>

Is there not much in the preceding memoirs of Mr. Brainerd to teach, and excite to duty, us who are called to the work of the ministry, and all that are candidates for that great work? What a deep sense did he seem to have of the greatness and importance of that work, and with what weight did it lie on

his mind! How sensible was he of his own insufficiency for this work; and how great was his dependence on God's sufficiency! How solicitous, that he might be fitted for it! and to this end, how much time did he spend in prayer and fasting, as well as reading and meditation; giving himself to these things! How did he dedicate his whole life, all his powers and talents, to God; and forsake and renounce the world, with all its pleasing and insnaring enjoyments, **that he might be wholly at liberty to serve Christ in this work**; and to "please him who had chosen him to be a soldier, under the Captain of our salvation!" With what solicitude, solemnity, and diligence did he devote himself to God our Saviour, and seek his presence and blessing in secret, at the time of his ordination! and how did his whole heart appear to be constantly engaged, his whole time employed, and his whole strength spent, in the business he then solemnly undertook, and to which he was publicly set apart! And his history shows us the right way to success in the work of the ministry. He sought it as a resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race, for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he "labour always fervently," not only in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in prayers day and night, "wrestling with God" in secret, and "travailing in birth," with unutterable groans and agonies, "until Christ were formed" in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent! how did he thirst for a blessing on his ministry; and "watch for souls, as one that must give account!" how did he "go forth in the strength of the Lord God;" seeking and depending on a special influence of the Spirit to assist [which assistance Adam did not have] and succeed him! And what was the happy fruit at last, though after long waiting, and many dark and discouraging appearances? Like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling, through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day.

These words "**wholly at liberty**" speak to the true Christian sense of freedom, where as prior to being converted we are not free (to worship Him) because we are held captive by Satan, desiring to do his will all the time (self-deceived, self-sufficient, secure in ourselves, etc.) - therefore we are in bondage to sin, servants of sin, sin having dominion over us. But we are only free when Christ makes us free (*If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed*. John 8:36, hence, repentance must be granted to give us a change of heart, 2Tim2:25, John 6) The world thinks they are free but it must be understood that this idea of them being free is only a *creaturely freedom* of a lesser kind as opposed to being free in Christ which is what really matters. Man's will does not exceed the power of God's will. Yes, they are free to sin in a creaturely sense, but even God restrains that!! The Jews while held captive in Egypt under Pharaoh had a creaturely freedom, so to speak, in that people desire to do what seems best to them, but were not free to worship God in a due manner due to Pharaoh's unwillingness to let them go. Pharaoh symbolizes Satan. It was only when the almighty power of God crushed Pharaoh (Satan) so that he let the people go. So it is God the Spirit who must convert the soul so that the person is truly free in the most important sense - to believe, to desire holiness, etc., i.e., to worship God in a due manner.

Also, the words **until Christ be formed** is in reference to our being conformed to his image by the constant contemplation of Christ's glory seen in his doctrines which is why we must strive to grow in knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom. See 2Cor. 3:18: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The Glory of Christ and Other Related Subjects

code33

By Thomas Watson

A Body of Divinity

The following several pages is an excerpt from **Thomas Watson's** book, [A Body of Divinity](#). Watson sums up many things in a very good way, arguably the easiest to read of all the reformers.

Christ gives us, the elect, the glory that the Father gave him, (John 17:22) as Edwards puts it, the effulgence or shining forth of his internal glory which consists in the knowledge of Himself, virtue and holiness, happiness consisting in joy in God. He gives this or he *communicates* this image to us, re-stamping this upon our soul, the image of his knowledge and holiness, a participation of his nature as well as a participation of happiness in Himself, consisting in joy in God, by which and only by which may we please God - without which we cannot. This is the image that we lost at the fall, the moral image of God, hence we are born into this world a *natural man* in the likeness of Adam (Gen 5:3, 1Cor15:49) as opposed to a *spiritual man*. Therefore, those who are in a natural condition are blind to this and because of the enmity in their heart toward God, hate everything having to do with holiness, love for God, God's sovereignty, and like spiritual things - they despise spiritual things like faith, etc., (seeing only an excellency in themselves) and will continue to hate these things and have a secret dislike for them (inveterate prejudice) until they be born again (regenerated, quickened from the dead to life, given a new heavenly palate to love God and all that has to do with Him). Shepard described it this way: *faith springs out of the destruction of our own excellency and the ruins of it*. Many of these descriptions are echoed in different way by Edwards, Owen and Shepard and the other reformers which is why you should study them. You'll see this come out in the next 60 pages in Watson's work. Review these things; note them; meditate on them.

Look for these words that have to do with the work of the Spirit upon the soul of his elect at conversion, words like stamps, impress, impression, image of God, likeness, holiness, etc., relating to holiness being enstamped upon the soul and so forth. You'll see these terms and concepts echoed by the other reformers. Grace is the image of God - Thomas Watson. It is grace that enables us to obey God...to believe on his Son.

My comments in [blue], Watson's comments in **red** for emphasis.

A Body of Divinity

By Thomas Watson

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vi.vii.html>

pg 85-87

If we must be like God in holiness, wherein does our holiness consist?

In two things. In our suitableness to God's nature, and in our subjection to his will.

Our **holiness consists** in our suitableness to the nature of God. [code469b] Hence the saints are said to partake of the divine nature, **which is not partaking of his essence, but his image**. [2 Pet 1:1](#). Herein is the saints' holiness, when they are the lively pictures of God. **They bear the image of God's meekness, mercifulness, heavenliness**; they are of the same judgment with God, of the same disposition; they love what he loves, and hate what he hates.

Our **holiness consists also in our subjection to the will of God**. As God's nature is the pattern of holiness, so his will is the rule of holiness. It is our holiness when we do his will, [Acts 13:32](#); when we bear his will, [Micah 7:7](#); when what he inflicts wisely we suffer willingly. Our great care should be, to be like God in holiness. Our holiness should be qualified as God's; as his is a real holiness, ours should be. 'Righteousness and true holiness.' [Eph 4:44](#). It should not be the paint of holiness, but the life; it should not be like the Egyptian temples, beautified without merely, but like Solomon's temple, gold within, [Psa 45:13](#). 'The king's daughter is all glorious within.' That I may press you to resemble God in holiness consider,

(1.) How illustrious every holy person is. He is a fair glass in which some of the **beams of God's holiness shine forth** [see Edwards on the glory of God, His external glory being the effulgence of his internal glory]. We read that Aaron put on his garments for glory and beauty. [Exod 28:8](#). When we wear the embroidered garment of holiness, it is for glory and beauty. A good Christian is ruddy, being sprinkled with Christ's blood [see Owen on the sprinkling of blood for our purification]; and white, being adorned with holiness. As the diamond to a ring, so is holiness to the soul; that, as Chrysostom says, they that oppose it cannot but admire it.

(2.) It is the great design God carries on in the world, to make a people like himself in holiness. What are all the showers of ordinances for, but to rain down righteousness upon us, and make us holy? What are the promises for, but to encourage holiness? What is the sending of the Spirit into the world for, but to anoint us with the holy unction? [John 2:20](#). What are all afflictions for, but to make us partakers of God's holiness? [Heb 12:20](#). What are mercies for, but loadstones to draw us to holiness? What is the end of Christ's dying, but that his blood might wash away our unholiness? 'Who gave himself for us, to purify unto himself a peculiar people.' [Titus 2:14](#). So that if we are not holy, we cross God's great design in the world.

(3.) Our holiness draws God's heart to us. **Holiness is God's image; and God cannot choose but love his image where he sees it**. A king loves to see his effigies upon a piece of coin. 'Thou lovest righteousness.' [Psa 45:7](#). And where does righteousness grow, but in a holy heart? [Isa 62:2](#). 'Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee.' It was her holiness that drew God's love to her. 'They shall call them the holy people.' Verse 12. God values not any by their high birth, but their holiness.

(4.) Holiness is the only thing that distinguishes us from the reprobate part of the world. God's people have his seal upon them. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let all that name the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' [2 Tim 2:19](#). The people of God are sealed with a double seal. Election, 'The Lord knows who are his:' and Sanctification, 'Let every one depart from iniquity.' As a nobleman is distinguished from another by his silver star; as a virtuous woman is distinguished from a harlot by her chastity; so holiness distinguishes

between the two seeds. All that are of God have Christ for their captain, and holiness is the white colour they wear. [Heb 2:20](#).

(5.) Holiness is our honour. Holiness and honour are put together. [1 Thess 4:4](#). Dignity goes along with sanctification. 'He has washed us from our sins in his blood, and has made us kings unto God.' [Rev 1:1](#). When we are washed and made holy, then we are kings and priests to God. The saints are called vessels of honour; they are called jewels, for the sparkling of their holiness, because filled with wine of the Spirit. This makes them earthly angels.

(6.) Holiness gives us boldness with God. 'Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.' [Job 22:23, 26](#). Lifting up the face is an emblem of boldness. Nothing can make us so ashamed to go to God as sin. A wicked man in prayer may lift up his hands, but he cannot lift up his face. **When Adam had lost his holiness [that most precious and excellent part of God's image], he lost his confidence; he hid himself.** But the holy person goes to God as a child to its father; his conscience does not upbraid him with allowing any sin, therefore he can go boldly to the throne of grace, and have mercy to help in time of need. [Heb 4:16](#).

(7.) **Holiness gives peace.** Sin raises a storm in the conscience; ubi peccatum ibi procella [where there is sin, there is tumult]. 'There is no peace to the wicked.' [Isa 57:7](#). Righteousness and peace are put together. Holiness is the root which bears this sweet fruit of peace; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

(8.) Holiness leads to heaven. It is the King of heaven's highway. 'An highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness.' [Isa 35:5](#). At Rome there were temples of virtue and honour, and all were to go through the temple of virtue to the temple of honour; so we must go through the temple of holiness to the temple of heaven. Glory begins in virtue [As Edwards said, his internal glory, which he gives or communicates to us, consists in virtue and holiness, etc., and we thus participate in the happiness that He has in himself, hence, consisting in joy in God.] , 'Who has called us to glory and virtue.' [2 Pet 1:1](#). Happiness is nothing else but the quintessence of holiness; holiness is glory militant, and happiness holiness triumphant.

The mercy of God, pg 94

[5] God's mercy is one of the most orient pearls of his crown; it makes his Godhead appear amiable and lovely. When Moses said to God, 'I beseech thee shew me thy glory;' the Lord answered him, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will shew thee mercy.' [Exod 33:19](#). God's mercy is his glory. **His holiness** makes him illustrious; his mercy makes him propitious.

II. The qualifications or properties of God's mercy.

[1] God's mercy is free. **To set up merit is to destroy mercy.** Nothing can deserve mercy, because we are polluted in our blood; nor force it. We may force God to punish us, but not to love us. 'I will love them freely.' [Hos 14:4](#). Every link in the chain of salvation is wrought and interwoven with free grace. Election is free. 'He has chosen us in him, according to the good pleasure of his will.' [Eph 1:1](#). Justification is free. 'Being justified freely by his grace.' [Rom 3:34](#). Salvation is free. 'According to his

mercy he saved us.' [Titus 3:3](#). Say not then, I am unworthy; for mercy is free. If God should show mercy to such only as are worthy, he would show none at all.

pg 103 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vi.x.html>

When God sees 'truth in the inward parts,' and 'lips in which is no guile,' he sees his own image, which draws his heart towards us. Likeness produces love. [Edwards notes that God loves himself with an infinite love infinitely more than any other being or creature for obvious reasons; he is the most excellent Being! So the first and foremost reason of why he created the universe and all that is in it is to display himself, his glory! That is his primary purpose, all things considered. Our salvation, his mercy, love and grace and infinite condescension work toward that ultimate end.]

pg 115 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vi.xiii.html>

[2] The soul of man. This is the man of the man. Man, in regard of his soul, partakes with the angels; nay, as Plato says, the understanding, will, and conscience, are a glass that resemble the Trinity. The soul is the diamond in the ring, it is a vessel of honour; God himself is served in this vessel. It is a spark of celestial brightness, says Damascene. David admired the rare contexture and workmanship of his body. 'I am wonderfully made, I was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.' [Psa 139:14, 15](#). If the cabinet be so curiously wrought, what is the jewel? How richly is the soul embroidered! Thus you see how glorious a work the creation is, and man especially, who is the epitome of the world.

But why did God make the world?

(1.) Negatively. Not for himself; for he did not need it, being infinite. **He was happy in reflecting upon his own sublime excellencies and perfections before the world was.** God did not make the world to be a mansion for us, since we are not to abide here for ever. Heaven is the mansion house. [John 14:4](#). The world is only a passage-room to eternity; the world is to us as the wilderness was to Israel, not to rest in, but to travel through to the glorious Canaan. The world is a dressing-room to dress our souls in, not a place where we are to stay for ever. The apostle tells us of the world's funeral. 'The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.' [2 Pet 3:30](#).

(2.) Positively. **God made the world to demonstrate his own glory.** The world is a looking glass, in which we may see the power and goodness of God shine forth. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' [Psa 19:9](#). The world is like a curious piece of tapestry, in which we may see the skill and wisdom of him that made it.

Use one: Did God create this world? (1.) This convinces us of the truth of his Godhead. To create is proper to a Deity. [Acts 17:74](#). Plato was convinced of a Deity when he saw that all the world could not make a fly. Thus God proves himself to be the true God, and distinguishes himself from idols. [Jer 10:11](#). It is written in Chaldee, 'Thus shall ye say to them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish.' Who but God can create? The creation is enough to convince the heathen that there is a God. There are two books out of which God will judge and condemn the heathen, viz., the book of Conscience, 'Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,' [Rom 2:25](#), and the book of the Creation, 'The invisible things of him are clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' [Rom 1:10](#). The world is full of emblems and hieroglyphics.

Every star in the sky, every bird that flies in the air, is a witness against the heathen. A creature could not make itself.

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(4.) **Did God create our souls after his image, but we lost it? Let us never rest till we are restored to God's image again.** We have now got the **devil's image** in pride, malice, and envy. Let us get God's image restored, which consists in knowledge and righteousness [again, see Edwards on this subject of in what consists God's image, his glory, etc.] . [Col. 3:10. Eph 4:44](#). Grace is our best beauty [hence the beauty of holines], it makes us like God and angels. As the sun is to the world, so is holiness to the soul. Let us go to God to repair his image in us. Lord! thou hast once made me, make me anew; **sin has defaced thy image** in me, oh draw it again by the pencil of the Holy Ghost.

“The more pleasure and delight you find in doing or suffering the will of God, the more of Christ's spirit is in you, and the more of his image is upon you.” John Flavel, p 439 Vol. VI “Sanctification is the writing of God’s law on you heart.” John Flavel, 112 Vol. VI

III. The Fall

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1. The Covenant Of Works , p128

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vii.i.html>

Q xii: I proceed to the next question, WHAT SPECIAL ACT OF PROVIDENCE DID GOD EXERCISE TOWARDS MAN IN THE ESTATE WHEREIN HE WAS CREATED?

A: When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge upon pain of death.

For this, consult with [Gen 2:16, 17](#): ‘And the Lord commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die.’ The subject of our next discourse is this covenant of works.

I. This covenant was made with Adam and all mankind; for Adam was a public person, and the representative of the world.

For what reason did God make a covenant with Adam and his posterity in innocence?

(1.) To show his sovereignty over us. We were his creatures, and as he was the great Monarch of heaven and earth, he might impose upon us terms of a covenant. (2.) God made a covenant with Adam to bind him fast to him: as God bound himself to Adam, so Adam was bound to him by the covenant.

What was the covenant?

God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge; but gave him leave to eat of all the other trees of the garden. God did not envy him any happiness; but said, 'Meddle not with this tree of knowledge,' because he would try Adam's obedience. As King Pharaoh made Joseph chief ruler of his kingdom, and gave him a ring off his finger, and a chain of gold, but said he must not 'touch his throne.' [Gen 41:40](#). In like manner God dealt with Adam. He gave him a sparkling jewel, knowledge; and put upon him the garment of original righteousness; only, said he, touch not the tree of knowledge, for that is aspiring after omniscience. Adam had power to keep this law: he had the copy of God's law written in his heart. This covenant of works had a promise annexed to it, and a threatening.

1. The promise was, 'Do this and live.' In case man had stood, it is probable he would not have died, but would have been translated to a better paradise.
2. The threatening, 'Thou shalt die the death;' Heb. 'In dying thou shalt die;' that is, thou shalt die both a natural death and an eternal, unless some expedient be found out for thy restoration.

Why did God give Adam this law, seeing he foresaw that Adam would transgress it?

(1.) It was Adam's fault that he did not keep the law. God gave him a **stock of grace¹ to trade with** [\[see the parable of the talents that this relates to; we as Christians are to trade with our talents that God gave us, to increase in grace and knowledge of God, Matt. 13:12. See also bot'm pg 1191.\]](#), but by his own neglect he failed. (2.) Though God foresaw Adam would transgress, yet that was not a sufficient reason that no law should be given him; for, by the same reason, God should not have given his written Word to men, to be a rule of faith and manners, because he foresaw that some would not believe, and others would be profane. Shall laws not be made in the land, because some will break them? (3.) Though God foresaw Adam would break the law, he knew how to turn it to greater good in sending Christ. The first covenant being broken, he knew how to establish a second, and a better.

¹ "the law indeed is not a rule of that by which we are to obey, namely, of our faith, yet it is the only rule of what we are to obey; we are not to perform acts of obedience now as Adam was to do, namely, by the sole power of inherent grace, but we are to live by faith, and act by faith, (for without Me you can do nothing, Jn15:5). We are not united to Christ our life by obedience, as Adam was to God by it, but by faith. And therefore as all action in living things come from union, so all our acts of obedience are to come by faith, from the Spirit on Christ's part, and from faith on our part, which make our union." Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, p 381

II. Concerning the first covenant, consider these four things: -

[1] The form of the first covenant in innocence was working; 'Do this and live.' Working was the ground and condition of man's justification. [Gal 3:12](#). Not but that working is required in the covenant of grace, for we are bid to work out our salvation, and be rich in good works. But works in the covenant of grace are not required under the same notion as in the first covenant with Adam. **Works are not required for the justification of our persons, but as an attestation of our love to God; not as the cause of our salvation, but as an evidence of our adoption.** Works are required in the covenant of grace, not so much in our own strength as in the strength of another. 'It is God which worketh in you.' [Phil 2:13](#). As the teacher guides the child's hand, and helps him to form his letters, so that it is not so much the child's writing as the master's, so our obedience is not so much our working as the Spirit's co-working. [\[Edwards noted that man works, God works in us; we are the proper actors. Here's what he said: "In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God](#)

does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.¹ Efficacious Grace pg 558-601]

[2] The covenant of works was very strict. God required of Adam and all mankind, (1.) Perfect obedience. Adam must do all things written in the 'book of the law,' and not fail, either in the matter or manner. [Gal 3:10](#). Adam was to live up to the whole breadth of the moral law, and go exactly according to it, as a well-made dial goes with the sun. One sinful thought would have forfeited the covenant. (2.) Personal obedience. Adam must not do his work by a proxy, or have any surety bound for him; but it must be done in his own person. (3.) Perpetual obedience. He must continue in all things written in 'the book of the law.' [Gal 3:10](#). Thus it was very strict. There was no mercy in case of failure.

[3] The covenant of works was not built upon a very firm basis; and therefore must needs leave men full of fears and doubts. **The covenant of works rested upon the strength of man's inherent righteousness; which though in innocence was perfect, yet was subject to change.** [This is the critical issue!, Adam's defectableness. Even though he was made without sin, in a perfect environment, he was on his own in this respect; he had no promise of continual supplies of grace to enable him to persevere [see Flavel, page 1699, 1706] , that is, to not fully fall away from God. This differentiates the covenant of works from the covenant of grace; Adam did not have any promise of continual supplies of grace as new covenant believers do, hence John 15, we are ingrafted into the true vine to partake of the sap of the root. And this was to show that man is not sovereign but wholly dependent upon God; that our sufficiency is not of ourselves but of Him! Watson makes this point in #3 below.] Adam was created holy, **but mutable**; having a power to stand and a power to fall. He had a **stock of original righteousness** [see bot'm pg 1191 & pg 1173 footnote] to begin the world with, but he was not sure he would not break. He was his own pilot, and could steer right in the time of innocence; but he was not so secured but that he might dash against the rock of temptation, and he and his posterity be shipwrecked; so that the covenant of works must needs leave jealousies and doubtings in Adam's heart, as he had no security given him that he should not fall from that glorious state.

[4] The covenant of works being broken by sin, man's condition was very deplorable and desperate. He was left in himself helpless; there was no place for repentance; the justice of God being offended set all the other attributes against him. When Adam lost his righteousness, he lost his anchor of hope and his crown; there was no way for relief, unless God would find out such a way as neither man nor angel could devise.

Use one: See (1.) **The condescension of God**, who was pleased to stoop so low as to make a covenant with us. For the God of glory to make a covenant with dust and ashes; for God to bind himself to us, to give us life in case of obedience; for him to enter into covenant with us was a sign of friendship, and a royal act of favour.

(2.) See what a glorious condition man was in, when God entered into covenant with him. He was placed in the garden of God, which for the pleasure of it was called paradise. [Gen 2:8](#). He had his choice of all the trees, one only excepted; he had all kinds of precious stones, pure metals, rich cedars; he was a king upon the throne, and all the creation did obeisance to him, as in Joseph's dream all his brethren's sheaves bowed to his sheaf. Man, in innocence, had all kinds of pleasure that might ravish

his senses with delight, and be as baits to allure him to serve and worship his Maker. He was full of holiness. Paradise was not more adorned with fruit than Adam's soul was with grace. **He was the coin on which God had stamped his lively image.** Light sparkled in his understanding, so that he was like an earthly angel; and his will and affections were full of order, tuning harmoniously to the will of God. Adam was a perfect pattern of sanctity. Adam had intimacy of communion with God and conversed with him, as a favourite with his prince. He knew God's mind, and had his heart. He not only enjoyed the light of the sun in paradise, but the light of God's countenance. This was Adam's condition when God entered into a covenant with him; but this did not long continue; for 'man being in honour abideth not,' lodged not for a night. [Psa 49:12](#). His teeth watered at the apple, and ever since it has made our eyes water.

(3.) **Learn from Adam's fall, how unable we are to stand in our own strength.** If Adam, in the state of integrity, did not stand, how unable are we now, when the lock of our original righteousness is cut. **If purified nature did not stand, how then shall corrupt nature? We need more strength to uphold us than our own.**

(4.) See in what a sad condition all unbelievers and impenitent persons are. As long as they continue in their sins they continue under the curse, under the first covenant. Faith entitles us to the mercy of the second covenant; but while men are **under the power of their sins** [Owen notes that man is under sin's dominion while unconverted] they are under the curse of the first covenant; and if they die in that condition, they are damned to eternity.

(5.) See the wonderful goodness of God, who was pleased when man had forfeited the first covenant, to enter into a new covenant with him. Well may it be called *foedus gratiae*, a covenant of grace; for it is bespangled with promises as the heaven with stars. When the angels, those glorious spirits, fell, God did not enter into a new covenant with them to be their God, but he let those golden vessels lie broken; yet has he entered into a second covenant with us, better than the first. [Heb 8:6](#). It is better, **because it is surer**; it is made **in Christ**, and cannot be reversed. **Christ has engaged his strength to keep every believer. In the first covenant we had a posse stare, a power of standing; in the second we had a non posse cadere, an impossibility of falling finally.** [1 Pet 1:5](#).

(6.) **Whosoever they are that look for righteousness and salvation by the power of their freewill, or the inherent goodness of their nature, or by virtue of their merit, as the Socinians and Papists, they are all under the covenant of works.** They do not submit to the righteousness of faith [i.e., they hate faith!], therefore they are bound to keep the whole law, and in case of failure they are condemned. The covenant of grace is like a court of Chancery, to relieve the sinner, and help him who is cast by the first covenant. It says, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and be saved'; but such as will stand upon their own inherent righteousness, free-will and merit, fall under the first covenant of works, and are in a perishing estate.

Use two: Let us labour by faith to get into the second covenant of grace, and then the curse of the first covenant will be taken away by Christ. If we once get to be heirs of the covenant of grace, we are in a better state than before. **Adam stood on his own legs, and therefore he fell; we stand in the strength of Christ.** Under the first covenant, the justice of God, as an avenger of blood, pursues us [hence all those under Law see God as a judge, are *hard man*, not as a loving and gracious Father.

Why? They have not the Spirit of Adoption! Adam did not have this Spirit. This is one reason why Roman Catholics worship Mary; they see Jesus as a "hard man" and are thus afraid of him; so they pray to Mary to appease Jesus to have favor on them so in turn Jesus will pray the Father, etc. Read James White's book on Roman Catholicism]; but if we get into the second covenant we are in the city of refuge, we are safe, and the justice of God is pacified towards us. [As Watson says on page 282, "It is disputed, whether grace itself may not perish, as Adam's; yet sure I am, grace kept by the power of God cannot perish."]

¹Just as every human thought and action is the fruit of the action of God in whom we live and have our being, and is at the same time the fruit of the activity of human beings, so also Scripture is totally the product of the Spirit of God, who speaks through the prophets and apostles, and at the same time totally the product of the activity of the authors. "Everything is divine and everything is human" (θελα παντα και ανθρωπινα παντα). Herman Bavinck see also page 431, 432. [code225a]

II. Sin is evil in the nature of it. p 133

code377

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vii.i.html>

[1] It is a defiling thing. Sin is not only a defection, but a pollution. It is to the soul as rust is to gold, as a stain to beauty. It makes the soul red with guilt, and black with filth. Sin in Scripture is compared to a 'menstruous cloth,' [Isa 30:22](#), and to a 'plague-sore.' [1 Kings 8:38](#). Joshua's filthy garments, in which he stood before the angel, were nothing but a type and hieroglyphic of sin. [Zech 3:3](#). [Sin has blotted God's image](#), and stained the orient brightness of the soul. It makes God loathe a sinner, [Zech 11:8](#); and when a sinner sees his sin, he loathes himself. [Ezek 20:42](#). Sin drops poison on our holy things, it infects our prayers. The high priest was to make atonement for sin on the altar, to typify that our holiest services need Christ to make an atonement for them. [Exod 29:36](#). Duties of religion in themselves are good, but sin corrupts them, as the purest water is polluted by running through muddy ground. If the leper, under the law, had touched the altar, the altar would not have cleansed him, but he would have defiled the altar. The apostle calls sin, 'Filthiness of flesh and spirit.' [2 Cor 7:1](#). [Sin stamps the devil's image on a man](#). Malice is the devil's eye, hypocrisy his cloven foot. It turns a man into a devil. 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' [John 6:70](#).

pg 140 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vii.ii.html>

(2.) The aggravation of Adam's sin.

Wherein did it appear to be so great? It was but raptus pomi [the seizing of an apple]. Was it such a great matter to pluck an apple?

It was against an infinite God. It was malum complexum, a voluminous sin, there were many twisted together in it; as Cicero says of parricide, 'He who is guilty of it, Plurima committit peccata in uno, he commits many sins in one;' so there were many sins in this one sin of Adam. It was a big-bellied sin, a chain with many links. Ten sins were in it.

(1:) Incredulity. Our first parents did not believe what God had spoken was truth. God said, They shall die the death in the day they eat of that tree. They believed not that they should die; they could not be persuaded that such fair fruit had death at the door. Thus, by unbelief they made God a liar; nay, which was worse, they believed the devil rather than God. [\[They entered into league with Satan. Gen 3:15 is the first appearance of God's promise to break this league! - by putting "enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed:" Prior to conversion we are in league with Satan; we desire to do his will, etc....we are of the same mind and will. In order to effect this change so that there is enmity between us and Satan, God must change either Satan's nature or ours. Since Satan's nature is not going to be changed, ours will be changed, i.e., the elect's nature will be changed! Hence, Ezek. 36:25-28, Jer. 32:39-40, etc.\]](#)

(2:) Unthankfulness, which is the epitome of all sin. Adam's sin was committed in the midst of Paradise. God had enriched him with variety of mercies; **he had stamped his own image upon him**; he had made him lord of the world; gave him of all the trees of the garden to eat (one only excepted), and now to take of that tree! This was high ingratitude; it was like the dye to the wool, which makes it crimson. When Adam's eyes were opened, and he saw what he had done, well might he be ashamed, and hide himself. How could he who sinned in the midst of Paradise, look God in the face without blushing!

(3:) In Adam's sin was discontent. Had he not been discontented, he would never have sought to have altered his condition. Adam, one would think, had enough, he differed but little from the angels, he had the robe of innocence to clothe him, and the glory of Paradise to crown him; yet he was not content, he would have more; he would be above the ordinary rank of creatures. How wide was Adam's heart, that a whole world could not fill it!

(4:) Pride, in that he would be like God. This worm, that was but newly crept out of the dust, now aspired after Deity. 'Ye shall be as gods,' said Satan, and Adam hoped to have been so indeed; he supposed the tree of knowledge would have anointed his eyes, and made him omniscient. But, by climbing too high, he got a fall.

(5:) Disobedience. God said, 'Thou shalt not eat of the tree;' but he would eat of it, though it cost him his life. Disobedience is a sin against equity. It is right we should serve him from whom we have our subsistence. God gave Adam his allowance, therefore it was but right he should give God his allegiance. How could God endure to see his laws trampled on before his face? This made him place a flaming sword at the end of the garden.

(6:) Curiosity. He meddled with that which was out of his sphere, and did not belong to him. God smote the men of Bethshemesh for looking into the ark. [1 Sam 6:19](#). Adam would be prying into God's secrets, and tasting what was forbidden.

(7:) Wantonness. Though Adam had a choice of all the other trees, yet his palate grew wanton, and he must have this tree. Like Israel, God sent them manna, angels' food, ay, but they had a hankering after quails. It was not enough that God supplied their wants, unless he should satisfy their lusts. Adam had not only for necessity, but for delight; yet his wanton palate lusted after forbidden fruit.

(8:) Sacrilege. The tree of knowledge was none of Adam's, yet he took of it, and did sacrilegiously rob God of his due. It was counted a great crime in Harpalus to rob the temple, and steal the silver vessels; so it was in Adam to steal fruit from that tree which God had peculiarly enclosed for himself. Sacrilege is double theft.

(9:) Murder. Adam was a public person, and all his posterity were involved and wrapped up in him; and he, by sinning, at once destroyed all his posterity, if free grace did not interpose. If Abel's blood cried so loud in God's ears, 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground,' [Gen 4:10](#); how loud did the blood of all Adam's posterity cry against him for vengeance!

(10:) Presumption. Adam presumed of God's mercy; he blessed himself, saying he should have peace; he thought, though he did transgress, he should not die; that God would sooner reverse his decree than punish him. This was great presumption. What a heinous sin was Adam's breach of covenant!

One sin may have many sins in it. We are apt to have slight thoughts of sin, and say it is but a little one. How many sins were in Adam's sin! Oh take heed of any sin! As in one volume there may be many works bound up, so there may be many sins in one sin.

[3] The dreadfulness of the effect. It has corrupted man's nature. How rank is that poison a drop whereof could poison a whole sea! And how deadly is that sin of Adam, that could poison all mankind, and bring a curse upon them, till it be taken away by him who was made a curse for us.

3. Original Sin

Pg 142

code378

see Watson, also at code478

Q-16: DID ALL MANKIND FALL IN ADAM'S FIRST TRANSGRESSION?

A: The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him, by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.

'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' &c. [Rom 5:12](#).

Adam being a representative person, while he stood, we stood; when he fell, we fell, We sinned in Adam; so it is in the text, 'In whom all have sinned.'

Adam was the head of mankind, and being guilty, we are guilty, as the children of a traitor have their blood stained. *Omnes unus ille Adam fuerunt.* 'All of us,' says Augustine, 'sinned in Adam, because we were part of Adam.'

If when Adam fell, all mankind fell with him; why, when one angel fell, did not all fall?

The case is not the same. The angels had no relation to one another. They are called morning-stars; the stars have no dependence one upon another; but it was otherwise with us, we were in Adam's loins; as a child is a branch of the parent, we were part of Adam; therefore when he sinned, we sinned.

How is Adam's sin made ours?

(1.) **By imputation.** The Pelagians of old held, that Adam's transgression is hurtful to posterity by imitation only, **not by imputation**. But the text, 'In whom all have sinned,' confutes that.

(2.) Adam's sin is ours by propagation. Not only is the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to us, but the depravity and corruption of his nature is transmitted to us, as poison is carried from the fountain to the cistern. This is that which we call **original sin**. 'In sin did my mother conceive me.' [Psa 51:5](#). Adam's leprosy cleaves to us, as Naaman's leprosy did to Gehazi. [2 Kings 5:27](#). This original concupiscence is called,

(1.) The 'old man.' [Eph 4:22](#). It is said to be the old man, not that it is weak, as old men are, but for its long standing, and for its deformity. In old age the fair blossoms of beauty fall; so original sin is the old man, because it has withered our beauty, and made us deformed in God's eye.

(2.) Original concupiscence is called the law of sin. [Rom 7:25](#) Original sin has *vim coactivam*, the **power of a law which binds the subject to allegiance**. Men must needs do what sin will have them, when they have both the love of sin to draw them, and the law of sin to force them. [This is called the **dominion of sin** which is broken by Christ at conversion, hence we are *free indeed*.]

1. In original sin there is something privative, and something positive.

[1] Something privative. *Carentia Justitiae debitae* [The lack of that righteousness which should be ours]. We have lost that excellent quintessential frame of soul which once we had. Sin has cut the lock of original purity, where our strength lay. [\[The most excellent and most beautiful part of God's glory principally consists in is his holiness which we lost at the fall. Therefore, we are born into this world as sinners, God haters, not God lovers, in the likeness of Adam until the image of his holiness is re-
enstamped upon the soul at conversion. See Jonathan Edwards on the glory of God communicated to the elect.\]](#)

[2] Something positive. Original sin has contaminated and defiled our virgin nature. It was death among the Romans to poison the springs. Original sin has poisoned the spring of our nature, it has turned beauty into leprosy; it has turned the azure brightness of our souls into midnight darkness.

Original sin has become co-natural to us. A man by nature cannot but sin; though there were no devil to tempt, no bad examples to imitate, yet there is such an **innate principle** in him that he cannot

forbear sinning. [2 Pet 2:14](#). A *peccato cessare nesciunt*, who cannot cease to sin, as a horse that is lame cannot go without halting. In original sin there is,

(1.) An aversion from good. Man has a desire to be happy, yet opposes that which should promote his happiness. **He has a disgust of holiness, he hates to be reformed.** Since we fell from God, **we have no mind to return to him.** [And the reason is, is that we have not the image of his holiness upon our souls that would cause us to love God and his will.]

(2.) A propensity to evil. If, as the Pelagians say, there is so much goodness in us since the fall, why is there not as much natural proneness to good as there is to evil? Our experience tells us, that the natural bias of the soul is to that which is bad. The very heathens by the **light of nature** saw this. Hierocles the philosopher said, 'it is grafted in us by nature to sin.' Men roll sin as honey under their tongue. 'They drink iniquity as water,' [Job 15:16](#). Like a hydropsical person, that thirsts for drink, and is not satisfied; they have a kind of drought on them, they thirst for sin. Though they are tired out in committing sin, yet they sin. [Eph 4:19](#). 'They weary themselves to commit iniquity'; as a man that follows his game while he is weary, **yet delights in it**, and cannot leave it off. [Jer 9:5](#). Though God has set so many flaming swords in the way to stop men in their sin, yet they go on in it; which all shows what a strong appetite they have to the forbidden fruit. [*Delight in the Lord is a grace which we receive as believers that enables us to delight in God, to know his mind and will, hence Ps 119, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law."*, and Ps 40:8 I desire to do your will, my God;"]

"If Arminians (and Pelagians) believe that people are born innocent of Adam's transgression, that God did not impute Adam's sin to his posterity making them sinners, inherently bad, then why did God cast out Adam's most innocent posterity from paradise?" John Owen, I can't remember where I got this quote by Owen; it could have been a paraphrase of the one below from his work, *A Display of Arminianism*, Ch. 7 – excellent reasoning.

"I see no reason, then, why Corvinus should affirm, as he doth,¹² "That it is absurd, that by one man's disobedience many should be made actually disobedient," unless he did it purposely to contradict St Paul, teaching us that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," Romans 5:19. *Paulus ait, Corvinus negat; eligite cui credatis*; — Choose whom you will believe, St Paul or the Arminians. The sum of their endeavor in this particular is, to clear the nature of man from being any way guilty of Adam's actual sin, as being then in him a member and part of that body whereof he was the head, or from being obnoxious unto an imputation of it by reason of that covenant which God made with us all in him. So that, denying, as you saw before, all inherent corruption and pravity of nature, and now all participation, by any means, of Adam's transgression, methinks they cast a great aspersion on Almighty God, however he dealt with Adam for his own particular, yet for casting us, his most innocent posterity, out of paradise. It seems a hard case, that having no obliquity or sin in our nature to deserve it, nor no interest in his disobedience whose obedience had been the means of conveying so much happiness unto us, we should yet be involved in so great a punishment as we are; for that we are not now by birth under a great curse and punishment, they shall never be able to persuade any poor soul who ever heard of paradise, or the garden where God first placed Adam." *A Display of Arminianism* Chp 7

6. Christ's Humiliation In His Incarnation pg 192

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<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.viii.vi.html>

'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.' [1 Tim 3:16](#).

Q xxvii: WHEREIN DID CHRIST'S HUMILIATION CONSIST?

A: In his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross.

Christ's humiliation consisted in his incarnation, his taking flesh, and being born. It was real flesh that Christ took; not the image of a body (as the Manichees erroneously held), but a true body; therefore he is said to be 'made of a woman.' [Gal 4:4](#). As bread is made of wheat, and wine is made of the grape; so Christ is made of a woman: his body was part of the flesh and substance of the virgin. This is a glorious mystery, 'God manifest in the flesh.' In the creation, man was made in God's image; in the incarnation God was made in man's image.

How came Christ to be made flesh?

It was by his Father's special designation. 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.' [Gal 4:4](#). God the Father in a special manner appointed Christ to be incarnate; which shows how needful a call is to any business of weight and importance: **to act without a call, is to act without a blessing**. Christ would not be incarnate, and take upon him the work of a mediator till he had a call. 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.'

But was there no other way for the restoring of fallen man but that God should take flesh?

We must not ask a reason of God's will; it is dangerous to pry into God's ark; we are not to dispute but adore. The wise God saw it to be the best way for our redemption, that Christ should be incarnate. It was not fit for any to satisfy God's justice but man; none could do it but God; therefore, Christ being both God and man, is the fittest to undertake this work of redemption.

Why was Christ born of a woman?

(1.) That God might fulfill that promise in [Gen 3:15](#), 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.' (2.) Christ was born of a woman, that he might roll away that reproach from the woman, which she had contracted by being seduced by the serpent. Christ, in taking his flesh from the woman, has honoured her sex; that as, at the first, the woman had made man a sinner; so now, to make him amends, she should bring him a saviour.

Why was Christ born of a virgin?

(1.) For decency. It became not God to have any mother but a maid, and it became not a maid to have any other son but a God.

(2.) For necessity. Christ was to be a high priest, most pure and holy. Had he been born after the ordinary course of nature he had been defiled, **since all that spring out of Adam's loins have a tincture of sin, but, that 'Christ's substance might remain pure and immaculate,' he was born of a virgin.**

(3.) To answer the type. Melchisedec was a type of Christ, who is said to be 'without father and without mother.' Christ being born of a virgin, answered the type; he was without father and without mother; without mother as he was God, without father as he was man.

pg 198 (same chapter)

(3.) Behold here a sacred riddle or paradox - 'God manifest in the flesh.' That man should be made in God's image was a wonder, but that God should be made in man's image is a greater wonder. That the Ancient of Days should be born, that he who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle; *Qui tonitruat in caelis, clamat in cunabulis; qui regit sidera, sugit ubera*; that he who rules the stars should suck the breast; that a virgin should conceive; that Christ should be made of a woman, and of that woman which himself made; that the branch should bear the vine; that the mother should be younger than the child she bare, and the child in the womb bigger than the mother; that the human nature should not be God, yet one with God; this was not only mirum but miraculum. Christ taking flesh is a mystery we shall never fully understand till we come to heaven, when our light shall be clear, as well as our love perfect.

(4.) From hence, 'God manifest in the flesh,' Christ born of a virgin, a thing not only strange in nature, but impossible, learn, That there are no impossibilities with God. God can bring about things which are not within the sphere of nature to produce; as that iron should swim, that the rock should gush out water, and that the fire should lick up the water in the trenches. [1 Kings 18:88](#). It is natural for water to quench fire, but for fire to consume water is impossible in the course of nature; but God can bring about all this. 'There is nothing too hard for thee.' [Jer 32:27](#). 'If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in my eyes? saith the Lord.' [Zech 8:8](#). How should God be united to our flesh? It is impossible to us, but not with God; he can do what transcends reason, and exceeds faith. He would not be our God if he could not do more than we can think. [Eph 3:30](#). He can reconcile contraries. How apt are we to be discouraged with seeming impossibilities! How do our hearts die within us when things go cross to sense and reason! We are apt to say as that prince in [2 Kings 7:1,2](#), 'If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be!' It was a time of famine, and now that a measure of wheat, which was a good part of a bushel, should be sold for a shekel, half an ounce of silver, how can this be? So, when things are cross, or strange, God's own people are apt to question, how they should be brought about with success? Moses, who was a man of God, and one of the brightest stars that ever shone in the firmament of God's church, was apt to be discouraged with seeming impossibilities. 'And Moses said, The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?' [Num. 11:11, 22](#). As if he had said, in plain language, he did not see how the people of Israel, being so numerous, could be fed for a month. 'And the Lord said, Is the Lord's hand waxed short?' Verse 23. That God who brought Isaac out of a dead womb, and the Messiah out of a virgin's womb, what cannot he do? Oh let us rest upon the arm of God's power, and believe in him, in the midst of seeming

impossibilities! Remember, 'there are no impossibilities with God.' **He can subdue a proud heart.** He can raise a dying church. Christ born of a virgin! The wonder-working God that wrought this can bring to pass the greatest seeming impossibility.

Use two: Of exhortation. (1.) Seeing Christ took our flesh, and was born of a virgin, let us labour that he may be spiritually born in our hearts. What will it profit us, that Christ was born into the world, unless he be born in our hearts, that he was united to our persons? Marvel not that I say unto you, Christ must be born in your hearts. 'Till Christ be formed in you.' [Gal 4:19](#). Now, then, try if Christ be born in your hearts.

How shall we know that?

Are there pangs before the birth? So before Christ is born in the heart, **there are spiritual pangs; pangs of conscience, and deep convictions.** 'They were pricked at their heart.' [Acts 2:27](#). I grant in the new birth - recipere magis et minus [Some receive more, some less] - all have not the same pangs of sorrow and humiliation, yet all have pangs. If Christ be born in thy heart, thou hast been deeply afflicted for sin. Christ is never born in the heart without pangs. Many thank God they never had any trouble of spirit, they were always quiet; a sign Christ is not yet formed in them.

When Christ was born into the world, he was made flesh; so, if he be born in thy heart, he makes thy heart a heart of flesh. [Ezek 36:26](#). Is thy heart flesh? Before, it was a rocky heart, and would not yield to God, **or take the impressions of the word**; durum est quod non cedit tactui [It is hard substances that do not yield to the touch]; now it is fleshy and tender like melted wax, to take any stamp of the Spirit [i.e., the image of God's holiness and the image of the knowledge of God.]. It is a sign Christ is born in our hearts, when they are hearts of flesh, when they melt in tears and in love. What is it the better that Christ was made flesh, unless he has given thee a heart of flesh?

As Christ was conceived in the womb of a virgin; so, if he be born in thee, thy heart is a virgin-heart, in respect of sincerity and sanctity. Art thou purified from the love of sin? If Christ be born in thy heart, it is a Sanctum Sanctorum, a holy of holiest. If thy heart be polluted with the predominant love of sin, never think Christ is born there, Christ will never lie any more in a stable. If he be born in thy heart, it is consecrated by the Holy Ghost.

If Christ be born in thy heart, then it is with thee as in a birth. There is life. **Faith is principum vivens, it is the vital organ of the soul.** 'The life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God.' [Gal 2:20](#). There is appetite. 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.' [1 Peter 2:2](#). The word is like breast-milk, pure, sweet, nourishing; and the soul **in which Christ is formed** desires this breast-milk. Bernard, in one of his soliloquies, comforts himself with this, that he surely had the new birth in him, because he found in his heart such strong breathings and thirstings after God. After Christ is born in the heart, there is a violent motion: there is a striving to enter in at the strait gate, and offering violence to the kingdom of heaven. [Matt 11:12](#). By this we may know Christ is formed in us. This is the only comfort, that as Christ was born into the world, so he is born in our hearts; as he was united to our flesh, so he is united to our person.

(2.) As Christ was made in our image, **let us labour to be made in his image.** [That is, be spiritually minded, contemplating the glory of Christ by which we are transformed into this image from glory to

glory...2Cor. 3:18 - this is our duty.] Christ being incarnate was made like us, let us labour to be made like him. There are five things in which we should labour to be like Christ. (1:) In disposition. He was of a most sweet disposition, *deliciae humani generis* [the delight of human kind]. *Titus Vespasian*. He invites sinners to come to him. He has bowels to pity us, breasts to feed us, wings to cover us. He would not break our heart but with mercy. Was Christ made in our likeness? Let us be like him in sweetness of disposition; be not of a morose spirit. It was said of Nabal, 'he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.' [1 Sam 25:17](#). Some are so barbarous, as if they were akin to the ostrich, they are fired with rage, and breathe forth nothing but revenge, or like those two men in the gospel, 'possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce.' [Matt 8:88](#). Let us be like Christ in mildness and sweetness. Let us pray for our enemies, and conquer them by love. David's kindness melted Saul's heart. [1 Sam 24:16](#). A frozen heart will be thawed with the fire of love.

(2:) Be like Christ in grace. He was like us in having our flesh, let us be like him in having his grace. We should labour to be like Christ, in humility. 'He humbled himself, [Phil 2:2](#). He left the bright robes of his glory to be clothed with the rags of our humanity: a wonder to humility! Let us be like Christ in this grace. Humility, says Bernard, is *contemptus propriae extellentiae*, 'a contempt of self-excellence,' a kind of a self-annihilation. This is the glory of a Christian. We are never so comely in God's eyes as when we are black in our own. In this let us be like Christ. True religion is to imitate Christ. And indeed, what cause have we to be humble, if we look within us, below us, above us!

If we look *intra nos*, within us, here we see our sins represented to us in the glass of conscience; lust, envy, passion. Our sins are like vermin crawling in our souls. 'How many are my iniquities?' [Job 13:33](#). Our sins are as the sands of the sea for number, as the rocks of the sea for weight. Augustine cries out, *Vae mihi faecibus peccatorum polluitur templum Domini*. 'My heart, which is God's temple, is polluted with sin.'

If we look *juxta nos*, about us, there is that may humble us. We may see other Christians outshining us in gifts and graces, as the sun outshines the lesser planets. Others are laden with fruit, perhaps we have but here and there an olive-berry growing, to show that we are of the right kind. [Isa 17:7](#).

1. The Covenant Of Grace p 156

code380

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.viii.i.html>

Q 20: DID GOD LEAVE ALL MANKIND TO PERISH IN THE ESTATE OF SIN AND MISERY?

A: No! He entered into a covenant of grace to deliver the elect out of that state, and to bring them into a state of grace by a Redeemer.

'I will make an everlasting covenant with you.' [Isa 55:3](#). Man being by his fall plunged into a labyrinth of misery, and having no way left to recover himself, God was pleased to enter into a new covenant with him, and to restore him to life by a Redeemer.

The great proposition I shall go upon is, that there is a new covenant ratified between God and the elect.

What is the new covenant?

It is a solemn compact and agreement made between God and fallen man, wherein the Lord undertakes to be our God, and to make us his people.

What names are given to the covenant?

(1.) It is called the covenant of peace in [Ezek 37:26](#), because it seals up reconciliation between God and humble sinners. Before this covenant there was **nothing but enmity. God did not love us, for a creature that offends cannot be loved by a holy God; and we did not love him, since a God that condemns cannot be loved by a guilty creature; so that there was war on both sides.** But God has found out a way in the new covenant to reconcile differing parties, so that it is fitly called the covenant of peace.

(2.) It is called a covenant of grace, and well it may; for,

(i) It was of grace, that, when we had forfeited the first covenant, God should enter into a new one, after we had cast away ourselves. The covenant of grace is tabula post naufragium, 'as a plank after shipwreck.' Oh the free grace of God, that he should parley with sinners, and set his wisdom and mercy to work to bring rebels into the bond of the covenant!

(ii) It is a covenant of grace, because it is a royal charter, all made up of terms of grace; that 'God will cast our sins behind his back;' that 'he will love us freely;' [Hos 14:4](#); that **he will give us a will to accept of the mercy of the covenant**, and strength to perform the conditions of the covenant. [Ezek 37:26](#). All this is pure grace.

Why should God make a covenant with us?

It is out of indulgence, favour, and regard to us. A tyrant will not enter into a covenant with slaves, he will not show them such respect. God's entering into a covenant with us, to be our God, **is a dignity he puts upon us**. A covenant is insigne honouris, a note of distinction between God's people and heathens. 'I will establish my covenant with thee.' [Ezek 16:62](#). When the Lord told Abraham that he would enter into a covenant with him, Abraham fell upon his face, as being amazed that the God of glory should bestow such a favour upon him. [Gen 17:2](#).

God makes a covenant with us, to tie us fast to him; as it is called in Ezekiel, the 'bond of the covenant.' God knows we have slippery hearts, therefore he will have a covenant to bind us. It is horrid impiety to go away from God after covenant. If one of the vestal nuns, who had vowed herself to religion, was deflowered, the Romans caused her to be burnt alive. It is perjury to depart from God after solemn covenant.

How does the covenant of grace differ from the first covenant made with Adam?

(1.) **The terms of the first covenant were more strict and severe.** For,

(i) The least failing would have made the covenant with Adam null and void, but many **failings do not annul the covenant of grace**. I grant, the least sin is a trespass upon the covenant, but it does not make it null and void. There may be many failings in the conjugal relation, but every failing does not break the marriage bond. It would be sad, if, as oft as we break covenant with God he should break covenant with us; but God will not take advantage of every failing, but in 'anger remember mercy.'

(ii) The first covenant being broken, allowed the sinner no remedy, all doors of hope were shut; but the new covenant allows the sinner a remedy: **it leaves room for repentance, and provides a mediator.** 'Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.' [Heb 12:24](#).

(2.) The first covenant ran all upon 'working,' the second is upon 'believing.' [Rom 4:5](#).

But are not works required in the covenant of grace?

Yes. 'This is a faithful saying, that they which believe in God, be careful to maintain good works.' [Tit 3:8](#). **But the covenant of grace does not require works in the same manner as the covenant of works did.** In the first covenant, works were required as the condition of life; in the second, they are required only as the signs of life. In the first covenant, works were required as grounds of salvation; in the new covenant, they are required **as evidences** of our love to God. In the first, they were required to the justification of our persons; in the new, to the manifestation of our grace.

What is the condition of the covenant of grace?

The main condition is faith.

Why is faith more the condition of the new covenant than any other grace?

To exclude all glorying in the creature. Faith is a humble grace. If repentance or works were the condition of the covenant, a man would say, It is my righteousness that has saved me; **but if it be of faith, where is boasting? Faith fetches all from Christ, and gives all the glory to Christ; it is a most humble grace.** Hence it is that God has singled out this grace to be the condition of the covenant.

If faith be the condition of the covenant of grace, **it excludes desperate presumptuous sinners from the covenant [hence the presumption of the sinner's prayer]**. They say there is a covenant of grace, and they shall be saved: but did you ever know a bond without a condition? The condition of the covenant is faith, and if thou hast no faith, thou hast no more to do with the covenant, than a foreigner or a country farmer with the city charter.

Use one: Of information. See the amazing goodness of God, to enter into covenant with us. He never entered into covenant with angels when they fell. It was much **condescension** in God to enter into covenant with us in a state of innocence, but more so when we were in a state of enmity. In this covenant of grace, we may see the cream of God's love, and the working of his bowels to sinners. This is a marriage covenant. "I am married to you, saith the Lord." [Jer 3:14](#). In the new covenant, God

makes himself over to us, and what can he give more? He makes over his promises to us, and what better bonds can we have?

Use two: Of trial. Whether we are in covenant with God. There are three characters.

(1.) God's covenant-people are a humble people. "Be ye clothed with humility;" [1 Pet 5:5](#). God's people esteem others better than themselves; they shrink into nothing in their own thoughts. [Phil 2:3](#). David cries out, "I am a worm, and no man:" though a saint, though a king, yet a worm. [Ps. 22:6](#). When Moses' face shined, he covered it with a veil. When God's people shine most in grace, they are covered with the veil of humility. Pride excludes from the covenant, for "God resisteth the proud," [1 Pet 5:5](#), and sure such are not in covenant with God whom he resists.

(2.) A people in covenant with God are a **willing people**; though they cannot serve God perfectly, **they serve him willingly**. They do not grudge God a little time spent in his worship; **they do not hesitate or murmur at sufferings**; they will go through a sea and a wilderness, if God call. "**Thy people shall be a willing people**: '[Ps 110:3](#): 'a people of willingness.' Heb. This spontaneity and willingness is from the attractive power of God's Spirit: the Spirit does not *impellere*, force, but *trahere* [draws], **sweetly draws the will**²; [see [Shepard's comments at code11](#)] and this **willingness in religion makes all our services accepted**. God does sometimes accept of willingness without the work, but never the work without willingness.

G. Vos states: Reformed Dogmatics, p660 [[code380b](#)]

31. How does God move the will of man? In a manner that accords with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.

(3.) God's covenant people are a consecrated people, they have holiness to the Lord written upon them. 'Thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God.' [Deut 7:6](#). God's covenant people are separated from the world, and sanctified by the Spirit. The priests under the law were not only to wash in the great laver, but were arrayed with glorious apparel. [Exod 28:2](#). This was typical, to show God's people are not only washed from gross sins, but **adorned with holiness of heart: they bear not only God's name, but image**. Tamerlane refused a pot of gold, when he saw it had not his father's stamp upon it, but the Roman stamp. **Holiness is God's stamp**; if he does not see this stamp upon us, he will not own us for his covenant people. [[conversely, see the explanation of the 'mark of the beast' by Davis and Watson's comments view at code-beast, and Owen's comment below](#)]

Unto those who are inured unto these contemplations, they are the **salt** of their lives, whereby everything is condited and made savoury unto them, as we shall show afterward. **And the want of spiritual diligence herein is that which has brought forth a negligent, careless, worldly profession of religion, which, countenancing itself with some outward duties, has lost out of it the power of faith and love in their principal operations**. Hereby many deceive their own souls. Goods, lands, possessions, relations, trades, **with secular interests in them, are the things whose image is drawn on their minds, and whose characters are written on their foreheads**, as the titles whereby they may be known. [[noted](#)]

by the figurative words, the mark on their foreheads!] As believers, beholding the glory of Christ in the blessed glass of the Gospel, are changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord; so these persons, beholding the beauty of the world and the things that are in it in the cursed glass of self-love, are in their minds changed into the same image. Hence perplexing fears, vain hopes, empty embraces of perishing things, fruitless desires, earthly, carnal designs, cursed, self-pleasing imaginations, feeding on, and being fed by, the love of the world and self, do abide and prevail in them. But we have not so learned Christ Jesus. John Owen

Use three: Of exhortation. To such as are out of covenant, labour to get into covenant, and have God for your God. How glad would the old world have been of an ark! How industrious should we be to get within the ark of the covenant! Consider, (1.) The misery of such as live and die out of covenant with God. Such have none to go to in an hour of distress. When conscience accuses, when sickness approaches (which is but a harbinger to bespeak a lodging for death), then what will you do? Whither will you flee? Will you look to Christ for help? He is a mediator only for such as are in covenant. Oh, how will you be filled with horror and despair! and be as Saul, when he said, 'The Philistines make war against me, and the Lord is departed.' [1 Sam 28:15](#). Till you are in covenant with God, there is no mercy. The mercy-seat was placed upon the ark, and the mercy-seat was no larger than the ark; to show, that the mercy of God reaches no further than the covenant.

(2.) The excellency of the covenant of grace. It is a better covenant than the covenant made with Adam, first because it is more friendly and propitious. Those services which would have been rejected in the first covenant are accepted in the second. Here God accepts of the will for the deed, [2 Cor 8:12](#); here sincerity is crowned in the covenant of grace; wherein we are weak, God will give strength; and wherein we come short, God will accept of a surety. Secondly it is a better covenant, because it is surer. 'Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.' [2 Sam 23:5](#). The first covenant was not sure, it stood upon a tottering foundation of works. Adam had no sooner a stock of righteousness to trade with¹, but he broke; but the covenant of grace is sure; it is confirmed with God's decree, and it rests upon two mighty pillars, the oath of God, and the blood of God. Thirdly it has better privileges. The covenant of grace brings preferment. Our nature now is more ennobled, we are raised to higher glory than in innocence, we are advanced to sit upon Christ's throne. [Rev 3:21](#). We are, by virtue of the covenant of grace, nearer to Christ than the angels: they are his friends, we his spouse [We have the Spirit of Adoption; Adam did not]. God is willing to be in covenant with you. Why does God woo and beseech you by his ambassadors to be reconciled, if he were not willing to be in covenant?

¹Adam had a principle and a stock of life in himself [a stock of grace given him at his creation with which to live by, as Owen puts it, Adam had not promises of continual supplies of grace as believers have in the Covenant of Grace, the New Covenant. See pg 1173 footnote], in his own hand, and therefore was to live by this, to live of himself, and from himself, and therefore had no need, nor use of faith; he lived by the law of works, which the apostle sets in direct opposition to the law of faith; but Adam being now fallen, has lost his life, and became not like the man that fell among thieves, between Jerusalem and Jericho, stript, wounded, and half dead, but wholly dead, Eph. 2:1, *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins*. So that, let any man seek life from himself, it is impossible he would live; for if there had been a law that could have given life, our righteousness should have been thereby, Gal. 3:21, *For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law*. Hence it follows, if any man will have life, he must go out of himself into another, namely, the

Lord of Life, John 5:40, *But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*, and 6:27, *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life*, etc. – T. Shepard, Sound Believer, p 278

²*Flavel regarding the faculty of the will in conversion:* View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. [see T Shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)] God accepts its offering; though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent so ever be the matter of it. (pg 254 The Soul of Man)

3. Christ's Prophetic Office

[code381](#)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.viii.iii.html>

pg 166

'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet,' &c. [Deut 18:85](#).

Having spoken of the person of Christ, we are next to speak of the offices of Christ. These are Prophetic, Priestly, and Regal.

'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet.' Enunciatur hic locus de Christo. 'It is spoken of Christ.' There are several names given to Christ as a Prophet. He is called 'the Counsellor' in [Isa 9:9](#). In uno Christo Angelus foederis completur [The Messenger of the Covenant appears in Christ alone]. Fagius. 'The Angel of the covenant.' [Mal 3:3](#). 'A Lamp.' [2 Sam 22:19](#). 'The Morning Star.' [Rev 22:16](#). Jesus Christ is the great Prophet of his church. The woman of Samaria gave a shrewd guess. [John 4:19](#). He is the best **teacher**; he makes all other teaching effectual. 'Then opened he their understanding.' [Luke 24:45](#) He not only opened the Scriptures, but opened their understanding. **He teaches to profit**. 'I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee to profit.' [Isa 48:17](#).

How does Christ teach?

(1.) Externally, by his Word. 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet.' [Psa 119:905](#). Such as pretend to have a light or revelation above the Word, or contrary to it, never had their teaching from Christ. [hence the danger of Enthusiasts who say they hear from God as though they literally hear his voice...hearing voices... See Jonathan Edwards' explanation of what is truly being led by the Spirit.] [Isa 8:80](#).

(2.) **Christ teaches** these sacred mysteries, inwardly, by the Spirit. [John 16:13](#). The world knows not what it is. 'The natural man receives not the things of God, neither can he know them.' [1 Cor 2:14](#). He knows not what it is to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, [Rom 12:2](#), or what the inward workings of the Spirit mean; these are riddles and paradoxes to Him. He may have more insight into the things of the world than a believer, but he does not see the deep things of God. A swine may see an acorn under a tree, but he cannot see a star. **He who is taught of Christ sees the arcana imperii [state secrets], the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.**

What are the lessons which Christ teaches?

He teaches us to see into our own hearts. Take the most mercurial wits, the greatest politicians, that understand the mysteries of state, they know not the mysteries of their own hearts, **they cannot believe the evil that is in them**. 'Is thy servant a dog?' [2 Kings 8:13](#). Grande profundum est homo. Augustine. The heart is a great deep, which is not easily fathomed. But when Christ teaches he removes the veil of ignorance, and lights a man into his own heart; and now that he sees swarms of vain thoughts, he blushes to see how sin mingles with his duties, his stars are mixed with clouds; he prays, as Augustine, that God would deliver him from himself.

The second lesson Christ teaches is the **vanity of the creature**. A **natural man sets up his happiness here, and worships the golden image**; but he that Christ has anointed with his eye-salve has a spirit of discerning; he looks upon the creature in its night-dress, sees it to be empty and unsatisfying, and not commensurate to a heaven-born soul. Solomon had put all the creatures into a still, and when he came to extract the spirit and quintessence, all was vanity. [Eccles 2: 11](#). The apostle calls it a show or apparition, having no intrinsic goodness. [1 Cor 7:71](#).

The third lesson is the **excellency of things unseen**. Christ gives the soul a sight of glory, a prospect of eternity. 'We look not at things which are seen, but at things which are not seen.' [2 Cor 4:18](#). **Moses saw him who is 'invisible'**. [Heb 11:17](#). And the **patriarchs saw a better country**, viz. an heavenly, where are delights of angels, rivers of pleasure, the flower of joy, fully ripe and blown. [Heb 11:16](#).

How does Christ's teaching differ from other teaching?

Several ways.

(1.) **Christ teaches the heart**. Others may teach the ear, Christ the heart. '**Whose heart the Lord opened**.' [Acts 16:14](#). All that the dispensers of the word can do is but to work knowledge, Christ works grace: **they can but give the light of the truth; Christ gives the love of the truth**; they can only teach what to believe, Christ teaches how to believe.

(2.) **Christ gives us a taste of the word**. Ministers may set the food of the word before you, and carve it out to you; but it is only Christ can cause you to taste it. 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' [1 Pet 2:2](#). 'Taste and see that the Lord is good.' [Psa 34:4](#). It is one thing to hear a truth preached, another thing to taste it; one thing to read a promise, another thing to taste it. **David had got a taste of the word**. '**Thou hast taught me: How sweet are thy words unto my taste!** yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' [Psalm 119:902, 103](#). The apostle calls it the savour of knowledge. [2 Cor 2:14](#). The light of knowledge is one thing, the savour another. Christ makes us taste a savouriness in the word.

(3.) **When Christ teaches, he makes us obey**. Others may instruct, but cannot command obedience: they teach to be humble, but men remain proud. The prophet had been denouncing judgments against the people of Judah, but they would not hear. 'We will do whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven.' [Jer 44:17](#). Men come as it were, armed in a coat of mail that the sword of the word will not enter; **but when Christ comes to teach, he removes this obstinacy**; he not **only informs the judgment, but inclines the will**. He does not only come with the light of his word,

but the rod of his strength, and makes the stubborn sinner yield to him. His grace is irresistible.
[2Chron. 20:6, ...*none is able to withstand you.*]

(4.) Christ teaches easily. Others teach with difficulty. They have difficulty in finding out a truth, and in inculcating it. 'Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.' [Isa 28:80](#). Some may teach all their lives, and the word take no impression. They complain, 'I have spent my labour in vain;' [Isa 49:9](#), plowed on rocks; but Christ the great Prophet teaches with ease. He can with the least touch of his Spirit convert: he can say, 'Let there be light;' with a word he can convey grace.

(5.) When Christ teaches he makes men willing to learn. Men may teach others, but they have no mind to learn. 'Fools despise instruction.' [Prov 1:1](#). They rage at the word, as if a patient should rage at the physician when he brings him a cordial; thus backward are men to their own salvation. But Christ makes his people a 'willing people.' [Psa 110:0](#). They prize knowledge, and hang it as a jewel upon their ear. Those that Christ teaches say, as [Isa 2:2](#), 'Come let us go up to the mountains of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in them;' and as [Acts 10:03](#); 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things commanded.'

(6.) When Christ teaches, he not only illuminates but animates. He so teaches, that he quickens. 'I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall have lumen vitae, the light of life.' [John 8:12](#). By nature we are dead, therefore unfit for teaching. Who will make an oration to the dead? But Christ teaches them that are dead! he gives the light of life. As when Lazarus was dead, Christ said, 'Come forth,' and he made the dead to hear, for Lazarus came forth: so when he says to the dead soul, Come forth of the grave of unbelief, he hears Christ's voice, and comes forth, it is the light of life. The philosophers say, calor et lux con crescunt, 'heat and light increase together.' Where Christ comes with his light, there is the heat of spiritual life going along with it.

Use one: Of information. (1.) See here an argument of Christ's Divinity. Had he not been God, he could never have known the mind of God, or revealed to us those arcana caeli [the secrets of Heaven], those deep mysteries, which no man or angel could find out. Who but God can anoint the eyes of the blind, and give not only light, but sight? Who but he, who has the key of David, can open the heart? Who but God can bow the iron sinew of the will? He only who is God can enlighten the conscience, and make the stony heart bleed.

(2.) See what a cornucopia, or plenty of wisdom is in Christ, who is the great doctor of his church, and gives saving knowledge to all the elect. The body of the sun must needs be full of clearness and brightness, which enlightens the whole world. Christ is the great luminary; in him are hid all treasures of knowledge. [Col 2:2](#). The middle lamp of the sanctuary gave light to all the other lamps; so Christ diffuses his glorious light to others. We are apt to admire the learning of Aristotle and Plato; alas! what is this poor spark of light to that which is in Christ, from whose infinite wisdom both men and angels light their lamps.

(3.) See the misery of man in the state of nature. Before Christ becomes their prophet they are enveloped in ignorance and darkness. Men know nothing in a sanctified manner, they know nothing as they ought to know. [1 Cor 8:8](#). This is sad. Men in the dark cannot discern colours so in the state of

nature they cannot discern between morality and grace they take one for the other, pro dea nubem [They mistake the cloud for the goddess herself]. In the dark the greatest beauty is hid. Let there be rare flowers in the garden, and pictures in the room, in the dark their beauty is veiled over; so, though there be such transcendent beauty in Christ as amazes the angels, man in the state of nature sees none of this beauty. [Therefore, those who make the sinner's prayer know not what they pray or to whom they pray, but a god of their own making. That is one reason why this prayer is a wicked presumption.] What is Christ to him? or heaven to him? The veil is upon his heart. A man in the dark is in danger every step he takes; so man in the state of nature is in danger, at every step, of falling into hell. Thus it is before Christ teaches us; nay, the darkness in which a sinner is, while in an unregenerate state, is worse than natural darkness; for natural darkness affrights. 'An horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham.' [Gen 15:12](#). But the spiritual darkness is not accompanied with horror, men tremble not at their condition; nay, they like their condition well enough. 'Men loved darkness.' [John 3:19](#). This is their sad condition, till Jesus Christ comes as a prophet to teach them, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

(4.) See the happy condition of the children of God. They have Christ to be their prophet. 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.' [Isa 54:13](#). 'He is made to us wisdom.' [1 Cor 1:10](#). One man cannot see by another's eyes; but believers see with Christ's eyes. 'In his light they see light.' Christ gives them the light of grace and the light of glory.

Use two: Labour to have Christ for your prophet. He teaches savingly: he is an interpreter of a thousand, he can untie those knots which puzzle angels. Till Christ teach, we never learn any lesson; till Christ is made to us wisdom, we shall never be wise to salvation.

What shall we do to have Christ for our teacher?

(1.) See your need of Christ's teaching. You cannot see your way without this morning star. Some speak much of the light of reason improved: alas! the plumb-line of reason is too short to fathom the deep things of God; the light of reason will no more help a man to believe, than the light of a candle will help him to understand. A man can no more by the power of nature reach Christ, than an infant can reach the top of the pyramids, or the ostrich fly up to the stars. See your need of Christ's anointing and teaching in [Rev 3:18](#).

(2.) Go to Christ to teach you. 'Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.' [Psa 25:5](#). As one of the disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' [Luke 11](#): I, so say, Lord, teach me to profit. Do thou light my lamp, O thou great prophet of thy church! Give me a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may see things in another manner than I ever saw them before; teach me in the word to hear thy voice, and in the sacrament to discern thy body. 'Lighten mine eyes,' &c. [Psa 13:3](#). Cathedram habet in coelo qui corda docet in terra. Augustine. 'He has his pulpit in heaven who converts souls.' That we may be encouraged to go to our great Prophet:

(1:) Jesus Christ is very willing to teach us. Why else did he enter into the calling of the ministry, but to teach the mysteries of heaven? 'Jesus went about teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.' [Matt 4:43](#). Why did he take the prophetic office upon him? Why was Christ so angry with them that kept

away the key of knowledge? [Luke 11:12](#). Why was Christ anointed with the Spirit without measure, but that he might anoint us with knowledge? Knowledge is in Christ for us as milk in the breast for the child. Oh then go to Christ for teaching. None in the gospel came to Christ for sight, but he restored their eyesight; and sure Christ is more willing to work a cure upon a blind soul than ever he was to do so upon a blind body.

(2:) There are none so dull and ignorant but Christ can teach them. Every one is not fit to make a scholar of; *ex omni ligno non fit Mercurius*; but there is none so dull but Christ can make him a good scholar. Even such as are ignorant, and of low parts, Christ teaches in such a manner that they know more than the great sages and wise men of the world. Hence that saying of Augustine, *surgunt indocti, et rapiunt coelum*; the unlearned men rise up, and take heaven; they know the truths of Christ more savingly than the great admired Rabbis. The duller the scholar the more is his skill seen that teaches. Hence it is, that Christ delights in teaching the ignorant, to get himself more glory. 'The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.' [Isa 35:5](#). Who would go to teach a blind or a deaf man? Yet such dull scholars Christ teaches. Such as are blinded with ignorance shall see the mysteries of the gospel, and the deaf ears shall be unstopped.

(3.) Wait upon the means of grace which Christ has appointed. Though Christ teaches by his Spirit, yet he teaches in the use of ordinances. Wait at the gates of wisdom's door. Ministers are teachers under Christ. 'Pastors and teachers.' [Eph 4:4](#): We read of pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. [Judges 7:16](#). Ministers are earthen vessels, but these pitchers have lamps within them to light souls to heaven. Christ is said to speak to us from heaven now, by his ministers, as the king speaks by his ambassador. [Heb 12:25](#). Such as wean themselves from the breast of ordinances seldom thrive; either they grow light in their head, or lame in their feet. The word preached is Christ's voice in the mouth of the minister; and those that refuse to hear Christ speaking in the ministry, Christ will refuse to hear speaking on their death-bed.

(4.) If you would have the teachings of Christ, walk according to the knowledge which you have already. Use your little knowledge well, and Christ will teach you more. 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' [John 7:17](#). A master seeing his servant improve a little stock well gives him more to trade with.

Use three: If you have been taught by Christ savingly, be thankful. It is your honour to have God for your teacher, and that he should teach you, and not others, is a matter of admiration and congratulation. Oh how many knowing men are ignorant! They are not taught of God; they have Christ's Word to enlighten them, but not his Spirit to sanctify them. But that you should have the inward as well as the outward teaching, that Christ should anoint you with the heavenly unction of his Spirit, that you can say, as he in [John 9:95](#), 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' Oh, how thankful should you be to Christ, who has revealed his Father's bosom secrets unto you! 'No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.' [John 1:18](#). If Alexander thought himself so much obliged to Aristotle for the philosophic instruction he received from him, oh, how are we obliged to Jesus Christ, this great Prophet, for opening to us the eternal purposes of his love, and revealing to us the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven!

6. Christ's Humiliation In His Incarnation

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Use three: Of comfort. Jesus Christ, having taken our flesh, has ennobled our nature, *naturam nostram nobilitavit*. Our nature is now invested with greater royalties and privileges than in time of innocence. Before, in innocence, we were made in the image of God; **but now, Christ having assumed our nature, we are made one with God**; our nature is ennobled above the angelic nature. Christ taking our flesh, has made us nearer to himself than the angels. The angels are his friends, **believers are flesh of his flesh**, his members. [Eph 5:50](#) and chap 1:13. The same glory which is put upon Christ's human nature, shall be put upon believers.

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How then shall we know a true faith?

By the noble effects. (1.) **Faith is a Christ-prizing grace**, it puts a high valuation upon Christ. 'To you that believe he is precious.' [1 Pet 2:2](#). Paul best knew Christ. 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' [1 Cor 9:9](#): He saw Christ with his bodily eyes in a vision, when he was caught up into the third heaven; and with the eye of his faith in the Holy Supper; therefore he best knew Christ. And see how he styles all things in comparison of him. 'I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ.' [Phil 3:3](#). Do we set a high estimate upon Christ? Could we be willing to part with the wedge of gold for the pearl of price? Gregory Nazianzen blessed God he had anything to lose for Christ's sake.

(2.) **Faith is a refining grace**. 'Mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' [1 Tim 3:3](#). **Faith is in the soul as fire among metals; it refines and purifies**. Morality may wash the outside, **faith washes the inside**. 'Having purified their hearts by faith.' [Acts 15:5](#). Faith makes the heart a sacristy or holy of holiest. Faith is a virgin-grace: though it does not take away the life of sin, **yet it takes away the love of sin**. Examine if your hearts be an unclean fountain, sending out the mud and dirt of pride and envy. **If there be legions of lusts in thy soul, there is no faith. Faith is a heavenly plant, which will not grow in an impure soil.**

(3.) **Faith is an obediential grace**. 'The obedience of faith.' [Rom 16:66](#). **Faith melts our will into God's**. It runs at God's call. If God commands duty (though cross to flesh and blood) faith obeys. 'By faith Abraham obeyed.' [Heb 11:1](#). Faith is not an idle grace; as it has an eye to see Christ, so it has a hand to work for him. It not only believes God's promise, but obeys his command. It is not having knowledge that will evidence you to be believers; the devil has knowledge, but wants obedience, and that makes

him a devil. The true obedience of faith is a cheerful obedience. God's commands do not seem grievous. Have you obedience, and obey cheerfully? Do you look upon God's command as your burden, or privilege; as an iron fetter about your leg, or as a gold chain about your neck.

(4.) Faith is an assimilating grace. It changes the soul into the image of the object; it makes it like Christ. Never did any look upon Christ with a believing eye, but he was made like Christ. A deformed person may look on a beautiful object, and not be made beautiful; but faith looking on Christ transforms a man, and turns him into his similitude. Looking on a bleeding Christ causes a soft bleeding heart; looking on a holy Christ causes sanctity of heart; looking on a humble Christ makes the soul humble. As the chameleon is changed into the colour of that which it looks upon, so faith, looking on Christ, changes the Christian into the similitude of Christ.

(5.) True faith grows. All living things grow. 'From faith to faith.' [Rom 1:17](#).

How may we judge of the growth of faith?

Growth of faith is judged by strength. We can do that now, which we could not do before. When one is man-grown, he can do that which he could not do when he was a child; he can carry a heavier burden; so thou canst bear crosses with more patience.

Growth of faith is seen by doing duties in a more spiritual manner, with more fervency; we put coals to the incense, from a principle of love to God. When an apple has done growing in bigness, it grows in sweetness; so thou performest duties in love and art sweeter, and come off with a better relish.

5. Sanctification pg 240

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'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.' [1 Thess 4:4](#).

The word sanctification signifies to consecrate and set apart to a holy use: thus they are sanctified persons who are separated from the world, and set apart for God's service. Sanctification has a privative and a positive part.

I. A privative part, which lies in the purging out of sin. Sin is compared to leaven, which sours; and to leprosy, which defiles. Sanctification purges out 'the old leaven.' [1 Cor 5:5](#). Though it takes not away the life, yet it takes away the love of sin.

II. A positive part, which is the spiritual refining of the soul; which in Scripture is called a 'renewing of our mind,' [Rom 12:2](#), and a 'partaking of the divine nature.' [2 Pet 1:1](#). The priests in the law were not only washed in the great laver, but adorned with glorious apparel. [Exod 28:8](#); so sanctification not only washes from sin, but adorns with purity.

What is sanctification?

It is a **principle of grace savingly wrought, whereby the heart becomes holy, and is made after God's own heart**. A sanctified person bears not only God's name, **but his image** [the image of his holiness]. In opening the nature of sanctification, I shall lay down these seven positions: -

(1.) Sanctification is a supernatural thing; it is divinely infused. We are naturally polluted, and to cleanse, God takes to be his prerogative. 'I am the Lord which sanctify you.' [Lev 21:1](#). Weeds grow of themselves. Flowers are planted. Sanctification is a flower of the Spirit's planting, therefore it is called, 'The sanctification of the Spirit.' [1 Pet 1:1](#).

(2.) Sanctification is an intrinsic thing; it lies chiefly in the heart. It is called 'the adorning the **hidden man of the heart**.' [1 Pet 3:3](#). The dew wets the leaf, the sap is hid in the root; so the religion of some consists only in externals, but sanctification is deeply rooted in the soul. 'In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' [Psalm 51:1](#).

(3.) Sanctification is an extensive thing: it spreads into the whole man. 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly.' [1 Thess 5:53](#). As original corruption has depraved all the faculties - '**the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, no part sound**, as if the whole mass of blood were corrupted - so sanctification goes over the whole soul. After the fall, there was ignorance in the mind; but in sanctification, we are 'light in the Lord.' [Eph 5:5](#). After the fall, the will was depraved; there was not only impotence to good, but obstinacy. In sanctification, **there is a blessed pliability in the will**; it symbolizes and comports with the will of God. After the fall, the affections were misplaced on wrong objects; in sanctification, they are turned into a sweet order and harmony, the grief placed on sin, **the love on God, the joy on heaven**. **Thus sanctification spreads itself as far as original corruption; it goes over the whole soul**: 'the God of peace sanctify you wholly.' He is not a sanctified person who is good only in some part, but who is all over sanctified; therefore, in Scripture, **grace is called a 'new man'**, not a new eye or a new tongue, but a 'new man.' [Col 3:30](#). A good Christian, though he be sanctified but in part, yet in every part.

(4.) Sanctification is an intense and ardent thing. Qualitates sunt in subjecto intensive [Its properties burn within the believer]. 'Fervent in spirit.' [Rom 12:2](#): Sanctification is not a dead form, but it is inflamed into zeal. We call water hot, when it is so in the third or fourth degree; so he is holy whose religion is heated to some degree, and his heart boils over in **love to God**.

(5.) Sanctification is a beautiful thing. It makes God and angels fall in love with us. '**The beauties of holiness**.' [Psa 110:0](#). As the sun is to the world, so is sanctification to the soul, beautifying and bespangling it in God's eyes. That which makes God glorious must needs make us so. Holiness is the most sparkling jewel in the Godhead. 'Glorious in holiness.' [Exod 15:11](#): **Sanctification is the first fruit of the Spirit**; it is heaven begun in the soul. **Sanctification and glory differ only in degree: sanctification is glory in the seed, and glory is sanctification in the flower**. [Hence John 17:22, "The glory you gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:"] Holiness is the quintessence of happiness. [You are starting to see in what this *glory* consists: Knowledge (knowledge of God), virtue and holiness (love to God), and happiness consisting in joy in God - see Jonathan Edwards' comments on this.]

(6.) Sanctification is an abiding thing. 'His seed remaineth in him.' [1 John 3:3](#). He who is truly sanctified, cannot fall from that state. Indeed, seeming holiness may be lost, colours may wash off, sanctification may suffer an eclipse. 'Thou hast left thy first love.' [Rev 2:2](#). True sanctification is a blossom of eternity. 'The anointing which ye have received abideth in you.' [1 John 2:27](#). He who is truly sanctified can no more fall away than the angels which are fixed in their heavenly orbs.

(7.) Sanctification is a progressive thing. It is growing; it is compared to seed which grows: first the blade springs up, then the ear, then the ripe corn in the ear; such as are already sanctified may be more sanctified. [2 Cor 7:7](#): Justification does not admit of degrees; a believer cannot be more elected or justified than he is, but he may be more sanctified than he is. Sanctification is still increasing, like the morning sun, which grows brighter to the full meridian. Knowledge is said to increase, and faith to increase. [Col 1:10](#); [2 Cor 10:05](#). A Christian is continually adding a cubit to his spiritual stature. It is not with us as it was with Christ, who received the Spirit without measure; for Christ could not be more holy than he was. We have the Spirit only in measure, and may be still augmenting our grace; as Apelles, when he had drawn a picture, would be still mending it with his pencil. **The image of God is drawn but imperfectly in us**, therefore we must be still mending it, and drawing it in more lively colours. **Sanctification is progressive; if it does not grow, it is because it does not live**. Thus you see the nature of sanctification.

What are the counterfeits of sanctification?

There are things which look like sanctification, but are not.

(1.) **The first counterfeit of sanctification is moral virtue**. To be just, to be temperate, to be of a fair deportment, not to have one's escutcheon blotted with ignominious scandal is good, but not enough: it is not sanctification. A field-flower differs from a garden-flower. Heathens have attained to morality; as Cato, Socrates, and Aristides. **Civility is but nature refined; there is nothing of Christ there, and the heart may be foul and impure**. Under these fair leaves of civility the worm of unbelief may be hid. A moral person has a secret antipathy against grace: he hates vice, and he hates grace as much as vice [He hates faith]. The snake has a fine colour, but a sting. A person adorned and cultivated with moral virtue, has a secret spleen against sanctity. **The Stoics who were the chief of the moralized heathens, were the bitterest enemies Paul had.** [Acts 17:18](#).

(2.) **The second counterfeit of sanctification is superstitious devotion**. This abounds in Popery; adorations, images, altars, vestments, and holy water, which I look upon as a religious frenzy, and is far from sanctification. It does not put any intrinsic goodness into a man, it does not make a man better. If the legal purifications and washings, which were of God's own appointing, did not make those who used them more holy; and the priests, who wore holy garments, and had holy oil poured on them, were not more holy without the anointing of the Spirit; then surely those superstitious innovations in religion, which God never appointed, cannot contribute any holiness to men. A superstitious holiness costs no great labour; there is nothing of the heart in it. If to tell over a few beads, or bow to an image, or sprinkle themselves with holy water were sanctification, and all that is required of them that should be saved, then hell would be empty, none would come there.

(3.) **The third counterfeit of sanctification is hypocrisy**; when men make a pretence of that holiness which they have not. As a comet may shine like a star, a lustre may shine from their profession that dazzles the eyes of the beholders. 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power.' [2 Tim 3:3](#). These are lamps without oil; whited sepulchres, like the Egyptian temples, which had fair outsides, but within spiders and apes. The apostle speaks of true holiness. [Eph 4:44](#), implying that there is holiness which is spurious and feigned. 'Thou hast a name to live, but art dead;' [Rev 3:1](#); like pictures and statues which are destitute of a vital principle. 'Clouds without water.' [Jude 12](#). They pretend to be full of the Spirit, but are empty clouds. This show of sanctification is a self-delusion. He who takes copper instead of gold, wrongs himself; the most counterfeit saint deceives others while he lives, but deceives himself when he dies. To pretend to holiness when there is none is a vain thing. **What were the foolish virgins better for their blazing lamps, when they wanted oil? What is the lamp of profession without the oil of saving grace?** What comfort will a show of holiness yield at last? Will painted gold enrich? painted wine refresh him that is thirsty? **or painted holiness be a cordial at the hour of death?** A pretence of sanctification is not to be rested in. Many ships, that have had the name of the Hope, the Safeguard, the Triumph, have been cast away upon rocks; so, many who have had the name of saints, have been cast into hell.

(4.) **The fourth counterfeit of sanctification is restraining grace, when men forbear vice, though they do not hate it**. This may be the sinner's motto, 'Fain I would, but I dare not.' The dog has a mind to the bone, but is afraid of the cudgel; so men have a mind to lust, but conscience stands as the angel, with a flaming sword, and affrights: they have a mind to revenge, but the fear of hell is a curb-bit to check them. There is no change of heart; sin is curbed, but not cured. A lion may be in chains, but is a lion still.

(5.) **The fifth counterfeit of sanctification is common grace**, which is a slight, transient work of the Spirit, but does not amount to conversion. There is some light in the judgement, but it is not humbling; some checks in the conscience, but they are not awakening. This looks like sanctification, but is not. Men have convictions wrought in them, but they break loose from them again, like the deer, which, being shot, shakes out the arrow. After conviction, men go into the house of mirth, take the harp to drive away the spirit of sadness, and so all dies and comes to nothing.

Wherein appears the necessity of sanctification?

In six things: (1.) God has called us to it. '**Who has called us to glory and virtue;** [2 Pet 1:1](#); to virtue, as well as glory. '**God has not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.**' [1 Thess 4:7](#). We have no call to sin, we may have a temptation, but no call; no call to be proud, or unclean; but we have a call to be holy.

(2.) **Without sanctification there is no evidencing our justification. Justification and sanctification go together.** 'But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.' [1 Cor 6:11](#). 'Pardoning iniquity,' [Mic 7:18](#); there is justification. 'He will subdue our iniquities,' [5:19](#); there is sanctification. 'Out of Christ's side came blood and water,' [John 19:34](#); blood for justification; water for sanctification. Such as have not the water out of Christ's side to cleanse them, shall never have the blood out of his side to save them.

(3.) Without sanctification we have no title to the new covenant. The covenant of grace is our charter for heaven. The tenure of the covenant is, That God will be our God. But who are interested in the covenant, and may plead the benefit of it? Sanctified persons only. 'A new heart will I give you, and I will put my Spirit within you, and I will be your God.' [Ezek 36:26](#). If a man makes a will, none but such persons as are named in the will can lay claim to the will; so God makes a will and testament, but it is restrained and limited to such as are sanctified; and it is high presumption for anyone else to lay claim to the will. [Hence, the presumption of the sinner's prayer]

(4.) **There is no going to heaven without sanctification.** 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' [Heb 12:14](#). God is a holy God, and he will suffer no unholy creature to come near him. A king will not suffer a man with plague-sores to approach into his presence. Heaven is not like Noah's ark, where the clean beasts and the unclean entered. No unclean beasts come into the heavenly ark; for though God suffer the wicked to live awhile on the earth, he will never suffer heaven to be pestered with such vermin. Are they fit to see God who wallow in wickedness? Will God ever lay such vipers in his bosom? 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' It must be a clear eye that sees a bright object: only a holy heart can see God in his glory. Sinners may see God as an enemy, but not as a friend; may have an affrighting vision of him, but not a beatific vision; they may see the flaming sword, but not the mercy-seat. Oh then, what need is there of sanctification!

(5.) Without sanctification all our holy things are defiled. 'Unto them that are defiled is nothing pure.' [Tit 1:1](#). Under the law, if a man who was unclean by a dead body carried a piece of holy flesh in his skirt, the holy flesh would not cleanse him, but it would be polluted by him. [Hag 2:12, 13](#). This is an emblem of a sinner's polluting his holy offering. A foul stomach turns the best food into ill humours; so an unsanctified heart pollutes prayers, alms, sacraments. [Hence the sinner's prayer will not work; God does not hear them; their prayers are an abomination, John 9:31, Pr. 28:9, Pr. 15:29, Isa. 59:2, James 4:3, John 3:3...] This evinces the necessity of sanctification. Sanctification makes our holy things accepted. A holy heart is the altar which sanctifies the offering; if not to satisfaction, to acceptation.

(6.) Without sanctification we can show no sign of our election. [2 Thess 2:13](#). **Election is the cause of our salvation, sanctification is our evidence.** Sanctification is the ear-mark of Christ's elect sheep.

*What are the **signs** of sanctification?*

First, such as are sanctified can remember a time when they were unsanctified. [Tit 3:3](#). We were in our blood, and then God washed us with water, and anointed us with oil. [Ezek 16:9](#). Those trees of righteousness that blossom and bear almonds, can remember when they were like Aaron's dry rod, not one blossom of holiness growing. A sanctified soul can remember when it was estranged from God through ignorance and vanity, and when free grace planted this flower of holiness in it.

A second sign of sanctification is the indwelling of the Spirit. 'The Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' [2 Tim 1:14](#). As the unclean spirit dwells in the wicked and carries them to pride, lust, revenge - the devil enters into these swine, [Acts 5:3](#)- so the Spirit of God dwells in the elect, as their guide and comforter. The Spirit possesses the saints. God's Spirit sanctifies the fancy, causing it to mint holy thoughts; and

sanctifies the will by putting a new bias upon it, whereby it is inclined to good. He who is sanctified has the influence of the Spirit, though not the essence.

A third sign of sanctification is an antipathy against sin. [Psa 119:904](#). A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it; as a serpent casts its coat, but keeps its sting; but a sanctified person can say he not only leaves sin, but loathes it. As there are antipathies in nature between the vine and laurel, so in a sanctified soul there is a holy antipathy against sin; and antipathies can never be reconciled. Because a man has an antipathy against sin, he cannot but oppose it, and seek the destruction of it.

A fourth sign of sanctification is the spiritual performance of duties, with the heart, and from a principle of love. The sanctified soul prays out of a love to prayer, and 'calls the Sabbath a delight.' [Isa 58:13](#). A man may have gifts to admiration; he may speak as an angel dropped out of heaven, yet he may be carnal in spiritual things; his services may not come from a renewed principle, nor be carried upon the wings of delight in duty. [this is why many pastors preach legal sermons on morality, etc., and are thus dead sermons, lacking life from the reformed principles.] A sanctified soul worships God in the Spirit. [1 Pet 2:5](#). God judges not of our duties by their length, but by the love from which they spring.

A fifth sign is a well-ordered life. 'Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' [1 Pet 1:15](#). Where the heart is sanctified the life will be so too. The temple had gold without as well as within. As in a piece of coin there is not only the king's image within the ring, but his superscription without; so where there is sanctification, there is not only God's image in the heart, but a superscription of holiness written in the life. [It is this restored image of God at conversion that causes us to love God! which is the result of holiness in the heart.] Some say they have good hearts, but their lives are vicious. 'There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.' [Prov 30:12](#). If the water be foul in the bucket, it cannot be clean in the well. 'The king's daughter is all glorious within.' [Psa 45:13](#). There is holiness of heart. 'Her clothing is of wrought gold.' There is holiness of life. Grace is most beautiful when its light so shines that others may see it; this adorns religion, and makes proselytes to the faith.

A sixth sign is steadfast resolution. He is resolved never to part with his holiness. Let others reproach it, he loves it the more. Let water be sprinkled on the fire, it burns the more. He says, as David, when Michal reproached him for dancing before the ark, 'If this be to be vile, I will yet be more vile.' [2 Sam 6:62](#). Let others persecute him for his holiness, he says as Paul, 'None of these things move me.' [Acts 20:04](#). He prefers sanctity before safety, and had rather keep his conscience pure than his skin whole. He says as Job, 'My integrity I will hold fast, and not let it go,' 27:7. He will rather part with his life than his conscience.

Use one: The main thing a Christian should look after is sanctification. This is the unum necessarium, 'the one thing needful.' Sanctification is our purest complexion, it makes us as the heaven, bespangled with stars; it is our nobility, by it we are born of God, and partake of the divine nature; it is our riches, therefore compared to rows of jewels, and chains of gold. [Cant 1:10](#). It is our best certificate for heaven. What evidence have we else to show? Have we knowledge? So has the devil. Do we profess religion? Satan often appears in Samuel's mantle, and transforms himself into an angel of light. But our certificate for heaven is sanctification. Sanctification is the firstfruits of the Spirit; the only coin that will

pass current in the other world. Sanctification is the evidence of God's love. We cannot know God's love by giving us health, riches, success; but by drawing his image of sanctification on us by the pencil of the Holy Ghost it is known. [And that is the sum of the importance behind the image of God being restored to the elect upon conversion; without faith (which purifies the heart, Acts 15:9) we cannot please God!! Heb. 11:6]

Oh the misery of such as are destitute of a principle of sanctification! **They are spiritually dead.** Eph 2:2: Though they breathe, yet they do not live. The greatest part of the world remains unsanctified. 'The world lies in wickedness.' 1 John 5:19. That is, the major part of the world. Many call themselves Christians, but blot out the word saints. You may as well call him a man who wants (lacks) reason, as him a Christian who wants (lacks) grace. Nay which is worse, some are buoyed up to such a height of wickedness, that they hate and deride sanctification. **They hate it.** [1Cor1:18] It is bad to want (lack) it, it is worse to hate it. They embrace the form of religion, but hate the power. [now that passage becomes more clear, eh!!]. **The vulture hates sweet smells, so do they the perfumes of holiness.** They say in derision, These are your holy ones! To deride sanctification argues a high degree of atheism, and is a black brand of reprobation. Scoffing Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's family, Gen 21:1; and such as scoff at holiness shall be cast out of heaven.

Use two: Above all things pursue after sanctification. Seek grace more than gold. 'Keep her, for she is thy life.' Prov 4:13.

What are the chief inducements to sanctification?

(1.) It is the will of God that we should be holy, as saith the text, 'This is the will of God, your sanctification.' As God's word must be the rule, so his will, the reason of our actions. This is the will of God, our sanctification. Perhaps it is not the will of God we should be rich, but it is his will that we should be holy. God's will is our warrant.

(2.) Jesus Christ has died for our sanctification. Christ shed his blood to wash off our impurity. [i.e., Christ purchased faith since we are purified by faith] The cross was both an altar and a laver. 'Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity.' Tit 2:14. If we could be saved without holiness, Christ needed not have died. Christ died, not only to save us from wrath, but from sin.

(3.) **Sanctification makes us resemble God.** [We are transformed into his image from glory to glory, 2Cor. 3:18] It was Adam's sin that he aspired to be like God in omniscience, but we must endeavour to be like him in sanctity. It is a clear glass in which we can see a face; it is a holy heart in which something of God can be seen. Nothing of God can be seen in an unsanctified man, but you may see Satan's picture in him. Envy is the devil's eye, hypocrisy his cloven foot; **but nothing of God's image can be seen in him.**

(4.) Sanctification is that which God bears a great love to. Not any outward ornaments, high blood, or worldly grandeur, draws God's love, but a heart embellished with holiness does. Christ never admired anything but the beauty of holiness: he slighted the glorious buildings of the temple, but admired the woman's faith, and said, 'O woman, great is thy faith.' Amor fundatur similitudine. As a king delights to see his image upon a piece of coin, so where God sees his likeness he gives his love. The Lord has two heavens to dwell in, and the holy heart is one of them.

(5.) Sanctification is the only thing that makes us differ from the wicked. God's people have his seal upon them. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' [2 Tim 2:19](#). The godly are sealed with a double seal, a seal of **election**, 'The Lord knoweth who are his,' and a seal of **sanctification**, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' This is the name by which God's people are known, 'The people of thy holiness.' [Isa 63:18](#). As chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot, so sanctification distinguishes God's people from others. 'Ye have received an unction from the Holy One.' [1 John 2:20](#).

(6.) It is as great a shame to have the name of a Christian, yet want **[lack]** sanctity, as to have the name of a steward and want fidelity; or the name of a virgin, and want chastity. It exposes religion to reproach, to be baptized into the name of Christ while unholy, and to have eyes full of tears on a sabbath, and on a week-day eyes full of adultery: [2 Pet 2:15](#); to be so devout at the Lord's table, as if men were stepping into heaven, and so profane the week after, as if they came out of hell; to have the name of Christians while unholy is a scandal to religion, and makes the ways of God evil spoken of.

(7.) Sanctification fits for heaven: '**Who has called us to glory and virtue.**' [2 Pet 1:8](#). Glory is the throne, and sanctification is the step by which we ascend to it. As you first cleanse the vessel, and then pour in the wine; so God first cleanses us by sanctification, and then pours in the wine of glory. Solomon was first anointed with oil, and then was a king. [1 Kings 1:39](#). First God anoints us with the holy oil of his Spirit, and then sets the **crown of happiness upon our head**. **[we partake of the happiness that God has in himself, hence, joy in God. See Edwards on what consists in the glory of God]** Pureness of heart and seeing God are linked together. [Matt 5:5](#).

How may sanctification be attained?

(1.) **Be conversant in the word of God.** 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' [John 17:17](#). The word is both a glass to show us the spots of our soul, and a laver to wash them away. **The word has a transforming virtue in it; it irradiates the mind, and consecrates the heart.**

(2.) Get faith in Christ's blood. '**Having purified their hearts by faith.**' [Acts 15:9](#). She in the gospel who touched the hem of Christ's garment was healed. A touch of faith purifies. Nothing can have a greater force upon the heart, to sanctify it, than faith. If I believe Christ and his merits are mine, how can I sin against him? Justifying faith does that in a spiritual sense which miraculous faith does, it removes mountains, the mountains of pride, lust, envy. Faith and the love of sin are inconsistent.

Spirit sanctifies the heart, as lightning purifies the air, and as fire refines metals. *Omne agens generat sibi simile.* **The Spirit at work generates its own likeness everywhere.** [see [2Cor3:18](#) - *...are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.* And then Phil. [2:13](#), *For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*] **The Spirit stamps the impression of its own sanctity upon the heart, as the seal prints its likeness upon the wax.** (Needs must the glory of Christ be unspeakable, who reflects glory upon all that are with him, [John 17:24](#). and

stamps glory upon all that belong to him. Flavel, see p 141) The Spirit of God in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven.

(4.) Associate with sanctified persons. They may, by their counsel, prayers, and holy example, be a means to make you holy. As the communion of saints is in our creed, so it should be in our company. 'He that walketh with the wise shall be wise.' [Prov 13.20](#). Association begets assimilation.

(5.) Pray for sanctification. Job propounds a question. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' [Job 14:4](#). God can do it. Out of an unholy heart he can produce grace. Oh! make David's prayer your own, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' [Psa 51:10](#). Lay thy heart before the Lord, and say, Lord, my unsanctified heart pollutes all it touches. I am not fit to live with such a heart, for I cannot honour thee; nor die with such a heart, for I cannot see thee. Oh create in me a new heart! Lord, consecrate my heart, and make it thy temple, and thy praises shall be sung there for ever.

Use three: Has God brought a clean thing out of an unclean? has he sanctified you? Wear this jewel of sanctification with thankfulness. 'Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet for the inheritance,' &c. [Col 1:12](#). Christian, thou couldst defile thyself, but not sanctify thyself; but God has done it, he has not only chained up sin, but **changed thy nature**, and made thee as a king's daughter, all glorious within. He has put **upon thee the breastplate of holiness**, which, though it may be shot at, can never be shot through. Are there any here that are sanctified? **God has done more for you than millions, who may be illumined, but are not sanctified**. He has done more for you than if he had made you the sons of princes, and caused you to ride upon the high places of the earth. Are you sanctified? **Heaven is begun in you; for happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness**. Oh, how thankful should you be to God! Do as that blind man in the gospel did after he had received his sight, who 'followed Christ, glorifying God.' [Luke 18:43](#). Make heaven ring with God's praises.

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How shall we know we have a real work of grace, and have a right to assurance?

If we can resolve two queries: (1:) Have we high appreciations of Jesus Christ? 'To you that believe he is precious.' [1 Pet 2:2](#). Christ is all made up of beauties and delights; our praises fall short of his worth, and is like spreading canvas upon a cloth of gold. How precious is his blood and incense! **The one pacifies our conscience, the other perfumes our prayers**. Can we say we have endearing thoughts of Christ? Do we esteem him our pearl of price, our bright morning-star? **Do we count all our earthly enjoyments but as dung in comparison of Christ?** [Phil 3:3](#). Do we prefer the worst things of Christ, before the best things of the world; the reproaches of Christ before the world's embraces? [Heb 11:16](#). (2:) Have we the indwelling of the Spirit? 'The Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' [2 Tim 1:14](#).

How may we know that we have the indwelling presence of the Spirit?

Not by having sometimes good motions stirred up in us by the Spirit; for he may work in us but not dwell; but by the sanctifying power of the Spirit in our heart the Spirit infuses, divinum indolem, a divine nature; **it stamps its own impress and effigy on the soul, making the complexion of it holy**. The Spirit ennobles and raises the heart above the world. When Nebuchadnezzar had his understanding given him, he grazed no longer among the beasts, but returned to his throne, and minded the affairs of his kingdom; **so when the Spirit of God dwells in a man, it carries his heart above the visible orbs**; it

makes him, *superna anhelare* [pant after heavenly things], **thirst after Christ and glory**. If we can find this, then we have grace, and so have a right to assurance. [This is a result, or purpose, of the image of God being impressed upon the soul, or re-stamped upon the soul at conversion as Edwards describes, that consists of the knowledge of God (see 1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"), virtue and holiness, which enables us to please God by knowing God, loving God and thirsting after God and enjoying Him, etc.]

(2.) If you want assurance, wait for it. If the figures are graven on the dial, it is but waiting a while, and the sun shines; so when grace is engraven in the heart, it is but waiting a while, and we shall have the sunshine of assurance. 'He that believes makes not haste.' [Isa 28:16](#). He will stay God's leisure. Say not, God has forsaken you, he will never lift up the light of his countenance; but rather say, as the church, 'I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob,' [Isa 8:17](#). (i) Has God waited for your conversion and will you not wait for his consolation? How long did he come wooing you by his Spirit? He waited till his head was filled with dew; he cried, 'Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?' [Jer 13:37](#). Christian, did God wait for thy love, and canst thou not wait for his? (ii) Assurance is so sweet and precious, that it is worth waiting for; the price of it is above rubies, it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir. Assurance of God's love is a pledge of election, it is the angels, banquet: what other joy have they? As Micah said, 'What have I more?' [Judy 18:84](#); so, when God assures the soul of his eternal purposes of love, what has he more to give? Whom God kisses he crowns. Assurance is the firstfruits of paradise. One smile of God's face, one glance of his eye, one crumb of the hidden manna is so sweet and delicious, that it deserves our waiting. (iii) God has given a promise that we should not wait in vain. 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.' [Isa 49:93](#). Perhaps God reserves this cordial of assurance for a fainting time; he keeps sometimes his best wine till last. Assurance shall be reserved as an ingredient to sweeten the bitter cup of death.

How may deserted souls be comforted who are cast down for want of assurance?

(1.) Want of assurance shall not hinder the success of the saint's prayers. Sin lived in puts a bar to our prayer; but want of assurance does not hinder prayer; we may go to God still in an humble, fiducial manner. A Christian perhaps may think, because he does not see God's smiling face God will not hear him. This is a mistake. 'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before shine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.' [Psa 31:12](#). If we pour out sighs to heaven, God will hear every groan; and though he does not show us his face, he will lend us his ear.

(2.) Faith may be strongest when assurance is weakest. The woman of Canaan had no assurance, but a glorious faith. 'O woman, great is thy faith.' [Matt 15:58](#). Rachel was more fair, but Leah was more fruitful. Assurance is more fair and lovely to look upon, but a fruitful faith God sees to be better for us. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' [John 20:09](#).

(3.) When God is out of sight, he is not out of covenant. 'My covenant shall stand fast.' [Psa 89:98](#). Though a wife does not see her husband's face for many years, yet the marriage-relation holds, and he will come again to her after a long voyage. God may be gone from the soul in desertion, but the covenant stands fast. 'The covenant of my peace shall not be removed.' [Isa 54:40](#). But this promise was made to the Jews, and does not belong to us! Yes it does, for says ver 17, 'This is the heritage of the

servants of the Lord.' This is true of all the servants of God, those who are now living, as well as those who lived in the time of the Jews.

What shall we do to get assurance?

(1.) **Keep a pure conscience.** Let no guilt lie upon the conscience unrepented of. God seals no pardon before repentance. He will not pour the wine of assurance into a foul vessel. 'Let us draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience!' [Heb 10:02](#). Guilt clips the wings of comfort. He who is conscious to himself of secret sins, cannot draw near to God in full assurance; he cannot call God father, but judge. Keep conscience as clear as your eye, that no dust of sin can fall into it.

(2.) If you would have assurance, be much in the exercise of grace. 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' [1 Tim 4:4](#). Men grow rich by trading; so by trading in grace we grow rich in assurance. 'Make your election sure.' How? 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.' [2 Pet 1:1](#). Keep grace upon the wing; it is lively faith that flourishes into assurance. No man will set up a great sail in a small boat, but in a large vessel; so God sets up the sail of assurance in a heart enlarged with grace. See pg 2026 on *trading*.

(3.) If you would have assurance, cherish the Holy Spirit of God. When David would have assurance, he prayed, 'Take not away thy Spirit from me.' [Psa 51:11](#). He knew that it was the Spirit only that could make him hear the voice of joy. The Spirit is the Comforter, that seals up assurance. [2 Cor 1:12](#). Therefore make much of the Spirit, do not grieve it. As Noah opened the ark to receive the dove, so should we open our hearts to receive the Spirit, which is the blessed dove that brings an olive branch of assurance in its mouth.

(4.) Let us lie at the pool of the ordinances, and frequent the word and sacrament. 'He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.' [Cant 2:2](#). The blessed ordinances are the banqueting-house, where God displays the banner of assurance. The sacrament is a sealing ordinance. Christ made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread; so, in the holy supper, in the breaking of bread God makes himself known to us, to be our God and portion.

How should they conduct themselves who have assurance?

(1.) If you have assurance of your justification, do not abuse it. It is abusing assurance when we grow more remiss in duty; as the musician, having money thrown him, leaves off playing. By remissness, or intermitting the exercises of religion, we grieve the Spirit, and that is the way to have an embargo laid upon our spiritual comforts. We abuse assurance when we grow presumptuous and less fearful of sin. What! because a father gives his son an assurance of his love, and tells him he will entail his land upon him, shall the son be wanton and dissolute? This were the way to lose his father's affection, and make him cut off the entail. It was an aggravation of Solomon's sin that his heart was turned away from the Lord, after he had appeared to him twice. [1 Kings 11:1](#). It is bad to sin when one wants assurance, but it is worse to sin when one has it. Has the Lord sealed his love with a kiss? Has he left a pledge of heaven in your hand, and do you thus requite the Lord? Will you sin with manna in your mouth? Does God give you the sweet clusters of assurance to feed on, and will you return him wild grapes? It much pleases

Satan, either to see us want assurance, or abuse it. We abuse assurance when the pulse of our souls beats faster in sin, and slower in duty.

(2.) If you have assurance, admire his stupendous mercy. You deserved that God should give you gall and vinegar to drink, and has he made the honeycomb of his love to drop upon you? Oh, fall down and adore his goodness! Say, Lord, how is it that thou shouldst manifest thyself to me, and not to other believers! for many whom thou lovest as the apple of thine eye thou holdest in suspense, and givest them no assurance of thy love; though thou hast given them the new name, yet not the white stone; though they have the seed of grace, yet not the oil of gladness; though they have the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, yet not the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Lord, whence is it that thou shouldst manifest thyself to me, and make thy golden beams of assurance to shine upon my soul? Oh, adore God on this account! such will be the work of heaven.

(3.) Let your hearts be endeared in love to God. If God gives his people correction, they must love him: much more when he gives them assurance. 'O love the Lord, all ye his saints.' [Ps 31:13](#). Has God brought you to the borders of Canaan, given you a bunch of grapes, crowned you with lovingkindness, confirmed your pardon under the broad seal of heaven? How can you be frozen at such a fire? How can you be fumed into seraphims burning in divine love! Say as Augustine, animam meam in odio haberem, I would hate my own soul, if I did not find it loving God. Give God the cream and quintessence of your love, and show your love by being willing to lose all for his sake.

(4.) If you have assurance, improve it for God's glory. (1:) By encouraging such as are yet unconverted. Tell them how sweet this hidden manna is; tell them what a good master you serve; what gales you have had; tell them God has carried you to the hill of myrrh, to the mountains of spices; he has given you not only a prospect of heaven, but an earnest. Oh, persuade sinners, by all the love and mercy of God, that they would enroll their names in his family, and cast themselves upon him for salvation. Tell them God has met with you and unlocked the secrets of free grace, and assured you of a land flowing with those infinite delights which eye has not seen. Thus, by telling others what God has done for your soul, you may make them in love with the ways of God, and cause them to turn proselytes to religion. (2) Improve assurance, by comforting such as want it [\[lack it\]](#). Be as the good Samaritan to pour wine and oil into their wounds. You who have assurance, are arrived as it were at the haven, you are sure of your happiness; but do you not see others who are struggling with the waves of temptation and desertion, and are ready to sink? Oh, now sympathize with them, and do what you can to comfort them while they are in this deep ocean. 'Whether we be comforted is it, for your consolation.' [2 Cor 1:1](#). The comfortable experience of one Christian being communicated to another much revives and bears up his fainting heart. 'Our comfort,' says the apostle, 'is for your consolation.' (3:) Improve assurance, by walking more heavenly. You should scorn the things below; you who have an earnest of heaven, should not be too earnest for the earth. You have angels' food; and it becomes not you, with the serpent, to lick the dust. The wicked are all for corn, wine and oil; but you have that which is better. God has lifted up the light of his countenance; and will you hanker after the world, when you have been feeding upon the grapes and pomegranates of the holy land? Do you now lust after the garlicks and onions of Egypt? When you are clothed with the sun, will you set the moon and the stars above you? **Oh let them scramble for the world, who have nothing else but husks to feed on.** Have you assurance of heaven, and is not that enough? Will not a kingdom satisfy you?

Such as are high in assurance, should live above the world. (4.) Improve assurance by a cheerful walking. It is for condemned persons to go hanging down their heads. But hast thou thy absolution? Does thy God smile on thee? Cheer up. 'Why art thou, being the king's son, lean?' [2 Sam 13:3](#). Art thou the king's son? Has God assured thee of thy adoption, and art thou sad? Assurance should be an antidote against all trouble. What though the world hate thee? Thou art assured that thou art one of God's favourites. What though there is but little oil in the cruse, and thou art low in the world? Thou art high in assurance. Oh, then rejoice! How musical is the bird! How does it chirp and sing, though it knows not where to pick up the next crumb! and shall they be sad and discontented who have God's bond to assure them of their daily bread, and his love to assure them of heaven? Certainly those who have assurance, cannot but be of a sanguine complexion.

(5.) If you have an assurance of salvation, let it make you long after a glorified state. He who has an earnest in his hand, desires the whole sum to be paid. The soul that has tasted how sweet the Lord is, should long for a fuller enjoyment of him in heaven. Has Christ put the ring of assurance on thy hand, and so espoused thee to himself? **how shouldst thou long for the marriage-supper of the Lamb!** [Rev 19:9](#). O Christian, think with thyself, if a glimpse of heaven, a smile of God's face be so sweet, what will it be, to be ever sunning thyself in the light of God's countenance! Certainly, you who have an assurance of your title to heaven, cannot but desire possession. **Be content to live, but willing to die.**

(6.) If you have assurance, be careful you do not lose it. Keep it, for it is your life, your *bene esse*, the comfort of your life. Keep assurance. 1st. By prayer. 'O continue thy lovingkindness.' [Psa 36:60](#). Lord, continue assurance; do not take away this privy seal from me. 2ndly. Keep assurance by humility. Pride estranges God from the soul. When you are nigh in assurance, be low in humility. Paul had assurance, and he baptized himself with the name, 'Chief of sinners.' [1 Tim 1:15](#). The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of an humble heart.

7. Peace

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Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. [1 Pet 1:1](#).

Having spoken of the first fruit of sanctification, assurance, I proceed to the second, viz., Peace, 'Peace be multiplied:'

What are the several species or kinds of Peace?

Peace, in Scripture, is compared to a river which parts itself into two silver streams. [Isa 66:12](#).

I. There is an external peace, and that is, (1.) (Economical, or peace in a family. (2.) Political, or peace in the state. Peace is the nurse of plenty. 'He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.' [Psa 147:14](#). How pleasant it is when the waters of blood begin to assuage, and we can see the windows of our ark open, and the dove returning with an olive branch of peace! (3.) Ecclesiastical, or peace in the church. As unity in Trinity is the greatest mystery in heaven, unity in

verity is the greatest mercy on earth. Peace ecclesiastical stands in opposition to schism and persecution.

II. A spiritual peace, which is twofold; peace above us, or peace with God; and peace within us, or peace with conscience, which is superlative: other peace may be lasting, but this is everlasting.

Whence comes this Peace?

It has the whole Trinity for its author. God the Father is 'the God of peace.' [1 Thess 5:53](#). God the Son is the 'Prince of peace.' [Isa 9:9](#). Peace is said to be the 'fruit of the Spirit.' [Gal 5:22](#).

(1.) God the Father is the God of peace. As he is the God of order, so he is the God of peace. [1 Cor 14:43](#), and [Phil 4:4](#). This was the form of the priest's blessing upon the people. 'The Lord give thee peace.' [Numb 6:26](#).

(2.) **God the Son is the purchaser of peace.** He made peace by his blood. 'Having made peace by the blood of his cross.' [Col 1:10](#). The atonement Aaron made for the people, when he entered into the holy of holies, with blood, was a type of Christ our high priest, who by his sacrifice pacified his angry Father, and made atonement for us. Christ **purchased** our peace upon hard terms; for his soul was in an agony, while he was travelling to bring forth peace to the world.

(3.) Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. He seals up peace to the conscience. The Spirit clears up the work of grace in the heart, from whence arises peace. There was a well of water near Hagar, but she did not see it, therefore she wept. A Christian has grace, but does not see it, therefore he weeps. Now the Spirit discovers this well of water, it enables conscience to witness to a man that has the real work of grace, and so peace flows into the soul. Thus you see whence this peace comes - the Father decrees it, the Son purchases it, the Holy Ghost applies it.

Whether such as are destitute of grace may have peace?

No! **Peace flows from sanctification**, but they being unregenerate, have nothing to do with peace. 'There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.' [Isa 57:7](#). They may have a truce, but no peace. God may forbear the wicked a while, and stop the roaring of his cannon; but though there be a truce, yet there is no peace. The wicked may have something which looks like peace, but it is not. **They may be fearless and stupid**; but there is a great difference between a **stupified conscience**, and a **pacified conscience**. 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.' [Luke 11:11](#). This is the devil's peace; he rocks men in the cradle of security; he cries, Peace, peace, when men are on the precipice of hell. **The seeming peace a sinner has, is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but the ignorance of his danger.**

What are the signs of a false peace?

(1.) A false peace has much confidence in it, but this confidence is conceit. The sinner does not doubt of God's mercy; and from this **presumptuous confidence** arises some kind of quiet in the mind. The

same word in the Hebrew, *cassal*, signifies both confidence and folly. Indeed a sinner's confidence is folly. How confident were the foolish virgins!

(2.) **False peace separates those things which God has joined together.** God joins holiness and peace, but he who has a false peace, separates the two. **He lays claim to peace, but banishes holiness.** 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' [Deut 29:19](#). The wicked are loose and vain, and yet thank God that they have peace, what a delusion! You may as well suck health out of poison, as peace out of sin.

(3.) **False peace is not willing to be tried. It is a sign they are bad wares which will not endure the light; a sign a man has stolen goods, when he will not have his house searched.** A false peace cannot endure to be tried by the word. The word speaks of a humbling and refining work upon the soul before peace; but false peace cannot endure to hear of this. The least trouble will shake this peace; it will end in despair. In a false peace, **conscience is asleep**; but when this lion of conscience shall be awakened at death, it will roar upon a man; he will be a terror to himself, and be ready to lay violent hands upon himself. [Edwards noted that at the final day of judgment, people's consciences will be in full exercise and they will now see that they are guilty as charged. Now, in this life, they are running as fast as they can from God; at the last day they will be told to "depart" from God, but will do so unwillingly.]

How shall we know that ours is a true peace?

(1.) True peace flows from union with Christ. *Communio fundatur in unione*. The graft or scion must first be inoculated into the tree before it can receive sap or nourishment from it; **so we must first be ingrafted into Christ**, before we can receive peace from him. Have we faith? **By holiness we are made like Christ**; by believing we are made one with Christ, and being in Christ we have peace. [John 16:63](#).

(2.) **True peace flows from subjection to Christ.** Where Christ gives peace, there he sets up his government in the heart. 'Of his government and peace there shall be no end.' [Isa 9:9](#). Christ is called 'a priest upon his throne.' [Zech 6:13](#). Christ as a priest makes peace; but he will be a priest upon his throne - **he brings the heart in subjection to him**. If Christ be our peace, he is our prince. [Isa 9:9](#). **Whenever Christ pacifies the conscience, he subdues the lust.**

(3.) True peace is after trouble. First, God lets loose a spirit of bondage, he convinces and humbles the soul; then he speaks peace. Many say they have peace, but is this peace before a storm, or after it? True peace is after trouble. First there was the earthquake, and then the fire, and then the still small voice. [1 Kings 19:12](#). Thou who never hadst any legal bruising, mayest suspect thy peace. God pours the golden oil of peace into broken hearts.

Have all sanctified persons this peace?

They have a title to it; they have the ground of it; grace is the seed of peace, and it will in time turn to peace; as the blossoms of a tree to fruit, milk to cream. They have a promise of it. 'The Lord will bless his people with peace.' [Psalm 29:11](#): **They may have peace with God, though not peace in their own conscience; they have the initials and beginnings of peace.** There is a secret peace which the heart has in serving God; such meltings and enlargements in duty as revive the soul, and bear it up from sinking.

But why have not all believers the full enjoyment and possession of peace? Why is not this flower of peacefully ripe and blown?

Some of the godly may not have so full a degree of peace. (1.) Through the fury of temptation, though the devil cannot destroy us, he will disturb us. He disputes against our adoption; he would make us question the work of grace in our hearts, and so disturb the waters of our peace. He is like a subtle cheater, who, **if he cannot make a man's title to his land void, yet will put him to many troublesome suits in law**. If Satan cannot make us ungodly, he will make us unquiet. Violent winds make the sea rough and stormy; so the winds of temptation blowing, disturb peace of spirit, and put the soul into a commotion.

(2.) The godly may not enjoy peace, through mistake and misapprehension about sin. They find so much corruption, that they think sure, if there were grace, there would not be such strong working of corruption; whereas this should be so far from discouraging Christians, and hindering their peace, that it is an argument for them. Let me ask, Whence is it that you feel sin? **No man can feel sin, but by grace. A wicked man is insensible. Lay a hundredweight upon a dead man, he does not complain; but being sensible of corruption, argues a gracious principle.** [Rom 7:71](#). Again, Whence is it that there is a combat with sin, but from the life of grace? [Gal 5:17](#). Dead things cannot combat. Whence is it that the saints weep for sin? What are these tears but seeds of faith? The not understanding of this hinders a Christian's peace.

(3.) The godly may not enjoy peace, through remissness in duty: they may leave their first love. When Christians abate their fervency, God abates their peace. If you slacken the strings of a viol, the music is spoiled; so, if Christians slack in duty, they spoil the sweet music of peace in their souls. As the fire decays, the cold increases; so, as fervency in duty abates, our peace cools.

Use one: Labour for this blessed peace - peace with God and conscience. Peace with neighbour-nations is sweet. Pax una triumphis innumeris melior [One peace is better than innumerable triumphs]. The Hebrew word shalom, peace, comprehends all blessings; it is the glory of a kingdom. A prince's crown is more beautiful, when it is hung with the white lily of peace, than when it is set with the red roses of a bloody war. Oh, then, how sweet is peace of conscience! It is a bulwark against the enemy. [Phil 4:4](#). It shall keep you as in a garrison; you may throw down the gauntlet, and bid defiance to enemies. It is the golden pot and the manna. It is the first fruits of paradise. It is still music, for want of which a Christian is in continual fear, and does not take comfort in ordinances. Hannah went up to the feast at Jerusalem, but she wept and did not eat. [1 Sam 1:1](#); so, a poor dejected soul goes to an ordinance, but does not eat of the feast; he weeps and does not eat. **He cannot take comfort in worldly blessings, health, estate, relations; he wants [lacks] that inward peace, which should be a sauce to sweeten his comforts**. Oh, therefore, labour for this blessed peace. Consider its noble and excellent effects. (1.) It gives boldness at the throne of grace. **Guilt of conscience clips the wings of prayer, it makes the face blush, and the heart faint; but when a Christian has some lively apprehensions of God's love, and the Spirit whispers peace, he goes to God with boldness, as a child to his father.** 'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' [Psa 25:5](#): Time was when David's soul was bowed down. 'I am bowed down greatly.' [Psa 38:8](#). Now the case is altered he will lift up his soul to God in a way of triumph. Whence was this? God has spoken peace to his soul. 'Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.' [Psa 26:6](#). (2.) **This**

divine peace fires the heart with love to Christ. Peace is the result of pardon. He who has a pardon sealed, cannot choose but love his prince. How endeared is Christ to the soul! Now Christ is precious indeed. 'Oh,' says the soul, 'how sweet is this rose of Sharon! Has Christ waded through a sea of blood and wrath, to purchase my peace? Has he not only made peace, but spoken peace to me? How should my heart ascend in a fiery chariot of love! How willing should I be to do and suffer for Christ!' (3.) This peace quiets the heart in trouble. 'This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces.' [Mic 5:5](#). The enemy may invade our palaces, but not our peace: this man Christ shall be the peace. When the head aches, the heart may be well; and when worldly troubles assault a Christian, his mind may be in peace and quiet. 'I will lay me down in peace, and sleep.' [Psa 4:4](#). It was a sad time with David, he was fleeing for his life from Absalom; it was no small affliction to think that his own son should seek to take away his father's life and crown. David wept and covered his head. [2 Sam 15:50](#). Yet at this time he says, 'I will lay me down in peace, and sleep.' He had trouble from his son, but peace from his conscience. David could sleep upon the soft pillow of a good conscience. This is a peace worth getting.

What shall we do to attain this blessed peace?

(1.) Let us ask it of God. He is the God of peace; he beats back the roaring lion; he stills the raging of conscience: if we could call all the angels out of heaven, they could not speak peace without God. The stars cannot make day without the sun; none can make day in a dark deserted soul, but the Sun of Righteousness. As the wilderness cannot water itself, but remains dry and parched till the clouds drop their moisture, so our hearts cannot have peace till he infuse it, and drop it upon us by his Spirit. Therefore pray, 'Lord, thou who art the God of peace, create peace; thou who art the Prince of peace, command it. Give me that peace which may sweeten trouble, yea, even the bitter cup of death.'

(2.) If you would have peace, make war with sin. Sin is the Achan that troubles us, the Trojan horse. 'When Joram sew Jehu, he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?' [2 Kings 9:92](#). What peace, so long as sin remains unmortified? If you would have peace with God, break the league with sin; give battle to sin, for it is a most just war. God has proclaimed it: nay, he has promised us victory. 'Sin shall not have dominion.' [Rom 6:14](#). No way to peace, but by maintaining a war with sin. Pax nostra bellum contra daemonem [Our peace is a war against the Devil]. Tertullian [[One of the old church fathers, 2nd century](#)]. When Samson had slain the lion, there came honey out of the lion; so by slaying sin, we get the honey of peace.

(3.) Go to Christ's blood for peace. Some go to fetch their peace from their own righteousness, not Christ's: they go for peace to their holy life, not Christ's death. If conscience be troubled, they strive to quiet it with their duties. This is not the right way to peace. Duties must not be neglected, nor yet idolized. Look to the blood of sprinkling. [Heb 12:24](#). That blood of Christ which pacified God, must pacify conscience. Christ's blood being sucked in by faith, gives peace. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' [Rom 5:5](#): No balm to cure a wounded conscience, but the blood of Christ.

(4.) Walk closely with God. Peace flows from purity. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them.' [Gal 6:16](#). In the text, grace and peace are put together; grace is the root, and peace is the

flower. As balm water drops in distillation, so divine peace comes out of a gracious heart. Walk very holily. God's Spirit is a refiner before a comforter.

Use two: You who have this peace, peace above, peace within, **labour to keep it:** it is a precious jewel, do not lose it. [[Be spiritually minded. See Joshua 1:8, Romans 12:2, 2Cor.4:18](#)] It is sad to have the league of national peace broken, but it is worse to have the peace of conscience broken. Oh, preserve this peace! First, take heed of relapses. Has God spoken peace? Do not turn again to **folly.** [Psa 85:5.](#) Besides ingratitude, there is folly in relapses. It was long ere God was reconciled and the breach made up, and will you again eclipse and forfeit your peace? Has God healed the wound of conscience, and will you tear it open again? Will you break another vein? Will you cut a new artery? This is returning indeed to **folly. What madness is it to meddle again with that sin, which will breed the worm of conscience!** [[This can be gross outward, flagitious sins or just being slothful spiritually, not being spiritually minded but independently minded, etc.](#)] Secondly, make up your spiritual accounts daily; see how matters stand between God and your souls. 'I commune with my own heart.' [Psa 77:7.](#) Often reckonings keep God and conscience friends. Do with your hearts as you do with your watches, wind them up every morning by prayer, and at night examine whether your hearts have gone true all that day, whether the wheels of your affections have moved swiftly towards heaven. Oh, call yourselves often to account! Keep your reckonings even, for that is the way to keep your peace.

Joy

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*What are the differences between worldly joys and spiritual?
The gleanings of the one are better than the vintage of the other.*

(1.) **Spiritual joys help to make us better, worldly joys often make us worse.** 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear.' [Jer 22:21.](#) **Pride and luxury are the two worms that are bred of worldly pleasures.** 'Wine takes away the heart;' it is *fomentum libidinis*, Augustine, 'the inflamer of lust.' [Hos 4:4:](#) As Satan entered in the sop, so often in the cup; but spiritual joy makes one better; it is like cordial water, which, as physicians say, not only cheers the heart, **but purges out the noxious humours;** so divine joy is cordial water, which not only comforts but cleanses; it makes a Christian more holy; **it causes an antipathy against sin; it infuses strength to do and suffer.** **'The joy of the Lord is your strength.'** [Neh 8:80.](#) As some colours not only delight the eye, but strengthen the sight; so the joys of God not only refresh the soul, but strengthen it.

(2.) **Spiritual joys are inward, they are heart joys.** 'Your heart shall rejoice.' [John 16:62.](#) Seneca says true joy *latet in profundo*, it is hidden within, **worldly joy is in superficie, it lies on the outside,** like the dew that wets the leaf. We read of those who 'rejoice in appearance,' in the Greek, in the face. [2 Cor 5:12.](#) **It goes no farther than the face, it is not within; 'in laughter the heart is sad.'** Like a house which has a gilded frontispiece, but all the rooms within are hung in mourning. But spiritual joy lies most within. 'Your heart shall rejoice.' Divine joy is like a spring of water which runs underground! Others can see the sufferings of a Christian, but they see not his joy. 'A stranger intermeddled not with his

joy.' [Prov 14:40](#). His joy is hidden manna, hid from the eye of the world; he has still music which others hear not; the marrow lies within, the best joy is within the heart.

(3.) Spiritual joys are sweeter than others, they are better than wine. [Cant 1:1](#). They are a Christian's festival; they are the golden pot and the manna, they are so sweet, that they make everything else sweet: sweeten health and estate, as sweet water poured on flowers makes them more fragrant and aromatic. **Divine joys are so delicious and ravishing, that they put our mouth out of taste for earthly delights**; as he who has been drinking cordials tastes little sweetness in water. Paul had so tasted these divine joys, that his mouth was out of taste for worldly things; the world was crucified to him, it was like a dead thing, he could find no sweetness in it. [Gal 6:14](#). [This is why Paul said that he counted all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ! All the more reason to study the scriptures where these pearls of wisdom lie buried. Those who just remain on the surface never find them; but those who dig diligently as though digging for gold, find them! Read Jonathan Edwards' piece on the importance of Christian knowledge and then John Owen's piece, The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded.]

(4.) Spiritual joys are more pure, **they are not tempered with any bitter ingredients**. A sinner's joy is mixed with dregs, it is embittered with fear and guilt: the wolf feeds in the breasts of his joy; he drinks wormwood wine; but spiritual joy is not muddled with guilt, but like a crystal stream, runs pure; it is all spirits and quintessence; it is joy and nothing but joy; **it is a rose without prickles**; it is honey without wax.

(5.) They are satisfying joys: 'Ask, that your joy may be full.' [John 16:64](#). **Worldly joys can no more fill the heart than a drop can fill a cistern; they may please the palate or fancy, as Plato calls them pictures of joy, but cannot satisfy the soul**. 'The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;' [Eccl 1:1](#); but the joys of God satisfy. 'Thy comforts delight my soul.' [Psa 94:19](#). There is as much difference between spiritual joys and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.

(6.) They are stronger joys than worldly. 'Strong consolation.' [Heb 6:18](#). **They are strong indeed that can bear up a Christian's heart in trials and afflictions**. 'Having received the word in much affliction, with joy.' [1 Thess 1:1](#). These are roses that grow in winter, these joys can sweeten the waters of Marah; he that has these can gather grapes of thorns, and fetch honey out of the carcase of a lion. 'As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing.' [2 Cor 6](#): 10. At the end of the rod a Christian tastes honey.

(7.) **They are unwearied joys**. **Other joys, when in excess, often cause loathing, we are apt to surfeit on them [surfeit - cause to not desire no more of something]; too much honey nauseates; one may be tired with pleasure as well as labour**. Xerxes offered a reward to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the joys of God, though they satisfy, yet they never surfeit. A drop of joy is sweet, but the more of this wine the better. Such as drink of the joys of heaven are never cloyed; the satiety is without loathing, because they still desire the joy wherewith they are satiated.

(8.) **They are abiding joys**. **Worldly joys are soon gone**. Such as crown themselves with rosebuds, and bathe in the perfumed waters of pleasure, may have joys which seem to be sweet but they are swift:

they are like meteors, which give a bright and sudden flash, and then disappear. The joys which believers have are abiding; they are a blossom of eternity, a pledge and earnest of those rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand for evermore.

Why is this joy to be labored for?

(1.) Because it is self-existent, it can subsist in the absence of all other carnal joy. This joy depends not upon outward things. As the philosophers said, when the musicians came to them, 'Philosophers can be merry without music;' so he that has this joy can be cheerful in the deficiency of carnal joys; he can rejoice in God, in sure hope of glory, 'although the fig-tree shall not blossom.' [Hab 3:17](#). Spiritual joy can go without silver crutches to support it. Spiritual joy is higher built than upon creatures, for it is built on the love of God, on the promises, and on the blood of Christ.

(2.) Because spiritual joy carries the soul through duty cheerfully; the Sabbath becomes a delight, and religion is a recreation. Fear and sorrow hinder us in the discharge of duty; but a Christian serves God with activity, when he serves him with joy. The oil of joy makes the wheels of obedience move faster. How fervently did they pray, whom God made joyful in the house of prayer! [Isa 56:6](#).

(3.) It is called the kingdom of God in [Rom 14:17](#), because it is a taste of that which the saints have in the kingdom of God. What is the heaven of the angels, but the smiles of God's face, the sensible perception and feeling of those joys which are infinitely ravishing and full of glory! To encourage and quicken us in seeking after them, consider, that Christ died to purchase this joy for his saints. He was a man of sorrows, that we might be full of joy; he prayed that the saints might have this divine joy. 'And now I come to thee, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.' [John 17:13](#). This prayer he now prays in heaven; he knows we never love him so much as when we feel his love; which may encourage us to seek after this joy. We pray for that which Christ himself is praying for, when we pray that his joy may be fulfilled in us.

What shall we do to obtain this spiritual joy?

Walk consistently and spiritually. [be spiritually minded, etc., as I noted above] God gives joy after long and close walking with him. (1.) Observe your hours. Set time every day apart for God. (2.) Mourn for sin. Mourning is the seed, as Basil says, out of which the flower of spiritual joy grows. 'I will restore comforts to his mourners.' [Isa 57:18](#). [Also, remember, blessed are those who mourn! for what? for the sin that remains in them that is an affront to God. This only the saints are capable of.] (3.) Keep the book of conscience fair written. Do not by presumptuous sins blur your evidences. A good conscience is the ark in which God puts the hidden manna. (4.) Be often upon your knees, pray with life and fervency. The same Spirit that fills the heart with sighs fills it with joys. The same Spirit that indites the prayer, seals it. When Hannah had prayed, her countenance was no more sad. [1 Sam 1:18](#). Praying Christians have much intercourse with God; and none are so like to have the secrets of his love imparted, as those who hold correspondence with him. By close walking with God we get bunches of grapes by the way, which are an earnest of future happiness.

How shall we comfort those that want [lack] joy?

Such as walk in close communion with God have more than others.

(1.) Initial joy, joy in semine, in the seed. 'Light (a metaphor for joy) is sown for the righteous.' [Psa 97:71](#). Grace in the heart is a seed of joy. Though a Christian wants [lacks] the sun, he has a day-star in his heart. [God communicates this joy and happiness only to his elect. Only believers, have this kind of grace, which consists in saving grace or that new principle of life imparted to the soul by the Holy Spirit, Christ in you, that new principle of life which acts in you to will and to do, Phil 2:13. It is the duty of all Christians to examine themselves to see if they have this grace, to see if they be in the faith! 2Cor13:5 Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure...2Pet1:10]

(2.) A believer has real, though not royal comforts; he has, as Aquinas says, *gaudium in Deo, though not a Deo*; joy in God, though not from God. Joy in God is the delight and complacency the soul takes in God. 'My soul shall be glad in the Lord.' [Psa 104:44](#). He that is truly gracious, is so far joyful as to take comfort in God: though he cannot say, God rejoices in him, he can say, he rejoices in God. [*truly gracious means that the person has this saving grace, he has been born again, etc.*]

(3.) He has supporting, though not transporting comforts. He has as much as keeps him from sinking. 'Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' [Psa 138:8](#). If a Christian has not God's arm to embrace him, yet he has it to uphold him. Thus a Christian who walks with God has something that bears up his heart from sinking; and it-is but waiting awhile, and he is sure of those joys which are unspeakable and full of glory.

Use one: Then see that religion is no melancholy thing; it brings joy; the fruit of the Spirit is joy. *Mutatur non tollitur* [It varies, but it is not destroyed]. A poor Christian that feeds on bread and water, may have purer joy than the greatest monarch; though he fares hard, he feeds high; he has a table spread from heaven; angels' food, hidden manna; he has sometimes sweet raptures of joy, that cause jubilation of spirit; he has that which is better felt than can be expressed. [2 Cor 12:2](#).

Use two: If God gives his people such joy in this life, oh! then, what glorious joy will he give them in heaven! 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' [Matt 25:51](#). Here joy begins to enter into us, there we shall enter into joy. God keeps his best wine till last. Heliogabalus bathed himself in sweet perfumed waters. What joy when the soul shall for ever bathe itself in the pure and pleasant fountain of God's love! What joy to see the orient brightness of Christ's face, and have the kisses of those lips which drop sweet-smelling myrrh! *Laetabitur sponsa in amplexibus Domini* [The Bride will rejoice in the embrace of her Lord]. Augustine. Oh! if a cluster of grapes here be so sweet, what will the full vintage be! How may this set us all longing for that place where sorrow cannot live, and where joy cannot die!

Growth in Grace

code385

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.ix.ix.html>

p274

Whence is it that true grace cannot but grow?

(1.) It is proper for grace to grow; it is semen manens [an enduring seed], the seed of God. [1 John 3:3](#). It is the nature of **seed** to grow: **grace** does not lie in the heart, as a stone in the earth, but as seed in the earth, which will spring up, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. [the *seed* is a symbol for God's grace, hence 1John3:9, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His *seed* remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." this *seed* is that new principle of life, faith, grace, the power of God, that enables us to obey God (although imperfectly) and persevere to the end and not fall back to perdition, not fall back into sin. We still sin, but we do not make a willful habit of it as we did before we were converted since believers now hate sin and love God. This is called a change of heart or repentance which God grants to those he converts. Romans 7, John 6, 10]

(2.) Grace cannot but grow, from its sweetness and excellence. He that has grace is never weary of it, but would have more. The delight he has in it causes thirst. **Grace is the image of God, and a Christian thinks he can never be enough like God.** Grace instills peace; a Christian, therefore, strives to grow in grace that he may grow in peace. [When you think about it, he's right. Grace is that power that enables us to obey God...to love God, to know God (knowledge is grace), to take joy in God and participate in his happiness in Himself. And this image of God which, as Edwards puts it, consists of the knowledge of God, virtue and holiness, and joy and happiness, which he infuses into the soul or re-stamps upon the soul, causes us (leads us) to willingly obey God in exercise of his graces. Hence being united to Christ, having the image of God restored in us, we live by the sap of the True Vine and will bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit; all those graces that are listed in 1Cor13 and Gal. 5:22 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* And is not God like all these things! They are the essence of his likeness. We become partakers of his nature! And as a result, we put into exercise those graces; in this way we are *led by the Spirit*, not by hearing voices, or seeing visions, etc., as the Enthusiasts, Pentecostals, or Charismatics, etc., claim. And this explains Phil. 2:13, *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*, as well as the prophesy in Ezek. 36:27, *I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them.* Now we can understand the importance of David's prayer in Psalm 51:10, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.*]

Lets repeat this one thing that Thomas Watson mentions: my comments in [blue].

(4.) "Did God create our souls after his image, but we lost it? Let us never rest till we are restored to God's image again. We have now got the devil's image in pride, malice, and envy. [the likeness of Adam, Gen. 5:3, See 1Cor15:49, *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*] Let us get God's image restored, which consists in knowledge and righteousness. [Col. 3:10](#). [Eph 4:44](#). [But the Spirit must work it.] Grace is our best beauty, it makes us like God and angels. As the sun is to the world, so is holiness to the soul. [But prior to conversion we are in darkness and must be translated from that to light! Though God commands us to get us a clean

heart, we cannot do it apart from being in Him, John 15 - God's commanding us to do something is no proof that we are able to do it.] Let us go to God to repair his image in us. Lord! thou hast once made me, make me anew; sin has defaced thy image in me, oh draw it again by the pencil of the Holy Ghost." Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity p119

Here Watson says the image consists in knowledge and righteousness whereas Edwards says knowledge, holiness and virtue, joy & happiness - pretty much the same thing.

Many believe that God's image, at least the chief part of it (holiness or love for God), was not defaced but damaged, that is, not wiped clean, as though all God has to do is to improve upon what we have already; that there is some virtue in us that enables us to come to God, to believe in him, apart from being in Christ or apart from converting grace. But the image that God imparts to the elect is new, not an improvement of what was already there! We are a new creation, 2Cor5:17. For if we had a little holiness prior to conversion then we are not totally dead but we have a little life, as the Arminians claim. But we are dead in sin, unable and unwilling to come to God (to believe in God), Romans 8:7-8. If we had a little holiness or virtue, surely we would have some ability to believe from our own industry, i.e., *of ourselves*; but faith, being a gift, or this new living principle being a gift, is *not of ourselves*! Eph. 2:8

So, after the Fall, we lost this grace, this chief part of this image of God, his brightest and most glorious part of his two-fold image, the beauty of holiness; and it is only by His free and sovereign will, his mercy (there's the unconditional election) that we get it back. *I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy*, Romans 9:16. Prior to our conversion, being without this image, we have no virtue or holiness, hence, no love for God, only love for ourselves (self-love), we see no excellence in Him, only in ourselves, no saving knowledge of God; and on top of that, we have enmity in our hearts toward God, all the faculties of our soul are corrupt, being under the dominion of sin and Satan, held captive, desiring his will continually. Therefore, this grace that God gives us to effect our conversion has to be *freely given*, meaning that there was nothing outside of himself that moved him to give it.

Thomas Watson (continued)

(3.) Grace cannot but grow, from a believer's ingrafting into Christ. [Union with Christ] He who is a scion, ingrafted into this noble, generous stock, cannot but grow. Christ is so full of sap, and vivifying influence, that he makes all who are grafted into him, grow fruitful. 'From me is thy fruit found.' Hos 14:4.

What motives or incentives are there to make us grow in grace?

(1.) Growth is the end [purpose] of the ordinances. Why does a man lay out cost on ground, manure and water it, but that it may grow? The sincere milk of the word is given, that we may grow thereby. 1 Pet 2:2. The table of the Lord is on purpose for our spiritual nourishment and increase of grace. [And with that comes increase in peace!]

(2.) The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it. Things that have no life will not grow: a picture will not grow, a stake in the hedge will not grow; but a plant that has a vegetative life grows. The growing of grace shows it to be alive in the soul. [\[Good test for self-examination.\]](#)

(3.) Growth in grace is the beauty of a Christian. The more a child grows, the more it comes to its favour and complexion, and looks more ruddy; so, the more a Christian grows in grace, the more he comes to his spiritual complexion, and looks fairer. Abraham's faith was beautiful when in its infancy, but at last it grew so vigorous and eminent, that God himself was in love with it, and crowned Abraham with this honour, to be the 'father of the faithful.'

(4.) The more we grow in grace, **the more glory we bring to God.** God's glory is more worth than the salvation of all men's souls. This should be our design, to raise the trophies of God's glory; and how can we do it more, than by growing in grace? **'Hereby is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit.'** [John 15:5](#). Though the least drachm of grace will bring salvation to us, yet it will not bring so much glory to God. 'Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of his glory.' [Phil 1:11](#): It commends the skill of the husbandman when his plants grow and thrive; it is a praise and honour to God when we thrive in grace.

(5.) The more we grow in grace, the more will God love us. Is it not that which we pray for? The more growth, the more God will love us. The husbandman loves his thriving plants; the thriving Christian is God's Hephzibah, or chief delight. Christ loves to see the vine flourishing, and the pomegranates budding. [Cant 6:11](#): He accepts the truth of grace, but commends the growth of grace. 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' [Matt 8: 10](#). Would you be as the beloved disciple that lay in Christ's bosom? Would you have much love from Christ? Labour for much growth, let faith flourish with good works, and love increase into zeal.

(6.) We need to grow in grace. There is still something lacking in our faith. [1 Thess 3:30](#). Grace is but in its infancy and minority, and we must still be adding a cubit to our spiritual stature. **The apostles said, 'Lord, increase our faith.'** [Luke 17:7](#). Grace is but weak. 'I am this day weak, though anointed king.' [2 Sam 3:39](#). So, though we are anointed with grace, yet we are but weak, and had need arrive at further degrees of sanctity.

(7.) **The growth of grace will hinder the growth of corruption.** The more health grows, the more the distempers of the body abate; so in spirituals, the more humility grows, the more the swelling of pride is assuaged, the more purity of heart grows, the more the fire of lust is abated. The growth of flowers in the garden does not hinder the growing of weeds, but the growing of the flower of grace hinders the sprouting of corruption. As some plants have an antipathy, and will not thrive if they grow near together, as the vine and the bay tree, **so, where grace grows, sin will not thrive so fast.** [\[That's why Paul said that the Spirit \[of grace\] lusts against the flesh... Romans 7, Gal. 5:17\]](#)

(8.) We cannot grow too much in grace; there is no minimum, no excess there. The body may grow too great, as in the dropsy; but faith cannot grow too great. 'Your faith groweth exceedingly.' [2 Thess 1:1](#). Here was exceeding, yet not excess. As a man cannot have too much health, so not too much grace. **Grace is the beauty of holiness.** [Ps 110:0](#). We cannot have too much spiritual beauty; it will be the only trouble at death, that we have grown no more in grace. [\[Hence, as Watson put it before, grace is the image of God which consists in holiness or a love for God!\]](#)

(9.) Such as do not grow in grace, decay in grace. *Non progredi in via est regredi* [Not to go forward in the Christian life is to turn back]. Bernard. There is no standing in religion, either we go forward or backward. **If faith does not grow, unbelief will; if heavenly-mindedness does not grow, covetousness will. A man that does not increase his stock, diminishes it: so if you do not improve your stock of grace, your stock will decay.** The angels on Jacob's ladder were either ascending or descending: if you do not ascend in religion, you descend. [see the parable of the talents, where each were given a stock of grace, i.e., talents. They traded, as it were, to increase their stock of grace except the wicked servant who feared his master because he thought he was a hard man. That person was not saved, not having the Spirit of Adoption that cries out Abba Father, which the others had. So fearing God and not seeing him as a loving father full of mercy, he hid his talent. Unsaved people so not see God as their father, but their judge!! and so fear him in that sense, being thus unable to please him or grow in grace due to no faith or new living principle in them to enable them. This is heavy. See footnote on p 1173]

(10.) The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory. Though every vessel of glory shall be full, yet some vessels hold more than others. He whose pound gained ten, was made ruler over ten cities. [Luke 19:17](#). Such as do not grow much, though they lose not their glory, they lessen it. If any shall follow the Lamb in whiter and larger robes of glory than others, they shall be such as have shone most in grace here.

pg 301 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.x.ii.html>

A Believer's Privilege at Death

(3.) Our seeing God will be transforming. **We shall so see him, as to be in some measure assimilated and changed into his image.** 'We shall be like him.' [1 John 3:3](#). If, when Moses was with God on the Mount, and had but some imperfect sight of his glory, 'Moses' face shined,' [Exod 34:45](#), how shall the saints glorified shine, being always in God's presence, and having some beams of his glory put upon them! 'We shall be like him.' One that is deformed may look on beauty, and not be made beautiful; **but the saints shall so see God, as that sight shall transform them into his likeness.** 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.' [Psa 17:15](#). Not that the saints shall partake of God's essence; for as the iron in the fire is made fiery, yet remains iron still, so the saints, by beholding God's majesty, shall be made glorious creatures, but are creatures still.

A little strength - Rev. 3:8

code386

I was wanting to confirm what he says about Rev. 3:8 regarding the statement, "a little strength". It means "a little grace", or saving grace, that power that enables believers to obey God, i.e., to produce fruit, e.g., patience, mercy, long suffering, kindness, love for God, believing on Christ, etc. see 1Cor13, Gal. 5:22 - note also the comment on God's sovereignty -

Rev. 3:8 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":^[a] ⁸ "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;^[a] for you have **a little strength**, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Many Christians have "a little strength" meaning that they are saved, but they have a little faith. Remember, Oh ye of little faith? He didn't say no faith, just a little faith; they're not spiritually dead, for then they would have no faith. But they are alive, having a little. It's like either you are pregnant or you are not. Faith can be as small as a mustard seed, yet it is still that new living principle that God puts into a heart he intends to save. And it is irresistible.

Matthew Henry's comment on Rev. 3:8

(2.) "The way and manner in which he performs these acts, and that is **absolute sovereignty, independent upon the will of men, and irresistible by the power of men**: He openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he works to will and to do, and, **when he works, none can hinder**. These were proper characters for him, when speaking to a church that had endeavoured to be conformed to Christ in holiness and truth, and that had enjoyed a wide door of liberty and opportunity under his care and government."

v. 8. "In this there seems to be couched a gentle reproof: "Thou hast **a little strength, a little grace**, which, though it be not proportionate to the wide door of opportunity which I have opened to thee, **yet is true grace**, and has kept thee faithful." **True grace, though weak, has the divine approbation**; but, though Christ accepts a little strength, yet believers should not rest satisfied in a little, but should strive to grow in grace, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. **True grace**, though weak, will do more than the greatest gifts or highest degrees of common grace, for **it will enable the Christian to keep the word of Christ, and not to deny his name**. Obedience, fidelity, and a free confession of the name of Christ, **are the fruits of true grace**, and are pleasing to Christ as such."

Interesting truth here: many people think that God cannot save those he wants to save because of man's unwillingness to be saved; man just will not cooperate. Somehow, man can resist God's effectual call to save them. Most churches believe this. What they don't understand is that God is sovereign, has infinite wisdom and power and can *do all his pleasure* (Isa 46:10). So if God wants to save certain people (i.e., his elect) he can do so with infinite ease; nothing is too hard for Him (which is another scripture). He doesn't force anyone to receive Him, for I don't know anyone who unwillingly got saved and then loves God against his will! What happens is that God removes this resistance...by taking it out, the stony heart, and replacing it with a willing heart, a heart of flesh! (Hence, **Ps110:3, your people shall be willing in the day of your power.**) That's the miracle and the mystery! That explains **Ezek. 36:26...**"*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone (there's the resistance!) out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (there's the soft heart that can receive the impression of his grace, as soft wax receives the impression of a seal).*

Resurrection

code387

by Thomas Watson, p316

Use three: So demean and carry yourselves that, at the last day of judgment, you may be sure to be acquitted, and have the glorious privileges with which the saints shall be crowned.

How is that?

(1.) If you would stand acquitted at the day of judgment, then (1:) Labour to get into Christ. 'That I may be found in him.' [Phil 3:3](#). **Faith implants us into Christ**, it engarrisons us in him, and then 'there is no condemnation.' [Rom 8:8](#): There is no standing before Christ, but by being in Christ. (2:) **Labour for humility, which is a kind of self-annihilation**. 'Though I be nothing.' [2 Cor 12:2](#): Christian, hast thou parts and abilities, and cost thou cover them with the veil of humility, as Moses, when his face shone, put a veil over it? If thou art humble, thou shalt be acquitted at the day of judgement. 'He shall save the humble person.' [Job 22:29](#). An humble man judgeth himself for his sins, and Christ will acquit those who judge themselves.

(2.) If you would stand acquitted at the last day, keep a clear conscience. Do not load yourself with guilt, and furnish your judge with matter against you. 'The Lord,' says Paul, 'has appointed a day in which he will judge the world.' [Acts 17:31](#). How would Paul fit himself for that day? **'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.'** [Acts 24:16](#). Be careful of the first and second table; be holy and just. Have hearts without false aims, and hands without false weights. Keep conscience as clear as your eye, that no dust of sin fall into it. They that sin against conscience, will be shy of their judge; as such as take in prohibited goods cannot endure to see the searchers that are appointed to open their packs. Christian, thy pack will be opened at the last day, I mean, thy conscience (and Christ is the searcher), to see what sins, what prohibited goods thou hast taken in; and then he proceeds to judgment. **Oh! be sure to keep a good conscience; which is the best way to stand with boldness at the day of judgment.** The voice of conscience is the voice of God. **If conscience, upon just grounds, acquits us, God will acquit us.** 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.' [1 John 3:3](#).

(3.) **If you would stand acquitted at the last day, trade with your talents for God's glory;** lay out yourselves for him; honour him with your substance; relieve Christ's members, that you may be acquitted. He that had five talents traded with them, and made them five talents more; 'His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant.' [Matt 25:5](#).

(4.) If you would stand acquitted at the day of judgment, get a sincere love to the saints. Love is the truest touchstone of sincerity. To love grace for grace, shows the spirit of God to be in a man. Does conscience witness for you? Are you perfumed with this sweet spice of love? **Do you delight most in those in whom the image of God shines? Do you reverence their graces?** Do you bear with their infirmities? A blessed evidence that you shall be acquitted in the day of judgment. 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.' [1 John 3:14](#).

God's Internal Glory

code34

A Review by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

Sect VII p119

(For the complete section VII go to page 1397)

Footnote #1 is my insert

Since Watson's comments are so close to the subject of God's glory (grace) being communicated to the elect, I thought I would restate Jonathan Edwards' comments on this subject. See also Flavel's comment on holiness on page 1602!

Now God's internal glory, is either in his **understanding** or **will**. The glory or fulness of his understanding, is his knowledge. The **internal glory and fulness of God, having its special seat in his will**, is his **holiness and happiness**. The whole of God's internal good or glory, is in these three things, viz. **his infinite knowledge**, his **infinite virtue or holiness**, and **his infinite joy and happiness**. Indeed there are a great many attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving them: but all may be reduced to these; or to their degree, circumstances, and relations. We have no conception of God's power, different from the degree of these things, with a certain relation of them to effects. [This *knowledge* is the knowledge or understanding of himself as Edwards points out. This is communicated to his elect, see [1John 5:20](#), "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"]

God's infinity is not properly a distinct kind of good, but only expresses the degree of good there is in him. So God's eternity is not a distinct good; but is the duration of good. His immutability is still the same good, with a negation of change. So that, as I said, the **fulness of the Godhead** is the fulness of his understanding, consisting in his **knowledge**; and the fulness of his will consisting in his **virtue and happiness**. [Note the word *fulness* that Edwards uses to explain the graces that are in Christ are seen in John 1:16, "And of His **fulness** we have all received, and grace for grace." - grace answerable to the grace that is in Christ. And Eph. 3:19, "...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the **fulness of God**." and Eph. 4:19, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the **fulness of Christ**." And it is Christ, the root or the vine from whom we derive the sap of the vine, **his graces**, which are the continuous supplies of it promised in the new covenant, by which we are transformed into his image, being made a partaker of his nature.] And therefore, the **external glory of God consists in the communication of these**. The communication of his knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of himself: for this is the knowledge in which the fulness of God's understanding chiefly consists. And thus we see how the **manifestation of God's glory to created understandings** [see footnote¹ pg 916], and their seeing and knowing it, is not distinct from an emanation or communication of God's fulness, but clearly implied in it. **Again, the communication of God's virtue or holiness, is principally in communicating the love of himself**. And thus we see how, not only the creature's **seeing and knowing God's excellence**, but also supremely **esteeming and loving him**, belongs to the communication of God's fulness. And the communication of God's **joy and happiness**, consists chiefly in communicating

to the creature that happiness and joy which consists in rejoicing in God, and in his glorious excellency; for in such joy God's own happiness does principally consist. And in these things, knowing God's excellency, loving God for it, and rejoicing in it, and in the exercise and expression of these, consists God's honour and praise; so that these are clearly implied in that glory of God, which consists in the emanation of his internal glory.

And though all these things, which seem to be so various, are signified by that glory, which the Scripture speaks of as the ultimate end of all God's works; yet it is manifest there is no greater, and no other variety in it, than in the internal and essential glory of God itself. God's internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God's glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God's external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will. [That's the key; unregenerate men are in God's image in that sense - they have a faculty of understanding and will which animals do not have which distinguishes us from them. It was the chief part of God's image, his holiness, principally consisting in the love that God has for himself, that was lost or wiped clean due to Adam's sin. It is this chief part of God's image that is restored by the communication of his holiness to the will of the creature.] **code34b God communicates himself of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will¹ of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God.** These are the sum of that emanation of divine fulness called in Scripture, *the glory of God*. The first part of this glory is called truth, the latter, grace, [John i. 14](#). "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." [Remember, Thomas Watson said that grace is the image of God. This is communicated to the elect to effect their conversion, e.g., the grace of faith. Grace is that which enables us to obey God, in other words, to please God, e.g., to believe on the Son, to love God, etc. (hence, the obedience of faith, Rm. 1:5, 16:26. Also see Heb 11:6) All those graces should bear fruit, listed in Gal. 5:22 and 1Cor13, which is pleasing to God and answers to the principle end of our creation. Philip Schaff comments similarly: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845]

The emanation or communication of the divine fulness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him, has relation indeed both to God and the creature: but it has relation to God as its fountain, as the thing communicated is something of its internal fulness. The water in the stream is something of the fountain; and the beams of the sun are something of the sun. And again, they have relation to God as their object: for the knowledge communicated, is the knowledge of God [[Jn5:20](#)];

and the love communicated, is the love of God; and the happiness communicated, is joy in God. In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both **exhibited and acknowledged**; his fulness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation and re-emanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and he is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.

¹“to believe with the heart, as it does not exclude assent, so it necessarily includes the acts of the will and affections in relying upon him, and coming to him.” Thomas Shepard, *Sound Believer*, p 266

With specific attention to the subject of the will, God's will, **G Vos** states in his work *Reformed Dogmatics*, p 30.

In how many different senses can the word “will” be understood? It can have three meanings:

- a) All morally determined attributes, insofar as these are active powers that can operate in a twofold direction. In this sense, holiness, righteousness, etc. belong to the will.
- b) The capacity to make a decree or a plan, and such a decree or plan itself. In this sense, the will (never the understanding) is the capacity by which God decrees or is the decree of God itself.
- c) The capacity by which God executes a decree of His will by a manifestation of power outwardly. In this sense, God's will is most closely connected with His active might.

God's Glory, the Ultimate End in Creation

code35

Chap. 1 Sect. IV pg 103

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.iv.html>

Here, by the way, it may be properly considered, whether some writers are not chargeable with inconsistency in this respect. They speak against the doctrine of GOD making himself his own highest and last end, as though this were an ignoble selfishness—when indeed he only is fit to be made the highest end, by himself and all other beings; inasmuch as he is infinitely greater and more worthy than all others—yet with regard, to creatures, who are infinitely less worthy of supreme and ultimate regard, they suppose, that they necessarily, at all times, seek their own happiness, and make it their ultimate end in all, even their most virtuous actions; and that this principle, regulated by wisdom and prudence, as leading to that which is their true and highest happiness, is the foundation of all virtue, and every thing that is morally good and excellent in them.

OBJECT. III. To what has been supposed, that God makes himself his end—in seeking that his glory and excellent perfections should be known, esteemed, loved, and delighted in by his creatures—it may be objected, that this seems unworthy of God. It is considered as below a truly great man, to be much influenced in his conduct by a desire of popular applause. The notice and admiration of a gazing

multitude, would be esteemed but a low end, to be aimed at by a prince or philosopher, in any great and noble enterprise. How much more is it unworthy the great God, to perform his magnificent works, e. g. the creation of the vast universe, out of regard to the notice and admiration of worms of the dust, that the displays of his magnificence may be gazed at, and applauded by those who are infinitely more beneath him, than the meanest rabble are beneath the greatest prince or philosopher.

This objection is specious. It hath a show of argument; but it will appear to be nothing but a show, if we consider,

1. Whether it be not worthy of God, to regard and value what is excellent and valuable in itself; and so to take pleasure in its existence.

It seems not liable to any doubt, that there could be no future existence worthy to be desired or sought by God, and so worthy to be made his end, if no future existence was valuable and worthy to be brought to effect. If, when the world was not, there was any possible future thing fit and valuable in itself, **I think the knowledge of God's glory, and the esteem and love of it, must be so. Understanding and will are the highest kind of created existence.** And if they be valuable, it must be in their exercise. **But the highest and most excellent kind of their exercise is in some actual knowledge, and exercise of will. And, certainly, the most excellent actual knowledge and will that can be in the creature, is the knowledge and the love of God. And the most true excellent knowledge of God, is the knowledge of his glory or moral excellence; and the most excellent exercise of the will consists in esteem and love, and a delight in his glory.**—If any created existence is in itself worthy to be, or any thing that ever was future is worthy of existence, such **a communication of divine fullness, such an emanation and expression of the divine glory, is worthy of existence.** But if nothing that ever was future was worthy to exist, then no future thing was worthy to be aimed at by God in creating the world. And if nothing was worthy to be aimed at in creation, then nothing was worthy to be God's end in creation.

The Holy Spirit and the Principle of Spiritual Life

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CHAPTER XIX.

THAT THE HOLT SPIRIT IS IN BELIEVERS AS THE PRINCIPLE OF
THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE AND HOLINESS.

SECTION I.

Doct. 2. That within these vessels is an **inward principle of life and grace.** Or, the burning, shining profession of all the faithful, it proceedeth from an **inward principle of the Spirit of grace,** by the means of which their lamp burns and their profession shines.

For this I understand by oil in the vessel, the Spirit of Jesus, not out of us, but received in us; not coming only upon us, for so he may on foolish virgins by Balaamish ravishments, and hypocritical pangs, and land-flood affections; but abiding in us, and that not as it doth in hypocrites, but as it is in Christ Jesus, without measure, **both Spirit and graces**, so it abides in us in measure; **in him as the fountain, in us as the vessels**, from [whose fullness we receive the same. So that by oil is not meant I the external principle of all life, the Lord Jesus having Spirit and grace enough, but keeping our hearts empty of it. But the Lord Jesus in us, who is not in us but by his Spirit, even the Spirit of life, from whence all our actions spring, and from which oil our lamp burns. This, therefore, I say, the profession of the faithful springs not from outward motives or principles of motion, as the actions of hypocrites, sometimes sudden praise, sometimes gain, sometimes fears, sometimes fleshly hopes, sometimes sudden conceit and fancy, sometimes irruption and rushings of the Spirit upon them, but there is a spring within, there is a life within, there is oil in the vessel to fill the lamp, and so hence it burns; (Eph. ii. 1,) "You hath he quickened who were dead in sins;" i.e., you were held as fast under the power of your sins as a dead man is under the bonds of death; but now, in the room of that death, there is the **Spirit of life and the life of the Spirit**. Now, life is an inward principle of motion of any thing in its own place; as the sun, and trees, and grass, and cattle. You may take a stone, or a millstone, or wheel, and move it, yet they have no life, because this is not from an **inward principle** [part of this inward principle is faith, saving faith. As Paul said in Gal. 2:20, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," The new principle upon which I live is no longer by natural principles of self love which were crucified, but is now by a new principle, that being, by the instrument of faith Eph 2:8 and that faith upon the Son of God.]; so hypocrites may be acted and moved by the great power of the Spirit in an ordinance, yet not living, but dead still. John iv.14; the water — which is the Spirit — "is a spring of living water in him." Cisterns may have water in them, but no spring that is running winter and summer. 1 John iii. 9. This is called the seed remaining in him, which is that new creation, new birth, which the verse itself expounds, so that he can not sin; **it is against his nature, now he can not be a sin-maker**. Balaam could not curse the people of God, and many can not do as others do. Why? is it because they are born of God? No; but from some other respects, and hence (Matt. xiii. 21) the stony ground fell away, because they had not the root within. This is called the inner man, the good treasure of the heart, opposite to the evil treasure of the heart of a wicked man. Now, as an evil man acts not only from Satan, the evil spirit, but the inward power of lust, so the saints. Matt. xii. 35. And here I intend not to show what this inward principle is particularly, for that I reserve to the two last points; yet, lest any should stumble, let me speak to two sorts.

1. Know some of you, that there are not only external actings of the Spirit from whence we act, but a **new nature** in the saints.

2. Let others know, 1. That as before the Lord calls we are dead, so after we are alive this inward principle is not perfect here. Hence actions sometimes cease, and when they do not, yet are corrupted, as *hesa principia* act, but never err in their act; hence have need of pardon from, and acceptance in, the Lord Jesus. 2. That this is not in us as in Adam, who did not need to borrow life of another, but it stands in daily need of the Lord Jesus; and hence **this inward principle acts, but it is by faith**, the operations of which are the wagons to victual the camp continually, especially in time of need, **and which is part of this inward principle**; and hence, (1 Pet. i. 5,) "You are kept by power and faith;" i.e., **your souls, graces, lives, are kept by the Spirit, but through faith in us, " to salvation."**

Let me, therefore, prove these three things to you for opening of this point: —

1. That the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is in the souls of the faithful.
2. That there is a **principle of created graces, or the life of the Spirit** in them.
3. That, from **this principle of the Spirit dispensing himself by his graces**, our lamp burns, our acts of profession spring and I shine forth.

First. That the Spirit of Jesus is in the souls of the faithful; (1 John ii. 27,) "The anointing teacheth you all things." Rom. viii. 11, "The Spirit that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwells in us." The manner of his being in us I intend not to meddle with, unless I saw more cause. I do believe the manner of his abiding in us, and his nearness to all the saints, when seen of us, may astonish our own spirits, and shall one day confound all the world; only know, as the martyr said, "**He is come, he is come.**" **The spirit of the world and Satan is cast out, (1 Cor. ii. 12,) and in room of them enters the Spirit of God.**

Secondly. That the Spirit so is in the faithful, as that there is a principle of created graces in them, or an inward principle of life and grace. Not that these alone make this inward principle, but the Spirit in us working of them, working by them. And truly it is a sad thing if the proving of such a principle shall be an attributing too much to grace in us.

1. Therefore, to deny this is to deny Christ to be our sanctification; for beside the passive obedience of Christ, we are justified by his active obedience also; i.e., his inward conformity to the law and his external obedience to the law. So that graces as they are in Christ become our justification, and hence he is said to be "our righteousness." **No man can stand before God but by perfect holiness, but by doing whatever the law requires, and continuing so to do; this is not in us, this is in Christ; this, as it is in Christ, is properly our righteousness or justification.** Now, what is our sanctification? If not graces in Christ, then graces received from Christ Jesus, which is this inward principle I now speak of; and, therefore, to deny this is no less than to deny Christ is our sanctification; but Paul saith, "The Lord sanctify you in soul, and body, and spirit." 1 Thess. v. 23. And if it were so, a man may have a heart unsanctified and Christ too.

2. If there should not be those graces, then a Christian was not bound to add one grace to another, but then the apostle's precept should be broken; (2 Pet. i. 7, 8,) and so a Christian could not grow in grace, for graces are perfect in Christ; and the Spirit does not grow in grace, and the immediate operations of the Spirit increasing in us are not properly graces, no more than the act of seeing is the eye, no more than giving goods to be burned is love.

3. Then we are not to pray for graces, if there be no such thing to be found in the heart of saints; but (Ps. li. 10,) David prays, "Create in me a clean heart;" now, **if it be a thing created in me, it is not the Spirit only in me, for that cannot be created.** I doubt not but David had a clean heart, but he fell in part; and, therefore, look as there needs a creating power to make, **so there is a creating power to restore us again to what is lost.**

4. Then the saints have none of their sins mortified; for it is as with the eye, being made to see, if sight goes out, darkness comes in, and if that be subdued, sight is renewed. **So the soul being made only for God, and to bear his image, blot out that darkness and sin comes in; cast out sin, the Lord and**

his image and graces come in. If, therefore, there be no graces in the saints, then no sin mortified; truly, if so, then the end of Christ's coming and dying is quite abolished. 1 John iii. 8, and Rom. vi. 2, 3.

5. Then the Lord should be false in his covenant, and break oath and be forsworn; for, (Jer. xxxi. 32,) "I will write my law in their hearts." Luke i. 73, 74. So that if you will not believe man, yet believe God; and if you will not believe his word, yet his oath. O, but many good Christians find no such thing. But is it so, as they find it indeed? Either, then, they are no Christians, or else the Lord is forsworn.

Thirdly. That by the inward principle of Spirit and graces [this is that new principle of life of which the grace of faith is a principle part; by it we receive all the other graces], our lamp burns and shines, our actions issue. The Spirit enables a man to know, and hence the act flows, he doth know the Lord. The Spirit enables inwardly for to love the Lord, and hence it doth love him. [Ezek 36:27] That, as Christ saith, "A good tree brings forth good fruit," from an inward sap received from the root, and by abiding on the root; so here.

1. Those that are renewed to Adam's image in their measure, have, according to that measure, power to act; or in those graces there is power to act, for he had power so to do [hence as Edwards notes, grace is that which enables one to obey God]. Every creature in the world had a law of nature to carry them to their end, and so were carried to it. But Adam had a law of divinity, whereby he, being a cause by counsel, was enabled by God to carry himself toward his end. Now, we are renewed to that image in part; (Eph. iv. 24); I know there is difference between Adam's power to act, which had no faith, and ours, that has. And do not think that this doth advance nature and the power of man no more than the execution of the promise of the covenant of grace doth destroy grace and advance nature. For the writing again the law in our hearts is that which this covenant promiseth; nay, this doth honor the riches of grace, that a man being under the power of sin, and can not get deliverance, the Lord should now give a humble, conquering spirit; never a precious heart but will be thankful for it.

2. Because the graces in us are received from the Lord Jesus his fullness. John i. 16. Now, the graces in Christ are not dead, but living; are not weak, but powerful; the Spirit of grace is now triumphing in him, it is so in us only; it is in him in the highest degree, in us in a lower. And therein consists our likeness to Christ. 2 Cor. iii. 18. And to deny this is to deface the image of the Lord Jesus. "Without Christ a Christian can do nothing; but how doth Christ do all by the Spirit without graces? (I speak not of conversion where it is without graces as causes.) No, truly; as he acts, so we act in part. Unless any will say, We have not received grace for grace, or are in no measure like the image of Christ.

3. If the first Adam has conveyed to all his members a power of corruption, then the second Adam also a power of godliness contrary to that; (2 Tim. iii. 5 ;) yet in measure still, so as the apostle saith, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

Quest. But what measure of power is it?

Ans. I know no man that can, from any ground, limit the measure of it. For it may be in some men in greater power, in some men in less; in the same man, at one time, in a greater measure, at another time less. If one ask of trees, what measure of fruit they can bring forth, we cannot tell, because sometime more, sometime less; and the same tree more one year than another, and more at one time of the year than another; for they have their winter season. Only this, whereas before conversion he is stark dead to act, now he is alive, and is not dead. And if a man should, after conversion, be but in the next [*typical, old English I think*] disposition to receive grace, then how could one Christian be more

grown and stronger in grace in his inner man than another? I know not any to question this, only I speak it to cut off their carnal hopes, that think Christ is theirs, when they have nothing, can do nothing, and slightly say, He must do all; I cannot. I tell you the saints can; they cannot but love the Lord, and choose the Lord, etc.

Object. 1. But must not a Christian deny himself, and always go to Christ for power to do, and so be humble and empty?

Ans. 1. You must, because this is the means to live to Christ; but this does not argue you have no power at all. A man must pray for his "daily bread," much more for "daily grace;" but does this argue a man has no bread in his house? No; this is the means to have it continued and blessed. Easily can the Lord take away bread, or the staff of bread. Graces extinguish not faith, but help it.

2. A Christian can do no duty perfectly, hence must repair to Christ to help him to do every duty better; hence, though he must use that power he has, and do what he can, yet he must not content himself with what he has, but seek for more; and what a sweet life is this! [Edwards said, "In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God ... God produces all, and we act all. ... God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. ... God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. ..."] What honor would here come in? God lets in a new light into my mind, now I may and must see his truth; I saw it yesterday, but I may and must go to Christ to do it better; I must not quench the spirit of prayer, but carry the key with me, and next day pray better. And thus the soul is thankful for what it has, and emptying itself notwithstanding that, and daily, then, receiving from Christ. And I believe many Christians fail here. As in the body meat feeds and strengthens life, so I cannot live without Christ.

Object. 2. But does not this make a man trust to graces?

Ans. To act from them is not to trust to them, no more than for a diligent hand to trust to his diligence when he acts diligently that so he may be rich.

Object. 3. But does not this dishonor grace to do all by the power of it?

Ans. Then the saints in heaven that are made perfectly like Christ, and that love the Lord perfectly, should not honor grace by this means, when as this is it that makes them honor it most of all. As David, Lord, what am I, and my people, that we should offer willingly? so here.

SECTION II.

Use 1. See, hence, what cause of thankfulness to all the people of God that the Lord should make their souls the vessels (which he might easily and justly have dashed in pieces) to receive and preserve this eternal anointing. I do believe there is no man that knows the bitterness of sin, the plague of his own heart, but when he sees Christ is his, yet it makes him mourn that there should be so little suitableness between the Lord and him, so little likeness between his life and Christ's; what though the Lord love me, and yet my heart weary of him? what though the Lord bless me, and my heart abuse him? and hence this makes it thankful. Rom. vii. 24, 25. This is so far from dishonoring grace, as that the apostle makes this the matter of admiration of God's grace; (Eph. ii. 3, 4,) "God, who is rich in mercy, when dead in sins, has quickened us." Not only quickened our head, (for hence is cause of eternal praise,) but us; and hence he has us set up "in heavenly places in him." This is the state of all

men, they cannot do one spiritual act; now that the Lord should help when all creatures left us is wonderful; but that it should be with such a life, even the life of Christ Jesus himself; for the same Spirit that raised him from the dead dwells in us. 1 Pet. v. 1. This is mercy, indeed; that he should not only die for us, and live in heaven for us, but that he should love so dearly as to come and live in us; that, when our sins had slain him, he should not only come and dwell in our houses, nor only lay his head in our bosom, but live in our hearts, where he finds such poor welcome and ill entertainment at our hands. I tell you this is wonderful, to make his habitation in us, that, before we go to live with him, he should live in us; let them that never knew what this meant refuse to be thankful, but if you find it so, forget not this love; (John xiv. 17,) "I will send the Spirit, whom the world cannot receive, because it knows him not." The Lord sends the Spirit in common graces, and the world does receive that also in prophetic and miraculous gifts, and it does receive that; but this Spirit which God pours on the thirsty, this Spirit with which God fills the empty, they can not receive this. O that you should have it, when as they know it not!

1. Hence, therefore, take heed of not owning the Spirit in this his presence. Do you thus requite the Lord, O unthankful world; not so much as to own the presence of such a friend, neither in yourselves, nor yet in others? How like the world is it to think that there is no such thing!

2. Take heed, therefore, of not esteeming highly of it. If ever God broke thy heart, thou wilt esteem this life, this principle, as the greatest piece of love; and say, Lord, I shall account this as the greatest part of love in the world; (Ps. cxix. 68,) "Thou art good; O, teach me thy statutes." Now, to undervalue this, and to account it common, and hence as no sign of love, it is a part of unthankfulness.

3. Take heed of imprisoning the Spirit of grace, common truth. Rom. i. 18. It were fearful to imprison and silence that, much more this. It was the complaint of the church in those days, "None stirs up himself." Is. lxiv. 7. What strength [virtue or grace] the Lord gives, let me use; what I want [lack], the Lord has enough to help me withal; put it to exercise, or else affliction will.

4. Take heed of weakening and enfeebling this principle; the church of Sardis' things were ready to die in it; you should strengthen this inner man, not weaken it, either by not feeding it with Christ, or wounding it with known sin against Christ. Therefore, let all the churches know this, and take heed that you do not refuse to own this: where else will you make the difference between men, that either churches may discern them, or you may discern them, and so have peace yourselves?

Hence see the reason of that inward hypocrisy that is in men's hearts, so that the best profession of many a man is but a scheme, an image, a very craft, a very artificial form; all the duties are fair without, but sapless, lifeless within; here is the reason, they have no inward principle of life, or if they do go to Christ, they have no such principle within them to carry them to him, so as to receive life from him; and hence confess sin, without sorrow or shame, petition without thirsting, live without love, do without life, because there is no spring, but a dry heart within; and hence they must do duty, but they must make dead work of it, and hence all is but an appearance, and at best but a would be. This is, in a great measure, in saints, when the spirit within is quenched, but it is in full age and strength in hypocritical hearts; (Jer. iv. 14,) when the profession of Judah was great, and the prophets had scarce anything to say against them for outside, "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness;" there thy woe lies, it enters to the very heart; so Christ, "How can he that is evil bring forth good fruit?" And this is that which may make men mourn: if I forsake all profession, I shame myself before men; if not, I must blaspheme the Lord's name, and play the hypocrite before the Lord. Matt. xii. 33-35.

SECTION III.

Use 3. To take heed of denying the **grace of God**, or this **inward principle, in whole or in part; for this inward principle being the life of Christ in us**, to deny this is to deny Christ, and to take away his life; and such the Lord will deny before his angels another day: when they shall say, "Have we not eat and drank in thy presence?" he shall answer, "I never knew you." I shall, therefore, direct my speech to four sorts.

First. To those that deny created graces in the saints peculiar to them only. It is said there are none such in the country; if I there are not, it may be there have been, and it may be will be; and, therefore, I will speak; for I believe it is a delusion digged and hatched out of the steam of the lowest sink of hell; (and, therefore, that all may take heed of the evil of it, I will' first show the evil of it, then the causes that do beget it. [In other words many confuse common grace with saving grace, this new principle of life. Many think they are saved because they have common graces, thinking they are saving graces. And this sets one up in a fatal security.]

I. The evils of this delusion are these :—

1. It settles and fastens a man under the power of all his sin, and yet with a quiet conscience, and yet to keep his Christ, too. It transcends my capacity from whatever I have read, or have heard, or have felt, or can imagine, how the power of sin can be taken away, but where the Spirit infuseth the contrary grace: an empty house, swept and garnished with common gifts, is but a fitting house for Satan to return into; say, therefore, a man may have no such graces, and yet have Christ, and them in Christ, you stake this man down under his sin, and make this member of Satan a member of Christ Jesus; and, upon this ground, all churches in the land may be forced in conscience to take in all profane members, if they plead Christ, and their allness in him.

2. This blurs all the glory of a Christian, or at least the greatest part of it; for what is the glory of a saint? It is to be like Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, to bear his image before God and men. As to see a man with a swine's face would be the shame of a man, to see a Christian with Satan's image is the shame of a Christian; but to be like our head, this is our glory, though it be in sufferings, (2 Cor. iii. 18), heavenly, humble, compassionate, holy, as he was; and hence, when God has a mind to make churches or Christians base in the eyes of the world, he will withdraw here; and when he intends to draw the world after him, he will glorify it with his glory. Is. lx. 6, 7.

3. It cuts off a Christian from all hope of glory: how many be there that scramble and catch at Christ, and every one saith, He is mine; the proud man saith, He is mine, and hopes now verily to be saved, but that hope is in vain; they have Christ out of them, but where is Christ in them? The life of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ? (Col. i. 27,) "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

4. Give me but one place in all the book of God, where blessedness is bestowed upon or conveyed unto any, or promised but to such as have these graces; "Blessed is he that feareth the Lord, and greatly delighteth," etc. Ps. cxii. 1, 2. If there be no such thing, let any man expect it if he can.

II. The causes.

1. A magnifying Christ, and making him our sanctification, when as you heard the last day, this is to deny him to be our sanctification. **He becomes our righteousness by imputation of his holiness, and our sanctification by infusing of it.** Nay, hence a man deprives himself of all good in the Lord Jesus, when a man denies all grace in himself, and then flies for sanctuary unto Jesus Christ; (1 John i. 6, 7,) "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie," etc. And hence it seems they denied men to have sin, (ver. 8,) boasting of fellowship with Christ. Ver. 6.

2. Because there are (say men) only immediate actings of the Spirit. If this be so, then there is seeing in a Christian without an eye, and hearing without an ear, and knowing Christ without an understanding, and loving without love, and living without life, and feeding and eating without a mouth; and then, when these actings are over, a Christian is like another man; there is no law remains written on his heart, and so Christ should enter into his saints, like Satan into the serpent, who only acts the serpent, and when that is done, he remains a serpent again. Know it, the Lord Jesus his greatest work is not only to change the acts, **but to change the heart;** not only to put new actions, **but a new nature into men.** [This is addressing the false notion that Christians hear the voice of God or that God speaks to them in an immediate manner so that one can say, The Lord spoke to me and told me to do this or that - and they call this the leading of the Spirit. This is false. This leading can be counterfeited by Satan or our own fancies abetted by Satan. A true leading of the Spirit is when our graces listed in Gal. 5:22 are in their proper exercise - that is being led by the Spirit and not hearing voices or receiving unctions or even scriptures from the Spirit. This error is predominant in Pentecostal and Charismatic sects.]

3. Because men know not the Spirit, never felt the presence, nor power, nor comfort of it themselves; and hence men do as some countries, because themselves are black, they paint the devil white; (John xiv. 17,) "The world cannot receive, because it knows him not." Give me any Christian living that ever found the sweetness of it, but his longings were to have more of that grace, to "forget things behind, and reach to things before, even to the resurrection of the dead," whom I believe none will say want [lack] all habits of grace. I look upon the opinion as coming with a curse from God. A man hath been a dry professor long, conscience saith, there is no grace in the heart, and hence is troubled; true, saith he, there is none in saints, it is in Christ, and there he catcheth and deceives himself.

Secondly. Those that do acknowledge them, but any power or activity in them they deny; they say there is oil, indeed, in the vessel, but it helps not, it is no means to make the lamp to burn or shine; there is the life of Christ, but it is a dead life; they call them the graces of Christ, but they are but fruitless graces. I confess it, if you consider them without the Spirit of Christ, they are no true graces, much less active or living ones; but consider them thus: they have a power, as take the least grain of corn, there is a growing power in it, and fructifying too in it, by dying first, though it actually doth not fructify presently, and though there must be rain, and sun must shine also, and a providence accompanying of it; so it is in the graces of saints. And hence it is called a "law of the mind;" there is a power of a law, as of sin; and hence, as Christ grew in wisdom and stature, so all the members of Christ are like unto him.

I. The evil of this.

1. **This abates of the excellency of grace, as from a jewel to take away the operative virtue of it.** For it is not like Christ's now, which is strong through God, not weak; which is living, not dead. This is not like the glorious graces of saints triumphing. This makes the graces of saints of less excellency than

common graces; **common grace will make a man ride over many a sin, and run exceeding fast, though he fall at last.** A man that hath been angry, it will make him very quiet and still; and is there no more power in this?

2. **This will make a man content himself with a bare form, with a false confidence, if this be true.** For take a man that hath been long seeking to get strength against a vile heart, and he finds none; there is no power of heavenliness, he is earthy; no meekness, he is proud: I would say to him, Do you ever think to get any power of meekness, love, faith, etc.? You shall never do it, never have it here; all your strength is immediately from Christ; look for it there; **in conscience a man must cease there. And it is certain all our strength is in and from the Lord; but it is dispensed mediately;** (Eph. iii. 16,) Paul prays "he may be strengthened with might in the inner man." Or, thus, a man may not pray for strength of grace, which Paul refused not.

3. Then the saints, if they be asked whether they believe or can love the Lord Jesus, their answer must be, No, I have no power to love nor believe; and then Peter did ill to answer so, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Then, Paul to say, "We can do nothing but for the truth." Then, that martyr, that to them that said, "The Lord strengthen you;" Yes, saith he, the Lord doth. I know, **if the Lord withdraw his Spirit, we are gone, as Adam;** but is there not the immutable assistance of it? Is there not the promise, "I will never leave thee," though sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger?

4. This will make a Christian hide and not improve his talents; he has grace, but no power to put it forth. Then, suppose God gives power to see truth one day, I must not see it with this eye the next; but look up to Christ, and say, I cannot see at all.

II. Causes of this.

1. In opposing the outward principle of life, or first principle, and this second, I must live on Christ; hence I must not, I have no power to act myself, in any measure, because all my strength is in him. When, if this were true, a man might argue, because all grace is originally in Christ, hence no grace in me, because all glory is in Christ originally; hence no **glory shall be conveyed to me [see John 17:22].** No, this scripture reconciles these: "Because I live, therefore you shall live also." John xiv. 19. Because Christ is strong, hence he will make us strong in the inner man, and not in the spirit only; because Christ is glorious, hence we are predestinated "to be made like unto him." **Because all sap lies in the root, to say, therefore, there is no sap or power in the branch to fructify, this is false.**

2. The hypocritical activity of false professors, who, **having no spring to feed their wells, no Christ, nor bucket to draw from him, hence are their own men, and set up for themselves, till they turn bankrupts.** And, now, because a Pharisee is so active as to go through sea and land to make a proselyte, therefore Paul has no activity of grace of Christ in him to go from land to sea to make Christians.

3. **Sloth. A man sets upon a duty; and, now, because he cannot do it easily nor quickly, he can not do it at all.** A man would have grace active without means; and God will not help in that way; and hence many Christians cannot cleave to Christ by love or desire; no, so long as they pore upon their wants, no encouragement, but turn the mind, and consider well of the love and glory of Christ, then with Paul, (2 Cor. v. 14,) "Christ's love constraineth."

4. Judging that to be the power of grace at all times, which is at sometimes; a man has given special occasion for the Lord to leave him, as the camp in Joshua's time, (Josh, vii.,) and he thinks there is no more power at any time in any man. For then a man sees all the world cannot help, when if Achan were removed, the Spirit of the Lord would return again.

5. That hereby a man may have his sins without trouble; for a man has been troubled, and cannot get power, now he hears there is no such power to be expected, he looks to Christ, **and if power come, well, if not, saith he, it is not my fault.**

Thirdly. Those that deny the evidence of it, the evil of which apprehension I conceive to be no less than taking away that which is the chief, if not only difference between hypocrites and saints in virgin churches; for so it is made here. A man saith, I have Christ, and so have not they. I ask, Where is the Spirit? You have the deed, where is the seal? You have the testator, **where is the executor, the spirit in you?** Yes, I have it; it has witnessed Christ is mine.

Ans. It has witnessed, but what has it wrought? **Where is the power of his death killing thy lusts? Where is the life of the Spirit of Jesus in you?** Where is the oil in your vessel? Truly, I look for the bridegroom, but I regard not that, neither are others to regard it in way of evidence. Then, I say, the chief evidence is destroyed in the churches. I have known many that had assurances, yet never saw them prove right, till it witnessed this was here. What should be the causes of this, and that men should make blusters in the churches because of this, as though it was building on works? In several men they are several.

1. **An aptness in men's hearts to outrun the truth, and to fall from one extreme to another.** Many men there be that fall short of Christ, and the grace of God in and from him; and, from their loose, profane life, fall to duties, and imitate God's people; and **then, when they have got credit with good people, they judge well of them. And having made their peace hereby with conscience, and not with God, the Judge, never look after the saving knowledge of, and fellowship with, and life from, the Lord Jesus.** Now, because men rest on this, these duties are no evidence; hence none are at all. The Corinthians first mourned for the incestuous person; and, when cast out, wanted [lacked] pity toward him. Calvin preached against holidays, hence entrenched upon the Lord's day. Some of the separation see many churches where they have become corrupt, hence make them all no churches. A man is apt to think, Because I have rested on myself, and found those signs which now are not sound, hence others do so too. And I believe divers books have occasioned it, which give signs that will not hold without a fuller explication of them.

2. The apostasy of eminent professors, who have been deceived in their evidencing thus. And truly it would make one think the honesty of the world is but a fashion, and no evidence of any good estate; hence men say you have joy, so had the stony ground; you are blameless and strict, so was Paul a Pharisee; and Satan hereby shakes many a soul. Hence the apostle comes in, (Heb. vi. 9,) and speaks of better things, and things that accompany salvation, and these should you follow. Hymeneus and Philetus fell both. 2 Tim. ii. 18-21. Yet purge yourselves, and you shall be vessels of honor for the Master's use.

3. **Corrupt experience.** It may be a man walks so loosely, without fear, or life, or love, that the Lord leaves him, and he can see no clear thorough work; sometimes has pangs and then hopes; sometime dead, then doubts. Hence, being vexed here, and finding no peace, **if he find it any other way than this,**

there he rests. As it is observed with men, clothes hide their shame: but when dead, their face is also covered, all their glory being then gone. So some glory of God appears here; but when Christians are dead, they cover this; I will look no more to it, all the glory of it is now gone, and here lies a deceit to love Christ for freeing me from this way of evidencing.

4. A heart that never felt the bitterness and bondage of sin as the greatest evil. Take a man full of fears of wrath; O, now assurance is his chiefest good, and he will account it so; but if ever God did load the soul with sin, *e contra*, you will account of deliverance from this highly; nay, a promise he will do, it is sweet; but to be feeling those sinews of sin crack, O, it is the joy of heaven that now fills that heart! The greatest evil in God's eyes is sin; the greatest good we have is redemption from it by a mighty hand. Now, not so much as to account of this highly, this is hard. Thus I have left these things to be thought of; I cannot avoid it, it lies in my text; and the rather, because of that scripture abused, "If any say, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not," i.e., by signs; or, in a wilderness, i.e., in a sorrowful estate; or, in the privy chambers in frames of heart, believe it not neither. Take heed you do not wrest scriptures thus. It is said, "Esau hated Jacob for the blessing." Gen. xxvii. 41. This Spirit of grace is the blessing which saints account as the evidence of the dearest love; to separate from churches, from messengers of God, for this will yield you sorrow enough one day. I tell you, you shall not be found "fighters against men, but against God," and the Spirit of his grace, and the life of him who lives in heaven for us. Take heed you forget not oil in your vessels.

Fourthly. Those that acknowledge in their judgments all these things, **but deny it in their lives; regard not the having this principle of life,** and have peace in this, from a double ground.

1. **By a fruitless faith, which hangs on Christ; but never receives nor brings in this principle,** as those, John ii. 24, 25; and hence, though they receive none, yet they hang on him. And so their faith, like a bucket without a bottom, draws up nothing.

2. **A form of godliness before men.** If a man should neither speak well, nor pray, etc., he would have no love, no respect, no receiving into church; but he cannot do it with life, and hence a form contents him, and there rests. So that now, if conscience troubles, and says, Those duties are done with no life of Christ and Spirit, he answers, Yet I go to Christ, If this be all, why do you not cast off your form? **O, then, I should have no love from men!** O, this life of Christ is not prized, till, with these virgins, they feel the want of it, and it is too late, know this will be your woe at last. Look upon thy dead soul; all the glory is gone; and wait upon the word, that the Lord may make thee live. Could you know this well of water and ask, he would give it you. O, beg for it, then, as for your life. Only seek it in Christ, and so from Christ.

SECTION IV.

Use 4. Of Trial, We live in a country which hath goodly trappings, rich hangings, glorious profession, burning lamps; and hence many think themselves rich, when, indeed, poor; many look to meet the bridegroom, when, indeed, they shall be shut out from the fellowship of the bridegroom. How shall I know that? That all my sorrows, prayers, reformation, profession, **is but a paint, an appearance, a fashion, a church craft, which will stand me in no stead when the Lord shall appear,** who shall judge the secrets of all hearts, by the word you hear this day; try it, therefore, by this rule, does it come from a principle of I life or no? **Your lamp burns, but look what is in your vessel that feeds this flame.** That, as our divines speak, how the disciples could do greater works than Christ, and others wrought miracles

besides Christ; how, then, do they prove that he is Christ? It is answered, in all his miraculous works we are to consider not only *quid fecit*, i.e., what he did, but *qua virtute fecit*, **from what power he did**. The apostles and others did miracles, but it was *aliena virtute*; Christ did them, but it was *propria virtute*. **So many an unsound heart, he may do greater works than saints, and his lamp burn brighter**. Therefore, in this case, we are not to look so much to what is done, as from what power and principle it is done; for therein the best hypocrite ever fails. We shall ever observe in some **beasts** there are *umbra rationis*, **yet there is no rational soul, nor any wise man will believe that their acts proceed from such a principle**; so there are shadows of the power of grace in a carnal heart, and yet no judicious Christian will say they come from an inward soul or principle of life. Consider, therefore, whether there is this principle or no; you see there is profession, you have a name to live in the judgment of all the church, **but search your hearts, and see from what principle it proceeds**; for, if this be wanting, all is nothing. As he that had beer given him, when milk and wine and sugar were put into it to mend it, said, the wine is good, and the milk is good, but the beer is bad; so profession, affection is good, but the heart, the man, is bad; (Jer. 2:22,) "Though thou wash thee with nitre, thy sin is marked before the Lord." And that the trial may be full and fair, I shall show negatively the several **sorts of men that act not from, an inward principle**, yet carry it out as though the bitterness of death was past, and the bridegroom theirs.

I. When a man's principle is nothing but the power of created nature expressing itself, and setting the best face forward, in the gilded rottenness of some moral performances, wherein a man saith he does what he can; for there is this principle in most of men, a desire to be saved; nature saith so; and according to the intention of this desire, so according men will do more or less; and hereupon soothe up themselves, when they see they cannot do as others do, or as the Lord commands, I do as well as I can. Nay, when condemned by the word which meets them, I do as well as I can, I believe, I repent, I pray, I remember the word, I do as well as I can; and so they hope God accepts of that; and though I believe no man but may be hired to do more than he does, yet nature may do much. Hence I heard an Arminian once say, If faith will not work it, then set reason a-work, and we know how men have been kings and lords over their own passions by improving reason, and from some experience of the power of nature men have come to write large volumes in defence of it; and it is known the Arminians, though they ascribe somewhat to grace, and in words all to grace, yet, indeed, they lay the main stress of the work upon a man's own will, and the royalty and sovereignty of that liberty. But to leave them, and to come to ourselves, is it not a common thing for men to make lies their refuge, and to say, I was in a woeful condition once, and never looked after God; but now I bless the Lord it is otherwise with me? How? Now I believe, repent, etc. And so I confess all I do is full of weaknesses, yet I do what I can; and thus they are like to men that have old garments new dressed, they have made them as good as they can; and like the young man, (Luke xviii. 21,) "All these things have I done from my youth; yet one thing was wanting, which was to forsake all, and so himself, that the disciples said, Who then can be saved? with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

You say you do as much as you can; I say do so, but it is impossible for man from any strength of man, and you have no more yet; (John i. 13,) "**Born again, not of the will of man, but of God.**" There is in some men a birth, like to the new birth, which is of the will and power of man [e.g., the sinner's prayer]; but, O, this is not this inward principle which the almighty power of God creates; and therefore know it, if you get no/other oil in your lamps, you shall never meet the bridegroom.

2. When a man's principle is the power of holy example, whereby many a one is drawn to do more than otherwise he would. Many men think for a while as that man spake; men talk of being worth thousands, I would fain see the men, ministers preach and others speak well, we must do this and that, but I would fain see the men that do it. Now, it sometimes falls out that the Lord sets before men's eyes some pattern Christians; hereupon they think thus: Here are two contrary ways, they cannot both lead to heaven, their way is better than mine, and doubtless leads to life; mine doth not, therefore let me live like them. And hence there shall not be any fast but they will be at it, not a sermon near but they will go wet and dry to hear it, nor any duty in family but they will imitate it, and **hence read and learn, that they may be like them.** No Christians in the country hated but they will love them, nor ceremonies cast off but they will abhor them; and hence they reflect upon their patterns, and think their estate safe, because they are as good as a Christian's outside. And hence like some dead cattle, there is nothing good but their skin, **so there is nothing good in these but their imitating outside.** Thus it was with Joash while Jehojada lived. 2 Chron. xxiv. Hence he fell like ivy with the oak, when God cut him down. **Thus it was with these five foolish virgins; a man may follow good examples, but not rest in bare imitation of them.** And hence a blessed man is described (Ps. i,) negatively, from not imitating the wicked, not from imitating the good; because good men may be in many things ill examples, and it ever proves so in these men that have no more than this principle; hence, if they be loose in their tongues, or on the Sabbath, their plea is, they are like unto them. And hence come all your acquired excellencies; a man is an imitating creature, led by example, and a carnal man, out of the heart of hypocrisy in himself, will imitate the divine nature which is in another; and hence men not only take up such practices, but such opinions only because such and such are of that mind. And men change practices and opinions as examples do change; in Joshua's time, great reformation; he no sooner died, but all fell off again; then they were for purity of ordinances and God's worship, now they serve Balaam. **O, consider, here in an outward, but no inward principle.**

3. Those whose principle is nothing but external applause and praise of men, and this will carry a man beyond all the best examples; nay, sometime to be singular and a man alone; a Pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end, while simplicity walks through the town unseen. Hence a man will sometimes covertly commend himself, and myself ever comes in, and tells you a long story of conversion, and a hundred to one if some lie or other slip not out with it. Why, the secret meaning is, I pray admire me; hence complain of wants and weaknesses; pray, think what a broken-hearted Christian I am; and hence, if comforted, they complain, if not, they will comfort themselves; hence many lift up eyes and hands, and fetch deep sighs in prayer, remember and note sermons, look now what a gift I have; hence, if you come to their company, they will have so many good words as may make you think well of them, and then **the market** is almost done with them; hence men forsake their friends, and trample under foot the scorns of the world, **they have credit elsewhere.** [the term *market* is also used to describe the saints who trade with their talents, hence a *market*, and produce fruit to the glory of God. In this case this hypocrite is trading as described, but to his destruction. See pg 2026] To maintain their interest in the love of godly men they will suffer much; hence men in the ministry pray for grace to beautify and perfect their parts, that so they may preach, and convert, and have credit; hence men meditate new light, and profess deep things that few know, that men may worship the rising sun; hence the Lord is neglected secretly, yet honored openly, because there is no wind in their chambers to blow their sails, and, therefore, there they stand still; hence many men keep their profession when they lose their affection, they have by the one a name to live, and that is enough,

though their hearts be dead; and hence so long as you love or commend them, so long they love you, but if not, they will forsake you; they were warm only by another's fire, and hence, having no principle of life within, soon grow dead. This is the water that turns a Pharisee's mill, and the Lord passeth a heavy doom, "You have your reward." I have wondered that the opinion of men, nay, dream of men's thoughts, should act men; only it is a curse of God, that, when men despise his honor, the greatest good, they shall be fed with the basest good. [hence, Jesus said in John 5:44, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?"]

4. Those whose principle is nothing else but their own gain of outward blessings. Many there be that make not their honor so much as their bellies their gods, and they rule them, (Phil. iii. 19 ;) hence the shopkeeper will give good words when he sells his commodity, he should lose much of his custom else; and hence the minister preacheth conscionably that his gain may come in. 1 Thess. ii. 4, 5. Hence people would be as good as the best, they cannot get a lot in all the country else. Hence a man is sometime content to forsake all for Christ, that he may make a booty of Christ, as Judas did. Hence, when Christ feeds them with loaves, then the people will make him a king, (John vi.,) though afterward they cry, Crucify him. So men deal with Christ as the soldiers did that caught him, that they might strip him of his garments. And hence many men, if they see sorrows and wants attending them, if they attend on Christ, forsake him. Look upon our own land; many, so long as they could enjoy Christ with fair weather, cry out of ceremonies, and profaning of Sabbath; yet this not being to be had, creep to them, and read the book for profaning thereof. Many shadows have been seen since our sun hath risen here, and this way they looked; but viewing other men's wants, and fearing their own losses, and conceiving they may meet with Massah in this wilderness, refuse to follow. And lest this should seem to be the cause, cry out, we are separatists, or strongly possess themselves against all relations; there is no living at all here.

Look but at home; how many doves (that prove but ravens, and live on the prey) come hither to our windows, and have followed Christ to this world's end; when he fed them with loaves, they made him their king; but now he hath taken away what once they desired, because there is better bread to be labored for; now they forsake him, and live on the spoil. This is no inward principle. And hence, when men's expenses for Christ exceed their receipts from Christ, they cease spending, and fall in the highway to begging at the door of the world.

5. Those whose principle is nothing else but the strength of natural conscience, which will set men a-doing, when they have neither praise from men nor gain from Christ for their labor. For the Lord deals with some men as the Romans did with some of their prisoners; they would chain a prisoner and his keeper together, and let them go up and down; so God chains many a poor prisoner of hell and his conscience together, and lets them go together. And hence many a man keeps peace with his conscience, and cannot give it the slip for all the world heaped up with gold, as Balaam said. [Ooooo, heavy]

Now, there are two things in a natural conscience. Rom. ii. 15.

1. To accuse; hence a man dares not omit prayer, dares not commit a sin he has a mind to; conscience would then roar. Hence many keep constantly set duties in private, and tremble at small

sins; not because they take any delight in the one, or are weary of the other, but because they are ever under the eye of this judge.

2. To excuse, and to give much sweetness when a man follows the dictates thereof; hence a man, though carnal, will die for his religion, and that with some cheerfulness, because conscience cheers within, and sings him asleep in trouble. And hence a man will cry out of all the glorious hypocrisies of men, because to walk according to conscience is sweeter to him. And hence a man comforts himself, It is my conscience; (Mark xii. 33,) to love God "is better than burnt-offerings." Hence a man will profit exceedingly in what he holds, (Gal . i. 14,) because zealous for it for conscience; **and yet this is but a principle of nature, not an inward principle of life, whose property is to seek the subversion of corrupt nature, as natural conscience seeks the garnishing of it and the actions thereof.**

6. Those whose principle is the fear of death and hell; raised not so much by the power of conscience as by the power of the Word. And hence come complaints about a man's estate; that a man can have no rest by all duties that he has done, or doth. Hence following of the means, running to the best ministry, mourning and lamenting and confessing sin; (Matt. iii. 7,) "O generation of vipers," etc. And hence prizing of favor and comfort. Ps. lxxviii. 34, 35 [*When they slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and sought earnestly for God...*] **Hence many do take this for their conversion, and say,** I heard such a minister at such a time, and then I cried out I was damned, and thought I saw the devil; yea, and to hell you may for all this, if no other principle. **Indeed, there is this fear in the elect, but drives them to the ark, as Noah; but those, when their fear is over, they fall to fight against the Lord.**

7. **Those whose principle is nothing else but the immediate actings of the Spirit of God upon them.** [i.e., when people say that God spoke to them directly or gave them an unction or feeling or word as opposed to understanding God's mind and will from a diligent study of the scriptures.] For some time the Spirit of God comes upon men as light shines on the mud wall, yet dwells not there as in the sun. And hence many speak, pray, prophesy admirably, as Balaam. Num. xxiv. 3, 4. Many men, like carters, bring others' goods that are not possessors of them. Now, these are, 1. External enlargements. And hence a man doth many things which he has no inward power to perform [i.e., no saving grace, that new living principle only in the elect, hence *the faith of God's elect, Tit.1:1*]; **the Spirit is there assisting;** hence he cannot do so at another time, **but it is the Spirit only assisting.** And hence a man may have abundance of knowledge, and he not affected with it; he may live and pray with applause of men, others wish they were like him, yet live without love, and speak without feeling, and do without life; hence men leave themselves here. 2. **Internal pangs.** The Spirit of God begets some inward grief, especially when outward evils press, then inward flashes and desires, but they are soon done. **There is no spring, no principle within.** What the difference is between saints' unevenness and this inconstancy you shall hear hereafter; **yet these are wrestlings of spirit not yet conquering, and hence it possesses not the soul.**

8. **When men's principle is nothing else but common gifts, which are inward, and abiding long in the soul** [this is in distinction from saving faith or special faith and the new principle of life in believers. Common gifts are often mistaken for saving faith or God's testimony that they are his children when they are really not]. That a man now thinks he has grace, and sure signs of the Lord's love, and here is fastened. When there be two things wherein it appears there is **no inward principle:** 1. **These gifts, ever puff up,** and make a man something in his own eyes, as the Corinthian knowledge did. And many a

private man thinks himself fit to be a minister, many a minister better than all the parish besides; when Paul was the least of all the saints. And hence commonly they degenerate to pride and form. 2. **These keep men strangers to Christ and the life of faith**; they have these affections, yet, ignorant of Christ, **take these as signs of his love, and live without him.** [ministers that are truly converted have experienced the real thing, hence tend to preach truly reformed doctrine while others preach legal sermons, Moralism, etc., and end up not feeding the sheep and keep others from the true knowledge and the pure gospel message...keeping back the *key of knowledge*: See Luke 11:52 -

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”]

And this is, indeed, the inner principle which all the wicked in the world want [lack]; **there is in true grace an infinite circle. A man by thirsting receives, and receiving, thirsts for more.** But hence the Spirit is not poured out abundantly on churches, because men shut it out by **shutting in and contenting themselves with their common graces and gifts.** Matt. vii. 29. [“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”]

Examine if it be thus. If so, — ,

1. You cannot come to the Lord; (John 5:44,) "How can ye believe?" [Saving faith gives glory to God and seeks his honor and glory, not our own. A dead faith or a temporary faith is nothing but natural principles in operation,. To try to come to the Lord (to believe) upon those principles is presumption. No one can believe unless he is called, John 6:44, 65. **John Flavel:** How humble was Israel in the wilderness, tame and tractable in a lean pasture; but bring them once unto Canaan, and the world is strangely altered; then “we are lords, (say they) we will come no more unto thee,” Jer. 2:2, 7, 31. Prosperity is a crisis both to grace and corruption. Thence is that caution to Israel, Deut. 10:11, 12, "When thou hast eaten, and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God." Then beware, that is the critical time; surely that man must be acknowledged rich, very rich in grace, whose grace suffers no diminution or eclipse by his riches; and that man deserves double honor, whose pride the honors of this world cannot provoke and inflame. It was a sad truth from the lips of a pious divine in Germany upon his death-bed; being somewhat disconsolate by reflecting upon the barrenness of his life, some friends took thence an occasion to commend him, and mind him of his painful ministry and fruitful life among them; but he cried out, *Auferte ignem, adhuc enim paleas*
Habeo: Withdraw the fire, for I have chaff in me; meaning, that he felt his ambition like chaff catching fire from the sparks of their praises. Like unto which was the saying of another, He that praises me, wounds me. But to descend into the particular discoveries that prosperity and honor made of the want of grace in some, and of the weakness of grace in others; I will show you what symptoms of hypocrisy appear upon some men under the trial of prosperity, and what signs of grace appear in others under the same trial. Flavel, pg 539 vol. 5 [What Jesus is saying to the Pharisees is that this seeking of honor (out of self-love) from among men was their only purpose and end in religion. I say *only*, because genuine believers may do so partly, that is, with mixed motives for a season, due to remaining corruptions in them that war against the spirit. But the Pharisees were wholly seeking this honor, hence, were destitute of any saving grace, hence, *how can you believe until you have received saving grace?* That is, they cannot believe or even see the Kingdom lest they be born again, John 3:3.]

2. Nor to receive anything from the Lord if you do, (James iv. 3,) "when you ask to spend it on your lust," when that carries you.

3. This pulls down the kingdom of the Lord Jesus when other things rule us, and not himself alone.

4. Satan will have this against you, as against Job, "You serve not the Lord for nought." To what purpose are your new moons, church reformations, if it be thus? Now, because it hath been replied to what was formerly said, that Christ was the vessel, not our souls, I shall, therefore, confirm the latter to be the truth by these reasons: —

1. Mystical places of Scripture are to be interpreted by plain [by didactic (clear) teaching]. Now, though Christ may be the antitype of these vessels of the temple, yet he is not plainly said to be a vessel; but souls are called so. Rom. ix. 23; 2 Cor. iv. 7; Acts ix. 15. "Paul is a chosen vessel." 1 Thess. iv. 4, "We are to possess our vessels in holiness." 2 Tim. ii. 20, "Vessels of honor."

2. The Spirit is not in Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain; hence, (John iii. 34,) "Christ hath received the Spirit without measure."

3. The foolish virgins had vessels, because it is said, "They took their lamps, but no oil with them." Their folly was not in not providing vessels. Hence the foolish virgins did not afterward beg their vessels, but their oil.

4. The wisdom of the wise did appear in that they did provide oil for their vessels. If, therefore, the vessel be Christ, therein lies the wisdom of the wise, that they got the Spirit to put into Christ, and the folly of the foolish, they got not the Spirit to put into him. Or the one got Christ Jesus full of the Spirit, the other, Christ Jesus void of it. When whoever hath Christ must have in him the fullness of the Spirit also.

5. The other interpretation crosseth the main scope of this part of the parable, which is to show the difference between the virgins. All professed Christ, went to meet the bridegroom; but here was the difference, they never looked for to get the Spirit in them. And this is most suitable to men raised out of the dregs of Popery, where works being abolished, Christ is owned, and therein do well, but herein fail.

Thus you have heard the use of trial negatively. "What this inward principle is affirmatively you have generally heard, and shall more particularly in the other two doctrines. Only this I shall add, it consists of two parts: —

1. Our life in Christ by faith.

2. Christ's life in us by his Spirit. **Faith empties the soul, and looks upon it as dead, and sees its life laid up in Christ; and hence forsakes itself, and embraces the Lord of glory. Secondly. The Spirit comes and possesseth a forsaken, empty house, and there lives and dwells.** Both these the apostle mentions. Gal. ii. 20; Eph. iii. 17; John xv. 4. As two married together, their souls live not where they are, but in each other. The one cares not how to please herself, but her husband; and *e contra*. So that lest any weak soul should be discouraged, that thinks there is no principle of life, because such a blind, empty, dead heart, wandering from God, etc. Nay, when the Lord quickens it, O, it is lost again. Nay, when quickened, O, then, when it comes to, it is so feeble! I tell you it must be so. **This makes you lay up your life in him; this death is your life.** And lest any false heart should be here deceived that saith he has Christ, "If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his." The saints have this sometime,

their temple is filled with glory; and for their general course they are admirers of the Lord Jesus, and account his life to be life, and all their life beside to be continual death. There is not any grace but they say, O that I had it.

SECTION V.

Use 5. Of Exhort. To every man, as ever you look to be with Christ Jesus another day, get this oil in your vessels. The Lord doth, in this parable, set before your eyes the estate of the purest virgin churches and professors in the world, and it is his infinite love to tell us beforehand, before the time be past, to tell us that many of these shall be shut out from the presence of the Lord. Jesus, whom themselves and others think shall not; and yet this love would be but little, unless the Lord had made known the cause or defect in not getting oil to their vessel. O, consider, therefore, here you are like to fail; you that have lamps before the cry and bridegroom comes, acknowledge Christ's love, and be overcome by it to get oil in your vessels. When Rahab knew that the Lord would destroy all Jericho, now she lays about her to preserve her life. What is the means? To tie the scarlet thread at the window. O, she would be sure to get and keep that there. You know the Lord Jesus will come and discover the unsound profession, and destroy the glory of the world and churches, too. It may be ye have had sore fears, What if he should cut me off, and cast me out, as possibly he may! And I may as well as eminent professors. **I tell you none ever perished but because of this. How just had Rahab's judgment been if she had refused to get her scarlet thread there, and yours if now ye get not your oil in your vessel? How many are there that have lived fairly and died quietly, and, when they are dead, and knock, the door is shut, that then wring their hands; O, had I but known of this! I would have spent my care, and strength, and tears, and thoughts, how to have filled my vessel; but I knew it not. This time will shortly come; and if you know it now, and do not set upon it, what a cut will this be!** As, therefore, the apostle exhorts, (Heb. iv. 1,) "Having a promise of entering into rest, fear lest you fall short of it." I say so much more here, knowing how only you shall enter into Christ's rest, fear lest you fall short of this; I hope I shall not, I thank God my course is blameless, spotless; I have forsaken the sins of places and pollutions of ordinances; so these were virgins also. O, but my lamp burns as bright as any man's, I know; so did the foolish virgins'. O, but they all think well of me; so were these thought of, till the Lord said, "I know you not." O, but I look to Christ, to meet with him, and salvation from him; so did these, and yet were shut out from Christ. **If the Lord should have said, it was because they had not wealth enough, nor world enough, every man would not have been wanting here, but would have striven to have got enough of that, though it were not to be had;** but there is enough in Christ to enrich you, who has the Spirit without measure to do it. The Spirit may breathe now.

1. **Labor to feel and mourn under thy whole corrupt I principles** that have acted thee hitherto; for many men are sensible sometimes of some particular acts and jarrings of their hearts and life with the rule, and then they seek forgiveness of, and grace against them, and then they hope all is well; then they do many things and hear John gladly, and in plainness and integrity of their hearts think that all is well. But still they fall short of a **principle of life, because they never felt a whole corrupt principle, and how in every thing it crosseth God, not only in the corrupt, but most glorious actions.** For all men naturally turn from being open to secret enemies, and from being secret to be subtle enemies, and to undermine the Lord in all they do. **Now, many see it, but not the evil of it, nor mourn under it. Hence, the Lord never sends another Spirit, because they have not the spirit of heaviness for want of it.**

[Hence blessed are those who mourn!] But when a man sees that in every thing he is carried and acted by a principle of bitterness against the Lord, and lives without the Spirit of the Lord to act him, the Lord is not far from that soul when he feels this, and mourns before the Lord because of this, and the want of that. 1Kings viii. 38. So Christ said, "Because I said, I go away, sorrow has filled your hearts." John xvi. 6, 7. This is the very reason why saints have the Comforter, his absence fills their heart! You say it may be. If this be not a right principle, what is? *Ans.* To undermine all false works. **O, therefore, feel this plague! If ever God works this grace, feel you must the want of it, and if you do mourn, then you are under it. And, O, mourn**, 1. By considering the evil of it; you can mourn after a dead father, and shall you not over a dead heart? 2. To think there should be so much Spirit in Christ, and not a drop for me. Is he so angry with me? See, therefore, I pray you, that you are led by **ill principles**, or **false principles**. I pray, but **self-love sets me a-work**; I profess, but praise of men acts me; I observe duties in secret, but natural conscience only carries me. No surer sign of ruin than for the Lord to hide these things from you; nor of love than when he shows this, and gives you not only sense of some one act, but a spirit of heaviness under this. **This empties the vessel, and so makes us vessels of honor**. Do not, therefore, set thyself so much to do, as to see where thy evil principle is in all thou dost.

Means 2. Repair now to the fountain of life, for a principle of life from him, and fetch it from him.

Quest. What is that, and how shall I fetch it from him?

Ans. 1. It is not a man's own striving; a man may imitate nature, but cannot make nature. All the world cannot make one poor fly. And as it is *artis celare artem*, so when he hath done he may deceive himself and others, but nothing else. "Born not of the will of man." A man is in great distress of conscience for sin past, fear of death for time to come, and now he comes just as far as a devil; then prays, Lord, save me, and now comes as far as nature can carry him, and, therefore, is eased, and now he hath Satan's black seal upon him, and self-flattery hath carried him on. [Hence the sinner's prayer deceives many into a fatal security.] The fountain of life is not here.

2. It is not the law; it convinceth one, and he complains; it condemns another, and he cries out; it irritates another, and he falls to do what he can; but the law cannot give life. Gal. iii. 21.

3. It is not bare ordinances, which are of themselves but husks, and shells, and empty pipes. Witness the cries of many a man Sabbath after Sabbath, no life, and that for a long time; nay, he grows worse.

4. It is not God, simply considered. He is, indeed, the fountain of life, but sin has sealed that fountain; hence many a one goes to him, and departs from him with frowns.

5. **Where is life, then? In Christ**. I know he is Lord and Prince of life. Yet consider, as God man, no life is in him for you, as to be communicated to you. Where then? **It is in the blood and death of the Lord of life**. You are ready to undervalue this life. O, consider what it must cost the Son of God, and where it must lie; (Heb. ix. 14,) "If bulls' and goats' blood washed the flesh, much more this blood," etc. Many a man feels a blind, dead heart, and all duties dead; and hence uses many persuasions to himself, yet they continue so still, because he never looks to this blood. **There is this excellency in Christ's blood, not only to cleanse from guilt and power of sin, but from dead works, and none else can**. Now, therefore, repair hither for it; know what your lives will and must cost.

Now, how shall this be done?

Ans. 1. Prize this blood, and satisfy thy soul with it, choose it, and rest in it, in the Lord himself as sufficient; (John vi. 53,) "Except ye eat and drink," etc.: **many account it a common thing; you receive it not then, but trample it under your feet**; many esteem of it, but they feel not themselves with it, nor quiet their hearts with life there first; and hence it falls out thus.

2. Keep this rule, Content not thyself with that measure which thou hast from Christ, but be thankful for it, **and falling short, call ever for more**; but satiate thyself with that which is in Christ.

If thou canst not do this, if it is beyond thy strength, then consider Christ has words of life. John vi. O, beg for that, and for those words, "Hear what the Lord will say." Ps. li. 8. You can not see nor come to Christ; then, "Hear and your souls shall live." Who knows what the Lord may do? It is not possible for man to do it, but the Lord Jesus may and can.

O, then, you that have this principle, **let all your actions issue and spring from hence. As Paul exhorted Timothy, "Stir up that gift that is in thee." "Up, Deborah, up. Awake, harp and lute," saith David. Do not say, I can do nothing, and so the Lord must do all; do not say, I have a dead heart, and can do nothing, but stir it up. It was the Lord's complaint; (Is. lxiv. 7,) "None took hold of the Lord, nor stirred up himself" to that end. It may be some of you have some strength. O, put it forth. (I know all strength is from Christ, but there is a permanent strength in you. You are not dead to act; you wrong the Lord and his grace if you think so. As it is a heavy sin to shut up and imprison natural truth, (Rom. i. 18), so much more the power of grace. Others have lost it; O, recover it. And hence Paul prays for this earnestly; (Eph. iii. 15,) "The Lord strengthen you with might in the inner man." And, therefore, put this forth to act, and be sure you act only from the Spirit of grace.**

Quest. How shall I do this?

Ans. 1. Set the Lord Jesus in all his glory before you. **There is that excellency of the knowledge of Christ's person, that it makes us be and live like him, and according to the propinquity of our souls and eyes to Christ, so we are like him.** As it is with the sun, when it is gone from the earth, there are not so much as leaves on the trees, yet when it returns, the trees bring forth fruit. Or as it is in heaven, (1 John iii. 2,) so in this life, when we see him in a glass. **1 Cor. iii. 18.** That look as it is with an ambitious man, when he is in the presence of men he will manifest all his excellency; nothing shall be done to gain discredit. So if the Lord and his life be your excellency, when you see Christ you will approve yourselves to him. See him, therefore, beholding and accepting; and that grace you would put forth, see it in him; it is strange to see what a stream of spirit comes sometimes this way. **[Contemplating the glory of Christ transforms us from glory to glory, 2Cor3:18. Therefore it is our duty to be spiritually minded and grow in the knowledge of God for that purpose.]**

2. Keep the remembrance of the exceeding greatness of his love fresh in your minds, in that "he has quickened you," (Eph. ii. 4, 5;) and that this life was by his death. All the flowers of the field cast their savor but for a time, and then away with them; but Christ's love and Christ's death do usually always breathe a savor of life to a sincere heart that never knew what the sting of death meant. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Christ loves Christians, because he dies that we should live. But how? Because we thus judged. God has made man an agent by counsel. Now, some Christians go to the Lord to help them, but set not prayer of faith a-work, and hence have no water of life. Some do, but use not other means to set the understanding (the mind of faith) on work, to quicken it up to act, and so would have life brought in, but not by the right door; an empty vessel will not be full of this water **till now that the mouth of the**

understanding is open. Now, many things are to be considered to act every grace, as God's command and promise, etc. But this is that which in the general quickens; O, Christ's love, which constrains the soul to live to him. According as a man thus receives from Christ, so he returns to him. As it is observed, one sign that when a people visit not their minister they receive no good; so here. That is a sign of a decaying Christian, for usually they that get good by Christ, cannot, by their good will, stay away from Christ. So, then, the soul will return in all fruitful obedience to the Lord, when he receives the sweet of the love of the Lord. The Lord doth me good, methinks, and hence he follows the Lord. Satan hence prevails with the heart, because of its external objects, and a party within; so here Christ prevails, because there is a party within, when external objects are propounded. Let a man have life; if he have no food he will never live. **If bread be before him, and he feed not on it, and that abundantly, he will never have strength; so this love of Christ in us is life in us, and food for us.** [Contemplation is an fruit of saving faith; believers tend to do this because they have been given a love for God, hence faith worketh by love; that is, we think and contemplate those we love or who we love, i.e., Christ! i.e., his doctrine! hence faith mixes itself with the word (digestion of the bread) and thus we grow spiritually into his image day by day...]

3. Famish the contrary principle, the strength whereof is by sucking in the sweet, and receiving in carnal content from the creature; (Rom. xiii. 14,) "Put on the Lord Jesus," his Spirit, his righteousness, his life, his graces; "make no provision for the flesh." Many Christians look up to Christ in all means, but can do nothing, **because they have some delight either in lawful or unlawful things, that lie between them and Christ.** Hence that grows strong, the other feeble.

4. **Die to all self-confidence in grace received, or self-contentment with any measure of it; for thereby you stop the Spirit; for we of ourselves cannot think a good thought. Therefore, be strong in Christ,** and hence, Eph. vi. 10-12. A man is apt to fall to a double extreme, to be strong in the Lord without putting on graces; and to trust to them without being strong in him. Corn must die before it lives; so must you; and rest not content with the measure received, but look for more, and hence be, thankful, and say, It is not I, but Christ; yet look for more.

5. If no means come to give strength, consider sadly if you I have not broken covenant with God, as in Samson's case. God was in covenant with him, but he had broken it on his part; hence his strength was gone. I know no place that breeds men of larger covenants than this place, by sea and land, personal, and especially church covenants. Now, thy strength is gone. Dost thou not live in breach of covenant? Not only it is broken, but you live in it. You covenant to cleave to the Lord, or if you depart, to return soon again, but you lie in your falls. Nay, your covenant and returning heals your horror only, not your sin. You covenant to love brethren dearly, but a little offence one gives, or hopes of a bigger lot, will tempt thy heart to leave them to their own shifts. You covenant to submit to officers in the Lord, but some take liberty to speak what they will, and others do what they list. **To watch over your brethren, to put life in them, but you grow a stranger, and it may be see them not once in a quarter, unless at church.** But can it be said they are any better for thee? O, your sins are double, and hence your plagues of heart are worse now, more hard to be wrought upon, and hence sin and Satan lead you. Ps.78:57, 60, 61. O, consider this sin, the strength of God is taken as captain of the camp, that when you cry, Lord, help me, there it is. But, alas! it is gone from you, and it is in Satan's hand, not only your strength, but God's strength, and the soul is taken captive. O, therefore, mourn for this, lest you mourn at last.

Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God

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SECT. III.

Practical inferences.

By Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.vii.ii.iii.html>

This is more teaching on the subject of true conversion, the cause of it and in what it consists, namely the communication of God's glory or the image of his glory being re-stamped upon the soul, restoring the soul into the image of God. This is otherwise known as God communicating grace to the soul or infusing a new principle of life into the soul, the gift of faith, by which we are united to Christ, enabled to obey Christ, (e.g., to believe the gospel). There is so much here that describes this, it is best to read and re-read these writings and then the dots will be connected in due time. But first, I must precede this text by an excellent quote from John Owen from his commentary on the book of Hebrews (chapter 5 in particular) on the purpose and benefit of inquiring into these divine mysteries:

As for this fountain and spring of grace, this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and demonstration of divine wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love; this great discovery

of the purity of the law and vileness of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere and uncorrupted love towards him, of all joy and consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves a place in the objects of their contemplation, and are ready to guess that what men write and talk about it is but phrases, canting, and fanatical. But such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ will not so easily part with their immortal interest and concern herein. Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrency of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it.

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Some of the true friends of the work of God's Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them, of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do, which was not signified or revealed anywhere in the Bible without those impulses. These **impressions**, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, **are of a quite different nature from his gracious influences on the hearts of the saints**: they are of the nature of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and are **properly inspiration**, such as the prophets and apostles and others had of old; which the apostle distinguishes from the grace of the Spirit, 1 Cor. xiii.

One reason why some have been ready to lay weight on such impulses, is an opinion they have had, that the glory of the approaching happy days of the church would partly consist in restoring those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. This opinion, I believe, arises partly through want of duly considering and comparing the nature and value of those two kinds of influences of the Spirit, viz. Those that are **ordinary and gracious**, and those that are **extraordinary and miraculous**. The former are by far the most excellent and glorious; as the apostle largely shows. (1 Cor. xii. 31., &c.) Speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he says, "**But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way;**" i.e. **a more excellent way of the influence of the Spirit**. And then he goes on, in the next chapter, to show what that more excellent way is, even the grace of the Spirit, which summarily consists in **charity, or divine love**. And throughout that chapter he shows the great preference of that above inspiration. God communicates his own nature to the soul in saving grace in the heart, more than in all miraculous gifts. The

blessed image of God consists in that and not in these. The excellency, happiness, and glory of the soul, immediately consists in the former. That is a root which bears infinitely more excellent fruit. Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God is promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration. A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell. The spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists in the grace of the Spirit, which God bestows only on his favourites and dear children. He has sometimes thrown out the other as it were to dogs and swine, as he did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas; and some who, in the primitive times of the Christian church, committed the unpardonable sin. ([Heb. vi.](#)) Many wicked men at the day of the judgment will plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles, was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. **The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity and honour, than their miraculous gifts.** The things in which we find David comforting himself, are not his being a king, or a prophet, **but the holy influences of the Spirit of God in his heart, communicating to him divine light, love, and joy.** [The image of God's glory consists in these things, those things that are communicated to the soul, restoring the image of God that was lost at the fall, his moral image.] The apostle Paul abounded in visions, revelations, and miraculous gifts, above all the apostles; but yet he esteems all things but loss for the excellency of the spiritual knowledge of Christ. It was not the gifts but the grace of the apostles, that was the proper evidence of their names being written in heaven; in which Christ directs them to rejoice, much more than in the devils being subject to them. **To have grace in the heart,** is a higher privilege than the blessed Virgin herself had, in having the body of the second person in the Trinity conceived in her womb, by the power of the Highest overshadowing her: [Luke xi. 27, 28.](#) "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him; Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked! But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." See also to the same purpose, [Matt. xii. 47.](#), &c. The influence of the Holy Spirit, or divine charity in the heart, is the greatest privilege and glory of the highest archangel in heaven; yea, this is the very thing by which the creature has fellowship with God himself, with the Father and the Son, in their beauty and happiness. Hereby the saints are made partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ's joy fulfilled in themselves.

The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the end of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows, [Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13.](#) They are good for nothing, any further

than as they are subordinate to this end; they will be so far from profiting any without it, that they will only aggravate their misery. This is, as the apostle observes, the most excellent way of God's communicating his Spirit to his church, it is the greatest glory of the church in all ages. **This glory is what makes the church on earth most like the church in heaven, when prophecy, and tongues, and other miraculous gifts, cease.** And God **communicates his Spirit** only in that more excellent way of which the apostle speaks, viz. **charity or divine love**, "which never faileth." **Therefore the glory of the approaching happy state of the church does not at all require these extraordinary gifts.** As that state of the church will be nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so I believe it will be like it in this, **that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars, and the moon with the reflected light they gave in the night, or in a dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of divine love.** The apostle speaks of these **gifts of inspiration as childish things**, in **comparison of the influence of the Spirit in divine love; things given to the church only to support it in its minority, till the church should have a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace should be settled; but as things that should cease, as the church advanced to the state of manhood.** **1 Cor. xiii. 11.** "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things;" compared with the three preceding verses.²⁷⁵ [Note that these *miraculous gifts* were designed to validate the doctrine that the apostles were teaching, that they were from God. And as doctrine was formulated and canonized in the early church 100-500 AD, and as the church matured in their doctrine, these miraculous gifts were not needed anymore and so *vanished away*. The church doctrinally was more mature and didn't need these *childish* helps anymore. There are other reasons for the ceasing of extraordinary gifts, aka, Cessationism, as Edwards further elaborates some of them in the next paragraph and in another discourse, namely to quell any opportunity of man's exercise of his innate tendency toward idolatry. Philip Schaff concluded that these miraculous gifts didn't stop cold turkey after the death of John around 90AD, but faded out or vanished away to the point where they were not much known after the 2nd or 3rd century as Schaff notes here:

The subject of *post*-apostolic miracles is surrounded by much greater difficulties in the absence of inspired testimony, and in most cases even of ordinary immediate witnesses. There is an antecedent probability that the power of working miracles was not suddenly and abruptly, but gradually withdrawn, as the necessity of such outward and extraordinary attestation of the divine origin of Christianity diminished and gave way to the natural operation of truth and moral suasion. Hence St. Augustin, in the fourth century, says: "Since the establishment of the church God does not wish to perpetuate miracles even to our day, lest the mind should put its trust in visible signs, or grow cold at the sight of common marvels."¹¹¹ But it is impossible to fix the precise termination, either at the death

of the apostles, or their immediate disciples, or the conversion of the Roman empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy, or any subsequent era, and to sift carefully in each particular case the truth from legendary fiction.

It is remarkable that the genuine writings of the ante-Nicene church are more free from miraculous and superstitious elements than the annals of the Nicene age [cir 325AD] and the middle ages. The history of monasticism teems with miracles even greater than those of the New Testament. Most of the statements of the apologists are couched in general terms, and refer to extraordinary cures from demoniacal possession (which probably includes, in the language of that age, cases of madness, deep melancholy, and epilepsy) and other diseases, by the invocation of the name of Jesus.¹¹² Justin Martyr speaks of such cures as a frequent occurrence in Rome and all over the world, and Origen appeals to his own personal observation, but speaks in another place of the growing scarcity of miracles, so as to suggest the gradual cessation theory as held by Dr. Neander, Bishop Kaye, and others. Tertullian attributes many if not most of the conversions of his day to supernatural dreams and visions, as does also Origen, although with more caution. But in such psychological phenomena it is exceedingly difficult to draw the line of demarcation between natural and supernatural causes, and between providential interpositions and miracles proper. The strongest passage on this subject is found in Irenaeus, who, in contending against the heretics, mentions, besides prophecies and miraculous cures of demoniacs, even the raising of the dead among contemporary events taking place in the Catholic church;¹¹³ but he specifies no particular case or name; and it should be remembered also, that his youth still bordered almost on the Johannean age. [the era of the apostle John, 1st century]

Edwards continues:

When the apostle, in this chapter, speaks of prophecies, tongues, and revelations ceasing, and vanishing away in the church—when the Christian church should be advanced from a state of minority to a state of manhood—he seems to have respect to its coming to an adult state in this world, as well as in heaven; for he speaks of such a state of manhood, wherein those three things, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should remain after miracles and revelation had ceased; as in the last verse, and “now abideth (μενει, remaineth) Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three.” The apostle’s manner of speaking here shows an evident reference to what he had just been saying before; and here is a manifest antithesis, between remaining, and that **failing, ceasing, and vanishing away**, spoken of in the 8th verse. The apostle had been showing how all those gifts of inspiration, **which were the leading-strings of the Christian church in its infancy, should vanish away, when the church came to a state of manhood**. Then he returns to observe, what things remain after those had failed and ceased; and he observes that those three things shall remain in the church, Faith, Hope, and Charity: and therefore the adult state of the church he speaks of, **is the more perfect one at which it shall arrive on earth, especially in the latter ages of the world**. And this was the more properly observed to the church at Corinth, upon two accounts; because the apostle had before observed to

that church, that they were in a state of infancy, [chap. iii. 1, 2.](#) And because that church seems above all others to have abounded with miraculous gifts. When the expected glorious state of the church comes, **the increase of light shall be so great that it will in some respect answer what is said, [ver. 12. of seeing face to face.](#)** (See [Isa. xxiv. 23. and xxv. 7.](#))

Therefore I do not expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church, nor do I desire it. It appears to me, that it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it. For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, **drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacency, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations the whole year.** It appears to me much more probable that God should give immediate revelation to his saints in the dark times of prophecy, than now in the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of his church on earth. It does not appear to me that there is any need of those extraordinary gifts to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world; I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do it without.

I would therefore entreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things. I have seen them fail in very many instances, and know by experience that impressions being made with great power, and upon the minds of true, yea eminent,—saints even in the midst of extraordinary exercises of grace, and sweet communion with God, and attended with texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind—**are no sure signs of their being revelations from heaven.** I have known such impressions fail, in some instances, attended with all these circumstances. They who leave the sure word of prophecy which God has given us as a light shining in a dark place—to follow such impressions and impulses, leave the guidance of the polar star, to follow a Jack with a lantern. **No wonder therefore that sometimes they are led into woeful extravagancies.**

Moreover, seeing inspiration is not to be expected, let us not despise human learning. They who assert that human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry, do not well consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others mean, the improvement of common knowledge by human and outward means. And therefore to say, that human learning is of no use, is as much as to say that the education of a child, or that the common knowledge which a grown man has more than a little child, is of no use. At this rate, a child of four years old is as fit

for a teacher in the church of God, with the same degree of grace—and capable of doing as much to advance the kingdom of Christ, by his instruction—as a very knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more knowledge than a little child, then doubtless if they have more human knowledge still, with the same degree of grace, they would have still greater ability and advantage to do service. An increase of knowledge, without doubt, increases a man's advantage either to do good or hurt, according as he is disposed. It is too manifest to be denied, that God made great use of human learning in the apostle Paul, as he also did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge, obtained by human means, is not to be despised, then it will follow **that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, viz. study**; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God, may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick. And I would pray, that method, in public discourses, which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

Consubstantiation and Eternal Generation

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regarding the Father and the Son

by Philip Schaff in his 8 volumes, *The History of the Christian Church*

This helps understand the deity of Christ more fully, that was under attack by the Arians in the early Church, cir 318-381. This is amazing!

By Philip Schaff

https://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch09.htm

§ 127. *The Nicene Doctrine of the Consubstantiality of the Son with the Father.*

Comp. the literature in §§ 119 and 120, especially the four Orations of Athanasius against the Arians, and the other anti-Arian tracts of this "father of orthodoxy."

The NICENE, HOMO-OUSIAN, or ATHANASIAN doctrine was most clearly and powerfully represented in the East by Athanasius, in whom it became flesh and blood;¹³⁷⁸ and next to him, by Alexander of Alexandria, Marcellus of Ancyra (who however strayed into Sabellianism), Basil, and the two Gregories of Cappadocia; and in the West by Ambrose and Hilary.

The central point of the Nicene doctrine in the contest with Arianism is the identity of essence or the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and is expressed in this article of the (original) Nicene Creed: "[We believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is begotten the only-begotten of the Father; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."¹³⁷⁹

The term ομοουσιον", *consubstantial*, is of course no more a biblical term,¹³⁸⁰ than *trinity*;¹³⁸¹ but it had already been used, though in a different sense, both by heathen writers¹³⁸² and by heretics,¹³⁸³ as well as by orthodox fathers.¹³⁸⁴ It formed a bulwark against Arians and Semi-Arians, and an anchor which moored the church during the stormy time between the first and the second ecumenical councils.¹³⁸⁵ At first it had a negative meaning against heresy; denying, as Athanasius repeatedly says, that the Son is in any sense created or produced and changeable.¹³⁸⁶ But afterwards the homoousion became a positive testword of orthodoxy, designating, in the sense of the Nicene council, clearly and unequivocally, the veritable and essential deity of Christ, in opposition to all sorts of apparent or half divinity, or mere similarity to God. The same divine, eternal, unchangeable essence, which is in an original way in the Father, is, from eternity, in a derived way, through generation, in the Son; just as the water of the fountain is in the stream, or the light of the sun is in the ray, and cannot be separated from it. Hence the Lord says: "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; I and My Father are one." This is the sense of the expression: "God of God," "very God of very God." Christ, in His divine nature, is as fully consubstantial with the Father, as, in His human nature, He is with man; flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone; and yet, with all this, He is an

independent person with respect to the Father, as He is with respect to other men. In this view Basil turns the term *ὁμοούσιος* against the Sabellian denial of the personal distinctions in the Trinity, since it is not the same thing that is consubstantial with itself, but one thing that is consubstantial with another.¹³⁸⁷ Consubstantiality among men, indeed, is predicated of different individuals who partake of the same nature, and the term in this view might denote also unity of species in a tritheistic sense.

But in the case before us the personal distinction of the Son from the Father must not be pressed to a duality of substances of the same kind; the homoousion, on the contrary, must be understood as identity or *numerical* unity of substance, in distinction from mere generic unity. Otherwise it leads manifestly into dualism or tritheism. The Nicene doctrine refuses to swerve from the monotheistic basis, and stands between Sabellianism and tritheism; though it must be admitted that the usage of *ὁμοούσιος* and *ὁμοπόστασις* still wavered for a time, and the relation of the consubstantiality to the numerical unity of the divine essence did not come clearly out till a later day. Athanasius insists that the unity of the divine essence is indivisible, and that there is only one principle of Godhead.¹³⁸⁸ He frequently illustrates the relation as Tertullian had done before him, by the relation between fire and brightness,¹³⁸⁹ or between fountain and stream; though in these illustrations the proverbial insufficiency of all similitudes must never be forgotten. "We must not," says he, "take the words in John xiv. 10: 'I am in the Father and the Father in Me' as if the Father and the Son were two different interpenetrating and mutually complementary substances, like two bodies which fill one vessel. The Father is full and perfect, and the Son is the fulness of the Godhead."¹³⁹⁰ "We must not imagine," says he in another place, "three divided substances¹³⁹¹ in God, as among men, lest we, like the heathen, invent a multiplicity of gods; but as the stream which is born of the fountain, and not separated from it, though there are two forms and names. Neither is the Father the Son, nor the Son the Father; for the Father is the Father of the Son, and the Son is the Son of the Father. As the fountain is not the stream, nor the stream the fountain, but the two are one and the same water which flows from the fountain into the stream; so the Godhead pours itself, without division, from the Father into the Son. Hence the Lord says: I went forth from the Father, and come from the Father. Yet He is ever with the Father, He is in the bosom of the Father, and the bosom of the Father is never emptied of the Godhead of the Son."¹³⁹²

The Son is of the essence of the Father, not by division or diminution, but by simple and perfect self-communication. This divine self-communication of eternal love is represented by the figure of *generation*, suggested by the biblical terms *Father* and *Son*, the *only-begotten* Son, the *firstborn*.¹³⁹³ The eternal generation is an internal process in the essence of God, and the Son is an immanent offspring of this essence; whereas creation is an act of the will of God, and the creature is exterior to the Creator, and of different substance. The Son, as man, is produced;¹³⁹⁴ as God, he is unproduced or uncreated;¹³⁹⁵ he is begotten¹³⁹⁶ from eternity of the unbegotten¹³⁹⁷ Father. To this Athanasius refers the passage concerning the Only-begotten who is in the bosom of the Father.¹³⁹⁸

Generation and creation are therefore entirely different ideas. Generation is an immanent, necessary, and perpetual process in the essence of God himself, the Father's eternal communication of essence or self to the Son; creation, on the contrary, is an outwardly directed, free, single act of the will of God, bringing forth a different and temporal substance out of nothing. The eternal fatherhood and sonship in God is the perfect prototype of all similar relations on earth. But the divine generation

differs from all human generation, not only in its absolute spirituality, but also in the fact that it does not produce a new essence of the same kind, but that the begotten is identical in essence with the begetter; for the divine essence is by reason of its simplicity, incapable of division, and by reason of its infinity, incapable of increase.¹³⁹⁹ The generation, properly speaking, has no reference at all to the essence, but only to the hypostatical distinction. The Son is begotten not as God, but as Son, not as to his *natura*, but as to his *ijdiiovth*", his peculiar property and his relation to the Father. The divine essence neither begets, nor is begotten. The same is true of the *processio* of the Holy Ghost, which has reference not to the essence, but only to the person, of the Spirit. In human generation, moreover, the father is older than the son; but in the divine generation, which takes place not in time, but is eternal, there can be no such thing as priority or posteriority of one or the other hypostasis. To the question whether the Son existed *before* his generation, Cyril of Alexandria answered: "The generation of the Son did not precede his existence, but he existed eternally, and eternally existed by generation." The Son is as necessary to the being of the Father, as the Father to the being of the Son.

The necessity thus asserted of the eternal generation does not, however, impair its freedom, but is intended only to deny its being arbitrary and accidental, and to secure its foundation in the essence of God himself. God, to be Father, must from eternity beget the Son, and so reproduce himself; yet he does this in obedience not to a foreign law, but to his own law and the impulse of his will. Athanasius, it is true, asserts on the one hand that God begets the Son not of his will,¹⁴⁰⁰ but by his nature,¹⁴⁰¹ yet on the other hand he does not admit that God begets the Son without will,¹⁴⁰² or of force or unconscious necessity. The generation, therefore, rightly understood, is an act at once of essence and of will. Augustine calls the Son "will of will."¹⁴⁰³ In God freedom and necessity coincide.

The mode of the divine generation is and must be a mystery. Of course all human representations of it must be avoided, and the matter be conceived in a purely moral and spiritual way. The eternal generation, conceived as an intellectual process, is the eternal self-knowledge of God; reduced to ethical terms, it is his eternal and absolute love in its motion and working within himself.

In his argument for the consubstantiality of the Son, Athanasius, in his four orations against the Arians, besides adducing the proof from Scripture, which presides over and permeates all other arguments, sets out now in a practical method from the idea of redemption, now in a speculative, from the idea of God.

Christ has delivered us from the curse and power of sin, reconciled us with God, and made us partakers of the eternal, divine life; therefore he must himself be God. Or, negatively: If Christ were a creature, he could not redeem other creatures from sin and death. It is assumed that redemption is as much and as strictly a divine work, as creation.¹⁴⁰⁴

Starting from the idea of God, Athanasius argues: The relation of Father is not accidental, arising in time; else God would be changeable;¹⁴⁰⁵ it belongs as necessarily to the essence and character of God as the attributes of eternity, wisdom, goodness, and holiness; consequently he must have been Father from eternity, and this gives the eternal generation of the Son.¹⁴⁰⁶ The divine fatherhood and sonship is the prototype of all analogous relations on earth. As there is no Son without Father, no more is there Father without Son. An unfruitful Father were like a dark light, or a dry fountain, a self-contradiction.

The non-existence of creatures, on the contrary, detracts nothing from the perfection of the Creator, since he always has the power to create when he will.¹⁴⁰⁷ The Son is of the Father's own interior essence, while the creature is exterior to God and dependent on the act of his will.¹⁴⁰⁸ God, furthermore, cannot be conceived without reason (a[logo]), wisdom, power, and according to the Scriptures (as the Arians themselves concede) the Son is the Logos, the wisdom, the power, the Word of God, by which all things were made. As light rises from fire, and is inseparable from it, so the Word from God, the Wisdom from the Wise, and the Son from the Father.¹⁴⁰⁹ The Son, therefore, was in the beginning, that is, in the beginning of the eternal divine being, in the original beginning, or from eternity. He himself calls himself one with the Father, and Paul praises him as God blessed forever.¹⁴¹⁰

Finally Christ cannot be a proper object of worship, as he is represented in Scripture and has always been regarded in the Church, without being strictly divine. To worship a creature is idolatry.

When we attentively peruse the warm, vigorous, eloquent, and discriminating controversial writings of Athanasius and his co-laborers, and compare with them the vague, barren, almost entirely negative assertions and superficial arguments of their opponents, we cannot escape the impression that, with all their exegetical and dialectical defects in particulars, they have on their side an overwhelming preponderance of positive truth, the authority of holy Scripture, the profounder speculations of reason, and the prevailing traditional faith of the early church.¹⁴¹¹

The spirit and tendency of the Nicene doctrine is edifying; it magnifies Christ and Christianity. The Arian error is cold and heartless, degrades Christ to the sphere of the creature, and endeavors to substitute a heathen deification of the creature for the true worship of God. For this reason also the faith in the true and essential deity of Christ has to this day an inexhaustible vitality, while the irrational Arian fiction of a half-deity, creating the world and yet himself created, long ago entirely outlived itself.¹⁴¹²

key footnotes

¹³⁹⁹ Bishop JOHN PEARSON, in his well-known work: *An Exposition of the Creed* (Art. ii. p. 209, ed. W. S. Dobson, New York, 1851), thus clearly and rightly exhibits the Nicene doctrine in this point: "In human generations the son is of the same nature with the father, and yet is not the same man; because though he has an essence of the same kind, yet he has not the same essence; the power of generation depending on the first prolific benediction, *increase and multiply*, it must be made by way of multiplication, and thus every son becomes another man. But the divine essence, being by reason of its simplicity not subject to division, and in respect of its infinity incapable of multiplication, is so communicated as not to be multiplied; insomuch that he who proceeds by that communication, has not only the same nature, but is also the same God. The Father God, and the Word God; Abraham man and Isaac man: but Abraham one man, Isaac another man; not so the Father one God and the Word another, but the Father and the Word both the same God."

¹⁴⁰⁷ This last argument, in the formally logical point of view, may not be perfectly valid; for there may as well be a distinction between an ideal and real fatherhood, as between an ideal and real creatorship; and, on the other hand, one might reason with as good right backwards from the notion of essential omnipotence to an eternal creation, and say with Hegel: Without the world God is not God. But from the speculative and ethical point of view a difference must unquestionably be admitted, and

an element of truth be acknowledged in the argument of Athanasius. The Father needed the Son for his own self-consciousness, which is inconceivable without an object. God is essentially love, and this realizes itself in the relation of Father and Son, and in the fellowship of the Spirit: *Ubi amor ibi trinitas* [where there is love there is trinity].

Notes on Concupiscence

code43

and man as different from the beasts
Seeming virtue vs true virtue

History of the Christian Church

By Philip Schaff,

p 826 Vol. 3

https://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch09.htm

. *Concupiscence*, i.e., not sensuousness in itself, but the preponderance of the sensuous, the lusting of the flesh against the spirit. Thus God punishes sin with sin—a proposition which Julian considered blasphemy. Originally the body was as joyfully obedient to the spirit, as man to God. There was but one will in exercise. By the fall this beautiful harmony has been broken, and that antagonism has arisen which Paul describes in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. (Augustine referred this passage to the regenerate state.) The rebellion of the spirit against God involved, as its natural punishment, the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. *Concupiscentia*, therefore, is substantially the same as what Paul calls in the bad sense "flesh." It is not the sensual constitution in itself, but its predominance over the higher, rational nature of man. It is true, however, that Augustine, in his longing after an unimpeded life in the spirit, was inclined to treat even lawful appetites, such as hunger and thirst, so far as they assume the form of craving desire, as at least remotely connected with the fall. Julian attributed the strength of animal desire to the animal element in the original nature of man. Augustine answered, that the superiority of man to the brute consists in the complete dominion of reason over the sensual nature ¹, [the thinking and willing, immortal spirit, which distinguishes man from animals] and that therefore his approach to the brute in this respect is a punishment from God. Concupiscence then is no more a merely corporeal thing than the biblical σαρκί [flesh], but has its seat in the soul, without which no lust arises. We must, therefore, suppose a conflict in the soul itself, a lower, earthly, self-seeking instinct, and a higher, god-like impulse.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will guide you with My eye.

Do not be like the horse or like the mule,

Which have no understanding,

Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,

Else they will not come near you. Ps 32:8-9

[So that all that is done apart from faith is sin (Romans 14:23: "for whatever *is* not from faith is sin"). Put another way, all acts that springs from a person who is not converted, by definition, must spring

from a principle of self-love and not from a *new principle of life* i.e. faith, that which is infused into the soul or communicated to the soul of a true convert. It may appear virtuous, e.g., love for country, family, etc., but if it springs not from this new principle of life (based on a love for God) then it is ascribed to self-love, one's own honor or self-interest; all supposed virtue is not true virtue. As Augustine puts it regarding pagan acts of self-devotion to freedom and country so glorious in the eyes of men, "all virtues are but splendid vices," [1836](#).]

Philip Schaff explains more fully: (see also *The Nature True Virtue* by Jonathan Edwards)

To sum up the Augustinian doctrine of sin: This fearful power is universal; it rules the species, as well as individuals; it has its seat in the moral character of the will, reaches thence to the particular actions, and from them reacts again upon the will; and it subjects every man, without exception, to the punitive justice of God. Yet the corruption is not so great as to alter the substance of man, and make him incapable of redemption. The denial of man's *capacity* for redemption is the Manichaean error, and the opposite extreme to the Pelagian denial of the *need* of redemption. "That is still good," says Augustine, "which bewails lost good; for had not something good remained in our nature, there would be no grief over lost good for punishment."[1834](#) Even in the hearts of the heathen the law of God is not wholly obliterated, [[Rom. 2:14](#), see [Owen too](#)] and even in the life of the most abandoned men there are some good works. But these avail nothing to salvation. **They are not truly good, because they proceed from the turbid source of selfishness. Faith is the root, and love the motive, of all truly good actions**, and this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Before the time of Christ, therefore, all virtues were either, like the virtues of the Old Testament saints, who hoped in the same Christ in whom we believe, consciously or unconsciously Christian; or else they prove, on closer inspection, to be comparative vices or seeming virtues, destitute of the pure motive and the right aim. Lust of renown and lust of dominion were the fundamental traits of the old Romans, which first gave birth to those virtues of self-devotion to freedom and country, so glorious in the eyes of men; but which afterwards, when with the destruction of Carthage all manner of moral corruption poured in, begot the Roman vices.[1836](#) read this footnote!

This view of heathen or natural morality as a specious form of vice, though true to a large extent, is nevertheless an unjust extreme, which Augustine himself cannot consistently sustain. Even he was forced to admit important moral differences among the heathen: between, for example, a Fabricius, of incorruptible integrity, and the traitor Catiline; and though he merely defines this difference negatively, as a greater and less degree of sin and guilt, yet this itself involves the positive concession, that Fabricius stands nearer the position of Christian morality, and that there exists at least relative goodness among the heathen. Moreover, he cannot deny, that there were before Christ, not only among the Israelites, but also among the Gentiles, God-fearing souls, such as Melchisedec and Job, true Israelites, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, whom God by the secret workings of His Spirit drew to Himself even without baptism and the external means of grace. So the Alexandrian fathers saw scattered rays of the Logos in the dark night of heathenism; only they were far from discriminating so sharply between what was Christian and what was not Christian.

All human boasting is therefore excluded, man is sick, sick unto death out of Christ, but he is capable of health; and the worse the sickness, the greater is the physician, the more powerful is the remedy—redeeming grace.

1836 The sentence often ascribed to Augustine, that "all pagan virtues are but splendid vices," is not Augustinian in form, but in substance. Comp. the quotation and remarks above, §151. Dr. BAUR states his view correctly and clearly when he says (Vorlesungen über die Dogmengeschichte, Bd. i. Part 2, p. 342): "If, as Augustine taught, faith in Christ is the highest principle of willing and acting, nothing can be truly good, which has not its root in faith, which principle Augustine thus expressed, using the words of the apostle Paul, Rom. xiv. 23: 'Omne, quod non ex fide, peccatum.' Augustine judged therefore all good in the will and act of man after the absolute standard of Christian good, and accordingly could only regard the virtues of the heathen as seeming virtues, and ascribe to anything pre-Christian an inner value only so far as it had an inner reference to faith in Christ." Comp. also BAUR'S Geschichte der christl. Kirche vom 4-6ten Jahrhundert, p. 153 ff. NEANDER represents Augustine's doctrine on heathen virtue thus (Church History, vol. iv. 1161, 2d Germ. ed., or vol. ii. p. 620, in Torrey's translation): "Augustine very justly distinguishes the patriotism of the ancients from that which is to be called 'virtue,' in the genuinely Christian sense, and which depends on the disposition towards God (virtus from virtus vera); but then he goes so far as to overlook altogether what bears some relationship to the divine life in such occasional coruscations of the moral element of human nature, and to see in them nothing but a service done for evil spirits and for man's glory. He contributed greatly, on this particular side, to promote in the Western church the partial and contracted way of judging the ancient pagan times, as opposed to the more liberal Alexandrian views of which we still find traces in many of the Orientals in this period, and to which Augustine himself, in the earlier part of his life, as a Platonist, had been inclined. Still the vestiges of his earlier and loftier mode of thinking are to be discerned in his later writings, where he searches after and recognizes the scattered fragments of truth and goodness in the pagan literature, which he uniformly traces to the revelation of the Spirit, who is the original source of all that is true and good, to created minds; though this is inconsistent with his own theory respecting the total corruption of human nature, and with the *particularism* of his doctrine of predestination."

The Glory of God in Genuine Conversions Described

code45

this is very good.

By Jonathan Edwards

SECT. V.

Truly gracious affections are attended with a conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.

by Jonathan Edwards - On Religious Affections Part III Sect V p 288

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.vii.iv.vi.html>

This seems to be implied in the text that was laid as the foundation of this discourse, Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. All gracious persons have a solid, full, thorough, and effectual conviction of the truth

of the great things of the gospel. They no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion, which, though probable, are yet disputable; but with them, they are points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth. Their conviction is an effectual conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible things of the gospel, have the influence of real and certain things upon them; they have the weight and power of real things in their hearts; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. With respect to Christ's being the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and the great things he has revealed concerning himself, and his Father, and another world, they have not only a predominating opinion that these things are true, and so yield their assent, as they do in many other matters of doubtful speculation; but they see that it is really so; their eyes are opened, so that they see that really Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as to the things which Christ has revealed, of God's eternal purposes and designs, concerning fallen man, and the glorious and everlasting things prepared for the saints in another world, they see that they are so indeed; and therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice, in some measure answerable to their infinite importance.

That all true Christians have such a kind of conviction, is abundantly manifest from the Holy Scriptures. I will mention a few places out of many: [Matt. xvi. 15-17.](#) "But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona:—my Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee." [John vi. 68, 69.](#) "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." [John xvii. 6-8.](#) "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.—Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." [Acts viii. 37.](#) "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." [2 Cor. iv. 11-14.](#) "We which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.—Death worketh in us.—We having the spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Together with [verse 16.](#) "For which cause we feint not." And [verse 18.](#) "While we look not at the things which are seen," &c. And [chap. v. 1.](#) "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God."—And [ver. 6-8.](#) "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." [2 Tim. i. 12.](#) "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." [Heb. iii. 6.](#) "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." [Heb. xi. 1.](#) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:" together with that whole chapter. [1 John iv. 13-16.](#) "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God. God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." [Chap. v. 4, 5.](#) "For whatsoever is born of

God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Therefore truly gracious affections are attended with a conviction and persuasion of the truth of gospel declarations, and a sight of their evidence and reality.

There are many religious affections, which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. Many apprehensions and ideas which some call divine discoveries, are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while, they may seem to be more persuaded of the truth of religion, than they used to be, and may yield a forward assent, like many of Christ's hearers who believed for a while; **yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction**. There is no great abiding change in them in this respect, that whereas formerly they did not realize the great things of the gospel, now these things, with regard to reality and certainty, appear new to them, and they behold them quite in another view than they used to do. **There are many persons who have been exceedingly raised with religious affections, and think they have been converted**, but they do not seem any more convinced of the truth of the gospel, than they used to be; or at least, there is no remarkable alteration. They do not live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite and eternal things which the gospel reveals; if they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their affections are not attended with a thorough conviction of the mind, they are not at all to be depended on; however great a show and noise they make, it is like the blaze of tow, or crackling of thorns, or like the forward flourishing blade on stony ground, that has no root, nor deepness of earth, to maintain its life.

Some persons, under high affections and a confident persuasion of their good estate, have what they very ignorantly call seeing the truth of the word of God, but which is very far from it. **They have some text of Scripture coming to their minds**, in a sudden and extraordinary manner, immediately [*i.e., they hear voices or some kind of unction*] declaring unto them (as they suppose) that their sins are forgiven, or that God loves them, and will save them; and it may be have a chain of scriptures coming one after another, to the same purpose; and they are convinced that it is truth; i. e. they are confident that it is certainly so, that their sins are forgiven, and God does love them, &c.—they say they know it is so; and when the words of Scripture are suggested to them, and as they suppose immediately spoken to them by God, in this meaning, they are ready to cry out, Truth, truth! it is certainly so! the word of God is true." And this they call "seeing the truth of the word of God." **Whereas the whole of their faith amounts to no more, than only a strong confidence of their own good estate**, and so a confidence that those words are true, which they suppose tell them they are in a good estate: when indeed (as was shown before) there is no scripture which declares that any person is in a good estate directly, or any other way than by consequence. **So that this, instead of being a real sight of the truth of the word of God, is a sight of nothing but a phantom, and is all over a delusion**. Truly to see the truth of the word of God, is to see the truth of the gospel; which is the glorious doctrine the word of God contains, concerning God, Jesus Christ, the way of salvation by him, and the world of glory that he is entered into, and purchased for all them who believe; and not a revelation that such and such particular persons are true Christians, and shall go to heaven. **Therefore those affections which arise from no other persuasion of the truth of the word of God than this, arise from delusion, and not true conviction; and consequently are themselves delusive and vain.**

But suppose the religious affections of persons indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the christian religion; their affections are not the better, unless it be a reasonable persuasion or conviction. By a reasonable conviction, I mean a conviction founded on real evidence, or upon that which is a good reason, or just ground of conviction. Men may have a strong persuasion that the christian religion is true, when their persuasion is not at all built on evidence, but altogether on education, and the opinion of others; as many Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion, because their fathers, and neighbours, and nation believe it. That belief of the truth of the christian religion, which is built on the very same grounds with that of Mahometans who believe in the Mahometan religion, is the same sort of belief. And though the thing believed happens to be better; yet that does not make the belief itself to be of a better sort, for though the thing believed happens to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to this truth, but to education. So that as the conviction is no better than the Mahometans' conviction; so the affections that flow from it, are no better, in themselves, than the religious affections of Mahometans.

But suppose the belief of christian doctrines be not merely from education, but indeed from reasons and arguments, it will not from thence necessarily follow, that their affections are truly gracious; for in order to that, it is requisite, not only that the belief which their affections arise from should be a reasonable, but also a spiritual belief, or conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural men yield a kind of assent of their judgments to the truth of the christian religion, from the rational proofs or arguments that are offered to evince it. **Judas, without doubt, thought Jesus to be the Messiah, from the things which he saw and heard; but yet all along was a devil.** So in [John ii. 23-25](#). we read of "many that believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles that he did;" whom yet Christ knew had not that within them, which was to be depended on. So Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done; but yet remained "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity,". [Acts viii. 13, 23](#). And if there is such a **belief or assent of the judgment in some natural men, none can doubt but that religious affections may arise from that assent or belief; as we read of some who believed for a while that were greatly affected, and anon with joy received the word.**

It is evident that there is a spiritual conviction of the truth, or a belief peculiar to those who are spiritual, who are regenerated, and who have the Spirit of God, in his holy communications, dwelling in them as a vital principle. So that their conviction does not only differ from that which natural men have, in that it is accompanied with good works; but the belief itself is diverse, the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a kind peculiar to those who are spiritual, and of which natural men are wholly destitute. This is evident by the Scripture, if any thing at all is so: [John xvii. 8](#). "They have believed that thou didst send me." [Tit. i. 1](#). "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." [John xvi. 27](#). "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." [1 John iv. 15](#). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." [Chap. v. 1](#). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. [Verse 10](#). He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself."

What a spiritual conviction of the judgment is, we are naturally led to determine from what has been said already, under the former head of a spiritual understanding. The conviction of the judgment arises from the illumination of the understanding; the passing of a right judgment on things, depends on a

right apprehension. And therefore it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel, is such a conviction as arises from having a spiritual apprehension of those things in the mind. And this is also evident from the Scripture, which often represents a saving belief of the reality and divinity of the things proposed and exhibited to us in the gospel, **as what proceeds from the Spirit of God enlightening the mind.** Hence right apprehensions of the nature of those things; the Spirit as it were unveiling, or revealing them, and enabling the mind to view them as they are. [Luke x. 21, 22.](#) “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” [John vi. 40.](#) “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.” Where it is plain, that **true faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.** And [John xvii. 6-8.](#) “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. [see Jn 6:34]— Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” Christ’s manifesting God’s name to the disciples, or giving them a true apprehension of divine things, was that whereby they knew that Christ’s doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was sent by him. [Matt. xvi. 16, 17.](#) “Simon Peter said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” [1 John v. 10.](#) “He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” [Gal. i. 14-16.](#) “Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

If that is a spiritual conviction of the divinity and reality of the things exhibited in the gospel, which arises from a **spiritual understanding** of those things; I have shown already what that is. In short, it consists in a **sense and taste of the divine, supreme, and holy excellency and beauty of those things.** So that then is the mind spiritually convinced of the divinity and truth of the great things of the gospel, when that conviction arises, either directly or remotely, from such a sense or view of their **divine excellency and glory** as is there exhibited. This clearly follows from what has been already said; and for this the Scripture is very plain and express: [2 Cor. iv. 3-6.](#) “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. **For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.**” Together with the last verse of the foregoing chapter, which introduces this, “But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Nothing can be more evident, than that a saving belief of the gospel is here spoken of by the apostle, as **arising from the mind being enlightened to behold the divine glory of the things it exhibits.** This view or sense of the divine glory, and unparalleled beauty of the things exhibited to us in the gospel, **has a tendency to convince the mind of their divinity** two ways; first, directly, and secondly, more indirectly and remotely.

I. A view of this divine glory directly convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as this glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, or when this supernatural sense is given in a good degree. He that has his judgment thus directly convinced and assured of the divinity of gospel truths by a clear view of their divine glory, has a reasonable conviction. His assurance is altogether agreeable to reason; because the divine glory and beauty of divine things is in itself a real evidence of their divinity, and the most direct and strong. He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does as it were know their divinity intuitively; he not only argues, but sees that they are divine. He sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from the glory of artificial things, and all other glory, mainly consists the true notion of divinity. God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty. They therefore that see the stamp of this glory in divine things, they see divinity in them, they see God in them, and see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity consists. Thus a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel; not that he judges the doctrines of the gospel to be from God, without any argument or deduction at all; but it is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct; the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step, and that is its divine glory.

It would be very strange, if any professing Christian should deny it to be possible, that there should be an excellency in divine things, which is so transcendent, and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that if it were seen, would evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt, but that things which are divine, that appertain to the supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human. There is God-like, high, and glorious excellency in them, so distinguishing them from the things which are of men, that the difference is ineffable; and therefore such as if seen, will have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, viz. divine. Doubtless there is that glory and excellency in the Divine Being, by which he is so infinitely distinguished from all other beings, that if it were seen, he might be known by it. It would therefore be very unreasonable to deny, that it is possible for God to give manifestations of this distinguishing excellency, in things by which he is pleased to make himself known; and that this distinguishing excellency may be clearly seen in them. There are natural excellencies that are very evidently distinguishing of the subjects or authors, to any one who behold them. How vastly is the speech of an intelligent man different from that of a little child! And how greatly distinguished is the speech of some men of great genius, as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, and others, from that of many other intelligent men! There are no limits to be set to the degrees of manifestation of mental excellency, that there may be in speech. But the appearances of the natural perfections of God, in the manifestations he makes of himself, may doubtless be unspeakably more evidently distinguishing, than the appearances of those excellencies of worms of the dust, in which they differ one from another. He that is well acquainted with mankind, and their works, by viewing the sun, may know it is no human work. And it is reasonable to suppose, that when Christ comes at the end of the world, in the glory of his Father, it will be with such ineffable appearances of divinity, as will leave no doubt to the inhabitants of the world, even the most obstinate infidels, that he who appears is a divine person. But above all, do the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the Divine Being (which is the proper beauty of the divinity) bring their

own evidence, and tend to assure the heart. Thus the disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, for “they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” [John i. 14](#). When Christ appeared in his transfiguration to his disciples, as an outward glory to their bodily eyes—which was a sweet and admirable symbol and semblance of his spiritual glory—together with his spiritual glory itself, manifested to their minds; the manifestation was such as did perfectly, and with good reason, assure them of his divinity; as appears by what one of them says concerning it, [2 Pet i. 16-18](#). “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty: for he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the **excellent glory**, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” The apostle calls that mount, the holy mount, because the **manifestations of Christ there made to their minds**, and with which they were **especially impressed and ravished**, was the **glory of his holiness**, or the **beauty of his moral excellency**: or, as another of these disciples, who saw it, expresses it, **“His glory, as full of grace and truth.”** [496](#)

Now this **distinguishing glory** of the Divine Being has its brightest manifestation in the things exhibited to us in the gospel; the doctrines there taught, the word there spoken, and the divine counsels, acts, and works there revealed. These things have the clearest, most admirable, and distinguishing representations and exhibitions of the **glory of God’s moral perfections**, that ever were made to the world. And if there be such a distinguishing, evidential manifestation of divine glory in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it: what should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument that it cannot be seen, because some do not see it; though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. If there be such ineffable, distinguishing, evidential excellencies in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose, that they are such as are not to be discerned, but by the special influence and enlightenings of the Spirit of God. There is need of uncommon force of mind to discern the distinguishing excellencies of the works of authors of great genius. Those things in Milton, which to mean judges appear tasteless and imperfections, are his inimitable excellencies in the eyes of those who are of greater discerning, and better taste. And if there be a book of which God is the author, it is most reasonable to suppose, that the distinguishing glories of his word are of such a kind, as that the **sin and corruption of men’s hearts—which above all things alienate them from the Deity, and make the heart dull and stupid to any sense or taste of those things wherein the moral glory of the divine perfections consists**—would blind them from discerning the beauties of such a book; and that therefore they will not see them, but as God is pleased to enlighten them, and restore a holy taste, to discern and relish divine beauties.

This **sense of the spiritual excellency and beauty of divine things**, also tends directly to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel. Very many of the most important things declared in the gospel are hid from the eyes of natural men, the truth of which in effect consists in this excellency, or so immediately depends upon it, and results from it, **that in this excellency being seen, the truth, of those things is seen**. **As soon as ever the eyes are opened to behold a holy beauty and amiableness in divine things, a multitude of most important doctrines of the gospel that depend upon it**, (which all appear strange and dark to natural men,) **are at once seen to be true**. As for instance, hereby appears the truth of what the word of God declares concerning the exceeding evil of sin; for the same eye that discerns the **transcendent beauty of holiness**, **necessarily therein sees the exceeding odiousness of sin**: **the same**

taste which relishes the sweetness of true moral good, tastes the bitterness of moral evil. **And by this means a man sees his own sinfulness and loathsomeness**; for he has now a sense to discern objects of this nature; and so sees the truth of what the word of God declares concerning the exceeding sinfulness of mankind, which before he did not see. He now sees the dreadful pollution of his heart, and the desperate depravity of his nature, in a new manner; for his soul has now a sense given it to feel the pain of such a disease. This shows him the truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the corruption of man's nature, his original sin, his ruinous condition, his need of a Saviour, and of the mighty power of God to renew his heart, and change his nature. **Men by seeing the true excellency of holiness, see the glory of all those things which both reason and Scripture show to be in the Divine Being**; for it has been shown, that the glory of them depends on this. And hereby they see the truth of all that the Scripture declares concerning **God's glorious excellency and majesty**, his being the fountain of all good, the only happiness of the creature, &c. This again shows the mind the truth of what the Scripture teaches concerning the evil of sin against so glorious a God; also the truth of what it teaches concerning sin's just desert of that dreadful punishment which it reveals; and concerning the impossibility of our offering any satisfaction, or sufficient atonement for that which is so infinitely evil and heinous. And this again shows the truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the necessity of a Saviour, to offer an atonement of infinite value for sin. This **sense of spiritual beauty enables the soul to see the glory of those things which the gospel reveals concerning the person of Christ**; and so enables to see the exceeding beauty and dignity of his person, appearing in what the gospel exhibits of his word, works, acts, and life; and this apprehension of the superlative dignity of his person, shows the truth of what the gospel declares concerning the **value of his blood and righteousness**; the **infinite excellency** of that offering he has made to God for us, its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and recommend us to God. And thus the **Spirit of God discovers the way of salvation by Christ**; the soul sees the fitness and suitableness of this way, the admirable wisdom of the contrivance, and the perfect answerableness to our necessities of the provision that the gospel exhibits. **A sense of true divine beauty being given**, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel-scheme. This also shows the soul the truth of what the word of God declares concerning man's chief happiness, as consisting **in holy exercises and enjoyments**, and the unspeakable glory of the heavenly state. [*hence, "O Death, where is your sting? Oh Hades, where is your victory?" 1Cor15:55*] What the prophecies of the Old Testament and the writings of the apostles declare concerning the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, is now all plain; and also what the Scripture teaches concerning the reasons and grounds of our duty. The truth of all these things revealed in the Scripture, and many more that might be mentioned, appear to the soul, only by that spiritual taste of divine beauty, which has been spoken of; they being hidden things before.

And besides all this, the truth of all those things which the Scripture says about **experimental religion**, is hereby known; for they are now experienced. **And this convinces the soul**, that one who knew the heart of man, better than we know our own hearts, and perfectly knew the **nature of virtue and holiness**, was the author of the Scriptures. And the opening to view, with such clearness, such a world of wonderful and glorious truth in the gospel, that before was unknown, being **quite above the view of a natural eye, but now appearing so clear and bright, has a powerful and invincible influence on the soul, to persuade it of the divinity of the gospel**. [thus assurance and peace, etc., comes by growing in the knowledge of this reality by a diligent study and continual spiritual contemplation of Christ, his works, his word... *as beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from glory to*

glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2Cor3:18. This duty of Christians is expounded in John Owens' book, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded.*]

Unless men may come to a reasonable solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel, by internal evidences in the way that has been spoken, viz. **by a sight of its glory; it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with history, should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all.** They may without this see a great deal of probability of it; it may be reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men and historians tell them; and they may tell them so much, that it may look very probable and rational to them, that the Christian religion is true; and so much that they would be very unreasonable not to entertain this opinion. But to have a conviction, so clear, and evident, and assuring, as to be sufficient to induce them, with boldness to sell all, confidently and fearlessly to run the venture of the loss of all things, and of enduring the most exquisite and long continued torments, and to trample the world under foot, and count all things but dung for Christ; the evidence they can have from history, cannot be sufficient. It is impossible that men, who have not something of a general view of the historical world, or the series of history from age to age, should come at the force of arguments for the truth of Christianity, drawn from history, to that degree, as effectually to induce them to venture their all upon it. After all that learned men have said to them, there will remain innumerable doubts on their minds; they will be ready, when pinched with some great trial of their faith, to say, "How do I know this, or that? How do I know when these histories were written? Learned men tell me these histories were so and so attested in their day; but how do I know that there were such attestations then? They tell me there is equal reason to believe these facts, as any whatsoever that are related at such a distance; but how do I know that other facts which are related of those ages, ever were?" Those who have not something of a general view of the series of historical events, and of the state of mankind from age to age, cannot see the clear evidence from history of the truth of facts in distant ages; but there will remain endless doubts and scruples.

Mortification of Sin

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A short excerpt from John Owen's [Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers](#). There are many references to important concepts such as God's communication of the image of his knowledge and holiness (his glory) which is spoken of by Edwards, a saving knowledge of Christ and the implantation of a new principle of life, *faith*, that enables us to see him and obey him and to get the victory over sin and our lusts, conforming us to his image. I underlined many of the key terms in red with some of my comments in [blue].

Chapter XII.

The eighth direction: Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God — Our unacquaintedness with him proposed and considered.

Eighthly, Use and exercise thyself to such meditations as may serve to **fill thee at all times with self-abasement and thoughts of thine own vileness**; as, —

1. Be much in thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him. Many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and the excellency of God, he is filled with self-abhorrence and is pressed to humiliation, [Job xlii. 5, 6](#). And in what state doth the prophet Habakkuk affirm himself to be cast, upon the apprehension of the majesty of God? [chap. iii. 16](#). “With God,” says Job, “is terrible majesty.” [Job 37:22] Hence were the thoughts of them of old, that when they had seen God they should die. The Scripture abounds in this self-abasing consideration, comparing the men of the earth to “**grasshoppers**,” to “**vanity**,” the “**dust of the balance**,” in respect of God. Be much in thoughts of this nature, to abase the pride of thy heart, and to keep thy soul **humble** within thee. **There is nothing will render thee a greater indisposition to be imposed on by the deceits of sin than such a frame of heart.** Think greatly of the greatness of God.
2. Think much of thine unacquaintedness with him. Though thou knowest enough to keep thee low and humble, yet how little a portion is it that thou knowest of him! The contemplation hereof cast that wise man into that apprehension of himself which he expresses, [Prov. xxx. 2–4](#), “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son’s name, if thou canst tell?” Labour with this also to take down the pride of thy heart. What dost thou know of God? How little a portion is it! How immense is he in his nature! Canst thou look without terror into the abyss of eternity? **Thou canst not bear the rays of his glorious being.**

Because I look on this consideration of great use in our walking with God, so far as it may have a consistency with that filial boldness which is given us in Jesus Christ to draw nigh to the throne of grace, I shall farther insist upon it, to give an abiding impression of it to the souls of them who desire to walk humbly with God.

Consider, then, I say, to keep thy heart in **continual awe of the majesty of God**, that persons of the most high and eminent attainment, of the nearest and most familiar communion with God, do yet in this life know but a very little of him and his glory. God reveals his name to Moses, — the most glorious attributes that he hath manifested in the covenant of grace, [Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6](#); yet all are but the “back parts” of God. All that he knows by it is but little, low, compared to the perfections of his glory. Hence it is with peculiar reference to Moses that it is said, “**No man hath seen God at any time**,” [John i. 18](#); of him in comparison with Christ doth he speak, verse 17; and of him it is here said, “No man,” no, not Moses, the most eminent among them, “hath seen God at any time.” We speak much of God, can talk of him, his ways, his works, his counsels, all the day long; the truth is, we know very little of him. Our thoughts, our meditations, our expressions of him are low, many of them unworthy of his glory, none of them reaching his perfections.

You will say that Moses was under the law when God wrapped up himself in darkness, and his mind in types and clouds and dark institutions; — under the glorious shining of the gospel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, God being revealed from his own bosom, we now know him much more clearly, and as he is; we see his face now, and not his back parts only, as Moses did.

Ans. 1. I acknowledge a vast and almost inconceivable difference between the acquaintance we now have with God, after his speaking to us by his own Son, [Heb1:2] and that which the generality of the saints had under the law; for although their eyes were as good, sharp, and clear as ours, their faith and spiritual understanding not behind ours, the object as glorious unto them as unto us, yet our day is more clear than theirs was, the clouds are blown away and scattered, [Song of S 4:6] [19](#) the shadows of the night are gone and fled away, the sun is risen, and the means of sight is made more eminent and clear than formerly. Yet, —

2. That peculiar sight which Moses had of God, [Exod. xxxiv.](#), was a gospel-sight, a sight of God as “[gracious](#),” etc., and yet it is called but his “[back parts](#),” that is, but low and mean, in comparison of his excellencies and perfections.

3. The apostle, exalting to the utmost this glory of light above that of the law, manifesting that now the “vail” causing darkness is taken away, so that with “open” or uncovered “face (νακεκαλυμμένω προσώπω) we behold the glory of the Lord,” tells us how: “As in a glass,” [2 Cor. iii. 18](#). “In a glass,” how is that? Clearly, perfectly? Alas, no! He tells you how that is, [1 Cor. xiii. 12](#), “[We see through a glass, darkly](#),” saith he. It is not a telescope that helps us to see things afar off, concerning which the apostle speaks; and yet what poor helps are they! how short do we come of the truth of things notwithstanding their assistance! It is a looking-glass whereunto he alludes (where are only obscure species and images of things, [and not the things themselves](#)), and a sight therein that he compares our knowledge to [that is the bible speaks in analogies; what God is like, not as he actually is]. He tells you also that all that we do see, δι’ ἐσώπτρου, “by” or “through this glass,” is in αἰνίγματι — in “[a riddle](#),” in darkness and obscurity. And speaking of himself, who surely was much more clear-sighted than any now living, he tells us that he saw but ἐκ μέρους, — “in part.” He saw but the [back parts](#) of heavenly things, verse 12, and compares all the knowledge he had attained of God to that he had of things when he was a child, verse 11. It is a μέρος, short of the τὸ τέλειον· yea, such as καταργηθήσεται, — “it shall be destroyed,” or done away. We know what weak, feeble, uncertain notions and apprehensions children have of things of any abstruse consideration; how when they grow up with any improvements of parts and abilities, those conceptions vanish, and they are ashamed of them. It is the commendation of a child to love, honour, believe, and obey his father; but for his science and notions, his father knows his childishness and folly. Notwithstanding all our confidence of high attainments, all our notions of God are but childish in respect of his [infinite perfections](#). We lisp and babble, and say we know not what, for the most part, in our most accurate, as we think, conceptions and notions of God. We may love, honour, believe, and obey our Father; and therewith he accepts our childish thoughts, for they are but childish. [We see but his back parts; we know but little of him](#). Hence is that promise wherewith we are so often supported and comforted in our distress, “We shall see him as he is;” we shall see him “face to face;” “know as we are known; comprehend that for which we are comprehended,” [1 Cor. xiii. 12](#), [1 John iii. 2](#); and positively, “Now we see him not;” — all concluding that here we see but his back parts; not as he is, but in a dark, obscure representation; not in the perfection of his glory.

The queen of Sheba had heard much of Solomon, and framed many great thoughts of his magnificence in her mind thereupon; but when she came and saw his glory, she was forced to confess that the one half of the truth had not been told her. We may suppose that we have here attained great knowledge, clear and high thoughts of God; but, alas! when he shall bring us into his presence we shall cry out, "We never knew him as he is; the thousandth part of his glory, and perfection, and blessedness, never entered into our hearts."

The apostle tells us, [1 John iii. 2](#), that we know not what we ourselves shall be, — what we shall find ourselves in the issue; much less will it enter into our hearts to conceive what God is, and what we shall find him to be. Consider either him who is to be known, or the way whereby we know him, and this will farther appear:—

(1.) We know so little of God, because it is God who is thus to be known, — that is, he who hath described himself to us very much by this, that we cannot know him. What else doth he intend where he calls himself invisible, incomprehensible, and the like? — that is, he whom we do not, cannot, know as he is. And our farther progress consists more in knowing what he is not, than what he is. Thus is he described to be immortal, infinite, — that is, he is not, as we are, mortal, finite, and limited. Hence is that glorious description of him, [1 Tim. vi. 16](#), "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." His light is such as no creature can approach unto. He is not seen, not because he cannot be seen, but because **we cannot bear the sight of him**. The light of God, in whom is no darkness, forbids all access to him by any creature whatever. We who cannot behold the sun in its glory are too weak to bear the beams of infinite brightness. On this consideration, as was said, the wise man professeth himself "a very beast, and not to have the understanding of a man," [Prov. xxx. 2](#); — that is, he knew nothing in comparison of God; so that he seemed to have lost all his understanding when once he came to the consideration of him, his work, and his ways.

In this consideration let our souls descend to some particulars:—

[1.] For the being of God; we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, as that to frame any conceptions in our mind, with such species and impressions of things as we receive the knowledge of all other things by, **is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a god of our own making, and not the God that made us.** We may as well and as lawfully hew him out of wood or stone as form him a being in our minds, **suited to our apprehensions**. The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God is, that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low when it mounts no higher but only to know that we know it not.

[2.] There be some things of God which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them; but when we have so done, we see not the things themselves; we know them not. To believe and admire is all that we attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal; and we know what disputes and notions there are about omnipresence, immensity, infiniteness, and eternity. **We have, I say, words and notions about these things; but as to the things themselves what do we know? what do we comprehend of them? Can the mind of man do any more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss, which is as nothing; give itself up to what it cannot**

conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding "brutish" in the contemplation of such things, and is as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there. They are but the back parts of eternity and infiniteness that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the Trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence, — a mystery by many denied, because by none understood, — a mystery, whose every letter is mysterious? Who can declare the generation of the Son [his eternal generation, i.e., begotten of the Father vs. our natural generation, naturally born from our parents], the procession of the Spirit, or the difference of the one from the other? But I shall not farther instance in particulars. That infinite and inconceivable distance that is between him and us keeps us in the dark as to any sight of his face or clear apprehension of his perfections.

We know him rather by what he does than by what he is, — by his doing us good than by his essential goodness; and how little a portion of him, as Job speaks, is hereby discovered!

(2.) We know little of God, because it is faith alone whereby here we know him. I shall not now discourse about the remaining impressions on the hearts of all men by nature that there is a God [this is in distinction from the impression of God's glory of his knowledge, holiness, etc. that God communicates to his elect that actually saves, hence a saving knowledge of Christ...], nor what they may rationally be taught concerning that God from the works of his creation and providence, which they see and behold. It is confessedly, and that upon the woeful experience of all ages, so weak, low, dark, confused, that none ever on that account glorified God as they ought, but, notwithstanding all their knowledge of God, were indeed "without God in the world."

The chief, and, upon the matter, almost only acquaintance we have with God, and his dispensations of himself, is by faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," [Heb. xi. 6](#). Our knowledge of him and his rewarding (the bottom of our obedience or coming to him), is believing. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," [2 Cor. v. 7](#); — $\Delta\iota\ \pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\ \delta\iota\grave{\alpha}\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ by faith, and so by faith as not to have any express idea, image, or species of that which we believe. Faith is all the argument we have of "things not seen," [Heb. xi. 1](#). I might here insist upon the nature of it; and from all its concomitants and concernments manifest that we know but the back parts of what we know by faith only. As to its rise, it is built purely upon the testimony of Him whom we have not seen: as the apostle speaks, "How can ye love him whom ye have not seen?" — that is, whom you know not but by faith that he is. Faith receives all upon his testimony, whom it receives to be only on his own testimony. As to its nature, it is an assent upon testimony, not an evidence upon demonstration; and the object of it is, as was said before, above us. Hence our faith, as was formerly observed, is called a "seeing darkly, as in a glass." All that we know this way (and all that we know of God we know this way) is but low, and dark, and obscure. [In other words, faith is not perfect; in heaven faith is perfected in that we shall see him as he is...by sight! But on this earth we live by faith "seeing darkly, as in a glass."]

But you will say, "All this is true, but yet it is only so to them that know not God, perhaps, as he is revealed in Jesus Christ; with them who do so it is otherwise. It is true, 'No man hath seen God at any time,' but 'the only-begotten Son, he hath revealed him,' [John i. 18](#); and 'the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding [there's the communication of God's understanding of himself to us,

the saving knowledge of who Christ is as Peter confessed, You are the Christ...also, 1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"], that we may know him that is true,' [1 John v. 20](#). The illumination of 'the glorious gospel of Christ, who is **the image of God**,' shineth upon believers, [2 Cor. iv. 4](#); yea, and 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts, **to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son**,' verse 6. So that 'though we were darkness,' yet we are now 'light in the Lord,' [Eph. v. 8](#). And the apostle says, 'We all with open face behold the glory of the Lord,' [2 Cor. iii. 18](#); and we are now so far from being in such darkness, or at such a distance from God, that 'our communion and fellowship is with the Father and with his Son,' [1 John i. 3](#). The light of the gospel whereby now God is revealed is glorious; not a star, but the sun in his beauty is risen upon us, and the veil is taken from our faces. So that though unbelievers, yea, and perhaps some weak believers, may be in some darkness, yet those of any growth or considerable attainments have a clear sight and view of the face of God in Jesus Christ."

To which I answer, —

[1.] The truth is, we all of us **know enough of him** to love him more than we do, to delight in him and serve him, believe him, obey him, put our trust in him, above all that we have hitherto attained. Our darkness and weakness is no plea for our negligence and disobedience. Who is it that hath walked up to the knowledge that he hath had of the perfections, excellencies, and will of God? **God's end in giving us any knowledge of himself here is that we may "glorify him as God;"** that is, **love him, serve him, believe and obey him**, — **give him all the honour and glory that is due from poor sinful creatures to a sin-pardoning God and Creator**. We must all acknowledge that we were never thoroughly transformed into the **image of that knowledge** [that which was communicated to us impressed upon our souls, our heart and mind... see 1John 5:20, "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;"] which we have had. And had we used our talents well, we might have been trusted with more. [to him who has more will be given, etc., Matt. 13:12]

[2.] Comparatively, that **knowledge** which we have of God by the **revelation of Jesus Christ** in the gospel is exceeding eminent and glorious. It is so in comparison of any knowledge of God that might otherwise be attained, or was delivered in the law under the Old Testament, which had but the **shadow of good things**, **not the express image of them**; this the apostle pursues at large, [2 Cor. iii](#). Christ hath now in these last days revealed the Father from his own bosom, **declared his name, made known his mind, will, and counsel in a far more clear, eminent, distinct manner** than he did formerly, whilst he kept his people **under the pedagogy of the law**; and this is that which, for the most part, is intended in the places before mentioned. The clear, perspicuous delivery and declaration of God and his will in the gospel is expressly exalted in comparison of any other way of revelation of himself.

[3.] The difference between believers and unbelievers as to knowledge is not so much in the matter of their knowledge **as in the manner of knowing**. Unbelievers, some of them, may know more and be able to say more of God, his perfections, and his will, than many believers; **but they know nothing as they ought, nothing in a right manner, nothing spiritually and savingly, nothing with a holy, heavenly light**. The excellency of a believer is, not that he hath a large apprehension of things, but that what he doth apprehend, which perhaps may be very little, **he sees it in the light of the Spirit of God**, in a saving, **soul-transforming light**; and this is that which gives us communion with God, and not prying thoughts or curious-raised notions.

[4.] Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit reveals to the hearts of all his [his sheep, the elect, his church], God as a Father, as a God in covenant, as a rewarder, every way sufficiently to teach us to obey him here, and to lead us to his bosom, to lie down there in the fruition of him to eternity. But yet now,
 [5.] Notwithstanding all this, it is but a little portion we know of him; we see but his **back parts**. For,

1st. The intendment of all gospel revelation is, not to unvail God's essential glory, that we should see him as he is, **but merely to declare so much of him as he knows sufficient to be a bottom of our faith, love, obedience, and coming to him**, — that is, of the faith which here he expects from us; such services as besem poor creatures in the midst of temptations. But when he calls us to eternal admiration and contemplation, without interruption, he will make a new manner of discovery of himself, and the whole shape of things, as it now lies before us, will depart as a shadow.

2dly. We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things that are in the word revealed; God, by our infirmity and weakness, keeping us in continual dependence on him for teachings and revelations of himself out of his word, never in this world bringing any soul to the utmost of what is from the word to be made out and discovered: so that although the way of revelation in the gospel be clear and evident, yet we know little of the things themselves that are revealed.

Let us, then, revive the use and intendment of this consideration: Will not a due apprehension of this inconceivable greatness of God, and that infinite distance wherein we stand from him, fill the soul with a holy and awful fear of him, so as to keep it in a frame unsuited to the thriving or flourishing of any lust whatever? Let the soul be continually wonted to reverential thoughts of God's greatness and omnipresence, and it will be much upon its watch as to any undue deportments. Consider him with whom you have to do, — even "our God is a consuming fire;" and in your greatest abashments at his presence and eye, know that your very nature is too narrow to bear apprehensions suitable to his essential glory.

Brainerd's Life and Diary A.D. 1742 July

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(Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2 p 323)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.ix.i.ii.html>

All our trials and tribulations and testings of our faith by God are to this purpose seen in David Brainerd's life. This is fantastic! Related Scriptures, Heb. 12:6, James 1:2-4, Col. 3:1, Rom 12:1, 2Cor. 4:16

The frame of mind, and exercises of soul, that he expresses the three days next following, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, are much of the same kind with those expressed the two days past.

"Lord's day, April 25. This morning I spent about two hours in secret duties, and was enabled more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls; though it was early in the morning, and the sun scarcely

shined at all, yet my body was quite wet with sweat. I felt much pressed now, as frequently of late, to plead for the meekness and calmness of the Lamb of God in my soul; and through divine goodness felt much of it this morning. O it is a sweet disposition, heartily to forgive all injuries done us; to wish our greatest enemies as well as we do our own souls! Blessed Jesus, may I daily be more and more conformed to thee. At night I was exceedingly melted with divine love, and had some feeling sense of the blessedness of the upper world. Those words hung upon me, with much divine sweetness, [Psal lxxxiv. 7.](#) 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.' O the near access that God sometimes gives us in our addresses to him! This may well be termed appearing before God: it is so indeed, in the true spiritual sense, and in the sweetest sense. I think I have not had such **power of intercession** these many months, both for God's children, and for dead sinners, as have had this evening. I wished and longed for the coming of my dear Lord: I longed to join the angelic hosts in praises, wholly free from imperfection. O the blessed moment hastens! **All I want is to be more holy**, more like my dear Lord. O for sanctification! My very soul pants for the complete restoration of the blessed image of my Saviour; that I may be fit for the blessed enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world.

'Farewell, vain world; my soul can bid adieu; My Saviour's taught me to abandon you. Your charms may gratify a sensual mind; Not please a soul wholly for God design'd. Forbear to entice, cease then my soul to call; 'Tis fix'd through grace; my God shall be my all. While he thus lets me heavenly glories view, Your beauties fade, my heart's no room for you.'

"The Lord refreshed my soul with many sweet passages of his word. O the new Jerusalem! **my soul longed for it**. O the song of Moses and the Lamb! And that blessed song, that no man can learn, but they who are redeemed from the earth! and the glorious white robes, that were given to the souls under the altar!

'Lord, I'm a stranger here alone; Earth no true comforts can afford; Yet, absent from my dearest one, My soul delights to cry, My Lord. Jesus, my Lord, my only love, Possess my soul, nor thence depart; Grant me kind visits, heavenly Dove; My God shall then have all my heart.'

"Monday, April 26. Continued in a sweet frame of mind; but in the afternoon felt something of spiritual pride stirring. God was pleased to make it an humbling season at first; though afterwards he gave me sweetness. O my soul exceedingly longs for that blessed state of perfect deliverance from all sin! At night, God enabled me to give my soul up to him, to cast myself upon him, to be ordered and disposed of according to his sovereign pleasure; and I enjoyed great peace and consolation in so doing. My soul took sweet delight in God; my thoughts freely and sweetly centered in him. O that I could spend every moment of my life to his glory!

"Tuesday, April 27. I retired pretty early for **secret devotions**; and in prayer God was pleased to pour such ineffable comforts into my soul, that I could do nothing for some time but say over and over, 'O my sweet Saviour! 'O my sweet Saviour! whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' If I had had a thousand lives, my soul would gladly have laid them all

down at once to have been with Christ. My soul never enjoyed so much of heaven before; it was the most refined and the most spiritual season of communion with God I ever yet felt. I never felt so great a degree of resignation in my life. In the afternoon I withdrew to meet with my God, but found myself much declined, and God made it an humbling season to my soul. I mourned over the body of death that is in me. It grieved me exceedingly, that I could not pray to and praise God with my heart full of divine heavenly love. O that my soul might never offer any dead, cold services to my God! In the evening had not so much divine love, as in the morning; but had a sweet season of fervent intercession.

“Wednesday, April 28. I withdrew to my usual place of retirement in great peace and tranquility, spent about two hours in secret duties, and felt much as I did yesterday morning, only weaker and more overcome. I seemed to depend wholly on my dear Lord; wholly weaned from all other dependences. I knew not what to say to my God, but only lean on his bosom, as it were, and breathe out my desires after a perfect conformity to him in all things. Thirsting desires, and insatiable longings, possessed my soul after perfect holiness. God was so precious to my soul, that the world with all its enjoyments was infinitely vile. I had no more value for the favour of men, than for pebbles. The Lord was my All; and that he overruled all, greatly delighted me. I think, my faith and dependence on God scarce ever rose so high. I saw him such a fountain of goodness, that it seemed impossible I should distrust him again, or be any way anxious about anything that should happen to me. I now enjoyed great sweetness in praying for absent friends, and for the enlargement of Christ’s kingdom in the world. Much of the power of these divine enjoyments remained with me through the day. In the evening my heart seemed to melt, and, I trust, was really humbled for indwelling corruption, and I mourned like a dove. I felt, that all my unhappiness arose from my being a sinner. With resignation I could bid welcome to all other trials; but sin hung heavy upon me; for God discovered to me the corruption of my heart. I went to bed with a heavy heart, because I was a sinner; though I did not in the least doubt of God’s love. O that God would purge away my dross, and take away my tin, and make me seven times refined!

Miscellaneous Observations

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God's Glory, Christology Two Natures of Christ

by Jonathan Edwards

Heaven

More references to God's glory and our participation in it.

Also, the purpose of the two natures
of Christ described along with the Trinity.

[565] *Heaven Separate spirits.* The happiness which the departed souls of the saints being with Christ have before the resurrection, is proleptical, or by way of anticipation. This is not the proper time of their reward: the proper time of the reward and glory of saints is after the end of the world, when an end shall be put to the world's state of probation; then succeeds the state of retribution. When all the present dispensations of the covenant of grace shall be ended, and Christ shall have brought all enemies under his feet, and shall have fully accomplished the ends and designs of his mediatorial kingdom, and his own glory shall be fully obtained, and he shall have fully finished God's scheme in the series of revolutions in divine providence; then will be the time of Christ's joy and triumph, and then will be the proper time of judgment and retribution, and then will be the proper time of the reward and glory of Christ's followers. The state that spirits of just men are in now is not the proper state of their reward; it is only a state wherein they are reserved against the time of their reward; it is the time wherein the pure chosen espoused virgin is reserved in the King's house against the day of marriage, and the joy and blessedness that they now enjoy with Christ in their conversation with him, though it appear to us unspeakably great, is only by way of prelibation of what is future, and therefore vastly short of it. Such is God's overflowing love to them, that, while they are only reserved for their designed glory, they shall be reserved in blessed abodes, as a king would entertain her whom he reserves for marriage, and whom he loves with a strong and ardent love, in no mean manner, but in a way suitable to his love to her and his design concerning her. The state of the blessed souls in heaven is not merely a state of repose, but of a glorious degree of anticipation of their reward; as is evident by [Heb. vi. 12.](#) See my Notes on it. Thus it is God's way, from his overflowing goodness to his people, **to grant a prelibation of blessings before the proper season.** So the church of the Old Testament had an anticipation of gospel benefits before Christ came, and the gospel days commenced. **So the saints now, are allowed in a measure to anticipate the blessedness that is to succeed the fall of antichrist.** [Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11.](#) "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying. How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren also, which should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Those white robes were the glory and reward which God gave them beforehand, the earnest

of what was to be after antichrist's fall. So the saints here in this world have that light, holiness, and joy, that is an anticipation and earnest of what they are to have in heaven; and what they have now in heaven is but an earnest of what they are to have afterwards at the consummation of all things, and when all things come to be settled in their fixed and eternal state. Therefore the apostle so often speaks of the reward and glory of the saints at Christ's second coming, and encourages Christians with that, without any mention of the glory which they shall receive before.

[571] *Heaven Wisdom and the gloriousness of the work of redemption.* When the saints get to heaven, they shall not merely see Christ and have to do with him, as subjects and servants with a glorious and gracious Lord and Sovereign, but Christ will most freely and intimately converse with them as friends and brethren. This we may learn from the manner of Christ's conversing with his disciples here on earth; though he was the supreme Lord of the disciples, and did not refuse, yea, required, their supreme respect and adoration; yet he did not treat them as earthly sovereigns are wont to do their subjects; he did not keep them at an awful distance, but all along conversed with them with the most friendly familiarity as with brethren, as a father amongst a company of children. So he did with the twelve, and so he did with Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus; he told his disciples that he did not call them servants, but he called them friends. So neither will he call his disciples servants, but friends, in heaven. Though Christ be in a state of exaltation at the right hand of God, and appears in an immense height of glory, yet this will not hinder his conversing with his saints in a most familiar and intimate manner; he will not treat his disciples with greater distance for his being in a state of exaltation, but he will rather take them into a state of exaltation with him. This will be the improvement Christ will make of his own glory, **to make his beloved friends partakers with him, to glorify them in his glory**, as Christ says to his Father, [John xvii. 22, 23](#). "And the glory which thou hast given me, have I given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them," &c. For we are to consider, that though Christ be greatly exalted, yet he is exalted not as a private person for himself only, but he is exalted as his people's head, and he is exalted in their name, and upon their account, and as one of them, as their representative, as the first-fruits: he is not exalted that he may be more above them, and be at a greater distance from them, but that they may be exalted with him. The exaltation and honour of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members, but the members and head have the same relation and union as they had before, and are honoured with the head.

When believers get to heaven, **Christ will conform them to himself, he will give them his glory**; they shall in their measure be made like to him; their bodies after the resurrection shall be conformed to his glorious body.

Christ, when he was going to heaven, comforted his disciples with that, that after a while he would come and take them to himself, that they might be with him again. And we are not to suppose, when the disciples got to heaven, though they found their Lord in a state of infinite exaltation, yet that they found him any more retiring or keeping at a greater distance from them than he used to do. No, he embraced them as friends, he welcomed them home to their common Father's house, he welcomed them to their common glory, who had been his friends here in this world, that had been together here, had lived here together, partook of sorrows and troubles, **now welcomed them to their rest to partake of glory with him**, he took them and led them into his chambers, and showed them all his glory; as Christ prayed, [John xvii. 24](#). "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I

am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." And there ensued without doubt a most pleasant and free conversation between Christ and his disciples when they met together in their common rest and glory.

Christ did not behave with greater distance towards his disciples, after they had seen his transfiguration, than before; no, nor after his resurrection; nor will he in his highest exaltation in heaven.

Christ took on him man's nature for this end, that he might be under advantage for a more familiar conversation than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow of; and such a communion and familiar conversation is suitable to the relation that Christ stands in to believers, as their representative, their brother, and the husband of the church. The church being so often called the spouse of Christ, intimates the greatest nearness, intimacy, and communion with God. Christ will conform his people to himself; he will give them his glory, the glory of his person; their souls shall be made like his soul, their bodies like to his glorious body; they shall partake with him in his riches, as co-heirs in his pleasures; he will bring them into his banqueting house, and they shall drink new wine with him; they shall partake with him in his dominion; they shall sit with him in his throne, and shall rule over the nations; they shall partake with him in the honour of judging the world at the last day. When Christ shall descend from heaven in the glory of his Father, in such awful and dreadful majesty, with all his holy angels, and all nations shall be gathered before the saints, at the same time shall they be as familiar with Christ as his disciples were when he was upon earth: they shall sit with him to judge with him. As Christ died as the head of believers, and in their name, and was exalted in their name, so shall he judge the world as their head and representative. It was God's design in this way to confound and triumph over Satan, viz. by making man, whom he so despised, and envied, and thought to have had as a slave to lord it over, and thought to have glutted his own pride, and malice, and envy with his blood, and in his everlasting misery; 1 say, by making man his judge. It was God's design that the elect of mankind should be Satan's judge, and therefore the head of them, the elder brother of them, is appointed to this work in the room of the rest, and the rest are to be with him in it. God gave Christ "authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man," [John v. 27.](#) partly upon this account we have mentioned.

The conversation of Christ's disciples in heaven shall in many respects be vastly more intimate than it was when Christ was upon earth; vide Notes on [John xx. 17.](#) for in heaven the union shall be perfected. The union is but begun in this world, and there is a great deal remains in this world to separate and disunite them; but then all those obstacles of a close union and most intimate communion shall be removed. When the church is received to her consummate glory, that is her marriage with Christ, and therefore doubtless the conversation and enjoyment will be more intimate. This is not a time for that full acquaintance, and those manifestations of love, which Christ designs towards his people.

When saints shall see Christ's divine glory and exaltation in heaven, this will indeed possess their hearts with the greater admiration and adoring respect; yet this will not keep them at a distance, but will only serve the more to heighten their surprise and pleasure, when they find Christ condescending to treat them in such a familiar manner.

The saints, being united to Christ, shall have a more glorious union with, and enjoyment of, the Father, than otherwise could be; for hereby their relation becomes much nearer, they are the children of God in a higher manner than otherwise they could be; for, being members of God's own Son, they are partakers of his relation to the Father, or of his Sonship; **being members of the Son, they are partakers of the Father's love to the Son and his complacency in him.** [John xvii. 23.](#) "I in them, and thou in me: thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me;" and [John xvii. 26.](#) "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them;" and [John xvi. 27.](#) "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." So they are, in this measure, partakers of the Son's enjoyment of his Father; they have this joy fulfilled in themselves, and by this means they come to a more familiar and intimate conversing with God the Father than otherwise ever would have been; for there is, doubtless, an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son, and the saints being in him shall partake with him in it, and of the blessedness of it.

Such is the contrivance of our redemption; thereby we are brought to an immensely more glorious and exalted kind of union with God and enjoyment of him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been. **For, Christ being united to the human nature, we have advantage for a far more intimate union and conversation with him than we could possibly have had if he had remained only in the divine nature. So, we being united to a divine person, can in him have more intimate union and conversation with God the Father, who is only in the divine nature, than otherwise possibly could be. Christ, who is a divine person, by taking on him our nature, descended from the infinite distance between God and us, and is brought nigh to us, to give us advantage to converse with him.** So, on the other hand, we, **by being in Christ, a divine person, ascend nearer to God the Father, and have advantage to converse with him. This was the design of Christ, to bring it to pass that he, and his Father, and his people, might be brought to a most intimate union and communion,** [John xvii. 21, 22, 23.](#) "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me; and the glory which thou hast given me have I given them, that they may be made perfect in one." Christ has brought it to pass, that those that the Father has given him should be brought into the household of God, that he, and his Father, and they should be as it were one society, **one family, that his people should be in a sense admitted into the society of the Three Persons in the Godhead. In that family or household, God is the Father; Jesus Christ is his only-begotten and eternal Son; the saints, they also are children in the family, they have all communion in the same Spirit, the Holy Ghost.**

Corol. I. Seeing that God hath designed men for such exceeding exaltation, it was but agreeable to his wisdom to bestow in such a way as should abase man and exalt his own free grace, and wherein man's entire, and absolute, and universal dependence on God **should be most evident and conspicuous.**

Corol. II. It is easy to observe the wisdom of God, that seeing he designed man for such a height of glory, that it should be so ordered that he should be brought to it from the lowest depths of wretchedness and misery.

Corol. III. Hence we may learn something how vastly greater glory and happiness the elect are brought to by Christ than that which was lost by the fall, or even than that which man would have attained to if he had not fallen; **for then man would never have had such an advantage for an intimate union and converse with the Father or Son, Christ remaining at an infinite distance from man in the**

divine nature, and man remaining at an infinite distance from the Father, without being brought nigh by an union to a divine person.

Corol. IV. Hence we may see how God hath confounded Satan in actually fulfilling that which was a lie in him, wherewith he deluded poor man and procured his fall, viz. that they should be as gods. When Satan said so, he did not think that this would really be the fruit of it, he aimed at that which was infinitely contrary, his lowest depression, debasement, and ruin. But God has greatly frustrated him in fulfilling of it, in making the issue of eating that fruit to be the advancement of the elect to such an union with the persons of the Trinity and communion with them in divine honour and blessedness, and particularly he united one of them, the head and representative of the rest, in a perfect union with the Godhead, and so to the honour, dominion, and work of God in ruling the world, and judging it, and particularly in judging the devils, in which all the rest of the elect, according to their measure, partake with him.

This is more on the [glory of God](#), the church's participation in it, in Christ, etc. The [communication of God's glory](#) examined in many of its operations. Also, more on God's image in the creature, the elect, all resolved in God's love for himself. My comments in [blue].

Other References to God's Glory code49

Excerpts from Heaven

by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xii.v.html>

pg 626

[678] Beatifical vision. Whether there be any visible appearance or glory, that is the symbol of the divine presence, in which God manifests himself in heaven, beside the glorified body of Christ: see of the Beatifical Vision, in my sermon from these words, [Rom. ii. 10](#). "But glory, honour, and peace, to every one that worketh good."

[679] Goodness of God Love of God Happiness of heaven. **God stands in no need of creatures, and is not profited by them; neither can his happiness be said to be added to by the creature. But yet God has a real and proper delight in the excellency and happiness of his creatures:** he hath a real delight in the excellency and loveliness of the creature, in [his own image in the creature, as that is a manifestation, or expression, or shining forth of his own loveliness](#) [This is not the case in reprobates since they are unconverted and are still in the image of man, the *natural* man or Adam or the image of the devil, for Christ would never cast his own image into hell and destroy it. In other words, God would not cast a person into hell who truly loves Him and desires to be with him, the fruits or effects of His image! Unconverted man or natural man has the natural image of God in that he has a faculty of

understanding and reason and has dominion over the creatures of the earth, but lost the chief part of God's image, his moral image, upon the fall of Adam. So, Christ has not communicated His glory to them (2Cor4:6) to effect their conversion... as Thomas Shepard says, God never spoke to them!] God has a real delight in his own loveliness, and he also has a real delight in the shining forth, or glorifying of it. As it is a fit and condecant thing that God's glory should shine forth, so God delights in its shining forth. So that God has a real delight in the spiritual loveliness of the saints; **which delight is not a delight distinct from what he has in himself, but is to be resolved into the delight he has in himself; for he delights in his image in the creature, as he delights in his own being glorified; or as he delights in it, that his own glory shines forth, and so he hath real proper delight in the happiness of his creatures, which also is not distinct from the delight that he has in himself, for it is to be resolved into the delight that he has in his own goodness;** for as he delights in his own goodness, so he delights in the exercise of his goodness, and therefore he delights to make the creature happy, and delights to see him made happy, as he delights in exercising goodness, or communicating happiness. This is no proper addition to the happiness of God, because it is that which he eternally and unalterably had. God hath no new delight when he beholds his own glory shining forth in his image in the creature, and when he beholds the creature made happy from the exercises of his goodness; because those and all things are from eternity equally present with God. **This delight in God cannot properly be said to be received from the creature, because it consists only in a delight in giving to the creature; neither will it hence follow that God is dependent on the creature for any of his joy, because it is his own act only that this delight is dependent on, and the creature is absolutely dependent on God for that excellency and happiness that God delights in.** God cannot be said to be the more happy for the creature, because he is infinitely happy in himself, and he is not dependent on the creature for anything, nor does he receive any addition from the creature. But yet in one sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight for the loveliness and happiness of the creature, viz. as God would be less happy if he were less good, or if it were possible for him to be hindered in exercising his own goodness, or to be hindered from glorifying himself. God has no addition to his happiness, when he exercises any act of holiness towards his creatures; and yet God has a real delight in the exercises of his own holiness, and would be less happy if he were less holy, or were capable of being hindered from any act of holiness.

Corol. I. Hence when the saints get to heaven they will have this to rejoice them, and add to their blessedness, that God hath a real delight and joy in them, in their holiness and happiness.

Corol. II. Hence God's love to the saints is real and proper love; so that those have been to blame, who have represented, much to the prejudice of religion, the love of God to creatures **as if it were merely a purpose in God of acting as the creature does that has love.** [see Ps 50:16- "You thought I was altogether like you..."]

Corol. III. **Hence we learn how all God's love may be resolved into his love to himself, and delight in himself. His love to the creature is only his inclination to glorify himself, and communicate himself; and his delight in himself glorified, and in himself communicated.** There is his delight in the act, and in the fruit: the act is the exercise of his own perfection; and the fruit is himself expressed and communicated.

[701] Happiness of heaven increasing. It is certain that the inhabitants of heaven do increase in their knowledge, "the angels know more than they did before Christ's incarnation, for they are said to

know by the church, i. e. by the dealings of God with the church, the manifold wisdom of God: and to desire to look into the account the gospel gives of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Ridgley's Body of Divinity, p. 61/62. vol. 1.

[710.] Heaven Separate state Resurrection Dispensations. How the happiness of the resurrection state will exceed the present happiness in heaven. It looks to me probable, that the glory of the state of the church after the resurrection will as much exceed the present glory of the spirits of just men made perfect, **as the glory of the gospel dispensation exceeds the Mosaic dispensation**; or as much as the glory of the state of the church in its first or purest state of it, or rather in its state in the Millennium, (wherein alone the glory of the gospel dispensation will be fully manifested,) exceeds the state of the church under the law, and as much as the state, the company, of glorified souls exceed this. **Of old, under the Mosaic dispensation, the church saw things very darkly; they saw as it were by a reflex light, as we see the light of the sun by that of the moon;** they saw gospel things in **dark types and shadows**, and in **dark sayings**, that **were, as it were, riddles, or enigmas**. The glory of that dispensation was no glory in comparison of the glory of the evangelical dispensation it so much excels, but under the gospel dispensation those dark shadows are ceased, and instead of enigmas or dark sayings, the apostle uses great plainness of speech. [2 Cor. iii. 12](#). The night, in which we saw by a reflex light only, is ceased, and Christ is actually come, we enjoy day-light. John the Baptist was the day-star to usher in the day; and when he was born, the day-spring from on high visited us, as Zachariah his father sang. [Luke i. 78, 79](#). And when Christ himself came, the sun rose; especially when he rose from the dead, and shed forth his light and heat on the day of Pentecost; and now we see the sun by his own direct light, we see him immediately, **the veil is taken away**, and we all see with open face. [2 Cor. iii. 18](#). **But still, even under the gospel dispensation, we see by a reflex light, we see only the image in a looking-glass in comparison of what we shall in the future state. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [i.e., we walk by faith now which is imperfect, not by sight, as we will in heaven]** We understand not by plain speeches and declarations, but as in an enigma, or dark saying, as it is said in the same place; for the things of heaven cannot be expressed as they be in our language. The apostle, when he went there, said of them, that it was not lawful or possible to utter them. But when the souls of the saints are separated from their bodies, they shall no longer see heavenly things as in an enigma, or dark saying, for they shall go themselves to heaven to dwell there, and shall immediately see and hear those things that it is not possible or lawful to utter plainly, or know immediately in this world. They shall then no longer see Christ by reflexion as in a looking-glass, because they shall be where Christ himself shall be immediately present; for they that are departed are with Christ, they that are absent from the body are present with the Lord; when that which is perfect is come, then we shall no more see by a looking-glass or enigma, but shall see face to face, as the apostle shows, [1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12](#). "But when that which is perfect is come," is said with respect to the separate souls of the saints, as is evident by [Heb. xii. 23](#). for they are there called the spirits of just men made perfect; and therefore when the soul of the saint leaves the body and goes to heaven, it will be like coming out of the dim light of the night into day-light. The present state is a dark benighted state; but when the soul enters into heaven, it is like the rising of the sun, for they shall then see the Sun of righteousness, by his own direct light, because they shall be with him; they will be spirits made perfect in that respect, that is, it will be perfect day with them. [Prov. iv. 18](#). **We cannot in the present state see clearly, because we have a veil before us, even the veil of the flesh. The church is Christ mystical:** the church in the Old-Testament state was represented by Christ in his fleshly state, such as he was in before his death; for Christ was the head of

that church in that state, and was subject to the same ordinances with them, was under the same dispensation with his church till his death.

His flesh was as it were a veil that hindered our access to heavenly things, or seeing them immediately. When Christ died, this veil was rent from the top to the bottom, and the holy of holies, with the ark of the testament, were opened to view; and especially will this be fulfilled in the glorious period of this evangelical dispensation, when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, [Rev. xi. 15, 19.](#) But still the church of Christ has a veil before it, to hinder it from seeing immediately things in the holy of holies; and this veil is their flesh, which is mystically the flesh of Christ. Christ in his members is still in his fleshly state, but when the saints die this veil is rent from the top to the bottom, and a glorious prospect will be opened through this veil.

....

The day is a time of glory in comparison of the night, because of the sun that is then seen, which is the glory of the visible universe, and by his light fills the world with glory. So the gospel state of the church is spoken of as a state of glory, in comparison of its Old-Testament state. [1 Peter i. 11.](#) "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." [2 Cor. iii. 10.](#) "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth;" and this state was prophesied of, of old, as a state of glory, but the state of the holy separate souls is a state of glory in comparison of the present state. [Ps. lxxiii. 24, 26.](#) "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." So it is said of Moses, and Elijah, who were in the state that the saints are now in heaven, that at Christ's transfiguration they appeared in glory. [Luke ix. 30, 31.](#)

But yet the glorified souls of saints in their present state in heaven, though they cannot be said properly to see as in an enigma, is but darkly, in comparison of what they will see after the resurrection. Therefore, though we are said now to see with open face, in comparison of what they did under the Old Testament; and though separate souls in heaven see face to face, in comparison of what we do now; yet the sight that the saints shall have at the resurrection, is spoken of as it were the first sight wherein they should see him as he is. [1 John iii. 2.](#) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The glory of Christ is what will as it were then first appear to all the church, to all that shall then lift up their heads out of their graves to behold it, as well as to those that will then be alive. It is called the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, with respect to both those companies of which the church consists. The apostle speaks of it as what would be a glorious appearing to them, to the Christians that were then living, [Tit. ii. 13.](#); which implies something that will be seen anew, as though he had been till then unseen. That appearing of Christ will be like the appearing of the sun when it rises to all, both those that shall then be found alive, and those that will then rise: it will be to them both as the morning succeeding the dim light of the night. [Ps. xlix. 14.](#) "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." Though, in the state the saints are now in heaven, there is no proper darkness, because there is no evil, yet the light they have is dim, like the light of the night, in comparison of the glorious light that shall appear in that morning. The happiness that separate souls have now in heaven, is like the quiet rest that a

person has in bed before a wedding day, or some other joyful and glorious day, in comparison of the light and joy after the resurrection. [Isa. lvii. 1, 2.](#) "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace. They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." [1 Thess. iv. 14, 15.](#) "Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." The morning of the natural day when the sun rises, and persons awake out of sleep, and the face of the whole world is revived, seems to be a type of the resurrection, when the saints shall awake out of sweet repose to glory.

The saints now in heaven see God or the divine nature by a reflex light, comparatively with the manner in which they will see it after the resurrection, seeing now through the glass of the glorified human nature of Christ, and in that glass of his works especially relating to redemption, as was observed No. 702.

Of old under the Old Testament, the church of Christ was as a child, [Gal. iv. 1.](#); so still under the gospel dispensation the church on earth is as a child, in comparison of what the church of glorified souls in heaven is, where what is perfect is come. [1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11.](#) "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." But yet the church remains a child, and does not come to the stature of a man until the resurrection. [Eph. iv. 10-13.](#) "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." But this will not be till that time comes, when the work of those offices ceases, which will not be till the end of the world, and there be no further use of them. [Matt. xxviii. 20.](#) It will not be till the time comes when he that is ascended shall descend again. It will not be till the church has all its members; and all its members are delivered from all remaining corruption; and all are brought to their consummate glory.

pg 634 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xii.v.html>

If the highest heaven might be as it were bowed and rent, (though it be the throne of God,) that the eternal Son of God might come down on the earth, to be the subject of his humiliation; doubtless it is as capable of being adorned and made higher and higher on occasion of his glorification.

The external heavens, and the human nature of Christ, are the external house and temple of God in different senses; but the human nature, or body, of Christ, including both the head and the members, including his human nature with his church, is the house and temple of God in the highest sense. This is immensely the most noble temple of God. But if this, which is the palace of God in so much the highest sense, will pass under a glorious change; why should not the external house, which is the temple of God in a much inferior sense, and which indeed is to be but a house for this house, pass under a glorious change? If the inner temple, the highest and most holy part of the temple, shall be so much

exalted, why may we not suppose that the external temple, the outer courts, or the outermost curtains of the tabernacle, be changed and made proportionally more beautiful?

Christ mystical, or Christ and his church, and the external heaven, are the city of God, or the new Jerusalem, in different senses; but the former in vastly the highest and noblest manner. But if the city of God, or the new Jerusalem, that which is called so in the highest sense, shall be so exalted and adorned with **new glory** at the head of the universe; why not that external new Jerusalem, that is as much inferior to the other as the body is to the soul? If the soul shall be glorified and made better, why not the body? if the body, why not the garment? if the inhabitants, why not the house?

The body of Christ is the dwelling-place of his soul; and therefore when God the Father glorified the soul of Christ, he also glorified his body, because he judged it meet that the alteration in the house should be answerable to the alteration in the inhabitant. And so, for the same reason, the bodies of the saints shall be glorified as well as their souls; and there is just the same reason why heaven, the house of Christ, and the house of his saints, or in one word, the house of Christ mystical, should be exalted to higher glory at the same time that Christ mystical himself, the inhabitant, is exalted to higher glory.

The church is Christ's temple: Christ is spoken of as dwelling in the saints. This temple of Christ, the new Jerusalem, shall, at the end of the world, when Christ comes to receive his full reward, be exceedingly adorned, to fit it for Christ's indwelling; as we see by [Rev. xxi. 2](#). And why shall not the other temple of Christ, that which is so in an inferior sense, be proportionally adorned at the same time? Is it not rational to suppose that the whole tabernacle shall be proportionally adorned and beautified; the outer curtains proportionally with the inward curtains of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen?

The infinitely glorious and beloved Son of God's shedding his blood, and enduring those extreme sufferings in obedience to his Father's will, was a thing great enough to obtain this, even that the very heaven of heavens should be made new, with new glory for him; it was great enough to lay the foundation for an universal refreshing, renewing, or new creation, of all elect things, that all things both spiritual and external should be immensely exalted in perfection, beauty, and glory.

It seems impossible that it should be otherwise than that all heaven should put on new glory at the same time that Christ put on new glory; all must be allowed proportion, for Christ is the glory of heaven, the beauty and ornament, the life and soul, of all; and there is no glory there, but only the reflection of his glory, and the emanation of his brightness and life, and the diffusion of his sweetness. **Every manner of beauty or excellency there, is immediately dependent on him: there is no shining or lustre, no fineness or purity, no vivacity or pleasantness, in anything there, but it is in such a manner dependent on him, as appear to be immediately, every moment, from him, as a kind of diffusion of his glory and sweetness on everything, and into and through every thing; so that the most inward nature of everything there receives all excellency, and all purity, and preciousness, and sweetness from him immediately. In heaven, Christ appears and acts most visibly and sensibly as the Creator, and Life, and Soul, and Fountain of all being and perfection, and he of whom and through whom all things are, and by whom all immediately consist.** Thus the glory of the latter house will in every respect be greater than the glory of the former house, because Jehovah, the angel of the covenant, shall come into his temple, and fill the house with his glory. Christ's appearing in glory will be that which will glorify the

bodies of his saints, as though it was an **immediate visible communication of his glory and life** to them, as from the head to the members. Nothing but his presence in so great glory effects the thing; and so will it be with respect to everything else that is external in heaven.

Thus as the face of the earth rejoices at the return of the sun in the spring, and there is a great alteration in it, it puts on new beautiful garments of joy, and gladness, and welcomes the sun; and its renewed beauty is from the sun, from his diffused glory, and **sweet vivifying influence**, in which all the face of the earth rejoices; so it will be in heaven when Christ returns thither in his highest glory after the day of judgment, all heaven will rejoice, and put on new life, new beauty, and glory, to welcome him thither.

[1122] Heaven perfected. The external heaven surrounds Christ, not merely as a house surrounds an inhabitant, or as a palace surrounds a prince; but rather as plants and flowers are before the sun, that have their life and beauty and being from that luminary; or as the sun may be encompassed round with reflections of his brightness, as the cloud of glory in mount Sinai surrounded Christ there.

[1126] Heaven perfected, after the day of judgment. Solomon's temple was a great type of heaven; and the prophet Haggai foretells that the glory of the latter temple shall be greater than that of the former, because that the Messiah, "the desire of all nations," should come into it; [Hag. ii. 6, 7, 8](#). "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts. And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." I suppose that what was here foretold concerning that typical temple, was fulfilled much more properly and amply concerning heaven itself, when the Messiah entered into it at his first ascension; and will be fulfilled to a much more glorious degree still at his second ascension, at Christ's entrance into that heavenly temple, with his glorified and complete mystical body, as well as his natural body, after God has in a literal manner shaken the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land, and shaken all nations.

The beautifying and adorning the temple of Jerusalem so exceedingly but a little before Christ came into it, seems to be some shadow of this; and I believe was intended as a type of it; though not parallel in every circumstance, as the beautifying of it not being at the very instant of Christ's first entering into the temple, and some other circumstances. This seems also to be typified by the immensely more glorious abode that the ark had in Solomon's time than that which it had in David's time. The carrying up of the ark into mount Zion in David's time, was a type of Christ's first ascension into heaven, as is evident from Scripture; and the carrying of it up into mount Moriah, into Solomon's glorious temple, is a type of his second more glorious ascension into a more glorious abode at the end of the world. David's militant reign till all the enemies of Israel were subdued under them, was a type of Christ's present reign in heaven, over his church till the resurrection, which is a militant reign; for till the end of the world he goes on fighting, and will continue so to do till all enemies are made his footstool. As yet we see not all things put under him, and the last enemy that shall be conquered is death, which shall be at the end of the world. Solomon's glorious reign in perfect peace and tranquility, with all subdued under him, and settled in subjection to him, is a type of the reign of Christ after the end of the world:

all enemies shall be subdued: and the place of the ark in his reign, in this glorious and most magnificent temple, was a type of the abode of Christ in heaven, in its advanced glory, at the consummation of all things. It is the same heaven, only sublimated and exalted to exceeding greater glory; which is typified by the mountain of the temple, being called by the same name after the ark was removed into it, that the place of its former abode was called by, viz. mount Zion; so that the ark is represented as never changing its place from mount Zion; and when it was carried into mount Zion, God said of it [Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.](#) "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

There is a place somewhere in the universe, (perhaps in the central parts of the earth,) that is called hell; but hell will be made immensely more terrible after the day of judgment, when instead of that fire in the centre of the earth, all the visible universe shall be turned into a great furnace: and probably heaven will be made as much more glorious, after the day of judgment, as hell will be made more terrible.

Thus the external new Jerusalem, or the glorious and eternal abode of the church of God; (which cannot be excluded from the description in the two last chapters in Revelations, because there is in the description often a distinction made between the city and the saints that are the inhabitants;) I say, thus the external new Jerusalem will come down from God out of heaven; i.e. heaven, in this new creation of it, shall come down from the infinitely high and uncreated heaven, in which God had dwelt from all eternity, from which God stoops and humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven.

Thus that will be fulfilled that is proclaimed in [Rev. xxi. 5.](#) "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. "The whole creation, external and spiritual, shall be altered, and new formed; and thus the new creation will be parallel with the first creation that Moses gives us an account of, to which it is spoken of as parallel in Scripture; and all the elect creation, which is composed of all elect things in heaven and in earth, shall be gotten together in Christ, and all made new, both spiritual and external; all that appertains to the elect, not only elect spirits, but their external habitations: their bodies, that are the microcosm or their particular habitations; and the microcosm, that is, the general habitation. There shall be collected all that is elect in heaven or earth, being all perfectly purified by fire, and not mixed with the reprobate part of the world, and all shall be made new, and so is justly called "the new heaven and new earth." There will be new angels and new men, new bodies and new spirits: things that are originally of the earth made new, and things originally of heaven also made new. Though the place of the church of Christ (for whose sake chiefly all heaven and earth is made) be different from what it was before; she dwells in another place, instead of that heaven and earth that was her habitation before; yet it is called by the same name, but only new, as the ark when it moved from Zion to mount Moriah carried the name with it, only it was a New Zion.

When God has obtained his end of the universe that he created in the beginning, when all things are brought to issue into their end at the consummation of all things, and God in the final event appears to be the OMEGA, as he was the ALPHA; then God will show his mighty power a second time towards the whole: toward the reprobate part of the creation, in terribly destroying it; and towards the elect part, in bringing it to its highest perfection. The elect creatures, who are the eye and mouth of the creation, who are made to behold God's works, and to give him the glory of them, did not behold the first creation. The angels did not behold the first creation of heaven, that most glorious part of the creation, nor did they see the creation of themselves; and men beheld no part of God's work in producing the creation; but the time will come when God will make all things new by a new creation, wherein his

power towards the whole will be much more displayed than in the first creation. When God shall effect this creation, men and angels shall see God perform it, they shall see God produce the new heaven and new earth by his mighty power. Men, who saw the creation of nothing in the first creation, shall see the creation of all, and even their own new creation; and angels shall see the creation of heaven and of themselves: all shall see that creation that shall be a work so much more wonderful, and so much greater than the former, that the former shall not be mentioned, nor come into mind.

Conflagration. Many suppose the fire of the conflagration will be a purifying fire, by which the heavens and the earth will be refined in order to their standing forth in new perfection and beauty. This is very true, yet not in the manner in which many seem to understand. It will indeed be the fire by which the whole universe shall be purified, i.e. by which it shall be purged from its reprobate parts; all the filthiness of the whole universe shall be gathered into it, there to be consumed. The reprobate part of heaven was removed out of it to be cast into this fire; the filthiness that once was there is consumed here, and so is all that is reprobate and filthy in the earth. **It is a purifying fire, as it is the fire of God's justice and holiness**; but the justice and holiness of God shall perfectly purify heaven and earth, and purge all the elect creation from all manner of defilement or mixture of that which is reprobate; whereby it will be fitted to be exalted to its highest beauty and glory. And not only so, but such a **wonderful and terrible display of the holiness and justice of God**, will be a great means of further sanctifying all the elect universe, setting them at a vastly greater distance from sin against this holy God, and a means of vastly exalting the purity and sanctity of their minds.

Many have supposed that the place of the residence of the saints after the day of judgment, would be different from what it is before; that the paradise in which the departed souls of saints are now, is different from the heaven into which they shall be admitted after the day of judgment; and that paradise is only a place of rest in which the saints are reserved till the day of judgment, when they shall be admitted into heaven. Here is a mixture of truth with error. It is true that the habitation of the saints, after the day of judgment, will be new and different, exceeding different, from what it was before, but not in that manner that has been supposed: not that the place or situation will be different, there is no need of that; but the habitation will be new created, and shall appear with quite new and transcendently more excellent glory.

It may be objected against what has been at the day of judgment, will invite his saints to "inherit the kingdom here supposed, that Christ, prepared for them from the foundation of the world;" as though it were the same heaven, that was made and prepared for them at the first creation, which they were now going to inherit.

Answer. It is the same house then built, not taken down, never shaken or removed, but only made more glorious; as they are the same angels of heaven that were made for the saints, from the foundation of the world, though they shall be so much more glorified that they will be as it were new creatures. As it will be with the angels of heaven, who are the principal part of the kingdom spoken of, so it will be with the external habitation: it was prepared for them at the foundation of the world the foundation of it was laid then, and has been preparing from the foundation of the world; from that time that the foundation of the world was laid, it has been preparing ever since, in all that has been done to it, and in it, and about it. And not only the kingdom is prepared from the foundation of the world in creating heaven, and in what has been done there from that time; but the creation of the whole universe was made to prepare a kingdom for them, to lay a foundation for their kingdom

and dominion, and all that has been done in providence, ever since, has been to prepare a kingdom for them. And these words of Christ are a good argument, that the work of redemption is the end and sum of all God's works. It was the end of the creation of the whole universe, and of all God's works of providence in it.

Quest. By whom and at what time will this glorious work of God, in making the highest heavens new, be accomplished. Will it be done by God the Father in the absence of his Son, while he is here in this lower world taken up in the concerns of the last judgment, to garnish heaven or prepare it for his Son with his blessed bride against their coming? or will it be accomplished by the Son at his return into heaven with his church?

Answer. Not by the former, but by the latter; for the following reasons.

1. All communicated glory to the creature must be by the Son of God, who is the brightness or shining forth of his Father's glory: and therefore when the eternal world comes to receive its greatest brightness and glory, it will doubtless be by him, and it will be by him as God man; for all that God doth by Christ, or the medium of communication between himself and the creature since Christ became God man, or at least since as God man he has been glorified and enthroned as Lord of the universe; he doth by Christ as God man, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that in all things he should have the pre-eminence. As he glorifies the angels and saints who are the inhabitants, so doubtless it will be he who will glorify the habitation.

2. The old creation was by him, the highest heavens were created by him; for without him was not anything made that was made; it was said concerning him, [Heb. i. 10.](#) "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hand," and not only the visible but the invisible heavens were created by him; for he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, and the beginning of the creation of God; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. So likewise the new creation will be by him, for by him God makes the worlds; not only the visible but the invisible world, not only the present world, but the world to come, that new world, the new heavens and new earth; for God hath given him a name above every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come, [Eph. i. 21.](#) By the world to come in that place, the apostle seems to mean the new world that shall follow when the age of this shall be at an end, for the word is Greek or Hebrew; this age, and that which is to come; and unto Christ hath God put in subjection the world to come. If God committed to him the creation of the old world, much more would he commit to him the creation of the new, for it is his business to renew all things. The creation of the new heavens and the new earth is by the work of redemption, which is his work; and it is a work that he works out as God man, and therefore as God man he will make the heavens new. **All new things are by Christ:** the new creature, the new name, the new covenant, the new song, the new Jerusalem, and the new heavens and new earth, are all by Christ, God man.

3. The destroying the lower world, the reprobate part of the creation, is committed to him; and therefore much more will the glorifying of the elect part of it be his work, for this is his most proper business; the other is his business more indirectly, and in subordination to this.

4. The creation is certainly by him, as to the principal parts of it, viz. **the glorifying the saints and angels.** He shall build the inner temple, and doubtless, therefore, he will build the outer temple. The

glorifying of that, which is his temple and city in the highest sense, is committed to him; and therefore, doubtless, the glorifying of that which is the temple and city in an inferior sense will be committed to him.

5. If Christ as God man shall be the author of this work, he will doubtless be so visibly; for the work is committed to him for his honour. It is an honour that the Father commits to him in reward of what he has done and suffered; it shall therefore be visibly done by Christ, as God man, and therefore will not be effected in his absence here in this lower world; but he shall be present when it is done, and shall visibly put forth his power and communicate his influence and glory in order to it.

6. If this work were wrought while Christ is here in this lower world judging the world, then this new creation would not be seen by men and angels, which is not to be supposed.

7. If this work be wrought in Christ's absence, then that world will not be glorified by the presence of the Sun of righteousness, as the face of the earth is renewed and glorified by the return of the sun in the spring.

The Lamb is the light, and glory, and sun of the new Jerusalem, and therefore the new brightness and life, vigour, bloom, and beauty, and fragrancy, and joy, of this world, will be from him and from his presence.

After the curse is executed on the universe of the ungodly, and all the angels and saints have beheld the dreadful execution; then Christ, with all his elect church, now perfect, shall ascend to heaven, and Christ shall come and present his church, now perfectly redeemed, to the Father, saying, "**Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me;**" and having thus finished all the work that the Father had given him to do, he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Then shall the Father, with infinite manifestations of endearment and delight, testify his acceptance of Christ, and of his church thus presented to him, his infinite acquiescence in what his Son has done, and his complacency in him, and in his church; and in reward shall now give them the joy of their eternal marriage feast, and he himself will dress his Son in his wedding robes. The human nature of Christ, or Christ as God man, **shall be the subject of a new glorification then**, when he shall be the **subject of those smiles of the Father**, and those infinitely sweet manifestations of his acceptance and complacency, when he shall present his redeemed church, and deliver up the kingdom; and from the manifestations of complacency, **the Son shall be changed into the same image of complacency and love, and shall put on that divine glory, the glory of the infinitely sweet divine love, grace, gentleness, and joy, and shall shine with this special light far more brightly than ever he did before**, shall be clothed with those sweet robes in a far more glorious manner than ever before: then shall that be fulfilled in the highest degree; **Ps. xxi. 6. "For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance;"** and also the fore-verses. Thus God the Father will give the Son his heart's desire, as it is said in the 2d verse of that psalm: his heart's desire was, that he might express his infinite love to his elect church, fully and freely; to this end God the Father will now crown him with a crown of love, and array him in the brightest robes of love and grace, as his wedding garments, as the robe in which he should embrace his redeemed church, now brought home to her everlasting rest, in the house of her spiritual husband. As before he came into this accursed world in the glory of the Father, and God the Father

arrayed him with his own glory, chiefly of his majesty, power, justice, omnipotence, and holiness, attributes that are terrible to God's enemies, because his errand into this reprobate part of the universe was to destroy it; so now he is returned and entered into the elect and blessed world, to receive the joy that was set before him with his church. Now he shall more especially have conferred on him the glory of his Father, in his gentle and sweet attributes, shining forth in the infinitely bright robes of his love, and grace, and holiness, his sweet ravishing beauty and delight, that he may bless and glorify that elect world with the beams of this light. The Son being thus glorified with infinite sweetness, by the light of the countenance of the Father, the glory will be communicated from him to his church, and she shall be transformed into his image by beholding him, and by the light of his glory and love, shining and smiling upon her. And at that time will be the transformation of all heaven, and it will become a new heaven; the beams of the Son's new glory of grace and love shall advance that whole world to new glory and sweetness. Thus Christ and his saints shall both receive their consummate felicity and full reward, and shall begin that eternal feast of love, and the eternal joys of that marriage supper of the Lamb. The saints shall not receive their full happiness till then; though they shall be glorified on earth when they shall be raised and changed at the first sight of their glorious Redeemer coming in the clouds, and shall be further glorified when they shall be made to sit with Christ on his throne of judgment; yet Christ speaks of their greatest happiness as then future, when he says, at the close of the judgment, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," &c. Now they shall inherit it; now they shall be put in possession of it.

Thus, though the new glory of heaven shall be, as it were, from the communicated influence and glory of the Sun of righteousness returning to heaven from the judgment; yet it will not be at once, as soon as the beams of the returning Jesus shine on that world; but Christ, with all his saints and angels, shall first enter into the world, and they shall have opportunity to see its glory in its former state; and then the presentation shall be made to the Father, and his acceptance manifested, and the purchased glory then given by his hands; so that the saints and angels shall have opportunity fully to see this work of the new creation: first fully beholding the world before its renovation, and then seeing the change as it is, with the destruction of the reprobate world. That world, as it were, sinks of itself, flies away, and breaks in pieces, by beholding the manifestation of his awful majesty and wrath. The shining forth of the infinitely pure and powerful holiness, justice, and wrath, does, as it were of itself, set all on fire; yet this destruction will not actually be at Christ's first appearing in terrible majesty in the lower world, but at the greatest manifestation of it when he pronounces the curse on the ungodly.

How immensely will it heighten, in the eyes of the saints, the value of that love and gentleness with which they now shall see Christ clothed, that they just before have seen such great manifestations of his infinite majesty, and the terribleness of his wrath! And how will it heighten their admiration and joy in his love, when Christ himself, that glorious King, shall resign up the kingdom to the Father! Though he shall receive now his reward, and new glory from the Father, it will not be to act henceforward as the Supreme Head of dominion, to whom the government of the world is left, but rather as a head or grand medium of enjoyment of the Father. Christ himself shall be admitted to a higher enjoyment of the Father than ever he was admitted to before; and in Christ the saints shall enjoy the Father. The Son himself, as God man, shall now be subject to the Father. After the saints have seen him in infinite majesty in the judgment wherein his glorious and divine dignity appeared, and now come to see him in his ineffable mildness and love; they shall also see his transcendent humility in his adoration of the

Father. And what a sense will this give them of the honour of the Father, to behold Jesus Christ, God man, a person of such dignity as they saw in the judgment, thus humbly adoring the Father! And how will this example influence their adoration of God, and keep up their reverence in that infinite nearness and freedom to which they are admitted; as the sight they have had of the terrible majesty of Christ in the judgment will keep up their reverence towards him in the midst of their most intimate communion with him, and while they dwell, as it were, in his arms, and on his lips! See concerning the new occasion of glory to the highest heavens at Christ's first ascension, Note on these words, [John xiv. 2.](#) "I go to prepare a place for you."

[934] Happiness of heaven. God doubtless will entertain his saints according to the state of the King of heaven, when he comes to entertain them at the feast that he has provided with such great contrivance and wonderful amazing exercises of infinite and mysterious wisdom, showing the bottomless depths and infinite riches of his wisdom, and with such great and mighty ado, and innumerable and wonderful exercises of his power; having, in order to provide this feast, created heaven and earth, and done all in all ages, bringing such great revolutions in such an amazing wonderful series, and besides that, having come down himself from his infinite height and become man, and also provided the feast at such infinite expense as that of his own blood. We read of Ahasuerus, a great king, when he made a feast unto all his princes and servants, he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the power of his excellent majesty, and gave drink in vessels of gold, and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king, [Esth. i.](#) So doubtless the happiness of the saints in heaven shall be so great, that the very majesty of God shall be exceedingly shown in the greatness, and magnificence, and fulness of their enjoyments and delights.

God's Image Re-instamped Upon the Soul

code50

This is an excellent overview of the role of [God's image, his glory, implanted or re-instamped upon the soul, that new living principle of life](#), (as opposed to lust) and its infallible effects toward obedience, peace, rest, holiness and complacency in God. Earlier, Owen described this new principle as the sum of grace, truth and faith. You notice several words are used to describe the same thing in spiritual matters such as being born again = being saved = translated from death to life = quickened, raised from the dead, etc. So this new spiritual light is likened to faith, wisdom, spiritual understanding, etc. This discourse by Owen is an excellent teaching on what to look for in self-examination to see if you be in the faith! as well as, upon successful endeavors, giving you consolation that you are in the faith!

Excerpt from
Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect

by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/faith.vi.html>

Some among the heathen placed the rectitude of nature in moral virtues and operations, according unto them; and this was the utmost that natural light could ever rise up unto: but the uncertainty and weakness hereof are discovered by the light of the gospel.

It is faith alone that discovers what is good for us, in us, and unto us, whilst we are in this world. It is in the renovation of the image of God in us, — in the change and transformation of our nature into his likeness, — in acting from a gracious principle of a divine life, — in duties and operations suited thereunto, — in the participation of the divine nature by the promises, — that the good, the perfection, the order, the present blessedness of our nature do consist.

Hereby are the faculties of our souls exalted, elevated, and enabled to act primigenial powers, with respect unto God and our enjoyment of him; which is our utmost end and blessedness. Hereby are our affections placed on their proper objects (such as they were created meet for, and in closing wherewith their satisfaction, order, and rest do consist), — namely, God and his goodness, or God as revealed in Jesus Christ by the gospel. Hereby all the powers of our souls are brought into a blessed frame and harmony in all their operations, — whatever is dark, perverse, unquiet, vile, and base, being cast out of them. But these things must be a little more distinctly explained.

1. There is in this gospel holiness, as the spring and principle of it, a spiritual, saving light, enabling the mind and understanding to know God in Christ, and to discern spiritual things in a spiritual, saving manner; for herein “God shines into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. Without this, in some degree, whatever pretence there may be or appearance of holiness in any, there is nothing in them of what is really so, and thereon accepted with God. Blind devotion, — that is, an inclination of mind unto religious duties, destitute of this light, — will put men on a multiplication of duties, especially such as are of their own invention, in “a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,” as the apostle speaks, Col. ii. 23; wherein there is nothing of gospel holiness.

“The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him,” Col. iii. 10. That this saving light and knowledge is the spring and principle of all real evangelical holiness and obedience, the apostle declares in that description which he gives us of the whole of it, both in its beginning and progress, Col. i. 9–11, “**We desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.**” It is a blessed account that is here given us of that gospel holiness which we inquire after, in its nature, original, spring, progress, fruits, and effects; and a serious consideration of it as here proposed, — a view of it in the light of faith, — will evidence how distant and different it is from those schemes of moral virtues which some would substitute in its room. It has a glory in it which no unenlightened mind can behold or comprehend; the foundation of it is laid in the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This is that spiritual, saving light whereof we speak; the increase hereof is prayed for in believers by the apostle, Eph. i. 17, 18, even “**that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;**” which here is called

“increasing in the knowledge of God,” verse 10. The singular glory of this saving light, in its original, its causes, use, and effects, is most illustriously here declared: and this light is in every true believer, and is **the only immediate spring of all gospel holiness and obedience**; for “the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him,” [Col. iii. 10](#).

This **light**, this **wisdom**, this **spiritual understanding**, thus **communicated unto believers**, is the **rectitude and perfection** of their minds in this world. It is that which gives them order, and peace, and power, enabling them to **act all their faculties in a due manner**, with respect unto their being and end. [\[hence all grace is designed to enable one to obey God and please him. see Heb 11:6\]](#) It is that which gives beauty and glory to the inward man, and which constitutes a believer an inhabitant of the kingdom of light, — whereby we are “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love,” [Col. i. 13](#); or “out of darkness into his marvellous light,” [1 Pet. ii. 9](#).

That which is contrary hereunto, is that ignorance, darkness, blindness, and vanity, which the Scripture declares to be in the minds of all unregenerate persons; and they are really so, where they are not cured by the glorious working of the power and grace of God before mentioned.

Now, **faith** discerns these things, as the spiritual man discerns all things, [1 Cor. ii. 15](#). It sees the beauty of this heavenly light, and judges that it is that which gives order and rectitude unto the mind; as also, that that which is contrary unto it is vile, base, horrid, and to be ashamed of. As for those who “love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil,” — it knows them to be strangers unto Christ and his gospel.

2. Again: there is required unto this holiness, a **principle of spiritual life and love unto God**. This guides, acts, and rules in the soul, in all its obedience; and it gives the soul its proper order in all its operations: that which is contrary hereunto is death, and enmity against God. Faith judges between these two principles and their operations: the former in all its acting it approves of as lovely, beautiful, desirable, as that which is the rectitude and perfection of the will: and the other it looks on as deformed, froward, and perverse.

3. The like may be said of its nature and operations in the **affections**, as also of all those **duties of obedience which proceed from it**, as it is described in the place before mentioned.

It remains only that we show by what acts, ways, and means, faith does evidence this its approbation of gospel holiness, as that which is lovely and desirable in itself, and which gives all that rectitude and perfection unto our minds which they are capable of in this world. And it does so, —

1. By that **self-displicity and abasement which it works in the mind** on all instances and occasions where it comes short of this holiness. This is the chief principle and cause of that holy shame which befalls believers on every sin and miscarriage, wherein they come short of what is required in it: [Rom. vi. 21](#), “Those things whereof ye are now ashamed.” Now when, by the light of faith, you see how vile it is, and unworthy of you, what a debasement of your souls there is in it, you are ashamed of it. It is true, the principal cause of this holy shame is a sense of the unsuitableness that is in sin unto the holiness of God, and the horrible ingratitude and disingenuity that there is in sinning against him; but it is greatly promoted by this consideration, that it is a thing unworthy of us, and that wherein our natures are exceedingly debased. So it is said of provoking sinners, that they “debase themselves even

unto hell," [Isa. lvii. 9](#); or make themselves as vile as hell itself, by ways unworthy the nature of men. **And this is one ground of all those severe self-reflections which accompany godly sorrow for sin, [2 Cor. vii. 11](#).**

And hereby [does faith evidence itself and its own sincerity](#), whilst a man is ashamed of, and abased in, himself for every sin, for every thing of sin, wherein it comes short of the holiness required of us, as that which is base and unworthy of our nature, in its present constitution and renovation; though it be that which no eye sees but God's and his own, [he has that in him which will grow on no root but sincere believing](#). Wherefore, whatever may be the disquieting conflicts of sin in and against our souls, whatever decays we may fall into, — which be the two principles of darkness and fears in believers, — whilst this inward holy shame and self-abasement, on account of the vileness of sin, is preserved, **faith leaves not itself without an evidence in us.**

2. It does the same by a spiritual satisfaction, which it gives the soul in every experience of the **transforming power of this holiness, [rendering it more and more like unto God](#). There is a [secret joy and spiritual refreshment rising in the soul from a sense of its renovation into the image of God](#)**; and all the [actings](#) and increases of the life of God in it augment this joy. Herein consists its gradual return unto its primitive order and rectitude, with a blessed addition of [supernatural light and grace](#) by Christ Jesus; it finds itself herein coming home to God from its old apostasy, in the way of approaching to eternal rest and blessedness: and there is no satisfaction like unto that which it receives therein.

This is the second way wherein faith will abide firm and constant, and does evidence itself in the soul of every believer. However low and mean its attainments be in this spiritual life and the fruits of it, though it be overwhelmed with darkness and a sense of the guilt of sin, though it be [surprised and perplexed](#) with the deceit and violence thereof, **yet faith will continue here firm and unshaken. [It sees that glory and excellency in the holiness and obedience that God requires of us](#), — as it is a [representation of his own glorious excellencies](#), the [renovation of his image, and the perfection of our natures thereby](#), — as that it constantly approves of it, even in the deepest trials which the soul can be exercised withal; and whilst this anchor holds firm and stable we are safe.**

Applications ref. Faith, Restoring God's Image, Etc.

Motives to Fix our Thoughts Heavenly Things [code51](#)

This is vital!

The infallible effects of this new principle of life, faith, grace and truth all wrapped together, as Owen puts it, works in us, and enables us to obey God, exciting us to think and dwell upon holy thoughts and heavenly things, (Col. 3:1-2) - which is to be spiritually minded, conforming the mind thereto, the principle means of growing in knowledge and grace and then true peace and rest (2Pet2:2, "***Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,***").

Note in this excerpt the key words, our [wills](#), our [affections](#), the [image of God](#), the [communication](#) of God's grace and of the [image](#) itself, of his [glory](#), consisting of the image of his knowledge (Col. 3:10) and holiness (2Pet1:4, etc.), re-enstamped upon the mind, written upon the heart, etc. Without this

infusion of his nature, this virtue, that new principle of life communicated to us, all our works to reform ourselves will be in vain. The elect will receive this communication; those who are not the elect, will not receive it and hence will trust in their own righteousness, etc., leading to formalism, legalism, furtherance in sin, hardening of the heart and ultimately atheism.

There are many ways to describe this as you are probably seeing; the upshot of it is that we are made partakers of his nature and over time made meet for heaven; the spirit works it! but he works by this ordained means of being spiritually minded - Joshua 1:8 - "...meditate in it [this book of the law] day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For there you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." And I say, success against the enemies of your soul: sin, the flesh, Satan and the love of this world. See 2Cor3:18, Phil. 1:29, Heb. 13:20-21, Jn 6:29, Ps37:23, 1Thes. 3:13, 2:13, 2Pet. 2:2-10, 1Cor. 12:6, Col. 1:29, Gal. 2:8, Rom12:1, etc.

All these spiritual subtleties, as they may appear to some, are vital to our growing in knowledge and discernment, our spiritual growth, and our peace and consolation. A command of them by practice (enabling us to discern good from evil) is that which is necessary to prevent those foxes from creeping in and spoiling the vines. (SS 2:15).

My inserts on [blue] and Owen's comments in red for emphasis

Part I Chapter V.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.v.v.html>

The objects of spiritual thoughts, or what they are conversant about, evidencing them in whom they are to be spiritually minded — Rules directing unto steadiness in the contemplation of heavenly things — Motives to fix our thoughts with steadiness in them.

Before I proceed unto the next general head, and which is the principal thing, the foundation of the grace and duty inquired after, some things must be spoken to render what hath been already insisted on yet more particularly useful; and this is, to inquire what are, or what ought to be, the special objects of those thoughts which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spiritually minded. And, it may be, we may be useful unto many herein, by helping them to fix their minds, which are apt to rove into all uncertainty; for this is befallen us, through the disorder and weakness of the faculties of our souls, that sometimes what the mind guides, leads, and directs unto, in things spiritual and heavenly, our wills and affections, through their depravation and corruption, will not comply withal, and so the good designings of the mind are lost; sometimes **what the will and affections are inclined unto and ready for, the mind, through its weakness and inconstancy, cannot lead them to the accomplishment of.** So to will is present with us, but how to perform that will we know not. **So many are barren in this duty because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts when they have chosen a subject for their meditations.** Hence they spend their time in fruitless desires that they could use their thoughts unto more purpose, rather than make any progress in the duty itself. They tire themselves, not because they are not willing to go, but because they cannot find their way. Wherefore, both these things shall be spoken unto, both what are the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and how we may be steady in our contemplation of them. And

I shall unto this purpose first give some general rules, and then some particular instances in way of direction:—

1. **Observe the especial calls of providence**, and apply your minds unto thoughts of the duties required in them and by them. There is a voice in all signal dispensations of providence: “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it,” [Mic. vi. 9](#). There is a call, a cry in every rod of God, in every chastising providence, and therein [he] makes a declaration of his name, his holiness, his power, his greatness. This every wise, substantial man will labour to discern, and so comply with the call. God is greatly provoked when it is otherwise: “Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed,” [Isa. xxvi. 11](#). If, therefore, we would apply ourselves unto our present duty, we are wisely to consider what is the voice of God in his present providential dispensations in the world. Harken not unto any who would give another interpretation of them, but that they are plain declarations of his displeasure and indignation against the sins of men. Is not his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially such as retain the truth in unrighteousness, or false, hypocritical professors of the gospel? **Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? as also how vain and foolish it is to adhere inordinately unto them?** The fingers that appeared writing on the wall the doom of Belshazzar did it in characters that none could read, and words that none could understand, but Daniel; but the present call of God in these things is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds, and it thunder over us, if any that are on their journey will not believe that there is a storm coming, they must bear the severity of it.

Suppose, then, this to be the voice of providence, suppose there be in it these indications of the mind and will of God, what are the duties that we are called unto thereby? They may be referred unto two heads:—

(1.) **A diligent search into ourselves**, and a **holy watch over ourselves**, with respect unto those ways and sins which the displeasure of God is declared against. That present providences are indications of God’s anger and displeasure, we take for granted. But when this is done, the most are apt to cast the causes of them on others, and to excuse themselves. So long as they see others more wicked and profligate than themselves, openly guilty of such crimes as they abhor the thoughts of, they cast all the wrath on them, and fear nothing but that they shall suffer with them. But, alas! when the storm came on the ship at sea, wherein there was but one person that feared God, upon an inquiry for whose sake it came, the lot fell on him, [Jonah i. 7](#). **The cause of the present storm may as well be the secret sins of professors as the open provocations of ungodly men.** God will punish severely those which he hath known, [Amos iii. 2](#). It is therefore certainly our duty to **search diligently**, that nothing be found resting in us against which God is declaring his displeasure. **Take heed of negligence and security herein.** When our Saviour foretold his disciples that “one of them should betray him,” he who alone was guilty was the last that said, “Master, is it I?” **Let no ground of hopes you have of your spiritual condition and acceptance with God**, no sense of your sincerity in any of your duties, no visible difference between you and others in the world, **impose themselves on your minds to divert them from diligence in this duty.** “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see his name.”

(2.) **A diligent endeavour** to live in a holy resignation of our persons, our lives, our families, all our enjoyments, unto the sovereign will and wisdom of God, so as that we may be in **readiness to part with**

all things upon his call without repining. This, also, is plainly declared in the voice of present providences. God is making wings for men's riches, he is shaking their habitations, taking away the visible defenses of their lives, proclaiming the instability and uncertainty of all things here below; and if we are not minded to contend with him, we have nothing left to give us rest and peace for a moment but a holy resignation of all unto his sovereign pleasure.

Would you now know what you should fix and exercise your thoughts upon, so as that they may be evidences of your being spiritually minded? I say, be frequently conversant in them about these things. They lie before you, they call upon you, and will find you a just employment. Count them part of your business, allow them some part of your time, cease not until you have the testimony of your consciences that you have in sincerity stated both these duties in your minds; which will never be done without many thoughts about them. Unless it be so with you, God will be greatly displeased at the neglect of his coming and call, now it is so plain and articulate. Fear the woeful dooms recorded, Prov. i. 24–31, Isa. lxxv. 12, lxxvi. 4, to this purpose. And if any calamity, public or private, do overtake you under a neglect of these duties, you will be woefully surprised, and not know which way to turn for relief. This, therefore, is the time and season wherein you may have an especial trial and experiment whether you be spiritually minded or no. It is the wisdom of faith to excite and draw forth grace into exercise, according unto present occasions. If this grace be habitually resident in you, it will put itself forth in many thoughts about these present duties.

But, alas! for the most part, men are apt to walk contrary to God in these things, as the wisdom of the flesh is contrary unto him in all things. A great instance we have with respect unto these duties, especially the latter of them; for, —

[1.] Who almost makes a diligent search into and trial of his heart and ways with respect unto the procuring causes of the displeasure and judgments of God? Generally, when the tokens and evidences of them do most abound, the world is full of outrageous, provoking sins. These visibly proclaim themselves to be the causes of the “coming of the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.” Hence most men are apt to cast the whole reason of present judgments upon them, and to put it wholly from themselves. Hence, commonly, there is never less of self-examination than when it is called for in a peculiar manner. But as I will not deny but that the open, daring sins of the world are the procuring cause of the wrath of God against it in temporal judgments, so the wisest course for us is to refer them unto the great judgment of the last day. This the apostle directs us unto, 2 Thess. i. 6–10. Our duty it is to consider on what account “judgment begins at the house of God,” and to examine ourselves with respect thereunto.

[2.] Again, the other part of our present duty, in compliance with the voice of providence, is an humble resignation of ourselves and all our concernments unto the will of God, sitting loose in our affections from all earthly, temporal enjoyments. This we neither do nor can do, let us profess what we will, unless our thoughts are greatly exercised about the reasons for it and motives unto it; for this is the way whereby faith puts forth its efficacy unto the mortification of self and all earthly enjoyments. Wherefore, without this we can make no resignation of ourselves unto the will of God. But, alas! how many at present do openly walk contrary unto God herein! The ways, the countenances, the discourses of men, do give evidence hereunto. Their love unto present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance, do grow and thrive under the calls of God to the contrary. So it was of old: “They did

eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.” **Can the generality of professors at this day give testimony unto the exercise of their thoughts upon such things as should dispose them unto this holy resignation?** that they meditate on the calls of God, and thence make themselves ready to part with all at his time and pleasure? **How can persons pretend to be spiritually minded, the current of whose thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the mind of God?**

Here lies the ground of their self-deceivings: They are professors of the gospel in a peculiar manner, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it. **But one negative evidence will render a hundred that are positive useless.** “All these things have I done,” saith the young man. “Yet lackest thou one thing,” saith the Saviour. **And the want of that one rendered his “all things” of no avail unto him.** Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition; but are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail you; you have, indeed, neither life nor peace. And what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if the current of your thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the present calls of God? If, at such a time as this is, your love to the world be such as ever it was, and perhaps increased; if your desires are strong to secure the things of this life unto you and yours; **if the daily contrivance of your minds be not how you may attain a constant resignation of yourselves and your all unto the will of God, which will not be done without much thoughtfulness and meditations on the reasons of it and motives unto it,** — I cannot understand how you can judge yourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any, therefore, shall say that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon, I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them unto the **due performance** of present duties.

2. The special trials and temptations of men call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner with respect unto them. If a man hath a bodily disease, pain, or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it whether he will or no, at least, if he be wise he will so do; nor will he always be complaining of the smart, but he will inquire into the causes, and seek their removal. **Yet are there some distempers, as lethargies, which in their own nature take away all sense and thoughts of themselves; and some are of such a slow, secret progress, as hectic fevers, that they are not taken notice of;** — **but both these are mortal.** And shall men be more negligent about the spiritual distempers of their souls, so as to have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared that where it is so, they are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensibly unto death eternal? **Not to have our minds exercised about these things is to be stupidly secure,** [Prov. xxiii. 34, 35.](#)

You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ³⁵“They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.”

There is, I confess, some difficulty in this matter, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; for the great way of the prevalency of temptations is by stirring up multiplied thoughts about their objects, or what they do lead unto. And this is done or occasioned several ways:— (1.) From the previous power of **lust in the affections**. This will fill the mind with thoughts. **The heart will coin imaginations in compliance** therewith. They are the way and means whereby lust draws away the heart from duty and enticeth unto sin, [James i. 14](#); the means at least whereby men come to have “eyes full of adultery,” [2 Pet. ii. 14](#), or to live in **constant contemplation of the pleasures of sin**. (2.) They arise and are occasioned by renewed representations of the object of sin. And this is twofold:— [1.] That which is real, as Achan saw the wedge of gold and coveted it, [Josh. vii. 21](#); [Prov. xxiii. 31](#). Against this is that prayer of the psalmist, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;” and the covenant of [Job xxxi. 1](#). [2.] Imaginary, when the **imagination**, being tainted or **infected by lust**, **continually represents the pleasure of sin and the actings of it unto the mind**. Herein do men “make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof,” [Rom. xiii. 14](#). (3.) From the suggestions of Satan, who useth all his wiles and artifices to stir up thoughts about that sin whereunto the temptation leads. And temptation seldom fails of its end, when it can stir up a multitude of unprofitable thoughts about its object; for when temptations do multiply thoughts about sin, proceeding from some or all of these causes, and the mind hath wanted itself to give them entertainment, those in whom they are do want nothing but opportunities and occasions, taking off the power of outward restraints, for the commission of actual sin. When men have so devised mischief, “they practice it” when it is “in the power of their hand,” [Mic. ii. 1](#). It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I speak unto them only unto whom their temptations are their affliction and their burden. And such persons also must be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare and be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of any object with abhorrency and detestation, and, if it be a case of temptation, end them in complacency and approbation. **The deceitfulness of sin lays hold on something or other that lust in the mind stays upon with delectation, and so corrupts the whole frame of spirit which began the duty**. There have been instances wherein persons have entered with a resolution to punish sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion unto the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Wherefore, it is seldom that the mind of any one exercised with an actual temptation is able safely to conflict with it, if it entertain abiding thoughts of the matter of it or of the sin whereunto it leads; for sin hath “*mille nocendi artes*,” and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections from every thing it hath once made a bait of, especially if it have already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations of it. Yea, oftentimes a man, that hath some spiritual strength, and therein engageth unto the performance of duties, if in the midst of them the matter of his temptation is so presented unto him as to take hold of his thoughts, in a moment, as if he had seen (as they say) Medusa’s head, is turned into a stone; his spirits are all frozen, his strength is gone, all actings of grace do cease, his armour falls from him, and he gives up himself a prey to his temptation. **It must be a new supply of grace that can give him any deliverance**. Wherefore, whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I do not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it; for sometimes remembrances of former satisfaction of their lusts, sometimes present surprisals, with the suitableness of it unto corruption not yet mortified, sometimes the craft of Satan fixing their imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them unto a fresh compliance with that sin which they would be delivered from.

But this season calls in an especial manner for the exercise of the thoughts of men about the ways and means of deliverance from the snare wherein they are taken, or the danger they find themselves exposed unto. Think of the guilt of sin, that you may be humbled. Think of the power of sin, that you may seek strength against it. Think not of the matter of sin, the things that are in the world suited unto "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," lest you be more and more entangled. But the present direction is, **Think much of the ways of relief from the power of your own temptation leading unto sin.** But this, men, unless they are spiritually minded, are very loath to come unto. I speak not of them that love their shackles, that glory in their yoke, that like their temptations well enough, as those which give the most satisfactory entertainment unto their minds. Such men know not well what to do unless they may in their minds converse with the objects of their lusts, and do multiply thoughts about them continually. The apostle calls it "**making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.**" Their principal trouble is, that they cannot comply with them to the utmost, by reason of some outward restraints. These dwell near unto those fools who make a mock of sin, and will ere long take up their habitation among them.

But I speak, as I said before, of them only whose temptations are their afflictions, and who groan for deliverance from them. [This is characteristic of the actings of faith in the elect as Christ taught in his sermon on the mount, *blessed are those who mourn...*(for the sin that remains in him.)] Acquaint such persons with the great, indeed only, way of relief in this distress, as it is expressed, Heb. ii. 17, 18, "He is a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;" and chap. iv. 15, 16, "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" — **let them know that the only way for their deliverance is by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, his power to succour them that are tempted, with the ways whereby he administereth a sufficiency of grace unto that end,** retreating for relief unto him on the urgency of temptations; — they can hardly be brought unto a compliance therewithal. They are ready to say, "'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' **Is it not better to betake ourselves and to trust unto our own promises, resolutions, and endeavours, with such other ways of escape as are in our own power?"** **I shall speak nothing against any of them in their proper place, so far as they are warranted by Scripture rule.** **But this I say, none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations, unto the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage, but by the acting and exercising of faith on Christ Jesus and the sufficiency of his grace for our deliverance:** But when men are not spiritually minded, they cannot fix their thoughts on spiritual things. Therefore do men daily pine away under their temptations; they get ground upon them, until their breach grows great like the sea, and there be no healing of it.

I mention this only to show the weight and necessity of the duty proposed; for when men under the power of conviction are pressed with temptation, **they will do any thing rather than betake themselves unto the only efficacious relief.** Some will groan and cry out under their vexation from the torture they are put into in the conflict between their temptations and convictions; some will betake themselves unto the pretended relief that any false religion tenders unto them; but to apply themselves in thoughts of faith unto Jesus Christ, whose grace alone is sufficient for all, that they will not be persuaded unto.

We are all of us liable unto temptations. Those who are not sensible of it are under the power of what the temptation leads unto. And they are of two sorts:— First, such as are extraordinary, when the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke. It is true, God tempts none, as temptation formally leads unto sin; **but he orders temptations so far forth as they are afflictive and chastisements.** Thus it is when he suffers an especial corruption within to fall in conjunction with an especial temptation without, and to obtain a prevalency thereby. Of these there is no doubt but any man not judicially hardened may know both his disease and the remedy. But that ordinary course of temptations which we are exercised withal needs a diligent attendance for their discovery, as well as for our deliverance from them. And it is to be feared that many are kept in spiritual weakness, useless, and in darkness, all their days, through the power of their temptations, yet never know what they are or wherein they consist. These gray hairs are sprinkled on them, yet they know it not. Some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. Yet in the exercise of due watchfulness, diligence, and prudence, men may know both the plague of their own hearts in their prevailing corruptions, ³¹⁶and the ways whereby it is excited through temptation, with the occasions it makes use of and the advantages it takes. For instance, one may have an eminency in gifts, and usefulness or success in his labours, which give him great acceptance with others. Such an one shall hardly avoid a double temptation, — first, of spiritual pride and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit “a novice,” one unexperienced in the ways of grace and deceits of sin, into the office of the ministry, lest he should be “lifted up with pride,” and “fall into the condemnation of the devil,” [1 Tim. iii. 6](#); he himself was not without danger hereof, [2 Cor. xii. 1–7](#). The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the secret workings of pride upon successes and applause, unless they keep themselves constantly balanced with thoughts of their own vileness in the sight of God. And, secondly, remisness unto exact, **universal mortification, which they countenance themselves against by their acceptance and success above others in the ministry.** It were much to be desired that all who are ministers would be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves as to expose our souls unto these snares. And the effects of negligence herein do openly appear unto the disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant in the world and the affairs of it. **Negligence as unto a spiritual watch, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, with conformity unto the world, will on all occasions impose themselves upon them.** If they understand not their temptations herein, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them continually. Those that are rich have their especial temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their constitutions; of others, in their society; of most, in the various circumstances of life. Those who are upon their watch in any due measure, who exercise any wisdom or observation concerning themselves, may know wherein their temptations do lie, what are the advantages whereby they perplex their minds and endanger their souls.

In these cases, generally, men are taught what are the ways and means of their deliverance and preservation. Wherefore there are three things **required unto this duty**, and spiritual wisdom unto them all:—

(1.) To know what are the especial temptations from whence you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you. If this be neglected, if it be disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace, or is spiritually minded.

(2.) To know your remedy, your relief, wherein alone it doth consist. Many duties are required of us unto this end, and are useful thereunto; but know assuredly that no one of them, not all of them in

conjunction, will bring in relief, unto the glory of God and your own peace, without application by faith unto Him who “is able to succour them that are tempted.” Wherefore,

(3.) Herein lies your great duty with respect unto your temptations, namely, in a constant exercise of your thoughts on the love, care, compassion, and tenderness of Christ, with his ability to help, succour, and save them that do believe, so as to strengthen your faith and trust in him; which will assuredly prove successful and victorious.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect unto any urgent prevalent general temptation. There are seasons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein. What if a man should judge that now it is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness, deadness, and decay in grace, especially as to the vigorous actings of zeal, love, and delight in God, with an indifferency unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation? I do not say determinately that so it is; let others judge as they see cause: but if anyone do so judge, undoubtedly it is his duty to be exercised in his thoughts how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. He will find it his concernment to be conversant in his mind with the reasons and motives unto watchfulness, and how he may obtain such supplies of grace as may effectually preserve him from such decays.

3. All things in religion, both in faith and practice, are to be the objects of such thoughts. As they are proposed or occur in our minds in great variety, on all sorts of occasions, so we ought to give them entertainment in our meditations. To hear things, to have them proposed unto us, it may be in the way of a divine ordinance, and to let them slip out, or flow from us as water that is poured into a leaking vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore choose out some instances, as was before proposed, of those things which I judge that they who would be spiritually minded ought to abide and abound in thoughts concerning.

It is our duty greatly to mind the things that are above, eternal things, both as unto their reality, their present state, and our future enjoyment of them. Herein consists the life of this grace and duty. To be heavenly minded, — that is, to mind the things of heaven, — and to be spiritually minded, is all one; or it is the effect of being spiritually minded as unto its original and essence, or the first proper actings of it. It is the cause of it as unto its growth and degrees, and it is the evidence of it in experience. Nor do I understand how it is possible for a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them. It is the great advice of the apostle, on a supposition of our interest in Christ and conformity unto him, Col. iii. 1, 2, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **Set your affection on** (or your thoughts); **mind much the things that are above**. It becomes those who, through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ, are raised unto newness of life to have their thoughts exercised on the state of things above, with respect unto the presence of Christ among them. And the singular use of our prospect into these things, or our meditations on them, he instructs us in: 2 Cor. iv. 16–18, “**For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.**” Not to faint under the daily decays of our outward man, and the approaches of death thereby, to bear afflictions as things light and momentary, to thrive under all in the inward man, are unspeakable mercies and privileges. Can you

attain a better frame? Is there anything that you would more desire, if you are believers? Is it not better to have such a mind in us than to enjoy all the peace and security that the world can afford? One principal means whereby we are made partakers of these things is a due meditation on things unseen and eternal. These are the things that are within the veil, whereon we ought to cast the anchor of our hope in all the storms we meet withal, [Heb. vi. 19, 20](#), whereof we shall speak more afterward.

Without doubt, the generality of Christians are greatly defective in this duty, partly for want of light into them, partly for want of delight in them; they think little of an eternal country. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein their inheritance lies. If they are absent from it for a season, yet will they labour to acquaint themselves with the principal concerns of it. But this heavenly country, wherein lies our eternal inheritance, is not regarded. Men do not exercise themselves as they ought unto thoughts of things eternal and invisible. It were impossible, if they did so, that their minds should be so earthly, and their affections cleave so as they do unto present things. He that looks steadily on the sun, although he cannot bear the lustre of its beams fully, yet his sight is so affected with it that when he calls off his eyes from it, he can see nothing as it were of the things about him; they are all dark unto him. And he who looks steadily in his contemplations on things above, eternal things, though he cannot comprehend their glory, yet a veil will be cast by it on all the desirable beauties of earthly things, and take off his affections from them.

Men live and act under the power of a conviction [this is related to self-love or self preservation, a common grace that all have, as opposed to the principle of life which includes in it a love for God, i.e., that virtue or holiness that is communicated to the elect.] that there is a state of immortality and glory to come. With a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their sorrows, sufferings, and temptations; yet with many it is only a reserve when they can be here no more. But as unto daily contemplation of the nature and causes of it, or as unto any entrance into it by faith and hope, the most are strangers thereunto. If we are spiritually minded, nothing will be more natural unto us than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those wherein all our own principal concerns do lie, as well as those which are excellent and glorious in themselves. The direction thereon is, that we would make heavenly things, the things of the future state of blessedness and glory, a principal object of our thoughts, that we would think much about them, that we would meditate much upon them. Many are discouraged herein by their ignorance and darkness, by their want of due conceptions and steady apprehensions of invisible things. Hence one of these two things doth befall them when they would meditate on things above:— 1. The glory of them, the glory of God in them, being essentially infinite and incomprehensible, doth immediately overwhelm them, and, as it were, in a moment put them unto an utter loss, so that they cannot frame one thought in their minds about them. Or, 2. They want skill and ability to conceive aright of invisible things, and to dispose of them in such order in their minds as that they may sedately exercise their thoughts about them. Both these shall be afterward spoken unto. At present I shall only say, that, —

Whosoever shall sincerely engage in this duty according unto what he hath, and shall abide constant therein, he will make such a refreshing progress in his apprehension of heavenly things as he will be greatly satisfied withal. We are kept in darkness, ignorance, and unsteadiness of meditations about them, not from the nature of the things themselves, but from our own sloth, negligence, and readiness to be turned aside by apprehensions of difficulties, of the lion in the way. Wherefore, I shall consider

two things: (1.) What are the principal motives unto this duty of fixing our thoughts on the things that are above, and the advantages which we receive thereby. (2.) Give some directions how, and on what in particular, we may exercise our thoughts on those things above:—

(1.) [1.] **Faith will be increased and strengthened by it.** Invisible things are the proper objects of faith. It is “the evidence of things not seen,” [Heb. xi. 1](#). Wherefore, in our thoughts of them faith is in its proper exercise; which is the principal means of its growth and increase. And hereon two things will ensue:—

1st. **The soul will come unto a more satisfactory, abiding sense of the reality of them.** Things of imagination, which maintain a value of themselves by darkness, will not bear a diligent search into them. They lose of their reputation on every serious inquiry. If rational men would but give themselves the liberty of free inquiry by their own thoughts, it would quickly cashier the fool’s paradise of Mohammed, the purgatory of the Papists, and all such creatures of imagination and superstition. **But where things are real and substantial, the more they are inquired into, the more they evidence their being and subsistence.** It is not, therefore, every profession of a faith of a future state of blessedness that will realize it in our minds; and therefore, for the most part, it is rather a notion that men have of heavenly things, which they do not contradict, than any solid satisfaction in or spiritual sense of their reality: for these are things that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor will enter into the heart of man to conceive,” — whose existence, nature, and real state, are not easily comprehended. **But through the continual exercise of holy thoughts about them, the soul obtains an entrance into the midst of them, finding in them both durable substance and riches.** There is no way, therefore, to strengthen faith unto any degree **but by a daily contemplation on the things themselves.** **They who do not think of them frequently shall never believe them sincerely.** They admit not of any collateral evidence, where they do not evidence themselves unto our souls. **Faith, as we said, thus exercised, will give them a subsistence; not in themselves, which they have antecedent thereunto, but in us, in our hearts, in the minds of them that do believe.** Imagination creates its own object; faith finds it prepared beforehand. It will not leave a bare notion of them in the understanding, but give them a spiritual subsistence in the heart, as Christ himself dwells in our hearts by faith. [[hence Heb. 1:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."](#) See [Justification by Faith by John Owen](#)] And there are two things that **will discover this subsistence of them in us:—** [[this is a great point of interest for self-examination to see if you be in the faith; if so you will see these fruits of it to some degree!](#)]

(1st.) When we find them in a continual readiness to rise up in our minds on all occasions wherein the thoughts and remembrance of them are needful and useful unto us. There are many seasons (some whereof shall be immediately spoken unto) and many duties, wherein and whereunto the faith and thoughts of things invisible and eternal are needful unto us, so as that we cannot fill up those seasons nor perform those duties in a due manner without them. If on all such occasions they do, from the inward frame of our minds, present themselves unto us, or, through our acquaintance and familiarity with them, we recur in our thoughts unto them, they seem to have a real subsistence given unto them in our souls. **But if on such occasions, wherein alone they will yield us help and relief, we accustom ourselves to other thoughts, if those concerning them are, as it were, out of the way, and arise not in our minds of their own accord, we are yet strangers unto this effect of faith.**

(2dly.) They are realized unto us, they have a subsistence in us, when the soul **continually longeth to be in them**. **When they have given such a relish unto our hearts, as the first-fruits of glory, that we cannot but desire on all opportune occasions to be in the full enjoyment of them**, faith seems to have had its **effectual work herein upon us**. **For want of these things do many among us walk in disconsolation all their days**.

2dly. It will **gradually** give the heart an acquaintance with the especial nature and use of these things. General thoughts and notions of heaven and glory do but fluctuate up and down in the mind, and very little influence it unto other duties; **but assiduous contemplation** will give the mind such distinct apprehensions of heavenly things as shall duly affect it with the glory of them. The more we **discern of the glory and excellency of them in their own nature; of their suitableness unto ours, as our only proper rest and blessedness, as the perfection and complement of what is already begun in us by grace**; of the **restless tendency of all gracious dispositions and inclinations of our hearts towards their enjoyment**, — the more will faith be established **in its cleaving unto them**. **So in the contemplation of these things consists the principal food of faith, whereby it is nourished and strengthened**. And we are not to expect much work where there is not provision of proper food for them that labour. No wonder if we find faith faint and weak in the work it hath to do, which ofttimes is great and weighty, if we neglect to guide it daily unto that which should administer strength unto it.

[2.] It will give life and exercise unto the **grace of hope**. Hope is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the **supportment and consolation of believers**. By it are we purified, sanctified, saved. And, to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is a principal way of the working of Christ as inhabiting in us: **Col. i. 27**, “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Where Christ evidenceth his presence with us, he gives us an infallible hope of glory; he gives us an assured pledge of it, and worketh our souls into an expectation of it. Hope in general is but an uncertain expectation of a future good which we desire; but as it is a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an earnest expectation, proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence, accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment. **From a mistake of its nature it is that few Christians labour after it**, exercise themselves unto it, or have the benefit of it; for, to live by hope they suppose infers a state not only beneath the life of faith and all assurance in believing, but also exclusive of them. **They think to hope to be saved is a condition of men who have no grounds of faith or assurance; but this is to turn a blessed fruit of the Spirit into a common affection of nature**. Gospel hope is a fruit of faith, trust, and confidence; yea, the height of the actings of all grace issues in a well-grounded hope, nor can it rise any higher, **Rom. v. 2–5**.

Now, the reason why men have no more use of, no more benefit by, this excellent grace, is because **they do not abide in thoughts and contemplation of the things hoped for**. The especial object of hope is **eternal glory**, **Col. i. 27; Rom. v. 2**. The peculiar use of it is to support, comfort, and refresh the soul, in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves, by continual meditation, with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous, active hope, such as whereby the apostle says “we are saved.” Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

good example:

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension that there is a place of rest and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit some of them have only a general notion of these things; they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations. Others there are who **by all possible means acquaint themselves** particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many, and their dangers great, and they have nothing to relieve and encourage themselves with but the hope and expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint, their general hopes will not be able to relieve them; but those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite and work in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, **that grace which is neglected for the most part as unto its benefit, and dead as unto its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions.** This, therefore, is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of who are really spiritually minded.

[3.] This alone will make us ready for the cross, for all sorts of sufferings that we may be exposed unto.

There is nothing more necessary unto believers at this season than to have their minds furnished with provision of such things as may prepare them for the cross and sufferings. Various intimations of the mind of God, circumstances of providence, the present state of things in the world, with the instant peril of the latter days, do all call them hereunto. If it be otherwise with them, they will at one time or other be woefully surprised, and think strange of their trials, as if some strange thing did befall them. **Nothing is more useful unto this end than constant thoughts and contemplations of eternal things and future glory.** From hence alone can the soul have in a readiness what to lay in the balance against all sorts of sufferings. When a storm begins to arise at sea, the mariners bestir themselves in the management of the tackling of the ship, and other applications of their art, for their safety; but if the storm increase and come to extremity, they are forced to forego all other means and betake themselves unto a sheet-anchor, to hold their ship steady against its violence. So when a storm of persecution and troubles begins to arise, men have various ways and considerations for their relief; but if it once come to extremity, — if sword, nakedness, famine, and death, are inevitably coming upon them, — they have nothing to betake themselves unto that will yield them solid relief **but the consideration and faith of things invisible and eternal.**

So the apostle declares this state of things, [2 Cor. iv. 16–18](#) (the words before insisted on), “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” He lays all sorts of afflictions in one scale, and, on the consideration of them, declares them to be “light” and “but for a moment.” Then he lays glory in the other scale, and finds it to be ponderous, weighty, and “eternal,” — “an exceeding weight of glory.” In the one is sorrow for a little while, in the other eternal joy; in the one pain for a few moments, in the other everlasting rest; in the one is the loss of some few temporary things, in the other the full fruition of God in Christ, who is all in all.

Hence the same apostle casts up the account of these things, and gives us his judgment concerning them, [Rom. viii. 18](#), “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” There is no comparison between them, as if one had as much evil and misery in them as the other hath of good and blessedness; as though his state were any way to be complained of who must undergo the one whilst he hath an interest in the other; or as though to escape the one he hazard the enjoyment of the other.

It is inseparable from our nature to have a fear of and aversion from great, distressing sufferings, that are above the power of nature to bear. Even our Lord Jesus himself, having taken on him all the sinless properties of our nature, had a fear and aversion, though holy and gracious, with respect unto his own. Those who, through a stout-heartedness, do contemn them before their approach, boasting in themselves of their abilities to undergo them, censuring such as will not unadvisedly engage in them, are such as seldom glorify God when they are really [called] to conflict with them. Peter alone trusted unto himself that he would not forsake his Master, and seemed to take the warning ill that they should all do so, and he alone denied him. All church stories are filled with instances of such as, having borne themselves high before the approach of trials, have shamefully miscarried when their trials have come. Wherefore, it is moreover allowed unto us to use all lawful means for the avoiding of them. Both rules and examples of the Scripture give sufficient warranty for it. But there are times and seasons wherein, without any tergiversation, they are to be undergone unto the glory of God and in the discharge of our duty, confessing Christ before men, as we would be owned by him before his Father in heaven. All things do now call us to prepare for such a season, to be martyrs in resolution, though we should never really lose our lives by violence. Nothing will give us this preparation but to have our minds exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things, of things that are invisible and eternal. **He who is thus spiritually minded, who hath his thoughts and affections set on things above, will have always in a readiness what to oppose unto any circumstance of his sufferings.**

Those views which such an one hath had by faith of the uncreated glories above, of the things in heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God, of the glory within the veil, whereby they have been realized and made present unto his soul, will now visit him every moment, abide with him continually, and put forth their efficacy unto his supportment and refreshment. **Alas! what will become of many of us, who are grovelling continually on the earth, whose bellies cleave unto the dust, who are strangers unto the thoughts of heavenly things, when distressing troubles shall befall us? Why shall we think that refreshing thoughts of things above will then visit our souls, whet we resisted their admittance in days of peace?** “Do ye come to me in your distress,” saith Jephthah, “when in the time of

your peace ye drove me from you?" When we would thus think of heavenly things to our refreshment, we shall hardly get them to make an abode with us. I know God can come in by the mighty power of his Spirit and grace to support and comfort the souls of them who are called and even surprised into the greatest of sufferings; yet do I know also that it is our duty not to tempt him in the neglect of the ways and means which he hath appointed for the communication of his grace unto us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, as "the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," [Heb. xii. 2](#). His **mediatory glory** in the salvation of the church **was the matter of the joy set before him**. This he took the view and prospect of in all his sufferings, **unto his refreshment and supportment**. And his example, as "the author and finisher of our faith," **is more efficaciously instructive than any other rule or precept**. **Eternal glory is set before us also; it is the design of God's wisdom and grace that by the contemplation of it we should relieve ourselves in all our suffering, yea, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.** [It is our duty to increase in the knowledge of this and of God's wisdom in the way of salvation which requires diligent searching and studying of the scriptures so as to be able to fix our thoughts and contemplations on as to give him praise and honor in a due manner. Otherwise on what are we to contemplate?? We need to know what this glory is, in what it consists so that we become familiar with it, etc. See Edwards on this, too.] How many of those blessed souls now in the enjoyment of God and glory, who passed through fiery trials and great tribulations, were enabled to sing and rejoice in the flames by prepossession of this glory in their minds through believing! yea, some of them have been so filled with them as to take off all sense of pain under the most exquisite tortures. When Stephen was to be stoned, to encourage him in his suffering and comfort him in it, "the heavens were opened, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Who can conceive what contempt of all the rage and madness of the Jews, what a neglect of all the pains of death, this view raised his holy soul unto? To obtain, therefore, such views frequently by faith, as they do who are truly spiritually minded, is the most effectual way to encourage us unto all our sufferings. The apostle gives us the force of this encouragement in a comparison with earthly things: [1 Cor. ix. 25](#), "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." **If men, when a corruptible crown of vain honour and applause is proposed unto them, will do and endure all that is needful for the attainment of it, and relieve themselves in their hardships with thoughts and imaginations of attaining it, grounded on uncertain hopes, shall not we, who have a crown immortal and invisible proposed unto us, and that with the highest assurance of the enjoyment of it, cheerfully undergo, endure, and suffer, what we are to go through in the way unto it.**

[4.] This is the most effectual means to wean the heart and affections from things here below, to keep the mind unto an undervaluation, yea, a contempt of them, as occasion shall require; for there is a season wherein there is such a contempt required in us of all relations and enjoyments as our Saviour calleth the "hating" of them, — that is, not absolutely, but comparatively, in comparison of him and the gospel, with the duties which belong unto our profession: [Luke xiv. 26](#), "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Some, I fear, if they did but consider it, would be apt to say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" and others would cry out, with the disciples in another case, "Lord, who then can be saved?" but it is the word whereby we must be judged, nor can we be the disciples of Christ on any other terms. But here, in an especial manner, lies the wound and weakness of

faith and profession in these our days: “The bellies of men cleave unto the dust,” or their affections unto earthly things.

I speak not of those who, by rapine, deceit, and oppression, strive to enrich themselves; nor of those who design nothing more than the attainment of greatness and promotion in the world, though not by ways of open wickedness; least of all of them who make religion, and perhaps their ministry therein, a means for the attaining of secular ends and preferments. No wise man can suppose such persons, any of them, to be spiritually minded, and it is most easy to disprove all their pretences. But I intend only those at present whose ways and means of attaining riches are lawful, honest, and unblamable; who use them with some moderation, and do profess that their portion lies in better things, so as it is hard to fasten a conviction on them in the matter of their conversation. Whatever may seem to reflect upon them, they esteem it to be that whose omission would make them foolish in their affairs or negligent in their duty. But even among these also there is oftentimes that inordinate love unto present things, that esteem and valuation of them, that concernment in them, as are not consistent with their being spiritually minded. With some their relations, with some their enjoyments, with most both in conjunction, are an idol which they set up in their hearts and secretly bow down unto. About these are their hopes and fears exercised, on them is their love, in them is their delight. They are wholly taken up with their own concerns, count all lost that is not spent on them, and all time misspent that is not engaged about them. Yet the things which they do they judge to be good in themselves; their hearts do not condemn them as to the matter of them. The valuation they have of their relations and enjoyments they suppose to be lawful, within the bounds which they have assigned unto it. Their care about them is, in their own minds, but their duty. It is no easy matter, it requires much spiritual wisdom, to fix right boundaries unto our affections and their actings about earthly things. But let men plead and pretend what they please, I shall offer one rule in this case, which will not fail; and this is, that when men are so confident in the good state and measure of their affections and their actings towards earthly things as that they will oppose their engagements into them unto known duties of religion, piety, and charity, they are gone into a sinful excess. Is there a state of the poor that requires their liberality and bounty, — you must excuse them, they have families to provide for; when what is expected from them signifies nothing at all as unto a due provision for their families, nor is what would lessen their inheritances or portions one penny in the issue. Are they called to an attendance on seasons of religious duties? — they are so full of business that it is impossible for them to have leisure for any such occasions. So by all ways declaring that they are under the power of a prevalent, predominant affection unto earthly things. This fills all places with lifeless, sapless, useless professors, who approve themselves in their condition, whilst it is visibly unspiritual and withering.

The heart will have something whereon, in a way of pre-eminence, it will fix itself and its affections. This, in all its perpetual motions, it seeks for rest and satisfaction in. And every man hath an edge; the edge of his affections is set one way or other, though it be more keen in some than others. And whereas all sorts of things that the heart can fix upon or turn the edge of its affections unto are distributed by the apostle into “things above” and “things beneath,” things heavenly and things earthly, if we have not such a view and prospect of heavenly things as to cause our hearts to cleave unto them and delight in them, let us pretend what we will, it is impossible but that we shall be under the power of a predominant affection unto the things of this world. [\[Iron sharpens iron: we sharpen the edge of each other toward spiritual things and make them blunt to all other things. The predominant inclination to a man's affections is his edge - Owen Ch11 Part II\]](#) Herein lies the great

danger of multitudes at this present season; for, let men profess what they will, under the power of this frame their eternal state is in hazard every moment. And persons are engaged in it in great variety of degrees; and we may cast them under two heads:—

1st. Some do not at all understand that things are amiss with them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts do cleave unto, and which it is their duty to take care of and regard. “May they not delight in their own relations, especially at such a time, when others break and cancel all duties and bonds of relation in the service of and provision they make for their lusts? May they not be careful, in good and honest ways of diligence, about the things of the world, when the most either lavish their time away in the pursuit of bestial lusts, or heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not contrive for the promotion of their children in the world, to add the other hundred or thousand pounds unto their advancement, that they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an infidel who provides not for his own family,” By such reasonings and secret thoughts do many justify themselves in their earthly mindedness. And so fixed they are in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall lose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. [see Gal. 4:16 "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"] Yea, they will avoid one duty that lieth not against their earthly interest, because it leads unto another; — they will not engage in religious assemblies, or be constant unto their duty in them, for fear duties of charity should be required of them or expected from them. On what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I know not. I shall leave only one rule with persons that are thus minded:— Where our love unto the world hath prevailed, by its reasonings, pleas, and pretences, to take away our fear and jealousy over our own hearts lest we should inordinately love it, there it is assuredly predominant in us.

2dly. Others are sensible of the evil of their hearts, at least are jealous and afraid lest it should be found that their hearts do cleave inordinately unto these things. Hence they endeavour to contend against this evil, sometimes by forcing themselves unto such acts of piety or charity as are contrary unto that frame, and sometimes by labouring a change of the frame itself; especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by trials and afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But, for the most part, they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal, and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. There are other duties required also unto the same end, — namely, of the mortification of our desires and affections unto earthly things, — whereof I have treated elsewhere [“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Col. 3:5”]; but without this, or a fixed contemplation on the desirableness, beauty, and glory, of heavenly things, it will not be attained [see 2Cor3:18 -“ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”, Col. 3:1-2 - “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”, Joshua 1:8, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may

observe to do according to all that is written in it."]. Farther to evince the truth hereof, we may observe these two things:— (1st.) If by any means a man do seem to have taken off his heart from the **love of present things**, **and be not at the same time taken up with the love of things that are heavenly**, his seeming mortification is of no advantage unto him. So persons frequently, through discontent, disappointments, or dissatisfaction with relations, or mere natural weariness, have left the world, the affairs and cares of it, as unto their wonted conversations in it, and have betaken themselves to monasteries, convents, or other retirements suiting their principles, without any advantage to their souls. (2dly.) God is no such severe lord and master as to require us to take off our affections from and mortify them unto those things which the law of our nature makes dear unto us, as wives, children, houses, lands, and possessions, and not propose unto us somewhat that is incomparably more excellent to fix them upon. So he invites the elect of the Gentiles unto Christ: Ps. xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;" that is, "Come into the faith of Abraham, who forsook his country and his father's house to follow God whithersoever he pleased." **But he proposeth this for their encouragement**, verse 11, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The love of the great King is an abundant satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. So when Abraham's servant was sent to take Rebekah for a wife unto Isaac, he required that she should immediately leave father and mother, brothers, and all enjoyments, and go along with him; but withal, that she might know herself to be no loser thereby, he not only assured her of the greatness of his master, but also at present he gave her "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," Gen. xxiv. 53. And when our Saviour requires that we should part with all for his sake and the gospel, he promiseth a hundredfold in lieu of them, even in this life, — **namely, in an interest in things spiritual and heavenly**. Wherefore, without an assiduous meditation on heavenly things, as a better, more noble, and **suitable object for our affections to be fixed on, we can never be freed in a due manner from an inordinate love of the things here below**.

It is sad to see some professors, who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak and discourse of spiritual things, and keep themselves from the open excesses of the world, yet, when they come to be tried by such duties as intrench on their love and adherence unto earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being spiritually minded in a due manner. Were they to be tried as our Saviour tried the young man who made such a profession of his conscientious and religious conversation, "Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me," something might be pleaded in excuse for their tergiversation [equivocation]; but, alas! they will decline their duty when they are not touched unto the hundredth part of their enjoyments.

[Another good thing to glean from this is the duty of *iron sharpening iron*, Pr. 27:17 - "**As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend**"; that being, the mutual sharpening of the edge of our affections by holy conversation amongst believers. See Eph 5:17-21 - "**Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**"¹⁸ **And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (dissipated living, decadence, etc.); but be filled with the Spirit,**¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ **submitting to one another in the fear of God.**" **In this we encourage one another**, see Heb. 3:13 - "**But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**"]

I bless God I speak not thus of many of my own knowledge, and may say with the apostle unto the most unto whom I usually speak in this manner, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," [Heb. vi. 9](#). Yea, the same testimony may be given of many in this city which the same apostle gives unto the churches of Macedonia: [2 Cor. viii. 1–3](#), Understand "the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." There hath been nothing done amongst us that may or can be boasted of; yet, considering all circumstances, it may be there have not been more instances of true, evangelical charity in any age or place for these many years. For them who have been but useful and helpful herein, the Lord remember them for good, and spare them according to the multitude of his mercies! It is true, they have not, many of them, founded colleges, built hospitals, or raised works of state and magnificence; for very many of them are such as whose deep poverty comparatively hath abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The backs and bellies of multitudes of poor and needy servants of Christ have been warmed and refreshed by them, blessing God for them. "Thanks be unto God," saith the apostle in this case, "for his unspeakable gift," [2 Cor. ix. 15](#). Blessed be God, who hath not left the gospel without this glory, nor the profession of it without this evidence of its power and efficacy! Yea, God hath exalted the glory of persecutions and afflictions; for many, since they have lost much of their enjoyments by them, and have all endangered continually, have abounded in duties of charity beyond what they did in the days of their fulness and prosperity. So "out of the eater there hath come forth meat." And if the world did but know what fruits, in a way of charity and bounty, unto the praise of God and glory of the gospel, have been occasioned by their making many poor, it would abate of their satisfaction in their successes.

But with many it is not so. **Their minds are so full of earthly things, they do so cleave unto them in their affections**, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment of the glory of God or the gospel, can make any impressions on them. If there be yet in them so much life and light of grace as to design a deliverance from this woeful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of.

Especially this advice is needful unto those ware rich, who have large possessions, or abound in the goods of this world. The poor, the afflicted, the sorrowful, are prompted from their outward circumstances, as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to remember and to think of the things above, wherein lies their only reserve and relief against the trouble and urgency of their present condition; but the enjoyment of these things in abundance is accompanied with a twofold evil, lying directly contrary unto this duty:—

A desire of increase and adding thereunto. Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires, and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of waters, sufficient for our use, may be kept within ordinary banks; but if a flood be turned into them, they know no bounds, but overflow all about them. **The increase of wealth and riches enlargeth the desires of men after them beyond all bounds of wisdom**, sobriety, or safety. He that labours hard for his daily bread hath seldom such earnest, vehement desires of an addition unto what he hath, as many have who already have more than they know how to use or almost what to do withal. This they must have more, and the last advantage serves

for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would, on other accounts, be esteemed good Christians, and spiritually minded, as all good Christians are.

They draw the heart to value and esteem them, as those which bring in their satisfaction, and make them to differ from those whom they see to be poor and miserable. **Now, these things are contrary unto, and, where they are habitually prevalent, inconsistent utterly with, being spiritually minded.** Nor is it possible that any who in the least degree are under their power can ever attain deliverance, unless their thoughts are fixed upon, and their minds thereby possessed with, due apprehensions of invisible things and eternal glory.

These are some few of those many advantages which we may obtain by fixing our thoughts and meditations, and thereby our affections, on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give some few directions for the practice of this duty; for whatever else we are and do, we neither are nor can be truly spiritually minded, whereon life and peace depend, unless we do really exercise our thoughts unto meditations of things above. Without it all our religion is but vain. And as I fear men are generally wanting and defective herein in point of practice, so I do also that many, through the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their intellectuals, and ignorance of the nature of all things unseen, do seldom set themselves unto the contemplation of them. I shall therefore give some few directions for the practice of this duty.

Part II Chapter VI.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.v.vi.html>

Directions unto the exercise of our thoughts on things above, things future, invisible, and eternal; on God himself; with the difficulties of it, and oppositions unto it, and the way of their removal — Right notions of future glory stated.

(2.) We have treated in general before of the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts as unto our present duty. That which we were last engaged in is an especial instance in heavenly things, — things future and invisible, — with the fountain and spring of them all in Christ and God himself. And because men generally are unskilled herein, and great difficulties arise in the way of the discharge of this part of the duty in hand, I shall give some especial directions concerning it:—

[1.] **Possess your minds with right notions and apprehensions of things above**, and of the state of **future glory**. We are in this duty to “look at the things which are not seen,” [2 Cor. iv. 18](#). **It is faith only whereby we have a prospect of them; for “we walk by faith, and not by sight.” And faith can give us no interest in them unless we have due apprehensions of them;** for it doth but assent and cleave unto the truth of what is proposed unto it. And the greatest part of mankind do both deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this matter. They fancy a future state, which hath no foundation but in **their own imaginations**. Wherefore the apostle, directing us to seek and mind the “things that are above,” adds, for the guidance of our thoughts, the consideration of the principal concernment of them, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,” [Col. iii. 1, 2](#). He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of

those heavenly things, especially of the presence of Christ in his exaltation and glory. Wherefore the true notion of these things which we are to possess our minds withal may here be considered:—

1st. All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness do agree in this matter, that it contains in it, or is accompanied with, a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil. But in what is so they are not agreed. Many esteem only those things that are grievous, troublesome, wasting and destructive unto nature, to be so; that is, what is penal, in pain, sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kinds of outward troubles, and death itself, are evil. Wherefore they suppose that the future state of blessedness will free them from all these things, if they can attain unto it. This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes, it may be, against the pleasures of it, which they must forego; yea, persons profane and profligate will, in words at least, profess that heaven will give them rest from all their troubles: but it is no place of rest for such persons.

Unto all others also, unto believers themselves, these things are evil, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven and glory. And there is no doubt but it is lawful for us and meet that we should contemplate on them, as those which will give us a deliverance from all outward troubles, death itself, and all that leads thereunto. Heaven is promised as “rest” unto them that are “troubled,” [2 Thess. i. 7.](#) It is our duty, under all our sufferings, reproaches, persecutions, troubles, and sorrows, to raise up our minds unto the contemplation of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. It is a blessed notion of heaven, that “God shall therein wipe away all tears from our eyes,” [Rev. vii. 17.](#) or remove far from us all causes of sorrow. And it would be unto our advantage if we did accustom our minds more unto this kind of relief than we do, — if, upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily retreat unto thoughts of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. Even this most inferior consideration of it would render the thoughts of it more familiar, and the thing itself more useful unto us. Much better it were than on such occasions to be exercised with heartless complaints, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances.

But there is that which, unto them who are truly spiritually minded, hath more evil in it than all these things together; **and that is sin.** **Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, in all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it.** He is no true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by its natural affections, at some seasons than ever our sins did at any one time in any one instance, — so a man may have a greater trouble in sense of pain by a fit of the toothache, which will be gone in an hour, than in a hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life, — but take in the whole course of our lives, and all the actings of our souls, in spiritual judgment as well as in natural affection, **and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow.**

Wherefore, in the first place, it belongs unto the true notion of heaven, that it is a state wherein we shall be eternally freed from sin and all the concernments of it; but only [through] the exaltation of the glory of God’s grace in Christ by the pardon of it. **He that truly hates sin and abhors it, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it so far as it is possible, who walks in self-abasement through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hoped it should act in him no more,** cannot, as I judge, but **frequently betake himself for refreshment unto thoughts of that state wherein he shall be**

freed from it, and triumph over it unto eternity. This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended and fixed on the mind, and which we may dwell upon unto the great advantage and satisfaction of our souls.

Frequent thoughts and meditations on heaven under this notion do argue a man to be spiritually minded; for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden unto him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequents, that no thoughts are more welcome unto him than those of that state wherein sin shall be no more. And although men are troubled about their sins, and would desirously be freed from them, so far as they perplex their minds and make their consciences uneasy, yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. [again, this is another point about which we should examine ourselves for our own consolation and peace] Wherefore, when men can so wrangle and wrestle with their convictions of sin, and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them at some time or other in this world, without longing desires after that state wherein sin shall be no more, they can give no evidence that they are spiritually minded.

It is quite otherwise with sincere believers in the exercise of this duty. The consideration of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good Spirit that dwelleth in them, of the light, grace, and mercy, which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, are those which make the remainders of sin most grievous and burdensome unto them. This is that which even breaks their hearts, and makes some of them go mourning all the day long, — namely, that anything of that which alone God hates should be found in them or be remaining with them. It is, **in this condition, an evidence that they are spiritually minded**, if, together with watchful endeavours for the universal mortification of sin, and utter excision of it, both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of that blessed state wherein they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin, with refreshment, delight, and complacency.

These things belong unto our direction for the fixing of our thoughts and meditations on things above. This the meanest and weakest person who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace is capable of apprehending and able to practice; and it is that which the sense they have of the evil of sin will put them on every day, if they shut not their eyes against the light of the refreshment that is in it. Let them who cannot rise in their minds unto fixed and stable thoughts of any other notion of these invisible things dwell on this consideration of them, wherein they will find no small spiritual advantage and refreshment unto their souls.

2dly. As unto the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts and apprehensions of men are very various; and that we may know as well what to avoid as what to embrace, we shall a little reflect on some of them:—

(1st.) Many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a future state of blessedness and glory, no notions wherein either faith or reason is concerned. Imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not. No wonder if such persons have no delight in, no use of, thoughts of heaven. When their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are swallowed up in nothing. Glorious, and therefore desirable, they take it for

granted that it must be. But nothing can be so unto them but what is suitable unto their present dispositions, inclinations, and principles; and hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven or in the eternal enjoyment of God. These things are not suited unto the will of their minds and of the flesh; and therefore they cannot rise up unto any constant desires of them. Hence, to please themselves, they begin to imagine what is not; but whereas what is truly heaven pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found, they seldom or never endeavour in good earnest to exercise their thoughts about it.

It were well if **darkness and ignorance** of the true nature of the future state and eternal glory did not exceedingly prejudice believers themselves as unto their delight in them and meditations about them. They have nothing fixed or stated in their minds, which they can betake themselves unto in their thoughts when they would contemplate about them. And, by the way, whatever doth divert the minds of men from the power and life of spiritual worship, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, doth greatly hinder them as unto right conceptions of a future state. There was a promise of eternal life given unto the saints under the old testament; but whereas they were obliged unto a worship that was carnal and outwardly pompous, they never had clear and distinct apprehensions of the future state of glory, for "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the infinite riches of eternal glory, yet it is the duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so as that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love unto it, earnest desires after it; all under its own true and proper notion.

(2dly.) So great a part of mankind as the Mohammedans, unto whom God hath given all the principal and most desirable parts of the world to inhabit and possess, do conceive the state of future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures. And evidence this is that the religion which they profess **hath no power or efficacy on their minds, to change them from the love of sin, or from placing their happiness in fulfilling the desires of the flesh.** It doth not at all enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections unto the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited unto its rational constitution; for if it did, they would place their happiness and blessedness in them. Wherefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men, unto their eternal destruction.

(3dly.) Some of the philosophers of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of men in another world doth consist in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature. And there is a truth in this notion, which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses; and sundry who have been and are learned among Christians have greatly improved this truth by the light of the Scripture. From reason they take up with thoughts of the goodness, the amiableness, the self-sufficiency, the all-sufficient satisfactoriness of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. These things shine in themselves with such a glorious light as that there is no more required unto a perception of them but that men do not willfully shut their eyes against it through bestial sensuality and love of sin. From reason also do they frame their conceptions concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the immediate enjoyment of God, and what is suited therein unto their utmost blessedness. **No more is required unto these things but a due consideration of the nature of God and man, with our relation unto him and dependence on him.** By the light of the Scripture they frame these things into that which they call the "beatifical vision;" whereby they intend

all the ways whereby God, in the highest and immediate instances, **can and doth communicate of himself unto the souls of men**, and the utmost elevation of their intellectual capacities to receive those communications. It is such an intellectual apprehension of the divine nature and perfections, **with ineffable love, as gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend unto**.

These things are so, and they have been by many both piously and elegantly illustrated; howbeit they are above the capacities of ordinary Christians, — they know not how to manage them in their minds, nor exercise their thoughts about them. They cannot reduce them unto present usefulness, nor make them subservient unto the exercise and increase of grace. And the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary unto this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited unto the faith and experience of believers, and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto our minds. This, therefore, is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

(4thly.) The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice, is, that faith shall be turned into sight, and grace into glory. “We walk by faith, and not by sight,” saith the apostle, [2 Cor. v. 7](#). Wherefore, this is the difference between our present and our future state, **that sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith**, [1 John iii. 2](#); and if sight come into the place of faith, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith. So the apostle informs us, [1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12](#), **“We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.”** Those things which we now see darkly, as in a glass, we shall then have an immediate sight and full comprehension of; for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part. What, then, is the **principal present object of faith** as it is evangelical, into whose room sight must succeed? **Is it not the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness, and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will and the ways of their accomplishment, unto the eternal salvation of the church, in and by him, with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself**? Wherefore, in the full, satisfactory representation of these things unto our souls, received by sight, or a direct, immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. **We behold them now darkly, as in a glass, — that is the utmost which by faith we can attain unto; in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed**. The infinite, incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith; nor shall they be so unto sight in heaven. **The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our faith here, and shall be of our sight hereafter**. Only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiesce in them, as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them with delight ineffable. **This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other**. And this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever live in the exercise of faith, and have any experience of the life, power, and sweetness, of these heavenly things, unto whom they are a spring of grace and consolation, **they are able to meditate on the glory of them in their full enjoyment**. Think much of heaven, as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the wisdom, and love, and grace of God in Christ, with those other things which shall be immediately declared.

Some perhaps will be ready to say, that if this be heaven, they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired. It may be so, for some **have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations**. Some have no light, no principle, no disposition of mind or soul, whereunto these things are either acceptable or suitable. [see 1Cor2:14, " **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;**] Some will go no farther in the consideration of the divine excellencies of God, and the faculties and actings of our souls, **than reason will guide them**; which may be of use. But we look for no other heaven, we desire none, but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the gospel; **that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us**, not what shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited unto the desires and inclinations of the worst of men as well as of the best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. **No man who is not acquainted experimentally, in some measure, with the life, power, and evidence of faith here, hath any other heaven in his aim but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith leads and conducts us unto, which the souls of believers long after**, as that which will give full rest, satisfaction, and complacency, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them, and the **communication of their effects unto us. He that likes it not, unto whom it is not desirable, may betake himself unto Mohammed's paradise or the philosophers' speculations; in the gospel heaven he hath no interest.** These are the things which we see now darkly, as in a glass, by faith; in the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God, and the comprehension of them is that which shall give us our utmost conformity and likeness unto him whereof our natures are capable. In a sense and experience of their reality and goodness, given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual consolations and joys consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first-fruits of glory. Our light, sense, experience, and enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted; our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure, — **are the only means whereby we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."**

To have the eternal glory of God in Christ, with all the fruits of his wisdom and love, whilst we are ourselves under the full participation of the effects of them, immediately, directly revealed, proposed, made known unto us, in a divine and glorious light, our souls being furnished with a capacity to behold and perfectly comprehend them, — this is the heaven which, according unto God's promise, we look for. But, as was said, these things shall be elsewhere more fully treated of.

It is true that there are sundry other things in particular that belong unto this state of glory; but what we have mentioned is the fountain and spring of them all. We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of his nature, nor can any created understanding conceive any such thing. **God's communications of himself unto us and our enjoyment of him shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ.** He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness, in **these things, is a stranger unto that heaven which the Scripture reveals and which faith leads unto.**

It may be inquired, What is the **subjective glory**, or **what change is to be wrought in ourselves that we may enjoy this glory?** Now, that consists principally as unto our souls, in the perfection of all grace

which is initially wrought and subjectively resides in us in this world. The grace which we have here shall not be done away as unto its essence and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as unto the manner of its operation. What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present light, faith, and love of God, though he be told that he should receive that in lieu of them which is more excellent, whereof he hath no experience, nor can understand of what nature it is? When the saints enter into rest, their good works do follow them; and how can they do so if their grace do not accompany them, from whence they proceed? **The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak and interrupted in their operations, is a principal eminency of the state of glory. Faith shall be heightened into vision, as was proved before; which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as unto its manner of operation towards things invisible.** If a man have a weak, small faith in this life, with little evidence and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and hath no comfort from what he doth believe; if afterward, through supplies of grace, he hath a mighty prevailing evidence of the things believed, is filled with comfort and assurance; **this is not by a faith or grace of another kind than what he had before, but by the same faith raised unto a higher degree of perfection.** When our Saviour cured the blind man and gave him his sight, [Mark viii.](#), at first he saw all things obscurely and imperfectly, — he saw “men as trees, walking,” [340verse 24](#); but on another application of virtue unto him, “he saw every man clearly,” [verse 25](#). It was not a sight of another kind which he then received than what he had at first; only its imperfection, whereby he “saw men as trees, walking,” was taken away. Nor will our perfect vision of things above be a grace absolutely of another kind from the light of faith which we here enjoy; only what is imperfect in it will be done away, and it will be made meet for the present enjoyment of things here at a distance and invisible. Love shall have its perfection also, and the least alteration in its manner of operation of any grace whatever; and there is nothing that should more excite us to labour after a growth in love to God in Christ than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in all its operations, only both the one and the other shall be made absolutely perfect. **The soul will by it be enabled to cleave unto God unchangeably, with eternal delight, satisfaction, and complacency.** Hope shall be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as unto other graces.

This subjective perfection of our nature, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls and all their operations, belongs unto our blessedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the objective glory in heaven would not, in our beholding and enjoyment of it (if it were possible), make us blessed and happy, if our own natures were not made perfect, freed from all disorder, irregular motions, and weak, imperfect operations. What is it, then, that must give our natures this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone whose beginnings we are here made partakers of; **for therein consists the renovation of the image of God in us,** and the perfect communication of that image unto us is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost which their capacity is suited unto. And this gives us the last thing to be inquired into, — namely, by what means in ourselves we shall eternally abide in that state; and this is, by the unalterable adherence of our whole souls unto God, in perfect love and delight. This is that whereby alone the soul reacheth unto the essence of God, and the infinite, incomprehensible perfections of his nature. For the perfect nature hereof, divine revelation hath left it under a veil, and so must we do also; nor do I designedly handle these things in this place, but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them.

This is the notion of heaven which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant withal; and the true stating of it by faith is a discriminating character of believers. This is no heaven unto any others. Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial state in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other things, cannot conceive how heavenly glory and blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away rough unwrought diamonds as useless stones; they know not what polishing will bring them unto. Nor do men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness judge there can be any glory in rough unwrought grace; they know not what lustre and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it.

It is generally supposed that however men differ in and about religion here, yet they agree well enough about heaven; they would all go to the same heaven. But it is a great mistake; they differ in nothing more; they would not all go to the same heaven. How few are they who value that heavenly state which we have treated of, or do understand how any blessedness can consist in the enjoyment of it! But this, and no other heaven, would we go unto. **Other notions there may be, there are of it; which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations**, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, **the more carnal they may grow, at best the more superstitious**. But spiritual thoughts of this heaven, consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace, in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, and all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of spiritual life and the increase of all graces in us; **for they cannot but effect an assimilation in the mind and heart unto the things contemplated on [2Cor. 3:18]**, when the **principles** and **seeds** of them are already inlaid and begun. This is our first direction.

2. **Having fixed right notions and apprehensions of heavenly things in our minds**, it is our duty to think and contemplate greatly on them and our own concernment in them. Without this all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use unto us. And unto your encouragement and direction take these few short rules relating unto this duty:—

1st. Here lies the great trial whether we are spiritually minded or no, by virtue of this rule, “If we are risen with Christ, we will mind the things that are above,” [Col. iii. 1](#).

2dly. Here lies the great means whereby we may attain farther degrees in that blessed frame of mind, if it be already formed in us, by virtue of that rule, “Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory,” [2 Cor. iii. 18](#).

3dly. Here lies the great evidence whether we have a real interest in the things above or no, **whether we place our portion and blessedness in them, by virtue of that rule**, “Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.” **Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison whereof all other things are “but loss and dung?”** — we shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them.

4thly. It cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle cognate and suited unto things above, of the same kind and nature with them, that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace which strive and naturally tend unto perfection, labouring greatly here under the weight of their own weaknesses, as it is with all who are truly spiritually minded, and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about these things, [1 John iii. 2, 3](#).

It were well if we would try ourselves by things of so uncontrollable evidence. What can any object unto the truth of these things or the necessity of this duty? If it be otherwise with us, it is from one of

these two causes:— **either we are not convinced of the truth and reality of them, or we have no delight in them because we are not spiritually minded**. Do we think that men may turmoil themselves in earthly thoughts all the day long, and, when they are freed of their affairs, betake themselves unto those that are vain and useless, without any stated converse with things above, and yet enjoy life and peace? **We must take other measures of things if we intend to live unto God, to be like him, and to come unto the enjoyment of him.**

What is the matter with men that they are so stupid? They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some, indeed, have no other regard unto it but only that they would not go to hell. But most would “die the death of the righteous,” and have their “latter end like his;” yet few there are who endeavour to attain a right notion of it, to **try how it is suited unto their principles and desires, but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations**. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their minds or thoughts about it; nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. **But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chiefest interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, it argues, indeed, that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.**

[3.] **Again; meditate and think of the glory of heaven so as to compare it with the opposite state of death and eternal misery**. Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein. **Those do so least who are in the most danger of falling thereinto**. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is no such place; because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. Some, out of profaneness, make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment were but a fable. Most seem to think that there is a severity in thoughts about it, which it is not fit we should be too much terrified withal. Some transient thoughts they will have of it, but [they do] not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed; or they think it not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any men in that condition, whereas there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments and their eternity, by himself than in all the Scripture besides. **These thoughts, in most, proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins, and are useful unto none**. It is the height of folly for men to endeavour the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity, and the due consideration whereof is a means for an escape from it. But I speak only of true believers; and the more they are conversant in their thoughts about the future state of eternal misery, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. It is a necessary duty to consider it, as what we were by nature obnoxious unto, as being “children of wrath;” what we have deserved by our personal sins, as “the wages of sin is death;” what we are delivered from through Jesus the deliverer, who “saves us from the wrath to come;” what expression it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath “ordained Tophet of old,” — that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. **This, therefore, is required of us, that in our thoughts and meditations we compare the state of blessedness and eternal glory, as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus**, with that state of eternal misery which we had deserved; and if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up unto its due exercise.

Some, it may be, will say that they complained before that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things. Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions, do prevalently obstruct their abiding in such thoughts. I shall speak farther unto this afterward. At present I shall only suggest two things:—

First, If you cannot attain, yet continue to follow after. Get your minds in a perpetual endeavour after an abode in spiritual thoughts. **Let your minds be rising towards them every hour, yea, a hundred times a day, on all occasions, in a continual sense of duty; and sigh within yourselves for deliverance when you find disappointments, or a not-continuance in them. It is the sense of that place, [Rom. viii. 23–26](#). Secondly, Take care you go not backwards and lose what you have wrought. If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. Whilst persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it, where they find it preached unto their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it; — **let them be diverted from it for a season, after a while it grows indifferent unto them; anything will satisfy them that pretends unto the same duty.****

The Fullness of God (his glory) Communicated

*The Communication of God's Glory
God's Chief End in Creation*

code52

Jonathan Edwards

Ch 2, SECT. VII.

Ch 1, sect. III on the communication of God's glory is on pg 1075

Ch 2, sect. VI on the glory of God is on pg 898

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iv.vii.html>

(see Flavel's comment on holiness on page 1609 & Shepard's comments on pg 911!)

Showing that the ultimate end of the creation of the world is but one, and what that one end is.

From what has been observed in the last section, it appears, if the whole of what is said relating to this affair be duly weighed, and one part compared with another, we shall have reason to think, that the design of the Spirit of God is not to represent God's ultimate end as manifold, but as ONE. For though it be signified by various names yet they appear not to be names of different things, but various names involving each other in their meaning either different names of the same thing, or names of several parts of one whole; or of the same whole viewed in various lights or in its different respects and relations. For it appears, that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as a ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, the glory of God; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing.

The thing signified by that name, the glory of God, when spoken of as the supreme and ultimate end of all God's works, is the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fulness; meaning by his fulness what has already been explained; or, in other words, God's internal glory, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it. It is confessed, that there is a degree of obscurity in these definitions; but perhaps an obscurity which is unavoidable, through the imperfection of language to express things of so sublime a nature. And therefore the thing may possibly be better understood, by using a variety of expressions, by a particular consideration of it, as it were, by parts, than by any short definition.

It includes the exercise of God's perfections to produce a proper effect, [as opposed to incomplete or imperfect effects as all false teaching tends to] in opposition to their lying eternally dormant and ineffectual: as his power being eternally without any act or fruit of that power; his wisdom eternally ineffectual in any wise production, or prudent disposal of anything, &c. The manifestation of his internal glory to created understandings [see footnote¹ pg 916]. The communication of the infinite fulness of God to the creature. The creature's high esteem of God, love to him, and complacence and joy in him; and the proper exercises and expressions of these.

These at first view may appear to be entirely distinct things: but if we more closely consider the matter, they will all appear to be one thing, in a variety of views and relations. They are all but the emanation of God's glory; or the excellent brightness and

fulness of the divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word, existing ad extra. God exercising his perfection to produce a proper effect, is not distinct from the emanation or communication of his fulness: for this is the effect, viz. his fulness communicated, and the producing of this effect is the communication of his fulness; and there is nothing in this effectual exerting of God's perfection, but the emanation of God's internal glory.

Now God's internal glory, is either in his **understanding** or **will**. The glory or fulness of his understanding, is his knowledge. The **internal glory and fulness of God, having its special seat in his will**, is his holiness and happiness.¹ The whole of God's internal good or glory, is in these three things, viz. **his infinite knowledge**, **his infinite virtue or holiness**, and **his infinite joy and happiness**. Indeed there are a great many attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving them: but all may be reduced to these; or to their degree, circumstances, and relations. We have no conception of God's power, different from the degree of these things, with a certain relation of them to effects.

[This *knowledge* is the knowledge or understanding of himself as Edwards points out. This is communicated to his elect, see [1John 5:20](#), "...and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;" – see [Shepard's version of this communication to the understanding and the will; excellent](#). Philip Schaff comments similarly: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: **to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart**; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845]

God's infinity is not properly a distinct kind of good, but only expresses the degree of good there is in him. So God's eternity is not a distinct good; but is the duration of good. His immutability is still the same good, with a negation of change. So that, as I said, the **fulness of the Godhead** is the fulness of his understanding, consisting in his **knowledge**; and the fulness of his will consisting in his **virtue and happiness**. [Note the word *fullness* that Edwards uses to explain the graces that are in Christ are seen in John 1:16, "And of His fulness we have all received, and grace for grace." - grace answerable to the grace that is in Christ. And Eph. 3:19, "...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the **fullness of God**." and Eph. 4:19, "till we all

come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the *fullness of Christ*.” And it is Christ, the root or the vine from whom we derive the sap of the vine, *his graces*, which are the continuous supplies of it promised in the new covenant, by which we are transformed into his image, being made a partaker of his nature.] And therefore, the external glory of God consists in the communication of these. The communication of his knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of himself: for this is the knowledge in which the fulness of God’s understanding chiefly consists. And thus we see how the **manifestation of God’s glory to created understandings**, and their seeing and knowing it, is not distinct from an emanation or communication of God’s fulness, but clearly implied in it. Again, the communication of God’s virtue or holiness, is principally in communicating the love of himself. And thus we see how, not only the creature’s seeing and knowing God’s excellence, but also supremely esteeming and loving him, belongs to the communication of God’s fulness. And the communication of God’s joy and happiness, consists chiefly in communicating to the creature that happiness and joy which consists in rejoicing in God, and in his glorious excellency; for in such joy God’s own happiness does principally consist. And in these things, knowing God’s excellency, loving God for it, and rejoicing in it, and in the exercise and expression of these, consists God’s honour and praise; so that these are clearly implied in that glory of God, which consists in the emanation of his internal glory.

And though all these things, which seem to be so various, are signified by that glory, which the Scripture speaks of as the ultimate end of all God’s works; yet it is manifest there is no greater, and no other variety in it, than in the internal and essential glory of God itself. God’s internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God’s glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God’s external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will. [That’s the key; unregenerate men are in God’s image in that sense - they have a faculty of understanding and will which animals do not have which distinguishes us from them. It was the chief part of God’s image, his holiness, principally consisting in the love that God has for himself, that was lost or wiped clean due to Adam’s sin. It is this chief part of God’s image that is restored by the communication of **his holiness to the will of the creature**.] **God communicates himself**

to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God.¹ These are the sum of that emanation of divine fulness called in Scripture, **the glory of God**. The first part of this glory is called **truth**, the latter, **grace**, [John i. 14](#). “We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” [Shepard says the same thing on the communication to the understanding and the will; see [code11a](#). Thomas Watson said that grace is the image of God. This is communicated to the elect to effect their conversion, e.g., the grace of faith. Grace is that which enables us to obey God, in other words, to please God, e.g., to believe on the Son, to love God, etc. (hence, the obedience of faith, Rm. 1:5, 16:26. Also see Heb 11:6) All those graces should bear fruit, listed in Gal. 5:22 and 1Cor13, which is pleasing to God and answers to the principle end of our creation.]

¹**Philip Schaff** comments similarly: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: **to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart**; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God’s Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845

The **emanation or communication of the divine fulness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him**, has relation indeed both to God and the creature: but it has relation to God as its fountain, as the thing communicated is something of its **internal fulness**. The water in the stream is something of the fountain; and the beams of the sun are something of the sun. And again, they have relation to God as their object: for the **knowledge communicated, is the knowledge of God** [[Jn5:20](#)]; and **the love communicated, is the love of God**; and the **happiness communicated, is joy in God** [[see pg 1080 for of an in depth explanation of this by Edwards](#)]. In the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both **exhibited and acknowledged**; **his fulness is received and returned**. Here is both an emanation and re-emanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. **So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and he is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.**

And though it be true that God has respect to the creature in these things; yet his respect to himself, and to the creature, are not properly a double and divided respect. What has been said, (chap. I. sect. 3, 4.) may be sufficient to show this. Nevertheless, it may not be amiss here briefly to say a few things; though mostly implied in what has been said already.

When God was about to create the world, he had respect to that emanation of his glory, which is actually the consequence of the creation, both with regard to himself and the creature. He had regard to it as an emanation from himself, **a communication of himself**, and, as the thing communicated, in its nature returned to himself, as its final term. And he had regard to it also as the emanation was to the creature, and as the thing communicated was in the creature, as its subject.

And God had regard to it in this manner, as he had a supreme regard to himself, and value for his own infinite, internal glory. It was this value for himself that caused him to value and seek that his internal glory should flow forth from himself. It was from his value for his glorious perfections of wisdom, righteousness, &c. that he valued the proper exercise and effect of these perfections, in wise and righteous acts and effects. It was from his infinite value for his internal glory and fulness, that he valued the thing itself communicated, which is something of the same, extant in the creature. **Thus, because he infinitely values his own glory, consisting in the knowledge of himself, love to himself, and complacence and joy in himself; he therefore valued the image, communication, or participation of these in the creature.** [see pg 1080 for an in depth explanation of this by Edwards] And it is because he values himself, that he delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being himself the object of this knowledge, love, and complacence. For it is the necessary consequence of true esteem and love, that we value others' esteem of the same object, and dislike the contrary. For the same reason, God approves of others' esteem and love of himself.

Thus it is easy to conceive, **how God should seek the good of the creature, consisting in the creature's knowledge and holiness, and even his happiness, from a supreme regard to himself**; as his happiness arises from that which is an image and participation of God's own beauty; [See Col. 3:10, " and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him," in other words, the image of his knowledge and holiness is communicated to our souls and as we grow in knowledge of Him and as we contemplate his glory as noted in 2Cor. 3:18, we are being *transformed into the same image from glory to glory* being conformed more into His

image!] and consists in the creature's exercising a supreme regard to God, and complacency in him; in beholding God's glory, in esteeming and loving it, and rejoicing in it, and in his exercising and testifying love and supreme respect to God: which is the same thing with the creature's exalting God as his chief good, and making him his supreme end.

And though the emanation of God's fulness, intended in the creation, is to the creature as its object; and though the creature is the subject of the **fulness communicated**, which is the creature's good; yet it does not necessarily follow, that even in so doing, God did not make himself his end. It comes to the same thing. God's respect to the creature's good, and his respect to himself, is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself. The creature is no farther happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end, than he becomes one with God. The more happiness the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like to that between God the Father and the Son; who are so united, that their interest is perfectly one. If the happiness of the creature be considered in the whole of the creature's eternal duration, with all the infinity of its progress, and infinite increase of nearness and union to God; in this view, the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite strictness.

If God has respect to something in the creature, which he views as of everlasting duration, and as rising higher and higher through that infinite duration, and that not with constantly diminishing (but perhaps an increasing) celerity; then he has respect to it, as, in the whole, of infinite height; though there never will be any particular time when it can be said already to have come to such a height.

Let the most perfect union with God be represented by something at an infinite height above us; and the eternally increasing union of the saints with God, by something that is ascending constantly towards that infinite height, moving upwards with a given velocity; and that is to continue thus to move to all eternity. God, who views the whole of this eternally increasing height, views it as an infinite height. And if he has respect to it, and makes it his end, as in the whole of it, he has respect to it as an infinite height, though the time will never come when it can be said it has already arrived at this infinite height.

God aims at that which the motion or progression which he causes, aims at, or tends to. If there be many things supposed to be so made and appointed, that, by a constant

eternal motion, they all tend to a certain centre; then it appears that he who made them, and is the cause of their motion, aimed at that centre: that term of their motion, to which they eternally tend, and are eternally, as it were, striving after. And if God be this centre, then God aimed at himself. And herein it appears, that as he is the first author of their being and motion, so he is the last end, the final term, to which is their ultimate tendency and aim.

We may judge of the end that the Creator aimed at, in the being, nature, and tendency he gives the creature, by the mark or term which they constantly aim at in their tendency and eternal progress; though the time will never come, when it can be said it is attained to, in the most absolutely perfect manner.

But if strictness of union to God be viewed as thus infinitely exalted; then the creature must be regarded as nearly and closely united to God. **And viewed thus, their interest must be viewed as one with God's interest; and so is not regarded properly with a disjunct and separate, but an undivided respect.** And as to any difficulty of reconciling God's not making the creature his ultimate end, with a respect properly distinct from a respect to himself; with his benevolence and free grace, and the creature's obligation to gratitude, the reader must be referred to chap. I. sect. 4. obj. 4. where this objection has been considered and answered at large.

If by reason of the strictness of the union of a man and his family, their interest may be looked upon as one, how much more so is the interest of Christ and his church,—whose first union in heaven is unspeakably more perfect and exalted, than that of an earthly father and his family—if they be considered with regard to their eternal and increasing union? Doubtless it may justly be esteemed so much one, that it may be sought, not with a distinct and separate, but an undivided respect. It is certain that what God aimed at in the creation of the world, was the good that would be the consequence of the creation, in the whole continuance of the thing created.

It is no solid objection against God aiming at an infinitely perfect union of the creature with himself, that the particular time will never come when it can be said, the union is now infinitely perfect. God aims at satisfying justice in the eternal damnation of sinners; which will be satisfied by their damnation, considered no otherwise than with regard to its eternal duration. But yet there never will come that particular moment, when it can be said, that now justice is satisfied. But if this does not satisfy our modern free-thinkers who do not like the talk about satisfying justice with an infinite punishment; I suppose it

will not be denied by any, that God, in glorifying the saints in heaven with eternal felicity, aims to satisfy his infinite grace or benevolence, by the bestowment of a good infinitely valuable, because eternal: and yet there never will come the moment, when it can be said, that now this infinitely valuable good has been actually bestowed. [224](#) [225](#)
 Read the footnotes, e.g., [224](#) are phenomenal! (ctrl + left click on the link)

¹ The new life implanted in regeneration yields, in relation to the intellect, faith and knowledge and wisdom; in relation to the will, conversion and repentance. [i.e., holiness! God communicates holiness to the will so that man will love God, obey his commandments, and repent of sin.] Hermon Bavinck, RD, Vol. 4 pg 97

The Affections

code53

Being Conformed to the image of God

This is perhaps the most important and the central issue in the Christianity! The affections, that is, upon what and whom are the predominant desires and delights of your heart. Owen explains the vital importance of the affections being changed at conversion, what saving affections are like (vs. those that are temporary) and their subsequent conformity to the likeness (or image) of Christ and by what means this is effected. This is vital for all Christians to know and to put in practice! I underlined key terms and inserted my comments in [blue]. Faith works by love explained.

See also, page 1042 on the affections, the more outward part of the soul in contrast to the mind or the "inward part", are usually first affected and wrought upon.

The heart, as distinguished from the mind, compriseth the will and the affections; and they are compared unto the tables wherein the letter of the law was engraven. - Owen

Part II Chapter XVI

Assimilation unto things heavenly and spiritual in affections spiritually renewed — This assimilation the work of faith; how, and whereby — Reasons of the want of growth in our spiritual affections as unto this assimilation.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.vi.vi.html>

When affections are spiritually renewed in their exercise, or fixing of themselves on spiritual things [contemplating of and growing in the knowledge of spiritual truths/God in Christ/his doctrines, the wisdom of the way of salvation, etc.], there is an assimilation wrought in them, and in the whole soul, unto those spiritual and heavenly things, by faith [that is, faith works it, he works in you both to will and to do...Phil.2:13 etc.]. But when there is a change in them only from other causes and occasions,

and not from renewing grace, there is an assimilation effected [a conforming to] of spiritual and heavenly things themselves unto those affections, by imagination [hence the vital importance of pure doctrine and growing in the knowledge thereof and also, the importance of being taught by good teachers so as not to be "untaught" and thus twist the scriptures to our own destruction thereby, 2Pet3:16, "*as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*"]

This must somewhat at large be spoken unto, as that which gives the most eminent distinction between the frames of mind whose difference we inquire into. And to that end we shall cast our consideration of it into the ensuing observations:—

1. **Affections spiritually renewed** are, in all their actings, in their whole exercise, **under the guidance and conduct of faith**. It is faith which, **in its spiritual light** [Ps36:9 "*For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.*"], hath the leading of the soul in the whole life of God. **We live here by faith**, [in other words we live by this new principle of life that works in us as opposed to by the principle of self-love; see pg 1044 ref. new living principle] as we shall do hereafter by sight. If our affections deviate or decline in the least from the guidance of the faith, **they degenerate from their spirituality, and give up themselves unto the service of superstition**. Next unto corrupt secular interest in the management of crafty, selfish seducers, this hath been the great inlet of all superstition and false worship into the world. Blind affections groping in the dark after spiritual things, having not the saving light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitious imaginations and practices, continuing to do so at this day. And wherever they will lead the way, when faith goeth not before them to discover both way and end, they that lead and the mind that is led must fall into one snare and pit or another. [And if the blind leads the blind both will fall into a ditch. Matt. 15:14]

Wherefore, affections that are spiritually renewed move not, act not, **but as faith discovers their object and directs them unto it. It is faith that works by love**. We can love nothing sincerely with divine love but what we believe savingly with divine faith. Let our affections unto any spiritual thing be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, **if they are not guided by it, they are neither accepted with God nor will promote the interest of spirituality and holiness in our own souls**, Heb. xi. 6; Matt. vi. 22, 23. And this is the reason whence we oftentimes see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season: They have been awakened, excited, acted, by one means or another, outward or inward; **but not having the light of faith to guide them unto their proper object, they either wither and die, as unto any appearing of spiritual motions, or else keep the mind tossed up and down in perpetual disquietment, without rest or peace**. "The foolish man wearie himself because he cannot find the way to the city." So was it with them who, on the account of their attendance unto the doctrine of Christ, are called his disciples, John vi. Having preached unto them about the bread which came down from heaven and giveth life unto them that feed, they were greatly affected with it, and cried out, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," verse 34; but when he proceeded to declare the mystery of it, they having not faith to discern and apprehend it, their affections immediately decayed, and they forsook both him and his doctrine, verse 66. [God communicates to the elect "the love of God" unto their souls, their hearts...their affections! so that they now love God and cannot but stop to be in continual contemplations of God, his nature, his works upon their souls, etc. and in this act of

meditation or contemplation upon God, that is, upon his glory and all that consists in it, we are changed into the same image (the image of his glory) from glory to glory. In that way, divine love has for its object divine things that one's affections adhere or cleave unto. You tend to contemplate upon those things you love, right? The affections being renewed by the Spirit, are sharpened unto God and heavenly things, and are made dull to everything else (the world, etc.). As the psalmist puts it:

Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart fail; *But God is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Ps 73:25-26

Thomas Watson adds: “ Would you persevere? Cherish the grace of faith. Faith is able *stabilere animum* [to support the spirit]. ‘By faith ye stand.’ [2 Cor 1:14](#). Faith knits us to Christ, as the members are knit to the head by nerves and sinews. Faith fills us with love to God. ‘It works by love.’ [Gal 5:5](#). He who loves God will rather die than desert him; as the soldier who loves his general will die in his service. Faith gives us a prospect of heaven; it shows us an invisible glory; and he who has Christ in his heart, and a crown in his eye, will not faint away. O cherish faith! Keep your faith, and your faith will keep you. While the pilot keeps his ship, his ship keeps him.”

We may consider one especial instance of this nature. Persons every day fall under great and effectual convictions of sin, and of their danger or certain misery thereby. This stirs up and acts all their affections, especially their fears, hopes, desires, sorrow, self-revenge, according as their condition calls for them. Hence sometimes they grow restless in their complaints, and turn themselves every way for relief, like men that are out of the way and bewildered in the night. But in this state and condition, tell them of the only proper way and means of their relief, — which, let the world say what it will, is Christ and his righteousness alone, with the grace of God in him, — and they quickly discover that they are strange things unto them, such as they do not understand, nor indeed approve. They cannot see them, they cannot discern them, nor any beauty in them for which they should be desired. [[see 1Cor2:14](#)]

Wherefore, after their affections have been tossed up and down for a season under the power and torment of this conviction, they come unto one or other of these issues with them; for, either they utterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, so as that they wonder in themselves whence they were so foolish as to be tossed and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and so commonly prove as bad a sort of men as live upon the earth; or they take up in a **formal, legal profession, whereto they never attain to be spiritually minded**. This is the best end that our affections towards spiritual things, not guided by the light of faith, do come unto. [[legalism is doing something because the law says so, from a principle of self-love or self-preservation \(to quiet conscience\) and not from a principle of love for God for who he is in himself.](#)]

2. **Faith hath a clear prospect into and apprehension of spiritual things, as they are in themselves and in their own nature**. It is true, the light of it cannot fully comprehend the nature of all those things which are the objects of its affections: for they are infinite and incomprehensible, such as are the nature of God and the person of Christ; and some of them, as future glory, are not yet clearly revealed. **But it discerns them all in a due manner**, so as that they may in themselves, and not in any corrupt representation or imagination of them, be the **objects of our affections**. They are, as the apostle speaks, “spiritually discerned,” [1 Cor. ii. 14](#); which is the reason why the natural man cannot receive them, — namely, because he hath not ability spiritually to discern them. And this is the principal end of the renovation of our minds, **the principal work and effect of faith**, — namely, the communication unto our minds and the acting in us of a **spiritual, saving light, whereby we may see and discern**

spiritual things as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use. See [Eph. i. 17–19](#), “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and re-relation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” [2 Cor. iv. 6](#), “God shineth in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” The end God designs is, to draw our hearts and affections unto himself; and unto this end he gives unto us a glorious internal light, whereby we may be enabled to discern the true nature of the things that we are to cleave unto with love and delight. Without this we have nothing but false images of spiritual things in our minds; not always as unto the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as unto their reality, power, and efficacy. This is one of the principal effects of faith, as it is the principal part of the renovation of our minds, — namely, to discover in the soul and represent unto the affections things spiritual and heavenly, in their nature, beauty, and genuine excellency. **This attracts them if they be spiritually renewed, and causeth them to cleave with delight unto what is so proposed unto them**. He that believes in Christ in a due manner, who thereon discovers the excellency of his person and the glory of his mediation, will both love him, and, on his believing, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” So is it in all other instances. The more steady is our view by faith of spiritual things, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving unto them; and wherever the mind is darkened about them, by temptation or seduction from the truth, there the affections will be quickly weakened and impaired. Wherefore, —

3. Affections thus led unto and fixed on spiritual and heavenly things, under the light and conduct of faith, are more and more renewed, or made in themselves more spiritual and heavenly. They are, in their cleaving unto them and delight in them, continually changed and assimilated unto the things themselves, becoming more and more to be what they are, — namely, spiritual and heavenly. [from glory to glory!]

This transformation is wrought by faith, and is one of its most excellent faculties and operations. See [2 Cor. iii. 18](#).

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

And the means whereby it works herein are our affections. In them as we are carnal, we are conformed unto this world; and by them as we are sanctified are we “transformed by the renewing of our mind,” [Rom. xii. 2](#). And this transformation is the introduction of a new form or nature into our souls, [see [Col. 3:10](#), "...and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"] diverse from that wherewith we were before endued. So is it described, [Isa. xi. 6–9](#). A spiritual nature they were changed into. ["The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb..."] And it is twofold:— First, Original and radical as to the substance or essence of it, which is the effect of the first act of divine grace upon our souls when we are made new creatures. Herein our affections are passive; they do not transform us, but are transformed. [we are passive in our conversion; e.g., the sinner's prayer is a contradiction; can a dead man raise himself out of his own grave?] Secondly, Gradual as unto its increase; and therein faith works in and by the affections.

Whenever the affections do cleave intensely unto any object they receive an impression from it, — as the wax doth from the seal when applied unto it, — which changeth them into its own likeness. So the apostle affirms of sensual, unclean persons, they “have eyes full of adultery,” [2 Pet. ii. 14](#). Their affections are so wholly possessed and filled with their lustful objects as that they have brought forth their own likeness upon their imaginations. That blots out all others, and leaves them no inclinations but what they stir up in them. When men are filled with the “love of this world,” which carries along with it all their other affections, their hopes, fears, and desires, **unto a constant exercise about the same object, they become earthly minded.** **[and are being changed into the image of the world which God hates].** Their minds are so changed into the image of the things themselves, **by the effectual working of the corrupt principles of sin, self-love and lust,** as if they were made up of the earth; and therefore have no savour of any thing else.

In like manner, when by faith men come to embrace heavenly things, through the **effectual working of a principle of spiritual life and grace** in them, they are every day made more and more heavenly: **“The inward man is renewed day by day.”** Love is more sincere and ardent, delight is more ravishing and sensible, desires are more enlarged and intense, and by all a taste and relish of heavenly things is heightened into refreshing experience. See [Rom. v. 2–5](#). **This is the way whereby one grace is added unto another, 2 Pet. i. 5–7,** in degrees.

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Great is the assimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects that **by this means** may be attained.

The mind hereby becomes the temple of God, wherein he dwells by the Spirit; Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him: “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,” [1 John iv. 16](#).

Love in its proper exercise gives a mutual inhabitation unto God and believers. In brief, he whose **affections are set upon heavenly things in a due manner** will be heavenly minded, and in the **due exercise of them will that heavenly mindedness be increased.** The **transformation and assimilation** that is wrought is not in the objects or spiritual things themselves; they are not changed, neither in themselves nor in the representation made of them unto our minds; **but the change is in our affections, which are made like unto them.**

Two cases deriving from this principle and consideration may be here spoken unto, and shall be so, — the first in this, and the other in the following chapter. The one is concerning the **slowness and imperceptibility** of the growth of our affections in their assimilation unto heavenly things, with the

causes and reasons of it. The other is the decays that frequently befall men in their affections unto spiritual things, instead of growing and thriving in them, with the reasons and causes thereof.

1. The progress and growth of our affections into spirituality and heavenliness, into conformity unto the things they are set upon, is oftentimes very slow, and sometimes imperceptible; yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness, which see not when good cometh, and are not like plants in a garden enclosed, which is watered every day. But it is not so without our folly and our sin.

(1.) The folly that keeps many in this condition consists herein: The generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more than not to lose the ground they have gained. And a pernicious folly it is, that both ruins the glory of religion and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is. Men have some grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope and suppose they have such grounds, that they are “passed from death unto life,” that they are in a state of grace and acceptance with God. This state they will endeavour to preserve by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and the avoidance of such sins as whereby they might make a forfeiture of it; but as for earnest, watchful endeavours and diligence to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, to press forward towards the mark of the high calling, and after perfection, to lay hold upon eternal life, to be more holy, more humble, more righteous, more spiritually minded, to have their affections more and more transformed into the likeness of things above, they are but few that sincerely and diligently apply themselves unto it, or unto the means of these things. The measures which they have attained unto give satisfaction unto the church, and reputation in the world that they are professors; and some so speak peace unto their own souls. To be more holy and heavenly, to have their affections more taken up with the things above, they suppose somewhat inconsistent with their present occasions and affairs. By this means hath religion lost much of its glory, and the souls of men have been deprived of the principal advantages of it in this world.

Such persons are like unto men who live in a country wherein they are not only pressed with poverty and all sorts of misery, but are also obnoxious unto grievous punishments, and death itself, if they are taken in it. In this condition, they are told and assured of another country, wherein, so soon as they are arrived, they shall be freed from all fear of danger of punishment; and if they pass farther into it, they shall meet with riches, plenty, and a fair inheritance provided for them. Hereon they betake themselves unto their voyage to obtain an entrance into it and possession of it; but no sooner do they come within the borders, and so are free from danger, or fear of punishment and death, but they sit down, and will go no farther to enjoy the good things of the country whereinto they are come. And it falls out with many of them, that, through their sloth, negligence, and ignorance, they take up short of the true bounds and limits of the country of liberty and peace which they aimed at, whereby danger and death surprise them unawares. This ruin could not have befallen them had they industriously endeavoured to enter into the heart of the country, and have possessed the good things thereof. At best, being only on the borders, they lead a poor life all their days, exposed to wants and danger.

So it is in this ease. Men falling under the power of convictions, and those restless fears wherewith they are accompanied, will stir up themselves and inquire how they may “flee from the wrath to

come,” how they may be delivered from the state of sin, and the eternal misery which will ensue thereon.

In the gospel, not only mercy and pardon are proposed unto them on their believing, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but peace, and joy, and spiritual strength, upon their admission into it, **and a progress made in it by faith and obedience**. But many, when they have attained so far as that they have some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse, so as to deliver them from their tormenting fears, will endeavour to preserve those hopes and keep that state, but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the precious things of the gospel, by growth in grace and spiritual affections. But how many of them fall under woeful mistakes for supposing themselves to be in a gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it. They were not, it may be, far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was spoken of him who never came thither. **There is no way to secure an interest in the gospel, as to pardon and mercy, safety and deliverance, but by a growth in grace, holiness, and spirituality; which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges of it**.

This folly of men in taking up with their measures, endeavouring only to maintain that state and condition which they hope they have attained, is the great reason why their affections do not daily grow up into spirituality, through an assimilation unto heavenly things. And a folly it is attended with innumerable aggravations; as, for instance, —

[1.] It is contrary and destructive unto the **genuine and principal property of gospel grace** [**or that new principle of life: faith, grace and truth wrapped up together, as Owen describes it**]; for it is everywhere compared by our Saviour unto things which, from small **seeds** [**a operative principle, in this case faith**] and **beginnings**, do grow up by a continual increase unto large measures, — as to a grain of mustard seed, a little leaven, and the like.

That grace in whose nature it is not to thrive and grow may justly be suspected, and ought diligently to be examined by them who take care of their own souls, and would not be eternally deceived.

[2.] It is contrary unto the most excellent or invaluable evangelical promises recorded in the Old Testament and the New, and which are amongst the principal supportments of the faith, hope, and comfort of believers. God hath given them unto us to encourage us unto an expectation of such supplies of grace as shall cause us to thrive and grow against all opposition, unto the utmost of our continuance in this world. And they are so multiplied as that there is no need to mention any of them in particular; God evidencing thereby how great is the grace, and how precious, which he so often promiseth, and of what consideration it is unto ourselves. See [Ps. xcii. 13–15](#); [Isa. xl. 28–31](#). Wherefore, the folly of taking up with present measures of grace, holiness, and spirituality, is attended with two unspeakable evils:—

1st, A signal contempt of the love, grace, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, in giving of us such promises of grace, to make us to increase, thrive, and grow. How can it be done more effectually than by such a neglect of his promised grace?

2dly, An evidence that such persons love not, care not for, grace and holiness for their own sake, **but merely to serve their turn at present**, as they suppose; nor do desire the least of grace or privilege by Christ without which they can have any hopes to get to heaven. This sufficiently discovers men to be wholly under the power of **self-love**, and to centre therein; for if they may have so much grace and mercy as may save them, they care for no more. [[True grace causes you to thirst for more...](#)]

[3.] It is repugnant unto the honour of gospel grace, as though it would carry us so far, and no farther, in the way to glory: for it must be known that this sort of persons, who sit down in their present measures and attainments, either really have no true grace at all, or that which is of the lowest, meanest, and most **imperceptible** size and degree; for if any one hath attained any considerable growth in faith and love, in the mortification of sin, in heavenly mindedness, it is utterly impossible but that ordinarily he will be pressing forward towards farther attainments and farther degrees of spiritual strength in the life of God. So the apostle declares it in his own example, [Phil. iii. 12–14](#). What thoughts can these persons have concerning the glory, power, and efficacy of gospel grace, which they suppose they have received? If they measure them by the effects which they find in themselves, either as unto the mortification of sin, or strength unto and delight in duties of holiness, or as unto spiritual consolation, they can see no excellency nor beauty in them; for they do not manifest themselves but in their success, **as they transform the soul daily into the image of Christ**.

[4.] It is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of religion in the world, and therein the honour of the gospel itself: for the most of professors do take up with such measures as put no lustre upon it, as give no commendation unto the religion they profess; for their measures allow them such a conformity unto the world, in their ways, words, and actions, in their gestures, apparel, and attire, as that they are no way visibly to be distinguished from it; yea, the ground and reason why the most do rest in their present measures is, because they will not be farther differenced from the world. This hath greatly lost the glory, honour, and reputation of religion amongst us. And, on the other side, if all visible professors would endeavour continually to grow and thrive in spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affections, with fruits suited thereunto, it would bring a conviction on the world that there is a **secret invisible power** accompanying the religion they profess, **transforming them daily into the image and likeness of God**.

[5.] Whatever is pretended unto the contrary, it is inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience; for no such thing is promised unto any who live in such a contempt of divine promises, **nor is it attainable but by the diligent exercise of all those graces which lie neglected under this frame**. [[Heb. 11:6, he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him](#)] Few men are able to judge whether they have real, internal, abiding peace or no, unless it be in case of trials and temptations. At other seasons, general hopes and confidences do or may supply the want of it in their minds; but when any fear, danger, trial, or word of conviction, befalls them, they cannot but inquire and examine how it is with them. And if they find their affections cold, dead, earthly, carnal, withering, not spiritual or heavenly, there will be an end of their supposed peace, and they will fall into woeful disquietments; and they will then find that the root of all this evil lies in this frame and disposition: They have been so far satisfied with their present measures or attainments in religion, as that the utmost of their endeavours has been but to preserve their station, or not to forfeit it by open sins, — to keep their souls alive from the severe reflections of the word, and their reputation fair in the church of God; spiritually to thrive, to prosper

in their souls, to wax fat and flourishing in the inward man, to bring forth more fruit as age increaseth, **to press towards perfection, are things they have not designed nor pursued.**

Hence it is that so many among us are visibly at an unthrifty stand in the world, — that where they were one year, there they are another, **like shrubs in the wilderness**; not like plants in the “garden of God,” not as vines planted in “a very fruitful hill.” Yea, though many are sensible themselves that they are cold, lifeless, and fruitless, yet will they not be convinced that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spirituality and heavenly mindedness, **whereby the inward man may be renewed day by day, and grace augmented with the increase of God.** This is a work, as they suppose, for them who have nothing else to do; not consistent with their business, callings, and occasions; not necessary, as they hope, unto their salvation; nor, it may be, to be attained by them if they should set themselves about it. This apprehension or imagination, upon the beginning of the declension and decay of Christian religion in the many, cast off holiness and devotion unto a sort of men who undertook to retire themselves utterly out of the world; amongst whom also the substance of religion was quickly lost, and a cloud or meteor of superstition embraced in the room of it. But this folly is ominous unto the souls of men.

Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things spiritual and heavenly **know most of its necessity, excellency, and desirableness**; yea, without some progress in it, these things will not be known. **Such will testify that the more they attain herein, the more they see there is yet to be attained**, and the more they do desire to attain what is before. Forgetting those things which are behind, they reach forth unto the things that are yet before them, like men running in a race, whose prize and reward is yet before them, [Phil. iii. 13, 14](#). **It is a comely thing to see a Christian weaned from the world, minding heavenly things, green and flourishing in spiritual affections; and it is the more lovely because it is so rare.** **The generality of them take up with those measures which neither glorify God nor bring in durable peace unto their own souls.**

That which men pretend and complain of herein is, the difficulty of the work. They can, as they suppose, preserve their present station, but to press forward, to grow in grace, to thrive in their affections, this is too hard for them. **But this complaint is unequal and unjust, and adds unto the guilt of their sloth.** It reflects upon the words of our Saviour, that “his yoke is easy and his burden light,” that “his commandments are not grievous.” It expresseth unbelief in the promises of God tendering such supplies of grace as to render all the ways of Wisdom easy, yea, mercy and peace. **It is contrary unto the experience of all who have with any sincerity and diligence engaged in the ways of gospel obedience.** [\[Why? because delight in God is a grace that enables you and causes you to cleave unto and love God and anything having to do with Him.\]](#) And the whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone, which may be reduced unto these two heads:—

1st, A desire to retain some thing or things that is or are inconsistent with such a progress; for unless the heart be ready on all occasions to esteem everything “as loss and dung, so as we may win Christ,” the work will be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. **This is the first principle of religion, of gospel obedience, that all things are to be despised for Christ.** But this difficulty ariseth not from the thing itself, but from our indisposition unto it and unfitness for it. That which is an easy, pleasant walk unto a sound and healthy man is a toilsome journey to him that is diseased and infirm. In particular,

whilst men will retain an inordinate respect unto the world, the vanities, the pleasures, the profits, the contentments of it; whilst self-love, putting an undue valuation on our persons, our relations, our enjoyments, our reputations, doth cleave unto us, — we shall labour in the fire when we engage in this duty, or rather, we shall not at all sincerely engage in it. Wherefore the apostle tells us that in this case we must cast off every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, if we intend to run with joy the race that is set before us, [Heb. xii. 1.](#)

2dly, It is because men dwell continually upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercise of grace. Some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things are always difficult. They design not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work. They do not with use habituate grace unto a readiness in all the actings of it, which the apostle commends in them that are “perfect” or complete, [Heb. v. 14.](#) Hence he calls such persons “babes and carnal,” comparatively unto them that are “strong men and spiritual.” Such persons do not oblige themselves unto the whole work and all the duties of religion, but only to what they judge necessary unto them in their present circumstances. In particular, they do not attempt a thorough work in the mortification of any sin, but are hewing and hacking at it, as their convictions are urgent or abate, the wounds whereof in the body of sin are quickly healed. They give not any grace its perfect work, but are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they shall always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties as to the growth of their affections in spirituality and heavenliness. Remove these things out of the way, as they ought to be removed, and we shall find all the paths wherein we are to walk towards God to be pleasantness and peace.

This is the first cause whence it is that there may be affections truly spiritual and graciously renewed in some persons, who yet do not thrive in an assimilation and conformity unto heavenly things: Men take up with their present measures, and thereon pretend either necessary occasion or discouragements from difficulties in attempting spiritual growth in the inward man. But they may thank themselves if, as they bring no honour unto Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own souls.

(2.) As the evil proceedeth from folly, so it is always the consequent of sin, of many sins, of various sorts. Let us not dwell on heartless complaints that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly, that we do not find the inward man to thrive or grow. Let us not hearken after this or that relief or comfort under this consideration, as many things are usually insisted on unto this purpose. They may be of use when persons are under temptations; and not able to make a right judgment of themselves; but in the course of our ordinary walking with God, they are not to be attended nor retired unto. The general reason of this evil state is our own sinful carelessness, negligence, and sloth, with perhaps an indulgence unto some known lust or corruption. And we do in vain seek after refreshing cordials, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we stand in need of lancings and burnings, as nigh unto a lethargy. It would be too long to give instances of those sins which fail not effectually to obstruct the thriving of spiritual affections: but, in general, when men are careless as unto that continual watch which they ought to keep over their hearts; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as unto the seasons of them or the manner of their performance; when they are strangers unto holy meditation

and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world, or are so tender and delicate as that they will not undergo the hardship of a heavenly life, either as unto the inward or outward man; much more when they are vain in their conversation, corrupt in their communication, especially if under the predominant influence of any particular lust, — it is vain to think of thriving in spiritual affections. And yet thus it is with all who ordinarily and in their constant course are thrifless herein.

Evidences of Renewed Affections

code54

means of self-examination, operations of saving faith,
reasons behind superstition;

Part II. Chapter XVIII.

[The state of spiritual affections.]

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.vi.viii.html>

It remains only, as unto this head now spoken unto, that we briefly consider what is the state of spiritual affections thus daily exercised and improved. And this we shall do by showing, — first, What is their pattern; secondly, What is their rule; thirdly, What is their measure, or whereunto they may attain:—

First, The pattern which we ought continually to bear in our eyes, whereunto our affections ought to be conformed, is Jesus Christ and the affections of his holy soul. The mind is the seat of all our affections; and this is that we ought continually to design and endeavour, namely, that the “**same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus**,” [Phil. ii. 5](#). To have our minds so affected with spiritual things as was the mind of Christ is the principal part of our duty and grace; nor do I think that any man can attain any considerable degree in spiritual mindedness who is not much in the contemplation of the same mind in Christ, [2 Cor. iii. 18](#). To this purpose ought we to furnish our minds with instances of the holy affections that were in Christ, and their blessed exercise on all occasions. The Scripture makes a full representation of them unto us, and we ought to be conversant in our meditations on them. What glorious things are spoken of **his love to God and his delight in him**, whence also he “**delighted to do his will, and his law was in the midst of his bowels**,” [Ps. xl. 8](#), — seated in the throne of his affections! What pity and compassion had he for the souls of men, yea, for the whole human kind, in all their sufferings, pains, and distresses! How were all his affections always in perfection of order, under the conduct of the spirit of his mind! Hence was his self-denial, his contempt of the world, his readiness for the cross, to do or suffer according to the will of God. If this pattern be continually before us, it will put forth a transforming efficacy to change us into the same image. When we find our minds liable unto any disorders, cleaving inordinately unto the things of this world, moved with intemperate passions, vain and frothy in conversation, darkened or disturbed by the fumes of distempered lusts, let us call things to an account, and ask of ourselves whether this be the frame of mind that was in Christ Jesus. **This, therefore, is an evidence that our affections are spiritually renewed, and that they have**

received some progress in an assimilation unto heavenly things, — namely, when the soul is delighted in making Christ their pattern in all things.

Secondly, The rule of our affections in their utmost spiritual improvement is the Scripture. And two things are respected in them:— their internal actings; their exercise in outward ways and means, whereby they are expressed. Of them both the Scripture is the entire rule:—

1. And with respect unto the former, it gives us one general law or rule, that is comprehensive of all others, — namely, “That we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.” The acting of all our affections towards God in the utmost degree of perfection is required of us; **that in all instances we prefer and value him above all things; that we inseparably cleave unto him, and do nothing whatever at any time that is not influenced and directed by the love of God.** [the definition of true virtue. See Edwards' discourse on this subject.] This perfection, as we shall see immediately, is not attainable absolutely in this life; but it is proposed unto us as that which the excellency of God's nature requires, and which the faculties and powers of our nature were created for, and which we ought in all things to design and aim at. But the indispensable obligation of this rule is, that we should always be in a sincere endeavour to cleave unto God continually in all things, to prefer him above all, and delight in him as our chiefest good. **When this frame and disposition is habitually fixed in our minds, it will declare and act itself in all instances of duties, on all occasions of trial, when other things put in for a predominant interest in our affections, as they do every day;** and if it be not so with us, we shall be at a continual loss in all our ways. This is that which makes us lifeless and heartless in duties, careless in temptations or occasions of them, forgetful of God, **when it is impossible we should be preserved from sin without a due remembrance of his holiness.** In brief, the want of a predominant love unto God, kept in continual exercise, is the spring of all that unprofitable profession of religion that the world is filled withal.

2. There are outward ways and duties whereby our spiritual affections are expressed. The rule of them also is the Scripture. **The way marked out therein is the only channel wherein the stream of spiritual affections doth take its course unto God.** The graces required therein are to act themselves by [them]; **the duties it prescribes are those which they stir up and enliven;** the religious worship it appoints is that wherein they have their exercise. Where this rule hath been neglected, men's religious affections have grown irregular, yea, wild and ungovernable. All the superstitions that the world is filled withal owe their original principally unto **men's affections set at loose from the rule of the word.** There is nothing so fond, absurd, and foolish, but they have imbondaged the souls of men unto, nothing so horrid and difficult but they have engaged them in. And having once taken unto themselves this liberty, the corrupt minds of men are a thousand times more satisfied than in the regular exercise of them according to the word of God. Hence they will rejoice in such penances as are not without their austerities; in such outward duties of devotion as are troublesome and chargeable; in every thing that hath a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglect of the body. **Hence will all their affections be more sensibly moved by images and pictures, and a melting devotion be more stirred up in them, than by all the motives and incentives which God proposeth unto them to draw their affections unto himself.** Nothing is more extravagant than the affections of men, tintured with some devotion, if they forsake the rule of the Scripture.

Thirdly, There is considerable concerning them the measure of their attainments, or what, through due exercise and holy diligence, they may be raised unto. Now, this is not absolute perfection: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after," as the apostle speaks, [Phil. iii. 12](#). But there is that attainable which those who pretend highly unto perfection seem to be strangers unto. And the state of our affections under a due exercise on heavenly things, and in their assimilation unto them, may be fixed on these three things:—

1. An habitual suitableness unto spiritual things upon the proposal of them. The ways whereby spiritual things are proposed unto our minds are various. They are so directly in all ordinances of divine worship; — they are so indirectly and in just consequence by all the especial providences wherein we are concerned, by our own thoughts and stated meditations; — they are so by the motions of the Holy Spirit, when he causeth us to "hear a word behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;" by holy converse with others; by all sorts of occurrences. And as the ways of their proposal are various, so the times and seasons wherein a representation of them is made unto us are comprehensive of all, at least are not exclusive of any, times and seasons of our lives. Be the way of their proposal what it will, and whenever be the season of it, if our affections are duly improved by spiritual exercises, they are suited unto them and will be ready to give them entertainment. Hence, or for want hereof, on the other hand, are tergiversations [equivocations] and shiftings in duties, proneness to comply with diversions, all to keep off the mind from closing with and receiving of those spiritual things which it is not suited unto. Wherefore, as unto the solemn way of proposing spiritual things unto our minds which is in and by the ordinances of divine worship, when men have a prevalent loathness to engage in them, or when they are satisfied with an outward attendance on them, but not enabled unto a vigorous stirring up of the inward man unto a holy, affectionate converse with spiritual and heavenly things, it is because they are carnal. [carnal (unsaved or unregenerated) although some use this term, carnal, loosely by meaning Christians that are backslidden in some degree or representing the corruption of nature that still resides in Christians to some extent; but being that Paul says this "carnal" leads to death should mean unregenerate or unsaved as opposed to spiritual (saved or regenerated); see Romans 8:

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. "For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace." Romans 8:5-6

When men can receive the fiery darts of Satan in his temptations into their bosoms, and suffer them to abide there, yea, foster and cherish them in thoughts of the lusts that they kindle, but quickly quench the motions of the Spirit stirring them up unto the embracing of heavenly things, they are carnal, and carnally minded. When providences of concernment, in afflictions, trials, deliverances, do not engage the mind unto thoughts of spiritual things, and excite the affections unto the entertainment of them, men are carnal and earthly. When every lust, corruption, or passion, as anger, envy, displeasure, at this or that person or thing, can divert the mind from compliance with the proposal of spiritual things that is made unto it, we are carnal.

It is otherwise when our affections are conformed unto things spiritual and heavenly [this process begins at conversion]. Upon every proposal of these, the mind finds a suitableness unto itself, like that which a well-disposed appetite finds unto savoury meat. As “the full soul loatheth an honey-comb,” so a mind under the power of carnal affections hath an aversion unto all spiritual sweetness. But spiritualized affections desire them, have an appetite unto them, readily receive them on all occasions, as those which are natural unto them, as milk is unto new-born babes. [renewed affections love spiritual things, the things of God, etc. They have a new palate for them whereas before they hated and despised them as having a savour of death unto death.]

2. Affections so disposed constantly find a gust, a pleasant taste, a relish, in spiritual things. They do in them “taste that the Lord is gracious,” [1 Pet. ii. 3](#). To taste of God’s goodness, is to have an experience of a savoury relish and sweetness in converse and communion with him. And persons whose affections are thus renewed and thus improved do taste a sweet savour in all spiritual things. Some of them, as a sense of the love of Christ, are sometimes as it were too hard for them, and overpower them, until they are “sick of love,” and do “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Neither is there any of them, however condit with afflictions or mortifications, but is sweet unto them, [Prov. xxvii. 7](#). Everything that is wholesome food, that is good nourishment, though it be but bitter herbs, is sweet to him that is hungry. And when by our affections we have raised up in us a spiritual appetite unto heavenly things, however any of them in their own nature or in their dispensation may be bitter to flesh and blood, — as are all the doctrines of the cross, — they are all sweet unto us, and we can taste how gracious the Lord is in them. When the soul is filled with earthly things, the love of this world, or when the appetite is lost by spiritual sickness, or vitiated and corrupted by any prevalent sin, heavenly things are unsavoury and sapless, or, as Job speaks, “like the white of an egg, wherein there is no taste.” There may be in the dispensation of the word a taste or pleasing relish given unto the fancy, there may be so unto the notional understanding, when the affections find no complacency in the things themselves; but unto them who are spiritually minded unto the degree intended, they are all sweet, savoury, pleasant, — the affections taste them immediately, as the palate doth meat.

3. They are a just repository of all graces, and therein the treasury of the soul. There are graces of the Spirit whose formal direct residence is in the understanding and the will, as faith itself, and therein are all other graces radically comprised; they grow from that root. Howbeit, the most of them have their principal residence in the affections. [hence the importance of Proverbs 4:3 -

"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life."

The affections are your heart; one and the same as Owen mentioned in previous chapters. To guard your heart or keep your heart (where the graces reside) is basically what Jesus warned those in Rev 3:2, "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die," so that the graces would not atrophy, waste away due to sloth and negligence which evidently they can do as Jesus says here and as Jesus, Paul and Peter intimate in their warnings and exhortations throughout the bible the New Testament.]

In them are they preserved secure and ready for exercise on all occasions. And when they are duly spiritual, there is nothing that tends to their growth or improvement, to their cherishing or quickening, which they stand in need of continually, and which God hath made provision for in his word, but they

readily receive it, lay it up, keep and preserve it. **Hereby they come to be filled with grace, with all graces**, — for there is room in them for all the graces of the Spirit to inhabit, — and do readily comply with the light and direction of faith unto their exercise. **When faith discerns and determines** that there is any thing to be done or suffered in a way of duty unto the glory of God, **the affections thus disposed do not shut up or stifle the graces that are in them, but carefully offer them unto their proper exercise.**

These are some of those things which our affections, conformed unto heavenly things, will attain unto. **And thus it is with affections spiritually renewed: by being fixed on things spiritual and heavenly, they are more and more conformed unto them, made like them,** and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves.

It is not thus with them whose affections have only an **occasional change** wrought upon them by the means before described, but are not spiritually renewed; yea, on the contrary, **such persons do design to debase spiritual things, to bring down heavenly things into a conformity with their affections, which, however changed, are not spiritual, but carnal.** To evince this we may observe, —

1. **Their affections are under the light and conduct of such notions in the mind and understanding as do not give a clear, distinct representation of them in their own nature unto them:** for where they are not themselves spiritually renewed, there the mind itself is carnal and unrenewed; and such a mind “perceiveth not the things of God, neither can do so, because they are spiritually discerned.” They cannot be discerned aright in their own beauty and glory, but in and by a spiritual, saving light, which the mind is devoid of. And where they are not thus represented, **the affections cannot receive or cleave unto them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them.**

2. Those notions in such persons are oftentimes variously influenced and corrupted by **fancy and imagination.** They are merely “puffed up by their fleshly minds;” that is, they are filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations about spiritual things, as the apostle declares, Col. ii. 18, 19. And the work of fancy, in a fleshly mind, is to raise up such images of spiritual things as may render them suitable unto natural, unrenewed affections.

3. This, in the progress of it, produceth **superstition, false worship, and idolatry;** for **they are all of them an attempt to represent spiritual things in a way suited unto carnal, unrenewed affections.** Hence men suppose themselves to be excited by them unto love, joy, fear, delight in the things themselves, when they all respect that false representation of them whereby they are suited unto them as carnal. These have been the spring of all false worship and idolatry in the Christian world.

1. The **mind and affections** have been changed and tintured [not renewed] with devotion by some of the means we have before insisted on. Herein they will, one way or other, be exercised about spiritual things, **and are ready to receive impressions from anything that superstition can impose upon them.**

2. They are, by error and false information, set at liberty from the only rule of their actings and exercise; that is, the word of God. Men satisfied themselves, that so their affections were engaged about things spiritual and heavenly, it was no matter at all whether the way of their exercise was

directed by the Scripture or no. Having thus lost their guide and their way, every “ignis fatuus,” every wandering meteor, allures them to follow its conduct into foolish superstitions. Nothing almost is so ridiculous, nothing so horrid and difficult, that they will not embrace under the notion of things spiritual and heavenly.

3. The carnal minds of men, having no proper, distinct apprehensions and notions of spiritual things in their own nature, do endeavour to represent them under such notions and images as may suit them unto their carnal, unrenewed affections; for it is implanted almost indelibly upon them, that the end of all knowledge of spiritual things is to propose them unto the embraces of the affections.

It were easy to manifest that from these three corrupt springs arose that flood of idolatry and false worship which spread itself over the church of Rome, and with whose machinations the minds of men are yet too much replenished.

4. Where it is not thus, yet carnal affections do variously debase spiritual things, to bring them into a conformity with themselves; and this may proceed so far, until men think wickedly that God is altogether like unto themselves. [Ps 50:21] But I shall not insist on these things any farther.

Lastly, Where affections are spiritually renewed, the person of Christ is the centre of them; but where they are changed only, they tend unto an end in self. Where the “new man” is put on, “Christ is all, and in all,” Col. iii. 10, 11. He is the spring, by his Spirit, that gives them life, light, and being; and he is the ocean that receives all their streams. God, even the Father, presents not himself in his beauty and amiableness as the object of our affections, but as he is in Christ, acting his love in him, 1 John iv. 8, 9. And as unto all other spiritual things, renewed affections cleave unto them according as they derive from Christ and lead unto him; for he is unto them “all, and in all.” It is he whom the souls of his saints do love for himself, for his own sake, and all other things of religion in and for him. The air is pleasant and useful, that without which we cannot live or breathe; but if the sun did not enlighten it and warm it with its beams, if it were always one perpetual night and cold, what refreshment could be received by it? Christ is the “Sun of Righteousness,” and if his beams do not quicken, animate, and enlighten, the best, the most necessary duties of religion, nothing desirable would remain in them. This is the most certain character of affections spiritually renewed: They can rest in nothing but in Christ; they fix on nothing but what is amiable by a participation of his beauty; and in whatever he is, therein do they find complacency. It is otherwise with them whose affections may be changed but are not renewed. The truth is, — and it may be made good by all sorts of instances, — that Christ, in the mystery of his person and in the glory of his mediation, is the only thing that they dislike in religion. False representations of him by images and pictures they may embrace and delight in; false notions of his present glory, greatness, and power may affect them; a worship of their own devising they may give unto him, and please themselves in it; corrupt opinions concerning his office and grace may possess their minds, and they may contend for them: but those who are not spiritually renewed cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, yea, they have an inward, secret aversation from the mystery of his person and his grace. It is self which all their affections centre in, the ways whereof are too long here to be declared.

This is the first thing that is required to render our affections in such a state and condition as that from and by them we may be spiritually minded, — namely, that they themselves are spiritually and savingly renewed.

The things that remain will admit of a speedy despatch, as I suppose.

Affections Renewed Part I

code55

vs. Only the Mind Being Enlightened or the
Affections being Transiently Impressed Upon
or a Temporary Work of the Spirit

The affections being renewed by the infusion of a new principle of life [i.e., faith, love for God, delight in Him, etc.] vs. just changed temporarily (temporary impressions) by outward circumstances, situations or stimulations, even by a hearing of the word. This is very important for purposes of self-examination and growth in consolation. The affections as they are depraved, are the seat and subject of all lusts. Hence the importance of our souls being re-ensampled with the image of God, his graces implanted in our hearts (in our affections!) that enables us and incline us to all obedience to God whether it be believing the gospel or mortifying our members, all issuing in that ultimate fulfillment of the command to love God with all our heart, mind soul and strength. It was this image or this glory consisting in primarily holiness or love to God in which God's image chiefly consists, that was lost at the fall and that is communicated to his elect upon their conversion. The graces: love, desire, delight, godly fear, etc. have their seat in the affections. Deceitful lusts = depraved affections = the spirit of the mind, which inclines, bends and leads...which must be renewed for this alteration to be lasting and durable (*firm and stable*, *Ps37:23*, *Col. 2:5*, *1Cor15:58*,) in all situations, as opposed to affections that are transient, unstable or vanishing like the early morning mist.

Psalm 37:23 - *The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;*

Firm in that you are secure with God as to your being accepted of him and not being tossed back and forth as to whether you are saved or not, challenged with doubts, scruples and perplexities due to remaining corruption in us, that sin that so easily besets us. Psalm 119:165, that says, *Great peace have those who love your law* (his mind and will), *and nothing causes them to stumble*. We should be jealous over our hearts; watchful! working out our salvation with fear and trembling, constantly examining ourselves to see if we be in the faith. This tends to our true peace as opposed to a stupid or fatal security.

Part II Chapter XII. The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded

by John Owen [code369](#)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.vi.ii.html>

What is required in and unto our affections that they may be spiritual — A three-fold work on the affections described.

To declare the interest of our affections in this frame of being spiritually minded, and what they contribute thereunto, I shall do these three things:— First, Declare what is required hereunto, that our affections may be spiritual, wherein lies the foundation of the whole duty; secondly, What are their actings when they are so spiritual; thirdly, What are the means whereby they may be kept and preserved in that frame; with sundry other things of the like nature.

How our affections are concerned in or do belong unto the frame of mind inquired after hath been before declared. Without spiritual affections we cannot be spiritually minded. And that they may be of this use, three things are required:— I. Their principle; II. Their object; III. The way and manner of their application unto their proper object by virtue of that principle.

I. As unto the principle acting in them, that our affections may be spiritual and the spring of our being spiritually minded, it is required that they be changed, **renewed**, and **inlaid with grace**, spiritual and supernatural. To clear the sense hereof, we must a little consider what is their state by nature, and then by what means they may be wrought upon as unto a change or a renovation; for they are like unto some things which in themselves and their own nature are poisonous, but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament from a mixture of other ingredients, become medicinal and of excellent use.

By nature our affections, all of them, are depraved and corrupted. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen under greater disorder and depravation by the entrance of sin than our affections are. **In and by them is the heart wholly gone and turned off from God, [Tit. iii. 3](#).** It were a long work to set forth this depravation of our affections, nor doth it belong unto our present design. Some few things I shall briefly observe concerning it, to make way unto what is proposed concerning their change:—

1. This is the only corruption and depravation of our nature by the fall evident in and unto reason or the light of nature itself. Those who were wise among the heathen both saw it and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, but saw nothing of its darkness and depravation as unto things spiritual. But they were sensible enough of this disorder and tumult of the affections in things moral, which renders the minds of men “like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” This greatly aggravates the neglect of them who are not sensible of it in themselves, seeing it is discernible in the light of nature.

2. **They are, as depraved, the seat and subject of all lusts, both of the flesh and of the spirit;** yea, lust or evil concupiscence is nothing but the irregular motion and acting of our affections as depraved, defiled, corrupted, [Rom. vii. 8](#). **Hence no one sin can be mortified without a change wrought in the affections.**

3. They are the spring, root, and cause of all actual sin in the world, [Matt. xv. 19](#). The “evil heart,” in the Scripture, is the corrupt affections of it, with the imaginations of the mind, whereby they are excited and acted, [Gen. vi. 5](#). These are they which at this time fill the whole world with wickedness, darkness, confusion, and terror; and we may learn what is their force and efficacy from these effects. So the nature of the plague is most evident when we see thousands dying of it every week.

4. **They [the affections] are the way and means whereby the soul applies itself unto all sinful objects and actings.** Hence are they called our “**members**,” our “**earthly members**,” because as the body applies itself unto its operations by its members, **so doth the soul apply itself unto what belongs unto it by its affections,** [Rom. vi. 13](#); [Col. iii. 5](#).

5. **They will not be under the conduct of the mind, its light or convictions.** Rebellion against the light of the mind is the very form whereby their corruption acts itself, [Job xxiv. 13](#). Let the apprehensions of the mind and its notions of good and evil be what they will, they reject them, **and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations.** Hence, no natural man whatsoever doth in any measure answer the light of his mind or the convictions of his understanding, but he sees and approves of better things, following those that are worse; and there is no greater spiritual judgment than for men to be given up unto themselves and their own evil affections, [Rom. i. 26](#).

Many other instances might be given of the greatness of that depravation which our affections are fallen under by sin; these may suffice as unto our present purpose.

In general, this depravation of our affections by nature may be reduced unto two heads:—

1.. In this lies the spring of all that dislike **An utter aversion from God and all spiritual things** of God and his ways that the **hearts of men** are filled withal; yea, they do not only produce an aversion from them and dislike of them, but they fill the mind with an enmity against them [[see Rm8:7-8 below](#)]. Therefore men say in their hearts unto God, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” [Job xxi. 14, 15](#). See [Rom. i. 28, viii. 7](#).

2. **An inordinate cleaving unto things vain, earthly, and sensual, causing the soul to engage into the pursuit of them as the horse rushes into the battle.**

Whilst our affections are in this state and condition we are far enough from being spiritually minded, **nor is it possible** to engage them into an adherence unto or delight in spiritual things. [[see Rom. 8:7-8!!](#) ⁶For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”]

In this state they may be two ways wrought upon, and yet not so renewed as to be serviceable unto this end:—

1. There may be various temporary impressions made on them. Sometimes there is so by the preaching of the word. Hereon men may hear it with joy, and do many things gladly [see parable of the soils - Matt.13:5 "Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.]. Sometimes it is so by judgments, dangers, sicknesses, apprehensions of the approach of death, Ps. lxxviii. 35–37. These things take men off for a season from their greedy delight in earthly things, and the pursuit of the interest of lust in making provision for the flesh. On many other occasions, by great variety of causes, there may be temporary impressions made on the affections, that shall seem for a season to have turned the stream of them. And thereon we have many who any day will be wholly, as it were, for God, resolved to forsake sin and all the pleasures of it, but the next return unto all their former excesses [as a dog returns to his vomit]; for this is the effect of those impressions, that whereas men ordinarily are predominantly acted by love, desire, and delight, which lead them to act according unto the true natural principles of the soul, now they are for a season acted by fear and dread, which put a kind of force on all their inclinations. Hereon they have other thoughts of good and evil, of things eternal and temporal, of God and their own duty, for a season. And hereon some of them may and do persuade themselves that there is a change in their hearts and affections, which there is not; like a man who persuades himself that he hath lost his ague because his present fit is over. The next trial of temptation carries them away again unto the world and sin.

There are sometimes sudden impressions made on spiritual affections, which are always of great advantage to the soul, renewing its engagements unto God and duty. So was it with Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 16–20; so is it often with believers in hearing the word, and on other occasions. On all of them they renew their clearings unto God with love and delight. But the effect of these impressions on unrenewed affections are neither spiritual nor durable; yea, for the most part, they are but checks given in the providence of God unto the raging of their lusts, Ps. ix. 20.

2. They are liable unto an habitual change. This the experience of all ages gives testimony to. There may be an habitual change wrought in the passions and affections of the mind, as unto the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, without any gracious renovation of them. **Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts, have wrought this change**. So Saul, upon his call to be king, became "another man." Hereby persons naturally passionate and furious have been made sedate and moderate, and those who have been sensual have become temperate, yea, and haters of religion to be professors of it. All these things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought upon the affections only, whilst the mind, will, and conscience, have been totally unsanctified.

By this change, when it is alone [that is, when the affections are not renewed by grace, that internal renovation of the affections], no man ever became spiritually minded; for whereas there are two parts of the depravation of our affections, that whereby they are turned off from God, and that whereby they inordinately cleave unto other things, their change principally, if not only, respects the latter. They are brought into some order with respect unto present things. The mind is not continually tossed up

and down by them as the waves of the sea, that are troubled, and east up mire and dirt. They do not carry those in whom they are into vicious, sensual actions, but they allow them to make virtue in moderation, sobriety, temperance, fidelity, and usefulness in several ways, to be their design; and it is admirable to think what degrees of eminency in all sorts of moral virtues, upon this one principle of moderating the affections, even many among the heathens attained unto. But as unto their aversation from God and spiritual things, in the true spiritual notion of them, they are not cured by this change; at least this change may be, and yet this latter not be wrought.

Again; this alteration doth but turn the course or stream of men's affections, it doth not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, **only they are habituated unto another course than what of themselves they are inclined unto.** You may take a young whelp of the most fierce and savage creature, as of a tiger or a wolf, and by custom or usage make it as tame and harmless as any domestic creature, — a dog, or the like: but although it may be turned into quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself inclined unto, yet its nature is not changed; and therefore frequently, on occasion, opportunity, or provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination, and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So is it with the depraved affections of men with respect unto their change: their streams are turned, they are habituated unto a new course: but their nature is not altered, at least not from rational unto spiritual, from earthly unto heavenly. Yet this is that which was most beautiful and desirable in nature, the glory of it, and the utmost of its attainments. He who has by any means proceeded unto such a moderation of his affections as to render him kind, benign, patient, useful, preferring public good before private, ordinate and temperate in all things, will rise up in judgment against those who, professing themselves to be under the conduct of the light of grace, do yet, by being morose, angry, selfish, worldly, manifest that their affections are not subdued by the power of that grace. Wherefore, that we may be spiritually minded, there is yet another work upon our affections required, which is their internal renovation, whereby not only the course of their actings is changed, but their nature is altered and spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in that great evangelical promise, Isa. xi. 6–9, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” **A change and alteration is promised in the natures, principles, and first inclinations, of the worst and most savage sinners who pass under the power of gospel grace.**

This is that which is required of us in a way of duty, Eph. iv. 23, “Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind.” There is a renovation of the mind itself, by the communication of spiritual, saving light and understanding thereunto, whereof I have treated elsewhere at large. See Rom. xii. 2; Eph. i. 17, 18. But “the spirit of the mind,” that whereby it is enlivened, led, and disposed unto its actings, that is to be renewed also. “The spirit of the mind” is in this place opposed unto “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” or depraved affections, Eph. iv. 22. These, therefore, are that “spirit of the mind,” which inclines, bends, and leads it to act suitably unto its inclinations, which is to be renewed. **And when our affections are inclined by the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and not else.** No other change will give them a spiritual renovation. Hereby those things which are only natural affections in themselves, in them that believe become **fruits of the Spirit**: Gal. v.

[22, 23](#), “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,” etc. **They continue the same as they were in their essence, substance, and natural powers; but are changed in their properties, qualities, inclinations, whenever a new nature is given unto them. So the waters at Marah were the same waters still before and after their cure.** But of themselves and in their own nature they were bitter, so as that the people could not drink them; on the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful, [Exod. xv. 25](#). So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them, [2 Kings ii. 19–22](#). **Our affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence; but they are so cured by grace as that their properties, qualities, and inclinations, are all cleansed or renewed.** The tree or salt that is cast into these waters, whereby the cure is wrought, is the love of God above all, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

More on the affections being renewed; the formation of the new man, which is God's image re-instamped upon the soul, which is *grace* implanted, that new principle of life (faith, grace and truth all wrapped together in one principle as Owen says), making us a partaker of his divine nature, inclining us to holiness, love for God, obedience, etc. The old man vs. the new man described. The universal effect upon the soul in true conversion.

Affections Renewed part II code56

Part II. Chapter XIII.

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded

by John Owen

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/spirituallyminded.i.vi.iii.html>

The work of the renovation of our affections — How differenced from any other impression on or change wrought in them, and how it is evidenced so to be — The first instance, in the universality accompanying of affections spiritually renewed — The order of the exercise of our affections with respect unto their objects.

That which is our concernment herein is, to inquire of what nature that work is which hath been on our own affections, or in them, and how it differs from those which, whatever they do or effect, yet will not render us nor themselves spiritual.

And we ought to use the best of our diligence herein, because the great means whereby multitudes delude and deceive their own souls, persuading themselves that there has been an effectual work of the grace of the gospel in them, is the change that they find in their affections; which may be on many occasions without any spiritual renovation:—

1. As unto the temporary and occasional impressions on the affections before mentioned, whether from the word or any other divine warning by afflictions or mercies, they are common unto all sorts of persons. Some there are whose “consciences are seared with a hot iron,” [1 Tim. iv. 2](#), “who” thereon, “being past feeling” (senseless of all calls, warnings, and rebukes), “have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,” [Eph. iv. 19](#). Such persons, having hardened themselves in a long course of sin, and being given up unto a reprobate mind, or vile affections, in a way of judgment, have, it may be, no such impressions on their affections on any occasion as to move them with a sense of things spiritual and eternal. They may be terrified with danger, sudden judgments, and other revelations of the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness of men, but they are not drawn to take shelter in thoughts of spiritual things. Nothing but hell will awaken them unto a due consideration of themselves and things eternal.

It is otherwise with the generality of men who are not profligate and impudent in sinning; for although they are in a natural condition and a course of sin, in the neglect of known duties, yet, by one means or other, — most frequently by the preaching of the word, — their affections are stirred towards heavenly things.

Sometimes they are afraid, sometimes they have hopes and desires about them. These put them on resolutions, and some temporary endeavours to change their lives, to abstain from sin and to perform holy duties. But, as the prophet complains, “their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away.” Yet by means hereof do many poor ignorant souls deceive themselves, and cry “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” And they will sometimes so express how they are affected, with complaints of themselves as unto their long neglect of spiritual things, that others may entertain good hopes concerning them; but all comes to nothing in the trial.

There is no difficulty unto spiritual light to distinguish between these occasional impressions on the affections and that spiritual renovation of them which we inquire after. This alone is sufficient to do it, that they are all of them temporary and evanid. They abide “for a while” only, as our Saviour speaks, and every occasion defeats all their efficacy. They may be frequently renewed, but they never abide. Some of them immediately pass away, and are utterly lost between the place where they hear the word and their own habitations; and in vain shall they inquire after them again, — they are gone forever. Some have a larger continuance, endure longer in the mind, and produce some outward effects. None of them will hold any trial or shock of temptation.

Yet I have somewhat to say unto those who have such **impressions on their affections, and warnings by them**:—

(1.) **Despise them not, for God is in them.** Although he may not be in them in a way of saving grace, yet he is in them in that which may be preparatory thereto. They are not common human accidents, but especial divine warnings.

(2.) Labour to retain them, or a sense of them, upon your hearts and consciences. You have got nothing by losing so many of them already; and if you proceed in their neglect, after a while you will hear of them no more.

(3.) Put no more in them than belongs unto them. Do not presently conclude that your state is good, because you have been affected at the hearing of the word, or under a sickness, or in a danger. Hereon you may think that now all is well with them, wherewith they please themselves, until they are wholly immersed in their former security.

2. **We may consider the difference that is between the habitual change of the affections before described, and that renovation by grace which renders them spiritual.** And this is of great concernment unto us all, to inquire into it with diligence. Multitudes are herein deceived, and that unto their ruin; for they resolve their present peace into, and build their hopes of eternal life on, such a change in themselves as will not abide the trial. This difference, therefore, is to be examined by Scripture light and the experience of them that do believe. And, —

(1.) There is a double universality with respect unto the spiritual renovation of our affections, — that which is subjective, with respect unto the affections themselves; and that which is objective, with respect unto spiritual things.

[1.] **Sanctification extends itself unto the “whole spirit, and soul, and body,” 1 Thess. v. 23.** When we say that we are sanctified in part only, we do not say that any part, power, or faculty of the soul is un sanctified, but only that the work is not absolutely perfect in any of them. All sin may retain power in some one affection, as anger, fear, or love, as unto actual eruptions and effects, more than in all the rest, as one affection may be more eminently sanctified in some than in others; for it may have advantages unto this end from men’s natural tempers and various outward circumstances. Hence, some find little difficulty in the mortification of all other lusts or corruptions in comparison of what they meet withal in some one inordinate affection or corruption. This, it may be, David had regard unto, Ps. xviii. 23. I have known persons shining exemplarily in all other graces who have been scarce free from giving great scandal by the excess of their passions and easy provocation thereunto. And yet they have known that the setting themselves unto the sincere, vigorous mortification of that disorder is the most eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things; for the trial of our self-denial lies in the

things that our natural inclinations lie strongest toward. **Howbeit, as was said, there is no affection where there is this work of renovation but it is sanctified and renewed; none of them is left absolutely unto the service of sin and Satan.** And therefore, whereas, by reason of the advantages mentioned, sin doth greatly contend to use some of them unto its interest and service in a peculiar manner, yet are they enabled unto and made meet for gracious actings, and do in their proper seasons put forth themselves accordingly. There is no affection of the mind from whence the soul and conscience hath received the greatest damage, — that was, as it were, the field whereon the contest is managed between sin and grace, — but hath its spiritual use and exercise when the mind is renewed.

There are some so inordinately subject to anger, and passion therein, as if they were absolutely under the power and dominion of it; yet do they also know how to be “angry and sin not,” in being angry at sin in themselves and others: “Yea, what indignation; yea, what revenge!” etc., [2 Cor. vii. 11](#). **Yea, God is pleased sometimes to leave somewhat more than ordinary of the power of corruption in one affection, that it may be an occasion of the continual exercise of grace in the other affections. Yet are they all sanctified in their degree,** that which is relieved as well as that which doth relieve. And therefore, as the **remainder of sin in them that believe is called “the old man,”** [that [principle of nature that is opposed to that principle of life, faith, grace, divine love, delight, etc., the new man](#)] which is to be crucified in all the members of it, because of its adherence unto the whole person in all its powers and faculties; **so the grace implanted in our natures is called “the new man,” there being nothing in us that is not seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of sin, so nothing in our natures is excepted from the renovation that is by grace. He in whom any one affection is utterly unrenewed hath no one graciously renewed in him. Let men take heed how they indulge to any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable impeachment of their sincerity.** Think not to say, with **Naaman**, “God be merciful unto me in this thing; in all others I will be for him.” **He requires the whole heart, and will have it or none.** The chief work of a Christian is to make all his affections, in all their operations, subservient unto the life of God, [Rom. vi. 17, 18](#); and he who is wise will keep a continual watch over those wherein he finds the greatest reluctancy thereunto. And every affection is originally sanctified according unto the use it is to be of in the life of holiness and obedience.

To be entire for God, to “**follow him fully,**” to “**cleave unto him with purpose of heart,**” to have the “**heart circumcised to love him,**” **is to have all our affections renewed and sanctified; without which we can do none of them.** When it is otherwise, there is a “**double heart,**” “**a heart and a heart,**” **which he abhors:** “**Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty,**” [Hos. x. 2](#).

So it is in the other change mentioned. **Whatever is or may be wrought upon our affections when they are not spiritually renewed, that very change, as unto the extent of it, is not universal.** It doth not affect the whole mind, in all its powers and affections, until a vital, prevailing principle and habit of grace is implanted in the soul. Sin will not only radically adhere unto all the **faculties, powers, and affections,** but it will, under any change that may befall them, **refer the rule and dominion in some of them unto itself.** So was it with the young man that came unto our Lord Jesus Christ to know what he should do to obtain eternal life, [Mark x. 17–22](#).

Thus there are many who in other things are reduced unto moderation, sobriety, and temperance, yet there remaineth in them “the love of money” in a predominant degree; which to them is “the root of all evil,” as the apostle speaks. Some “seem to be religious,” but they “bridle not their tongues;” through anger, envy, hatred, and the like, “their religion is vain.”

The most of men, in their several ways of profession, pretend not only unto religion, but unto zeal in it, yet set no bounds unto their affections unto earthly enjoyments. Some of old, who had most eminently in all other things subdued their passions and affections, were the greatest enemies unto and persecutors of the gospel.

Some who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them by a superstitious devotion, do yet walk in the spirit of Cain towards all the disciples of Christ, — as it is with the principal devotionists of the church of Rome; and elsewhere we may see some go soberly about the persecution and destruction of other Christians. Some will cherish one secret lust or other, which they cannot but know to be pernicious unto their souls. Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded: so our Saviour testifieth of some, that they “could not believe, because they loved the praise of men.” This was the known vice of all the ancient philosophers. They had, many of them, on the principles of reason and by severe exercise, subdued their affections unto great moderation about temporary things, but in the meantime were all of them slaves to vain-glory and the praise of men, until by the public observation of it, and some contradictions in their lives unto their pretences unto virtue, they lost that also among wise and considerative men. And, generally, if men not spiritually renewed were able to search themselves, they would find that some of their affections are so far from having any change wrought in them, as that they are a quiet habitation for sin, where it exerciseth its rule and dominion.

[2.] There is a universality that is objective in spiritual things, with respect unto the renovation of our affections; that is, affections spiritually renewed do fix themselves upon and cleave unto all spiritual things, in their proper places, and unto their proper ends: for the ground and reason of our adherence unto any one of them is the same with respect unto them all, — that is, their relation unto God in Christ. Wherefore, when our affections are renewed, we make no choice in spiritual things, cleaving unto some and refusing others, making use of Naaman’s restraint; but our adherence is the same unto them all in their proper places and degrees. And if, by reason of darkness and ignorance, we know not any of them to be from God, — as, for instance, the observation of the Lord’s day, — it is of unspeakable disadvantage unto us. An equal respect is required in us unto all God’s commands. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things, and thereon a man may and ought to value one above another as unto the degrees of his love and esteem, although he is to be sincere with respect unto them all:—

1st. God himself, — that is, as revealed in and by Christ, — is in the first and chiefest place the proper and adequate object of our affections as they are renewed, lie is so for himself, or his own sake alone. This is the spring, the centre, and chief object of our love. He that loves not God for himself, — that is, for what he is in himself, and what from himself alone he is and will be unto us in Christ (which considerations are inseparable), — hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. And not a few do here deceive themselves, or are deceived; which should make us the more diligent in the examination of ourselves. They suppose that they love heaven and heavenly things, and the duties of

divine worship, — which persuasion may befall them on many grounds and occasions which will not endure the trial, — but as unto God himself, they can give no evidence that they have any love to him, either on the account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, with their natural relation unto him and dependence on him, or on the account of the manifestation of himself in Christ, and the exercise of his grace therein. But whatever may be pretended, there is no love unto God whereof these things are not the formal reason, that proceeds not from these springs. And because all men pretend that they love God, and defy them that think them so vile as not to do so, though they live in open enmity against him and hatred of him, it becomes us strictly to examine ourselves on what grounds we pretend so to do. Is it because indeed we see an excellency, a beauty, a desirableness, in the glorious properties of his nature, such as our souls are refreshed and satisfied with the thoughts of, by faith, and in whose enjoyment our blessedness will consist, so that we always rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness? Is it our great joy and satisfaction that God is what he is? Is it from the glorious manifestation that he hath made of himself and all his holy excellencies in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us in and by him? If it be so indeed, then is our love generous and gracious, from the renovation of our affections. But if we say we love God, yet truly know not why, or upon principles of education, and because it is esteemed the height of wickedness to do otherwise, we shall be at a loss when we are called unto our trial. This is the first object of our affections.

2dly. In other spiritual things, renewed affections do cleave unto them according as God is in them. **God alone is loved for himself**; all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. This alone gives them pre-eminence in renewed affections. For instance, God is in Christ, in the human nature of the man Christ Jesus, in a way and manner singular, in concern alike, incomprehensible, so as he is in the same kind in nothing else. Therefore is the Lord Christ, even as unto his human nature, the object of our affections in such a way and degree as no other thing, spiritual or eternal, but God himself, is or ought to be. All other spiritual things become so from the presence of God in them, and from the degree of that presence have they their nature and use. Accordingly are they, or ought to be, the object of our affections as unto the degree of their exercise. Evidences of the presence of God in things and persons are the only attractives of renewed affections.

3dly. In those things which seem to stand in an equality as unto what is of God in them, yet on some especial occasions and reasons our love may go forth eminently unto one more than another. Some particular truth, with the grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion unto God, of our edification in an especial manner, of our consolation in distress; it cannot be but that the mind will have a peculiar respect unto and valuation of such truths and the grace administered by them. And so it is as unto duties. We may have found such a lively intercourse and communion with God in some of them as may give us a peculiar delight in them.

But, notwithstanding these differences, affections spiritually renewed do cleave unto all spiritual things as such; for the true formal reason of their so doing is the same in them all, — namely, God in them: only they have several ways of acting themselves towards them, whereof I shall give one instance.

Our Saviour distributes spiritual things into those that are heavenly and those that are earthly, that is comparatively so: [John iii. 12](#), “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

The “heavenly things” are the deep and mysterious counsels of the will of God. These renewed affections cleave unto with holy admiration and satisfactory submission, captivating the understanding unto what it cannot comprehend. So the apostle declares it, [Rom. xi. 33–36](#), “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” **What the mind cannot comprehend the heart doth admire and adore, delighting in God, and giving glory unto him in all.**

The “earthly things” intended by our Saviour in that place are the work of God upon the souls of men in their regeneration, wrought here in the earth. Toward these the affections act themselves with delight and with great thanksgiving. The experience of the grace of God in and upon believers is sweet unto their souls. But one way or other they cleave unto them all; they have not a prevailing aversation unto any of them. They have a regard unto all God’s precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself and all his ways.

Whatever other change is wrought on the affections, if they be not spiritually renewed, it is not so with them; for as they do not cleave unto any spiritual things, in their own true proper nature, in a due manner, because of the evidences of the presence of God in them, so there are always some of them whereunto those whose affections are not renewed do maintain an aversation and an enmity. And although this frame doth not instantly discover itself, yet it will do so upon any especial trial. So was it with the hearers of our Saviour, [John vi.](#) There was a great impression made on their affections by what he taught them concerning “the bread of God, which came down from heaven and gave life unto the world;” for they cried thereon, “Lord, evermore give us this bread,” [verse 34](#): **but when the mystery of it was farther explained unto them, they liked it not, but cried, “This is an hard saying, who can hear it?”** [verse 60](#); **and thereon fell off both from him and his doctrine**, although they had followed him so long as to be esteemed his disciples, [verse 66](#). I say, therefore, whenever men’s affections are not renewed, whatever other change may have been wrought upon them, as they have no true delight in any spiritual things or truths for themselves and in their own nature, so there are some instances wherein they will maintain their natural enmity and aversation unto them.

This is the first difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which, from any other causes, may have some kind of change wrought in them.

Regeneration Produces a New Spiritual Principle

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by John Owen

from The Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power, p154

Now the Scripture abundantly testifies, that in regeneration there is a new spiritual principle, which is the production of the Holy Spirit: 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature' (2Cor5:17). This is produced in the soul by a creating act of the power of God, or it is not a creature; and it is super-induced into the faculties of the soul, or it is not a new creature. It must be something that has a being and subsistence of its own in the soul, or it can be neither new nor a creature; and that the production of it is by a creating act of almighty power, the Scripture declares (Ps. 51:10, Eph. 2:10). It is a new spiritual principle wrought in us by the Spirit of God. 'No' say some, 'a new creature is only a changed man.' It is true, but then this change is internal also. 'Yes, in the inclinations of the mind.' But it is by real infusion of a new principle of spiritual life. 'No, it denotes only a new course of conversation. The expression is metaphorical—a new creature, is a moral man that has changed his way; for if he were always a moral man, then he was always a new creature.' 'Tis is good gospel! At once overthrowing original sin, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine I am sure was not learned from the fathers, of whom some used to boast. And this way of turning all Scripture expressions of spiritual things into metaphors, is the way to turn the whole into a fable; or, at least, to render the gospel the most obscure method of teaching the truth of things that ever was used in the world.

The new creature therefore does not consist in a new course of actions, but in renewed faculties, with new dispositions, power and ability to perform them. Hence it is called the 'divine nature' (2Pet. 1:4). This divine nature, is not the nature of God, of which in our own persons we are not subjectively partakers, yet, a nature it is, a principle of operation; and that divine or spiritual - an habitual holy principle, wrought in us by God and bearing his image.

The whole of what we intend is declared in Ephesians: 'Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. 4:22-4). The work of regeneration is here described. The foundation of the whole is laid in our being renewed in the spirit of our mind, or being transformed in the renovation of our mind (Rom. 12:2). The principle itself infused into us, is called the new man, because it consists in the universal change of the soul, as it is the principle of all spiritual and moral actions. And it is opposed to the old man, or the corruption of our nature, as it is the principle of all actions and root of it; for it is distinguished from the conversation of men. And it is called a new man, because it is the effect of God's power in the new creation. Now the object of a creating act is an instantaneous production. Whatever preparations there may be for it, the production of a new being by creation, is in an instant. This therefore cannot consist in a mere reformation of life. We are the "workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus to good, our good works towards him; for before we can perform them, we must be created unto them, or spiritually enabled to perform them. Again; this new man is said to be 'created in righteousness and true holiness'. This has respect to man create in innocence; he was made in the image of God. Now this image of God did not consist in reformation of life, no, nor in a course of virtuous actions; for he had the image of God

before he performed any good action at all. It consisted in the rectitude of his whole soul, and ability for the obedience required of him. Such therefore must be our regeneration, antecedent to evangelical reformation of life, and fitting us for it according to the will of God.

Regeneration Comes Before Reformation

And thus also our Saviour speaks: 'A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit' (Luke 6:43). The fruit follows the nature of the tree; and there is no way to change the nature of the fruit, but by changing the nature of the tree. Now all amendment of life is but fruit (Matt. 3:10); but the changing of our nature is antecedent to it. The Scripture constantly distinguishes between the grace of regeneration, and that obedience of holiness which is the effect of it (Ezek. 36:25; Jer. 31:33; 32:39). God's method is first to wash and cleanse our natures; to 'take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh', to write his law in our hearts, and put his Spirit in us; and then the effect and consequence is, that we shall 'walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them', that is, reform our lives and yield obedience to God. These things therefore are distinguished as causes and effects; see to the same purpose (Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 3:1, 5; Eph. 2:10, 6:23).

A Denial of Original Sin

This work is described to consist in the 'sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body' (1Thes. 5:23). And if this is what some men intend by reformation of life, and moral virtue, they must certainly gain much esteem for their clearness and perspicuity in teaching spiritual things. For who would not admire them for such a definition of morality, namely, that it is the sanctification of the whole spirit, soul and body of a believer, by the Holy Ghost? But, in short, there is not description of regeneration in the Scripture, in its nature, causes, or effects; no name given to it, no promise made of it, nothing said of the means or power by which it is wrought, but what is inconsistent with this bold Pelagian figment, which is destructive of the grace of Jesus Christ.

This is vain imagination evidently arises from a denial of original sin. For if a man be not originally depraved, it is certain that he needs no inward spiritual renovation. It is enough that by change of life he renounce a custom of sinning, and reform his conversation. but as it has been already shown, and will be more fully evinced, that in our regeneration, the native darkness of our minds is dispelled, spiritual light introduced, the stubbornness of our wills removed, a new principle of life bestowed, and the disorder of our affections cured; so the contrary opinion, directly opposite to the Scripture, to the faith of the ancient Church, and the experience of all believers, has nothing but ignorance and confidence to support it.

Ecstatic Experience is Not Regeneration

The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, does not consist in enthusiastical raptures, ecstasies, voices, or anything of the like kind. Such things may have been pretended to by some weak and deluded persons: but the countenancing of such imaginations, or teaching men to expect them, or esteeming them as conversion to God, while holiness was neglected, is a calumny and false accusation, as our writings and preaching fully testify. Therefore as to this negative principle we observe, that the Holy Spirit usually exerts his power in the use of means, and that he works on men agreeably to their natures. He does not come upon them with involuntary raptures using their mental powers, as the evil spirit wrests the bodies of possessed persons; his whole work is rationally to be accounted for, by those who believe the Scriptures, and have received the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. Indeed, the efficiency of the Spirit in quickening our souls (which the ancients always termed his inspiration of grace) is no otherwise to be comprehended than any other act of creating power: for as we 'hear the wind' but know not whence it cometh, nor wither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit' (John 3:8). But this is certain, that he works nothing but what is determined and declared in his written word and that he puts no force on the faculties of our souls, but works in them and by them suitably to their nature.

Yet so it is come to pass, that many regenerate persons have been looked upon by the world (which knows them not) as mad, enthusiastic, and fanatical. So the captains of the host esteemed the prophet who came to anoint Jehu (2Kings 9:11). And the kindred of our Saviour, when he began to preach the gospel, said he was beside himself and they went out to lay hold of him (Mark 3:21). So Festus judged of Paul (Acts26:24-5). And the author of the Book of Wisdom represents the acknowledgements some will make, when it will be too late for their own advantage:

They shall say crying out, because of the trouble of their minds, 'This is he whom we accounted a scorn, and a common reproach: We fools esteemed his life madness, and his latter end to have been shameful; but now is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his lot is among the holy ones.' Wis. 5:3-5

Van Til on “Special Revelation” and the “special principle” & Regeneration

The Names Used to Indicate Special Revelation

The terms most frequently used are *apokalypto* and *phaneroo*. Etymologically, *apokalypto* indicates the removal of a covering under which something was hidden, while *phaneroo* signifies the making known of something that was unknown. The former takes away the hinderances that kept something from being manifest, while the latter manifests the matter itself. The former is always used with the **objective** aspect of the “**special principle**,” while the latter applies to both the **objective** and the **subjective** aspect. By “special principle” we mean the totality of the work of redemption. This work is done both for us and within us. It has, therefore, an objective and a subjective aspect.³⁴

³⁴As he explains in chp 11, note 4, the expression “special principle” refers to everything God has done for the redemption of his people, both objectively (through the work of Christ) and subjectively (through the work of the Holy Spirit). Because of sin, this revelation not only must carry new truth – that of the grace of redemption – but also must create a new heart to see the truth for what it is..

We see from these names and from their use that Scripture presents revelation as covering both the objective and the subjective aspects that we have spoken of under the heading of the necessity of special revelation. They speak both of the new light that must be given the sinner and also of the new power of sight that he needs. These two are constantly taken in conjunction with one another.

Pgs 202-203, Systematic Theology, by Cornelius Van Til

Regeneration is Needed

Excerpt from Van Til, Systematic Theology, pg 219

God not only walked with man and talked with man, but also wrought for man. When man fell into sin, he not merely needed new information, but he needed to be changed. Things had to be done for him in the objective sphere, and things had to be done for him in the subjective sphere. He needed to be told not only that Christ would come, but also that Christ had actually to come. Christ had to come because of the sin of man. The central miracle of Christianity, as it is in the person and work of Christ, is necessary not because man is man, but because of the sin of man. It is only because of the fact that this miracle was going to come in accordance with the grace and counsel of God that man could have true interpretation of prophesy at all. Thus, the theophany itself is essentially miraculous.

If this point is kept in mind, we shall be saved from much false intellectualism. Intellectualism is the church has often made an easy compromise with the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue. Men often speak as though the only thing that a sinner needs is true information. This, as has been pointed out before, is not the case. Man needs true interpretation, but he also needs to be made a new creature.

That this is so may also be observed from the very nature of sin. Sin is not only misinformation; it is also a power of perversion in the soul. And this appears all the more fully from the fact that the results of sin are seen in nature as well as in man. Nature cannot be suffering from lack of information. Yet it is suffering from the consequences of sin in man. It is under the curse of God.

This is a summary that puts many important doctrines in their proper perspective drawing together much of what has been said in previous writing in this study guide, their relationship one to another, so that you will gain a right understanding of them for faith to grow, to due appreciation for God and his sovereign power that works in us and hence a holy fear and admiration of Him being dependent upon Him for everything.

Sanctification

code58

A Progressive Work

by John Owen in his book, The Holy Spirit (pg 257)

(The writing of God's law on your heart – Flavel)

Having considered several things relating to sanctification in general, I shall in the next place give a description of it, and then explain it more particularly: not that I intend to comprise everything that belongs to the subject, but rather to say up some way - marks that may guide our future inquiries into the nature and glory of it.

Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God, and thereby enabling them, from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace [same thing as that term, a new principle of life infused], to yield obedience to God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, by virtue of that life and death of Jesus Christ [remember, the death of Christ purchased all those graces, eternal life, etc., for his elect]. Or more briefly, it is the universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit, into the image of God, through Jesus Christ. Our Apostle expresses it more briefly yet, 'He that is in Christ Jesus, is a new creature.' (2Cor. 5:17). I shall take up the first general description, nature and effects of this work, especially wherein is opposed or called in question.

It was before proved to be the work of the Spirit of God, a real, internal, powerful work, in and on the souls of believers; and it differs from regeneration, chiefly on account of the manner of its being wrought. The work of regeneration is instantaneous, consisting in one single creating act; hence it is not capable of degrees; no one is more or less regenerate than another: but sanctification is progressive, and admits of degrees; one may be more sanctified than another, who is yet truly sanctified; it is begun at once and carried on gradually. This observation we shall explain and confirm.

Increase and growth in holiness is frequently in the Scripture enjoined on us, and promised to us [this is the key difference between the old covenant of works and the new covenant of free grace; election is unconditional; salvation is conditional upon faith but that very condition, faith, is promised to the elect!]. So speaks the apostle Peter, 'Fall not [be not cast down] from your own steadfastness; but grow, or increase, in grace' (2Pet. 3:18). It is not enough that we do not decay in our spiritual condition, but an endeavour after an improvement, and increase, a thriving in grace, that is, in holiness, is required of us. And this is much commended in the Thessalonians namely, the 'exceeding growth of their faith, and abounding of their love' (2Thes. 1:3). This is called 'increasing with the increase of God' (Col. 2:19); or that increase in holiness which God requires, accepts and approves.

How Holiness is Increased

The work of holiness, in its beginning, is but like the seed cast into the earth; being cherished and nourished, it is in its nature to take root, to spring up, and to bring forth fruit. It is thus with the seed of God, the principle of holiness [see 1John3:9, "No one who is ^[a]born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is ^[b]born of God." In other words, that principle of holiness which includes the grace of faith (which is inseparable from repentance), is that new principle of life, aka, grace; many names (grace, new principle, faith, the love of God, etc.) meaning essentially the same thing.] It is small at first, but being received in good and honest hearts, made so by the Spirit of God, and there nourished and cherished, it takes root, and produces fruit: and both theses, the first planting and the increase, are equally of the Spirit; he who begins this 'good work; performs it so the day of Christ' (Phil. 1:6); and this he does two ways.

Key Graces are Strengthened

By strengthening and increasing those graces we have received and exercised. There are some graces, whose exercise does not depend on any outward occasions, but which are absolutely necessary, and that in their actual exercise, to the least degree of the life of God; such are faith and love. These graces are capable of degrees, and therefore of increase. We read of little and great faith, weak and strong faith; both true, and the same in substance, but differing in degree. There is also fervent love, and that which is comparatively cold. These graces, then, are gradually increased in the work of sanctification. So the disciples prayed our Saviour to 'increase their faith' (Luke 17:5) - to add to its light, confirm in assent, multiply its acts, and make it strong against all assaults; that it might work more effectually in difficult duties of obedience, such as that of frequent forgiveness of offending brethren. And the apostle prays for the Ephesians, 'that they may be rooted and grounded in love' (3:17); that is, that by the increase of their love, they may be more established in all the duties thereof.

By Frequent Exercise

Now the Holy Spirit strengthens these graces, by exciting them to frequent actings. They grow and thrive by exercise. And the Spirit of God excites them, by frequently and seasonably presenting their proper objects; particularly in the preaching of the word, and other ordinances of worship. God in Christ, the promises of the covenant, and other proper objects of faith and love being proposed to us, these graces are drawn out into exercise. This is one principal advantage we derive from the dispensation of the word; and we are beyond what we retain in our memories (though we should labour for that too) our chief advantage is in this, that faith, love, and other graces are excited to their proper exercise; without this they would decay and wither, but thus they are kept alive. And thus the Holy Spirit, 'takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us' and 'brings to remembrance' what he has spoken (John 16:14; 14:26). Herein lies the secret profiting and thriving of believers under the gospel, which perhaps they are not sensible of themselves. By this means many thousand acts of faith and love are drawn forth; these graces themselves are strengthened; and consequently holiness is increased. He does it really and internally. All the graces are called 'the fruits of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:22); he brings them forth from the stock that he has planted in the heart; and we cannot act any one grace without his effectual operation therein; 'God worketh in us both to will and to do' (Phil. 1:13); for 'in us, that is, in our flesh' (and or ourselves we are but flesh) 'there dwelleth no good.' Wherefore the Spirit dwelling in believers, effectually excites their graces to frequent exercise, and so increases and strengthens them. And therefore we ought to be exceedingly careful that we grieve not this good Spirit, and so provoke him to withhold his gracious assistance from us.

By Conscious Experience

The Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification by supplying believers with experiences of the truth, reality, and excellency of the things believed. Experience is the food of all grace which grows and thrives upon. Every taste that faith obtains of divine love and grace adds to its measure and

stature. Hence God expostulates with the Church as to the weakness of her faith, after so much experience of his power and faithfulness: 'Hast thou not heard, hast thou not known? - How then sayest thou that that God has forsaken thee?' (Isa. 40:27-8). And our apostle affirms, that the consolations he had experimentally received from God, enabled him to discharge his duty towards others in trouble (2Cor. 7:4). For herein 'we prove', or really approve of, as being satisfied in, 'the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God' (Rom. 12:2). I may say, that he who knows not how faith is strengthened, **by special experience of the reality and power of things believed on the soul**, never partook of them. How often does David encourage his own faith and others, **from his former experiences**, which were also pleaded by Christ himself, to the same purpose, in his great distress (Ps. 22:9-10). Now it is the Holy Ghost who administer consolation, as the great Comforter of the Church; and he administers it, **by giving to believers a spiritual, sensible experience of the reality and power of the things believed**. Other means of spiritual consolation I know not; and I am sure this never fails. Give the soul a taste of the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus, and be its condition what it may, it cannot refuse to be comforted; and hereby he 'sheds abroad the love of "God in our hearts', by which all graces are cherished an increased.

Directly by the Spirit

He does it by working immediately an actual increase of these graces in us; as he first creates them, so he increases them. Hereby the 'feeble become as David' (Zech. 12:8): those whose graces were weak, whose faith was infirm, and whose love was languid, become by the supplies of the Spirit, strong and vigorous. To this purpose promises are multiplied in Scripture, which in our constant supplications we principally respect (Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:10; Isa. 40:29; Ps. 138:8).

Occasional Graces Accrue

There are graces whose exercise is more occasional; it is not necessary that they should be always in actual exercise, as faith and love are to be. With respect to these, holiness is increased by the addition of one to another, till we are brought on several occasions to the practice of them all. And the wise **providence** of God renders our relations, afflictions, temptations, mercies, enjoyments and all occurrences subservient to this end. This is given us in charge, 'Besides all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly kindness a divine nature imparted. But will that suffice, or is nothing more required of us to that end? 'Yes,' says the apostle, 'use your **utmost diligence** to add the exercise of all graces one to another, as occasion requires.' And this addition of one grace to another is from the Holy Ghost, for he so orders our affairs and conditions that the exercise of these graces shall become necessary.

All the afflictions of the Church have this design; hence the apostle James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience: but let patience have it perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing' (Jas. 1:2-4). All our trials are under the direction of Christ, by his Spirit; and they are to this end, **that**

faith may be exercised, patience employed, and one grace added to another. In this state of things, he effectually reminds us of our duty, and what graces ought to be exercised. We may dispute whether it be better to act in faith, or to despond; to exercise patience under continued trials, or irregularly to seek deliverance: then he cause is 'to hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left' (Isa. 30:21). When we are at a loss, and know not what to do, and are ready perhaps to 'consult with flesh and blood.' He speaks effectually to us, saying, "No, that is not your way, but his is, namely, to act faith, patience, and submission to God."

Now all this increase of holiness is the **work of the Spirit**, who not only bestows in regeneration a nature capable of growth, but affords actual supplies for its increase. It depends wholly on **continual influences** from God, 'I the Lord water it every moment' and the Spirit is this water [this is another promise of the new covenant that those under law did not have the benefit of, which is one good reason why the new covenant is a better covenant being that it is built on better promises. Even Adam, prior to his fall while under probation (under works, do this and live) did not have this promise of continual supplies of grace!]. God the Father takes upon him the care of this vineyard; 'I the Lord do keep it night and day' (Isa. 27:3). The Lord Christ is the head, fountain and treasury of all supplies: and the Spirit is the efficient cause, communicating them to us from him. Hence it is that any grace is kept alive one moment, that it is ever acted in a single duty, or that it ever receives the least increase. With respect to all these, our apostle says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20). Spiritual life, and living by it, in all the acts of it, are immediately from Christ.

There is no man, who has any true grace, but the Spirit, by his care over it, and supplies of it, is able to preserve it, to extricate it from difficulties, to free it from opposition, and to increase it to its full measure and perfection. Wherefore, 'let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened;' we have to do with him who 'will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.' And on the other hand, no one has received such a measure of grace, nor exercised it in such a manner, that he can preserve it one moment, or act it in one instance, without the **constant supplies of the Spirit**, for 'without him we can do nothing.' Wherefore God has so ordered the dispensation of his love and grace to believers, that all of them living on the supplies of his Spirit, can have no cause on the one hand to faint or despond, nor occasion on the other to glory in themselves: there is ground of faith given to all, and occasion of presumption administered to none.

Biblical Illustrations from Nature

I shall close the discourse on this subject with some consideration of that similitude by which the Scripture so frequently represents the gradual improvement of grace and holiness; and this is the growth of trees and plants. 'I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon' (Hos. 14:5-6). 'I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seek, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass and the willows by the watercourses' (Isa. 44:3-4). We may illustrate this instructive similitude by a few observations.

Why Make an Effort to Grow in Grace?

This objection we must expect to meet at every turn: men will not believe there is a consistency between God's effectual grace, and our diligent obedience; that is, they will not believe what the Scripture declares, and experience proves, because they cannot comprehend it by their carnal reason. Let the apostle answer this objection for once: 'His divine power hath given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of a divine nature' (2Pet1:3). Now if all things pertaining to godliness be given us by the power of God - if we receive a divine nature, by virtue of which our corruptions are subdued; then what need of our endeavours? All is done in us, it seems; we may leave it to God, while we are negligent, secure and at ease. Nay, saith the apostle, this is not the use that the grace of God is to be put to. The consideration of this is the principal motive to diligence for the increase of holiness for so he adds immediately, 'but also for this cause,' or because of the gracious operations of the divine power in us: 'giving all diligence, add'. These objectors, and our apostle were very differently minded in these matters; what they make a discouragement to diligence, he makes the greatest motive.

The Source of Growth Is Internal

These trees and plants have the principle of their growth in themselves. They do not grow immediately from external adventitious aid, but from their own seminal virtue and radical moisture. It is no otherwise in the progress of holiness; it has a **root**, a **seed**, a **principle of growth** in the soul. All grace is **immortal seed**, and contains in it a **living growing principle**, (John 4:14). That which has not in itself a life and power of growth, is not grace. And therefore whatever duties men perform, as directed by natural light, or urged by convictions from the word, **if they proceed not from a principle of spiritual life in the heart, they are not fruits of holiness**.

Withers Without Water

A tree or plant must be watered from above, or it will not thrive by virtue of its own seminal power; if a drought come, it will wither or decay. Wherefore God ascribes this growth to his own watering: 'I will be as the dew', and 'I will pour water', is the special cause of it: and this God does by the actual supplies of this Spirit.

The Growth of the Best Is Secret

The growth of trees and plants is secret and imperceptible, and discerned only in the effects and consequences of it; the most watchful eye can discern little of its notion; and so it is in the progress of

holiness. It is not immediately discernible either by those in whom it is, or by others who observe it, except by its fruits and effects. Some indeed, especially at times, do evidently thrive and grow, springing up like the 'willows by the watercourses', though their growth in itself is indiscernible, yet it is plain they have grown. Such we ought all to be. And some affirm that the growth of plants is by sudden gusts and motions (which may sometimes be discerned in the opening of buds and flowers) to the growth of believers consists principally in some intense vigorous actings of grace on great occasions, as of faith, love, humility, bounty. Again there are trees and plants that have a **principle of life** and growth in them, but they are so withering and unthrifty, that you can only discern them to be alive: and so it is with too many believers; they are all trees planted in the garden of God; some thrive, some decay for a season; but the growth of the best is secret.

The Spirit Preserves the Living Fire

From what has been said, it is evident that sanctification is a progressive work. It is not completed in us at once, as regeneration is, nor does it cease under any attainments. A river, continually fed by a living fountain, may as soon end its streams before it come to the ocean, as a stop be put to the course of grace, before it issue in glory. For 'the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day' (Prov. 4:18); the morning light may be clouded for a time, yet fails not till it arrive at perfection: and thus it is with their path who are led by the Spirit. And as the wisdom, patience, and power of the Spirit herein are unutterable, so they are constantly admired by those who are interested in them (Ps. 66:8-9; 31:17). Who is there, who has made any diligent observation of his own heart, and what have been the workings of grace in him, to bring him to his present stature and measure, who does not admire the watchful care and powerful operations of the Spirit of God therein? The principle of holiness as in us, is weak and infirm, because it is in us; this he preserves and cherishes, **that it shall not be overpowered by corruptions and temptations** [greater is He who is in you... 1Jn4:4]. Among all the glorious works of God, next to that of redemption by Jesus Christ, my soul most admires this of **the Spirit in preserving the seed and principle of holiness in us, as a spark of living fire in the midst of the ocean, against all corruptions and temptations whereby it is opposed**. Many breaches are made on the course of our obedience, by the incursions of actual sins; these he cures and makes up, healing our backslidings, and repairing our decays. He loses much of the comfort of spiritual life, who does not diligently observe the means of its preservation: and it is no small part of our sin and folly, when we are negligent herein.

All believers are no doubt in some measure convinced of this, both from Scripture and experience. And there is nothing from which they may more distinctly learn it, than the workings of their minds in prayer. It is '**the Spirit of grace and supplications**', who enables believer to pray; and as such, he copies out and expresses what he works in them as the **Spirit of sanctification**: and if we wisely consider his working in our hearts by prayer, we may understand much of his working upon our hearts by grace. Now how does the Holy Spirit teach us to pray? It is:

1. By giving us a spiritual insight into the promises of God, and the grace of the covenant, whereby we know what to ask.

2. By acquainting us with our wants, and giving us such a deep sense of them, as we cannot bear without relief.

3. By stirring up desires in the new creature for its own preservation, increase and improvement.

Answerable to these things, is his whole work of sanctification; for it is his **effectual communication of the grace and mercy** prepared in the promises of the covenant, through Jesus Christ; hereby he supplies our spiritual wants, and sets the new creature in life and vigour. Thus are our prayers an extract or copy of the Spirit's work, given us by himself. Now what is it that you chiefly labour about in prayer? Is it not, that the 'body of sin' in you may be weakened, subdued and at length destroyed? It is not that all the graces of the Spirit may be daily renewed, increased, and strengthened? And what is all this, but that holiness may be gradually progressive in your souls, till it come to perfection?

Sanctification at a Standstill

It may be said by some, that they neither find in themselves, nor observe in others, that the work of sanctification is constantly progressive; they have found grace more vigorous in former days than of late. Hence the complaints among many of their leanness, deadness and barrenness; 'O that it were with us as in our former days, in the day of our youth!'

I shall so far consider and remove this objection, as that the truth we have asserted may not suffer from it, nor those remain discouraged who do not come up to a full compliance with it.

Sinful Negligence Stunts Growth

What **grace in its own nature tends to**, and what is the Spirit's ordinary procedure in sanctification, is one thing; but what may fall out by indisposition, irregularity, or any other obstruction in the subjects of this work, is another. Under the first consideration, the work is thriving and progressive; in the latter, the rule is liable to exceptions. A child, who has a good constitution and proper food, will grow and thrive; but one who has inward obstructions and diseases, or falls and bruises, may be weak and thriftless. When we are regenerate, we are as new-born babes; and generally, if we have the 'sincere milk of the word', we shall 'grow thereby', but if we give way to temptations, corruptions, negligence, or conformity to the world, is it any wonder that we are lifeless and thriftless? It suffices to confirm that truth asserted, that if the work of sanctification be not gradually carried on in everyone where it is begun, it is generally from his own sinful negligence, indulgence of carnal lusts, or love of this present evil world.

Flourishing Holiness May Not Be Felt

It is one thing to have holiness really thriving in any soul, another for that soul to know it; and these may be separated. But before I name the reasons hereof, I must premise a necessary caution, which is, that as this rule is proposed for the relief of such as are at a loss about their condition, those persons have no concern in it, who may at any time, if they please, find how it is with them: for if they indulge

any predominant lust; if they live in the neglect of any known duty or the practice of any way of deceit; if they suffer the world to devour the choicest increase of their souls; or formality to eat out the life of their duties: I have nothing to offer to them, to manifest that holiness may thrive though they discern it not; for undoubtedly it does not, but will decay more and more. Such are to be awaked with violence, like men falling into a deadly lethargy; to be snatched as brands out of the fire, lest their end should be darkness and sorrow for ever more. But as to those who walk with God humbly and sincerely, several reasons may be given, to show that holiness may be thriving in them, and yet be undiscerned by themselves.

Promises of Progress Must Be Grasped

For it being the subject of so many gospel promises, it is a proper object of faith, or a thing to be believed. **The promises of God's explanation of covenant, and their accomplishment depends on God's faithfulness, and not on our sense of it.** Where therefore we do not openly lay an obstruction against it, we may and ought to believe that they are fulfilled to us, though we are not continually sensible thereof. **Again, it is our duty to grow in holiness;** and what God requires of us, we are to believe that he will help us in, and does so, whatever be our present apprehension. And he, who on these grounds can believe the growth of holiness in himself, though he have no sensible experience thereof, is, in my judgment, in as good, and perhaps in a more safe condition, than he who through the vigorous working of spiritual affections is most sensible of it. For it is certain that such a one does not **willfully** obstruct the growth of holiness; nor is he in danger of a **vain elation of mind [Rom12:3]**, and carelessness thereon, as others may be; for when we live by faith, and not at all by sense, we shall be humble, and fear always: such a one not finding in himself the evidence of what he most desires, will be continually careful that he drive it not further from him.

Notes on Sanctification

From *Reformed Dogmatics*

By Geerhardus Vos

Pgs. 796-815

Code469

13. *What then is contained in this holiness of God?*

a) That God loves Himself as the highest moral good.

b) That God as such turns away from all evil. In fact, in God, too, holiness is therefore a being separated—a being separated from the world, but not the world in the abstract. It is a separation from the unclean, sinful world. And thereby it must be kept in view that this separation derives from a positive principle, **since God seeks and loves Himself as the highest good**. [see [code469a](#)]

16. *From what two concepts, therefore, must the concept “holy,” as Scripture uses it, be sharply distinguished?*

a) From the concept of purity taken in itself. Someone is called good and pure if, considered in himself, he has no pollution.

b) From the concept of righteousness. Someone is called righteous if either his own merits or the imputed merits of another cause him to be in a state of acquittal before God. Thus, righteousness not only means that there is a relationship of his moral condition to God but also that that relationship has worked retroactively upon him.

Holiness is to be distinguished from both of these concepts. From purity in the abstract, first of all, for holiness means a relationship with God, a dedication to God. [see [code469b](#) on this] To be holy never means something that one is in himself, apart from God. But holiness is likewise distinguished from righteousness, for it is an inherent attribute and not a status granted to us again by God. It is something that we have in ourselves and not something in which we stand.

17. *Is this delineation of great importance for establishing the concept of sanctification?*

Yes, since at present one is accustomed to completely losing sight of this element of consecration to God and to regarding holiness anthropocentrically. One thereby starts with man and assumes that to sanctify is to make someone better or much better. This idea is already excluded by the term. Once someone has gained a correct insight into the biblical concept of “holiness” in its original meaning, as an attribute of God, in its theocentric character, that person will find it impossible to proceed in such a humanly oriented fashion. The **moral transformation of man**, too, **his subjective change**, must from the outset be regarded from this point of view: It is for God and not for ourselves. It serves for God’s

glorification and to carry out His holiness, not to remake us for an ideal that would have independent significance and would bear in itself its own standard.

Thus, on this point, despite every difference between them, sanctification and justification agree in that both happen to us for God's glorification. It is not wrong to stress sanctification along with justification, for on that Scripture itself leads the way for us most emphatically. But it is certainly wrong to stress sanctification that is cut off from the root of God's holiness, that is not for God, so is unscriptural. That is what must be repudiated in the ethical preaching of our day. However, by no means is the corrective against such preaching a one-sided emphasis on objective justification and a neglect of subjective sanctification. True sanctification must again replace false sanctification. Once this happens, dead and deadening ethicism will be replaced **by a moral earnestness that will express the warmth and ardor of true religion**. "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"; not only, "as I am holy" [Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 1 Pet 1:16]! P798-799

22. *How do you define sanctification?*

The gracious work of God whereby, under the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, the justified believer is renewed by degrees in his whole nature, so that Christ is formed in him and he lives for God in good works. Pg 801 [From point 32 in Justification, Vos adds more understanding to this definition: "Justification is thus in a judicial sense the root of sanctification." Sanctification is more subjective. God declares us innocent of all charges (declarative, forensic, or objective, a judicial pronouncement, by the merits of Christ; our sanctification is worked out in time in each believer by the Spirit, hence subjective. See 25. below.)

23. *Is it correct to say that the righteousness of the Mediator is imputed to us in justification and infused in sanctification?*

Although there is certainly a working of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit in sanctification, this formula could give rise to misunderstanding. In any case, it is not the same righteousness of Christ that occurs in its two parts. When I speak of an **imputed righteousness** of the Mediator, then I mean that righteousness that He obtained by means of His suffering and dying and obedience in the state of humiliation—not, however, the righteousness of life of the human nature of Christ, that is, that Christ in His human nature now possesses. The latter is not imputed to me. And, conversely, the former cannot be infused into me; it can only be reckoned to me. Really, one cannot even say that the righteousness in which Christ now lives is infused into me. This always rests on a more-or-less unclear mystical conception. It is not the personal righteousness of Christ that is infused into the believer, for, as an inherent quality, righteousness cannot be detached from the person. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, where the apostle enumerates what we have in Christ, there is no mention that Christ would be our holiness (*hagiōsynē* or *hagiotēs* – Greek words), but it is simply said that He is our sanctification (*hagiasmos*).

24. *Is then no "holiness" of Christ imputed to us?*

Yes; by that term, if one wishes, one can designate His active obedience, imputed to us in justification. As our [Heidelberg] Catechism states in the answer to question 60, “How are you righteous before God?... God grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,” etc. In this sense, one may thus then say that Christ is not only our sanctification but also our holiness before God.

25. *Is sanctification something that occurs in the **judicial sphere** or does it have reference to a **subjective change** in the disposition of man?*

The latter is the case, as was explained in detail above in the distinction between it and justification.

26. *Does sanctification occur in the **conscious** level of the life of believers or below that level in depth?*

It occurs below the level of conscious life and works out of the regenerate root of the soul on its dispositions and inclinations to sanctify them.

27. *Is sanctification a **mediate** or **immediate** work? [**mediate** meaning that God uses means to an end; **immediate** meaning that God operates directly on the object or creature.]*

As it takes place below the consciousness, it is primarily an immediate work. That, however, does not take away from the fact that in its manifestation it is tied by God to the use of certain means.

28. *Does God Himself work in sanctification or is it man who does the work?*

God is the author of sanctification and not man. The latter can only be maintained by proponents of so-called free will. Here again, however, it must be noted that the outward manifestation of this sanctification is not apart from means that the believer has at his disposal.

29. *Is sanctification a work that occurs all at once or is it subject to a long passage of time?*

In the normal course of things, sanctification covers a long period of time. It can happen, however, that it is completed in a single moment, namely where regeneration-conversion and temporal death coincide, or at least where the latter quickly follows the former. Because it is certain that with the death of believers, or rather immediately after their death, their sanctification is complete, then it must follow that in such cases it is immediately perfect in its full extent. It then takes on the nature of a critical transformation in place of a gradual process. And even where gradual sanctification has preceded, temporal death still always retains the character of a crisis.

30. *What is the relationship between justification and sanctification?*

a) **Justification precedes**. That is the sequence in the covenant of grace, by which it is distinguished from the covenant of works. Adam, as he was in the covenant of works, was perfectly holy; in all his characteristics and inclinations there was perfect devotion to God. Still, on the basis of this perfect holiness, righteousness had first to be acquired by Adam; his

condition expressing itself in works would be indicative of his state, of his righteousness. In the covenant of grace, this is reversed. Here, by faith, the sinner is first transferred into the state of righteousness, so that he is much further than Adam before the fall; **inasmuch as Adam's state was not secure, the sinner's is**. And now, following on this righteousness, the state of holiness appears, produced through the work of sanctification. In this respect, the justified believer is not above but below Adam, for in him is unholiness, as sanctification continually presupposes. In the Letter to the Romans there is this sequence: first justification, then sanctification, indicated by the successive treatment of both parts—chapters 1 and 2, sin; chapters 3–5, justification; chapters 6–7, sanctification.

b) **The legal ground for sanctification lies in justification**. Sanctification must be viewed as a gift. It belongs to those things that God can require of us, which, however, we are still not able to produce, and which are now, through the merits of Christ, produced in us through the grace of God. For this reason, as indicated above, sanctification is more than once connected with the suffering of Christ, His blood.

c) Justification excludes that in our sanctification there could ever be any mention of obtaining rights to eternal life. Sanctification remains completely outside the legal sphere. Justification has completely taken over this sphere for itself, so that nothing remains for sanctification.

d) Conversely, justification remains completely outside of our being, and therefore may never contest the distinctive task of sanctification. To stand righteous before God is not enough; the believer must and also will be holy before God. All traces and remnants of sin must be removed from him, the pollution completely purged, as well as the guilt entirely wiped out.

31. *What connection and what difference is there between regeneration and sanctification?*

a) Regeneration happens all at once. A person cannot be more or less regenerated. He is, or he is not. Sanctification happens gradually, and there are degrees.

b) Nevertheless, regeneration is the beginning of sanctification; Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this, that He who has begun in you a good work shall complete it at the day of Jesus Christ." All the sanctifying of our nature takes place in connection with the **new principle of life** that God has produced in regeneration.

32. *What relationship is there between initial conversion and sanctification?*

Conversion is the first outward manifestation of sanctification, just as continuing conversion may be called its renewed manifestation.

33. *What is the nature of sanctification?*

Sanctification has a supernatural character. Many think of sanctification as if it is taken up with awakening, activating, drawing out and exercising the principles of grace present in the heart as that

happens in an external, persuasive manner by presenting motives. Sanctification would then be a kind of spiritual pedagogy, and God would then deal with believers as a schoolmaster treats his pupils when he seeks to develop their intellectual and moral life. Now, the great difference lies in the fact that the schoolmaster cannot inwardly touch the child's soul and expressions of life. He must confine himself to gaining access to the child's life along conscious routes. As a result, he can introduce nothing specifically new into the child, but only develop what is already present in principle. At the most, by the exercise of the better qualities of the child he can suppress evil and silence it temporarily; he cannot eradicate it at its root. But God's relationship to the soul of the believer is totally different. He works from within and from the outside at the same time. Direct supernatural working and indirect working accompany each other. Therefore:

- a) The principle of life, bestowed in regeneration by a special supernatural work of grace, is, with all the dispositions contained in it, strengthened and increased. It does not receive that strengthening and increase from itself. Already in nature, creation of life and causing the growth of life are two different actions of God, to which two different immediate activities correspond. God's providence in the world of living beings works directly. But it is likewise the case in relation to spiritual life. Growth is brought about by God immediately.
- b) In connection with this, it is also the case that the remnants of sin in the nature of man are not just suppressed or silenced but are also eliminated, removed. The root from which they thrive is cut off. It is obvious that this also must be attributed to a supernatural work of God. The one thing has in itself no power over the other to banish it. **That is above all true of sin. Its power is so great that it cannot be killed by mediate means alone. Only because God banishes and kills sin does the new life receive the power to replace it.**
- c) Thus, while the actual killing of sin and the growth of the new life remain the **immediate work of God**, there is also another side in sanctification. First, a difference is to be made between a disposition, even the most developed disposition, and its activity. Someone who has not spoken a certain language for many years need not for that reason have lost the habitual capacity to speak that language. But he is out of practice. And when he speaks, all kinds of defects will mar his speech. Similarly, if the believer does not exercise the dispositions of grace present in him in a conscious manner and constantly, they will not be able to be manifested in his life but will continually be overcome by evil dispositions. Thus, sanctification is furthered by good works, and has its impact in all branches of life.
- d) As the believer can never recognize his regeneration other than as it is worked out in repentance and faith, so too progress in the knowledge of sanctification is tied to the exercise of sanctification. Only then, and insofar as he makes progress toward honoring God in his works, can a child of God have the **assurance** that he is sanctified and becomes sanctified.
- e) This activity coming from the outside, too, may not be viewed as detached from the grace of God. It is God who works in us both the willing and the working according to His good pleasure [Phil 2:13]. The result is therefore that in sanctification God not only works in certain respects, but the believer nowhere works alone in any respect.

34. *Show from Scripture that there is a supernatural activity in sanctification, and that not everything happens through moral exercise.*

a) This is taught explicitly in passages that have sanctification taking place in the **inner man**, thus, from within: “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and that you be rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:16); “to be strengthened with all power” (Col 1:11).

b) This is taught no less in those passages that view **sanctification as preeminently a divine work**. For example, “and may the God of peace sanctify you completely” (1 Thess 5:23); “now may the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work ... working in you what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:20–21).

c) It is also shown from the fact that the sanctification of the believer is viewed as **a fruit of life-union with Christ**. Because of that, sanctification immediately receives a deeper sense than one can connect with an external exercise. The Savior says that without Him we can do nothing, that He is the vine and we are the branches [John 15:5]. That relationship is, in the first place, organic, not moral. And there are a number of texts that derive sanctification directly from that relationship (Eph 2:20–22; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:28–32).

d) It is confirmed by the fact that in the first place sanctification is not attributed to the external means of grace but **to the Holy Spirit**, who works within the heart. The Spirit is therefore called the Spirit of grace, of joy, of love, of faith, etc., and in general the Christian virtues are called the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22–23).

35. *Who deny that sanctification is a supernatural work of God in the sense described?*

First of all, **Roman Catholics**, because they hold that through regeneration all sin, properly speaking, is eradicated from a person, and that there is thus no further need for a supernatural action for removing sin. **They therefore must have sanctification turned into a purely human work, the performing of good works**. And insofar as these good works flow from a purified nature, **a meritorious character can more easily be ascribed to them**. At an even further distance from Scripture are the views of **Pelagians** and **Rationalists**, who deny the inner corruption of sin and so, moreover, have no need for sanctification. **The good slumbering by nature in every man needs only to be awakened and brought to development**.

36. *To what parts of man does sanctification extend?*

To the whole man as he exists organically. To soul and body, to all the capacities of both. First Thessalonians 5:23 sums up all the parts of man in the terminology of that time: “your whole spirit and soul and body.” Second Corinthians 5:17 emphasizes that to be in Christ Jesus means to be a new

creature in every respect, so that all the old has passed away (cf. also Eph 4:24). Further, one can say that sanctification extends:

a) To the mind. There is in the natural man, also in his thought-life, an inclination to evil, a congeniality with sin and an aversion to the good. Through sanctification this disposition and inclination is removed and the opposite put in its place (John 6:45).

b) To the will. In the unbeliever the will, too, is opposed to the holiness of God. But it is reversed, so that he now reaches out for that holiness with inward pleasure (Phil 2:13; Ezek 36:25–27).

c) To the **passions [or the affections]**, from which all selfish desire is removed and which are relocated in God as the source of all true enjoyment: “But those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24).

d) **To the conscience**. Through the working of sin in the soul, the conscience is defiled. If the soul is sanctified and cleansed, **it involves a cleansing of the conscience** (Heb 9:14). But the conscience is sanctified in still another sense—namely, **because it is made sensitive and tender** and judges us more dependably according to God’s holy righteousness. **A defiled conscience** is in this sense a conscience that is so stained by sin **that it has become impervious to sin**, just as one can no longer see new stains on a stained garment: “But both their mind and conscience are stained” (Titus 1:15).

e) To the body, in which—insofar as it is the organ of the sinful soul—sinful inclinations have created a fixed form. This, too, is removed by sanctifying grace. This working, however, is largely limited to the crisis that for the body coincides with temporal death and the resurrection of the dead. This is also the only point at which one may say that sanctification is not limited to this life. However, life is, as it were, something that at death remains in this life and remains behind on earth in order to become completely sanctified at the last day (1 Cor 6:15, 20; Rom 6:12).

37. *Of how many parts does sanctification consist?*

Two; the same two that we find in principle in regeneration. As there was in regeneration a mortifying of the flesh at its root and an implanting of a new principle of life, so too in sanctification there is a continuation of this double work.

a) The putting to death of the old man, that action of God whereby the pollution and corruption of nature, flowing from sin, are gradually diminished and removed in believers.

b) The enlivening of the new man, whereby the same corrupt nature is more and more renewed according to the image of God in Christ.

38. *Are these terms scriptural?*

Yes, they are used repeatedly in Scripture to portray the sanctification of man. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we no longer serve sin” (Rom 6:6). “But those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:25). Thus one sees that not only the death in general but most specifically the crucifixion of the old man is presented in Scripture as the one side of sanctification. Therein lies the double notion of (a) misery and (b) shame. In continuing penitence and sorrow before God, the dying of the old man enters into the consciousness of the believers. But from the other side, the struggle with the death of the old man is nothing other than the birth pangs of the new man. And coupled with the dying of the old is an inner aversion to the old. **This is a proof that the holiness of God makes its impression in the soul of man.** In it something occurs that, at a great distance, resembles the **divine repugnance that is awakened by all uncleanness. In the eye of believers sin becomes shameful, so that they abhor it not only because of guilt and punishment but because of the pollution itself. This is one of the characteristics by which true sanctification is distinguished from moral reformation.**

That the **old man** must be slain and crucified also expresses in a striking manner how at issue is not a partial renewal but a total, organic re-creation. It is man in his entirety. Thus this expression must never be taken in a personal sense, as if in the believer two “I’s” are opposed to each other, but more extensively: The man in view is human nature, being human in its entirety. And the same thought is present in reverse: namely, that it is a **new man** who must be made alive. Here, too, it is not a matter of single expressions of life but of obtaining a complete formation, an image in all its dimensions. In the beginning, over against the strong, mature old man, the new man is like a weak, newly born infant. This relationship must be reversed.

39. *Can this putting to death of the old man also be described in another way?*

Yes. One can describe it as the removal of the pollution of sin. The distinction involved is that the putting to death of the old man has in view more the conscious side of sanctification, while the removal of the pollution also includes the subconscious. The pollution of sin is what stands precisely over against the holiness of God, what in the spiritual world answers to physical contamination. Pollution and guilt correspond respectively to God’s holiness and to His righteousness. And in man, conscious shame answers to pollution, conscious fear to guilt. We thus see this double set: **Righteousness Holiness Guilt Corruption Fear Shame Even feelings of physical shame serve to portray this moral fact of pollution.** As soon as Adam sins, he is ashamed and acknowledges his nakedness. And in the same way, the ceremonial laws of clean and unclean serve in order to impress this consciousness of pollution deeply in the soul of the Israelite sinner. All these things could only cleanse the flesh, but they pointed to a higher cleansing, that of the soul through the blood and the Spirit of Christ (Heb 9:13–14). Thus, there is something in sin that casts a spiritual stain on the soul, and it belongs to true repentance to feel this pollution as something detestable, unbearable. Whoever is used to bodily cleanliness and is aware that some uncleanness sticks to him has an aversion to his situation. **This feeling accompanies the consciousness of sin to an even much greater degree when it is awakened in the sinner by God’s Spirit. And being freed from this feeling already belongs to the cleansing of conscience, of which Scripture speaks.**

The opposite of this pollution is a spiritual beauty and splendor of the soul. Not only cleanliness in a negative sense, equivalent to the absence of pollution, but holiness in a positive sense, as holy adornment, replaces the pollution. The Church that is sanctified is presented to her Savior without spot or wrinkle [Eph 5:27] (cf., for the portrayal of the pollution of sin and of sanctification in this sense, Hab 1:13; Psa 5:4–6; Jer 44:4; Ezek 36:25; Isa 4:4; Mal 3:2–3; Psa 51:7). 40. How is the disposition designated that originates through the second work of sanctification? Scripture calls it “a living for God” (Gal 2:19; Rom 6:11). It is expressed very strikingly in this how true holiness is completely different from self-interested reformation, insofar as the goal of its striving is not in man but in God.

41. *Is there also a link between faith and sanctification?*

Yes, and it is a tie that is closely connected to what has just been said. Sanctification is one of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and so will also bear the features of the covenant of grace. **It is true that holiness cannot be anything other than conformity to God’s law, since this is the complete expression of God’s nature**, and that, in turn, is the norm of all genuine holiness. This, however, does not diminish that restored obedience to that law, according to the varied circumstances under which it appears, also assumes a particular coloration. Adam also, when he was in the covenant of works, possessed holiness. In a certain sense, one can even say [it was] a holiness in which faith in a broader sense was not entirely lacking. **But this was a legal holiness**, as that was resident in the covenant of works. It was accompanied by the awareness that this inherent disposition, this personal condition, was the basis for obtaining eternal life. For Adam, there was no thought of saving faith as the elect sinner learns to exercise it. After all, this faith, as we have found, is nothing other than that activity of the soul **by which it separates its legal standing from all of its own doing and works and makes it to rest in the merits of Christ.** Now, however, it cannot be other than that this form of faith must be at work in sanctification. **Faith becomes the root of all Christian holiness, since at every point of our striving for improvement and conformity to God it fills our hearts with the thought that all this cannot ever be the ground on which we could stand in God’s judgment. It teaches us true humility**, which in the covenant of grace is inseparable from true holiness. Thus, faith is not solely something that accompanies sanctification, but something that permeates it; and that, properly seen, is the heart of everything in our holiness that is pleasing to God. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). One is sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). Our hearts are cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9; cf. also 1 Pet 1:21–22; Col 2:12–14; 3:7–11). Thus, the question sometimes discussed—whether faith is necessary for our sanctification—must be answered according to what has been said. The answer must be decidedly affirmative. That there could have been disputes about this stems from a misunderstanding. **It is feared that from this conception confusion between justification and sanctification can arise.** This cannot be, if one only keeps in mind that in sanctification faith functions in a different manner than it does in justification. **In justification it is the instrumental cause or the possessing organ through which we appropriate the merits of Christ. In sanctification, on the other hand, faith is the humble form of the soul by which all self-righteousness is banished from our inward holiness and from our good works.** Furthermore, it is one of the characteristics of good works that they occur by faith. The relationship of the sinner to God brought about by the covenant of grace is such that **the absence of faith stamps everything as sin. Whoever performs any good work without the conviction that all merit is excluded, by that already becomes the object of God’s displeasure.** We may and must therefore say: Faith is not

only necessary for the sanctification of a believer, but the form faith assumes constitutes an essential part of his sanctification itself.

42. Is this true only for the conscious exercise of faith, or does it also count for the disposition of faith that is produced and maintained in the soul through God's Spirit?

It is true for both. As there is unconscious holiness, so there must also be unconscious faith that makes it pleasing to God. What does not enter into the consciousness is therefore surely present. A believer does not cease being sanctified if he loses consciousness. Between a sleeping worldling and a sleeping child of God is just as great a difference as between a David who sings psalms and a blasphemer who curses his Creator. Holiness and sanctification are not matters that can be repeatedly interrupted; they remain constantly present. And thereby is also shown the necessity of the dispositional aspect of faith for sanctification. The entire life of the soul, down into its unconscious depths, is for the regenerate person a life of faith. Faith penetrates and sanctifies everything.

43. Is faith present in sanctification in yet another connection?

Yes, insofar as it unites us in our consciousness with Christ and keeps us in union, which is our sanctification. Thus, in his faith the believer recognizes:

a) That sanctification, received by him as a gift of God's grace, **rests on and flows from the merits of Christ. Faith not only works negatively by keeping us mindful of the unmerited nature of our holiness and our good works**, but also by reminding us of the origin of both in Christ.

b) That sanctification not only flows from the merits of Christ as its **judicial wellspring**, but also from the living Christ as its fountain. According to the Apostle Paul, it is the life of Christ in him on which his life rests before God (Gal 2:19–20). After their regeneration, believers do not serve God in their own strength. They know that for every good work they perform, the strength of Christ flows into them and is at their disposal. Through His intercession, Christ is continually active for their holiness (John 17:17). He prays for Peter that his faith will not fail [Luke 22:32]. All this can only be appropriated from our side by faith. So, an activity of faith with respect to sanctification is indispensable.

c) The Mediator is even more than the meritorious and effecting cause of sanctification. In the third place, **He is also the guarantee of its permanency**. In the holiness in itself that the believer possesses, there is no basis for saying that it can never be lost or die off. Neither is there a guarantee that it will ever reach its perfection. Christ is the guarantee for both: for not becoming lost, and for becoming perfect. Thus by faith the initially sanctified one contemplates his holiness as it will be perfect in the future (Gal 2:20).

d) At the same time, Christ is also the model of our sanctification, the image in which we are formed (Rom 8:29), the form that must be born in us [Gal 4:19]. In Christ all the virtues and all the gifts of holiness are perfectly present. He is the living law, according to which our living must be directed. We must not form ourselves according to a self-formed ideal, but the Holy

Spirit forms us according to the image of Christ as Scripture portrays it, so that we can also recognize the likeness and find the traits of the Savior in ourselves. From Christ one must learn how to be (Eph 4:20). Beholding the Savior is what is necessary for realizing this conformity in us, a beholding of faith, so that here too faith appears as instrumental for sanctification: “And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being changed in form according to the same image from glory to glory, as from the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18); see also “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6); “everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure (1 John 3:3; cf. also Phil 3:21; Heb 2:14–15; Phil 2:5–7).

Although many now wrongly find in this transformation according to the image of Christ the only use that we could make of Him as mediator, this should not cause us to fall into the opposite extreme, as if we had nothing to do with Him as an example. **Scripture explicitly portrays Him as such. Only He is not an example in that superficial sense in which older and newer Pelagians take it.** He is an example who possesses the power of the Spirit in order to affect and impress Himself into our life, in order to reproduce His form in us, in order as the Head to have issuing from Him formative power that determines our image: “In every way to grow up in Him, who is the Head, namely Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitly joined and held together, through the supply of joints and marrow, according to the working of each part in its measure, maintains the growth of the body for building itself up in love” (Eph 4:15–16). This being given the imprint of Christ in us also has, since it coheres with mystical union, **the secret nature of the latter, so that it cannot be fully conceptualized. But it is a reality.**

To this conformity to Christ also belongs a part of the Christian life on which older theologians rightly placed great emphasis—that is, self-denial and cross-bearing (cf. Calvin, Institutes 3.8, “Of the Bearing of the Cross”). Scripture provides the occasion for this (Isa 31:9; 48:10, where it speaks of a fire of purification and a “crucible of affliction”; 1 Cor 3:13; “He chastises us for our benefit, so that we may become partakers of His holiness” [Heb 12:10]). The cross sanctifies:

1. Because it becomes the reminder and measure of our remaining sin. While not a punishment for sin, it is still in many respects proportional to sin. That, of course, is not to be understood as if the full punishability of sin would be depicted.
2. The cross, insofar as it is a deprivation of earthly pleasure, leads the believer to seek his only enjoyment in God. It removes from us whatever besides God occupies a place in our hearts; “I am crucified to the world and the world to me” (Gal 6:14).
3. Through the cross, faith, hope and all gifts of grace are brought to more than usual expression, so that they are strengthened and through exercise, developed.

44. *Is sanctification in this life complete, so that all the pollution of sin is removed from the believer?*

No; that is an error of Pelagius, some Roman Catholics (Trent), Socinians, Arminians, many mystics of all sorts (Pietists, Labadists, Quakers, Herrnhutters) and a number of sects at present.

48. *Is sanctification something indispensable, like justification, or can it be dispensed with?*

It is **absolutely indispensable**. To deny this is **libertinism** and **antinomianism**. Still, sanctification is indispensable in a different sense than justification. **The latter stands in a judicial relationship with salvation, so that salvation is grounded in it.** Sanctification, on the other hand, is a portion of the bestowed salvation itself, a part of the way along which one comes to salvation. As is known, in the Lutheran church a conflict was carried on about the necessity of good works. Agricola taught that good works were not necessary for salvation and that the law should not be preached in ministering the gospel. According to him, true repentance did not flow from preaching the law but from presenting the gospel. The believer has nothing more to do with the law. Sometime later, Major lapsed into the opposite extreme by maintaining that no one could be saved without the performance of good works. Against these extremes we must note:

- a) That good works cannot be said to be necessary as conditions for obtaining salvation.
- b) That neither can they be considered to be means for retaining salvation. Our salvation and the perseverance of the saints are secure in an act of God and not in any act of man.
- c) That, strictly speaking, it cannot be asserted that good works are the only way to salvation. After all, children and those who die immediately after their conversion are not able to do any good works. Thus the assertion in view would shut them out of heaven.
- d) Scripture nowhere teaches that no one can be saved without good works. Certainly, on the other hand, without sanctification no one shall see the Lord [Heb 12:14]. There is a difference between sanctification and good works. The former can occur at once without any passage of time, as in a crisis moment; for doing the latter, time is necessary.
- e) If someone does not do good works and allows the flesh that is in him to fester unhindered, then he does not have any reason to remain assured of his salvation. Scripture addresses such people as being in danger of becoming lost (Rom 8:12–13). Thus we see here the conclusion drawn from the lack of good works—that a true regenerate life cannot be present (Eph 2:10; Heb 12:14, “Pursue peace with all, and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord”).
- f) The proposition that good works can be harmful to salvation (Agricola) is a dangerous error. It rests on a view of good works [that is] wrong at its root, and on their severing from faith and from Christ. To the same degree that someone exercises faith, he will be safe from the danger that by doing good works his salvation will be damaged. If one looks carefully, the proposition under discussion here rests on a principal denial of sanctification itself. If the selfish and self-righteous dispositions in man are not changed, then it would indeed be impossible to bring him to the performing of good works that could not harm him. Outward holiness, then, could not reveal itself without being polluted by inward unholiness. But Scripture does not teach such external holiness. It presents God’s work of grace as moving from within outwardly. The best works are the most humble works, where the most faith is and is expressed.

50. *What are the characteristics of good works, and how is this designation meant?*

a) The first characteristic of a good work is conformity to the law of God. As we define sin according to its departure from the law of God, so here, what is the opposite of sin. It is not possible for us to determine materially what sin is, nor to determine materially what good is. Something becomes good by its agreement with the law. **Through sanctification, the regenerate person acquires a delight in the law of God according to the inner man** [Rom 7:22]. The law is written on the tablets of his heart. **And because it flows from this inward conformity to the law of God, it can be called a good work.** On this basis, the Savior speaks of a good tree that brings forth good fruit (Luke 6:43–44). Thus, these works are not called “good” because they conform to the law externally. With “work” here is not meant the product of material lying outside of man, but the action itself as it stems from his consciousness, “working.” Neither are they called “good” because in all aspects they were free from sin, and within them nothing wrong lurked. There is not one believer who can do such a good work. But certain works are called good insofar as they arise from the new man, and so in their point of departure they agree with the law. Scripture itself speaks of good works in this way (Acts 9:36; Eph 2:10; 2 Tim 3:17; Titus 2:14).

Expressed negatively, this proposition says that nothing can be a good work that does not conform to God’s law and is not commanded by it. This holds true against Rome when it teaches that believers can do more than keep the law perfectly. By complying with the *concilia evangelica*, “gospel counsels” (in distinction from the *praecepta*, “the commandments”), the believer can gain extra merits. To this belong celibacy, monastic obedience, and voluntary poverty. In opposition to this view we observe:

1. That the law of God requires complete obedience and lays claim to all of human life. Thus all that is in fact well pleasing to God falls under the law. By this we are not saying that every good work must be prescribed in so many words in the law, but the principles and rules from which it flows are resident in the law.

2. That, conversely, when it cannot be derived from the law and thus falls outside the law, it also cannot be well pleasing to God and is not to be regarded as a good work.

b) The second characteristic of a good work is that it is done by faith. This was discussed above.

c) The third characteristic relates to the *goal*, which is the honor of God. In good works, too, the true character of holiness and sanctification must come out, that is, that the center of regenerate living is in God.

51. *Can these good works be considered meritorious?*

No, and the reason why not has already been demonstrated in general above. Concerning the meritorious character of good works in the strict sense, theologians teach that what would be needed for that is:

- a) That we are not required to do them. This cannot be said of the good works that a believer does because they are not only an aspect of the gratitude that he owes to God, but they are also required by the natural relationship in which he, as a moral creature, stands toward God's law.
 - b) That they are entirely our own. **Now, it is the grace of God, who puts what is good in us and draws it out from us.** God has prepared our good works beforehand, so that we would walk in them (Eph 2:10).
 - c) That they are completely perfect, what again does not hold true for a single good work in this life.
 - d) That they are proportional to the reward—that is, inherently proportional. We know that God has instituted a certain proportion between the reward of grace and the good works done by believers. But this proportion is again by grace. The good even for Adam in the covenant of works, the great gift of grace of eternal life promised him by God for his obedience, far surpassed his obedience in value. This is much truer of the good works of believers. If God granted believers eternal life for them (something that He does not do), as Rome maintains, with Rome it could still not yet be held to be *meritum ex condigno*, “by worthiness,” or inherent merit.
 - e) That they are worthy of reward not *ex pacto* but *ex natura*. This is also not true of any work. All payment or reward takes place by covenant and not according to natural necessity.
- [Perseverance]¹

¹Vos does not have a separate chapter heading on perseverance, but he treats it beginning with chapter 6, question 52.

Perseverance

Code470

52. *Can sanctification, once caused by God, still be completely lost?*

This is the same question as to whether there is an apostasy of the saints. To answer “no” here is unique to the Reformed church, since not only non-Protestant Christianity but also the Lutherans give an affirmative answer to this question. One may even say that through Reformed doctrinal development, starting with **Calvin**, justice was first done to the perseverance of the saints as a

scriptural doctrine. Augustine, who otherwise was in many respects the precursor of Reformed theologians, could not accept this doctrine but, strangely enough, stood with Pelagius on this point. But still there was a difference. According to Pelagius, there is no difference in principle between the believer and the unbeliever. The former does not have a higher life that is lacking in the latter. There is only a different use of the powers that every natural man possesses. Augustine, on the other hand, certainly taught that a believer and a nonbeliever differ in principle: In the one, there is a new life that is lacking in the other. But even according to Augustine, that life can be lost. To be regenerated does not necessarily include remaining regenerated. One can be regenerated initially and then can return again to the position of the unregenerate. Yes, one can even be elect and still fall from grace—of course, not finally, for all time, but in order later to be taken into that number again. So, a result of this view is that also for Augustine the believer cannot use his election as the basis of his certainty, simply because there are no evidences of election in this life other than being actually saved at the end. That one is regenerated no longer provides any guarantee for election. Thus one sees what a great difference there was between Calvin and Augustine, notwithstanding all the agreement there was. With the former, election has become the firm ground for the assurance of the individual believer.

The Roman Catholic church also teaches an apostasy of the saints. This already follows from the human character that it ascribes to the work of justification (for Rome, equal to sanctification). Whatever is in human hands naturally cannot be absolute and incapable of being lost. Next, for Rome, this view follows unavoidably from its conception of the Church and the means of grace. Since salvation rests with the Church and is distributed through the means *ex opera operato*, “by the worked work,” in certain cases scorning or not using the means must naturally lead to being lost. By a mortal sin justification is lost; by the sacrament of penance it is restored. Whoever makes no use of this sacrament dies unjustified and is lost.

That the Socinians and Remonstrants teach an apostasy of the saints is well known.

However, on this point the Lutheran church, too, is against us. Faith is not compatible with a mortal sin. With Augustine, it teaches that there is an apostasy from faith, but not a final apostasy of the elect. However, the faith that the elect possess is not specifically different from the faith in many who are finally lost. For the Lutherans, this error is connected to their overall conception of the resistibility of grace. Man can resist or not resist when, through the mystical power of the Word of God, the action of grace impinges on him. Man himself settles the matter, makes the decision, notwithstanding his complete inability for any good. It would be nonsensical, then, to place the man who made the decision at the outset in a position subsequently where nothing more remains to be decided. For the sequel, too, it depends on him whether or not he will persevere. In their last period the Lutherans, as we have seen earlier, have gone over completely to the Remonstrant point of view and so no longer hold to absolute election.

Modern theologians for the most part also teach an apostasy of the saints; for example, Ebrard.

Over against these parties the Reformed church now stands virtually alone. Only Luther in his early period, when he opposed the free will of Erasmus, was untainted. True, there are also among most recent theologians those who deny an apostasy of the saints, but they do this on a pantheistic basis. It goes without saying that on such premises as this theology proceeds, there can be no thought of change. If the life of the Christian is the life of God in him, in a real substantial sense, infused into him by a mystical process, then it can no longer be expelled or suppressed; God does not let Himself be driven out by man. But thereby the doctrine becomes completely changed and assumes a totally other character.

If someone Reformed is asked on what his perseverance in the state of grace rests, then he will not answer, "On something in me, on the power and the capacity for withstanding of the new life that I possess," but, "Solely on the preserving faithfulness of God." **Thus he reasons theologically, from God and His free election, on the basis of Scripture; not psychologically, from himself, on the basis of spiritual experience that he has gained for himself.** Hence he knows very well how to explain when God's Word frequently speaks with warnings as if an apostasy of the saints were possible. Where this occurs, the matter is simply being looked at psychologically, **from the side of man, and accordingly man is roused to be on guard against this psychologically possible apostasy.** This is not thereby denying that from the side of God apostasy is inconceivable and never occurs. With modern theologians, these two sides now become one. God does not act as a free and self-conscious being on man's soul, but passes over with His life into man. The distinction between a theological and psychological viewpoint has then lost its meaning.

53. *What is meant when we say that there is no apostasy of the saints?*

That the regenerate life with the dispositions flowing from it and at work in sanctification cannot be driven out of the believer. Even if all the activities of faith would cease, even if someone would be robbed by insanity of the ability to exercise faith, the new life would still endure and his dispositions would continue to exist.

54. *What is the principal error of those who teach an apostasy of the saints?*

They confuse the state of believers in the covenant of grace with the state of Adam before the fall, as if these two were completely the same. The difference lies precisely in this: **Adam possessed a perfect but mutable holiness,** since he was in a covenant of works in which the decision is suspended from the will of man; the believer is in a covenant of grace, in **which God has made all things secure so that there is no longer any thought of vicissitude.** For this reason, believers have a holiness that is imperfect but is still incapable of being lost.

55. *Is then perseverance something that adheres in man as a moral disposition?*

No, it is a gift of God's grace. As long as we look at man and limit ourselves to man, there is nothing that would make us suppose that he would remain constant. Life is certainly present, but it has no inherent attribute of constancy. It remains because God constantly keeps it present: "whom God will also sustain to the end, to be without blame in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8). Hence perseverance is not something that originates by degrees and is acquired slowly. There are those who think that the believer on the lowest level of his sanctification is still exposed to apostasy, but that having progressed further, he has escaped this danger. In doing so, however, they suppose that perseverance is a disposition in man. Scripture always attributes it to God as an act of grace (Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23).

56. *What are the evidences for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints?*

a) The principal ground is the **doctrine of election**. If this is (1) an election to eternal salvation and (2) the sole source of faith and regeneration, it must follow that, therefore, where sanctification has once begun, it must certainly reach its completion. One could now still ask with **Augustine** if it is not possible to posit an interruption in the life of grace in the elect, or if it is necessary to teach its uninterrupted continuation. Our answer to this is that in Scripture the doctrine of election is not at all related only to final salvation but also certainly with the impossibility of a temporary apostasy. Scripture does not comfort us by saying: "Come what will, and although your regeneration is lost multiple times, in the end you will still enter heaven." On the contrary, it says: "God is faithful, and He will never allow you to be tempted beyond your ability" [1 Cor 10:13]. Be assured that no one can snatch us from the hand of the Father. Not, "Finally we will still return again into the Father's hand," but, "We remain there all the time" (John 10:28–29; Rom 11:29; 2 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 1:12). It is not only that salvation is kept in readiness for the believer, but also, conversely, that the believer is kept in readiness for salvation (1 Pet 1:5; Rev 3:10).

One must also pay attention to the fact that Scripture everywhere presents the **doctrine of election as a ground of confidence and trust for the believer**. If this is so, then the possibility must exist to be assured of his election. But the only possibility lies in this: that faith and election presuppose each other, that the one points no further than the other. As soon as one says to the believer that there are non-elect believers, for him comfort is gone from election. Therefore, each use that Scripture makes of the doctrine of election as a basis of comfort for believers is a proof of the perseverance of the saints.

b) A second argument for perseverance is found in the **immutability of the covenant of grace**. As noted above, in the covenant of grace God also guarantees for man himself that everything is accomplished that must happen. Therefore, this is called an eternal covenant (Jer 32:38–40; cf. Jer 31:32–33; Gen 17:7). This is true for all who share in the essence of the covenant, though

not for all who are reckoned objectively under the covenant. But this latter consideration does not matter here, for the question is about the apostasy of those truly sanctified (Heb 8:9–12).

c) The work of Christ as mediator, **His eternal suretyship**, is also a ground that confirms the perseverance of the saints—and that in more than one way. First of all, His suretyship is not provisional but absolute. He pays for the debt of His own. Now, if there is an apostasy of these believers, if they are finally lost, then either the payment of Christ counts for nothing or the one debt is paid twice. **Next, at regeneration a life-union comes about between Christ and believers, as a result of which they form one body.** To assume that a believer, one initially sanctified, can fall away, even if it were only temporarily, **involves the unbecoming notion that members can fall out of the mystical body of the Lord, so that it is disfigured and desecrated.** Insofar as the members themselves are concerned, nothing is impossible, but certainly not insofar as the body is concerned. Its beauty, its proper proportions, must thereby be lost. From all this it appears that in our union with Christ, He—not we—is the governing factor. It is He who lives in us. Turning off that inflow of life that comes from Him, as the head to the members, would have to happen from His side, which again cannot be, since He is faithful.

Further, Christ through His merit has also acquired sanctification for us. **If now this can still be lost, then His acquisition would have been conditional or powerless.** The sin of apostasy would then be a sin for which He would not have gained our holiness. There would remain in us a series of deeds that are not covered by the merit of the Mediator. But Scripture teaches that in all His work He includes us completely in every aspect of our lives. After our justification, there is nothing in which we stand on our own account. Even our unfaithfulness and our deviation with respect to Him are forgiven on His account, and by His power we are redeemed from that and sanctified (2 Cor 1:20–21; John 6:37; Gal 2:20).

d) There is a no-less-firm basis in the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes His dwelling with believers. **Through His presence, there is in them a higher and divine principle that does not permit being supplanted by the stirrings of the old nature.** In back of grace, as it has become their subjective possession and has become intermingled with their lives, stands the personal Holy Spirit, **who cannot be harmed through their subjective ups and downs but continues His work with eternal power.** The Spirit as comforter abides with believers forever (John 14:16; Eph 1:13). He is at the same time a **seal and a pledge** of the future benefits of salvation, and an earnest, the firstfruits to which the full harvest will follow [2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14; Rom 8:23]. It would therefore involve a dishonor for the Holy Spirit, as well as for Christ, if He had to withdraw from His temple and to abandon what He had once taken possession of to a renewed pollution of sin. Therefore, not only final but also temporary-total apostasy is impossible (Eph 4:30).

e) **The doctrine of justification automatically brings with it the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.** The justification of a sinner is absolute. It places him forever in the status of a **child**, covers both his future life in its entirety as well as all of the past. Now, if we must assume that there is a temporary apostasy of the saints, then from that it will follow that there can be justified children of God without any grace in their hearts, without any faith, without any union with Christ, without being subjectively distinguished in any respect from the unjustified sinner. This of course cannot be. The apostle teaches us that there is no justification without sanctification. We say: no continuation of the one, then, without continuation of the other. See Romans 8:33–39, where the conclusion drawn from complete justification is that nothing will be able to separate the Christian from the love of Christ, and from the love of God in Christ.

f) At his regeneration the believer receives a life that is, in principle, eternal life. Eternal life means not only what is communicated in eternity but also what extends from now on into eternity (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:40; Rom 5:4–5, 10).

57. *What objections are brought against this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints?*

a) First, it is said that the repeated warnings against apostasy presuppose the possibility of such an apostasy. To this we answer:

1. That such warnings, as they are directed to man, **are meant psychologically and consider the matter from the side of man.** From that, one may not conclude that apostasy really occurs with those who possess true faith. One could just as well conclude from the demand for faith that comes to people that it is within their own power to give themselves faith. Believers can no more give themselves supernatural grace than they can deprive themselves of it.

2. Scripture clearly indicates that if there are those who appear to apostatize, this is only *a posteriori* evidence that their faith was not genuine—that is, that it was no more than an apparent apostasy preceded by an apparent faith (1 Cor 11:19; 1 John 2:19).

3. At the same time, such warnings also **serve to awaken believers to self-examination** whether their faith is true faith, or whether they are perhaps deceiving themselves with a temporary faith. They must examine themselves whether Christ Jesus is in them [2 Cor 13:5]. But to be assured of that also gives them a firm basis of certainty for the future.

4. If one remains aware that perseverance is not an inherent state but a **constant act of grace**, then it is immediately apparent to what end those warnings serve. **They are intended and formulated precisely to cause believers to persevere.** In this, too, **God makes use of means by which He awakens us and causes us to persevere.** Quite rightly some have pointed to the case of the shipwreck of Paul as a picture to illustrate this

issue (Acts 27:21–31). The apostle first declares emphatically, “There shall be no loss among you of anyone’s life.” However, later he says to the officer, “If these men do not remain in the ship, you cannot be saved.” But he uses just this statement as a means for the soldiers to keep the sailors from fleeing and to prevent a total shipwreck. In the same manner, God declares categorically already in advance that none of His children will be lost, but this does not prevent Him from directing extremely serious warnings to them as if it could in fact happen.

b) It is said that there are statements in Scripture that directly teach an apostasy of saints—instances of persons who in fact suffered shipwreck from the faith. Here one points especially to Hebrews 6:4–8 and to the case of Judas, Ananias, David, and others. Against this view, we say:

1. That the persons of whom such an apostasy is recorded either were not regenerated and did not possess true faith but only an apparent faith, or they did not completely lose their faith but only fell into sin temporarily, whereby gloom descended over their conscious state. The former was the case with Judas, who is called a “son of destruction” [John 17:12], whom the Savior knew from the beginning, of whom not once was it said that he truly believed. The latter was the case with David, whose repentant and believing attitude appears to be sufficiently present, even after committing his sin.
2. Hebrews 6 has already been discussed more than once. We recall only in general: (a) that in this passage none of the terms used necessarily cause us to think of saving faith; (b) that on the contrary, temporary faith is spoken of; (c) of temporary faith, however, not in the general sense but in an entirely specific form as was perhaps possible only during the apostolic age, accompanied by extraordinary gifts and powers and under the ordinance of God that their loss made further conversion impossible.

The **context** of the words is as follows: At the close of Hebrews 5 a complaint is made about dullness in knowledge. The Hebrews, who ought to be teachers, were again in need of teachers and needed milk instead of solid food. They were children where they could have been mature (= perfect). This, however, is not a reason to despair. If they would only leave behind the elementary teaching of Christ and continue on to perfection, then the future can bring them to the required perfection. The apostle himself progresses in this (Heb 6:3). And then follows (Heb 6:4) the basis for this progress. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and who have tasted the heavenly gifts, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the coming age, and fall away—those, I say, it is impossible to renew again to repentance, as those who crucify again to themselves

the Son of God and openly put Him to shame.” To repeat the elementary principles and to lay again the very first foundation is, in the given circumstances, useless work, for those who have sunk to that are not renewed again to repentance.

Now, one should note that it is not said of the Hebrews here that they were in this situation. They were certainly dull, but not apostate; the foundation had remained. Hebrews 6:10 says, “God is not unjust, that He would forget your work and the labor of love that you have shown in His name, as those who have served the saints and still serve.” In Hebrews 6:4–8, on the contrary, no mention is made of the gift of grace that regeneration of the heart would presuppose. There is no mention of faith, of justification, of sanctification. This is most remarkable, for if an apostasy of the saints were taught, one would certainly expect such. Over against this is the fact that in Hebrews 6:12 and following, which speak of the promise of the covenant of grace, completely the opposite of apostasy is taught—namely, the unchangeable faithfulness of God through which believers can have a strong consolation [Heb 6:18]. God wished to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise more abundantly the immutability of His counsel, and therefore He interposed with an oath [Heb 6:17]. This is not apostasy but perseverance of the saints in the strongest terms.

As to the nature of the gifts ascribed here to those who can fall away, these gifts are spoken of as:

- a) “Enlightenment.” By this is meant an extraordinary and supernatural degree of knowledge of the truth. This enlightenment is between historical knowledge and the knowledge of saving faith. It is distinguished from the former by deeper insight, from the latter by the absence of the experiential element (cf. 2 Cor 3:18).
- b) “Having tasted the heavenly gift.” The heavenly gift is the gift of the Holy Spirit, also so named elsewhere in Acts 2:38; 8:20. Especially the latter text sheds light. Simon thought that the gift of the Holy Spirit was obtained for money. That was the gift to do extraordinary things, which the possession of the Holy Spirit enabled. This gift is called heavenly because it is sent from heaven by Christ.
- c) “Having become partakers of the Holy Spirit.” This expresses the same thought in other words for further clarification.
- d) “Tasting of the good word of God.” This of itself reminds us of the description of the temporary faith given by the Lord in the parable of the sower: “the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.” With that, however, it is expressly said that such people have no roots in themselves. Thus one can taste the good word of God without being regenerated at the root (Matt 13:20–21).

e) "Tasting of the powers of the coming age." By this is meant the exercise of the power of the Spirit mentioned under (b) and (c). Thus one sees that (d) corresponds to (a), and (e) with (b) and (c). The subjective effects of the enlightenment consist in tasting the good word of God. Those effects of becoming partakers of the Holy Spirit consist in tasting the powers of the coming age. The coming age is the dispensation of the New Testament, the age of the Messiah in distinction from the Old Testament dispensation, in which those powers were not seen but presented as something future (Joel 2).

The question is raised whether the words, "These, I say, to renew again to repentance," do not imply that initially genuine repentance was present. "Again" and "re-" in "renew" look back on an initial repentance of which this would have to be the repetition. However, this objection immediately fails as soon as one poses the question of who is in view here as the subject of the renewing. If it is God, the meaning would be: It is impossible that God would again renew such persons to repentance, that He would repeat the act of renewal that He had once done in them. Then it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that the reference here is to an apostasy of those who have truly repented, for, without further stipulation, the repentance that God produces in a sinner is true repentance. But the question takes on an entirely other complexion if men, ministers of the Word, teachers, of whom the writer himself is one, are seen as the subject of the renewing. Then the meaning becomes: It is impossible, after they have fallen away, that we would renew again to repentance such persons whom we at one time have brought to an outward repentance and moved to a confession of Christianity. Without doubt this latter understanding is the correct one. Were the other correct, then it would have to include that God would renew such people again. The context does not speak of the work of God but of the work of men, of a progressing to perfection, of not re-laying the foundation, etc. Thus, all that can be rightly derived from this expression comes down to this: If there are such apostate persons, then with this their apostasy our calling toward them ceases; God has not directed us to continue working on such people. By that, strictly speaking, it is not yet said that God, too, could not bring back such people, but that He generally does not do so and therefore also does not will to have the instrumentality of the ministry of the Word used for that. It is similar to what the Apostle John says about the sin unto death—namely, that one shall no longer pray for it [1 John 5:16].

That this is the correct conception appears, finally, from the image used in Hebrews 6:7–8, used to clarify what has been said. The soil that drinks the rain receives God's blessing, but that which produces thorns and thistles is rejected and thereby shows that it is not good soil for growing. The former is therefore also continually cultivated; the latter is considered rejected and one no longer bothers about it.

More on the [restoration of the image of God](#) in God's elect and in what consists as the principle part of this image; this is very good.

Pneumatologia

code59

The Holy Spirit

by John Owen

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/pneum.i.xi.v.html>

With respect unto his moral condition and principle of obedience unto God, it is expressed, [Gen. i. 26, 27](#), “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion,” etc. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” He made him “upright,” [Eccles. vii. 29](#), perfect in his condition, every way complete, — fit, disposed, and **able to and for the obedience required of him; without weakness, distemper, disease, contrariety of principles, inclinations, or reasonings.** A universal rectitude of nature, consisting in light, power, and order, in his understanding, mind, and affections, **was the principal part of this**

image of God wherein he was created. And this appears, as from the nature of the thing itself, so from the description which the apostle giveth us of the renovation of that image in us by the grace of Christ, [Eph. iv. 24](#), [Col. iii. 10](#). And under both these considerations we may weigh the especial operations of the Spirit of God:—

Book I Ch 4

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/pneum.i.v.iv.html>

First, As to the essential principles of the nature of man, it is not for nothing that God expresseth his **communication of a spirit of life** by his breathing into him: “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” The Spirit of God and the breath of God are the same, only, the one expression is proper, the other metaphorical; wherefore, this breathing is the especial acting of the Spirit of God. **The creation of the human soul, a vital immortal principle and being, is the immediate work of the Spirit of God**: [Job xxxiii. 4](#), “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Here, indeed, the creation and production of both the essential parts of human nature, body and soul, are ascribed unto the same author; for the Spirit of God and the breath of God are the same, but several effects being mentioned causeth a repetition of the same cause under several names. This Spirit of God first made man, or formed his body of the dust, and then gave him that breath of life whereby he became a “living soul.” So, then, under this first consideration, the creation of man is assigned unto the Holy Spirit, for man was the perfection of the inferior creation; and in order unto the glory of God, by him were all other things created. Here, therefore, are his operations distinctly declared, to whom the perfecting and completing of all divine works is peculiarly committed.

Secondly, We may consider the moral state and condition of man, with the furniture of his mind and soul, in reference unto his **obedience to God** and his **enjoyment of him**. **This was the principal part of that image of God wherein he was created**. Three things were required to render man idoneous [[archaic: fit, proper, suitable](#)], or fit unto that life to God for which he was made:— First, An ability to discern the mind and will of God with respect unto all the duty and obedience that God required of him; as also so far to know the nature and properties of God as to believe him the only proper object of all acts and duties of religious obedience, and an all-sufficient satisfaction and reward in this world and to eternity. Secondly, A free, uncontrolled, unentangled disposition to every duty of the **law of his creation**, in order unto living unto God.

Thirdly, An ability of mind and will, with a readiness of compliance in his affections, for a due regular performance of all duties, and abstinence from all sin. These things belonged unto the integrity of his nature, with the uprightness of the state and condition wherein he was made. And all these things were the peculiar effects of the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost; for although this rectitude of his nature be distinguishable and separable from the faculties of the soul of man, yet in his first creation they were not actually distinguished from them, nor superadded [see code294a], or infused into them when created, **but were concreated with them**, — that is, his soul was made meet and able to live to God, as his sovereign lord, chiefest good, and last end. And so they were all from the Holy Ghost, from whom the soul was, as hath been declared. Yea, suppose these abilities to be superadded unto man's natural faculties, as gifts supernatural (which yet is not so), they must be acknowledged in a peculiar manner to be from the Holy Spirit; **for in the restoration of these abilities unto our minds, in our renovation unto the image of God in the gospel, it is plainly asserted that the Holy Ghost is the immediate operator of them.** And he doth thereby restore his own work, and not take the work of another out of his hand: for in the new creation the Father, in the way of authority, designs it, and brings all things unto a head in Christ, [Eph. i. 10](#), which retrieved his original peculiar work; and the Son gave unto all things a new consistency, which belonged unto him from the beginning, [Col. i. 17](#). **So also the Holy Spirit renews in us the image of God**, the original implantation whereof was his peculiar work. And thus Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocency. He had him in these peculiar effects of his power and goodness; and he had him according to the tenor of that covenant whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose him, as accordingly it came to pass. [In other words, while under his probation in the garden, he did not have the promise of continual supplies of grace as do those who have an interest in the new covenant. [see Flavel, page 1699, 1706] He was defectible and did soon defect as Owen points out.] He was under the covenant of works He had him not by especial inhabitation, for the whole world was then the temple of God. In the covenant of grace, founded in the person and on the mediation of Christ, it is otherwise. **On whomsoever the Spirit of God is bestowed for the renovation of the image of God in him, he abides with him forever.** But in all men, from first to last, all goodness, righteousness, and truth, are the “fruits of the Spirit,” [Eph. v. 9](#).

Teaching, growing in knowledge

Fifthly, In asserting the Scripture to be the only external means of divine revelation, I do it not exclusively unto those institutions of God which are subordinate unto it, and appointed as means to make it effectual unto our souls; as, —

1. Our own personal endeavours, in reading, studying, and meditating on the Scripture, that we may come unto a right apprehension of the things contained in it, are required unto this purpose. It is known to all how frequently this duty is pressed upon us, and what promises are annexed to the performance of it: see [Deut. vi. 6, 7, xi. 18, 19](#); [Josh. i. 8](#); [Ps. i. 2, cxix.](#); [Col. iii. 16](#); [2 Tim. iii. 15](#). Without this it is in vain to expect illumination by the word; and, therefore, we may see multitudes living and walking in extreme darkness when yet the word is everywhere nigh unto them. Bread, which is the staff of life, will yet nourish no man who doth not provide it and feed upon it; no more would manna, unless it was gathered and prepared. Our own nature and the nature of divine revelations considered, and what is necessary for the application of the one to the other, make this evident; for God will instruct us in his mind and will, as we are men, in and by the rational faculties of our souls. Nor is an external revelation capable of making any other impression on us but what is so received. Wherefore, when I say that the Scripture is the only external means of our illumination, I include therein all our own personal endeavours to come to the knowledge of the mind of God therein; which shall be afterwards spoken unto. And those who, under any pretences, do keep, drive, or persuade men from reading and meditating on the Scripture, do take an effectual course to keep them in and under the power of darkness.

2. The mutual instruction of one another in the mind of God out of the Scripture is also required hereunto; for we are obliged by the law of nature to endeavour the good of others in various degrees, as our children, our families, our neighbours, and all with whom we have conversation. And this is the principal good, absolutely considered, that we can communicate unto others, — namely, to instruct them in the knowledge of the mind of God. This whole duty, in all the degrees of it, is represented in that command, “Thou shalt teach my words diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,” [Deut. vi. 7](#). Thus, when our Saviour found his disciples talking of the things of God by the wayside, he, bearing unto them the person of a private man, instructed them in the sense of the Scripture, [Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 32](#). And the neglect of this duty in the world, — which is so great that the very mention of it, or the least attempt to perform it, is a matter of scorn and reproach, — is one cause of that great ignorance and darkness which yet abounds among us. But the nakedness of this

folly, whereby men would be esteemed Christians in the open contempt of all duties of Christianity, will in due time be laid open.

Excerpts from A Treatise of the Soul of Man

code60

by John Flavel (1600s)

John Flavel was a contemporary of John Owen in England

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/pneum/files/flavel-pneumatologia03.html>

Flavel's discussion of the [soul of man](#) brings together key concepts and doctrines such as [original sin](#), [regeneration](#), the [image of God](#), the [glory of God](#), [man's complete dependence upon God](#), sanctification, a restoring of God's image, that will further illuminate your understanding of them as well as others. The more we know God; the more we know the true condition and stature of ourselves, the more we will love and obey God in a due manner, avoiding presumptuous sins, etc. From this discussion of the soul, Flavel helps understand the difference between our soul and that of an animal. . In this he also puts great emphasis on [our duty to study the scriptures](#), to **study** this area of sanctification with great diligence. See Heb 11:6 - *He is a rewarder of those who [diligently seek him](#).*

This excerpt begins with an answer to an objection about the soul's creation.

Obj. 3. If the soul be created and infused immediately by God [[immediately, meaning by God Himself, directly, without using other means or causes](#)], either it comes out of his hands pure, or impure; if pure, how comes it to be defiled and tainted with sin? If impure, how do we free God from being the author of sin?

Sol. If the question be, whether souls be pure or impure, as soon as they are united with their bodies? The answer is, they are impure, and tainted as soon as united: For the union constitutes a child of Adam, and consequently a sinful impure creature. But if it respect the condition and state in which God created them, I answer with Baronius. "They are created neither morally pure, nor impure; they receive neither purity nor impurity from him, but only their naked essence, and the natural powers and properties flowing there from." He inspires not any impurity in them; for he cannot be the author of sin, who is the revenger of it. **Nor does he create them in their original purity and rectitude; for the sin of Adam lost that, and God justly withholds it from his posterity.** Who wonders (says one) to see the children, the palaces and gardens of a traitor to droop and decay, and the arms of his house, and the badge of his nobility, to be defaced and reversed? That which is abused by men to the dishonour of God, may justly be destroyed (I add in this case, or withheld) by God to the detriment of man. **[Adam voluntarily and actually deprived himself, and meritoriously deprived all his posterity of that original righteousness and purity in which he was created.](#)** As an holy God, he cannot inspire ally impurity, and as a just and righteous God, he may, and does withhold, or create them void and destitute of that holiness, and righteousness which was once theirs, yea, of happiness and glory.

Obj. 4. But how come they then to be defiled and tainted with original sin? It is confessed God did not make them impure, and the body cannot; for being matter, it cannot act upon a spirit; itself it is a dead lump, and cannot act at all.

Sol. What if this be one of those mysteries reserved for the world to come, about which we cannot in this state solve every difficulty that may be moved? Must we therefore deny its divine original? What if I cannot understand some mysteries, or answer some questions about the hypostatical union of the two natures, in the wonderful person of our Emmanuel, must I therefore question whether he be "Theantropos", God-man? We must remain ignorant of some things about our souls, till we come into the condition of the spirits of just men made perfect. Mean time, I think it much more our concernment to study how we may get sin out of our souls, than to puzzle our brains to find how it came into them.

But that the objector may not take this for an handsome slide, or go-by to this great objection, I return to it, in a few particulars.

(1.) What I think not original sin follows either part singly; it comes in neither by the soul alone, nor by the body alone, apart from the soul; but upon the union and conjunction of both in one person. It is the **union of these two which constitutes a child of Adam, and as such only we are capable of being infected with his sin.**

(2.) And whereas it is so confidently asserted in the objection, that sin cannot come into the soul by, or from the body, because it being matter, cannot act upon a spirit; I say, this is gratis dictum, easily spoken, but difficultly proved. Cannot the body act upon, or influence the soul? Pray then, how comes it to pass that so many souls become foolish, forgetful, injudicious, &c. by their union with ill disposed bodies? Nothing is more sensible, plain, and evident, than that there is a reciprocal communication betwixt the soul and body. The body doth as really (though we know not how) affect the soul with its dispositions, as the soul influences it with life and motion. The more excellent any form is, the more intimate is its union and conjunction with the matter. This soul of man has therefore a more intimate and perfect union with the body, than light has with the air, which is made, by some, to be the emblem and similitude to shadow forth this union. But the union betwixt them is too intimate to be conceived by the help of any such similitudes. That this infection is by way of physical agency, as a rusty scabbard infects and defiles a bright sword when sheathed therein, I will not confidently affirm as some do. It may be by way of natural concomitancy, as Estius will have it; or to speak, as Dr. Reynolds (modestly, and as becomes men that are conscious of darkness and weakness) by way of ineffable resultancy and emanation.

(3.) Upon the whole, original sin consists in two things, viz.

1. In the privation of that original rectitude which ought to be in us.
2. In that habitual concupiscence which carrieth nature to inordinate motions.

This privation and inordinate inclination, made up that original corruption, the rise whereof we are searching for: And to bring us as near as we can come, without a daring intrusion into unrevealed secrets, our solid divines proceed by these steps, in answering this objection.

(1.) If it be demanded how it comes to pass that an infant becomes guilty of Adam's sin; The answer is, because he is a child of Adam by natural generation.

(2.) But why is he deprived of that original rectitude in which Adam was created? They answer, because Adam lost it by his sin, and therefore could not transmit what he had lost to his posterity.

(3.) But how comes he to be inclined to that which is evil? Their answer is, because he wants [lacks] that original rectitude: For whosoever wants [lacks] original rectitude, naturally inclines to that which is evil. And so the propension of nature to that which is evil, seems to be by way of concomitancy [a thing that exists in connection with another.] with the defect or want of original righteousness.

And thus I have given some account of the nature and original of the soul of man, though alas! My dim eyes see but little of its excellency and glory. Yet, by what has been said, it appears the masterpiece of all God's work of creation, in this lower world.

But because I suspect the description I have given of it will be obscure and cloudy to vulgar readers, of a plain and low capacity, by reason of divers philosophical terms which have been forced to make use of; and reckoning myself a debtor to the weak and unlearned, as well as others, I will endeavour to strip this description of the soul, for their sakes, out of those artificial terms which darken it to them, and present it once more in the most plain and intelligible epitome I am capable to give it in; that so the weaker understanding may be able to form a true notion of the nature and original of the soul, in this manner.

The soul of mine is a true and real being; not a fancy, conceit, very nothing. It has a proper and true being in itself, whether I conceive it or not. Nor indeed can I conceive of it, but by it. It is not such a thing as whiteness is in snow, a mere accident, which depends upon the snow in which it is for the being it has, and must perish as soon as the snow is dissolved: My soul doth not so much depend upon my body, or any other fellow-creature for its being; **but is as truly a substance as my body is, though not of so gross and material a kind and nature.** My soul can, and will subsist and remain what it is, when my body is separated from it; but my body cannot subsist and remain what it now is, when my soul is separated from it: So that I find my soul to be the most substantial and noble part of me; **it is not my body, but my soul which makes me a man.** And if this depart, all the rest of me is but a dead log, a lump of inanimate clay, a heap of vile dust and corruption. From this independent substance it has in itself, and the dependence its properties and affections have upon it, I truly apprehend and call it a substance.

But yet, when I call it a substance, I must not conceive of it as a gross material, palpable substance, such as my body is, which I can see and feel: No, there are spiritual substances, as well as gross, visible, material substances. An angel is a spiritual substance, a real creature, and yet imperceptible by my

sight or touch, such a substance is my soul. Spiritual substances are as real, and much more excellent than bodily substances are. I can neither see, hear, nor feel it, but I both see, hear, and feel by it.

My soul is also a vital substance. It is a **principle of life to my body: It has a life in itself, and quickens my body therewith.** [This fact and all that Flavel says in this subject will help you see more clearly why God made us this way, and why after the fall, how and why he communicates grace or his glory to us, to those faculties of the soul, as Edwards puts it, He communicates an understanding consisting in the knowledge of himself to created understandings, the re-ensembling of God's image upon us, the image of his knowledge, holiness, etc., so that we would be able to know him, obey him and enjoy him both in this world and to all eternity. See Flavel's comments (in red) a few paragraphs later to the same purpose. This is a good reason why one should study Edwards as well as Owen, Flavel, etc.; they all have something to add to this issue in a unique way that helps you see the pictures clearer. See footnote¹ pg 916] **My soul is the spring of all the actions and motions of life which I perform** [Hence when God has renewed our soul by endowing it with his graces, this new principle of life, making us a partaker of His nature, it animates the whole soul and body into a conformity to the mind of Christ with all its necessary consequents, i.e., good works, continual contemplation, adoration, worship and praise of Him]. It has been an error taken in from my childhood, that sense is performed in the outward organ, or members of my body; as touching in the hand, seeing in the eye, hearing in the ear, &c. in them, I say, and not only by them, as if nothing were required to make sense, but an object and an organ. No, no, it is not my eye that seeth, nor my ear that heareth, nor my hand that toucheth, **but my soul**, in and by them, performs all this. Let but an apoplexy hinder the operations of my soul in the brain, and of how little use are my eyes, ears, hands, or feet to me? My life is originally in my soul, and secondarily by way of communication in my body. So that I find my soul to be a vital, as well as a spiritual substance.

And being both a vital and spiritual substance, I must needs conclude it to be an immortal substance. For in such a pure, spiritual nature as my soul is, there can be found no seeds or principles of death. Where there is no composition, there will be no dissolution. My body indeed having so many jarring humours, mixed elements, and contrary qualities in it, must needs fall and die at last: but my soul was formed for immortality, by the simplicity and spirituality of its nature. No sword can pierce it from without, nor opposition can destroy it from within; man cannot, and God will not.

And being an immortal spirit, fitted and framed to live forever, I find that God has, answerably, endued and furnished it with an understanding, will, and affections, **whereby it is capable of being wrought upon by the Spirit in the way of grace and sanctification in this world in order to the enjoyment of God**, its chief happiness in the world to come. [See Edwards' on page 897 & 906 for comments on God's communicating his glory to the soul which consists in a communicating knowledge, holiness and joy & happiness.]

By this its understanding, I am distinguished from, and advanced above all other creatures in this world. I can apprehend, distinguish, and judge of all other intelligible beings. By my understanding I discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; it shews me what is fit for me to choose, and what to refuse.

To this faculty or power of **understanding**, my thoughts and conscience do belong; the former to my speculative, the latter to my practical understanding. My thoughts are all formed in my mind or understanding in innumerable multitudes and variety. By it I can think of things present, or absent; visible, or invisible; of God, or myself; of this world, or the world to come.

To my **understanding** also belongs by conscience, a noble, divine, and awful power: By which I summon and judge myself, as at a solemn tribunal; bind and loose, condemn and acquit myself and actions, but still with an eye and respect to the judgment of God. Hence are my best comforts, and worst terrors.

This **understanding** of mine is the director and guide of my will, as the counsellor; and my **will** is as the prince: It freely chuseth and refuseth, as my understanding directs and suggests to it. The members of my body, and the passions of my soul, are under its dominion: The former are under its absolute command, the latter under its suasions and insinuations, though not absolutely, yet always with effect and success.

And both my **understanding** and **will** I find to have great influence upon my **affections**.

These passions and affections of my soul are of great use and dignity. I find them as manifold as there are considerations of good and evil. They are the strong and sensible motions of my soul, according to my apprehensions of good and evil. By them by soul is capable of union with the highest good. By **love** and **delight** [both are graces; graces enable us to obey God, e.g., love God and delight in him and his word, etc.] I am capable of enjoying God, and resting in him as the centre of my soul. **This noble understanding, thoughts, conscience, will, passions, and affections, are the principal faculties, acts, and powers of this my high and heaven-born soul.** And being thus richly endowed and furnished,

I find it could never rise out of matter, or come into my body by way of generation; the souls of brutes, that rise that way, are destitute of understanding, reason, conscience, and such other **excellent faculties** and **powers** as I find in my own soul. **They cannot know, or love, or delight in God, or set their affections on things spiritual, invisible, and eternal as my soul is capable to do; it was therefore created and infused immediately into this body of mine by the Father of spirits,** and that with a strong inclination, and tender affection to my flesh, without which it would be remiss and careless in performing its several duties and offices to it, during the time of its abode therein.

Fearfully and wonderfully, therefore, am I made, and designed for **nobler ends** and uses, than for a few days to eat, and drink, and sleep, and talk, and die. My soul is of more value than ten thousand worlds. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

USE.

From the several parts and branches of this description of the soul, we may gather the choice fruits which naturally grow upon them, in the following inferences and deduction of truth and duty. For we may say of them all what the historian doth of Palestine, that there is *nihil infructuosum, nihil sterile*, no branch or shrub is barren, or unfruitful. Let us then search it branch by branch: and,

Inf. 1. From the substantial nature of the soul, which we have proved to be a being distinct from the body, and subsisting by itself, we are informed, That great is the difference betwixt the death of a man, and the death of all other creatures in the world. **Their souls depend on, and perish with their bodies; but ours neither result from them, nor perish with them.** My body is not a body, when my soul has forsaken it; but my soul will remain a soul when this body is crumbled into dust. Men may live like beasts, a mere sensual life; yea, in some sense, they may die like beasts, a stupid death; but in this there will be found a vast difference: **Death kills both parts of the beasts, destroys the matter and form; it toucheth only one part of man; it destroyeth the body, and only dislodgeth the soul, but cannot destroy it.**

In some things Solomon shews the agreement betwixt our death and theirs, Eccl. 3: 19, 20, 21. "That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; all go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." We breathe the same common air they breathe; we feel the same puns of death they feel, our bodies are resolved into the same earth theirs are. Oh! but in this is the difference, **The spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast goeth downward to the earth.** Their spirits go two ways at their dissolution; the one to the earth, and the other to God that gave it; as he speaks, chap. 12: 7. Though our dissolution and expiration have some agreement, yet great is the odds in the consequences of death to the one and the other. They have no pleasures nor pains besides those they enjoy or feel now; but so have we, and those eternal, or unspeakable too. The soul of man, like the bird in the shell, is still growing or ripening in sin or grace, till at last the shell breaks by death, and the soul flies away to the piece it is prepared for, and where it must abide forever. The body, which is but its shell, perisheth; but the soul lives when it is fallen away.

How doth this consideration expose and aggravate the folly and madness of this sensual world, who herd themselves with beasts though they have souls so near akin to angels! The princes and nobles of the world abhor to associate themselves with mechanics in their shops, or take a place among the sottish rabble upon an ale-bench; they know and keep their distance and decorum, as still carrying with them a sense of honour, and abhorring to act beneath it: But we equalise our high and noble souls in the manner of life with the beasts that perish. Our tables differ little from the crib At which they feed; or our houses from the stalls and stable, in which they lie down to rest, in respect of any divine worship or heavenly communication that is to be heard there. Happy had it been for such men (if so they live and die) that their souls had been of no higher extraction, or larger capacity, or longer duration than that of a beast: for then, as their comforts, so also their miseries had ended at death. And such they will one day wish they had been.

A separate soul immediately capable of blessedness.

Inf. 2. The soul of man being substance, and not depending in its being on the body or any other fellow-creature, There can be no reason, on the souls account, why its blessedness should be delayed: till the resurrection of the body.

It is a great mistake (and it is well it is so) that the soul is capable only of social glory, or a blessedness in partnership with the body: and that it can neither exert its own powers, nor enjoy its own happiness

in the absence of the body. The opinion of a sleeping interval took its rise from this error (as it is usual for one mistake to beget another;) they conceived the soul to be so dependent on the body, at least in all its operations, that when death rends it from the body, it must needs be left in a swoon or sleep, unable to exert its proper powers, or enjoy that felicity which we ascribe to it in its state of separation.

But certainly its substantial nature being considered, it will be found, that what perfection soever the body receives from the soul, and how necessary soever its dependence upon it is, the soul receives not its perfection from the body, nor doth it necessarily depend on it, in its principal operations; but it can live and act out of a body as well as in it. Yea, I doubt not but it enjoys itself in a much more sweet and perfect liberty than ever it did, or could, while it was clogged and fettered with a body of flesh.

"Doubtless, (says Tertullian) when it is separated, and as it were strained by death, it comes out of darkness into its own pure, perfect light, and quickly finds itself a substantial being, able to act freely in that light." Before the eyes of the dead body are closed, I doubt not, but the believing soul, with open eyes, beholdeth the face of Jesus Christ, Luke 23: 43. Phil. 1: 23. But this will also be further spoken to hereafter.

Inf. 3. The souls of men being created immediately out of no thing, and not seminally traduced; it follows, that all souls by nature are of equal value and dignity; one soul is not more excellent, honourable, or precious than another: but all by nature equally precious.

The soul of the poorest beggar that cries at the door for a crust, is, in its own nature, of equal dignity and value with the soul of the most glorious monarch that sits upon the throne. And this appears to be so,

1. Because all souls flow out of one and the same fountain, namely, the creating power of God. They were not made of better or worse, finer or coarser matter, but "*ek me onton*", out of nothing at all. **The same Almighty Power was put forth to the forming of one, as of another.** All souls are mine, says he that created them, Ezek. 18: 4. the soul of the child as well as of the father, the soul of the beggar as well as of the king; those that **had no pre-existent matter, but received their beings from the same efficient cause**, must needs be equal in their original nature and value. **The bodies of men, which are formed out of matter**, do greatly differ from one another; some are moulded (as we say) *e meliori luto*, out of better and finer clay; some are more exact, elegant, vigorous, and beautiful than others; but souls, having no matter of which they consist, are not so differenced.

2. All souls are created with a capacity of enjoying the infinite and blessed God. They need no other powers, faculties, or capacities than they are by nature endued with (if these be sanctified and devoted to God) to make them equally happy and blessed with them that are now before the throne of God in heaven, and with unspeakable delight and joy behold his blessed face. We pass through the fields, and take up an egg which lies under a clod, and see nothing in it but a little squalid matter; yea, but in that egg is seminally and potentially contained such a melodious lark as, it may be, at the same time we see mounting heavenward, and singing delicious notes above. So it is here, these poor despised souls, that are now lodged in crazy, despicable bodies on the earth, have, in their natures, a capacity for the same employments and enjoyments with those in heaven. They have no higher original than these have, and these have the same capacity and ability with them. They are beings improveable by grace, to the

highest perfections attainable by any creature. If thou be never so mean, base, and despicable a creature in other respects, yet thou hast a soul, which has the same alliance to the Father of spirits, the same capacity to enjoy him in glory, that the most excellent and renowned saints ever had.

3. All souls are rated and valued in God's book, and account, at one and the same price; and therefore by nature are of equal worth and dignity. Under the law, the rich and the poor were to give the same ransom, Exod. 30: 15. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel." The redemption of souls, by the blood of Christ, costs one and the same price. The poorest and the most despised soul that believes in Jesus, is as much indebted to him for the ransom of his soul, as the greatest and most illustrious person in the world. Moses, Abraham, Paul, &c. did not cost Christ anything more than poor Lazarus, or the meanest among all the saints did. "The righteousness of Christ is unto all, and upon all that believe, for there is no difference," Rom. 3: 22.

But yet we must not understand this parity of human souls universally, or in all respects. Though being of one species or common nature, they are all equal, and those of them that are purchased by the blood of Christ are all purchased at one rate; yet there are divers other respects and considerations, wherein there are remarkable differences betwixt soul and soul. As,

(1.) Some souls are much better lodged and accommodated in their bodies than others are, though none dwell at perfect rest and ease. God has lodged some souls in strong, vigorous, comely bodies; others in feeble, crazy, deformed, and uncomfortable ones. The historian says of Galba, *Anima Galae male habitat*; the soul of Galba dwelt in an ill body. And a much better man than Galba was as ill accommodated. John wishes in behalf of his beloved Gaius, that his body might but prosper as his soul did, Epistle iii. ver. 2. Timothy had his often infirmities. Indeed the world is full of instances and examples of this kind. If some souls had the advantages of such bodies as others have, who make little or very bad use of them; oh, what service would they do for God!

(2.) There is a remarkable difference also betwixt soul, and soul, in respect of natural gifts and abilities of mind. Some have great advantages above others in this respect. The natural spirits and organs of the body being more brisk and apt, the soul is more vegete, vigorous, and able to exert itself in its functions and operations. How clear, nimble, and firm, are the apprehensions, fancies, and memories of some souls beyond others! What a prodigy of memory, fancy, and judgement, was father Paul the Venetian! and Suarez, of whom Strada says, "Such was the strength of his parts, that he had all St. Augustine's works (the most copious and various of all the fathers) as it were by heart, so that I have seen him, says he, readily pointing with the finger to any place or page he disputed of." Our Dr. Reynolds excelled this way, to the astonishment of all that knew him, so that he was a living library, a third university. But above all, the character given by Vives of Budaeus is amazing, That there was nothing written in Greek or Latin, which he had not turned over and examined; that both languages were alike to him, speaking either with more facility than he did the French, his mother tongue; and all by the penetrating force of his own natural parts, without a tutor; so that the France never brought forth a man of sharper wit, more piercing judgement, exact diligence, and greater learning, nor, in his time, Italy itself. *Foelix et foecundum ingenium, quod in se uo invenit, et doctorem, et discipulum!* A happy and fruitful life, which in itself found both a master and a scholar! And yet Pasquier relates what is much more admirable of a young man, who came to Paris, in the 20th year of his age, and in the year

1445, shewed himself so excellent and exact in all the arts, sciences, and languages, that if a man of an ordinary good wit, and sound constitution, should live an hundred years, and during that time **study** incessantly, without eating, drinking, sleeping, or any recreation, he could hardly attain to that perfection.

(3.) And yet a far greater difference is made between one soul and another, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God. This makes yet a greater disparity; for it alters and new-moulds the frame and temper of the soul, and **restores the lost image of God to it**; by reason whereof the righteous is truly said to be "more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. 12: 26. This ennobles the soul, and stamps the highest dignity and glory upon it, that it is capable of in this world. [Needs must the glory of Christ be unspeakable, who reflects glory upon all that are with him, John 17:24. and stamps glory upon all that belong to him. - Flavel] It is true, it has naturally all excellency and perpetuity in it above other beings; as cedar has not only a beauty and fragrancly, but a soundness and durability far beyond other trees of the wood: but when it comes under the sanctification of the Spirit, then it is as cedar over-laid with gold.

(4.) Lastly, a wonderful difference will be made betwixt one soul and another, by the judgement of God in the great day. Some will be blessed, and others cursed souls, Matt. 25: 46; some received into glory, others shut out into everlasting misery; Mat. 8: 11, 15. "Many shall come from the East, and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And that which will be the sting and aggravation of the difference which will then be made, will be this parity and equality in the nature and capacity of every soul; by reason whereof they that perish will find they were as naturally capable of blessedness, as those that enjoy it; and that it was their own inexcusable negligence and obstinacy that were there their ruin.

Inf. 4. If God be the **immediate Creator**, and former of the soul of man, then sin must needs involve the most unnatural evil in it, as it is an horrid violation of the very law of nature. No title can be so full, so absolute, as that which creation gives. How clear is this in the light of reason? If God created my soul, then my soul had once no being at all: that it had still remained nothing, had not the **pleasure of its Creator** [**God's secret will or will of decree as opposed to his prescriptive will**] chosen and called it into the being it has, out of the millions of mere possible beings: for as there are millions of possible beings, which yet are nothing; so there are millions of possible beings, which never shall be at all. So that since the **pleasure and power of God** were the only fountain of my being, he must needs be the rightful owner of it. What can be more his own, than that whose very being flowed merely from him, and which had never been at all, had he not called it out of nothing?

And seeing the same pleasure of God [**See Isa. 46:10 "My council shall stand, And I will do all my pleasure." See also Rom. 9:19, "For who is able to resist his will?"**], which gave it a being, gave it also a **reasonable being**, capable of and fitted for moral government, by laws which other inferior natures are incapable of; it must needs follow that he is the supreme Governor, as well as the rightful owner of this soul.

Moreover, it is plain that he who gave my soul its being, and such a being, gave it also all the good it ever had, has, or shall have: and that it neither is, nor has anything but what is purely from him: and

therefore he must needs be my most bountiful benefactor, as well as absolute Owner, and supreme Governor. There is not a soul which he has created but stands bound to him, in all these ties and titles. Now for such a creature to turn rebelliously upon its absolute Owner, whose only, and wholly it is; upon its supreme Governor, to whom it owes entire and absolute obedience; upon its bountiful Benefactor, from whom it has received all, and every mercy it ever had, or has; to violate his laws, slight his sovereignty, despise his goodness, contemn his threatenings, pierce his very heart with grief, darken the glory of all his attributes, confederate with Satan his malicious enemy; and strike, as far as a creature can strike, at his very being (for in a sense, *Omne peccatum est Deicidium*, every sin strikes at the life and very existence of God): **Blush, O heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid!** O cursed sin, the evil of all evils, which no epithet can match; no name worse than its own can be invented, sinful sin. This is as if some venomous branch should drop poison upon the root that bears it. **Love and gratitude to benefactors, is an indelible principle engraven by nature upon the hearts of all men.** It teacheth children to love and honour their parents, who yet are but mere instruments of their being. O how just must their perdition be, who casting off the very bonds of nature, turn again with enmity against that God, in whom they both live, and move, and have their being! O think, and think again, on what a holy man once said; What a sad charge will this be against many a man at the great day, when God shall say, Hadst thou been made a dog, I never had had so much dishonour as I have had? It is pity God should not have honour from the meanest creature that ever he made, from every pile of grass in the field, or stone in the street; much more that he should not have glory from a soul more precious and excellent than all the other works of his hands. Surely it is better for us, our souls had still remained only in the number of possible beings, and had never had an actual existence in the second rank of beings, but a very little lower than the angels; than that we should be still dishonouring God by them. O that he should be put to levy his glory from us passively; that it should be with us as it was with Nebuchadnezzar, from whom God had more glory when he was driven out amongst the beasts of the field, than when he sat on the throne. In like manner, his glory will rise passively from us, when driven out among devils, and not actively and voluntarily, as from the saints.

Infer. 5. If God create and inspire the reasonable soul immediately, this should instruct and incite all Christian parents to pray earnestly for their children, not only when they are born into the world, but when they are at first conceived in the womb.

It is of great concernment both to us and our children, not only to receive them from the womb, with bodies perfectly and comely fashioned; **but also with such souls inspired into them** [\[aka, communicated to them\]](#), **whereby they may glorify God to all eternity.** It is natural to parents to desire to have their children full and perfect in all their bodily members; and it would be a grievous affliction to see them come into the world defective, monstrous, and misshapen births; should a leg, an arm, an eye be wanting, such a defect would make their lives miserable, and the parents uncomfortable. But how few are concerned with what soul they are born into the world? "Good God, (says Musculus,) how few shall we find, who are equally solicitous to have such children as may live piously and honestly, as they are to leave them inheritances upon which they may live splendidly and bravely?" **It pleaseth us to see our own image stamped upon their bodies;** but, O! how few pray, even while they are in the womb, that their souls may, in due time, bear the image of the heavenly, and not animate and use the members of their bodies, as weapons of unrighteousness against the God that formed them?

Certainly, except they be quickened with such souls, as may in this world be united with Christ, better had it been for them that they had perished in the womb, while they were pure embryo's and had never come into the number and account of men and women; for such embryo's go for nothing in the world, having only rudiments and rough draughts of bodies, never animated and informed by a reasonable soul, Job 3: 11, 12. But as soon as such a soul enters into them, though for never so little a time, it entails eternity upon them. We also know that as soon as ever God breathes, or infuses their souls into them, sin presently enters, and death by sin, and that by us, as the instruments of conveying it to them: which should have the efficacy of a mighty argument with us to lay our prayers and tears for mercy in the very foundation of that union.

Think on this particularly, you that are mothers of children, when you find the fruit of the womb quickened within you, that you then bear a creature within you of more value than all this visible world; a creature, upon whom, from that very moment, an eternity of happiness or misery is entailed; and therefore it concerns you to travail as in pain for their souls, before you feel the sorrows and pangs of travail for their bodies. O what a pity is it, that a part of yourselves should eternally perish! that so rare and excellent a creature as that you bear, should be cast away forever, for want of a new creation super added to that it has already! O let your cries and prayers for them anticipate your kisses and embraces of them. If you be faithful and successful herein, then happy is the womb that bears them; if not, happy had it been for them, that the knees had prevented them, and the breasts they have sucked. O! ye cannot begin your suits for mercy too early for them, nor continue them too long, though your prayers measure all the time betwixt their conception and their death.

Inf. 6. Moreover, if God has created our souls vital substances to animate and act those bodies, How indispensably necessary is it that such a principle of spiritual life do quicken and govern that soul which quickens and governs our bodies and all the members of them? Otherwise, though in a natural sense, we have living souls, yet they are dead while they live. [\[a lot of very important terms here!\]](#)

The apostle, in 1 Cor. 15: 45, 46. compares the animal life we live, by the union of our souls and bodies, with the spiritual life we live, by the union of our souls with Jesus Christ. And so it is written, (viz. in my text "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit." He opposes the animal to the spiritual life, and the two Adams, from whom they come; and shews, in both respects, the excellency of the spiritual above the animal life, not in point of priority, for that which is natural is before that which is spiritual, (and it must be so, because the natural soul is the recipient subject of the Spirit's quickening and sanctifying operations;) but in point of dignity and real excellency. To how little purpose, or rather to what a dismal and miserable purpose are we made living souls, except the Lord from heaven by His quickening power, make us spiritual and holy souls? The natural soul rules and uses the body as an artificer doth his tools: and except the Lord renew it by grace, Satan [\[the strong man who guards his palace\]](#) will rule that which rules thee, and so all thy members will be instruments of iniquity to fight against God. "The actions performed by our bodies, are justly reputed and reckoned by God to the soul," because the soul is the spring of all its motions, the fountain of its life and operations. What it cloth by the body, its instrument, is as if it were done immediately by itself; for without the soul it can do nothing.

Inf. 7. Moreover, from the immaterial and spiritual nature of the soul, we are informed, that communion with God, and the enjoyment of him, are the true and proper intentions and purposes for which the soul of man as created.

Such a nature as this is not fitted to live upon gross, material, and perishing things as the body doth. The food of every creature is agreeable to its nature; one cannot subsist upon that which another doth: as we see among the several sorts of animals, what is food to one, is none to another. In the same plant is found a root which is food for swine, a stalk which is food for sheep, a flower which feeds the bee, a seed on which the bird lives: the sheep cannot live upon the root, as the swine do; nor the bird upon the flower as the bee doth: but everyone feeds upon the different parts of the plant which are agreeable to its nature. So it is here, our bodies being of an earthly, material nature, can live upon things earthly and material, as most agreeable to them; they can relish and suck out the sweetness of these things; **but the soul can find nothing in them suitable to its nature and appetite; it must have spiritual food, or perish.** It were therefore too brutish and unworthy of a man that understood the nature of his own soul to cheer it up with the stores of earthly provision made for it, as he did, Luke 22: 20. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Alas! the soul can no more eat, drink, and be merry with carnal things, than the body can with spiritual and immaterial things: it cannot feed upon bread that perishes, it can relish no more the best and daintiest fair of an earthly growth, than the white of an egg: **but bring it to a reconciled God in Christ, to the covenant of grace, and the sweet promises of the gospel: set before it the joys, comforts, and earnestings of the Spirit; and if it be a sanctified renewed soul, it can make a rich feast upon these.** These make it a feast of fat things, full of marrow, as it is expressed, Isa. 25: 6. Spiritual things are proper food for spiritual and immaterial souls.

Inf. 8. The **spiritual nature of the soul** farther informs us, That no acceptable service can be performed to God, except the soul be employed and engaged therein.

The body has its part and share in God's worship as well as the soul; but its part is inconsiderable, in comparison, Prov. 23:26, "My son give me thy heart;" i.e. thy soul, thy spirit. The holy and religious acts of the soul are suitable to the nature of the object of worship: John 4:24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Spirits only can have communion with that great Spirit. They were made spirits for that very end, that they might be capable of converse with the Father of spirits, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" that is, with **inward love, fear, delight, and desires of soul**, that is, **to worship him in our spirits; and in truth, i.e. according to the rule of his word which prescribes our duty.** Spirit respects the inward power; truth the outward form. The former strikes at hypocrisy, the latter at superstition and idolatry: the one opposes the inventions of our heads; the other the looseness and formality of our hearts.

No doubt but the service of the body is due to God, and expected by him: for both the souls and bodies of his people are bought with a price, and therefore he expects we glorify him with our souls and bodies which are his: but the service of the body is not accepted of him otherwise **than it is animated and enlivened by an obedient soul**, and **both sprinkled with the blood of Christ** [Hence Heb. 11:6, *But without faith it is impossible to please Him.*] Separate from these, bodily exercise profits

nothing, 1 Tim. 4: 8. What pleasure can God take in the fruits and evidences of men's hypocrisy? Ezek. 33: 31.

Holy Paul appeals to God in this matter; Rom. 1: 9. "God is my witness (says he) whom I serve with my spirit;- q. d. I serve God in my spirit, and he knows that I do so. I dare appeal to him who searches my heart, that it is not idle and unconcerned in his service. The Lord humble us, the best of us, for our careless, dead, gadding, and vain spirits, even when we are engaged in his solemn services. O that we were once so spiritual, to follow every excursion from his service with a groan, and retract every wandering thought with a deep sigh! Alas, a cold and wandering spirit in duty is the disease of most men, and the very temper and constitution of unsanctified ones. It is a weighty and excellent expression of the Jews, in their Euchologium or prayer-book, "Where withal shall I come before his face, unless it be with my spirit? For man has nothing more precious to present to God than his soul." Indeed it is the best man has: thy heart is thy totum posse: it is all that thou art able to present to him. If thou cast thy soul into thy duty, thou dost as the poor widow did, cast in all that thou hast: and in such an offering the great God takes more pleasure than in all the external, costly, pompous ceremonies, adorned temples, and external devotions in the world. It is a remarkable and astonishing expression of his own in this case, Isa. 66: 1, 2. "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house that ye built me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things have mine hands made, and all these things have been, says the Lord; but unto this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" q. d. Think not to please me with magnificent temples, and adorned altars; if I had pleasure in such things, heaven is a more glorious throne than any you can build me; and yet I have more delight in a poor contrite spirit, that trembles with an holy awe and reverence at my word, than I have in heaven or earth, or all the works of my hands in either. Oh! if there had been more trembling at his word, there had not been such trembling as now there is, under fears of the loss and removal of it. Some can superstitiously reverence and kiss the sacred dust of the sanctuary, as they call it, and express a great deal of zeal for the externals of religion, but little consider how small the interest of these things is in religion, and how little God looks at, or regards them.

Inf. 9. How much are the spirits of men sunk by sin, below the dignity and excellency of their nature?

Our souls are spirits by nature, yet have they naturally no delight in things spiritual: they decline that which is homogeneal and suitable to spirits, and relish nothing but what is carnal and unsuitable to them. How are its affections inverted and misplaced by sin! That noble, spiritual, heaven-born creature the soul, whose element and centre God alone should be, is now fallen into a deep oblivion both of God and itself, **and wholly spends its strength in the pursuit of sensual and earthly enjoyments, and becomes a mere drudge and slave to the body.** Carnal things now measure out and govern its delights and hopes, its fears and sorrows. O! how unseemly is it to behold such a high-born spirit lacqueying up and down the world in the service of the perishing flesh. "Their heart (says the prophet) goeth after their covetousness, Ezek. 33: 31. as a servant at the beck or nod of his master.

O how many are there to be found in every place who melt down the precious **affections and strength of their souls, in sensitive brutish pleasures and delights?** Jam. 5: 6. "Ye have lived in pleasures

upon earth," as the fish in the waters, or rather as the eel in the mud; never once lifting up a thought or desire to the spiritual and eternal pleasures that are at God's right hand.

Our creation did not set us so low; we are made capable of better and higher things.

God did not inspire such a noble, excellent, spiritual soul unto us, merely to salt our bodies, or carry them up and down this world for a few years, to gaze at the vanities of it. It was a great saying of an Heathen, I am greater, and born to greater things, "than that I should be a slave to my body." We have a spirit about us, that might better understand its original, and know it is not so base a being, as its daily employments speak it to be. The Lord raise our apprehensions to a due value of the dignity of our own souls, that we may turn from these sordid employments with a generous disdain, and set our affections on what is agreeable to, and worthy of an high born spirit.

Inf. 10. **Is the soul of man a vital, spiritual, and immortal substance? Then it is no wonder, that we find the resentments and impressions of the world to come, naturally engraven upon the souls of men all the world over.** These impressions and sentiments of another life after this, do as naturally and necessarily spring out of an immortal nature, as branches spring out of the body of a tree, or feathers out of the body of a bird. So fairly and firmly are the characters and impressions of the life to come sealed upon the immortal spirits of all men, that no man can offer violence to this truth, but he must also do violence to his own soul, and unman himself by the denial of it. **Who feels not a cheeriness to spring from his absolving, and an horror from his accusing conscience? neither of which could arise from any other principle than this.** We are beings conscious to ourselves of a future state, and that our souls do not vanish when our breath doth: that we cease not to be when we cease to breathe.

And this is common to the most barbarous and savage Heathens: "They shew (says the apostle) the work of the law written in their hearts, their **consciences** also bearing them witness, and their thoughts in the meantime accusing, or else excusing one another." By the work of the law, understand the sum and substance of the ten commandments, comprising the duties to be done, and the sins to be avoided. This work of the law is said to be written upon the hearts of the Gentiles, who had no external written law; upon their hearts it was written, though many of them gave themselves over to all uncleanness; and they shewed or gave evidence and proof, that there was such a law written upon their hearts. They shewed it two ways: (1.) Some of them shewed it **in their temperance, righteousness, and moral honesty, wherein they excelled many of us**, who have far greater advantages and obligations. (2.) **In the efficacy of their consciences**; which, as it cleared and comforted them for things well done: so it witnessed against them, yea, judged and condemned them for things ill done. **And these evidences of a law written on the heart are to be found, wherever men are to be found.** Their ignorance and barbarity cannot stifle these sentiments and impressions of a future state, and a just tribunal to which all must come. And the universality of it plainly evinces, that it springs not out of education, but the very nature of an immortal soul.

Let none say that these universal impressions are but the effects of an universal tradition, which have been, time out of mind, spread among the nations of the world: for as no such universal tradition can be proved; so if it could, the very propension that is found in the minds of all men living, to embrace and close with the proposals of a life to come, will evince the agreeableness of them to the nature of

an immortal soul. Yea, the natural closing of the soul with these proposals, will amount to an evidence of the reality and existence of those invisible things. For as the natural senses and their organs prove that there are colours, sounds, savours, and juices; as well as, or rather because there are eyes, ears, &c. naturally fitted to close with; and receive them; so it is here, if the soul naturally looks beyond the line of time, to things eternal, and cannot bound and confine its thoughts and expectations within the too narrow limits of present things, surely there is such a future state, as well as souls made apprehensive of it, and propense to close with the discoveries thereof. So natural are the notions of future state to the souls of men, that those who have set themselves designedly to banish them, and struggled hard to suppress them, as things irksome and grievous to them, **giving interruption to their sensual lusts and pleasures**; yet still these apprehensions have returned upon them, and gotten a just victory over all their objections and prejudices; they follow them wheresoever they go; they can no more flee from them than from themselves; whereby they evidence themselves to be natural and indelible things.

Inf. 11. **Has God endued the soul of man with understanding, will, and affections, whereby it is made capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying God?** It is then no wonder to find the malice and envy of Satan engaged against man more than any other creature, and against the soul of man, rather than anything else in man.

It grates that Spirit of envy to see the soul of man adorning and preparing, by sanctification, to fill that place in glory from which he fell irrecoverably. It cut Haman to the very heart, to see the honour that was done to Mordecai; much more doth it grate and gall Satan, to see what Jesus Christ has purchased and designed for the souls of men. Other creatures being naturally incapable of this happiness, do therefore escape his fury; but men shall be sure to feel it as far as he can reach them; 1 Pet. 5: 8. "Your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He walks to and fro; that speaks his diligence; seeking whom he may devour; that speaks his design; his restlessness in doing mischief is all the rest and relief he has in his own torments. It is a mark of pure and perfect malice to endeavour to destroy, though he knows he shall never be successful in his attempts. We read of many bodies possessed by him; but he never takes up his quarters in the body of any but with design to do mischief to the soul. No room but the best in the house will satisfy him; no blood so sweet to him as soul-blood. If he raise prosecution against the bodies of men, it is to destroy their souls: holiness is what he hates, and happiness is the object of his envy: the soul being the subject of both, is therefore pursued by him as his prey.

Inf. 12. Upon the consideration both of its excellent nature and divine original, it follows, that the corruption and defacing of such an excellent creature by sin deserves to be lamented and greatly bewailed; and the **recovery of it by sanctification to be studied and diligently prosecuted, as the great concern of all men.** [Jonathan Edwards said the same thing in so many words - that it is important for Christians to look into that which angels desire to look into, namely, the wisdom of God in their salvation and all the particulars of it, all their experiences in the works of God in it; for this puts an awe on your heart, that holy fear, and to walk with God in a due manner of humble and contrite spirit; this works toward and answers to the passage that expresses our duty to God, we should work out our salvation in fear and trembling.]

What a beautiful and blessed creature was the soul of man at first, while it stood in its integrity? His mind was bright, clear, and apprehensive of the law and will of God; his will cheerfully complied therewith; his sensitive appetite and inferior powers stood in an obedient subordination. God made man upright, Eccles. 7: 29. "yashar" straight, and equal, bending to neither extreme. The law of God was fairly engraven upon the table of his heart. Principles of holiness and righteousness were inlaid in the frame of his mind, fitting him for an exact and punctual discharge of his duties both to God and man. This was the soundness of his constitution, the healthful temper of his inner-man, whereby it became the very region of light, peace, purity, and pleasure. For think how serene, lightsome, and placid the state of the soul must be, in which there was no obliquity, not a jar with the Divine will; but joy and peace continually transfused through all its faculties!

But sin has defaced its beauty, razed out the Divine image [the chief and most beautiful part of his image, his moral image consisting in holiness, the saving knowledge of God, and his joy and happiness; see Edwards or Owen on the two parts of God's image, his natural and spiritual.]which was its glory, and stamped the image of Satan upon it ["Sin stamps the Devil's image on a man." – Thomas Watson]; turned all its noble powers and faculties against the author and fountain of its being. Surely if all the posterity of Adam, from the beginning to the end of the world, should do nothing else but weep and sigh for the sin and misery of the fall, it could not be sufficiently deplored: **Other sins, like single bullets, kill particular persons, but Adam's sin, like a chain-shot, mowed down all mankind at once.** It murdered himself actually, and his posterity virtually, and Christ himself occasionally. Oh! what a black train of doleful consequents attend this sin! It has darkened the bright eye of the soul's understanding, 1 Cor. 2: 14. made its complying and obedient will stubborn and rebellious, Job 5: 40. rendered his tender heart obdurate and senseless, Ezek. 36: 26. filled its serene and peaceful conscience with guilt and terror, Tit. 1: 15. The considerations of these things is very humbling, and should cause those that glory in their high and illustrious descents, to wrap their silver star in cypress, and cover all their glory with a mourning veil. But this is but one part of their duty.

How should this consideration provoke us to apply ourselves with the most serious diligence to recover our lost beauty and dignity in the way of sanctification! This is the great and most proper use of the fall, as Musculus excellently speaks; — ut gratiam Christi eo subnixius ambimus, to inflame our desires the more vehemently after grace. [all the more reason to study this subject!]

Sanctification¹ restores the beauty of the soul, which sin defaced, Eph. 4: 25. Col. 3: 10. Yea, it restores it with this advantage, that it shall never be lost again; holiness is the beauty of God impressed upon the soul [hence, the image of God's holiness²], and the impression is everlasting. Other beauty is but a fading flower: Time will plough deep furrows upon the fairest faces, but this will be fresh to eternity. [see Edwards' on page 897 & 906 for comments on God's communicating his glory to the soul which consists in a communicating knowledge, holiness and joy & happiness]

All moral virtues, homilical qualities, which adorn and beautify nature, and make it attractive and lovely in the eyes of men, are but separable accidents, which death descends and crops off like a sweet flower from the stalk, Job 4: 21. "Does not their excellency that is in them go away?" But sanctification is inseparable, and will ascend with the soul into heaven. Oh! that God would set the glass of the law

before us, that we may see what defiled souls we have by nature, that we might come by faith to Jesus Christ, who cometh to us by water and by blood, 1 John 5: 6.

¹“The more pleasure and delight you find in doing or suffering the will of God, the more of Christ's spirit is in you, and the more of his image is upon you.” –Flavel, p 439, Vol. VI

²“Sanctification is the writing of God's law on your heart.” Flavel, p 112 Vol. VI

Horses and dogs have souls; BUT they are not the same kind of souls that we have. This is heavy and very interesting; read John Flavel's comment below; my comments in [blue]

excerpts from John Flavel's book A Treatise of the Soul of Man (1650s)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/pneum/files/flavel-pneumatologia03.html>

pg17

(2.) We find here the best account that ever was given of the origin of the soul of man, or whence it came, and from whom it derives its being. O, what a dust and pother have the disputes and contests of philosophers raised about this matter! which is cleared in a few words in this scripture; "**God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul:**" which plainly speaks it to be the immediate effect of God's creating power. Not a result from matter; no, results flow *e sinu materiae*, out of the bosom of matter; but this comes ex halitu divino, from the inspiration of God. **That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; but this is a spirit descending from the Father of spirits. God formed it, but not out of any pre-existent matter, whether celestial or terrestrial; much less out of himself, as the Stoics speak; but out of nothing.** An high born creature it is, but no particle of the Deity. The invisible and immutable essence of God is utterly repugnant to such notions; and therefore they speak not strictly and warily enough, that are bold to call it a ray or emanation from God.

A spirit it is, and flows by way of creation, immediately from the Father of spirits; but yet is a spirit of another inferior rank and order.

pg 18 Now, that which so sweetly links these two different natures together, and bolde them in union, is nothing else but the breath of our nostrils, as the text speaks: it came in with the breath; while breath stays with us, it cannot go from us and as soon as the breath departs, it departs also. All the rich elixirs and cordials in the world cannot persuade it to stay one minute after the breath is gone. One puff of breath will carry away the wisest, holiest, and most desirable soul that ever dwelt in flesh and blood. When our breath is corrupt, our days are extinct, Job 17: 1. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust," Psal. 114:19.

Out of the text thus opened, arise two doctrinal propositions, which I shall insist upon, namely,

Doct. 1. That the soul of man is of a divine original, created and inspired immediately by the Lord.

Doct. 2. That the souls and bodies of men are linked, or knit together, by the feeble band of the breath of their nostrils.

pg 19 The soul of man is a vital, spiritual, and immortal substance, endowed with an understanding, will, and various affections; created with an inclination to the body, and infused thereinto by the Lord. [It is to this created understanding that God communicates his glory!!! (to effect their conversion) which consists partly in the understanding of himself, i.e., the knowledge of God, that is, He reveals himself, e.g., Jesus as being divine as Peter confesses. For example, upon conversion, one is said to be enlightened by the truth and sanctified by the truth, etc. Animals don't have this kind of soul that has understanding (Job 39:17) since animals don't have to do with God; but man does - being accountable to Him as moral creatures with the obligation to love and worship him and to be united to Him (God does not unite himself to animals!). Animals operate on instinct not on the kind of understanding that we have. The human soul is a spirit created by God directly (immediately) in each person (Job 33:4); not created by natural generation as the animals are, flesh giving birth flesh or man's flesh giving birth to flesh; but our soul is spirit created by the Father of spirits, hence spirit gives birth to spirit. When we die, our spirit does not disintegrate; it is immortal; but when an animal dies, its body and soul die or come to nothing. Their soul is the fleshly type made by natural propagation not by the breath of God; our is by divine infusion, by the breath of God, created out of nothing, from the Father.]

pg 32 (1.) The soul of a brute is wholly confined to, and dependent on the matter or body with which it is united. It is dependent on it, both in *esse et in operari*, in its being and working; it is but a material form, which arises from, and perisheth with the body. "The soul of a brute, (says a great person) is no other than a fluid bodily substance, the more lively and refined part of the blood (called spirit) quick in motion, and from the arteries by the branches of the carotides carried to the brain; and from thence conveyed to the nerves and muscles, move the whole frame and mass of the body; and receiving only certain weak impressions from the senses, and of short continuance, hindered and obstructed of its work and motion, vanishes into the soft air.

on the human soul: Flavel describes the soul in basic terms

pg 40-42 The soul of mine is a true and real being; not a fancy, conceit, very nothing. It has a proper and true being in itself, whether I conceive it or not. Nor indeed can I conceive of it, but by it. It is not such a thing as whiteness is in snow, a mere accident, which depends upon the snow in which it is for the being it has, and must perish as soon as the snow is dissolved: My soul doth not so much depend upon my body, or any other fellow-creature for its being; but is as truly a substance as my body is, though not of so gross and material a kind and nature. My soul can, and will subsist and remain what it is, when my body is separated from it; but my body cannot subsist and remain what it now is, when my soul is separated from it: So that I find my soul to be the most substantial and noble part of me; it is not my body, but my soul which makes me a man. And if this depart, all the rest of me is but a dead log, a lump of inanimate clay, a heap of vile dust and corruption. From this independent substance it has in itself, and the dependence its properties and affections have upon it, I truly apprehend and call it a substance.

But yet, when I call it a substance, I must not conceive of it as a gross material, palpable substance, such as my body is, which I can see and feel: No, there are spiritual substances, as well as gross, visible, material substances. An angel is a spiritual substance, a real creature, and yet imperceptible by my

sight or touch, such a substance is my soul. Spiritual substances are as real, and much more excellent than bodily substances are. I can neither see, hear, nor feel it, but I both see, hear, and feel by it.

My soul is also a vital substance. It is a principle of life to my body: It has a life in itself, and quickens my body therewith. My soul is the spring of all the actions and motions of life which I perform. It has been an error taken in from my childhood, that sense is performed in the outward organ, or members of my body; as touching in the hand, seeing in the eye, hearing in the ear, &c. in them, I say, and not only by them, as if nothing were required to make sense, but an object and an organ. No, no, it is not my eye that seeth, nor my ear that heareth, nor my hand that toucheth, but my soul, in and by them, performs all this. Let but an apoplex hinder the operations of my soul in the brain, and of how little use are my eyes, ears, hands, or feet to me? My life is originally in my soul, and secondarily by way of communication in my body. So that I find my soul to be a vital, as well as a spiritual substance.

And being both a vital and spiritual substance, I must needs conclude it to be an immortal substance. For in such a pure, spiritual nature as my soul is, there can be found no seeds or principles of death. Where there is no composition, there will be no dissolution. My body indeed having so many jarring humours, mixed elements, and contrary qualities in it, must needs fall and die at last: but my soul was formed for immortality, by the simplicity and spirituality of its nature. No sword can pierce it from without, nor opposition can destroy it from within; man cannot, and God will not.

And being an immortal spirit, fitted and framed to live forever, I find that God has, answerably, endued and furnished it with an understanding, will, and affections, whereby it is capable of being wrought upon by the Spirit in the way of grace and sanctification in this world in order to the enjoyment of God, its chief happiness in the world to come.

By this its understanding, I am distinguished from, and advanced above all other creatures in this world. I can apprehend, distinguish, and judge of all other intelligible beings. By my understanding I discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; it shows me what is fit for me to choose, and what to refuse.

To this faculty or power of understanding, my thoughts and conscience do belong; the former to my speculative, the latter to my practical understanding. My thoughts are all formed in my mind or understanding in innumerable multitudes and variety. By it I can think of things present, or absent; visible, or invisible; of God, or myself; of this world, or the world to come.

To my understanding also belongs by conscience, a noble, divine, and awful power: By which I summon and judge myself, as at a solemn tribunal; bind and loose, condemn and acquit myself and actions, but still with an eye and respect to the judgement of God. Hence are my best comforts, and worst terrors.

This understanding of mine is the director and guide of my will, as the counsellor; and my will is as the prince: It freely chuseth and refuseth, as my understanding directs and suggests to it. The members of my body, and the passions of my soul, are under its dominion: The former are under its absolute command, the latter under its suasions and insinuations, though not absolutely, yet always with effect and success.

And both my understanding and will I find to have great influence upon my affections.

These passions and affections of my soul are of great use and dignity. I find them as manifold as there are considerations of good and evil. They are the strong and sensible motions of my soul, according to my apprehensions of good and evil. By them my soul is capable of union with the highest good. **By love and delight I am capable of enjoying God, and resting in him as the centre of my soul.** [Love and grace are two important graces that God gives those he converts; e.g., now the true believer delights to contemplate the things of God, study, etc., grow in knowledge.] This noble understanding, thoughts, conscience, will, passions, and affections, are the principal faculties, acts, and powers of this my high and heaven-born soul. And being thus richly endowed and furnished,

I find it could never rise out of matter [as it does the beasts], or come into my body by way of generation; the souls of brutes, that rise that way, are destitute of understanding, reason, conscience, and such other **excellent faculties** and powers as I find in my own soul. **They cannot know, or love, or delight in God, or set their affections on things spiritual, invisible, and eternal as my soul is capable to do;** it was therefore created and infused immediately into this body of mine by the Father of spirits, and that with a strong inclination, and tender affection to my flesh, without which it would be remiss and careless in performing its several duties and offices to it, during the time of its abode therein.

Fearfully and wonderfully, therefore, am I made, and designed for nobler ends and uses, than for a few days to eat, and drink, and sleep, and talk, and die. My soul is of more value than ten thousand worlds. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

That God May Be All In All

code61

An explanation
(1Cor. 15:28)

The Treatise of the Soul of Man

by John Flavel (1600s)

Chapter: Heb. 12:23 *And to the spirits of just men made perfect*

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/pneum/files/flavel-pneumatologia07.html>

10. *In such ravishing sights and joyful ascriptions of glory to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore, all the separated spirits of the just are employed and wholly taken up in heaven, as they come in their several times thither; and will be so employed in that temple-service unto the end of the world, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to His Father, and thenceforth God shall be all in all.*

The illustration and confirmation of this assertion we have in these two or three particulars.

(1.) That all the spirits of just men, from the beginning of the world, until Christ's ascension into heaven, did enter into heaven, as a place of rest, as a city prepared for them of God, Heb. xi. 16. and did enjoy blessedness and glory there. But yet there seems to be an alteration even in heaven itself, since the ascension of Christ into it, and such an alteration as advances the glory thereof both to angels and saints. "Heaven itself (says one who is now there) was not what it is, before the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary for the administration of his office. Neither the saints departed, nor the angels themselves, were participant of that glory which now they are. Neither yet does this argue any defect in heaven, or the state thereof in its primitive constitution; For the perfection of any state has respect unto that order of things which it is originally suited unto. Take all things in the order of the first creation, and in respect hereunto, heaven was perfect in glory from the beginning, &c.

Whatever was their rest, refreshment and blessedness, whatever were their enjoyments of the presence of God, yet was there no throne of grace erected in heaven, no high-priest appearing before it, no lamb as it had been slain, no joint ascription of glory unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever. *God having ordained some better thing for us, that they without should not be made perfect*, Heb. xi. 40.

Now both the angels and saints in heaven, do behold Christ in his priestly office within that sanctuary; a sight never seen in heaven before.

(2.) This frame of heavenly worship will continue as it is unto the end of the world, and then another alteration will be made in the manner of his dispensatory kingdom; "For then he must deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all," as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. So that as the present state of heaven is not, in all respects, what it was before Christ's ascension thither; so after the

consummation of the mediatorial kingdom, and the gathering of all the elect into glory, it will not in all respects be what now it is.

Christ will never cease to be the immediate head of the whole glorified creation. God having gathered all the elect, both angels and men, unto a head in him, and he being the knot and centre of that collective body, the whole frame of the glorified church would be dissolved, should he lose his relation of a head to it. Yea, I doubt not but he will for ever continue to be the medium of communion betwixt God and his glorified church: God will still communicate himself to us through Christ, and our adherence, love, and delight, will still be through Christ. In a word, whatever change shall be made, the person of Christ shall still continue to be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship, Rev. xxii. 4.

But when he shall have gathered home all his elect to glory, he will resign his present dispensatory kingdom, and become subject (*as man, and as head of that body which he purchased*) to his Father himself, "that God may be all in all," as it is 1 Cor. xv. 28.

(1.) *All in all*, that is, all the saints shall be filled, and abundantly satisfied, in and from God alone; there shall be no emptiness, no want, no complaint: For, as there is water enough in one sea to fill all rivers, light enough in one sun to illuminate all the world; so all souls shall be eternally filled, satisfied and blessed in one God. Surely, there is enough in God for millions of souls. For if there be enough in God for all the angels, Mat. xviii. 10. yea, enough in God for Jesus Christ, Col. i. 19. there must be enough for all our souls. The capacity of angels is larger than ours; the capacity of Christ is larger than that of angels: He that fills them, can, and will therefore fill us, or be all in all to us.

(2.) *All in all*, that is, complete satisfaction to all the saints, in the absence of all other things, out of which they were wont to suck some comfort and delight in this world. He will now be instead of all; eminently all without them. We shall suck no more **sweetness** out of food, sleep, relations, ordinances, &c. There will be no more need or use of them, than there is of candles in the sunshine, Rev. xxii. 5.

(3.) *All in all*, that is, God only shall be loved, praised, and admired by all the saints; they shall love no creature out of God, but all in God, or rather God in them all. This is that blessed state to which all things tend, for which the angels and glorified souls in heaven long. Hence it is that there is joy in heaven upon the conversion of any poor sinner on earth; because thereby the body of Christ musically advances towards its fullness and completeness, Luke xv. 10. No sooner is a poor soul struck by the word to the heart, and sent home crying, O sick! Sick! sick of sin, and sick for Christ! but the news of it is quickly in heaven, and is matter of great joy there, because they wait as well as Christ for the time of consummation. To conclude, those that went first to heaven before Christ's ascension, were fully at rest in God, and blessed in his enjoyment, and yet upon Christ's ascension thither, their happiness was advanced. It is a new heaven, as it were, to feed their eyes upon the *man Christ Jesus* there. Those that now stand before the throne, ravished with the face of Christ, and ascribing glory to him forever, are also in a most blessed state, and are filled with the joy of the Lord. And yet, two things still remain to be farther done, before they arrive at their consummation, viz. the restitution of their bodies, which yet lie in the dust, and the delivering up of the dispensatory kingdom, upon the coming in of the fullness of all their fellow saints; and after that no more alteration forever, but they shall be both in

soul and body for ever with the Lord. What tongue of man or angel can give us the complete emphasis of that word, *ever with the Lord*? Or that, of God's being *all in all*? O what has God prepared for them that love him!

But when that which is perfect is come,
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and living by faith vs. sight explained.

More on the soul and grace sown in it, the divine nature, incorruptible seed, etc.
Also the meaning of to *die in their sins*, *Let him who is filthy be filthy still*, and the *incorruptible seed*,
and living by faith vs sight explained

¹⁰But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

¹¹When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹²For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1Cor13:10-12

John Flavel ties in a lot of loose ends in explaining the meaning of this passage and several other passages and topics relating to the soul, its conversion and it being perfected.

excerpts from

John Flavel's book, A Treatise of the Soul of Man
pg 78 Chapter Rev. 6:9-11

Argument 4

The immortality of the soul may be evinced from the everlasting habits which are subjected, and inherent in it. If these habits abide forever, certainly so must the souls in which they are planted.

The souls of good men are the good ground, in which the seed of grace is sown by the Spirit, Mat. 13: 28. i.e., the subjects in which gracious properties and affections do inhere and dwell, (which is the formal notion of a substance) and these implanted graces are everlasting things. So John 4: 14, "It shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," i.e., the **graces of the Spirit** shall be in believers, **permanent habits**, **fixed principles**, which shall never decay. And therefore that **seed of grace**, which is cast into their souls at their regeneration, is in 1 Pet. 1: 23, called "incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever:" and it is incorruptible, not only considered abstractly, in its own simple nature, but concretely, as it is in the sanctified soul, its subject: for it is said, 1 John 3: 9, "The seed of God remaineth in him." It abideth forever in the soul. If then these two things be clear unto us, viz.

1. That the habits of grace be everlasting;
2. That they are inseparable from sanctified souls;

It must needs follow, That the soul, their subject, is so too, an everlasting and immortal soul. And how plainly do both these propositions lie before us in the scriptures? As for the immortal and indeterminable nature of saving grace, it is plain to him that considers, not only what the forecited scriptures speak about it, calling it **incorruptible seed**, a **well of water springing up into everlasting life**; but add to these, what is said of these divine qualities in 2 Pet. 1: 4, where they are called the **divine nature**; and Eph. 4:18, the life of God, noting the perpetuity of these principles in believers, as well as their resemblance of God in holiness, who are endowed with them.

I know it is a great question among divines, *An gratia in renatis sit natura et essentia sua interminabilis?* Whether these principles of grace in the regenerate be everlasting and interminable in their own nature and essence? For my own part, I think that God only is naturally, essentially, and absolutely interminable and immortal. But these gracious habits, planted by him in the soul, are so by virtue of God's **appointment, promise, and covenant**. And sure it is, that by reason hereof they are interminate [**having no end**], which is enough for my purpose, if they be not essentially interminable. Though grace be but a creature, and therefore has a *posse mori* [**could die**], yet it is a creature begotten by the Word and Spirit of God, which live and abide forever, and a creature **within the promise and covenant of God, by reason whereof it can never actually die.**

And then as for the inseparableness of these graces from the souls in whom they are planted, how clear is this from John 2: 27, where sanctifying grace is compared to an unction, and this unction is said to abide in them? And 1 John 3: 9, it is called **the seed of God**, which remaineth in the soul. **All our natural and moral excellencies and endowments go away when we die;** Job 4: 21, "Does not their excellency that is in them go away?" Men may outlive their acquired gifts, but not their supernatural graces. These stick by the soul, as Ruth to Naomi, and where it goes they go too; so that when the soul is dislodged by death, all its graces ascend up with it into glory; it carries away all its faith, love, delight in God, all its comfortable experiences, and fruits of communion with God, along with it to heaven. **For death is so far from divesting the soul of its graces, that it perfects in a moment all that was defective in them; 1 Cor. 13: 10,** "When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away," **as the twilight is done away when the sun is up, and at its zenith.** So then, grace never dieth, and this never-dying grace is inseparable from its subject by which it is plain to him that considers, that as graces, so souls, abide forever.

Object. But this only proves the immortality of regenerate souls.

Sol. It does so. But then consider, as there be gracious habits in the regenerate that never die, so there are vicious habits in the unregenerate that can never be separated from them in the world to come. Hence, John 8: 24, they are said to "die in their sins," and Job 20: 11, "Their iniquities lie down with them in the dust," and Ezek. 24: 13, "They shall never be purged." Remarkable is that place, Rev. 22: 11, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." And if guilt sticks so fast, and sin be so deeply engraven in impenitent souls, they also must remain forever, to bear the punishment of them.

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/pneum/files/flavel-pneumatologia07.html>

2. The second follows, namely, the way and manner of our association with these blessed spirits of just men, noted in this expression, [*we are come.*] He says not, *we* shall come hereafter, when the resurrection had restored our bodies, or after the general judgement; but, *we are come* to these spirits of just men. The meaning whereof we may take in these three particulars.

(1.) We that live under the gospel-light, are come to a clearer apprehension, sight, and knowledge of the blessed and happy estate of the souls of the righteous after death, than ever they had, or ordinarily could have, who lived under the types and shadows of the law, Eph. iii. 4, 5. And so we are come to them in respect of clearer apprehension.

(2.) We are come to those blessed spirits in our representative, Christ, who has carried our nature into the very midst of them, and whom they all behold with highest admiration and delight. By Christ, who is entered into that holy place where these spirits of just men live, we are come into a near relation with them: for he being the common head, both to them in heaven, and to us on earth, we and they consequentially make but one body or society, Eph. ii. 10. whereupon (notwithstanding the different and remote countries they and we live in) we are said "to sit down with them in heavenly places," Eph. iii. 5. and ii. 6.

(8.) *We are come.* That is, we are as good as come, or we are upon the matter come; there remains nothing betwixt them and us but a puff of breath, a little space of time, which shortens every moment: We are come to the very borders of their country, and there is nothing to speak of betwixt them and us: And by this expression, *we are come*, he teacheth us to account and reckon those things as present which so shortly will be present to us, and to look upon them as if they already were, which is the highest and most comfortable life of faith we can live on earth. Hence the note is,

Doct. That righteous and holy souls, once separated from their bodies by death, are immediately perfected in themselves; and associated with others alike perfect in the kingdom of God.

That the spirits of just men at the time of their separation from their bodies do not utterly fail in their beings, nor that they are so prejudiced and wounded by death, that they cannot exert their own proper acts in the absence of the body, has been already cleared in the foregoing parts of this treatise, and will be more fully cleared from this text.

But the true level and aim of this discourse is at a higher mark, viz. the far more excellent, free, and noble life the souls of the just begin to live immediately after their bodies are dropped off from them by death, at which time they begin to live like themselves, a pleasant, free, and divine life. So much at least is included in the apostle's epithet in my text, spirits of just men made perfect; and suitable thereto are his words in 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known."

These two adverbs, now and then, distinguish the twofold state of gracious souls, and show what it is while they are confined in the body, and what it shall be from the time of their emancipation and freedom from that clog of mortality. *Now we are imperfect, but then that which is perfect takes place,*

and that which is imperfect is done away, as the imperfect twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect day.

And it deserves a serious animadversion [critical comment], that this perfect state does not succeed the imperfect one after a long interval, (as long as betwixt the dissolution and resurrection of the body) **but the imperfect state of the soul is immediately done away by the coming of the perfect one.** The glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see face to face, and eye to eye.

The waters will prove very deep here, too deep for any line of mine to fathom; there is a cloud always overshadowing the world to come, a gloom and haziness upon that state: Fain we would, with our creak and feeble beam of imperfect knowledge, penetrate this cloud, and dispel this gloom and haziness, but cannot. We think seriously and closely of this great and awful subject, but our thoughts cannot pierce through it: we reinforce those thoughts by a sally, or thick succession of fresh thoughts, and yet all will not do, our thoughts return to us either in confusion, or without the expected success. For alas! how little is it that we know, or can know of our own souls now while they are embodied! much less of their unembodied state. The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ii. 9. "That eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And another apostle adds, "It does not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 2.

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Prop. 3. The separation of the soul and body, makes a great and wonderful change upon both, but especially upon the soul.

There is a twofold change made upon man by death, one upon his body, another upon his soul. The change upon the body is great and visible to every eye. A living body is changed into a dead carcass: a beautiful and comely body into a loathsome spectacle: that which was lately the object of delight and love, is hereby made an abhorrence to all flesh; "Bury my dead out of my sight," Gen. xxiii. 4.

What the sun is to the greater, that the soul is to the lesser world. When the sun shines comfortably, how vegete and cheerful do all things look! how well do they thrive and prosper! the birds sing merrily, the beasts play wantonly, the whole creation enjoyeth a day of light and joy: but when it departs, what a night of horror followeth! how are all things wrapped up in the sable mantle of darkness! or if it but abate its heat, as in winter, the creatures are, as it were, buried in the winding-sheet of winter's frost and snow: just so is it with the body, when the soul shines pleasantly upon it, or departs from it.

That body which was fed so assiduously, cared for so anxiously, loved so passionately, is now tumbled into a pit, and left to the mercy of crawling worms. The change which judgment made upon that great and flourishing city Nineveh, is a fit emblem to shadow forth that change which death makes upon human bodies: that great and renowned city was once full of people, which thronged the streets thereof; there you might have seen children playing upon the thresholds, beauties showing themselves through the windows, melody sounding in its palaces: but what an alteration was made upon it, the prophet Zephaniah describes, chap. ii. 14. "Flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it: their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds, for he shall uncover the cedar-work."

Thus it is with the body when death has dislodged the soul: worms nestle in the holes where the beautiful eyes were once placed; corruption and desolation is upon all parts of that stately structure. But this being a vulgar theme, I shall leave the body to the dust from whence it came, and follow the soul, which is my proper subject, pointing at the changes which are made on it.

The essence of the soul is not destroyed or changed by the body's ruin; it is substantially the self-same soul it was when in the body. The supposition of an essential change would disorder the whole frame and model of God's eternal design for the redemption and glorification of it, Rom. viii. 29, 30. But yet, though it undergo no substantial change at death, yet divers great and remarkable alterations are made upon it, by sundering it from the body. As,

1. It is not where it was: it was in a body, immersed in matter, married unto flesh and blood; but now it is out of the body, unclothed and stripped naked out of its garments of flesh, like pure gold melted out of the ore with which it was commixed; or as a bird let out of her cage into the open fields and woods. This makes a great and wonderful change upon it.

2. Being free from the body, it is consequently discharged and freed from all those cares, studies, fears and sorrows to which it was here enthralled and subjected upon the body's account: it puts off all those passions and burdens with it: never spends one thought more about food and raiment, health and sickness, wives and children, riches or poverty, but lives henceforth after the manner of angels, Mat. xxii. 30. It is now unrelated to, and therefore unconcerned about all these things.

3. In the unbodied state it is perfectly freed from sin, both in the acts and habits; a mercy it never enjoyed since the first moment it dwelt in the body. The cure of this disease was indeed begun in the work of sanctification; but it is not perfected till the day of the soul's glorification. It is now, and not till now, **a spirit made perfect**; that is, a soul enjoying its perfect health and rectitude: no more groans, tears, or lamentations, upon the account of indwelling sin.

4. The way and manner of its converse with, and enjoyment of God is changed. There are two mediums by which souls converse with God in the body, viz.

(1.) One internal, *to wit*, faith.

(2.) The other external, *to wit*, ordinances.

(1.) If a man walk with God on earth, it must be in the use and **exercise of faith**, 2 Cor. v. 7. Nor can there be any communion carried on betwixt God and the soul without it, Heb. xi. 6.

(2.) The external *mediums* are the **ordinances of God**, or **duties of religion**, both public and private, Psal. lxiii. 2. Betwixt these two *mediums* of communion with God, this remarkable difference is found: The soul may see and enjoy God by faith, in the want or absence of ordinances; but there is no seeing or conversing with God, in the greatest plenty and purity of ordinances, without faith, Heb. iv. 2.

But in the same moment the soul is cut off from union with the body, it is also cut off from both these ways of enjoying God, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Isa xxxviii. 11. But yet the soul is no loser; nay, it is the greatest *gainer* by this change. The child is no loser by ceasing to derive its nourishment by the navel,

when it comes to receive it by the mouth, a more noble way, whereby it gets a new pleasure in tasting the variety of all delectable food. Hezekiah bemoaned the loss of ordinances upon his supposed deathbed, saying, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living:" q. d. **Now farewell temple and ordinances**; I shall never go any more into his temple, where my soul has been so often cheered and refreshed with the displays of his grace and goodness; I shall never more join with the assembly of his people on earth. And suppose he had not, sure he would have lost nothing, had he then exchanged the temple at Jerusalem, for the temple in heaven; and communion with sinful imperfect saints on earth, for fellowship with angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect." By this change we lose no more than he loses, who while he stands delightfully contemplating the image of his dearest friend in a glass, **has the glass snatched away by his friend, whom he now seeth face to face.**

Upon this change of the mediums of communion, it will follow, that the communion betwixt God and the separate soul, excels all the communion it ever had with him on earth, in

(1.) The clearness. (2.) The sweetness. (3.) The constancy of it.

(1.) Its visions of God, in the state of separation, are more clear, distinct, and direct than they were on earth; clouds and shadows are now fled away: The soul now seeth as it is seen, and knoweth as it is known; its apprehensions of God there, differ from those it had here, as the crude and confused apprehensions of a child do, from those we have in the manly state.

(2.) They are also more sweet and ravishing: As our visions are, so are our pleasures; perfect visions produce perfect pleasures: The faculties of the soul now, and never till now, lie level to that rule, Matth. xxii. 37. The visions of God command, and call forth all the heart and soul, mind, and strength, into acts of dove and delight. It was not so here; if the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak; but there the clog is off from the foot of the will.

(3.) More constant, fixed, and steady. It is one of the greatest difficulties in religion to fix the thoughts and cure the wildness and roving of the fancy: the heart is not steady with God; and hence are its ups and downs, heatings and coolings; which are things unknown in the perfect state. By all which it appears, the change by dissolution is great and marvellous, both upon the body and soul, but upon the soul more especially.

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2. The departed souls of believers are as ready for heaven as ever they will be: for there is no preparation work to be done by them, or upon them after death, John ix. 3. Eccl. ix. 10. Their justification was complete before death, and now their sanctification is so too; sin which came in by the union, doing out at the separation of their souls and bodies. **They are spirits made perfect.**

3. The scripture is plain and full for their immediate glorification; Luke xxiii. 48. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke xvi. 22. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Phil. i. 21. "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better." **The scripture speaks but of two ways by which souls see and enjoy God, prize [by] faith and sight; the one imperfect,**

suited to this life; the other perfect, fitted for the life to come; and this immediately succeeding that, for the imperfect is done away, by the coming of that which is perfect, as the twilight is done away, by the advancing of the perfect day.

4. To conclude; there is nothing in reason lying in bar to it. It has been proved before, that the soul in its unembodied state is capable to enjoy blessedness, and can perform its acts of intellection, volition, &c. not only as well, but much better than it did, when embodied. I conclude therefore, that seeing heaven is already as much prepared for believers as it need be, or can be; and they as much prepared from the time of their dissolution, as ever they shall be; the scriptures also being so plain for it, and no bar in reason against it; all the aforementioned opinions are but the dreams and fancies of men, who have forsaken their scripture-guide; and this remains all unshaken truth, that the spirits of the just go immediately to glory from the time of their separation.

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Consid. 4. All that divine pleasure, which ever the holiest and devoutest soul enjoyed in the body, is but a sip or prelibation, compared with those full draughts it has in the unembodied state.

While it is embodied, it rejoiceth in the earnest and pledges of joy; but when it is unembodied, it receives the full sum; Psal. xvi. 11. "In thy presence is fullness of joy." This fullness of joy is not to be expected, because not to be supported in this world. The joy of heaven would quickly make the hoops of nature fly. When a good man had but a little more than ordinary joy of the Lord poured into his soul, he was heard to cry, Hold, Lord, hold! thy poor creature is but a clay vessel, and can hold no more! These pleasures the soul has in the body, are of the same kind indeed with those in heaven, but are exceeding short of them in divers other respects.

1. The spiritual pleasures the soul has in the body, are but **by reflection**; but those it enjoys out of the body, are by **immediate intuition**, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. **now in a glass, then face to face.**

The pleasures it now has, though they be of a divine nature, yet they are relished by the vitiated appetite of a sick and distempered soul; the embodied soul is diseased and sickly, it hath many distempers hanging about it. Now we know the most pleasant things lose much of their pleasure to a sick man; the separate soul is made perfect, thoroughly cured of all diseases, restored to its perfect health; and consequently, divine pleasures must needs have a higher gust and relish in heaven, than ever they had on earth.

3. The pleasures of a gracious soul on earth are but rare and seldom, meeting with many and long interruptions. And many of them occasioned by the body, which often calls down the soul to attend its necessities, and converse with things of a far different nature; but from these, and all other ungrateful and prejudicial avocations, the separated soul is discharged, and set free; so that its whole eternity is spent in the highest delights.

4. The highest pleasures of a gracious soul in the body, are but the pleasures of an uncentered soul, which is still gravitating and striving forward, and consequently can be but low and very imperfect, in

comparison with those it enjoys, when it is centered and fixed in its everlasting rest. They differ as the shadow of the labourer, for an hour in the day, from his rest in his bed, when his work is ended.

To conclude; the pleasures it has here, are but the pleasures of hope and expectation, which cannot bear any proportion to those of sight and full fruition. O see the advantages of an unbodied state.

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5. From pinching wants, to universal supplies. This is the day in which the Lord abundantly satisfies the desires, and supplies the needs of all his people. There are two sorts of wants upon the people of God: *spiritual* and *temporal*.

Spiritual wants are the just complaints of all gracious souls. You read, 1 Thess. iii. 10. of that which is lacking in the faith of the saints: There are none but find many things lacking to the perfection of every grace: our knowledge of God wants clearness and efficacy; our love to God fervour and constancy; our faith wants strength and stability: Darkness mixes itself with our knowledge, deadness with our love, unbelief with the purest acts of faith. Go where you will, you shall find God's people every where complaining of their spiritual wants: one of a dark head, another of a dead heart, another of a treacherous memory. Thus they are loading one another with their complaints.

Temporal outward wants pinch hard also upon many of God's people: The greatest number of them consist of the poor of this world, James ii. 5. Those whose souls are discharged and acquitted by God, whose debts are paid by Jesus Christ, may yet be entangled in a brake of cares and troubles in the world; and not know which way to turn themselves in their straits and difficulties. But by death the saints pass from all their wants, inward and outward, to a state of complete satisfaction, where nothing is lacking. From that day all their spiritual wants are supplied; for they are now arrived "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, to a perfect man," Eph. iv. 13. Now "that which is perfect is come, and all that was in part is done away," 1 Cor. 13: 10.

And for outward wants, they shall feel them no more: For putting off the body, we must needs put off all cares and concerns about it. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, God shall destroy both it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13.

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Prop. 11. The separated souls of the just do live in a more high and excellent way of communion with God, in his temple-worship in heaven, then ever they did in the sweetest gospel-ordinances, and most spiritual duties, in which they conversed with him here on earth.

That saints on earth have real communion with God, and that this communion is the joy of their hearts, the life of their life, and their relief under all pressures and troubles in this life, is a truth so firmly sealed

upon their hearts by experience, as well as clearly revealed in the word, that there can remain no doubt about it, among those that have any saving acquaintance with the life and power of religion.

This communion with God is of that precious value with believers, that it unspeakably endears all those duties and ordinances to them, which, as means and instruments are useful to maintain it.

At death, the people of God part with all those precious ordinances and duties, they being only **designed for, and fitted to the present state of imperfection**, Eph. iv. 12, 13. but not at all to their loss, no more than it is to his that loses the light of his candle by the rising of the sun. A candle, a star is comfortable in the night; but useless when the sun is up, and in its meridian glory. Christian, pray much, hear much, and be as much as thou canst among the ordinances of God, and duties of religion: For, the time is at hand that you shall serve, and wait on God no more this way.

But yet think not your souls shall be discharged from all worship and service of God when you die: No, you will find heaven to be a temple built for worship, and the worship there to be much transcendent to all that in which you were here employed. The sanctuary was a pattern of heaven in this very respect, Heb. ix. 23. And, on this very account, it is called *Sion* in my text, and the *heavenly Jerusalem*; as denoting a church state, and the spiritual worship there performed by the spirits of just men made perfect.

Some help we may have to understand the nature thereof, by comparing it with that worship and service which we perform to God here in this state of imperfection, and by considering the agreements and disagreements betwixt them. In this they agree, that the worship above and below are both addressed and directed to 'one and the same object, Father, Son, and Spirit; all centres and terminates in God. They also agree in the general quality and common nature, they are both spiritual worship. But there are divers remarkable differences betwixt the one and the other, as will be manifest in the following collation.

1. All our worship on earth is performed and **transacted by faith**, as the instrument and means thereof, Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God must believe," &c. **In heaven, faith ceaseth, and sight takes place of it**, 1 Cor. v. 7. There we see what here we only believe. There are now before us ordinances, scriptures, ministers, and the assemblies of saints in the places of worship: But if we have any communion with God, by, or among these, we must set ourselves to believe those things we see not. By realising and applying invisible things, we here get sometimes, and with no small pains, a taste of heaven, and a transient glance of that glory. **In this service our faith** is put hard to it, it must work and fight at once; resolutely act while sense and reason stand by, contradicting and quarrelling with it. And if, with much ado, we get but one sensible touch of heaven upon our spirits, if we get a little spiritual warmth and melting of our affections towards God, we call that day a good day, and it is so indeed.

But in heaven all things are carried at a high rate, the joy of the Lord overflows us without any labour, or pain of ours to procure it.

We may say of it there, as the prophet speaks of the dew and showers upon the grass, "which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," Micah v. 7.

2. No grace is, or can be acted here, without the clog of a contrary corruption, Rom. vii. 21. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Every beam of faith is presently darkened by a cloud of unbelief; Mark ix. 24. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." "We often read in the book of experience (says one) what an inconsistent fickle thing the heart is in duties: now it is with us, by and by it is fled away and gone; we know not where to find it. It is constant only in its inconstancy and lubricity." There is iniquity in our most holy things, which needs pardon, Exod. xxviii. 38. Our best duties have enough in them to damn us, as well as our worst sins: But in that perfect state above, grace flows purely out of the soul, as beams do from the sun, or crystal streams from the purest fountain. No impure or imperfect acts proceed from spirits made perfect.

3. Here the graces of the saints are never, or very rarely acted in their highest and most intense degree. When they love God most fervently, there is some coldness in their love. Who comes up to the height of that rule, Mat. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy strength?" When we meditate on God, it is not in the depth of our thought, without some wanderings and extravagancies; it is very hard, if not impossible, for the soul to stand long in its full bent to God.

But in heaven it doth so, and will do so for ever, without any relation or remission of its fervour. Christ, among the saints and angels in heaven, is as a mighty loadstone cast in among many needles, which leap to him, and fix themselves inseparably upon him. They all act in glory as the fire does here, to the utmost of their power and ability. There is no note lower than "Glory to God in the highest."

(4.) The most spiritual souls on earth, who live most with God, have, and must have their daily and frequent intermissions. The necessities of the body, as well as the defectiveness of their graces, require, and necessitate it to be so. **Our hands with Moses will hang down and grow weary.** Our affections will cool and fall, do what we can.

But as the spirits of just men made perfect know no remissions in the degree, so neither any intermissions in the acting of their grace: "They shall serve him day and night in his temple," Rev. vii. 15. You that would purchase the continuance of your spiritual comforts but for a day, with all that you have in this world, will there enjoy them at full, without any intermitting, through eternity.

5. If the best hearts on earth be at any time more than ordinarily enlarged in spiritual comforts, they need presently some humbling providence to hide pride from their eyes. Even Paul himself must have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Bernard could never perform any duty with comfortable enlargement, but he seemed to hear his own heart whisper thus, *Bene fecisti, Bernarde, O well done, Bernard.*

But, in heaven the highest comforts are enjoyed in the deepest humility; and the entire glory is ascribed to God, without any unworthy defalcations. Rev. iv. 10. They put not the crown upon their own heads, but Christ's: They cast down their own crowns, and fall down at the feet of him that sitteth upon the throne.

The Difference Between The Soul of Man and That Of Animals

code63

from John Flavel's book,
A Treatise on the Soul of Man

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/pneum/files/flavel-pneumatologia03.html>

This will help you see the soul more clearly - in what it consists, it's noble faculties, suited to know and enjoy God for eternity. This feathers into Owen's and Edwards' comments on God's communication of himself, his nature, to the soul. Comments on the [understanding](#), [reason](#), conscience, meditation or thinking of God, grace in the soul, the [affections](#), capabilities of the humans soul over that of animals, etc.

pg 22 (in the book, not online pages)

It is a spiritual substance.

All substances are not gross, material, visible and palpable substances; but there are spiritual and immaterial, as well as corporeal substances, discernible by sight or touch. To deny this were to turn a downright Sadducee, and to deny the existence of angels and spirits, Acts 23: 8. The word substance, as it is applied to the soul of man, puzzles and confounds the dark understandings of some, that know not what to make of an immaterial substance, whereas in this place it is no more than *substare accidentibus*, i.e. to be a subject in which properties, affections, and habits are seated and subjected. This is a spiritual substance, and is frequently in scripture called a spirit; "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," Luke 23: 46. "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," Acts 7: 59. and so frequently all over the scriptures. And the spirituality of its nature appears,

- (1.) By its descent, in a peculiar way, from the Father of spirits.
- (2.) In that it rejoiceth in the essential properties of a spirit.
- (3.) That at death it returns to that great Spirit who was its efficient and former.

(1.) It descends, in a peculiar way, from the Father of spirits, as has been shown in the opening of this text. God stiles himself its Father, Heb. 12: 9. its former, Zech. 12: 1. It is true, he gives to all living things "*dzoen kai pneuma*", life and breath, Acts 17: 25. Other souls are from him, as well as the [rational](#) soul [[living or speaking soul](#)]; but in a far different way and manner. They flow not immediately from him by creation, as this does. It is said, Gen. 1: 21, 27. "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind;" but "**God created man in his own image.**" **Which seems plainly to make a specified difference betwixt the reasonable and all other souls.**

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VIII. The soul of man has, in the very frame and nature of it, an inclination to the body. There is in it a certain pondus, or inclination which naturally bends or sways it towards matter, or a body. There are three different natures found in living creatures, viz.

1. The brutal.
2. The angelical.
3. The human.

(1.) **The soul of a brute is wholly confined to, and dependent on the matter or body with which it is united.** It is dependent on it, both in esse et in operari, in its being and working; **it is but a material form, which arises from, and perisheth with the body.** "The soul of a brute, (says a great person) is no other than a fluid bodily substance, the more lively and refined part of the blood (called spirit) quick in motion, and from the arteries by the branches of the carotides carried to the brain; and from thence conveyed to the nerves and muscles, move the whole frame and mass of the body; and receiving only certain weak impressions from the senses, and of short continuance, hindered and obstructed of its work and motion, vanishes into the soft air.

(2.) An angel is a spirit free from a body, and created without an appetite or inclination to be embodied. The Stoics call the angels "ousias psuchikas", souly substances; and the Peripatetics, formas abstractas, abstract forms. They are spirits free from the fetters and clogs of the body.

"An angel is a perfect soul, and an human soul is an imperfect angel." Yet angels have no such rooted disaffection to, and abhorrence of a body, but they have assumed, and can, in a ready obedience to their Lord's commands, and delight to serve him, assume bodies, for a time, to converse with men in them, i.e. aerial bodies in the figure and shape of human bodies. So we read, Gen. 18: 2: three men, i.e. angels in human shape and appearance, stood by Abraham, and talked with him; and at Christ's sepulchre, Luke 24: "There appeared two men in shining garments." But they abide in these bodies, as we do in an inn, for a night, or short season; they dwell not in them as our souls in those houses of flesh, which we cannot put on and off at pleasure as they do, but as we walk in our garments, which we can put off without pain.

(3.) **The human soul is neither wholly tied to the body, as the brutal soul is; nor created without inclination to a body, as angels are; but loves and inclines to it, though it can both live and act without it, when it is parted from it at death.** The proof of this assertion, and the reasons why God created it with such an inclination, will, in their proper place, be more fully spoken to, in the following discourse. All that I shall add is, that in this, as well as in some other respects, our souls are made a little lower than the angels; but when they are unclothed of the body, and have received it again, in a new edition, a spiritual body, then they shall be "isangeloi", equal unto angels, in the way and manner of life and action.

Thus I have, as briefly as I could, dispatched the first thing propounded, viz. the nature of the soul, in the explication of these seven particulars: it is a substance, a vital, spiritual, and immortal substance, a substance endued with understanding, will, affections, and an inclination to the body.

pg 24

It is a spiritual, and immortal substance, endued with an understanding.

This is the noble leading faculty of the soul: We are not distinguished from brutes by our senses, but by our understanding. As grace sets one man above another, so understanding sets the meanest man above the best of brutes. Strange and wonderful things are performed by the natural instinct and sagacity of beasts; but yet what is said of one, is true of them all, "God has not imparted understanding to them," Job 39: 17. This is a jewel which adorns none but rational creatures, men and angels.

The understanding is a faculty of the reasonable soul by which a man apprehends and judges all intelligible things.

The object of it is every being, so far as it is true in itself, and apprehensible by man. It has a twofold use in the life of man, viz.

(1.) To distinguish truth from error and falsehood. [man is a moral agent] By this candle of the Lord, lighted up in the soul of man, he may discern betwixt duty and sin, good and evil: It is the eye of the soul, by which it sees the way in which we should go, and the dangerous precipices that are on either side. It is the soul's taster, and discerns wholesome food from baneful poison, Job 12: 11. "Does not the ear (i. e. the understanding by the ear) try words, as the mouth tasteth meat?" It brings all things as it were in the lump before it, and then sorts them, and orderly ranks them into their proper classes of lawful and unlawful, necessary and indifferent, expedient and inexpedient, that the soul may not be damnified by mistaking one for another. And this judgement of discretion every man must be allowed for himself. No man is obliged to shut the eyes of his own understanding, and follow another and blind fold.

(2.) To direct and guide us in our practice. This faculty is by philosophers rightly called "to hegemonikon", the leading faculty; because the will follows its practical dictates. It sits at the helm, and guides the course of the soul; not impelling, or rigorously enforcing its dictates upon the will; for the will cannot be so imposed upon; but by giving it a directive light, or pointing, as it were, with its finger, what it ought to choose, and what to refuse.

To this faculty belong two other excellent and wonderful powers of the soul, viz.

1. Thoughts.
2. Conscience.

1. The power or ability of cogitation; "Thoughts are properly the actings and agitations of the mind, or any actual operation of the understanding." They are the musings of the mind, which are acted in the speculative part of the understanding. It is observable that the Hebrew word "suach", which is used for **meditation, or thinking, signifies both to think and to speak in the mind.** [now you may see the import of this, being that our duty is to meditate upon God's law (Joshua 1:8), the will and heart of God, by which we think of heavenly things, his person, promises, works, etc., his glory! by which we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, 2Cor3:18, see pg 146 - Shepard] When the understanding, or mind resolves, and meditates the things that come into it, **that very meditation is an inward speaking, or hidden word in the heart,** Deut. 15: 9. "Beware, lest there be a thought in thy wicked heart," as some render it: In the Hebrew it is "*davar im levavech*", a word in thy heart. So Mat. 9: 3, 4. "eipon ei autois", "they spake within themselves," i.e. "they thought in their hearts." The objects presented to the mind are the companions with whom our hearts talk and converse.

Thoughts are the figments and creatures of the mind: they are formed within it, in multitudes innumerable. **The power of cogitation is in the mind, yea, in the spirit of the mind.**

"The **fancy** indeed, while the soul is embodied, ordinarily, and for the most part presents the appearances and likenesses of things to the mind;" but yet it can form thoughts of things which the fancy can present no image of, as when the soul thinks of God, or of itself. This power of cogitation goes with the soul, and is rooted in it when it is separated from the body; and by it we speak to God, and converse with angels, and other spirits in the unbodied state, as will be more fully opened in the process of this discourse.

2. The **conscience** belongs also to this faculty; for it being the judgement of a man upon himself, with respect or relation to the judgement of God, it must needs belong to the understanding part or faculty. "Thoughts are formed in the speculative, but conscience belongs to the practical understanding." It is a very high and awful power; it is solo Deo minor, and rides (as Joseph did) in the second chariot; the next and immediate officer under God. He says of conscience with respect to every man, as he once said of Moses with respect to Pharaoh. "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh," Exod. 7: 1. **The voice of conscience is the voice of God;** for it is his vicegerent and representative. What it binds on earth, is bound in heaven: and what it looseth on earth is loosed in heaven. It observes records, and bears witness of all our actions; and acquits and condemns, as in the name of God, for them. Its consolations are most sweet, and its condemnations most terrible: so terrible, that some have chosen death, which is the king of terrors, rather than to endure the scorching heat of their own consciences. The greatest deference and obedience is due to its command, and a man had better endure any rack or torture in the world, than incur the torments of it. It accompanies us as our shadow wherever we go: and when all others forsake us, (as at death they will) conscience is then with us, and is then never more active and vigorous than at that time. Nor does it forsake us after death; but where the soul goes, it goes, and will be its companion in the other world forever. How glad would the damned be if they might but have left their consciences behind them, when they went hence! But as Bernard rightly says, "It is both witness, judge, tormentor, and prison;" it accuseth, judgeth, punisheth, and condemneth.

And thus briefly of the **understanding**, which has many offices, and as many names from those offices.

It is sometimes called wit, reason, understanding, opinion, wisdom, judgment. And why we bestow so many names upon one and the same faculty, the learned author of that small, but excellent tract "de anima", gives this true and ingenious account.

pg 37 The soul of creatures vs man's soul

Object. 1. It is urged, that it is manifest in itself, and generally yielded, that the souls of all other creatures come **by generation**, and therefore it is probable the human souls flow in the same channel also.

Solut. There is a specific difference betwixt rational souls, and the souls of all other creatures, and therefore no force at all in the consequence. A material form may rise out of matter, **but a spiritual, rational being (as the soul of man is) cannot so rise, being much more noble and excellent than matter is.**

What animal is there in the world, out of whose soul the acts of reason spring and flow, as they do out of human souls? Are they capable of inventing, (or which is much less) of learning the arts and sciences? Can they correct their senses, and demonstrate a star to be far greater than the whole earth, which to the eye seems no bigger than the rowel of a spur? Do they foreknow the positions and combination of the planets, and the eclipses of the sun and moon many years before they suffer them? And if they cannot perform these **acts of reason, as it is sure they cannot, how much less can they know, fear, love, or delight in God, and long for the enjoyments of him!** These things do plainly evince human souls to be of another species, and therefore of a higher original shall the souls of brutes. If all have one common nature and original, why are they not all capable of performing the same rational and religious acts?

pg 41-43

And being an immortal spirit, fitted and framed to live forever, I find that God has, answerably, endued and **furnished it with an understanding, will, and affections**, whereby it is capable of being wrought upon by the Spirit in the way of grace and sanctification in this world in order to the enjoyment of God, its chief happiness in the world to come.

By this its **understanding**, I am distinguished from, and advanced above all other creatures in this world. I can apprehend, distinguish, and judge of all other intelligible beings. By my understanding I discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; it shews me what is fit for me to choose, and what to refuse.

To this faculty or power of understanding, my thoughts and conscience do belong; the former to my speculative, the latter to my practical understanding. My thoughts are all formed in my mind or understanding in innumerable multitudes and variety. By it I can think of things present, or absent; visible, or invisible; of God, or myself; of this world, or the world to come.

To my understanding also belongs by conscience, a noble, divine, and awful power: By which I summon and judge myself, as at a solemn tribunal; bind and lose, condemn and acquit myself and actions, but still with an eye and respect to the judgment of God. Hence are my best comforts, and worst terrors.

This understanding of mine is the director and guide of my will, as the counsellor; and my will is as the prince: It freely chuseth and refuseth, as my understanding directs and suggests to it. The members of my body, and the passions of my soul, are under its dominion: The former are under its absolute command, the latter under its suasions and insinuations, though not absolutely, yet always with effect and success.

And both my understanding and will I find to have great influence upon my affections.

These passions and affections of my soul are of great use and dignity. I find them as manifold as there are considerations of good and evil. They are the strong and sensible motions of my soul, according to my apprehensions of good and evil. By them my soul is capable of union with the highest good. By love and delight I am capable of enjoying God, and resting in him as the centre of my soul. This noble understanding, thoughts, conscience, will, passions, and affections, are the principal faculties, acts, and powers of this my high and heaven-born soul. And being thus richly endowed and furnished,

I find it could never rise out of matter, or come into my body by way of generation; the souls of brutes, that rise that way, are destitute of understanding, reason, conscience, and such other excellent faculties and powers as I find in my own soul. They cannot know, or love, or delight in God, or set their affections on things spiritual, invisible, and eternal as my soul is capable to do; **it was therefore created and infused immediately into this body of mine by the Father of spirits,** and that with a strong inclination, and tender affection to my flesh, without which it would be remiss and careless in performing its several duties and offices to it, during the time of its abode therein.

Fearfully and wonderfully, therefore, am I made, and designed for nobler ends and uses, than for a few days to eat, and drink, and sleep, and talk, and die. My soul is of more value than ten thousand worlds. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

USE.

From the several parts and branches of this description of the soul, we may gather the choice fruits which naturally grow upon them, in the following inferences and deduction of truth and duty. For we may say of them all what the historian doth of Palestine, that there is nihil infructuosum, nihil sterile, no branch or shrub is barren, or unfruitful. Let us then search it branch by branch: and,

Inf. 1. From the substantial nature of the soul, which we have proved to be a being distinct from the body, and subsisting by itself, we are informed, That great is the difference betwixt the death of a man, and the death of all other creatures in the world. **Their souls depend on, and perish with their bodies;**

but ours neither result from them, nor perish with them. My body is not a body, when my soul has forsaken it; but my soul will remain a soul when this body is crumbled into dust. Men may live like beasts, a mere sensual life; yea, in some sense, they may die like beasts, a stupid death; but in this there will be found a vast difference: Death kills both parts of the beasts, destroys the matter and form; it toucheth only one part of man; it destroyeth the body, and only dislodgeth the soul, but cannot destroy it.

In some things **Solomon** shews the agreement betwixt our death and theirs, Eccl. 3: 19, 20, 21. "That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; all go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." We breathe the same common air they breathe; we feel the same puns of death they feel, our bodies are resolved into the same earth theirs are. Oh! but in this is the difference, The spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast goeth downward to the earth. Their spirits go two ways at their dissolution; the one to the earth, and the other to God that gave it; as he speaks, chap. 12: 7. Though our dissolution and expiration have some agreement, yet great is the odds in the consequences of death to the one and the other. They have no pleasures nor pains besides those they enjoy or feel now; but so have we, and those eternal, or unspeakable too. The soul of man, like the bird in the shell, is still growing or ripening in sin or grace, till at last the shell breaks by death, and the soul flies away to the piece it is prepared for, and where it must abide for ever. The body, which is but its shell, perisheth; but the soul lives when it is fallen away.

How doth this consideration expose and aggravate the folly and madness of this sensual world, who herd themselves with beasts though they have souls so near akin to angels! The princes and nobles of the world abhor to associate themselves with mechanics in their shops, or take a place among the sottish rabble upon an ale-bench; they know and keep their distance and decorum, as still carrying with them a sense of honour, and abhorring to act beneath it: But we equalize our high and noble souls in the manner of life with the beasts that perish. Our tables differ little from the crib At which they feed; or our houses from the stalls and stable, in which they lie down to rest, in respect of any divine worship or heavenly communication that is to be heard there. Happy had it been for such men (if so they live and die) that their souls had been of no higher extraction, or larger capacity, or longer duration than that of a beast: for then, as their comforts, so also their miseries had ended at death. And such they will one day wish they had been.

pg 47 sin

Inf. 4. If God be the immediate Creator, and former of the soul of man, Then sin must needs involve the most unnatural evil in it, as it is an horrid violation of the very law Of nature. No title can be so full, so absolute, as that which creation gives. How clear is this in the light of reason? If God created my soul, then my soul had once no being at all: that it had still remained nothing, had not the pleasure of its Creator chosen and called it into the being it has, out of the millions of mere possible beings: for as there are millions of possible beings, which yet are nothing; so there are millions of possible beings, which never shall be at all. So that since the pleasure and power of God were the only fountain of my

being, he must needs be the rightful owner of it. What can be more his own, than that whose very being flowed merely from him, and which had never been at all, had he not called it out of nothing?

And seeing the same pleasure of God, which gave it a being, **gave it also a reasonable being, capable of and fitted for moral government, by laws which other inferior natures are incapable of**; it must needs follow that he is the supreme Governor, as well as the rightful owner of this soul.

pg 49-50

Inf. 6. Moreover, if God has created our souls vital substances to animate and act those bodies, how indispensably necessary is it that such a principle of spiritual life do quicken and govern that soul which quickens and governs our bodies and all the members of them? Otherwise, though in a natural sense, we have living souls, yet they are dead while they live.

The apostle, in 1 Cor. 15: 45, 46, **compares the animal life we live, by the union of our souls and bodies, with the spiritual life we live, by the union of our souls with Jesus Christ.** And so it is written, (viz. in my text "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit." **He opposes the animal to the spiritual life, and the two Adams, from whom they come; and shews, in both respects, the excellency of the spiritual above the animal life,** not in point of priority, for that which is natural is before that which is spiritual, (and it must be so, because the natural soul is the recipient subject of the **Spirit's quickening and sanctifying operations;**) **but in point of dignity and real excellency. To how little purpose, or rather to what a dismal and miserable purpose are we made living souls, except the Lord from heaven by His quickening power, make us spiritual and holy souls? The natural soul rules and uses the body as an artificer doth his tools: and except the Lord renew it by grace, Satan will rule that which rules thee, and so all thy members will be instruments of iniquity to fight against God.** "The actions performed by our bodies, are justly reputed and reckoned by God to the soul," **because the soul is the spring of all its motions, the fountain of its life and operations.** What it cloth by the body, its instrument, is as if it were done immediately by itself; for without the soul it can do nothing.

Inf. 7. Moreover, from the immaterial and spiritual nature of the soul, we are informed, **That communion with God, and the enjoyment of him, are the true and proper intentions and purposes for which the soul of man as created.**

Such a nature as this is not fitted to live upon gross, material, and perishing things as the body doth. The food of every creature is agreeable to its nature; one cannot subsist upon that which another doth: as we see among the several sorts of animals, what is food to one, is none to another. In the same plant is found a root which is food for swine, a stalk which is food for sheep, a flower which feeds the bee, a seed on which the bird lives: the sheep cannot live upon the root, as the swine do; nor the bird upon the flower as the bee doth: but every one feeds upon the different parts of the plant which are agreeable to its nature. So it is here, our bodies being of an earthly, material nature, can live upon things earthly and material, as most agreeable to them; they can relish and suck out the sweetness of

these things; **but the soul can find nothing in them suitable to its nature and appetite; it must have spiritual food, or perish. It were therefore too brutish and unworthy of a man that understood the nature of his own soul to cheer it up with the stores of earthly provision made for it, as he did, Luke 22: 20.** "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." **Alas! the soul can no more eat, drink, and be merry with carnal things, than the body can with spiritual and immaterial things:** it cannot feed upon bread that perisheth, it can relish no more the best and daintiest fair of an earthly growth, than the white of an egg: **but bring it to a reconciled God in Christ, to the covenant of grace, and the sweet promises of the gospel: set before it the joys, comforts, and earnestings of the Spirit; and if it be a sanctified renewed soul, it can make a rich feast upon these.** These make it a feast of fat things, full of marrow, as it is expressed, Isa. 25: 6. **Spiritual things are proper food for spiritual and immaterial souls.**

pg 73 the soul's immortality (ie animal souls are not)

Argument 1

The first argument for proof of the soul's immortality, may be taken from the simplicity, spirituality, and uncompoundedness of its nature; it is a pure, simple, unmixed being. Death is the dissolution of things compounded; where therefore no composition of mixture is found, no death or dissolution can follow.

Death is the great divider, but it is of things that are divisible. The more simple, pure, and refined any material thing is, by so much the more permanent and durable it is found to be. The nearer it approaches to the nature of spirits, the farther it is removed from the power of death: **but that which is not material, or mixed at all, is wholly exempt from the stroke and power of death.** It is from the contrariant qualities, and jarring humours, in mixed bodies, that they come under the law and power of dissolution. Matter and mixture, are the doors at which death enters naturally upon the creatures.

But the soul of man is a simple, spiritual, immaterial, and unmixed being, not compounded of matter and form, as other creatures are, but void of matter, and altogether spiritual, as may appear in the **vast capacity of its understanding faculty,** which cannot be straitened by receiving multitudes of truths into it. It need not empty itself of what it had received before, to make way for more truth; nor doth it find itself clogged or burdened by the greatest multitudes or varieties of truths; but the more it knows, the more it still desires to know. Its capacity and appetite are found to enlarge themselves according to the increase of knowledge. So that to speak, as the matter is, If the knowledge of all arts, sciences, and mysteries of nature, could be gathered into the mind of one man, yet that mind could thirst, and even burn with desire after more knowledge, and find more room for it than it did when it first sipt, and **relished the sweetness of truth.** **Knowledge, as knowledge, never burdens or cloyes the mind; but like fire increases and enlarges, as it finds more matter to work upon. Now this could never be, if the soul were a material being.** Take the largest vessel, and you shall find the more you pour into it, the less room is still left for more; and when it is full, you cannot pour in one drop more, except you let out what was in it before. But the soul is no such vessel, it can retain all it had, and be still receptive of more; so that nothing can fill it, and satisfy it, but that which is infinite and perfect.

The natural appetite after food is sometimes sharp and eager, but then there is a stint and measure beyond which it craves not; **but the appetite of the mind is more eager and unlimited; it never says till it come to rest in God, it is enough, because the faculty which produceth it, is more active, spiritual, and immaterial.** All matter has its limits, bounds, and just measures, beyond which it cannot be extended. But the soul is boundless, and its appetition infinite; **it rests not, but in the spiritual and infinite Being, God alone being its adequated object, and able to satisfy its desires; which plainly proves it to be a spiritual, immaterial, and simple being.** And being so, two things necessarily follow there from.

1. That it is void of any principle of corruption in itself.
2. That it is not liable to any stroke of death, by any adverse power without itself.

pg 80 reason

And for beauty, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field. The beasts and fowls enjoy more pleasure, and live divested of all those cares and cumbers which perplex and wear out the lives of men. It cannot be in respect of bodily perfections and pleasures, that man excels other creatures.

If you say, He excels them all in respect of that **noble endowment of reason**, which is peculiar to man, and his singular excellency above them all.

It is true, this is his glory: but if you deprive the reasonable soul of immortality, **you despoil it of all, both of its glory and comfort, and put the reasonable into a worse condition than the unreasonable and brutish creatures.** For if the soul may die with the body, and man perish as the beast, **happier is the life of the beast, which is perplexed with no cares nor fears about futurities: our reason serves to little other purpose but to be an engine of torture, a mere rack to our souls.**

Certainly, the privilege of man doth not consist in reason, as abstracted from immortality. But in this, it properly consists, that he enjoys not only a reasonable, but also rejoiceth in an immortal soul, which shall over-live the world, and subsist separate from the body, and abide forever, **when all other souls, being but a material form, perish with that matter on which they depend. This is the proper dignity of man, above the beast that perisheth; and to deprive him of immortality, and leave him his reason, is but to leave him a more miserable and wretched creature than any that God has put under his feet.** For man is a prospecting creature, and raiseth up to himself vast hopes and fears from the world to come: by these he is restrained from the sensual pleasures, which other creatures freely enjoy, and exercised with ten thousand cares, which they are unacquainted with; and to fail at last of all his hopes and expectations of happiness, in the world to come, is to fall many degrees lower than the lowest creature shall fall; even so much lower as his expectations and hopes had lifted him higher.

pg 252

Doct. 1. *That one soul is of more value than the whole world.*

I need not spend much time in the proof of it, when you have considered, that he who bought them, has here weighed and valued them; and that the point before us is the result and conclusion of one that has the best reason to know the true worth of them. That which I have to do is to gather out of the scriptures the particulars; which, put together, make up the full demonstration of the point, And,

1. The invaluable worth of souls appears from the manner of their creation. **They were created immediately by God**, as has been proved, **and that not without the deliberation of the whole Trinity**; Gen. i. 26. "Let us make man." For the production of other creatures, it was enough to give out the afford of his command. "Let there be light, let the earth and the waters bring forth;" **but when he comes to man then you have no FIAT, let there be, but he puts his own hand immediately to it, as to the masterpiece of the whole creation**: yea, a council is called about it; *Let us*, implying the just consultation and de deliberation of all the persons in the Godhead about it, that our hearts might be raised to the expectation of some extraordinary work to follow; great counsels and wise debates being both the forerunners and foundations of great actions and events to ensue thereupon. Thus Elihu in Job xxxv. 10, "None saith, Where is God my Makers?" And David, in Ps. 149:2, "Let Israel rejoice in his Makers:" in both places the word is plural. The consultation here is only amongst the divine Persons, no angels are called to this council-table, the whole matter was to be conducted by the wisdom, and effected by the power of God; and therefore there was no need to consult with any but himself, the wisdom of angels being from him: **but this great council shows what an excellent creature was now to be produced, and the excellency of that creature man was principally in his soul**; for the bodies of other creatures, which were made be the word of his command, are as beautiful, elegant, and neat as the body of man; yea, and in some respects more excellent. The soul then was that rare piece which God in so condescending an expression tells us was created with the deliberation of the Godhead; those great and excellent Persons laid their heads, as it were together to project its being.

And by the way, this may smartly check the pride and arrogance of souls, who dare take it upon them to teach God, as murmurs at his disposals of us. Shall that soul which is the product of his wisdom and counsel, dare to instruct or counsel its maker? But that by the by. **You see there is a transcendent dignity and worth in the soul of man above all other beings in the world**, by the peculiar way of its production into the number of created beings: no wise man deliberates long, or calls a council about ordinary matters, much less the All-wise God.

pg 255 the use of the affections'

View the conscience and thoughts with their self-reflective abilities, wherein the soul retires into itself, and sits concealed from all eyes but his that made it, judging its own actions, and censuring its estate; viewing its face in its own glass, and correcting the indecencies it discovers there: things of greatest moment and importance are silently transacted in its council-chamber between the soul and God; so remote from the knowledge of all creatures, that neither angels, devils, nor men, can know what is doing, there, but by uncertain guess, or revelation from God. Here it impleads, condemns it, and acquits itself as at a privy session, with respect to the judgment of the great day: here it meets with the latest of comforts, and with the worst of terrors.

Take a survey of its **passions and affections**, and you will find them admirable: see how they are placed by divine Wisdom in the soul, some for defence and safety, others for delight and pleasure. **Anger actuates the spirits**, and rouses its courage, enabling it to break through difficulties. **Fear keeps sentinel**, watching upon all dangers that approach us: **Hope** forestalls the good, and **anticipates the joys of the next life**, and thereby supports and strengthens the soul under all the discouragements and pressures of the present life: **Love** unites us to the chiefest good: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him:" **Zeal** is the dagger which love draws in Gods cause and quarrel, to secure itself from sin, and testify its resentments of God's dishonour.

O what a divine spark is the soul of man! well might Christ prefer it in dignity to the whole world.

3. The worth of a soul may be gathered and discerned from its subjective capacity and inability both of grace and glory. **It is capable of all the graces of the Spirit, of being filled with the fullness of God**, Eph. iii. 19, **to live to God here, and with God for ever**. What excellent graces do adorn some souls? How are all the rooms richly hanged with divine and costly hangings, that God may dwell in them! This makes it like the carved works of the temple, overlaid with pure gold; here is glory upon glory, a new creation upon the old; in the innermost parts of some souls is a spiritual altar erected with this inscription. *Holiness to the Lord*: here the soul offers up itself to God in the sacred flames of love; and here it sacrifices its vile affections, devoting them to destruction, to the glory of its God: here God walks with delight, even a delight beyond what he takes in all the stately structures and magnificently adorned temples in the whole world, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

No other soul besides man's is marriageable to Christ, or capable of espousals to the King of glory: they [animals] were not designed, and therefore not endued with a capacity for such an honour as this: but such a capacity has every soul, even the meanest on earth, and such honour have all his saints: others may be, but they are betrothed to Christ in this world, 2 Cor. xi. 2, and shall be presented without spot before him in the world to come, Eph. v. 27.

pg 257 acts of the soul, immortal

6. This evidences the transcendent dignity and worth of souls, that *eternity is stamped upon their actions*, and theirs only, of all the beings in this world. The acts of souls are **immortal** as their nature is; **whereas the actions of other animals, having neither moral goodness nor moral evil in them, pass away as their beings do**.

The apostle therefore, in Gal. vi. 7, compares the actions of men in this world to seed sown, and tells us of everlasting fruits we shall reap from them in the next life; they have the same respect to a future account that seed has to the harvest, "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity," *i.e.* everlasting disappointment and misery, Prov. xxii. 8. and "they that now sow in tears, shall then reap in joy," Prov. xxvi. 5. Every gracious action is the seed of joy, and every sinful action the seed of sorrow; **and this makes the great difference between the actions of a rational soul, and those done by beasts: and if it were not so, man would then be wholly swayed by sense and present things, as the beasts are, and all religion would vanish with this distinction of actions.**

Our actions are considerable two ways, physically and morally; in the first sense they are transient, in the last permanent; a word is past as soon as spoken, but yet it must and will be recalled and brought into the judgment of the great day, Mat. xii. 36. Whatever therefore a man shall speak, think, or do, once spoken, thought, or done, it becomes eternal, and abides forever. **Now, what is it that puts so great a difference between human and brutal actions, but the excellent nature of the reasonable soul? It is this which stamps immortality upon human actions, and is at once a clear proof both of the immortality and dignity of the soul of man above all other creatures in this world.**

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Inf. 3. If the soul be so precious, then certainly it is the special care of heaven, that which God looks more particularly after, than any other creature or earth.

There is an active, vigilant providence that superintends every creature upon earth; there is not the most despicable, diminutive creature that lives in the world, left without the line of providence. God is therefore said to give them all their meat in due season, and for that end they all wait upon him, Psal. civ, who, as a great and provident house keeper orders daily, convenient provisions for all his family, even to the least and lowest among them: The smallest insects and gnats which swarm so thick in the air, and of the usefulness of almost being it is hard to give an account; yet as the incomparably learned Dr. More well observes, these all find nourishment in the world, which would be lost if they did not, and are again convenient nourishment themselves to others that prey upon them.

But man is the peculiar, special care of God; and the soul of man much more than the body. Hence Christ fortifies the faith of Christians against all distrusts of Divine Providence, even from their excellency above other creatures.

Mat. x. 31. "**Ye are of more value than many sparrows;**" and Mat. vi. 26, your heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air, and are ye not much better than they?" and vs. 30, "he clothes the grass of the field, and shall he not much more clothe you?" and so the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 9. "Does God take care for oxen? or says he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." In all which places we have the dignity of man above all animals and vegetables in respect of the natural excellency of his reasonable soul, but especially the gracious endowments of it, which endear it far more to its Maker; this is the very hinge of the argument, and a firm ground for the believer's faith of God's tender care over both parts, but especially the soul. The body of a believer is God's creature, as well as his soul; but that being of less value, has not such a degree of care and tenderness expressed towards it, as the soul has: **the father's care is not so much for the child's clothes, as it is for the child himself.** Besides, the immediate wants and troubles of the soul, which are *idiopathic*, are far more sharp and pinching than those it suffers upon the body's account, which are but *sympathetic*; and therefore, whenever such an excellent creature as a sanctified soul which is in Christ, or a soul designed to be sanctified, which is moving towards Christ, falls under those heavy pressures and distresses, (as it often does) and is ready to fail; let it be assured, its merciful Creator will not fail to relieve, support, revive, and deliver it, as often as it shall fall into those deep distresses.

More On the Affections code64

various graces planted in the affections, mortification of the affections
excerpt from *The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel pg 132

The Fifth Direction

Lastly, work up your hearts to those frames, and exercise those affections, which the particular providences of God that concern you, call for (Eccl. 7:14). "The ^[a]mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the ^[b]mind of fools is in the house of pleasure."

Just as there are various affections planted in your souls, so there are various graces planted in those affections, and various providences appointed to draw forth and exercise these graces.

1. When the providences of God are sad and afflictive, either upon the Church in general, or upon your families and persons in particular, then it is time for you to exercise godly sorrow and humility of spirit. For in that day, and by those providences, God calls for it: Isa 22:12 And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, For baldness and for girding with sackcloth. Mic 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, Because I have sinned against Him. Now, sensual pleasure and natural joy is out of season: "Should we then make mirth?" (Eze 21:10). If there is a filial spirit in us, we cannot be light and vain when our Father is angry. If there is any real sense of the evil of sin which provokes God's anger, we must be heavy-hearted when God strikes us for it. If there is any sense and compassion for the miseries that sin brings upon the world, it will make us say with David: "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved" (Psa 119:158). It is sad to consider the miseries that they pull down upon themselves in this world, and in the world to come. If there is any care in us to prevent utter ruin, and to stop God in the way of His anger, we know that [godly sorrow and humility] are the means to do it: Amos 4:11-12 "I overthrew some of you, As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. 12 "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

2. However sad and dismal the face of providence is, maintain your spiritual joy and comfort in God under all of it. "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and no herd be in the stalls – yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

Filial – family tie; characteristic of a child.

There are two sorts of comforts: those which are natural and sensual, and those which are divine and spiritual. There is a time when it becomes Christians to exercise both (Esther 9:22). And there is a time when the former is to be suspended and laid aside (Psa 137:2). But there is no season in which spiritual joy and comfort in God is unseasonable (1Thes 5:16; Phil. 4:4). This spiritual joy or comfort is nothing but the cheerfulness of our heart in God, and the sense of our interest in Him and in His promises. And it is sure that no providence can render this joy unseasonable to a Christian.

(1) Let us suppose a Christian is in the most afflicted and calamitous state possible; yet why should sad providences make him lay aside his comforts in God, when that state is but for a moment, and these comforts are eternal (2Cor 4:17)?

(2) Why should we give up our joy in God on account of sad external providences, when at the very worst and lowest ebb, the saints have infinitely more cause to rejoice than to be cast down? There is more in one of their mercies to comfort them, than there is in all their troubles to deject them. All your losses are like the loss of a farthing¹ to a prince (Rom 8:18).

(3) Why should they be sad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? As Christ said: "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (Mat 9:15). So say I: Can the soul be sad while God is with it? O I think that one promise, "I will be with him in trouble" (Psa 91:15) should bear you up under all burdens. Let those who have no God to turn to in trouble, be the ones that are cast down.

(4) Why should we be sad as long as no outward dispensation of providence, however sad, can be interpreted as a mark or a sign of God's hatred or enmity? "One event happens to both the righteous and wicked" (Eccl. 9:2-3). Indeed, if it was a sign of the Lord's wrath against a man, then it would justify our dejection. But this cannot be so. The Lord's heart is full of love, even while the face of providence is full of frowns.

(5) Why should we be cast down under sad providences while we have so great a security that, even by the hands of these providences, God will do us good? All these things shall turn to our salvation (Rom 8:28). By these God is only killing your lusts, weaning your hearts from a vain world, preventing temptations, and exciting your desires after heaven. This is all the hurt they will do you, and will that sadden us?

(6) Why should we give up our joy in God, when the change of our condition is so near? It is but a little while, and sorrows shall flee away. You shall never suffer again: "God will wipe away all tears" (Rev 7:17). Well then, you can see that there is no reason to give up your joy and comfort in God on account of providence. But if you would maintain your joy under all providences, then be careful, (1) To make sure of your interest in, and title to God. Faith may be separated from comfort, but assurance cannot. 1 A former British bronze coin worth a quarter of a penny. (2) Mortify your inordinate affections for earthly things. This is what makes providences that deprive us, and cross us so heavily.

Mortify your opinion and affection, and you will lighten your affliction. It is strong affection that makes for strong affliction (2Sam 18:33). "The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" "

(3) Dwell on the meditation of the Lord's near approach; and then all these things will seem but trifles to you. "Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil 4:5).

3. Exercise heavenly-mindedness and keep your hearts on eternal things under all the providences with which the Lord exercises you in this world. "Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:9), yet he met with providences as sad in his day as any man that ever lived since his time. But alas! We find most providences stop us, rather than step us, in our walk with God. If we are under comfortable providences, our hearts grow sensual, wanton, and worldly! And if sad providences befall us, we are cast down or disturbed! And this comes to pass partly through the narrowness, but mostly through the deceitfulness of our spirits. Our hearts are narrow, and do not know how to manage two businesses of such different natures as earthly and heavenly matters are, without detriment to one of them. But certainly a frame of spirit that enables us to continue in an even and steady course with God is attainable, whatever may befall us. Others have attained it; why not us? Prosperous providences, for the most part, are a dangerous state to the soul. The moon never eclipses unless it is full; yet Jehoshaphat's grace suffered no eclipse from the fullness of his outward condition; he "had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD" (2Chr 17:5-6). David's life was as full of cares, turmoils, and burdens as most men we read of; yet how spiritual the attitude of his heart was, as that excellent Book of Psalms reveals; it was mostly composed in the midst of those turmoils. The apostles were thrown into as great necessities, and suffered things as hard as any men ever did; yet how raised and heavenly their spirits were in the midst of it all! And certainly, if it were not possible to maintain heavenly-mindedness in such a state and posture of affairs, God would never exercise any of His people with such providences. He would never give you so much of the world to lose your hearts in the love of it, or so little to distract you with the care of it. **If therefore we were more deeply sanctified, and the tendencies of our hearts toward heaven were more ardent and vigorous, and if we were more mortified to earthly things and could just keep our due distance from them, then our outward conditions would not draw forth and exercise our inward corruptions at this rate; nor would we hazard the loss of so sweet an enjoyment as our fellowship with God, for the sake of any concern our bodies may have on earth.**

4. Under all providences, maintain a contented heart with what the Lord allots you, whether it is more or less of the things of this world. This grace must run parallel with all providences. Learn how to be full, and how to suffer want, and how to be content in every state (Phil 4:11-12).

All men are concerned in this duty at all times and in every state; not only the people of God, but even the unregenerate also. I will therefore address some considerations that are proper to both.

First as to the unregenerate, to stop their mouths from complaining and foolishly charging God when providence crosses them. Let them seriously consider these four things: (1) That hell and eternal damnation are their portion, their cup according to the tenor of law and Gospel warnings. Whatever therefore is short of this, is to be admired as the fruit of God's stupendous patience and forbearance toward them. Ah, poor souls! Do you not know that you are men and women condemned to wrath by the plain sentence of the Law? (Mark 16:16; John 3:36; 2Thes 1:6, 7) **And if so, then surely there are other matters to exercise your thoughts, desires, fears, and cares than these.** Alas! If you cannot bear a frown from providence, a slight cross in these things, how will you bear the everlasting burnings? A man that is to lose his head tomorrow is not very concerned about what bed he lies on, or how his table is furnished the night before.

(2) Consider that although you are condemned persons, and have no promise to entitle you to any mercy, yet there are very many mercies in your possession this day. Be your condition as afflictive as it will, is life nothing? Especially consider where you must sink to when that thread is cut. Are the necessary supports of life nothing? Does not providence minister these things to you, even though daily you disoblige it and provoke God to send you to your own place? (Act 1.25) But above all, are the Gospel and precious means of salvation nothing to you, by which you still have the capacity to escape the damnation of hell? O what would the damned say if they were put into your condition once more! What! And yet you fret against God because everything else does not suit your desires?

(3) Consider, that if you are ever to be rescued out of that miserable condition you are in, such cross providences as these of which you complain are the most probable means to rescue you. Alas! Prosperity and success are not the way to save, but only to destroy you (Prov 1:32). You must be bound in fetters, and held in cords of affliction, if your ear is ever to be opened to instruction (Job 36:8-10). Woe to you if you go on smoothly in the way in which you are going, and meet with no crosses.

(4) Lastly, consider that all your troubles under which you complain, are pulled down upon your heads by your own sins. You **turn God's mercies into sin, and then fret against God because He turns your sins into sorrow**. Your ways and your doings procure these things for you. Therefore lay your hand upon your mouth and say, "Why does a living man complain about the punishment of his sins?" (Lam 3:39).

But now I must turn to the Lord's people, who have the least pretenses of all to be dissatisfied with any of God's providences; and yet they are only too frequently found in that attitude. To them I will offer the following considerations:

(1) Consider your spiritual mercies and privileges with which the Lord Jesus has invested you, and complain at your providential lot if you can. One of these mercies alone has enough in it to **sweeten all your troubles** in this world. When the apostle considered them, his heart was so overwhelmed with astonishment, that he could not, in the midst of all his outward troubles, keep from crying out, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings" (Eph 1:3). Oh who, seeing such an inheritance settled upon him in Christ, can ever open his mouth again to complain at his providential lot!

(2) Consider your sins, and that will make you contented with your lot. Indeed, consider two things in sin: what it deserves from God, and what it requires to mortify and purge it in you. It deserves eternal ruin from God. The merit of hell is in the least vain thought. Every sin forfeits all the mercies you have; and if so, wonder that your mercies are so many, rather than wondering that you have no more. Besides, you cannot doubt but that your corruptions require all the crosses, wants, and troubles that are upon you (and maybe a great deal more) to mortify and subdue them. Do you not find, after all the rods that have been laid upon you, that you still have a proud heart, a vain and earthly heart? O how many bitter potions are necessary to purge out this tough and malignant disease! (3) Consider how near you are to the change of your condition. Have but a little patience, and all will be as well with you as your hearts can desire. It is no small comfort to the saints that this world is the worst place that they shall ever be in; things will get better every day with them. If the traveler has spent all his money, yet it

does not trouble him much if he knows he is within a few miles of his own home. If there are no candles in the house, we do not much trouble over it when we are sure it is almost break of day; for then there will be no need for them. This is the case with us; “for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11).

I am done with the directive part of this discourse. But before I proceed further, I judge that it is necessary to leave a few cautions, to prevent the abuse of providence.

This is an excellent summary of all that is related to regeneration (conversion or being born again from above). Subjects such as original sin, man's fallen nature referred to as "by nature" or the flesh or the "old man", then the irresistibility of the effectual call as God being sovereign and all powerful and its consistence with man's liberty or creaturely freedom also referred to as *creaturely free will* in distinction from God's free will, aka, *His good pleasure* or decretive or secret will as some call it, which is all powerful (for who can resist his will, see Romans 9), a major sticking point with the Arminians' view of man's free will (see Owen on free will in his book, [A Display of Arminianism](#) - see the chapter on this on page 402 in this study guide. The [order of nature](#) in the acts of the will and grace in our conversion is explained. Conversion, irresistible, given a new heart with a principle of holy obedience. What is the communication of God's saving grace to the faculties of the soul? (see Edwards on this too in this study guide) The danger of rushing to metaphors. Renewing the image of God in us. The faculties of the soul in our regeneration.

The Nature, Causes, and Means of Regeneration.

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Chapter V.

by John Owen

The Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power

pg 203-222 in the book,

this list of subjects covered is from the website version

[I include excerpts from both versions, either from the website (ccel.org) or from the book.]

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/pneum.i.vii.v.html>

Description of the state of nature necessary unto a right understanding of the work of the Spirit in regeneration — No possibility of salvation unto persons living and dying in a state of sin — Deliverance from it by regeneration only — The Holy Ghost the peculiar author of this work — Differences about the manner and nature of it — Way of the ancients in explaining the doctrine of grace — The present method proposed — Conversion not wrought by moral suasion only — The nature and efficacy of moral suasion, wherein they consist — Illumination preparatory unto conversion — The nature of grace morally effective only, opened; not sufficient for conversion — The first argument, disproving the

working of grace in conversion to be by moral suasion only — The second — The third — The fourth — Wherein the work of the Spirit in regeneration positively doth consist — The use and end of outward means — Real internal efficiency of the Spirit in this work — Grace victorious and irresistible — The nature of it explained; proved — The manner of God's working by grace on our wills farther explained — Testimonies concerning the actual collation of faith by the power of God — Victorious efficacy of internal grace proved by sundry testimonies of Scripture — From the nature of the work wrought by it, in vivification and regeneration — Regeneration considered with respect unto the distinct faculties of the soul; the mind, the will, the affections.

Unto the description we are to give of the work of regeneration, the precedent account of the subject of it, or the state and condition of them that are to be regenerated, was necessarily to be premised; for upon the knowledge thereof doth a due apprehension of the nature of that work depend. And the occasion of all the mistakes and errors that have been about it, either of old or of late, **hath been a misunderstanding of the true state of men in their lapsed condition, or of nature as depraved.** Yea, and those by whom this whole work is derided do now countenance themselves therein by their ignorance of that state, which they will not learn either from the Scripture or experience; for, “*natura sic apparet vitata ut hoc majoris vitii sit non videre,*” as Austin speaks. **It is an evidence of the corruption of nature, that it disenables the minds of men to discern their own corruption.** We have previously discharged this work so far as it is necessary unto our present purpose. Many other things might be added in the explication of it, were that our direct design. Particularly, having confined myself to treat only concerning the depravation of the mind and will, I have not insisted on that of the affections [those are the three components of the soul], which yet is effectual to retain unregenerate men under the power of sin; though it be far enough from truth that the whole corruption of nature consists therein, as some weakly and atheologically have imagined. Much less have I treated concerning that increase and heightening of the depravation of nature which is contracted by a custom of sinning, as unto all the perverse ends of it. Yet this also the Scripture much insists upon, as that which naturally and necessarily ensues in all in whom it is not prevented by the effectual transforming grace of the Spirit of God; and it is that which seals up the impossibility of their turning themselves to God, **Jer. xiii. 23 [“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.”]**;

Rom. iii. 10–19. But that the whole difficulty of conversion should arise from men's contracting a habit or custom of sinning is false, and openly contradictory to the Scripture. These things are personal evils, and befall individuals, through their own default, in various degrees. And we see that amongst men, under the same use of means, some are converted unto God who have been deeply immersed in an habitual course of open sins, whilst others, kept from them by the influence of their education upon their inclinations and affections, remain unconverted. So was it of old between the publicans and

harlots on the one hand, and the Pharisees on the other. But my design was only to mention that which is common unto all, or wherein all men universally are equally concerned, who are partakers of the same human nature in its lapsed condition. And what we have herein declared from the Scriptures will guide us in our inquiry after the work of the Holy Spirit of grace in our deliverance from it.

It is evident, and needs no farther confirmation, that persons living and dying in this estate cannot be saved. This hitherto hath been allowed by all that are called Christians; nor are we to be moved that some who call themselves so do begin to laugh at the disease, and despise the remedy of our nature. Among those who lay any serious and real claim unto Christianity, there is nothing more certain nor more acknowledged than that there is no deliverance from a state of misery for those who are not delivered from a state of sin. **And he who denies the necessary perishing of all that live and die in the state of corrupted nature, denies all the use of the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God: for if we may be saved without the renovation of our natures, there was no need nor use of the new creation of all things by Jesus Christ, which principally consists therein; and if men may be saved under all the evils that came upon us by the fall, then did Christ die in vain.** Besides, it is frequently expressed that men in that state are “enemies to God,” “alienated from him,” “children of wrath,” “under the curse;” and if **such may be saved, so may devils also.** *[This line of reasoning is very good and should be applied in other doctrines where opposers contradict themselves. Armed with scriptural knowledge along with the skill in reasoning through the scriptures, you will be able to communicate and better explain gospel truths as well being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, 1Pet3:15.]* In brief, it is not consistent with the nature of God, his holiness, righteousness, or truth, with the law or gospel, nor possible in the nature of the thing itself, that such persons should enter into or be made possessors of glory and rest with God. A deliverance, therefore, out of and from this condition is indispensably necessary to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is evident, and needs no farther confirmation, that persons living and dying in this estate cannot be saved. This hitherto hath been allowed by all that are called Christians; nor are we to be moved that some who call themselves so do begin to laugh at the disease, and despise the remedy of our nature. Among those who lay any serious and real claim unto Christianity, there is nothing more certain nor more acknowledged than that there is no deliverance from a state of misery for those who are not delivered from a state of sin. And he who denies the necessary perishing of all that live and die in the state of corrupted nature, denies all the use of the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God: for if we may be saved without the renovation of our natures, there was no need nor use of the new creation of all things by Jesus Christ, which principally consists therein; and if men may be saved under all the evils that came upon us by the fall, then did Christ die in vain. Besides, it is frequently expressed that men in that state are “enemies to God,” “alienated from him,” “children of wrath,” “under the curse;” and if such may be saved, so may devils also. In brief, it is not consistent with the nature of God, his holiness, righteousness, or truth, with the law or gospel, nor possible in the nature of the thing itself, that such persons should enter into or be made possessors of glory and rest with God. A

deliverance, therefore, out of and from this condition is indispensably necessary to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

p 204 This deliverance must be and is by regeneration. The determination of our Saviour is positive, both in this and the necessity of it, before asserted: [John iii. 3](#), "Except a man be born again," or from above, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." Whatever sense the "kingdom of God" is taken in, either for that of grace here or of glory hereafter, it is all the same as unto our present purpose. There is no interest in it to be obtained, no participation of the benefits of it, unless a man be born again, unless he be regenerate. And this determination of our Saviour, as it is absolute and decretory, so it is applicable unto and equally compriseth every individual of mankind. And the work intended by their regeneration, or in being born again, which is the spiritual conversion and quickening of the souls of men, is everywhere ascribed unto them that shall be saved. And although men may have, through their ignorance and prejudices, false apprehensions about regeneration and the nature of it, or wherein it doth consist, yet, so far as I know, all Christians are agreed that it is the way and means of our deliverance from the state of sin or corrupted nature, or rather our deliverance itself; for this both express testimonies of Scripture and the nature of the thing itself put beyond contradiction, [Tit. iii. 3–5](#). And those by whom it is exposed unto scorn, who esteem it a ridiculous thing for any one to inquire whether he be regenerate or no, will one day understand the necessity of it, although, it may be, not before it is too late to obtain any advantage thereby.

p204 The Holy Ghost is the immediate author and cause of this work of regeneration. And herein again, as I suppose, we have in general the consent of all. Nothing is more in words acknowledged than that all the elect of God are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. And this regeneration is the head, fountain, or beginning of our sanctification, virtually comprising the whole in itself, as will afterward appear. However, that it is a part thereof is not to be denied. Besides, as I suppose, it is equally confessed to be an effect or work of grace, the actual dispensation whereof is solely in the hand of the Holy Spirit. This, I say, is in words acknowledged by all, although I know not how some can reconcile this profession unto other notions and sentiments which they declare concerning it; for setting aside what men do herein themselves, and others do towards them in the ministry of the word, I cannot see what remains, as they express their loose imaginations, to be ascribed unto the Spirit of God. But at present we shall make use of this general concession, that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghost, or an effect of his grace. Not that we have any need so to do, but that we may avoid contesting about those things wherein men may shroud their false opinions under general, ambiguous expressions; which was the constant practice of Pelagius and those who followed him of old. But the Scripture is express in testimonies to our purpose. What our Saviour calls being "born again," [John iii. 3](#), he calls being "born of the Spirit," [verses 5, 6](#), because he is the sole, principal, efficient cause of this new birth; for "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," [John vi. 63](#); [Rom. viii. 11](#). And God saveth us "according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," [Tit. iii. 5](#). Whereas, therefore, we are said

to be “born of God,” or to be “begotten again of his own will,” [John i. 13](#), [James i. 18](#), [1 John iii. 9](#), it is with respect unto the especial and peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit.

301/204 These things are thus far confessed, even by the Pelagians themselves, both those of old and those at present, at least in general; nor hath any as yet been so hardy as to deny regeneration to be the work of the Holy Spirit in us, unless we must except those deluded souls who deny both him and his work. Our sole inquiry, therefore, must be after the manner and nature of this work; for the nature of it depends on the manner of the working of the Spirit of God herein. This, I acknowledge, was variously contended about of old; and the truth concerning it hath scarce escaped an open opposition in any age of the church. And at present this is the great ball of contention between the Jesuits and the Jansenists; the latter keeping close to the doctrine of the principal ancient writers of the church; the former, under new notions, expressions, and distinctions, endeavouring the re-enforcement of Pelagianism, whereunto some of the elder schoolmen led the way, of whom our Bradwardine so long ago complained. But never was it with so much impudence and ignorance traduced and reviled as it is by some among ourselves; for a sort of men we have who, by stories of wandering Jews, rhetorical declamations, pert cavillings, and proud revilings of those who dissent from them, think to scorn and banish truth out of the world, though they never **yet durst attempt to deal openly and plainly with any one argument that is pleaded in its defense and confirmation.**

cont. pg204 in book:

This being admitted, our inquiry must be after the manner and nature of this work; for the nature of it, depends on the manner of the Spirit's work in it. This, I confess, was variously contended about of old; and the truth concerning it has scarcely escaped an open opposition in any age of the Church; but it was never traduced and reviled with so much impotence and ignorance, as it now is, by some among ourselves. The ancient writers of the Church, who looked into these things with most diligence and success, as Augustine, Hilary, Prosper, and Fulgentius, taught the same doctrine, for the substance of it, (though with some variety of expression) that has been preached among us since the Reformation; and which some have ignorantly charged with novelty. And the whole of it was nobly and elegantly expressed by Augustine in his Confessions, wherein he relates the experience of the truth he had taught, in his own soul. I might follow their footsteps herein, but that there have been so many differences raised about the explications of their terms and distinctions, that to carry the truth so many intricacies, would lead me too far from my principal design. I shall refer the whole work of the Spirit, with respect to the regeneration of sinners, to two heads: first, that which is preparatory to it; and secondly, that which is effective of it. That which is preparatory to it is the conviction of sin and this, so far as it belongs to our present design, has been already insisted on. Our principal inquiry at present is about the work itself, and this must be both negatively and positively declared.

web version, pg 301: First, That which is preparatory for it; and, secondly, That which is effective of it. That which is preparatory for it is the conviction of sin; this is the work of the Holy Spirit, [John xvi. 8](#). And this also may be distinctly referred unto three heads:— 1. A discovery of the true nature of sin by the ministry of the law, [Rom. vii. 7](#). 2. An application of that discovery made in the mind or understanding unto the conscience of the sinner. 3. The excitation of affections suitable unto that discovery and application, [Acts ii. 37](#). But these things, so far as they belong unto our present design, have been before insisted on. Our principal inquiry at present is after the work itself, or the nature and manner of the working of the Spirit of God in and on the souls of men in their regeneration; and this must be both negatively and positively declared:— First, The work of the Spirit of God in the regeneration of sinners, or the quickening of them who are dead in trespasses and sins, or in their first saving conversion to God, doth not consist in a moral suasion only. By suasion we intend such a persuasion as may or may not be effectual; so absolutely we call that only persuasion whereby a man is actually persuaded. Concerning this we must consider, —

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Moral Suasion Alone Does Not Regenerate

The work of the Spirit of God in regeneration does not consist in a moral suasion, that is, such a persuasion as may, or may not, be effectual; though properly speaking, that only is persuasion whereby a man is actually persuaded. Now the means, instrument, and matter of this moral suasion, is the word of God, as contained in the Scripture, comprising the law and gospel; for by this we are commanded, pressed and persuaded to turn and live to God. And the principal way whereby this mean is applied, in order to produce its effects on the souls of men, is the ministry of the Church. This is the ordinary instrument which God employs in the regeneration of the adult; and it is every way sufficient in its own kind, as an outward mean.

The web version of this recent paragraph on the bottom of pg 302; It's interesting to see the difference. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/pneum.i.vii.v.html>

1. As to the nature of this moral suasion, two things may be considered:— (1.) The means, instrument, and matter of it, and this is the word of God; the word of God, or the Scripture, in the doctrinal instructions, precepts, promises, and threatenings of it. This is that, and this is that alone, whereby we are commanded, pressed, persuaded, to turn ourselves and live to God. And herein we comprise the whole, both the law and the gospel, with all the divine truths contained in them, as severally respecting the especial ends where-unto they are designed; for although they are distinctly and peculiarly suited to produce distinct effects on the minds of men, yet they all jointly tend unto the general end of guiding men how to live unto God, and to obtain the enjoyment of him. As for those documents and instructions which men have concerning the will of God, and the obedience which he requires of them from the light of nature, with the works of creation and providence, I shall not here

take them into consideration: for either they are solitary, or without any superaddition of instructive light by revelation, and then I utterly deny them to be a sufficient outward means of the conversion of any one soul; or they may be considered as improved by the written word as dispensed unto men, and so they are comprised under it, and need not to be considered apart. We will, therefore, suppose that those unto whom the word is declared have antecedaneously there-unto all the help which the light of nature will afford.

Book version; pg 205 cont.

What Gives The Ministry of the Word Efficacy

As to the efficacy of this moral work, we must observe:

1. That in the use of means for the conversion of men, there is first an instruction of the **mind** in the **knowledge of God's will**, and its **duty** towards him. Without this, there can be no room for the persuasive power of the word; for it consists in affecting the **mind** with its own concern in something already known.

2. On this supposition, that a man is instructed in the knowledge of God's will, there is a powerful persuasive efficacy in the dispensation of the word to a compliance with it.

For instance, suppose a man to be convinced by the word of God of the nature of sin; of his own sinful condition; of his danger on that account; and of the way whereby he may and ought to turn to God: there are in the precepts, promises and threatenings of the word, powerful motives and arguments to affect his mind, to seek after deliverance. Some indeed care not for them, are not moved by them, they despise them and live and die in rebellion against the light. But this is no proof that they are not powerful in themselves; though it proves that they are not sufficient of themselves, but only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to use them; and their efficacy, as to the end proposed, arise from the following things, which are all resolved into God himself.

The Veracity of the Gospel

From the evidence of the truth declared in the gospel, "that it is not a cunningly devised fable." Where this is not admitted, there can be no persuasive efficacy in it; but where it is, there in the mind is under a disposition to the things themselves, to which it is persuaded. And thus the whole efficacy of the word, is resolved into the truth and veracity of God.

Cont. on the web version pg 305

[2.] There is a proposal unto the wills and affections of men in the things so assented unto, on the one hand as good, amiable, and excellent, wherein the chiefest good, happiness, and utmost end of our natures are comprised, to be pursued and attained; and on the other of things evil and terrible, the

utmost evil that our nature is obnoxious unto, to be avoided: for this is urged on them, that to comply with the will of God in the proposals of the gospel, to conform thereunto, to do what he requires, to turn from sin unto him, is good unto men, best for them, — assuredly attended with present satisfaction and future glory. And therein is also proposed the most noble object for our affections, even God himself, as a friend, as reconciled unto us in Christ; and that in a way suited unto his holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness, which we have nothing to oppose unto nor to lay in the balance against. The way, also, of the reconciliation of sinners unto God by Jesus Christ is set out as that which hath such an impress of divine wisdom and goodness upon it, as that it can be refused by none but out of a direct enmity against God himself. Unto the enforcing of these things on the minds of men, the Scripture abounds with reasons, motives, and arguments; the rendering whereof effectual is the principal end of the ministry. On the other hand, it is declared and evidenced that sin is the great debasement of our natures, — the ruin of our souls, the only evil in the world, in its guilt and punishment; and that a continuance in a state of it, with a rejection of the invitation of the gospel unto conversion to God, is a thing foolish, unworthy of a rational creature, and that which will be everlastingly pernicious. Whereas, therefore, in the judgment of every rational creature, spiritual things are to be preferred before natural, eternal things before temporal, and these things are thus disposed of in infinite goodness, love, and wisdom, they must needs be apt to affect the wills and take the affections of men. And herein the efficacy of the word on the minds and consciences of men is resolved into the authority of God. These precepts, these promises, these threatenings are his, who hath right to give them and power to execute them. And with his authority, his glorious greatness and his infinite power come under consideration; so also doth his goodness and love in an especial manner, with many other things, even all the known properties of his holy nature; — all which concur in giving weight, power, and efficacy unto these motives and arguments.

[Cont. in book version pg 207](#)

Ministry of the Word Alone Cannot Convert

Now concerning this whole work, I affirm, that the Holy Spirit does make use of it in the regeneration or conversion of all adult persons, either by the word preached, or by some other application of light and truth to the mind derived from the word; for by the reason, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords, our minds are affected, and our souls so wrought upon, that conversion to God becomes our reasonable service; and most converted persons are able to give some account of the considerations whereby they were prevailed upon; but we also affirm, that the whole work of the Spirit in our conversion does not consist herein, but that there is real physical work, whereby he infuses a gracious principle of spiritual life into the souls of all who are truly regenerated; and this we shall prove by the following arguments.

[cont. from the website version pg 307](#)

Now, concerning this whole work I affirm these two things:—

1. That the Holy Spirit doth make use of it in the regeneration or conversion of all that are adult, and that either immediately in and by the preaching of it, or by some other application of light and truth unto the mind derived from the word; for by the reasons, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords are our minds affected, and our souls wrought upon in our conversion unto God, whence it becomes our reasonable obedience. And there are none ordinarily converted, but they are able to give some account by what considerations they were prevailed on thereunto. But, —

2. We say that the whole work, or the whole of the work of the Holy Ghost in our conversion, doth not consist herein; but there is a real physical work, whereby he **infuseth a gracious principle of spiritual life** into all that are effectually converted and really regenerated, and without which there is no deliverance from the state of sin and death which we have described; which, among others, may be proved by the ensuing arguments.

The principal arguments in this case will ensue in our proofs from the Scriptures that there is a real physical work of the Spirit on the souls of men in their regeneration. That all he doth consisteth not in this moral suasion, the ensuing reasons do sufficiently evince:

[this following paragraph is a huge point; very important. It has to do with the error of Arminian/Pelagian theology, where they believe man has some degree of virtue while in an unconverted/unregenerated state; that after the fall of Adam, man is not totally depraved...his will is not in bondage to sin & Satan, but is free to choose Christ or come to or believe in him from his own power or industry, i.e., virtue. But this presupposes that man has some degree of virtue or holiness (or faith) before he is given the gift of faith! Hence Thomas Shepard calls this kind of coming to Christ apart from being called thereunto, a wicked presumption. See Owen's comments on Arminianism in this study guide]

First, If the Holy Spirit work no otherwise on men, in their regeneration or conversion, but by proposing unto them and urging upon them reasons, arguments, and motives to that purpose,¹⁰⁶ then after his whole work, and notwithstanding it, the will of man remains absolutely indifferent whether it will admit of them or no, or whether it will convert itself unto God upon them or no; for the whole of this work consists in proposing objects unto the will, with respect whereunto it is left undetermined whether it will choose and close with them or no. And, indeed, this is that which some plead for: for they say that “in all men, at least all unto whom the gospel is preached, there is that grace present or with them that they are able to comply with the word if they please, and so believe, repent, or do any act of obedience unto God according to his will; and if they will, they can refuse to make use of this assistance, aid, power, or grace, and so continue in their sins.” What this grace is, or whence men have this power and ability, by some is not declared. Neither is it much to be doubted but that many do imagine that it is purely natural; only they will allow it to be called grace,

because it is from God who made us. Others acknowledge it to be the work or effect of grace internal, wherein part of the difference lay between the Pelagians and semi-Pelagians of old. But they all agree that it is absolutely in the power of the will of man to make use of it or not, — that is, of the whole effect on them, or product in them, of this grace communicated in the way described; for notwithstanding anything wrought in us or upon us thereby, the will is still left various, flexible, and undetermined. It is true, that notwithstanding the grace thus administered, the will hath power to refuse it and to abide in sin; but that there is no more grace wrought in us but what may he so refused, or that the will can make use of that grace for conversion which it can refuse, is false.

For, — 1. **This ascribes the whole glory of our regeneration and conversion unto ourselves, and not to the grace of God**; for that act of our wills, on this supposition, whereby we convert unto God, **is merely an act of our own**, and not of the grace of God. This is evident; for if the act itself were of grace, then would it not be in the power of the will to hinder it. 2. This would leave it absolutely uncertain, notwithstanding the purpose of God and the purchase of Christ, whether ever anyone in the world should be converted unto God or no; for when the whole work of grace is over, **it is absolutely in the power of the will of man whether it shall be effectual or no, and so absolutely uncertain: which is contrary to the covenant, promise, and oath of God unto and with Jesus Christ.** 3. **It is contrary to express testimonies of Scripture innumerable**, wherein actual conversion unto God is ascribed unto his grace, as the immediate effect thereof. This will farther appear afterward. “God worketh in us both to will and to do,” [Phil. ii. 13](#). The act, therefore, itself of willing in our conversion is of God’s operation; **and although we will ourselves, yet it is he who causeth us to will, by working in us to will and to do.** And if the act of our will, in believing and obedience, in our conversion to God, be not the effect of his grace in us, he doth not “work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” [That is excellent!! [God's sovereignty over the wills of men is not inconsistent with men's creaturely freedom, e.g., see 2Cor8:16 -](#)

"But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus (there's God's sovereignty working in him to will and to do..). "For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord." (there's Titus acting of *his own accord*, i.e., by his own creaturely free will; he was not forced as Arminians suppose he was, as they argue against this reasoning.)

Secondly, This moral persuasion, however advanced or improved, and supposed to be effectual, **yet confers no new real supernatural strength unto the soul**; for whereas it worketh, yea, the Spirit or grace of God therein and thereby, by reasons, motives, arguments, and objective considerations, and no otherwise, **it is able only to excite and draw out the strength which we have, delivering the mind and affections from prejudices and other moral impediments. Real aid, and internal spiritual strength, neither are nor can be conferred thereby.**[107](#) **And he who will acknowledge that there is any such**

internal spiritual strength communicated unto us must also acknowledge that there is another work of the Spirit of God in us and upon us than can be effected by these persuasions.

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If the Word Changes the Will, God's Grace is Redundant

It is pretended by some, that grace, in the dispensation of the word, does work really and efficiently, especially by illumination and excitation of the mind and affections; and if, upon this, the will exerts itself in the choice of that which is good, then the grace thus administered concurs with it, and assists it to perfect its act, and so, that the whole work is of grace. So pleaded the **Semi-Pelagians**, and so do others still. Now this is, in effect, to overthrow the whole grace of Jesus Christ, and to render it useless; for it ascribes to man the honour of his conversion, his own will being the principal cause of it. It makes a man to beget himself anew, or to be born again of himself; to make himself differ from others, by that which, in a special manner, he has not received. [See 1Cor. 4:7, "For who ^(a)makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"]

cont. from the website version pg 312

Thirdly, This is not all that we pray for, [111](#) either for ourselves or others, when we beg effectual grace for them or ourselves. There was no argument that the ancients more pressed the Pelagians withal than that the grace which they acknowledged did not answer the prayers of the church, or what we are taught in the Scripture to pray for. We are to pray only for what God hath promised, and for the communication of it unto us in that way whereby he will work it and effect it. Now, he is at a great indifferency in this matter who only prays that God would persuade him or others to believe and to obey, to be converted or to convert himself. The church of God hath always prayed that God would work these things in us; and those who have a real concernment in them do pray continually that God would effectually work them in their hearts. They pray that he would convert them; that he would create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in them; that he would give them faith for Christ's sake, and increase it in them; and that in all these things he would work in them by the exceeding greatness of his power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And there is not a Pelagian in the world who ever once prayed for grace, or gracious assistance against sin and temptation, with a sense of his want of it, but that his prayers contradicted his profession. To think that by all these petitions, with others innumerable dictated unto us in the Scripture, and which a spiritual sense of our wants will engage into, we desire nothing but only that God would persuade, excite, and stir us up to put forth a power and ability of our own in the performance of what we desire, is contrary unto all Christian experience. Yea, for a man to lie praying with importunity, earnestness, and fervency, for that which is in his own power, and can never be effected but by his own power, is fond and ridiculous; and they do but mock God who pray unto him to do that for them which they can do for themselves, and which God cannot do for them but only when and as they do it themselves. Suppose a man to have a power in himself to believe and repent; suppose these to be such acts of his will as God doth not, indeed cannot, by his grace work in him, but only persuade him thereunto, and show him sufficient reason

why he should so do, — **to what purpose should this man, or with what congruity could he, pray that God would give him faith and repentance?** This some of late, as it seems, wisely observing, do begin to scoff at and reproach the prayers of Christians; for whereas, in all their supplications for grace, they lay the foundation of them in an humble acknowledgment of their own vileness and impotency unto anything that is spiritually good, yea, and a natural aversation from it, and a sense of the power and working of the remainder of indwelling sin in them, hereby exciting themselves unto that earnestness and importunity in their requests for grace which their condition makes necessary¹¹² (which hath been the constant practice of Christians since there was one in the world), this is by them derided and exposed to contempt. In the room, therefore, of such despised prayers, I shall supply them with an ancient form that is better suited unto their principles.¹¹³ The preface unto it is, “Ille ad Deum digne elevat manus, ille orationem bonâ conscientîâ effundit qui potest dicere.” [translation: **Someone draws near to God, in a manner worthy elevates his hands, he pours out the prayer of the one who is able to say with a good conscience**] The prayer followeth:—“Tu nosti Domine quam sanctæ et puræ et mundæ sint ab omni malitia, et iniquitate, et rapina quas ad te extendo manus: quemadmodum justa et munda labia et ab omni mendacio libera quibus offero tibi deprecationes, ut mihi miserearis.” This prayer Pelagius taught a widow to make, as it was objected unto him in the Diospolitan Synod, that is at Lydda in Palestine, cap. vi.; only he taught her not to say that she had no deceit in her heart, as one among us doth wisely and humbly vaunt that he knoweth of none in his, so every way perfect is the man! Only to balance this of Pelagius, I shall give these men another prayer, but in the margin,¹¹⁴ not declaring whose it is, lest they should censure him to the gallows. **Whereas, therefore, it seems to be the doctrine of some that we have no grace from Christ but only that of the gospel teaching us our duty, and proposing a reward, I know not what they have to pray for, unless it be riches, wealth, and preferments, with those things that depend thereon.**

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Persuasion is Useless to Change Fallen Nature

This moral persuasion, where it is along, is not suited to produce and effect the work of regeneration or conversion to God, in persons who are really in that state of nature which we have before described. The most effectual persuasions cannot prevail with such men to convert themselves, **no more that arguments can prevail with a blind man to see, or with a dead man to rise from the grave, or with a lame man to walk steadily.** Wherefore the whole description before given from the Scripture of the state of fallen nature, must be disproved and removed out of the way, before this grace of moral persuasion can be thought sufficient for the purpose of regeneration.

The Spirit's Positive Work in Regeneration

I shall now proceed to show positively, wherein the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration does consist, and what is the true nature of it.

He Works Directly Upon the Mind
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2. There is not only a moral but a physical immediate operation of the Spirit, by his power and grace, or his powerful grace, upon the minds or souls of men in their regeneration.¹¹⁷ This is that which we must cleave to, or all the glory of God's grace is lost, and the grace administered by Christ neglected. So is it asserted, Eph. i. 18–20, 317 "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The power here mentioned hath an "exceeding greatness" ascribed unto it, with respect unto the effect produced by it. The power of God in itself is, as unto all acts, equally infinite, — he is omnipotent; but some effects are greater than others, and carry in them more than ordinary impressions of it. Such is that here intended, whereby God makes men to be believers, and preserves them when they are so. And unto this power of God there is an actual operation or efficiency ascribed, — the "working of his mighty power." And the nature of this operation or efficiency is declared to be of the same kind with that which was exerted in the raising of Christ from the dead; and this was by a real physical efficiency of divine power. This, therefore, is here testified, that the work of God towards believers, either to make them so or preserve them such, — for all is one as unto our present purpose, — **consists in the acting of his divine power by a real internal efficiency**. So God is said to "fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power," 2 Thess. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 3. **And hence the work of grace in conversion is constantly expressed by words denoting a real internal efficiency**; such as **creating, quickening, forming, giving a new heart**, whereof afterward. Wherever this word is spoken with respect unto an active efficiency, it is ascribed unto God; **he creates us anew, he quickens us, he begets us of his own will [i.e., not ours]**. But where it is spoken with respect unto us, there it is **passively expressed**; we are created in Christ Jesus, we are new creatures, we are born again, and the like; **which one observation is sufficient to evert the whole hypothesis of Arminian grace**. Unless a work wrought by power, and that real and immediate, be intended herein, such a work may neither be supposed possible, nor can be expressed. **Wherefore, it is plain in the Scripture that the Spirit of God works internally, immediately, efficiently, in and upon the minds of men in their regeneration. The new birth is the effect of an act of his power and grace; or, no man is born again but it is by the inward efficiency of the Spirit.**

3. This internal efficiency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, as to the event, is infallible,¹¹⁸ victorious, irresistible, or always efficacious. But in this assertion we suppose that the measure of the efficacy of grace and the end to be attained are fixed by the will of God. [by his eternal decree, see Eph. 1] **As to that end whereunto of God it is designed, it is always prevalent or effectual, and cannot be resisted**, or it will effectually work what God designs it to work: for wherein he "will work, none shall let him;" and "who hath resisted his will?" There are many motions of grace, even in the hearts of believers, which are thus far **resisted**, as that they attain not that effect which in their own nature they have a tendency unto. Were it otherwise, all believers would be perfect. But it is

manifest in experience that we do not always answer the inclinations of grace, at least as unto the degree which it moves towards. But yet even such motions also, if they are of and from saving grace, are effectual so far, and for all those ends which they are designed unto in the purpose of God; **for his will shall not be frustrated in any instance. And where any work of grace is not effectual, God never intended it should be so, nor did put forth that power of grace which was necessary to make it so.** Wherefore, in or towards whomsoever the Holy Spirit puts forth his power, or acts his grace for their regeneration, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions, and infallibly produceth the effect intended. **119** This proposition being of great importance to the glory of God's grace, and most signally opposed by the patrons of corrupted nature and man's free-will in the state thereof, must be both explained and confirmed.

(1.) The power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in our regeneration is such, in its acting or exercise, as our **minds, wills, and affections**, are suited to be wrought upon, and to be affected by it, according to their natures and natural operations: **"Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee."** He doth not act in them any otherwise than they themselves are meet to be moved and move, to be acted and act, according to their own nature, power, and ability. He draws us with "the cords of a man." And the work itself is expressed by persuading, — "God shall persuade Japheth;" and alluring, — "I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her:" for as it is certainly effectual, so it carries no more repugnancy unto our faculties than a prevalent persuasion doth. So that, —

(2.) **He doth not, in our regeneration, possess the mind with any enthusiastical impressions, nor act absolutely upon us as he did in extraordinary prophetic inspirations of old,** where the minds and organs of the bodies of men were merely passive instruments, moved by him above their own natural capacity and activity, not only as to the principle of working, but as to the manner of operation; but he works on the minds of men in and by their own natural actings, through an immediate influence and impression of his power: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." He "worketh both to will and to do."

(3.) **He therefore offers no violence or compulsion unto the will.** **120** This that faculty is not naturally capable to give admission unto. If it be compelled, it is destroyed. And the mention that is made in the Scripture of compelling ("Compel them to come in") **respects the certainty of the event, not the manner of the operation on them.** But whereas the will, in the depraved condition of fallen nature, is not only habitually filled and possessed with an aversion from that which is good spiritually ("Alienated from the life of God"), but also continually acts an opposition unto it, as being under the power of the "carnal mind," which is "enmity against God; and whereas this grace of the Spirit in conversion doth prevail against all this opposition, and is effectual and victorious over it, — it will be inquired how this can any otherwise be done but by a kind of violence and compulsion, seeing we have evinced already that moral persuasion and objective allurement is not sufficient thereunto? **Ans.** It is acknowledged that in the work of conversion unto God, though not in the very act of it, there is a reaction **between**

grace and the will, their acts being contrary; and that grace is therein victorious, and yet no violence or compulsion is offered unto the will; for, —

[1.] The opposition is not ad idem. The enmity and opposition that is acted by the will against grace is against it as objectively proposed unto it. So do men “resist the Holy Ghost,” — that is, in the external dispensation of grace by the word. And if that be alone, they may always resist it; the enmity that is in them will prevail against it: “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” The will, therefore, is not forced by any power put forth in grace, in that way wherein it is capable of making opposition unto it, but the prevalency of grace is of it as it is internal, working really and physically; which is not the object of the will’s opposition, for it is not proposed unto it as that which it may accept or refuse, but worketh effectually in it. [A very important distinction that Arminians, et al, ignore.]

[2.] The will, in the first act of conversion (as even sundry of the schoolmen acknowledge), acts not but as it is acted, moves not but as it is moved; and therefore is passive therein, in the sense immediately to be explained. And if this be not so, it cannot be avoided but that the act of our turning unto God is a mere natural act, and not spiritual or gracious; for it is an act of the will, not enabled thereunto antecedently by grace. Wherefore it must be granted, and it shall be proved, that, in order of nature, the acting of grace in the will in our conversion is antecedent unto its own acting; though in the same instant of time wherein the will is moved it moves, and when it is acted it acts itself, and preserves its own liberty in its exercise. There is, therefore, herein an inward almighty secret act of the power of the Holy Ghost, producing or effecting in us the will of conversion unto God, so acting our wills as that they also act themselves, and that freely. So Austin, cont. Duas Epistol. Pelag. lib. i. cap. 19: “Trahitur [homo] miris modis ut velit, ab illo qui novit intus in ipsis cordibus hominum operari; non ut homines, quod fieri non potest, nolentes credant, sed ut volentes ex nolentibus fiant.” The Holy Spirit, who in his power and operation is more intimate, as it were, unto the principles of our souls than they are to themselves, doth, with the preservation and in the exercise of the liberty of our wills, effectually work our regeneration and conversion unto God.

This is the substance of what we plead for in this cause, and which declares the nature of this work of regeneration, as it is an inward spiritual work. I shall, therefore, confirm the truth proposed with evident testimonies of Scripture, and reasons contained in them or deduced from them.

First, The work of conversion itself, and in especial the act of believing, 121 or faith itself, is expressly said to be of God, to be wrought in us by him, to be given unto us from him. The Scripture says not that God gives us ability or power to believe only, — namely, such a power as we may make use of if we will, or do otherwise; but faith, repentance, and conversion themselves are said to be the work and effect of God. Indeed, there is nothing mentioned in the Scriptures concerning the communicating of power, remote or next unto the mind of man, to enable him to believe antecedently unto actual believing. A “remote power,” if it may be so called, in the capacities of the faculties of the soul, the reason of the mind, and liberty of the will, we have given an account concerning; but for that which

some call a “next power,” [122](#) or an ability to believe in **order of nature antecedent unto believing itself, wrought in us by the grace of God, the Scripture is silent**. The apostle Paul saith of himself, Πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦτί με Χριστῷ, [Phil. iv. 13](#), — “I can do all things,” or prevail in all things, “**through Christ who enableth me;**” where a power or ability seems to be spoken of antecedent unto acting: **but this is not a power for the first act of faith, but a power in them that believe**. Such a power I acknowledge, which is acted in the co-operation of the Spirit and grace of Christ with the grace which believers have received, unto the performance of all acts of holy obedience; whereof I must treat elsewhere. Believers have a stock of habitual grace; which may be called indwelling grace in the same sense wherein original corruption is called indwelling sin. And this grace, as it is necessary unto every act of spiritual obedience, so of itself, without the renewed co-working of the Spirit of Christ, it is not able or sufficient to produce any spiritual act. **This working of Christ upon and with the grace we have received is called enabling of us; but with persons unregenerate, and as to the first act of faith, it is not so.**

But it will be objected, “That everything which is actually accomplished was in potentia before; there must, therefore, be in us a power to believe before we do so actually.”

Ans. **The act of God working faith in us is a creating act: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,” [Eph. ii. 10](#); and he that is in Christ Jesus “**is a new creature**,” [2 Cor. v. 17](#). Now, the effects of creating acts are not in potentia anywhere but in the active power of God; so was the world itself before its actual existence. This is termed potentia logica, which is no more but a negation of any contradiction to existence; not potentia physica, which includes a disposition unto actual existence. Notwithstanding, therefore, all these preparatory works of the Spirit of God which we allow in this matter, **there is not by them wrought in the minds and wills of men such a next power, as they call it, as should enable them to believe without farther actual grace working faith itself. Wherefore, with respect to believing, the first act of God is to work in us “to will:” [Phil. ii. 13](#), “He worketh in us to will.” Now, to will to believe is to believe. This God works in us by that grace** which Austin and the schoolmen call gratia operans, **because it worketh in us without us, the will being merely moved and passive therein**. That there is a power or faculty of believing given unto all men unto whom the gospel is preached, or who are called by the outward dispensation of it, some do pretend; and that “because those unto whom the word is so preached, if they do not actually believe, shall perish eternally, as is positively declared in the gospel, [Mark xvi. 16](#); but this they could not justly do if they had not received a power or faculty of believing.”**

Ans. 1. Those who believe not upon the proposal of Christ in the gospel are left without remedy in the guilt of those other sins, for which they must perish eternally. “If ye believe not,” saith Christ, “that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” [John viii. 24](#).

2. The **impotency** that is in men, **as to the act of believing**, is contracted by their own fault, both as it ariseth from the **original depravation of nature**, and **as it is increased by corrupt prejudices and**

contracted habits of sin: wherefore, they justly perished of whom yet it is said that “they could not believe,” [John xii. 39](#).

3. There is none by whom the gospel is refused, but they put forth an act of the will in its rejection, which all men are free unto and able for: “I would have gathered you, but ye would not,” [Matt. xxiii. 37](#). “Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life,” [[John v. 40](#).]

But the Scripture positively affirms of some to whom the gospel was preached that “they could not believe,” [John xii. 39](#); and of all natural men, that “they cannot receive the things of God,” [1 Cor. ii. 14](#). Neither is it “given” unto all to “know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” but to some only, [Matt. xi. 25, xiii. 11](#); and those to whom it is not so given have not the power intended. Besides, faith is not of all, or “all have not faith,” [2 Thess. iii. 2](#), but it is peculiar to the “elect of God,” [Tit. i. 1](#); [Acts xiii. 48](#); and these elect are but some of those that are called, [Matt. xx. 16](#).

Yet farther to clear this, it may be observed, that this first act of willing may be considered two ways:— 1. As it is wrought in the will subjectively, and so it is formally only in that faculty; and in this sense the will is merely passive, and only the subject moved or acted. And in this respect the act of God’s grace in the will is an act of the will. But, 2. It may be considered as it is efficiently also in the will, as, being acted, it acts itself. So it is from the will as its principle, and is a vital act thereof, which gives it the nature of obedience. Thus the will in its own nature is mobilis, fit and meet to be wrought upon by the grace of the Spirit to faith and obedience; with respect unto the creating act of grace working faith in us, it is mota, moved and acted thereby; and in respect of its own elicit act, as it so acted and moved, it is movens, the next efficient cause thereof.

These things being premised for the clearing of the nature of the operation of the Spirit in the first communication of grace unto us, and the will’s compliance therewithal, we return unto our arguments or testimonies given unto the actual collation of faith upon us by the Spirit and grace of God, which must needs be effectual and irresistible; for the contrary implies a contradiction, — namely, that God should “work what is not wrought:” — [Phil. i. 29](#), “To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,” To “believe on Christ” expresseth saving faith itself. This is “given” unto us. And how is it given us? Even by the power of God “working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” [chap. ii. 13](#). Our faith is our coming to Christ. “And no man,” saith he, “can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father,” [John vi. 65](#). All power in ourselves for this end is utterly taken away: “No man can come unto me.” However we may suppose men to be prepared or disposed, whatever arguments may be proposed unto them, and in what season soever, to render things congruous and agreeable unto their inclinations, yet no man of himself can believe, can come to Christ, unless faith itself be “given unto him,” — that is, be wrought in him by the grace of the Father, [Phil. i. 29](#). So it is again asserted, and that both negatively and positively, [Eph. ii. 8](#), “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Our own ability, be it what it will, however assisted and excited, and God’s gift, are contradistinguished. If it be “of

ourselves,” it is not “the gift of God;” if it be “the gift of God,” it is not “of ourselves.” And the manner how God bestows this gift upon us is declared, [verse 10](#), “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Good works, or gospel obedience, are the things designed. These must proceed from faith, or they are not acceptable with God, [Heb. xi. 6](#). And the way whereby this is wrought in us, or a principle of obedience, is by a creating act of God: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” In like manner God is said to “give us repentance,” [2 Tim. ii. 25](#); [Acts xi. 18](#). This is the whole of what we plead: God in our conversion, by the exceeding greatness of his power, as he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, actually worketh faith and repentance in us, gives them unto us, bestows them on us; so that they are mere effects of his grace in us.¹ And his working in us infallibly produceth the effect intended, because it is actual faith that he works, and not only a power to believe, which we may either put forth and make use of or suffer to be fruitless, according to the pleasure of our own wills. [\[another important distinction!\]](#)

¹**Thomas Shepard** on Faith:

“It is true, all things that pertain to life and godliness are received by faith 2Peter 1:3, yet faith itself is a saving work, which is not received by another precedent faith. Faith therefore is to be accepted not only as begotten in us, but as it is in the beginning of it in the conviction and humiliation of every sinner.” Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, p254,5

Secondly, As God giveth and worketh in us faith and repentance, so the way whereby he doth it, or the manner how he is said to effect them in us, makes it evident that he doth it by a power infallibly efficacious, and which the will of man doth never resist; for this way is such as that he thereby takes away all repugnancy, all resistance, all opposition, everything that lieth in the way of the effect intended: [Deut. xxx. 6](#), “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” A denial of the work here intended is expressed [chap. xxix. 4](#), “The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” What it is to have the heart circumcised the apostle declares, [Col. ii. 11](#). It is the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,” — that is, by our conversion to God. It is the giving “an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,” — that is, spiritual light and obedience, — by the removal of all obstacles and hinderances. This is the immediate work of the Spirit of God himself. No man ever circumcised his own heart. No man can say he began to do it by the power of his own will, and then God only helped him by his grace. As the act of outward circumcision on the body of a child was the act of another, and not of the child, who was only passive therein, but the effect was in the body of the child only, so is it in this spiritual circumcision, — it is the act of God, whereof our hearts are the subject. And whereas it is the blindness, obstinacy, and stubbornness in sin that is in us by nature, with the prejudices which possess our minds and affections, which hinder us from conversion unto God, by this circumcision they are taken away; for by it the “body of the sins of the flesh is put off.” And how should the heart resist the work of grace, when that whereby it should resist is effectually taken away? [\[excellent reasoning!!!\]](#)

[Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27](#), “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” To which may be added, [Jer. xxiv. 7](#), “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: so they shall return unto me with their whole heart.” As also, [Isa. xlv. 3–5](#), “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s,” etc. So [Jer. xxxi. 33](#), “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” I shall first inquire two things about these concurrent testimonies:—

[this following comment by Owen should clear up the error of the sinner' prayer.]

1. Is it lawful for us, is it our duty, to pray that God would do and effect what he hath promised to do, and that both for ourselves and others? — [We may pray] for ourselves, that the work of our conversion may be renewed, carried on, and consummated in the way and by the means whereby it was begun, that so “he which hath begun the good work in us may perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ,” [Phil. i. 6](#); for those who are converted and regenerated, and are persuaded on good and infallible grounds that so they are, may yet pray for those things which God promiseth to work in their first conversion. And this is because the same work is to be preserved and carried on in them by the same means, the same power, the same grace, wherewith it was begun. And the reason is, though this work, as it is merely the work of conversion, is immediately perfected and completed as to the being of it; yet as it is the beginning of a work of sanctification, it is continually to be renewed and gone over again, because of the **remainder of sin in us and the imperfection of our grace**. [And we may pray] for others, that it may be both begun and finished in them. And do we not in such prayers desire that God would really, powerfully, effectually, by the internal efficiency of his Spirit, take away all hinderances, oppositions, and repugnancy in our minds and wills, and actually collate upon us, give unto us, and work in us, a new principle of obedience, that we may assuredly love, fear, and trust in God always? or do we only desire that God would so help us as to leave us absolutely undetermined whether we will make use of his help or no? Did ever any pious soul couch such an intention in his supplications? He knows not how to pray who prays not that God would, by his own immediate power, work those things in him which he thus prayeth for. **And unto this prayer, also, grace effectual is antecedently required.**¹²⁵ Wherefore, I inquire, —

2. Whether God doth really effect and work in any the things which he here promiseth that he will work and effect? If he do not, where is his truth and faithfulness? It is said that “he doth so, and will so do, provided that men do not refuse his tender of grace nor resist his operations, but comply with them.” But this yields no relief, —

For, (1.) What is it not to refuse the grace of conversion, but to comply with it? Is it not to believe, to obey, — to convert ourselves? So, then, God promiseth to convert us, on condition that we convert ourselves; to work faith in us, on condition that we do believe; and a new heart, on condition that we make our hearts new ourselves! **To this are all the adversaries of the grace of God brought by those conditions which they feign of its efficacy to preserve the sovereignty of free-will in our conversion, — that is, unto plain and open contradictions,** which have been charged sufficiently upon them by others, and from which they could never extricate themselves. (2.) Where God promiseth¹²⁶ thus to work, as these testimonies do witness, and doth not effectually do so, it must be either because he cannot or because he will not. If it be said that he doth it not because he will not, then this is that which is ascribed unto God, — that he promiseth indeed to take away our stony heart, and to give us a new heart with his law written in it, but he will not do so; which is to overthrow his faithfulness, and to make him a liar. If they say it is because he cannot, seeing that men oppose and resist the grace whereby he would work this effect, **then where is the wisdom of promising to work that in us which he knew he could not effect without our compliance, and which he knew that we would not comply withal?** But it will be said that God promiseth to work and effect these things, but in such a way as he hath appointed, — that is, by giving such supplies of grace as may enable us thereunto, — which if we refuse to make use of, the fault is merely our own. Ans. **It is the things themselves that are promised, and not such a communication of means to effect them as may produce them or may not,** as the consideration of the place will manifest; **[another key distinction! This reasoning will undue the sophisms of Arminian theology; that man's will is self-directed and autonomous]** whereof observe, —

[1.] The subject spoken of in these promises is the heart. **And the heart in the Scripture is taken for the whole rational soul,** not absolutely, **but as all the faculties of the soul are one common principle of all our moral operations.** Hence it hath such properties assigned unto it as are peculiar to the mind or understanding, as to see, perceive, to be wise, and to understand; and, on the contrary, to be blind and foolish; and sometimes such as belong properly to the will and affections, as to obey, to love, to fear, to trust in God. Wherefore, the principle of all our spiritual and moral operations is intended hereby.

[2.] There is a description of this heart, as it is in us antecedent unto the effectual working of the grace of God in us: it is said to be stony, — “The heart of stone.” It is not absolutely that it is said so to be, but with respect unto some certain end. This end is declared to be our walking in the ways of God, or our fearing of him. **Wherefore, our hearts by nature, as unto living to God or his fear, are a stone, or stony; and who hath not experience hereof from the remainders of it still abiding in them?** And two things are included in this expression:— 1st. **An ineptitude unto any actings towards that end.** Whatever else the heart can do of itself, in things natural or civil, in outward things, as to the end of living unto God it can of itself, without his grace, do no more than a stone can do of itself unto any end whereunto it may be applied. 2dly. **An obstinate, stubborn opposition unto all things conducing unto that end.** Its hardness or obstinacy, in opposition to the pliability of a heart of flesh, is principally intended in this expression. And in this stubbornness of the heart consists all that repugnancy to the

grace of God which is in us by nature, and hence all that resistance doth arise, which some say is always sufficient to render any operation of the Spirit of God by his grace fruitless.

[3.] This heart, — that is, this **impotency and enmity** which is in our natures unto conversion and spiritual obedience, — **God says he will take away; that is, he will do so in them who are to be converted according to the purpose of his will, and whom he will turn unto himself.**¹²⁷ He doth not say that he will endeavour to take it away, nor that he will use such or such means for the taking of it away, **but absolutely that he will take it away.** He doth not say that he will persuade men to remove it or do it away, that he will aid and help them in their so doing, and that so far as that it shall wholly be their own fault if it be not done, — which no doubt it is where it is not removed; but positively that he himself will take it away. **Wherefore, the act of taking it away is the act of God by his grace, and not the act of our wills** but as they are acted thereby; and that **such an act as whose effect is necessary [infallibly consequent].** It is impossible that God should take away the stony heart, and yet the stony heart not be taken away. What, therefore, God promiseth herein, **in the removal of our natural corruption**, is as unto the event infallible, and as to the manner of operation **irresistible.**

[4.] As what God taketh from us in the cure of our original disease, so what he bestoweth on us or works in us is here also expressed; and this is, a new heart and a new spirit: “I will give you a new heart.” And withal it is declared what benefit we do receive thereby: for those who have this new heart bestowed on them or wrought in them, they do actually, by virtue thereof, **“fear the Lord and walk in his ways;”** for so it is affirmed in the testimonies produced: and no more is required thereunto, as nothing less will effect it. **There must, therefore, be in this new heart thus given us a principle of all holy obedience unto God:** the **creating of which principle in us is our conversion to him; for God doth convert us, and we are converted.** And how is this new heart **communicated** unto us? “I will,” saith God, **“give them a new heart.”** “That is, it may be, he will do what is to be done on his part that they may have it; but we may refuse his assistance, and go without it.” **No; saith he, “I will put a new spirit within them;” which expression is capable of no such limitation or condition.** And to make it more plain yet, he affirms that he “will write his law in our hearts.” It is confessed that this is spoken with respect unto his writing of the law of old in the tables of stone. As, then, he wrote the letter of the law in the tables of stone, so that thereon and thereby they were actually engraven therein; **so by writing the law, that is, the matter and substance of it, in our hearts,** it is as really fixed therein as the letter of it was of old in the tables of stone. **And this can be no otherwise but in a principle of obedience and love unto it, which is actually wrought of God in us.** And the aids or assistances which some men grant that are left unto the power of our own wills to use or not to use, have no analogy with the writing of the law in tables of stone. **And the end of the work of God described is not a power to obey, which may be exerted or not; but it is actual obedience in conversion, and all the fruits of it.** And if God do not in these promises declare a real efficiency of internal grace, taking away all repugnancy of nature unto conversion, curing its depravation actually and effectually, and communicating infallibly a principle of scriptural obedience, I know not in what words such a work may be expressed. **And whatever is**

excepted as to the suspending of the efficacy of this work upon conditions in ourselves, it falls immediately into gross and sensible contradictions. An especial instance of this work we have, [Acts xvi. 14.](#)

A third argument is taken from the state and condition of men by nature, before described; for it is such as that no man can be delivered from it, but by that powerful, internal, effectual grace which we plead for, such as wherein the mind and will of man can act nothing in or towards conversion to God but as they are acted by grace. The reason why some despise, some oppose, some deride the work of the Spirit of God in our regeneration or conversion, or fancy it to be only an outward ceremony, or a moral change of life and conversation, is, their ignorance of the corrupted and depraved estate of the souls of men, in their minds, wills, and affections, by nature; for if it be such as we have described, — that is, such as in the Scripture it is represented to be, — they cannot be so brutish as once to imagine that it may be cured, or that men may be delivered from it, without any other aid but that of those rational considerations which some would have to be the only means of our conversion to God. We shall, therefore, inquire what that grace is, and what it must be, whereby we are delivered from it:—

1. **It is called a vivification or quickening.** We are by nature “dead in trespasses and sins,” as hath been proved, and the nature of that death at large explained. In our deliverance from thence, we are said to be “quickened,” [Eph. ii. 5.](#) Though dead, we “hear the voice of the Son of God, and live,” [John v. 25;](#) being made “alive unto God through Jesus Christ,” [Rom. vi. 11.](#) Now, no such work can be wrought in us but by an effectual communication of a principle of spiritual life; and nothing else will deliver us. Some think to evade the power of this argument by saying that “all these expressions are metaphorical, and arguings from them are but fulsome metaphors:” **and it is well if the whole gospel be not a metaphor unto them.** But if there be not an impotency in us by nature unto all acts of spiritual life, like that which is in a dead man unto the acts of life natural; if there be not an alike power of God required unto our deliverance from that condition, and the working in us a principle of spiritual obedience, as is required unto the raising of him that is dead, — they may as well say that the Scripture speaks not truly as that it speaks metaphorically. And that it is almighty power, the “exceeding greatness of God’s, power,” that is put forth and exercised herein; we have proved from [Eph. i. 19, 20;](#) [Col. ii. 12, 13;](#) [2 Thess. i. 11;](#) [2 Pet. i. 3.](#) And what do these men intend by this quickening, this raising us from the dead by the power of God? A persuasion of our minds by rational motives taken from the word, and the things contained in it! But was there ever heard such a monstrous expression, if there be nothing else in it? What could the holy writers intend by calling such a work as this by a “quickening of them who were dead in trespasses and sins through the mighty power of God,” unless it were, by a noise of insignificant words, to draw us off from a right understanding of what is intended? And it is well if some are not of that mind.

2. **The work itself wrought is our regeneration.** I have proved before that this consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle or habit of grace, infused into the soul, the mind, will, and

affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is unto spiritual, supernatural, vital acts of faith and obedience. Some men seem to be inclined to deny all habits of grace. And on such a supposition, a man is no longer a believer than he is in the actual exercise of faith; for there is nothing in him from whence he should be so denominated. But this would plainly overthrow the covenant of God, and all the grace of it. Others expressly deny all gracious, supernatural, infused habits, though they may grant such as are or may be acquired by the frequent acts of those graces or virtues whereof they are the habits. But the Scripture giveth us another description of this work of regeneration, for it consists in the renovation of the image of God in us: [Eph. iv. 23, 24](#), “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That Adam in innocency had a supernatural ability of living unto God habitually residing in him is generally acknowledged; and although it were easy for us to prove that whereas he was made for a super-natural end, — namely, to live to God, and to come to the enjoyment of him, — it was utterly impossible that he should answer it or comply with it by the mere strength of his natural faculties, had they not been endued with a supernatural ability, which, with respect unto that end, was created with them and in them, yet we will not contend about terms. **Let it be granted that he was created in the image of God, and that he had an ability to fulfil all God’s commands,** and that in himself, and no more shall be desired. **This was lost by the fall.** When this is by any denied, it shall be proved. **In our regeneration, there is a renovation of this image of God in us:** “Renewed in the spirit of your mind.” And it is renewed in us by a creating act of almighty power: “Which after God,” or according to his likeness, “is created in righteousness and true holiness.” There is, therefore, **in it an implantation of a new principle of spiritual life,** of a life unto God in **repentance, faith, and obedience,** or universal holiness, according to gospel truth, or the truth which came by Jesus Christ, [John i. 17](#). And the effect of this work is called “spirit:” [John iii. 6](#), “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” It is the Spirit of God of whom we are born; that is, our new life is wrought in us by his efficiency. And that which in us is so born of him is spirit; not the natural faculties of our souls, — they are once created, once born, and no more, — but a new principle of spiritual obedience, whereby we live unto God. And this is the product of the internal immediate efficiency of grace.

This will the better appear if we consider the faculties of the soul distinctly, and what is the especial work of the Holy Spirit upon them in our regeneration or conversion to God:— (1.) **The leading, conducting faculty of the soul is the mind or understanding.** Now, this is corrupted and vitiated by the fall; and how it continues depraved in the state of nature hath been declared before. The sum is, that it is not able to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner; for it is **possessed with spiritual blindness or darkness,** and is **filled with enmity against God and his law,** esteeming the things of the gospel to be foolishness; because it is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in it. We must, therefore, inquire what is the work of the Holy Spirit on our minds in turning of us to God, whereby this depravation is removed and this vicious state cured, whereby we come to see and discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, that we may **savily know God and his mind** as revealed in and by Jesus Christ. And this is several ways declared in the Scripture:—

[1.] He is said to give us an understanding: 1 John v. 20, “The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;” which he doth by his Spirit. Man by sin is become like the “beasts that perish, which have no understanding,” Ps. xlix. 12, 20. Men have not lost their natural intellective faculty or reason absolutely. It is continued unto them, with the free though impaired use of it, in things natural and civil. And it hath an advance in sin; men are “wise to do evil:” 128 but it is lost as to the especial use of it in the saving knowledge of God and his will, “To do good they have no knowledge,” Jer. iv. 22; for naturally, “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,” Rom. iii. 11. It is corrupted not so much in the root and principle of its actings, as with respect unto their proper object, term, and end. Wherefore, although this giving of an understanding be not the creating in us anew of that natural faculty, yet it is that gracious work in it without which that faculty in us, as depraved, will no more enable us to know God savingly than if we had none at all. The grace, therefore, here asserted in the giving of an understanding is the causing of our natural understandings to understand savingly. This David prays for: Ps. cxix. 34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.” The whole work is expressed by the apostle, Eph. i. 17, 18, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being opened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,” etc. That “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” is the Spirit of God working those effects in us, we have before evinced. And it is plain that the “revelation” here intended is subjective, in enabling us to apprehend what is revealed, and not objective, in new revelations, which the apostle prayed not that they might receive. And this is farther evidenced by the ensuing description of it: “The eyes of your understanding being opened.” There is an eye in the understanding of man, — that is, the natural power and ability that is in it to discern spiritual things. But this eye is sometimes said to be “blind,” sometimes to be “darkness,” sometimes to be “shut” or closed; and nothing but the impotency of our minds to know God savingly, or discern things spiritually when proposed unto us, can be intended thereby. It is the work of the Spirit of grace to open this eye, 129 Luke iv. 18; Acts xxvi. 18; and this is by the powerful, effectual removal of that depravation of our minds, with all its effects, which we before described. And how are we made partakers thereof? It is of the gift of God, freely and effectually working it: for, first, he “giveth us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” to that end; and, secondly, works the thing itself in us. He “giveth us a heart to know him,” Jer. xxiv. 7, without which we cannot so do, or he would not himself undertake to work it in us for that end. There is, therefore, an effectual, powerful, creating act of the Holy Spirit put forth in the minds of men in their conversion unto God, enabling them spiritually to discern Spiritual things; wherein the seed and substance of divine faith is contained.

[2.] This is called the renovation of our minds: “Renewed in the spirit of your mind,” Eph. iv. 23; which is the same with being “renewed in knowledge,” Col. iii. 10. And this renovation of our minds hath in it a transforming power to change the whole soul into an obediential frame towards God, Rom. xii. 2. And the work of renewing our minds is peculiarly ascribed unto the Holy Spirit: Tit. iii. 5, “The renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Some men seem to fancy, yea, do declare, that there is no such

depravation in or of the mind of man, but that he is able, by the use of his reason, to apprehend, receive, and discern those truths of the gospel which are objectively proposed unto it. But of the use of reason in these matters, and its ability to discern and judge of the sense of propositions and force of inferences in things of religion, we shall treat afterward. At present, I only inquire whether men unregenerate be of themselves able spiritually to discern spiritual things when they are proposed unto them in the dispensation of the gospel, so as their knowledge may be saving in and unto themselves, and acceptable unto God in Christ, and that without any especial, internal, effectual work of the Holy Spirit of grace in them and upon them? [hence Pelagians] If they say they are, as they plainly plead them to be, and will not content themselves with an ascription unto them of that notional, doctrinal knowledge which none deny them to be capable of, I desire to know to what purpose are they said to be “renewed by the Holy Ghost?” to what purpose are all those gracious actings of God in them before recounted? He that shall consider what, on the one band, the Scripture teacheth us concerning the blindness, darkness, impotency of our minds, with respect unto spiritual things, when proposed unto us, as in the state of nature; **and, on the other, what it affirms concerning the work of the Holy Ghost in their renovation and change, in giving them new power, new ability, a new, active understanding,** — will not be much moved with the groundless, confident, unproved dictates of some concerning the power of reason in itself to apprehend and discern religious things, so far as we are required in a way of duty. This is all one as if they should say, that if the sun shine clear and bright, every blind man is able to see.

God herein is said to communicate a light unto our minds, and that so as that we shall see by it, or perceive by it, the things proposed unto us in the gospel usefully and savingly: [2 Cor. iv. 6](#), “*God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Did God no otherwise work on the minds of men but by an external, objective proposal of truth unto them, to what purpose doth the apostle mention the almighty act of creating power which he put forth and exercised in the first production of natural light out of darkness? What allusion is there between that work and the doctrinal proposal of truth to the minds of men? It is, therefore, a confidence not to be contended with, if any will deny that the act of God in the spiritual illumination of our minds be of the same nature, as to efficacy and efficiency, with that whereby he created light at the beginning of all things. And because the effect produced in us is called “light,” the act itself is described by “shining:” “God hath shined in our hearts,” — that is, our minds. So he conveys **light** unto them by an act of omnipotent efficiency. And as that which is so wrought in our minds is called “**light**,” so the apostle, leaving his metaphor, plainly declares what he intends thereby, — namely, the actual “**knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;**” that is, as God is revealed in Christ by the gospel, as he declares, [verse 4](#). Having, therefore, first, compared the mind of man by nature, with respect unto a power of discerning spiritual things, to the state of all things under darkness before the creation of light; and, secondly, the powerful working of God in illumination unto the act of his omnipotency in the production or creation of light natural, — he ascribes our ability to know, and our actual knowledge of God in Christ, unto his real efficiency and

operation. And these things in part direct us towards an apprehension of that work of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men in their conversion unto God whereby their depravation is cured, and without which it will not so be. By this means, and no otherwise, do we who were “darkness” become “light in the Lord,” or come to know God in Christ savingly, **looking into and discerning spiritual things with a proper intuitive sight**, whereby all the other faculties of our souls are guided and influenced unto the obedience of faith.

(2.) **It is principally with respect unto the will and its depravation by nature that we are said to be dead in sin.** And herein is seated that peculiar obstinacy, whence it is that no unregenerate person doth or can answer his own convictions, or walk up unto his light in obedience. For the will may be considered two ways:— first, As a rational, vital faculty of our souls; secondly, As a free principle, [130 freedom being of its essence or nature](#). This, therefore, in our conversion to God, is renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that by an effectual implantation in it of a principle of spiritual life and holiness in the room of that original righteousness which it lost by the fall. That he doth so is proved by all the testimonies before insisted on:—

First, This is its renovation as it is a rational, vital faculty; and of this **vivification** see before.

Secondly, As it is a free principle, it is determined unto its acts in this case by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, without the least impeachment of its liberty or freedom; as hath been declared.

And that this is so might be fully evinced, as by others so by the ensuing arguments; for if the Holy Ghost do not work immediately and effectually upon the will, producing and creating in it a principle of faith and obedience, infallibly determining it in its free acts, then is all the glory of our conversion to be ascribed unto ourselves, and we make ourselves therein, by the obediential actings of our own free will, to differ from others who do not so comply with the grace of God; which is denied by the apostle, [1 Cor. iv. 7](#). Neither can any purpose of God concerning the conversion of any one soul he certain and determinate, seeing after he hath done all that is to be done, or can be done towards it, the will, remaining undetermined, may not be converted, contrary to those testimonies of our Saviour, [Matt. xi. 25, 26](#); [John vi. 37](#); [Rom. viii. 29](#). Neither can there be an original infallibility in the promises of God made to Jesus Christ concerning the multitudes that should believe in him, seeing it is possible no one may so do, if it depend on the undetermined liberty of their wills whether they will or no. And then, also, must salvation of necessity be “of him that willeth, and of him that runneth,” and not “of God, that showeth mercy on whom he will have mercy,” contrary to the apostle, [Rom. ix. 15, 16](#). And the whole efficacy of the grace of God is made thereby to depend on the wills of men; which is not consistent with our being the “workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” [Eph. ii. 10](#). Nor, on this supposition, do men know what they pray for, when they pray for their own or other men’s conversion to God; as hath been before declared. There is, therefore, necessary such a work of the Holy Spirit upon our wills as may cure and take away the depravation of them before described, freeing us from the state of spiritual death, causing us to live unto God, **and determining**

them in and unto the acts of faith and obedience. And this he doth whilst and as he makes us new creatures, quickens us who are dead in trespasses and sins, gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us, writes his law in our hearts, that we may do the mind of God and walk in his ways, worketh in us to will and to do, making them who were unwilling and obstinate to become willing and obedient, and that freely and of choice.

(3.) In like manner a prevailing love is implanted upon the affections by the Spirit of grace, causing the soul with delight and complacency to cleave to God and his ways. This removes and takes away the enmity before described, with the effects of it: Deut. xxx. 6, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." This circumcision of the heart consists in the "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," as the apostle speaks, Col. ii. 11. He "crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts" thereof. Some men are inclined to think that all the depravation of our nature consists in that of the sensitive part of the soul, or our affections; the vanity and folly of which opinion hath been before discovered. Yet it is not denied but that the affections are signally depraved, so that by them principally the mind and will do act those lusts that are peculiarly seated in them, or by them do act according to their perverse and corrupt inclinations, Gal. v. 24; James i. 14, 15. Wherefore, in the circumcision of our hearts, wherein the flesh, with the lusts, affections, and deeds thereof, is crucified by the Spirit, he takes from them their enmity, carnal prejudices, and depraved inclinations, really though not absolutely and perfectly; and instead of them he fills us with holy spiritual love, joy, fear, and delight, not changing the being of our affections, but sanctifying and guiding them by the principle of saving light and knowledge before described, and uniting them unto their proper object in a due manner.

From what hath been spoken in this third argument, it is evident that the Holy Spirit, designing the regeneration or conversion of the souls of men, worketh therein effectually, powerfully, and irresistibly; which was proposed unto confirmation.

From the whole it appears that our regeneration is a work of the Spirit of God, and that not any act of our own, which is only so, is intended thereby. 131 I say it is not so our own as by outward helps and assistance to be educed out of the principles of our natures. And herein is the Scripture express; for, mentioning this work directly with respect unto its cause, and the manner of its operation in the effecting of it, it assigns it positively unto God or his Spirit 1 Pet. i. 3, "God, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again." James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." John iii. 5, 6, 8, "Born of the Spirit." 1 John iii. 9, "Born of God." And, on the other hand, it excludes the will of man from any active interest herein; I mean, as to the first beginning of it: 1 Pet. i. 23, "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." John i. 13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." See Matt. xvi. 17; Tit. iii. 5; Eph. ii. 9, 10. It is, therefore, incumbent on them who plead for the active interest of the will of man in regeneration to produce some testimonies of Scripture

where it is assigned unto it, as the effect unto its proper cause. Where is it said that a man is born again or begotten anew by himself? And if it be granted, — as it must be so, **unless violence be offered not only to the Scripture but to reason and common sense**, — that whatever be our duty and power herein, yet these expressions must denote an act of God, and not ours, the substance of what we contend for is granted, as we shall be ready at any time to demonstrate. **It is true, God doth command us to circumcise our hearts and to make them new: but he doth therein declare our duty, not our power; for himself promiseth to work in us what he requireth of us.** And that power which we have and do exercise in the progress of this work, in sanctification and holiness, proceeds from the infused principle which we receive in our regeneration; for all which ends we ought to pray for Him, according to the example of holy men of old.[132](#)

Illuminating the Understanding

code69

A great discourse on the faculties of the soul, the mind and understanding, the will and the affections, the heart and what happens in conversion. Order of nature in salvation, saving light, etc.

Sermon 10.

by John Flavel, The Fountain of Life p82

The second Branch of Christ's Prophetical Office, consisting in the Illumination of the Understanding.

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/fountain.v.x.html>

[Luke 24: 45.](#)

Then opened he their understandings, &c.

[Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ESV]

Knowledge of spiritual things is well distinguished into **intellectual** and **practical**: the **first has its seat in the mind, the latter in the heart**. This latter, divines call a knowledge peculiar to saints; and, in the apostle's dialect, it is "huperechon tes gnoseos Christou Iesou", [Phil. 3: 8](#). "The eminency, or **excellency of the knowledge of Christ.**"

And indeed, there is but little excellency in all those petty notions which furnish the lips with discourse, **unless by a sweet and powerful influence** they draw the conscience and will to the obedience of Christ. **Light in the mind** is necessarily antecedent to the sweet and heavenly motions and

elevations of the **affections**: For the farther any man stands from the light of truth, the farther he must needs be from the heat of comfort. Heavenly quickening are begotten in the heart, while the sun of righteousness spreads the beams of truth into the understanding, and the soul sits under those its wings; yet all the light of the gospel spreading and diffusing itself into the mind, can never savingly open and change the heart, without another act of Christ upon it; and what that is, the text informs you; “Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures”.

In which words we have both an act of Christ upon the disciples’ understandings, and the immediate end and scope of that act.

1. Christ’s act upon their understandings: He opened their understandings. By understanding is not here meant the mind only, in opposition to the **heart, will,** and **affections,** but these were opened by and with the mind. **The mind is to the heart, as the door to the house: what comes in to the heart, comes in at the understanding,** which is introductive to it; and although truths sometimes go no farther than the entry, never penetrate the hearts, yet, here, this effect is undoubtedly included.

Expositors make this expression parallel to that in [Acts 16: 14](#). “The Lord opened the heart of Lydia.” And it is well observed, that it is one thing to open the scriptures, that is, to expound them, and give the meaning of them, as Paul is said to do in [Acts 18: 3](#), and another thing to open the **mind or heart,** as it is here. There are, as a learned man truly observes, **two doors of the soul barred against Christ; the understanding by ignorance; and the heart by hardness: both these are opened by Christ. The former is opened by the preaching of the gospel, the other by the internal operation of the Spirit.** The former belongs to the first part of Christ’s prophetic office, opened in the foregoing sermon: the latter, to that special internal part of his prophetic office, to be opened in this.

And that it was not a naked act upon their minds only, but that their hearts and minds did work in fellowship, being both touched by this act of Christ, is evident enough by the effects mentioned, ver. 52, 53. “They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” It is confessed, that before this time Christ had opened their hearts by conversion; and this opening is not to be understood simply, but *secundum quid*, in reference to those particular truths, in which, till now, they were not sufficiently informed, and so their hearts could not be duly affected with them. They were very dark in their apprehensions of the death and resurrection of Christ; and consequently their hearts were sad and dejected about that which had befallen him, ver. 17. But when he opened the scriptures and their understandings and hearts together, then things appeared with another face, and they returned, blessing and praising God.

2. Here is farther to be considered, the design and end of this act upon their understandings: That they might understand the scriptures: Where let it be marked, reader, **that the teachings of Christ, and his Spirit, were never designed to take men off from reading, and studying, and searching the scriptures, as some vain notionists, have pretended,** opposing those things which are subordinated,

but to make their studies and duties the more fruitful, beneficial, and effectual to their souls: or that they might this way receive the end or blessing of all their duties. God never intended to abolish his Word, by giving his Spirit; and they are true fanatics (as Calvin upon thus place calls them) that think, or pretend so. By this means he would at once impart more light, and make that they had before more operative and useful to them, especially in such a time of need as this was. Hence we observe,

Doctrine. That the opening of the mind and heart, effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ.

One of the great miseries under which lapsed nature labours, is **spiritual blindness**. Jesus Christ brings that eye-salve which only can cure it. [Rev. 3: 18](#). "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Those to whom the Spirit has applied it, can say, as it is [1 John 5: 20](#). "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life.

"To the spiritual illumination of a soul, it suffices not that the object be revealed, nor yet that man, the subject of that knowledge have a due use of his own reason; **but it is further necessary that the grace and special assistance of the holy Spirit be superadded, to open and mollify the heart, and so give it a due taste and relish of the sweetness of spiritual truth.**" By opening the gospel, he reveals truth to us, and, by opening the heart, in us. Now, though this cannot be without that, yet it is much more excellent to have truth revealed in us, than to us. This divines call *praecipuum illud "apogelesma" muneris prophetici*; "the principal perfective effect of the prophetic office," the special blessing promised in the new covenant, [Heb. 8: 10](#). "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts."

For explication of this part of Christ's prophetic office, I shall as in the former, show what is included in the opening of their understanding, and by what acts Christ performs it. And,

First, Give you a brief account of what is included in this act of Christ; take it in the following particulars.

1. It implies the **transcendent nature of spiritual things, far exceeding the highest flight and reach of natural reason**. Jesus Christ must by his Spirit open the understandings of men, or they can never comprehend such mysteries. Some men have strong natural parts, and by improvement of them are become eagle-eyed in the mysteries of nature. Who more acute than the heathen sages? Yet, to them the gospel seemed foolishness, [1 Cor. 1: 20](#). Austin confesses, that before his conversion, he often felt his spirit swell with offence and contempt of the gospel; and he despising it, said *dedignabar esse parvulus*; "he scorned to become a child again." Bradwardine, that profound doctor, learned *usque ad stuporem*, even to a wonder, professes that when he read Paul's epistles, he condemned them, because in them he found not a metaphysical wit. Surely, it is possible a man may, with Berengarius, be able to dispute *de omni scibili*, of every point of knowledge; to unravel nature from the cedar in

Lebanon, to the hyssop on the wall; and yet be as blind as a bat in the knowledge of Christ. Yes, it is possible a man's understanding may be improved by the gospel, to a great ability in the literal knowledge of it, so as to be able to expound the scriptures orthodoxly, and enlighten others by them, as it is [Mat. 7: 22](#). The Scribes and Pharisees were well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament; yea, such were their abilities, and esteem among the people for them, that the apostle stiles them the princes of this world, [1 Cor. 2: 8](#). And yet notwithstanding Christ truly calls them blind guides, [Mat. 23](#). **Till Christ open the heart, we can know nothing of him, or of his will, as we ought to know it.** So experimentally true is that of the apostle, [1 Cor. 2: 14, 15](#). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man." The spiritual man can judge and discern the carnal man, but the carnal man wants [lacks] a faculty to judge of the spiritual man: as a man that carries a dark lantern, can see another by its light, but the other cannot discern him. Such is the difference betwixt persons whose hearts Christ has, or has not opened.

2. **Christ's opening the understanding, implies the insufficiency of all external means, how excellent soever they are in themselves, to operate savingly upon men, till Christ by his power opens the soul, and so makes them effectual.** What excellent preachers were Isaiah and Jeremiah to the Jews? The former spake of Christ more like an Evangelist at the New than a Prophet of the Old Testament; the latter was a most convictive and pathetic preacher: yet the one complains, [Isa. 53: 1](#), "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The other laments the successlessness of his ministry, [Jer. 6: 18](#). "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain." Under the New Testament, what people ever enjoyed such choice helps and means, as those that lived under the ministry of Christ and the apostles? Yet how many remained still in darkness? [Matt. 11: 27](#). "We have piped to you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented". Neither the delightful airs of mercy, nor the doleful ditties of judgement, could effect or move their hearts.

And indeed if you search into the reason of it, you will be satisfied, that the choicest of means can do nothing upon the heart, until Christ by his Spirit open it, because ordinances work not as natural causes do: for then the effect would always follow unless miraculously hindered; and it would be equally wonderful, that all that hear should not be converted, as that the three children should be in the fiery furnace so long, and yet not be burned: no, **it works not as a natural, but as a moral cause, whose efficacy depends on the gracious and arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit.** "The wind bloweth where it listeth," [John 3: 8](#). The ordinances are like the pool of Bethesda, [John 5: 4](#). At a certain time an angel came down and troubled the waters, and then they had a healing virtue in them. So the Spirit comes down at certain times in the word, and opens the heart; and then it becomes the power of God to salvation. So that when you see souls daily sitting under excellent and choice means, and remain dead

still, you may say as Martha did to Christ of her brother Lazarus, Lord, if thou hadst been here they had not remained dead. If thou hadst been in this sermon, it had not been so ineffectual to them.

3. **It implies the utter impotency of man to open his own heart**, and thereby make the word effectual to his own conversion and salvation. He that at first said, "let there be light," and it was so, must shine into our hearts, or they will never be savingly enlightened, [2 Cor. 4: 4, 6](#). A double misery lies upon a great part of mankind, viz. **Impotency and Pride**. They have not only lost the liberty and freedom of their wills, but with it have so far lost their understanding and humility as not to own it. **But, alas! Man is become a most impotent creature by the fall; so far from being able to open his own heart, that he cannot know the things of the Spirit, [1 Cor. 2: 14](#).** cannot believe, [John 6: 44](#). cannot obey, [Rom. 8: 7](#). cannot speak one good word, [Matt. 12: 34](#), cannot think one good thought, [2 Cor. 3: 5](#), cannot do one good act, [John 15: 5](#). Oh what a helpless, shiftless thing is a poor sinner! Suitably to this state of impotence, conversion is in scripture called regeneration, [John 3: 3](#), a resurrection from the dead, [Eph. 2: 5](#). a creation, [Eph. 2: 10](#). a victory, [2 Cor. 10: 5](#). Which does not only imply man to be purely passive in his conversion to God, but a renitency, and opposition made to that power which goes forth from God to recover him.

Lastly, **Christ's opening the understanding imports his divine power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself**. Who but God knows the heart? Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure? No mere creature, no not the angels themselves, who for their large understandings are called intelligences, can command or open the heart. We may stand and knock at men's hearts, till our own ache; but no opening till Christ come. He can fit a key to all the cross wards of the will, **and with sweet efficacy open it, and that without any force or violence to it.** [This the Arminians do not understand; they accuse Calvinists of believing that God forces people against their will, making them robots.¹] These things are carried in this part of his office, consisting in opening the heart: which was the first thing propounded for explication.

¹ John Norton makes this point clearly, arguing that God's determination of the creature's will offers no violence to it: Either the will is determined by God in its operation, or else it would follow, either that there were not an essential subordination of the second cause unto the first, that is, of man to God, which were repugnant to the nature of the second cause (it being imperfect and dependent); or that the first Cause were subordinate to the second, which were repugnant to the nature of the first Cause, being perfect and universal.

The will cannot be compelled: to say that which is done willingly is done constrainedly is to affirm a contradiction namely, that which is willing is unwilling. God can determine the will and not prejudice the nature of the will because he is an infinite Cause. God determineth the will suitably and agreeably to its own nature, that is, freely. He so determineth the will as the will determineth itself. God so determineth the will as the first free agent, as that the will determineth itself as a second free agent. **The efficacy of God offereth no violence, nor changeth the nature of things, but govereth them according to their own natures; it reacheth from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordereth all things.** The external, transient,

efficacious motion of God upon the will determineth the will with a real determination: the will so moved, moveth itself with a real and formal determination. - James Dolezal's work: *Agency, Concurrence and Evil, A Study in Divine Providence*

G. Vos states: Reformed Dogmatics, p660

31. How does God move the will of man? In a manner that accords with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.

Secondly, In the next place, let us see by what acts Jesus Christ performs this work of his, and what way and method he takes to open the hearts of sinners.

And there are two principal ways, by which Christ opens the understandings and hearts of men, viz. **by his Word and Spirit.**

1. By his word; to this end was Paul commissioned and sent to preach the gospel, [Acts 26: 18](#). "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." The Lord can, if he pleases, accomplish this immediately; but though he can do it, he will not do it ordinarily without means, because he will honour his own institutions. Therefore you may observe, that when Lydia's heart was to be opened, "there appeared unto Paul a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us," [Acts 19: 9](#). God will keep up his ordinances among men: and though he has not tied himself, yet he has tied us, to them. Cornelius must send for Peter: God can make the earth produce corn, as it did at first, without cultivation and labour; but he that shall now expect it in the neglect of means, may perish for want of bread.

2. **But the ordinances in themselves cannot do it**, as I noted before; and therefore Jesus Christ has sent forth the **Spirit**, who is his Prorex, his **vicegerent**, to carry on this work upon the hearts of his elect. And when the Spirit comes down upon the souls in the administration of the ordinances, **he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the healing of faith**. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions so much that word, [John 16: 8](#). imports, "He shall convince the world of sin;" convince by clear demonstration, such as enforces assent, so that the soul cannot but yield it to be so; and yet the door of the heart is not opened, till he has also put forth his power upon the will, and, **by a sweet and secret efficacy, overcome all its reductions, and the soul be made willing in the day of his power.** [\[Ps 110:3\]](#) When this is done, the heart is opened: saving light now shines in it; and this light set up, the Spirit in the soul is,

1. A new light in which all things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names Christ and sin, the words heaven and hell have another sound in that man's ears, than formerly they had. When he comes to read the same scriptures, which possibly he had read a hundred times before, he wonders he

should be so blind as he was, to overlook such great, weighty, and concerning things as he now beholds in them; and saith, Where were mine eyes, that I could never see these things before?

2. It is a very affecting light; a light that has heat and powerful influences with it, which makes **deep impressions on the heart**. Hence they whose eyes the great Prophet opens, are said to be “brought out of darkness into his marvellous light,” [1 Pet. 2: 9](#). The soul is greatly affected with what it sees. The beams of light are contracted and twisted together in the mind; and being reflected on the heart and affections, soon cause them to smoke and burn. “Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures?”

3. And it is a growing light, like the light of the morning which “shines more and more unto the perfect day,” [Prov. 4: 18](#). When the Spirit first opens the understanding, he does not give it at once a full sight of all truths, or a full sense of the power, sweetness and goodness of any truth; **but the soul in the use of means grows up to a greater clearness day by day**: its knowledge grows extensively in measure, and intensively in power and efficacy. And thus the Lord Jesus by his Spirit opens the understanding. Now the use of this follows in five practical deductions.

Inference 1. If this be the work and office of Jesus Christ, to open the understandings of men; hence we infer the miseries that lie upon those men, whose understandings, to this day, Jesus Christ has not opened; of whom we may say, as it is, [Deut. 24: 4](#). “To this day Christ has not given them eyes to see.” Natural blindness, whereby we are deprived of the light of this world, is sad; but spiritual blindness is much more so. See how dolefully their case is represented, [2 Cor. 4: 3, 4](#). “**But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: whose eyes the God of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them:**” he means a total and final concealment of the saving power of the word from them. Why, what if Jesus Christ withhold it, and will not be a prophet to them, what is their condition? Truly no better than lost men. It is hid “tois apollumenois”, to them that are to perish, or be destroyed. This blindness, like the covering of the face, or tying the handkerchief over the eyes, is in order to their turning off into hell. More particularly, because the point is of deep concernment, let us consider,

1. The judgment inflicted, and that is **spiritual blindness**. A sore misery indeed! Not an universal ignorance of all truths, O no! in natural and moral truths they are oftentimes acute, and sharp sighted men; but in that part of knowledge which wraps up eternal life, [John 17:2](#), there they are utterly blinded: as it is said of the Jews, upon whom this misery lies, that blindness in part is happened to Israel. They are learned and knowing persons in other matters, but they know not Jesus Christ; there is the grand and sad defect.

2. The subject of this judgment, **the mind, which is the eye of the soul**. If it were put upon the body, it would not be so considerable; this falls immediately upon the **soul**, **the noblest part of man**, and upon the **mind**, **the highest and noblest faculty of the soul**, **whereby we understand, think, and reason**. This

in scripture is called “pneuma”, the spirit, the intellectual, **rational faculty**, which the philosophers call “to hegemonikon”, the **leading directive faculty**; which is to the soul what the natural eye is to the body. Now the soul being the most active and restless thing in the world, always working, and its leading, directive power blind, judge what a sad and dangerous state such a soul is in; just like a fiery, high-mettled horse, whose eyes are out, furiously carrying his rider up on rocks, pits and dangerous precipices. I remember Chrysostom, speaking of the loss of a soul, saith that the loss of a member of the body is nothing to it; for, saith he, If a man lose an eye, ear, hand or foot, there is another to supply its want: *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, “God has given us those members double;” animam vero unam, “but he has not given us two souls,” that if one be lost, yet the other may be saved. Surely it were better for thee, reader, to have every member of thy body made the seat and subject of the most exquisite racking torments, than for spiritual blindness to befall thy soul. Moreover,

3. Consider the indiscernableness of this judgement to the soul on whom it lies: they know it not, no more than a man knows that he is asleep. Indeed it is “the spirit of a deep sleep poured out upon them from the Lord,” [Isa. 29: 10](#). like that which befall Adam when God opened his side, and took out a rib. This renders their misery the more remediless: “Because ye say you see, therefore your sin remaineth,” [John 9: 41](#). Once more,

4. Consider the tendency and effects of it. What does this tend to but eternal ruin? for hereby we are cut off from the only remedy. The soul that is so blinded, can never see sin, nor a Saviour; but, like the Egyptians, during the palpable darkness, sits still, and moves not after its own recovery. And as ruin is that to which it tends, so in order thereto, it renders all the ordinances and duties under which that soul comes, altogether useless and ineffectual to its salvation. He comes to the word, and sees others melted by it, but to him it signifies nothing. O what a heavy stroke of God is this! Most wretched is their case, to whom Jesus Christ will not apply this eye-salve, that they may see. Did you but understand the misery of such a state, if Christ should say to you, as he did to the blind man, [Mat. 20: 33](#). That wilt thou that I should do for thee?” You would return as he did, “Lord, that my eyes may be opened.”

Infer. 2. If Jesus Christ be the great Prophet of the church, then surely he will take special care both of the church and the under shepherds appointed by him to feed them: else both the objects and instruments upon and by which he executes his office, must fail and consequently this glorious office be in vain. Hence he is said “to walk among the golden candlesticks,” [Rev. 1: 13](#): and [Rev. 2: 1](#). “to hold the stars in his right hand.” Jesus Christ instrumentally opens the understandings of men by preaching of the gospel; and whilst there is an elect soul to be converted, or a convert to be farther illuminated, means shall not fail to accomplish it by.

Infer. 3. Hence you that are yet in darkness, may be directed to whom to apply yourselves for saving knowledge. It is Christ that has the sovereign eye-salve, that can cure your blindness; he only has the key of the house of David; he opens, and no man shutteth. O that I might persuade you to set

yourselves in his way, under the ordinances, and cry to him, “Lord, that my eyes may be opened.” Three things are marvelously encouraging to you so to do

1. God the Father has put him into this office, for the cure of such as you be, [Isa. 49: 6](#). “I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth”. This may furnish you with an argument to plead for a cure. Why do you not go to God, and say, Lord, didst thou give Jesus Christ a commission to open the blind eyes? Behold me, Lord, such a one am I, a poor, dark, ignorant soul. Didst thou give him to be thy salvation to the ends of the earth? No place nor people excluded from the benefit of that right; and shall I still remain in the shadow of death? O that unto me he might be a saving light also? The best and most excellent work that ever thou wroughtest, brings thee no glory till it comes into the light! O let me see and admire it!

2. It is encouraging to think, that Jesus Christ has actually opened the eyes of them that are as dark and ignorant as you are. He has revealed those things to babes, that have been hid from the wise and prudent, [Mat. 11: 25](#). “The law of the Lord is perfect, making wise the simple,” [Psal. 19: 7](#). And if you look among those whom Christ has enlightened, you will not find “many wise after the flesh, many mighty or noble; but the foolish, weak, base, and despised; these are they on whom he has glorified the riches of his grace,” [1 Cor. 1: 26, 27](#).

3. And is it not yet farther encouraging to you that hitherto he has mercifully continued you under the means of light? Why is not the light of the gospel put out? Why are times and seasons of grace continued to you, if God have no farther design of good to your souls? Be not therefore discouraged, but wait on the Lord in the use of means, that you may yet be healed.

Quest. If you ask, What can we do to put ourselves into the way of the Spirit, in order to such a cure?

Sol. I say, though you cannot do any thing, that can make the gospel effectual, yet the Spirit of God can make those means you are capable of using effectual, if he please to concur with them. **And it is a certain truth, that your inability to do what is above your power, does no ways excuse you from doing what is within the compass of your power to do.** I know no act that is saving, can be done without the concurrence of spiritual grace; yea, and no act that has a remote order and tendency thereto, without a more general concurrence of God’s assistance: but herein he is not behind hand with you. Let me therefore advise,

1. That you diligently attend upon an able, faithful, and searching ministry. **Neglect no opportunity God affords you;** for how know you but that may be the time of mercy to your soul? If he that lay so many years at the pool of Bethesda, had been wanting but that hour when the angel came down and troubled the waters, he had not been healed.

2. Satisfy not yourselves with hearing, but consider what ye hear. Avow time to reflect upon what God has spoken to you. What power is there in man more excellent, or more appropriate to the

reasonable nature, than its reflective and self-considering power? There is little hope of any good to be done upon your souls, till you begin to go alone, and become thinking men and women: Here all conversion begins. I know, a severer task can hardly be imposed upon a carnal heart. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together upon this account: but this must be, if ever the Lord do your souls good. [Psal. 4: 4.](#) “Commune with your own hearts.”

3. Labour to see, and ingenuously confess the insufficiency of all your other knowledge to do you good. What if you had never so much skill and knowledge in other mysteries? What if you be never so well acquainted with the letter of the scripture? What if you had an angelical illumination? This can never save thy soul. No, all thy knowledge signifies nothing till the Lord show thee by special light the deplorable sight of thy own heart, and a saving sight of Jesus Christ, thy only remedy.

Inf. 4. Since then there is a common light, and special saving light, which none but Christ can give, it is therefore the concernment, of every one of you to try what your light is. “We know, (saith the apostle, [1 Cor. 8: 1.](#)) that we all have knowledge.” O but what, and whence is it? Is it the light of life springing from Jesus Christ, that bright and morning star, or only such as the devils and damned have? **These lights differ,**

1. **In their very kind and natures.** The one is heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual, the other earthly, and natural, the effect of a better constitution or education, [James 3: 15, 17.](#)

2. **They differ most apparently in their effects and operations.** The light that comes in a special way from Christ, is humbling, abasing, and soul-emptying light: **by it a man sees the vileness of his own nature and practice, which begets self-loathing in him;** but natural light, on the contrary, puffs up, exalts, and makes the heart swell with self-conceitedness, [1 Cor. 8: 1.](#)

The light of Christ is practical and operative, still urging the soul, yet lovingly constraining it to obedience. No sooner did it shine into Paul’s heart, but presently he asks, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” [Acts 9: 13.](#) It brought forth fruit on the Colossians, from the first day it came to them, [Col. 1: 6;](#) but the other spends itself in impractical notions, and is detained in unrighteousness, [Rom. 1: 18.](#) **The light of Christ is powerfully transformative of its subjects, changing the man, in whom it is, into the same image, from glory to glory, [2 Cor. 3: 18.](#) But common light leaves the heart as dead, as carnal and sensual, as if no light at all were in it.**

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[a] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[b] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. [2Cor3:18](#)

In a word, **All saving light endears Jesus Christ to the soul;** and as it could not value him before it saw him, **so when once he appears to the soul in his own light, he is appreciated and endeared unspeakably:** then none but Christ; all is but dung, that he may win Christ: none in heaven but him, nor in earth desirable in comparison of him. But no such effect flows from natural common knowledge. [So

this is how the Holy Spirit will infallibly convert all those whom He wills to convert while not doing violence to the will or forcing the will as Arminians accuse Calvinists. For Arminians to use this strawman argument is to ignore the very essence and logical consequences of the meanings of this passage, Ps 36:9, *For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light*, as well as many others such as Psalm 110:3, *My people will be willing in the day of his power*, John 6:37, *all that the Father gives me will come to me*, John 10:27,28 - *My sheep hear my voice...etc.*, Ezek. 36:26, *I will remove the heart of stone*, i.e., remove the resistance, the hard unbelieving heart! thus infallibly making the heart willing, in this day of his sweet and omnipotent power *that works in us both to will and to do for his good pleasure*, Phil. 2:13] *God sweetly convinces*, as Flavel describes¹, and thus, in effect, conquers the stubborn and hard heart. Cannot an infinitely wise and powerful God do this? Are not his thoughts and ways higher than ours? Is his arm too short to save? *For who can resist his will?* Romans 9. Many who oppose this sovereign work of God on his elect think that He is altogether like us! Ps 50:21. And so they figure that the only way that God can infallibly convert all his elect is by forced obedience, thus destroying man's will in the process, hence they say a forced love is no genuine love. But this strawman argument stems from their ignorance, Psalm 50:21, *These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself*. And thus, they complain, and insinuate that God is unrighteous, in that he is destroying man's will or liberty by forcing them to love Him, and thus try to bring God to account by challenging God's infinite power and wisdom, in the like manner upon a similar issue, as those that Paul replies to in Romans 9! "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, *Why have you made me like this?*"²¹ *Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?* I suspect that those who doubt this way in which God converts the soul without doing violence to the will, hence the effectual call being irresistible God will save all he desires with infinite ease, do so upon this faulty foundation of *natural common knowledge* and not the knowledge of God. [2Chron. 20:6, *...none is able to withstand you.*]

3. They differ in their issues. Natural common knowledge vanisheth, as the apostle speaks, [1 Cor. 13: 8](#). It is but a Mayflower, and dies in its month. "Does not their excellency that is in them go away?" [Job 4: 21](#). But this that springs from Christ is perfected, not destroyed by death: **it springs up into everlasting life**. The soul in which it is subjected, carries it away with it into glory. [John 17: 2](#). this light is life eternal. Now turn in, and compare yourselves with these rules: let not false light deceive you.

Inf. 5. Lastly, How are they obliged to love, serve, and honour Jesus Christ, whom he has enlightened with the saving knowledge of himself? O that with hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, ye would adore the free grace of Jesus Christ to your souls? How many round about you have their eyes closed, and their hearts shut up! How many are in darkness, and there are like to remain, till they come to the blackness of darkness, which is reserved for them? O what a pleasant thing is it for your eyes to see the light of this world! But what is it for the eye of your mind to see God in Christ? To see such ravishing sights as the objects of faith are? and to have such a pledge as this given you of the blessed visions of glory? for in this light you shall see light. Bless God, and boast not: rejoice in your light, but be proud of

it; and beware ye sin not against the best and highest light in this world. If God were so incensed against the Heathens for disobeying the light of nature, what is it in you to sin with eyes clearly illuminated with the purest light that shines in this world? You know, God charges it upon Solomon, [1 Kings 11: 9](#), that he turned from the way of obedience after the Lord, had appeared, to him twice. Jesus Christ intended when he opened your eyes, that your eyes should direct your feet. **Light is a special help to obedience, and obedience is a singular help to increase your light.**

¹*Flavel regarding the faculty of the will in conversion:* View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. God accepts its offering; though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent so ever be the matter of it. (pg 254 The Soul of Man)

G. Vos states: Reformed Dogmatics, p660

31. How does God move the will of man? In a manner that accords with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.

Absolute Dependency Upon the Spirit

code70

Sermon 28 - Flavel

Get a load of this sermon! Grace without the Spirit working it, is a weight to the Christian. This causes me to be even more watchful and humble and prayerful and smaller in my own eyes and have a keener awareness of our complete and absolute dependence upon God (vs. self-sufficiency, etc.). He uses many examples, but the main one he expounds on is the scattering of the sheep, the disciples, upon the apprehension of Jesus by the Pharisees, troops, etc., that night he was betrayed....what are the how's and why's and inferences, etc., behind their being scattered. Now you'll see what condition Adam was in and why he fell!! He had grace concreated in him upon his creation but he had no promise of continual supplies of grace from the Spirit as we Christians do [see Flavel, page 1700, 1708-9]; that is, he had not the Spirit of Adoption; he was on his own (on trial or probation), and hence, doomed to fall (to show, ultimately that our sufficiency is not in ourselves but in God! 2Cor3:4-6, "⁴Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.) And he, being perfect in a perfect environment - Oh, how more watchful we should

be, being jealous of our souls, while in a far worse condition and a far worst environment!! [Owen speaks on this too on page 382](#). There's more subsequent to this, but later on that.

I **highlighted** and underlined things etc., for emphasis and added my own comments in [blue]

Sermon 28.

Of the manner of Christ's Death, in respect to the Solitariness thereof.

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/fountain.v.xxviii.html>

Zechariah 13:7

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man [that is] my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

In the former sermons, we have opened the nature and kind of death Christ died; even the cursed death of the cross. Wherein, nevertheless his innocence was vindicated, by that honourable title providentially affixed to his cross. [\[by Pilate, see sermon 27\]](#) Method now requires that we take into consideration the manner in which he endured the cross, and that was solitarily, meekly, and instructively.

His solitude in suffering is plainly expressed in this scripture now before us, it cannot be doubted, but the prophet in this place speaks of Christ, if you consider [Matt. 26: 31](#), where you shall find these words applied to Christ by his own accommodation of them, "Then said Jesus unto them, all ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Besides, the title here given [God's fellow] is too big for any creature in heaven or earth besides Christ.

In these words we have four things particularly to consider. First, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. Secondly, The person against whom it is commissioned. Thirdly, The dismal effect of that stroke. Fourthly and lastly, The gracious mitigation of it.

First, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. "Awake, O sword, and smite, saith the Lord of hosts."

The Lord of hosts, at whose beck and command all the creatures are. Who, with a word of his mouth, can open all the armories in the world, and command what weapons and instruments of death he pleaseth, calls here for the sword; not the rod, gently to chasten; but the sword to destroy. The rod breaks no bones, but the sword opens the door to death and destruction. The strokes and thrusts of the sword are mortal; and he bids it awake. It signifies both "to rouse up," as one that awakes out of sleep, and "to rouse or awake with triumph and rejoicing." So the same word is rendered, [Job 31: 29](#). Yea, he commands it, "to awake and smite." And it is as if the Lord had said, Come forth of thy scabbard, O sword of justice, thou hast been hid there a long time, and hast, as it were, been asleep in thy scabbard, now awake and glitter, thou shalt drink royal blood, such as thou never sheddest before.

Secondly, The person against whom it is commissioned, “my shepherd, and the man that is my fellows.” This shepherd can be no other than Christ, who is often in scripture styled “a Shepherd, yea, the chief Shepherd, the Prince of pastors.” **Who redeemed, feeds, guides, and preserves the flock of God’s elect, [1 Pet. 5: 4.](#) [John 10: 11.](#)** This is he whom he also stiles the man his fellow or his neighbor, as some render it. And so Christ is, with respect to his equality and unity with the Father, both in essence and will. His next neighbor. His other self. You have the sense of it in [Phil. 2: 6.](#) He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

Against Christ his fellow, his next neighbor, the delight of his soul, the sword here receives its commission.

Thirdly, you have here the dismal consequent of this deadly stroke upon the shepherd. And that is the scattering of the sheep. By the sheep understand here, that little flock, the disciples, which followed this shepherd till he was smitten i.e. apprehended by his enemies, and they were scattered, i.e. dispersed; they all forsook him and fled. And so Christ was left alone, amidst his enemies. Not one durst make a stand for him, or own him in that hour of his danger.

Fourthly, And lastly, Here is a gracious mitigation of this sad dispersion, “I will turn my hand upon the little ones.” By little ones he means the same that before he called sheep; but the expression is designedly varied, to show their feebleness and weakness, which appeared in their relapse from Christ. And by turning his hand upon them, understand God’s gracious reduction, and gathering of them again after their sad dispersion, so that they shall not be lost, though scattered for the present. For after the Lord was risen, he went before them into Galilee, as he promised, [Matth. 26: 31.](#) And gathered them again by a gracious hand, so that not one of them was lost but the son of perdition.

The words thus opened, I shall observe suitably to the method I have proposed.

Doctrine. That Christ’s dearest friends forsook and left him alone, in the time of his greatest distress and danger.

This doctrine containing only matter of fact, and that also so plainly delivered by the pens of the several faithful Evangelists, I need spend no longer time in the proof of it, than to refer you to the several testimonies they have given to it. But I shall rather choose to fit and prepare it for use, by explaining these four questions.

First, Who were the sheep that were scattered from their shepherd, and left him alone?

Secondly, What evil was there in this their scattering?

Thirdly, What were the grounds and causes of it?

Fourthly, and lastly, What was the issue and event of it?

First, Who were these sheep that were dispersed and scattered from their shepherd when he was smitten. It is evident they were those precious elect souls that he had gathered to himself, who had long followed him, and dearly loved him, and were dearly beloved of him. They were persons that had

left all and followed him, and, till that time, faithfully continued with him in his temptations, [Luke 22: 28](#). And were all resolved so to do, though they should die with him, [Matth. 26: 35](#). These were the persons.

Secondly, But were they as good as their word? Did they indeed stick faithfully to him? No, they all forsook him and fled. These sheep were scattered. This was not indeed a total and final apostasy, that is the fall proper to the hypocrite, the temporary believer, who, like a comet, expires when that earthly matter is spent that maintained the blaze for a time.

These were stars fixed in their orb, though clouded and overcast for a time. This was but a mist or fog, which overspreads the earth in the morning till the sun be risen, and then it clears up and proves a fair day. But though it was not a total and final apostasy; yet it was a very sinful and sad relapse from Jesus Christ, as will appear by considering the following aggravations and circumstances of it. For,

First, This relapse of theirs was against the very articles of agreement, which they had sealed to Christ at their first admission into his service; he had told them, in the beginning, what they must resolve upon, [Luke 14: 26, 27](#). "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Accordingly they submitted to these terms, and told him they had left all and followed him, [Mark 10: 28](#). Against this engagement made to Christ, they now sin. Here was unfaithfulness.

Secondly, As it was against the very terms of their admission, so it was against the very principles of grace implanted by Christ in their hearts. They were holy sanctified persons, in whom dwelt the love and fear of God. By these they were strongly inclined to adhere to Christ, in the time of his sufferings, as appears by those honest resolves they had made in the case. Their grace strongly inclined them to their duty, their corruptions swayed them the contrary way. **Grace bid them stand, corruption bid them fly.** Grace told them it was their duty to share in the sufferings as well as in the glory of Christ. **Corruption represented these sufferings as intolerable, and bid them shift for themselves whilst they might.** So that here must needs be a force and violence offered to their light, and the loving constraints thereof; which is no small evil.

For though I grant it was a sudden, surprising temptation, yet it cannot be imagined that this fact was wholly deliberate; nor that, for so long time, they were without any debate or seasonings about their duty.

Thirdly, As it was against their own principles, so it was much against the honour of their Lord and Master. By this their sinful flight they exposed the Lord Jesus to the contempt and scorn of his enemies. This some conceive is imported in that question which the High-priest asked him, [John 18: 19](#). "The High priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." He asked him of his disciples, how many he had, and what was become of them now? And what was the reason they forsook their master, and left him to shift for himself when danger appeared? But to those questions Christ made no reply. He would not accuse them to their enemies, though they had deserted him. But, doubtless, it did

not a little reflect upon Christ, that there was not one of all his friends that durst own their relation to him, in a time of danger.

Fourthly, As it was against Christ's honour, so it was against their own solemn promise made to him before his apprehension, to live and die with him. They had passed their word, and given their promise that they would not flinch from him, [Matth. 26: 35](#). "Peter said to him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." This made it a perfidious relapse. Here they break promise with Christ who never did so with them. He might have told then when he met them afterwards in Galilee, as the Roman soldier told his general, when he refused his petition after the war was ended, I did not serve ye so at the battle of Actium.

Fifthly, As it was against their solemn promise to Christ, so it was against Christ's heart-melting expostulations with them, which should have abode in their hearts while they lived. For when others that followed him went back, and walked no more with him, Jesus said to these very men, that now forsook him at last, Will ye also go away? There is an emphasis in [ye] q.d. What, ye that from eternity were given to me! Ye whom I have called, loved, and honoured above others, for whose sakes I am ready and resolved to die. "Will ye also forsake me?" [John 6: 67](#). What ever others do, I expect other things from you.

Sixthly, As it was against Christ's heart-melting expostulations with them, so it was against a late direful example presented to them in the fall of Judas. In him, as in a glass, they might see how fearful a thing it is to apostatize from Christ. They had heard Christ's dreadful threats against him. They were present when he called him the son of perdition, [John 18: 11](#). They had heard Christ say of him, "Good had it been if he had never been born." An expression able to scare the deadest heart. They saw he had left Christ the evening before. And that very day, in which they fled, he hanged himself. And yet they fly. For all this they forsake Christ.

Seventhly, As it was against the dreadful warning given them in the fall of Judas, so it was against the law of love, which should have knit them closer to Christ, and to one another.

If to avoid the present shock of persecution, they had fled, yet surely they should have kept together, praying, watching, encouraging, and strengthening one another. This had made it a lesser evil: but as they all forsook Christ, so they forsook one another also; for it is said, [John 16: 32](#) "They shall go every man to his own, and leave Christ alone," (i.e. saith Beza) every man to his own house, and to his own business. They forsook each other, as well as Christ. O what an hour of temptation was this!

Eighthly, and lastly, This their departure from Christ, was accompanied with some offence at Christ. For so he tells them, [Matth. 26: 31](#). "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." The word is, "skandalisthesesthe", you shall be scandalized at me, or in me. Some think the scandal they took at Christ was this, that when they saw he was fallen into his enemies' hands, and could no longer defend himself; they then began to question whether he were the Christ or no, since he could not defend himself from his enemies. Others, more rightly, understand it of their shameful flight from Christ, seeing it was not now safe to abide longer with him. That seeing he gave himself into their hands, they thought it advisable to provide as well as they could for themselves, and somewhere or other, to take

refuge from the present storm, which had overtaken him. This was the nature and quality of the fact. We enquire,
Thirdly, Into the grounds and reasons of it. Which were three.

First, God's suspending wonted influences and aids of grace from them. They were not wont to do so. They never did so afterwards. They would not have done so now, had there been influences of power, zeal, and love from heaven upon them. But how then should Christ have borne the heat and burden of the day? How should he tread the wine-press alone? How should his sorrows have been extreme, unmixed, succourless (as it behoved them to be) if they had stuck faithfully to him in his troubles? No, no, it must not be; Christ must not have the least relief or comfort from any creature; and therefore, that he might be left alone, to grapple hand to hand with the wrath of God, and of men; the Lord for a time withholds his encouraging, strengthening influences from them; and then, like Samson when he had lost his locks, they were weak as other men.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," saith the apostle, [Eph. 6: 10](#). If that be withheld, our resolutions and purposes melt away before a temptation, as snow before the sun.

Secondly, As God permitted it, and with-held usual aid from them; so the efficacy of that temptation was great, yea, much greater than ordinary. As they were weaker than they were used to be, so the temptation was stronger than any they had yet met withal. It is called, [Luke 22: 53](#). "Their hour and the power of darkness." A sifting, winnowing hour, ver. 46. O it was a black and cloudy day. Never had the disciples met with such a whirlwind, such a furious storm before. The devil desired but to have the winnowing of them in that day, and so would have sifted and winnowed them, that their faith had utterly failed, had not Christ secured it by his prayer for them. So that it was an extraordinary trial that was upon them.

Thirdly and lastly, That which concurred to their shameful relapse, as a special cause of it, was the remaining corruptions that were in their hearts yet unfortified. Their knowledge was but little, and their faith not much. Upon the account of their weakness in grace, they were called little ones in the text. And as their graces were weak, so their corruptions were strong. Their unbelief, and carnal fears grew powerfully upon them.

Do not censure them, reader, in thy thoughts, nor despise them for this their weakness. Neither say in thy heart, Had I been there as they were, I would never have done as they did. They thought as little of doing what they did, as you, or any of the saints do; and as much did their souls detest and abhor it: but here thou mayest see, whither a soul that fears God may be carried, if his corruptions be irritated by strong temptation, and God withholds usual influences.

Fourthly and lastly, Let us view the issue of this sad apostasy of theirs. And you shall find it ended far better than it began. Though these sheep were scattered for a time, yet the Lord made good his promise, in turning his hand upon these little ones, to gather them. The morning was over cast, but the evening was clear.

Peter repents of his perfidious denial of Christ, and never denied him more. All the rest likewise returned to Christ, and never forsook him any more. He that was afraid at the voice of a damsel,

afterwards feared not the frowns of the mighty. And they that durst not own Christ now, afterwards confessed him openly before councils, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake, [Acts 5: 41](#). They that were now as timorous as hares, and started at every sound, afterward became as bold as lions, and feared not any danger, but sealed their confession of Christ with their blood. **For though, at this time, they forsook him, it was not voluntarily, but by surprisal.** Though they forsook him, they still loved him; though they fled from him, **there still remained a gracious principle** in them; **the root of the matter was still in them**, which recovered them again.

To conclude: Though they forsook Christ, yet Christ never forsook them: he loved them still; "Go tell the disciples, and tell Peter, that he goes before you into Galilee," [Mark 16: 7](#). q.d. Let them not think that I so remember their unkindness, as to own them no more: No, I love them still.

The use of this is contained in the following inferences.

Inference. 1. Did the disciples forsake Christ, though they had such strong persuasions and resolutions never to do it? Then we see, **That self-confidence is a sin too incident to the best of men. They little thought their hearts would have proved so base and deceitful, as they found them to be when they were tried.** "Though all men forsake thee (saith Peter) yet will not!" Good man, he resolved honestly, but he knew not what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if God once left him to his own fears.

Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it will. The angels left to themselves, quickly left their own habitations, [Jude 6](#). Upon which, one well observes, **That the best of created perfections, are of themselves defectible. Every excellency without the prop of divine preservation, is but a weight which tends to a fall.** The angels in their innocence, were but frail, without God's sustentation; even grace itself is but a creature, and therefore purely dependent. It is not from its being and nature, but from the assistance of something without it, that it is kept from annihilation. **What becomes of the stream, if the fountain supply it not?** What continuance has the reflection in the glass, if the man that looks into it, turn away his face? **[I think James 1:23-24 is hinted at here]** **The constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, are the food and fuel of all our graces. The best men will show themselves but men if God leave them.** He who has set them up, must also keep them. It is safer to be humble with one talent, than proud with ten; yea, better to be an humble worm, than a proud angel. Adam had more advantage to maintain his station than any of you. **For though he were left to the liberty of his own mutable and self-determining will; and though he was created upright, and had no inherent corruption to endanger him, yet he fell.**

And shall we be self confident, after such instances of human frailty! Alas, Christian! What match art thou for principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness! "Be not high-minded, but fear." When you have considered well the example of **Noah**, Lot, **David**, and **Hezekiah**, men famous and renowned in their generations, who all fell by temptations; yea, and that when one would think they had never been better provided to cope with them. Lot fell after, yea, presently after the Lord had thrust him out of Sodom, and his eyes had seen the direful punishment of sin. Hell, as it were, rained upon them out of heaven. **Noah**, in like manner, immediately after God's wonderful, and astonishing preservation of him in the ark; when he saw a world of men and women, perishing in the floods for their sins. **David**,

after the Lord had settled the kingdom on him, which for sin he rent from **Saul**, and given him rest in his house. **Hezekiah** was but just up from a great sickness, wherein the Lord wrought a wonderful salvation for him. Did such men, and at such times, when one would think no temptations should have prevailed, fall; and that so foully? **Then “let him that thinks he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” O be not high minded, but fear.**

Inference. 2. Did Christ stand his ground, and go through with his suffering-work, when all that had followed him, forsook him? Then a resolved adherence to God, and duty, though left alone, without company or encouragement, is Christ-like, and truly excellent. You shall not want better company than that which has forsaken you in the way of God. Elijah complains, [1 Kings 19: 10](#) “They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away” And yet all this did not damp or discourage him in following the Lord; for still he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.

Paul complains, [2 Tim 4: 16](#) “At my first answer no man stood by me, all men forsook me: nevertheless the Lord stood with me.” And as the Lord stood by him, so he stood by his God alone, without any aids or support from men. How great an argument of integrity is this! He that professes Christ for company, will also leave him for company. But to be faithful to God, when forsaken of men; to be a Lot, in Sodomy a Noah, in a corrupted generation; oh, how excellent is it! It is sweet to travel over this earth to heaven, in the company of the saints, that are bound it thither with us, if we can; but if we can meet no company, we must not be discouraged to go on. It is not unlike, but before you have gone many steps farther, you may have cause to say, as one did once, Never less alone, than when alone.

[Perseverance of the Saints]

Inference 3. Did the disciples thus forsake Christ, and yet were all recovered at last? Then, though believers are not privileged from backsliding, **yet they are secured from final apostasy and ruin. The new creature may be sick, it cannot die.** Saints may fall, but they shall rise again, [Micah 7: 8](#). The highest flood, of natural zeal and resolution, may ebb, and be wholly dried up; but saving grace is “a well of water, still springing up into everlasting life,” [John 4: 14](#). God’s unchangeable election, the frame and constitution of the New Covenant, the meritorious and prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, do give the believer abundant security against the danger of a total and final apostasy. “My Father, which gave them me, saith Christ, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand,” [John 10: 29](#).

And again, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth who are his,” [2 Tim. 2: 19](#). Every person committed to Christ by the Father, shall be brought by him to the Father, and not one wanting.

God has also so framed and ordered the new covenant, that none of those souls, who are within the blessed clasp and bond of it can possibly be lost. It is settled upon immutable things: and we know all things are as their foundations be, [Heb. 6: 18, 19](#). Among the many glorious promises contained in the bundle of promises, this is one, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

And as the fear of God in our hearts, pleads in us against sin, so our potent intercessor in the heavens pleads for us with the Father; and by reason thereof, we cannot finally miscarry, Rom. 8: 34, 35. Upon these grounds, we may (as the apostle in the place last cited does) triumph in that full security which God has given us; and say, What “shall separate us from the love of God?” Understand it either of God’s to us, as Calvin, Beza, and Martyr do; or of our love to God, as Ambrose and Augustine do: it is true in both senses, and a most comfortable truth.

Inference 4. Did the sheep fly, when the shepherd was smitten; such men, and so many forsake Christ in the trial? Then learn how sad a thing it is for the best of men to be left to their own carnal fears in a day of temptation: This was it that made those good men shrink away so shamefully from Christ in that trial: “The fear of man brings a snare,” Prov. 29: 25. In that snare these good souls were taken, and for a time held fast.

Oh what work will this unruly passion make, if the fear of God do not over-rule it! Is it not a shame to a Christian, a man of faith to see himself out done by an Heathen? Shall natural conscience and courage make them stand and keep their places in times of danger; when we shamefully turn our backs upon duty, because we see duty and danger together?

When the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidius Priscus not to come to the senate; or, if he did, to speak nothing but what he would have him; the senator returned this brave and noble answer, “That as he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if, being there, he were required to give his advice, he would speak freely, that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die; he returned thus, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do you what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in me to die constantly.” O think, what mischief you; fears may do yourselves, and the discovery of them to others. O learn to trust God with your lives, liberties, and comforts, in the way of your duty; and at that time you are afraid trust in him: and do not magnify poor dust and ashes, as to be scared, by their threat, from your God and your duty. The politic design of Satan herein, is to affright you out of your coverts, where you are safe, into the net. I will enlarge on this no farther; I have elsewhere laid down fourteen rules for the cure of this, in what of mine is public.

Inference. 5. Learn hence, How much a man may differ from himself, according as the Lord is with him, or withdrawn from him. The Christian does not always differ from other men, but sometimes from himself also: yea, so great is the difference betwixt himself and himself, as if he were not the same man. And where is he that does not so experience it? Sometimes bold and courageous, despising dangers, bearing down all discouragements in the strength of zeal, and love to God: at another time faint, feeble, and discourage at every petty thing. Whence is this but from the different administrations of the Spirit, who sometimes gives forth more, and sometimes less, of his gracious influence. These very men that flinched now, when the Spirit was more abundantly shed forth upon them, could boldly own Christ before the council, and despised all dangers for his sake.

A little dog, if his master be by, and encourage him, will venture upon a greater beast than himself. Peter stood at the door without, when the other disciple, (or one of the other disciples, as the Syrian

turns it, and Grotius approves it as the best), i.e. one of the private disciples that lived at Jerusalem, went in so boldly, [John 18: 16, 17](#). **We are strong or weak, according to the degrees of assisting grace.** So that as you cannot take the just measure of a Christian by one act, so neither must they judge of themselves, by what they sometimes feel in themselves.

But when their spirits are low, and their hearts discouraged, they should rather say to their souls, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him:" It is low with me now, but it will be better.

Inference. 6. Was the sword drawn against the Shepherd, and he left alone to receive the mortal strokes of it? How should all adore both the justice and mercy of God so illustriously displayed herein! Here is the triumph of divine justice, and the highest triumph that ever it had, to single forth the chief Shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, and sheathe its sword in his breast for satisfaction. No wonder it is drawn and brandished with such a triumph; awake rejoicingly, O sword, against my Shepherd, &c. For in this blood shed by it, it has more glory than if the blood of all the men and women in the world had been shed.

And no less is the mercy and goodness of God herein signalized, **in giving the sword a commission against the Man, his fellow, rather than against us.** Why had he not rather said, awake, O sword, against the men that are mine enemies; shed the blood of them that have sinned against me, than smite the Shepherd, and only scatter the sheep. Blessed be God, the dreadful sword was not drawn and brandished against our souls; that God did not set it to our breasts; that he had not made it fat with our flesh, and bathed it in our blood; that his fellow was smitten, that his enemies might be spared. O what manner of love was this! Blessed be God therefore for Jesus Christ, who received the fatal stroke himself; and has now so sheathed that sword in its scabbard, that it shall never be drawn any more against any that believe in him.

Inference. 7. Were the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten? Learn hence, That the best of men know not their own strength till they come to the trial. Little did these holy men imagine such a cowardly spirit had been in them, till temptation put it to the proof. Let this therefore be a caution forever to the people of God. You resolve never to forsake Christ, you do well; but so did these, and yet were scattered from him. You can never take a just measure of your own strength, till temptation have tried it. It is said, [Deut. 8: 2](#), that God led the people so many years in the wilderness **to prove them**; and to know them, (i.e. to make them know) **what was in their hearts**. Little did they think such unbelief, murmurings, discontents, and a spirit bent to backslidings, had been in them; until their straits in the wilderness gave them the sad experience of these things.

Inference. 8. Did the dreadful sword of divine justice smite the Shepherd, God's own fellow; and at the same time the flock, from whom all its **outward comforts** arose, were scattered from him? **Then learn, That the holiest of men have no reason either to repine or despond, though God should at once strip them of all their outward and inward comforts together.** He that did this by the man his fellow, may much rather do it by the man his friend. Smite my Shepherd: there is all comfort gone from the inward man; Scatter the sheep; there is all comfort gone from the outward man. What refreshments had Christ in this world, but such as came immediately from his Father, or those holy ones now scattered from him? In one day he loseth both heavenly and earthly comforts. Now, as God dealt by Christ, he

may, at one time or other, deal with his people. You have your comforts from heaven; so had Christ, in a fuller measure than ever you had, or can have. He had comforts from his little flock; you have your comforts from the society of the saints, the ordinances of God, comfortable relations, etc. Yet none of these are so firmly settled upon you, but you may be left destitute of them all in one day. God did take all comfort from Christ, both outward and inward; and are we greater than he? God sometimes takes outward, and leaves inward comfort; sometimes he takes inward, and leaves outward comfort: but the time may come, when God may strip you of both.

This was the case of **Job**, a favorite of God, who was blessed with outward and inward comforts; yet a time came when God stripped him of all, and made him poor to a proverb, as to all outward comfort; and the venom of his arrows drank up his spirit, and the inward comforts thereof.

Should the Lord deal thus with any of you, how seasonable and relieving will the following considerations be?

First. Though the Lord deal thus with you, yet this is no new thing; he has so dealt with others, yea with Jesus Christ that was his fellow. If these things were done in the green tree, in him that never deserved it for any sin of his own, how little reason have we to complain? Nay,

Secondly. Therefore did this befall Jesus Christ before you, that the like condition might be sanctified to you, when you shall be brought into it. For therefore did Jesus Christ pass through such varieties of conditions, on purpose that he might take away the curse, and leave a blessing in those conditions, against the time that you should come into them.

Moreover,

Thirdly, Though inward comforts and outward comforts were both removed from Christ, in one day, yet he wanted [lacked] not support in the absence of both. **How relieving a consideration is this!** [John 16: 32](#). "Behold, (saith he) the hour comes, yea, is now come that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." With me by way of support, when not by way of comfort. **Thy God, Christian, can in like manner support thee, when all sensible comforts shrink away together from thy soul and body in one day.**

Lastly, It deserves a remark, that this comfortless forsaken condition of Christ, immediately preceded the day of his greatest glory and comfort. Naturalists observe, the greatest darkness is a little before the dawning of the morning. It was so with Christ, it may be so with thee. It was but a little while and he had better company than theirs that forsook him. Act therefore your faith upon this, that the most glorious light usually follows the thickest darkness. The louder your groans are now, the louder your triumphs hereafter will be. The horror of your present, will but add to the lustre of your future state.

This is an excellent discourse on God's sovereignty over the human will directing it and determining it without prejudice to its creaturely freedom, that is, God does not determine the will by compulsion.

Agency, Concurrence, and Evil:

A Study in Divine Providence

James E. Dolezal

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James E. Dolezal is associate professor of theology in the School of Divinity at Cairn University, Langhorne, Pa. This article is adapted from lectures originally delivered at the 2018 Southern California Reformed Baptist Pastor's Conference in La Mirada, CA. The author is grateful to Paul Helm for his remarks on a previous draft.

Red for emphasis, my additions or comments in [blue]

Every Christian faces the perennial challenge of accounting for God's providence in the face of evil. Both realities are attested by Holy Scripture. Psalm 103:19 declares, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all." In Ephesians 1:11 we are informed that God "works all things after the counsel of His will." Yet Genesis 6:5 speaks of widespread moral evil among mankind: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In Matthew 5:19 Jesus speaks of the depth of human depravity: "From out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."

How can God be the all-good and all-wise universal sovereign and yet evil still abound in the world? And concerning moral evil in particular, would not God's universal providence somehow implicate him in the wickedness of fallen angels and men? This dilemma has been met with widely divergent answers. Some restrict the extent and efficacy of God's providential operation in order to make space for angelic and human free agency to function independently of God. This alone, it is claimed, can account for evil among God's creatures while leaving God himself innocent. Others resolve the question by denying altogether the genuine causal agency of creatures, arguing that every causal operation in the universe is exclusively the will of God. There is no such thing as true creaturely causal agency.

Neither of these approaches can be satisfactorily squared with the witness of Scripture or nature. But then what are we to say? Surely God is not the author of evil. Yet nothing happens apart from his purpose and operation. It may be tempting to abandon all hope of giving an answer and simply declare the dilemma to be an insoluble paradox. After describing the paradox we have nothing to do but remain silent. There is undeniably some validity in such silence inasmuch as God's ways are

not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8), his judgments are unsearchable and his paths are beyond tracing out (Rom. 11:33). We ignore this to our theological and spiritual peril. By the same token, we also risk peril if we fail to seek an understanding of our faith through the right contemplation of what God has revealed in Scripture and disclosed in the created order. If these sources of truth enable us to attain even a slight glimpse of an answer to the challenge, then we ought to seek it out (see Prov. 25:2), even if chiefly to avoid unworthy thoughts of God.

This article offers no new approach to the topics of divine providence, creaturely agency, and evil. Rather my goal is to reintroduce some insights drawn from the Thomistic and Reformed traditions of the benefit of the modern Christian wrestling with these profound doctrinal matters. My procedure is straightforward. To begin, a few observations will be made on God's providence in general, especially with respect to his preservation of all things. After that consideration will be given to the topic of God's and the creature's causal operations and how it is that each does not cancel out the other. This is sometimes called the doctrine of concurrence. Volitional (free) agency will be given special focus. Finally, the problem of evil will be treated in light of the doctrine of divine concurrence. My aim is to account for how it is that God is providentially at work in all acts of creaturely volition and yet is not the author of the evil so often found in the wills of fallen angels and men. Brief attention will also be given to the question of human moral culpability in the light of universal divine providence.

Providence in General

Before delving into a consideration of divine concurrence and the problem evil, it is fitting to set forth a few observations about God's providence in general. The Second London Confession of Faith 5.1 (2LCF) provides this summary account:

God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto this infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

In Isaiah 46:10 God proclaims that he is the one "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'" In Psalm 135:6 we read, "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps." As for the scope of God's providence, Hebrews 1:3 says that divine Son "upholds all things by the word of His power." Colossians 1:17 speak similarly: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." God decrees all things and perfectly brings to pass all that he decrees. All that is created is sustained by him and directed according to his counsel. Everything possessed by the creature is from God: "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). God has created all things and by his will they exist (Rev. 4:11).

While Scripture speaks of God's preservation of creatures in a variety of ways, it is most fundamentally with respect to the act-of-existence that he sustains them. His sustenance of creaturely actions and operations is rooted in the reality of his peculiar work of making creatures to be. Every

creaturely operation depends upon that creature's existence. One cannot act if one is not. **No being can perform operations apart from its act-of-existence.** Thus, it would seem to follow that no creature is able to act independently of God's operative power any more than it is able to exist independently of God's power.

It might be objected that God merely supplies the initial act-of-existence and that after that the creature is on its own, so to speak. [\[The Deist's and, I think, most everyone's view of things\]](#) In the natural order we frequently observe that an effect can persist even after its initial cause has withdrawn its immediate operation. But this only happens when the causal agent's impression has somehow been taken up into the nature of the thing upon which it operates. That is, only if the effect becomes part of the nature of the thing that is caused can it continue in that thing after the agent's power is withdrawn. We discover this, for example, in the configuration of a house, humanity of a child, and heat in a kettle of hot water. In each case the effected form is taken up into the nature of the thing caused and persists in the absence of the causal operation of the builder, parents, or flame respectively. But this is not always the case. For example, the effect of vibration in a violin string ceases to be when the musician withdraws the operation of drawing the bow across the string. Inasmuch as vibration is not assimilated into the nature of the violin string, the violin does not continue to produce music in the absence of the musician's immediate causal operation.

In creatures, the act-of-existence is not assimilated into their respective natures. In causing all things to be, God does not thereby convert the act-of-existence he grants the creature into its nature as such. "Therefore," as Thomas Aquinas states, "no thing can remain in being if divine operation cease."¹

¹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, bk. 3...It is only in God that the act-of-existence is identical with his nature as such. God is pure act and thus alone is the ultimately sufficient source for all received actuality of being in creatures.

Put differently, insomuch as creatures are not existentially self-sufficient (i.e., they are not *a se*) **they require the continuous influx of divine operation in order to avoid slipping back into the nothingness from which they were drawn.** [\[note also that the saints receive continual supplies of grace, grace upon grace John 1:16, as we are also kept by the power of God \(NKJV\), or who are by God's power are being guarded through faith \(ESV\) 1Pet1:5, etc., so that we don't slip back into perdition\]](#) And as it goes for their act-of-existence, so it goes for their various operations of agency.

This existential observation, together with the biblical witness to God's universal providence, should frame any discussion of the relation between divine and human agency and of the problem of evil.

Divine Concurrence with Created Causes

1. Against Deism and Pantheism

In the development of theological treatments of divine providence a consideration of concurrence (or cooperation) came to be inserted between the discussions of preservation and government. The purpose was to defend the Christian doctrine against both deism and pantheism. The tendency of

deism was to affirm the real causal agency of creatures and to (generally) banish God's causal activity from the world in order to ensure that it did not cancel out natural causes. The tendency of pantheism was precisely the opposite in that it affirmed universal divine agency in such a way that it no longer acknowledged genuine non-divine causes. *Both views share the common belief that God and the creature cannot both be causal agents producing the exact same effect. In short, to the extent God acts causally, the creature does not. And to the extent that creature acts causally, God does not.* According to deism and pantheism there is no alternative to this either-or way of conceiving of things.

Orthodox Christian theologians have long perceived a raft of problems to follow from both of these viewpoints. *Against deism*, if God is not acting causally in the world at all times in all beings and yet creatures continue to exist and operate, then some sort of cosmological dualism must follow. There must be several first causes in the world and several beings exhibiting self-sufficient existence. In such a world God can only stand alongside other beings like one of the territorial gods of the nations – a *finite power* that must give way to other powers and that can only execute his will by either overpowering them or soliciting their help, *and thus making himself dependent upon them*.

Against *pantheism*, if no creature genuinely causes anything then God is the sole and immediate cause of all good and evil. Or more accurately, there is no real distinction between good and evil. All that occurs is just God developing himself through the world-process. It follows also from this that there could be no such things as moral culpability among rational creatures since no rational creature really *does* (or *fails to do*) anything. No good deeds and no wicked. Pantheism removes all created agency and obligation from the world, moral and otherwise.

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of *pantheism* into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and God becomes severely limited. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or *of himself, a se*. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

Somewhat similar to pantheism in this regard is occasionalism, which argues there is only one true cause, namely, God. The power of nature is nothing but the will of God. Nicholas Malebranch, the

foremost proponent of this view, states, “all natural causes are not *true* causes but only *occasional* causes.”²

²Cited in Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. ... **Occasionalism** is so styled because it holds that creatures merely provide the occasions for God to perform his causal operations. The creatures themselves are not causal operators in their own right.

Divine preservation on the one side and governance on the other might appear to be nothing but God’s self-sustenance or self-lordship if pantheism were true, that is, if one even bothered to hold on to such doctrines. And of course, neither preservation nor universal governance would be true on the deist account. Concurrence and divine cooperation with creaturely causes is thus a necessary piece of any confession of providence that aims to avoid falling into either pantheism or deism. In order to do so it is necessary that we reject the cosmology that says there can be only primary causes in the production of any single effect.

2. Created causes

The first thing that should be said of any existent that is not God is that it is a being that is made-to-be. It is a creature. And if the cause of its being is a continuous cause, because what is caused **is not transformed into the nature of the creature** (as existence does not become the nature of any creature), **then the creature can only act or move in accordance with the power that makes it to be**. Relevant to our present concern it follows that no creature acts as a causal agent except through the immediate agency of divine power by which it exists. Thomas Aquinas expresses this succinctly: “A thing does not give being except in so far as it is an actual being. But God preserves things in being by His providence...Therefore, it is as a result of divine power that a thing gives being.” God’s conserving providence not only sustains the creature’s existence, but also its operations. Thomas Aquinas enlarges upon this point:

But just as God has not only given being to things when they first began to exist, and also causes being in them as long as they exist, conserving things in being, as we have shown, so also has He not merely granted operative powers to them when they were originally created, but He always causes these powers in things. Hence, if this divine influence were to cease, every operation would cease. Therefore, every operation of a thing is traced back to Him as to its cause. (Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, bk. 3 cp 67 [3])

[Jonathan Edwards says the same in his piece, *God’s Chief End in Creation*, *The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?]*

There can be no causal operation of the creature apart from the causal operation by which the creature exists – that is, God actively causing of all creatures to be at any moment of their existence. **Movement and agency presuppose and depend upon being.** And derived being (which is non-*a-se*) depends at every moment upon that power by which it exists. Thus, all non-divine powers of operation and agency are *caused causes* or *moved movers*. These are often referred to as “**secondary causes**” in distinction to God who is the “**primary cause**” of all things. As the 2LCF 5.2 states, God providentially orders the affairs of the world, even those that appear to us to be chance effects, to fall out in accordance with the nature of secondary causes, whether necessary, free, or contingent. God’s work on ordinary providence does not hover above the natural order of cause and effect, but rather runs straight through it.

Scripture provides plentiful evidence of God’s concurrence with created causes. In the natural order he sends the rains and fruitful harvests and causes man to be satisfied with food and gladness (Acts 14:17; cf. Psa. 65:9-11| 104:10-30). He is also at work in the volitional operations of angels and men, both with respect to good and evil. It is “God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) Lamentations 3:37 asks rhetorically, “Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it.” It is evil words and consequences that the prophet has especially in view. God hardens Pharaoh’s heart (Ex. 7:3; 11:10; 14:4) and Pharaoh hardens his heart (Ex. 8:32). Proverbs 21:1 declares, “The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.” Every one of these passages indicates that God is at work *in and through* the causal powers of nature and the agency of humans. We are not to think that inasmuch as God is causally working in and through these things that there is no cause-effect relation within the natural order itself. Rather, each natural cause is made to work *with* God’s work as a secondary cause ordered below his primary causal activity.

3. Challenging of multiple agents

But does not God’s universal working in and through created causes not generate several problems? It might seem that two agents producing a single effect is one too many, especially if one of these agents is the all-powerful God. This is sometimes called the problem of superfluity. Some may wonder how one action, such as the growth of a tree, can flow from two agents. If there are natural causal explanations for the growth of a tree – the germination process, for instance – then are we not needlessly multiplying causes if we say God causes it to grow? Inversely, if God’s power is sufficient to being about natural effects then would it not be superfluous to use natural cause as well in the production of that same effect? And if God produces the entire natural effect, there seems to be nothing left for the natural agent to produce.

Aquinas says there are two things we must keep in mind with thinking about an agent: “the thing itself that acts, and the power by which it acts.” If an agent depends upon the power of a higher agent in order to act, there will necessarily be two agents working in the productions of the effect. Thomas Aquinas explains it this way:

But the power of a lower agent depends on the power of the superior agent, according as the superior agent gives this power to the lower agent whereby it may act; or preserves it; or even applies it to the action, as the artisan applies an instrument to its proper effect.

A brush may be a moving cause in the painting of a picture, but only inasmuch as it receives its power to move from the painter. So that the brush is a real cause of the action of paint being smeared on canvas, but it is a dependent cause. There is a power proper to brushes that makes them suitable for producing a painting (bristles and such). Accordingly, Thomas writes:

So, it is necessary for the action of a lower agent to result not only from the agent by its own power, but also from the power of all higher agents; it acts, thus, through the power of all. And just as the lowest agent is found immediately active, so also is the power of the primary agent found immediate in the production of the effect. For the power of the lower agent is not adequate to produce this effect of itself, but from the power of the next higher agent; and the power of the next one gets this ability from the power of the next higher one; and thus the power of the higher agent is discovered to be of itself productive of the effect, as an immediate cause...So, just as it is not unfitting for one action to be produced by an agent and its power, so it is not inappropriate for the same effect to be produced by a lower agent and God: by both immediately, though in different ways.

As the one whose power runs through the entire hierarchy of natural agents, without which there would be no such order of agents, God's power is necessary for any production brought about by a created cause. Again, Thomas makes this clear: "though a natural thing produces its proper effect, it is not superfluous for God to produce it, since the natural thing does not produce it except by divine power."

But why deploy an order of natural causes at all? The confession says that God "is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure" (2LCF 5.3) They are not absolutely necessary to the production of natural effects, any more than natural causes were needed by God in the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. Thomas discovers a reason in the superabundance of God's goodness:

Nor is it superfluous, even if God can by Himself produce all natural effects, for them to be produced by certain other causes. For this is not a result of the inadequacy of divine power, but of the immensity of His goodness, whereby He has willed to communicate His likeness to things, not only so that they might exist, but also that they might be causes for other things.

In other words, by ordering things to fall out according to the nature of second causes God is placing a finite imitation of his own causal power in the natural order and thereby **conferring a special revelatory dignity upon it**. [Hence, Ps. 19:1, *The heavens declare the glory of God...*] How strangely inappropriate, then, if we should set the creature's agency in opposition to God's agency, since the creature's agency is but a created similitude of God's uncaused causal power.

4. Subordinate, not coordinate, cooperation

Perhaps the one feature of divine concurrence that generates the most theological confusion is with respect to the manner of God's *cooperation* with non-divine causes. The apostle Paul says in 1Cor. 3:9, "We are God's fellow workers." For many, this is understood to mean that God shares a percentage of the work in his cooperative production of a single effect with the creature. God does his part, the creature does his part, and together they bring about the intended result. This sort of cooperation would be best characterized as a *coordinate* cooperation. God and the creature are each conceived as first-order causes. Thomas says this is like when two men carry a single burden or drag a boat. What makes this *coordination*, and not merely *cooperation*, is that neither operator is the cause of the other. Two independent causes simply team up to produce a single outcome. Each does one part of the work and to the extent the one agent contributes something to the effect, the other does not contribute.

Yet this sort of cooperation is theologically problematic when used to account for the relation of divine and human agency. It is based on the same errant assumption found in deism and pantheism – namely, that God and creatures must necessarily give way to one another if each is to act causally. Otherwise put, if God is to act causally in the mundane order then to just that extent the creature cannot act, and vice versa. This conceives God's agency as a finite cause that must somehow fit itself into a single causal order with other finite causes. Just as one finite cause must share space with another, or share a fraction of the work in the production of a single effect, so God's causal action must share space with the creature's causal action. But this is not how divine causality relates to the created order, as simply one more power within it. God's causal operation is not a cause among natural causes. His agency, rather, is the universal cause that causes all other causes to be and to operate. Such causal agency could not possibly be one of the natural causes competing for causal explanatory space with a host of finite causes.

Instead of saying that created powers cooperate with God *coordinate*ly, we should insist that all natural causes cooperate with him *subordinate*ly. John Norton explains this all-important distinction:

A coordinate cause worketh of itself, not depending upon its co-working cause, or causes. A subordinate cause is that which dependeth upon its superior cause in respect of its working, as the officer upon the magistrate. An absolute subordinate cause, is that which dependeth absolutely upon its superior cause, in respect of its working: so all second causes depend upon the first cause.

God's absolute primacy and the creature's total dependency are the key concern here. Wilhlemus a Brakel spells out the issue quite clearly:

One should not understand this cooperation to be such as if God were collaterally involved in the activity of the creature as is true when two horses draw a wagon. This would mean that the creature by virtue of a God-given innate ability would then function independently rather than that God would energize that creature in order for it to be in motion. This would additionally mean that God would merely join Himself to the activity of the moving creature, executing this task jointly, each by exercising power independently. God's initiative precedes the motion of

the creature however, stipulating the creature to a specific object, place, and time. Having initiated and determined the creature's motion in this manner, God then proceeds to further involve Himself in the creature and its motion, thus accomplishing what He has purposed. We therefore understand the cooperation of God not merely to refer to His omnipotent and omnipresent power whereby He preserves the existence and faculties of all creatures but also to be a special, physical, natural, immediate, and tangible operation by which He precedes the creature object while in motion, directing this motion and preserving the created object while in motion. Thus He permeates all secondary causes and their motions to their conclusive effect.

One way of looking at this is simply as an exposition of the necessary implications of Romans 11:36: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." Subordination is a necessary feature of the creature's relation to the Creator.

5. God and the creature both work immediately

Both God and all subordinate created causes are immediately active in the production of any effect. But not in the exact same way. We have already observed that God acts as the primary uncaused cause and the secondary cause works as a moved mover. But there is more we must say about how God and secondary causes differ in their relation to any single effect. In particular, God causes all things efficiently, but secondary proximate causes produce their effects both efficiently *and* formally. Norton explains the difference:

God causeth the burning of the fire, yet we do not say God burneth, but the fire burneth. God worketh repentance in the soul, yet it is not a truth to say that God repenteth, but man repenteth; **God is the next efficient cause, but not the next formal cause.**

We might be tempted to think that this double-nearness (of efficiency and formality) of the secondary cause to any effect means that it is somehow more immediate to the effect that God is. It may seem as if God is a step removed, like one who works through an instrument is a step removed from the production of the instrument. If one used a saw to cut a fallen tree into logs for firewood, there would be a sense in which the saw would do no cutting without someone to move it. But there would be another sense in which the saw is more immediate to the effect (the cut wood) than the woodcutter himself. This is because the saw has a power that the one who moves it does not – namely, to cut through wood. Yet this is not what we are saying about God's relation to all natural effects. His instrumental use of the creature does not remove his power from the *immediate* production of the effect. This is because created instruments have no power of their own that is not wholly from God himself. This is rather unlike saws or brushes that exist and possess powers independently of those lumberjacks and painters who wield them. Moreover, it is God himself who providentially orders and causes the relation of the natural cause to the natural effect and who gives being to the effects no less than to the natural causes of them. Aquinas is most instructive on this point:

If, then, we consider the subsistent agent, every particular agent is immediate to its effect: but if we consider the power whereby the action is done, then the power of the higher cause is more immediate to the effect than the power of the lower cause; since the power of the lower cause is not coupled with its effect save by the power of the higher cause: wherefore it is said in *De Causis* (prop. i) that the power of the first cause takes the first place in the production of the effect and enters more deeply therein. Accordingly the divine power must needs be present to every acting thing... Consequently we may say that God works in everything forasmuch as everything needs his power in order that it may act... Therefore God is the cause of everything's action inasmuch as he gives everything the power to act, and preserves it in being and applies it to action, and inasmuch as by his power every other power acts. And if we add to this that God is his own power, and that he is in all things not as part of their essence but as upholding them in their being (*esse*), we shall conclude that he acts in every agent immediately, **without prejudice to the action of the will and of nature.** [God does not work by compulsion; he does not do violence to man's creaturely free will or liberty except when he casts people into outer darkness – they willingly depart God while on this earth but they are bid to depart Christ unwillingly upon his command, depart from me...]

There are two ways in which a thing may be immediate to another: (1) by virtue and (2) by presence. In every causal action the cause immediately touches the effect. This touch may be either virtual or real. Immediateness of virtue is when a thing acts upon another but does not come into contact, as it were, with the substance of its effect. Norton explains, "So, the fire that warmeth, though it reacheth not him that sitteth by it with its substance (for then it would burn him), yet it reacheth him with its virtue, otherwise it could not warm him." Immediateness of presence, by contrast, acts upon its effects by its substance directly. Norton again, "So fire burning the stubble doth immediately touch it, not only with the immediation of its virtue, but also with the immediation of its present substance." Secondary causes sometimes work upon their effects in both ways, and sometimes only with the immediateness of virtue. **God, though, works always in both ways.** Thus Norton writes, "Yet such is the nature of the first cause, as that whatsoever it worketh, it worketh immediately, both with the immediation of his virtue, without which there could be no effect; and with the immediation of his presence, because he is in every place." As God says through the prophet Jeremiah, "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" (Jer. 23:24).

Far from taking away the reality and diversity of natural and created causes, God's providence is what establishes, conserves, and moves them by applying them to action. For this reason we ought to reject all false choices between God and nature. **God is not competing with created causes; he is causing them to be and to move.**

Agency, Authorship, and Evil

The most significant objection to divine providence generally, and concurrence specifically, is the so-called problem of evil. Many seek to exonerate God from the charge of wrong-doing by denying he is operative in the created agencies by which evil comes about. Moral agents in particular are thought to operate (even if only in the realm of volition) independently of God's purpose and providential action. This view arguably posits a kind of operational atheism inasmuch as it conceives the creature

acting as a first cause and not a second. In this view, God is simply not at work in the creature's volitional operation.

1. Biblical witness to God's activity in evil events

To avoid this atheistic implication it is first necessary that we lay to rest any doubt about God's concurrence in the production of evil by considering the broad and consistent biblical witness to his providential work in the natural and moral evils. Concerning natural evils we read in Isaiah 45:7, "The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these." (cf. Isa. 31:2, 47:11). God forms swarms of locusts to devour crops (Amos 7:1) and sends destruction upon the earth by means of fire (Ps 104:32, Amos 9:5) and water (Ps 104:6; Amos 9:6). In each of these events we discover a concurrence of operation between God's primary causal activity and the creature's secondary causal activity.

We are also informed by Holy Scripture of God's concurrence with respect to agents of moral evil. The Lord puts a deceiving spirit in the mouths of false prophets (1Kings 22:19-23). As mentioned above, he hardens Pharaoh's heart as well as the hearts of other persons (Josh. 11:20; John 12:40; Rom 9:18). He causes the wicked enemies of his people to rejoice and he exalts their destructive might (Lam. 2:17). The prophet Amos asks, "If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?" (Amos 3:6). Jeremiah's rhetorical question in Lamentations 3:38 is especially arresting: "Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?" (KJV) In the context the evil refers to that which wicked men perpetrated upon others. Those who stumble in disobedience over the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, were set for that end by God himself (1Pet 2:7-8).²¹

²¹Those who stumble on Christ were "appointed" (ἔτεθησαν) to do so; ἔτεθησαν (aor. Pass. ind.) is from τιθημι which can mean "to put or place for a particular function"; this is the same word Simeon uses in Luke 2:34 to speak of Jesus' appointment (being "placed" or "set") for the fall and rise of many in Israel.

And Revelation 17:17 states that God puts it in the hearts of people "to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast." Even the crucifixion of the Lord of glory at the hands of godless men was carried out in accordance with God's power and purpose:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:27-28)

In all these wicked volitional actions of creatures, God is depicted as the one who is working all things in accordance with his sovereign design.

It is because of passages like these that the Confession says God does **not merely order these things by a "bare permission"** but **"most wisely and powerfully binds, and otherwise orders and governs, in a manifold dispensation to His most holy end."** (2LCF 5.4). Whatever we are to make of such biblical passages, we cannot conclude that in bringing about evil in the created realm God

himself *does* evil. The Confession immediately adds: “yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts precedes only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin” (2LCF 5.4). As Abraham asks, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Gen. 18:25) God can intend and effectively bring about sinful acts, such as the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart or the crucifixion of Christ, without incurring a moral stain or compromising his justice. “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!” (Rom 9:14) Bavinck explains that, “Just as a father forbids a child to use a sharp knife, though he himself uses it without any ill results, so God forbids us rational creatures to commit the sin that he himself can and does use as a means for glorifying his name.”

While it is difficult to think through these things, it is important to show that Scripture is not presenting us with a real contradiction on this point. **God superintends and brings about evil in such a way that he himself does not commit any injustice.** At this juncture it is necessary to get some grasp on the nature of evil and how the authorship of evil is established.

2. Nature of evil

If we are to rightly conceive the providence of God in the occurrence of evil – natural and moral – it is necessary that we characterize evil correctly. A misstep at this point can lead to countless problems later on. So then, what is evil? The short answer is that **evil is the absence of good** where good ought to be. **It is a privation of good and a failure to hit the mark. It is not a substantial thing that exists in its own right.** Bavinck writes,

If sin were a substance, there would exist an entity that either was not created by God or was not caused by God. Sin, accordingly, has to be understood and described neither as an existing thing nor as being in things that exist but rather as a defect, a deprivation, an absence of the good, or as weakness, imbalance, just as blindness is a deprivation of sight.

This defect can be a failure of commission insofar as one aims at some good in an illegitimate and idolatrous way. Or it can be a failure of omission insofar as one neglects to seek and do the good that is required of him or her. Both are ways of missing the mark.

The origin of evil is a mystery, a riddle. In one sense it has no origin, but only a beginning. Sin is included within the decretive will of God, and yet stands against his moral precepts. Its possibility was given with the original state of the world, yet nothing in the original upright state naturally necessitated it. Bavinck sets out this great mystery in clear terms:

According to Scripture, the fall is essentially distinct from the creation itself. Sin is a phenomenon whose possibility was indeed given in the creation of finite, mutable beings, but whose reality could only be called into being by the will of the creature. It is a power that does not belong to the essential being of the creation, a power that originally did not exist, but that came by way of disobedience and transgression, that is, entered the creation unlawfully, and did not belong there. It is there, and its existence is no accident. With a view toward the counsel of God that incorporated it and assigned a place to it, it may up to a point and in a

sense even be said that it had to be there. But then certainly it always had to be there as something that ought not to be and had no right to exist.

In what exactly does the evil of any sinful intent or action consist? This is a difficult question insomuch as pure evil never exists in its own right. It requires something good in order to be, just as an accident requires a substance in order to be [he's not talking about a chance happening here; accident refers to a property associated with a substance; e.g., white is the *accident* of snow]. Historically, the answer given to this question is that *the evil of sin does not lie in the material action itself, but rather in the form of it*. Sin is not reducible to the agents and actions by which it is committed. The instruments and actions of sin are in themselves, *as creatures* and *as actions*, good. Bavinck remarks,

Fallen angels and humans as creatures are and remain good and exist from moment to moment only by, and in, and for God. And just as sin is dependent on the good in its origin and existence, so it is in its operation and struggle. It has power to do anything only with and by means of the power and gifts that are God-given.

It is necessary to distinguish the matter of sin, which is not itself sinful, from the form of it.

But concretely, sin only occurs as the wrong "form" of a certain state or act and makes that state or act itself sinful, just as an illness, without being a substance, still makes a body sick. Concretely, therefore, sin is always in and attached to something that is substantially good. It may be hard in certain cases to make a distinction between "matter" and "form" and even more difficult to separate them, just as at any time the heat of a stove cannot be separated from the stove. Yet, just as on that account the stove is not identical with its heat, so the being or act to which sin is attached cannot be identified with sin. Even in the case of blasphemy, the power needed to express it and the language in which it is couched are themselves good; what makes it and all things wrong and sinful is the deformity, the departure from divine law.

As the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 14) puts it: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." Or as 1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is lawlessness." **But again, this is not a lawlessness that exists independently of some good, but rather as a corruption of some good.** Bavinck further comments on this corruptive character of sin:

If transgression is the very character of sin then that character cannot lie in the nature or essence of things, be they matter or spirit, for things owe their essence and existence to God alone, He who is the fountain of all goods. **The evil can therefore only come after the good, can only exist through the good and on the good, and can really consist of nothing but the corruption of the good.** Even the wicked angels, although sin has corrupted their whole nature, nevertheless as creatures are and remain good. Moreover, the good, in so far as it is in the essence and being of things, is not annihilated by sin, though bent in another direction and abused. Man has not lost his being, his human nature, through sin. He still has a soul and body, reason and will, and all kinds of emotions and interests.

This sinfulness of sin is not in the being or movement of sinful creatures, otherwise we could rightly charge God with its authorship inasmuch as all creatures move and have their being immediately in and through God. Rather, sinfulness lies in the absence of moral good that angels and humans ought to seek and perform. We turn, then, to the matter of authorship.

3. Meaning of authorship

It is a Christian commonplace to insist that God is not the author of evil. Yet we might wonder how this is so if God decrees all things, works them after the counsel of his will, and concurs with all second causes as their primary and superior cause. Surely if God had willed there to be no moral evil there would be none. And sin ultimately occurs because God willed it to have a place within his perfect plan for creation. So how can we seriously contend that God is not the author of evil?

One way in which theologians have sought to avoid ascribing the authorship of moral evil to God is by defining authorship in the narrow sense of formal causality. We can say that God is the efficient cause of creature's action (as movement), but not the formal cause of any sinfulness in that action. Bavinck mounts such a defense:

But because the primary cause and the secondary cause are not identical and differ essentially, the effect and the product are *in reality* totally the effect and product of the two causes, to be sure, but *formally* they are the effect and product of the secondary cause.

He illustrates his point: "Wood burns and it is God alone who makes it burn, but the burning process may not be formally attributed to God but must be attributed to the wood as subject." He further connects this point to the question of human sin:

Human persons speak, act, and believe, and it is God alone who supplies to the sinner all the vitality and strength he or she needs for the commission of a sin. Nevertheless the subject and author of the sin is not God but the human being.

This seems plausible so far as it goes, but we may still wonder how it is that God is not sin's author if he both decrees that it should occur (e.g., Acts 2:23, 4:27-28) and is the agent who *applies* the power of the creature to action. God's exercise of providential rule over moral evil is not restricted to preserving moral creatures and their powers, but also causes them to *move*, which must include all volitional movement and choice. How is God not the author of evil if he is the one from whom every moral agent derives its movement when it sins?

To begin answering this question we must recall that evil is a privation of good where good ought to be. *Moral evil follows from the lack of a form of goodness in the subject's will where such good is morally expected of him or her.* And this lack of good form is precisely a lack in the creature and not in God, who is goodness itself. It would only be a privation (and so evil) in God if God were under natural obligation to move the will of every creature to every good required of it. **He is under no such obligation, as will be discussed below.** [God owes no one anything; He acts *freely* in all acts including his choosing of the elect. God is the potter...] Wherever there is good it is because God makes it to be. And wherever there is the

lack of good we must say that God did not (efficiently) will good to be there, otherwise it would be. In not placing the form of the moral good required of a creature in that creature's will, we may say that God causes an evil outcome to result. But he does not author that evil outcome for at least two reasons.

First, it is not due to lack of good form in God that evil results, but from the lack of good form in the creature. The creature's deformity alone provides the **formal** reason for the evil of any action. We might think of this as **formal causality** in a negative mode. Second, since divine non-determination does not result in any term of production, there is nothing evil *positively* produced by God when he withholds any form of good from the creature's will or action. This point is made by John Norton in a rich and illuminating passage:

As often as the will [of creatures] doth not will, God hath not determined it to will. The non-determination, or suspension of the determination of God, is the antecedanious cause in respect of God: this cause cannot be positive. A positive cause cannot be terminated in a *non-ens* [non-being], such as man's non-volition; i.e. Not-willing is, it must therefore be suspensive. The meet suspension, or withholding of the influence of God, without any positive action sufficeth to the annihilation of the creature; that is, therefore the suspension of the determination of God, sufficeth to the preventing of the operation of the creature, which yet is not.

Obviously, the entire argument that God is not the author of evil only works on the assumption that God is not naturally required to give every requisite moral good to every creature, even if he requires such good from them by way of command or precept. If it suits his purpose to withhold any form of goodness, even if this results in the moral corruption of particular men or angels, or in physical corruption (or harm) in others, then he is **free** to withhold it. This is undoubtedly the epicenter of the conflict with regard to the question of God's providence and the reality of evil. Is God naturally obligated to give every good, physical or volitional, to every one of his creatures? Or is he free to do as he pleases with what is his, giving to some and withholding the same from others? We will revisit this question below, but suffice it to say that God is not the author of sin inasmuch as sin does not result from a privation of goodness in him.

4. Determined free will [codefreewill2]

All moral evil is located in an act of the will, either in its failure to seek the good it ought, or to seek real goods in a disordered way. This disordered way of seeking goods is evil either because it treats non-ultimate goods as though they were ultimate, resulting in idolatry, or because it seeks the good selfishly and at the expense of other goods to which it is obligated. What ordinarily renders such choices morally culpable is that the act of will is the best natural explanation for the action performed. If we can establish some other naturally necessary cause or contingent circumstance that better accounts for the action, the will is usually exempted from moral blame in the instance since it was not sufficiently free in its operation.

This is where the objection to universal divine providence usually crops up. If God is the one who immutably decrees the end from the beginning, accomplishing all his good pleasure and working all

things after the counsel of his will, it would seem that one of two things results. Either rational creatures are not sufficiently free so as to establish their moral culpability, or God is somehow complicit in the evil of fallen angels and humans.

It is a common objection from those of Pelagian and semi-Pelagian conviction that God's universal causal primacy, as has been maintained in the Augustinian tradition, necessarily obliterates the reality of free will and with it all moral culpability. The traditional Augustinian response to this charge is that, far from destroying free will, it is God's primary agency that causes free will to be and move freely. There is no such thing as absolutely independent creaturely agency or operation, any more than there is such a thing as absolutely independent creaturely existence (which in any case is necessary for a creature's operation to commence or continue). And God's moving of the creature's will can no more be a coercive act against its volition than God's making the creature to be is a coercive act against its being. [excellent reasoning!] There just would be no volitional movement in the creature without God concurrently and primarily acting to make it so – no moved mover without an absolute unmoved mover. This is essential to maintaining the order between God as first cause and all second causes. John Norton makes this point clearly, arguing that God's determination of the creature's will offers no violence to it:

Either the will is determined by God in its operation, or else it would follow, either that there were not an essential subordination of the second cause unto the first, that is, of man to God, which were repugnant to the nature of the second cause (it being imperfect and dependent); or that the first Cause were subordinate to the second, which were repugnant to the nature of the first Cause, being perfect and universal.

The will cannot be compelled: to say that which is done willingly is done constrainedly is to affirm a contradiction namely, that which is willing is unwilling. God can determine the will and not prejudice the nature of the will because he is an infinite Cause. God determineth the will suitably and agreeably to its own nature, that is, freely. He so determineth the will as the will determineth itself. God so determineth the will as the first free agent, as that the will determineth itself as a second free agent. The efficacy of God offereth no violence, nor changeth the nature of things, but governerth them according to their own natures; it reacheth from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordereth all things. The external, transient, efficacious motion of God upon the will determineth the will with a real determination: the will so moved, moveth itself with a real and formal determination.

[this is how theologians like John Flavel, John Owen, Thomas Shepard, Thomas Watson and others describe God's converting power; a secret and sweet efficacy of his power answering to Psalm 110:3 that overcomes the stubborn will and makes it willing: *Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power*, that God does not work this by compulsion doing violence to man's creaturely freedom or liberty, for how can they be willing and unwilling at the same time? For example, Shepard notes: "but there is a secret virtue coming from the stone which draws it, and so it comes and is united to it; so who would think that ever such an iron, heavy, earthy heart should be drawn unto Christ? yet the Lord lets out a secret virtue of truth and sweetness from himself, which draws the soul to Christ, and so it comes." "As iron is drawn to the load-stone by a secret hidden virtue, so there is a secret

virtue of divine light that draws the most iron heart; nay, changes it," Thomas Watson says: "the Spirit does not *impellere*, force, but *trahere* [drawing], sweetly draws the will; and this willingness in religion makes all our services accepted." John Flavel: "They say of frogs, that if they be croaking never so much in the night, bring but a light among them, and they are all quiet: such a light is the peace of God among our disordered affections. These are Christ's regal acts. And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably." And, "whether he restrains from sin, or impels to duty, **he does it with a soul determining efficacy**: for "his kingdom is not in word, but in power," 1 Cor. 4: 20. And, "He rules not by compulsion, but most sweetly. His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife, Rev. 19: 7. "a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," Isa. 42: 2, 3. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 10: 1. For he delighteth in free, not in forced obedience." And again, "Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causes upon the soul, **turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy** from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ." See Vos below:

G. Vos states: Reformed Dogmatics, p660

31. How does God move the will of man? In a manner that accords with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.]

The notion of "determined freedom" will undoubtedly strike many as peculiar. In saying that God moves the creature's will so that it moves itself freely we maintain that God causes the will to move in the way that is natural to it. In particular God does this through the power of the good, which is what all men seek and what naturally stirs the will to action. When a man chooses to do evil and not good, it is still the good that he is willing. But he is willing it sinfully in that he aims at it in such a way that he disregards other obligatory goods, perhaps even higher goods. And if he aims at lower goods as if they were themselves the highest good, then his will for the good becomes idolatrous. In any event, man is willing the good in a disordered and sinful manner such that this will misses the mark. This is how humans can eat and drink sinfully, the actions themselves, *qua* actions, not being evil yet are rendered evil when pursued in a way that is not ultimately Godward and that seeks some goods while neglecting other obligatory goods. Yet inasmuch as man freely wills some good, there is not evil in this action. *It is only in the falling short of his obligation to will other or higher goods that his will is rendered evil.* The fact that God moves this evil will does not mean that God creates evil in it. Evil is rather the result of what is not in the angel's or the human's will – at least according to the privation account.

Some protest that this thick account of divine providence turns man into a mere puppet. This common objection says both too much and too little. It says too much in that it must presuppose that for God to be at work in a creature the creature must not be working. Puppets are not agents, but are merely patients - receivers of action, but not doers in their own right. Angels and men would only be puppets if they were pure patients and not also agents. Being caused by another is not what renders a puppet a puppet, but rather being a mere patient, a non-agent. But the puppet objection also says too little inasmuch as God's activity in the creature is far more interior and pervasive than those of a

puppet-master to a puppet. Puppet-masters only push and pull an independently existing object, whereas with respect to God humans are not independently existing beings. He not only moves them, but makes them be at every moment of their existence. In this consideration their dependency upon God is profoundly greater than the dependency of puppets upon those who move them.

5. Creaturely culpability and divine rights

We are now in a position to address the contentious and challenging question of man's culpability and of God's obligations toward the creature, if any. Romans 9:11-23 presents us some of the clearest verses touching these questions. God is free to do as he pleases with what is his own. In 9:15 Paul cites God's works in Exodus 33:19, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." He then goes on to speak of Pharaoh upon whom God did not have mercy. Rather, God says he raised Pharaoh up in order to demonstrate his power (9:17). He does this by judging him, the Egyptians, and the Egyptian gods (Ex. 12:12; Num. 33:4). But it is well-known from the Exodus account that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. So Paul adds in Romans 9:18, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."

It is at just this point that the well-known objection is considered in Romans 9:19: "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" The accusatory way in which the question is asked elicits a stern reproach in 9:20: "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" What is wrong with the question in 9:19 is the insinuation that God does something unjust in holding man morally accountable when it is God himself who had hardened his heart. But if we consider the question apart from its accusatory tenor, we must concede that there is a great mystery here. And the question is, taken in abstraction, an understandable one. The primacy of God's willing and determining our acts of will would appear on the face of it to be sufficient reason to shift responsibility off the creature and on to God. After all, this is how things work in establishing and assigning moral culpability in our day-to-day lives in the natural order. If there is another and more powerful cause than our act of will that explains our actions – some physical law or circumstantial contingency – then moral responsibility is removed from us in that case. But God's will and power is the primary cause of all our actions, including our volitional actions. **How then does he still find fault?**

There is surely a great deal about this that we do not understand. But conceding our ignorance on exactly how moral culpability of a moral secondary cause is established vis-a-vis the primary cause is not to suggest any validity in the objection in Romans 9:19. There are several reasons why the objection founders. Most significantly, it seems to assume that God's relation to finite causes is like the relation of one finite cause to others. **To the extent the one acts causally, the others do not [the problem associated with deism and pantheism described above].** This is why necessary and contingent natural causes sometimes can be appealed to in order to prove one's moral innocence in a human court of law. Since one of those causes did the causing, it must be that the will (a voluntary cause) did not. The objection in 9:19 seems to regard God as a cause in this fashion. **If God causes an effect then no other cause can act in the production of the same effect.** Or if it did, it could only do so by *coordination*. But this does away with the entire distinction between primary and secondary causes, reducing divine and human agents to an equal and finite primacy. This spells the end of the

Creator-creature distinction. [see codeCC1] It reconceives God along pagan lines in which a deity must fit its operation into a world of other operators with which it must share causal explanatory space [as in deism just noted]. This is why the gods of the nations are frequently frustrated by other regional gods and shrewd humans. Anyhow, given the Creator-creature distinction as one between primary and secondary causes, we should never have expected that our moral culpability before God would be established in precisely the same way it is in the natural order of things, that is, by showing the relative autonomy and originality of one's choice over against other causal powers. There is no such thing as operational autonomy from the one in whom we live, move, and have our being. Nevertheless, many are willing to endorse such an argument in order to ensure that God is "playing fair," at least according to a mundane standard of fairness.

The objection also fails to consider that God does not determine the activity of our will in such a way that cancels out his agency, but rather in a way that establishes the agency of our wills. Secondary causes do not do this to one another. Necessary and contingent causes, as well as the volitional activity of other humans, can only act over against and in the place of our wills. They can impede our willful actions, but they cannot cause our willful actions. Because God causes our will to be and to move he does no violence to it when he determines it to act. He rather moves it in accordance with its own nature. Clearly, then, no one is coerced against his will when he is moved or not moved by God. No one is violently coerced to believe and repent, on the one hand, or to commit iniquity, on the other. The creature in sinning does precisely what the creature wants to do. And this, we should say, is what properly grounds his moral culpability; not the absence of all other causes.³³

³³ Our relative autonomy from other natural causes is the device we are compelled to use in establishing the thoughts and intentions of the heart and so in ascertaining one's guilt or innocence. This arguably is due to the limitation of our viewpoint and not from the fact that autonomy is absolutely necessary to establish moral guilt.

While the apostle does not answer all our questions about how subordinate agents are held responsible by God, the primary agent, he does give us reason why no injustice can be charged to him. In particular, there is no natural right of the creature being violated when God prepares some vessels for destruction any more than any natural right is respected when he prepares other vessels for mercy. It is not of him who wills or him who runs (Rom. 9:16). Rather, God is free to do as he pleases with what is his own: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own?" (Matt. 20:15) If God should withhold good from a man such that evil results and eventually divine judgment, then he is free to do so because that man belongs to him and serves his purpose. Aquinas comments on Romans 9:18, "he is not said to harden as though by inserting malice, but by not affording grace." [Thomas Aquinas] And if he should show mercy upon another, so as to soften his heart by the bestowal of good, it is according to the same freedom and primacy that he does so. There can be no injustice with God, even when he deigns to soften some hearts and harden others, since there is no good form lacking in him when he executes his will among creatures.

The questions addressed in this article have taxed the minds of Christians for millennia. I have made no pretense to the comprehension of these great mysteries. My goal, rather, has been to "perceive some glimpse of the truth sufficient to steer clear of error." [Aquinas] In particular we must avoid the

error of banishing God's operation from any aspect of being or movement found in the world of finite causes, whether material or spiritual. Such a notion is tantamount to atheism and is wholly contrary to the biblical record. The Christian's commitment, rather, is to the God from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things.

Holiness, the Image and Glory of God

code71

described by John Flavel in

The Fountain of Life

pg 347

The pouring forth of Christ's blood for us, obtained the pouring forth of the spirit of holiness upon us. Therefore the Spirit is said to come in his name, and to take of his, and shew it unto us. Hence it is said, [1 John 5: 6](#). "He came both by blood and by water;" **by blood, washing away the guilt; by water, purifying from the filth of sin.** Now this fruit of Christ's death, even our sanctification, is a most incomparable mercy. For, do but consider a few particular excellencies of holiness.

First, **Holiness is the image and glory of God.** His image, [Col. 3: 10](#). and his glory, [Exod. 15: 11](#). "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness." Now, when the guilt and filth of sin are washed off, and the beauty of God put upon the soul in sanctification, O what a beautiful creature is the soul now! So lovely in the eyes of Christ, even in its imperfect holiness, that he saith, [Cant. 6: 5](#). "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." So we render it, but the Hebrew word signifies, "they have made me proud, or puffed me up. It is beam of divine glory upon the creature, enamoring the very heart of Christ.

Secondly, As it is the soul's highest beauty, so it is the soul's best evidence for heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," [Matt. 5: 8](#). "And without holiness no man shall see God," [Heb. 12: 14](#). No gifts, no duties, no natural endowments will evidence a right in heaven, but the least measure of true holiness will secure heaven to the soul.

Thirdly, As holiness is the soul's best evidence for heaven, so it is a continual spring of comfort to it in the way thither. The poorest and sweetest pleasures in this world are the results of holiness, "till we come to live holy, we never live comfortably. Heaven is epitomized in holiness.

Fourthly, And to say no more; it is the peculiar mark by which God has visibly distinguished his own from other men, [Psal. 4: 3](#) "The Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself," q. d. this is the man, and that the woman, to whom I intend to do good for ever. This is a man for me. O holiness, how surpassingly glorious art thou!

Inference 1. Did Christ die to sanctify his people, how deep then is the pollution of sin, that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it! All the tears of a penitent simmer, should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation to this day, cannot wash away one sin. The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin. O guess at the wound by the largeness and length of this tent that follows the mortal weapons, Sin.

Inference 2. Did Christ die to sanctify his people? Behold then the love of a Saviour. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." He did not shed the blood of beasts, as the priests of old did, but his own blood, [Heb. 9: 12](#). And that not common, but precious blood, [1 Pet. 1: 1, 19](#). The blood at God; one drop of which out-values the blood that runs in the veins of all Adam's posterity. And not some of that blood, but all, to the last drop. He bled every vein dry for us: and what remained lodged about the heart of a dead Jesus, was let out by that bloody spear which pierced the Pericardium: so that he bestowed the whole treasure of his blood upon us. And thus liberal was he of his blood to us when we were enemies. This then is that heavenly Pelican that feeds his young with his own blood. O what manner of love is this!

This is an excellent summary of the vital importance of holy living with explanations on the new principle of life infused into the soul, the spring of water that wells up to eternal life, etc.

Holiness, the Image of God

The General Use, Exhortation and Application

The last part of Sermon 42 by John Flavel

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/fountain.v.xlii.html>

And now, to close up all, let me persuade all those for whom the dear Son of God came from the blessed bosom of the Father; assumed flesh; brake, by the strength of his own love, through all discouragements and impediments; laid down his own life a ransom for their souls; for whom he lived, died, rose, ascended, and lives for ever in heaven to intercede; to live wholly to Christ, as Christ lived and died wholly for them.

O brethren, never was the heathen world acquainted with such arguments to deter them from sin; never acquainted with such motives to urge them to holiness, as I shall this day acquaint you with. My request is, to give up both your hearts and lives to glorify the Father, Son, and Spirit, whose you are, by the holiness and heavenliness of them. Other things are expected from you than from other men. See that you turn not all this grace that has sounded in your ears into wantonness. Think not because Christ has done so much for you, you may sit still; much less indulge yourselves in sin, because Christ has offered up such an excellent sacrifice for the expiation of it. No, though Christ came to be a curse, he did not come to be a cloak for your sins. "If one died for all then were all dead; that they that live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them," [2 Cor. 5: 15](#). O keep your lives pure and clean.

Do not make fresh work for the blood of Christ every day. "If you live in the Spirit, see that you walk in the Spirit, [Gal. 5: 25](#), i.e. (saith Cornelius a Lapide very solidly) "Let us shape and order our lives and actions according to the dictates, instinct, and impulses of the Spirit, and of that **grace of the Spirit** put within us, and planted in our hearts, which tendeth to practical holiness." O let the grace which is in your hearts, issue out into all your religious, civil, and natural actions. Let the faith that is in your hearts appear in your prayers; the obedience of your hearts in hearing; the meekness of your hearts in suffering; the mercifulness of your hearts in distributing; the truth and righteousness of your hearts in trading; the sobriety and temperance of your hearts in eating and drinking. These be the fruits of Christ's sufferings indeed, they are sweet fruits. Let grace refine, ennoble, and elevate all your actions; that you may say, "Truly our conversation is in heaven." Let grace have the ordering of your tongues, and of your hands; the mounding of your whole conversation. Let not humility appear in some actions, and pride in others; holy seriousness in some companies, and vain frothiness in others. Suffer not the fountain of corruption to mingle with, or pollute the streams of grace. Write as exactly as you can, after your copy, Christ. O let there not be (as one well expresses it) here a line, and there a blank; here a word, and there a blot. One word of God, and two of the world. Now a spiritual rapture, and then a fleshly frolic. This day an advance towards heaven, and to-morrow a slide back again towards hell. But be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Let there be a due proportion betwixt all the parts of your conversation. Approve yourselves the servants of Christ in all things. "By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand, and on the left," [2 Cor. 6: 6](#). See then how accurately you walk. - Cut off occasion from them that desire occasion; and in well doing commit yourselves to God, and commend religion to the world. That this is your great concernment and duty, **I shall evidence to your consciences**, by these following considerations. That of all persons in the world, the redeemed of the Lord are most obliged to be holy; most assisted for a life of holiness; and that God intends to make great use of their lives, **both for the conviction and conversion of others.**

Consider, First, God has more obliged them to live pure and strict lives. I know the command obliges all men to it, even those that cast away the cords of the commands, and break Christ's bonds asunder, are yet bound by them; and cannot plead a dispensation to live as they do. Yea, and it is not unusual for them to feel the obligations of the command upon their consciences, even when their impetuous lusts hurry them on to the violation of them; but there are special ties upon your souls, that oblige you to holiness more than others. Many special and peculiar engagements you are under. First, from God. Secondly, from yourselves. Thirdly, from your brethren. Fourthly, from your enemies.

First, God has peculiarly obliged you to purity and strictness of life. Yea, every Person in the blessed Trinity has cast his cord over your souls, to bind up your hearts and lives to the most strict and precise obedience of his commands. The Father has obliged you, and that not only by the common tie of creation, which is yet of great efficacy in itself; for, is it reasonable that God should create and form so excellent a piece, and that it should be employed against him? That he should plant the tree, and

another eat the fruit of it? But, besides this common engagement, he has obliged you to holiness of life.

First, By his wise and merciful designs and counsels for your recovery and salvation by Jesus Christ. It was he that laid the corner-stone of your salvation with his own hands. **The first motion sprang out of his breast.** If God had not designed the Redeemer for you, the world had never seen him; he had never left that sweet Bosom for you. **It was the act of the Father to give you to the Son to be redeemed, and then to give the Son to be a Redeemer to you.** Both of them stupendous and astonishing acts of grace. And in both God acted as a most free Agent. When he gave you to Christ before the beginning of time, **there was nothing out of himself that could in the least move him to it.** [that is key to understanding God's sovereignty!] When the Father, Son, and Spirit sat (as I may say) at the council-table, contriving and laying the design for the salvation of a few out of many of Adam's degenerate offspring, there was none came before him to speak one word for thee; but such was the divine Pleasure [aka, his secret or decretive will] to insert thy name in that catalogue of the saved. **Oh how much owest thou to the Lord for this.** [this is the proper effect upon the soul in understanding and knowing this will of election and that, unconditional!] And what an engagement does it leave upon thy soul, to obey, please, and glorify him?

Secondly, By his bountiful remunerations of your obedience, which have been wonderful. What service didst thou ever perform for him, for which he has not paid thee a thousand times more than it is worth. Didst thou ever seek him diligently, and not find him a bountiful rewarder? none seek him in vain, unless such only as seek him vainly, Heb. 11: 6. Didst thou ever give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, and not receive a disciple's reward? Matt. 10: 42. Hast thou not found inward peace and comfort flowing into thy soul, upon every piece of sincere obedience! Oh what a good Master do saints serve? You that are remiss and inconstant in your obedience, you that are heartless and cold in duties; hear how your God expostulates with you, Jer. 2: 31. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of darkness?" q. d. Have I been a hard Master to you? Have you any reason to complain of me? To whomsoever I have been strait handed, surely I have not been so to you. Are fruits of sin like fruits of obedience? Do you know where to find a better Master? Why then are you so shuffling and inconstant, so sluggish and remiss in my work? Surely God is not behind-hand with any of you. May you not say with David, Psal. 119: 56. "This I had, because I kept thy precepts." There are fruits in holiness, even present fruit. It is a high favour to be employed for God. Reward enough that he will accept any thing thou dost. But to return every duty thou representest to him with such comforts, such quickening, such inward and outward blessings into thy bosom, so that thou mayest open the treasury of thine own experiences, view the variety of encouragements and tokens of his love, at several times received in duties; and say, this I had, and that I had, by waiting on God, and serving him. Oh what an engagement is this upon thee to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord! Though thou must not work for wages; yet God will not let thy work go unrewarded. For he is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.

Thirdly, Your Father has further obliged you to holiness and purity of life, by signifying to you (as he has frequently done) thee great delight and pleasure he hath therein. He hath told you, “that such as are upright in the way are his delight,” [Prov. 11: 20](#). That he would not have you forget to do good, and to communicate, for with such sacrifices he is well pleased,” [Heb. 13: 16](#). You know you cannot “walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, [excepts ye be fruitful in every good word and work,” [Col. 1: 10](#). And oh what a bond is this upon you to live holy lives! Can you please yourselves in displeasing your Father? If you have the hearts of children in you, sure you cannot. O you cannot grieve his Spirit by loose and careless walking, but you must grieve your own spirits too. How many times has God pleased you, gratified and contented you, and will you not please and content him? This mercy you have asked of him, and he gave it, that mercy and you were not denied; in many things the Lord has wonderfully condescended to please you, and now there is but one thing that he desires of you, and that most reasonable, yea, beneficial for you, as well as pleasing to him, [Phil. 1: 27](#). “Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ.” This is the one thing, the great and main thing he expects from you in this world, and will not you do it? Can you expect he should gratify your desires, when you make no more of grieving and displeasing him? Well, if you know what will please God, and yet resolve not to do it, but will rather please your flesh, and gratify the devil than him; pray pull off your wizards, fall into your own rank among hypocrites, and appear as indeed you are.

Fourthly, The Father hath further obliged you to strictness and purity of conversation, by his gracious promises made to such as so walk. He has promised to do great things for you, if you will but do this one thing for him. If you will “order your conversation aright,” [Psal. 50](#) ult. He will be your sun and shield, if you walk before him and be upright, [Gen. 15: 1](#). “He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that walketh uprightly,” [Psal. 84: 11](#). And he promises no more to you, than he has made good to others, that have thus walked, and stands ready to perform to you also. If you look to enjoy the good of the promise, you are obliged by all your expectations and hopes to order your lives purely and uprightly. This hope will set you on work to purge your lives, as well as your hearts, from all pollutions, [2 Cor. 7: 1](#). “Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Fifthly, Yea, He hath yet more obliged you to strict and holy lives, by his confidence in you, that you will thus walk and please him. He expresseth himself in scripture, as one that dares trust you with his glory, knowing that you will be tender of it, and dare do no otherwise. But if a man repose confidence in you, and trust you with his concerns, it greatly obliges you to be faithful. What an engagement was that upon Abraham to walk uprightly, when God said of him, [Gen. 18: 19](#). “I know him, that he will commend his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,” q. d. as for this wicked generation, whom I will speedily consume in my wrath, I know they regard not my laws, they will trample my commands under their feet, they care not how they provoke me, but I expect other things from Abraham, and I am confident he will not fail me. I know him, **he is a man of another spirit**, and what I promise myself from him, he will make good. And to the like purpose is that in [Isa. 63:](#)

[7.](#) “I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord; according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie, (or fail me:) so he was their Saviour.” Here you have an ample account of the endearing mercies of God to that people, ver. 7. and the Lord’s confident expectations of suitable returns from them, ver. 8. I said, i.e. (speaking after the manner of men in like cases) I made a full account, that after all these endearments and favours bestowed upon them, they would not offer to be disloyal and false to me. I have made them sure enough to myself, by so many bonds of love. Like to which is that expression, [Zeph. 3: 7.](#) “I said, surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction.” Oh! how great are the expectations of God from such as you! I know Abraham, there is no doubt of him! And again, they are children that will not lie, i.e. they will not *fallere fidem datam*, break their covenant with me. Or they are my people that will not shrink, as Mr. Coverdale well translates, *fili non negantes*, such as will be true to me, and answer their covenant-engagements. And again, surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction. And shall not all this engage you to God? What! Neither the ancient and bountiful love of God, in contriving your redemption from eternity, nor the bounty of God, in rewarding all and every piece of service you have done for him? Nor yet the pleasure he takes in your obedience and upright walking? nor the encouraging promises he has made thereto, nor yet his confident expectations of such a life from you, whom he has so many ways obliged and endeared to himself? Will you forget your ancient friend, condemn his rewards, take no delight or care to please him? Slight his promises, and deceive and fail his expectations? “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid.” Consider how God the Father has fastened this fivefold cord upon your souls, and show yourselves Christians; yea, to use the prophet’s words, [Isa. 46:](#) [8.](#) “Remember this, and show yourselves men.”

Secondly, You are further engaged to this precise and holy life, by what the Son has done for you; is not this pure and holy life the very aim, and next end of his death? Did he not shed his blood to “redeem you from your vain conversations?” [1 Pet. 1: 18.](#) Was not this the design of all his sufferings? “That being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, you might serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of your life,” [Luke 1: 74, 75.](#) And is not the apostle’s inference, [2 Cor. 5: 14, 15.](#) highly reasonable? “If one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them.” Did Christ only buy your persons, and not your services also? No, whoever has thy time, thy strength, or any part of either, I can assure thee, Christian, that Christ has paid for it, and thou givest away what is none of thine own to give. Every moment of thy time is his, every talent, whether of grace or nature, is his; and dost thou defraud him of his own? O how liberal are you of your precious words and hours, as if Christ had never made a purchase of them! O think of this, when thy life runs muddy and foul. When the fountain of corruption flows out at thy tongue, in idle frothy discourses; or at thy hand, in sinful unwarrantable actions? Does this become the redeemed of the Lord? Did Christ come from the bosom of his Father for this? Did he groan, sweat, bleed, endure the cross, and lay down his life for this? Was he so well

pleased with all his sorrows and sufferings, his pangs and agonies, upon the account of that satisfaction he should have in seeing the travail of his soul? [Isa. 53: 11.](#) as if he had said, “Welcome death, welcome agonies, welcome the bitter cup and heavy burden; I cheerfully submit to all this. These are travinging pangs indeed, but I shall see the beautiful birth at last. These throws and agonies shall bring forth many lovely children to God; I shall have joy in them, and glory from them, to all eternity. This blood of mine, these sufferings of mine, shall purchase to me the persons, duties, services, and obedience of many thousands that will love me, and honour me, serve me, and obey me, with their souls and bodies which are mine.” And does not this engage you to look to your lives, and keep them pure? Is not every one of Christ’s wounds a mouth open to plead for more holiness, more service, and more fruit from you? Oh! what will engage you if this will not? But,

Thirdly, This is not all; as a man when he weigheth a thing, casteth in weight after weight, till the scales are counterpoised; so does God cast in engagement after engagement, and argument upon argument, till thy heart, Christian, be weighed up and won to this heavenly light. And therefore, as Elihu said to Job, chap. 36: 22. “Suffer me a little, and I will show thee what I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Some arguments have already been urged on the behalf of the Father and Son, for purity and cleanness of life; and next I have something to plead on the behalf of the Spirit. I plead now on his behalf, who has so many times helped you to plead for yourselves with God. He that has so often refreshed, quickened, and comforted you, he will be quenched, grieved, and displeased by an **impure, loose, and careless conversation**; and what will you do then? Who shall comfort you when the Comforter is departed from you? When he that should relieve your souls is far off? O grieve not the holy Spirit of God by which you are sealed, to the day of redemption, [Eph. 4: 30.](#) There is nothing grieves him more than impure practices, for he is a holy Spirit. And look, as water damps and quenches the fire, so does sin quench the Spirit, [1 Thess. 5: 19.](#) Will you quench the warm affections and burning desires which he has kindled in your bosoms? If you do, it is a question whether ever you may recover them again to your dying day. **The Spirit has a delicate sense.** It is the most tender thing in the whole world. He feels the least touch of sin, and is grieved **when thy corruptions within are stirred by temptations, and break out to the defiling of thy life;** then is the holy Spirit of God, as it were, made sad and heavy within thee. As that word “*me lukeite*”, [Eph. 4: 30.](#) may be rendered. For thereby thou resistest his motions, whereby in the way of a loving constraint he would lead and guide thee in the way of thy duty; yea, thou not only resistest his motions, but crossest his grand design, which is to purge and sanctify thee wholly, and build thee up more and more to the perfection of holiness. And when thou thus forsakes his conduct, and crossest his design in thy soul, then does he usually withdraw as a man that is grieved by the unkindness of his friend. He draws in the beams of his evidencing and quickening grace, withholds all his divine cordials, and saith, as it were, to the unkind and disingenuous soul,

“Hast thou thus requited me, for all the favours and kindnesses thou hast received from me? Have I quickened thee, when thou was dead in transgressions? Did I descend upon thee in the preaching of

the gospel, and communicate careless life, even the life of God, to thee; **leaving others in the state of the dead?** Have I shed forth such rich influences of grace and comfort upon thee? Comforting thee in all thy troubles, helping thee in all thy duties; satisfying thee in all thy doubts and perplexities of soul; saving thee, and pulling thee back from so many destructive temptations and dangers? What had been thy condition, if I had not come unto thee? Could the world have converted thee without me? Could ministers, could angels, have done that for thee which I did? And when I had quickened thee, and made thee a living soul, what couldst thou have done, without my exciting and assisting grace? Couldst thou go on in the way of duty, if I had not led thee? How wouldst thou have waded through the deeps of spiritual troubles, if I had not borne thee up? Whither had the temptations of Satan and thine own corruptions carried thee before this day, if I had not stood thy Friend, and come in for thy rescue in the time of need? Did I ever fail thee in thy extremities? Did I ever leave thee in thy dangers? Have I not been tender over thee, and faithful to thee? And now, for which of all these kindnesses, dost thou thus wrong and abuse me? Why hast thou wounded me thus by thy unkindness? Ah! thou hast ill requited my love! And now thou shalt eat the fruit of thy doings. Let thy light now be darkness; thy songs turned into cowlings; the joy of thine heart, the light of thine eyes, the health of thy countenance, even the face of thy God, and the joy of salvation, be hid from thee."

This is the fruit of careless and loose walking. To this sad issue it will bring thee at last, and when it is come to this, thou shalt go to ordinances, and duties, and find no good in them; no life-quickenng comfort there. When thy heart which was wont to be enlarged, and flowing, shall be clung up and dry; when thou shalt kneel down before the Lord, and cry, as Elisha, when with the mantle of Elijah, he smote the water, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" So thou, where is the God of prayer? Where is the God of duties? But there is no answer: when like Samson, thou shalt go forth and shake thyself, as at other times; but thy strength is gone; then tell me, what thou hast done in resisting, quenching, and grieving the Holy Spirit of God by impure and offensive practices? And thus you see what engagements lie upon you from the Spirit also to walk uprightly, and keep the issues of life pure. I could willingly have enlarged myself upon this last branch, but that a judicious hand has lately improved this argument, to which I shall refer the reader. **Thus God has obliged you to circumspect and holy lives.**

Secondly, You are under great engagements to keep your lives pure; even from yourselves, as well as from your God. As God has bound you to purity of conversation, so you have bound yourselves. And there are several things in you, and done by you, which wonderfully increase, and strengthen your obligations to practical holiness.

First, Your clearer illumination is a strong bond upon your souls, [Eph. 5: 8](#). **"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light."** You cannot pretend, or plead ignorance of your duty. You stand convinced in your own consciences before God, that this is your unquestionable duty. Christians, will you not all yield to this? I know you readily yield. We live, indeed, in a contentious, disputing age. In other things, our opinions are different. One Christian is of this

judgement, another of that: but does he deserve the name of a Christian that dare once question this truth? In this we all meet and close in oneness of mind and judgement, that it is our indisputable duty to live pure, strict, and clean lives. "The grace of God, which has appeared to you, has taught you this truth clearly, and convincingly," [Tit. 2: 11, 12](#). "You have received how you ought to walk, and to please God," [1 Thess. 4: 1](#).

Well then, this being yielded, the inference is plain and undeniable, that you cannot walk as others, in the vanity of their mind; but you must offer violence to your own light. You cannot suffer the corruptions of your hearts to break forth into practice, but you must slight, and put by the notices and rebukes of your own consciences, [Jam. 4: 17](#). "He that knoweth to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." Yea, sin with a witness. Aggravated sin. Sin of a deeper tincture than that of Heathens. Sin that sadly wastes and violates conscience. Certainly, whoever has, you have no cloak for your sin. Light and lust struggling together, great light and strong lusts: these make the soul a troubled sea that cannot rest. **O but when masterless lusts overbear conscience, this impresses horror upon the soul.** This brake David's heart, [Psal. 51: 6](#). "Thou hast put knowledge in my inner part", q. d. Ah, Lord! I went against the rebukes of conscience, to the commission of this sin. I had a watchful light set up within me. I knew it was sin. My light endeavoured lovingly to restrain me, and I thrust it aside. Besides, what pleasure in sin can you have? Indeed, such as for want of light know not what they do, or such, whose consciences are seared, and past feeling; they may seek a little pleasure (such as it is) out of sin: but what content or pleasure can you have, so long as your light is ever breaking in upon you, and smiting you for what you do? This greatly increases your obligation to a precise, holy life. Again,

Secondly, You are professors of holiness. You have given in your names to Christ, to be his disciples; **and by this your engagements to a life of holiness, are yet further strengthened,** [2 Tim. 2: 19](#). "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." The name of Christ is called upon you, and it is a worthy name, [Jam. 2: 7](#). It is called upon you, as the name of the husband is called upon his wife, [Isa. 4: 1](#). "Let thy name be called upon us." Or, as the name of a Father is called upon his child, [Gen. 48: 16](#). "Let my name be called on them, and the name of my fathers. Well then, you bear the name of Christ as his spouse or children; and will you not live suitably to your name? Every place and relation, every title of honour and dignity has its decorum and becomingness. O how will that worthy name of Christ be blasphemed through you, if you adorn it not with becoming deportment? Better you had never professed any thing, than to set yourselves by your profession in the eye and observation of the world; and then to pour contempt on Jesus Christ, by your scandalous conversations, before the eyes of the world, who will laugh at it. I remember it was a momento given to one of his name by Alexander, recordare nominis Alexandri. Remember (said he) thy name Alexander, and do nothing unworthy of that name. O, that is a heavy charge, [Rom. 2: 24](#). "Through you is the name of God blasphemed among the Heathens." Unhappy man that ever thou shouldst be a reproach to Christ: The herd of wicked men are ignota capita, men of no note or observation. **They may sin, and sin again; drink, swear, and tumble in all uncleanness; and it passes away silently; the**

world takes little notice of it. Their wicked actions make but little noise in the world; but the miscarriages of professors, are like a blazing comet, or an eclipsed sun, which all men gaze at, and make their observations upon; oh then, what manner of persons ought you to be, who bear the worthy name of Christ upon you!

Thirdly, But more than this, You have obliged yourselves to this life of holiness by your own prayers. How many times have you lifted up your hands to heaven, and cried with David, [Psal. 119: 5](#). "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me," ver. 133. Were you in earnest with God, when you thus prayed? did you mean as you said? Or did you only compliment with God? If your hearts and tongues agreed in this request, doubtless it is as much your duty to endeavour, as to desire those mercies and, if not, yet do all these prayers stand on record before the Lord, and will be produced against you as witnesses to condemn you, for your hypocrisy and vanity. How often also have you in your prayers lamented, and bewailed your careless and uneven walkings? You have said with Ezra, chap. 9: 6. "O my God, I am ashamed, and even blush to look up unto thee." And do not your confessions oblige you to greater circumspection and care for time to come? Will you confess, and sin? And sin, and confess? Go to God and bewail your evils, and when you have bewailed them, return again to the commission of them? God forbid you should thus dissemble with God, play with sin, and dye your iniquities with a deeper tincture.

Fourthly, and lastly, to add no more, You have often reprov'd or censur'd others for their miscarriages and falls, which adds to your own obligation, to walk accurately, and evenly. Have you not often reprov'd your erring brethren? or at least privately censur'd them, if not duty reprov'd them, (for to these left-handed blows of secret censurings, we are more apt, than to the fair and open strokes of just and due reproofs (and will you practice the same things you criminals and censure others for? "Thou that teachest another, saith the apostle) teachest thou not thyself?" [Rom. 2: 21](#). So say I, thou that censures or rebukes another, condemnest thou not thyself? Will your rebukes ever do good to others, whilst you allow in yourselves what you condemn in them? And as these reproofs and censures can do them no good, so they do you much evil, by reason of them you are "autokatakritoï", self-condemned persons; and out of your own mouths God will judge you. For you need no other witness than yourselves in this case. Your own tongues will fall upon you. Your censures and reproofs of others will leave you without plea or apology, if you look not to your lives with greater care. And yet will you be careless still? Fear you not the displeasure of God? Nor the wounding and disquieting your own consciences? Surely, these things are of no light value with you, if you be Christians indeed.

Thirdly, You are yet further engaged to practical holiness upon the account of your brethren, who are not a little concerned and interested therein. For if, through the neglect of your hearts your lives be defiled and polluted, this will be thrown in their faces, and many innocent and upright ones both reproach'd and griev'd upon your account. This mischievous effect holy David earnestly deprecated, [Psal. 69: 5, 6](#). "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee; let

not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake. Let not them that seek thee, be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel," q. d. Lord, thou knowest what a weak and foolish creature I am. And how apt to miscarry, if left to myself, and should I, through my foolishness, act unbecoming a saint; how would this shame the faces, and sadden the hearts of thy people! They will be as men confounded at the report of my fall. The fall of one Christian is matter of trouble and shame to all the rest; and, when they shall hear the sad and unwelcome news of your scandalous miscarriages, (which will certainly be the effect of a neglected heart and life) they will say as David concerning Saul and Jonathan, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," &c. Or as Tamar concerning Amnon, "And we, whither shall we cause our shame to go?" And for them, they shall be as fools in Israel. **Thy loose and careless life will cause them to estrange themselves from thee**, and look shy upon thee, as being ashamed to own thee, and canst thou bear that; will it not grieve and pierce your very hearts to see a cloud of strangeness and trouble over the countenances of your brethren? To see yourselves disowned and lightly esteemed by them? This very consideration struck a great favourite in the Persian court to the very heart.

It was Ustazanes, who had been governor to Sapore in his minority. And this man for fear denied the Christian faith, and complied with the idolatrous worship of the king. And one Day (saith the historian) sitting at the court-gate, he saw Simon, the aged archbishop of Seleucia, drawn along to prison, for his constancy in the Christian faith; and, though he durst not openly own the Christian faith he had so basely denied, and confess himself a Christian, yet he could not chuse but rise, and express his reverence to this holy man, in a respective and honourable salutation; but the zealous good man frowned upon him, and turned away his face from him, as thinking such an apostate unworthy of the least respect from him This presently struck Ustazanes to the heart, and drew from him many tears and groans, and thus he reasoned with himself: Simon will not own me, and can I think but that God will disclaim me, when I appear before his tribunal? Simon will not speak unto me, will not so much as look upon me, and can I look for so much as a good word or look from Jesus Christ, whom I leave so shamefully betrayed and denied? Hereupon he threw off his rich courtly robes, and put on mourning, apparel, and professed himself a Christian, and died a martyr O it is a piercing thing to an honest heart, to be cast out of the favour of God's people. If you walk loosely, neither God nor his people look in kindly upon you.

Fourthly, and lastly; Your very enemies engage you to this pure and holy life upon a double ground. You are obliged by them two ways, viz. as they are your bold censurers, and your watchful observers. They censure you as hypocrites, and will you give them ground and matter for such a charge? They say, only your tongues are more holy than other men's, and shall they prove it from your practice? They also observe you diligently; lie at catch, and are highly gratified by your miscarriages. If your lives be loose and defiled, **you will not only be a shame to your friends, but the song of your enemies. You will make mirth in hell; and gratify all the enemies of God. This is that they watch for. They are curious observers of your goings.** And that which makes them triumph at your falls and miscarriages, **is not**

only that deep rooted enmity betwixt the two seeds, but because all your miscarriages and evils are so many absolutions to their consciences, and justifications (as they think) of their ways and practices. For look, as your strictness and holiness does, as it were, cast and condemn them, as Noah, [Heb. 11: 7](#). by his practice, condemned the world, their consciences fly in their faces, when they see your holy and pure conversations. It lays a damp upon them. It works upon their consciences, and causes many smart reflections. So when you fall, you, as it were, absolve their consciences, loose the bonds of conviction you had made fast upon them, and now there is matter of joy put before them.

Oh, say they, whatever these men talk, we see they are no better than we. They can do as we do. They can cozen and cheat for adventure. They can comply with any thing for their own ends; it is not conscience, as we once thought, but mere stomach and humour, that made them so precise. And oh! what a sad thing is this! hereby you shed soul-blood. You fasten the bands of death upon their souls. you kill those convictions, which, for any thing you know, might have made way to their conversion. When you fall, you may rise again; but they may fall at your example, and never rise more. Never have a good opinion of the ways of God, or of his people any more. Upon this consideration, David begs of God, [Psal. 5: 8](#). "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies;" (or, as the Hebrew;) my observers, make thy way straight before my face. And thus you see how your very enemies oblige you to this holy and pure conversation also.

Now put all this together, and see to what these particulars will amount. You have heard how God the Father has engaged you to this purity of conversations by his designment of your salvation; rewarded your obedience; his pleasure in it; his promises to it; and his great confidence in you, that you will thus walk before him. The Lord Jesus has also engaged you thereunto by his death and sufferings, whereby you were redeemed from your vain conversations. The Spirit has engaged you, by telling you plainly how much you will grieve and wrong him, resist and quench him, if you do not keep yourselves pure. Yea, you are obliged further, by yourselves; your clear illumination; your high profession; your many prayers and confessions; your many censures and reprehensions of others; do all strengthen your obligation to holiness. Yea, you are obliged further to this holy life by the shame, grief, and trouble your loose walking will bring upon your friends; and the mirth it will make for, and mischief it will do to your enemies; who, thereby, may be made utterly to fall, where, it may be, you only have stumbled: who are justified and absolved, (as before ye heard), by your miscarriages. And now, what think you of all this? Are you obliged or not, to this purity of life? Are all these bonds so tied, that you can set loose, and free yourselves at pleasure from them? If all these things are of no force with you, if none of these bonds can hold you, may it not be questioned, (notwithstanding your profession), whether any spiritual principle, any fear of God, or love to Christ, be in your souls or no? O, you could not play fast and loose with God? if so, you could not, as Samson, snap these bonds asunder at your pleasure.

Consid. 2. Secondly, As you are more obliged to keep the issues of life pure than others are, so God has given you greater assistances and advantages for it than others have. God has not been wanting to any in helps and means. Even the Heathen, who are without the gospel, will be yet speechless and inexcusable before God; but how much more will you be so? Who, besides the light of nature, and the general light of the gospel, have, First, Such a principle put within you. Secondly, Such patterns set before you. Thirdly, Such an assistant ready to help you. Fourthly, So many rods to quicken you and prevent your wandering: if notwithstanding all these helps, your life be still unholy.

First, Shall men of such principles walk as others do? Shall we lament for you, as David once did for Saul, saying, "There the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, the shield of Saul; as though he had not been anointed with oil." There the honour of a Christian was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with the Spirit? "You have received an unction from the holy One, which teaches you all things", 1 John 2:20. Another Spirit, far above that which is in other men, 1 Cor. 2:12. And as this spirit which is in you, is fitted for this life of holiness" (for you are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works", Eph. 2:10.) so this holy spirit of principle, infused into your souls, has such a natural tendency to this holy life, that if you live not purely and strictly, you must offer violence to your own principles and new nature. A twofold help this principle affords you for a life of holiness.

1. First, It pulls you back from sin, as in Joseph; "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And it also inclines you powerfully to obedience. It is a curb to sin, and an spur to holiness. It is impossible for all others to live spiritually and heavenly, because they have no new nature to incline them hereunto. And, methinks, it should be hard for you to live carnally, and sensually; and therein cross the very bent and tendency of the new creature, which is formed in you. How can you neglect prayer, as others do, whilst the Spirit, by divine pulsations, is awaking and rousing up your sluggish hearts with such inward motions, and whispers, as that, Psal. 27:8. "Seek my face". Yea, whilst you feel, (during your omissions of duty), something within that bemoans itself, and, as it were, cries for food, pains and gripes you, like an empty stomach, and will not let you be quiet, till it be relieved. How can you let out your hearts to the world, as other men do, when all that while your spirit is restless, and aches like a bone out of joint? And you can never be at ease, till you come back to God, and say, as Psal. 116 "Return to thy rest, O my soul". Is it not hard, yea, naturally impossible, to fix a stone, and make it abide in the fluid air? Does not every creature, in a restless motion, tend to its proper centre, and desire its own perfection? So does this new creature also. You see how the rivers in their course will not be checked, but bear down all the obstacles in their way, *et soevior ab obice ibit*; a stop does but make them raise the more, and run the swifter afterwards.

There is a central force in these natural motions, which cannot be stopped. And the like may you observe, in the motions of a renewed soul, John 4: 14 "It shall be in him as a well of water springing up." And is it not hard for you to keep it down, or turn its course? How hard did Jeremiah and David find that work? If you do not live holy lives, you must cross your own new nature, and violate the law

that is written in your own hearts, and engraven upon your own bowels. **To this purpose a late writer speaks; Till you were converted, (saith he) the flesh was predominant, and therefore it was impossible for you to live any other than a fleshly life; **for everything will act according to its predominant principle**. Should you not therefore live a spiritual life? **Should not the law of God written in your hearts, be legible in your lives?** O should not your lives be according to the tendency of your hearts? Thus he: Doubtless this is no small advantage to practical holiness. But,**

Secondly, Besides this principle within, you have no small assistance for the purity of life, by these excellent patterns before you. The path of holiness is no untrodden path to you. Christ and his servants have beaten it before you. The life of Christ is your copy, and it is a fair copy indeed, without a blot. Oh! what an advantage is this, to draw all the lines of your actions, according to his example! This glorious, grand example is often pressed upon for your imitation, Heb 12: 2. Looking to Jesus, he has left you an example, that ye should tread in his steps, 1 Pet 2: 21. His life is a living rule to his people; and besides Christ's example, (for you may say, who can live as Christ did? his example is quite above us) you have a cloud of witnesses. A cloud for its directive use, and these men of like passions, temptations, and constitutions with you; who have gone before you in exemplary holiness. The Holy Ghost (intending therein your special help and advantage) has set many industrious pens to sock, to write the lives of the saints, and preserve for your use, their holy sayings, and heavenly actions He bids you "take them for an example," James 5: 10. Oh! what excellent men are passed on before you! what renowned Worthies have led the way! Men, whose conversions were in heaven, whilst they tabernacled on earth.

Whilst this lower world had their bodies, the world above had their hearts, and their affections. Their actions, and their designs were all for heaven. Men that improved troubles and comforts; losses and gains, smiles and frowns, and all for heaven. Men that did extract heaven out of spirituals, out of temporals, out of all things; their hearts were full of heavenly meditations, **their mouths of heavenly communications**, and **their practices of heavenly inclination**: O what singular help is this! Where they followed Christ, and kept the way, they are propounded for your imitation; and where any of them turned aside, you have a mark set upon that action for your cautions and prevention. Does any strange or unusual trial befall you, in which you are ready to say with the church, Lam. 1:12, "Was there ever any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" Here you may see "the same affliction accomplished in your brethren", 1 Pet. 5:9. Here is a store of good company to encourage you. Do the world and the devil endeavour to turn you from your duty, by loading it with shameful scoffs, or sufferings? In this case you may look to Jesus, who despised the shame; and to your brethren, "who counted it their honour to be dishonoured for the name of Christ", as the original of the text, Acts 5:41, may be translated. Is it a dishonour to thee, to be ranked with Abraham, Moses, David, and such as were the glory of the ages they lived in? Art thou at any time under a faint fit of discouragement, and ready to despond under any burden? Oh, how mayest thou be animated by such examples, when such a qualm comes over thy heart? Some sparks of their holy courage cannot choose but steal into thy breast, whilst thou

considerest them. In them, God has set before thee the possibility of overcoming all difficulties, thou seemst men of the same mould, who had the same trials, discouragements and fears, that now thou hast, and yet overcame all. How is thy unbelief checked, when thou sayest, Oh! I shall never reach the end, I shall one day utterly perish! Why dost thou say so? Why may not such a poor creature as thou art, be carried through as well as they? Had not they the same temptations and corruptions with you? Were they not all troubled with an naughty heart, an ensnaring world, and a busy devil, as well as you? Alas! When they put on the divine, they did not put off the human nature; but complained, and feared, as you do; and yet were carried through all.

O what an advantage have you this way! They that first trusted in Christ, had not such helps as you. You stand upon their shoulders. You have the benefit of their experiences. You that are fallen into the last times, have certainly the best helps to holiness, and yet, will not you live strictly and purely? still you put on the name and profession of Christians, and yet be lofty in your spirits; earthly in your designs; neglective of duty; frothy in your communications? Pray, from which of all the saints did you learn to be proud? Did you learn that from Christ, or any of his? From which of his saints did you learn to be earthly and covetous, passionate or censorious, over-reaching and crafty? If you have read of any such evils committed by them, have you not also read of their shame and sorrow, their repentance and reformations? If you have found any such blots in their lives, it was left there designedly to prevent the like in yours. O, what an help to holiness is this!

Thirdly, And this is not all. You have not only a principle within you, and a pattern before you, but you have also an omnipotent assistant to help, and encourage you throughout your way. Are you feeble and infirm? and is every temptation, even the weakest, strong enough to turn you out of the way of your duty? Lo, God has sent his Spirit to help your infirmities, [Rom. 8:26](#). No matter then how weak you are, how many and mighty your difficulties and temptations are, as long as you have such an assistant to help you. Great is your advantage for a holy life this way also. For,

(1) First, when a temptation to sin presses sore upon you, **he pleads with your consciences within, whilst Satan is tempting without.** How often has he brought such scriptures to your remembrance, at the very opportunity, as have saved you out of the temptation? If you attend his voice, you may hear such a voice within you as that, [Jer. 44:4](#), "O do not this abominable thing which I have!" What mighty strivings were there in the heart of Spira, as himself relates? He heard, as it were, a voice within him, saying, Do not write, Spira, do not write. To this purpose is that promise, [Isa. 30:20, 21](#) "**Thine eyes shall behold thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it? when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left."** Here you have a two-fold help to holiness, the outward teaching of the word, verse 20 and the inward teachings of the Spirit, verse 21. He shall say, this is the way, when ye are turning aside to the right-hand, or to the left Alluding to a shepherd, saith one, who, driving his sheep before him; whistles then in, when he sees them ready to stray.

(2) Secondly, When ye walk homily and closely with God in your duties, and the Spirit encourages you to go on, by those inward comforts, scalings, and joys, you have from him at such times; how often does he entertain your souls in public ordinances, in private duties, **with his hidden Manna**, with marrow and fatness, with incomparable and unspeakable comforts, and all this to strengthen you in your way, and encourage you to hold on?

(3.) Thirdly, When you are indisposed for duties, and find your hearts empty and dry, he is ready to fill them, quicken and raise them; so that oftentimes the beginning and end of your prayers, hearing or meditations, are as vastly different, as if one man had begun, and another ended the duty. **O then, what assistance for a holy life have you!** Others indeed are bound to resist temptations, as well as you; but, alas! **having no special assistance from the Spirit, what can they do?** [why Adam fell, **having no special assistance from the Spirit!**] It may be, they reason with temptation a little while, and in **their own strength** resolve against it; **but how easy a conquest does Satan make, where no greater opposition is made to him than this?** Others are bound to hear, meditate, and pray, as well as you; else the neglect of those duties would not be their sin: But, alas, what pitiful work do they make of it! being left to the hardness and vanity of their own hearts, when you spread your sails, you have a gale, but they lie wind bound, heart-bound, and can do nothing spiritually in a way of duty.

Fourthly, and lastly, to mention no more, You have a further advantage to this holy life, by all the rods of God that are at any time upon you. I might show you in many particulars, the advantages this way also, but I shall only present these three to your observation at this time.

First, By these you are clogged, to prevent your straying and wandering. **Others may wander even as far as hell, and God will not spend a sanctified rod upon them, to reduce or stop them; but saith, let them alone,** [Hos. 4: 17](#). **But if you wander out of the way of holiness, he will clog you with one trouble or other to keep you within bounds,** [2 Cor. 12: 7](#). **“Lest I should be lifted up, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet me.”** So **David**, [Psalm 119: 67](#). **“Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy word.”** Afflictions are used by God, as thorns by husband men, to stop the gaps and keep you from breaking out of God’s way, [Hos. 2: 6](#). **“I will hedge up her way with thorns, and build a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”** A double allusion; 1. To cattle that are apt to stray, I will hedge up thy way with thorns. 2. To the sea, which is apt to overflow the country, I will build a wall to prevent inundations. Holy Basil was a long time sorely afflicted with an inveterate head-ache, he often prayed for the removal of it; at last God removed it, but in the room of it, he was sorely exercised with the motions and temptations of lust; which, when he perceived, he heartily desired his head-ache again, to prevent a worse evil. You little know the ends and uses of many of your afflictions. Are you exercised with bodily weakness? it is a mercy you are so; and if these pains and infirmities were removed, these clogs taken off, you may with Basil, wish for them again, to prevent worse evils. Are you poor? why, with that poverty God has clogged your pride. Are you reproached? with these

reproaches God has clogged your ambition. **Corruptions are prevented by your afflictions. And, is not this a marvellous help to holiness of life?**

Secondly, By your afflictions, your corruptions are not only clogged, but purged. By these God dries up and consumes that spring, of sin that defiles your lives, [Isa. 27: 9](#). “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away sin.” **God orders your wants to fill your wantonness; and makes your poverty poison to your pride.** They are God’s physic, to purge ill humours out of your souls. **“When they fall by the sword, and by famine, and by captivity, and by spoil, it is to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white?”** They are both purges and lavatories to your souls. Others have the same afflictions that you have, **but they do not work on them as on you; they are to you as fire for purging, and water for cleansing: and yet, shall not your lives be clean?** It is true, (as one well observes upon that place of Daniel,) **Christ is the only lavatory, and his blood the only fountain to wash away sin: but, in the virtue and efficacy of that blood, sanctified afflictions are cleansers and purgers, too.** [[Hence Tit. 1:15, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled."](#)]

A cross without a Christ never made any man better, but with Christ, saints are much the better for the cross. Has God been (as it were) so many days and nights a whitening you, and yet is not the hue of your conversation altered? Has he put you so many times into the furnace, and yet is not the dross separated? The more afflictions you have been under, the more assistance you have had for this life of holiness.

Thirdly, By all your troubles, God has been weaning you from the world, the lusts, loves, and pleasures of it; and drawing out your souls to a more excellent life and state than this. He makes your sorrows in this life, give a lustre to the glory of the next. Whoever has, be sure you shall have no rest here; and all, that you may long more ardently for that to come. He often makes you groan, “being burdened, to be clothed with your house from heaven,” [2 Cor. 5: 4](#). And yet will you not be weaned from lusts, customs, and evils of it? O what mariner of persons should you be for heavenly and holy conversations? You stand upon the higher ground. You have, as it were, the wind and tide with you. **None are assisted for this life as you are.** Put all this together, and see what this second argument contributes toward our further conviction, and persuasion to holy life. **Have you received a supernatural principle, fitting you for, and inclining you to holy actions, resisting and holding you back from sin?** Has God also set before you such eminent patterns to encourage and quicken you in your way? Doth the Spirit himself stand ready, so many ways, to assist and help you in all difficulties, and has God **hedged up the way of sin with the thorns of affliction, to prevent your wandering, and yet will you turn aside?** **Will you offer violence to your own principles and new nature?** Refuse to follow such leaders as have beaten the way before you? Resist, or neglect his gracious assistance of the blessed

Spirit, which he offers you in every need, and venture upon sin, though God has hedged up your way with afflictions? O, how can you do such great wickedness, and sin against such grace as this!

Methinks, I need say no more to convince you how much you are concerned to keep the issues of life pure, **none being so much obliged to it, or assisted for it, as you are**. But when I remember that Joash lost the complete victory over the Syrians, because he smote not his arrows often enough upon the ground, [2 Kings 13: 8](#). I shall level one arrow more at this mark: For, indeed, that can never be enough pressed, which can never be enough practiced. And therefore,

Consid. 3. Thirdly, It will yet farther appear to be your high concernment, to exact holiness in your conversations, because of the manifold and great uses which God has to make of the visible holiness and purity of your lives, both in this world and that to come. The uses God puts the conversation-holiness of his people in this world unto, are these among others.

First, **To win over souls to Christ, and bring them in love with religion**. **Practical holiness is a very lovely, attractive, and obliging thing**. If the heathen could call moral virtue *verticordia*, turn-heart, from that obliging and winning power it exercises upon the hearts of men; if they could say of it, that were it visible to human eyes, all men would adore it, and fall in love with it; **how much rather may we say so of true holiness, made visible in the lives of saints! This is the turn-heart indeed. It makes the souls of men to cling and cleave to the persons in whom it is**; as it is prophesied, [Zech. 8: 23](#). of the Jews, when they shall be called, (which shall be a time of great holiness,) “in that day, ten men out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” So much of God as appears in men, **so much drawing excellency there is in them**. And this is the apostle’s argument, [1 John 1:3](#) “That ye may have fellowship with us.” Why, what is there in your fellowship to invite men to you? “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus.” Who can choose but to covet their company, that keep company every day with God? **Great is the efficacy of visible holiness to work upon the hearts of men**; either as a concause, working in fellowship with the word, or as a single instrument, working solitarily without the word.

Where God is pleased to afford the word unto men, there the practical holiness of saints is of singular use, to assist and help it in its operation upon the hearts of men. When the lives of Christians sensibly experience that to the eyes of men, which the gospel does to their ears; when so we preach, and so ye believe and live; when we draw by our doctrines, and you draw with us by your examples; when we hold forth the word of life doctrinally, and you hold it forth practically, as [Phil. 2: 16](#). Where is the heart that can stand before us? O! when the plain and powerful gospel pierces the ears of men, and at the same time, the **visible holiness of professors shines so full in their faces**, that they must rather put out their own eyes, or else be forced to acknowledge, that God is in you of a truth; then it will work to purpose upon souls. Then will Christ see of the travail of his soul daily.

Yea, if God deny the word to men, yet this practical holiness I am speaking of, may be to them an ordinance for conversion. **This way, souls may be won to Christ without the word, as the apostle speaks, [1 Pet. 3: 1](#).** Though pulpits should be silent, and vision fail; yet, if you would this way turn preachers, if your lives may but preach the reality, excellency, and sweetness of Jesus Christ and his ways; and, if you would this way preach down the love of the world, and let men see what poor vanities these are; and preach up the necessity and beauty of holiness; surely you, even you might be honoured to bring many souls to Christ, to turn many to righteousness, and cause many to bless God, on your behalf, in the day of visitation. This is the use God has for the holiness and purity of your lives, and does not this engage you strongly to it? What, not when it may prove the means of eternal the to others? Surely, if you have any bowels of mercy in you, you cannot hide from others that whereby they may be saved. How can you, instead of holding forth the word of life, (which is your manifest duty) visibly hold forth the works of death before men? Have you been beholden to others, and shall none be beholden to you for help towards heaven? Dare you say, let others shift as well as they can, find the way to heaven by themselves if they can, they shall have no benefit by your light? If you be Christians, you are Christians of a different stamp and spirit from all those we find described in scripture. Should you not rather say as the lepers did, [2 Kings 7: 6](#). "Do we well to hold our peace," whilst others are perishing? Shall the lips of ministers, and the lives of Christians, be both silenced together? **Shall poor sinners neither hear anything from us, nor see anything from you, that may help them to Christ?** The Lord have mercy then upon the poor world, and pity it, for its case is desperate. **O put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy. Destroy not, by the looseness of your conversation, so many souls; for your scandalous miscarriages are like a bag of poison put into the spring which supplies the whole city with water.**

Secondly, Another use God has for it, is to recover and save the credit of religion, which by the apostasies of hypocrites, and scandalous falls of careless Christians, is wounded and **exposed to contempt**. Much reproach by this means is brought upon religion, and how shall that reproach be rolled away, but by your strictness and purity? By this the world must be convinced that all are not so. Though some be a blot to the name of Christ, yet others are his glory. The more others slur and disgrace religion, the more God expects you to honour and adorn it. I remember Chrysostom brings in the persecutors speaking to two renowned martyrs, after this manner, *Nonne videtis alios vestri ordinis hoc fecisse?* i.e. Why are you so nice and scrupulous? See you not that others of your rank and profession have done these things? To which they returned this brave answer, *Nos hac potissimum ratione viriliter stabimus*, i.e. have they done it? For that very reason we will stand out like men, and will never yield to it. There is an holy Antiperistasis in the zeal of a Christian, which makes it, like fire, burn most vehemently in the coldest weather. If men make void God's law, therefore will David love his commandments above gold, [Psal. 119: 127](#). If there be many Pendletons among professors who will betray Christ and his truth to save their flesh; God will have some Sanders to repair that breach, by their constancy and courage in appearing for them.

Thirdly, God makes use of it for the encouragement of his ministers who labour among you. And indeed it is of no small use to refresh their hearts, and strengthen their hands in their painful work: “Now we live (saith the apostle) if ye stand fast in the Lord,” [1 Thess. 3: 8](#). He speaks as if their very life lay at the mercy of the people, because so much of the joy and comfort of it is wrapt up in their regularity and steadfastness. God knows what a hard providence his poor ministers have, and how many discouragements attend them in their work; hear how one of them expresses it, “Ministers would not be gray headed so soon, nor die so fast, notwithstanding their great labours, if they were but successful; but this cuts to the heart, and makes us bleed in secret, that though we do much, yet it comes to nothing. Our work dies therefore we die. Not so much that we labour, as that we labour in vain: When our ministry petrifies, turns hearts into stones, and these taken up and thrown at us, this kills us; the recoiling of our pains kills us. When our peace returns to us; when we spend our strength to make men more nought than they were; this wounds our hearts, which should be considered by sinners. To kill one’s self, and one’s minister too, who would save them; what a bloody condition is this! Every drop that has fallen from our heart and hand, from our eye-lids and eye-brows, shall be all gathered up, and put as marginal notes by all our labours, and all put in one volume together, and this volume put into your hands at the great day, and opened leaf after leaf, and read distinctly and exactly to you.

Christians, you hear our case, you see our work. Now a little to cheer our spirits in the midst of our hard and killing labours, God sends us to you for a little refreshment, that, by beholding your holy and heavenly conversation, your cheerful obedience, and sweet agreement in the ways of God, we may be comforted over all these troubles, [2 Thess. 1: 3, 4](#). And will you wound and kill our hearts too? O what a cut will this be!

Fourthly, **God has further use for the holiness of your lives; this serves to daunt the hearts, and overawe the consciences of his and your enemies.** And sometimes it has had a strange influence and effect upon them. **There is a great deal of awful Majesty in holiness, and when it shines upon the conscience of a wicked man,** it makes him stoop and do obeisance to it, which turns to a testimony for Christ and his ways before the world. Thus **Herod** was overawed by the strict and holy life of John; he feared him, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and observed (or preserved and saved) him.

That bloody tyrant was **convinced in his conscience of the worth and excellency of that servant of God,** and was forced to reverence him for his holiness. So Darius, [Dan. 6: 14, 18, 19, 20](#). What conflicts had he with himself about Daniel, whom he had condemned; his conscience condemned him, for condemning so holy and righteous a person. “Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night in fastings; neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him. He goes early in the morning to the den, and cries with a lamentable voice, O Daniel, servant of the living God.”

How much is this for the honour of holiness, that it conquers the very persecutors of it; and makes them stoop to the meanest servant of God! It is said of Henry II of France, that he was so daunted by

the heavenly majesty of a poor taylor that was burnt before him, that he went home sad, and vowed, that he would never be present at the death of such men any more. When Valence the emperor came in person to apprehend Basil, he saw such majesty in his very countenance, that he reeled at the very sight of him; and had fallen backward to the ground, had not his servants stepped in to support him. O holiness, holiness, thou art a conqueror. So much, O Christians, as you show of it in your lives, so much you preserve your interest in the consciences of your enemies: cast off this, and they despise you presently.

Fifthly, and lastly, **God will use the purity of your conversations to judge and convince the world in the great day.** It is true, the world shall be judged by the gospel, but your lives shall also be produced as a commentary upon it; and God will not only show them by the word how they ought to have lived, but bring forth your lives and ways to stop their mouths, by showing how others did live. And this I suppose is intended in that text, [1 Cor. 6:2](#), "The saints shall judge the world, yea, we shall judge angels;" i.e. our examples are to condemn their lives and practices, as Noah, [Heb. 11:7](#) is said to condemn the world by building the ark, i.e. his faith in the threatening, and obedience to the command, condemned their supineness, infidelity and disobedience. They saw him every day about that work, diligently preparing for a deluge, and yet were not moved with the like fear that he was; this left them inexcusable; so when God shall say in that day to the careless world, did you not see the care, and diligence, the holy zeal, watchfulness, and self-denial of my people, who lived among you? How many times have they been watching and praying, when you have been drinking or sleeping! Was it not easy to reflect when you saw their pains and diligence, Have not I a soul to look after as well as they; a heaven to win or lose, as well as they? O how speechless and inexcusable will this render wicked men, yea, it shall not only be used to judge them, but angels also. How many shocks of temptations have poor saints stood,; whereas they fell without a tempter? They stood not in their integrity, though created in such excellent natures; how much then are you concerned on this very account also to walk exactly! if not instead of judging then, you shall be condemned with them.

And thus you see what use your lives and actions shall be put to; and are these inconsiderable uses? Is the winning over souls to God a small matter? Is the salving the honour and reputation of godliness a small matter? Is the encouraging the hearts and strengthening of the hands of God's poor ministers, amidst their spending, killing labours, a small matter? Is the awing of the consciences of your enemies, and judging them in the last day, a light thing? Which of these can you call so?

O then, since you are thus obliged to holiness of life, thus singularly assisted for it; and since there are such great dependencies upon it, and uses for it, both now and in the world to come, see that ye be holy in all manner of conversation. See that, "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so ye walk in him," always remembering, that for this very end, Christ has redeemed, or "delivered you out of the hands of your enemies, that you might serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of your lives," [Luke 1: 74, 75](#). And to how little purpose will be all that I have preached, and you

have heard, of Christ, if it be not converted into practical godliness? This is the scope and design of it all.

And now, reader, thou art come to the last leaf of this treatise of Christ, it will be but a little while, and thou shalt come to the last page or day of thy life; and thy last moment in that day. Wo to thee, wo and alas for ever; if an interest in this blessed Redeemer be then to get. The world affords not a sadder sight, than a poor Christless soul shivering upon the brink of eternity. To see the poor soul that now begins to awake out of its long dream, at its entrance into the world of realities, to shrink back into the body, and cry, O, I cannot, I dare not die. And then the tears rundown. Lord, what will become of me? O what shall be my eternal lot? This, I say, is as sad a sight as the world affords. That this may not be thy case, reflect upon what thou hast read in these sermons. Judge thyself in the light of them. Obey the calls of the Spirit in them. Let not thy slight and formal spirit float upon the surface of these truths, like a feather upon the water; but get them deeply fixed upon thy spirit, by the Spirit of the Lord; turning them into life and power upon thee; and so animating the whole course and tenor of thy conversation by them, that it may proclaim to all that know thee, that thou art one who esteemest all to be but dross, that thou mayest win Christ.

Bavinck's comments: "Others put it this way: the image of God consists antecedently in man's spiritual nature, formally in sanctity, and consequently in dominion. As a rule, however, Reformed theologians continued to speak of the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense. In Holy Scripture they read that man, on the one hand, is still called the image of God after the fall and should be respected as such (Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9); and that, on the other hand, he had nevertheless lost the **primary content of the image of God (i.e., knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) and only regains these qualities in Christ** (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). By observing this distinction in Scripture and incorporating it in their theology, Reformed theologians have maintained the bond between the physical and the ethical nature of man, and thereby also at this point (the relation between nature and grace) kept themselves from falling into various errors". Hermon Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 2 pg 550

God's Holiness

God's Love for Himself & The Communication Of It To The Will

by Geerhardus Vos
Vol. 1 pgs. 36-38
Code453

83. *What is the original concept of holiness?*

The root קדש originally means, "to be set apart," "to be separated." God is therefore called, "the Holy One," because He exists in Himself and nothing can be compared to Him. The metaphysical gap that exists between Him and the creature is therefore expressed by the concept of holiness. A very clear Scripture is 1 Samuel 2:2, "There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides You; there is no rock like our God" (see Exod 15:11; 1 Sam 6:20).

84. *Is the concept of holiness exhausted by this?*

No, this is already clear from the fact that God can also communicate a likeness of His holiness to the creature. Of course, God can never give up His eternity. From this it is therefore apparent that the concept as described above needs supplementing. This supplement must be sought in the following: God is holy not only insofar as He is the eternal One, but also insofar as in His dealings with His creatures He claims everything for Himself and makes it subservient to His purposes, sets it apart, hallows it.

85. *How is this second element in the concept of holiness distinguished from the first?*

By accenting the rational significance of God's holiness. God is not only distinguished from all that exists outside Him, but He also knows Himself, seeks Himself, and loves Himself as the supreme embodiment of rational perfection. And from this determination of God toward Himself, it follows that He also makes the creature subservient to Himself and separates it for Himself. For the creature being holy means "consecrated to God."

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

86. *What results from this consecration of the creature to God?*

That sometimes the appearance can arise as if God's holiness is synonymous with His grace. When God sets a person or a nation apart for Himself, He at the same time takes them into His special favor. Grace follows consecration, for in being dedicated to God lies the beatitude [go too codeB] of the creature; compare Psalm 103; Hosea 11:8; Psalms 22:4; 33:21; and the name "the holy One of Israel" in Isaiah 43:14 and other such places.

87. *How then can we describe the holiness of God?*

As that attribute of God by which He seeks and loves Himself as the highest good and demands as reasonable goodness from the creature to be consecrated to Him. [see Edwards @ code453a]

88. *Can one rightly call God's love the central attribute of His being according to which all the others must be classified?*

No, because all attributes are God's being. What is more, theologians who venture to make God's love the central attribute do this at the expense of other attributes, e.g., holiness, as if God were nothing other than pure self-sacrificing love. Scripture teaches us that there is such self-sacrificing love in God, but at the same time it teaches that there is more than this love and that it also is subordinate to the highest law of the rational life of God, namely, that in the first place **He wills Himself and glorifies Himself.**

89. *Does the attribute of love need to be understood rationalistically as an insight into and approval of the excellent attributes of the object that is loved?*

No, love has its rational sense within itself and does not lose that sense even when it extends to the most unworthy object. Scripture ascribes to God such a love for lost sinners **who did not have anything in themselves that would arouse God's approval and His good pleasure.**

90. *What distinguishes God's love from His holiness?*

Holiness has reference to God's love of Himself as the highest good. Thus, it is God's self-determination. Love, on the other hand, has reference to the disposition of God's good pleasure toward what lies outside of Him, or to the affection of the three Divine Persons for each other as well.

91. *How has one attempted to make an argument for the Trinity from the attribute of love?*

It has been pointed out that love demands a personal object that is distinct from the person who loves. This is true, but one should observe that in this way we do not yet come to the conclusion that there are precisely three persons in the Godhead.

92. Is **self-love** permitted in the creature in the same way that it is in God's holiness?

a) **God can and must love Himself as the highest good.** The creature may not aim at making itself the highest good and final purpose of its aspirations. In us absolute self-love is forbidden; indeed, strictly taken, so is absolute love for another creature where the honor of God would be left aside.

b) Still, one may speak of self-love in a good sense. The obligations, through whose fulfillment we must glorify God, must vary in nature. There are some that call us to self-sacrifice, others that we must have a regard for self-preservation. Ill-considered self-sacrifice can become sin. Nobody may hate his own flesh. Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8. 9

page 40

102. *What is the difference between the holiness of God and His righteousness?*

These two attributes are most closely connected to one another, yet they are not to be identified with each other. The difference is mainly twofold:

a) **We call holiness the rational goodness of God as He possesses that in Himself,** without our understanding that goodness as moving outside of Himself. On the other hand, righteousness is specifically that attribute of God's being that compels Him to make His holiness a power outside of Himself.

b) **Holiness is, as we have seen, God's determination toward Himself.** It is, as it were, a centripetal property, by which God moves toward Himself, toward the center of His being. On the other hand, righteousness is more a centrifugal property, by which God works from Himself outwardly, although this also occurs to reveal and maintain His holiness.

Important Notes on Faith

code72

John Flavel

[This comment by Flavel is in the same vein as John Owen's comment.](#)

[page 103 Vol. 2, pdf file online](#)

Nothing but unbelief bars men from Christ and his benefits. As many as [received him]; the word signifies "to accept, take," or, (as we fitly render it), to receive, assume, or take to us; a word most aptly expressing the nature and office of faith, yea, the very justifying and saving act; and we are also needfully to note its special object: The text saith not *aura*, his, but *avrov, him*, i.e., his person, as he is clothed with his offices, and not only his benefits and privileges. These are secondary and consequential things to our *receiving him* ¹ So that it is a receiving, assuming, or accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, which must have respect to the tenders and proposals of the gospel, "for therein is the

righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i.17. therein is Jesus Christ revealed, proposed, and offered unto sinners, as the only way of justification and salvation ; which gospel offer, as before was opened, is therefore ordinarily necessary to believing, Rom. x. 11, 12, 13, etc.

Thirdly, This description is yet further explained by this additional exegetical clause, [even to them that believe on his name ,] here the terms are varied, though the things expressed in both be the same; what he called receiving there, is called believing on his name here, to show us that the very essence of saving faith consists in our receiving of Christ. By his name, we are to understand Christ himself: it is usual to take these two, believing in him, and believing in his name, as terms convertible, and of the same importance, *Ipse est nomen suum, et nomen ejus ipse est*: His name is Himself, and Himself is his name. So that here we have the true nature and precious benefits of saving faith excellently expressed in this scripture, the sum of which take in this proposition:

Doctrine. *That the receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ is that saving and vital act of faith which gives the soul right both to his person and benefits.*

We cannot act spiritually till we begin to live spiritually: Therefore the spirit of life must first join himself to us, in his quickening work, (as was shown you in the last sermon), which being done, we begin to act spiritually, by taking hold upon, or receiving Jesus Christ, which is the thing designed to be opened in this sermon.

The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith. There are several sorts of faith besides saving faith, and in saving faith there are several acts, besides the justifying or saving act; but this receiving act, which is to be our subject this day, is that upon which both our righteousness and eternal happiness do depend. "This, as a *form*, differences saving faith from all other kinds or sorts of faith:"² by this it is that we are justified and saved. "To as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God:" **yet it doth not justify and save us by reason of any proper dignity that is found in this act, but by reason of the object it receives or apprehends.** [this is in the same vein as Owen's quote above, at the end of his comments.] The same thing is often expressed in scripture by other terms, as "Coming to Christ," John vi. 35. Trusting or staying upon Christ, Isa. 50:10. But whatever is found in those expressions, it is all comprehended in this, as will appear hereafter.

¹The gospel offer is God's act, made by means of the word: acceptance is man's act; yet so, as it is also the gift of God; for a man cannot receive the Mediator, unless faith, which is the **instrument of this acceptance**, be given him by God.

² There are divers other expressions by which the nature of saving faith is expressed in scripture, viz. **Eating Christ's flesh**, and **drinking his blood**, John vi. 40. **Coming to Christ**, Matt. xi. 28. **Having the Son**, 1 John v. 12. **Trusting or depending upon him**, for which the Hebrew uses three emphatical words. The first signifies a firm and stable trust. The second, to lean, or depend with security. The third, to betake one's self to a sanctuary for protection. All which is supposed or included in our receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ. In eating and drinking we must receive meat and drink : coming to Christ is necessarily supposed in receiving him, for there is no receiving at a distance. Having the Son, and receiving him, are notions of the same importance ; and for trusting, relying with security, and betaking ourselves to Christ for refuge, they are all involved in the receiving act; for as God offers him to us as the only prop of our hearts and hopes, so we receive him to rely upon him. And as he is held forth in the gospel as

the only Asylum, or city of refuge, so we take or receive him, and accordingly betake ourselves to him for refuge.

Excerpt from John Owen, Covenant Theology p 299 (see this excerpt in context on page 1867)

Objection and Answer

“But then, on the other hand it will follow,” they say, “that men are pardoned before they do believe; which is expressly contrary to the Scripture.”

Answer: (1.) The communication and donation of faith to us is an effect of the same grace in accordance with which our sins are pardoned; and they are both bestowed on us by virtue of the same covenant. (2.) The application of pardoning mercy to our souls is in order of nature consequent to believing, but in time they go together. (3.) Faith is not required to the procuring of the pardon of our sins, but to the receiving of it: “Whosoever believes in him will receive remission of sins,” Acts 10:43.

Eph. 1:6

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

John Flavel, The Method of Grace, vol. 2 p 261

In opening of this point three things must be doctrinally discussed and opened, viz.

1. What the acceptation of our persons with God is?
2. How it appears that believers are so accepted with God ?
3. How Christ the Beloved procures this benefit for believers ?

Firsts What the acceptation of our persons with God is ? To open which, it may be proper to remember, that there is a twofold acceptance of persons mentioned in scripture.

1. One is the sinful act of corrupt man.
2. The other the gracious act of a merciful God.

First. Accepting of persons is noted in scripture as the sinful act of a corrupt man ; a thing which God abhors, being the corruption and abuse of that power and authority which men have in judgment; overlooking the merit of the cause through sinful respect to the quality of the person whose cause it is; so that the cause doth not commend the person, but the person the cause. This God everywhere brands in men, as a vile perverting of judgment, and utterly disclaims it himself, Gal. ii. 6. "God accepteth no man's person;" Rom. ii. 11. "There is no respect of persons with God." [\[this speaks against the presumption of the sinner's prayer, that the effect cannot come before the cause\]](#)

Secondly. There is also an accepting of persons, which is the gracious act of a merciful God ; whereby he receives both the persons and duties of believers into special grace and favour for Christ's sake; and of this my text speaks. In which act of favour three things are supposed or included.

First. It supposes an estate of alienation and enmity ; those only are accepted into favour that were out of favour ; and indeed so stood the case with us, Eph. ii. 12, 13. "Ye were aliens and strangers, but

now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ:" So the apostle Peter, in 1 Pet. ii. 10. "Which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God ; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The fall made a fearful breach betwixt God and man. Sin, like a thick cloud, intercepted all the beams of divine favour from us ; the satisfaction of Christ dissolves that cloud, Isa. xlv. 22, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." **This dark cloud thus dissolved**, the face of God shines forth again with cheerful beams of favour and love upon all, who, by faith, are interested in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, It includes the removing of guilt from the persons of believers, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, Rom. v. 1, 2. " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand:" **for the face of God cannot shine upon the wicked; the person must be first made righteous, before he can be made accepted.**

pg 297: "And thus we see in what glorious acts the efficacy of the word discovers itself upon the hearts of men; and all these acts **lie in order to each other**. For, until the soul be awakened, it cannot be enlightened, Eph. 5:14. **Till it be enlightened, it cannot be convinced**, Eph 5:13. **Conviction being nothing else but the application of the light that shines in the mind in the conscience of a sinner. Till it be convinced, it cannot be wounded for sin**, Acts 2:37 [*they were cut to the heart, only then, what must we do to be saved?*] And till it be wounded for sin, it will never be converted from sin, and brought effectually to Jesus Christ. **p 298 vol. 2]**

Ordo Salutis

code73

Important Distinctions on Faith and Conversion

Order of nature of faith relative to a vital principle communicated by God; a more thorough explanation the order of nature of the events in conversion.

The following excerpts from **Edwards, Owen, Flavel, Coxe and John Gill** will clear up the question that many have on the order of events in our conversion, *ordo salutis*, in the work of the Spirit, to believe on Christ; that is, is faith what happens first? After studying all these you should come to a good understanding of this subject; they all do a really good job in painting this picture, mentioning a vital principle of life infused by being united to Christ first, then faith being bestowed.

If the first thing that happens is faith, then to what testimony or object does faith exercise upon? Nothing. Union to Christ hasn't happened yet in order of nature. In this case his faith would testify to an untruth, that one was in Christ when he is not. This is what actually happens by means of the Sinner's prayer, where an unregenerate person exercises a faith of his own making, a self-deception, i.e., that he is in Christ (from which saving faith flows) when he is not, hence presumption and the subsequent fatal security.

My summary first: Faith sees the testimony as true; it is not the cause of the testimony but the instrument by which we see and believe it and hence agree to it thus **making it a true covenant where both parties agree to its terms** and **hence no more enmity between man and God**. Hence *by his*

knowledge [or by the knowledge one has of the saviour, a saving knowledge] *he* [Christ] *shall my righteous servant justify many*, Isa 53:11. So we are justified in the mind of God because of his eternal love for the elect and by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ in eternity before the foundation of the world he justified in his mind while we were sinners (unregenerate) and faith when given at the appointed time gives us this knowledge, changes the heart, takes away the enmity as described immediately above, hence fulfills the requirement of what a covenant is, both parties now reconciled due to the removal of the enmity at conversion; so by believing by which faith is denominated (as well as by knowledge in Isa 53:11), we submit or obey the gospel plea, agreeing to the terms of the covenant, etc., hence are actually justified. So all this happens at once yet by order of nature we are cut from the wild olive branch and engrafted into Christ by the Spirit (for we can do nothing apart from him - John 15) and believed on by faith which is given by the Spirit. See also Owen's comment on the order re faith's order in relation to other things.

Faith must testify to something that has happened; for if faith come first absolutely considered; i.e., no object for it to fix on, then it must testify of an untruth, that we would believe a lie (e.g., as in the case of the sinner's prayer) that we have not been engrafted into Christ. So we must be engrafted into Christ, united to Him, the true vine, first in order of nature, to partake of the sap, which are the graces from the fullness of Christ, grace for grace, of which faith is the queen thereof.

Steven Lawson states, "**Just as the time of human conception precedes delivery, so regeneration precedes faith**. The new birth is Monergistic, meaning that the Holy Spirit is the sole active party in regeneration; man is passive." p 167 Foundations of Grace

Then as Flavel notes, "he first infuses the grace, and then opens the eye of the soul to see it. Now since the heart is the subject of that infused grace, even this way of the Spirit's witnessing also includes the necessity of keeping carefully our own hearts." P434, Vol. V

I put in bold red the key statements on this. There are many other spiritual principles employed in this explanation. The last big section by Flavel is excellent in clearing up any misunderstandings on this subject; reading all these comments will help you gain a very good understanding of it.

John Owen: p 68 Vol. 22 Commentary on Hebrews

Obs. IX. The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because the grace of them prevents [comes before - my insert] any condition or qualification on our part. —I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requireth of us in and **by virtue of that covenant**; but this I say, the principal promises thereof are **not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant**, but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant, and establishing or confirming in the covenant. The covenant of works had its promises, **but they were all remunerative**, respecting an antecedent obedience in us; (so were all those which were peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them was **formally reward only**. In the covenant of grace it is not so; for sundry of the promises thereof are the means of our being taken into covenant, of our entering into covenant with God. The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged unto obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those promises, namely, of the **pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts**, which the apostle expressly insisteth upon as the peculiar promises of

this covenant, **do take place and are effectual antecedently unto our covenant obedience.** For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedence unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.¹

¹ *When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is, that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours; and it is not, in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified.* Jonathan Edwards

Notes on the order of salvation from Hermon Bavinck (ordo salutis)

Now since regeneration is basically the re-creation of the whole person in the image of him who created humans, **the capacity to believe (potential, seminal, or “habitual” faith, the seed or root of faith) is automatically implied.** Pg 101 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

In addition, it was overlooked that in regeneration the seeds of hope and love (and so forth) are always implanted as well, that in principle the whole person is renewed by it. Aside from this, however, it is perfectly true that in regeneration, along with all human capacities and powers, the capacity to believe is also restored. To the regenerate person, believing in God or in Christ as such is just as natural as it is for everyone to believe in the world of the senses. Admittedly, just as every potentiality results in actions only when it receives a kind of stimulus from without, and a grain of wheat only germinates in the warm shelter of the soil, **so also the capacity to believe implanted by regeneration only becomes an act of faith in response to the ongoing internal calling.** But in regeneration, God nevertheless restores the vital rapport that originally existed between him and humanity. Created in God’s image, humans are again related to God himself and to all that is his: to his Christ, to the things of the Spirit, to his Word, to his church, to his heaven, to the things that are above. Crucified to the world and to sin, the regenerate live to God. And thus, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they also know God and are saved through that knowledge (John 17: 3). Pg 101-102 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

FAITH AND REGENERATION: WHICH IS PRIOR?

Code421

More Insight on Regeneration & The Order of Salvation (*ordo salutis*)

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 122-124
(Hermon Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian, 1854 to 1921)

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

FAITH AND REGENERATION: WHICH IS PRIOR?

The descriptions that have been given of faith since the Reformation are so numerous and divergent as to make a person almost despair of the possibility of correctly and clearly defining the nature of faith. **Roman Catholic** theology has the advantage of a very simple and understandable definition when it describes faith solely as assent. But in so doing it puts saving faith on a level with all other historical faith, denies its religious nature, must therefore later complement it with love, and thus makes the forgiveness of sins and the eternal blessed life depend on our good works. **In Scripture, however, faith is not merely an intellectual act of accepting the witness of the apostles concerning Christ**, but also a personal relation, a spiritual bond, with Christ who is now seated at the right hand of the power of God. There it occupies such a central place that it can be called "the work of God" par excellence (John 6: 29). It is the principle of the Christian life as a whole, the means by which we obtain Christ and all his benefits, the subjective source of all salvation and blessing. While through Scripture it binds us to the historical Christ, it at the same time lifts us up to the invisible world and causes us to live in communion with the Lord from heaven. Wherever faith may be rooted in human beings, it affects all our capacities and powers, gives us direction and guidance, controls our intellect and heart, our thinking and activity, our life and conduct. Christians are believers (πιστοι). **Faith is mystical and noetic [noetic is relating to the intellect], receptive and spontaneous, passive and active, the opposite of all works and itself the work of God par excellence, the means of justification and the principle of sanctification, accompanying us throughout our lives and changing into sight only at death.** It is only natural that theology has to struggle to give a somewhat correct definition of it. But even if it succeeded in doing this, it would never be able to control human life and prevent all its one-sidednesses and aberrations in practice. Still, it should not be impossible, in the order of redemption, to give faith the place and the significance that is due to it according to Scripture.

To that end it needs to be in the foreground of our consciousness that all the benefits of salvation are secured by Christ and present in him and that he himself, as the Lord from heaven, is by his Spirit the one who distributes and applies them. **Neither faith nor conversion is the condition that in any way**

acquires salvation for us. They are only the way in which the benefits of the covenant enter into the subjective possession of those for whom they were acquired. To that extent it is completely correct to say that justification, like the other benefits of the covenant, precedes faith. In “the pact of salvation” (*pactum salutis*) the Son already acted as the Guarantor and Mediator of his own. According to 2Cor. 5:19, God reconciles the world to himself in Christ, not counting its trespasses against it, and Rom. 4:25 clearly states that Christ, who was handed over to death on account of our sins, was raised for our justification; that is, to acquire this justification by his death and to **communicate it to us by his resurrection.** Reconciliation (καταλλαγή) is not distinguished from expiation (ἱλασμός) by the fact that while the latter is objective the former is subjective. The former is also objective. The content of the gospel message is this: God has been reconciled, accept this reconciliation, and believe the gospel. Reconciliation, forgiveness, sanctification, and so forth, are not effected by our faith or our conversion but have been completely secured by Christ, who distributes them at his pleasure.

This needs to be remembered all the more since there is no participation in the benefits of Christ except by communion with his person. The benefits of the covenant are not material goods that can be owned and enjoyed apart from the mediator of that covenant. They are included in him and never exist independently of him. When it is said that Christ secured them, this means that God grants these benefits out of grace without violating his righteousness and can grant them in communion with Christ. Among the benefits Christ has secured, there is, specifically, also the gift of the Holy Spirit. He himself became Spirit. By his suffering and death he made the Spirit of the Father and the Son also his Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and therefore distributes that Spirit at his pleasure while the Spirit himself takes all things from him. **The gift of the Spirit, accordingly, presupposes that God has already imparted and granted his Christ, and that Christ has given himself.** Also, the very first benefit of salvation is a benefit of the covenant that presupposes the objective mystical union. Not only is there no resurrection, but neither is there a crucifixion and a burial, no mortification of the old self, except in communion with Christ. **This imputation and donation of Christ and his benefits already took place, ideally, in the decree and from all eternity.** It was objectively realized in Christ as head and mediator when he became human, died, and was raised. Materially it is also the content of the word of the gospel. **It is individually applied and distributed only in the internal calling and passively accepted on the human side in regeneration.** Whether it takes place in childhood, youth, or later, before or during the hearing of the Word, **logically it always precedes the act of really believing.** “For no one can hear the word of God salvifically unless he is regenerate.” No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him (John 6: 44; also cf. Rom. 8: 7; 1 Cor. 2: 14; 12: 3; etc.).

But **regeneration** in a restricted sense, as the **infusion of the principle of the new life,** may also temporally precede faith. In their polemic with Anabaptists, the Reformed gradually arrived at the insight that the faculty, seed, or disposition of faith, in other words, regeneration in a restricted sense, could already occur in infancy before the awakening of consciousness, in or before baptism, or even before birth. They appealed to the examples of Jeremiah (1: 5), John the Baptist (Luke 1: 15), Paul (Gal. 1: 15), and Jesus himself (Luke 1: 35); and beyond these examples, to the teaching of Scripture concerning circumcision and baptism, church and the covenant of grace; in other words, they appealed to all those proofs that were **advanced in support of pedobaptism** that will be discussed later. If regeneration did not occur in infancy, either [the doctrine of] original sin would be weakened, or one would have to despair of the salvation of children who die in their infancy. However, since the grace of

God is pure grace and hence absolutely independent of any human condition, and since, especially in the New Testament dispensation of it, it is abundant (Rom. 5: 15) and extended to all races and peoples, there need not be either any weakening of [the doctrine of] original sin or any denial of salvation for all those who die in their infancy. For God no door is locked, no creature unapproachable, no heart inaccessible. With his Spirit he can enter the innermost being of every human, with or without the Word, by way of or apart from all consciousness, in old age or from the moment of conception. Christ's own conception by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb is proof that the Holy Spirit can, from that moment on and continually, be active in a human being with his sanctifying presence. [The question is, is this normative for people, in general, except those who God uses in a special way as was the case with John the Baptist, Christ, etc., after those times? I don't think it is. Same goes for the gift of healing; I'm a Ceasationist, but God can heal still as he pleases.]

The objection raised against this view always comes down to the fact that in this way the **freedom and independence of a person is abandoned** and **a decision is made concerning people's salvation entirely apart from them**. But, in the first place, this objection applies in the same degree with respect to the regeneration that occurs at a later age. For, unless one wants to take the **Pelagian** route and **make regeneration dependent on a person's free religious choice**, **regeneration in this case precedes faith and takes place in a person without input from that person**. Second, it is an undeniable fact that all children have been conceived and born in sin and are therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself. Against this background, it is a most comforting thought that as children they are similarly received without their knowledge unto grace in Christ. And, third, this confession finds support in the manner in which God, in creation and providence, goes to work in the distribution of his gifts. No one can say to him: What are You doing? For no one makes us different but God. *What have we that we did not receive? And if we received it, why do we boast as if it were not a gift?* (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 7).

More Insight on Regeneration & The Order of Salvation (*ordo salutis*)

The Reformation Understanding: Mortification and Vivification (pg 147)

Skip to Pg150

Gradually, however, conversion was also delimited in another direction. Initially, in Reformed theology as in Scripture, the word was very often still understood in a broad sense to refer to the overall change of a person from beginning to end. In that sense, conversion included rebirth, faith, and ongoing renewal or sanctification. But the conflict with Anabaptists raised the question whether also in the case of children, before they came to awareness, there could be faith and conversion. Furthermore, the controversy with the Remonstrants concerned the question whether God or man was the primary agent in the work of salvation and specifically in conversion. For these reasons the Reformed soon began to make a distinction between the disposition (*habitus*) of faith and the act (*actus*) of faith, and similarly between the disposition to conversion and actual conversion. "For the grace of conversion is twofold: habitual and actual. The former is that by which a human is regenerated

by the power of the Holy Spirit or is given the powers of faith and love. The latter is that by which the already-regenerate person, with the aid of God's word and Spirit, exercises these powers in the activity of believing and loving."

The Remonstrants, however, reversed this order. They started with actual conversion, which came about [synergistically] by a combination of God's sufficient grace and human free will. They then added that this actual conversion, by the repeated exercises of the acts of faith and repentance, became a habitual conversion (*conversio habitualis*). But the Reformed viewed habitual conversion as an **infused** (not an acquired) disposition, **attributed it solely to the regenerating grace of God**, and in this connection regarded the preaching of the gospel only as an antecedent means and customary adjunct. Among them, accordingly, actual conversion became the act of the regenerate person, endowed by God with the powers of faith and love, by virtue of which, aroused by God's Word and enabled by his Spirit, one also actually begins to exercise those powers. [F. Gomarus *et al*, 1888] Thus in the **Reformed order of salvation**, conversion gradually acquired a very definite place. On the one hand, it was essentially distinct from the law-driven repentance that also frequently occurs among unbelievers, as well as from faith and love or habitual conversion, that is, from what was later called regeneration in the restricted sense. On the other hand, as the "first actual conversion" (*conversio actualis prima*) it was also distinguished from the "continual conversion" (*conversio continua*) that goes on throughout the Christian life, as well as from the "second actual conversion" (*conversio actualis secunda*) that again is necessary in the case of believers after a period of aberrancy and a lapse from faith or following a slump in one's spiritual life.

Now, in what does this "first actual conversion" consist? Under the heading of penitence (repentance, conversion) the Lutherans usually list three components: contrition, faith, and good works (the new obedience). But these three do not, in their redemptive order, cohere organically. By "contrition" is meant the terrors of conscience that are induced by the law and precede faith. But these terrors of conscience do not with absolute certainty lead to faith and may, after a shorter or longer period of time, pass and disappear. By "faith," Lutherans understand the heart's reliance on the grace of God in Christ, but because in this connection they almost exclusively have in mind peace of conscience and the rest of soul that is the fruit of faith, it is not clear here how the new obedience proceeds from faith nor how it can arouse and spur on believers to practice it. The Reformed, in contrast, following Calvin, gave to penitence (*poenitentia*) a place outside, and to full conversion (*resipiscentia*) a place inside the Christian life; they did not include faith in this full conversion but saw both as arising from the root of regeneration and recognized them in their relative independence. Consequently faith was especially related to justification and conversion to sanctification, and so conversion (*resipiscentia*) acquired, besides a religious sense, an eminently ethical meaning as well.

This is especially evident from the fact that Calvin did not define conversion in terms of contrition and faith (with or without good works) but in terms of the putting-to-death of the old self and the bringing-to-life of the new self; he was followed in this by countless Reformed theologians—among others, by Ursinus in his catechism and commentary (Explications). A few, however, proposed another division. In **Calvin's** thought, regeneration did not yet have the restricted meaning later attributed to it but described a person's total renewal that proceeds from faith. **Similarly, he did not yet distinguish conversion (*resipiscentia*) as actual conversion from habitual conversion (or regeneration in a restricted**

sense). For that reason, it was easy for him, following the example of Rom. 6, to ascribe to conversion the two parts of putting-to-death the old self (*mortificatio*) and bringing-to-life the new (*vivificatio*). But later, when all these terms became more refined, some commented that the putting-to-death of the old self and the bringing-to-life of the new—that is, the experience of being passively crucified and resurrected with Christ—were in fact aspects of regeneration. “The two terminal points of regeneration are two qualities: the formerly inherent corruption and the sanctity that is now being introduced.” But “the terminal points of conversion (*resipiscentia*) are two acts: the sin committed and the good that must be done.” It was consequently described as “hatred of sin and love of righteousness,” as a turning away from evil and a turning to the good, or more extensively as “grief after having committed the sin on account of its offense to God” and a “transformation of the whole spirit, out of grief, from evil to good. [W. Musculus, *Loci communes*] But even if one continues to view the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life as aspects of actual conversion, one always ascribes to them a different meaning than when they occur as aspects of regeneration. In the latter case they are exclusively acts of God in which a human is passive; but if the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life are aspects of actual conversion (*resipiscentia*), they are activities of the person who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God and endowed with the virtues of faith and love. [A. Polanus, 1617]

Accordingly, conversion as the “first actual conversion” (as it is considered here [in order] after regeneration in a restricted sense, alongside of and in connection with faith, and [in order] before justification) is the activity of the regenerate person by which one learns to know, hate, and flee sin in its true nature, returns with a humble confession of sin to God as Father in Christ, and proceeds with a joyful heart to walk in his ways. Hence there are several elements here: the illumination of the intellect by which a person learns to know sin in its true character, that is, as sin in the sight of God; grief, sorrow, regret, and shame over sin because we have displeased God with it; a humble confession made in secret before God or privately before another person, or in special cases in public before the council of the church or the whole congregation; hatred of sin and a conscious and firm decision to flee it; the act of standing up and returning to God as a gracious Father in Christ, hence in the confidence that he can and will forgive the sins; a heartfelt joy in God through Christ inasmuch as he has forgiven the sin and is a gracious Father; a sincere desire and love to live in keeping with the will of God, in all good works.

True conversion, therefore, does not consist in an incidental act of moral self-improvement, in breaking with some gross sin and adapting oneself to virtue. It is rather a complete reversal in one’s way of life, a fundamental break with sin because it is sin. Conversion, however, can only be conversion when it bears a primarily religious character; that is, when we have learned to know sin—as God views it—in the light of his holy law, as it dishonors him and makes him angry. We then see its ethical nature as a natural implication of its religious character. For those who have thus learned to know sin as sin in the sight of God, cannot love it, but hate and flee it, separate themselves from it by a humble confession of guilt, and receive an inward desire and love for the good, that is, a life in harmony with God’s will. True conversion, accordingly, encompasses the whole person, including one’s intellect, heart, will, soul, and body. It makes one break with sin across the board and devote one’s entire person and life to God’s way and God’s service. In conversion the focus is especially on the will. Faith and repentance both arise from regeneration. They are both rooted in the heart. But whereas faith tends to work from there to the side of consciousness and appropriates the forgiving grace of God in

Christ, conversion exercises its activity more in the sphere of the will and turns it away from evil and toward the good. However, just as the intellect and the will share a common root in the heart of a person, are never separated, and continually impact each other, so also it is with faith and conversion. They are consistently interconnected and reciprocally support and promote each other.

The Natural Order in Conversion

code73

Coming to Christ with Knowledge

by AW Pink

"No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). It is by the secret and effectual operation of the Spirit that the Father brings each of His elect to a saving knowledge of Christ. These operations of the Spirit begin by His enlightening the understanding, renewing the mind. Observe carefully the order in Ezek. 37:14, "And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live. . . *then* shall ye *know* that I the Lord have spoken it." No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:12); and even then, faith is an eye to *discern* Christ before it is a foot to *approach* Him. There can be no act without an object, and there can be no exercising of faith upon Christ till Christ is seen in His excellency, sufficiency, and suitability to poor sinners. "They that *know* thy name will (not "ought to") put their trust in thee" (Ps. 9:10). But again, we say, that knowledge must be a spiritual and miraculous one imparted by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself, and not merely a preacher, must take of the things of Christ and show them unto the heart. It is only in *God's* "light" that we truly "*see* light" (Psa. 36:9). The opening of his eyes precedes the conversion of the sinner from Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawn of day, before its heat is felt. It is those who "see" the Son with a supernaturally enlightened understanding that "believe" on Him with a spiritual and saving faith (John 6:40). *We behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, before we are changed into His very image* (2 Cor. 3:18). Note the order in Romans 3:11, "there is none that understandeth" goes before "there is none that seeketh after God." The Spirit must shed His light upon the understanding, *which light conveys the actual image of spiritual things in a spiritual way to the mind, forming them on the soul; much as a sensitive photographic plate receives from the light the images to which it is exposed.* This is the "*demonstration* of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

More Notes *Ordo Salutis* code73

The Order of nature of works of the Spirit in conversion,
notes on the image of God, natural generation and regeneration, etc.
[my comments in blue]

The Image of God re-instamped upon the soul at regeneration or conversion and the order of the events of salvation aka *ordo salutis*. This should clear up many question and perplexities on what, why and when things happen in order of nature to properly reflect the order of things that happen in one's conversion to the great improvement of our understanding and hence effect of knowing the mighty works of God upon our souls.

John Gill Commentary on Gen 5:3

"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years"

The Septuagint version, through [typo? Should be though] mistaken, gives the number two hundred and thirty years: and begat [a son]; not that he had no other children during this time than Cain and Abel; this is only observed to show how old he was when Seth was born, the son here meant; who was begotten in his own likeness, after his image; not in the likeness, and after the image of God, in which Adam was created; for having sinned, he lost that image, at least it was greatly defaced, and he came short of that glory of God, and could not convey it to his posterity; who are, and ever have been conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; are polluted and unclean, foolish and disobedient; averse to all that is good, and prone to all that is evil: the **sinfulness of nature is conveyed by natural generation**, but not holiness and grace; that is not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the flesh, but of God, and produced of his own will, by his mighty power **impressing the image of his Son in regeneration** on his people; which by **beholding his glory** they are more and more changed into by the Spirit of God. ...and we are told by good authority, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh", carnal and corrupt, and such are all the sons of Adam by natural generation; see (Job 14:4). - John Gill

My point: This image consists of those things Edwards mentions, the knowledge of God, holiness and joy & happiness; therefore if someone is regenerated with this "impressing of this image upon the soul" as noted above, he has not just the knowledge of God the Father that all have by natural revelation noted in Romans 1, that is common to all, but also the knowledge of Christ (the saving knowledge of God by this *special revelation*, revealing the **excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...Phil 3:8**). They have to have this kind of knowledge if their souls are impressed with this kind of image upon their hearts. See Col. 3:10, "and have put on the new man [the image of God] **who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him** who created him," that being the image of Christ.

Hence Isa. 53:11, "**By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.**" That is, by having this knowledge of Him, *His knowledge*, or the **excellence of the knowledge of Christ**, i.e., who Christ is, the God-man, etc., you are justified, your sins are forgiven. Hence, faith is denominated by knowledge as it is also by believing. As Jesus said, "**for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**" Herman Bavinck puts it this way: "It is Gods' will, however, to give human beings a higher, a supernatural and heavenly, destiny. To that end he had to furnish them the so-called "superadded gifts" [see code294a] both before and after the fall. He must grant them a supernatural grace by which they can know and love God in another, a

better and higher way, practice better and higher virtues, and attain a higher destiny. **This higher knowledge is faith (*fides*) and this higher love is charity (*caritas*).**"

Order of Salvation cont.

first cause, union with Christ by the Spirit of Christ
Jonathan Edwards, Justification by Faith Alone, pg 624
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.xiii.ii.html>

When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our *own*, what is meant is, that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours; and it is not, in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified. Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions.

(1.) It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to him, that is expressed in Scripture, from time to time, by being *in Christ*, and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to him as members to the head, and branches to the stock, ⁶⁵⁴ and is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is; nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of disputes about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union*, as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it, than all, of all sorts, will readily allow, *viz.* that there is a peculiar *relation* between true Christians and Christ, which there is not between him and others; and which is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture, of being in Christ, being members of Christ, &c. ⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁵ The word "union," in this connexion, is both more intelligible and more appropriate, than the word relation; since in this connexion the latter is the consequence of the former. **As the doctrine of a vital union to Christ** is fundamentally important in Christianity, and inseparable from the doctrine of justification; and as our author passes it over with so much brevity, a few observations upon it in this place may appear the more needful.

1. The Scriptures are not only full of the fact, but they abound with illustrations of it. The first part of [John xv.](#) is full and explicit to this purpose.

2. What the Scriptures assert, and illustrate, is abundantly corroborated by the reasonableness of the thing. **To suppose the reality of vital religion without a corresponding vital union, is to suppose an important effect without an adequate cause,** as shall be further shown

3. **The question then is, What is the immediate cause of this vital union?** Now as the union subsisting is between the Spirit of Christ, and man, the immediate cause must be in the one or the other of these, or in both at the same instant, or in neither. If the immediate cause be in man, he makes his approach to Christ either as a carnal or spiritual man, for there is no conceivable medium. **But the idea of a**

carnal man uniting himself to Christ in order to form a vital union, is both unscriptural and unreasonable. It is unscriptural; for the scripture asserts that “The carnal mind is enmity against God;” how then can it be the cause of a vital union? “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus; ” — “and you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ” —it is not therefore the carnal man that unites himself to Christ, or quickens himself in order to effect it. It is also unreasonable; for it supposes a glorious effect without an adequate cause. The effect is spiritual, while the cause is carnal, which are not only different but even directly opposite. What ideas can be more contradictory, or sentiment more unreasonable?

4. The supposition of two simultaneous causes, the one being the Spirit of Christ, and the other the carnal man, involves the same inconsistency. For how can the mere circumstance of time, irrespective of causal influence, make any difference? If the carnal mind be adequate to unite itself to Christ at one time, why not at another time as well, except some causal influence makes the difference? For surely no one can suppose that some individual moment of time, as distinguished from others preceding, constitutes the cause of difference.

5. To suppose a spiritual man whether by the exercise of his faith or by any other mental act, in the cause of a vital union, is no less inconsistent than the former supposition. For how can he be a spiritual man, without a spiritual casual influence? But if such influence be admitted as a predisposing cause of his vital acts, it is incumbent on the objector to show that such casual influence may take place without vital union. This I am persuaded no one can do. It is contrary to all analogy, and to every sound principle of true philosophy. It is contrary to Christian experience and revealed statements. What effect in physical nature can be produced, which does not imply a casual union? Does not the divine energy pervade all second causes in the way of union with them, in order to the production of their effects? and what miraculous effects have ever been produced without a present uniting causal influence to produce the change? For instance, when Lazarus came forth from death to life, was there not a uniting causal interest to produce the change? and if we appeal to an experienced intelligent Christian, will he not own, will he not maintain, according to his views of revealed truth, that the transforming energy of the Spirit of God or of Christ in him, was the cause of his own vitality? Nay, would he not be shocked to hear any one maintain the contrary?

6. Perhaps it may be thought, that—though in the great laboratory of physical nature, in the bowels of the earth and in the surrounding atmosphere, a causal union be necessary to produce chemical effects; and that though in all works of mechanism a causal union is requisite to the existence of mechanical effects; and that, moreover, though the sun by his light and heat produces an effect upon objects by a causal union with them; yet, what shall we say of one body affecting a change of situation in another, at an immense distance? Does not the sun powerfully attract all the planets that surround him, however distant? and how can this be by causal union? This objection admits of two answers.

7. First, it has never been proved, that there is no causal union between these bodies adequate to the effect; while on the contrary several philosophers have at least attempted to show its existence. The solar system, for ought we know, may be perfectly mechanical, though we should never be able to perceive the intermediate parts.

8. Secondly, as to the universe in general depends on the causal presence of the first cause, so must every part of it; Scripture and reason assure us that in God we live, and move, and have our being. Therefore, whether there be any intermediate cause of gravitation or not, between the effect and the first cause, **a causal union is still necessary to the effect**. What difference there is, lies against the objector. For if there be no intermediate cause of gravitation, the presence, the energy, the causal union of the first cause is proportionally the more immediate.

9. **Having shown that neither the carnal man nor the spiritual man is the immediate cause of the union subsisting between Christ and the Christian**, it remains to be ascertained, what else is the cause? If it be not man it must be the divine spirit, either as the Spirit of the Father or of Christ. In one view this difference is not very material, but in another it is of considerable importance. **Allow it to be from the Holy Spirit, in either sense, it secures the great point of salvation by grace, in opposition to our own merit**. But, as it respects the nature of Christ's mediation, and particularly his federal headship and suretyship, it is of moment to ascertain, whether he or the Father, economically, be the immediate cause of the vital union.

10. **The Scripture fully declares that the influence of the Spirit on the minds of men is from Christ**. The Lord from heaven is a quickening Spirit—**he quickeneth whom he will—he sends the Holy Ghost—he gives repentance, or the spirit of repentance—in him was life** (without whom nothing was created,) and this life is the true light of men—he shines into the heart—**his grace and strength constitute our sufficiency** - &c. These and other passages innumerable show, **that quickening influence proceeds from his fullness of life and grace**. [this continual supply of grace Adam did not have; he was on his own, liable to defection, not having the spirit of adoption and the promise of continual supplies of grace.]

11. That other passages ascribe spiritual effects to the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, is of no force, except with such as deny the divine nature of Christ, who are confuted on other grounds. But supposing his divine nature in union with humanity, the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and vice versa. And in the divine economy of grace, Christ is the head or source of influence to the church. It is he who gives gifts to the rebellious, **who endows with the spirit of life**, and **who bestows the living water to which divine influence is compared**.

12. And how beautifully consistent must this appear when we consider, that as a **covenant head he is the surety of his chosen people!** The **office of a surety** engages to perform what is requisite in behalf of a person or persons as required by another. Thus Jesus not only brought in an everlasting righteousness in behalf of his people as their federal perfection, in lieu of those who could never attain to it by any obedience of their own; **but it also belonged to his office to secure for them a voluntary, penitential, believing obedience to the equitable requisitions of the divine Governor**. **This can be effected only by divine influence, and that influence must needs proceed from him as the immediate cause; otherwise we make the creditor and surety to be the very same**. God, as governor, demands obedience from all the subjects of his government; and Christ, as the surety of those who were given him, **enables them to comply with those demands, that is, to submit, to repent, to believe with the heart, to love God, and to walk with him**. [this is the role of grace! It enables one to obey God.]

13. From the premises it follows plainly, **that the immediate cause of vital union is the spirit of Christ**, which he bestows in the exercise of his office as the **federal head** of influence, and in virtue of his

suretyship for his church and people. He as the true vine communicates life to the branches, and as the head of his church brings dead souls to be his living members. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and not the cause of a spiritual existence. [That is the KEY!] Yet,

14. We maintain that faith forms a consequent union. Man being a subject of moral government, and therefore a free agent, at liberty to choose his end and means of happiness for which he is accountable; and God in infinite mercy proposing Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; the all-sufficient and only Saviour of sinners—in whom we are required to believe and to trust with confidence, and whom we are encouraged to receive into our hearts, that he may dwell there by faith—the regenerate soul, by believing, unites itself to this object.

15. The former union is the immediate effect of sovereign favour; the latter union is the immediate effect of exercised grace; in the performance of an incumbent duty, or the discharge of moral obligation. Now since men are exhorted, warned, directed, reasoned, and expostulated with, on the ground of what they ought to do or abstain from doing, the Scripture abounds with such addresses. But lest any false inferences should be drawn, derogatory from the honours of sovereign grace, we are assured that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father of lights. When we have done all we are unprofitable servants. *Work out your own salvation, says Paul, with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. No one can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him, that is, without divine influence; and whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. Ye are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Among many other parts of Scripture where grace and obligation are strikingly intermixed,* and illustrative of the preceding remarks, the reader is particularly referred to the sixth and fifteenth chapters of St. John's Gospel.

16. Coroll. [e.g., God says to make you a clean heart, but knows that we cannot apart from his spirit working it.] The old mode, adopted by many orthodox divines, of distinguishing the vital union between Christ and his people, first, on his part, and secondly, on their part, is founded on Scripture and the reason of the thing; and the former is the cause of the latter. And therefore, as the cause must ever precede the effect, the first union not only may be prior to the second, as in the case of happy infants, but also must be so in the case of adults.—W (Solomon Williams a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards)

Ordo Salutis, cont.

Footnote (#658) from Justification by Faith Alone
[this is an excellent point made here; red for emphasis](#)
 by **Jonathon Edwards** pg 627 (pg 269 in Argument file)

God does not give those that believe an union with or an interest in the Saviour as a *reward* for faith, but only because faith is the soul's *active* uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of union, *on their part*. God sees it, that in order to an union being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in

requiring this in order to an union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice; and hence sees it fit that they only who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one *in law*. What is *real* in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is *legal*; that is, it is something really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the Judge. And if there be any *act* or qualification in believers of that uniting nature, that it is meet on that account the Judge should look upon them and accept them as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if these were their own satisfaction and merits. This necessarily follows, or rather is implied.

And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured thereby, namely, as it thus makes Christ and the believer *one* in the acceptance of the Supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The apostle John in these words, [1 John v.12](#). "He that hath the Son, hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ of which he gives an account in his gospel, [chap. iii. 36](#). "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And where the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with, Christ, as the ground of an interest in his benefits. To as many as received him, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God." [656](#) "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." [657](#) And there is a wide difference between its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs who believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is a fit *reward* of faith—or a suitable testimony of God's respect to the amiableness and excellency of that grace—and its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs, because Christ and they are so united, that in the eyes of the Judge they may be looked upon and taken as one.

Although, on account of faith in the believer, it is in the sight of God fit and congruous, both that he who believes should be looked upon as in Christ, and also as having an interest in his merits, in the way that has been now explained; yet it appears that this is very wide from a *merit of congruity*, or indeed any *moral congruity* at all to either. [658](#)

[658](#) The term here used, "moral congruity," is not happily chosen. Indeed our author, in the next sentence, professes himself to be at a loss what terms to use which may clearly convey the necessary distinction. By "moral" congruity or fitness he seems to mean personal perfection, or a perfection of state personally considered, without relation to a surety, or the righteousness which God has provided. But this is an acceptance of the term "moral" so unusual as to throw great perplexity into the argument. Beside, when contrasted with believing, it leaves the reader to suppose that to believe is not a moral act. But the supposition that "believing with the heart unto righteousness" is not a moral act, as contradistinguished from a natural one, leads to an endless confusion of ideas. Surely, to believe God's testimony concerning the Son and his righteousness is, if anything be, a moral act of obedience to divine authority. How then can it be called a natural fitness only, as contrasted with what is moral? Nor is the distinction at all necessary in order to avoid the apprehended consequence **of assigning to faith any merit of congruity**. [\[see my insert of Owen's comment on this subject of merit at the bottom of this footnote\]](#) A few observations on this intricate subject may probably assist the reader in seeking scriptural and consistent notions.

1. Justification implies a charge, a plea, and a virtual declaration of approval.
2. The charge against Adam and all his posterity is twofold, including a breach of covenant, or a failure in federal perfection; and also disobedience in transgressing a divine rule. These considerations are perfectly distinct in their nature. A rule may be momentarily transgressed for a long series of years, as it was by Adam, and constantly is by his rebellious descendants, but a federal failure was, from the nature of perfect righteousness, the very first act of delinquency.
3. No plea can be valid against a federal delinquency, as was the case in Adam, but a participation of a federal perfection. Nothing less can answer the charge, and nothing more is requisite. This averts condemnation, and entitles to a virtual approval in reference to that part of the charge.
4. No plea can be valid against disobedience to divine authority, or the rule of moral government, but a personal, voluntary, actual compliance with that authoritative rule of government; which we find by divine revelation to be, in reference to fallen man, submission to the righteousness of God; or, as differently expressed, believing on the Son of God, receiving him as the Lord our righteousness, &c.
5. No man has possessed a federal perfection, except by imputation, beside the first Adam while he obeyed without failure, and the second Adam when he completed his work of humiliation. For no eminence of grace in a mere descendant of Adam could possibly attain to federal perfection, from the very nature of such perfection. Nor indeed can the perfect obedience of glorified saints rise higher than a conformity to the divine law as a rule; their federal perfection is still derived from their union to Christ, and a consequent imputation, which implies a virtual approval. Hence,
6. The federal perfection of Messiah is the proper and sole ground of an actual interest in reconciliation and justification. In other words, the righteousness of Christ, his perfect obedience unto death as our substitute, is that alone on account of which we can stand before God with acceptance, in reference to the charge of a federal failure in Adam.
7. **An actual interest in this federal perfection is obtained only by a vital or an effectual union to the Lord our righteousness.** This is plain from Scripture, and is perfectly rational. It is compared to the union of a vine and its branches, the head and members of the human body, etc. That a participation of nature between Christ and us, or an effectual union, is requisite for a ground of imputation is evident, not only from scriptural comparisons, and the rational consistence of such an idea, but also from the fact of the Saviour's incarnation. Without this union to us, our sin could not have been imputed to him; and without a vital union, his righteousness could not be imputed to us. This is fairly and fully implied in many parts of Scripture, as might be shown if necessary.—From whence it is plain, that **union is the indispensable ground of imputation.**
8. Whoever is the subject of a vital union to Christ, is in a justified state, as partaker of a federal perfection, prior to the performance of any moral duty whatever. But in order to explain and prove this it is requisite to attend to the following particulars.

9. **Union to Christ is of two kinds**, on his part by his spirit; and on our part by faith, as explained in a preceding note. In the former, we are passive; and in the latter, we are active. In the one he acts as a sovereign dispenser of benefits; in the other we act as accountable creatures.

10. By the order both of nature and of time, the union begins with him who is a quickening Spirit; and that of faith is consequent upon the other, and is the proper effect of it.

11. By his uniting act, which may be termed effectual calling, the enmity of sin is destroyed in the soul, and the Spirit of Christ is imparted, which as occasion offers, will manifest itself as the Spirit of faith, or love, etc. Hence,

12. To the soul thus in Christ, whether infant or adult, there is no condemnation arising from federal delinquency; for this charge is answered by the union on his part; and righteousness is imputed.

13. From the premises it follows, that the generally received theological maxim is perfectly just and plain, namely, that **justification and regeneration are simultaneous**.—Union is the immediate cause of both; and because the one is a relative and the other a vital effect, there is no interference as to the order of time. Thus an union of a tree and a branch by ingrafture, is attended with two simultaneous effects, **the one relative [justification] and the other vital [regeneration]**; it is related to the tree as a branch, and at the same time partakes of the vital sap. **The union, however, must precede both, as to nature and time.**

14. But where two effects are both real, as distinguished from relative, the one must precede the other, both as to nature and time. **Thus union precedes vitality, and this of necessity must precede vital acts; and regeneration, as the act of the Spirit of Christ, must necessarily precede believing**, which is one mode by which a vital principle operates. For to suppose that the operation produces, or is prior to the principle, either in nature or in time, is a direct contradiction.

15. If the preceding steps of these remarks be thoroughly weighed, it will be found, that justification, according to Scripture, and just reasoning upon it, has for its foundation the federal perfection of Messiah, **and takes place as the immediate result of union to him.**

16. But since this union is twofold, the one as the effect of the other, that is, union by faith is the effect of union by the Spirit of Christ, and these, cause and effect, cannot possibly be simultaneous, there must necessarily be a twofold justification as the result of the corresponding unions. **Though in that union which is first in the order of nature and of time**, the person, whether infant or adult, is passive; the result however is the imputation of righteousness, which is Messiah's federal perfection, and which entitles to life eternal. And by that union which is the effect of the other, and consequently posterior in it in the order both of nature and of time, (and of which infants cannot be partakers,) this is, by the union effected by believing, the result is the imputation of the same righteousness in circumstances totally different.

17. These two different circumstances, clearly perceived, will developed the seeming difficulty. In the first, the person, whether infant or adult, is the passive possessor of decreed benefits, union

righteousness, and life; in the second circumstance, the adult person, as a free and accountable agent, is required to determine for himself on what to found his plea of acceptance with God. If he found his plea on his own obedience past or intended, whether moral, ceremonial, or both; he shows at once both ignorance and rebellion. Ignorance, that he supposes it even possible for him, by his own obedience, to attain to that federal perfection which is justly required by the righteous Governor; and also in that he does not perceive the love and wisdom, the super abounding grace and wonderful mercy, of God as a sovereign Benefactor in providing the needful remedy. Rebellion, in that he rejects the counsel of God, and resists, by obstinate unbelief, the divine authority requiring submission to this righteousness as the way to favour and life. Hence,

18. As all reasonings, expostulations, threats, promises and encouragements; all testimonies, declarations, appeals, inducements, and sanctions, are addressed to men **as moral agents**, with whom, in the business of accountability, it rests, what mode they will adopt for obtaining acceptance with God—**whether by doing the work themselves, or by believing his testimony and receiving his gift**—it fully accounts for justification by faith being the great point argued in the apostolic writings.

19. And it further appears, that justification by faith alone should be strenuously urged by all gospel ministers, while they have to do continually with persons whose inquiry is, “What shall we do to be saved?” To such as thus inquire after the way of salvation, who seek acceptance with God, who are about to choose for themselves “the way they will take,” what answer can be given, in effect, but what is contained in the apostle’s words? [Romans 4:5](#) “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” The above statement not only agrees with these words, but also, as I humbly conceive, explains their import; and the embarrassment respecting the office and influence of faith in justification is removed, without expunging faith, or the act of believing, from the class of moral duties.

20. It may be objected, if there be any justification before believing, then an unbeliever may be justified; whereas the Scripture saith, “He that believeth not is condemned already.” This objecting arises from a mistaken notion of the true meaning of such passages of Scripture. Condemnation, in the real import of Scripture, is leveled against the rejecters of Christ, or of the divine testimony, and these only, considered as free agents in seeking acceptance with God and final happiness. These, not believing in Christ, while prevailing devoted to Moses or Mahomet, moral obedience or ceremonies, or indeed any other object whatever, reject in fact the testimony of God and his righteousness, and expose themselves to a double condemnation. They are condemned as being destitute of a perfect righteousness, and also for their actual disobedience to the divine authority. The sentence of the law is against them both as a covenant and as a rule; and the gospel which they reject will be a witness to prove the wickedness of their heart. **But this can never take place in one who is vitally united to Christ.** All allow that infants not believing are not to be ranked with unbelievers. To them no testimony is proposed, and therefore no testimony is rejected by them. **Nor does any adult united to Christ reject the divine testimony, even before he believes. Let but the object of faith be presented to him, and his vital union secures the exercise of the living principle towards the proposed object in proportion as the terms are understood.** A testimony not presented, or one presented in an unknown tongue, cannot be believed, notwithstanding the principle of faith. **The existence of a principle does not necessarily imply its exercise, whether it be sense, reason, or faith.** Men are not necessarily conversant with the objects

of sense, because they possess the senses requisite for these purposes; nor are they always exercising the powers of the mind, however essential these powers are to human nature. **In like manner, not exercising faith is a very different thing from not possessing the principle.** A vital union and the spirit of faith are inseparably and essentially connected; **but a vital union and believing are connected *secundum quid*, in certain circumstances.** Without the circumstances of adult age, or a capacity of understanding, believing is impracticable. But how absurd would it be to say, that a sinner cannot be justified because he has not arrived at a certain advanced portion of understanding, or has not learned some language; as if a title to heaven depended on age, or knowing a language! **And equally absurd is it to suppose that Christ cannot effect a vital union because the sinner's voluntary consent to it is wanting; as if God's high sovereignty were bound by the human will!** That God requires the sinner's consent, as a matter of obligation, is a solemn fact; but God has not laid himself under any obligation that he will never unite a soul to Christ for justification of life but by the sinner's previous consent. He has declared, however, that the continued unbeliever, who is properly a willful rejecter of Christ and his righteousness, shall be condemned. **Hence it is evident, that to make believing essential to a vital union, on the part of Christ; and to make the exercise of faith on a divine testimony essential to its existence, are erroneous conclusions, derogatory to gospel grace, and founded on wrong notions of moral government.**

21. To make this, if possible, still more plain, the gospel finds men, as apostatized with Adam, in a state of condemnation; infants and adults alike are under the condemnatory sentence which is the result of a breach of covenant. This evil can be removed, and a restoration to favour be effected, **only by an act of sovereign grace, whereby Christ becomes vitally united to the soul.** Without this vital union there is, there can be, no faith. **This being the case, a vital union is formed before faith can have any ground of existence; and consequently a justification which is a necessary result of this union takes place.** **For to him who is thus in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation;** but he is passed from death unto life, **as an object of mere grace and mercy.** In this respect, an adult and in infant are perfectly on a par, while justified and regenerated for the kingdom of God. **But God, in the character of a moral governor, has a further claim on every free agent;** he exhibits to the view, and solicits, yea demands, a **voluntary compliance with the plan of mercy** through the blessed Redeemer, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. The regenerate person that is capable of acting for him self, as the subject of commands and invitations, **complies; he becomes an active recipient of the appointed righteousness, which he now pleads in opposition to all charges presented against him.** **By faith, or believing God's testimony, he makes his appeal, and by faith alone he is justified.** An investigation of the rationale of Christian doctrines is not necessary for popular use, but may be peculiarly useful as a guard against inconsistencies, and a means of strengthening our attachment to those doctrines.—W. (Solomon Williams a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards) **[If faith did come first, then it would testify to a lie, being that one is not yet justified (in order of time) So we must be justified first by being united to Christ and then faith (aka, believing) acknowledges it, receives it, embraces it.]**

Comment by **John Owen** on this subject regarding merit:

For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of

the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith. G. Vos comments in a similar vein:

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: [skip to point 4.](#)

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him.** The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who, in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. **It is one of the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life itself.****

Notes on the order of salvation from Hermon Bavinck (ordo salutis)

Now since regeneration is basically the re-creation of the whole person in the image of him who created humans, the **capacity to believe (potential, seminal, or “habitual” faith, the seed or root of faith) is automatically implied.** Pg 101 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

In addition, it was overlooked that in regeneration the seeds of hope and love (and so forth) are always implanted as well, that in principle the whole person is renewed by it. Aside from this, however, it is perfectly true that in regeneration, along with all human capacities and powers, the capacity to believe is also restored. To the regenerate person, believing in God or in Christ as such is just as natural as it is for everyone to believe in the world of the senses. Admittedly, just as every potentiality results in actions only when it receives a kind of stimulus from without, and a grain of wheat only germinates in the warm shelter of the soil, **so also the capacity to believe implanted by regeneration only becomes an act of faith in response to the ongoing internal calling.** But in regeneration, God nevertheless restores the vital rapport that originally existed between him and humanity. Created in God’s image, humans are again related to God himself and to all that is his: to his Christ, to the things of the Spirit, to his Word, to his church, to his heaven, to the things that are above. Crucified to the world and to sin, the regenerate live to God. And thus, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they also know God and are saved through that knowledge (John 17: 3). Pg 101-102 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

Works of the Spirit in Conversion

code74

This is an excerpt from John Flavel's works, volume 2 page 84-98

SERMON V.

Of the Work of the Spirit more particularly, by which the
Soul is enabled to apply CHRIST

Eph. ii. 1.

And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

In the former sermons we have seen our union with Christ in the general nature of it, and the means by which it is effected, both external, by the preaching of the gospel, and internal, by the drawing of the Father. We are now to bring our thoughts yet closer to this great mystery, and consider the bands by which Christ and believers are knit together in a blessed union. And if we needfully observe the scripture expressions, and ponder the nature of this union, we shall find there are two bands which knit Christ and the soul together, namely,

1. The Spirit on Christ's part.
2. Faith on our part.

The *Spirit*, on Christ's part, **quickening us with spiritual life, whereby Christ first takes hold of us**, and faith on our part, **when thus quickened**, whereby we take hold of Christ ; accordingly, this **union** with the Lord Jesus is expressed in scripture sometimes by the one and sometimes by the other of the means or bands by which it is effected. Christ is sometimes said to be in us ; so Col. i. 27. "Christ is in you the hope of glory." And Rom. viii. 10. " And "if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." At other times it is expressed by the other band on our part, as 1 John v. 20. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Christ Jesus." And 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

The difference betwixt both these is thus aptly expressed by a late author. Christ is in believers by his *Spirit*, 1 John iv. 13. **The believer is in Christ by faith**, John i. 12. **Christ is in the believer by inhabitation**, Rom. iii. 17. **The believer is in Christ by implantation**, Rom. vi. 35. Christ is in the believer as the head is in the body, Col. i. 18. As the root in the branches, John xv. 5. Believers are in Christ as the members are in the head, Eph. i. 23. or as the branches are in the root, John xv. 1, 7. Christ in the believer implieth life, and influence from Christ, Col. iii. 4. The believer implieth communion and fellowship with Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30. When Christ is said to be in the believer, we are to understand it in reference to sanctification. When the believer is said to be in Christ, it is in order "to justification."

Thus we apprehend, being ourselves first apprehended by Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 12. **We cannot take hold of Christ till first he take hold of us ; no vital act of faith can be exercised till a vital principle be first inspired**: of both these bands of union we must speak distinctly, and first of " Christ quickening us by his Spirit, "in order to our union with him," of which we have an account in the scripture before us, "

You he hath quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:" In which words we find these two things noted, namely,

1. The infusion of a vital principle of grace.
2. The total indisposedness of the subject by nature.

First, The infusion of a vital principle of grace, You hath he quickened. These words [hath he quickened] are a supplement made to clear the sense of the apostle, which else would have been more obscure, by reason of that long parenthesis betwixt the first and fifth verses, "for as the learned observe, this word *vpag* [Greek], you, is governed by the verb [Greek word] hath he quickened, ver. 5. So that here the words are transposed from the plain grammatical order, by reason of the interjection of a long sentence, therefore, with good warrant our translators have put the verb into the first verse, which is repeated, ver. 5. and so keeping faithfully to the scope, have excellently cleared the syntax and order of the words. Now this verb *o-vs^uoxoir^s*, hath he quickened imports the first vital act of the Spirit of God, or his first enlivening work upon the soul, in order to its union with Jesus Christ: For look, as the blood of Christ is the fountain of all merit, so the Spirit of Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life ; and until he quicken us, i. e. infuse the principle of the divine life into our souls, we can put forth no hand, or vital act of faith, to lay hold upon Jesus Christ.

This, his quickening work, is therefore the first in order of nature to our union with Christ, and fundamental to all other acts of grace done and performed by us, from our first closing with Christ throughout the whole course of our obedience; and this quickening act is said, ver. 5. to be together with Christ. Either noting (as some expound it) that it is the effect of the same power by which Christ was raised from the dead, according to Eph. 1. 19, or rather, to be quickened together with Christ, notes that new spiritual life which is infused into our dead souls in the time of our union with Christ; "For it is Christ to whom we are conjoined and united in our regeneration, out of whom, as a fountain, all spiritual benefits flow to us, among which this vivification or quickening is one, and a most sweet and precious one."

Zanchy Bodius, and many others, will have this quickening to comprise both our justification and regeneration, and to stand opposed both to eternal and spiritual death, and it may well be allowed; but it most properly imports our regeneration, wherein the Spirit, in an ineffable and mysterious way, makes the soul to live to God, yea, to live the life of God, which soul was before dead in trespasses and sins. In which words we have,

Secondly, In the next place, the total indisposedness of the subjects by nature : For, as it is well noted by a learned man, "the apostle doth not say of these Ephesians that they were half dead, or sick, and infirm, but dead wholly ; altogether dead, destitute of any faculty or ability, so much as to think one good thought, or perform one good act." You were dead in respect of condemnation, being under the damning sentence of the law, and you are dead in respect of the privation of spiritual life ; dead in opposition to justification, and dead in opposition to regeneration and sanctification: And the fatal instrument by which their souls died is here showed them; you were dead in, or by trespasses and sins, this was the sword that killed your souls, and cut them off from God. Some do curiously distinguish

betwixt trespasses and sins, as if one pointed at original, the other at actual sins; but I suppose they are promiscuously used here, and serve to express the cause of their ruin, or means of their spiritual death and destruction: this was their case when Christ came to quicken them, dead in sin; and being so, they could not move themselves towards union with Christ, but as they were moved by the quickening Spirit of God. Hence the observation will be this,

Doctrine. *That those souls which have union with Christ, are quickened with a supernatural principle of life by the Spirit of God in order thereunto.*

The Spirit of God is not only a living Spirit, formally considered; but he is also the Spirit of life, effectively or casually considered; **And without his breathing, or infusing life into our souls, our union with Christ is impossible.**

It is the observation of learned Camero, "that there must be an *union* before there can be an union with Christ. *Union* is to be conceived *efficiently* as the work of God's Spirit, joining the believer to Christ, and union is to be conceived *formally*, the joining itself of the persons together: **We close with Christ by faith, but that faith being a vital act, pre-supposes a principle of life communicated to us by the Spirit**; therefore it is said, John xi. 26. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die:" **The vital act and operation of faith springs from this quickening Spirit**: So in Rom. viii. 1, 2. The apostle, having in the first verse opened the blessed estate of them that are in Christ, shows us in the second verse how we come to be in him: "The Spirit of life (saith he) which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

There is indeed a quickening work of the Spirit, which is subsequent to regeneration, consisting in his exciting, recovering, and actuating of his own graces in us; and from hence is the *liveliness* of a Christian; **and there is a quickening act of the Spirit in our regeneration**, and from hence is the spiritual life of a Christian; of this I am here to speak, and that I may speak profitably to this point, I will in the doctrinal part labour to open these five particulars.

[Look, as the sin of the first Adam could never hurt us, unless he had been our head by way of generation; so the righteousness of Christ can never benefit us, unless he be our head by way of **regeneration**. Flavel pg 314 Vol 2]

First, What this spiritual life is in its nature and properties.

Secondly, In what manner it is wrought or inspired into the soul.

Thirdly, For what end, or with what design, this life is so inspired.

Fourthly, I shall shew this work to be wholly supernatural.

And then, *Fifthly*, Why this quickening must be antecedent to our actual closing with Christ by faith.

First, We shall enquire into the nature and properties of this life, and discover (as we are able) what it is. And we find it to consist in that *wonderful change which the Spirit of God makes upon the frame and temper of the soul, by his infusing or implanting the principles of grace in all the powers and faculties thereof*.

A change it makes upon the soul, and that a marvellous one, no less than from death to life ; for though a man be physically a living man, i.e., his natural soul hath union with his body, yet his soul

having no union with Christ, he is theologically a dead man, Luke xv. 24. and Col. ii. 18. Alas, it deserves not the name of life, to have a soul serving only to season and preserve the body a little while from corruption : to carry it up and down the world, and only enable it to eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh, and then die: Then do we begin to live, when we begin to have union with Christ the Fountain of life, by his Spirit communicated to us : From this time we are to reckon our life as some have done. There be many changes made upon men besides this, many are changed from profaneness to civility, and from mere civility to formality, and a shadow of religion, who still remain in the state and power of spiritual death, notwithstanding : but when the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us, to quicken us with the new spiritual life, this is a wonderful change indeed : It gives us an *esse supernaturale*, a new supernatural being, which is therefore called a **new creature, the new man, the hidden man of the heart**: The natural essence and faculties of the soul remain still, but it is divested of the old qualities, and endowed with new ones, 2 Cor. v. 17. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

And this change is not made by altering and rectifying the disorders of the life only, leaving the temper and frame of the heart still carnal ; but by the infusion of a supernatural permanent principle into the soul, John iv. 14. "It shall be in him a well of water: principles are to a course of actions, as fountains or springs are to the streams and rivers that flow from them, and are maintained by them; and hence is the evenness and constancy of renewed souls in the course of godliness.

Nor is this principle or habit *acquired* by accustoming ourselves to holy actions, as natural habits are acquired by frequent acts, which beget a disposition, and thence grow up to an habit or second nature, but it is infused, or implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God. So we read, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : " It grows not up out of our natures, but is put or infused into us : as it is said of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 11. who lay dead in a *civil sense*, three days and a half, that *the Spirit of life from God entered into them*: so it is here in a *spiritual sense*, the Spirit of life from God enters into the dead, carnal heart : it is all by way of **supernatural infusion**.

Nor is it limited to this or that faculty of the soul, but grace or life is poured into all the faculties : "Behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. ***The understanding, will, thoughts, and affections, are all renewed by it***: the whole inner man is changed ; yea, the *tongue* and *hand*, the *discourses* and *actions*, even all the *ways* and *courses* of the outward man are renewed by it.

But more particularly, we shall discern the nature of this Spiritual life, by considering the properties of it; among which, these are very *remarkable*.

First, The soul that is joined to Christ is quickened with a *divine life*, so we read in 2 Pet. i. 4. Where believers are said to be *partakers of the divine nature*: a very high expression, and warily to be understood. Partakers of the divine nature: not *essentially*; so it is wholly incommunicable to the creature, nor yet *hypostatically*, and personally; so Christ only was a partaker of it; but our participation of the divine nature, must be understood in a way proper to believers ; that is to say, we partake of it by the inhabitation of the Spirit of God in us, according to 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit" of God dwelleth in you?" The Spirit, who is God by nature **dwells in, and actuates the soul whom he regenerates**, and by

sanctifying it, causes it to live a divine life: from this life of God the unsanctified are said to be alienated, Eph. iv. 18, but believers are partakers of it.

Secondly, And being divine, it must needs be the most excellent, and transcendent life that any creature doth, or can live in this world : it surmounts the natural, rational, and moral life of the unsanctified, as much as the angelical life excels the life of flies and worms of the earth.

Some think it a rare life to live in sensual pleasures ; but the scripture will not allow so much as the name of life to them ; but tells us, "they are dead whilst they live," 1 Tim. v. 6, certainly it is a wonderful elevation of the nature of man to be quickened with such a life as this. There are two ways wherein the blessed God hath honoured poor man above the very angels of heaven. One was by the hypostatical union of our nature, in Christ, with the divine nature: the other is by uniting our persons mystically to Christ, and thereby communicating spiritual life to us : this latter is a most glorious privilege, and in one respect a more singular mercy than the former ; for that honour which is done to our nature by the hypostatical union, is common to all, good and bad, even they that perish have yet that honour ; but to be implanted into Christ by regeneration, and live upon him as the branch doth upon the vine, this is a peculiar privilege, a mercy kept from the world that is to perish, and only communicated to God's elect, who are to live eternally with him in heaven.

Thirdly, This life infused by the regenerating Spirit, is a most pleasant life. All delights, all pleasures, all joys, which are not fantastic and delusive, have their spring and origin here, Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace," i.e., a most serene, placid life ; such a soul becomes, so far as it is influenced and sanctified by the Spirit, the very region of life and peace : when one thing is thus predicated of another, *in casu recto*, (saith a learned man) it speaks their intimate connection : peace is so connatural to

this life, that you may either call it a life that hath peace in it, or a peace that hath life in it : yea, it hath its enclosed pleasures in it, "such as a stranger intermeddles not with," Prov. xiv. 10. Regeneration is the term from which all true pleasure commences ; you never live a cheerful day, till you begin to live to God: therefore it is said, Luke xv. 24. when the *prodigal son* was returned to his father, and reconciled, then *they began to be merry*.

None can make another, by any words, to understand what that pleasure is which the renewed soul feels diffused through all its faculties and affections, in its communion with the Lord, and in the sealings and witnessings of his Spirit. That is a very apt and well known similitude, which Peter Martyr used, and the Lord blessed to the conversion of that noble marquis Galeacus: if, said he, a man should see a company of people dancing upon the top of a remote hill, he would be apt to conclude they were a company of wild distracted people ; but if he draw nearer, and behold the excellent order, and hear the ravishing sweet music that are among them, he will quickly alter his opinion of them, and be for dancing himself with them.

All the *delights* in the *sensual life*, all the pleasure that ever your lusts gave you, are but as the putrid, stinking *waters* of a corrupt *pond*, where toads lie croaking and spawning, compared to the *crystal streams* of the most pure and pleasant *fountain*.

Fourthly, This life of God, with which the regenerate are quickened in their union with Christ, as it is & *pleasant*, so it is also a *growing increasing life*, John iv. 14. "It shall be in him a well of "water springing up into everlasting life."

It is not in our *sanctification*, as it is in our *justification* ; our justification is complete and perfect, no defect is found there; but the new creature labours under many defects: all believers are equally justified, but not equally sanctified. Therefore you read, 2 Cor. iv. 16. that "the inward man is renewed day by day: And 2 Pet. iii. 18. Christians are exhorted "to grow in grace, and "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour : "if this work were perfect, and finished at once, as justification is, there could be no renewing day by day, nor growth in grace. *Perfectum est cui nihil deest cui nihil addi potest*; i.e., that is perfect which wants nothing, and to which nothing can be added. The apostle indeed prays for the Thessalonians, "that God would sanctify them," *aoIsXsi*; —wholly, perfectly, 1 Thes. v. 23. And this is matter of prayer and hope ; for, at last, it will grow up to perfection ; but this perfect holiness is reserved for the perfect state in the world to come, and none but deluded, proud spirits boast of it here: but when "that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. And upon the imperfection of the new creature in every faculty, that warfare and daily conflict spoken of, Gal. V. 17. and experienced by every Christian, is grounded ; grace rises gradually in the soul, as the sun doth in the heavens, "which shineth more and more unto a perfect day," Prov. iv. 18.

Fifthly, To conclude; This life with which the regenerate are quickened, is an everlasting life. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 11. This principle of life, is the seed of God; and that remains in the soul forever, 1 John iii. 9. It is no transient, vanishing thing, but a *fixed, permanent principle, which abides in the soul forever*; a man may lose his gifts, but grace abides; the soul may, and must be separated from the body, but grace cannot be separated from the soul: when all forsake us, this will not leave us.

This *infused principle* is therefore vastly different, both from the extraordinary gifts of prophecy, wherein the Spirit was sometimes said to come upon men, under the Old Testament, 1 Sam. x. 6, 10. and from the common vanishing effects he *sometimes produceth in the unregenerate*, of which we have frequent accounts in the New Testament, Heb. vi. 4. and John v. 35. *It is one thing for the Spirit to come upon a man in the way of present influence and assistance, and another thing to dwell in a man as in his temple.*

And thus of the nature and quality of this blessed work of the Spirit in quickening us.

Secondly, Having seen the nature and properties of the spiritual life, we are concerned in the next place to enquire into the way and manner in which it is wrought and infused by the Spirit, and here we must say,

First of all, that the work is wrought in the soul very mysteriously; so Christ tells Nicodemus, John iii. 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There be many opinions among philosophers about the original of wind ; but we have no certain knowledge of it; we describe it by its effects and properties, but know little of its original; and if the works of God in nature be so obstruse, and unsearchable, how much more so are these sublime, and supernatural works of the Spirit?

We are not able to solve the Phenomena of nature, we can give no account of our own formation in the womb, Eccl. 11:5. Who can exactly describe how the parts of the body are formed, and the soul infused ? " It is curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the "earth," as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. 139:16. but how, we know not. Basil saith, divers questions may be moved about a fly, which may puzzle the greatest philosopher : we know little of the forms and essences of natural things, much less of these profound, and abstruse spiritual things.

Secondly, But though we cannot pry into these secrets by the eye of reason, yet God hath revealed this to us in his word, that it is wrought by his own Almighty Power, Eph. i. 19. The apostle ascribes this work to the exceeding greatness of the power of God; and this must needs be, if we consider how the Spirit of God expresses it in scripture by a new creation; i.e., a giving being to something out of nothing, Eph. ii. 10. In this it differs from all the effects of human power, for man always works upon some preexistent matter, but here is no such matter; all that is in man, the subject of this work, is only a passive capacity, or receptivity, but nothing is found in him to contribute towards this work; this supernatural life is not, nor can it be educed out of natural principles; this wholly transcends the sphere of all natural power; but of this more anon.

Thirdly, This also we may affirm of it, that this divine life is infused into all the natural faculties and powers of the soul, not one exempted, 1 Thes. v. 23. The whole soul and spirit is the recipient subject of it ; and with respect to this general infusion into **all the faculties and powers of the soul, it is called a new creature, a new man**, having an integral perfection, and fulness of all its parts and members; it becomes **light in the mind**, John xvii. 3. Obedience in the will, 1 Pet. i. 2. In the affections an heavenly temper and tenderness, Col. hi. 1, 2. And so is variously denominated, even as the sea is from the several shores it washes, though it be one and the same sea. And here, we must observe, lies one main difference betwixt a regenerate soul and an hypocrite ; the one is all of a piece, as I may say, **the principle of spiritual life runs into all, and every faculty and affection, and sanctifies or renews the whole man**; whereas the change upon hypocrites is but partial **and particula** ; he may have new light, **but no new love; a new tongue, but not a new heart; this or that vice may be reformed, but the whole course of his life is not altered.**

Fourthly, and lastly, This infusion of spiritual life is done **instantaneously**, as all creation work is; hence it is resembled to that plastic power, which, in a moment, made the light to shine out of darkness; just so God shines into our hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

It is true, a soul may be a long time under the preparatory works of the Spirit, he may be under convictions and humiliations, purposes and resolutions a long time ; he may be waiting at the pool of Bethesda, attending the means and ordinances, but when the Spirit comes once to quicken the soul, it is done in a moment: even as it is in the infusion of the rational soul, the body is long ere it be prepared and molded, but when once the embryo or matter is ready, **it is quickened with the spirit of life in an instant**: so it is here; but O what a blessed moment is this! Upon which the whole weight of our eternal happiness depends; for it is Christ in us, i.e., **Christ formed in us**, who is the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. And our Lord expressly tells us, John iii. 3. That except we be regenerate and born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. And thus of the way and manner of its infusion.

Thirdly, Let the design and end of God, in this his *quickenning work*, be next considered ; for what end and with what design and aim this work is wrought. And if we consult the scriptures in this matter, we shall find **this principle of life is infused in order to our glorifying God**, in this world, **by a life of obedience**, and **our enjoying of God in the world to come**.

First, **Spiritual life is infused in order to a course of obedience** in this world, whereby God is glorified : So we read in Eph. ii. 10. "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them:" habits are to actions, as the root is to the fruit, it is for fruit sake that we plant the root, and ingraft* the branches. So in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. "A new spirit will I also put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." This is the next or immediate design and end, not only of the first infusion of the principle of life into the soul, but of all the exciting, actuating, and assisting works of the Spirit afterwards. Now this principle of spiritual life infused, hath a twofold influence into obedience.

First, This makes a sincere and true obedience, when it flows from an inward vital principle of grace. **The hypocrite is moved by something ab extra, from without, as the applause of men, the accommodation of fleshly interests, the force of education**: or if there be any thing from within that moves him, **it is but self-interest, to quiet a disturbing conscience, and support his vain hopes of heaven; but he never acts from a new principle, a new nature, inclining him to holy actions**. Sincerity mainly lies in the harmony and correspondency of actions to their principles: **from this infused principle it is, that men hunger and thirst for God**, and go to their duties as men do to their meals, when they find an empty craving stomach.

O reader, pause a little upon this ere thou pass on, ask thy heart whether it be so with thee : are holy duties connatural to thee ? Doth thy soul move and work after God by a kind of supernatural instinct ? This then will be to thee a good evidence of thy integrity.

Secondly, From this **infused principle of life results the excellency of our obedience**, as well as the sincerity of it; for by virtue and reason thereof, it becomes free and voluntary, not forced and constrained, it drops like honey, and of its own accord, out of the comb, Cant. iv. 11. or as waters from the fountain, without forcing, John iv. 14. [**hence, my burden is light...**] An unprincipled professor must be pressed hard by some weight of affliction, ere he will yield one tear, or pour out a prayer, Psal. 78:34, "When he slew them, then they sought him."

Now the freedom of obedience is the excellency of it, God's eye is much upon that, 1 Cor. ix. 17. yea, and the uniformity of our obedience, which is also a special part of the beauty of it, results from hence: he that acts from **a principle acts fluently and uniformly**, and there is a proportion betwixt the parts of his conversation; **this is it which makes us holy, in all manner of conversation**, or in every point and turning of our conversations, as the word imports, 1 Pet. i. 15. Whereas he that is moved by this or that external accidental motive, must needs be very uneven, "like the legs of a lame man," as the expression is, Prov. xxvi. 7. "which are not equal." Now a word of God, and then the discourse runs muddy and profane or carnal again; all that evenness and uniformity that are in the several parts of a Christian's life, are the effect of this infused principle of spiritual life.

Thirdly, Another aim and design of God in the infusion of this principle of life, is thereby to prepare and qualify the soul for the enjoyment of himself in heaven: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. All that shall possess that inheritance must be begotten again to it, as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

This principle of grace is the very seed of that glory; it is eternal life in the root and principle, John xvii. 3, by this the soul is attempered and qualified for that state and employment. What is the life of glory but the vision of God, and the soul's assimilation to God by that vision? From both which results that unspeakable joy and delight which passeth understanding: but what vision of God, assimilation to God, or delight in God, can that soul have which was never quickened with the supernatural principle of grace? The temper of such souls is expressed in that sad character, **Zech. xi. 8**. "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." **For want of this vital principle it is, that the very same duties and ordinances which are the delights and highest pleasures of the saints, are no better than a mere drudgery and bondage to others**, Mai. i. 13. Heaven would be no heaven to a dead soul; this principle of life, in its daily growth and improvement, is our meetness, as well as our evidence, for heaven: these are the main ends of its infusion. Fourthly, In the next place, according to the method proposed, I am obliged to shew you, that this quickening-work is wholly supernatural; it is the sole and proper work of the Spirit of God. So Christ himself expressly asserts it, in John iii. 6, 8. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Believers are the birth or offspring of the Spirit, who produceth the new creature in them in an unintelligible manner, even to themselves. So far is it above their own ability to produce, that it is above their capacity to understand the way of its production; as if you should ask, Do you know from whence the wind comes? No. Do you know whither it goes? No, but you hear and feel it when it blows? Yes. **Why, so is every one that is born of the Spirit; he feels the efficacy, and discerns the effects of the Spirit on his own soul, but cannot understand or describe the manner of their production.** This is not only above the carnal, but above the renewed mind to comprehend; we can

contribute nothing, I mean actively, to the production of this principle of life, we may indeed be said to concur passively with the Spirit in it; i.e., there is found in us a capacity, aptness, or receptiveness of this principle of life: **our nature is endowed with such faculties and powers as are meet subjects to receive** and instruments to act this spiritual life: [as Edwards **comments**: And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: **even as having these two faculties of understanding and will.** [That's the key; unregenerate men are in God's image in that sense - they have a faculty of understanding and will which animals do not have which distinguishes us from them. It was the chief part of God's image, his holiness, principally consisting in the love that God has for himself, that was lost or wiped clean due to Adam's sin. It is this chief part of God's image that is restored by the communication of his holiness to the will of the creature. see code34b] God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fulness called in Scripture, the glory of God. The first part of this glory is called truth, the latter, grace, [John i. 14](#). "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Chap II, Sect. VII Vol. 1 pg 119] God only quickens the rational nature with spiritual life.

It is true also, that in the *progress of sanctification* a man doth actively concur with the Spirit, **but in the first production of this spiritual principle he can do nothing**: he can indeed perform those external duties that have a remote tendency to it, **but he cannot by the power of nature perform any saving act, or contribute anything more than a passive capacity to the implantation of a new principle**: as will appear by the following arguments.

Arg. 1. He that actively concurs to his own regeneration, makes himself to differ; but this is denied to all regenerate men, 1 Cor. iv. 7, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

Arg. 2. That to which the scripture ascribes both impotency and enmity, with respect to grace, cannot actively, and of itself, concur to the production of it : but the scripture ascribes both impotency and enmity to nature, with respect to grace. It denies to it a power to do anything of itself, John xv. 5. And, which is less, it denies to it a power to speak a good word, Mat. xii. 34. And, which is least of all, it denies it power to think a good thought, 2 Cor. hi. 5. **This impotency, if there were no more, cuts off all pretence of our active concurrence**: but then if we consider that it ascribes enmity to our natures, as well as impotency, how clear is the case! See Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And Col. i. 21. "And you that were enemies in your minds by wicked; works." So then **nature** [that is, man's natural sinful condition] is so far productive of this principle, as impotency and enmity can enable it to be so.

Arg. 3. That which is of natural production, must needs be subject to natural dissolution; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, a perishing thing, for everything is as its principle is, and there can be no more in the effect, than there is in the cause: but this principle of spiritual life is not subject to dissolution, it

is the water that springs up into everlasting life, John iv. 14. The seed of God, which remaineth in the regenerate soul, 1 John iii. 9.

And all this, because it is "born not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed," 1 Pet. i. 23.

Arg. 4. **If our new birth be our resurrection, a new creation, yea, a victory over nature, then we cannot actively contribute to its production**; but under all these notions it is represented to us in the scriptures; it is our resurrection from the dead, Eph. v. 14.

And you know the body is wholly passive in its resurrection: but though it concurs not, yet it gives pre-existent matter: therefore the metaphor is designedly varied, Eph. iv. 24. where it is called a creation: in which there is neither active concurrence, nor pre-existent matter; but though creation excludes pre-existent matter, yet in producing something out of nothing, there is no reluctancy nor opposition: therefore to show how purely supernatural this principle of life is, it is clothed and presented to us in the notion of a victory, 2 Cor. x. 4. And so leaves all to grace.

Arg. 5. If nature could produce, or but actively concur to the production of this spiritual life, then the best natures would be soonest quickened with it; and the worst natures not at all, or at last, and least of all: but contrarily, we find the worst natures often regenerated, and the best left in the state of spiritual death: with how many sweet homilitical virtues was the young man adorned? Mark x. 21. yet graceless; and what a sink of sin was Mary Magdalen, Luke 7:37, yet sanctified. Thus beautiful Rachel is barren, while Leah bears children. And there is scarce anything that affects and melts the hearts of Christians more than this comparative consideration doth, when they consider vessels of gold cast away, and leaden ones chosen for such noble uses. So that it is plain enough to all wise and humble souls, that this new life is wholly of supernatural production.

Fifthly, and lastly, I shall briefly represent the **necessary antecedency** of this **quickening work of the Spirit**, to our first closing with Christ by faith: and this will easily let itself into your understandings, if you but consider the nature of the vital act of faith: which is the soul's receiving of Christ, and resting upon him for pardon and salvation: in which two things are necessarily included, namely,

1. The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies.
2. The opening of the heart fully to Jesus Christ.

First, The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies whatsoever. Self in all its acceptations, natural, sinful, and moral, is now to be denied and renounced forever, else Christ can never be received, Rom. 10: 3. not only self in its vilest pollutions, but self in its richest ornaments and endowments: but this is as impossible to the unrenewed and natural man, as it is for rocks or mountains to start from their centre, and fly like wandering atoms in the air: **nature will rather chose to run the hazard of everlasting damnation, than escape it by a total renunciation of its beloved lusts, or self-righteousness**: this supernatural work necessarily requires a supernatural principle, Rom. viii. 2.

Secondly, The opening the heart fully to Jesus Christ, without which Christ can never be received, Rev. iii. 20. but this also is the effect of the quickening Spirit, the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. Sooner may we expect to see the flowers and blossoms open

without the influence of the sun, than the heart and will of a sinner open to receive Christ without a principle of spiritual life first derived from him; and this will be past doubt to all that consider, not only the impotence, but the ignorance, prejudice, and aversations of nature, by which the door of the heart is barred, and chained against Christ, John v. 40. So that nature hath neither ability nor will, power nor desire, to come to Christ : if any have an heart opened to receive him, it is the Lord that opens it by his Almighty Power, and that in the way of an infused principle of life supernatural.

Question. But here it may be doubted and objected, against this position. If we cannot believe till we are quickened with spiritual life, as you say, and cannot be justified till we believe, as all say, then it will follow, that a regenerate soul may be in the state of condemnation for a time, and consequently perish, if death should befall him in that juncture.

[this is following paragraph is Key in understanding the *ordo salutis*]

Sol. To this I return, That when we speak of the **priority of this quickening work of the Spirit to our actual believing**, we rather understand it of the **priority of nature**, than of time, the nature and order of the work requiring it to be so: **a vital principle must, in order of nature, be infused before a vital act can be exerted**. First, Make the tree good, and then the fruit good: **and admit we should grant some priority in time also to this quickening principle, before actual faith**, yet the absurdity mentioned would be no way consequent upon that concession; **for as the vital act of faith quickly follows the regenerating principle, so the soul is abundantly secured against the danger objected**: God never beginning any special work of grace upon the soul, and then leaving it and the soul with it in hazard, but preserves both to the finishing and completing of his gracious design, Phil. i. 6. (See Flavel on page 1717)

Excerpts from Covenant Theology by Nehemiah Coxe

- For as the real holiness of believers springs from their union to Christ, and justification through faith in his name, so I take circumcision first to look toward that perfect righteousness which we have in Jesus Christ and then to that sincere (though imperfect) holiness that is worked in us by the Spirit of Christ. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit; and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," (Phil 3:3). **Nehemiah Coxe**, pg 127 Covenant Theology

- But the truth is that none are at any time justified before God except those whom Christ has loved and washed from their sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5). None are washed by him but those that are in him as the second Adam. It is by union to him as the root of the new covenant that the free gift comes on them to the justification of life. (Rm5:14) And none can have union to him but by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. Wherever the Spirit of God applies the blood of Christ for the remission of sins he does it also for the purging of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. As certainly as any derive a new covenant right from Christ for pardon, they also receive a vital influence from him for the renovation of their natures and conforming their souls to his own image. And therefore to assert that the grace of Christ is applied to some for the remission of sins only, or that the guilt of any sin can be pardoned to any person and yet that sin retain its dominion over him, is (so far as I can discern) both unscriptural and incoherent with the doctrine that is according to godliness. **Nehemiah Coxe** p 82

Affections and Outward Duties That Are Not Saving The Deceitfulness of Sin

Seen in false professors

(How can an enemy to Christ be attracted To the Gospel)

Code75

In this book, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* by **Thomas Shepard**, he exposes the incredible deceitfulness of sin and how it manifests. When the average person thinks that sin only consists in a habitual act of murder or robbery or rape, they perceive themselves as ok; or they establish their own righteousness - that there is no need to examine themselves and examine the scriptures to see if they really be in the faith. Jonathan Edwards quoted Shepard in his treatise *On Religious Affections* more than any other divine.

Why many seem to be savingly moved with sincere affections, thoughts of God, repentance, faith, etc., but are false. Someone might wonder if man by nature is dead in sin, at enmity with God, etc., yet seems very happy, sincere in his profession when he says the Sinner's Prayer or like prayer; how can this be if they are at enmity with God? The answer will further show the wickedness of the presumption of this prayer.

CHAPTER XIV

CONTAINING A DISCOVERY OF GOSPEL HYPOCRITES

Section I

Pgs 191-206, 482-484

http://www.archive.org/stream/worksthomasshep02shepgoog/worksthomasshep02shepgoog_djvu.txt
or

https://books.google.com/books?id=XE3xP-pLMM4C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Observ. 2. That the most hidden hypocrites of the purest churches under the gospel are evangelical or gospel hypocrites.

For these that were foolish were not such as in appearance rested in the law, or in a covenant of works, but they had escaped those entanglements and now were virgins that plead their interest in and their communion and fellowship and love-knot with Christ; they had now their lamps ready and made much preparation for him and they did wait for him and verily looked to have eternal fellowship with him their beloved insomuch that they took their flight so high towards heaven and Christ that they passed for a time the discerning of the wise; for you must know that where the gospel comes there are two sorts of enemies against it:

1. Open; and those are your justiciaries, that seeking to establish their own righteousness and **being puffed up with it**, can, with pretended good consciences in doing God service, oppose the righteousness of God.

2. **Secret and subtle enemies, yet seeming friends; and these are your carnal gospelers that cry down all their own righteousness and cry up Christ and see nothing in themselves**, as there is good cause so to think, and look for all from Christ; and yet these, when the Lord comes to search, are found false; and these are the worms that grow in this wood, in this building, in these churches. Thus it was in Christ's time the church of the Jews had left their gross idolatries; yet this was their stumbling-stone; they sought to establish their own righteousness, and hence he came to his own and his own received him not, and hence were cut off for this their unbelief; but others (divers sorts of them) did receive him, believed in him, John 2:23. **Many took hold on Christ**, and he took no hold on them, wondered at him, and entertained him when others did reject him, as Capernaum did, yet under his woe. And these are the spots of evangelical purity, when in the bodies of the best constituted churches. Look but upon Christ's own family, John 6:69, 70. The disciples professed when others departed, "Lord to whom should we go? Thou hast words of life;" yet saith he, "I have chosen you indeed to be for me, but one is a devil;" viz., Judas the deacon stood not on his own righteousness, **but was for Christ, and followed him**; and yet in this evangelical angel without is a devil within, because he still harbored his lusts within. This the apostle Paul foresaw, Acts 20:29, 30. Some wolves without should come, and also some cankers within should fret, that should draw many disciples after them, (in a church bought by Christ's own blood), "speaking perverse things," pretending to draw disciples after Christ, but it is indeed after themselves; and Paul laments this - "Many walk," i.e., profess Christ and his cross, "yet enemies to it." Phil 3:19 This Christ foretells Luke 13:25, 26. Many seek, many knock, and at last cry, "Lord, Lord, open," and in their lifetime they pleaded communion with Christ; yet, "Depart, ye workers of iniquity." Jude 4, certain men are crept, in turning grace into lasciviousness; for this is the very form of an evangelical hypocrite - in denying his own righteousness, to establish his sin, it is advancing Christ to advance his lust. The epistles of James and John are antidotes against this kind of poison and I look on them as lamps hung up to discover these men, not but that these men are indeed under a covenant of works; for **there be but two sorts of men and two ends of all men, hence but two covenants**; hence those that are not indeed under grace are under the law, and under the curse; but because the most subtle hypocrites appear or seem to be under grace, and their external operations are chiefly evangelical, hence I call them evangelical hypocrites.

Reason 1. In regard of the power of the word and gospel of life and spirit in such churches ; for the gospel where it comes, as it advances the glorious and everlasting righteousness of Christ, it knocks under foot all man's, as a means subservient to that end, and it coming with power and light, it would be too gross for hypocrites to maintain life by works; hence Christ is that which they look unto; for Christ when he preached, not only to many "believed because of his miracles," but "when they heard his word," (John viii. 30; Matt xiii.) in the **parable of the Sower**, the word came with much power, that they received it with joy, and did believe, **but fell by their lusts. And look as it is with the sun, there comes light and heat with it**, so there comes,—

1. Truth to the mind, and conquers the judgments of hypocrites, that there is no life, good, righteousness, but in Christ, nor salvation but by Christ.

[this is why, right here: the following points !!]

2. **There comes some goodness of the gospel to the heart**, that men hearing and seeing salvation wrapped up there, O, that is sweet and good! and hence their affections and hearts are in some measure conquered by the power of the over-dazzling truth; and hence hypocrites, being thus conquered, partly being of this opinion, partly tasting some good of it, **desire it out of self-love, expect it out of self-delusion**, and **profess themselves virgins out of these principles**. [as opposed from the principle of a love to God, that new principle of spiritual life]

Reason 2. In regard of the power of evangelical examples in the five wise virgins ; for look as it is with living men when the sun shines upon their heads, **they cast their shadows that follow them**; so when the Lord Jesus shines upon the souls of his own people, almost every honest, sincere-hearted man will cast his shadow that will be like him; **hence hypocrites in those churches which are commonly rather led by example than by rule** [*rule: proceeding from the law written on the heart of a true convert*], will be very like them, and imitate them ; if they should not, what communion could they have with them, or what love could they receive from them? For there is a mighty power in eminent examples to **overbear hypocrites, that if they will turn themselves into any form, they must into theirs**, as in Joash; for there are two things in the carriage of the saints.

1. **There is a condemning power in it;** hence men fear to live unlike them.

2. **There is a winning virtue in it, an attractive virtue** ; hence men endeavor to be and live like them, to be of the same mind, the same heart with them ; and hence others take them, and they take themselves, to be sincere, and hence they are evangelical gospel hypocrites that lie hid in these churches ; hence, (Zech. viii. 23,) "**Many shall take hold of a Jew's skirt**, (I doubt not but some false ones,) **We have heard God is with you.**" And as Christ when lifted up and risen, so saints draw hypocrites to them.

Reason 3. **Because the gospel brings the greatest and sweetest consolations with it. Hence a man, under the terror of the law and sense of curse for his sin, will make his last refuge hither and hide himself under the wing of the gospel, not so much out of love to Christ or gospel, but because they serve his turn, and give him ease.** Like men scorched with heat, and almost ready to die, the shadow of a tree is now very comfortable, and therefore there they sit; so these. Or, as men with scalded arms they put them into water, which gives them ease, no cure; but because it gives them ease, there they keep them; so here. Men have been scalded with wrath; **O, now gospel is very sweet, and so are eased by it, never cured by it.** Therefore, here you shall find them disclaim all works, and cry up grace only; where the purest churches are, there are usually great awakenings, there God is very near men, and made most manifest to men's consciences, and there are most foul plagues, contempt of the Spirit of grace, and hence most dreadful torments of conscience, and fearful lookings for of judgment. Now, hence it comes to pass, when Christ is offered, and general notice given to men's minds, that yet there is hope and mercy for great sinners; **this fills them with joy and peace, as John's hearers**, (John v. 35,) **and hence they believe as the stony ground that had some ploughing, and hence received the word with joy, and believed.** Ps. lxxvi. 3. It is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ, Antichrist tormented the consciences of men. Rev. ix. Men have no peace within nor without. Luther is raised up, and preaches

the doctrine of free grace, **which a world of men looking to their ease reject**; others in truth receive it; for some time before his death he cries to God that he may not live to see the ruins that were coming on Germany for their contempt. The law is the ministry of death; the gospel propounds great privileges, with much more sweetness to sinners, and hence hither men fly.

Reason 4. **Because the gospel yields the fairest colors for a man's sloth, and strongest props for that.** Hence you shall see them walking in this garden; **for the last sin God conquers in a man is his sloth.** When the swine have no swill to eat, yet you shall find them in the mire of sloth; this "slays the foolish." **Hence the best hypocrite will plead the gospel, it is troublesome to the flesh to bear a daily sense of the sins and wants of the soul.** Hence you shall, **Capernaum**, receive Christ, **and wonder at his doctrine; and yet Christ upbraids them, they repented not.**" Matt xi. 20. **It is troublesome, nay, impossible, for a man to break his chains and get his soul loosed from his lusts, and free for the Lord.** The gospel shows all fullness in Christ, and that he must do all; a slothful, false heart, therefore, closeth with Christ as the end, **but neglects him in the means.** Why? Christ must do all, say they, and hence, if Christ do drop upon their hearts, well and good; **if not, it is Christ's fault; he is a hard master that gathers where he did not sow**, and hence wrapped it up. **A man's false heart is weary of the yoke of Christ, and hence would fain be eased of it.** Now, **the gospel promiseth liberty from the bondage and curse of the law**, and a **slothful heart can find out reasons to free himself from the rule of it**, as part of Christian liberty, "this is our liberty in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. ii. 19. And they rejoice exceedingly that the law is dead, as they did (Rev. xi 10) for the death of witnesses, because they tormented them. I say again, **they rejoice not because the Lord makes them like himself and because of his image restored by the gospel, and because they feel the power of it, but because they are free from the power of it.** **It is an old deceit, yet subtle to rejoice, and love, and bless Christ, because he will pardon sin, though I lie and live in them.** Or, if they do not free themselves from it, the gospel shows the law within closing with the law without, to be an evidence the Lord will not impute it, and **that it be not they, but sin in them.** **Hence a slothful heart will continue in his sloth, and to ease himself of trouble, for sin and obedience too, say, it is not he, but sin.** And hence Arminius makes a strange interpretation of Rom. vii. Because he saw German professors plead that for themselves, the Israelites entered not into Canaan, unbelief caused it. And why did that shut them out? O, there were walled towns and difficulties, and this was the last shock, and hence they fell off; so it is in hypocrites now. **The safest place to lie asleep is in Christ's lap.**

Reason 5. From the mighty cunning of Satan, the strength of whose kingdom is made and continued by peace. Luke xi. 41. Hence, "He will turn himself into an angel of light," and suffer men to **go to Christ and the gospel, to avoid the search**, that they may be Christ's in appearance, and his indeed. 2 Cor. iv. 4, He has a mighty power over men to blind them; for there be three things which trouble men usually, and make them question their estates, and the gospel quiets and absolves them from all.

1. Conscience, that cries dolefully sometimes, These sins shall have these woes. Yes, unless I believe; but I believe, and trust to Christ, and flee to Clod's mercy.

2. Ministry, that cries and searches into the deepest windings of men's hearts, that men cannot but see that Christ has of flaming fire to see through them. Now, hence men avoid stroke and power of all ministry; thus it is with me, thus it be with me; but I believe and trust to Christ. And hence men bear

back like brazen walls all blows. [In other words, they are sermon proof; they resist all blows against their false pretenses, their ruinous resistance, that may expose their undone condition....*is it hard for you to kick against the goads?*]

3. God's judgment seat. What though men see you not, yet God seeth. Why, they have sinned, they confess, but Christ has suffered; they have sinned, but they trust, etc, (Micah iii 11,) "Is not the Lord among us?" Look as it was with Joab, "he runs to the horns of the altar," yet there he perishes, there he would die, there was the last refuge from search and death; so here.

Section III

Use 1. Hence do not think your estates good because you look only for justification by Christ, and look only to God's grace, and count of grace in Christ. It is a common error for men to think, being they be of this opinion, only to look for grace in Christ; to think that, therefore, their estates are false, and they are justified by Christ. Why, there may be such a power of word and spirit to conquer their judgments, as those Papists that have been pleading against it have been overcome by it. **You may receive the notions of it in your head, but the power of it never into your heart.**

Object, 1. But my heart has been affected with this to see when my sins deserve death; yet there is mercy for the vilest in Christ.

Ans. You may taste and joy, and yet fall off at last.

Object. 2. But I have fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

Ans. You may eat and drink in his presence, and yet be bid, "Depart; I know you not, a worker of iniquity."

Object. 3. But I have "escaped the pollution of the world," (2 Pet 10:20,) and that through this knowledge of Christ his love has much moved me to part with my sins.

Ans. It may be so, and it may wash thee from all external pollutions, and yet thy swinish nature remain still hidden from thee, but seen of an all-seeing God.

Object. 4. But I look for Christ, and wait for him, and desire him, and all that are wise think well of me.

Ans. You may do all this, and yet you may be found foolish, for all this. Evangelical work, which is accompanied with salvation in some, it may be hypocritical in thee; **and therefore take heed you do not take shows for substance.** For, look, as in the gospel, God's utmost perfection of wisdom and love appears, **so the most hidden and admirable delusions of Satan are evangelical.** There his power is employed to undermine, and so to keep his head. O that we could but imagine and set before our eyes the amazing condition of such a man, whose plagues shall be made wonderful, that has been troubled with sin a long time, at last looks to Christ, and there rests, and so hears all sermons, and there still sleeps, and considers often that his ways are evil, not never suspects his faith to be evil; then he comes to die, and then looks for Christ; at last the wick or snuff dies, and sun sets, and darkness approaches, and then suddenly slips into hell, where he sees Christ and saints afar off. And what has deceived them? **O, their faith has deceived them,** to see Christ shaking them off as dust. O, they wish, O that I had known or feared this before! And will you not fear now? As for you, profane ones, that can

scoff, and drink, and break Sabbaths, and live idly, your judgment is writ upon your foreheads; but, O, take heed, you that have escaped these pollutions, lest you deceive yourselves here. To show you that deceit particularly, it is not my time yet, but go along, and think sadly of it; I may look for justification by Christ, and wait for Christ, and yet perish. O, let me be sure I get such a faith as will not deceive me here. Should not a man, you will say, trust Christ? Yes, when you can in truth; but thy trust may be but presumption.

Use 2. Take not up, therefore, every opinion and doctrine, from men or angel, that bears a fair show of advancing Christ; for they may be but the fruits of **evangelical hypocrisy and deceit**, that, **being deceived themselves, may deceive others too**. Matt. vii. 15, "Beware of them that come in sheep's clothing," in the innocency, purity, and meekness of Christ and his people, "but inwardly are wolves, proud, cruel, censorious, speaking evil of what they know not; by their fruits you shall know them." Do not think, beloved, that Satan will not seek to send delusions among us; and do you think these delusions will come out of the Popish pack, whose inventions smell above ground here? No; he must come, and will come, with more evangelical fine-spun devices. It is a rule observed among Jesuits at this day, if they would conquer religion by subtlety, never oppose religion with a cross religion, but set it against itself; **so oppose the gospel by the gospel**; and look, as churches pleading for works had new invented devised works, so when faith is preached, men will have their new inventions of faith. I speak not this against the doctrine of faith where it is preached, but am glad of it; nor that I would have men content themselves with every form of faith; for I believe that most men's faith needs confirming or trying, but I speak to prevent danger on that hand. For it that which Christ did foretell, (Matt xxiv. 24,) "Many false Christs should arise," i.e., such as should misapply Christy that had a spirit for Christ, which was a spirit against Christ, and would "deceive, if it were possible, the very elect;" for coming with Christ's Spirit, they dare not oppose them, lest they oppose the Spirit of Christ. The only remedy is to hold to Christ's word, and not to depart one hair's breadth from it, (Rev. iii. 10,) and to a word well understood, and then dispute no more. Satan comes to Eve, and bids her eat; no, God forbid; yet eat to be like gods; **he dazzled her with that which was not**; now she fell. Take the truth from what the word says, and depart not from it.

Use 3. Here see the dreadful estate of all them that be found false-hearted in the purest churches, and that in these three respects: —

First. That they should so horribly forsake and blaspheme the name of God, to make the glorious gospel of God and all the sweet doctrines of grace a cover for their hypocrisy and sin, as indeed it is; for were it not for this, they might be found out in their sins, but now they are beyond the discovery of all men or means.

Secondly, That they should be so lamentably forsaken of God as to be left, —

1. To the most subtle and spiritual hypocrisy in the world, which, being most cross to God, shall receive most fierce and searching wrath; for, as divines say of Christ, he was forsaken in soul, because man had sinned with his soul; so God's wrath will search deep in their hearts, whose hearts have guilefully departed from the Lord.

2. That he should lead them so far, and yet in the main forsake them, O, this is heavy wrath, for a man to be led in the daylight of the gospel, almost to the end of his journey, and at last the sun spots, and he left to wilder.

Thirdly. In regard of the cries of the very gospel itself against them. O that the precious gospel of God, coming with so much peace, love, grace, mercy, should win them to be hypocrites, but never to be friends! Beloved, as there is vengeance of the law, and of the temple, so there is vengeance of the gospel when the soul shall be drawn before the tribunal of Christ, and shall stand there quaking, all sins set in order before you, and your mouth shall be stopped. What say you then for your life? O, grace and mercy, Lord; O, now shall the gospel come forth and say. All this I did, I spake, I strove, I comforted, I terrified, and yet he hath opposed the Lord, and me he hath made a cover for all these evils; and therefore, Lord, let him never be comforted more. John iii. 19. O, Christ hath heavy things against these times, that take light of the gospel to see to commit their sin by. And, therefore, lament your present estates, you that know yourselves nought, never yet drawn to Christ, never yet humbled at the feet of Christ, and look up to the Lord, whatever misery he inflicts, not to suffer thee to be deceived here; not only to have such a faith as may catch hold on Christ, but he on thee, and come unto the light to manifest the hidden enmity there. Never was yet man deceived but he that was willing to be deceived, that would not use the means, and search.

Section IV

Use 4. **All you, therefore, that live under the light of the gospel, consider if it doth not nearly concern you to search and try yourselves, whether you, or some of you, may not be evangelical hypocrites.** The time is coming that you shall stand before the tribunal of God, wherein the hidden things of darkness shall be brought forth to light, **and it will be too late to know yourselves then. O, therefore, search now. No man's misery will be so great as this, if your heart be found false.** I shall speak in a manner but generally now.

Sign 1. Those that do believe and yet fail in respect of the efficient cause of faith, it never had the right maker, never came out of the right shop nor mint; **it was never a faith of God's making, but a faith of your own making**; so that it is a base, **bastard faith**, that though it be born in the house, it shall never possess the inheritance, because it was never begotten of the right father; the Lord never wrought it, but themselves; for many a man is convinced, by the law and spirit of bondage, that he must die, and that he is a most grievous sinner, and that, when he has done all, he is unprofitable; but yet he trusts to Christ's and God's mercy, and so believes; he finds no great difficulty in this, nor no great need of the almighty power of the Lord to work this, and all men living shall never make him think but that he does heartily and truly believe; but ask him, Have you no doubt of your estate, and of Christ's not taking hold of you when you take hold of him? Yes, but seeing he has been troubled about his estate, and repented of his sin, (in his fashion), and reformed himself and family, and loves the best things, he believes without question, and so misapplies promises to himself, never feeling a need of the revelation and donation of Jesus to him by the Father; and thus the Lord finds this man a Christ, and this man finds the Lord a faith, and the Lord Jesus redeems this man by price, and this man redeems himself by power, and so the Father shall have some glory for providing a Saviour; Christ shall have

some glory for paying a price, and the Spirit of Christ, which only can draw to Christ, shall lose his glory; and so this man may take it to himself. And is this good, think you? Col. ii. 12, "Risen with Christ through faith of the operation of God." 1 Pet. 1:3, "The same power that raised Christ from the dead must raise you to a lively hope." Matt 22:1-3, "One man came from his hedges and highways to the feast of the promise and ordinances of the gospel, till the Lord saw him without Christ." But, John 6:64, 65, "Unless the Father reveals Christ's face," the Father persuades thee of Christ's love, "you can never come to Christ;" men know not thy hypocrisy, thou dost not, but Jesus doth, and what good will thy faith do thee then? It was a sweet speech of Christ, "Thy faith has saved thee. O, heavy when it shall be said, Thy faith has damned thee; that which I thought to be the way of life is the way of death: truly, so it will if you do not fetch it out of heaven."

Sign 2. Those that do believe, but they fail in the object, i.e., they close with Christ, but they know not who he is; that as the woman of Samaria, that had some lookings to the Messiah, she did worship whom she knew not; so men believe in one whom they know not, only have heard the fame of. For there are two things in the gospel — 1. The outward words and letters; 2. The things contained in those words. **Hence there is a double knowledge of Christ.**

1. A fantasy knowledge, as a man that hears of anything absent, presently fancies the thing in his head.

2. **There is an intuitive knowledge, whereby the soul doth not only see words and fancies, but beholds the things themselves.** [this is enabled by a saving faith, that infuses the substance of what was before unseen, into the soul as to make it real and not just notional.] Hence it comes to pass that many a man, hearing the same, and receiving the fancy of Christ, believes in him, but not seeing him as he is, therein he believes in one whom he knows not; and hence the Lord Jesus may be a hid thing to many a man, and the gospel a sealed book, though he lives and remains in the very light of the sun, and that all his days. Hence Christ laments Jerusalem — "O that thou hadst known, but now hid;" and yet Christ preached. Yes, (Deut. 29:4) "You have heard and seen, and yet the Lord had not given a heart to see to this day:" so it is with many a soul; you have heard with your ears the great things of the kingdom of God, yet the Lord has not given you eyes to see; you have seen deliverances on sea, yet the Lord has not given you hearts to understand; and if so, all your faith is nought, and profession and affection vile, and estates miserable. 2Cor. iii. 18, "All we with open face," etc .

Object. But many see it not so.

Ans. I confess some may see more darkly, and be mourning under it; yet he that doth not in part, he to whom it is hid, (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4,) is one of them that be lost, whose "eyes Satan has blinded." John 6:45, "He that has heard and learned of the Father." **Many hear but never learn of the Father, hence never come truly unto Christ:** it is in this case as it is with a traitor; he comes to the king for his life, and prays for his son's sake; the king sends for him, and saith. Here is one that begs for your sake; do you know him? For my sake! I wonder on what acquaintance; he is a stranger to me, and therefore I regard him not. So here.

Sign 3. Those that have some kind of sight of the object, and see Christ, but there is a wound in the subject, **because their faith arises and springs out of an ill soil**, it is in such a party that never was yet

thoroughly rent from his sin, and here is the great wound of the most cunning hypocrites living; for there are two things in him- —

1. A carnal heart, which cannot be satisfied with a spiritual good with Christ; hence he must have his lust.
2. A convinced conscience, which cannot be quieted without Christ and mercy; hence men close with Christ, and their lusts too. Look as it was with the stony ground and thorny soil, they believed, but had a stone at bottom; "but roots of bitterness," etc. These men can sometimes plead acquaintance with Christ, (Luke xiii 26, 27,) yet "workers of iniquity." 2 Pet ii. 19, 20. Some had escaped the pollution of the world, (that you may do,) but a swinish nature lasts, that they never felt, or grew not in the feeling of it, and loosening from it; as with apricot trees rooted in the earth, but leaning on the wall, so they on Christ. O, consider of this: let a man be cast down as low as hell by sorrow, and lie under your chains, quaking in apprehension of terror to come; let a man then be raised up to heaven in joy, not able to live; let a man reform and shine like an earthly angel, yet if not rent from lust, that either you did never see it, or if so, you have not followed the Lord to remove it, but proud, dogged, worldly, sluggish still, false in your dealings, cunning in your tradings, devils in your families, images in your churches; you are objects of pity now, and shall be of terror at the great day; for where sin remains in power, it will bring faith, and Christ, and joy into bondage and service of itself.

Sign 4. Those that believe, yet fail of saving faith in of the very act of believing and closing with Christ, namely, they close with Christ, but it is without a high esteem of him or love to him; they have some, but right grace consists in a kind summitry or excellency, else it is not right. 1 Pet. 2:5. To you that believe he is precious, and hence it comes to pass, —

1. That some never come to find or enjoy Christ, because they will not come off to the price of him, to sell themselves out of all for him.
2. Some sell him away again in time of temptation, like Esau that sold his birthright, and never make anything of it; because the bond is not strong enough, down they fall from him.
3. Hence comes all a man's uneven carriage.
4. Hence comes sometimes the unpardonable sin. Heb. x. 29. Many a man lays claim to Christ, and his blood, and righteousness, that never knew the worth of it ; and this is Christ's complaint, methinks, in heaven, (and of saints on earth,) "He comes unto his own, and his own esteem him not;" his own love him not, his own receive him not; him that is the glory of heaven, the beauty of the Father, the delight of saints, the wonderment of angels ; he, I say, is not esteemed by many a man that in his judgment esteems him, and in his heart does despise him. There are two parts of this esteem. 1. To esteem him only, John 5:44. 2. Him ever and alway; (Ps. 73:26,) "Thou art my portion forever." Many say they esteem Christ, but to be ever loving him, ever looking on him, this is not their frame. O, think of this; fail here of your valuing of him, and you fail everywhere.

Sign 5. Those that believe, but they fail in their end; and these may, for a while, in a hot fit, prize water, prize Christ and mercy above all things in the world, but their end is naught; so that men here may ask, and never have, **because of their lusts**. As a man that lies on his death bed, or in a sea storm in fear of hell, he may now prize and take hold on Christ to save him. A man lies upon the bed of horror of heart, he may prize Christ to comfort him, and getting a conceit of it, be rapt up almost in an ecstasy of joy, that a man would think he was sealed with the Spirit of Christ, and yet his end being naught, **Christ only to comfort him, misses Christ in conclusion; for when a man believes indeed, he receives Christ for the end the Father sent him, viz., to be King and Sovereign of the whole man, as well as Saviour;** (Ps. 24:7,) "Open your gates, that the King of glory, etc.; (Rom. 8:38,) "I am persuaded nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord;" our Lord as well as Jesus. Indeed, (John 6:15,) **some did receive Christ to be King, but it was that he might be their cook;** he provided loaves for them; so here. Ps. 66:2, 3, "Because of thy power, thine enemies shall flatteringly submit." **It is but flattery, not faith; look to it, therefore.**

Sign 6. Those that believe, but fail in regard of the use of the gospel and of the Lord Jesus; and these we read of, (Jude 3), namely, of some men that did turn "grace into wantonness;" for therein appears the exceeding evil of a man's heart, that not only the law, but also the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus works in him all manner of unrighteousness; and it is too common for men at the first work of conversion, O, then to cry for grace and Christ, and afterward grow licentious, live and lie in the breach of the law, and take their warrant for their course from the gospel I shall not name all the ways that men do so, but I will only speak that which conscience and compassion move me to; not to begin, but, if possible, to still division; and what I shall speak shall be by way of prevention.

1. Take heed of making graces in a Christian the weaknesses of a Christian; for this is to make darkness light and grace wantonness indeed; is it not? Take heed, then, of thinking or saying counterfeit or false sanctification consists in feeling something in a man's self, as love to delight in the Lord and his ways. True sanctification is seeing nothing, no love, no delight. Why, the apostle Paul knew "that in him (i.e., in his flesh) dwelt no good thing;" but he calls it flesh there, and groans under it, yet he felt a law within closing with the law without, and blessed the Lord for it, and that was himself. Do you think the Holy Ghost comes on a man as on Balaam, by immediate acting, and then leaves him, and then he has nothing? Yes, beloved, know you not Christ is in you (2 Cor. xiii. 5) as well as out of you; in you, comforting, dwelling, sanctifying, preparing the heart for himself? Indeed, to be puffed up with grace, or rest in it, is a sin; yet that grace is not that sin.

2. Take heed of making weaknesses graces or duties; as, —

First, To make poverty of spirit the sight of nothing in a man's self. Why, he that is poor has heaven for his, and so Christ and promises, and has faith his, at least some seeds. Now, to see nothing now is to see an untruth, and to tell a flat lie to God, and men, and Scripture, too. Indeed, a man that is poor doth usually see nothing; but that is his weakness, not any grace.

Secondly. To say there is no difference between graces of hypocrites and saints. Why so? Because I cannot see any. Is this your weakness or your wisdom, you can see none? And will you make your weakness your religion?

Thirdly. That a man must not evidence his justification by sanctification; I speak of that which accompanies salvation - Why so? Because then there will be comfort today and sorrow tomorrow. Grant it; but then consider, 1. That is either a man's weakness and ignorance that he doth not see it; or, 2. His wickedness and carelessness that has stained that work. And will you make this a duty, a grace? O, but many have been deceived here. Grant it; and will you make your wretched baseness of heart the foundation of this conceit?

Fourthly. That a man must see no saving work nor take comfort from any promise until he is sealed. No. Why so? Because many tall Christians have deceived themselves so and deluded themselves there, and been kept off from Christ, and truly I believe it in part. But what of that? Shall men's weakness be my religion or work? No, beloved; for a man believes before he is sealed, Eph. i. 15. And hence Christ is his; and now for him to deny Christ to be his own is to make Christ a liar, (1 John v. 10, 12, 13;) not that I would have Christians content themselves here (it is a sign you never knew what Christ meant if you do so) till he shall send a more full gale of his Spirit.

3. If you do account them weaknesses, yet take heed your closing with Christ do not cause you to make light matter of sin; either not to take notice of sins at all, only look to Christ, (it is not I, but sin, as being the act of the outward man; one calls this to unknow a man's self), or not to be deeply sensible of them, and so use Christ as your shoe-clout to wipe them off. O, this is dangerous! The spirit of joy never quenched the spirit of sorrow. Capernaum entertained Christ, and yet perished. O, she repented not. What, must we repent after we be in Christ? Yes, (Jer. 30:19,) "After I was turned I repented." It argues a bold conscience, when men, as they look to no good themselves, so to no sin in themselves, but wholly to Christ.

4. Take heed of those doctrines which in show lift up grace, but indeed pull it down, or any part of it; as, —

First. To think that the letter of the whole Scripture holds out no more than a covenant of works, a most prodigious speech, though colored with advancing a spiritual covenant of grace, and no word but Christ.

Secondly. Under a show of advancing God's grace in doing all, to say the ordinances are not means, but only occasions of conversion.

Thirdly, Under a show of giving all to grace, to abolish that truth, as to say we are not justified by faith, which, though it be true, not really; i.e., not simply by faith in itself, considered as a work, yet to say, [not relatively, as the Lord is apprehended by it,] it is false. If we cast off the power of the truth, yet let us not cast off the form of it; keep the form of wholesome words as well as truths.

Fourthly, Take heed of maintaining that a man until sealed is not persuaded to believe, under a show of letting the Spirit of grace do all. And, brethren, doth not the Spirit of grace accompany the word of grace? Are not evangelical commands part of that word? Is there not a power going along with them?

What is this but to take from God's book? And he that so doth, God will blot him out of the book of life. Rev. xxii. 19.

Fifthly, That a Christian is to gather no assurance from particular conditional promises, under color of receiving all from Christ and grace. True, them that have nothing to do with them ought not; but for those that have to do with them as their inheritance not to apply and make use of them for their comfort, it is to trample under foot Christ's blood, that has purchased them for that end, and it is to raze out in our practice the greatest part almost of the covenant of grace.

Sixthly, That the law ought not to be our rule of life, under a show of being freed from it by Christ, as though Christ came to set hell gates open for men to do what they please. Shall I say any more? I am weary with speaking; I desire rather to go aside and mourn, and to think there is somewhat amiss why the Lord lets these out. You that are sincere, search and keep close with Christ, and fetch more life from him, and though accounted under a covenant of works with men, yet rejoice; you know it is better with you in his sight. And you that are weak, beware and take heed and do not consider what I, but the Holy Ghost, has cleared this day; and as for all them that do turn grace into lasciviousness, not intentionally, but practically; not in all things, but some things; consider this scripture, (Jude 4), men "ordained to this condemnation." They thrive and have no hurt, and they joy. O, but they have condemnation enough upon them. Do but consider, (verse 12, 13,) "twice dead;" dead in Adam, **then quickened by Christ with common gifts and graces, then die and turn grace into wantonness**, for whom is reserved the very blackness of darkness forever. They being in painted profaneness.

Use 3. O, take heed, then, lest you fall short of Christ by unbelief. Heb. 6:1. Christ must do all. O, but take heed, **use means**, and then put the work into his hands to make faith right. Heb. xii. 1, 2, "Looking to Jesus the author and finisher." Suppose Christ was here on earth, and you should beg it; would he deny thee? O, no; beg hard, therefore, now.

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Use 2. Of exhortation to all young beginners, and so lo all others; take heed that you chop not at your comfort too soon; take heed you do not perish in the way, that while seeking after the Lord and rest, you fall from the Lord by security and scandal, and so you perish; but labor for that which will continue and last.

1. Mariners when they go on a voyage, they will trim their vessel, and search if there be not something amiss which may sink the ship at last; if once out at sea, they may die before they come home; and hence at first setting out are careful; so do you.

2. You will meet with trials enough to exercise all your grace, that you will find all little enough in issue.

3. This will be your comfort at death, that though it be difficult, yet if you have fought a good fight, and run a good race, there is now a crown; this will make you to go out of the world wondering, and go up to eternity in your chariot, in your triumphant chariot of glory, when you shall see on the one side, here a Demas forsaking, there a Judas betraying ; here one Christian withered, there another scandalized and offended; and yet the Lord hath upheld you, (in thy integrity,) a poor creature, that thought you should never have held out at all.

That you may do thus, two things are to be done.

First. Be sure your wound at first for sin be deep enough; for all the error in a man's faith and sanctification, it springs from that first error of his humiliation; if a man's humiliation be false and weak and little, his faith is light, and his sanctification counterfeit, as may be seen in the stony and thorny soil; if a man's wound be right, and humiliation deep enough, that man's faith is right, and his sanctification is glorious; **for Christ cannot be exceeding sweet and satisfactory to the soul, unless sin be at first exceeding bitter;** and this is the reason why Christ is not sweet nor precious at first nor afterward, because sin is not so bitter to them, especially heart sins; Christians shall find it, the esteem and price of Christ falls, while sin lies light and is not bitter.

Section VII

Quest. How bitter must it be ?

Ans. So bitter as that nothing contents your heart, while sin is with you, and the Lord is gone from you. Lam. iii. 4, 9. "Mine eye ceaseth not mourning, till the Lord look down from heaven;" as a man that looks for a prince to come and live with him, he prepares rooms for all his attendants, but he reserves the best lodgings for the prince himself, and they are kept empty while he comes; so the soul entertains creatures, and ordinances, and saints of God, but yet the heart is not content, but sits empty, desolate, while the Lord is gone; for while the heart is delighted with somewhat else beside the Lord, (that if the Lord comes, it is well, if not, it is merry and jolly,) see what the Lord there speaks. Jam. iv. 8-10. "Cleanse your hearts, and he will draw nigh unto you;" turn laughter to mourning, else you are not humbled. Let God's own people do so, it stops up the fountain of God's love, and sweetness of mercy. Ps. 30:7, "When carnally confident, I was troubled;" as it is in marriage, if a man know there is familiarity between the woman and another lover, he will have none of her; but when sin is thus bitter, the Lord hath the garments of joy to give for the spirit of heaviness. Isa. 62:1, 2. O, therefore, though it be cross to have limbs cut off, and breasts seared, bones broken, etc., yet part with all for life, even this life of Christ in you, which will give you full content.

Section VIII

Quest. How shall I do thus? My heart will be wanton and carnal.

Ans. 1. Set this down for a conclusion, I shall never be comforted by the Lord, while anything else comforts my heart, i.e., for itself, as hath been proved; and if this was well thought of, this would make a man above all other things detest his carnal content, because this indeed keeps the Lord from him.

2. Keep the remembrance of the bitterness of your sin and evil in it; thus David (Ps. 51:3) set it ever before him; for all the sweet of sin comes into the heart by a delusion first begot in the mind, of some present good in it, which the soul not attending to is drawn away by it; (Jam. 1:14), "drawn away and enticed;" hence fortify here. Three things in sin, which, if remembered, would make it bitter.

1. Sentence of condemnation passed upon thee by the law of God for it, which may make a soul to mourn. Littel content do men lake in their prison bolts.

2. The death, and agonies and sorrows of the Lord Jesus, to acquit the soul from this condemnation; this is that which may work "bitterness as for a first born," Zech. 12:10, 11.

3. Crossing the will, and so grieving the heart of Christ now in glory, as when the old world grew sensual it grieved God to the heart; keep these in remembrance; what pleasure canst thou take in that which makes the Lord sigh?

4. "The end will be bitterness." Ps. 73:17.

Secondly, Take heed you miss not of that faith which will bring in supply. Heb. 4:1, 2. Take heed lest a promise being left, any fall short of that rest which comes by the promise, by an unbelieving heart; for many desire the Lord and rest upon the Lord, and they are satisfied with their hunger, and with their rest on him, without receiving life from him; truly you will fall from the Lord then; for if the Lord doth not daily drop life into your hearts, you will grow weary of him; and ordinances, they are empty wells, and promises, they are dry breasts: if you have bread, but it feed you not, you will not care for it.

This sermon addresses many things unique to God in his acts by His Spirit in converting the soul, and man's inability to convert himself due to his being in a natural condition of sin & rebellion, being dead in sin, etc., and the inability of coming to God (or believing in Christ) by the sole use of the faculty of his reason despite the many views of this to the contrary advanced by Arminians and others of like persuasion (which is most people). The reason being, that before we are converted, we are blind (2Cor4:4, 1Cor2:14, etc.) and unwilling and unable to come to Christ (Romans 8:7-8). This sermon will shed more light on this subject adding to what Owen and Flavel have said. Also, the distinction between common and special grace and conscience in its exercise is explained; very good!

A Divine and Supernatural Light

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Immediately Imparted to the Soul
by the Spirit of God,

Shown to be Both Scriptural and Rational Doctrine

A Sermon
by
Jonathan Edwards

[Preached at Northampton, and published at the desire of some of the hearers, in the year 1734.]

key excerpts

http://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/sermons/supernatural_light.html

Matthew 16:17 - *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

It is rational to suppose, **that this blessing should be immediately from God**; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, **there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity**: it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; **for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart**. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, **as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it**; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that are the subject matter of this divine light; **and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it**. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: a seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, that is consequent on it. But if we take reason strictly -- not for the faculty of mental perception in general, **but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments -- the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food**. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. -- **Reason** may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; **but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness**.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. **2 Cor. 3:18**, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour: it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. This light, and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convincing of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

full sermon:

Matthew 16:17 - *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

CHRIST says these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, who men said he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. When they had thus given an account who others said he was, Christ asks them, who they said he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: he readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does *to* him, and *of* him in the text: in which we may observe,

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account. *Blessed art thou* -- "Thou art a happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am *Christ, the Son of the living God.* Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another; but none of them thinking right, all of them misled. Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter." 2. The evidence of this his happiness declared; *viz.*, that God, and he *only*, had *revealed it* to him. This is an evidence of his being *blessed*.

First, As it shows how peculiarly favored he was of God above others; *q.d.*, "How highly favored art thou, that others that are wise and great men, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers, and the nation in

general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my Heavenly Father should thus set his love, on *thee, Simon Bar-jona*. This argues thee *blessed*, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

Secondly, It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that *flesh and blood can reveal*. "This is such knowledge as only my *Father which is in heaven* can give: it is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge is. Thou art *blessed*, that thou knowest that which God alone can teach thee."

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. *Positively*, as God is here declared the author of it. *Negatively*, as it is declared, that *flesh and blood had not revealed it*. God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of the knowledge that is obtained by human learning: he is the author of all moral prudence, and of the knowledge and skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were *wise-hearted*, and skilled in embroidering, that God had *filled them with the spirit of wisdom*, Exodus 28:3.

God is the author of such knowledge; but yet not so but that *flesh and blood reveals it*. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. *God is the author of such knowledge by those means: flesh and blood is employed as the mediate or second cause of it*; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means. *But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: he reveals it, and flesh and blood reveals it not*. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, and divided and confounded in their opinions of him: but Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the *Son of God*. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not *flesh and blood* that had *revealed it to him*, but God: for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means, how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater knowledge and sagacity in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse from these words, is this

DOCTRINE

That there is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.--And on this subject I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

III. Show the truth of the doctrine.
And then conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it, would show,

First, In a few things what it is not. And here,

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men in a natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from light or sensibleness of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin: but yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing anything above nature. The light that is obtained is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained if men were left wholly to themselves: or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will, by mere nature, make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves: he helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thence forward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of, as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may indeed act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them; for notwithstanding all his influences that they may be the subjects of, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. **Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God**. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act

upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, *the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, as upon an external object. But as he acts in his holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw anything with the bodily eyes: it is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceeding different thing from it. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

3. **This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God.** This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelation of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. [*enthusiasts: modern day Pentecostals or Charismatics often times that say, God told me this or that, etc.: that have a lot of heat but very little light.*] But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration: it reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of the things of religion that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story: he may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it: yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic description of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And that common belief of the truth of the things of religion, that persons may have from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A

person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this: one man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance: but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them. -- But I proceed to show,

Secondly, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.

And it may be thus described: **a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God**, and a **conviction of the truth and reality** of them thence arising. This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, *viz.*, a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. **A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory**; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; **a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ**, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a **sense of the loveliness of God's holiness**. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, *viz.*, that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness, and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the **sense of the heart**: as when there is a **sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing**; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, are mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head,

speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

2. There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them; and that either directly or indirectly.

First, Indirectly, and that two ways.

1. As the prejudices that are in the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptible of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against the truth of divine things: it is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2. It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions the more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with the fixedness and intensesness to that kind of objects; which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, than he that sees them in a dim starlight or twilight.

The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty and sweetness of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises: so that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion. -- But,

Secondly, A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so

superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is a human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them; i.e., they see a divine, and transcendent, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truth of religion as this, arising, these ways, from a sense of the divine excellency of them, is that true spiritual conviction that there is in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, which unregenerate men are capable of.

II. I proceed now to the *second* thing proposed, *viz.*, to show how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means. And here,

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not made use of in it. The natural faculties are the subject of this light: and they are the subject in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man's understanding are concerned and made use of in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, or as a rational creature; and makes use of his human faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; though the faculties are made use of, it is as the subject and not as the cause; and that acting of the faculties in it, is not the cause, but is either implied in the thing itself (in the light that is imparted) or is the consequence of it. As the use that we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. As I have observed already, it is not in this affair, as it is in inspiration, where new truths are suggested: for here is by this light only given a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the word of God; and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is made use of in this affair: this light is the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ", 2 Cor. 4:4. The gospel is as a glass by which this light is conveyed to us, 1 Cor. 13:12. "Now we see through a glass." -- But,

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power, or a natural force God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that

the word properly causes that light. **The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God;** though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. **So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God.** As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: **but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.** -- I come now,

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would show briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

First, It is scriptural. My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine that the Scripture abounds in. We are there abundantly taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this, that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few texts of many. 1 John 3:6, "Whosoever sinneth, has not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11, "He that doth good, is of God: but he that doth evil, hath not seen God." John 14:19, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." **This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as a seeing and knowing, wherein they differ from the ungodly.** And by these Scriptures it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects; but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God, Matt. 11:25-27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed alone to the arbitrary operation, and gift of God, bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it, that have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And the imparting of the knowledge of God is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: and also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that it is the immediate effect of his power and will; for it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation; and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen in that. Gal. 1:15,16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The Scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described, as the immediate gift of God, Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What

could the Psalmist mean when he begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? and what could he mean by those wondrous things? Was it the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these strange things when he would? Doubtless by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections, and glory, that there was in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the Scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God, Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is also what the Scripture teaches. As John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. and John 17:6,7,8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John 12:44,45,46, "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." Their believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are spoken of as running parallel.

Christ condemns the Jews that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke 12:56,57. He having there blamed the Jews, that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times; or as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times; he adds, yea, and why even of your own selves, judge ye not what is right? i.e., without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine? Why have ye not that savor of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine?

The Apostle Peter mentions it as what gave them (the apostles) good and well grounded assurance of the truth of the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration: that glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly showing his divinity, as his outward glory, and a great deal more: for his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration showed

him to be divine, **only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory**. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have been an eyewitness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen. -- But this brings me to what was proposed next, *viz.*, to show that,

Secondly, This doctrine is rational.

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things, that is so **transcendent** and **exceedingly different from what is in other things**, that, if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine, that appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is that godlike, high and glorious excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, *viz.*, divine. What reason can be offered against it? Unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his transfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in the glory that he now appears in, as he will do at the day of judgment; without doubt, the glory and majesty that he would appear in, would be such as would satisfy everyone that he was a divine person, and that religion was true: and it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel, that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world, there should be something in his word or speech vastly different from man's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had noticed that he was about to do it; that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, in divine speeches or discourses, as it were from his own mouth, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from man's speech, that he should speak like a God; that is, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his speech or word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty and other divine perfections, that the word of man, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in everything he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more, is the speech of God (if there be any such thing as the speech of God) to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeably to Jer. 23:28,29. God having there been reprovng the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there

is no such thing as such a distinguishing excellency, or that, if there be, that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptible of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; who were made on purpose for those exercises that do respect God and wherein they have nextly to do with God: for reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And if it be rational to suppose that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose that God would reserve that knowledge and wisdom, that is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself, and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is that highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: in this the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left meaner goods and lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in!

It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity: it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that

are the subject matter of this divine light; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: a seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, *that* is consequent on it. But if we take *reason* strictly -- not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments -- the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. -- Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

First, This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. *But persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtle train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion: they are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men*. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. 1:26,27, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world --."

Secondly, This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light, that has been described, let into our souls. If there be such a thing indeed, and it be not only a notion or whimsy of persons of weak and distempered brains, then doubtless it is a thing of great importance, whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel-doctrines which arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

Thirdly, All may hence be exhorted earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

[All these points are very important to understand; contemplate them!!!]

1. **This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of.** It is more excellent than any human learning; **it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen.** Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that is or can be, viz., the divine glory or excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. **This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful.** Men have a great deal of pleasure in human knowledge, in studies of natural things; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. **This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart.** [or the beginning of that glory in which we partake in heaven, seeing Christ as he is] **There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.**

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. **It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. 3:18,** "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. **It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion.** This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour: it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. **This light, and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this.** But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, **so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.**

The Transcendent Excellency of Communion With God Transforming us into his image

John Flavel, pg 250 Vol. 4 England's Duty

In the last place, I shall show you the transcendent excellency of this life of communion with God; it is the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth, as will appear by these twenty excellencies thereof following,

- I. Excellency. **It is the assimilating instrument whereby the soul is molded and fashioned after the**

image of God. This is the excellency of communion with God, to make the soul like him. There is a two-fold assimilation or conformity of the soul to God, the one perfect and complete, the other inchoate and in part. Perfect assimilation is the privilege of the perfect state, resulting from the immediate vision and perfect communion the soul hath with God in glory, 1John 3:2, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." **Perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation; but the soul's assimilation or imperfect conformity to God in this world, is wrought and gradually carried on, by daily communion with him.** **And as our communion with God here, grows up more and more into spirituality and power, so in an answerable degree doth our conformity to him advance.** **Cor. 3:18,** "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating efficacy; he that walks in vain company is made vainer than he was before; and he that walks in spiritual, heavenly company, will be ordinarily more serious than he was before. But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man as communion with God doth. Those are most like unto God that converse most frequently with him. The beauty of the Lord is upon those souls; it figures the spirit of a man after the divine pattern. That is the first excellency of communion with God, it assimilates them to God.

This is an excellent summary of things that have to do with the believers' union with Christ, being engrafted into Christ, the communication of holiness, the restoring of the image of God upon the soul, and the spiritual advantages of new covenant believers over those under the law as Adam was in the Garden.

Union with Christ

code76

From The Method of Grace

by John Flavel, Vol. 2 pg 141-144 - excerpts

SERMON VIII.

Setting forth the Believer's Fellowship with Christ, the next End of his Application to them.

Psalm xlv. 7.

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

THE method of grace in uniting souls with Jesus Christ, hath been opened in the former discourses; thus doth the Spirit, (whose office it is) make application of Christ to God's elect; The result and next fruit whereof is communion with Christ in his graces and benefits. Our mystical union is **the very ground-work and foundation of our sweet, soul-enriching communion and participation of spiritual**

privileges; we are first ingrafted into Christ, and then suck the sap and fatness of the root: first married to the person of Christ, then endowed and instated in the privileges and benefits of Christ. This is my proper work to open at this time, and from this scripture.

The words read, are a part of that excellent song of love, that heavenly Epithalamium, wherein the spiritual espousals of Christ and the church are figuratively and very elegantly celebrated and shadowed. The subject matter of this psalm is the very same with the whole book of the Canticles; and in this psalm, under the figure of king Solomon, and the daughter of Egypt, whom he espoused, the spiritual espousals of Christ and the church are set forth and represented to us. Among many rapturous and elegant expressions in praise of this glorious bridegroom, Christ, this is one, which you have before you: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows:" i.e., enriched and filled thee, in a singular and peculiar manner, with the fulness of the Spirit, whereby thou art consecrated to thy office; and by reason whereof thou out-shinest and excellest all the saints, who are thy fellows or copartners in these graces. So that in these words you have two parts; viz.

First, The saints' dignity, and
Secondly, Christ's pre-eminency:

First, The saints' dignity, which consists in this, that they are Christ's fellows. The Hebrew word is very full and copious, and is translated "consorts, companions, copartners, partakers: or, as ours read it, fellows, i.e., such as are partakers with him in the anointing of the Spirit, who do, in their measure, receive the same Spirit, every Christian being anointed, *modo sibi proportionate*, with the same grace, and dignified with the same titles, 1 John ii. 27, Rev. i. 6. **Christ and the saints are in common one with another: Doth the spirit of holiness dwell in him? so it doth in them too. Is Christ King and Priest? Why, so are they too by the grace of union with him. He hath made us kings and priests to God, and his Father.** This is the saints' dignity to be Christ's fellows, consorts, or copartners; so that look, **whatever spiritual grace or excellency is in Christ, it is not appropriated to himself, but they do share with him: for indeed he was filled with the fulness of the Spirit, for their sakes and use; as the sun is filled with light, not to shine to itself, but to others; so is Christ with grace.** And therefore, some translate the text, not *prae consortibus*, above thy fellows; but *propter consortes*, for thy fellows¹. [¹ Oil itself is pure and clear, which supplies and feeds the flame with fuel; hence the metaphor of anointing with oil used in scripture, frequently signifies the internal illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit, and the communication of the true knowledge of God, and suitable affections of soul to it. Moller. on the place.] **Making Christ the first receptacle of grace, who first and immediately is filled from the fountain, the Godhead: but it is for his people, who receive and derive from him, according to their proportion.**

This is a great truth, and the dignity of the saints lies chiefly in their partnership with Christ, though our translation, above thy fellows, suits best, both with the importance of the word, and scope of the place.

Secondly, But then, whatever dignity is ascribed herein to the saints, there is, and still must be, a **pre-eminency acknowledged, and ascribed to Christ:** if they are anointed with the Spirit of grace, much more abundantly is Christ: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

By the *oil of gladness* understand the *Spirit of holiness*, compared here with oil, of which there was a double use under the law, viz. a civil and a sacred use. It had a sacred and a solemn use, in the inauguration and consecration of the Jewish kings and high-priests; it had also a civil, and common use, for the anointing their bodies, to make their limbs more agile, expedite, and nimble; to make the face shine, for it gave a lustre, freshness, and liveliness to the countenance. It was also used in lamps, to feed and maintain the fire, and give them light. These were the principal uses of oil. Now, upon all these accounts, it excellently expresseth, and figuratively, *represents to us the Spirit of grace poured forth upon Christ and his people*. For,

First, By the Spirit poured out upon him, he was prepared for, and consecrated to his offices, he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, Acts x. 38. Secondly, As this precious oil runs down from Christ, the head, to the borders of his garments, I mean, as it is shed upon believers, so it exceedingly beautifies their faces, and makes them shine with glory.

Thirdly, It renders them apt, expedite, and ready to every good work : *Non tardat uncta rota*.

Fourthly, It kindles and maintains the flame of divine love in their souls, and, like a lamp, enlightens their minds in the knowledge of spiritual things; the anointing teaches them. And this oil is here called the oil of gladness, because it is the cause of all joy and gladness to them that are anointed with it: Oil was used (as you heard before) at the installment of sovereign princes, which was the day of the gladness of their hearts; and, among the common people, it was liberally used at all their festivals, but never upon their days of mourning. Whence it becomes excellently expressive of the nature and use of the Spirit of grace, who is the cause and author of all joy in believers, John xvii. 13.

And with this oil of gladness is Christ said to be anointed above his fellows, i.e., to have a far greater share of the Spirit of grace than they: "For to every one of the saints is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. iv. 7. But to him the Spirit is not given by measure, John iii. 34. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should ail fulness dwell," 1 Col. i. 19- and "*of his fulness we all receive grace for grace*," John i. 16. The saints partake with him, and through him in the same Spirit of grace, for which reason they are his fellows; but all the grace poured out upon believers comes exceeding short of that which God hath poured out upon Jesus Christ. The words being thus opened, give us this note

*Doctrine: That all true believers have a real communion or fellowship
with
the Lord Jesus Christ.*

From the saints union with Christ, there doth naturally and immediately result a most sweet and blessed communion and fellowship with him in graces and spiritual privileges, Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ"; in giving us his Son, he "freely gives us all things," Rom. viii. 32. So in 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." And once more, 1Cor. iii. 22, 23. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's." What Christ is and hath is theirs by communication to them, or improvement for them; and this is very evidently implied in all those excellent scripture metaphors, by which our union with Christ is figured and shadowed out to us ; as the marriage-union betwixt a man and his wife, Eph. v: 31, 32. You know that this conjugal union gives the wife interest in the estate and honours of the husband, be she never so

meanly descended in herself. The natural union betwixt the head and members of the body, by which also the **mystical union of Christ** and believers is set forth, 1 Cor. xii. 12. excellently illustrates this fellowship or communion betwixt them, for from Christ "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body," as the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 16. The **union betwixt the graft and the stock**, which is another emblem of our union with Christ, John xv. 1. imports, in like manner, this communion or partnership betwixt Christ and the saints; for no sooner doth the graft take hold of the stock, **but the vital sap of the stock is communicated to the graft**, and both live by one and the same juice.

John Flavel, cont., Vol. 2 pg 146-150

Thirdly, Believers have communion with Christ **in his holiness** or **sanctification**, for of God he is made unto them, not only righteousness, but sanctification also; and as in the former privilege, they have a **stock of merit** in the blood of Christ to justify them; so here, they have the **Spirit of Christ to sanctify them**, 1 Cor. i. 30. and therefore we are said of his fulness to receive "**grace for grace**," John i. 16. i.e., say some, grace upon grace, manifold graces, or abundance of grace ; or grace for grace, that is, grace answerable to grace: as in the seal and wax, there is line for line, and cut for cut, exactly answerable to each other; or grace for grace, that is, say others, the free grace of God in Christ, for the sanctification or filling of our souls with grace: be it in which sense it will, it shows the communion believers have with Jesus Christ in grace and holiness. Now, **holiness** is the most precious thing in the world, **it is the image of God**, and **chief excellency of man**: it **is our evidence for glory**, yea, **and the first fruits of glory**. In Christ dwells the fulness of grace, and from him, our head, it is **derived and communicated to us**; thus he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. ii. 11. You would think it no small privilege to have bags of gold to go to, and enrich yourselves with, and yet that were but a very trifle in comparison to have Christ's righteousness and holiness to go to for your justification and sanctification. More particularly,

Fourthly, Believers have communion with Christ *in his death*; they die with him, Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ," i.e., **the death of Christ hath a real killing and mortifying influence upon the lusts and corruptions of my heart and nature**: true it is, he died for sin one way, and we die to sin another way: he died to expiate it, we die to it, when we mortify it: the death of Christ is the death of sin in believers; and this is a very glorious privilege; for the death of sin is the life of your souls; if sin do not die in you by mortification, you must die for sin by eternal damnation. **If Christ had not died, the Spirit of God, by which you now mortify the deeds of the body, could not have been given unto you**: then you must have lived vassals to your sins, and died at last in your sins; but the fruit, efficacy, and benefit of Christ's death is yours for the killing those sins in you, which else had been your ruin.

Fifthly, Believers have communion with Christ in his life and resurrection from the dead; **as he rose from the dead, so do they**; and that by the power and influence of his **vivification** and **resurrection**. It is the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus that makes us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. **Our spiritual life is from Christ**, Eph. ii. 1. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins:" and hence Christ is said to live in the believer, Gal. ii. 20. "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" and it is no small privilege to partake of the very life of Christ, which is the most excellent life that

ever any creature can live; yet such is the happiness of all the saints, the life of Christ is manifest in them, and such a life as shall never see death.

Sixthly, To conclude, believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ in his glory, which they shall enjoy in heaven with him: they "shall be ever with the Lord," 1 Thes. iv. 17. and that is not all, (though, as one saith, it were a kind of heaven but to look through the key-hole, and have but a glimpse of Christ's blessed face) but they shall partake of the glory which the Father hath given him; for so he speaks, John xvii. 22, 24. and more particularly, they shall sit with him in his throne, Rev. iii. 21. and when he comes to judge the world, he will come to be glorified in the saints, 2 Thes. i. 10. So that you may see what glorious and inestimable things are, and will be in common betwixt Christ and the saints. His titles, his righteousness, his holiness, his death, his life, his glory. I do not say that Christ will make any saint equal with him in glory; that is impossible, he will be known from all the saints in heaven, as the sun is distinguished from the stars; but they shall partake of his glory, and be filled with his joy there and thus you see what those things are that the saints have fellowship with Christ in.

Secondly, Next I would open the way and means by which we come to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in these excellent privileges ; and this I shall do briefly in the following positions.

Position 1.

*First, No man hath fellowship with Christ in any special saving privilege **by nature**, howsoever it be cultivated or improved; **but only by faith uniting him to the Lord Jesus Christ**; It is not the privilege of our first, but second birth.*

This is plain from John i. 12, 13. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even as many as believe on his name, who are born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." We are by nature children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3, we have fellowship with Satan in sin and misery: the wild branch hath no communication of the sweetness and fatness of a more noble and excellent root until it be ingrafted upon it, and have immediate union and coalition with it, John xv. 1, 2.

Position 2.

Believers themselves have not an equal share one with another, in all the benefits and privileges of their union with Christ, but in some there is an equality, and in others an inequality ; according to the measure and gift of Christ, to everyone.

In justification they are all equal: the weak and the strong believer are alike justified, because it is one and the same perfect righteousness of Christ, which is applied to the one and to the other, so that there are no different degrees of justification, but all that believe are justified from all things, Acts xiii. 39 and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1 be they never so weak in faith, or defective in degrees of grace. But there is apparent difference in the measures of their sanctification, some are strong men, and others are babes in Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 1. The faith of some flourishes and grows exceedingly, 2 Thes. i. 3. the things that are in others are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2. It is a plain case, that there is great variety found in the degrees of grace, and comfort among them that are jointly interested in Christ, and equally justified by him.

Position 3.

The saints have not fellowship and communion with Christ, in the forementioned benefits and privileges by one and the same medium, but by various mediums and ways, according to the nature of the benefits, in which they participate.

For instance, they have partnership and communion with Christ, as hath been said, in his righteousness, holiness, and glory, but they receive these distinct blessings by divers mediums of communion: **we have communion with Christ in his righteousness, by the way of imputation; we partake of his holiness, by the way of infusion; and of his glory in heaven, by the beatifical vision.** Our justification is a relative change, our sanctification a real change, our glorification a perfect change, by redemption from all the remains both of sin and misery. Thus hath the Lord appointed several blessings for believers in Christ, and several channels of conveying them from him to us; **by imputed righteousness, we are freed from the guilt of sin: by imparted holiness, we are freed from the dominion of sin, and by our glorification with Christ, we are freed from all the relics and remains both of sin and misery let in by sin upon our natures.**

Position 4.

That Jesus Christ imparts to all believers, all the spiritual blessings that he is filled with, and withholds none from any that have union, with him, be these blessings never so great, or they that receive them never so weak, mean, and contemptible in outward respects, Gal. iii. 27. "Ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ."

The salvation that comes by Jesus Christ is styled the **common salvation** Jude 3. and heaven the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, (saith the apostle, "circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all," 1 Col. iii. 11. He means, there is no privilege in the one to commend them to God, and no want of anything in the other to debar them from God; let men have or want outward excellencies, as beauty, honour, riches, nobility, gifts of the mind, sweetness of nature, and all such like ornaments. What is that to God ? He looks not at these things, but respects them, and communicates his favour to them as they are in Christ: He is all, and in all. The gifts and blessings of the Spirit are given to men as they are in Christ, and without respect to any external differences made in this world among men : hence we find excellent treasures of grace in mean and contemptible persons in the world ; poor in the world and rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom ; and as all believers, without difference, receive from Christ, so they are not debarred from any blessing that is in Christ: "All is yours, for ye are Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. ult. With Christ God "freely gives us all things," Rom. viii. 32.

Position 5.

The communion believers have with Christ, in spiritual benefits is a very great mystery, far above the understandings of natural men.

There are no footsteps of this thing in all the works of creation; therefore the apostle calls it "The unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8. *anriyjigov xfoxv em Xetsx*: The word signifies, that which hath no footsteps to trace it by : yea, it is so deep a mystery, that the angels themselves stoop down to look into it, 1 Pet. i. 12. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

Inference 5. How securely is the saints inheritance settled upon them, seeing they are in common with Jesus Christ for Christ and his saints are joint-heirs, and the inheritance cannot be alienated but by his consent; **he must lose his interest, if you lose yours.** Indeed Adam's inheritance was by a single title, and moreover, **it was in his own hand**, and so he might, (as indeed he soon did) divest himself and his posterity of it; but it is not so betwixt Christ and believers; we are secured in our inheritance by Christ our co-heir, who will never alienate it: and therefore it was truly observed by the father, *Faelicior Job in sterquilinio, quam Adamus in paradiso* : Job was happier upon the dunghill, than Adam was in paradise. **The covenant of grace is certainly the best tenure; as it hath the best mercies, so it gives the fullest security to enjoy them.**

pg 414, Sermon 30 - an excellent summary

Secondly, The nature of Christ-mystical requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be heterogeneous; of a nature different from the head, and how monstrous and uncomely would this be? This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, Dan. 2:32, 33. "The head of fine gold, the breasts and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay." **Christ, the head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and earthly members.** And therefore the apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the members of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the head, 2 Cor. 15:48, 49. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

Thirdly, This resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Christ in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's fellows, or co-partners, Psal. 14:7, from their participation with him of the same spirit; as it is 1 Thes. 4:8. God giveth the same Spirit unto us, which he more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated; and this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God, in the infusion of the Spirit of grace. For it is plain, from Ezek. 36:27, that practical holiness and obedience is the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. [Hence saving faith and repentance are inseparable, James 2:18-] The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men, **is to elevate their minds, and set their affections upon heavenly things, to purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of holiness and obedience.** Its nature also is assimilating, and changeth them in whom it is, into the same image with Jesus Christ their heavenly head, 2 Cor. 3:18.

The Irresistible Work of the Holy Spirit

code368

The irresistible work of God's Spirit upon the souls of men in the conviction of the conscience and sweetly overcoming enmity and resistance without doing violence to the will¹

SERMON XXI

Method of Grace (vol. 2 p295)

by John Flavel

Rom. vii. 9

For I was alive without the law once : But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Doctrine 2. THAT there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of God, to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences. "The weapons of the word are not carnal, but mighty through God ; to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," **2 Cor. x. 4, 5.**

In the opening of this point I shall,

1. Demonstrate the efficacy of the word or law of God.
2. Shew wherein the efficacy thereof lies.
3. From whence it hath all this mighty power and efficacy.

First, I shall give you some demonstrations of the mighty power and efficacy that there are in the word or law of God ; which will appear with the fullest evidence, First, From the various subjects upon whom it works: The hearts and consciences of men of all orders and qualities, have been reached and wounded to the quick by the two-edged sword of God's law. Some, among the great and honourable of the earth, (though indeed the fewest of that rank) have been made to stoop and tremble under the word, Acts xxiv. 16. Mark vi. 20. 1 Sam. xv. 24. The wise and learned of the world have felt its power, and been brought over to embrace the humbling and self-denying ways of Christ, Acts xvii. 34. Thus Origen, Hierom, Tertullian, Uradwardine, and many more, came into Canaan laden with the Egyptian gold, as one speaks, i. e. they came into the church of God abundantly enriched and furnished with the learned arts and sciences, devoting them all to the service of Christ. Yea, and which is as strange, the most simple, weak, and illiterate have been wonderfully changed, and wrought upon by the power of the word, "The testimonies of the Lord make wise the simple:" Men of weak understandings, in all other matters, have been made wise to salvation by the power of the word, Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 27. **Nay the most malicious and obstinate enemies of Christ have been wounded and converted by the word,** 1 Tim. i. 13. Acts xvi. 25. Those that have been under the prejudice of the worst and most idolatrous education, have been the subjects of its mighty power, Acts xix. 26. To conclude, men of the most profligate and debauched lives have been wonderfully changed and altered by the power of the word, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11.

Secondly, The mighty efficacy of the law of God appears in the manner of its operation; **it works suddenly; strikes like a dart through the hearts and consciences of men**, Acts ii. 37. A wonderful change is made in a short time. **And, as it works quickly and suddenly, so it works irresistibly, with an uncontrolled power upon the spirits of men**, 1 Thes. i. 5. Rom. i. 16. **Let the soul be armed against conviction with the thickest ignorance, strongest prejudice, or most obstinate resolution, the word of God will wound the breast even of such a man, when God sends it forth in his authority and power.** [2Chron. 20:6, ...*none is able to withstand you.*]

Romans 1:6, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,"

1Thes. 1:4-5, "For we know, brothers^[b] loved by God, that he has chosen you,⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."

[All in God's display of his *mighty power*; for what is the purpose of his mighty power and that sovereign, if it not be seen in its wise and powerful exercise in converting unwilling souls into willing souls!! Therefore, this power is irresistible, 2Chron. 20:6]

Thirdly, The wonderful power of the law or word of God is evidently seen in the strange effects which are produced by it in the hearts and lives of men. For,

First, It changes and alters the frame and temper of the mind; It moulds [as receiving his image upon the soul, as mentioned before in other excerpts, regarding the enstamping of the image of God upon their souls] a man into a quite contrary temper, Gal. i. 23. "He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith, which once he destroyed:" **Thus a tiger is transformed into a lamb, by the power of the word of God.**

Secondly, It makes the soul, upon which it works, to forego and quit the dearest interests it hath in this world for Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. Riches, honours, self-righteousness, dearest relations, are denied and forsaken. Reproach, poverty, and death itself, are willingly embraced for Christ's sake, when once the efficacy of the word hath been upon the hearts of men, 1 Thes. i. 6. Those that were their companions in sin, are declined, renounced, and cast off with abhorrence, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. In such things as these the mighty power of the word discovers itself.

Secondly, Next, let us see wherein the efficacy of the word upon the souls of men principally consisteth; and we find in scripture it exerteth its power in five distinct acts upon the soul, by all which it strikes at the life, and kills the very heart of vain hopes. For,

First, It hath an **awakening efficacy upon secure and sleepy sinners**: It rouses the conscience, and brings a man to a sense and feeling apprehension, Eph. v. 13, 14. The first effectual touch of the word startles the drowsy conscience. A poor sinner lies in his sins, as Peter did in his chains, fast asleep, though a warrant was signed for his execution the next day: but the Spirit in the word awakens him as the angel did Peter: And this awakening power of the word is in order, both of time and nature, antecedent to all its operations and effects.

Secondly, The law of God hath an enlightening efficacy upon the minds of men : It is eye-salve to the blinded eye, Rev. iii. 18. A light shining in a dark place, 2 Pet. i. 19. A light shining into the very heart of man, 2 Cor. iv. 6. **When the word comes in power, all things appear with another face.** The sins that were hid from our eyes, and the danger which was concealed by the policy of Satan from our souls, now lie clear and open before us, Eph. v. 8.

Thirdly, The word of God hath a convincing efficacy : It sets sin in order before the soul, Ps. 1. 21. As an army is drawn up in an exact order, so are the sins of nature and practice, the sins of youth and age, even a great and terrible army is drawn up before the eye of the conscience; the convictions of the word are clear and full, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. The very secrets of a sinner's heart are made manifest ; his mouth is stopped ; his pleas are silenced; his conscience yields to the charge of guilt, and to the equity of the sentence of the law, so that the soul stands mute, and self condemned at the bar of conscience : It hath got nothing to say why the wrath of God should not come upon it to the uttermost, Rom. iii. 19.

Fourthly, The law of God hath a soul-wounding, an heart-cutting efficacy : It pierces into the very soul and spirit of man, Acts ii. 37. "When they heard this, they were pricked at their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles; men and brethren, what shall we do ?" A dreadful sound is in the sinner's ears; his soul, is in deep distress ; he knows not which way to turn for ease ; no plaister but the blood of Christ can heal these wounds which the word makes : No outward trouble, affliction, disgrace, or loss, ever touched the quick as the word of God doth.

Fifthly, The word hath a **heart-turning, a soul converting efficacy in it.** It is a **regenerating**, as well as a **convincing word**, 1 Pet. i. 23. 1 Thes. i. 9. **The law wounds, the gospel cures;** the law discovers the evil that is in sin, and the misery that follows it; and the Spirit of God, working in fellowship with the word, effectually turns the heart from sin. And thus we see in what glorious acts the efficacy of the word discovers itself upon the hearts of men ; and all these acts lie in order to each other : For, until the soul be awakened, it cannot be enlightened, Eph. v. 14. Till it be enlightened, it cannot be convinced, Eph. v. 13. **Conviction being nothing else but the application of the light that shines in the mind to the conscience of a sinner. Till it be convinced, it cannot be wounded for sin,** Acts ii. 37. And until it be wounded for sin, it will never be converted from sin, and brought effectually to Jesus Christ. And thus you see what the power of the word is.

Thirdly, In the last place, it will concern us to enquire whence the word of God hath all this power? And it is most certain, that it is not a power inherent in itself, nor derived from the instrument by which it is managed, **but from the Spirit of the Lord, who communicates to it all that power and efficacy which it hath upon our souls.**

1. Its power is not in, or from itself: It works not in a, physical way, as natural agents do ; for then the effect would always follow, except it were miraculously hindered : But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the **waters of Bethesda**, John v. 4. "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water. Whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stept in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." It is not a power naturally inherent in it at all times, **but communicated to it at some special seasons.** How often is the word preached, and no man awaked or convinced by it!

2. The power of the word is not communicated to it by the instrument that manageth it, 1 Cor. iii. 7. "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth." Ministers are nothing to such an effect and purpose as this is; he doth not mean that they are useless and altogether unnecessary, but insufficient of themselves to produce such mighty effects. It works not as it is the word of man, 2 Thess. ii. 13. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts

iii. 12, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" If the effects of the word were in the power, and at the command of him that preacheth it, then the blood of all the souls that perish under our ministry must lie at our door, as was formerly noted.

3. If you say, whence then hath the word all this power? Our answer is, It derives it all from the **Spirit of God¹**, [**¹What is commanded by the word, is given by the Spirit.**] 1 Thes. ii. 13, "For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, **which effectually worketh also in you that believe.**" It is a successful instrument only when it is in the hand of the Spirit, without whose influence it never did, nor can convince, convert, or save any soul. Now, the Spirit of God hath a **sovereignty** over three things in order to the conversion of sinners.

1. Over the word which works.
2. Over the soul wrought upon.
3. Over the time and season of working.

First, The Spirit hath a glorious sovereignty over the word itself whose instrument it is to make it successful or not, as it pleaseth him, Isa. lv. 10, 11. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, &c. so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth;" as the clouds, so the word is carried and directed by divine pleasure. It is the Lord that makes them both give down their blessings, or to pass away fruitless and empty : yea, it is from the Spirit that this part of the word works, and not another. Those things upon which ministers bestow greatest labour in their preparation, and from which accordingly they have the greatest expectation ; these do nothing, when, mean time, something that dropped occasionally from them, like a chosen shaft, strikes the mark and doth the work.

Secondly, The Spirit of the Lord hath a **glorious sovereignty over the souls** wrought upon; it is his peculiar work "to take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and to give us an heart of flesh," **Ezek. xxxvi. 26**. We may reason, exhort, and reprove, but nothing will abide till the Lord set it home. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia under Paul's ministry; he opens every heart that is effectually opened to receive Christ in the word; if the word can get no entrance, if your hearts remain dead under it still, we may say concerning such souls, as Martha did concerning her brother Lazarus, "**Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.**" So, Lord, if thou hadst been in this sermon, in this prayer, or in that counsel, these souls had not remained dead under them.

Thirdly, **The Spirit hath dominion over the times and seasons of conviction and conversion**. Therefore the day in which souls are wrought upon is called "the day of his power," Ps. 110:3. That shall work at one time, which had no efficacy at all at another time ; because this, and not that, was the time appointed. And thus you see whence the word derives that mighty power it hath.

Now this word of God, when it is set home by the Spirit, is mighty to convince, humble, and break the hearts of sinners, John xvi. 9. " **The Spirit when it cometh shall convince the world of sin.**" The word signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth assent; it not only convinces men in general that they are sinners, but it convinceth men particularly of their own sins, and the aggravations of them. So in the text, **Sin revived, that is, the Lord revived his sins**, the very circumstances and aggravations with which they were committed and so it will be with us when the commandment comes; sins that we had forgotten, committed so far back as our youth or childhood; sins that lay slighted in our consciences, **shall now be roused up as so many sleepy lions to affright and terrify us**; for now the soul hears the voice of God in the word, as **Adam** heard it in the cool of the day and was afraid, and hides itself; but all will not do, for the Lord is come in the word; **sin is held up before the eyes of the conscience in its dreadful aggravations and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy law**, clear light, warnings of conscience, manifold mercies, God's long-suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgment, the wages and demerit whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, eternal death, Rom. vi. 23. Rom. i. 32. Rom. ii. 9. **Thus the commandment comes, sin revives, and vain hope gives up the ghost.**

This next excerpt is from Sermon 10, Fountain of Life - showing that God sweetly overcomes the will, I think, best seen in Ezek. 11:19 and 36:26 where the Spirit takes out the stony heart, the natural resistance, that enmity against God, that people have in an unregenerate condition. In this way does God make the will willing, and that gladly, in the *day of his power!* (Ps. 110:3) It was this power that the Pharisees had not experienced, and so argued against it and in its place put the act of their own *will* in coming to God, by their own strength or will (aka will worship) recommending their own righteousness to God, which is basically what the sinner's prayer is, as are the many other similar approaches by man such as the many sacraments or ordinances in Roman Catholicism.

"To the spiritual illumination of a soul, it suffices not that the object be revealed, nor yet that man, the subject of that knowledge have a due use of his own reason; but it is further necessary that the grace and special assistance of the holy Spirit be superadded, **to open and mollify the heart, and so give it a due taste and relish of the sweetness of spiritual truth.**" By opening the gospel, he reveals truth to us, and, by opening the heart, in us. Now, though this cannot be without that, yet it is much more excellent to have truth revealed in us, than to us. This divines call *praecipuum illud* "apogelesma" *muneris prophetici*; "the principal perfective effect of the prophetic office," the special blessing promised in the new covenant, Heb. 8: 10. "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts."

Lastly, Christ's opening the understanding imports his divine power, **whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself**. Who but God knows the heart? Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure? No mere creature, no not the angels themselves, who for their large understandings are called intelligences, can command or open the heart. We may stand and knock at men's hearts, till our own ake; but no opening till Christ come. He can fit a key to all the cross wards of the will, **and with sweet efficacy open it, and that without any force or violence to it**. These things are carried in this part of his office, consisting in opening the heart: which was the first thing propounded for explication.

Secondly, In the next place, let us see by what acts Jesus Christ performs this work of his, and what way and method he takes to open the hearts of sinners.

And there are two principal ways, by which Christ opens the understandings and hearts of men, viz. by his Word and Spirit.

1. By his word; to this end was Paul commissioned and sent to preach the gospel, [Acts 26: 18](#). "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." The Lord can, if he pleases, accomplish this immediately; but though he can do it, he will not do it ordinarily without means, because he will honour his own institutions. Therefore you may observe, that when Lydia's heart was to be opened, "there appeared unto Paul a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us," [Acts 19: 9](#). God will keep up his ordinances among men; and though he has not tied himself, yet he has tied us, to them. Cornelius must send for Peter; God can make the earth produce corn, as it did at first, without cultivation and labour; but he that shall now expect it in the neglect of means, may perish for want of bread.

2. But the **ordinances** in themselves cannot do it, as I noted before; and therefore Jesus Christ has sent forth the Spirit, who is his *Prorex*, his vicegerent, to carry on this work upon the hearts of his elect. And when the Spirit comes down upon the souls in the administration of the ordinances, he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the healing of faith. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions, so much that word, [John 16: 8](#). imports, "He shall convince the world of sin;" convince by clear demonstration, **such as enforces assent, so that the soul cannot but yield it to be so**; and yet the door of the heart is not opened, **till he has also put forth his power upon the will, and, by a sweet and secret efficacy, overcome all its reductions, and the soul be made willing in the day of his power**. When this is done, the heart is opened: saving light now shines in it; and this light set up, the Spirit in the soul is,

1. A new light in which all things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names Christ and sin, the words heaven and hell have another sound in that man's ears, than formerly they had. When he comes to read the same scriptures, which possibly he had read a hundred times before, he wonders he should be so blind as he was, to overlook such great, weighty, and concerning things as he now beholds in them; and saith, Where were mine eyes, that I could never see these things before?

2. It is a very affecting light; a light that has heat and powerful influences with it, which makes deep impressions on the heart. Hence they whose eyes the great Prophet opens, are said to be "brought out of darkness into his marvellous light," [1 Pet. 2: 9](#). The soul is greatly affected with what it sees. The beams of light are contracted and twisted together in the mind; and being reflected on the heart and affections, soon cause them to smoke and burn. "Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures?"

3. And it is a growing light, like the light of the morning which "shines more and more unto the perfect day," [Prov. 4: 18](#). When the Spirit first opens the understanding, he does not give it at once a full sight of all truths, or a full sense of the power, sweetness and goodness of any truth; but the soul in the use of means grows up to a greater clearness day by day; its knowledge grows extensively in

measure, and intensively in power and efficacy. And thus the Lord Jesus by his Spirit opens the understanding.

¹ *Flavel regarding the faculty of the will in conversion:* View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. [see T Shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)] God accepts its offering; though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent so ever be the matter of it. (pg 254 The Soul of Man)

Flavel's comments on the liberty of the will, respect to God's Sovereignty over it, and Pelagius' error

excerpt from The Soul of Man, p28

God has endued the soul of man not only with an **understanding** to discern, and direct, but also a **will** to govern, moderate, and over-rule the actions of life. The will is a faculty of the rational soul, whereby a man either chuseth or refuseth the things which the understanding discerns and knows. This is a very high and noble power of the soul. The understanding seems to bear the same relation to the will, as a grave counselor does to a great prince. It glories in two excellencies, namely, 1. Liberty. 2. Dominion.

It has a freedom and liberty; it cannot be compelled and forced; Coaction is repugnant to its very nature. In this it differs from the understanding, that the understanding is wrought upon necessarily, but the will acts spontaneously. This liberty of the will respects the choice, or refusal of the means for attaining those ends it prosecutes, according as it finds them more or less conducive thereunto. The liberty of the will must be understood to be in things natural, which are within its own proper sphere, not in things supernatural. It can move, or not move the body, as it pleases, but it cannot move towards Christ, in the way of faith, as it pleaseth; it can open or shut the hand or eye at its pleasure, but not the heart. True, indeed, it is not compelled, or forced to turn to God by supernatural grace, **but in a way suitable to its nature, it is determined and drawn to Christ, Psal. 110:3. It is drawn by a mighty power, and yet runs freely; Cant. 1: 4. "Draw me, and I will run after thee."**

Efficacious grace, and victorious delight, is a thing very different from compulsive force. "Pelagius (as a late author speaks) at first gave all to nature, acknowledged no necessity of divine grace; but when this proud doctrine found little countenance, he called nature by the name of grace; and when that deceit was discovered, he acknowledged no other grace but outward instruction, or the benefit of external revelation, to discourse, and put men in mind of their duty. Being yet driven farther, he acknowledged the grace of pardon; and before a man could do anything acceptably, there was a necessity of the remission of sin, and then he might obey God perfectly. But that not sufficing, he acknowledged another grace, viz. the example of Christ, which does both secure our rule and encourage our practice. And last of all, his followers owned some kind of internal grace, but they made that to consist in some illumination of the understanding, or moral persuasion, by probable arguments, to excite the will, and this not absolutely necessary, but only for facilitation, as a horse to a journey,

which otherwise a man might go on foot. Others grant the secret influences of God's grace, but make the will of man a co-ordinate cause with God, namely, that God doth propound the object, hold forth inducing considerations; give some remote power and assistance; but still there is an indifferency in the will of man, to accept or refuse, as liketh him best." Thus have they been forced to quit and change their ground; but still the pride of nature will not let men see the necessity of divine efficacious influences upon the will, and the consistency thereof with natural liberty.

True Spiritual Sense Revealed by the Spirit

code78

What is taught here by Flavel is crucial to understand. He is saying that when God converts the soul, God communicated knowledge to the mind, enlightening the mind to the real or spiritual sense of the meaning of the word or the law, the mind and will of God. In this way is it as described in Heb. 11:1, where faith is said to be the substance of things hoped for; that substance who is Christ, his word, is made real to the soul so that we really know the true spiritual sense of what the word says. Many have a notion that sin is bad, but they really do not know the infinite badness of it, the real sense of its evil. They may know Jesus notionally, but they do not see his beauty or comeliness and so are still cold towards him, having no relish in his doctrine or person. Faith makes the true sense of the meaning of spiritual things real to the soul, so as to taste them, so as to see them, whereas before they had no earthly idea of them; once I was blind; now I see. And this is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. This is a huge difference; the difference of being in darkness vs. light! Owen describes this effect of the substance made real to the soul by this instrument of faith (on page 101) - that faith is the substance of things hoped for; and hence you now see the meaning of *sanctifying impressions*; those impressions made on a soft heart, a believing heart, as opposed to a heart of stone which cannot receive these impressions, that ultimately serve in animating the soul and thus the whole body in all its thoughts and actions, making them pleasing to God in a due manner of worship, which answers to Hebrews 11:6, *without faith (saving faith) you cannot please Him.*

(1.) [1.] For faith itself; it is by our apostle said to be ελπιζομένων ύψότασις, Hebrews 11:1, — “the substance of things hoped for.” Now the υποστασις [substance] here, “the things hoped for,” are so termed with respect unto their goodness and their futurity, in which respects they are the objects of hope. But they are proposed unto faith, and respected by it, as true and real. And as such it is the υποστασις, or “substance” of them; not absolutely and physically, but morally and in respect of use. It brings them into, makes them present with, and gives them a subsistence, as to their use, efficacy, and comfort, in the soul. This effect of faith is so far of the nature of it, that the apostle makes use of it principally in that description which he gives us of it. Now, this giving a subsistence in the mind unto the things believed, that they shall really operate and produce their immediate effects therein, **of love, joy, and obedience**, is that spiritual mixture and incorporation whereof we speak. And here lies the

main difference between saving faith and the temporary persuasion of convinced persons. This latter gives no such subsistence unto the things believed in the minds of men, as that they should produce their proper effects therein. Those in whom it is believe the promise, yet not so as that thereby the things promised should have such an existence in their minds as to produce in them and upon them their proper effects. It may be said of them, as it is of the law in another sense, "They have the shadow of good things to come, but **not the very image of the things.**" [this is the importance of the *image of God* pictured in the diagram in what it consists in, that is implanted upon our souls, conforming us into his likeness by this instrument called faith (with its necessary actings, e.g., contemplation, mixing the word with itself...), without which we cannot please God - Heb 11:6, etc. This is why, while in Adam, we were without this image and hence could not please God and therefore must be born again, having this image restored to our souls! 2Cor. 4:6] **There is not a real reflection of the things they profess to believe made upon their minds.** For instance, the death of Christ, or "Christ crucified," is proposed unto our faith in the gospel. The genuine proper effect hereof is to destroy, to crucify, or mortify sin in us. But where this is apprehended by a temporary faith only, this effect will not at all be produced in the soul. Sin will not be mortified, but rather secretly encouraged; for it is natural unto men of corrupt minds to conclude that they may continue in sin, because grace doth abound. On the other side, where faith gives the subsistence mentioned unto the death of Christ in the soul, it will undoubtedly be the death of sin, Romans 6:3-14. [i.e., true saving grace slays a man - Thomas Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins]

Now read this sermon by Flavel. You'll see more clearly what he is saying regarding this new spiritual sense that is given to the souls of the elect, that is not given to others.

SERMON XXII.

The Teachings of God opened, in their Nature and Necessity.

<https://thepuritans.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/flavel-vol-2.pdf>

John vi. 45.

*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God-
Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the
Father, cometh unto me.*

How necessary to our union with Jesus Christ, the application of the law, or coming home of the commandment to the heart of a sinner is, we have heard in the last discourse ; and how impossible it is, either for the commandment to come to us, or for us to come to Christ without illumination and instruction from above, you shall hear in this. This scripture hath much of the mind of God in it; and he that is to open it, had need himself to be taught of God. In the foregoing verses, Christ offers himself as the bread of life unto the souls of men; against this doctrine they oppose their carnal reason, ver. 41, 42. Christ strikes at the root of all their cavils and objections in his reply, ver. 43, 44. "Murmur not among yourselves; "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" q. d. you slight me because you do not know me; you do not know me because you are not taught of God ; of these divine teachings, the prophets of old have spoken, and what they foretold is at this day fulfilled in our sight ; so many as are taught of God, and no more, come unto me in the way of faith : it is

impossible to come without the teachings of God, ver. 44. It is as impossible not to come, or to miscarry in their coming unto me, under the influence of these divine teachings, ver. 45.

The words read, consist of two parts, viz.

1. An allegation out of the prophets.
2. The application thereof made by Christ.

First, An allegation out of the prophets : " It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." The places in the prophets to which Christ seems here to refer, are, Isa. 54:13. "And all thy children shall he taught of the Lord ;" and, Jer. xxxi, 34 "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." These promises contain the great blessings of the new covenant, viz. Divine instruction and heavenly illumination, without which no man can obtain an interest in the new covenant.

Secondly, We have here the application of these testimonies out of the prophets, made by Christ himself; " Every man therefore "that hath heard, and learned of the Father, come unto me." In which words we have both the necessity and the efficacy of these divine teachings ; without them no man can come, and under them no man can miscarry. The words being fitly rendered, and the sense obvious, The notes are,

Doctrine 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.

Doctrine 2. No man can miss of Christ, or miscarry in the way of faith, that is under the special instructions and teachings of the Father.

Doctrine 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith. Of the necessity of divine teaching, in order to believing, the apostle speaks, in Eph. iv. 20, 21. " But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;" i.e., Your faith must needs be effectual, both to the reformation of your lives, and your perseverance in the ways of holiness, if it be such a faith as is begotten and introduced into your hearts by divine teachings¹. [¹They who believe, by means of the preacher speaking to them outwardly, hear and learn inwardly of the Father ; they who believe not, hear outwardly, but not inwardly. Augustine on Predest. chap. 8.]

Now, in the explication of this point, I shall speak distinctly to the following enquiries.

1. How doth God teach men, or what is imported in our being taught of God ?
2. What those special lessons are, which all believers do hear, and are taught of God ?
3. In what manner doth God teach these things to men in the day of their conversion to Christ ?
4. What influence God's teaching hath upon our believing?
5. Why it is impossible for any man to believe, or come to Christ without the Father's teachings.

First, How doth God teach men, or what is imported in our being taught of God ? To this I will speak both negatively and positively, for your clearer apprehension of the sense and meaning of the Spirit of God in this phrase.

First, The teaching of God, and our hearing and learning of him, is not to be understood of any extraordinary visional appearances, or oraculous and immediate voice of God to men. God indeed hath so appeared unto some, Num. xii. 8. Such voices have been heard from heaven, but now these extraordinary ways are ceased, Heb. i. 1, 2, and we are no more to expect them; we may sooner meet with satanical delusions than divine illuminations in this way*. I remember, the learned Gerson tells us that the devil once appeared to an holy man in prayer, personating Christ, and saying, I am come in person to visit thee, for thou art worthy. But he with both hands shut his eyes, saying, *Nolo hie Christum videre, satis est ipsum in gloria videre*; i.e., I will not see Christ here ; it is enough for me to see him in glory. We are now to attend only to the voice of the Spirit in the scriptures : this is a more sure word than any voice from heaven, 2 Pet. i. 19.

[*pg 403 Vol. 1 Flavel comments again on this: pg 403 Vol. 1 - Mr. Fenner, in his excellent discourse upon this point, tells us, that as this was an extraordinary time, Christ being now to be installed in his kingdom, and crowned with glory and honour; so extraordinary things were now done ; as when kings are crowned, the streets are richly hanged, the conduits run with wine, great malefactors are then pardoned, for then they show their munificence and bounty ; it is the day of the gladness of their hearts. But let a man come at another time to the conduits, he shall find no wine, but ordinary water there. Let a man be in the jail at another time, and he may be hanged ; yea, and have no reason but to expect and prepare for it. What Christ did now for this man, was at an extraordinary time.

Reason 3. Thirdly, such a conversion as this may not ordinarily be expected ; for as such a time will never come again, so there will never be the like reason for such a conversion any more. Christ converted him upon the cross, to give an instance of his divine power at that time, when it was almost wholly clouded. Look, as in that day the divinity of Christ brake forth in several miracles, as the preternatural eclipse of the sun, the great earthquake, the rending of the rocks and veil of the temple ; so in the conversion of this man in such an extraordinary way, and all, to give evidence of the divinity of Christ, and prove him to be the Son of God whom they crucified ; but that is now sufficiently confirmed, and there will be no more occasion for miracles to evidence it.]

Secondly, The teachings of God are not to be understood as opposite unto, or exclusive of the teachings of men. Divine teachings do not render ministerial teachings in vain or useless. Paul was taught of God, Gal. i. 12. and his conversion had something extraordinary in it, yet the ministry of Ananias was used and honoured in that work, Acts ix. 4, 17. compared. Divine teachings do indeed excel, but not exclude human teachings. I know that scripture, Jer. xxxi. 24. to which Christ here refers, is objected against the necessity of a standing ministry in the church, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother," &c. But if those words should be understood absolutely, they would not only overthrow all public ordinances of God's own institution, 1 Cor. xii. 28. and deprive us of a principal fruit of Christ's ascension, Eph. iv. 11. 12. but, for the same reason, would destroy all private instructions and fraternal admonitions also. Such a sense would make the prophet to contradict the apostle, and spoil the consent and harmony of the scriptures : the

sense thereof cannot be negative, but comparative ; it shews the excellency of divine, but doth not destroy the usefulness of human teachings; *Subordinata non pugnant*. The teachings of men are made effectual by the teachings of the Spirit; and the Spirit in his teachings Avill use and honour the ministry of man.

Thirdly, But to speak positively, the teachings of God are nothing else but that spiritual and heavenly light, by which the Spirit of God shineth into the hearts of men, to give them "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And though this be the proper work of the Spirit, yet it is called the teachings of the Father, because the Spirit who enlightens us is commissioned and sent by the Father so to do, John xiv. 26. Now these teachings of the Spirit of God, consist in two things, viz. in his,

1. Sanctifying impressions.
2. Gracious assistances.

First, In his sanctifying impressions or regenerating work upon the soul, by virtue whereof it receives marvellous light and insight into spiritual things ; and that not only as illumination is the first act of the Spirit in our conversion, Col. iii. 10. but as his whole work of sanctification is illuminative and instructive to the converted soul, 1 John ii. 27. "The anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you." The meaning is that sanctification gives the soul experience of those mysterious things which are contained in the scriptures, and that experience is the most excellent key to unlock and open those **deep scripture mysteries**; no knowledge **is so distinct, so clear, so sweet**, as that which the heart communicates to the head, John vii. 17. "If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." A man that never read the nature of love in books of philosophy, nor the transports and extasies thereof in history, may yet truly describe and express it by the sensible motions of that passion in his own soul; yea, **he that hath felt, much better understands, than he that hath only read or heard.** O what a light doth spiritual sense and experience cast upon a great part of the scriptures! **for indeed sanctification is the very copy or transcript of the word of God upon the heart of man ;** Jer. 31:33. **"I will write my law in their hearts;"** so that the scriptures and the experiences of believers, by this means answer to each other, as the lines and letters in the press answer to the impressions made upon the paper; or the figures in the wax, to the engravings in the seal. When a sanctified man reads David's psalms, or Paul's epistles, how is he surprised with wonder to find the very workings of his own heart so exactly decyphered and fully expressed there! **O, saith he, this is my very case, these holy men speak what my heart hath felt.**

Secondly, The Spirit of God teacheth us, as by his sanctifying impressions, so by his gracious assistances which he gives us *pro renata*, as our need requires, Matt. x. 19. "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, John xiv. 26. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance;" he assisteth both the understanding in due apprehensions of truth, and the heart in the spiritual improvements of truth. And so much briefly of the first particular.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire what those special truths are which believers hear and learn of the Father, when they come to Christ.

And there are divers great and **necessary truths**, wherein the Spirit enlightens men in that day. I cannot say they are all taught every believer in the same degree and order; but it is certain they are taught of God such lessons as these are, which they never so understood before.

Lesson 1. First, They are taught of God that there is abundantly more evil in their sinful natures and actions, than ever they discerned or understood before: "the Spirit when he cometh shall convince the world of sin," John xvi. 8, 9. Men had a general notion of sin before; so had Paul, when a Pharisee; **but how vastly different were his apprehensions of sin, from all that ever he had in his natural state, when God brought home the commandment to his very heart?** There is a threefold knowledge of sin, viz. *traditional, discursive, and intuitive*. The first is the more rude and illiterate multitude. The second is more rational and knowing men. **The third is only found in those that are enlightened and taught of God. And there is as great a difference betwixt this intuitive knowledge of sin, whereby God makes a soul to discern the nature and evil of it in a spiritual light,** and the two former, as there is betwixt the sight of a painted lion upon the wall, and the sight of a living lion that meets us roaring in the way. The intuitive sight of sin is another thing than men imagine it to be : it is such a sight as wounds a man to the very heart, Acts 2:37. for God doth not only show a man this or that particular sin, but in the day of conviction, he sets all his sins in order before him, Ps. 1:21, yea, the Lord shows him the sinfulness of his nature as well as practice. Conviction digs to the root, shows and lays open that original corruption, from whence the innumerable evils of the life do spring, James 1:14, 15. and which is yet more, the Lord shows the man whom he is bringing to Christ the sinful and miserable estate which he is in by reason of both, John xvi. 9. And now all excuses, pleas and defenses of sin are gone, he shows him "how their iniquities have exceeded," Job 36:8, 9, exceeded in number, and in aggravations of sinfulness ; exceeding many, and exceeding vile ; no such sinner in the world as I; can such sins as mine be pardoned? The greatness of God greatens my sin; the holiness of God makes it beyond measure vile; the goodness of God puts unconceivable weight into my guilt. O, can there be mercy for such a wretch as I! If there be, then there will not be a greater example of the riches of free grace in all the world than I am. Thus God teacheth the evil of sin.

Arguments Against the Sinner's Prayer

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"No man can come unto me, (saith Christ) except my father which hath sent me, draw him." There is a legal spirit working under evangelical pretences in many souls; they look within them to find that which is quite above them. The apostle points you to the fountain of faith, in Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." John Flavel Vol. 4 p 139

A gift, and procuring cause in him to whom it is given, are inconsistent. **John Owen**

It is true, all things that pertain to life and godliness are received by faith 2Peter 1:3, yet faith itself is a saving work, which is not received by another precedent faith. Faith therefore is to be accepted not only as begotten in us, but as it is in the beginning of it in the conviction and humiliation of every sinner. **Thomas Shepard**, *The Sound Believer*, p254,5

It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. Ezekiel 36:32 ESV

This consent of thy heart to be Christ's, this choice of thy will in taking him for thine, is but the echo of Christ's choice of thee; and I would rather have such an evidence of my interest in him, than a voice from heaven to assure me that Christ is mine. John Flavel, Vol. 4 p 142

...he [God] cannot be touched with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes. John Calvin, on the impassibility of God. See Confessing the Impassible God, 2015. P 157

Here's the background to help see the problem with the sinner's prayer. You are not saved by your profession of faith or by your asking to be saved. You are saved by a sovereign act of God's mercy on your soul, in regeneration, by the operation by the Holy Spirit. To base your assurance of being saved upon a profession or a hope in hope itself is a sandy foundation, as you see in Matthew 7:21-23, and Matt. 25:11, where the foolish virgins were trying to get into heaven upon their works and declaration of faith, "Lord, Lord" and Jesus said to them depart from me workers of iniquity *I never knew you*.

But a sound foundation is only to be had in *effectual vocation* (which includes regeneration, John 6:44, 65 etc.) So one's evidence of being saved, united to Christ, is founded upon this act of God and hence a sure foundation. And this assurance of salvation grows when he sees the fruit of regeneration in one's ongoing repentance from sin and mortification of his lusts (making his call and election sure, 2Pet1:10). These are the fruits or evidences (the fruits of the spirit which is being lead by the Spirit) that will give Christians assurance that they are children of God, not from a profession of faith, i.e., talk is cheap.

This is the danger. People are told that if you want to get saved, say this prayer and Jesus is faithful to honor it. Well, the latter is not true, God is beholden to no one nor is a debtor to any, (in which case, grace is no longer grace) and the former is never recommended in scripture (e.g., John 3:1-16). But as I said before a profession faith is not a sure ground of one being converted if for no other reason than that *the heart is deceitful above all things* (Jer. 17:9) It is a sure way to be self-deceived. But what is

much more easily discerned by the sinner is when he experiences a change of heart; that it was not of himself; that he was passive in this affair. Now that is something that stands out; that God did something and we merely receive; where God alone made him to differ from another (1Cor. 4:7), not the person by his own will, and that corrupted, in saying a prayer. The gospel squashes all human boasting! The following few hundred pages will expound upon and confirm this.

Excerpts from John Flavel, Method of Grace

Vol. 2 pg 320

Secondly, Next let us see what influence divine teachings have upon souls, in bringing them to Christ; and we shall find a threefold influence in them.

1. They have an influence upon the external means, by which they come to Christ.
2. They have an influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ.
3. They have an influence upon the will, to allure and draw it to Christ.

First, They have an influence upon the means by which we come to Christ; the best ordinances are but a dead letter except the Spirit, the teaching and quickening Spirit of God, work in fellowship with them, 2 Cor. 3:6. The best ministers, like the disciples, cast forth the net, but take nothing, win not one soul to God, till God teach as well as they. Paul is nothing, and Apollos nothing, but God that giveth the increase, 1 Cor. 3:7. Let the most learned, eloquent, and powerful orator be in the pulpit, yet no man's heart is persuaded till it hear the voice of God; *Cathedram in ecrtis habet, qui corda docet.*

Secondly, They have influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ. Except the minds of men be first untaught those errors, by which they are **prejudiced** against Christ, they will never be persuaded to come unto him; and nothing but the Father's teachings can **unteach those errors**, and **cure those evils of the mind**. The natural mind of man slights the truths of God, until God teach them; and **then they tremble with an awful reverence of them**. Sin is but a trifle, till God shows us the face of it in the glass of the law, and then it appears exceeding sinful, Rom. vii. 15. We think God to be such a one as ourselves, Ps. 1. 21. until he discover himself unto us in his infinite greatness, awful holiness, and severe justice; and then we' cry, who can stand before this great and dreadful God! We thought it was time enough hereafter, to mind the concernments of another world, until the Lord open our eyes, to see in what danger we stand upon the very brink of eternity ; and then nothing alarms us more, than the fears that our time will be finished before the great work of salvation be finished. We thought ourselves in a converted state before, till God made us to see the necessity of another manner of conversion, upon pain of eternal damnation. We readily caught hold upon the promises before, when we had no right to them ; but the teachings of God make the presumptuous sinner let go his hold, that he may take a better and surer bold of them in Christ. We once thought that the death of Christ, in itself, had been enough to secure our salvation; but, under the teachings of God, we discern plainly the necessity of a change of heart and state; or else the blood of Christ can never profit us. Thus the teachings of God remove the errors of the mind, by which men are withheld from Christ.

Thirdly, The teachings of God powerfully attract and allure the will of a sinner to Christ, Hos. ii. 14. But of these drawings of the Father I have largely spoken before, and therefore shall say no more of them in this place, but hasten to the last thing propounded, viz.

Thirdly, Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without the Father's teachings; and the impossibilities hereof will appear three ways.

1. From the power of sin.
2. From the indisposition of man.
3. From the nature of faith.

By all which, the last point designed to be spoken to from this scripture, will be fully cleared, and the whole prepared for application.

First, The impossibility of coming to Christ without the teachings of the Father, will appear from the power of sin, which hath so strong an holdfast upon the hearts and affections of all unregenerate men, that no human arguments or persuasions whatsoever can divorce or separate them; for,

First, Sin is connatural with the soul, it is born and bred with a man; Ps. li. 4. Isa. xlviii. 8. It is as natural for fallen man to sin, as it is to breathe.

Secondly, The **power of sin** hath been strengthening itself from the beginning, by long continued custom, which gives it the force of a second nature, and makes regeneration and mortification naturally impossible, Jer. xiii. 23. **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may he also do good that is accustomed to do evil."**

Thirdly, Sin is the delight of a sinner: "It is sport to a fool to do mischief," Prov. x. 23. Carnal men have no other pleasure in this world, but what arises from their lusts; to cut off their corruptions by mortification, were at once to deprive them of all the pleasure of their lives.

Fourthly, Sin being connatural, customary, and delightful, doth therefore bewitch their affections and enchant their hearts, to that degree of madness and fascination, that they rather chose damnation by God, than separation from sin: "Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil," Eccles. viii. 11. they rush into sin, as the "horse rusheth into the battle," Jer. viii. 6. And now, what think you can separate a man from his beloved lust, except the powerful and effectual teachings of God? Nothing but a light from heaven can rectify and reduce the enchanted mind; no power, but that of God, can change and alter the sinful bent and inclination of the will; it is a task above all the power of the creature.

Secondly, The impossibility of coming to Christ, without the Father's teachings, evidently appears from the indisposedness of man, the subject of this change; "The natural man receives not the things which are of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14. Three things must be wrought upon man, before he can come to Christ: His blind understanding must be enlightened; his hard and rocky heart must be broken and melted; his stiff, fixed, and obstinate will must be conquered and subdued: but all these are effects of a supernatural power. The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Rev. iii. 17. Eph. v. 8. The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lord's own work; it is he that giveth repentance,

Acts v. 31. It is the Lord that "takes away the heart of stone, and giveth an heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It is he that poureth out the spirit of contrition upon man, Zech. xii. 10. The changing of the natural bent and inclination of the will, is the Lord's sole prerogative, Phil. ii. 13. All these things are effectually done in the soul of man, when God teacheth it, and never till then.

Thirdly, The nature of faith, by which we come to Christ, plainly shows the impossibility of coming without the Father's teaching. Everything in faith is supernatural; the implantation of the habit of faith is so, Eph. ii. 8. It is not of ourselves, but the gift of God; it is not an habit acquired by industry, but infused by grace, Phil. 1:29. The light of faith, by which spiritual things are discerned, is supernatural, Heb. xi. 1, 27. It seeth things that are invisible. The adventures of faith are supernatural; for against hope, a man believeth in hope, giving glory to God," Rom. iv. 18. By faith a man goeth unto Christ, against all the dictates and discouragements of natural sense and reason. The self-denial of faith is supernatural; the cutting off the right-hand, and plucking out of right-eye sins, must needs be so, Matt. v. 29. The victories and conquests of faith do all speak it to be supernatural; it overcomes the strongest oppositions from without, Heb. xi. 33, 34. It subdueth and purgeth the most obstinate and deep rooted corruptions within, Acts xv. 9. It overcometh all the blandishments and charming allurements of the bewitching world, 1 John v. 4. All which considered, how evident is the conclusion, that none can come to Christ without the Father's teachings? The uses follow.

First use for information.

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine which asserteth the possibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace? The desire of self-sufficiency was the ruin of Adam, and the conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes of his posterity. This doctrine is not only contradictory to the current stream of scripture, Phil. ii. 13, 1 John i. 13, with many other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and overthrow.

*Inf. 2. Hence we may also inform ourselves, how it cometh to pass that so many rational, wise and learned men miss Christ, whilst the simple and illiterate, even babes in natural knowledge, obtain interest in him, and salvation by him. The reason hereof is plainly given us by Christ, in Matt. xiii. 11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." It is the dropping and dews of divine teaching upon one, and not upon another, that dryeth up the green tree, and maketh the dry tree to flourish. Many natural men have very fine brains, searching wits, solid judgments, nimble fancies, tenacious memories; they can search out the mysteries of nature, solve the *phenomena*, satisfy the enquiries of the most curious; they can measure the earth, discover the motions of the heavens ; but after all take up their place in hell, when, in the mean time, *the statutes of the Lord* (by the help of his teachings) *make wise the simple*, Ps. xix. 17. It is no matter how dull and incapable the scholar be, if God undertake to be the teacher. I remember, Austin speaks of one who was commonly reputed a fool, and yet he could not but judge him to be truly godly, and that by two signs of grace which appeared in him; one was, his seriousness when he heard any discourses of Christ; the other was, his indignation manifested against sin. It was truly said by those two Cardinals, (who, riding to the council of Constance, overheard a poor shepherd in the fields with tears bewailing his sins) *Surgent indoeti ct rapiunt caelum*, The unlearned will rise and take heaven, whilst we with all our learning*

shall descend into hell.

Inf. 3. *This also informs Us of the true reason of the strange and various successes of the gospel upon the souls of men.* Here we see why the ministry of one man becomes fruitful, and another's barren; yea why the labours of the same poor man prosper exceedingly at one time, and not at another ; these things are according as the teachings of God do accompany our teachings. We often see a weaker and plainer discourse blessed with success, whilst that which is more artificial, neat and labored, comes to nothing. St. Austin hath a pretty similitude to illustrate this. Suppose, saith he, two conduits, the one very plain, the other curiously carved and adorned with images of lions, eagles, &c. the water doth not refresh and nourish as it cometh from such a curious conduit, but as it is water. Where we find most of man, we frequently find least of God. I speak not this to encourage carelessness and laziness, but to provoke the dispensers of the gospel to more earnestness and frequent prayer for the assistance and blessing of the Spirit upon their labours, and to make men less fond of their own gifts and abilities; blear-eyed Leah may bear children, when beautiful Rachel proves barren.

Inf. 4. *Learn hence the transcendent excellency of saving, spiritual knowledge, above that which is merely literal and natural.* One drop of knowledge taught by God, is more excellent than the whole ocean of human knowledge and acquired gifts, Phil. 3:8. John 17:3. 1 Cor. 2:2. Let no man therefore be dejected at the want of those gifts with which unsanctified men are adorned. **If God have taught thee the evil of sin, the worth of Christ, the necessity of regeneration, the mystery of faith, the way of communion with God in duties; trouble not thyself because of thine ignorance in natural or moral things; thou hast that, reader, which will bring thee to heaven;** and he is a truly wise man that knows the way of salvation, though he be ignorant and unskilful in other things; thou knowest those things which all the learned doctors and libraries in the world could never teach thee, but God hath revealed them to thee ; others have more science, thou hast that, reader, which will bring thee to heaven; and he is a truly wise man that knows the way of salvation, though he be ignorant and unskilful in other things; thou knowest those things which all the learned doctors and libraries in the world could never teach thee, but God hath revealed them to thee; others have more science, thou hast more savour and sweetness; bless God, and be not discouraged.

excerpts from John Flavel, Method of Grace

pg 209 vol. 209, 263

Inference 1. If Christ be the mercy of mercies, the medium of conveying all other mercies from God to men; then in vain do men expect and hope for mercy of God out of Jesus Christ. I know many poor sinners comfort themselves with this, when they come upon a bed of sickness; I am sinful, but God is merciful; and it is very true God is merciful; plenteous in mercy; his mercy is great above the heavens; mercy pleaseth him; and all this they that are in Christ shall find experimentally, to their comfort and salvation. But what is all this to thee, if thou art Christless? There is not one drop of saving mercy that comes in any other channel than Christ to the soul of any man.

But must I then expect no mercy out of Christ? **This is a hard case, very uncomfortable doctrine.** Yes, thou mayest be a Christless, and covenantless soul, and yet have variety of temporal mercies, as

Ishmael had, Gen. xvii. 20, 21. God "may give thee the fatness of the earth, riches, honours, pleasures, a numerous and prosperous posterity; will that content thee? Yes, yes, if I may have heaven too; No, neither heaven, nor pardon, nor any other spiritual or eternal mercy may be expected out of Christ, Jude, ver. 21. O deceive not yourselves in this point; there are two bars betwixt you and all spiritual mercies, viz. the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin; and nothing but your own union with Christ can remove these, and so open the passage for, spiritual mercies to your souls.

Why, but I will repent of sin, strive to obey the commands of God, make restitution for the wrongs I have done, cry to God for mercy, bind my soul with vows and strong resolutions against sin for time to come; will not all this lay a ground-work for hope of mercy to my soul? No, this will not, this cannot do. First, All your sorrows, tears and mournings for sin cannot obtain mercy; could you shed as many tears for any sin that ever you committed, as all the children of Adam have shed upon any account whatsoever, since the creation of the world; they will not purchase the pardon of that one sin; for the law accepts no short payment; it requires plenary satisfaction, and will not discharge any soul without it; nor can it acknowledge or own your souls to be such. The repentance of a soul finds, through Christ, acceptance with God, but out of him it is nothing. [A person who is asking to be saved is praying while "outside of Christ", i.e., he has not been united to Him. So it is impossible for his prayer to be heard nor is it accepted by God, but is a wicked presumption.]

Secondly, All your strivings to obey the commands of God, and live more strictly for time to come, will not obtain mercy. Matt, v. 20. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Thirdly, Your restitution, and reparation of wrongs you have done, cannot obtain mercy. Judas restored, and yet was damned. Man is repaired, but God is not. Remission is the act of God, it is he must loose your consciences from the bond of guilt, or they can never be loosed. [Christ must be the one to set you free from the *strong man*]

Fourthly, All your cries to God for mercy will not prevail for mercy, if you be out of Christ, Matt. vii. 22. Job xxvii. 9. A righteous judge will not reverse the just sentence of the law, though the prisoner at the bar fall upon his knees, and cry, Mercy, mercy.

Fifthly, Your vows and engagements to God for time to come cannot obtain mercy ; for they being made in your own strength, it is impossible you should keep them; and if you could, yet it is impossible they should obtain remission and mercy; should you never sin more for time to come, yet how shall God be satisfied for sins past? Justice must have satisfaction, or you can never have remission, Rom. iii. 25, 26. and no work wrought by man can satisfy divine justice; nor is the satisfaction of Christ made over to any for their discharge, but to such only as are in him; therefore never expect mercy out of Christ.

Thirdly, God's readiness to grant, as well as their liberty to ask, speaks them the special favourites of God, The heart of God is so propense, and ready to grant the desires of believers, that it is but ask and have, Matth. 7:7. The door of grace is opened by the key of prayer. That is a favourite indeed, to whom the king gives a blank to insert what request he will: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you," John 15:7. O blessed liberty of the sons of God! David did but say, " Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness," and it was done as soon as asked, 2 Sam. xv. 31. Joshua did but say, "Thou sun stand still in Gibeon," and a miraculous stop was presently put to its swift motion in the heavens; nay, which is wonderful to consider, a prayer, yet unborn, I mean conceived in the heart, and not yet uttered by the lips of believers, is often anticipated by the propensiveness of free grace, Isa. 65:24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and whilst they are yet "speaking I will hear." The prayers of others are rejected as an abomination, Prov. xv. 8. God casts them back into their faces, Mai. ii. 3. But free grace signs the petitions of the saints more.

p 104 Vol. 2: **We cannot act spiritually till we begin to live spiritually. Therefore the spirit of life must first join himself to us, in his quickening work**, (as was shown you in the last sermon), which being done, we begin to act spiritually, by taking hold upon, or receiving Jesus Christ, which is the thing designed to be opened in this sermon. **[to say the sinner's prayer is a spiritual act done by someone who is not yet spiritual! making the effect come before the cause! And hence the sinner's prayer is presumption and speaks against many scriptures, Romans 8:7-8 for one, turning the Gospel on its head.]**

p 353

If civility without the new creature could save thee, why are not the moral Heathens saved also? If strictness of life without the new creature could save thee, why did it not save the Scribes and Pharisees also? **If a high profession of religion without the new creature can save thee, why did it not save Judas, Hymenaeus and Philetus also? Nothing is more evident than this, that no repentance, obedience, self-denial, prayers, tears, reformations or ordinances, without the new creation, avail anything to the salvation of thy soul:** The very blood of Christ himself, without the new creature, never did, and never will save any man. Oh how necessary a work is the new creation! "Circumcision avails nothing, and uncircumcision nothing; but a new creature." p353 **[Hence the Sinner's Prayer is a gross presumption, putting himself into the room of God who He alone can call into existence the things that do not exist! Rom. 4:17]**

Inference 1. How miserable and deplorable an estate all unrenewed souls are in, who can lay no claim to Christ during that state, and therefore are under an impossibility of salvation. p359

pg 419 Vol. 2 Sermon 30

Secondly, It is an argument of the excellency of the Christian religion, and that even **wicked men themselves covet the name and profession of it, though they only cloak and cover their evils under it.** I confess it is a great abuse of such an excellent thing as religion is; but yet, if it had not an awful reverence paid it by the consciences of all men, it would never be abused to this purpose, by hypocrites, as it is.

Thirdly, According to this reasoning, there can be no religion in the world; for name me that religion which is not scandalized by the practices of some that profess it. **So that this practice [the world's**

badmouthing of Christianity due to its many hypocrites] has a natural tendency to Atheism; and is, no doubt, encouraged by the devil for that end. [Point being, the sinner's prayer leads to many false professors who's lives and conversations strongly argue hypocrisy! and thus quell any enthusiasm for the true religion, quiets their consciences (peace when there is no peace), providing justification, excuses and false pretences for their ungodly and often profligate lives. The sinner's prayer is the fertile ground from which this evil springs and flourishes that becomes a cancer in churches; they deceive themselves and others!]

The Jews said that they were bondage to no one; but Jesus and told him they were in bondage to sin and Satan to do his will. So the Jews were basically saying the same thing as the free-willers are saying now; that their will is free; that they're in bondage to no one. But they do ere in not knowing their own hearts. *But where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty*; liberty to believe on Christ, worship God, etc.; and then are you truly free from bondage to sin and Satan.

Flesh Can Only Give Birth to Flesh

John Flavel, A Treatise of the Soul of Man pg 34

Code429

[Regarding the sinner's prayer from an unregenerate person assumes that something noble and spiritual as a new creation is, can proceed from nature. But this cannot be in that the effect cannot be greater than the cause. John 3:6]

But to me it is clear that the soul receives not its beginning by traduction or generation; for that which is generable, is also corruptible; but the spiritual, immortal soul (as it has been proved to be) is not subject to corruption. Nor is it imaginable how a soul should be produced out of matter, which is not endued with reason: or, how a bodily substance can impart that to another, which it has not in itself. If it be said, the soul of the child proceeds from the souls of the parents, that cannot be; for spiritual substances are impartible, and nothing can be descended from them. "And it is absurd to think the soul of Adam should spring from one original, and the souls of his offspring from another, while both his and theirs are of one and the same nature and species." To all which let me add, that as the assertion of their creation is most reasonable, so it is most scriptural. It is reasonable to think and say, "That no active power can act beyond, or above the proper sphere of its activity and ability". But if the soul be elicited out of the power of matter, here would be an effect produced abundantly more noble and excellent than its cause. And as it is most reasonable, so it is most scriptural. [And so in conversion, it is the Spirit that quickens, not the will of man, for "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." See also, John 1:13 and Romans 9:16; hence the fruitlessness of the sinner's prayer or any like prayer or petition of an unregenerate man. This is one reason why Thomas Shepard called the sinner's prayer a *wicked presumption*.]

This answers a big objection that Arminians and most other people have against God requiring something of men that they are unable to do.

The Works Mentality of Fallen Men

Code433

Excerpt from

The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology

by Pascal Denault pg 28-29

The Covenant of Works had a simple way of functioning: if Adam had obeyed, he and his posterity after him would have retained life and would have been sealed in justice; but his disobedience marked the entrance of death into the world. The fall placed Adam and all of his posterity under condemnation. The Covenant of Works was conditional and provided no way to expiate the offence in case of disobedience. In reformed theology, the Covenant of Works is seen as the foundation for the “retributive” justice of God, whereby obedience begets blessing and disobedience brings malediction. It is the Covenant of Works that founded the principle “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23; Heb 10:28). Under the Covenant of Works, eternal life cannot be given freely^A, it must be earned.⁴ But now, because of sin, the Covenant of Works is ineffective in giving life; it can only bring death (Gal 3:21; Rom 8:3).

Reformed theologians considered that the Covenant of Works remained in effect after the fall,⁵ but that the feature inside this covenant after the entry of sin into the world. Before the fall, man benefited from the relationship with his Creator wherein, by virtue of the Covenant of Works, God was his God. While remaining under the obligation of obeying God because of this covenant, fallen man lost his covenantal privileges which ensured him of god’s favor and found himself, from then on, under God’s wrath. While God remained God for all men even after the fall, sin made it so that He was no longer their God in a favorable covenantal connection.

⁴ Peter Bulkeley makes a very pertinent remark regarding the revelation of the Covenant of Works versus the revelation of the Covenant of Grace: “The covenant of works is revealed by the light of Nature, but the covenant of Grace is revealed by a supernatural light from above. Nature’s light teaches men to look for life and righteousness by works, and this is written in all men’s hearts. Rom. 2:15.” *The Gospel Covenant; or the Covenant of Grace Opened*, 1644, pg 98. Buckley continues by explaining that it is natural for men to seek justification through works, grace being contrary to natural reasoning.

^A*Freely*, meaning that nothing outside of God (e.g., no prayer or sacrament, or any other duty by man, etc.) motivates him or causes him to grant someone eternal life. A “works mentality” is how we are before we are converted as Buckley notes above; we are of the mindset, What must I do to be saved? We are works oriented, trying to earn God’s favor, trying to appease God in some way, hence, by “works.” But after one is truly converted, we see the fruitlessness and folly of that mindset; we see that we had nothing to do with our being saved/converted/born again, etc. Nothing! – very similar to our role in our natural birth; we had nothing to do with that either! But after we are converted, we do good works out of gratitude and love for God. - My insert

⁵Arminius rejected the idea that the Covenant of Works remained in effect after the fall, because, according to him, God cannot require of man something that he is unable to do. To demand perfect obedience from a fallen creature would have been unjust. The Calvinists did not consider it unjust to require such obedience from a creature incapable of obedience, since this requirement was given while man was still able to comply. Man changed, but the divine standards of justice remain the same. The Covenant of Works allowed the Calvinists to say that God could have unilaterally condemned all men while remaining just, even if none of them could have obeyed.

What it is to Come to Christ

code193

More insight to show the error of the Sinner's Prayer
p171-3 v2, John Flavel, Method of Grace

Doctrine 2. That sin-burdened souls are solemnly invited to come to Christ.

This point sounds sweetly in the ear of a distressed sinner; it is the most joyful voice that ever the soul heard; the voice of blessing from mount Gerizim, the ravishing voice from mount Sion, "Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator." In opening of it I will show,

1. What it is to come to Christ.
2. How Christ invites men to come to him.
3. Why his invitation is directed to burdened souls.

First We will enquire what it is to come to Christ, and how many things are included in it. In general, to come to Christ, is a phrase equipollent, or of the same amount with believing in Christ. It is an expression that carries the nature and necessity of faith in it, and is reciprocated with believing. John vi. 35. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst."

Coming to Christ, is believing in Christ; and believing in Christ, is coming to Christ; they are synonyms, and import the self same thing. Only in this notion of faith, there are many rich and excellent things hinted to us, which no other word can so aptly convey to our minds. As,

First, It hints this to us, That the souls of convinced and burdened sinners do not only discern the reality of Christ, or that he is, but also the necessity of applying Christ, and that their eternal life is in their union with him; for this is most certain, that the object of faith must be determinate and fixed ; the soul must believe that Christ is, or else there can be no emotions of the soul after him; all coming pre-supposes a fixed term to which we come, Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God, must believe that God is." Take away this, and all motions after Christ presently stop. No wonder then that souls, in their

first motions to Christ, find themselves clogged with so many atheistical temptations, shaking their assent to the truth of the gospel at the very root and foundation of it; but they that come to Christ, do see that he is, and that their life and happiness lie in their union with him, else they would never come to him upon such terms as they do.

Secondly, Coming to Christ implies the soul's despair of salvation any other way. The way of faith is a supernatural way, and souls will not attempt it until they have tried all natural ways to help and save themselves, and find it all in vain ; therefore the text describes these comers to Christ as weary persons, that have been labouring and striving all other ways for rest, but can find none; and so are forced to relinquish all their fond expectations of salvation in any other way, and come to Christ as their last and only remedy.

Thirdly, Coming to Christ notes a supernatural and almighty power, acting the soul quite above its own natural abilities in this motion. John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except my Father which hath sent me draw him." It is as possible for the ponderous mountains to start from their bases and centers, mount themselves aloft into the air, and there fly like wandering atoms hither and thither, as it is for any man, of himself, i.e., by a pure natural power of his own, to come to Christ. It was not a stranger thing for Peter to come to Christ, walking upon the waves of the sea, than for his, or any mans soul, to come to Christ in the way of faith. [See Martin Luther's comment on pg 1779.](#)

Fourthly, Coming to Christ notes the voluntariness of the soul in its motion to Christ. It is true, **there is no coming without the Father's drawing**; but that drawing hath nothing of coaction in it; **it doth not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness, persuade the will.**¹ **It is not forced or driven, but it comes; being made "willing in the day of God's power,"** Ps. 110:3. Ask a poor distressed sinner in that season, Are you willing to come to Christ? O rather than live! life is not so necessary as Christ is! O ! with all my heart, ten thousand worlds for Jesus Christ, if he could be purchased, were nothing answerable to his value in mine eyes! **The soul's motion to Christ is free and voluntary**, it is coming.

¹ Nor do your sins exceed the ability and power of the applying cause of pardon, namely , the Spirit of God. For though I should suppose thy mind to be clouded, and overshadowed with grossest ignorance, thy heart to be as hard as adamant, or nether-millstone, your will stiff and obstinate, thy affections enchanted and bewitched with the pleasures of sin; yet this Spirit of God, in a moment, can make a convincing beam of light to dart into thy dark mind, make your hard heart relent, your stubborn will to bow, and all the affections of your soul to comply, and open obediently to Christ, **John 16:9, 10**, "The Spirit when he cometh, he shall convince the world of sin," etc. Thus you see, whatever your guilt be, it does not exceed the abilities of the causes of remission. O what an encouragement is this? – Flavel p533Vol. 6

Fifthly, It implies this in it, That no duties, or ordinances, (which are but the ways and means by which we come to Christ), are, or ought to be central and terminative to the soul; i.e., the soul of a believer is not to sit down, and rest in them, but to come by them or through them to Jesus Christ, and take up his rest in him only. No duties, no reformations, no ordinances of God, how excellent soever these things are in themselves, and how necessary soever they are in their proper place and use, can give rest to the weary and heavy laden soul; it cannot centre in any of them, and you may see it cannot, because it still gravitates and inclines to another thing, even Christ, and cannot terminate its motion till it be

come to him. Christ is the term to which a believer moves; and therefore he cannot sit down by the way, or be as well satisfied as if he were at his journey's end. Ordinances and duties have the nature and use of means to bring us to Christ, but not to be to any man instead of Christ.

Sixthly, Coming to Christ, implies an hope or expectation from Christ in the coming soul. If he hath no hope, why doth it move forward? As good sit still, and resolve to perish where it is, as to come to Christ, if there is no ground to expect salvation by him. Hope is the spring of motion and industry; if you cut off hope, you hinder faith : it cannot move to Christ, except it be satisfied, at least, of the possibility of mercy and salvation by him. Hence it is, that when comers to Christ are struggling with the doubts and fears of the issue, the Lord is pleased to enliven their faint hopes, by setting home such scriptures as these, John vi. 37. "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." And Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him" This puts life into hope, and hope puts life into industry and motion.

Seventhly, Coming to Christ for rest implies, that believers have, and lawfully may have an eye to their own happiness, in closing with the Lord Jesus Christ. The poor soul comes for rest; it comes for salvation; its eye and aim are upon it; and this aim of the soul at its own good, is legitimated, and allowed by that expression of Christ, John v. 40, "**Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.**" If Christ blame them for not coming to him, that they might have life, sure he would not blame them, had they come to him for life.

Eighthly, but Lastly, and which is the principal thing in this expression, Coming to Christ, notes the all-sufficiency of Christ, to answer all the needs and wants of distressed souls, and their betaking themselves accordingly to him only for relief, being content to come to Christ for whatever they need, and live upon that fulness that is in him. If there were not an all-sufficiency in Christ, no soul would come to him ; for this is the very ground upon which men come. Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him;" Εἰς τὸ ὠαντελεετο, the uttermost. In the greatest plunges, difficulties, and dangers. He hath a fulness of saving power in him, and this encourages souls to come unto him. One beggar uses not to wait at the door of another, but all at the doors of them they conceive able to relieve them. And as this notes the fulness of Christ as our Saviour, so it must needs note the emptiness and humility of the soul as a comer to him. This is called submission, in Rom. x. 3. Proud nature must be deeply distressed, humbled, and **moulded into another temper**, [that holiness must have been communicated to the soul to effect this new temper] before it will be persuaded to live upon those terms, to come to Christ for everything it wants, to live upon Christ's fulness in the way of grace and favour, and **have no stock of its own to live upon**. O! this is hard, but it is the way of faith. [see footnote on pg 1173]

The New Creation

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Arguments...cont.

In this excerpt, you'll see what is entailed in this new creation, who is the cause of it and in what it consists; all of which you will have to conclude that man plays no role in it whatsoever for he would be the creator of it if he did which is preposterous; but that is what Arminianism promotes - that man can ask to be saved; and that from natural principles (self-love), and those corrupted! This is why Thomas Shepard calls the sinner's prayer a *wicked presumption*. As Flavel notes, " (1.) If your persons were accepted through Christ, your prayers should be accepted too, Gen. 4:4. But you are in a state of nature, destitute of the Spirit, John 15:7. And so your voice is to God not the voice of a child, but a stranger. p358 Vol. 5 Flavel

from Method of Grace, John Flavel, Sermon 28, pg 347

Doctrine. That Gods creating of a new supernatural work of grace in the soul of any mart, is that man's sure, and infallible evidence of a saving interest in Jesus Christ.

Suitable hereunto are those words of the apostle, [Eph. 4:20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#). "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Where we have, in other words of the same importance, the very self- same description of the man that is in Christ, which the apostle gives us in this text. Now, for the opening and stating of this point, it will be necessary that I show you,

1. Why the regenerating work of the Spirit is called a new creation.
2. In what respect every soul that is in Christ is renewed, or made a new creature.
3. What are the remarkable properties and qualities of this new creature.
4. The necessity of this new creation to all that are in Christ.
5. How this new creation evidences our interest in Christ.
6. And then apply the whole in the proper uses of it.

First, Why the regenerating work of the Spirit is called a new creation. This must be our first enquiry. And, doubtless, the reason of this appellation is the analogy, proportion, and similitude which is found betwixt the work of regeneration, and God's work in the first creation. And their agreement and proportion will be found in the following particulars.

*First, The same almighty Author who created the world, created also this work of grace in the soul of man, 2 Cor. 4:6. "God, who commanded the light to thine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." **The same powerful word which created the natural, created also the spiritual light. It is equally absurd for any man to say, I make myself to repent, or to believe, as it is to say, I made myself to exist, and be.***

Secondly, The first thing that God created in the natural world, was light, [Gen. 1:3](#). and the first thing which God createth in the new creation, [is the light of spiritual knowledge](#), [Col. 3: 10](#). "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Thirdly. [Creation is out of nothing](#); it requires no pre- existent matter; it does not bring one thing out of another, but something out of nothing; it gives a being to that which before had no being. So it is also in the new creation, [1 Pet. 2:9, 10](#). "Who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." [The work of grace is not educed out of the power and principles of nature, but it is a pure work of creation](#). The Heathen philosophers could neither understand, nor acknowledge the creation of the world, because that notion was repugnant to this maxim of reason, *en nihilo nihil fit*, out of nothing, nothing can be made. Thus did they *insanire cum ratione*, befool themselves with their own reasonings; and after the same manner some great pretenders to reason among us, voting it an absurdity to affirm, that the work of grace is not virtually and potentially contained in nature, the new creation in the old.

Fourthly, It was the virtue and efficacy of the Spirit of God, which gave the natural world its being by creation; [Gen. 1:2](#), the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; it hovered over the chaos, as the wings of a bird do over her eggs, as the same word is rendered, [Deut. 32:11](#). cherishing, as it were by incubation, that rude mass by a [secret quickening influence](#), by which it drew all creatures into their several forms, and particular natures. [So it is in the new creation; a quickening influence must come from the Spirit of God, or else the new creation can never be formed in us](#); [John 3:8](#). "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." And ver. 6. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

Fifthly, The word of God was the instrument of the first creation; [Psal. 33:6, 9](#). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." The word of God is also the instrument of the new creation, or work of grace in man; [1 Pet. 1:23](#). "Being born again, [not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible](#); by the word of God, which liveth, and abideth forever." So [James 1:18](#). "[Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth](#)." [Of his own will; that was the impulsive cause; with the word of truth; that was the instrumental cause](#). [Great respect and honour, love, and delight, is due to the word upon this account, that it is the instrument of our regeneration, or new creation. \[Hence the gospel squashes all human boasting.\]](#)

Sixthly, The same power which created the world, still underprops and supports it in its being: the world owes its conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God, without which it could not subsist one moment. Just so it is with the new creation, which entirely depends upon the preserving power, which first formed it; Jude ver. 1. "Preserved in Christ Jesus," and [1 Pet. 1:5](#). "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." As in a natural way "we live, move, and have our being in God," [Acts 17:28](#), [so in a spiritual way, we continue believing, repenting, loving, and delighting in God; without whose continued influence upon our souls, we could do neither](#).

Lesson 4. Fourthly, The Lord teaches the soul that is coming to Christ, that though it be their duty to strive to the uttermost for salvation; **yet all strivings, in their own strength, are insufficient to obtain it.** This work is quite above the power of nature: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The soul is brought to a full conviction of this, by the discovery of the heinous nature of sin, and of the rigour and severity of the law of God. No repentance nor reformation can possibly amount unto a just satisfaction, **nor are they within the compass and power of our will.** It was a saying that Dr. Hill often used to his friends, speaking about the power of man's will; he would lay his hand upon his breast, and say, "Every man has something here to confute the Arminian doctrine." **This fully takes off the soul from all expectations of deliverance that way; it cannot but strive, that is its duty; but to expect deliverance, as the purchase of its own strivings, that would be its sin.** [related verse, Isa. 44:20, "He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"]

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Thirdly, But to speak positively, the teachings of God are nothing else but that spiritual and heavenly light, by which the Spirit of God shineth into the hearts of men, to give them "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," as the apostle speaks, [2 Cor. 4:6](#). And though this be the proper work of the Spirit, yet it is called the teachings of the Father, because the Spirit who enlightens us is commissioned and sent by the Father so to do, [John 14: 26](#). Now these teachings of the Spirit of God, consist in two things, viz. in his,

1. Sanctifying impressions.
2. Gracious assistances.

First, In his sanctifying impressions or regenerating work upon the soul, by virtue whereof it receives marvellous light and insight into spiritual things; and that not only as **illumination** is the first act of the Spirit in our conversion, [Col. 3:10](#), but as his whole work of sanctification is illuminative and instructive to the converted soul, [1 John 2:27](#). "The anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you." **The meaning is that sanctification gives the soul experience of those mysterious things which are contained in the scriptures,** and that experience is the most excellent key to unlock and open those deep scripture mysteries; no knowledge is so distinct, so clear, so sweet, as that which the heart communicates to the head, [John 7:17](#). "If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." A man that never read the nature of love in books of philosophy, nor the transports and ecstasies thereof in history, may yet truly describe and express it by the sensible motions of that passion in his own soul; yea, he that has felt, much better understands, than he that has only read or heard. **O what a light does spiritual sense and experience cast upon a great part of the scriptures!** for indeed sanctification is the very copy or transcript of the word of God upon the heart of man; [Jer. 31:83](#). "I will write my law in their hearts:" so that the scriptures and the experiences of believers, by this means answer to each other, as the lines and letters in the press answer to the impressions made upon the paper; or the figures in the wax, to the engravings in the seal. When a sanctified man reads David's psalms, or Paul's epistles, how is he surprised with wonder to find the very workings of his own heart so exactly deciphered and fully expressed there! O, saith he, this is my very case, these holy men speak what my heart has felt. [Experience teaches us, therefore, that we had nothing to do with our conversion, just as we had

nothing to do with our natural birth. We didn't ask to come out of our mother's womb to have life! And so it is here in our new birth.]

p293 Vain hopes, fatal security next to impossible to overcome

Fourthly, This life of security and vain hope frustrates all the means of recovery and salvation, in the only season wherein they can be useful and beneficial to us. By reason of these things the word has no power to convince men's consciences, nothing can bring them to a sight and sense of their condition. Therefore Christ told the self-confident and blind Jews, [Matt. 21:31](#). "That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them." And the reason is, because their hearts lie more open and fair to the strokes of conviction and compunction for sin than those do, who are blinded by vain hopes and confidences. [This is the danger of those who say they got saved by saying the Sinner's Prayer, a fatal or stupid security. Seen in Jesus' words to the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." John 9:41. For in the sinner's prayer, the sinner says he sees, when in fact he really doesn't see! He is still blind, dead in sin, etc.; he is just like the Pharisees who said they see. There sin remains! Oh what a most miserable state of affairs, a fatal one, to think you are saved when you are not. Now it's impossible to reach him by an preaching or by any convictions, for he imagines that any gospel threatenings have nothing to do with him! Flavel explains further: there is a twofold opening of men's eyes to see their danger, namely, 1. Graciously to prevent danger. 2. Judicially to aggravate misery. They whose eyes are not opened graciously in this world, to see their disease and remedy in Christ, shall have their eyes opened judicially in the world to come, to see their disease without any remedy. If God open them now, it is by way of prevention; if they be not opened till then, it will produce desperation.

Fourthly, The horrible nature of this judgement farther appears from the exceeding difficulty of curing it, especially in men of excellent natural endowments and accomplishments, John 9:40, 41. "And some of the Pharisees which were with him, heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth," q. d. the pride and conceitedness of your heart and obstinacy and incurableness to your blindness; these are "the blind people that have eyes;" [Isa. 63:8](#). In seeing they see not. The conviction of such men is next to an impossibility. pg 466 vol. 2, [Method of Grace](#). *Note pride, conceitedness;* this is the state of those who say this sinner's prayer since they are not regenerated yet! They are in effect, praying to get regenerated which, as I have noted before, is a strong contradiction, aka presumption and wicked at that because of this sin of pride, self love/righteousness, etc. That's why it's wicked; they are offering their righteousness which is vile and they want what God has but they don't want God for who he really is.]

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Inference 1. Is this the life that the unregenerate world lives? Then it is not to be wondered at that the preaching of the gospel has so little success: "Who has believed our report? (saith the prophet) and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" [Isa. 53](#): 1. Ministers study for truths apt to awaken and convince the consciences of them that hear them, but their words return again to them: They turn to God, and mourn over the matter; we have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought. And this security is the cause of all, vain hopes bar fast the doors of men's hearts against all the convictions and persuasions of the word. The greater cause have they to admire the grace of God, who have found, or shall find the convictions of the word sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the

dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; to whose hearts God brings home the commandment by an effectual application.

Inf. 2. If this be the life of the unregenerate world, what deadly enemies are they that nourish and strengthen the groundless confidences and vain hopes of salvation in men. This the scripture calls the healing of the hurt of souls slightly, by crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," [Jer. 6:14](#). The sewing of pillows under their arm-holes, [Ezek. 13:18](#). That they may lie soft and easy under the ministry; and this is the doctrine which the people love [because it greatly appeals to their carnal apprehension of things, of God, etc. They think God is altogether like them! [Ps 50](#)]; but oh, what wilt the end of these things be! And what an account have those men to give to God for the blood of those souls by them betrayed to the everlasting burnings! Such flattery is the greatest cruelty. Those whom you bless upon earth, will curse you in hell, and the day in which they trusted their souls to your conduct. [Many people say that because you said this sinner's prayer that you are saved because Jesus is faithful, etc., even thought you may not experience a thing or feel anything upon your soul. How stupifying that is to the soul...*peace, peace...*and flattery combined.]

Inf. 3. How great a mercy is it to be awakened out of that general sleep and security which is fallen upon the world! You cannot estimate the value of that mercy, for it is a peculiar mercy. O that ever the Spirit of the Lord should touch thy soul under the ministry of the word, startle and rouse thy conscience, whilst others are left in the dead sleep of security round about thee! When the Lord dealt with thy soul much after the same manner he did with Paul in the way to Damascus, who not only saw a light shining from heaven, which those that travelled with him saw as well as he, but heard that voice from heaven which did the work upon his heart, though his companions heard it not. Besides, it is not only a peculiar mercy, but it is a leading introductive mercy, to all other spiritual mercies that follow it to all eternity. If God had not done this for thee, thou hadst never been brought to faith, to Christ, or heaven. From this act of the Spirit all other saving acts take their rise; so that you have cause for ever to admire the goodness of God in such a favour as this is.

p360 This is rich with truth on this subject of man's vain attempts to think that he can recommend himself to God by his own prayer!, i.e., his own strength of his will, from his own industry.

Inf. 3. Learn from hence, that the work of grace is wholly supernatural; it is a creation, and a creation-work is above the power of the creature. No power but that which gave being to the world, can give a being to the new creature. Almighty Power goes forth to give being to the new creature. This creature is not born of flesh, or of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God, [John 1](#): 13. The nature of this new creature speaks its original to be above the power of nature; the very notion of a new creation spoils the proud boasts of the great asserters of the power and ability of the will of man. When God, therefore, puts the question, **who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received?** Let thy soul, reader, answer it with all humility and thankfulness. It is thou, Lord, thou only, that madest me to differ from another; and what I have received, I have received from thy free grace.

Sermon 31

Arguments cont. my comments in [blue]

Of the State of Spiritual Death, And The Misery Thereof

code194

By John Flavel

[Eph. 5:14.](#)

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/grace.xxxiv.html>

This scripture represents unto us the miserable and lamentable state of the unregenerate, as being under the power of spiritual death, which is the cause and inlet of all other miseries. From hence, therefore, I shall make the first discovery of the woeful and wretched state of them that apply not Jesus Christ to their own souls.

The scope of the apostle in this context, is to press believers to a circumspect and holy life; to "walk as children of light." This exhortation is laid down in ver. 8. and pressed by divers arguments in the following verses.

First, From the tendency of **holy principles**, unto **holy fruits and practice**, ver. 9, 10.

Secondly, From the convincing efficacy of practical godliness, upon the consciences of the wicked, ver. 11, 12, 13. It awes and convinces their consciences.

Thirdly, From the co-incidence of such a conversation with the great design and drift of the scriptures, which is to awaken men by regeneration, out of that spiritual sleep, or rather death, which sin has cast them into; and this is the argument of the text, Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, &c. There is some difficulty in the reference of these words. Some think it is to [Isa 26:19](#). "Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust." Others to [Isa. 60:1](#): "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c. But most probably, the words neither refer to this or that particularly, but to the drift and scope of the whole scriptures, which were inspired and written upon this great design, [a key point when interpreting scripture...the drift of the Holy Spirit throughout the bible] to awaken and quicken souls out of the state of spiritual death. And in them we are to consider these three things more distinctly and particularly.

1. The miserable state of the unregenerate; they are asleep and dead.
2. Their duty; which is to "awake, and stand up from the dead.
3. The power enabling them thereunto; "Christ shall give thee light".

First, The miserable state of the unregenerate, represented under the motions of sleep and death: both expressions intending one and the same thing, though with some variety of notion. The Christless

and unregenerate world is in a **deep sleep**; a spirit of slumber, senselessness and security is fallen upon them, though they lie exposed immediately to eternal wrath and misery, ready to drop into hell every moment. Just as a man that is fast asleep in a house on fire, and whilst the consuming flames are round about him, his fancy is sporting itself in some pleasant dream; this is a very lively resemblance of the unregenerate soul. But yet he that sleeps has the principle of life entire in him, though his senses be bound, and the actions of life suspended by sleep. Lest therefore we should think it is only so with the unregenerate, the expression is designedly varied, and those that were said to be asleep, are positively affirmed to be dead; on purpose to inform us that it is not a simple suspension of the acts and exercise, but a **total privation of the principle of spiritual life**, which is the misery of the unregenerate.

Secondly, We have here the **duty of the unregenerate**, which is to "awake out of sleep, and arise from the dead." This is their great concernment; no duty in the world is of greater necessity and importance to them. "Strive (saith Christ) to enter in at the strait gate," [Luke 13:24](#). And the order of these duties is very natural. First awake, then arise. Startling and rousing convictions make way for spiritual life; **till God awake us by convictions of our misery, we will never be persuaded to arise and move towards Christ for remedy and safety.**

Thirdly, **But you will say, if unregenerate men be dead men, to what purpose is it to persuade them to arise and stand up: The very exhortation supposes some powers or ability in the unregenerate; else in vain are they commanded to arise. [a key argument that Arminians use to support man's supposed ability (*internal virtue*) to chose Christ prior to actually being converted!]** This difficulty is solved in this very text, though the duty is ours, **yet the power is God's. God commands that in his word, which only his grace can perform.** [God says to make you a clear heart, or as in Deut. 10:16, "*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.*" But only God can do it as he notes later in scripture in Deut. 30:6, "*And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*" So, God says, I will do it; I will take out the heart of stone, or circumcise the heart, etc., [Ezek 36:26](#), "*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.*" And as David intimates in Ps 51:10, *Create in me a clean heart, O God...*] "Christ shall give thee light." Popish commentators would build the tower of free will upon this scripture, by a very weak argument, drawn from the order wherein these things are here expressed; which is but a very weak foundation to build upon, for it is very usual in scripture to put the effect before, and the cause after, as it is here, so in [Isa. 26:19](#). "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." But I will not here entangle my discourse with that controversy; that which I aim at is plain in the words, namely,

Doctrine. *That all Christless souls are under the power of spiritual death; they are in the state of the dead.*

Multitudes of testimonies are given in scripture to this truth; [Eph. 2:1, 5](#). "**You has he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.**" [Col. 2:13](#). "**And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him;**" with many other places of the same importance. But the method in which I shall discourse this point will be this;

First, I will show you in what sense Christless and unregenerated men are said to be dead.

Secondly, What the state of spiritual death is.

Thirdly, How it appears that all unregenerate men are in this sad state. And then apply it.

First, In what sense are Christless and unregenerate men said to be dead men.

To open this, we must know there is a three-fold death, viz.

1. Natural.
2. Spiritual.
3. Eternal.

Natural death is nothing else but the privation of the principle of natural life, or the separation of the soul from the body, [James 2:26](#). "The body without the spirit is dead." **Spiritual death is the privation of the principle of spiritual life, or the want and absence of the quickening Spirit of God in the soul; the soul is the life of the body**, and Christ is the life of the soul, the absence of the soul is death to the body, and the absence or want of Christ is death to the soul. Eternal death is the separation both of body and soul from God, which is the misery of the damned. Now Christless and unregenerate men are not dead in the first sense; they are naturally alive though they are dead while they live, nor are they yet dead in the last sense, eternally separated from God by an irrevocable sentence as the damned are; but they are dead in the second sense; they are spiritually dead, whilst they are naturally alive; and this spiritual death is the fore-runner of eternal death. Now spiritual death is put in scripture in opposition to a two-fold spiritual life, viz.

1. The life of justification.
2. The life of sanctification.

Spiritual death in opposition to the life of justification, is nothing else but the guilt of sin bringing us under the sentence of death. Spiritual death, in opposition to the life of sanctification, is the pollution or dominion of sin. In both these senses, unregenerate men are dead men; but it is the last which I am properly concerned to speak to in this place, and therefore,

Secondly, Let us briefly consider what this spiritual death is, which, as before was hinted, is **the absence of the quickening Spirit of Christ from the soul of any man. That soul is a dead soul, into which the Spirit of Christ is not infused in the work of regeneration; and all its works are dead works**, as they are called, [Heb. 9:14](#). [So the Sinner's Prayer is a dead work; nor does God hear (harken to) his prayer, [John 9:31](#), because it springs forth from natural principles, and those corrupted, not from the *new principle of life*, i.e., faith; and *without faith* they cannot please Him, [Heb. 11:6](#); so that they, in this natural condition, cannot perform any spiritual act acceptable to God. [Romans 8:7-8](#), [1Cor2:14](#), etc.] For, look how it is with the damned, they live, they have sense and motion, and an immortality in all these; yet because they are eternally separated from God, the life which they live, deserves not the name of life, but it is everywhere in scripture styled death: so the unregenerate, they are naturally alive; they eat and drink, they buy and sell, they talk and laugh, they rejoice in the creatures; and many of them spend their days in pleasures, and then go down to the grave. This is the life they live, but yet the scripture rather calls it death than life; because though they live, yet it is without God in the world, [Eph. 2:12](#). though they live, yet it is a life alienated from the life of God, [Eph. 4:18](#). And therefore while they remain naturally alive, they are in scripture said "to remain in death, [1 John 3:14](#). and to be "dead while they live," [1 Tim. 5:6](#). And there is great reason why a Christless, an

unregenerate state, should be represented in scripture, under the notion of death; for there is nothing in nature which more aptly represents that miserable state of the soul, than natural death does. The dead see and discern nothing, and the natural man perceiveth not the things that are of God. The dead have no beauty or desirableness in them; "Bury my dead (saith Abraham) out of my sight;" neither is there any spiritual loveliness in the unregenerate. True it is, some of them have sweet natural qualities and moral excellencies, which are engaging things, but these are so many flowers, decking and adorning a dead corpse. The dead are objects of pity and great lamentation: men used to mourn for the dead, Eccl. 12:5. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." But unregenerate, and Christless souls, are much more the objects of pity and lamentation. How are all the people of God (especially those that are naturally related to them) concerned to mourn over them and for them, as Abraham did for Ishmael, Gen. 17:18. "O that Ishmael might live before thee." Upon these, and many other accounts, the state of unregeneracy is represented to us in the notion of death.

Thirdly, And that this is the state of all Christless and unsanctified persons, will, undeniably, appear two ways.

1. The causes of spiritual life have not wrought upon them.
2. The effects and signs of spiritual life do not appear in them, and therefore they are in the state, and under the power of spiritual death.

First, The causes of spiritual life have not wrought upon them. There are two causes of spiritual life,

1. Principal, and internal.
2. Subordinate and external.

The principal internal cause of spiritual life is the regenerating Spirit of Christ, Rom. 8: 2. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." It is the Spirit, as a regenerating Spirit, that unites us with Christ, in whom all spiritual life originally is, John 5:25, 26. "Verily I say unto you, that the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live: For as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." As all the members of the natural body receive animation, sense, and motion, by their union with their natural head; so all believers, the members of Christ, receive spiritual life and animation by their union with their natural head; so all believers, the members of Christ, receive spiritual life and animation by their union with Christ their mystical head, Eph. 4:15, 16. Except we come to him, and be united with him in the way of faith, we can have no life in us, John 5:40. "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." Now the Spirit of God has yet exerted no regenerating, quickening influences, nor begotten any special saving faith in natural, unsanctified men; whatever he has done for them in the way of natural, or spiritual common gifts, yet he has not quickened them with the life of Christ. [This is why the Sinner's Prayer is a wicked presumption, for to say that someone has truly spiritual and holy desires for Christ, is to have the effect come before the cause! Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? No one!" As Owen said, the only way of salvation is by effectual vocation. You must be called; you cannot elect yourself so to speak. So by this means of the Sinner's Prayer, they deceive themselves and others. People may look and sound sincere when they do it, but it is all outward appearance, a fair

profession only, founded on self-love or self-preservation; it is but a flower that will fade at last. They want what God has but do not want God; that's why this prayer is *wicked*; the prayer is founded upon natural principles, love for self, etc., and not from a love for God nor from a spiritual sight of Christ, therefore it is highly provoking to God.] And as for the subordinate external means of life, viz. the preaching of the gospel, which is the instrument of the Spirit in this glorious work, and is therefore called, The word of life, [Phil 2:16](#). This word has not yet been made a regenerating, quickening word to their souls. Possibly it has enlightened them, and convinced them: it has wrought upon their minds in the way of common illumination, and upon their consciences in the way of conviction, but not upon their hearts and wills, by way of effectual conversion. To this day the Lord has not given them an heart opening itself, in the way of faith, to receive Jesus Christ.

Secondly, The effects and signs of spiritual life do not appear in them: For,

First, They have no **feeling**, or **sense** of misery and danger [**which saving faith makes real to the soul**]. I mean no such sense as thoroughly awakens them to apply Christ their remedy. **That spiritual judgment lies upon them**, [Isa. 6:9](#), [10](#). "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes."

Secondly, They have no spiritual motions towards Christ, or after things that are spiritual; all the arguments in the world cannot persuade their wills to move one step towards Christ in the way of faith, [John 5:30](#). ***Ye will not come unto me. Were there a principle of spiritual life in their souls, they would move Christ-ward and heaven-ward***, [John 4:14](#). It would be in them a well of water springing up into eternal life. The natural tendency of the spiritual life is upward. [**But the sinner's prayer speaks against what Jesus spoke; that man will come by his own industry, which is essentially what this prayer signifies. In other words Jesus was telling them that without the Spirit's work, you will not come to me to have life. The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. John 6:63; That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6.**]

Thirdly, **The unregenerate have no appetite unto spiritual food; they savour not things that are spiritual**; they can go from week to week, and from year to year, all their life-time, without any communion betwixt God and their souls, and feel no need of it, nor any hungerings or thirstings after it; which could never be, if a principle of spiritual life were in them; for then they would "esteem the words of Gods mouth more than their necessary food," [Job 30:12](#).

Fourthly, They have no heat or spiritual warmth in their affections to God, and things above; their hearts are as cold as a stone to spiritual objects. They are heated, indeed, by their lusts and affections to the world, and the things of the world: but O how cold and dead are they towards Jesus Christ, and spiritual excellencies.

Fifthly, They breathe not spiritually, therefore they live not spiritually; were there a spiritual principle of life in them, their souls would breathe after God in spiritual prayer, [Acts 9:11](#). "Behold he prayeth." **The lips of the unregenerate may move in prayer, but their hearts and desires do not breathe and pant after God.** [**but it looks like they do when they do this prayer, but remember, those affections are not based on a new principle of life but upon natural principles, self-love, and those corrupted. This is where their sincerity is fraudulent; they deceive themselves and others, too.**]

Sixthly, They have no cares or fears for self-preservation, which is always the effect of life; the poorest fly, or silliest worm will shun danger. The wrath of God hangs over them in the threatenings, but they tremble not at it: hell is but a little before them; they are upon the very precipice of eternal ruin, yet will use no means to avoid it. How plain, therefore, is this sad case which I have undertaken here to demonstrate, viz. that Christless and unregenerate souls are dead souls? The uses follow.

Inf. 1. If all Christless and unregenerate souls be dead souls, then how little pleasure can Christians take in the society of the unregenerate?

Certainly, it is, no pleasure for the living to converse among the dead. It was a cruel torment invented by Mezentius the tyrant, to tie a dead and living man together. The pleasure of society arises from the harmony of spirits, and the hopes of mutual enjoyment in the world to come; neither of which can sweeten the society of the godly with the wicked in this world. It is true, there is a necessary civil converse which we must have with the ungodly here; or else (as the apostle speaks) we must go out of the world. There are also duties of relation which must be faithfully and tenderly paid, even to the unregenerate: but certainly, where we have our free election, we shall be much wanting both to our duty and comfort, if we make not the people of God our chosen companions. Excellently to this purpose speaks a modern author, "Art thou a godly master? When thou takest a servant into thine house, chose for God as well as thyself. A godly servant is a greater blessing than we think on; he can work, and set God on work also for his master's good, [Gen. 24:12](#). O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master. And surely he did his master as much service by his prayer, as by his prudence in that journey. Holy David observed, while he was at Saul's court, the mischief of having wicked and ungodly servants, (for with such was that unhappy king so compassed, that David compares his court to the profane and barbarous Heathens, among whom there was scarce more wickedness to be found, [Psal. 120:6](#). "Wo is me, that I sojourn in eshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; i.e., among those who were as prodigiously wicked as any there); and no doubt, but this made this gracious man, in his banishment, before he came to the crown, (having seen the evil of a disordered house) to resolve what he would do when God should make him the head of such a royal family, [Psal. 101](#) : 7. "He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

Art thou godly? show thyself so in the choice of husband or wife. I am sure, if some, (and those godly ones) could bring no other testimonials for their godliness than the care they have taken in this particular, it might justly be called into question both by themselves and others. There is no one thing that gracious persons, (even those recorded in scripture as well as others, have seen their weakness, yea, given offence and scandal more in, than in this particular, The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair, [Gen. 6:2](#). One would have thought that the sons of God should have looked for grace in the heart, rather than beauty in the face; but we see, even they sometimes turn in at the fairest sign, without much enquiring what grace is to be found dwelling within." Look to the rule, O Christian, if thou wilt keep the power of holiness, that is clear as the sun-beam written in the scripture, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," [2 Cor. 6:14](#).

Inf. 2. How great and wholly supernatural, marvellous, and wonderful is that change which regeneration makes upon the soul of men! It is a change from death to life, [Luke 15:24](#). "This my son was dead and is alive again." Regeneration is life from the dead; the most excellent life from the most terrible death: it is the life of God re-inspired into a soul alienated from it by the power of sin, [Eph. 4:11](#). There are two stupendous changes made upon the souls of men, which justly challenge the highest admiration, viz.

1. That from sin to grace.
2. From grace to glory.

The change from grace to glory is acknowledged by all, and that justly, to be a wonderful change for God to take a poor creature out of the society of sinful men; yea, from under the burden of many sinful infirmities, which made him groan from day to day in this world; and in a moment to make him a complete and perfect soul, shining in the beauties of holiness, and filling him as a vessel of glory, with the unspeakable and inconceivable joys of his presence; to turn his groanings into triumphs, his fightings into songs of praise; this, I say, is marvellous, and yet the former change from sin to grace is no way inferior to it, nay, in some respect, beyond it; **for the change which glory makes upon the regenerate is but a gradual change**, but the change which regeneration makes upon the ungodly is a specific change. Great and admirable is this work of God; and let it forever be marvellous in our eyes.

Inf. 3. If unregenerate souls be dead souls, what a fatal stroke does death give to the bodies of all unregenerate men? A soul dead in sin, and a body dead by virtue of the curse for sin, and both soul and body remaining for ever under the power of eternal death, is so full and perfect a misery, as that nothing can be added to make it more miserable: It is the comfort of a Christian that he can say when death comes, *Non omnis moriar*, I shall not wholly die; there is a life I live which death cannot touch, [Rom. 8:18](#). "The body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power. As death takes the believer from amidst many sorrows and troubles, and brings him to the vision of God, to the general assembly of all the perfected saints, to a state of complete freedom and full satisfaction; so it drags the unregenerate from all his sensitive delights, and comforts, to the place of torment; it buries the dead soul out of the presence of God for ever; it is the king of terrors, a serpent with a deadly sting to every man that is out of Christ.

Inf. 4. If every unregenerate soul be a dead soul, how sad is the case of hypocrites and temporary believers, who are twice dead? These are those cursed trees, of which the apostle Jude speaks, Jude ver: 12. "Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." The apostle alludes unto dying trees, trees that are dying the first time in the spring, then they fade, decay, and cast off their leaves, when other trees are fragrant and flourishing: but from this first death they are sometimes recovered, by pruning, dressing, or watering the roots; but if in autumn, they decay again, which is the critical and climacterical times of trees, to discover whether their disease be mortal or not; if then they wither and decay the second time, the fault is ab intra, the root is rotten, there is no hope of it; the husbandmen bestows no more labour about it, except it be to root it up for fuel to the fire.

Just thus stands the case with false and hypocritical professors, who though they were still under the power of spiritual death, **yet in the beginning of their profession, they seemed to be alive; they showed the world the fragrant leaves of a fair profession, many hopeful buddings of affection towards spiritual things were seen in them, but wanting a root of regeneration,** they quickly began to wither and cast their untimely fruit. However, by the help of ordinances, or some rousing and awakening providences, they seem to recover themselves again; but all will not do, the fault is *ab intra*, **from the want of a good root,** and therefore, at last, they who were always once dead, **for want of a principle of regeneration,** are now become twice dead, by the withering and decay of their vain profession. Such trees are prepared for the severest flames in hell, Matt. 24:51, their portion is the saddest portion allotted for any of the sons of death. Therefore the apostle Peter tells us, 2 Pet. 2:20, 21. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, **through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** [a notional knowledge as opposed to saving, they ascent to it], they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Double measures of wrath seem to be prepared for them that die this double death.

Inf. 5. If this be so, then unregenerate persons deserve the greatest lamentations. And were this truth heartily believed, we could not but mourn over them, with the most tender compassion and hearty sorrow. If our husbands, wives, or children are dying a natural death, how are our hearts rent in pieces with pity and sorrow for them? What cries, tears, and wringing of hands, discover the deep sense we have of their misery! O Christians, is all the love you have for your relations spent upon their bodies? Are their souls of no value in your eyes? Is spiritual death no misery? Does it not deserve a tear? The Lord open your eyes, and duly affect your hearts with spiritual death and soul miseries.

Consider, my friends, and let it move your bowels, (if there be bowels of affection in you,) whilst they remain spiritually dead, **they are useless and wholly unserviceable unto God in the world, as to any special and acceptable service unto him, 2 Tim. 2:21.** they are incapable of all spiritual comforts from God; **they cannot taste the least sweetness** in Christ, in duties, or in promises, **Rom. 8:6.** they have no beauty in their souls, how comely soever their bodies are; it is grace, and nothing but grace that beautifies the inner man, **Ezek. 16:6, 7.** The dead have neither comfort nor beauty in them; they have no hope to be with God in glory; for the life of glory is begun in grace, **Phil. 1:6.** their graves must be shortly made, to be buried out of the sight of God for ever in the lowest hell, the pit digged by justice for all that are spiritually dead; the dead must be buried. **Can such considerations as these draw no pity from your souls, nor excite your endeavours for their regeneration?** Then it is to be feared your souls are dead as well as theirs. O pity them, pity them, and pray for them; in this case only, prayers for the dead are our duty; who knows but at the last, God may hear your cries, and you may say with comfort, as he did, "This my son was dead, but is alive; was lost, but is found; and they began to be merry," **Luke 15: 24.**

Statements on Arminianism

code195

by Jonathan Edwards

from his discourse Concerning Efficacious Grace

[my comments in blue]

The sum is this; Arminians and most people think that we have it in our own power to endeavour after holiness, and thus to determine the matter of believing the Gospel, believing on Christ, to really see Christ as our only hope and to see us as vile creatures, meriting nothing but damnation, and us as nothing in comparison to Christ, all to be done in a saving manner and that the only thing that God does to help us in this way is only by moral suasion, presenting ideas to our understanding, and that nothing on God's part by his Spirit is infallibly effectual or decisive; the decision for salvation is left up to their idea of man's own "self-directed" or "autonomous free-will" of deciding the matter. Hence, the first cause is within us, this deciding originates within us, and not from without. (which makes us god's, by the way) - G Clark

I would highly recommend studying John Owen's book, [A Display of Arminianism!](#)

Also, when looking at the diagram of the Glory of God, in what it consists and the communication of it to the elect by the Holy Spirit, this exposition should increase your understanding and make plain the vanity of the Arminian doctrine of man's self-sufficiency to the exclusion of the power of God that works in us (Phil2:13), and the truth of the doctrine of Original Sin which ascribes nothing to man but total depravity (1Cor2:14, Rms 8:7-8).

The following excerpts are from Concerning Efficacious Grace by Jonathan Edwards. This should help paint the picture more clearly. I underlined and emboldened in red many of the important points.

CHAP. IV.

CONCERNING EFFICACIOUS GRACE - by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.xi.iv.html>

§ 1. it is manifest that the Scripture supposes, that if ever men are turned from sin, God must undertake it, and he must be the doer of it; that it is his doing that must determine the matter; that all that others can do, will avail nothing, without his agency. [i.e., *without Me you can do nothing* - Jn 15] This is manifest by such texts as these: Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh," &c. Lam. v. 21. "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned."

[The following is typical of Arminian dogma that Edwards points out: for if the confess that the Spirit of God actually does something to effect an end which the scriptures say in a multitude of place (they just ignore many scriptures), their positions all fall to the ground.]

§2. According to Dr. Whitby's notion of the assistance of the Spirit, the Spirit of God does nothing in the hearts or minds of men beyond the power of the devil; nothing but what the devil can do; and

nothing showing any greater power in any respect, than the devil shows and exercises in his temptations. **For he supposes that all that the Spirit of God does, is to bring moral motives and inducements to mind, and set them before the understanding, &c.** It is possible that God may infuse grace, in some instances, into the minds of such persons as are striving to obtain it in the other way, though they may not observe it, and may not know that it is not obtained by gradual acquisition. But if a man has indeed sought it only in that way, **and with as much dependence on himself, and with as much neglect of God in his endeavours and prayers, as such a doctrine naturally leads to,** it is not very likely that he should obtain saving grace by the efficacious, mighty power of God. It is most likely that God should bestow this gift in a way of earnest attention to divine truth, and the use of the means of grace, with reflection on one's own sinfulness, and in a way of being more and more convinced of sinfulness, and total corruption and need of the divine power to restore the heart, to infuse goodness, and of becoming more and more sensible of one's own impotence, and helplessness and inability to obtain goodness by his own strength. And if a man has obtained no other virtue, than what seems to have been wholly in that gradual and insensible way that might be expected from use and custom, **in the exercise of his own strength,** he has reason to think, however bright his attainments may seem to be, that he has no saving virtue.

§ 3. **Great part of the gospel is denied by those who deny pure efficacious grace. They deny that wherein actual salvation and the application of redemption mainly consists; and how unlikely are such to be successful in their endeavours after actual salvation!**

Turnbull's explanation of Philip. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," is this, (Christian Philosophy, p. 96, 97.) "Give all diligence to work out your salvation; for it is God, the Creator of all things, who, by giving you, of his good pleasure, the power of willing and doing, with a sense of right and wrong, and reason to guide and direct you, hath visibly made it your end so to do. Your frame shows, that to prepare yourselves for great moral happiness, arising from a well cultivated and improved mind, suitably placed, is your end appointed to you by your Creator. Consider, therefore, that by neglecting this your duty, this your interest, you contemn and oppose the good will of God towards you, and his design in creating you." [This is a good example of misapplication of those two scriptures by Arminians that Edwards points out.]

[The following excerpt: Is salvation obtained by gradual habits, etc., or by a decisive effectual power of the Holy Spirit in infusing true virtue or holiness in the heart, thus changing the heart?]

§ 4. If we look through all the examples we have of conversion in Scripture, the conversion of the apostle Paul, and of the Corinthians, ("Such were some of you, but ye are washed, 1 Cor. vi. 11." &c.) and all others that the apostles write to, **how far were they from this gradual way of conversion, by contracted habits, and by such culture as Turn-bull speaks of!** Turnbull, in his Christian Philosophy, p. 470. seems to think, that the **sudden conversions** that were in the apostles' days, **were instances of**

their miraculous power, as in these words, "They appealed to the works they wrought, to the samples they gave of their power to foretell future events; their power to cure instantaneously all diseases of the body; their power to cure, in the same extraordinary manner, all diseases of the mind, or to convert bad into good dispositions; their power to bestow gifts and blessings of all sorts, bodily and spiritual." See again to the like purpose, p. 472.

Now I would inquire, whether those who thus had the diseases of their minds cured, and theirs had converted into good dispositions, had any virtue; or whether those good dispositions of theirs were virtues, or anything praiseworthy; and whether, when they were thus converted, they became good men and the heirs of salvation? As Turnbull himself allows, all that are not good men, were called the children of the devil in Scripture; and he asserts that **nothing is virtue, but what is obtained by our own culture; that no habit is virtuous, but a contracted one, one that is owing to ourselves, our own diligence,** &c.; and also holds, that none are good men but the virtuous; none others are the heirs of future happiness.

§ 5. **What God wrought for the apostle Paul and other primitive Christians, was intended for a pattern to all future ages, for their instruction and excitement; Eph. ii. 7. 1 Tim. i. 16.** It is natural to expect, that the first fruits of the church specially recorded in history, and in that book which is the steady rule of the church in all things pertaining to salvation, should be a pattern to after-ages in those things, those privileges, which equally concern all. Or if it be said, that as soon as men take up a strong resolution, they are accepted and looked upon by God as penitents and converts; it may be inquired, is there a good man without good habits, or principles of virtue and goodness in his heart?

 [That all true virtue comes from God and not from man.]

Herod's example - [see also [code278a](#)]

§ 8. [Acts xii. 23.](#) God was so angry with Herod for not giving him the glory of his eloquence, that the angel of the Lord smote him immediately, and he died a miserable death; he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But if it be very sinful for a man to take to himself the glory of such a qualification as eloquence, how much more a man's taking to himself the glory of divine grace, **God's own image** [see [diagram!!](#)], and that which is **infinitely God's most excellent, precious, and glorious gift** [which are all those virtues listed on the diagram of God's internal glory], and man's highest honour, **excellency, and happiness, whereby he is partaker of the divine nature**, and becomes a God-like creature? If God was so jealous for the glory of so small a gift, how much more for so high an endowment, this being that alone, of all other things, by which man becomes like God? If man takes the glory of it to himself, he thereby will be in the greatest danger of taking the glory to himself that is due to God, **and of setting up himself as standing in competition with God, as vying with the Most High, and making himself a god, and not a man.** **If not giving God the glory of that which is least honorable, provokes God's jealousy; much more must not giving God the glory of that which is infinitely the most honorable.** [And that is why the sinner's prayer is highly provoking to God and is the height of man's rebellion of being

independent from God's authority and kingship, that it is a wicked presumption see Ps 50:16] It is allowed, the apostle insists upon it, that the primitive Christians should be sensible that the glory of their gifts belonged to God, and that they made not themselves to differ. But how small a matter is this, if they make themselves to differ in that, which the apostle says is so much more excellent than all gifts! p544

[Next: All the glory of our salvation should go to God! ----]

§ 9. How much more careful has God shown himself, that men should not be proud of their virtue, than of any other gift! See Deut. ix. 4. Luke xviii. 9. and innumerable other places. And the apostle plainly teaches us to ascribe to God the glory, not only of our redemption, but of our wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification; and that no flesh should glory in themselves in these things, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. Again, the apostle plainly directs, that all that glory in their virtue, should glory in the Lord, 2 Cor. x. 17. It is glorying in virtue and virtuous deeds he is there speaking of; and it is plain, that the apostle uses the expression of glorying in the Lord, in such a sense, as to imply ascribing the glory of our virtue to God. p544

§ 10. The doctrine of men's being the determining causes of their own virtue, teaches them, not to do so much, as even the proud Pharisee did, who thanked God for making him to differ from other men in virtue, Luke xviii.

See Gen. xli. 15, 16. Job xi. 12. Dan. ii. 25., &c. 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6., 2 Cor. iv. 7. 2 Cor. x. 17.

Prov. xx. 12. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made, even both of them;" compared with many parallel places that speak about God's giving eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, &c.

Next: Characteristics of Arminian doctrine:

§ 11. The Arminian doctrine, and the doctrine of our new philosophers, concerning habits of virtue being only by custom, discipline, and gradual culture, joined with the other doctrine, that the obtaining of these habits in those that have time for it, is in every man's power, according to their doctrine of the freedom of will, tends exceedingly to cherish presumption in sinners, while in health and vigour, and tends to their utter despair, in sensible approaches of death by sickness or old age.

Next: On the Spirit of God.... efficacious or not? Common virtue vs true virtue infused...

§.12. Observe that the question with some is, whether the Spirit of God does anything at all in these days, since the Scriptures have been completed. With those that allow that he does anything, the

question cannot be, whether his influence be immediate; for, if he does anything at all, his influence must be immediate. Nor can the question be, whether his influence, with regard to what he intends to do, be efficacious.

The questions relating to efficacious grace, controverted between us and the Arminians, are two:

1. Whether the grace of God, in giving us saving virtue, be **determining and decisive**.

2. Whether **saving virtue be decisively given by a supernatural and sovereign operation of the Spirit of God; or, whether it be only by such a divine influence or assistance, as is imparted in the course of common providence**, either according to established laws of nature, or established laws of God's universal providence towards mankind; i.e. either,

1. **Assistance** which is given in all natural actions, wherein men do merely exercise **and improve the principles of nature and laws of nature**, and come to such attainments as are connected with such exercises by the **mere laws of nature**. For there is an assistance in all such natural actions; **because it is by a divine influence that the laws of nature are upheld; and a constant occurrence of divine power is necessary in order to our living, moving, or having a being.** [Hence, for in him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28] **This we may call a natural assistance**. Or, 2. That assistance, which though it be something besides the upholding of the laws of nature, (which take place in all affairs of life,) is yet, by a divine, universal constitution in this particular affair of religion, so connected with those voluntary exercises which **result from this mere natural assistance, that by this constitution it indiscriminately extends to all mankind, and is certainly connected with such exercises and improvements, as those just mentioned, by a certain, established, known rule, as much as any of the laws of nature**. This kind of assistance, **though many Arminians call it a supernatural assistance, differs little or nothing from that natural assistance that is established by a law of nature**. The law so established, is only a particular law of nature; as some of the laws of nature are more general, others more particular: but this establishment, **which they suppose to be by divine promise, differs nothing at all from many other particular laws of nature**, except only in this circumstance, of the established constitutions being revealed in the word of God, while others are left to be discovered only by experience.

The Calvinists suppose otherwise; they suppose that **divine influence and operation, by which saving virtue is obtained, is entirely from, and above common assistance, or that which is given in a course of ordinary providence**, according to universally established laws of nature. **They suppose a principle of saving virtue is immediately imparted and implanted by that operation, which is sovereign and efficacious in this respect, that its effect proceeds not from any established laws of nature**. I mention this as an entirely different question from the other, viz. Whether the grace of God, by which we obtain saving virtue, is **determining or decisive**. For that it may be, if it be given wholly in a course of nature, or by such an operation as is limited and regulated perfectly according to established,

invariable laws. For none will dispute that many things are brought to pass by God in this manner, that are decisively ordered by him, and are brought to pass by his determining providence. The controversy, as it relates to efficacious grace, in this sense, includes in it these four questions.

1. Whether saving virtue differs from common virtue, or such virtue as those have that are not in a state of salvation, in nature and kind, or only in degree and circumstances?

2. Whether a holy disposition of heart, as an internal governing principle of life and practice, be immediately implanted or infused in the soul, [see diagram - it show this!] or only be contracted by repeated acts, and obtained by human culture and improvement?

3. Whether conversion, or the change of a person from being a vicious or wicked man, to a truly virtuous character, be instantaneous or gradual!

4. Whether the divine assistance or influence, by which men may obtain true and saving virtue, be sovereign and arbitrary, or, whether God, in giving this assistance and its effects, limits himself to certain exact and stated rules, revealed in his word, and established by his promises?

§ 13. Eph. i. 19, 20. “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, according to the working of his mighty power,” or the **effectual working**, as the word signifies These words, according to the **effectual working of his power, we shall find applied to conversion, to growth in grace, and to raising us up at last.** You have them applied to conversion, Eph. iii. 7. “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given to me, by the effectual working of his power.” So likewise to grow in grace, Eph. iv. 10. “The whole body increaseth with the increase of God, by the **effectual working** in the measure of every part.” And to the resurrection to glory at the last day, Philip. iii. 21. “He will change our vile bodies, according to the effectual working of his mighty power, **whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.**”

And that the power of God in conversion, or in giving faith and the spiritual blessings that attend it, is here meant, may be argued from the apostle’s change of phrase, that whereas in the foregoing verse, he spoke of the riches of the glory of Christ’s inheritance in the saints, he does not go on to say, “and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them,” (i. e. the saints,) which surely would have been most natural, if he still had respect only to the power of God in bestowing the inheritance of future glory. But, instead of that, we see he changes the phrase; “**and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;**” plainly intimating some kind of change of the subject, or a respect to the subject of salvation with regard **to something diverse**; that whereas before he spoke of saints in their future state only, now he speaks of something that the saints, we that dwell in this world that believe, are the subjects of. And as the apostle includes himself, so it is the more likely he should

have the mighty **power of God in conversion** in his thought; his conversion having been so visible and remarkable an instance of **God's marvellous power**.

Next: *The new way or another way* that man has invented....

§ 14. It is a doctrine mightily in vogue, that God has promised his saving grace to men's sincere endeavours in praying for it, and using proper means to obtain it; and so that it is not God's mere will that determines the matter, whether we shall have saving grace or not; but that the matter is left with us, to be determined by the sincerity of our endeavours.

But there is vast confusion in all talk of this kind, **for want of its being well explained** [so typical - further examination of arguments typifies the "MO" of cults and false teaching] what is meant by sincerity of endeavour, and through men's deceiving themselves by using words without a meaning. I think the Scripture knows of but one sort of sincerity in religion, and that is a truly pious or holy sincerity. The Bible suggests no notion of any other sort of sincere obedience, or any other sincerity of endeavours, or any doings whatsoever in religion, than doing from love to God and true love to our duty. As to those that endeavour and take pains, (let them do ever so much,) that yet do nothing freely, or from any true love to or delight in God, or free inclination to virtue, but wholly for by-ends, and from sinister and mercenary views, as being driven and forced against their inclination, or induced by regard to things foreign; I say, respecting such as these, I find nothing in Scripture that should lead us to call them honest and sincere in their endeavours. I doubt not but that the Scripture promises supernatural, truly divine, and saving blessings, to such a sincerity of endeavour as arises from **true love to our duty**. But then, as I apprehend, **this is only to promise more saving grace to him that seeks it in the exercise of saving grace, agreeably to that repeated saying of our Saviour, "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."** [Matthew 13:12](#). [that was a good example of a misapplied scripture] Persons, in seeking grace with this sincerity, ask in faith; they seek these blessings in the exercise of a saving faith, the great condition of the covenant of grace. And I suppose, promises are made to no sincerity, but what implies this. And whoever supposes that divine promises are made to any other sincerity than this, I imagine he never will be able to make out his scheme, and that for two reasons: p545-6

1. On such a supposition, the promises must be supposed to be to an undetermined condition. And,
2. Even on the supposition that the promises are made to some other sincerity than a truly pious sincerity, the sovereign grace and will of God must determine the existence of the condition of the promises; and so the whole must still depend on God's determining grace.

Arminians: the will determines itself to endeavor after holiness! Not God.

And if it be said, that there is no need of supposing any such thing as any previous, habitual sincerity, or any such sincerity going before, as shall be an **established principle**, **but that it is sufficient that the**

free will does sincerely determine itself to endeavour after holiness [the key Arminian position] I answer, whether we suppose the sincerity that first entitles to the promises, to be a **settled habit or established principle**, or not, it does not in the least remove the difficulty, as long as it is something, in which some men are distinguished from others, that precedes the distinguishing endeavour which entitles to the promises, and is the source and spring of those endeavours. This **first distinguishing sincerity**, which is the **spring of the whole affair**, **must have existence by some means or other; and it must proceed either from some previous sincere endeavour of the man's own, which is a contradiction; or from God, which is the point required; or it must be the effect of chance**, in other words, of nothing. p 547

an example of twisting scripture:

§ 15. **Ephesians ii. 8.** "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Mr. Beach observes, "this text does not mean that their faith is so God's gift, as not to be of themselves, as is most evident to any who reads the original." This is certainly a great mistake. What I suppose he means, is, that the relative *that*, being of the neuter gender, and the word Greek of the feminine, they do not agree together. But if he would translate the Greek relative *that* thing, viz. the thing last spoken of, all the difficulty vanishes. Vid. Bezn, in loc. Such Scriptures as these, **1 Cor. xv. 10.** "Not I, but the grace of God *that* was with me;" **Gal. ii. 20.** "**Not I, but Christ liveth in me;**" **proves efficacious grace. The virtuous actions of men that are rewardable, are not left to men's indifference, without divine ordering and efficacy, so as to be possible to fail. They are often in the Scripture the matter of God's promises. How often does God promise reformations! How often does God promise that great revival of religion in the latter days!** **Dr. Whitby seems to deny any physical influence at all of the Spirit of God, on the will; and allows an influence by moral suasion and moral causes only,** p. 344. This is to deny that the Spirit of God does anything at all, except inspiring the prophets, and giving the means of grace, with God's ordination of this in his providence. If God do anything physically, what he does must be efficacious and irresistible. p547 [2Chron. 20:6, *...none is able to withstand you.*]

But if it be said, that though God has promised assistance, yet he has not promised the exact degree, as, notwithstanding his promise, he has left himself at liberty to assist some, much more than others, in consequence of the very same endeavour. I answer, that this will prove a giving up of their whole scheme, and will infallibly bring in the Calvinistical notion of sovereign and arbitrary grace; whereby some, with the very same sincerity of endeavour, with the same degree of endeavour, and the same use of means, nay, although all things are exactly equal in both cases, both as to their persons and behaviour; yet one has that success by sovereign grace and God's arbitrary pleasure, that is denied another. If God has left himself no liberty of sovereign grace in giving success to man's endeavours, but his consequent assistance be always tied to such endeavours precisely, then man's success is just as much in his own power, and is in the same way the fruit of his own doings, as the effect and fulfillment of his endeavours to commit adultery or murder; and indeed much more. For his success in those endeavours is not tied to such endeavours, but may be providentially disappointed. Although particular motions follow such and such acts of will, in such a state of body, exactly according to certain laws of

nature; yet a man's success in such wickedness is not at all tied to his endeavours by any divine establishment, as the Arminians suppose success is to man's endeavours after conversion.

For the Spirit of God, by assisting in the alleged manner, becomes not the efficient cause of those things, as the Scriptures do certainly represent him. If God be not the proper bestower, author, and efficient cause of virtue, then the greatest benefits flow not from him; are not owing to his goodness; nor have we him to thank for them. p548

§ 20. Arminians argue that God has obliged himself to bestow a holy and saving disposition, on certain conditions, and that what is given in **regeneration**, is given either for **natural men's asking** [natural, meaning unsaved], or for the diligent improvement of **common grace**; because, otherwise, it would not be our fault that we are without it [a common objection of unconditional election by Arminians], nor our virtue that we have it. But if this reasoning is just, the holy qualities obtained by the regenerate, are only the fruits of virtue, not virtues themselves. **All the virtue lies in asking, and in the diligent improvement of common grace.** [Hence the popularity of saying the sinner's prayer, etc.] p548

Martin Luther, Bondage of the Will:

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“Now take the words of Christ in John 6: “No one comes to me unless my Father draws him.” What does this leave to free choice? He says that everyone needs to hear and learn from the Father himself, and that all must be taught by God. He plainly teaches here, not only that the works and efforts of free choice are fruitless, but that even the message of the gospel itself (which is what this passage is about) is heard in vain unless the Father himself speaks, teaches, and draws inwardly. “No one can come,” he says, “no one”; and thus that power by which a man is able to make some endeavor toward Christ, or in other words, toward the things that pertain to salvation, is asserted to be no power at all.”

Speaking of common grace (*God rains on the just and the unjust*) vs. special or saving grace (*faith*) reserved only for the elect.

Yet we must not— for the sake of the kinship and connection between them— overlook the essential difference. This is the special grace that was unknown to the pagans. All pagan religions are self-willed and legalistic. They are all the aftereffects and adulterations of the covenant of works. Human beings here consistently try to bring about their own salvation by purifications, asceticism, penance, sacrifice, law observance, ceremony, and so on. Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pg 220

"A man's free will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in its power to cure his soul" – Toplady, 1740-1778

Augustus Montague Toplady was an Anglican cleric and hymn writer. He was a major Calvinist opponent of John Wesley. He is best remembered as the author of the hymn "Rock of Ages".

Miscellaneous Remarks by Jonathan Edwards code197

pg 554 volume 2

Concerning Efficacious Grace

cont.

This is a very strong argument in favor of God's sovereign disposal of his gifts. **This is key!** Edwards excellently uncovers the absurdity of the Arminian doctrine of free will, liberty etc., confirming the sinful presumptuousness of the sinner's prayer as not the way of salvation.]

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Edwards:

Moses speaks of the great **moral means** [this is the same as moral suasion or reasonings that Arminians say that God uses to try to convince men to decide for Christ and leaving the deciding in the hands of man's so called free will to decide the matter] that God had used with the children of Israel to enlighten them, and convince and persuade them; but of their being yet un-persuaded and unconverted, and gives this as a reason, **that God had not given them a heart to perceive**, as [Deut. xxix. 4](#). "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." **The Scripture plainly makes a distinction between exhibiting light, or means of instruction and persuasion, and giving eyes to see, circumcising the heart, &c.**

§ 51. Why should Christ teach us to pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, [Matt. vi. 10](#)." if it is not God's work to bring that effect to pass, and it is left to man's free will, and cannot be otherwise, because otherwise it is no virtue, and none of their obedience, or doing of God's will; and God does what he can oftentimes consistently with man's liberty, and those that enjoy the means he uses, do generally neglect and refuse to do his will? He does so much, that he can

well say, what could I have done more? And yet almost all are at the greatest distance from doing his will. See [Colos. i. 9, 10.](#)

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event [that is by God's influence];** that it is no part of the ordering of God, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he/has not the disposal.

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? **For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it.** [Isa. lx. 22.](#) "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." Surely this is the language of a promiser, and not merely a predictor. God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. xi.](#) and innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.

Next, this is superb reasoning!!

§ 53. If God is not the disposing author of **virtue [this is that virtue or holiness shone on the diagram that means mainly, love for God]**, then he is not the giver of it. The very **notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit.** [1 John iv. 4.](#) "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict? pg 554

Remarks by Elisha Coles

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CH 3

A Practical Discourse on God's Sovereignty

I like the way Elisha Coles says things; this is on the pernicious consequents of the weak foundation of the sinner's prayer and upon the ignorance of God's sovereignty in election and the limited atonement. How vital Christian knowledge is!

Argument 7. The doctrine of **special** and **peculiar redemption** is further confirmed by those perilous consequents which attend the doctrine of **general redemption**, as it is commonly held forth; for, 1. It seems to reflect on the wisdom of God; as imputing to him such a contrivance for men's salvation, as might be possibly frustrated; which is far from convincing the world that Christ crucified is the wisdom of God. 2. It also seems to tax God with injustice, as not discharging those whose transgressions are answered for by their Surety; or else, that the sufferings of Christ were not sufficient to make a discharge due to them. Or, 3. It insinuates a deficiency of power, or want of good will, to prosecute his design to perfection. 4. It makes men boasters; suspending the virtue and success of all that Christ has done for them, on something to be done by themselves, which he is not the doer of; and consequently, that men are principals in procuring their own salvation; and so Christ shall have but his thousands, in truth his nothing, while **freedom of will** shall have its ten thousands to cry up the praises of men. This is not "that the Lord alone should be exalted." It would also follow, that those who are saved and gone to heaven, have nothing more of Christ's to glory in, and praise him for, than those who are perished and gone to hell. For, according to the principles of general redemption, he did and doeth for all alike; and no more for one than for another. 6. **It makes men presumptuous, and carnally secure**. How many have soothed up themselves in their impenitency and hardness of heart, and fenced themselves against the word, on this very supposition, that Christ died for all; and why then should not they look to be saved as well as any other? And so they lean, pretendedly, on the Lord, and transgress; not considering, that those for whom Christ died, he purchased for them a freedom from sin, and not a liberty of sinning; nor impunity, but on terms of faith and repentance. **And that the tempter disturbs them not in their rest on such a foundation, may be one reason why men so stiffly adhere to it; and that those of the general principle are so seldom troubled with terrors of conscience.**

By a Sweet and Secret Efficacy of God's Power

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More on God's Sovereignty in the conversion of Sinner's,
man's will, subject to God's will, etc.

The following excerpts from Flavel and Owen show convincingly that God is not in the least dependent upon the creature, but the creature wholly dependent upon God; that God in his infinite power and wisdom, converts the soul from an obstinate unbelieving sinner to a willing servant of Christ without doing any violence to his will - that the sinner's prayer is a fraud of the highest order, pretty much no different than all the other man-invented ways of trying to escape his spiritual prison cell and appease his guilty conscience, all of which leads to a false peace and fatal security. After all that God has done in eternity in his plan of redemption as Owen explains, to think that it all hinges upon man's decision is not only ludicrous but also directly contradicts scripture, and is against all due application of reason.

My comments in [blue].

Vol. 18, Commentary on Hebrews, by John Owen
Federal Transaction Between the Father and the Son

Regarding a valid covenant - Vol. 18 p 82

7. An absolutely complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement, between distinct persons, about the ordering and disposal of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage: —

(1.) Distinct persons are required unto a covenant, for it is a mutual compact. As “a mediator is not of one,” — that is, there must be several parties, and those at variance, or there is no room for the interposition of a mediator, Galatians 3:20, — so a covenant, properly so called, is not of one. In the large sense wherein [*Hebrew word*] is taken, a man's resolution in himself with respect unto any especial end or purpose may be called his covenant, as Job 31:1, “I made a covenant with mine eyes.” And so God calleth his purpose or decree concerning the orderly course of nature in the instance before given. But a covenant, properly so called, is the convention or agreement of two persons or more.

(2.) This agreement must be *voluntary* and of choice upon the election of the terms convented about. Hence [*Hebrew word*] is by some derived from [*Hebrew word*]; which signifies “to choose” or “elect;” for such choice is the foundation of all solemn covenants. What is properly so is founded on a *free election* of the terms of it, upon due consideration and a right judgment made of them. Hence, when one people is broken in war or subdued by another, who prescribe terms unto them, which they are forced as it were to accept for the present necessity, it is but an imperfect covenant, and, as things are in the world, not like to be firm or stable. So some legates answered in the senate of Rome when their people were subdued, “*Pacem habebitis qualem dederitis; si bonam, firmam et stabilem, sin haud diuturnam.*” [*Those who are unconverted are at enmity with God and cannot obey or please God, Rom 8:7-8, "for it [the mind] does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸ and*

those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The soul must be willing for it to be a valid covenant! Unconverted people are not willing!! Only if God converts the soul first by the secret efficacy of his power, will they be genuinely willing, and hence the covenant be *firm and stable*; hence Ps 110:3, "*Your people shall be volunteers [or willing] in the day of Your power.*" So this person doing this prayer is still apart from God, in no such covenant, though he thinks he is. And this is the great danger, a stupid or fatal security ensues which, all things being equal, is *next to impossible to overcome* as Flavel states. Think about this; how is someone going to react when he thinks he's saved and you tell him he may not be? All the warnings and exhortation to believe or repent will rollover him like water off a duck's back; he'll think they have nothing to do with him, but only for other people. He will not want to examine himself, for that would destroy his peace.]

(3.) The matter of every righteous and complete covenant must be of things in the power of them who convent and agree about them; [this, no unconverted person is able or willing to do] otherwise any, yea the most solemn compact, is vain and ineffectual. [exactly my point] A son or daughter in their father's house, and under his care, making a vow or covenant for the disposal of themselves, can give no force unto it, because they are not in their own power. Hence, when God invites and takes men into the covenant of grace, whereunto belongs a restipulation of faith and obedience, which are not absolutely in their own power, that the covenant may be firm and stable he takes upon himself to enable them thereunto; and the efficacy of his grace unto that purpose is of the nature of the covenant. Hence, when men enter into any compact wherein one party takes on itself the performance of that which the other thinks to be, but is not, really in its power, there is *dolus malus* [fraud] in it, which enervates and disannuls the covenant itself. And many such compacts were rescinded by the senate and people of Rome, which were made by their generals without their consent; as those with the Gauls who besieged the Capitol, and with the Samnites, at the Furcae Caudinae.

pg 85-6 Vol. 18, Commentary on Hebrews, by John Owen;

Federal Transaction Between the Father and the Son (or The Covenant of Redemption that entered into in eternity)

10. Again; the transactions before insisted on and declared are proposed to have been by the way of "counsel," for the accomplishment of the end designed in a covenant: Zechariah 6:13, [Hebrew words]. The counsel about peace-making between God and man was "between them both;" that is, the two persons spoken of, — namely, the Lord Jehovah, and he who was to be [Hebrew word], "The Branch." And this was not spoken of him absolutely as he was a man, or was to be a man, for so there was not properly [Hebrew word], or "counsel," between God and him; "for who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Romans 11:34. And, besides, the Son in his human nature was merely the servant of the Father to do his will, Isaiah 42:1. But God takes this counsel with him as he was his **eternal Wisdom**, only with respect unto his future incarnation; for therein he was to be both the "Branch of the LORD and "the fruit of the earth," Isaiah 4:2. Hereunto regard also is had in his name: Isaiah 9:6, "He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor;" for these titles, with those that follow, do not absolutely denote properties of the divine nature, though they are such divine titles and attributes as cannot be ascribed unto any but to him who is God; but there is in them a respect unto the work which he had to do as he was to be a "child born" and "a son given" unto us. And on the same account

is he called "The everlasting Father," a name not proper unto the person of the Son with mere respect unto his personality. There is, therefore, a regard in it unto the work he had to do, which was to be a father unto all the elect of God. And therein also was he "The Prince of Peace," — he who is the procurer and establisher of peace between God and mankind. On the same account God speaking of him, says that he is *ytiymi rbef, yiro*, — "My shepherd, and the man my fellow," Zechariah 13:7; such an one as with whom he had sweetened and rejoiced in secret counsel, as Psalm 55:14, according unto what was before declared on Proverbs 8:30, 31.

11. Particularly, **the will of the Father and Son concurred in this matter; which was necessary**, that the **covenant might be voluntary and of choice**. And the original of the whole is referred to the will of the Father constantly. Hence our Lord Jesus Christ on all occasions declares solemnly that he came to do the will of the Father: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-10; for in this agreement the part of the enjoiner, prescriber, and promiser, whose will in all things is to be attended unto, is on the Father. And his will was naturally at a perfect liberty from engaging in that way of salvation which he accomplished by Christ. **He was at liberty to have left all mankind under sin and the curse**, as he did all the angels that fell; he was at liberty utterly to have destroyed the race of mankind that sprang from Adam in his fallen estate, either in the root of them, or in the branches when multiplied, as he almost did in the flood, and have created another stock or race of them unto his glory. **And hence the acting of his will herein is expressed by grace**, — **which is free, or it is not grace**, [so if you have to ask for it which is the purpose of the sinner's prayer, then *grace is no longer grace!* and God then is a debtor and not the *free* giver of it. "Free" meaning that nothing outside Himself moves him to do anything; it is totally of the *counsel of his own will*, not the result of the will of another! John 1:13, Rom 9:15-16 As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God.]— and is said to proceed from love acting by choice; **all arguing the highest liberty in the will of the Father**, John 3:16; Ephesians 1:6. And the same is further evidenced by the exercise of his authority, both in the commission and commands that he gave unto the Son, as incarnate, for the discharge of the work that he had undertaken; for none puts forth his authority but voluntarily, or by and according unto his own will. Now, he both sent the Son, and sealed him, and gave him commands; which are all acts of choice and liberty, **proceeding from sovereignty**. Let none, then, once imagine that this work of entering into covenant about the salvation of mankind was any way necessary unto God, or that it was required by virtue of any of the essential properties of his nature, so that he must have done against them in doing otherwise. **God was herein absolutely free**, as he was also in his making of all things out of nothing. He could have left it undone without the least disadvantage unto his essential glory or contrariety unto his holy nature. Whatever, therefore, we may afterwards assert concerning the necessity of satisfaction to be given unto his justice, upon the supposition of this covenant, yet the entering into this covenant, and consequently all that ensued thereon, **is absolutely resolved into the mere will and grace of God**.

pg 88 Covenant between the Father and the Son cont.

14. Moreover, a covenant must be about the disposal of things in the power of them that enter into it, otherwise it is null or fraudulent. And thus things may be two ways; — first, Absolutely; secondly, By virtue of some condition or something in the nature of the covenant itself.

(1.) Things are absolutely in the power of persons, when they are completely at their disposal antecedently unto the consideration of any covenant or agreement about them; as in the covenant of

marriage, where 108 the several persons engaging are *sui juris*, — they have an absolute power in themselves to dispose of their own persons with respect unto the ends of marriage. **So it is in all covenants.** [But in the Sinner's prayer, the sinner is deceived: that he thinks he is willing, loves God, sees his own vileness, when in truth he is still at enmity with God. There are many motives for this prayer all resolved into self-love and not a love for God. Why? Because he hasn't been given a love for God yet!!! This is why this prayer is a huge contradiction, the cart before the horse. Yet it looks and sounds so good; the person seems contrite, humble, emotional, sincere; but it's all a fraud as we see these similar reactions in the parable of the sower, where they receive the word *with joy*, etc. Fallen man still has an attraction to religion because it's good and tends to quiet conscience, etc., but that does not mean these signs are truly gracious signs. All he wants is what God has, not God or Christ. Calvin writes, *he [God] cannot be toughed with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes. Confessing the Impassible God, pg 157. Study this subject of impassibility!*]

When the things to be disposed of according to the limitations of the covenant are lawful and good antecedently unto any agreement made about them, and because they are in the power of the covenanters, they may be disposed of according to the terms of the compact. So was it in this covenant. To do good unto mankind, to bring them unto the enjoyment of himself, was absolutely in the power of the Father. And it was in the power of the Son to assume human nature, which becoming thereby peculiarly his own, he might dispose of it unto what end he pleased, saving the union which ensued on its assumption, for this was indissoluble. (2.) Again, some things are made lawful or good, or suited unto the glory, honor, or satisfaction and complacency, of them that make the covenant, by virtue of somewhat arising in or from the covenant itself. And of this sort are most of the things that are disposed in the covenant between the Father and the Son under consideration. They become good and desirable, and suited unto their glory and honor, not as considered absolutely and in themselves, but with respect unto that order, dependence, and mutual relation, that they are cast into by and in the covenant.

pg 100 Our Absolute Dependence upon God - Owen vol. 18 cont.

The "sovereignty of God" is a huge objection by Arminians (and unregenerate people for that matter) over their supposed *liberty of their will*; that God is not fair in doing what he does as the *Potter*...

The right, therefore, which God hath to act his righteousness, or to act righteously towards others, is **supreme and sovereign**, arising naturally and necessarily from the relation of all things unto himself; for hereby, — namely, by their relation unto him as his creatures, — **they are all placed in an universal, indispensable, and absolutely unchangeable dependence on him**, according to their natures and capacities. The right of God unto rule over us is wholly of another kind and nature than anything is or can be among the sons of men, that which is paternal having the nearest resemblance of it, **but it is not of the same kind**; for it doth not arise from the benefits we receive from him, **nor hath any respect unto our consent, for he rules over the most against their wills**, but depends merely on our relation unto him as his creatures, with the nature, order, and condition of our existence, wherein we are placed by his sovereignty. **This in him is unavoidably accompanied with a right to act towards us according to the counsel of his will and the rectitude of his nature.** The state and condition, I say, of our being and end, with the relation which we have unto him and to his other works, or the order wherein we are set and placed in the universe, being the product or effect of his power, wisdom, will,

and goodness, he hath an **unchangeable, sovereign right to deal with us and act towards us according to the infinite, eternal rectitude of his nature**. And as he hath a right so to do, so he cannot do otherwise. Supposing the state and condition wherein we are made and placed, with the nature of our relation unto and dependence on God, and God can act no otherwise towards us but according to what the essential rectitude of his nature doth direct and require; which is the foundation of what we plead in the case before us concerning the necessity of the priesthood of Christ.

Christ's Kingly Office in Conversion

code200

Now, some comments from John Flavel, in his book,

The Fountain of Life p 133-138,

Christ's kingly office

So, the question arises, if man can't chose Christ savingly while unregenerate via the Sinner's Prayer, **how then does one come to Christ, to believe in him?** Does God force the issue by doing violence to the will, making him a robot, as Arminians argue? Flavel explains how God does it. This will put to rest this straw-man argument against God's sovereignty and man's responsibility; that they are consistent with one another.

Sermon 16

Of the Kingly Office of Christ, as it is executed spiritually upon the Souls of the Redeemed.

[2 Cor. 10: 5.](#)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

We now come to the **Regal** office, by which our glorious Mediator executes and dischargeth the undertaken design of our redemption. Had he not, as our Prophet, opened the way of life and salvation to the children of men, they could never have known it; and if they had clearly known it, except, as their Priest, he had offered up himself, to impetrate and obtain redemption for them, they could not have been redeemed virtually by his blood; and if they had been so redeemed, yet had he not lived in the capacity of a King, to **apply this purchase of his blood to them, they would have had no actual, personal benefit by his death; for what he revealed as a Prophet, he purchased as a Priest; and what he so revealed and purchased as a Prophet and Priest, he applies as a King:** [\[note this is active; we are passive in our conversion\]](#) **first subduing the souls of his elect to his spiritual government; then ruling them as his subjects,** and ordering all things in the kingdom of Providence for their good. So that Christ has a **twofold kingdom**, the one spiritual and internal, by which he subdues and rules the hearts of his people; the other providential and external, whereby he guides, rules, and orders all things in the

world, in a blessed subordination to their eternal salvation. I am to speak from this text of his spiritual and internal kingdom.

These words are considered two ways, either relatively or absolutely. Considered relatively, they are a vindication of the apostle from the unjust censures of the Corinthians, who very unworthily, interpreted his gentleness, condescension, and winning affability, to be no better than a fawning upon them for self-ends; and the authority he exercised, no better than pride and imperiousness. But hereby he lets them know, that as Christ needs not, so he never used such carnal artifices: The weapons of our warfare (saith he) are not carnal, but mighty, through God, &c.

Absolutely considered, **they hold forth the efficacy of the gospel**, in the plainness and simplicity of it, for the **subduing of rebellious sinners to Christ**: and in them we have these three things to consider,

1. The oppositions made by sinners against the assaults of the gospel, viz. imaginations, or reasonings, as the word "*logismous*" may be fitly rendered. He means the subtleties, slights, excuses, subterfuges, and arguing of fleshly-minded men; in which they fortify and entrench themselves against the convictions of the word: yea, and there are not only such carnal seasonings, but many proud, high conceits with which poor creatures swell, and scorn to submit to the abasing, humble, self denying way of the gospel. **These are the fortifications erected against Christ by the carnal mind.**
2. We have here the conquest which the gospel obtains over sinners, thus fortified against it; it casts down and overthrows, and takes in these strong holds. Thus Christ spoils Satan of his armour in which he trusted, by showing the sinner that all this can be no defense to his soul against the wrath of God. But that is not all: in the next place,
3. You have here the improvement of the victory. **Christ does not only lead away these enemies spoiled, but brings them into obedience to himself**, i.e. makes them, after conversion, subjects of his own kingdom, obedient, useful, and serviceable to himself; and so is more than a conqueror. They do not only lay down their arms, and fight no more against Christ with them; but repair to his camp, and fight for Christ, with those reasons of theirs that were before employed against him: as it is said of Jerome, Origin, and Tertullian, that they came into Canaan, laden with Egyptian gold; i.e. they came into the church full of excellent learning and abilities, with which they eminently served Jesus Christ. **"O blessed victory, where the conqueror, and conquered, both triumph together!"** And thus enemies and rebels are subdued, and made subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. [and I re-state Edwards' comment on God's power vs. ours:

§ 53. If God is not the disposing author of **virtue** [this is that virtue or holiness shone on the diagram that means mainly, love for God], then he is not the giver of it. The very **notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit.** **1 John iv. 4.** "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. **But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict?** pg 554

Hence the doctrinal note is,

Doctrine. That *Jesus Christ exercises a Kingly power over the souls of all whom the gospel subdues to his obedience.*

No sooner were the Colossians delivered out of the power of darkness, but they were immediately translated into the kingdom of Christ, the dear Son, [Col. 1: 13](#).

This kingdom of Christ, which is our present subject, is the [internal spiritual kingdom](#), which is said to be within the saints, [Luke 17: 20, 21](#). "The kingdom of God is within you." Christ sits as an enthroned king in the hearts, consciences, and affections of his willing people, [Psal. 110: 3](#). And his kingdom consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," [Rom. 14: 17](#), and it is properly monarchical, as appears in the margin.

In the prosecution of this point, I will speak doctrinally to these three heads.

First, How Christ obtains the throne in the hearts of men.

Secondly, How he rules in it, and by what acts he exercises his kingly authority.

Thirdly, What are the privileges of those souls over whom Christ reigns. And then apply it.

First, We will open the war and manner in which Christ obtains a throne in the hearts of men, and that is by conquest: [for though the souls of the elect are his by donation, and right of redemption](#); the Father gave them to him, and he died for them; [yet Satan has the first possession](#): and so it fares with Christ, as it did with Abraham, to whom God gave the land of Canaan by promise and covenant, but the Canaanites, Perizites, and sons of Anak, had the actual possession of it, and Abraham's posterity must fight for it, and win it by inches, before they enjoy it. The house is conveyed to Christ by him that built it, but the strong man armed keeps the possession of it, till a stronger than he comes and ejects him, [Luke 11: 20, 21, 22](#). Christ must fight his way into the soul, though he have a right to enter, as into his dearly purchased possession. And so he does; for when the time of recovering them is come, he sends forth his armies to subdue them; as it is [Ps. 110: 3](#). "[Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.](#)" The Hebrew may as fitly be rendered, and so is by some, "in the day of thine armies;" when the Lord Jesus sent forth his armies of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, under the conduct of his Spirit, armed with that two edged sword, the word of God, which is sharp and powerful, [Heb. 4: 12](#). But that is not all: he causes armies of convictions, and spiritual troubles, to begird and straiten them on every side, so that they know not what to do. These convictions, like a shower of arrows, strike, point blank, into their consciences; [Acts 2: 37](#). "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Christ's arrows are sharp in the hearts of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him, [Psal. 45: 5, 6](#). By these convictions he batters down all their loose vain hopes, and levels them with the earth.

Now all their [weak pleas and defenses](#), [from the general mercy of God](#), [the example of others](#), &c. [prove but as paper walls to them](#). [i.e., [the covenant that they think they are partakers of by way of the sinner's prayer is not firm and stable](#)] These shake their hearts, even to the very foundation, and overturn every high thought there, that exalts itself against the Lord. This day, in which Christ sits down before the soul, and summons it by such messengers as these, is a day of distress within: yea, such a day of trouble, that none is like it. But though it be so, yet Satan has so deeply entrenched himself in the mind and will, [that the soul yields not at the first summons](#), till its provisions within are spent, and all its [towers of pride](#), and walls of [vain confidence](#), be undermined by the gospel, and shaken down

about its ears: and then the soul desires a parley with Christ. O now it would be glad of terms, any terms, if it may but save its life: let all go as a prey to the conqueror.

Now it sends many such messengers as these to Christ, who is come now to the very gates of the soul; mercy, Lord, mercy, O were I but assured thou wouldest receive, spare, and pardon me, I would open to thee the next moment! Thus the soul is shut up to the faith of a Christ, as it is, [Gal. 3: 23](#). and reduced now to the greatest strait and loss imaginable; and now the merciful King, whose only design is to conquer the heart, hangs forth the white flag of mercy before the soul, giving it hopes it shall be spared, pitied, and pardoned, though so long in rebellion against him, if yet it will yield itself to Christ. Many staggering, hesitations, irresolutions, doubts, fears, scruples, half-resolves, reasonings for and against, there are at the council table of man's own heart, at this time. Sometimes there is no hope; Christ will slay me, if I go forth to him, and then it trembles. But then, who ever found him so that tried him? Other souls have yielded, and found mercy beyond all their expectations. O but I have been a desperate enemy against him. Admit it, yet thou hast the word of a King for it; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him", [Isa. 55: 7](#).

But the time of mercy is past, I have stood out too long: yet if it were so, how is it that Christ has not made short work, and cut me off? set fire, hell fire to my soul, and withdrawn the siege? Still he waiteth that he may be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compassion. A thousand such debates there are, till, at last, the soul considering, if it abide in rebellion, it must needs perish; if it go forth to Christ, it can but perish: and being somewhat encouraged by the messages of grace sent into the soul, at this time, such as in [Heb. 8: 25](#). "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him;" and, [John 6: 37](#). "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" and in [Matt. 11: 28](#). "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It is, at last, resolved to open to Christ; and saith, "Stand open ye everlasting gates, and be ye opened ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Now, the will spontaneously opens to Christ: that royal fort submits and yields; all the affections open to him. The will brings Christ the keys of all the rooms in the soul. Concerning the triumphant entrance of Christ into the soul, we may say, as the Psalmist rhetorically speaks concerning the triumphant entrance of Israel into Canaan, [Psal. 114: 5, 6](#). "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs; what aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" So here, in a like rhetorical triumph, we may say, the mountains and hills skipped like rams, and the fixed and obstinate will, starts from its own basis and centre; the rocky heart rends in twain. A poor soul comes into the world, full of ignorance, pride, self-love, desperate hardness, and fixed resolutions to go on in its way: and, by an hour's discourse, the tide turns, Jordan is driven back. What aileth thee, thou stout will, that thou surrenderest to Christ! thou hard heart, that thou relents, and the waters gush out? **And thus the soul is won to Christ; he writes down his terms, and the soul willingly subscribes them.** Thus it comes in to Christ by free and hearty submission, desiring nothing more than to come under the government of Christ, for the time to come.

Secondly, Let us see how Christ rules in the souls of such as submit to him. And there are six things in which he exerts his kingly authority over them.

1. **He imposes a new law upon them**, and enjoins them to be severe and punctual in their obedience to it. The soul was a Belialite before, and could endure no restraint; its lusts gave it laws. "We ourselves

were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving diverse lusts and pleasures," [Tit. 3: 3](#). Whatever the flesh craved, and the sensual appetite whined after, it must have, cost what it would; if damnation were the price of it, it would have it, provided it should not be present pay. Now, it must not be any longer "anomos Theoi, all' ennomos toi Christoi", without law to God; but under law to Christ. Those are the articles of peace which the seal willingly subscribes in the day of its admission to mercy, [Mat. 11: 29](#). "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." This "Law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death," [Rom. 8: 2](#). Here is much strictness, but no bondage; **for the law is not only written in Christ's statute-book, the bible, but copied out by his spirit upon the hearts of his subjects, in correspondent principles; which makes obedience a pleasure, and self-denial easy.** [Hence, NOT MADE INTO A ROBOT!] Christ's yoke is lined with love, so that it never galls the necks of his people: [1 John 5: 3](#). "His commandments are not grievous." The soul that comes under Christ's government, must receive law from Christ; and under law every thought of the heart must come.

2. He rebukes and chastises souls for the violations and transgressions of his law. That is another act of Christ's regal authority: "whom he loves he rebukes and chastens," [Heb. 12: 6, 7](#). These chastisements of Christ are either by the rod of providence upon their bodies, and outward comforts, or upon their spirits and inward comforts. Sometimes his rebukes are smart upon the outward man, [1 Cor. 11: 30](#). "for this cause, many among you are weakly and sick, and many sleep." They had not that due regard to his body that became them, and he will make their bodies to smart for it. And he had rather their flesh should smart, than their souls should perish. Sometimes he spares their outward, and afflicts their inner man, which is a much smarter rod. He withdraws peace, and takes away joy from the spirits of his people. The hidings of his face are sore rebukes. however, all is for emendation, not for destruction. And it is not the least privilege of Christ's subjects to have a seasonable and sanctified rod to reduce them from the ways of sin: [Ps. 23: 3](#). "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Others are suffered to go on stubbornly in the way of their own hearts; Christ will not spend a rod upon them for their good, will not call them to account for any of their transgressions, but will reckon with them for all together in hell.

3. Another regal act of Christ, is the restraining and keeping back his servants from iniquity, **and withholding them from those courses which their own hearts would incline**, and lead them to; for, even in them, there is a spirit bent to backsliding, but the Lord in tenderness over them, keeps back their souls from iniquity, and that when they are upon the very brink of sin: "My feet were almost gone, my steps were well nigh slipt," [Psal. 73: 2](#). Then does the Lord prevent sin, by removing the occasion providentially, or by helping them to resist the temptation, **graciously assisting** their spirits in the trial, so that no temptation shall befall them, but a way of escape shall be opened, that they may be able to bear it, [1 Cor. 10: 13](#). **And thus his people have frequent occasions to bless his name for his preventing goodness**, when they are almost in the midst of all evil. And this I take to be the meaning of [Gal. 5: 16](#). "This, I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh;" tempted by them, you may be, but fulfill them ye shall not; my spirit shall cause the temptation to die, and wither away in the womb, in the embryo of it, so that it shall not come to a full birth.

4. He protects them in his ways, and suffers them not to relapse from him into a state of sin, and bondage to Satan and more. Indeed, Satan is restless in his endeavours to reduce them again to his obedience; he never leaves tempting and soliciting for their return; and where he finds a false

professor he prevails; but Christ keeps his, that they depart not again. [John 17: 12](#). "All that thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." They are "kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation," [1 Pet. 1: 5](#). Kept, as in a garrison, according to the importance of that word. None more solicited, none more safe than the people of God. They are "preserved in Christ Jesus," [Jude 1](#). **It is not their own grace that secures them, but Christ's care, and continual watchfulness.** "Our own graces left to themselves would quickly prove but weights, sinking us to our own ruin," as one speaks. This is his covenant with them, [Jer. 32: 4](#). "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Thus, as a king he preserves them.

5. As a king he Regards their obedience, and encourages their sincere service. Though all they do for Christ be duty, yet he has united their comfort with their duty; "this I had, because I kept thy precepts," [Psal. 119: 56](#). They are engaged to take this encouragement with them to every duty, that he whom they seek "is a bountiful rewarder of inch as diligently seek him", [Heb. 11: 6](#). O what a good master do the saints serve! Hear how a king expostulates with his subjects, [Jer. 2: 31](#). "Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness to you?" q. d. Have I been such a hard master to you? Have you any reason to complain of my service? To whomsoever I have been strait-handed, surely I have not been so to you. You have not found the ways or wages of sin like mine.

6. He pacifies all inward troubles, and **commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous**. This "peace of God rules in their hearts" [Col. 3: 15](#), it does "*brabeuein*" act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife within. When the tumultuous affections are up, and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. "I will hearken (saith the church) what God the Lord will speak, **for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints,**" [Psal. 75: 8](#). **He that saith to the raging sea, be still, and it obeys him; he can only pacify the disquieted spirit**. They say of frogs, that if they be croaking never so much in the night, bring but a light among them, and they are all quiet: such a light is the peace of God among our disordered affections. These are Christ's regal acts. **And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably.** [see T Shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)]

(1.) Powerfully: whether he restrains from sin, or impels to duty, **he does it with a soul determining efficacy**: for "**his kingdom is not in word, but in power,**" [1 Cor. 4: 20](#). [*not in word, that is, not dependent upon what the sinner says or prays to effect his conversion, e.g., his profession, but in power, God's Almighty power that works in those who believe.*] And those whom his Spirit leads, go bound in the spirit, to the fulfilling and discharge of their duties, [Acts 20:22](#). And yet,

(2.) **He rules not by compulsion, but most sweetly**. His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife, [Rev. 19: 7](#). "a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," [Isa. 42: 2, 3](#). "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," saith the apostle, [2 Cor. 10: 1](#). **For he delighteth in free, not in forced obedience**. He rules Children, not slaves; and so his kingly power is mixed with fatherly love. His yoke is not made of iron, but gold. [Again, we are not made into robots. See T Shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)]

(3.) He rules them suitably to their natures in a rational way; [Hos. 11: 4](#). "I drew them with the cords of man, with bands of love;" i.e. in a way proper to convince their reason, and work upon their

ingenuity. And thus his eternal kingdom is administered by his Spirit, who is his prorex, or vicegerent in our hearts.

A Good Summary of this whole affair:

- Flavel, Fountain of Life p 79:

Yea, and such as you are, the Lord delights to choose, that his grace may be the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Cor. 1: 26, 27. You will have nothing of your own to glory in; you will not say, as a proud wretch once said, *Ego et Deus meus*; "I and my God did this." Jesus Christ affects not social glory, he will not divide the praise with any.

God commands all to repent which is our duty; "though the duty is ours, yet the power is God's"

Jesus has three offices: Priest, Prophet and King. This is part of what he does as king over his church. examine this one. One of the biggest complaints that people have against God's sovereignty in election is that people think he forces Himself upon them, doing violence to the will, turning them into robots. This is a mistaken understanding, a straw-man argument to denigrate or unfairly criticize a most beautiful comforting doctrine. When the heart is changed by the Spirit, it becomes a willing heart.

Christ In His Kingly Office (cont.)

code200

*excerpt from The Fountain of Life by John Flavel
pg 203*

Secondly, Let us see how Christ rules in the souls of such as submit to him. And there are six things in which he exerts his kingly authority over them.

1. He imposes a new law upon them, and enjoins them to be severe and punctual in their obedience to it. The soul was a Belialite before, and could endure no restraint ; its lusts gave it laws. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, servicing divers lusts and pleasures," 1Tim 3:3. Whatever the flesh craved, and the sensual appetite whined after, it must have, cost what it would; if damnation were the price of it, it would have it, provided it should not be present pay. Now, it must not be any longer *avopog Ofw, aet sdopog ru Xytww*, without law to God; but under law to Christ. Those are the articles of peace which the soul willingly subscribes in the day of its admission to mercy, Mat. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." This "law of the spirit of life" which is in Christ Jesus makes them free "from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. [hence one is truly free, free to worship God, whereas before he was not free; his will was bound by sin, etc.] Here is much strictness, but no bondage; for the law is not only written in Christ's statute-book, the bible, but copied out by his spirit upon the hearts of his subjects, in correspondent principles; which makes obedience a pleasure, and self-denial easy. [all pointing to the fruit of regeneration being a willing heart] Christ's yoke is lined with love, so that it never galls the necks of his people [which is did before he was

converted, hence unwilling to come to Christ] 1 John v. 3. "His commandments are not grievous." The soul that comes under Christ's government, must receive law from Christ; and under law every thought of the heart must come.

soul determining efficacy

excerpt from The Fountain of Life, Sermon 16, The Kingly Office of Christ
by John Flavel

p138 (205 pdf)

6. O what a good master do the saints serve! Hear how a king expostulates with his subjects, Jer. 2:31. "Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness to you?" q. d. Have I been such a hard master to you? Have you any reason to complain of my service? To whomsoever I have been strait-handed, surely I have not been so to you. You have not found the ways or wages of sin like mine.

6.¹ ***He pacifies all inward troubles, and commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous.*** This "peace of God rules in their hearts," Col. 3:15. it does *βραβεύειν* act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife within. When the tumultuous affections are up, and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. "I will hearken (saith the church) what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints," Ps. 75:8. He that saith to the raging sea, be still, and it obeys him; he can only pacify the disquieted spirit. **They say of frogs, that if they be croaking never so much in the night, bring but a light among them, and they are all quiet; such a light is the peace of God among our disordered affections. These are Christ's regal acts. And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably.** [See T shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)]

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(2.) **He rules not by compulsion, but most sweetly.** His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife, Rev. 19:7. "a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," Isa. 42:2, 3. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 10:1. **For he delights in free, not in forced obedience.** He rules *Children*, not *slaves*; and so his *kingly power* is mixed with *fatherly love*. His yoke is not made of *iron*, but *gold*.

(3.) He rules them suitably to their natures in a rational way; Hos. 11:4. "I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love;" i.e., in a way proper to convince their reason, and work upon their ingenuity. And thus his eternal kingdom is administered by his Spirit, who is his *prorex*, or vicegerent in our hearts.

¹It acts the part of an umpire or judge among the other affections, for this is the meaning of the word *βραβεύειν*: **when therefore, these tumultuous passions, anger, hatred and revenge rise in our hearts, this peace of God ought to do its office, i.e., put an end to these tumults like the judge in ancient games.** *Daven. in Col.*

Flavel regarding the faculty of the will in conversion: View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. God accepts its offering; though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent so ever be the matter of it. (pg 254 The Soul of Man)

Some excerpts from Flavel, Shepard, & Norton on the Holy Spirit who sweetly and irresistibly converts the will.

Code458

A people in covenant with God are a **willing people**; though they cannot serve God perfectly, **they serve him willingly**. They do not grudge God a little time spent in his worship; **they do not hesitate or murmur at sufferings**; they will go through a sea and a wilderness, if God call. **“Thy people shall be a willing people: [Ps 110:3](#): ‘a people of willingness.’** Heb. This spontaneity and willingness is from the attractive power of God's Spirit: the Spirit does not *impellere*, force, but *trahere* [draws], **sweetly draws the will²**; [see Shepard's comments at [code11](#)] and this **willingness in religion makes all our services accepted**. God does sometimes accept of willingness without the work, but never the work without willingness.

²*Flavel regarding the faculty of the will in conversion:* View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. [see T Shepard's comments on this at [code11](#)] God accepts its offering; though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent so ever be the matter of it. (pg 254 The Soul of Man)

6. He pacifies all inward troubles, and commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous. This “peace of God rules in their hearts” [Col. 3: 15](#). it does “*brabeuein*” act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife within. When the tumultuous affections are up, and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. “I will hearken (saith the church) what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints,” [Psal. 75: 8](#). He that saith to the raging sea, be still, and it obeys him; he can only pacify the disquieted spirit. “They say of frogs, that if they be croaking never so much in the night, bring but a light among them, and they are

all quiet: such a light is the peace of God among our disordered affections. These are Christ's regal acts. And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably." And, "whether he restrains from sin, or impels to duty, **he does it with a soul determining efficacy**: for "his kingdom is not in word, but in power," [1 Cor. 4: 20](#). And, "He rules not by compulsion, but most sweetly. His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife, [Rev. 19: 7](#). "a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," [Isa. 42: 2, 3](#). "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," saith the apostle, [2 Cor. 10: 1](#). For he delighteth in free, not in forced obedience." And again, "Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causes upon the soul, **turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy** from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ." Flavel

Very good summary here:

John Flavel: *Fourthly*, Coming to Christ notes the voluntariness of the soul in its motion to Christ. It is true, **there is no coming without the Father's drawing**; but that drawing hath nothing of coercion in it; it doth not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness, persuades the will. It is not forced or driven, *but it comes*; being made "willing in the day of God's power," Ps. 110:3. [[see code443a](#)]

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

Secondly, In what manner he draws men to Christ,

Thirdly, How it appears that none can come till they be so drawn.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports. To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually distinguished into physical and moral. The former is either by co-action, force, and compulsion; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man, which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who loves to reign over a free and willing people, Ps.110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Or, as that word may be rendered, they shall be voluntarinesses, as willing as willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible co-action, but in a moral way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus Christ. He draws with the bands of a man, as they are called, Hos. 11:14, i.e., in a way of rational conviction of the mind and conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will. **But yet by moral persuasion, we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at the sinner's choice, whether he will comply with it or no**. For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ. And, in this respect, we own a physical, as well as a moral influence of the Spirit in this work; and so scripture expresses it, Eph. i. 19, 20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will; **there is a power as well as a tender; greatness of power**; and yet more, the exceeding greatness of his power; and **this power hath an actual efficacy ascribed to it**, he

works upon our hearts and wills according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Thus he fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thess.1:11. Flavel, pg 69 vol. 2 Ser. 4

And this is that which the schools call *gratia efficax*, effectual grace; and others *victrix delectatio*, an overcoming, conquering delight; thus the work is carried on with a most efficacious sweetness. So that the liberty of the will is not infringed, whilst the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued and over-ruled. For want of this, there are so many almost Christians in the world [brought on much by the presumptuous sinner's prayer, coming to God without being called]; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works which come to nothing, called in scripture, a morning cloud, an early dew. [That's because they were never called; as Thomas Shepard says, God never spoke one word to them! see John 5:37] Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had never vanished or perished like embryos as they do. So then, God draws not only in a moral way, by proposing a suitable object to the will, but also in a physical way, or by immediate powerful influence upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly and effectually persuading it to come to Christ. – John Flavel

James Dolezal's work:

Agency, Concurrence and Evil, A Study in Divine Providence

It is a common objection from those of Pelagian and semi-Pelagian conviction that God's universal causal primacy, as has been maintained in the Augustinian tradition, necessarily obliterates the reality of free will and with it all moral culpability. The traditional Augustinian response to this charge is that, far from destroying free will, it is God's primary agency that causes free will to be and move freely. There is no such thing as absolutely independent creaturely agency or operation, any more than there is such a thing as absolutely independent creaturely existence (which in any case is necessary for a creature's operation to commence or continue). And God's moving of the creature's will can no more be a coercive act against its volition than God's making the creature to be is a coercive act against its being. [excellent reasoning!] There just would be no volitional movement in the creature without God concurrently and primarily acting to make it so – no moved mover without an absolute unmoved mover. This is essential to maintaining the order between God as first cause and all second causes. John Norton makes this point clearly, arguing that God's determination of the creature's will offers no violence to it:

Either the will is determined by God in its operation, or else it would follow, either that there were not an essential subordination of the second cause unto the first, that is, of man to God, which were repugnant to the nature of the second cause (it being imperfect and dependent); or that the first Cause were subordinate to the second, which were repugnant to the nature of the first Cause, being perfect and universal.

The will cannot be compelled: to say that which is done willingly is done constrainedly is to affirm a contradiction namely, that which is willing is unwilling. God can determine the will and not prejudice the nature of the will because he is an infinite Cause. God determineth the will

suitably and agreeably to its own nature, that is, freely. He so determineth the will as the will determineth itself. God so determineth the will as the first free agent, as that the will determineth itself as a second free agent. The efficacy of God offereth no violence, nor changeth the nature of things, but goverenth them according to their own natures; it reacheth from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordereth all things. The external, transient, efficacious motion of God upon the will determineth the will with a real determination: the will so moved, moveth itself with a real and formal determination.

The Communication of God's Glory in the Gospel

code11

to the Understanding and Then to the Will (Saving Faith)

By Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer, pg 284

Because as the gospel first reveals Christ to the mind, and then offers him to the will; so faith, which runs parallel with the gospel, first sees Christ, (there the mind, one part of the soul goes out) then receives Christ gladly, (there the other part, the will goes out) and so the whole soul comes to Christ. The gospel comes to all the elect, First, in Great clearness and evidence of the truth of it, 1Thes. 1:5, to which the understanding assents, and is persuaded of; Secondly, In great grace and goodness, surpassing beauty and sweetness, Lam. 3:24, with which the will is drawn, and so the whole soul comes unto Christ. For the gospel is not only true, but glad tidings to all the elect, especially when humbled at God's feet, 1Tim1:15, *In whom*, says the apostle, Eph. 1:12, 13, *you believed, after that ye heard the word of truth*, (**there is the object of the understanding**) the gospel of your salvation, (**there is the goodness of it, the object of the will**) so that the whole soul is drawn to Christ in the work of faith. He that understands how *liberum arbitrium* may be in two faculties must not wonder, if one grace be seated in both faculties of the understanding and will; no grace can be completely seated in diverse faculties, but gradually and imperfectly it may; the work of faith is not complete, when the understanding is opened, only to see and wonder at the mysteries of the mercy in the gospel, but when the will adheres and clasps about that infinite and surpassing good it sees, then it is perfected, and not before, **John 6:40**. And this is the reason why saving faith (as it is called) does not look only to the bare testimony and assent unto it, as human faith does, because in the gospel, not only divine truth is propounded to the mind to assent unto, but an infinite and eternal good is offered to the heart, and will of man to embrace. And thence it is, that it is not sufficient for a Christian to believe God, or to believe Christ, but he must also believe in him, or else he cannot be saved; the object of believing of him being *verum*, or truth; the object of the second, *bonum*, or good. Take heed, therefore, a poor, lost sinner, undone in its own eyes forever; not knowing what to do, unless it be to lie down, and lie still at God's feet, as worthy of nothing but hell. What does the Lord now do? The Lord Christ, by his gospel, first lets in a new light [to the understanding], and it sees the Lord Jesus there bleeding before its eyes, and held forth as a propitiation to all that believe, to all that come to him; the mind sees this mystery, this exceeding rich grace and free mercy, and thinks, **Happy are they that share in this mercy!** [there the communication to the will, that it is good] But will the Lord look

upon such a nothing as I? Can such infinite treasures be my portion? The Lord, therefore, calls, and bids him come away and enter into the possession of it.

Hereupon the **heart and will** come, and rest, and roll themselves upon these bowels, and there rest; **thus the whole soul comes**, and this, I say again, is faith. Just as it is with the loadstone drawing the iron; who would think that iron should be drawn by it? but there is a **secret virtue** coming from the stone which draws it, **and so it comes and is united to it**; so who would think that ever such an iron, heavy, earthy heart should be drawn unto Christ? **yet the Lord lets out a secret virtue of truth and sweetness from himself**, which draws the soul to Christ, and so it comes. [willingly & gladly, Ps 110:3. Jonathan Edwards describes this communication similarly...communicates the knowledge of God to the faculty of understanding and holiness, love of God to the faculty of the will. John Flavel describes this *secret efficacy* in converting the soul in similarly as well,]

Philip Schaff says likewise: Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined and made complete, It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being: **to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into this heart**; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. Philip Schaff *The Principle of Protestantism* 1845

The Effect Before the Cause in Scripture Misunderstood

code201

Sermon 31, Method of Grace,
John Flavel -

First, The miserable state of the unregenerate, represented under the motions of sleep and death: both expressions intending one and the same thing, though with some variety of notion. The Christless and unregenerate world is in a deep sleep; a spirit of slumber, senselessness and security is fallen upon them, though they lie exposed immediately to eternal wrath and misery, ready to drop into hell every moment. Just as a man that is fast asleep in a house on fire, and whilst the consuming flames are round about him, his fancy is sporting itself in some pleasant dream; this is a very lively resemblance of the unregenerate soul. But yet he that sleeps has the principle of life entire in him, though his senses be bound, and the actions of life suspended by sleep. Lest therefore we should think it is only so with the unregenerate, the expression is designedly varied, and those that were said to be asleep, are positively affirmed to be dead, on purpose to inform us that it is not a simple suspension of the acts and exercise, but a total privation of the principle of spiritual life, which is the misery of the unregenerate.

Secondly, We have here the duty of the unregenerate, which is to "awake out of sleep, and arise from the dead." This is their great concernment; no duty in the world is of greater necessity and importance

to them. "Strive (saith Christ) to enter in at the strait gate," [Luke 13:24](#). And the order of these duties is very natural. First awake, then arise. Startling and rousing convictions make way for spiritual life; till God awake us by convictions of our misery, we will never be persuaded to arise and move towards Christ for remedy and safety.

Thirdly, But you will say, if unregenerate men be dead men, to what purpose is it to persuade them to arise and stand up. **The very exhortation supposes some powers or ability in the unregenerate**; else in vain are they commanded to arise. This difficulty is solved in this very text, **though the duty is ours, yet the power is God's. God commands that in his word, which only his grace can perform.** "Christ shall give thee light." Popish commentators would build the tower of free will upon this scripture, by a very weak argument, **drawn from the order wherein these things are here expressed**; which is but a very weak foundation to build upon, **for it is very usual in scripture to put the effect before, and the cause after, as it is here**, so in [Isa. 26:19](#). "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." But I will not here entangle my discourse with that controversy; that which I aim at is plain in the words, viz.

For example:

God states our duty: "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?¹⁴ Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.¹⁶ **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.**¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe." Deut 10:12-17

Then in Deut. 30:6, God says he will do it! "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. see also, Ezek 11:19, Ezek. 36:26 -

Ezek. 11:19, "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within ^[e]them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh,"

Ezek. 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Also, I might add that in Deut. 10:17, it is stated that God is not *partial and takes no bribes*. That is, no man can come to God unless he be called; he cannot bribe him with a prayer, e.g., the sinner's prayer, or any other sacrament or way (the arm of the flesh). Nor do any of our efforts incline Him to choose us over someone else, hence he is not partial in that sense, we cannot make him partial to us due our works or prayer in this matter of conversion. It is solely by the will of God, by the counsel of his own will, not by the will of man, John 1:13, etc. This answers to 1Cor. 4:7, "**For who makes you differ from another?** And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?"

This commentary by John Piper is an excellent example of the unreasonableness of Arminian theology or the theology of most people - they just don't think things through, and/or are untaught, and end up being very inconsistent with themselves!

Excerpt from Steven J Lawson on **Anselm of Canterbury** (1033-1109)
(the 'second Augustine') Pillars of Faith, pg 265

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

code210

Anselm clearly believed that God effectually calls all whom He elects to salvation. This summons causes them to believe on Christ. In commenting on John 6:44, Anselm declared that the Father irresistibly moves the sinner to come to faith in Christ. He writes: "As the Father is said to draw by imparting an inclination, so there is nothing improper in asserting that he moves man. For as the Son says of the Father: 'No man cometh to Me except the Father draw him,' he might as well have said, except he move him." Anselm rightly understood that God initiates conversion. Unregenerate men cannot come to Christ until they are drawn by the Father.

In this divine initiative, God gives man a new will to believe. Anselm writes: "Since a man is drawn or moved, by his will, to that which he invariably chooses, it is not improper to say, that God draws or moves him, when he gives him this will. And in this drawing or impelling it is not to be understood that there is any constraint, but a free and grateful clinging to the holy will which has been given." Here Anselm taught that when God calls a sinner to Himself, there is no constraint, meaning undue coercion; when the Holy Spirit works in the heart, the sinner then believes because he wants to do so. No one believes against his will. Rather, God changes the will so that the sinner freely believes.

Likewise, Anselm asserted that God graciously gives grace and faith to man in order to bring about salvation. Without grace, he argued, one can achieve nothing toward salvation. Anselm boldly asserts: "It must all be attributed to grace, because 'it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God who shows mercy' (Rom. 9:16). For to all, except God alone, it is said: 'What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it all, why do you boast as though you had not received it?' (1 Cor. 4:7)." Convinced by Scripture, Anselm was clear in his belief that man's salvation is exclusively the result of God's sovereign, saving grace.

The Sovereignty of God and Prayer

code202

by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-sovereignty-of-god-and-prayer>

I am often asked, "If you believe God works all things according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:11), and that his knowledge of all things past, present, and future is infallible, then what is the point

of praying that anything happen?” Usually this question is asked in relation to human decisions: “If God has predestined some to be his sons and chosen them before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4–5), then what’s the point in praying for anyone’s conversion?”

The implicit argument here is that if prayer is to be possible at all, people must have the power of self-determination. That is, a person’s decisions must ultimately belong to himself, not God. For otherwise, he is determined by God, and all his decisions are really fixed in God’s eternal counsel. Let’s examine the reasonableness of this argument by reflecting on the example cited above.

God Decides Who Will Be Saved

“Why pray for anyone’s conversion if God has chosen before the foundation of the world who will be his sons?”

A person in need of conversion is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1); he is “a slave to sin” (John 8:34; Romans 6:17); the god of this world has blinded his mind that he might not see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4); his heart is hardened against God (Ephesians 4:18) so that he is hostile to God and in rebellion against God’s will (Romans 8:7). “I do not ask God to sit back and wait for my neighbor to decide to change.”

Now, I would like to turn the question back to my questioner: If you insist that this man must have the power of ultimate self-determination, what is the point of praying for him? What do you want God to do for him? You can’t ask that God overcome the man’s rebellion, for rebellion is precisely what the man is now choosing, so that would mean God overcame his choice and took away his power of self-determination. But how can God save this man unless he act so as to change the man’s heart from hard hostility to tender trust?

Will you pray that God enlighten his mind so that he truly see the beauty of Christ and believe? If you pray this, you are in effect asking God no longer to leave the determination of the man’s will in his own power. You are asking God to do something within the man’s mind (or heart) so that he will surely see and believe. That is, you are conceding that the ultimate determination of the man’s decision to trust Christ is God’s, not merely his.

God’s Sovereignty Enables Prayer

It is not the doctrine of God’s sovereignty that thwarts prayer for the conversion of sinners. On the contrary, it is the unbiblical notion of self-determination which would consistently put an end to all prayers for the lost. Prayer is a request that God do something. But the only thing God can do to save a lost sinner is to overcome his resistance to God. If you insist that he retain his self-determination, then you are insisting that he remain without Christ. For “no one can come to [Christ] unless it is granted him by the Father” (John 6:65, 44).

Only the person who rejects human self-determination can consistently pray for God to save the lost. My prayer for unbelievers is that God will do for them what he did for Lydia: He opened her heart so that she gave heed to what Paul said (Acts 16:14). I will pray that God, who once said, “Let there be light!” will by that same creative power shine in their hearts to give “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). I will pray that he will “take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). I will pray that they be born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God (John 1:13). And with all my praying I will try to “be kind to everyone, able to teach, correcting [my] opponents with gentleness,” for “God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24–25).

“God knows those who are his, and he will raise up messengers to win them.”

In short, I do not ask God to sit back and wait for my neighbor to decide to change. I do not suggest to God that he keep his distance lest his beauty become irresistible and violate my neighbor’s power of self-determination. No! I pray that he ravish my unbelieving neighbor with his beauty, that he unshackle the enslaved will, that he make the dead alive and that he suffer no resistance to stop him lest my neighbor perish.

The Relationship Between Prayer and Evangelism

If someone now says, “Okay, granted that a person’s conversion is ultimately determined by God, I still don’t see the point of your prayer. If God chose before the foundation of the world who would be converted, what function does your prayer have?” My answer is that it has a function like that of preaching: How shall the lost believe in whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent (Romans 10:14–15)? Belief in Christ is a gift of God (John 6:65; 2 Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 2:8), but God has ordained that the means by which men believe on Jesus is through the preaching of men.

It is simply naive to say that if no one spread the gospel, all those predestined to be sons of God would be converted anyway. The reason this is naive is because it overlooks the fact that the preaching of the gospel is just as predestined as is the believing of the gospel: Paul was set apart for his preaching ministry before he was born (Galatians 1:15), as was Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5). Therefore, to ask, “If we don’t evangelize, will the elect be saved?” is like asking, “If there is no predestination, will the predestined be saved?”

God knows those who are his, and he will raise up messengers to win them. If someone refuses to be a part of that plan because he dislikes the idea of being tampered with before he was born, then he will be the loser, not God and not the elect. As C.S. Lewis writes, “You will certainly carry out God’s purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John” (The Problem of Pain, 111).

God Uses Means

Prayer is like preaching in that it is a human act also. It is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him. He has promised to respond to prayer, and his response is just as contingent upon our prayer as our prayer is in accordance with his will. “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14). When we don’t know how to pray according to God’s will but desire it earnestly, “the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:27).

“Prayer is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him.”

In other words, just as God will see to it that his word is proclaimed as a means to saving the elect, so he will see to it that all those prayers are prayed which he has promised to respond to. I think Paul’s words in Romans 15:18 would apply equally well to his preaching and his praying ministry: “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience.” Even our prayers are a gift from the one who “[works] in us that which is pleasing in his sight” (Hebrews 13:21). Oh, how grateful we should be that he has chosen us to be employed in this high service! How eager we should be to spend much time in prayer!

Martin Luther, Bondage of the Will:

code196

“Now take the words of Christ in John 6: “No one comes to me unless my Father draws him.” What does this leave to free choice? He says that everyone needs to hear and learn from the Father himself, and that all must be taught by God. He plainly teaches here, not only that the works and efforts of free choice are fruitless, but that even the message of the gospel itself (which is what this passage is about) is heard in vain unless the Father himself speaks, teaches, and draws inwardly. “No one can come,” he says, “no one”; and thus that power by which a man is able to make some endeavor toward Christ, or in other words, toward the things that pertain to salvation, is asserted to be no power at all.”

The Opening of Lydia's Heart

code203

This is a commentary by [John Gill](#) on Acts 16:14, regarding the opening of Lydia's heart, her conversion, and all that attended it. This sheds more light from a different theologian so you can more clearly see God's sovereignty over the wills of men in salvation.

¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, **which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened**, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

KJV

¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ESV

which worshipped God;

the true God, the God of Israel, and not the gods of the Gentiles, among whom she was; which shows, that she was either a Jewish woman, who had knowledge of the one true and living God, or at least a proselytess of the Jewish religion:

heard us;

not alone, but with other women; and at first only externally, and not so as to understand and receive what she heard, until the efficacious grace of God was exerted upon her, signified in the following clause:

whose heart the Lord opened;

which was before shut and barred, with the bars of ignorance, hardness, and unbelief. The heart of a sinner before conversion, is like a house shut up, and wholly in darkness; whatever degree of natural or moral light is in it, there is none in spiritual things; it is empty of the grace of God, of the fear of him, and love to him; it is without proper inhabitants, without God, Christ, and the Spirit; and is the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, who delight in dark and desolate places; it is bolted and barred with unbelief, and walled up, and even petrified and hardened with sin, and is guarded and garrisoned by Satan, and its goods are kept in peace by him: and this had been the case of Lydia; but now the Lord opened her understanding, and put light into it, which was before darkness itself; as to spiritual things; by which she saw her wretched, sinful, and miserable state by nature, the insufficiency of all ways and means, and works, to justify and save her, and the necessity, suitableness, and fulness of grace and salvation by Christ; which was done by the same divine power, that at first created light in darkness: moreover, the Lord wrought upon her affections, and engaged them to divine and spiritual things; creating love in her soul to Christ, to his people, truths and ordinances; which was done by his almighty hand, taking away the stony heart, and giving an heart of flesh: he also removed the bar of unbelief, entered in himself, dispossessed Satan, and worked faith in her, to look to him, lay hold on him, and receive him, as her Saviour and Redeemer; making her willing in the day of his power, to be saved by him, and to serve him: it is a petition the Jews frequently make ^{F24}, in their prayers to God, (*yabl xtptd*), "that thou wouldst open my heart", in thy law; or as sometimes, open our hearts in the doctrine of thy law: not Lydia herself, nor the Apostle Paul, but the Lord opened her heart; Jehovah the Father, who commanded light out of darkness; Jehovah the Son, who has the key of the house of David; Jehovah the Spirit, who convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment:

that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul;

concerning the person and offices of Christ, concerning his truths and ordinances, concerning free justification by his righteousness, pardon by his blood, and everlasting salvation by him; these things she hearkened unto in another manner than she had done; before she heard, but did not attend to what she heard; but faith coming by hearing, now she hears with the hearing of faith, and understands what she hears, and cordially receives and embraces it, and put into practice what she heard, submitting to the ordinance of Christ, as follows.

Defaulting Wills

Steven J Lawson
Foundations of Grace p 322

7. Deficient Intellects. The unconverted person has a total inability to comprehend the spiritual truth of God. This spiritual ignorance renders him completely unable to grasp the divine standard of righteousness:

It is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands." (Rom. 3:10–11a)

The mind of the unregenerate man is completely helpless to deal with the truth. Plagued by this mental inability, he fails to grasp the most basic truths of God. He is utterly oblivious to the person and work of Christ, and to his own need for salvation. William Hendriksen writes, "The picture he draws is dismal: no one is righteous; in fact, no one understands his deplorable condition. And no one is even trying to understand, is even searching for God, the Source of all wisdom and knowledge. But are there no exceptions? Paul answers, 'There is no one.'" Boice adds, "We need to view this as a lack of spiritual perception and not merely a lack of human knowledge. If we think on the human level, comparing the 'understanding' of one person with that of another, we will observe rightly that some people obviously understand a great deal about our world. And since we are impressed by that, we will be misled. We need to see that in spiritual matters the important thing is that no one truly understands God or seeks to know Him." **Radical depravity renders man mentally incompetent in spiritual things.** . (Also, a moral inability paralyzes him. He is utterly unable to see, to hear, or choose the truth. When the truth of the gospel is presented, it is sheer foolishness to him. P 353)

8. Defaulting Wills. The unsaved refuse to seek for God. Instead, they follow their natural tendency to run after their own interests:

No one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. (Rom. 3:11b–12)

Quoting Psalms 14:2–3 and 53:2–3, Paul states that no unregenerate person ever pursues God. This is because sinful man's natural inclination is to run from Him. All of the unregenerate have "turned aside," a term picturing a soldier who has deserted his post. In like manner, all unconverted men are bent on deserting God. MacArthur writes, "Men are naturally wayward.... The person who is naturally evil, naturally ignorant of God's truth, and naturally rebellious against God will inevitably naturally live apart from God's will." Radical depravity leaves man completely rebellious.

"As a result, fallen man is incapable of contributing any spiritual good to his salvation. He cannot please God. He will not seek God. And he refuses to believe upon Christ." pg 317

There Is No Inconsistence Between Moral Inability and Precepts & Commands

code204

excerpts from Flavel & Edwards
(see also code457 on moral inability)

Secondly, It is an argument of the excellency of the Christian religion, and that even wicked men themselves covet the name and profession of it, though they only cloak and cover their evils under it. I confess it is a great abuse of such an excellent thing as religion is; but yet, if it had not an awful reverence paid it by the consciences of all men, it would never be abused to this purpose, by hypocrites, as it is. Flavel, Sermon 30 p 416

On this foundation, that unregenerate man being attracted by different motives, tries to come to God by his own industry, by his own will, in recommending himself to God, attempting to make himself respectable to God when the scripture says explicitly that *God is no respecter of persons* on their own account (*for who makes you to differ from another? 1Cor4:7*) nor is there any partiality with God, but only upon God's account or upon his will only, by the counsel of his own will, him being the *potter*, etc., "*that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls*" Romans 9:11, so that the only way of salvation is by *effectual vocation*. That is, God will not respect our counsel from us, to him, to save us. We do not make us to differ from another, God does.

The implicit understanding of God's command to repent and believe is that man, of himself, cannot repent unless the Spirit works it! For if man has it already in himself to repent and believe, the command to do so is to know purpose in that Man would do it without commands since it would be in his nature to do it on his own, as Edwards points out here in his discourse on Freedom of the Will:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iii.iv.iv.html> pg 50

III. Though the opposition of the Will itself, or the very want of Will to a thing commanded, implies a moral Inability to that thing; yet, if it be, as has been already shown, that the being of a good state or act of Will, is a thing most properly required by Command; then, in some cases, such a state or act of Will may properly be required, which at present is not, and which may also be wanting after it is commanded. And therefore those things may properly be commanded, for which men have a moral Inability.

Such a state or act of the Will, may be required by Command, as does not already exist. For if that volition only may be commanded to be, which already is, there could be no use of precept: Commands in all cases would be perfectly vain and impertinent. And not only may such a Will be required, as is wanting before the Command is given, but also such as may possibly be wanting afterwards; such as the exhibition of the Command may not be effectual to produce or excite. Otherwise, no such thing as

disobedience to a proper and rightful Command is possible in any case; and there is no case possible, wherein there can be a faulty disobedience. Which Arminians cannot affirm, consistently with their principle: for this makes obedience to just and proper Commands always necessary, and disobedience impossible. And so the Arminian would overthrow himself, yielding the very point we are upon, which he so strenuously denies, namely, that Law and Command are consistent with necessity.

If merely that inability will excuse disobedience, which is implied in the opposition or defect of inclination, remaining after the Command is exhibited, then wickedness always carries that in it which excuses it. By how much the more wickedness there is in a man's heart, by so much is his inclination to evil the stronger, and by so much the more, therefore, has he of moral Inability to the good required. His moral Inability consisting in the strength of his evil inclination, is the very thing wherein his wickedness consists; and yet, according to Arminian principles, it must be a thing inconsistent with wickedness; and by how much the more he has of it, by so much is he the further from wickedness.

Therefore, on the whole, it is manifest, that moral Inability alone (which consists in disinclination) never renders anything improperly the subject matter of Precept or Command, and never can excuse any person in disobedience, or want of conformity to a command.

Notes on the Federal Transaction of God

code205

in reference to Fallen Man's Presumption

When God saves someone or converts him, it is properly a federal transaction; that is, it is God acting as federal head making a covenant with men, translating you from the kingdom of darkness out from under the curse, out from under Adam as your federal head, into the kingdom of light, of his dear Son, united to Christ, so that Christ is now your federal head, and you part of his body. You have nothing to do with this initial act of God in the disposal of his saving grace; you are entirely passive in it; God is active. First, you are bound by sin, dead in sin, blind, captive of Satan, etc.; you also have no theological principle upon which to please God, though from natural principles, self-love, etc., and not from a love for God or a spiritual sight of Christ, you may try by praying a prayer which is wholly presumption, and most wicked at that. Subsequent to conversion, however, Christians are active, seeking God, praying to God, etc., because they are endowed with faith, infused with a new living principle of life, the new man or the new creation. You see, it is this God who creates something out of nothing to magnify his glory to the uttermost; he calls things that aren't a thought they were; *as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he*

believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Rom. 4:17¹. In the case of a sinner, there is nothing in him that can recommend him to God in this sense; so God creates in him a new heart and so it is called a new creation. Can a sinner create this from which his prayer must flow? That would be preposterous and rob God of all this glory of his grace. Though God commands, Make you a new heart or circumcise your heart, it is God who actually does it; the power is of God (compare Deut 10:16 with ver. 30:6). For a unregenerate sinner to try to come to God by any means other than that is sinning with very *high hand* toward God, highly provoking to Him, not to mention the many pernicious consequents, though it may seem sincere outwardly.

¹ John Gill commentary on Romans 4:17

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.. Romans 4:17

calleth those things which be not, as though they were;

so he called Abraham the father of many nations, when he was not in fact, as if he really was; and the Gentiles his seed and offspring, before they were; and when he comes effectually to call them by his grace, they are represented as "things which are not", whom he called, "to bring to nought things that are", (1 Corinthians 1:28) ; they were not his people, nor his children, and he called them so, and by his grace made them so, and made them appear to be so; for as in creation so in regeneration, God calls and brings that into being which before was not: and the phrase seems to be an allusion to the creation of all things out of nothing; and it is a Rabbinical one, for so the Jews speaking of the creation say ^{F19}

“(Nya la arwq) , "he calls to that which is not", and it is excluded; (i.e. all things are excluded out of it, as a chicken out of an egg;) and to that which is, and it is established, and to the world, and it is stretched out."

Adam's Presumption of Eating of the Fruit of the Tree of Life

code206

Similar to Man's Presumption of the Sinner's Prayer
G. Clark

Adam was told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, an added precept to the law of his creation. He was under the law of works, that upon his perfect obedience to this law, he would be granted or rewarded with eternal life. But he disobeyed and ate of it, a gross presumption, before it was lawfully granted to him, which it would have been had he kept the law perfectly. Now, man in his fallen state, makes a similar move by trying to attain eternal life in the same presumptive manner (apart from Gods' prescribed way (by faith, the condition of the new covenant) by coming to God, attaining righteousness some other way e.g., the sinners prayer, whereby presumptuously, he imagines by some fancy in his mind, taking that fruit from the *tree of life*, i.e., Christ, before he is lawfully called! or before God has truly bestowed the real perfect obedience in the new testament sense, the imputed righteousness of Christ. In the new covenant, it is only attained by effectual vocation, by the communication (imputation) of Christ's righteousness, that perfect righteousness attained by Christ's perfect obedience to the law in our place, by which man is made righteous in the sight of God, and then and only then does he have a claim to an interest in Christ, to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, so to speak. So man in his fallen condition, trying to acquire an interest in Christ by some other way, whether it be works or some prayer, or sacrament, attempts to do the same thing Adam did in eating of the fruit before he was duly made righteous according to the covenant God made with him, which was his sin, sin of presumption, act of rebellion, call it what you will.

And as I read Coxe's discourse on Adam and the Covenant that God made with him, which Adam broke by eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life, fallen man, Adam's cursed posterity, is trying by his own industry, to *recover his forfeited happiness* in a similar fashion, as Coxe states, "He", [fallen man] "*entertained an opinion (that vain man is on any pretence ready to nourish in himself) **of his yet being capable of recovering his forfeited happiness this way, or by any other works of his own.** The words teach us what was the use and end for which this tree was first designed, as well as that Adam was not ignorant of these. Yet now he was to be taught **the utter impossibility of obtaining life by a broken covenant** through the guarding and prohibiting of all access to that tree by the cherubim's flaming sword that turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." p 46 *Covenant Theology**

As it was a wicked presumption on Adam's part, so it is here on the part of the unregenerate. As Owen has said, the only way of salvation is by effectual vocation.

Nehemiah Coxe on Covenant Theology

code207

For more insight into this conclusion regarding unregenerate man's presumptuous attempt to come to God, we go to Nehemiah Coxe's comments on covenants, page 34 of his book, Covenant Theology.

God's Covenant Proposed to Men and their Response

2. Seeing that those transactions of God with men which we will meet in this inquiry are of a federal nature, it will be required first that something be said about covenant relationships to God in general.

The original words by which the making, striking, or entering into covenant are signified, with their various uses and applications to particular cases and occasions, have been fully explained by man. Therefore passing by that, it will be enough for our present purpose to remind you that a covenant is to be considered either simply as proposed by God or as man enters into it by restipulation⁴ (⁴The Oxford English Dictionary indicates this rare word carries the sense "to promise or engage in return, a counter-engagement" ...) [in other words, both parties must be willing for the covenant to be valid.]

1. **Whatever is transacted in a federal way between God and men, God has the first hand in it.** As Christ said to his disciples in another cases, they had not chosen him but he had chosen them. So we may say that man has not at any time entered into covenant with God but God has entered into covenant with man. It only belongs to his sovereign majesty and is the fruit of his infinite goodness to propose, as well as his wisdom to choose and order, the terms of a covenant relationship between himself and his creatures. Therefore, the covenant that has made with men is frequently in Scripture said to be the Lord's covenant, as in Psalm 25:14, Isaiah 56:4,6 and other places.

2. Nevertheless, a covenant relationship to God and interest in him does not immediately result from the proposal of a covenant and terms of a covenant relationship to man. But it is by **restipulation** that man actually enters into covenant with God and becomes an interested party in the covenant. **It is a mutual consent of the parties in covenant that states and completes a covenant relationship.** And this is called an avouching of the Lord to be their God by consent to the terms of a covenant proposed to them (Deut. 26:6-18); a subscribing with the hand to the Lord (Isa. 44:5); and taking hold of his covenant (Isa. 56:4,6). The formal notion of a covenant entered or made includes mutual engagement.

3. Yet there can be no covenant of mutual benefits between God and men as there may be between one man and another. For all creatures necessarily depend on and have both their being and well-being from the bounty of their Creator. **There is nothing that they have not received from him and therefore the most perfect of them can render nothing to him but what is due by the law of their creation.** None can be profitable to God (Job 35:7,8; Rom 11:35,36) though he that is righteous may be so both to himself and his neighbor. And therefore none can oblige God or make him their debtor unless he condescends to oblige himself by covenant or promise.

The General Notion of a Covenant and Its Inferences

3. The general notion of any covenant of God with men, considered on the part of God or as proposed by him, may be conceived of as "A declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning the benefits he will bestow on them, the communion they will have with him, and the way and means by which this will be enjoyed by them." [the presumptuous nature of the sinner's prayer argues the opposite position, that man acting as a sovereign being (the role of a *potter*) which he is not, makes a covenant with God and God must respond by saving him, making God dependent upon the creature!]

For the better understanding of what I intend by this general description, I will briefly propose some particulars that are either included in it or are the immediate and necessary consequences of it.

1. It implies a free and sovereign act of the divine will exerted in condescending love and goodness. It is not from any necessity of nature that God enters into covenant with men but of his own good pleasure. [i.e., not from a common affection of love, but by an act of his will - John Owen] such a privilege and nearness to God as is included in covenant interest cannot immediately result from the relationship which they have to God as reasonable creatures, though upright and in a perfect state. For the Lord does not owe to man the good promised in any covenant he makes with him previously; but his first right in it is freely given to him by the promise of the covenant.

skip to page 39 (Coxe continues regarding Adam having broken covenant)

1. Once people have fallen under the guilt of breaching the covenant, they are by their own failure utterly disabled from yielding any acceptable obedience to God on the terms of that covenant which they have violated. Their interest in that covenant relationship is forfeited and lost by them. They remain under the penal sanction of the covenant but are utterly deprived of strength to answer the ends of that covenant, and have wholly lost their right in its reward.

2. If they are without strength with respect to the condition and end of that covenant which they once had an interest in and principles suited to, then are they so much more without strength, while they remain in their lapsed state, with respect to the terms of another covenant more excellent and mysterious, and wholly supernatural in its doctrine and terms.

3. Therefore, spiritual strength and ability to please God cannot in any way be restored to them except by a new covenant interest and that new creation which is its adjunct.

God's Covenant Always Transacted with a Representative Head

5. This is also worthy to be noted by us: that when God has made covenants, in which either mankind in general or some select number of men in particular have been involved, it has pleased him first to transact with some public person, head, or representative for all others that should be involved in them. So it was in the covenant of creation which God made with Adam in his upright state and with

all mankind in him. And the same is to be observed in the Noahic covenant as also in the covenants with Abraham considered either as the father of believers or of the Israelite nation. In the interest of a spiritual relationship to him, believers claim the blessings of the covenant of grace that was made with him. And in the interest of a natural relationship to him, his offspring according to the flesh claimed the rights and privileges of that covenant of peculiarity which was first made with him as the head of that separate people. But more eminently, the covenant of grace is established in Christ as its head. All its promises were first given to him and in him they are all yes and amen. It is by union to him that believers obtain a new covenant interest and from him they derive a new life, grace, and strength to answer the ends of the new covenant.

General Directions to Rightly Understand Covenant Transactions

6. Now it is evident from what has already been said, that all federal transactions of God with men flow only from his good pleasure and the counsel of his will. [not from the will of man! John 1:13, etc.] So that ground it is certainly to be concluded that our knowledge and understanding of them must wholly depend on divine revelation. No one can pretend acquaintance with the secret of God except as he has been please to reveal it in his work. This light must guide all our inquiries after it. Our sentiments in things of this nature must be strictly governed by this rule, seeing the nature of them is such as transcends the common principles of reason or natural light. This is so since they owe their origin to the free acts of the divine will and wisdom, which are unaccountable until revealed by God himself. Therefore it becomes us to captivate all our thoughts of them to the obedience of faith, knowing that learning and strength of parts (though of excellent use in their place) not guided by Scripture light in these inquiries can only form an ingenious error and lose a man in the labyrinth of his own imagination and uncertain guesses. The simple advantage of those aids (in this case trusted to and stretched beyond their limit) can reach no further than to enable him *cum ratione errare* (to ere with reason) and so to wander from truth in a path seemingly more smooth but no less dangerous than others light upon.

In these things lies the spring of most mistakes and corruptions of doctrine and practice in matters of religion. Men easily find out and agree in the true dictates of the law of nature but in things pertaining to the covenants of God, how varied are their sentiments! Yes, many great, learned, and good men have been divided in their judgments about some things of great importance to the faith and edification of the church thought no absolutely necessary to her being. One error admitted about the nature of God's federal transactions with men strangely perplexes the whole system of body of divinity and entangles our interpretation of innumerable texts of Scripture. By this means jars and contentions have been perpetuated in the church to the great grief and hindrance of all, the offence of the weak, and the greater scandal of the blind world. All this has often occurred through the lack of due and humble attention to that revelation of truth which God has given us in the holy Scriptures, and endeavoring to collect the mind of God from there without a preconceived judgment, and a careful

avoiding of the undue mixture or confusion of things natural with those that are purely of a federal nature.

The covenant of God is his secret and only he can make us know it. And yet our faith, practice, comfort, and holiness are closely concerned in a good acquaintance with it; so we need no other motive to a diligent and humble search of the Scriptures of the right informing of our judgment about it. Nor do we need any other caution against attributing too much to our own wisdom or abilities. Rather we must manage all our inquiries with earnest prayer to God for that Holy Spirit of light and truth, who only can lead us into all this truth and bring us to a clear acquaintance of the mind of God concerning it.

pg 53 regarding man's sinful condition, moral inability to come to God (to believe, etc.)

In this condition man was altogether helpless and without strength, being utterly disabled to stand before God on terms of a covenant of works, [of which fallen man is in still, while praying the sinner's prayer, still under the curse, etc., under law...] and incapable to bring himself on other terms. For he was not able to move one step toward a reconciliation with God or the ransoming of himself out of these miseries. The door of repentance was not opened to him by the covenant of creation, or if it had, there was now in him neither power nor will to enter in there [Rom 8:7-8]. He was utterly disabled from obeying God acceptable on any terms until made a new creature. [until faith bestowed, Heb 11:6, "But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*,"

The Secret Almighty Power of the Holy Spirit in Converting the Soul

code208

pg 69-70 Sermon IV
John Flavel, Method of Grace

Doctrine. That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God.

No man is compelled to come to Christ against his will, he that cometh, comes willingly, but even that will and desire to come is the effect of grace, Phil. ii. 13. "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." If we desire the help and assistance of grace, (saith Fulgentius) even the desire is of grace; grace must first be shed forth upon us, before we can begin to desire it." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. Suppose the utmost degree of natural ability; let a man be as much disposed and prepared as nature can dispose or prepare him, and to all this, add the proposal of the greatest arguments and motives to

induce him to come; let all these have the advantage of the fittest season to work upon his heart; yet no man can come till God draw him; we move as we are moved; as Christ's coming to us, so our coming to him are the pure effects of grace.

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

Secondly, In what manner he draws men to Christ,

Thirdly, How it appears that none can come till they be so drawn.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports. To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually distinguished into physical and moral. The former is either by co-action, force, and compulsion ; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man, which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who loves to reign over a free and willing people, Ps.110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Or, as that word may be rendered, they shall be voluntarinesses, as willing as willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible co-action, but in a moral way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus Christ. He draws with the bands of a man, as they are called, Hos. 11:14, i.e., in a way of rational conviction of the mind and conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will. But yet by moral persuasion, we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at the sinner's choice, whether he will comply with it or no. **For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ.** And, in this respect, we own a physical, as well as a moral influence of the Spirit in this work ; and so scripture expresses it, Eph. i. 19, 20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, **according to the working of his mighty power**, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." **Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will; there is a power as well as a tender**; greatness of power ; and yet more, the exceeding greatness of his power; **and this power hath an actual efficacy ascribed to it**, he works upon our hearts and wills according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Thus he fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thess.1:11. Flavel, pg 69 vol. 2 Ser. 4

And this is that which the schools call *gratia efficax*, effectual grace; and others *victrix delectatio*, an overcoming, conquering delight; thus the work is carried on with a most **efficacious sweetness**. **So that the liberty of the will is not infringed, whilst the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued and over-ruled**. **For want of this, there are so many almost Christians in the world [brought on much by the presumptuous sinner's prayer, coming to God without being called]**; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works which come to nothing, called in scripture, a morning cloud, an early dew. **[That's because they were never called; as Thomas Shepard says, God never spoke one word to them! see John 5:37]** Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had never vanished or perished like embryos as they do. **So then, God draws not only in a moral way, by proposing a suitable object to the**

will, but also in a physical way, or by immediate powerful influence upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly and effectually persuading it to come to Christ.

The Secret Almighty Power of the Holy Spirit in Converting the Soul

Prop. 6. *The application of Christ, by the work of regeneration is that which yields unto men all the sensible sweetness and refreshing comforts that they have in Christ, and in all that he hath done, suffered, or purchased for sinners.*

An unsanctified person may relish the natural sweetness of the creature, as well as he that is sanctified; **he may also seem to relish and taste some sweetness in the delicious promise and discoveries of the gospel, by a misapplication of them to himself.** But this is like the joy of a beggar, dreaming he is a king; but he awakes and finds himself a beggar still; but for the rational, solid, and genuine delights and comforts of religion, no man tastes them, **till this work of the Spirit hath first passed upon his soul;** it is an enclosed pleasure, a stranger intermeddles not with it. "The white stone, and the new name," (denoting the pleasant results and fruits of justification and adoption) "no man knows but he that receives it," Rev. ii. 7. There are all those things wanting in the unsanctified (though elect) soul, that should capacitate and enable it to relish the sweetness of Christ and religion, namely, propriety, evidence, and suitableness of spirit. Propriety is the sweetest part of any excellency; therefore Luther was wont to say, that the sweetness of the gospel lay mostly in pronouns, as me, my, thy, &c. who loved [me] and gave himself for me, Gal 2:20. Christ Jesus [my] Lord, Phil. 3:18. So Matt, 9:2. Son, be of good cheer, [thy] sins are forgiven. Take away propriety, and you deflower the very gospel of its beauty and deliciousness; and as propriety, so evidence is requisite to joy and comfort; yea, so necessary, that even interest and propriety afford no sensible sweetness without it. For as to comfort, it is all one not to appear, and not to be. If I am registered in the book of life, and know it not, what comfort can my name there afford me? **Besides, to capacitate a soul for the sweetness and comfort of Christ there is also an agreeable temper of spirit required; for how can Christ be sweet to that man's soul, whose thoughts reluctate, decline, or nauseate so holy and pure an object?** Now, all these requisites being the proper effects and fruits of the Spirit's sanctifying operations upon us, it is beyond controversy, **that the consolations of Christ cannot be tasted, until the application of Christ be first made.** John Flavel, Sermon 1, Method of Grace

Proposition 1. The application of Christ to us, is not only comprehensive of our justification, but **of all those works of the Spirit which are known to us in scripture by the names of regeneration, vocation, sanctification, and conversion.** [blake]

Though all these terms have some small respective differences among themselves, yet they are all included in this general, **the applying and putting on of Christ, Rom. xiii. 14.** "Put ye on the "Lord Jesus Christ." **Regeneration** expresses those supernatural, divine, new qualities, **infused by the Spirit into the soul, which are the principles of all holy actions.** **Vocation** expresses the terms from which, and to which, the soul moves, when the Spirit works savingly upon it, under the gospel call. **Sanctification** notes an **holy dedication of heart and life to God.** Our becoming the temples of the living God, separate from all profane sinful practices, to the Lord's only use and service.

Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causeth upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ. Now all these are imported in, and done by the application of Christ to our souls; for when once the efficacy of Christ's death, and the virtue of his resurrection, come to take place upon the heart of any man, **he cannot but turn from sin to God**, and become a new creature, living and acting by new principles and rules. So the apostle observes, **1 Thess. 1:5, 6**. speaking of the effect of this work of the Spirit upon that people, "Our gospel (saith he) came "not to you in word only, but in power; and in the Holy Ghost;" There was the effectual application of Christ to them. "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord," ver. 6. there was their effectual call. "And ye turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God," ver. 9. there was their conversion. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe," ver. 9. there was their life of sanctification or dedication to God. So that all these are comprehended in effectual application. John Flavel, vol. Method of Grace, p 19

*The Secret Almighty Power (cont.)
of the Holy Spirit in Converting the Soul*

John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me to draw him."

[No Man], not one, let his natural qualifications be what they will, let his external advantages, in respect of means and helps, be never so great; **it is not in the power of any man**; all persons, in all ages, need the same power of God, one as well as another; **every man is alike dead, impotent, and averse to faith in his natural capacity**. No man, or—not one, among all the sons of men [Can], or is able; he speaks of impotency to special and saving actions, such as believing in Christ is; no act that is saving can be done without the concurrence of special grace. Other acts that have a remote tendency to it, are performed by a more general concourse and common assistance; so men may come to the word, and attend to what is spoken, remember and consider what the word tells them; but as to believing or coming to Christ, that no man can do of himself, or by a general and common assistance. No man can. [Come unto me], i.e., believe in me unto salvation. **Coming to Christ, and believing in him, are terms equipollent, and are indifferently used to express the nature of saving faith,** as is plain, ver. 35. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger," and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;" it notes the terms from which and to which the soul moves, and the voluntariness of the motion, notwithstanding that **divine power by which the will is drawn to Christ.** [Except my Father] not excluding the other two Persons; for every work of God relating to the creatures is common to all the three Persons; nor only to note that the Father is the first in order of working; but the reason is hinted in the next words, [*who hath sent me,*]. God hath entered into covenant with the Son, and sent him, stands obliged thereby, to bring the promised seed to him, and that he does by drawing them to Christ by faith; so the next words tell us the Father does, [*Draw him*] **That is, powerfully and effectually incline his will to come to Christ: "Not by a violent co-action, but by a benevolent bending of the will which was averse;"** and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so neither is it by a simple moral suasion, by the bare proposal of an object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election; but it is such a persuasion, as hath a mighty overcoming efficacy accompanying it; of which more anon. The words thus opened, the observation will be this: Doctrine: *That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God.* John Flavel, vol. 2 pg 68

p 77 Vol. 2, Method of Grace Sermon IV - ref. our corrupt nature

Secondly, Let us take the act of **faith** into consideration also, as it is here described by the soul's coming to Jesus Christ; and you will find a necessity of the Father's drawings ; for this evidently implies, that which is **against the stream and current of corrupt nature**, and that which is **above the sphere and capacity of the most refined and accomplished nature**.

First, It is against the stream and current of our corrupt nature to come to Christ. For let us but consider the term from which the soul departs, when it comes to Christ. In that day it leaves all its lusts, and ways of sin, how pleasant, sweet, and profitable soever they have been unto it, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." **Way and thoughts, i.e., both the practice of, and delight he had in sin, must be forsaken**, and the outward and inward man must be cleansed from it. Now there are in the bosoms of unregenerate men such **darling lusts**, that have given them so much practical and speculative pleasure, which have brought so much profit to them, **which have been born and bred up with them**; and which, upon all these accounts, are endeared to their souls to that degree, that it is easier for them to die, than to forsake them; yea, **nothing is more common among such men, than to venture eternal damnation, rather than suffer a separation from their sins**. And which is yet more difficult in coming to Christ, the soul forsakes not only its sinful self, **but its righteous self**, i.e., not only its worst sins, **but its best performances, accomplishments, and excellencies**. Now this is one of the greatest straits that nature can be put to. Righteousness by works was the first liquor that ever was put into the vessel, and it still retains the tang and savour of it, and will to the end of the world, Rom. x. 3. " For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." *ax, weraymv*, they have not submitted. To come naked and empty to Christ, and receive all from him **as a free gift**, is, **to proud corrupt nature, the greatest abasement and submission in the world**.

The quickening power of the Spirit
Sermon V, Method of Grace, pg 86-88

This his quickening work is therefore the first in order of nature to our union with Christ, and fundamental to all other acts of grace done and performed by us, from our first closing with Christ throughout the whole course of our obedience; and this quickening act is said, ver. 5. to be together with Christ. Either noting (as some expound it) that it is the effect of the same power by which Christ was raised from the dead, according to Eph. 1. 19, or rather, to be quickened together with Christ, notes that new spiritual life which is infused into our dead souls in the time of our union with Christ; **"For it is Christ to whom we are conjoined and united in our regeneration, out of whom, as a fountain, all spiritual benefits flow to us, among which this vivification or quickening is one, and a most sweet and precious one."** Zanchy Bodius, and many others, **will have this quickening to comprise both our justification and regeneration**, and to stand opposed both to eternal and spiritual death, and it may well be allowed; but **it most properly imports our regeneration, wherein the Spirit, in an ineffable and mysterious way,**

makes the soul to live to God, yea, to live the life of God, which soul was before dead in trespasses and sins.

The deadness of man in sin; spiritual life only from God's Spirit

Secondly, In the next place, the total indisposedness of the subjects by nature. For, as it is well noted by a learned man, "the apostle doth not say of these Ephesians that they were half dead, or sick, and infirm, but dead wholly ; altogether dead, destitute of any faculty or ability, so much as to think one good thought, or perform one good act." You were dead in respect of condemnation, being under the damning sentence of the law, and you are dead in respect of the privation of spiritual life; dead in opposition to justification, and dead in opposition to regeneration and sanctification : And the fatal instrument by which their souls died is here showed them; you were dead in, or by trespasses and sins, this was the sword that killed your souls, and cut them off from God. Some do curiously distinguish betwixt trespasses and sins, as if one pointed at original, the other at actual sins; but I suppose they are promiscuously used here, and serve to express the cause of their ruin, or means of their spiritual death and destruction; this was their case when Christ came to quicken them, dead in sin; and being so, they could not move themselves towards union with Christ, but as they were moved by the quickening Spirit of God. Hence the observation will be this,

Doct. That those souls which have union with Christ, are quickened with a supernatural principle of life by the Spirit of God in order thereunto.

The Spirit of God is not only a living Spirit, formally considered; but he is also the Spirit of life, effectively or casually considered; And without his breathing, or infusing life into our souls, our union with Christ is impossible.

It is the observation of learned Camero, "that there must be an *union* before there can be an union with Christ. *Union* is to be conceived efficiently as the work of God's Spirit, joining the believer to Christ, and union is to be conceived formally, the joining itself of the persons together." We close with Christ by faith, but that faith being a vital act, pre-supposes a principle of life communicated to us by the Spirit; therefore it is said, John xi. 26. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die;" The vital act and operation of faith springs from this quickening Spirit. So in Rom. viii. 1,2. The apostle, having in the first verse opened the blessed estate of them that are in Christ, shows us in the second verse how we come to be in him: "The Spirit of life (saith he) which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

There is indeed a quickening work of the Spirit, which is subsequent to regeneration, consisting in his exciting, recovering, and actuating of his own graces in us; and from hence is the liveliness of a Christian; and there is a quickening act of the Spirit in our regeneration, and from hence is the spiritual life of a Christian; of this I am here to speak, and that I may speak profitably to this point, I will in the doctrinal part labour to open these five particulars.

First, What this spiritual life is in its nature and properties.

Secondly, In what manner it is wrought or inspired into the soul.

Thirdly, For what end, or with what design, this life is so inspired.

Fourthly, I shall show this work to be wholly supernatural.

And then, Fifthly, Why this **quicken**ing must be antecedent to our actual closing with Christ by faith.

A Secret Virtue

Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer, p286

"Hereupon the heart and will come, and rest and roll themselves upon these bowels, and there rest; thus the whole soul comes and this, I say again, is faith. Just as it is with the load-stone drawing the iron; who would think that iron should be drawn by it? **But there is a secret virtue coming from the stone, which draws it and so it comes** and is untied to it; so who would think, that ever such an iron, heavy, earthly heart, should be drawn to Christ? Yet, the Lord lets out a secret virtue of faith and sweetness from himself, which draws the soul to Christ, and so it comes."

Sermon VII, pg 122

Method of Grace - True Freedom

Besides, it is no easy thing to persuade men to receive Christ as their Lord in all things, and submit their necks to his strict and holy precepts, though it be a great truth that "Christ's yoke doth not gail, but grace and adorn the neck that bears it;" that **the truest and sweetest liberty is in our freedom from our lusts, not in our fulfilling them**; yet who can persuade the carnal heart to believe this? And much less will men ever be prevailed withal, to forsake father, mother, wife, children, inheritance, and life itself, to follow Christ; and all this upon the account of spiritual and invisible things; and yet this must be done by all that receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel terms; yea, and before the soul hath any encouraging experience of its own, to balance the manifold discouragements of sense, and carnal reason, improved by the utmost craft of Satan to dismay it: for experience is the fruit and consequent of believing. So that it may well be placed among the great mysteries of godliness, that Christ is believed on in the world, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

pg 133 Sermon VII

Things accompanying Faith

These are the concomitant frames that accompany faith.

3. Lastly, Examine the consequents and effects of faith, if you would be satisfied of the truth and sincerity of it. And such are,

First, Evangelical meltings, and ingenuous thawings of the heart under the apprehensions of grace and mercy: Zech. xii. 10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn.

Secondly, Love to Christ, his ways and people, Gal. v. 6. Faith worketh by love, i. e. represents the love of God, and then makes use of the sweetness of it by way of argument, to constrain the soul to all acts of obedience, where it may testify the reality of its love to God and Christ.

Thirdly, Heart-purity, Acts xv. 9. "Purifying the hearts by faith;" It doth not only cleanse the hands but the heart. No principle in man, besides faith, can do this;

Morality may hide corruption, but faith only purifies the heart from it.

Fourthly, Obedience to the commands of Christ, Rom. xvi. 26. The very name of faith is called upon obedience; for it accepts Christ as Lord, and urges upon the soul the most powerful arguments in the world to draw it to obedience.

Flavel: Conversion of the Vilest Sinner Possible

John 16:9

pg 533 Vol. 6

The Power of God is irresistible...

Once more, Rom. v. 20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So that whatever thy sins have been, they do not, they cannot exceed the ability and power of the grace of God, the all-sufficient, impulsive cause of remission. That infinite abyss, or sea of mercy, can swallow up, and cover such mountains of guilt, as yours have been. 2. Nor do your sins exceed the ability and power of the meritorious cause of remission, namely, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; for that blood is the blood of God, Acts 20:28. He is the Lamb of God, whose blood is sufficient to take away the sins of the world, John 1:29. There is but one sin in the world exempt from remission by this blood, and if your heart be now wounded with the sense of sin, (as I here suppose it to be) that is none of your sin, how heinous so ever your other sins be.

Nor do your sins exceed the ability and power of the applying cause of pardon, namely, the Spirit of God. For though I should suppose thy mind to be clouded, and overshadowed with grossest ignorance, thy heart to be as hard as adamant, or nether-millstone, your will stiff and obstinate, your affections enchanted and bewitched with the pleasures of sin; yet this Spirit of God, in a moment, can make a convincing beam of light to dart into thy dark mind, make thy hard heart relent, thy stubborn will to bow, and all the affections of your soul to comply, and open obediently to Christ, **John 16:9**, 10, "The Spirit when he cometh, he shall convince the world of sin," etc.

Thus you see, whatever your guilt be, it does not exceed the abilities of the causes of remission. O what an encouragement is this? [Only convinced sinners are convinced of the infinite hatred that God has for sin and are so convinced, by faith, that they sincerely repent and continue to do so the rest of their lives [James 2:14-]. The *world* here must mean the world of believers, not the whole world, since they remain unconvinced and hence die in their sin.]

The Doctrine of Concurrence

code211

Excerpt from

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 2 pg 608-615

This discourse by Hermon Bavinck answers a popular objection to God's sovereignty over the wills of men that most people have against predestination and election. By nature, fallen man asserts his presumed autonomy and self-reliance with great vigilance, that nothing outside himself is warranted to influence his decisions especially in the area of religion, faith in Christ, etc., since he sees it as God doing violence to his the liberty of his free will. The objection he falsely describes is that God has to turn people into robots to infallibly effect what He has decreed in eternity to accomplish. Of course this is a false narrative due to ignorance or blindness in this mystery of the doctrine of Concurrence (or Compatibilism), where God's sovereignty [in election for example] is consistence with man's liberty or freedom, that God does not coerce people to believe in him but as John Flavel puts it, works by a secret and sweet efficacy of his mighty power, moves the will, changes it. Hermon Bavinck does an excellent job in describing this amazing act of God, hence the words that are so true, "amazing grace that saved a wretch like me." Read this very carefully; it is deep but really good! There are a multitude of good examples of this: The Assyrians in Isa. 10, Titus in 2Cor8:16, ¹⁶ "But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going^[d] to you of his own accord." and the conversion of every lost sinner that believes!

In another place in his works, on a similar sublime subject, the incomprehensibility of God, upon which that Bavinck commented, the same comment can be applied to this doctrine of concurrence in describing the work of efficacious grace upon the soul of man in conversion (while simultaneously not doing violence to man's liberty), is a "adorable mystery" and then what he concluded then, can be said here as well, "But mystery and self-contradiction are not synonymous terms." Bavinck sums this up: "This knowledge [the knowledge of God] that is shrouded in mystery... leads to adoration and worship." pg 27, Vol. 2

Here is my summary of this doctrine and an important application: God's sovereignty, his decrees, etc., are consistent with man's liberty or free will. When you see this more clearly it will excite you to your duty to prayer with more vigor and confidence. God is *immanent* in that he is in all beings (near to everyone) sustaining all according to their nature, saved or unsaved; this is deep. Though he is close to all; he is not savingly close to all; i.e., most people's hearts are far from him even though God is close to them (immanence), in that by his power they *live and move*... (Acts 17:28), including in all manner of evil/sin, etc., yet God is not culpable in their sin. This whole thing is seen in Phil. 2:13, *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Both to will* – meaning, for example, that he moves on those he intends to save by sweetly changing their will by a secret efficacy of his power, from stubborn unbelief to believing! And they come willingly - not by compulsion; God is not dragging people into the kingdom kicking and screaming. But this moving of the will is not just for converting the soul; it is for all that you do – and hence speaks to the fact, as Jonathan Edwards notes,

that we receive our all from God, implying the *most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence*, a great motivation and encouragement that we pray!

CONCURRENCE: SECONDARY CAUSES

With that we have now indicated the manner in which God exercises his providential rule in the world—which in former times was expressed by the **doctrine of concurrence**. This is as richly diversified as the diversity with which God distinguished his creatures at the time of creation. The variety exhibited in God’s manner of government is just as great as that exhibited in his creation.[J. Alsted, *Theol.*, 315] By creation God called into being a world that simultaneously deserves to be called a “cosmos” (*kosmos*) and an “age” (*aiōn*), and which in both space and time is “a most brilliant mirror of the divine glory.”[J. Alsted] Now, providence serves to take the world from its beginning and to lead it to its final goal; it goes into effect immediately after the creation and brings to development all that was given in that creation. Creation, conversely, was aimed at providence; creation conferred on creatures the kind of existence that can be brought to development in and by providence. For the world was not created in a state of pure potency, as chaos or a nebulous cloud, but as an ordered cosmos, and human beings were placed in it not as helpless toddlers but as an adult man and an adult woman. Development could only proceed from such a ready-made world, and that is how creation presented it to providence. In addition, that world was a harmonious whole in which unity was coupled to the most marvelous diversity. Every creature received a nature of its own, and with that nature an existence, a life, and a law of its own. Just as the moral law was increased in the heart of Adam as the rule for his life, **so all creatures carried in their own nature the principles and laws for their own development**. All things are created by the word.

All things are based on thought. The whole creation is a system grounded in the ordinances of God (Gen. 1:26, 28; 8:22; Ps. 104:5, 9; 119:90–91; Eccles. 1:10; Job 38:10ff.; Jer. 5:24; 31:25ff.; 33:20, 25). On all creatures God conferred an order, a law that they do not violate (Ps. 148:6).[64] In all of its parts it is rooted in the counsel of God, a design that emerges in things great and small. This all comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom (Isa. 28:23, 29). This is how Scripture teaches us to understand the world, and this is also how Christian theology has understood it. Augustine said that “hidden seeds” (*semina occulta*), “original principles” (*originales regulae*), and “seminal reasons” (*seminariae rationes*) were implanted in creatures, are concealed in the secret womb of nature, and thus are the principles of all development. “Whatever things, by being born, become visible to our eyes receive the principles of their development from hidden seeds, and take the increases in size appropriate to them, as well as the distinctiveness of their forms as though from these original causes.”[Augustine]

The world, accordingly, is pregnant with the causes of beings. “For as mothers are pregnant with unborn offspring, so the world itself is pregnant with the causes of unborn beings, which are not created in it except from that highest essence, where nothing is either born or dies, begins to be, or ceases to be.” [Augustine] The world is a tree of things (*arbor rerum*), bringing forth branch and blossom and fruit. [Augustine] God so preserves things and so works in them that they themselves work along with him as secondary causes. This is not to say that we must stop there. On the contrary,

we must always ascend to the cause of all being and movement, and that is the will of God alone. “The ‘nature’ of any particular created thing is precisely what the supreme Creator of the thing willed it to be.”[Augustine] To that extent providence is not only a positive but also an immediate act of God. His will, his power, his being is immediately present in every creature and every event. All things exist and live together in him (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Just as he created the world by himself, so he also preserves and governs it by himself. Although God works through secondary causes, this is not to be interpreted, in the manner of Deism, to mean that they come in between God and the effects with their consequences and separate these from him. “God’s immediate provision over everything extends to the exemplar of the order.”[Aquinas]

For that reason a miracle is not a violation of natural law nor an intervention in the natural order. From God’s side it is an act that does not more immediately and directly have God as its cause than any ordinary event, and in the counsel of God and the plan of the world it occupies as much an equally well-ordered and harmonious place as any natural phenomenon. In miracles God only puts into effect a special force that, like any other force, operates in accordance with its own nature and therefore also has an outcome of its own.[Bavinck, *Vol. 1 p188*] But at the creation God built his laws into things, fashioning an order by which the things themselves are interconnected. **God is not dependent on causes, but things do depend on one another.** That interconnectedness is of many kinds. Although in general it can be called “causal,” the word “causal” **in this sense must by no means be equated with “mechanical,” as materialism would have us do.** A mechanical connection is only one mode in which a number of things in the world relate to each other. Just as creatures received a nature of their own in the creation and differ among themselves, so there is also difference in the laws in conformity with which they function and in the relation in which they stand to each other.

These laws and relations differ in every sphere: the physical and the psychological, the intellectual and the ethical, the family and society, science and art, the kingdoms of earth and the kingdom of heaven. It is the providence of God that, interlocking with creation, maintains and brings to full development all these distinct natures, forces, and ordinances. **In providence God respects and develops—and does not nullify—the things he called into being in creation.** “It does not pertain to divine providence to corrupt the nature of things but to preserve [that nature].”[Aquinas] Thus, therefore, God preserves and governs all creatures according to their nature, the angels in one way, humans in another, and the latter again in a way that differs from animals and plants. But insofar as God in his providence maintains things in their mutual relatedness and makes creatures subserve each other’s existence and life, that providence can be called mediate. “God immediately provides for all things as it pertains to the exemplar of the order, but as it pertains to the execution of the order he, to be sure, provides through other means.”[Aquinas] Thus he created all the angels simultaneously but lets humans spring from one blood; thus he preserves some creatures individually and others as species and families. In each case, then, he employs all sorts of creatures as means in his hand to fulfill his counsel and to reach his goal.

Christian theology did not deny these things. On the contrary, following the example of Scripture, it has always emphatically upheld the natural order and the causal nexus of the phenomena. It is not true that Christianity with its supernaturalism was hostile to the natural order and made science impossible, as Draper, for example, and others have sought to demonstrate with such relish. Much more in line

with the facts is the judgment of DuBois-Reymond when he wrote: “Modern natural science, however paradoxical this may sound, owes its origin to Christianity.” In any case, Christianity made science—specifically natural science—possible and prepared the ground for it. For the more the natural phenomena are deified—as in **polytheism**—and viewed as the visible images and bearers of deity, the more scientific inquiry is made impossible since it becomes automatically a form of desecration that disturbs the mystery of Deity. **But Christianity distinguished God and the world**, and by its confession of God as the Creator of all things, separated God from the nexus of nature and lifted him far above it. **The study of nature, therefore, is no longer a violation of Deity.** At the same time and by this very fact it has made human beings free and given them independent status vis-à-vis nature, as is clearly demonstrated by the splendid view of nature we find in the psalmists and prophets, in Jesus and the apostles. **For the believer, nature is no longer an object of worship and dread.** [*The Hebrews faced the world and nature with sovereign self-awareness – being without fear of the world – but also with a sense of the utmost responsibility. As God’s representative, humanity exercises dominion over the world but only as such. Human beings may not follow their arbitrary impulses but only the reveal will of God. Paganism, in contrast, alternates between presumptuous misuse of the world and childish dread before its powers.* R. Smend] Whereas before God he bows down in deep humility and is utterly dependent on him, in relation to the earth he has the calling to exercise dominion over it and to subject all things to himself (Gen. 1:26). Dependence on God is something very different from living conformably to nature and adapting oneself to circumstances. Many writers argue either in such a way that they attribute all things and events to the will of God and consider resistance impermissible, or they limit God’s providence and place many things in the hands of humans.

Scripture, however, warns us against both this antinomianism and this Pelagianism; it cuts off at the root all false fatalistic resignation on the one hand, and all presumptuous self-confidence on the other. Bowing before the powers of nature is something very different from childlike submission to God, and exercising dominion over the earth is a matter of serving God. The sea captain who went to his cabin to pray and read the Bible during a storm did submit to the power of the elements, but not to God. [S. Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*] There is much more real piety in Cromwell’s dictum: “Trust God and keep your powder dry.” It is, moreover, the confession of God as the Creator of heaven and earth that immediately brings with it the one absolute and never self-contradictory truth, the harmony and beauty of the counsel of God, and hence the unity of the cosmic plan and the order of all of nature. “If in a free and wonderful way, on the basis of the full scope of nature, one attributes to the one God also a unified manner of working, then the connectedness of things in terms of cause and effect not only becomes conceivable but even a necessary consequence of the assumption.”[F.A. Lange] Scripture itself models to us this recognition of such a natural order, of a wide range of ordinances and laws for created things. And miracle is so far from making an inroad on that natural order that it rather presupposes and confirms it. At all times the Christian church and theology have generously acknowledged such an order of things. Augustine repeatedly appealed to the saying in Wisdom 11:20: “You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight.” At least in the early period they energetically opposed the appalling superstition that crested in the third and fourth centuries, and especially fought against astrology. [Augustine, F. Turretin, Aquinas, Calvin, etc.] The controversy that often erupted was not a conflict between Christianity and natural science; the alignments were very different; it was usually a struggle between an earlier and later worldview, with believing Christians on both sides.[80]

This fundamentally correct view of nature, which Christian theology advocated, is nowhere more clearly in evidence than in its **doctrine of “concurrency” and “secondary causes.”** In neither **pantheism** nor **Deism** can this doctrine come into its own. In the former there are no longer any causes, and in the latter no secondary causes. In **pantheism** the secondary causes, that is, the immediate causes of things within the circle of created things, are identified with the primary cause, which is God. **Between the two there is no distinction of substance and effect.** Both materially and formally, God is the subject of all that happens, and hence also of sin. At best the so-called secondary causes are opportunities and passive instruments for the workings of God. Whereas this theory only sporadically surfaced in earlier times, in the more modern philosophy of **Descartes** it came to dominance and so led to the **idealism** of **Berkeley** and **Malebranche**, and to the pantheism of **Spinoza**, **Hegel**, **Schleiermacher**, **Strauss**, and others. So Malebranche, for example, posits that “there is only one true cause because there is only one true God; that the nature or power of each thing is nothing but the will of God; that all natural causes are not true causes but only occasional causes.” The true cause can only be God because he alone can create and he cannot communicate that power to a creature. If creatures could be the true cause of motions and phenomena, they themselves would be gods. But “all these insignificant pagan divinities and all these particular causes of the philosophers are merely chimeras that the wicked mind tries to establish to undermine worship of the true God.” [N. Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*] Accordingly, there are only phenomena, representations, and the only reality, power, and substance behind these phenomena is that of God himself. [J. Kleutgen]

Conversely, in **Deism** the secondary causes are separated from the primary cause and made independent. **The primary cause is totally restricted to the creation,** the communication of the possibility (*posse*), and totally excluded in the case of the “willing” (*velle*) and the doing (*facere*), as in the original **Pelagianism**. Or the two causes are conceived as associated causes that work with and alongside each other, like two draft horses pulling a wagon, even though one is perhaps stronger than the other, as in semi-Pelagianism and synergism. **In this view the creature becomes the creator of his or her own deeds.** Scripture, however, tells us both that God works all things so that the creature is only an instrument in his hand (Isa. 44:24; Ps. 29:3; 65:10; 147:15ff.; Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:25; etc.) **and that providence is distinct from creation and presupposes the existence and self-activity of creatures** (Gen. 1:11, 20, 22, 24, 28; etc.). In keeping with this witness, Christian theology teaches that the secondary causes are strictly subordinated to God as the primary cause and in that subordination nevertheless remain true causes. The odd theologian, to be sure, diverged from this position, such as the nominalist Biel in the Middle Ages and **Zwingli** in the time of the Reformation, who believed that secondary causes were mistakenly so-called and preferred to call them instruments. [U. Zwingli, *On the Providence and Other Essays*]

The constant teaching of the Christian church, nevertheless, has been that the two causes, though they are totally dependent on the primary cause, **are at the same time also true and essential causes.** With his almighty power God makes possible every secondary cause and is present in it with his being at its beginning, progression, and end. It is he who posits it and makes it move into action (*praecursus*) and who further accompanies it in its working and leads it to its effect (*concursum*). He is “at work” [in us] “both to will and to do for his good pleasure” (**Phil. 2:13**). **But this energizing activity of the primary cause in the secondary causes is so divinely great that precisely by that activity he stirs those secondary causes into an activity of their own.** “The providence of God does not cancel out but posits

secondary causation.” [J Wollebius] **Concurrence is precisely the reason for the self-activity of the secondary causes, and these causes, sustained from beginning to end by God’s power, work with a strength that is appropriate and natural to them. So little does the activity of God nullify the activity of the creature that the latter is all the more vigorous to the degree that the former reveals itself the more richly and fully. Hence, the primary cause and the secondary cause remain distinct. **The former does not destroy the latter but on the contrary confers reality on it, and the second exists solely as a result of the first.** Neither are the secondary causes merely instruments, organs, inanimate automata [i.e., robots], but they are genuine causes with a nature, vitality, spontaneity, manner of working, and law of their own. “Satan and evildoers are not so effectively the instruments of God that they do not also act in their own behalf. For we must not suppose that God works in an iniquitous man as if he were a stone or a piece of wood, but He uses him as a thinking creature, according to the quality of his nature, which He has given him. Thus, when we say that God works in evildoers, that does not prevent them from working also in their own behalf.” [J. Calvin, *Treaties Against the Anabaptists and Libertines*]**

In relation to God the secondary causes can be compared to instruments (Isa. 10:15; 13:5; Jer. 50:25; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:20–23); in relation to their effects and products they are causes in the true sense. **And precisely because the primary and the secondary cause do not stand and function dualistically on separate tracks, but the primary works through the secondary, the effect that proceeds from the two is one and the product is one. There is no division of labor between God and his creature, but the same effect is totally the effect of the primary cause as well as totally the effect of the proximate cause. The product is also in the same sense totally the product of the primary as well as totally the product of the secondary cause.** But because the primary cause and the secondary cause are not identical and differ essentially, the effect and product are in reality totally the effect and product of the two causes, to be sure, but formally they are only the effect and product of the secondary cause. Wood burns and it is God alone who makes it burn, yet the burning process may not be formally attributed to God but must be attributed to the wood as subject. **Human persons speak, act, and believe, and it is God alone who supplies to a sinner all the vitality and strength he or she needs for the commission of a sin. Nevertheless the subject and author of the sin is not God but the human being.** In this manner Scripture draws the lines within which the reconciliation of God’s sovereignty and human freedom has to be sought.

Here is a good explanation of God's preservation of things, and the carrying out of his eternal decree in his sovereignty over the wills of men, the doctrine of Concurrence. This is important to see because it is the Arminians and most people object to God's sovereignty in general, especially when considering God's sovereignty over men's wills and how this rubs sore against man's innate determination to protect his supposed autonomy of his will to the death.

God's Providence seen in God's Preservation and *Concursus*

[Concurrence]

Excerpt from G. Vos, Reformed Dogmatics

P194-204

Code459

Chapter 7 – Providence (skip to item 3)

3. *What is the basis for the doctrine of God's preservation of the universe?*

a) On the continual representation of Scripture that the creature, although possessing a real existence, nevertheless at no moment and in no respect can be independent of God. **If it existed of itself, then so far as its being is concerned it would be like God.** [God is *a se*, of himself; this distinguishes him from all creatures, who are not *a se*, but derive all that has to do with their being, from God.]

b) On the doctrine of divine immanence, according to which God with His eternal power and divine nature can be excluded from nothing in creation. Therefore it will not do to exclude Him from the ongoing existence of the substance of creation.

c) On the explicit declarations of Holy Scripture (see Neh 9:6; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3).

4. *Is providence, as far as preservation is concerned, a purely negative work, consisting in the fact that God does not destroy the created universe?*

No, it is a positive work, for only of God can it be true that He remains where He always is. God alone is absolute being. That the universe exists is not in itself sufficient grounds for its continuing to exist. For this, a new work of God is necessary, which we call preservation. Failure to appreciate that necessity is based on a deistic concept of God and on a deistic worldview. The biblical, Reformed doctrine navigates between the two extremes of pantheism and deism.

5. *How does it come about that we are so inclined to fall into this deistic error, as if given with the existence of a thing is its continuing existence, unless a positive act of destruction intervenes between the two?*

Because we have made for ourselves a god in our image and our likeness. Our relation to things outside of us is more or less deistic. When we have made something, then the sufficient grounds for its continuing to exist seem to us to lie in the fact that it exists. We do not then preserve it further, but it remains because it is. That way of thinking we then transfer to God. Of course this involves a huge *petitio principii*. For that something continues to exist when it is made by us does not depend on the fact that it exists, but exclusively on the preserving power of God.

6. What is the opposite extreme with respect to the doctrine of preservation?

That in a **pantheistic** fashion the continuity of the substance of the universe is abolished, and the universe is seen as being created every moment by God out of nothing. Preservation thus becomes a continuous creation. Supporters of this view are:

a) Many old dogmaticians, who desired to lay the emphasis on the creaturely and dependent existence of the universe. Therefore they call *conservatio* [conservation] a *creatio continua* [continuous creation]. For example, Ursinus, Heidegger, Alsted, Rijssen do this. This was not wrongly intended, but is, however, less happily formulated.

b) Many who under this formulation conceal a pantheistic worldview. One can already find the principles of this view in Descartes, which is then given a pantheistic coloring later in Malebranche and in Spinoza became a full-blown pantheism. Jonathan Edwards, who brought the sovereignty of God dangerously close to the borders of pantheism, defended this opinion in his book on original sin.

7. What objections must be brought against this identification of creation and preservation?

a) It abolishes all continuity in the existence of things. The element of what is abiding, of permanence, thereby disappears from the concept of substance. The universe comes into existence anew every moment; its existing at moment A is in no regard the basis for its existing at moment B, etc. So then, for B it is also completely indifferent whether an A instead of a P or a Q preceded. The real connection between moments of existing falls away.

b) The opposition between this opinion and the biblical view lies completely on the line of the opposition between **pantheism** and **theism**. According to this theory everything flows constantly out of God, everything must be created anew every moment. Since time is divisible into infinity, no one can determine a limit for how short the moments of creation are and so finally they will become so short that there no longer remains any room for existence, that is, the universe is constantly being created, but it never actually is. This comes dangerously close to the illusionism that asserts that finite things are an illusion.

c) This theory can also lead to Idealism. Fundamentally, here all *Vermittelung* [mediating] of things by each other is abolished, just at the point where it is most obvious, namely in the continuing existence of identical objects. If A in moment A is not the basis for the existence of A in moment B, how then will A ever be able to be the basis of B? In other words, how will we be able to maintain causality as real?

d) This theory becomes its most dangerous if its consequences are drawn for the life of man. It breaks up that life into a number of unconnected parts and thereby takes away the basis for moral life, for continuity of character, and for the responsibility of man.

8. *How then ought we to think about the preservation of God?*

As the **act** by which He, by a positive expression **of His will**, causes a thing, as it already exists or in connection with that existence, to remain itself. This does not mean that what exists in moment A does half the work necessary to perpetuate itself, and God does the other half. **It is not a divided work.** [see [Edwards' comment code225a](#)] Rather God works so that He makes use of the existence of A in moment A in order to cause this identical A to continue to exist in moment B. Beyond this, the way in which this occurs must remain incomprehensible for us. We may not, however, abandon the continuity of things. As we shall see, this same co-working of God with what already exists returns in connection with other acts of providence.

9. *What then ought to be considered as belonging to preservation?*

a) First of all, maintaining the substance of things, both spiritual and material, and of both in their specific identity. The continuity of spirits is other than that of matter, and God preserves both of them **according to their nature.** [that is, by not doing violence to their creaturely liberty. That's the wonderful mystery!]

b) Besides matter and spiritual substance, there is, however, still more reality. There is form, attribute, power, and still more. The question arises, therefore, as to whether maintaining these belongs to preservation. The answer, in brief, must be the following: Insofar as these things are not active powers or actions, their maintenance must be subsumed under the category of preservation. On the other hand, insofar as they are nothing other than active powers, they belong to the act of concursus, if one will continue to make a logical and clear distinction between preserving and co-working. Gravity, for example, is, as far as we know, always at work; it is identical with its action. There is as well, however, a latent or dormant gravity, not active as such, that would thus fall under preservation. It appears, then, that with regard to powers God need cause their action to continue only by concursus. It is, however, extremely difficult to indicate the boundary between latent and constantly active powers. Scripture does not distinguish between such things, and we may therefore be satisfied with pointing out this distinction in general.

c) Many also reckon the maintenance of type for organic genera and kinds to preservation. One should bear in mind, however, that here creation (creationism) in part and co-working and governing in part intersect, and that further the identity of kinds and genera cannot be called an identity in the strict sense, but only a similarity, unless one explains the propagation of individuals in a realistic fashion.

10. *What is the second work of providence?*

Co-working, which has reference not to the substance of things but to their action. If substance and activity differ, then with respect to the latter a specific immanence of God must exist, an immanence that at least modaliter [as to its mode] differs from that with respect to the former. The same arguments that are valid for preservation can be made for co-working. God may no more be excluded from the activity of things than from their substance. When Charles Hodge maintains that the theory of concursus seeks to make comprehensible what is incomprehensible, that is not the case, at least it does not have to be the case. Nothing more is present in the postulate of concursus than in that of preservation. We see that both must be accepted, but how that is so we comprehend as little for the one as the other.

11. *What grounds, besides what has been mentioned, do we have for assuming a co-working of God?*

a) Scripture says that we are not only in God but also live and move in Him.

b) God works in all of nature down to the smallest and most insignificant matters, or what are such for us (Psa 104:21; Matt 5:45; 10:29; Acts 14:17). If we were to accept that God in a deistic fashion lets nature work of itself, then all these texts would have to be taken figuratively and the consolation of our religion and worship would be lost.

c) The entire teleology of nature and of history speaks of an immanent working of God (cf. Job 12:7–9; Dan 4:35).

d) Every individual has only to look at his life history to discern that there was a higher hand that governed it. **At this point faith in God's co-working is most closely connected with our dependence upon Him. He directs even our free acts, and however far above our comprehension may be the manner in which he does that, in any case it must be a co-working, a concursus.** Not matter, not fate, not chance can affect us, if our freedom is to be maintained, but only the coworking of God (Psa 104:4; Prov 16:1; 21:1).

12. *How are we to think about this concursus?*

Here, too, two extremes will have to be avoided, **deism and pantheism**. According to the first, the powers and the laws of nature certainly come from God and as such are not necessary for God but now **work of themselves such that God remains excluded**. That eliminates God's **immanence**. According to the other extreme, God alone does everything in nature, that is, **there are not two causes that work together**; the laws of nature and the powers of nature are just abstractions from God's modes of working. Thus, nature and God are identified. That can happen (like the theory of preservation as *creatio continua*) in a twofold manner:

a) In the consistent **pantheistic** sense, so that God is not only immediately all power and motion of the universe but is also the ground and the substance of the universe.

b) In the sense of inclining toward **pantheism**, so that the universe is certainly distinguished from God substantially but the power of the universe is still viewed exclusively as divine power; God = nature.

13. *What must be urged against this opinion that inclines toward pantheism?*

Although there are glimmers of this view in Zwingli and Calvin and other Reformed theologians, **one can still not say that they were conscious of eliminating the action of second causes**. In their views we have to do more with dangerous formulations than real error. Nevertheless, Reformed theology must guard against such formulations much more than against **deism**, because our basic principle does not drive us in the direction of the latter, but toward **pantheism**. We note:

- a) That this conception, as if God is the only acting cause in the universe, is based more on a philosophical concept of the absolute than on scriptural grounds.
- b) That this conception is in conflict with the experience that we acquire from our own inner actions. We know ourselves as *causa secunda* [second causes] and will have to assume that, after discounting the difference between the activity of spirit and the activity of matter, something similar to what we call (spiritual) causality also takes place in material substances when we act.
- c) That this conception brings us extremely close to **Idealism and pantheism**. It is inconsistent to posit a universe outside of God in which God nevertheless is the only acting cause. **If He is thus made the doer of all doing, then one must also go a step further and make Him the being of all being.**

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and God becomes severely limited. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – An Introduction to Systematic Theology, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. **He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit.** [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

- d) That this conception is **irreconcilable with the rational responsibility of man**, insofar as that responsibility depends upon the causality of our will.

14. *What must be maintained regarding concursus?*

a) That it, like preservation, has to do with what is already created. In creating, God has placed powers in substances. These are realities, however uncertain we may be about the kind of reality that is to be attributed to them. There is something in the earth by which it exercises an attracting power. God has created it there and connected it in a certain way with the matter of earth. Just as He preserves the matter that makes up the earth, so He co-works together with that power that is joined to matter so that it endures. It is not God in the literal sense who attracts in the earth, but rather the earth itself that attracts by the concursus of God.

b) It is not a physical or metaphysical power but His omnipotent will by which God exercises His concursus, the same will by which He created the universe and preserves it. Making this distinction avoids the pantheistic formulations that hyper-Calvinistic theology has often fallen into. If God as *causa prima* [first cause] acts in the universe by physical or metaphysical power and if, as in fact is the case, this physical or metaphysical power is completely sufficient to explain what is effected, then no place remains for *causae secundae* [second causes], unless one divides power in two and attributes half to God and the other half to the creature. If, on the other hand, one holds that God is to be distinguished from the universe, not only with respect to substance but also with respect to its activity, then we arrive at recognition of the fact that what is at work *proprio sensu* [in the proper sense] in the universe is the power not of God but of the universe, and that this power, however, at every point and in every moment, is dependent on the omnipotent will of God and without that will cannot express itself. In this way both the transcendence and the immanence of God are maintained, although here too we must confess our ignorance regarding the way in which God's omnipotent will is involved in the power of the creature. [the great mystery.]

c) What we call the laws and the powers of nature is a reality, a propensity placed in things by God to act and also to act in this way and not otherwise. These wills and powers are made suitable to the matter to which they belong. There is congruence between them and the substances to which they adhere. However, we may not go so far as to think of these laws and powers as already given with these substances or as inseparably bound to them. In that case the difference between preservation and concursus would vanish. And it would be impossible for God to change natural law, to abolish it, without changing or destroying substance. By His omnipotent will God can join to the same substance new and different powers than were previously proper to it. He follows the order of nature as He Himself has established it, but He by no means does that because He cannot do otherwise. It is important to keep this in view for describing the concept of miracle. It has been observed, correctly, that in an absolute sense no miracles exist for God. For Him it is no more miraculous for iron to float on water than for it to sink. He can exercise the influence of His will on the co-working factors involved so that iron floats and just as well exercise that influence so that it sinks. When, however, by His will He exercises other such influences, that is always accompanied by a real change in the powers of things themselves, for these really exist and are not simply the power of God.

d) How we ought not to think of God's concursus follows from what has already been said. Different wrong conceptions must be rejected:

1. Concursus is not general and indifferent (*conkursus generalis et indifferens*), as the Jesuits, the Socinians, and the Remonstrants maintain. This general concursus is thought of as a neutral

power imparted by God to all *causae secundae* [second causes], as the result of which they can act, while, further, the manner of their action is dependent on the kind of *causae secundae*. [this 'neutral power' idea is believed by Arminians is to defend their supposed autonomy of the liberty of their will, their independence from God; will-worship. They say it is not fair and prejudicial to their liberty if God influences their wills in any way. They see their will as completely self-directed. Vos notes this in the next paragraph.] The sun imparts the same heat and power to grow to all plants on earth, yet these plants do not all grow in the same way because they differ from each other in kind.

The motives for this conception lie on an ethical terrain. One wished to keep God free from co-working in sin and to leave room for the *liberum arbitrium* [free will]. One distinguished between *materia* [matter] and *forma* [form] in the act of sin. The former was attributed to God, who effected it by His *concursum generalis et indifferens*, the latter (the form) came from man. (Even Reformed theologians, like Gravemeijer, make use of this distinction). Although we ought to have all respect for the first motive mentioned above and to recognize every difficulty of the problem that emerges for us through the presence of sin in the world, nevertheless we can only see in this generalizing of *concursum* a failed attempt to maintain God's holiness at the expense of His absoluteness. God is kept free from evil (at least apparently), but at the same time He is kept apart from a part of the activity of the creature. God with His eternal power and capability also cannot be excluded from that doing by which His general influence becomes specific. There is in sin not only a metaphysical substrate as a real act; there is also reality in the form of sin, activity that is specifically culpable, and even of this culpable activity it is the case that it cannot be initiated or carried out against God's will and without His *concursum*. It is much better here to let what is inexplicable stand in its inexplicability than to make do with solutions that do not do justice to another, acknowledged truth.

2. Neither is *concursum* to be conceived of as partial, so that God and the creature would share the activity involved. The same act, it is to be emphasized much more, is at the same time entirely an act of God and entirely an act of the creature. It is an act of God in its entirety insofar as there is nothing in it that does not depend on His eternal will and insofar as at each moment of its occurring it is determined by this will. At the same time it is an act of the creature insofar as by the creature and from its center the will of God causes the act to occur and be manifested as a reality. As on so many other points where we deal with the relationship between the finite and the infinite, here we encounter two spheres into which one and the same object falls without the one limiting the other. Just as the infinity of space is not the infinity of God and still is borne by the infinity of God and does not limit the infinity of God, so also the activity of second causes is not the activity of God in a proper sense but is nonetheless borne by the activity of God without limiting the activity of God. God can do everything and the creature can do everything in the same instance, since the spheres of doing are different and need not exclude each other.

3. From what has been said it is now also excluded that the activity of God and that of the creature may be placed entirely on the same line. God's activity has the primacy in order. Also, it is not to be thought that God pairs His *concursum* with the act of the creature as the same

causa occasionalis [occasional cause]. We must rather affirm the following for concursus—with respect to the working of the creature God’s activity is:

a. *Concursus praeivus sive praedeterminans* [prior or antecedent co-working]. In created things there is not a principle that works of itself and to which God then attaches. Rather, in every specific case the first impulse to activity and movement comes from God. God is first active before the creature can act. Every action and reaction of things that interact with each other depends in this way on God’s omnipotent will. When a spark and gunpowder come in contact with each other, then all the conditions for an explosion are supplied by the preservation of God that maintained the particular powers of both, but those powers cannot cause this new phenomenon of an explosion by reacting with each other unless God co-works *per concursum praeivum* [through prior concursus]. It is obvious that this *prae* [before] in *praeivus* does not mean priority in time. It is entirely a question of order. It must be noted further that this concursus *praeivus* does not terminate on the action of the creature, but on the creature itself.

b. *Concursus simultaneus* [simultaneous concursus]. Once the action has begun, the efficacious will of God must also accompany it reciprocally at every moment if it is to continue. This concursus *simultaneus*, in distinction from the concursus *praeivus*, does not concern the creature but its action. While the Jesuits among Roman Catholic theologians wanted to conceive of the concursus only as simultaneous and thus deny a concursus *praeivus*, some Reformed theologians have accepted the latter as applying only to good and gracious actions and for the rest remained satisfied with the demands of a *conkursus simultaneus*. However, one cannot make a distinction here between good acts and acts that are not good. With respect to their reality they are on the same line, and if a good action cannot take place without a *conkursus praeivus*, so the same must be maintained about an evil action.

c. *Conkursus immediatus*, that is, an immediate concursus. We often make use of means to bring about some action, and although God uses means for His governing in order to realize His purpose, this cannot be said with regard to concursus. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by letting fire rain out of heaven, that is a mediate act of governing, but at the same time it is God’s immediate concursus by which He enables fire to fall, to glow, to burn, to consume. In all the means that His governing utilizes, God’s concursus is therefore immediately active. This immediateness is further described in detail by dogmaticians as an immediateness *quoad suppositum* and *quoad virtutem*. The first means an immediacy with respect to a being, the second an immediacy with respect to power. When God exercises His concursus, no other being, no other thing, interposes itself between this concursus and its object, as, for example, the sculptor places his chisel between himself and the block of marble. Even the *causa secunda* [second cause], although action is rightly attributed to it, does not in this way lie between God and the result. God’s act adjoins and is involved directly in what is done. With respect to power God’s concursus is likewise “immediate.” It is not as if power issues and is separated from Him in order to be then further transferred apart from Him, to bring other power into action and thus cause a certain final action to exist. Rather, in every transposition and transmission of power, God is present at every moment with His *conkursus praeivus* and *simultaneus*. Here,

too, the power that really belongs to *causae secundae* [second causes] does not form a link between God and the end result.

Fallen man is always attempting to declare his independence from God by defending his so called autonomy, this self-sufficiency, his idol of his absolute free will, as he sees it, that it is doing violence to it if anything from without himself attempts to control or effect his will one way or the other. This is what it is to be sovereign; so, basically, man is declaring that he is God, not the God of scripture, that he is the captain or determiner of his own destiny, not God. And so, many people are threatened by the doctrine of God's sovereignty in general, i.e., providence, or predestination and election, for they see, in their misunderstanding of it, that for God's decrees to play out infallibly, he must force men to do things against their will (compulsion), thus making robots out of man, doing violence to their liberty. Well, this view is a result of man's ignorance of God's power, and man's true nature and condition, among other prejudices, and that they think God is altogether like themselves (Ps50:21)

More on the Doctrine of Concurrence

code409

(See also code306 on free will by Owen)

From John Owen in

A Display of Arminianism

Chapter IV

(some old English words updated)

[Ctrl + left click the **blue** scripture/footnotes to see them]

That God by his providence governs and disposes of all things by him created is sufficiently proved; the manner how he worketh all in all, how he orders the works of his own hands, in what this governing and disposing of his creatures does chiefly consist, comes now to be considered. And here four things are principally to be observed:— First, The sustaining, preserving, and upholding of all things by his power; for “he upholdsh all things by the word of his power,” [Heb. i. 3](#). Secondly, His working together with all things, by an influence of causality into the agents themselves; “for he also has wrought all our works in us,” [Isa. xxvi. 12](#). Thirdly, His powerful overruling of all events, both necessary, free, and contingent, and disposing of them to certain ends for the manifestation of his glory. So Joseph tells his brethren, “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is at this day, to save much people alive,” [Gen. i. 20](#). Fourthly, His determining and restraining second causes to such and such effects: “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will,” [Prov. xxi. 1](#).

First, His sustentation or upholding of all things is his powerful continuing of their being, natural strength, and faculties, bestowed on them at their creation: “In him we live, and move, and have our

being," [Acts xvii](#). So that he does neither work all himself in them, without any co-operation of theirs, which would not only turn all things into stocks, yea, and take from stocks their own proper nature, but also is contrary to that general blessing he spread over the face of the whole world in the beginning, "Be fruitful, and multiply," [Gen. i. 22](#); — nor yet leave them to a self-subsistence, he in the meantime only not destroying them; [63](#) which would make him an idle spectator of most things in the world, not to "work hitherto," as our Savior speaks, and grant to divers things here below an absolute being, not derivative from him: the first whereof is blasphemous, the latter impossible.

Secondly, For God's working in and together with all second causes for producing of their effects, what part or portion in the work punctually to assign unto him, what to the power of the inferior causes, seems beyond the reach of mortals; neither is an exact comprehension thereof any way necessary, so that we make everything beholding to his power for its being, and to his assistance for its operation.

Thirdly, His supreme dominion exercises itself in disposing of all things to certain and determinate ends for his own glory, and is chiefly discerned advancing itself over those things which are most contingent, and making them in some sort necessary, inasmuch as they are certainly disposed of to some proposed ends. Between the birth and death of a man, how many things merely contingent do occur! how many chances! how many diseases! in their own nature all evitable, and, in regard of the event, not one of them but to some proves mortal; yet, certain it is that a man's "days are determined, the number of his months are with the Lord, he hath appointed his bounds that he cannot pass," [Job xiv. 5](#). And oftentimes by things purely contingent and accidental he executes his purposes, — bestows rewards, inflicts punishments, and accomplishes his judgments; as when he delivers a man to be slain by the head of an axe, flying from the helve in the hand of a man cutting a tree by the way. But in nothing is this more evident than in the ancient casting of lots, a thing as casual and accidental as can be imagined, huddled in the cap at a venture. Yet God overrules them to the declaring of his purpose, freeing truth from doubts, and manifestation of his power: [Prov. xvi. 33](#), "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord;" — as you may see in the examples of Achan, [Josh. vii. 16–18](#); Saul, [1 Sam. x. 20, 21](#); Jonathan, [chap. xiv. 41, 42](#); Jonah, [chap. i. 7](#); Matthias, [Acts i. 26](#). And yet this overruling act of God's providence (as no other decree or act of his) **does not rob things contingent of their proper nature; for cannot he who effectually causes that they shall come to pass, cause also that they shall come to pass contingently?** [This is one area where people don't think things through; cannot God who is infinite in wisdom and power figure out a way to save anyone without violating their liberty and turning them into robots?! Are not people limiting the Most High!!]

Fourthly, God's **predetermination of second causes** (which I name not last as though it were the last act of God's providence about his creatures, for indeed it is the first that concerns their operation) is that **effectual working** of his, according to his eternal purpose, whereby, though some agents, as the wills of men, **are causes most free and indefinite** [i.e., **God does not operate by coercion, yet God rules over their wills in a miraculous way, Ps 100:3, Pr. 16:1, 9, 21:1, etc**], or unlimited lords of their own actions, in respect of their internal principle of operation (that is, their own nature), [they] are yet all, in respect of his decree, and by his powerful working, determined to this or that effect in particular; not **that they are compelled to do this, or hindered from doing that, but are inclined and disposed to do this or that, according to their proper manner of working, that is, most freely:** [i.e., **God doesn't do violence to their liberty.**] for truly such testimonies are everywhere obvious in Scripture, of the stirring up of men's wills and minds, of bending and inclining them to divers things, of the governing of the secret thoughts and motions of the heart, as cannot by any means be referred to a naked permission,

with a government of external actions, or to a general influence, whereby they should have power to do this or that, or anything else; wherein, as some suppose, his whole providence consists. [That's the key; most people don't consider this point in their thinking, that God's omniscience, his predestination of all things, are consistent with man's liberty; that's the miracle that prompted the title of that great song, Amazing Grace; that's why it is amazing!]

Let us now jointly apply these several acts to free agents, working according to choice, or relation, such as are the wills of men, and that will open the way to take a view of Arminian heterodoxies, concerning this article of Christian belief. And here two things must be premised:— **First, That they be not deprived of their own radical or original internal liberty**; **secondly, That they be not exempt from the moving influence and gubernation of God's providence**; — the first whereof would leave no just room for rewards and punishments; the other, as I said before, is injurious to the majesty and power of God. St Augustine⁶⁴ judged Cicero worthy of special blame, even among the heathens, for so attempting to make men free that he made them sacrilegious, by denying them to be subject to an overruling providence: which gross error was directly maintained by Damascen,⁶⁵ a learned Christian, teaching, "Things whereof we have any power, not to depend on providence, but on our own free will;" an opinion fitter for a hog of the Epicurus herd than for a scholar in the school of Christ. And yet this proud, prodigious error is now, though in other terms, stiffly maintained: for what do they else who ascribe such an **absolute independent liberty to the will of man**, that it should have in its own power every circumstance, every condition whatsoever, that belongs to operation, so that all things required on the part of God, or otherwise, to the performance of an action being accomplished, it remains solely in the power of a man's own will whether he will do it or no? which supreme and plainly divine liberty, joined with such an absolute uncontrollable power and dominion over all his actions, would exempt and free the will of man, not only from all fore-determining to the production of such and such effects, but also from any effectual working or influence of the providence of God into the will itself, that should sustain, help, or cooperate with it in doing or willing anything; and, therefore, the authors of this imaginary liberty have wisely framed an **imaginary concurrence** of God's providence, answerable unto it, — namely, a **general and indifferent influence, always waiting and expecting the will of man to determine itself to this or that effect, good or bad**; God being, as it were, always ready at hand to do that small part which he has in our actions, when so ever we please to use him, or, if we please to let him alone, he no way moves us to the performance of anything. Now, God forbid that we should give our consent to the choice of such a captain, under whose conduct we might go down again unto Paganism, — to the erecting of such an idol into the throne of the Almighty. No, doubtless, let us be most indulgent to our wills, and assign them all the liberty that is competent unto a created nature, to do all things freely according to election and foregoing counsel, **being free from all natural necessity and outward compulsion**; but for all this, let us not presume to deny God's effectual assistance, his particular powerful influence into the wills and actions of his creatures, **directing of them to a voluntary performance of what he has determined**: which the Arminians opposing in the behalf of their darling free-will, do work in the hearts of men an **overweening of their own power**, and an **absolute independence** of the providence of God; for, —

First, they deny that God (in whom we live, and move, and have our being) does anything by his providence, ⁶⁶"whereby the creature should be stirred up, or helped in any of his actions." **That is, God wholly leaves a man in the hand of his own counsel, to the disposal of his own absolute independent power**, without any respect to his providence at all; whence, as they do, they may well conclude, ⁶⁷"that those things which God would have to be done of us freely" (such as are all human

actions), “he cannot himself will or work more powerfully and effectually than by the way of wishing or desiring,” as Vorstius speaks; which is no more than one man can do concerning another, perhaps far less than an angel. I can wish or desire that another man would do what I have a mind he should; but, truly, to describe the providence of God by such expressions seems to me intolerable blasphemy. But thus it must be; without such helps as these, Dagon cannot keep on his head, nor the idol of uncontrollable free will enjoy his dominion.

Hence Corvinus will grant⁶⁸ that the killing of a man by the slipping of an axe’s head from the helve, although contingent, may be said to happen according to God’s counsel and determinate will; but *on no terms will he yield that this may be applied to actions wherein the counsel and freedom of man’s will do take place, as though that they also should have dependence on any such overruling power;* — whereby he absolutely excludes the providence of God from having any sovereignty within the territory of human actions, which is plainly to shake off the yoke of his dominion, and to make men lords paramount within themselves: so that they may well ascribe unto God (as they do⁶⁹) *only a deceivable expectation of those contingent things that are yet for to come, there being no act of his own in the producing of such effects on which he can ground any certainty;* only, he may take a conjecture, according to his guess at men’s inclinations. And, indeed, this is the Helen for whose enjoyment, these thrice ten years, they have maintained warfare with the hosts of the living God; their whole endeavor being to prove, that, notwithstanding the performance of all things, on the part of God, required for the production of any action, ⁷⁰yet the will of man remains absolutely free, yea, in respect of the event, as well as its manner of operation, to do it or not to do it. That is, notwithstanding God’s decree that such an action shall be performed, and his foreknowledge that it will so come to pass; notwithstanding his cooperating with the will of man (as far as they will allow him) for the doing of it, and though he hath determined by that act of man to execute some of his own judgments; ⁷¹yet there is no kind of necessity but that he may as well omit as do it: which is all one as if they should say, “Our tongues are our own; we ought to speak: who is lord over us? We will vindicate ourselves into a liberty of doing what and how we will, though for it we cast God out of his throne.” And, indeed, if we mark it, we shall find them undermining and pulling down the actual providence of God, at the root and several branches thereof; for, —

First, For his conservation or sustaining of all things, they affirm⁷² it to be very likely that this is nothing but *a negative act of his will, whereby he willeth or determineth not to destroy the things by him created;* and when we produce places of Scripture which affirm that it is an act of his power, they say *they are foolishly cited.* So that, truly, let the Scripture say what it will, (in their conceit,) God does no more sustain and uphold all his creatures than I do a house when I do not set it on fire, or a worm when I do not tread upon it. [i.e., Arminian beliefs are irrational]

Secondly, For God’s concurring with inferior causes in all their acts and working, they affirm it to be only ⁷³ a general influence, alike upon all and every one, which they may use or not use at their pleasure, and in the use determine it to this or that effect, be it good or bad (so Corvinus), as it seems best unto them. In a word, to the will of man ⁷⁴it is nothing but what suffers it to play its own part freely, according to its inclination; as they jointly speak in their *Confession.* Observe, also, that they account this influence of his providence not to be into the agent, the will of man, whereby that should be helped or enabled to do anything (no, that would seem to grant a self-sufficiency), ⁷⁵but only into the act itself for its production: as if I should help a man to lift a log, it becomes perhaps unto him so much the lighter, but he is not made one jot the stronger; which takes off the proper work of providence, consisting in an internal assistance.

Thirdly, For God's determining or circumscribing the will of man to do this or that in particular, they absolutely explode it, as a thing destructive to their adored liberty. [76](#) "It is no way consistent with it," say they, in their *Apology*. So also **Arminius**: [77](#) "The providence of God doth not determine the will of man to one part of the contradiction." That is, "God hath not determined that you shall, nor does by any means overrule your wills, to do this thing rather than that, to do this or to omit that." **So that the sum of their endeavor is, to prove that the will of man is so absolutely free, independent, and uncontrollable, that God doth not, nay, with all his power cannot, determine it certainly and infallibly to the performance of this or that particular action, thereby to accomplish his own purposes, to attain his own ends.** Truly, it seems to me the most unfortunate attempt that ever Christians lighted on; which, if it should get success answerable to the greatness of the undertaking, the providence of God, in men's esteem, would be almost thrust quite out of the world. "*Tantæ molis erat.*" The new goddess contingency could not be erected until the God of heaven was utterly despoiled of his dominion over the sons of men, and in the room thereof a home-bred idol of self-sufficiency set up, and the world persuaded to worship it. But that the building climb no higher, let all men observe how the word of God overthrows this Babylonian tower.

First, then, In innumerable places it is punctual that his providence does not only bear rule in the counsels of men and their most secret resolutions, (whence the prophet declares that he knows that "the way of man is not in himself," — that "it is not in man that walks to direct his steps," [Jer. x. 23](#); and Solomon, that "a man's heart, devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps," [Prov. xvi. 9](#); David, also, having laid this ground, that "the Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to naught," and "makes the devices of the people of none effect," but "his own counsel stands for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," [Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11](#), proceeds accordingly, in his own distress, to pray that the Lord would infatuate and make [78](#) "foolish the counsel of Ahithophel," [2 Sam. xv. 31](#), — which also the Lord did, by working in the heart of Absalom to hearken to the cross counsel of Hushai); but also, **secondly**, That the working of his providence is effectual even in the hearts and wills of men to turn them which way he will, and to determine them to this or that in particular, according as he pleaseth: "**The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord,**" saith Solomon, [Prov. xvi. 1](#); — which Jacob trusted and relied on when he prayed that the Lord would grant his sons to find favor and mercy before that man whom then he supposed to be some atheistical Egyptian, [Gen. xliii. 14](#); whence we must grant, either that the good old man believed that it was in the hand of God to incline and unalterably turn and settle the heart of Joseph to favor his brethren, **or else his prayer must have had such a senseless sense as this**: "Grant, O Lord, such a general influence of thy providence, that the heart of that man may be turned to good towards my sons, or else that it may not, being left to its own freedom." A strange request! yet how it may be bettered by one believing the Arminian doctrine I cannot conceive. Thus Solomon affirms that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will," [Prov. xxi. 1](#). If the heart of a king, who hath an inward natural liberty equal with others, and an outward liberty belonging to his state and condition above them, be yet so in the hand of the Lord as that he always turns it to what he pleases in particular, **then certainly other men are not excepted from the rule of the same providence; which is the plain sense of these words**, and the direct thesis which we maintain in opposition to the Arminian idol of absolute independent free-will¹. So Daniel, also, reproving the Babylonian tyrant, affirms that he "glorified not the God in whose hand was his breath, and whose were all his ways," [chap. v. 23](#). Not only his breath and life, but also all his ways, his actions, thoughts, and words, were in the hand of God.

Yea, **thirdly**, sometimes the saints of God, as I touched before, do pray that God would be pleased thus to determine their hearts, and bend their wills, and wholly incline them to some one certain thing, and that without any prejudice to their true and proper liberty: so David, [Ps. cxix. 36](#), “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.” This prayer being his may also be ours, and we may ask it in faith, relying on the power and promise of God in Christ that he will perform our petitions, [John xiv. 14](#). Now, I desire any Christian to resolve, whether, by these and the like requests, he intends to desire at the hand of God nothing but such an **indifferent motion** to any good as **may leave him to his own choice whether he will do it or no, which is all the Arminians will grant him; or rather, that he would powerfully bend his heart and soul unto his testimonies, and work in him an actual embracing of all the ways of God, not desiring more liberty, but only enough to do it willingly**. Nay, surely the prayers of God’s servants, requesting, with Solomon, that the Lord would be with them, and “incline their heart unto him, to keep his statutes and walk in his commandments,” [1 Kings viii. 57, 58](#); and with David, to “create in them a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within them,” [Ps. li. 10](#); when, according to God’s promises, they entreat him “to put his fear into their hearts,” [Jer. xxxii. 40](#), “to unite their hearts to fear his name,” [Ps. lxxxvi. 11](#), to **work in them both the will and the deed**, an actual obedience unto his law; — cannot possibly aim at nothing but a general influence, enabling them alike either to do or not to do what they so earnestly long after.

Fourthly, The certainty of divers promises and threatenings of Almighty God **depends upon his powerful determining and turning the wills and hearts of men which way he pleaseth**; thus, to them that fear him he promises that they shall find favor in the sight of men, [Prov. iii. 4](#). Now, if, notwithstanding all God’s powerful operation in their hearts, it remaineth absolutely in the hands of men whether they will favor them that fear him or no, **it is wholly in their power whether God shall be true in his promises or no**. Surely when Jacob wrestled with God on the strength of such promise, [Gen. xxxii. 12](#), he little thought of any question whether it were in the power of God to perform it. Yea, and the event showed that there ought to be no such question, [chap. xxxiii.](#); for the Lord turned the heart of his brother Esau, as he does of others when he makes them pity his servants when at any time they have carried them away captives, [Ps. cvi. 46](#). See, also, the same powerful operation required to the execution of his judgments, [Job xii. 17, xx. 21](#), etc. **In brief, there is no prophecy nor prediction in the whole Scripture, no promise to the church or faithful, to whose accomplishment the free actions and concurrence of men are required, but evidently declares that God disposes of the hearts of men, rules their wills, inclines their affections, and determines them freely to choose and do what he in his good pleasure hath decreed shall be performed**; — such as were the prophecies of deliverance from the Babylonish captivity by Cyrus, [Isa. xlv.](#); of the conversion of the Gentiles; of the stability of the church, [Matt. xvi.](#); of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, [chap. xxiv.](#); with innumerable others. I will add only some few reasons for the close of this long discourse.

This opinion, that God has nothing but a general influence into the actions of men, not effectually moving their wills to this or that in particular, —

First, Grants a goodness of *entity*, or being, unto divers things, whereof God is not the author, as those special actions which men perform without his special concurrence; which is blasphemous. The apostle affirms that “of him are all things.”

Secondly, It denies God to be the author of all moral goodness, for an action is good inasmuch as it is such an action in particular; [79](#) which that any is so, according to this opinion, is to be attributed

merely to the will of man. The general influence of God moves him no more to prayer than to evil communications tending to the corruption of good manners.

Thirdly, It makes all the decrees of God, whose execution dependeth on human actions, to be altogether uncertain, and his foreknowledge of such things to be fallible and easily to be deceived; so that there is no reconciliation possible to be hoped for betwixt these following and the like assertions:—

43 S. S.	Lib. Arbit.
<p>“In him we live, and move, and have our being,” Acts xvii. 28.</p>	<p>“God’s sustaining of all things is not an affirmative act of his power, but a negative act of his will.”</p>
<p>“He upholdeth all things by the word of his power,” Heb. i. 3.</p>	<p>— “Whereby he will not destroy them,” <i>Rem. Apol.</i></p>
<p>“Thou hast wrought all our works in us,” Isa. xxvi. 12. “My Father worketh hitherto,” John v. 17.</p>	<p>“God by his influence bestows nothing on the creature whereby it may be incited or helped in its actions,” <i>Corvinus.</i></p>
<p>“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord,” Prov. xvi. 1. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will,” Prov. xxi. 1.</p>	<p>“Those things God would have us freely do ourselves; he can no more effectually work or will than by the way of wishing,” <i>Vorstius.</i></p>
<p>“Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,” Ps. cxix. 36. “Unite my heart to fear thy name,” Ps. lxxxvi. 11. “The God in whose hand try breath is, and whose are all try ways, thou hast not glorified,” Dan. v. 23.</p>	<p>“The providence of God doth not determine the free-will of man to this or that particular, or to one part of the contradiction,” <i>Arminius.</i></p>

43	S. S.	Lib. Arbit.
	See Matt. xxvii. 1 , compared with Acts ii. 23 , and iv. 27 , 28 ; Luke xxiv. 27 ; John xix. 31–36 . For the necessity of other events, see Exod. xxi. 17 ; Job xiv. 5 ; Matt. xix. 7 , etc.	“The will of man ought to be free from all kind of internal and external necessity in its actions,” <i>Rem.</i> That is, God cannot lay such a necessity upon any thing as that it shall infallibly come to pass as he intendeth. See the contrary in the places cited.

¹ Yet here observe, that we do not absolutely oppose free-will, as if it were “nomen inane,” a mere figment, when there is no such thing in the world, but only in that sense the Pelagians and Arminians do assert it. About words we will not contend. We grant man, in the substance of all his actions, as much power, liberty, and freedom as a mere created nature is capable of [[called "ceaturely freedom" in theological circles](#)]. We grant him to be free in his choice from all outward coaction or inward natural necessity, to work according to election and deliberation, spontaneously embracing what seemeth good unto him. Now, call this power free-will, or what you please, so you make it not supreme, independent, and boundless [[that's the key! Arminians will not yield this point.](#)], we are not at all troubled. The imposition of names depends upon the discretion of their inventers. Again; even in spiritual things, we deny that our wills are at all debarred, or deprived of their **proper liberty**: but here we say, indeed, **that we are not properly free until the Son makes us free** [[Amen!](#)]; — no great use of freedom in that wherein we can do nothing at all. **We do not claim such a liberty as should make us despise the grace of God**, whereby we may attain true liberty indeed; which addeth to, but taketh nothing from, our original freedom. But of this after I have showed **what an idol the Arminians make of free-will.** Only take notice in the entrance that we speak of it now, **not as it was at first by God created, but as it is now by sin corrupted**; yet, being considered in that estate also, they ascribe more unto it than it was ever capable of.

Notes on Conversion Being Irresistible
 (Yet Without Coercion! Hence, The Doctrine of Concurrence)
 from *Concerning Efficacious Grace*
 by Jonathan Edwards
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§ 50. God is said to give true virtue and piety of heart to man; to work it in him, **to create it, to form it, and with regard to it we are said to be his workmanship**. Yea, that there may be no room to understand it in some improper sense, it is often declared as the peculiar character of God, that he assumes it as his character to be the author and giver of true virtue, in his being called the Sanctifier; he that sanctifieth us. "I am he that sanctifieth you." This is spoken of as the great prerogative of God, Lev. xx. 8, and other parallel places. He declares expressly that this effect shall be connected with his act, or with what he shall do in order to it. "I will sprinkle clean water, and you shall be clean. [497] " **What God does is often spoken of as thoroughly effectual; the effect is infallibly consequent**. "Turn us, and we shall be turned." [498] Jesus Christ has the great character of a Saviour on this account, that "he saves his people from their sins." [499] See Rom. xi. 26, 27. "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there shall come out of Zion a deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." God says, "I will put my law into their heart; I will write my law in their inward parts, and they shall not depart away from me; I will take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh; I will give them a heart to know me; I will circumcise their hearts to love me; oh, that there were such a heart in them!" And it is spoken of as his work, to give, to cause, to create such a heart, to put it in them. God is said **to incline** their hearts, not only to give statutes, but to **incline their hearts to his statutes**.

Concurrence - w/o coercion...

§ 45. Who ever supposed that the term irresistible was properly used with respect to that power by which an infant is brought into being; meaning, irresistible by the infant? Or who ever speaks of a man's waking out of a sound sleep irresistibly, meaning, that he cannot resist awaking? Or who says, that Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth irresistibly? See what I have said of the use of such terms as irresistible, unfrustrable, &c. in my Inquiry about Liberty. [\[Christians are a new creation, 2Cor. 5:17; God works this in you. How can you resist that? Could Adam have resisted his natural creation; could you resist your natural birth? So, being born again is irresistible; once you were blind and now you can see. It is impossible to frustrate this work by your stubbornness or supposed unwillingness for that is the very thing that God removes in his act of regeneration by his mighty power \(Ps. 110:3, Ezek. 26:26, he removes the stony heart.\) and you come out willing! To be made willing by force or coercion is impossible; it is a contradiction. All of this is marvelous mystery. Left to ourselves we would never believe.](#)

Romans 9:19

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

Phil. 2:13

¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

2Cor. 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Thomas Shepard states regarding this irresistible grace:

Because all divine light of glory is ever powerful through Christ to change the heart. Hence if hypocrites had it, their hearts would be sincere, which is not so, and hence they ever want [lack] it, whatever light else they have; and hence those that have it must be sincere, John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and it shall make you free," i.e., from your bondage of fears and sins; hence David prays for light, Psalm 119:33, 34, and then he shall be set at liberty. As iron is drawn to the load-stone by a secret hidden virtue, so there is a secret virtue of divine light that draws the most iron heart; nay, changes it, John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth," etc. For this is the difference between God and man's teaching; and hence when the gospel comes in power, it comes in demonstration; whereby the heart is mightily overpowered, that it cannot but fall down before God, whose voice and truth it hears. And hence the young man saw some worth in Christ, but not enough, and hence he forsook Christ. Truth is not stones, but bread to them that see it indeed. Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, pg 231

Notes on Concurrency & Compatibilism

Code446

Concurrency is subcategory of Compatibilism; in other words, Concurrency evidences the Truth of Compatibilism, that God's eternal decree or determinate will is consistent with man's liberty or creaturely freedom and responsibility without doing violence to either God or man. Concurrency means that God and man (with all different manner of intent) are both acting and working simultaneously, or concurrently to bring about God's eternal decree.

God's Sovereignty over the wills of men

By G Clark

This thing I was talking about is the doctrine of concurrence, where the will of God, his eternal decree or his will of decree, is consistent with man's liberty; so even though God predestines everything to happen, this does not turn people into puppets or blocks of wood. As rational creatures with the faculties of a will, of knowledge/reason and the affections, it is an inconsistency to have these occur in their due exercise by coercion....and God has designed it as such, e.g., for God loves a cheerful giver. God does not work by compulsion in rational beings like us, and thus does no violence to man's creaturely freedom or liberty. This is heavy, a great mystery. For if God is sovereign over his creation,

that his will, his eternal decree, will be done, many presume that he must force men to do things they object to, thus doing violence to their creaturely liberty/freedom. And many argue this way in objection to God's sovereignty (or freedom) over the wills of men, that God turns men into puppets or blocks of wood. But this is a straw-man argument, for this is not the case!

If God made everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), that argues a most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. [Edwards] In other words we are not autonomous creatures, with God off in the distance somewhere, watching his creation, his creatures, live and move and have their being all by themselves! (Deism) So with this biblical view, the experience Titus in 2Cor, 16-17 (below), Joseph and his brothers in Genesis, the Assyrians as instruments in God's hands to punish Israel in Isa. 10, the act of conversion by the Holy Spirit, and many other like acts illustrate this amazing (humbling) doctrine. This is where many people including Christians (unwittingly so) find the doctrine of predestination objectionable. Why? Because it crushes man's corrupt notion that he is an autonomous, independent being; that his freedom is the same as God (or even more preeminent!), making man gods, the captain of his own soul, and that it is unfair to put man in a corner (doing violence to his freedom) by forcing him to do things or think things or, e.g., believe in Christ, against his will. For man's declaration of independence insists that there is nothing, including God's influences, that is allowed to sway him one way or the other; man's deciding must originate from his own will, his supposed *self-directed will*. (But was this not the sin of Adam and Eve!!! declaring their independence from God's law!) But as I said above, this is straw-man argument! God does not force people to do or think anything, but he does direct them - their wills and acts etc., without forcing them; and that's the mystery. I don't know of anyone who was forced to believe in Jesus! That is a contradiction! And yet Jesus says in John 6:37, *all that the Father gives me will come to me*. The Assyrians were not forced as instruments in God's hand; they loved to rape and pillage! In other words, they didn't say to God, *O God, don't have us do this unspeakable thing*. They loved doing it **on their own accord**. And there's more! Afterwards, God says that he will punish the Assyrian Captain for the haughtiness of his heart! God decrees Israel's destruction, has the Assyrians do it, and then punishes the Assyrians for their pride. That's the mystery; I understand it but don't comprehend it. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it*, as the Psalmist says in Ps 139:6. You gotta read this in Isaiah 10:12-16 ---my comments in [blue]

¹² When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the **arrogant heart** of the king of Assyria and the **boastful look in his eyes**. ¹³ For he says:

"By the strength of my hand I have done it, [there's man's declaration of self-reliance, independence etc., typical of our fallen sinful nature]

and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;

I remove the boundaries of peoples,

and plunder their treasures;

like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. [See?! They love to pillage, etc.]

¹⁴ My hand has found like a nest

the wealth of the peoples;
 and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,
 so I have gathered all the earth;
 and there was none that moved a wing
 or opened the mouth or chirped.”

¹⁵ Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, [Here's God sovereignty over man described]

or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it?
 As if a rod should wield him who lifts it,
 or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

¹⁶ Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts
 will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, [God's judgment, like we're seeing now in our country due to national sins]
 and under his glory a burning will be kindled,
 like the burning of fire.

Here are some of the innumerable passages that speak to this. My comments in [blue], red for emphasis

Prov. 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Jer. 10:23:24 O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps. ²⁴ O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.

Prov. 21:1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *Like* the [Ⓜ]rivers of water; **He turns it wherever He wishes.** [like he did with Nebuchadnezzar.... and Pharaoh, Titus, and all that ever get born again or saved.]

And if this is true, and it is, then your heart is also in his hands! **then how can we not have a reverential fear of God!**, and have a desire to seek him out all the more; this is seen in Phil. 2 here:

Phil 2:12-13 ...but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³ **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.** [God's good pleasure is the same thing as his will of decree or his secret will that is always accomplished without fail. Dan. 4:35, Ps. 115, "He does all he pleases." His prescriptive will or will of command is different, e.g., you shall not murder; but people do murder, ...or steal, or lie, etc.]

This one is a key passage on concurrence:

2Cor. 8:16 ¹⁶ But thanks *be* to God **who [Ⓜ]puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.** ¹⁷ [there's God sovereignty over the souls/wills of men] For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you **of his own accord.** [There's Titus acting of his own accord not out of coercion.]

Here is an excerpt from Jonathan Edwards on this:

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event;** that it is no part of the ordering of God, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he has not the disposal.

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. [Isa. Lx. 22.](#) "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." [Also Isa 46:9-11] **Surely this is the language of promiser, and not merely a predictor.** God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. Xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. Vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. Xi.](#) and innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.

And this next excerpt by Edwards is about the doctrine of concurrence that I briefly outlined above:

§ 64. In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.

In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, "God worketh in you both to will and to do." [Phil. 2:13](#)

A note from G Vos on **concurrence** and the mystical union with Christ:

28. *What can we establish further concerning this union with Christ?*

a) **It is not a unity that resides in the ordinary concursus of God. God is present in every creature by His co-action.** And insofar as Christ as Logos sustains all things, He also has a **certain immanent association with all created spirits**. This, however, is a union of the Logos-God with

the creature as creature. The mystical union is a union of the person of the Mediator with the regenerate person as such.

Side note on current day happenings:

So what is happening in this country (2022), why it's going south beyond our wildest dreams, is due to God's judgment because of national sins e.g., abortion, sexual perversion of all kinds, man's general apostasy. This country is rebelling against God *with a high hand*; brazenly. So, God is giving many, including our leaders, over to a depraved mind. Read Romans 1:24-32. This is why so many people are without reason and morals, etc. God has given them over. AND God has given us children as leaders as part of this judgment. Read **Isa. 3:4** -

**"I will give children to be their princes,
And babes shall rule over them.**

⁵The people will be oppressed,

Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; [How? God withdraws his common graces that restrain sin. Hence people sin more and you get drama...cancel culture, Marxism, self-destruction follows.]

The child will be insolent toward the elder,
And the base toward the honorable."

Here's more of this passage

For Jerusalem stumbled,
And Judah is fallen,
Because their tongue and their doings
Are against the LORD,

To provoke the eyes of His glory.

⁹The look on their countenance witnesses against them,
And they declare their sin as Sodom;

They do not hide it.

Woe to their soul!

For they have brought evil upon themselves.

Meditate on these things.

Notes on concurrence from Monergism.com - <https://www.monergism.com/concurrence>

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINE CONCURRENCE (excerpts by Louis Berkhof) see [code446a](#)

1. THE IDEA OF DIVINE CONCURRENCE AND SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR IT.

a. *Definition and explanation.* Concurrence may be defined as *the co-operation of the divine power with all subordinate powers, according to the pre-established laws of their operation, causing them to act and to act precisely as they do.* Some are inclined to limit its operation, as far as man is concerned.

to human actions that are morally good and therefore commendable; others, more logically, extend it to actions of every kind. It should be noted at the outset that this doctrine implies two things: (1) That the powers of nature do not work by themselves, that is, simply by their own inherent power, but that God is immediately operative in every act of the creature. This must be maintained in opposition to the deistic position. (2) That second causes are real, and not to be regarded simply as the operative power of God. It is only on condition that second causes are real, that we can properly speak of a concurrence or co-operation of the First Cause with secondary causes.

He worketh all things in all, I Cor. 12:6, and worketh all things, also in this respect, according to the counsel of His will, Eph. 1:11. He gave Israel power to get wealth, Deut. 8:18, and worketh in believers both to will and to do according to His good pleasure, Phil. 2:13. Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians of all kinds are generally willing to admit that the creature cannot act apart from an influx of divine power, but maintain that this is not so specific that it determines the character of the action in any way.

b. It is also a simultaneous concurrence. After the activity of the creature is begun, the efficacious will of God must accompany it at every moment, if it is to continue. There is not a single moment that the creature works independently of the will and the power of God. It is in Him that we live *and move* and have our being, Acts 17:28. This divine activity accompanies the action of man at every point, but without robbing man in any way of his freedom. The action remains the free act of man, an act for which he is held responsible.

2. ERRORS THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED. There are several errors against which we should guard in connection with this doctrine.

a. That it consists merely in a general communication of power, without determining the specific action in any way. Jesuits, Socinians, and Arminians maintain that the divine concurrence is only a general and indifferent co-operation, so that it is the second cause that directs the action to its particular end. It is common alike to all causes, quickening them into action, but in a way that is entirely indeterminate. While it stimulates the second cause, it leaves this to determine its own particular kind and mode of action. But if this were the situation, it would be in the power of man to frustrate the plan of God, and the First Cause would become subservient to the second. Man would be in control, and there would be no divine providence.

b. That it is of such a nature that man does part of the work and God a part. The co-operation of God and man is sometimes represented as if it were something like the joint efforts of a team of horses pulling together, each one doing his part. This is a mistaken view of the distribution of the work. As a matter of fact each deed is in its entirety both a deed of God and a deed of the creature. It is a deed of God in so far as there is nothing that is independent of the divine will, and in so far as it is determined from moment to moment by the will of God. And it is a deed of man in so far as God realizes it through the self-activity of the creature. There is interpenetration here, but no mutual limitation.

c. That the work of God and that of the creature in concurrence are co-ordinate. This is already excluded by what was said in the preceding. The work of God always has the priority, for man is dependent on God in all that he does. The statement of Scripture, "Without me ye can do nothing,"

applies in every field of endeavor. The exact relation of the two is best indicated in the following characteristics of the divine concurrence.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINE CONCURRENCE.

a. *It is previous and pre-determining, not in a temporal but in a logical sense.* There is no absolute principle of self-activity in the creature, to which God simply joins His activity. In every instance the impulse to action and movement proceeds from God. There must be an influence of divine energy before the creature can work. It should be noted particularly that this influence does not terminate on the activity of the creature, but on the creature itself. God causes everything in nature to work and to move in the direction of a pre-determined end. So God also enables and prompts His rational creatures, as second causes, to function, and that not merely by endowing them with energy in a general way, but by energizing them to certain specific acts. He worketh all things in all, [I Cor. 12:6](#), and worketh all things, also in this respect, according to the counsel of His will, [Eph. 1:11](#). He gave Israel power to get wealth, [Deut. 8:18](#), and worketh in believers both to will and to do according to His good pleasure, [Phil. 2:13](#). Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians of all kinds are generally willing to admit that the creature cannot act apart from an influx of divine power, but maintain that this is not so specific that it determines the character of the action in any way.

b. *It is also a simultaneous concurrence.* After the activity of the creature is begun, the efficacious will of God must accompany it at every moment, if it is to continue. There is not a single moment that the creature works independently of the will and the power of God. It is in Him that we live *and move* and have our being, [Acts 17:28](#). This divine activity accompanies the action of man at every point, but without robbing man in any way of his freedom. The action remains the free act of man, an act for which he is held responsible. This simultaneous concurrence does not result in an identification of the *causa prima* and the *causa secunda*. In a very real sense the operation is the product of both causes. Man is and remains the real subject of the action.

This is a good summary of conversion, its effects on the soul by grace; on the will, mind, and the affections, Very good for self-examination!

Saving Grace and the Effects On the Soul

From the Works of
John Flavel, Vol. 6 pgs 30-36

Code443

Chap. IV

Wherein the nature of this work of grace, in which our habitual fitness for suffering lies, is briefly opened, and an account given of the great advantage the gracious person hath for any, even the hardest work thereby.

Having in the former chapter plainly evinced the necessity of saving grace to fit a man for suffering; it will be expected now that some account be given you of the nature of the work, and how it advantages a man for the discharge of the hardest services in religion. Both which I shall open in this chapter by a distinct explication of the parts of this description of it.

What Saving Grace Is

This work of grace, of which I am here to speak, *consists in the real change of the whole man by the Spirit of God, whereby he is prepared for every good work*: In which brief description I shall open these four things to you,

1. That it is a change; that is palpably evident, both from scripture and experience, 2Cor. 5:17, "Old things are past away, behold all things are become new;" and it is so sensible a change, that it is called a *turning from darkness to light*, Acts 26:18 and a new creature formed and brought forth. But to be a little more distinct and particular, there are several other changes that pass upon men, which must not be mistaken for this; and therefore, (1.) It is not a mere change of the judgment from error to truth, from Paganism to Christianity. Such a change Simon Magus had, yet still remained in the gall of bitterness, and fast bound in the bonds of iniquity, Acts 8:23 (2.) Nor only of a man's practice, from *profaneness to civility*. This is common among such as live under the light of the gospel, which breaking into men's consciences, thwarts their lusts, and over-awes them with the fears of hell; which is no more than what the Gentiles had, Rom. 2:15. (3.) Nor is it a change from mere *morality* to mere *formality* in religion. Thus hypocrites are changed by the common gifts of the Spirit, illuminating their minds, and slightly touching their affections, Heb. 6:4-5. (4.) Nor is it such a change as justification makes, which is relative, and only alters the state and condition, Rom. 5:1-2. (5.) Lastly, it is not a change of the essence of a man; he remains essentially the same person still. But this change consists in the infusion of a new habits of grace into the old faculties; which immediately depose sin from its dominion over the soul, and deliver up the soul into the hands and government of Christ, so that it lives no more to itself, but to Christ. This is that change whereof we speak. And this change (2.) I assert to be real, no fancy, no delusion; not a groundless conceit, but it is really existent, *extra mentum*, whether you conceit it or not. Indeed the blind world would persuade us it is *suppositious* and

fantastic; and that there is no such real difference betwixt one man and another as we affirm grace makes. And hence it is, that whosoever professeth it, is presently branded for a fanatic; and that scripture, Isa. 56:5, *Stand for thyself, I am holier than thou*, etc., clapt in their teeth in their absurd and perverse sense of it.

But I shall briefly offer these seven things to your consideration, which will abundantly evince the reality of it, and at once both stop the slanderous mouths of ignorant men, and silence those atheistical surmises, which t any time Satan my inject into the hearts of God's own people touching this matter. And *first*, let it be considered, that the Spirit of God hath represented to us this work of grace under such names and notions in scripture, as if they had been chosen purposely to obviate this calumny [bad mouthing]. It is called a *creature*, Gal. 6:15, a *man*, 1Pet. 3:4, a *new birth*, John 3:8, Christ formed in us, Gal. 4:12. All of which express its reality, and that it is not a conceited thing. (2.) It appears to be real by the marvelous effects it hath upon a man, turning him both in judgment, will, affections, and practice, quite counter to what he was before. This is evident in that famous instance of Paul, Gal. 1:23, which is abundantly attested and sealed by the constant experience of all gracious souls that are witnesses of the truth hereof. (3.) A divine and Almighty power goes forth to produce and work it; and hence faith is said to be of the operation of God, Col. 2:12. Yea, that the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead, goes to the production of it, Eph. 1:19-20. And if so, how much less than blasphemy is it to call it a conceit or fancy? Doth God set on work his infinite power to beget a fancy, or raise an imagination? (4.) Conceits and whimsies abound most in men of weak reason. Children, and such as are crackt in their understandings, have most of them. Strength of reason banishes them, as the sun doth mists and vapors. But now the more rational any gracious person is, by so much the more hi is fixed, settled, and satisfied in the grounds of religion. Yea, there is the highest and purest reason in religion; and when this change is wrought upon men, it is carried on in a rational way, Isa. 1:18. The Spirit over powers the understanding with clear demonstrations, and silences all objections, please, and pretences to the contrary. (5.) It is a real thing, and gracious souls know it to be so; else so many thousands of the saints would never have suffered so many cruel torments and miseries, rather than forsake a fancy, and so save all. They have been so well satisfied of the reality of that which the world calls a fancy, that they have chosen rather to embrace the stake than to deny it. The constancy of Christians in cleaving to religion was common to a proverb among the heathen: who when they would express the greatest difficulty, would say, 'You may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it.' Surely no wise man would sacrifice his liberty, estate, life, and all that is dear, for a conceit. (6.) Its reality appears in its uniformity in all those in whom it is wrought. *They have all obtained like precious faith*, 2Pet. 1:1. *They are all changed into the same image*, 2Cor. 3:18. Three thousand persons affected in one and the same manner at one sermon, Acts 2:37. Could one and the same conceit possess them altogether? Take two Christians that live a thousand miles distant from each other, that never heard of one another, let these persons be examined, and their reports compared, and see if they do not substantially agree, and whether as face answers face in the water, so their experience do not answer one to the other? Which could never be, if it were a groundless conceit. (7.) And lastly, it is manifest it is a reality, and puts a real difference betwixt one and another, because God carries himself so differently towards them after their conversion; now he smiles, before he frowned; now they are under the promises, before they were under the threats and curses and what a vast difference will he put betwixt the one and the other in that great day? See Matt. 25. Surely

if these nominal Christians did but differ in conceit, not really from others, the righteous Judge of all the earth would not pass such a different judgment and doom upon them.

By all this you evidently see, that **grace** is a real change, and not a conceited one.

3. We say that this real change passes upon the whole man; he is changed in *soul, body, and practice*; all things are become new. (1.) This change appears in his soul. For by it, (1.) His understanding is strangely altered, and receive things in another way than formerly. It did look at Christ and things eternal as uncertain and light matters; the things that are seen and present do mostly affect, and appeared great and excellent. It admired riches and honor, whilst Christ and glory were overlooked and despised. But now all these temporals are esteemed dung, dross, vanity, Phil. 3:8, 11, Rom. 8:18. And Jesus Christ is not esteemed the wisdom and the power of God, 1Cor.1:23, 24. It did look on the saints as despicable persons, but now as the *excellent of the earth*, Ps. 16:3. Strictness and duty was once esteemed a needless thing, but now the only thing desirable, Ps. 119:14, "Oh, saith the renewed soul, where were mine eyes, that I could see no more excellency in Christ, his ways and people?" (2.) It stopped not there (as it doth in hypocrites) but passes on further, and reduces the will; that strong hold is taken, and delivered up to Christ. it did rebel against God, and could not be subject, but now it submits, Acts 9:6, *Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* In the day of Christ's power he presents himself in all his drawing glory and loveliness before the will, and cries to that stubborn faculty, *Open to me, open to me*; with which word **there goes forth an opening and subduing power, which the will no sooner feels, but it spontaneously moves towards him**, and saith, *Stand open ye everlasting gates, that the King of glory may come in.* (Ps 24:9) Henceforth it votes for God, subscribes and submits to his will as its only rule and law; and indeed it becomes the principal seat where grace makes its residence; and where, for the most part, it is more visible than in any other faculty. For after a man hath searched for it in all other faculties, and cannot discern it, yet here he ordinarily finds it; to will is present, Romans 7:18. (3.) The will being thus gained to Christ, love comes in of course; it, feeling the power of grace also, presently changeth its object: It seizeth not so greedily on earthly object as before, but is strangely cooled and deadened to them; and often (especially at first) it is so weaned from all things on earth, that the temptation seems to lie on the other extreme, even in too great neglect of our lawful employments and comforts. Now Jesus Christ, Cant. 1:3, his ordinances, Ps. 119:97, and his saints, 1John 3:14, are the only delights and sweetest companions; he could sit from morning till night, to hear discourses of Christ his beloved, and could live and die in the company of his people, whose company is now most delightful and sweet, Ps 119:63. (4.) The desires are altered, they pant no more after the dust of the earth, Ps. 4:6, but pant for God, as the *hart after the water-brooks*, Ps. 42:1. Yea, so big is the soul with them, that it is sometimes ready to faint, yea, to break with the longing it hath after him, Ps. 119:20. (5.) The thoughts are changed, Ps 119:113, and the thoughts of God are now most precious, Ps. 139:47, musing when along of him; and in its solitudes the soul entertains itself with a delightful feast, which its thoughts of God bring in to refresh it, Ps. 63:5,6. (6.) The designs and projects of the soul are changed; all are now swallowed up in one grand design, even to approve himself to God, and be accepted of him, 2Cor. 5:9, and if he fail not there, it will not much trouble him, if all his other designs should be dashed. It were easy to instance in the rest of the affections, and shew how grace spreads and diffuses itself into them all, as light in the air, or leaven in the lump; but this may suffice, to shew how it passes upon the whole soul, and enters the several faculties and affections thereof.

And the soul being thus possessed for God, the body with all its members is consequently resigned p to him also. For the will hath the empire of the members of the body, as well as of the passions and affections of the soul. These are not anymore delivered up to execute the lusts of Satan, but are yielded up to God for his ends and uses. Rom. 6:19. And thus you have the third thing in the description made out also, that it is a universal, as well as a real change. Then,

4. Lastly, you must know that by this change God prepares a man for choice and excellent services; and this indeed is the main thing designed in this chapter, and is the result and issue of all that hath hitherto been said about this work of grace.

Beloved, can you imagine that God could employ his infinite and glorious power to produce this new creature in such an excellent nature, it being the master-piece of all his works of wonder wrought upon man, and not aim at come singular use and excellent end? Every wise agent designs some end; and what God aims at he hath told us, Isa. 43:21, Eph. 2:20. And accordingly he expects singular things from such person, Matt. 5:47. If God had not aimed at some new service, he need not have made a new creature; the old creature was fit enough for the old use and service it was employed in. But God hat some choice service to be done wherein he will be glorified. He will have his name glorified, even in this world, by the active and passive obedience of his people. But this being far above all the **power of nature** [man in an unconverted condition], God therefore brings them forth in a new and heavenly nature, endowed with rare, supernatural, and divine qualities, by which it is fitted and excellently prepared for any service of God, by doing or by suffering, which before he had no fitness or ability for. The very make and constitution of this new creature speaks its use and end. As now, if a man look upon a sword or knife, (supposing he had never seen either before) yet, I say, by viewing the shape and properties of it, he will say, this was made to cut. Even so here, this new creature was formed for some glorious and singular service for God, to which it is exceedingly advantaged, whether God put you upon doing or suffering. If you ask wherein this advantage of the new creature to honor God either way lies; I answer, it principally consists in its heavenly inclination, or natural tendency to God. This is its great advantage; for by virtue of this,

1. If God call a man to any duty, there is a principle within, closing with the command without, and moving the soul freely [code443a without coercion; good example is Titus in 2Cor. 8:16-17, "*But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.*" This is the doctrine of concurrence; see code211, etc.] and spontaneously to duty, Ps. 27:8. If God say, *Seek my face*, such a heart echoes to the call, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. And this is it which is called, The writing of God's law in the heart, Jer. 31:33 [³³ *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*], and must needs be a mighty advantage; for now its work is its delight and wages, Ps 19:11. The command to such a soul is not grievous, 1John5:3, and by this it is kept from tiring in duty, and being weary of its work. As you see what pains children can take at play, how they will run and sweat, and endure knocks and falls, and take no notice of it; put them upon any manual labor, and they cannot endure half so much. When our work is our delight, we never faint nor tire at it. This inclination to God is to the soul as wings to a bird, or sails to a ship. This carries the soul easily through every duty. O there is a vast difference betwixt a man that *works for wages*, and one whose

work is wages to him. And here you may say at once see wherein the principal difference betwixt the hypocrite and real Christian lies in the performance of duty; and also have a rue account of the reason why one perseveres in his work to the end, when the other flags. Why, here is the true account of both; the one is moved to duty from a natural inclination to it, the other is forced upon it by some external motives. [this is key!! The new man has new motives, i.e. a love for God; hence, this love for God is now natural to him.] For the hypocrite takes not delight in the spiritual and inward part of duty, but is secretly weary of it, Mal. 1:13, only his ambition and self-ends put him upon it as a task. [Other motives are self-love and self-preservation, especially in the motive behind the sinner's prayer or any other work to seek God's saving favor before actual conversion.] But now the upright heart goes to God as his joy, Ps 63:4, "Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name." And saith, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God," Ps 73 ult.. When the Sabbath comes, (that golden spot of the week) oh how he longs to see the beauty of the Lord in this ordinances! Ps. 27:4. And when engaged in the worship of God, he cannot satisfy himself in bodily service, or to serve God in the oldness of the letter. He knoweth that this persuasion comes not of him that called him, Gal. 5:7-8, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you." He labors to engage his heart to approach to God, Jer. 30:21. And hence those mountings of heart and violent sallies of the desires heavenward. And thus you see one rare advantage to glorify God actively, flowing from the inclination of this new creature.

2. But then, secondly, hence in like manner hath the soul as great an advantage for sufferings; for this new creature having such a natural tendency to God, will enable the soul in which it is, to break its way to God through all the interposing obstacles and discouragements. What are persecutions, what are reproaches, what are the fears and frowns of enemies, but so many blocks thrown into the soul's way to keep it from God and duty? And indeed where this principle of grace is wanting, they prove inaccessible mountains. Graceless hearts are stalled, and quite discouraged by them; but now this tendency of the soul to God enables the Christian to break his way through all. You may say of him in such a case as the historian doth of Hannibal, (who force a way over the Alps with fire and vinegar) either he will find a way, or make a way; "Shall sword or famine, or any other creature separate me from Christ?" saith an upright soul. No, it will make its way through all to him, and that from this tendency of his new nature. You see in nature, everything hath a tendency to its center; fire will up, do what you can to suppress it; water will to the sea; if it meet with dunes, yea, mountains in its way, if it cannot bear them down, it will creep about some other way, and wind and turn to find a passage to the sea. God is the center of all gracious spirits, and grace will carry the soul through all to him. This is grace, and this is your advantage by it in the most difficult part of your work. It will carry you through all; make the hardest work easy and pleasant, 2Cor. 2:10. And if great sufferings or temptations interpose betwixt you and your God, it will break through all, and enable you to withstand all; as it did Paul in the text, who forced his way not only through the fury of enemies, but also through the intreaties and tears of friends.

More Arguments Against Arminianism

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Chapter One

Exposition of Verse 6

The Difference Between the Two Covenants

by John Owen; excerpt from Covenant Theology

(by Nehemiah Coxe & John Owen)

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Fifth Practical Observation

And we may see that the exaltation of the human nature of Christ into the office of this glorious ministry depended solely on the sovereign wisdom, grace and love of God. When the human nature of Christ was united to the divine, it became, in the person of the Son of God, fit and capable to make satisfaction for the sins of the church, and to procure righteousness and life eternal for all that believe. But it did not merit that union, nor could do so. For as it was utterly impossible that any created nature, by any act of its own, should merit the hypostatical union³, so it was granted to the human nature of Christ antecedently to any act of its own in way of obedience to God; for it was united to the person of the Son by virtue of that union. To that end, antecedently to it, it could merit nothing. Therefore its whole exaltation and the ministry that was discharged in that respect depended solely on the sovereign wisdom and pleasure of God. **And in this election and designation of the human nature of Christ to grace and glory, we may see the pattern and example of our own. For if it was not on the consideration or foresight of the obedience of the human nature of Christ that it was predestinated and chosen to the grace of the hypostatical union, with the ministry and glory which depended for that reason, but of the mere sovereign grace of God; how much less could a foresight of anything in us be the cause why God should choose us in him before the foundation of the world to grace and glory!** [this is one of the main views that Arminians hold, that God looks down through the corridors of time to see who will believe in Him and from that, he elects those upon this foresight. This not election at all, but man electing himself and God responding to man.]

Further Description of His Mediatory Office

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[2.] That there was need of a mediator, that this covenant might be effectual to its proper ends, of the glory of God and the obedience of mankind, with their reward. This was not necessary from the nature of a covenant in general; for a covenant may be made and entered into between different parties without any mediator, merely on the equity of the terms of it. Nor was it so from the nature of a covenant between God and man, as man was at first created of God; **for the first covenant between**

them was immediate, without the interposition of a mediator. But it became necessary from the state and condition of them with whom this covenant was made, and the especial nature of this covenant. This the apostle declares, Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The law was the moral instrument or rule of the covenant that was made immediately between God and man: but it could not continue to be so after the entrance of sin; that is, so as that God might be glorified by that means, in the obedience and reward of men. [The sinner's prayer is a "legal" act done under law (therefore unacceptable and highly provoking to God) since that is what state that person making the prayer is under, and so he acts accordingly, by necessity! And so he responds like those in Acts 2, "what must we do", etc. It's the only thing he is capable of, i.e., "do this and live". He has no other principle other than natural principles, from which to act upon, i.e., he does not have the new principle of life, the life of faith.] To that end he "sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh;" that is, provided a mediator for a new covenant. The persons with whom this covenant was to be made being all of them sinners, and apostatized from God, it became not the holiness or righteousness of God to treat immediately with them anymore. Nor would it have answered his holy ends so to have done. For if when they were in a condition of uprightness and integrity, they kept not the terms of that covenant which was made immediately with them, without a mediator, although they were holy, just, good, and equal; how much less could any such thing be expected from them in their depraved condition of apostasy from God and enmity against him! It therefore became not the wisdom of God to enter anew into covenant with mankind, without security that the terms of the covenant should be accepted, and the grace of it made effectual. This we could not give; yea, we gave all evidences possible to the contrary, in that "GOD saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually," Gen. 6:5. To that end it was necessary there should be a mediator, to be the surety of this covenant. Again, the covenant itself was so prepared, in the counsel, wisdom, and grace of God, as that the principal, yea, indeed, all the benefits of it, were to depend on what was to be done by a mediator, and could not otherwise be accomplished. Such were satisfaction for sin, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; which are the foundation of this covenant.

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2dly. That first covenant made with Adam, had, as to any benefit to be expected from it, with respect to acceptance with God, life, and salvation, ceased long before, even at the entrance of sin. It was not abolished or abrogated by any act of God, as a law, but only was made weak and insufficient to its first end, as a covenant. God had provided a way for the salvation of sinners, declared in the first promise. When this is actually embraced, that first covenant ceases towards them, as to its curse, in all its concerns as a covenant, and obligation to sinless obedience as the condition of life; because both of them are answered by the mediator of the new covenant. But as to all those who receive not the grace tendered in the promise, it does remain in full force and efficacy, not as a covenant, but as a law; and that because neither the obedience it requires nor the curse which it threatens is answered. Therefore, if any man believes not, "the wrath of God abides on him." For its commands and curse depending on the necessary relation between God and man, with the righteousness of God as the supreme governor of mankind, they must be answered and fulfilled. To that end it was never abrogated formally. But as all unbelievers are still obliged by it, and to it must stand or fall, so it is

perfectly fulfilled in all believers, not in their own persons, but in the person of their surety. “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” Rom. 8:3, 4. But as a covenant, obliging to personal, perfect, sinless obedience, as the condition of life, to be performed by them, so it ceased to be, long before the introduction of the new covenant which the apostle speaks of, that was promised “in the latter days.” But the other covenant here spoken of was not removed or taken away, until this new covenant was actually established.

Arminianism Overthrows the New Covenant

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Excerpts from Covenant Theology by Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen

This section is by John Owen in his exposition of Hebrews 8:6-10, pg 175-181
Arminianism overthrows the whole New Covenant by robbing God of the glory of his free grace.

Who can express or limit the sovereignty of God over his creatures? All the disputes about it are fond. We have no measures of what is infinite. May he not do with his own what he pleases? Are we not in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter? And whether he make or mar a vessel, who will say to him, What are you doing? He gives no account of his matters. But on supposition that he will condescend to enter into covenant with his creatures, and to come to agreement with them according to the terms of it, it becomes his greatness and goodness to give them promises as the foundation of it, in which he proposes to them the things in which their blessedness and reward do consist. For, 1st. In this he proposes himself to them as the eternal spring and fountain of all power and goodness. **Had he treated with us merely by a law, he had in that respect only revealed his sovereign authority and holiness;** the one in giving of the law, the other in the nature of it. **But in promises he reveals himself as the eternal spring of goodness and power; for the matter of all promises is somewhat that is good; and the communication of it depends on sovereign power.** That God should so declare himself in his covenant was absolutely necessary to direct and encourage the obedience of the covenanters; and he did so accordingly, Gen. 15:1, 17:1, 2. 2dly. **By this means he reserves the glory of the whole to himself.** For although the terms of agreement which he proposes between himself and us be in their own nature “holy, just, and good,” which sets forth his praise and glory, **yet if there were not something on his part which has no antecedent respect to any goodness, obedience, or merit in us, we should have in which to glory in ourselves; which is inconsistent with the glory of God.** But the matter of those promises **in which the covenant is founded is free, undeserved, and without respect to any thing in us in accordance with which it may in any sense be procured [e.g., the sinner's prayer].** And so in the first covenant, which was given in a form of law, attended with a penal sanction, yet the foundation of it was in a promise of a free and undeserved reward, even of the eternal enjoyment of God; **which no goodness or obedience in the creature could possibly merit the attainment of. So that if a man should by virtue of any covenant be justified by works, though he might have of which to glory**

before men, yet could he not glory before God, as the apostle declares, Rom. 4:2; and that because the reward proposed in the promise does infinitely exceed the obedience performed.

Pg176,7

[3.] It is necessary from the nature of a covenant. For every covenant that is proposed to men, and accepted by them, requires somewhat to be performed on their part, otherwise it is no covenant; but where anything is required of them that accept of the covenant, or to whom it is proposed, it does suppose that somewhat be promised on the behalf of them by whom the covenant is proposed, as the foundation of its acceptance, and the reason of the duties required in it. All this appears most evidently in the covenant of grace, which is here said to be “established on promises”; and that on two accounts. For,

[4.] At the same time that much is required of us in the way of duty and obedience, we are told in the Scripture, and find it by experience, that of ourselves we can do nothing. To that end, unless the precept of the covenant is founded in a promise of giving grace and spiritual strength to us, in accordance with which we may be enabled to perform those duties, the covenant can be of no benefit or advantage to us. And the lack of this one consideration, that every covenant is founded in promises, and that the promises give life to the precepts of it, has perverted the minds of many to suppose ability in ourselves of yielding obedience to those precepts, without grace antecedently received to enable us to that; which overthrows the nature of the new covenant.

[5.] As was observed, we are all actually guilty of sin before this covenant was made with us. To that end unless there be a promise given of the pardon of sin, it is to no purpose to propose any new covenant terms to us. For “the wages of sin is death”; and we having sinned must die, whatever we do afterwards, unless our sins be pardoned. This, therefore, must be proposed to us as the foundation of the covenant, or it will be of no effect. And in this lies the great difference between the promises of the covenant of works and those of the covenant of grace. The first were only concerning things future; eternal life and blessedness on the accomplishment of perfect obedience. Promises of present mercy and pardon it stood in need of none, it was not capable of. Nor had it any promises of giving more grace or supplies of it; but man was wholly left to what he had at first received. Therefore the covenant was broken. But in the covenant of grace all things are founded in promises of present mercy, and continual supplies of grace, as well as of future blessedness. Therefore it comes to be “ordered in all things, and sure”. And this is the first thing that was to be declared, namely, that every divine covenant is established on promises.

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Ninth Practical Observation

The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because the grace of them prevents any condition or qualification on our part. I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requires of us in and by virtue of that covenant; but this I say, the principal promises of it are not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant, but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant, and establishing or confirming in the covenant. [i.e., faith

being bestowed freely by the sovereign pleasure will of God.] The covenant of works had its promises, but they were all remunerative, respecting an antecedent obedience in us; (so were all those which were peculiar to the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them was formally reward only. In the covenant of grace it is not so; for several of the promises of it are the means of our being taken into covenant [e.g., the free gift of faith], of our entering into covenant with God. The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged to obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those promises, namely, of the pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts, on which the apostle expressly insists as the peculiar promises of this covenant, do take place and are effectual antecedently to our covenant obedience. For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently to our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself produced in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedence to pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.

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A Dispute Concerning Two Covenants

First, therefore, the apostle does evidently in this place dispute concerning two covenants, or two testaments, comparing the one with the other, and declaring the disannulling of the one by the introduction and establishment of the other. What are these two covenants in general we have declared, namely, that made with the church of Israel at Mount Sinai, and that made with us in the gospel; not as absolutely the covenant of grace, but as actually established in the death of Christ, with all the worship that belongs to it.

Here then arises a difference of no small importance, namely, whether these are indeed two distinct covenants, as to the essence and substance of them, or only different ways of the dispensation and administration of the same covenant. And the reason of the difficulty lies in this: We must grant one of these three things:

1. That either the covenant of grace was in force under the old testament; or,
2. That the church was saved without it, or any benefit by Jesus Christ, who is the mediator of it alone; or,
3. That they all perished everlastingly. And neither of the two latter can be admitted.

Some, indeed, in these latter days, have revived the old Pelagian imagination, that before the law men were saved by the conduct of natural light and reason; [this is the spring or foundation of the sinner's prayer] and under the law by the directive doctrines, precepts, and sacrifices of it, without any respect to the Lord Christ or his mediation in another covenant. [the sinner's prayer is without respect to Christ because they are alienated from Him while in an unregenerate state as they make this prayer! Hence the whole prayer is a fancy in their minds from a principle of self-love/preservation] But I will not here contend with them, as having elsewhere sufficiently refuted these imaginations. To that end I will take it here for granted, that no man was ever saved but by virtue of the new covenant, and the mediation of Christ in that respect.

Suppose, then, that this new covenant of grace was extant and effectual under the old testament, so as the church was saved by virtue of it, and the mediation of Christ in that respect, how could it be that there should at the same time be another covenant between God and them, of a different nature from this, accompanied with other promises, and other effects?

But on the other hand, there is such express mention made, not only in this, but in various other places of the Scripture also, of two distinct covenants, or testaments, and such different natures, properties, and effects, ascribed to them, as seem to constitute two distinct covenants. This, therefore, we must inquire into; and will first declare what is agreed to by those who are sober in this matter, though they differ in their judgments about this question, whether two distinct covenants, or only a twofold administration of the same covenant, be intended. And indeed there is so much agreed on, as that what remains seems rather to be a difference about the expression of the same truth, than any real contradiction about the things themselves. For,

Four Agreements about the Two Administrations

1. It is agreed that the way of reconciliation with God, of justification and salvation, was always one and the same; and that from the giving of the first promise none was ever justified or saved but by the new covenant, and Jesus Christ, the mediator of it. **The foolish imagination before mentioned, that men were saved before the giving of the law by following the guidance of the light of nature, and after the giving of the law by obedience to the directions of it, is rejected by all that are sober, as destructive of the Old Testament and the New.**

2. That the writings of the Old Testament, namely, the Law, Psalms, and Prophets, do contain and declare the doctrine of justification and salvation by Christ. The church of old believed this, and walked with God in the faith of it. This is undeniably proved, in that the doctrine mentioned is frequently confirmed in the New Testament by testimonies taken out of the Old.

3. That by the covenant of Sinai, as properly so called, separated from its figurative relation to the covenant of grace, none was ever eternally saved.

4. That the use of all the institutions in accordance with which the old covenant was administered, was to represent and direct to Jesus Christ, and his mediation. These things being granted, the only way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, under the old testament and the new, is secured; which is the substance of the truth in which we are now concerned. On these grounds we may proceed with our inquiry.

Legal vs. Evangelical

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"No man can come unto me, (saith Christ) except my father which hath sent me, draw him." There is a legal spirit working under evangelical pretences in many souls; they look within them to find that which is quite above them. The apostle points you to the fountain of faith, in Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." John Flavel Vol. 4 p 139

Speaking of common grace (*God rains on the just and the unjust*) vs. special or saving grace (*faith*) reserved only for the elect.

Yet we must not— for the sake of the kinship and connection between them— overlook the essential difference. This is the special grace that was unknown to the pagans. All pagan religions are self-willed and legalistic. They are all the aftereffects and adulterations of the covenant of works. Human beings here consistently try to bring about their own salvation by purifications, ascesis, penance, sacrifice, law observance, ceremony, and so on. Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pg 220

"A man's free will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in its power to cure his soul" – Toplady, 1740-1778

Augustus Montague Toplady was an Anglican cleric and hymn writer. He was a major Calvinist opponent of John Wesley. He is best remembered as the author of the hymn "Rock of Ages".

When an unconverted person says the sinner's prayer, he is only acting according to nature, that is, from natural principles, evidencing the covenant he is under, hence the covenant of works. That is all he is capable of because he is void of faith and any new spiritual principle of life, he being apart from Christ, etc. This is essentially what the Jews did at Sinai (a legal act vs. evangelical), agreeing to "the covenant", saying that they would submit to God and obey him. But due to their unconverted, blind, obstinate hearts of which Moses laments in Deut 5:29 and was confirmed in Deut. 29:4, they would not submit to him or obey him and so immediately departed from the Lord as soon as Moses left them to go up the mountain. This is why the Sinner's Prayer is a fraud and is nothing more than the covenant of works being put into practice (legalism), which never was able to save nor was it ever intended that it should save; that those are truly converted being entirely passive in their conversion "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13

Related scriptures in Galatians:

Gal. 2:11-21

¹¹ Now when ^[d]Peter had come to Antioch, I ^[e]withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing ^[f]those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, ^[g]why do you compel Gentiles to live as ^[h]Jews? ¹⁵ We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ **knowing that a man is not ^[i]justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, **that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.** ¹⁷ "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Gal. 5:4-

Stand^[a] fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, **and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.** ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is ^[b]a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, **you who attempt to be justified by law**; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ **For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.** ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. **[those who do not have the Spirit are not free to come to Christ. For where the Spirit is there is liberty; where the Spirit is not, there is no liberty, but bondage to sin and Satan; one cannot set himself free spiritually by his own strength or any other legal performance, prayer, sacrament, etc. Salvation is gratuitous, a gift; if you have to ask for it, it is no longer a gift but a debt; and if a debt, it is no long grace (free grace) and God is no debtor to anyone. As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God." 2Cor3:17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.]**

See Owen's comments here from Communion with God, p 194 my comments in [blue].

[2.] A way whereby to approach unto God with our *desires*. This, also, we have by him provided for us, **John xiv. 5, 6**, "Thomas saith unto Jesus, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." That way which we had of going unto God at our *creation* is quite shut up by *sin*. **[In other words, we cannot come to him by the law or the works thereof which many attempt or will seek to enter and will not be able, Luke 13:24; that covenant was broken (do this and you will live, Luke 10:28), and now we are under the curse of it; we must come by faith in the Son, etc. hence, evangelically vs. legally; but this is by the will of God, John 1:13, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. We can only please him by saving faith which he gives only to his elect.]** The sword of the law, which has fire put into it by sin, turns every way, to stop all passages unto communion with God. Jesus Christ hath "consecrated a new and living way" (for the saints) "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," **Heb. x. 20**. He hath consecrated and set it apart for believers, and for them alone. Others pretend to go to God with their prayers **[legal]**, but they come not nigh him. How can they possibly come to the end who go not in the way? Christ only is the way to the throne of grace **[faith in**

him, hence *evangelical*]; none comes to God but by him. “By him we have an access in one Spirit unto the Father,” [Eph. ii. 18](#). These two things, then, the saints have for the opening of their hearts at the throne of grace, — *assistance* and a *way*. The assistance of the Spirit, without which they are nothing; and the way of Christ’s mediation, without which God is not to be approached unto.

Design of the New Covenant vs. the Old

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John Owen from Covenant Theology

by Nehemiah Coxe & John Owen

[the following excerpts help explain my comment above]

p 242

But inasmuch as he would do so no more, but would make another covenant of another nature with them, it is evident that there was some defect in the covenant itself, it was not able to communicate those good things with which God designed to bless the church.

3. These two things being the only reason that God gives why he will make this new covenant, namely, the sins of the people, and the insufficiency of the first covenant to bring the church into that blessed estate which he designed them; it is manifest that all his dealings with them for their spiritual and eternal good are of mere sovereign grace, and such as he has no motive to but in and from himself alone. [i.e., God does not save someone by virtue of his praying for salvation. Nothing outside Himself moves Him to do anything; He is sovereign, not man. Not to mention He does not hear (hearken to) the prayer of sinners, Jn 9:31.] On page 234 Owen writes, “[1.] The freedom of this covenant, without respect to any merit, worth, or condignity in them with whom it is made. What God does, he does freely, “*ex mera gratia et voluntate*.” (out of his grace and will alone) There was no cause outside himself for which he should make this covenant, or which should move him so to do. And this we are eminently taught in this place, where he expresses no other occasion of his making this covenant but the sins of the people in breaking that which he formerly made with them. And it is expressed on purpose to declare the free and sovereign grace, the goodness, love, and mercy, which alone were the absolute springs of this covenant.

pg 249

1. God made this covenant with the people on Sinai, in the authoritative proposition of it to them; and for that reason the people solemnly accepted of it, and took it on themselves to observe, do, and fulfill the terms and conditions of it, Exod. 19:8, especially chap. 24:3, 7, “The people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD has said, will we do.” And, “All that the LORD has said, will we do, and be obedient.” So Deut. 5:27. [The sinner's prayer includes this too, I will obey, I will submit to you and so on; but to no avail because that person is still under law, is blind, bound by Satan, etc., hates God ,hates faith, and cannot nor will not submit to God's gospel law, Rom 8:7-8. But

you may object: They sound and look so sincere in this, their prayer. Ans.: So what. Many can be greatly moved by religious acts and prayers just like one can be moved by a scene in a movie. Many rejoiced for a season as the stony ground hearers did, yet fell away at last. The Spirit of God enlightened their mind, as in Heb. 6:4, and Matt. 13:20-21, but never went deep enough to change their heart. They had no root in them, and so withered away.] On this the covenant was ratified and confirmed between God and them, and for that reason the blood of the covenant was sprinkled on them, Exod. 24:8. This gave that covenant its solemn ratification.

2. Having thus accepted of God's covenant, and the terms of it, Moses ascending again into the Mount, **the people made the golden calf**. And this fell out so suddenly after the making of the covenant, that the apostle expresses it by, "They continued not in it," 'they made haste to break it.' He expresses the sense of the words of God on this, Exod. 32:7, 8, "Go, get down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed to that, and said, These be your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt." For there they broke the covenant in which God had in a peculiar manner assumed the glory of that deliverance to himself.

Seventh Practical Observation p255

No covenant between God and man ever was, or ever could be stable and effectual, as to the ends of it, that was not made and confirmed in Christ. God first made a covenant with us in Adam. **There was nothing in that respect but the mere defectibility of our natures as we were creatures that could render it ineffectual.** [and it remains so if the person is unconverted] And from there did it proceed. In him we all sinned, by breach of covenant. The Son of God had not then interposed himself, nor undertaken on our behalf. The apostle tells us that "in him all things consist;" without him they have no consistency, no stability, no duration. So this first covenant was immediately broken. It was not confirmed by the blood of Christ. And those who suppose that the efficacy and stability of the present covenant do depend solely on our own will and diligence, had need not only to assert our nature free from that depravation which it was under when this covenant was broken, but also from that defectibility that was in it before we fell in Adam. And such as, neglecting the interposition of Christ, do commit themselves to imaginations of this kind, surely know little of themselves, and less of God.

Eighth Practical Observation

No external administration of a covenant of God's own making, no obligation of mercy on the minds of men, can enable them to steadfastness in covenant obedience, without an effectual influence of grace from and by Jesus Christ. For we will see in the next verses that this is the only provision which is made in the wisdom of God to render us steadfast in obedience and his covenant effectual to us. [unconverted people who say the sinner's prayer are led into a fatal or stupid security, have really no intention of living holy lives, will lead carnal lives, and hence will contaminate the *sheep* of the church.]

Ninth Practical Observation

God, in making a covenant with any, in proposing the terms of it, retains his right and authority to deal with persons according to their behavior in and towards that covenant: "They broke my covenant, and I regarded them not."

Tenth Practical Observation

God's casting men out of his especial care, on the breach of his covenant, is the highest judgment that in this world can fall on any persons. And we are concerned in all these things. For although the covenant of grace be stable and effectual to all who are really partakers of it, **yet as to its external administration, and our entering into it by a visible profession, it may be broken**, to the temporal and eternal ruin of persons and whole churches. Take heed of the golden calf.

More Comments on Ordo Salutis

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John Flavel, Method of Grace (vol. 2) pg 295

First, It hath an **awakening efficacy** upon secure and sleepy sinners. **It rouses the conscience**, and brings a man to a sense and feeling apprehension, Eph. v. 13, 14. The first effectual touch of the word startles the drowsy conscience. A poor sinner lies in his sins, as Peter did in his chains, fast asleep, though a warrant was signed for his execution the next day; but the Spirit in the word awakens him as the angel did Peter. And this awakening power of the word is in order, both of time and nature, antecedent to all its operations and effects.

Fifthly, The word hath a **heart-turning, a soul converting efficacy in it**. It is a **regenerating**, as well as a **convincing word**, 1 Pet. i. 23, 1 Thes. i. 9. The law wounds, the gospel cures; the law discovers the evil that is in sin, and the misery that follows it; and the Spirit of God, working in fellowship with the word, effectually turns the heart from sin. And thus we see in what glorious acts the efficacy of the word discovers itself upon the hearts of men; and all these acts lie in order to each other. For, until the soul be awakened, it cannot be enlightened, Eph. v. 14. Till it be enlightened, it cannot be convinced, Eph. v. 13. **Conviction** being nothing else but the application of the light that shines in the mind to the conscience of a sinner. Till it be convinced, it cannot be wounded for sin, Acts ii. 37. And until it be wounded for sin, it will never be converted from sin, and brought effectually to Jesus Christ. And thus you see what the power of the word is. John Flavel, Method of Grace (vol. 2) pg 295

These comments on what a covenant consists in, the nature of it and of the New Covenant vs. the Old...that we are passive in our conversion. This will shed even more light on the error of the Sinner's Prayer.

Exposition of Verses Heb. 8:10-12

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The Promises of the New Covenant

by John Owen

excerpts from Covenant Theology (pg 257)

by Nehemiah Coxe & John Owen

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will give my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people. And they will not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all will know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Heb. 8:10-12

The design of the apostle, or what is the general argument which he is in pursuit of, must still be borne in mind throughout the consideration of the testimonies he produces in the confirmation of it. And this is, to prove that the Lord Christ is the mediator and surety of a better covenant than that in which the service of God was managed by the high priests according to the law. For therefore it follows that his priesthood is greater and far more excellent than theirs. To this end he does not only prove that God promised to make such a covenant, but also declares the **nature and properties** of it, in the words of the prophet. And so, by comparing it with the former covenant, he manifests its excellence above it. In particular, in this testimony the imperfection of that covenant is demonstrated from its result. For it did not effectually continue peace and mutual love between God and the people; but being broken by them, they were for that reason rejected of God. **This rendered all the other benefits and advantages of it useless.** To that end the apostle insists from the prophet on those properties of this other covenant which infallibly prevent the like result, securing the people's obedience for ever, and so the love and relation of God to them as their God.

To that end these three verses give us a description of that covenant of which the Lord Christ is the **mediator and surety**, not absolutely and entirely, but as to those properties and effects of it in which it differs from the former, so as infallibly to secure the covenant relation between God and the people. **That covenant was broken, but this will never be so, because provision is made in the covenant itself against any such event.**

And we may consider in the words, 1. The particle of introduction, *oti*, answering the Hebrew *ylo*. 2. The subject spoken of, which is *diaqhkh*; with the way of making it, *hpn diaqhosomai*, "which I will make." 3. The author of it, the Lord Jehovah; "I will... says the Lord." 4. Those with whom it was to be made, "the house of Israel." 5. The time of making it, "after those days." 6. The properties, privileges, and benefits of this covenant, which are of two sorts: (1.) Of sanctifying, inherent grace; described by a double consequent:

[1.] Of God's relation to them, and theirs to him; "I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people," verse 10. [2.] Of their advantage by that means, without the use of such other aids as formerly they stood in need of, verse 11. (2.) Of relative grace, in the pardon of their sins, verse 12. And various things of great weight will fall into consideration under these several heads.

Exposition of Verse 10

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will give my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people."

Introduction of the Declaration of the New Covenant

The introduction of the declaration of the new covenant is by the particle *oti*. The Hebrew [word] which is rendered by it, is variously used, and is sometimes redundant. In the prophet, some translate it by an exceptive, "sed;" some by an illative, "quoniam." And in this place *o[ti]* is rendered by some "*quamborem*," "to that end;" and by others "nam," or "enim," as we do it by "for." And it does intimate a reason of what was spoken before, namely, that the covenant which God would now make should not be according to that, like to it, which was before made and broken.

The Subject Spoken Of: The Making of a Covenant

The thing promised is a "covenant:" in the prophet [Hebrew word], here *διαθηκη*. And the way of making it, in the prophet [Hebrews word]; which is the usual word in accordance with which the making of a covenant is expressed. For signifying to "cut," to "strike," to "divide," respect is had in it to the sacrifices by which covenants were confirmed. From there also were "*foedus percutere*," and "*foedus ferire*."² See Gen. 15:9, 10, 18. [Hebrew word], [another Hebrew word] or [another Hebrew word], that is, "cum," which is joined in construction with it, Gen. 15:18; Deut. 5:2. The apostle renders it by *διαθησομαι*, and that with a dative case without a preposition, *τω οικω*, "I will make" or "confirm to." He had used before *συντελεσω* to the same purpose.

We render the words [Hebrew word] and *διαθηκη* in this place by a "covenant," though afterward the same word is translated by a "testament." A covenant properly is a compact or agreement on

certain terms mutually stipulated by two or more parties. As promises are the foundation and rise of it, as it is between God and man, so it comprises also precepts, or laws of obedience, which are prescribed to man on his part to be observed. But in the description of the covenant here annexed, there is no mention of any condition on the part of man, of any terms of obedience prescribed to him, but the whole consists in free, gratuitous promises, as we will see in the explication of it. Some therefore conclude that it is only one part of the covenant that is here described. Others observe from this place that the whole covenant of grace as a covenant is absolute, without any conditions on our part; which sense Estius³ on this place contends for. But these things must be further inquired into:

(1.) The word [Hebrew word], used by the prophet, does not only signify a “covenant” or compact properly so called, but a free, gratuitous promise also. Yea, sometimes it is used for such a free purpose of God with respect to other things, which in their own nature are incapable of being obliged by any moral condition. Such is God’s covenant with day and night, Jer. 33:20, 25. And so he says that he “made his covenant,” not to destroy the world by water anymore, “with every living creature,” Gen. 9:10, 11. Nothing, therefore, can be argued for the necessity of conditions to belong to this covenant from the name or term in accordance with which it is expressed in the prophet. A covenant properly is διαθηκη, but there is no word in the whole Hebrew language of that precise signification.

(2.) The making of this covenant is declared by [Hebrew word]. But yet neither does this require a mutual stipulation, on terms and conditions prescribed, to an entrance into covenant. For it refers to the sacrifices by which covenants were confirmed; and it is applied to a mere gratuitous promise, Gen. 15:18, “In that day did the LORD make a covenant with Abram, saying, To your seed will I give this land.”

As to the word διαθηκη, it signifies a “covenant” improperly; properly it is a “testamentary disposition.” And this may be without any conditions on the part of them to whom anything is bequeathed.

(3.) The whole of the covenant intended is expressed in the ensuing description of it. For if it were otherwise, it could not be proved from there that this covenant was more excellent than the former, especially as to security that the covenant relation between God and the people should not be broken or disannulled. For this is the principal thing which the apostle designs to prove in this place; and the lack of an observation of that has led many out of the way in their exposition of it. If, therefore, this be not an entire description of the covenant, there might yet be something reserved essentially belonging to that which might frustrate this end. For some such conditions might yet be required in it as we are not able to observe, or could have no security that we should abide in the observation of them: and for that reason this covenant might be frustrated of its end, as well as the former; which is directly contrary to God’s declaration of his design in it.

(4.) It is evident that there can be no condition previously required, to our entering into or participation of the benefits of this covenant, antecedent to the making of it with us. For none think there are any such with respect to its original constitution; nor can there be so in respect of its making with us, or our entering into it. For,

[1.] This would render the covenant inferior in a way of grace to that which God made with the people at Horeb. For he declares that there was not anything in them that moved him either to make that covenant, or to take them into it with himself. Everywhere he asserts this to be an act of his mere grace and favor. Yea, he frequently declares, that he took them into covenant, not only without respect to any thing of good in them, but although they were evil and stubborn. See Deut. 7:7, 8; 9:4, 5.

[2.] It is contrary to the nature, ends, and express properties of this covenant. For there is nothing that can be thought or supposed to be such a condition, but it is comprehended in the promise of the covenant itself; for all that God requires in us is proposed as that which himself will effect by virtue of this covenant.

(5.) It is certain, that in the outward dispensation of the covenant, in which the grace, mercy, and terms of it are proposed to us, many things are required of us in order to a participation of the benefits of it; for God has ordained, that all the mercy and grace that is prepared in it will be communicated to us ordinarily in the use of outward means, by which a compliance is required of us in a way of duty. To this end he has appointed all the ordinances of the gospel, the word and sacraments, with all those duties, public and private, which are needful to render them effectual to us. For he will take us ordinarily into this covenant in and by the rational faculties of our natures, that he may be glorified in them and by them. To that end these things are required of us in order to the participation of the benefits of this covenant. And if, therefore, any one will call our attendance to such duties of the condition of the covenant, it is not to be contended about, though properly it is not so. For,

[1.] God does work the grace of the covenant, and communicate the mercy of it, antecedently to all ability for the performance of any such duty; as it is with elect infants.

[2.] Among those who are equally diligent in the performance of the duties intended he makes a discrimination, preferring one before another. "Many are called, but few are chosen;" and what has any one that he has not received?

[3.] He actually takes some into the grace of the covenant while they are engaged in an opposition to the outward dispensation of it. An example of this grace he gave in Paul.

(6.) It is evident that the first grace of the covenant, or God's putting his law in our hearts, can depend on no condition on our part. For whatever is antecedent to that, being only a work or act of corrupted

nature, can be no condition on what the dispensation of spiritual grace is superadded. [Amen! That is the whole point behind the reason why the sinner's prayer is complete presumption.] And this is the great ground of them who absolutely deny the covenant of grace to be conditional; namely, that the first grace is absolutely promised, on what and its exercise the whole of it does depend.

(7.) To a full and complete interest in all the promises of the covenant, faith on our part, from which evangelical repentance is inseparable, is required. But although these also are produced in us by virtue of that promise and grace of the covenant which are absolute, it is a mere strife about words to contend whether they may be called conditions or no. Let it be granted on the one hand, that we cannot have an actual participation of the relative grace of this covenant in adoption and justification, without faith or believing; and on the other, that this faith is produced in us, given to us, bestowed on us, by that grace of the covenant which depends on no condition in us as to its discriminating administration, [i.e., *that God's purpose in that election might stand, Rom. 9:11*] and I will not concern myself what men will call it.

(8.) Though there are no conditions properly so called of the whole grace of the covenant, yet there are conditions in the covenant, taking that term, in a large sense, for that which by the order of divine constitution precedes some other things, and has an influence into their existence; for God requires many things of them whom he actually takes into covenant, and makes partakers of the promises and benefits of it. Of this nature is that whole obedience which is prescribed to us in the gospel, in our walking before God in uprightness; and there being an order in the things that belong to this, some acts, duties, and parts of our gracious obedience, being appointed to be means of the further additional supplies of the grace and mercies of the covenant, [answers to Matt. 13:12, *For whoever has, to him more will be given*] they may be called conditions required of us in the covenant, as well as duties prescribed to us.

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Fifth Practical Observation

God himself, in and by his own sovereign wisdom, grace, goodness, all-sufficiency, and power, is to be considered as the only cause and author of the new covenant; or, the abolishing of the old covenant, with the introduction and establishment of the new, is an act of the mere sovereign wisdom, grace, and authority of God. It is his gracious disposal of us, and of his own grace; that of which we had no contrivance, nor indeed the least desire.

2Cor3:5

⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being from ourselves*, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the ^[a]Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

More on the New & Old Covenant

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Free grace, Depravity of Man, Restoration of the Image of God in man, the Writing of the Law on our Hearts, etc.

Excerpt from Covenant Theology, by Nehemiah Coxe & John Owen

This particular excerpt is by John Owen

pg 275-277

The Blessed Properties and Effects of the New Covenant

SECONDLY, These things being premised, as it was necessary they should be, to the right understanding of the mind of the Holy Spirit, I will proceed to the particular parts of the covenant as here expressed, namely, in the blessed properties and effects of it, in accordance with which it is distinguished from the former.

First General Blessing– Restoration of the Image of God in Us

The first two expressions are of the same nature and tendency, “I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts.” In general it is the reparation of our nature by the restoration of the image of God in us, that is, our sanctification, which is promised in these words [God is the promiser, and hence the rightful disposer of his grace, not merely the predictor of one's conversion see pg 193, 1781, “For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity” - J. Edwards]. And there are two things in the words both doubly expressed: 1. The subject acted on; which is the “mind” and the “heart.” 2. The manner of producing the effect mentioned in them; and that is by “putting” and “writing.” And, 3. The things by these means so communicated; which are the “laws” of God.

The Subject Acted On

The subject spoken of is the mind and heart. When the apostle treats of the depravation and corruption of our nature, he places them εν τη διανοια and εν τη καρδια, Eph. 4:18; that is, “the mind and the heart.” These are, in the Scripture, the seat of natural corruption, the residence of the principle of alienation from the life of God which is in us. To that end the renovation of our natures

consists in the rectifying and curing of them, in the furnishing them with contrary principles of faith, love, and adherence to God. And we may observe, that,

Sixth Practical Observation

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the new covenant, in its being and existence, in its healing, repairing efficacy, is as large and extensive as sin is in its residence and power to deprave our natures. This is the difference about the extent of the new covenant, and the grace of it: Some would have it to extend to all persons, in its tender and conditional proposition; but not to all things, as to its efficacy in the reparation of our natures. Others assert it to extend to all the effects of sin, in the removal of them, and the cure of our natures by that means; but as to persons, it is really extended to none but those in whom these effects are produced, whatever be its outward administration, which was also always limited: to whom I do subscribe.

On Their Minds

The first thing mentioned is the "mind." [Hebrew word], the apostle renders by $\delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$, "**the inward part.**" The mind is the most secret, inward part or power of the soul. And the prophet expresses it by the "**inward part,**" because it is the only safe and useful repository of the laws of God. When they are there laid up, we will not lose them; neither men nor devils can take them from us. And he also declares in which the excellence of covenant obedience does consist. It is not in the conformity of our outward actions to the law, although that be required in that respect also; but it principally lies in the inward parts, where God searches for and regards truth in sincerity, Ps. 51:6. To that end $\delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ is the "mind and understanding," whose natural depravation is the spring and principle of all disobedience; the cure of which is here promised in the first place. In the outward administration of the means of grace, **the affections**, or, if I may so speak, the more outward part of the soul, are usually first impressed and acted on: but the first real effect of the internal promised grace of the covenant is on the mind, the most spiritual and inward part of the soul. This in the New Testament is expressed by the renovation of the mind, Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:23; and the opening of the eyes of our understandings, Eph. 1:17, 18; God shining into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 4:6. By this means the enmity against God, the vanity, darkness, and alienation from the life of God, with which the mind naturally is possessed and filled, are taken away and removed, of the nature of which work I have treated at large elsewhere; for the law of God in the mind, is the **saving knowledge of the mind and will of God**, of which the law is the revelation, communicated to it and implanted in it. [Hence as Flavel states that the Spirit, in changing the heart, does no violence to the will as many suppose who oppose this doctrine, but sweetly, with a secret efficacy, overcomes the will, so that one comes willingly to Christ, not forced. Most remarkable! This answers to Ps 110:3, *Your people shall be volunteers [or willing] In the day of Your power; It is this power that the Pharisees were ignorant of when Jesus said to them, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."*]

The Manner of Producing the Effect

The way in accordance with which God in the covenant of grace thus works on the mind is expressed by $\delta\iota\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$: so the apostle renders [Hebrew word], "I will give." $\Delta\iota\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, "giving," may by a substitution

be put for δωδω, "I will give." So is it expressed in the next clause, επιγραψω in the future tense, "I will write." The word in the prophet is, "I will give;" we render it, "I will put." But there are two things intimated in the word:

(1.) The freedom of the grace promised; it is a mere grant, gift, or donation of grace. [i.e., never the result of human prayer or any other sacrament that man may dream up.]

(2.) The efficacy of it. That which is given of God to any is received by them, otherwise it is no gift. And this latter is well expressed by the word used by us, "I will put;" which expresses an actual communication, and not a fruitless tender. This the apostle renders emphatically, διδους; that is, εμε, 'This is that which I do, am doing in this covenant; namely, freely giving that grace in accordance with which my laws will be implanted on the minds of men.'

The Things Communicated: My Laws

To show in general, before we proceed to the nature of this work, so far as is necessary to the exposition of the words, we may here consider what was observed in the third place, namely, what it is that is thus promised to be communicated, and so carry it on with us to the other clause of this promise. That which is to be put into this spiritual receptacle is, in these words, τους νομους μου, "My laws;" in the plural number. Expositors inquire what laws are here intended, whether the moral law only, or others also. But there is no need of such inquiry. There is a metonymy of the subject and effect in the words. It is that knowledge of the mind and will of God which is revealed in the law, and taught by it, which is promised. The "laws of God," therefore, are here taken largely, for the whole revelation of the mind and will of God. So does [Hebrew word] originally signify "doctrine" or "instruction." By whatsoever way or revelation God makes known himself and his will to us, requiring our obedience in that respect, it is all comprised in that expression of "his laws".

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The Nature of the Grace in the First Promise

From these things we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this first branch of the first promise of the covenant. And this is, the effectual operation of his Spirit in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, in accordance with which they are habitually made conformable to the whole law of God, that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, and enabled to all acts and duties that are required of us. And this is the first grace promised and communicated to us by virtue of this covenant, as it was necessary that so it should be. For, 1. The mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience. 2. The proper and peculiar actions of the mind, in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actions of the will and affections, much more all outward practices. 3. The depravation of the mind is such, by blindness, darkness, vanity, and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace on the mind. 4. Faith itself is principally ingenerated by an infusion of saving light into the mind, 2 Cor. 4:4, 6. So,

Seventh Practical Observation

All the beginnings and entrances into the saving knowledge of God, and for that reason of obedience to him, are effects of the grace of the covenant. [In other words, the sinner's prayer is not flowing from this new principle but from wholly corrupted natural principles! And that is why any prayer is unbiblical, is highly presumptuous and provoking to God. This whole point is KEY to understand.]

On Their Hearts

The second part of this first promise of the covenant is expressed in these words, “**And will write them on their hearts;**” **which is that which renders the former part actually effectual.** Expositors generally observe, that respect is had in this to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, that is, in the first covenant; for then the law (that is, “the ten words”) was written in tables of stone. And although the original tables were broken by Moses, when the people had broken the covenant, **yet would not God alter that dispensation, nor write his laws any other way, but commanded new tables of stone to be made, and wrote them in that place.** And this was done, not so much to secure the outward letter of them, as **to represent the hardness of the hearts** of the people to whom they were given. **God did not, God would not by virtue of that covenant otherwise dispose of his law.** And the event that followed this was that they broke these laws, and abode not in obedience. **This event God promises to anticipate and prevent under the new covenant, and that by writing these laws now in our hearts,** which he wrote before only in tables of stone; that is, **he will effectually work that obedience in us which the law does require, for he “works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”** [this is KEY!! to understanding the new covenant as distinguished from the Old; and to see more clearly the error, or rather the presumption of the sinner's prayer. How can a unregenerate person sincerely pray a holy prayer without this holy law written on his heart? That is why this prayer is presumption; his heart is still at enmity with God, is blind, ignorant of Christ, without faith, etc. This prayer proceeds only from natural principles of self-love and self preservation and other self seeking ends. The only reasonable conclusion on this matter is that this prayer is a contradiction of the highest sort, the cart before the horse. It is on this account why Thomas Shepard labeled it a wicked presumption. Calvin writes, *he [God] cannot be toughed with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes.* **Confessing the Impassible God, pg 157. Study this subject of impassibility!** **The heart, as distinguished from the mind, comprises the will and the affections;** and they are compared to the tables in which the letter of the law was engraved. For as by that writing and engraving, the tables received the impression of the letters and words in which the law was contained, which they did firmly retain and represent, so as that although they were stones still in their nature, yet were they nothing but the law in their use; **so by the grace of the new covenant there is a durable impression of the law of God on the wills and affections of men, in accordance with which they fulfill it, represent it, comply with it, and have a living principle of it abiding in them.** To that end, as this work must necessarily consist of two parts, namely, the **removal out of the heart of whatever is contrary to the law of God,** and the **implanting of principles of obedience** in that respect; so it comes under a double description or denomination in the Scripture. For sometimes it is called a “**taking away of the heart of stone,**” or “**circumcising of the heart;**” and sometimes the “**giving of an heart of flesh,**” the “**writing of the law in our hearts;**” **which is the renovation of our natures into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth.** To that end in this promise the whole of our sanctification, in its beginning and progress, in its work on our whole souls and all their faculties, is comprised. And we may observe,

Eighth Practical Observation

The work of grace in the new covenant happens on the whole soul, in all its faculties, powers, and affections, to their change and renovation. The whole was corrupted, and the whole must be renewed. The image of God was originally in and on the whole, and on the loss of it the whole was deprived. See 1 Thes. 5:23.

Ninth Practical Observation

To take away the necessity and efficacy of renewing, changing, sanctifying grace, consisting in an internal, efficacious operation of the principles, habits, and acts of internal grace and obedience, is plainly to overthrow and reject the new covenant. [This is why the sinner's prayer turns the gospel on its head. It presumes the sinner has these promises before he actually has them! For a covenant to be steadfast and sure, both parties must be in mutual agreement to the terms of the covenant. But in fact, the praying sinner is not; he is deceiving himself; his heart still is at enmity with God and cannot please him at all in his condition. This is the danger of this prayer; he now thinks he is converted when he is not. Hence see the following comments by Owen; see red.]

Tenth Practical Observation

We bring nothing to the new covenant but our hearts, as tables to be written in, with the sense of the insufficiency of the precepts and promises of the law, with respect to our own ability to comply with them.

“I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people.”

The last thing in the words is the relation that follows on this between God and his people: “I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people.” This is indeed a distinct promise by itself, summarily comprising all the blessings and privileges of the covenant. And it is placed in the center of the account given of the whole, as that from which source all the grace of it does spring, in which all the blessings of it do consist, and in accordance with which they are secured. Although in this place it is peculiarly mentioned, as that which has its foundation in the foregoing promise. For this relation, which implies **mutual acquiescence** in each other, could not be, nor ever had been, **if the minds and hearts of them who are to be taken into it were not changed and renewed**. For neither could God approve of and rest in his love towards them, while they were enemies to him in the depravation of their natures; nor could they find rest or satisfaction in God, whom they neither knew, nor liked, nor loved.

This is the general expression of any covenant relation between God and men, “He will be to them a God, and they will be to him a people.” And it is frequently made use of with respect to the first covenant, which yet was disannulled. God owned the people in that respect for his peculiar portion, and they avouched him to be their God alone.

Nor can this be spoken of God and any people, but on the ground of an especial covenant. It is true, God is the God of all the world and all people are his; yea, he is a God to them all. For as he made them, so he sustains, rules, and governs them in all things, by his power and providence. But with

respect to this God does not freely promise that he will be a God to any, nor can so do; for his power over all, and his rule of all things, is essential and natural to him, so as it cannot otherwise be. To that end, as thus declared, it is a peculiar expression of an especial covenant relation. And the nature of it is to be expounded by the nature and properties of that covenant which it does respect.

The Nature of this Relation

Two things we must therefore consider, to discover the nature of this relation: 1. The foundation of it. 2. The mutual actions in it by virtue of this relation.

The Foundation

To the manifestation of the foundation of it, some things must be premised:

(1.) On the entrance of sin there continued no such covenant relation between God and man, as that by virtue of it he should be their God, and they should be his people. God continued still in the full enjoyment of his sovereignty over men; which no sin, or rebellion, or apostasy of man could in the least impeach. And man continued under an obligation to dependence on God and subjection to his will in all things. For these cannot be separated from his nature and being until final judgment be executed; after which **God rules over them only by power, without any respect to their wills or obedience**. But that especial relation of mutual interest by virtue of the first covenant ceased between them.

(2.) God would not enter into any other covenant with sinful, fallen man, to be “a God to them,” and to take them to be a “peculiar people” to him, immediately in their own persons. Nor was it consistent with his wisdom and goodness so to do; for if man was not steadfast in God’s covenant, but broke and disannulled it when he was sinless and upright, **only created with a possibility of defection, what expectations could there be that now he was fallen, and his nature wholly depraved, any new covenant should be of use to the glory of God or advantage of man?** To enter into a new covenant that must necessarily be broken, to the aggravation of the misery of man, became not the wisdom and goodness of God. If it be said, ‘God might have so made a new covenant immediately with men as to secure their future obedience, and to have made it firm and stable,’ I answer, it would not have become the divine wisdom and goodness to have dealt better with men after their rebellion and apostasy than before, namely, on their own account. **He did in our first creation communicate to our nature all that grace** and all those privileges with which in his wisdom he thought meet to endow it, and all that was necessary to make them who were partakers of it everlastingly blessed. **To suppose that he, on his own account alone, would immediately collate more grace on it, is to suppose him singularly well pleased with our sin and rebellion**. This, then, God would not do. To that end,

(3.) God provided in the first place that there should be a mediator, a sponsor, an undertaker, with whom alone he would treat about a new covenant, and so establish it. For in the contrivance of his grace and wisdom concerning it, there were many things necessary to it that could no otherwise be enacted and accomplished. Nay, there was not any one thing in all the good which he designed to mankind in this covenant, in a way of love, grace, and mercy, that could be communicated to them, so as that his honor and glory might be advanced by that means, without the consideration of this

mediator, and what he undertook to do. Nor could mankind have yielded any of that obedience to God which he would require of them, without the interposition of this mediator on their behalf. It was therefore with him that God firstly made this covenant.

The Mediator Must Be Christ

How it was needful that this mediator should be God and man in one person; how he became so to undertake for us, and in our stead; what was the especial covenant between God and him as to the work which he undertook personally to perform; have, according to our poor weak measure and dark apprehension of these heavenly things, been declared at large in our Exercitations on this epistle, and yet more fully in our discourse of the mystery and glory of the person of Christ.⁷ To that end, as to this new covenant, it was firstly made with Jesus Christ, the surety of it and undertaker in it. For,

(1.) God neither would nor, "*salvâ justitiâ, sapientiâ, et honore,*" [saving justice, wisdom and honor] could, treat immediately with sinful, rebellious men on terms of grace for the future, until satisfaction was undertaken to be made for sins past, or such as should afterwards fall out. This was done by Christ alone, who was therefore the *πρωτον δεκτικον* of this covenant and all the grace of it. See 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Gal. 3:13, 14; Rom. 3:25.

(2.) No restipulation [to stipulate again - to agree again] of obedience to God could be made by man, which might be a ground of entering into a covenant intended to be firm and stable. [another sound argument against the propriety of the sinner's prayer] For seeing we had broken our first covenant engagement with God in our best condition, we were not likely of ourselves to make good a new engagement of a higher nature than the former. Who will take the word or the security of a bankrupt for thousands, who is known not to be worth one farthing; especially if he had wasted a former estate in luxury and riot, continuing an open slave to the same lusts? To that end it was absolutely necessary that in this covenant there should be a **surety**, to undertake for our answering and firm standing to the terms of it. Without this, the event of this new covenant, which God would make as a singular effect of his wisdom and grace, would neither have been glory to him [since the sinner in the sinner's prayer robs God of the glory of his free grace] nor advantage to us [as I mentioned before, this leads to a fatal security; as Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' [as the unregenerate presumes when they say the sinner's prayer] Therefore your sin remains."].

(3.) That grace which was to be the spring of all the blessings of this covenant, to the glory of God and salvation of the church, was to be deposited in some safe hand, for the accomplishment of these ends. In the first covenant, God at once committed to man that whole stock of grace [concreated upon Adam's creation¹ see Continual Supplies of Grace on pgs 2154, 210, 286, 295 & Adam Defectible on pgs 1595, 2156] which was necessary to enable him to the obedience of it. And the grace of reward which he was to receive on the performance of it, God reserved absolutely in his own hand; yea, so as that perhaps man did not fully understand what it was. But all was lost at once that was committed to our keeping, so as that nothing at all was left to give us the least relief as to any new endeavors. To that end God will now secure all the good things of this covenant, both as to grace and glory, **in a third hand, in the hand of a mediator**. On this the promises are made to him, and the fullness of grace is laid up in him, John 1:14; Col. 1:19; 2:3; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 1:20.

(4.) As he was the mediator of this covenant, God became his God, and he became the servant of God in a peculiar manner. For he stood before God in this covenant as a public representative of all the elect. See our comment on chap. 1:5, 8, 9; 2:13. God is a God to him in all the promises he received on the behalf of his spiritual body; and he was his servant in the accomplishment of them, as the pleasure of the Lord was to prosper in his hand.

(5.) God being in this covenant a God and Father to Christ, he came by virtue of it to be our God and Father, John 20:17; Heb. 2:12, 13. And we became “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ;” and his people, to yield him all sincere obedience.

And these things may suffice briefly to declare the foundation of that covenant relation which is here expressed.

¹ “the law indeed is not a rule of that by which we are to obey, namely, of our faith, yet it is the only rule of what we are to obey; we are not to perform acts of obedience now as Adam was to do, namely, by the sole power of inherent grace, but we are to live by faith, and act by faith, (for without Me you can do nothing, Jn15:5). We are not united to Christ our life by obedience, as Adam was to God by it, but by faith. And therefore as all action in living things come from union, so all our acts of obedience are to come by faith, from the Spirit on Christ’s part, and from faith on our part, which make our union.” Thomas Shepard, The Sound Believer, p 381

The Promise of a Saving Knowledge of God

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The Things Promised in the New Covenant: a saving knowledge of God. This saving knowledge is pretended by those who do the sinner's prayer in order to get favor with God so as to get saved or converted. But this is, as I have stated before, presumption of the highest order.

None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. Heb. 8:11

excerpt from Covenant Theology - Coxe & Owen: this excerpt by Owen, p 299

What is its Subject-Matter

The thing promised, is the knowledge of God: “They will all know me.” No duty is more frequently commanded than this is, nor any grace more frequently promised. See Deut. 29:6; Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 11:10; 36:23, 26, 27. For it is the foundation of all other duties of obedience, and of all communion with God in them. All graces as to their exercise, as faith, love, and hope, are founded in that respect. And the woeful lack of it which is visible in the world is evidence how little there is of true evangelical obedience among the generality of them that are called Christians. And two things may be considered

in this promise: (1.) The object, or what is to be known. (2.) The knowledge itself, of what kind and nature it is:

(1.) The first is God himself: "They will all know me, says the LORD." And it is so not absolutely, but as to some especial revelation of himself. For there is a knowledge of God, as God, by the light of nature. This is not here intended, nor is it the subject of any gracious promise, but is common to all men. There was, moreover, a knowledge of God by revelation under the old covenant, but attended with great obscurity in various things of the highest importance. To that end there is something further intended, as is evident from the antithesis between the two states in this declared. In brief, it is the knowledge of him as revealed in Jesus Christ under the new testament. To show what is contained in this doctrinally would be to go over the principal articles of our faith, as declared in the gospel. The sum is, To "know the Lord," is to know God as he is in Christ personally, as he will be to us in Christ graciously, and what he requires of us and accepts in us through the Beloved. In all these things, notwithstanding all their teaching and diligence in that respect, the church was greatly in the dark under the old testament; but they are all of them more clearly revealed in the gospel.

(2.) The knowledge of these things is that which is promised. For notwithstanding the clear revelation of them, we abide in ourselves unable to discern them and receive them [Rom. 8:7-8]. For such a spiritual knowledge is intended as in accordance with which the mind is renewed, being accompanied with faith and love in the heart. This is that knowledge which is promised in the new covenant, and which will be brought about in all them who are interested in that respect.

Twenty-fifth Practical Observation

The full and clear declaration of God, as he is to be known of us in this life, is a privilege reserved for and belonging to the days of the new testament. Before, it was not made; and more than is now made is not to be expected in this world. And the reason of this is, because it was made by Christ. See the exposition on chap. 1:1, 2.

Twenty-Sixth Practical Observation

To know God as he is revealed in Christ, is the highest privilege of which in this life we can be made partakers; for this is life eternal, that we may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, John 17:3. Twenty-Seventh Practical Observation Persons destitute of this saving knowledge are utter strangers to the covenant of grace; for this is a principal promise and effect of it, wherever it does take place.

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Twenty-Eighth Practical Observation

Free and sovereign, undeserved grace in the pardon of sin is the original spring and foundation of all covenant mercies and blessings. By this means, and by this means alone, are the glory of God and the safety of the church provided for. And those who like not God's covenant on these terms (as none do by nature) will eternally fall short of the grace of it. By this means all glorying and all boasting in

ourselves is excluded; which was that which God aimed at in the contrivance and establishment of this covenant, Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29-31 [and Eph. 2:8-9]. For this could not be if the fundamental grace of it did depend on any condition or qualification in ourselves. If we let go the free pardon of sin, without respect to any thing in those that receive it, we renounce the gospel. Pardon of sin is not merited by antecedent duties [e.g., a prayer], but is the strongest obligation to future duties. He that will not receive pardon unless he can one way or other deserve it, or make himself meet for it; or pretends to have received it, and finds not himself obliged to universal obedience by it, neither is nor will be partaker of it.

The Promise Considered

In the promise itself we may consider, 1. To whom it is made. And, 2. What it is that is promised.

To Whom it is Made

The first is expressed in the pronoun αυτων, "their," three times repeated. All those absolutely, and only those with whom God makes this covenant, are intended. Those whose sins are not pardoned do in no sense partake of this covenant; it is not made with them. For this is the covenant that God makes with them, that he will be merciful to their sins; that is, to them in the pardon of them. Some speak of a universal conditional covenant, made with all mankind. If there be any such thing, it is not that here intended; for they are all actually pardoned with whom this covenant is made. And the indefinite declaration of the nature and terms of the covenant is not the making of a covenant with any. And what should be the condition of this grace here promised of the pardon of sin? "It is," say they, "that men repent, and believe, and turn to God, and yield obedience to the gospel." If so, then men must do all these things before they receive the remission of sins? "Yes." Then must they do them while they are under the law, and the curse of it, for so are all men whose sins are not pardoned. This is to make obedience to the law, and that to be performed by men while under the curse of it, to be the condition of gospel-mercy; which is to overthrow both the law and the gospel.

Objection and Answer

(also add to ordo salutis)

"But then, on the other hand it will follow," they say, "that men are pardoned before they do believe; which is expressly contrary to the Scripture."

Answer: (1.) The communication and donation of faith to us is an effect of the same grace in accordance with which our sins are pardoned; and they are both bestowed on us by virtue of the same covenant. (2.) The application of pardoning mercy to our souls is in order of nature consequent to believing, but in time they go together. (3.) Faith is not required to the procuring of the pardon of our sins, but to the receiving of it: "Whosoever believes in him will receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43.

The new covenant is made with them alone who effectually and eventually are made partakers of the grace of it. "This is the covenant that I will make with them... I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," etc. Those with whom the old covenant was made were all of them actual partakers of the benefits of it; and if they are not so with whom the new is made, it comes short of the old in efficacy, and may be utterly frustrated. Neither does the indefinite proposal of the terms of the covenant prove that the covenant is made with them, or any of them, who enjoy not the benefits of it. Indeed this is the excellence of this covenant, and so it is here declared, that it does effectually communicate all the grace and mercy contained in it to all and every one with whom it is made; with whomsoever it is made, his sins are pardoned.

Groundlessness of the Sinner's Prayer

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Another discussion from which you will gain a deeper understanding of the groundlessness and hence, false security and presumptuous nature of the Sinner's Prayer. This is especially seen in the first paragraph where Flavel describes the unregenerated sinner: wholly under Satan's control, bound by sin, spiritually blind, an enemy to God in his heart, wholly self-centered, etc. A prayer of any kind by a person in this condition is complete presumption and highly provoking to God.

Speaking of common grace (*God rains on the just and the unjust*) vs. special or saving grace (*faith*) reserved only for the elect.

Yet we must not— for the sake of the kinship and connection between them— overlook the essential difference. This is the special grace that was unknown to the pagans. All pagan religions are self-willed and legalistic. They are all the aftereffects and adulterations of the covenant of works. Human beings here consistently try to bring about their own salvation by purifications, asceticism, penance, sacrifice, law observance, ceremony, and so on. Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pg 220

"A man's free will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in its power to cure his soul" – Toplady, 1740-1778

Augustus Montague Toplady was an Anglican cleric and hymn writer. He was a major Calvinist opponent of John Wesley. He is best remembered as the author of the hymn "Rock of Ages".

Excerpt from The Righteous Man's Refuge
by John Flavel
Volume 3 of his works
pg 399-402

Two things remain to be considered, before we finish this last proposition : viz.

1. Who the people of God are ?
2. Why this privilege is peculiar to them ?

1. Who are the people of God? the scripture describes them two ways; negatively and positively. Negatively, in opposition to those who are not the people of God, but are, (1.) The servants of sin, obeying it in the lusts of it, which the people of God neither are, nor dare to do, Rom. vi. 11, 12, etc. (2.) The men of this world have their portion in this life, savoring and minding the things of the world only, whereas the people of God are called out of the world, John xvii. 16, and principally study and labour after the higher concernments of the world to come, Rom. viii. 5. (3.) The vassals of Satan, do his lusts, and are in subjection to his power. Acts 26:18, Eph. ii. 2, from which bondage the people of God are made free. (4.) Nor yet are they their own, living wholly to themselves, and seeking only their own ends, as others do, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. These, all these are not the people of God, God will not own them for such; they but deceive themselves in thinking and calling themselves so. But then positively, they are (1.) A people regenerated, and born again, John 1:13. Their regeneration gives them both the essence and denomination of the people of God; It is as impossible to be the children of God without regeneration, as it is to be the children of men without generation. (2.) They are a people in covenant with God, Ezek. xvi. 8. "I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." For in this covenant they give themselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. 8:5. They avouch the Lord to be their God, and make over themselves to him to be his people, Jer. 31:33, devoting unto God all that they are, their souls and bodies, with every faculty and member inclusively, Rom. 12:1. Luke 10:27. All that they have, Rom. 11:36, all is dedicated and devoted to the Lord's use and service, and these only are the people of God.

2. The last thing to be cleared is, Why the people of God, and none beside them, have this peculiar privilege of an hiding place in the day of trouble, and the grounds of it are, 1. Because they only have special interest in God, and propriety is the ground on which they claim and expect protection: I am thine, save me, Ps. 119:94. [Only those who are

converted, born again, can say this or that which is similar, Help my unbelief or increase my faith, etc. But before one is born again, he can't even see the kingdom of God let alone pray for any spiritual benefit. Flavel also quotes on pg 408, Ps. 86:2, "Preserve my soul, for I am holy; O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee." And then Flavel says, "I speak not here of the first act of faith which flows not from an interest, but gives the soul an interest in God."] Upon this very ground it was that David encouraged himself in one of his greatest plunges and distresses of his whole life, 1 Sam. 30:6. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." 2. **The people of God only are at peace with God**; and where there is no peace there can be no protection. [unconverted men are still at war with God; their prayer is not genuine; it can't be. They have not the love of God in them yet, they have not faith yet, etc. What they are really praying for is what God has and not prayer for God, for communion with Him for who He really is. The prayer is all raised corrupt affections and carnal needs. See parable of the Sower.] The harbours and garrisons of one kingdom never receive into their protection the subjects of another kingdom that are in open hostility against them. **Now there is open war betwixt God and the wicked**, Ps. vii. 11, Zech, xi. 8. Till they have peace with God they can claim no protection from God.

3. The promises of protection are made only to God's people; **and where there is no promise, there can be no warrantable claim to protection**, 2 Cor. i. 20. 2 Pet. i. 4. Common providences may shelter them for a time, but the saints only have the keys of the promises, which open the chambers or attributes of God to them. [Unconverted men cannot make any claim from God since they are not in covenant with him at the time of the prayer! Again, this prayer is the cart before the horse.]

4. None but the people of God walk in the ways of God, and none but those that walk in his way can, groundedly, expect his protection ; for so runs the promise, 2 Chron. xv. 2. "I am with you whilst you are with me," i.e., I am with you, by way of protection, direction, support, and salvation, whilst you are with me in the duties of obedience, and exercises of your graces; see that you love, fear, and obey me, and then, depend upon it, I will look after and take care of you. [Those who are told they are saved because they made this prayer are self-deceived.]

5. To conclude. The people of God only flee to God for sanctuary, and cast themselves upon him for protection, Ps. 56:3. "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Ps. 18:2, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." This

their confidence in God, and reliance upon him, engage him to protect them in their dangers, Isa. 26:3. All others put themselves out of God's protection **by making flesh their arm** [which the sinner's prayer is; it's a legal act vs. a truly evangelical act, an act of saving faith which he has not since he is unconverted while making this prayer], and so giving the honour of God to the creature, Jer. 17:5. [The sinner's prayer does exactly that; it robs God of his glory of his free grace and makes God a debtor to the creature.] And thus much for clearing this last proposition also. All that remains will be dispatched in a brief and close application of the point thus opened and confirmed.

CHAP. XII.

Containing the first use of the point in several informing consecrations and deductions of truth from it.

Consect. I. From the whole of this discourse we may be informed what a miserable and shiftless people all those will be in times of trouble who have no special interest in God, or the promises. Sad and lamentable was the case of Saul, as it is by himself expressed, 1 Sam. 28:15. "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more." It is a wonderful and unaccountable thing, how carnal men and women subsist and bear up, when their earthly props and hopes sink under and fail them; so long as any creature-comfort is left, thither they will retreat for relief and succor; but if all fail, as quickly they may, whither will they turn for comfort, having not a God nor a promise to flee to? which the people of God can do when all things else fail them, Heb. iii. 17. Their different conditions in the day of trouble is clearly expressed in Zeph. ii. 3, 4. "Seek ye the Lord all ye meek of the earth which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness, it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." There is God's may-be, which is better security than man's shall-be for their temporal deliverance. But what shall become of others that have no refuge but in the creature? Why, the misery and shiftlessness of their condition follows in the next words: "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up;" i.e., all their earthly securities shall fail them; their strong-holds shall not secure them; they shall find no shelter in the scorching heat of the day of trouble. Moab, Ashdod, and Ekron have no more benefit by the promises made to Zion, than the inhabitants of Rome can claim by the charter of London. If a wicked or hypocritical person cry to God in his distress, he will not hear him, Prov. 1:25, 26, Job 27: 9, but will bid him go to his earthly refuges

which he hath chosen. If he go to the promises, knock at those doors of hope, they cannot relieve him, being all made in Christ to believers; if to the name and attributes of God all the doors are shut against them, Ps. 34:16. [The person making any kind of prayer to God has not covenantal right to any promise including eternal life because at the time of the prayer he is not in any covenant with God yet, but still under the curse and the covenant of works; it is precisely this prayer that exposes this fact, for he is doing the only thing nature can produce which is to do something to recommend himself to God...what must I do which is what the law says; do this and live. The truly penitent person knows he had nothing to do with his conversion as Paul insinuates in 1Cor4:7¹, "For who ^lmakes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*? i.e., if you had to ask for it, that is do something to get it which would lay grounds for boasting. But faith is a gift, not of yourselves...lest anyone boast, Eph 2:8-9!! Man is completely passive in his conversion or in his being born again, just as in our natural birth. See also, 2Cor3:5 As Martin Luther said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God."]

There are seven dreadful aggravations of a wicked man's troubles.

(1.) When troubles come upon him, the curse of God follows him into his carnal refuges; Jer. xvii. 5. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Trouble is the arrow, and this curse the venom of the arrow, which makes the wound incurable.

(2.) When troubles fall upon him from without, a guilty conscience will terrify him from within; so that the mind can give no relief to the body, but both sink under their own weights. It is not so with the people of God, they have inward relief under outward pressures, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

(3.) The gusts and storms of wicked men's troubles may blow them into hell, and hurry them into eternal destruction; if death march towards them upon the pale horse, hell always follows him, Rev. vi. 8.

(4.) If troubles and distresses overwhelm their hearts, they can give them no vent or ease by prayer, faith, and resignation to God, as his people use to do, 1 Sam. i. 18.

(5.) When their troubles and distresses come, then come the hour and power of their temptations; and, to shun sorrow, they will fall into sin, **having no promise** to be kept in the hour of temptation, as the saints have, Rev. iii. 10.

(6.) When their troubles come, they will be left alone in the midst of them; these are their burdens, and they alone must bear them. God's gracious, comfortable, supporting presence is only with his own people.

(7.) If trouble or death come upon them as a storm, they have no anchor of hope to drop in the storm; the wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his deaths, Prov. 14:32. By all which it appears, that a Christless person is a most helpless and shiftless creature in the day of trouble.

¹ Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

1Cor. 4:7b [John Gill Commentary](#)

To glory in any mercy, favour, or blessing received from God, as if it was not received from him, but as owing to human power, care, and industry, betrays wretched vanity, stupid and more than brutish ignorance, horrid ingratitude, abominable pride and wickedness; and is contrary to the grace of God, which teaches men humility and thankfulness. To God alone should all the blessings of nature, providence, and grace be ascribed; he ought to have all the glory of them; and to him, and him only, praise is due for them. That proud Arminian, Grevinchovius ^{F20}, in answer to this text, said,

“I make myself to differ; since I could resist God, and divine predetermination, but have not resisted, why may not I glory in it as of my own?”

[My comments reference on Isa. 53:2-6](#)

*For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; **he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; **yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have*

gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:2-6 ESV

This is the condition of unregenerate man highlighted in red above. See also Romans 3. This is why saying some kind of prayer in order to curry God's favor is a wicked presumption, an act of man flowing from not a principle of spirit life (i.e., faith and holiness) but from a principle of self-love or self-preservation. It is a contradiction to say that an unregenerate man's prayer is genuine or truly sincere (though it may sound sincere) coming from a heart full of love for God, when in truth he *despises and rejects* him, seeing *no beauty* that he *should desire him!*

This is regarding the Antinomian's idea of what constitutes justification, "which teaches that men are justified actually and completely, before they have a being," ... "that justification by faith is no more but a manifestation to us of what was really done before we had a being." which ultimately consists in a "personal persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them" all of which has direct relation to the foundational reason for the error of the Sinner's Prayer. This will shed much light on the false foundation and presumption of the Sinner's prayer. This will also teach you to exercise your reason.

The Error of Antinomianism

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Excerpt from:

Vol. 3 - The Second Appendix - Of Antinomianism by John Flavel
p 559-569

The Second Appendix: Giving a brief Account of the Rise and Growth of Antinomianism: the Deduction of the principle Errors of that Sect, With modest and seasonable reflections upon them.

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But, notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much obtaining in the professing world. For my own part, he that searches my heart and reins, is witness, I would rather choose to have my right hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than to speak one word, or write one line to cloud and diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it than I do ; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretence

of exalting it, do really militate against it. To begin therefore with the first and leading error.

Error I. *That the justification of sinners is an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself; αναμασθητοι, [sinners] as some of them have spoken.* To stop the progress of this error I shall,

1. Lay down the sentence of the orthodox about it.
2. Offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

(1) That which I take to be the truth agreed upon, and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching gospel-justification, is by them made clear to the world, in these following scriptural distinctions of it.

Justification may be considered under a twofold respect or habitude.

1. According to God's eternal decree; or,
2. According to the execution thereof in time.

1. According to God's eternal decree and purpose; and in this respect grace is said to be "given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 19, and we are said to be "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 5.

2. According to the execution thereof in time, so they again distinguish it by considering it two ways:

1. In its impetration by Christ.
2. In its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them by the death of Christ, Rom. 5:9, 10. where we are said to be "justified by his blood;" and he is said to have "made peace through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things to himself," Col. 1:20. to be "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. Once more, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," 2 Cor. 5:19. God the Father had in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them. Again,

2. It must be considered in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling. When an elect sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passeth from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favour; this is our actual justification, Rom. v. 1, Acts xiii. 39, John V. 24, which actual justification is again considered two ways:

1. Universally and in general, as to the state of the person.
2. Specifically and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God, and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ against sins to come; and though these special and particular sins we afterward fall into, do need particular pardons ; yet, by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again, they carefully distinguish betwixt,

1. Its application by God to our persons. And,
2. Its declaration, or manifestation in us, and to us.

Which manifestation, or declaration, is either,

1. Private, in the conscience of a believer, or,
2. Public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is many ways distinguished. And, notwithstanding all this, it is still *actus indivisus*; an undivided act, not on our part, for it is iterated in many acts; but **on God's part [the Father], who at once decreed it; and on Christ's part [the Son], who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation [by the Holy Spirit], universally applied it**, as to the state of the person justified; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation. **[And here you see the specific acts of the three persons of the Godhead!]**

In this sentence or judgment the generality of reformed, orthodox divines are agreed ; and the want of distinguishing (as they, according to scripture, have distinguished) hath led the Antinomians into this first error about justification, and that error hath led them

into the most of the other errors. That this doctrine of theirs (which teaches that men are justified actually and completely, before they have a being) **is an error**, and hath no solid foundation to support it, may be evidenced by these three reasons.

1. Because it is irrational.
2. Because it is unscriptural.
3. Because it is injurious to Christ and the souls of men.

Reason 1. It is irrational to imagine, that men are actually justified before they have a being, by an immanent act [*existing within*, as all decrees are from God's own counsel] or degree of God. Many things have been urged upon this account, to confute and destroy this fancy, and much more may be rationally urged against it; let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reason.

1. Can we rationally suppose, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reason tells us, *Non entis nulla sunt accidentia*; that which is not, can neither be condemned nor justified; but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own person be a subject of justification. **Where there is no law, there is no sin; where there is no sin, there is no punishment; where there is neither sin nor punishment, there can be no guilt; (for guilt is an obligation to punishment) and where there is neither law nor sin, nor obligation to punishment, there can be no justification.** He that is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a discharge. What remains then, but that either the elect must exist from eternity, or be justified in time? It is true, future beings may be considered as in the purpose and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Christ, who died intentionally for the sins of the elect, and rose again for their justification; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Christ takes place upon any man for his actual justification, until he personally exist; for the object of justification, is a sinner actually ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. but so no man is, or can be so from eternity. In election, men are considered without respect to good or evil done by them, Rom. ix. 11. not so in actual justification.

2. In justification there is a change made upon the state of the person, Rom. v. 8, 9. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. By justification men pass from a state of death to a state of life, John v. 24, but the decree or purpose of God, in itself, makes no such actual change upon the state of any person : it hath indeed the nature of an universal cause; but an universal cause produceth nothing without particulars. If our state be changed, it is not by an

immanent [existing within] act of God; hence no such thing doth transpire. A *mere velle non pimore*, or intention to justify us in due time and order, makes no change on our state till that come, and the particular causes have wrought. A prince may have a purpose or intention to pardon a law-condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but whilst the law that condemned him, stands in its full force and power against him, he is not justified or acquitted, notwithstanding that gracious intention, but stand still condemned. So it is with us, till by faith we are implanted into Christ. It is true Christ is a surety for all his, and hath satisfied the debt; he is a common head to all his, as Adam was to all his children, Rom. v. 19. but as the sin of Adam condemns none but those that are in him; **so the righteousness of Christ actually justifies none but those that are in him**; and none are actually in him but believers; therefore, till we believe, no actual change passeth, or can pass upon our states. So that this hypothesis is contrary to reason.

Reason 2. As this opinion is irrational, so it is unscriptural. For

1. The scripture frequently speaks of remission or justification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity, Rom. iv. 23, 24. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him," etc. And, Gal. iii. 8. "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; but if they were justified from eternity, how was the gospel preached before their justification?

2. The scripture leaves all unbelievers, without distinction, under condemnation and wrath. The curse of the law lies upon them all till they believe, John iii. 18, "He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." And, Eph. ii. 3, 12, 13. The very elect themselves were by nature the children of wrath even as others. They were at that time, or during that state of nature, (which takes in all that whole space betwixt their conception and conversion) without Christ, without hope, without God in the world. But if this opinion be true, that the elect were justified from eternity, or from the time of Christ's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world; except these two may consist together, (which is absolutely impossible) that the children of wrath, without God, Christ, or hope, are actually discharged from their sins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of justification.

Objection. But doth not scripture say, Rom. viii. 33. " Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If none can charge the elect, then God hath discharged them.

Solution. God hath not actually discharged them, as they are elect, but as they are justified elect; for so runs the text, and clears itself in the very next words. It is God that justifieth. When God hath actually justified an elect person, none can charge him.

(3.) It is cross to the scripture order of justification, which places it not only after Christ's death in the place last cited, Rom. viii. 33, but also after our actual vocation; as is plain, ver. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is absurd to place vocation before predestination, or glorification before justification? Sure then it must be absurd also to place justification before vocation ; the one as well as the other confounds and breaks the scripture order. You may as well say, men shall be glorified that were never justified, as say they may be justified before they believed, or existed. So that you see the notion of justification from eternity, or before our actual existence, and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to sacred scripture, **as it is to sound reason.**

Reason 3. And as it is found repugnant to reason and scripture, so it is highly injurious to Jesus Christ and the souls of men.

(1.) It greatly injures the Lord Jesus Christ, and robs him of the glory of being our Saviour; for if the elect be justified from eternity, Christ cannot be the Saviour of the elect, as most assuredly he is; for if Christ save them, he must save them as persons subject to perishing, either de facto or de jure. But if the elect were justified from eternity, they could, in neither respect, be subject to perishing. For he that was eternally justified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he that never was, nor could be condemned, could never be subject to perishing; and he that never was, nor could be subject to perishing, can never truly and properly be said to be saved.

If it be said the elect were not justified till the death of Christ, I demand then what became of all them that died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from Rom. viii. 30. that the whole number of the

glorified in heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth. Let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretence of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Saviour of his elect.

(2.) It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture everywhere makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Rom. viii. 3, 4 2 Cor. V. 19, 20. Gal. iii. 13, 14. Eph. i. 17. but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross? as it plainly appears from these scriptures to be. Nay,

(3.) This opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the cross of Christ for our sins. He did not die according to this opinion to pay our debts. **And here Antinomianism and Socinianism meet, and congratulate each other.** For if there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay them; and it is manifest there where no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his elect, if the elect were from eternity justified; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid: For all justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

If there were any debt for Christ to pay by his blood, they must either be his own debts, or the elect's. To say they were his own is a blasphemous reproach to him ; and, according to this opinion, we cannot say they were the elect's; for if they were justified from eternity their debts were discharged, and their bonds cancelled from eternity. So that this opinion leaves nothing to the blood of Christ to discharge, or make satisfaction for.

(4.) And as it hath been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, **so it is greatly injurious to the souls of men,** as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which naturally flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear in

Error II. That justification by faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before; or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; and that when persons do believe that which was hid before doth then only appear to them.

Refutation. As the former error dangerously corrupts the doctrine of justification, so this corrupts the doctrine of faith; and therefore deserves to be exploded by all Christians.

That there is a manifestation and discovery of the special love of God and our own saving concernment in the death of Christ to some Christians at some times cannot be denied. St. Paul could say. Gal. ii. 20, 21. Christ loved him, and gave himself for him ; but to say that this is the justifying act of faith, whereby a sinner passes from condemnation and death into the state of righteousness and life; this I must look upon as a great error ; and that for the following reasons:

Reason 1. Because there be multitudes **of believing and justified persons** in the world, who have no such manifestation, evidence, or assurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Christ, and that he died to put away their sins; but daily conflict with strong fears and doubts, whether it be so or no. **There are but few among believers that attain such a persuasion and manifestation, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in scripture by justification through faith.** Many thousand new-born Christians live as the new-born babe, which neither knows its own estate, or the inheritance to which it is born.

Vivct, et vitoo nescius ipse suae.

" Not conscious of life, it lives."

A soul may be in Christ, and a justified state, without any such persuasion or manifestation, as they here speak of, Isa. 1:10, and if any shall assert the contrary, he will condemn the greatest part of the generation of God's children. Now that cannot be the saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons.

But manifestation, or a personal persuasion of the love of God to a man's soul, or that Christ died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified souls.

Therefore such a persuasion or manifestation is not that saving justifying faith which the scripture speaks of That faith which only justifies the person of a sinner before God must necessarily be found in all justified believers, or else a man may be justified without the least degree of justifying faith, and consequently it is not faith alone by which a man is justified before God.

Reason 2. That cannot be a justifying act of faith which is not constant and abiding with the justified person, but comes and goes, is frequently lost and recovered, the state of the person still remaining the same. And such contingent things are these persuasions and manifestations ; they come and go, are won and lost, the state of the person still remaining the same. Job was as much a justified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The same may be said of David, Heman, Asaph, and the greatest number of justified believers recorded in the scripture. There be two things belonging to a justified state, (1.) That which is essential and inseparable, to wit, faith uniting the soul to Christ. (2.) That which is contingent and separable, to wit, evidence and persuasion of our interest in him. Those believers that walk in darkness and have no light have yet a real, special interest in God as their God, Isa. 1:10. **Here then you find believers without persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them; which could never be, if justifying faith consisted in a personal persuasion, manifestation, or evidence of the love of God, and pardon of sin to a man's soul. That cannot be the justifying faith spoken of in scripture**, without which a justified person may live in Christ and be as much in a state of pardon, and acceptation with God, when he wants it, as when he hath it. But such is persuasion, evidence, or manifestation of a man's particular interest in the love of God, or the pardon of his sins. **Therefore this is not the justifying faith the scripture speaks of.**

Reason 3. That only is justifying, saving faith, which gives the soul right and title to Christ, and the saving benefits which come by Christ upon all the children of God. Now, **it is not persuasion that Christ is ours, but acceptation of him that gives us interest in Christ, and the saving benefits and privileges of the children of God**. John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." So that unless the Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Christ, and personal persuasion of pardon be one and the same thing, and consequently, that all believers in the world are persuaded, or assured, that their sins are pardoned and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deserted, dark and doubting Christians; this persuasion they speak of is not, nor can it be the act of faith, which justifies the person of a sinner before God. That which I think led our Antinomians into this error, **was an unsound and unwary definition of faith**, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechisms, and other systems, passing without contradiction or scruple in those days; which, though it were a mistake, and

hath abundantly been proved to be so in latter days, yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion so serviceable to the support of the darling opinion of eternal justification.

Reason 4. A man may be strongly persuaded of the love of God to his soul, and of the pardon of his sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state. **This was the case of the Pharisees and others**, Luke xviii. 9. Rev. iii. 17. therefore this persuasion cannot be justifying faith. If a persuasion be that which justifies the persuaded person, then the Pharisees and Laodiceans were justified. Oh ! how common and easy is it for the worst of men to be strongly persuaded of their good condition, whilst humble, serious Christians doubt and stagger? I know not what such doctrine as this is useful for, but to beget and strengthen that sin of presumption, which sends down multitudes to hell out of the professing world. For what is more common amongst the **most carnal and unsanctified part of the world**, not only such as are merely moral, but even the most flagitious and profane, than to support themselves by false persuasions of their good estate? When they are asked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of salvation they have, and how they are founded ? their common answer is, Christ died for sinners, and that they are persuaded, that whatever he hath done for any other, he hath done it for them as well as others; **but such a persuasion cometh not of him that called them, and is of dangerous consequence.**

Reason 5. This doctrine is certainly unsound, because **it confounds the distinction betwixt dogmatical and saving faith**; and makes it all one, **to believe an axiom or proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to eternal life.** What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Christ, more than the mere assent of the understanding to a scripture axiom, or proposition, **without any consent of the will, to receive Jesus Christ as the gospel offers him?** **And this is no more than what any unregenerate person may do**; yea, **the very devils themselves assent to the truth of scripture axioms** or propositions as well as men, James ii. 19. "Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble." What is more than a scripture axiom or proposition? "God laid the iniquities of us all upon Christ," Isa. 53:6. And yet (saith Dr. Crisp, p. 296.) God cannot charge one sin upon that man that believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ. The assent of the understanding may be often given to a scripture-proposition, whilst the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly adverse to Jesus Christ. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Christ, and persuade myself presumptively, that mine, as well as other men's were laid upon him; and yet remain a perfect stranger to all saving union and communion with him.

Reason 6. This opinion cannot be true, because it takes away the only support that bears up the soul of a believer in times of temptation and desertion.

For how will you comfort such a distressed soul that saith, and saith truly, I have no persuasion that Christ is mine, or that my sins are pardoned; but I am heartily willing to cast my poor sin burdened soul upon him, that he may be mine; I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet to cleave to him, wait at the door of hope; I stay and trust upon him, though I walk in darkness and have no light. Now let such doctrines as this be preached to a soul in this condition (and we may be sure it is the condition of many thousands belonging to Christ) I say, bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unless they be persuaded of the love of God, and that God laid their iniquities on Christ, except they have some manifestation that their persons were justified from eternity, their accepting of Christ, consent of their wills, waiting at his feet, etc., signifies nothing; if they believe not that their particular sins were laid upon Christ, and are pardoned to them by him, they are still unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. **Whatever pretences of spiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you see by this it really deprives a very great, if not the greatest number of God's people of their best and sweetest relief in days of darkness and spiritual distress. So that this doctrine which makes manifestation and assurance the very essence of justifying faith,** appears hereby to be both a false and very dangerous doctrine. And yet there is as much or more danger to the souls of men in their -

Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith or question, whether they believe or no. Nay, that they ought no more to question their faith than to question Christ.

Refutation. **What an easy way to heaven is the Antinomian way?** Were it but as true and safe to the soul, as it is easy and pleasing to the flesh, who would not embrace it? **What a charm of the devil is prepared in those two propositions? Be but persuaded more or less of Christ's love to thy soul (saith Mr. Saltmarsh) and that is justifying faith. Here is a snare of the devil laid for the souls of men.** And then (2.) To make it fast and sure upon the soul, and effectually to prevent the discovery of their error, tell them they need no more to doubt or question their faith than to question Christ, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error, and a very dangerous one, will appear by the following reasons.

Reason 1. The questioning and examining of our faith is a commanded scripture-duty, 2 Cor. 13:5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," etc. And 2 Pet. 1:10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." " Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. *The second epistle of John*, ver. 8. "Look to yourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought:" With a multitude of other scriptures, recommending holy jealousy, serious self-trial and examination of our faith, as the unquestionable duties of the people of God. **But if we ought to question our faith no more than we ought to question Christ, away then with all self-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election sure**; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there is no place or room for examination, or further endeavours to make it surer than it is. How do you like this doctrine, Christians ? How many be there among you, that find no more cause to question your own faith or interest in Christ, than you do to question, whether there be a Christ, or whether he shed his blood for the remission of any man's sins ?

Reason 2. This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous because it leaves no way to recover a presumptuous sinner out of his dangerous mistakes ; but confirms and fixes him in them to the great hazard of his eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information, and nails them fast to the carnal state in which they are. According to this doctrine, it is impossible for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing; or to be guilty of such a paralogism [**an invalid argument**] and cheat put by himself upon his own soul, James 2:22. this, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong; he is sure enough of heaven if he be but strongly persuaded that Christ died for him, and he shall come thither at last. Certainly this was not the counsel Christ gave to the self-deceived Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18. but instead of dissuading them from self-jealousy and suspicion of their condition, whether their faith and state were safe or not, **he rather counsels them to buy eye-salve, that is, to labour after better information of the true state and condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.** [**a stupid or fatal security**]

Reason 3. This doctrine cannot be true, **because it supposes every persuasion, or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain,** as the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that

Jesus Christ died for sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," 1Tim. 1:15. This is a foundation-stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself, Isa. 28:16. and shall the strong conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare in point of certainty with it. As well may probable, and merely conjectural propositions, compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments that leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that the heart is deceitful above all things, the most notorious cheat and imposter in the world, Jer. xvii. 9. Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into hell by a remediless self-deception. [a fatal security]

Can a Person Come to God by His Own Power? code101 code222 a sandy foundation

Excerpt from Vol. 3, The Causes and Cure From Mental Errors
by John Flavel, pg 458

Cause 5. Another inward cause, disposing men to receive erroneous impressions, is an unreasonable eagerness to snatch at any doctrine or opinion that promiseth ease to an anxious conscience.

Men that are under the frights and terrors of conscience are willing to listen to any thing that offers present relief of all the troubles in the world those of the mind and conscience are most intolerable; and those that are in pain are glad of ease, and readily catch at anything that seems to offer it.

This seems to be the thing which led those poor distressed wretches, intimated Micah vi. 6. into their gross mistakes and errors about the method of the remission of their sins. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

They were ready to purchase inward peace, and buy out their pardon at any rate. Nothing but the twinges of conscience could have extorted these things from them. Great is the efficacy and torment of a guilty conscience.

Satan, who feels more of this in himself than any other creature in the world, and knows how ready poor ignorant, but distressed sinners are **to catch at anything that looks like ease or comfort**, and being jealous what these troubles of conscience may issue into, prepares for them such erroneous doctrines and opinions, under the names of *anodines* and quieting *recipes*, **by swallowing of which they feel some present ease; but their disease is thereby made so much the more incurable. [i.e., a fatal security]**

It is upon this account he hath found such vent in the world for his penances, pilgrimages, and indulgences among the Papists. **[and the Sinner's Prayer!]** But seeing this ware will not go off among the reformed and more enlightened professors of Christianity, he changeth his hand, and fits other doses under other names to quiet sick and distressed souls, before ever their frights of conscience come to settle into true repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, by dressing up, and presenting to them such opinions as these, namely -

That they may boldly apply to themselves all the promises of pardon and peace, without any respect at all to repentance or faith in themselves; that it is not at all needful, nay, that it is illegal and sinful to have any respect to these things, for as much as their sins were pardoned, and they justified from eternity; and that the covenant of grace is in all respects absolute, and is made to sinners as sinners, without any regard to their faith or repentance; and whatever sins there be in them, God sees them not. **[Antinomianism]**

To such a charm of troubles as this, how earnestly doth the ear of a distressed conscience listen? **how greedily doth it suck in such pleasing words?** Are all sins that are pardoned, pardoned before they are committed? and, Does the covenant of grace require neither repentance nor faith antecedently to the application of the promises? How groundless then are all my fears and troubles? **This, like a dose of opium, quiets, or rather stupifies the raging conscience;** for, even an error in judgment, till it be detected and discovered to be so, quiets and comforts the heart as well as principles of truth; but whenever the fallacy shall be detected, whether here or hereafter, the anguish of conscience must be increased, or (which is worse) left desperate.

The remedies.

To prevent and cure this mistake and error in the soul, by which it is fitted and prepared to catch any erroneous principle (which is but plausible) for its present relief and ease, I shall desire my reader seriously to ponder and consider the following queries upon this case.

Query 1. Whether by the vote of the whole rational world, a good trouble be not better than a **false peace**? Present ease is desirable, but eternal safety is much more so; and if these two cannot consist under the present circumstances of the soul. Whether it be not better to endure for a time those painful pangs, than feel more acute and eternal ones, by quieting conscience with false remedies before the time?

It is bad to lie tossing a few days under a laborious fever; but far worse to have that fever turned into a lethargy, or fatal apoplexy. Erroneous principles may rid the soul of its present pain and eternal hopes and safety together. Acute pains are better than a senseless stupidity. Though the present rage of conscience be not a right and kindly conviction, yet it may lead to it, and terminate in faith and union with Christ at last, if Satan do not this way practice upon it, and quench it before its time.

Query 2. Bethink yourselves seriously, whether troubles so quieted and laid asleep, will not revive and turn again upon thee with a double force as soon as the virtue of the drug (I mean the erroneous principle) hath spent itself?

The efficacy of truth is eternal, and will maintain the peace it gives for ever; but all delusions must vanish, and the troubles which they dammed up for a time, break out with a greater force. Satan employs two sorts of witches, some to torment the bodies of men with grievous pain and anguish; but then he hath his white witches at hand to relieve and ease them. And have these poor wretches any great cause, think you, to boast of the cure, who are eased of their pains at the price of their souls?

Much like unto this, are the cures of inward troubles by erroneous principles. I lament the case of blinded Papists, who by pilgrimages and offerings to the shrines of titular saints, attempt the cure of a lesser sin by committing a greater¹; is it because there is not a God in Israel, who is able in due season to pacify conscience with proper and durable gospel-remedies, that we suffer our troubles thus to precipitate us into the snares of Satan, for the sake of present ease? [¹the sinner's prayer is presumption and highly provoking to God.]

Query 3. Read the scriptures, and enquire, Whether God's people, who have lain long under sharp inward terrors, have not at last found settlement and inward peace, by those very methods which the principles that quiet you do utterly exclude!

If you will fetch your peace from a groundless notion, that your sins were pardoned, and your persons justified from all eternity, and therefore you may apply boldly and confidently to yourselves the choicest promises and privileges in the gospel, without any regard to faith or repentance wrought by the Spirit in your souls. I am sure holy David took another course for the settlement of his conscience, Ps. 51:6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And it hath been the constant practice of the saints in all ages, to clear their title to the righteousness of Christ wrought without them, by the works of his Spirit wrought within them.

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Secondly, Their other common artifice is, to insinuate their false doctrines among many acknowledged and precious truths, which only serve for a convenient vehicle to them; and besides that, to make their errors as palatable and gustful as they can to the vitiated appetite of corrupt nature. The fore-mentioned worthy hath judicially observed how artificially Satan hath blended his baneful doses, to please the palate of carnal reason, spiritual pride, and the desire of *fleshly liberty*.

Carnal reason is that great idol which the more intelligent part of the carnal world worships. And are not the Socinian heresies as pleasant to it, as a well mixed *julep* to a *feverish stomach*.

Spiritual pride is another *Diana*, which obtains greatly in the world; and no doctrine like the Pelagian, and Semipelagian errors to gratify it. A doctrine that sets fallen nature upon its legs again, and persuades it, it can go alone to Christ; at least, with a little external help of moral suasion, without any preventing or creating work in the soul. That goes down glib and gratefully.

[It is true, that our ability to stand is not from our own inherent grace; "For by his strength shall no man prevail," 1 Sam. 2:9. And yet it is as true, that without grace, both inherent in us, and excited and prepared for a storm, we cannot expect to stand; for these two, grace inherent in us, and grace exciting and assisting without are not opposed, but coordinated. Grace in us, is the weapon by which our enemy falls; but then that weapon must be managed by the hand of the Spirit. Well then, look upon this as a choice mercy, which tends so much to your stability. Flavel, p23 Vol.6]

Although God commands obedience - make you a clean heart, circumcise your hearts, believe the gospel, etc., yet this in no way proves that we have the ability to do so. It is the Spirit that must work it. See Deut. 10:16 compared with Deut 30:6. Augustine also explains in his own words:

CHAPTER 10.

FREE WILL AND GOD'S GRACE ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY COMMENDED

Augustine code264

When God says, “Turn to me, and I will turn to you,” Zech. 1:3 one of these clauses—that which invites our return to God—evidently belongs to our will; while the other, which promises His return to us, belongs to His grace. Here, possibly, the Pelagians think they have a justification for their opinion which they so prominently advance: that God’s grace is given according to our merits. In the East indeed, that is to say, in the province of Palestine in which the city of Jerusalem lies, Pelagius, when examined in person by the bishop, did not venture to affirm this. For it happened that among the objections which were brought up against him, this in particular was objected: he maintained that the grace of God was given according to our merits—an opinion which was so different from catholic doctrine, and so hostile to the grace of Christ, that unless he had anathematized it, as laid to his charge, he himself must have been anathematized on its account. He pronounced, indeed, the required anathema upon the dogma, but how insincerely his later books plainly show; for in them he maintains absolutely no other opinion than that the grace of God is given according to our merits. They collect such passages out of the Scriptures—like the one which I just now quoted, “Turn to me, and I will turn to you,”—as if it were owing to the merit of our turning to God, that His grace were given us — in which He Himself even turns to us. Now the persons who hold this opinion fail to observe that, **unless our turning to God were itself God’s gift [that’s the key! my insert, see Phil. 2:13, 1:29, Jn 6:29]**, it would not be said to Him in prayer, “Turn us again, O God of hosts;” Ps. 80:3 and, “You, O God, will turn and quicken us;” Ps. 80:7 and again, “Turn us, O God of our salvation,” Ps. 85:4—with other passages of similar import, too numerous to mention here. For with respect to our coming to Christ, what else does it mean than our being turned to Him by believing? And yet He says: “No man can come to me, unless it was given to him by my Father.” John 6:65

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: [skip to point 4.](#)

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him.** The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who, in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. It is one of**

the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life itself. When Scripture speaks of a union with Christ by faith, then this always applies to unity in the consciousness or the consciousness of unity: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17), where, however, precedes, “so that He might grant you though the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.” The Spirit’s activity, therefore, is antecedent, and only as a result of it does Christ dwell in the heart by faith. It is the drawing power of Christ Himself that in our faith draws us to His life. In this sense, then, Scripture clearly teaches that a reception of life from Christ by faith is possible for us— indeed, is necessary (John 6:47, 51). There is not merely a life of Christ in us but also a life of ours for God in union with Christ. According to Romans 7:4, the believer knows himself to be as closely united to the Mediator as husband to wife, and according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, the church is viewed as a bride presenting herself to her bridegroom, Christ. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” (Rev 22:17).

God's Immutability Proves Election

code102 code223

excerpts from John Flavel on God's Immutability

p 375 Vol. 3

Our God is the rock of ages; and yet one step higher, in Zech. vi. 1, **his decrees and purposes are called mountains of brass**, that is, most firm, durable, and **unchangeable purposes**. Thus the immutability of God is shadowed forth to us in scripture emblems.

2. The same also you will find in plain, positive scripture assertions; such as these that follow, Mai. iii. 6, "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And Job xxiii. 13. "**He is in one mind, and who can turn him?**" Men are in one mind today, and another to-morrow; the winds are not more variable than the minds of men; but God is in one mind, **the purposes of his heart never change**. Thou art the same or as some translate. Thou art thyself forever, Ps. 102:27. Thus when Moses desired to know his name, that he might tell Pharaoh from whom he came; the answer is, **I AM hath sent me, Exod. iii. 14, not I was, or I will be, but I AM THAT I AM**, noting the absolute unchangeableness of his nature.

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3. Their hope of eternal life depends upon the unchangeableness of God that hath promised, Tit. 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." **Take away the immutability of God, and you at once darken and eclipse his glory**, and overturn the perseverance, consolations, and hopes of all his people; but blessed be God, these things are built upon firm foundations.

1. His nature is unchangeable, "Thou art the same forever." Ps. 102:27. The heavens, though they be the purest, and therefore the most durable and unchangeable part of the creation, yet they shall perish and wax old, and be changed as a vesture; but our God is the same forever.

2. His power is unchangeable ; Isa. lix. 1. " The Lord's hand is not shortened." Time will enfeeble the strongest creature, and cut short the power of the hands of the mighty, they cannot do in their decrepit age as they were wont to do in their youthful and vigorous age ; but the Lord's hand never is, nor can be shortened.

3. **The counsels and purposes of his heart are unchangeable**, Ps. 33:11. "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

4. The goodness, truth, and mercy of God are unchangeable, Ps. 100:5. "The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations."

5. The word of God is unchangeable. Though all flesh be as grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field, yet the word of our God shall stand for ever ; all the promises contained therein are sure and stedfast. Not yea and nay, but yea and Amen forever, 2 Cor. 1:20.

6. **The love of God is an unchangeable love**, Jer. 31:3. "**Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.**"

7. In a word, all the gracious pardons of God are unchangeable; as they are full without exceptions, so they are final pardons without any revocation. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness"

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Thy God, and his love to his people, are the same forever. - Flavel

Subsequent conclusion regarding election God's Unchangeableness Proves Election

My comments: Now, since God is unchangeable and as He is eternal, so are all his attributes; then, regarding the church, his elect, he has always loved them with a special or electing love otherwise he would never had saved them. There was never a time when he did not love them nor was there ever a time when he was neutral towards them or hated them, for if he did and then decided to love them with a special, transcendent love, the John 3:15 *so love*, then that would argue mutability within the Godhead which is contrary to his nature (see red highlighted in 2nd paragraph, *not I was*, etc.) Therefore, election is the inevitable consequent of God's nature, his unchangeableness or immutability. His decree to choose the church flowed from His eternal love to them. And, God's electing love infallibly leads to actual election or choosing and is not dependent upon anything in the creature (Romans 9). He was not waiting to see what the creature would do; whether he would believe in Christ or not and then God would chose them if they did believe, for that would mean that God is dependent upon the creature, and that prior to this he was in a non-electing or neutral stance waiting for them to decide. Then upon their decision He would love them and elect them, predestine them, etc. But that whole scheme clearly infers mutability in God from neutrality or non-electing to an electing love and that God is not sovereign, that he is dependent upon the **creature**, which God being **sovereign**, is not dependent upon what the creature does. And God's eternal love for them and his unchangeableness obviates that scheme completely not to mention the creature cannot, nor will not elect himself due to his spiritual bondage. God has always loved them with this electing love, since God is eternal, and hence chose them and effected their conversion (in time), they being wholly passive¹ (see John 1:13, etc.). To say that election is not true is to deny God, his eternal being and nature, his immutability or unchangeableness, and ascribe man to be a god thus robbing him of the glory of his sovereignty and free grace. And one reason why people hold to the erroneous view is because they do not examine things further to see its absurd consequents.

¹In the first sense, as to the real communicating of the Spirit of grace unto the soul, so raising it from death unto life, the saints have no kind of communion with Christ therein but only what consists in a passive reception of that life-giving, quickening Spirit and power. **They are but as the dead bones in the prophet; the wind blows on them, and they live; — as Lazarus in the grave; Christ calls, and they come forth, the call being accompanied with life and power — John Owen, Communion w/God p 311**

Objection & Answer: But God's desires to save everyone (a misinterpretation of 2Pet3:9) so he hasn't purposed it in his heart to save them until the creature accepts or

believes. Upon their believing, God then purposes to actually save them. Ans.: But this directly infers a change of purpose in the Godhead from a neutral or "wishing to save" disposition to a purpose and intention to actually save them as well as making God dependent upon the creature which He is not. This change in purpose cannot be in God who is unchangeable and eternal in all his purposes and will. Therefore because the purposes of God are eternal and unchangeable and because it is not up to the creature to effect his conversion due to his bondage to sin, etc., it is all up to God, hence God must elect if they are ever to be saved.

So, one minute he has no intention to actually save them because all is hinged upon the decision of the creature and then he purposes it, upon the creatures' believing. But he either has an eternal purpose to actually save or he does not, since God is immutable and eternal. He cannot have no desire to actually save them, just wishing for them to be saved, and then have a purpose to actually save them, all this depending upon the creature's decision that moves God to save or not save; yet, all this argues a change in God's purpose or will, contrary to Job 23:13, "**He is in one mind, and who can turn him?**" ("The counsels and purposes of his heart are unchangeable" - Flavel, point 3 above.) Ps. 33:11, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." And, again, from point 2 above by Flavel, "the answer is, **I AM hath sent me, Exod. iii. 14, not I was, or I will be, but I AM THAT I AM**, noting the absolute unchangeableness of his nature."

Objection: God commands all to believe or all to circumcise their heart which must mean that man has it in himself the ability to do so.

Answer. No, he does not have this ability from within himself to do so. For though God commands all to believe, does not necessarily mean that man has this virtue or ability to obey God from his own recourses or strength (see Romans 8:7-8, John 6:44, 65, Heb. 11:6). By the analogy of faith, looking to many other related passages, this issue is cleared; man is dead in sin and cannot obey this command to believe unless he is enabled so by God's grace; and it is God's manner of speaking in scripture to command man to do something of this nature and then later say that He will do it. (Deut 10:16 compared with Deut. 30:6, Ezek. 36:24-27, Jer. 32:40, 31:18, *restore me, and I will return*)

Therefore, God's eternal purposes, being that they are eternal, have never changed or been modified. So that those who have been saved, were always going to be saved by the eternal will of God; God was never dependent upon the creature, the creature's will,

him being dead and his will wholly corrupted, but the creature is wholly dependent upon God's will, his good pleasure.

If God loved someone enough to save them, a special or transcendent love to show them favor over others (compared to a creaturely or common affection of love), then he always loved them in that manner and always will, with this special love or saving love, because he is, first, sovereign, second, unchangeable, and third, eternal, hence the eternal purpose of God in election. Election flows from or is the fruit of this eternal love that God has for his church, the elect; the others he passes over due to his eternal dereliction of them.

Eph 1:3-12

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the good pleasure of His will**, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He ^[a]made us accepted in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and ^[b]prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, **according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself**, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, ^[c]both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, **being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Romans 8:29

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the **called according to His purpose**. ²⁹ For whom He **foreknew¹**, **He also predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

¹*foreknow* is to show special favor. The object of this verb, to foreknow are the elect, those he has always loved unchangeably. And hence those and only those does he predestine and call to himself. **John Gill**: "but this regards the everlasting love of God to his own people, his delight in them, and approbation of them; in this sense he knew them, he foreknew them from everlasting, affectionately loved them, and

took infinite delight and pleasure in them; and this is the foundation of their predestination and election, of their conformity to Christ, of their calling, justification, and glorification."

Ezek. 36:24-27

²⁴For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

Jer. 32:40

⁴⁰And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.

Deut. 10:16

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked^[a] no longer.

Deut. 30:6

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

more notes on God's love and eternal purpose

p 393-4 Flavel vol 3

1. And first, you will find it an ancient love whose spring is in eternity itself Believer, God is thine **ancient friend**, who foresaw and loved thee **before thou wast**, yea, before this world was in being; the fruits and effects thereof thou gatherest in time, but the root that produces them was before all time, **Prov. 8:22, 23**. "**The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.**" Thus was the love of God contriving, and providing the best of mercies in Christ for us; while, as yet, there were no such creatures in the world, nor a world prepared to receive us.

2. The love of God to his people is a **free**, and altogether undeserved love. It must needs be so, seeing it preceded our very being; which had it not done, yet no motives had been found in us to allure it to us more than others, Deut. 7:7. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loved you." So that we cannot find one stone of our merit in the foundation of this love; for those whom it embraces in its arms are *immerentes, & male meientes*, ill-deserving, as well as undeserving. We were loved of God before we were lovely in ourselves; it was **freely pitched upon us**, not purchased by us, Isa. 43:24. **[that is, we did not ask for it nor could we; nothing outside himself moved him love us, hence free from all outside influences.]**

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4. The love of God to believers is a **distinguishing love**; not the portion of all, no, nor yet of many besides thee, 1Cor. i. 26. The generality of the world dwell in the room of **common providence, not in the chamber of special love**, into which God hath admitted thee; this consideration should make thee break out in admiration, as it is, John xix. 22, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to me, and not to the world?"

5. The love of God to believers is a **love transcendent to all creature-love**; it moves in an higher sphere than the love of any creature doth, Rom. v. 6, 7, 8. We read of Jacob's love to Rachel, which is so celebrated in the sacred story for the fervor of it; and yet all that it enabled him to suffer was but the summer's heat and the winter's cold; a trifle to what the love of Christ engaged, and enabled him to suffer for thy sake. We read also of the love of David to Absalom, which made him wish. Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! This love was only manifested in a wish, which, haply might have been retracted too, had there been an exchange to be made indeed; but the life of Christ, worth millions of his life, was actually and willingly staked down for thy soul. We read of the love of one disciple manifested to another disciple in a cup of cold water; but Christ hath manifested his love to thee in pouring out his warmest heart-blood for thy redemption. O what a transcendent love is the Divine love!

6. To conclude, (though alas, little is said of the love of God) it is an **everlasting and unchangeable love**. Hills and mountains shall sooner start from their basis, than his loving-kindness depart from his people, Isa. 54:10. Though he afflict us, still he loves us, Ps. 89:32, 83. Nay, though we grieve him, yet still he loves us, Mark 16:7, *Tell the*

disciples, and tell Peter. Peter had grieved Christ, denied Christ, yet will he not renounce nor cast off Peter. end of Flavel quote

Summary of the reasonableness of this doctrine; my comments:

I think that most will concede that whatever happens on this earth is because God willed it, from the eternal counsel of his will..."according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will," Eph. 1:11

Nothing happens on this earth unless it is God's will; not the creature's will, which would make God dependent upon the creature, which makes no sense. God is sovereign; nothing outside himself moves him to do anything. So if someone gets saved it was by the will of God, John 1:13. And if it was by the will of God they got saved and that God is unchangeable, then it has always been God's will that that person should get saved. There never was a time in eternity that God did not will him to get saved. The only logical conclusion is that election flows from God's unchangeableness. It is the logical consequence.

If God loves you with a transcendent, special, saving love, which is the ground of him saving you from your sin¹, then he has always loved you; there was never a time when he did not love you in this way. For if there was, then he would have had a change of heart, which argues mutability. But God is immutable! He is unchangeable in his nature and hence his eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11 & Job 23:13 above, Isa. 46:10, etc.) and all his decrees are thus unalterable and are not dependent upon the creature at all. Therefore, if he loved you with this everlasting love, even before the foundation of the world (because he is eternal), then the consequent is clear; it follows that he would elect you and predestine you to eternal life and effect it as time unfolds.

¹ Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity Consisting of Three Book*, God's love to Christ is the foundation of his love to us, Matt. 3:17; Eph. 1:6. God loves all creatures with a general love, Matt. 5:44, 45, as they are the work of his hands; but he doth delight in some especially, whom he as hath chosen in his Son, John 3:16; Eph. 1:6." Otherwise, the personal and pastoral implications would be devastating. If 1 John 4:10 were to be inverted, "In this is love, not that God loved us, but that we loved him," God would be passible indeed, and all men would be without hope. – *Confessing the Impassible God* p313 [my insert]

If God saved you, then he had the intention and purpose to save you; and that from eternity because God is eternal and unchangeable; *the council of the Lord stands forever*, (Ps. 33:11) Hence, He has always wanted to save you (this is beyond our understanding to conceive), because he has loved us with an everlasting love Jn3:16, *So loved* (also 1Jn3:1); His love for us and hence his purpose and design to save us, had its origin in eternity past before you existed (Eph. 1) before you had done anything good or bad (Rms 9), hence election has to be. There is no other reasonable explanation; we can't elect ourselves, although many try. It is the fruit of God's sovereignty and unchangeable nature.

The LORD has appeared [a]of old to me, *saying*:
 "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
 Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Jer. 31:3

When did God get the intention to save you? Was he waiting for you to ask him? For that would infer mutability in the Godhead if his intention to save you depended upon what you do or pray. One minute he's neutral; the next minute he has intention to save you. Because he is immutable and all his purposes unchangeable, he has always wanted and intended to save you, the elect, before you had a being (Rom. 9) and that at an appointed time and not at a time of your choosing! Therefore, the nature of God necessitates election; it can't be otherwise.

Notes on immutability vs Arminianism, etc., by Hermon Bavinck

This immutability of God, however, was frequently combated from the side of both Deism and pantheism. In the opinion of Epicurus the gods totally resemble excellent human beings, who make changes with respect to location, activity, and thought (etc.); and according to Heraclitus and later the Stoics, the deity as the immanent cause of the world was also caught up in its perpetual flux.[25] Opposition to God's immutability in Christian theology was of the same nature. On the one hand, there is the **Pelagianism, Socinianism, Remonstrantism, and rationalism**, which especially opposes the immutability of God's knowing and willing and makes the will of God dependent on—and hence change in accordance with—the conduct of humans. Especially Vorstius, in his work *On God and His Attributes*, criticized the immutability of God. He made a distinction between God's essence, which is simple and unchangeable, and God's will, which being free does not will everything eternally and does not always will the same thing.[26] Bavinck, *God & Creation*, Vol. 2 pg 155

Have We Invented a New Ordinance?

Will Worship

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The Sinner's Prayer

my comments in [blue]

Speaking of common grace (*God rains on the just and the unjust*) vs. special or saving grace (*faith*) reserved only for the elect.

Yet we must not— for the sake of the kinship and connection between them— overlook the essential difference. This is the special grace that was unknown to the pagans. All pagan religions are self-willed and legalistic. They are all the aftereffects and adulterations of the covenant of works. Human beings here consistently try to bring about their own salvation by purifications, asceticism, penance, sacrifice, law observance, ceremony, and so on. Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pg 220

COUNSEL II

By John Flavel

Touch not with idolatry and superstition; under what name or

notion soever it he presented to you.

1John 5:21, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Here you had need be exceeding cautious, and circumspect¹ [¹When a man watches against being deceived, he does it with human infirmities, when he even actually watches and apprehends he hath done it to purpose, yet such an one is often ensnared.]

(1.) Because it is a **creeping thing** which works in itself **by plausible pretences and insinuations**, 2 Pet. ii. 1. Eph. iv. 14. Col. ii. 23. In which respect [mystery] is written in the whore's forehead. Rev. 17:5. For as Dr. Usher well observes, 'The Roman apostasy' stole into the church disguised, and by degrees.' It is a **mystery of iniquity** (saith the apostle) and a working mystery, 2Thes. ii. 7. *Iniquitas, sed mystica, pietatis, et fidelitatis nomine palliata*; i.e., iniquity, but a mystical iniquity, because palliated and **cloaked under the name and pretence of piety and fidelity**. Idolatrous practices have a show of wisdom, Col. ii. 23, (i.e., saith Davenant on the place) 'They are more modest than to pretend an immediate revelation of the Spirit;' Yet lest their placets and inventions should want [lack] a pretext of Divine wisdom, they are wont to say, that their doctrines and traditions are not indeed consigned to writing by the apostles, but delivered by lively voice, according to that. *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect. And by the name of this wisdom, everyone calls his own fictions*. Saith Irenaeus, lib. 3. cap. 3. 'Thus sometimes under the pretext of wisdom, order, decency, apostolical traditions, antiquity, the power of the church,' etc., it steals upon men insensibly¹ [¹It gradually began to be had in esteem by long use, and the tacit approbation of the learned, increasing in esteem insensibly.], especially being so advantaged by the **proneness of corrupt nature to it**.' To this purpose it is observable, that Babylon, the mother of harlots, is said, Rev xvii. 4, to give the wine of her fornication in a golden cup. Wine in itself is temptingly pleasant, but more so when presented in a golden cup; the brims whereof are sugared and sweetened to make it the more grateful. Therefore, little children, I mean you simple, plain, credulous souls, apt to be taken with fine glittering things, look to yourselves; [And so the sinner's prayer sounds sooo good, doesn't it! But, Oh! what a wicked presumption; another deceiving ordinance that carnal minds have concocted to suit their carnal and fleshly ends of self-love and preservation. Search the scriptures yourself and see if anyone recommended this way to Christ. Why didn't Jesus inform Nicodemus this way? Or the Pharisees when Jesus spoke to them? Or how about the crowds that swarmed about Jesus; how come he didn't tell them? But His response was seen in John 3:8, John 1:13, John 6:44 & 65, etc.]

(2.) Because nothing more provokes and inflames the fiery wrath of the Lord, who is a jealous God, than this does ; it makes his anger come up in his face, as that expression is, Ezek. 38:18, and kindles consuming wrath, Ezek. 43:7, 8, 9. Upon this account the blessed God complains, after the manner of men, as if his heart were broken, Ezek. vi. 9, "I am [broken] with their whorish heart, and with their [eyes] which go a whoring after their idols." If it be but an unchaste glance upon an idol, it goes to the very heart of God. When he seeth his people yielding to the temptations of it, he shrieks, as it were, and cries out. Oh! *do not this abominable thing' that I hate*. Oh! if there be in you the hearts of children, do not that which does, as it were, break the heart of your father.

Question. But what mean you by idolatry and superstition? We hope there are no such things practiced among us; Pagans and Papists may be guilty of it?

Sol. Give me leave here to open these things unto you, and then, perhaps, you may see them nearer to you than you are aware of; and that this caution is a word in season.

Idolatry then, according to the true and generally received definition of it, is a religious worship, given either to that which is not the true God, or to the true God himself, but otherwise than he hath prescribed in his word. From hence we plainly see that worship may be idolatrous two ways; (1.) **In respect of the object**; if it have anything besides the true God for its object, it is gross idolatry; such as the first commandment condemns. Pagan idolatry, which the light of the gospel hath long since profligated and expelled out of these parts of the world. Or, (2.) **In respect of the manner**, when we worship the true God, but in a way and manner which he hath not prescribed in his word, but is **invented and devised by ourselves**; and this is condemned as idolatry in the second commandment ; *Thou shalt not [make to thyself,] i.e., out of thine own brain, or of thine own head, any [graven image;] under which title all human inventions, corrupting the pure and simple worship of God, are prohibited as idolatrous; for images are here, by a synecdoche², put for all false ways of worshipping God*, as the best expositors tell us. This inventing or making to ourselves, is that which makes it idolatry, Amos 5:26. Num. 15:39 Hence the molten calf became an idol to the Israelites, not because it was the object of their worship ; for it is plain, it was Jehovah, the true God, they intended to worship by it; appears from Exod. xxxii. 4, 5. "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." And, as Dr. Willet observes, it had been impossible, that so good a man as Aaron, would have yielded to them, if they had intended to worship it as a god. But yet it being a way or manner of worshipping the true God, which was of their own devising, it became idolatry. And this worship of God, in ways of our own invention becomes idolatrous

upon a double ground: (1.) As it is will worship; i.e., such worship as hath no other ground or warrant but the will of man,¹

¹(It is true) that God loves indeed a willing worshipper, that is, one who cheerfully and willingly does whatever God has commanded him to do; but it is as true on the other hand, that he hates will-worship, that is, those services that are performed to him for immediate worship, when as they were not prescribed and commanded by him for that end; because this, as it is expressed Ps. 106:39, "is to go a whoring with their own inventions." Davenant on the place.

²*Side note on synecdoche: For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.* 1 Corinthians 2:2. Paul's words *to know anything among you except Jesus Christ crucified* is a *synecdoche*, a part substituted for the whole; in other words, Paul views everything through gospel-colored glasses; all our thoughts and acts should find their proper meaning as they relate to God's ultimate end in the earth, his self-glorification. Otherwise, everything is relative, subject to our opinion, emotions, traditions, etc.

Col. ii. 23, and so dethrones God, by setting up the will of the creature above his, and bestowing the peculiar honour, and incommunicable sovereignty and glory of the blessed God upon the creatures; for the absolute sovereignty of God, which is his glory, 1 Tim. vi. 15, is manifested in two things especially; in his decrees, Rom. ix. 20, and in his laws, Isa. 33:22, James iv. 12. The Lord is our King, and Lawgiver; and there is one Lawgiver. Now, by prescribing anything by our own authority in the worship of God, the commands of God are made void, Mat. xv. 6, his royal law is slighted, the throne of God invaded by the creatures, who will be a lawgiver too, which can no more be borne, than the heavens can bear two suns; and God is hereby forgotten, as Hos. viii. 14. "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded temples;" i.e., by building [temples] when God had appointed but one temple. This is, as Melanthon [1500s - Luther's compatriot] observes, *Cum Deo certare, aliud instituendo: To strive with God, by instituting something of our own*. And Chrysostom notes, Hom. ii. in Rom - *That it is a greater sin, in God's worship, to do what we should not, than to omit what we should. For (saith he) by the one we show the difficulty of the law; but by the other, we charge the law and lawgiver with folly; make ourselves wiser than God; in the one we show our weakness, in not doing the will of God; but in the other our impudence to control of the wisdom of God.* And it is, as Lactantius phrases it, lib. 3. cap. 13, *Summam arrogantiam, sibi vindicare quod humana condito non recipit*. The highest arrogance, to challenge that to ourselves, which the condition of a creature is not capable of. [for the sinner's prayer is founded upon natural principles of which the devils are capable; an unregenerate person is in no way capable of any things spiritual or pleasing to God, Rom 8:7-8. What is highly provoking to God is that the creature in this condition only wants what God

has; not God! Flavel explains this here.] And upon this account it is, that the indignation and wrath of God smoke so dreadfully against such usurpers, as in the sad story of Nadab and Abihu, you see, because God is a jealous God; and jealousy is the rage of a man. *Zelotes est, nolens habere consortium in amando*, can endure no rival. This God looks upon as the greatest and most daring wickedness that a creature can lightly commit, Hos. ix. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; i.e., the height of their wickedness is there, because there they worshipped him according to their own devices which was such an affront to the wisdom and sovereignty of God, that he could by no means bear it. This is called, a setting our threshold besides the Lord's threshold, Ezek. 43:8. and the nearer this comes to him, the more it provokes him. Therefore it is said in the same text, "There was a wall betwixt me and them;" i.e., either it caused a wall of separation betwixt me and them, as it is generally expounded; **or else it notes, how God is provoked, by bringing their own inventions so near him**. For in the Hebrew it is, "There was but a wall betwixt me and them." And hence it is evident that doctrinal, symbolical ceremonies, I mean such rites and ceremonies as are brought into the worship of God, with a spiritual signification, merely upon the authority of man, are idolatrous mixtures and additions, and such by which the Lord is dreadfully provoked. It is true, men pretend order and decency, and the power of the church in such cases : but, as learned Amesius well notes, "Those things which pertain to order and decency, are not so left to the will of man, that they may, under that name, obtrude what they please upon the churches." All the liberty that scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 46, gives us, is but this, to observe and perform those things which God hath instituted, in an orderly and comely manner; and not to innovate new things, what, and as many as we please. And then, (2.) **It becomes idolatrous upon this ground also, because this daring impudence of men, in worshipping God in their own way, argues gross and carnal notions and conceptions of God**. When we devise a carnal, pompous way of worship for him, it is an argument we have set up an idol god first in our imaginations, one like ourselves [See Ps. 50:21, *you thought I was altogether like you*], and utterly unlike the true God ; who is a most simple, pure, spiritual Being; and, as such, will be worshipped, John iv. 24. **But by devising such a fleshly way of worship, I say it is manifest, we have fancied to ourselves another god, altogether different from that God revealed to us in the word**. Hence it was that Joshua told the people, Josh. xxiv. 19. "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a jealous God, and will not forgive your sins." that is, you cannot serve the true God, **till you have gotten right apprehensions of him. You fancy to yourselves a God made up of all mercy, as if he had no justice nor righteousness to call you to an account for your sins; and so do but worship an idol, formed in your own imagination, instead of the true God**. And if the thing he duly weighed, it will appear as well idolatry to submit to, and acknowledge the

sovereign authority of a creature, in appointing laws for worship, or falling down before an imaginary god, or idol, formed in our own fantasy, as to bow to, and worship a graven image, or the stock of a tree.

Now, hence you may come to see at once, both the nature of this second sort of idolatry, and also the rise and original of it; which is nothing else but the proud and carnal heart of man, which not willing to contain itself within the limits of the word, wherein a plain, simple, and spiritual way of worship is ruled out, invents to itself new rites, ceremonies, and ways of worshipping God, more suitable and pleasing to the flesh. And hence it is, that idolatry is in scripture reckoned a work of the flesh. Gal. v. 20, because man naturally having a **proud heart, and a working imagination**, which depending upon sense, **and not elevated and rectified by faith, first forms to itself carnal conceptions and notions of God; and then deviseth a way of worship suitable to those notions of him.** So that as one well observes, "This is the fountain and principle of all error, that men think that those which please them, must needs please God; and what displeases them must also displease him." **So that this brat, idolatry, is begotten betwixt a proud, carnal heart and the devil;** who, since he cannot draw men to the former sort of idolatry, endeavours all he can to entangle and defile them with this, and that partly out of malice to God, knowing what a dear thing his worship is to him, and partly out of a design of ruining such as he can entice to it. For he knows their sorrows shall be multiplied Ps. xvi. 4, and God seldom lets it escape without some remarkable stroke.

Upon the whole then, you plainly see, worship may be right as to its object, and yet idolatrous in respect of the manner [self-love and will-worship]; because the assuming of a despotal power in this case, is not only a slighting of that royal law, but as high a piece of treason against Jesus Christ, as can lightly be committed by a creature. [in that the sinner only wants what God has, as I said earlier, and does not want God nor desire holiness because he is still in an unregenerate condition!] I will shut up this with two worthy and full testimonies to the truth of the point in hand. The first is Melancthon *in loc Com. de ceremon humanis*. His words are these, and they are grave and weighty. *Accedit et hoc, quod ejnscopti arrogant sihi potestatem condendi traditiones, quam tamen non concedit els evangelium, etc., non est leve crimen tentare Deum est enim non infirmitate labi, sed contemptu Dei, proposito ipsius verbo, quasi cum eo certare, aliud in stituendo, oculi, et illius sapiential nostram antefirre.* 'The bishops arrogate to themselves a power of making traditions, which the gospel hath not given them. It is no small crime to tempt God, for this is not to slide by infirmity, but by contempt of God,

his word being set before them, as it were to contend with it, by instituting another thing, and overcome it. This is to prefer our wisdom to his.' And a little after (having given some instances of it,) he proceeds thus: *Tales fuerunt et sunt fontes cultus idolorum, Hec sunt arcana mala, quae politica sapientia non potest iudicare, sed nos in ecclesia, ea considerare debemus; ut moniti, subjiciamus nos verbo Dei, ne nostris opinionibus regi velimus.* 'Such have been, and are the fountain of the worship of idols. These are secret evils, which political wisdom cannot judge. But we in the church ought to consider these things, that being warned, we may submit ourselves to the word of God, and not be willing to be ruled by our own opinions,' etc.

To this I shall add the most worthy testimony of the right honorable Lord Brook:

'A bishop's wearing a surplice, cope, mitre, using the cross, bowing to the altar, etc., (although they may be errors) yet all, or one of these make him not a Pope, or popeling, or properly antichristian; but receiving these from the Pope's dictates, doing them, because he commands acknowledging him in commanding them, pressing them on others with such a despotical power, makes a true Pope, a real Antichrist! Nor may our bishops evade by this, which I easily see will be answered, that though Indeed they do, and command these things, yet they neither do them from the Pope's command, nor command them in the Pope's power.

Though I should grant this, which yet many wise men will not grant (for our bishop's first power came from the Pope; and of late also we have found letters, advice, commands, dictates from the Pope to some of our bishops, and that in matters of greatest consequence, both for the church and state.) But grant all this they say, yet they may be Antichristian, and so such (*in re*) as the Pope is; though not literally Romanists, except they do or command in the power of Rome. This I shall be bold to affirm and maintain, till I see better reason that he (whoever he be) that commands the least tittle of doctrine or discipline, merely *ex imperio voluntatis*, in his own power and authority, without license or warrant from scripture, or right reason, (where the scripture hath been silent) though the thing he so commandeth, should happen to be good in itself, yet he, in his so commanding, is not only tyrannical, but antichristian, properly antichristian, encroaching on the royal office of Christ; which is truly high-treason against God, and most properly antichristianism.'

By all which, you see where the idolatry of worship lies. The instituting of any, though the smallest part of worship, in and by our own authority, without scripture-warrant,

makes it idolatrous, as well as if we worshipped an idol. And hence it is, that God gives his people the same call from this latter sort of Romish idolatry; See Rev. xviii. 4. as he doth from the more gross pagan idolatry, 2 Cor. vi. 17. So that if that worship you perform to God, be corrupted by a **mixture of mere human, doctrinal, symbolical, rites and ceremonies, which God hath not appointed in his worship by the word**; though your worship be right for the object, yet it is idolatrous in the manner. Here you had need to be advised, and careful, for you are upon a ticklish point.

And for superstition, that is nothing else, but an excess in religion, For the better understanding whereof, consider three things,

1. That all, and every part of God's instituted worship, depends entirely upon his own sovereign will and pleasure. So that no man can appoint any part of it, but God alone, forasmuch as no man knows what will be acceptable to God, but God himself; **that which is highly esteemed among men [especially unregenerate men], is an abomination to God. Besides, none can give efficacy to a creature, as bread, wine, water, or raise them up to such high supernatural ends and uses, but God.**

2. The will of God, which is the foundation and rule of his worship, is only revealed to us in the scriptures; whence it is manifest, that in worship all men are bound to keep close to the word; and besides the reason that is in the thing itself, the command is express, Exod. 23:13. Deut. 4:2. Gal. 4:10. [πω χανοντ τουτω} according to this canon, or rule. This is true canonical obedience. So Rom. xii. 7. [λογιχη λατσεια] is properly word-service; i.e., such as the word prescribes.

3. Hence then you may see the door at which superstition enters, even addition of new and **uncommanded things**. When we invent new rites and ceremonies, and bring them into the worship of God, with a spiritual signification and use, this is superstition; being (*supra statutum*) **something above and beyond what God appoints and requires**. And as all the water in the Tyber cannot wash the Papists from the filth of their idolatry and superstition, in their mass, altars, surplice, cross, etc. So neither can anything besides the blood of Jesus, cleanse us from the same, if we do like them.

Having thus opened the nature of idolatry and superstition to you. I shall reinforce that apostolical caution upon you; "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;" I beseech you, get senses exercised, Heb. v. 14. and suffer not yourselves to be abused by an easy credulity; **"the simple believeth every word,"** Prov. 14:15. There is no idolatry or

superstition in Rome so gross, but is glossed over with **plausible pretences**, and many subtle distinctions invented to defend it. But take not you anything upon trust in God's worship; **be like those well-bred Bereans**, Acts xvii. 11, **examine the grounds of your practice**. It was a good saying of Sir Thomas More, 'I will pin my faith (*saith he*) upon no man's sleeve, because I know not whether he will carry it.' See that you be provided with an answer, if God should speak to you, when you are at your *divine service*, as he did to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 9, when he was hid in the cave at Horeb, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" Or as to the Jews, Isa. 1:12. "Who hath required this at your hands?" **See that you be able by the word, to justify your practice**. And as you love your souls, defile them not with idolatry and superstition. And the rather,

Arg. 1. Because, should you be found in a false way of worship, you betray a special trust committed to you by the Lord.

Christians, unto you hath the Lord committed his precious gospel truths and appointments, as precious treasure to defend and keep for him. Rev. iii. 10. Jude 8. Phil. i. 7, 17, and one special means of its preservation, is by witnessing against all those **errors and innovations**, that corrupt and endanger it. O see that none of Christ's jewels be embezzled, if you can help it. You yourselves have committed a trust to Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. i. 12, and expect he should be faithful in what you have committed to him and lie expects the same from you. O consider what precious things the pure institutions of Christ are: All the good in this world cannot compensate the loss of one of them, "Let heaven rush (*said Luther*) rather than one crumb of truth should perish." O what hard things have the saints in all generations suffered, to preserve and transmit it to us. And shall we now betray it? Would not the generations to come curse us, and abhor our remembrance? And then to speak nothing of any solemn bond or engagement under which you have put your souls to the contrary.

Arg. 2. Shall we not hereby oppose and cross the great design which God is carrying on in the world, by his present providences? O it will be sad to be found opposing God's design. Now what is that but, by shaking heaven and earth, to remove the things that are [*made*] namely, **by man invented in his worship**, Heb. xii. 27 To pluck up by the roots, every plant; (i.e.,) **ceremony and tradition, not of his planting**, Matt. xv. 13. Are not all these things appointed to perdition? Col. ii. 22, and darest thou then by thy presence, or pleading for them, **go about to support and establish them, and so strive against God!** O consider it seriously,

Arg. 3. Is it not dangerous to be found amongst idolaters? Doth not judgment sometimes sweep away the whole community and neighborhood, of such sinners? Read 1 Sam. vi. 19, 20. 1 Chron. XV. 13. And hath not God given you timely warning of the danger before it come? Rev. xviii. 4. And is it not more than ordinary dangerous, to be found among them now, when God is preparing his troops to invade Babylon; I mean ready to pour forth the vials of his wrath upon her?

Arg. 4. And may not your example have a mischievous influence upon others? **May it not harden sinners in their ways?** And even compel and draw away the weak Christian? Gal. ii. 13, 14. and so draw the guilt of their sins upon thine own soul? And what a dreadful thing is that; 'actors and consenters are alike guilty and punishable;' O you have too much personal guilt of your own; add not the guilt of others sins to it. Nay, by this means thou mayest be sinning in another, when thou liest in the dust.

Lastly, consider how careful God hath always been to keep his people off at the greatest distance from idolatry. Compare these scriptures, 2 Kings xvii. 15, Ezek. xliv. 20, Numb, xxxii. 38, 1 Thess. V. 22. Heb. iv. 1. O let these arguments be impartially weighed, and let not any low fleshly interest be set up to oppose them.

John 14:17

¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him;

John 5:44

How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God?

If you can have Christ and be ambitious too, take him; but how can you believe, till the Lord have broken you off from thence? Thomas Shepard, Sound Believer, pg 227

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: [skip to point 4.](#)

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him.** The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who,**

in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. **It is one of the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life itself.** When Scripture speaks of a union with Christ by faith, then this always applies to unity in the consciousness or the consciousness of unity: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17), where, however, precedes, “so that He might grant you though the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.” The Spirit’s activity, therefore, is antecedent, and only as a result of it does Christ dwell in the heart by faith. It is the drawing power of Christ Himself that in our faith draws us to His life. In this sense, then, Scripture clearly teaches that a reception of life from Christ by faith is possible for us— indeed, is necessary (John 6:47, 51). There is not merely a life of Christ in us but also a life of ours for God in union with Christ. According to Romans 7:4, the believer knows himself to be as closely united to the Mediator as husband to wife, and according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, the church is viewed as a bride presenting herself to her bridegroom, Christ. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” (Rev 22:17).

Notes on Conversion and the Effectual Call

code85 code225

Believing is the Gift of God
 God's Sovereignty over the Wills of Men
My comments in blue

The commands in the covenant of works, the Old Covenant, are the promises in the New Covenant. The command of God to man was always to love God with all your hearts, etc., and to obey the gospel...to believe in the Promise, the Messiah, Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for everlasting life. But man in his unregenerate condition cannot and will not do this, Rom. 8:7-8, "For to be ^[b]carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the ^[c]carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." So, the very act of believing on Christ is promised in the New Covenant for those for whom Christ died, the elect, Phil. 1:19, "**For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,**".

Your ability and desire to believe on Christ, your receiving of him and that being irresistible, is the very thing that is given to you, through the instrument of faith, the chief of graces, that which God bestows, that infallibly leads to one believing; faith being the gift of God, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast."

So the choice is infallibly consequent in conversion; it is not as though a person could choose Satan over Christ in this saving act of the Holy Spirit as he moves upon the soul. For that would speak contrary to many passages that say in short, that conversion includes a love for God, hatred for sin and Satan (Gen 3:15), along with compunction for sin and repentance.

Conversion is not just providing a choice to the sinner as to whether he will or will not believe on Christ on account of outward persuasions and that his choosing is from his own strength and wit, that the choice is left up to him as to whether he chooses Christ or not. It is God who determines the outcome infallibly every time; it is not left up to the person to choose Satan in a genuine conversion. He will believe, i.e., come to Christ, willingly and gladly, answering to **Ps 110:3**, "Your people *shall be* volunteers [or willing] In the day of Your power;"

God commands one to believe or obey God; but this does not mean that man has it in his power to obey, to make the choice to believe or not. Conversion must be an operation of the Spirit of God (John 3:8). Compare Deut. 10:16 with Deut. 30:6

Deut. 10:12-16, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your ^[f]good? ¹⁴ Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it. ¹⁵ The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their ^[g]descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. ¹⁶ **Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.**"

- then vs. 30:6

Deut. 30:6, "**And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, **to love the LORD your God with all your heart** and with all your soul, that you may live." There is God determining the matter; they will love God! not choose Satan, sin, etc.

God commands it; God then actually makes it happen by his almighty power that works in us to will and to do...Phil 2:13, John 6:29, Heb. 2:13, etc. – Concurrence. Code225a

§ 64. In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active. - Jonathan Edwards (also see pg 431,2, 1175, etc)

God's circumcising their heart is the cause; the effect is that they will believe, love God, etc., not maybe if they decide to or not. And this all happens without their will being forced. Why? Because God took out the stony (unbelieving, hard, obstinate) heart, and gave them a new spirit and a new heart, and thus caused them to love and fear him. This is why they all come willingly with delight. The former resistance, unbelief was removed by his almighty power. See Ezek. 36, Jer. 32:40, Ezek 11:19

Ezek. 36:25-27, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." You see, God causes them to do exactly what he wants them to do and that is to believe, love and fear God (see also, Phil 2:13). Salvation is not just something that God makes possible or available and then it's up to the person to make the final choice, that it is up to his so called self-directed will as though man were an autonomous being. God makes promises in so many strong words, that it is He that must determine the matter, not man (John 1:13, Rom 9:16, "**So then *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.***"). To say that God makes these promises that his elect will believe and yet not be the determiner in the affair is a great absurdity as Jonathan Edwards explains:

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. Isa. lx. 22. "I the Lord do hasten

it in its time." Surely this is the language of a promiser, and not merely a predictor. God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, etc., should serve and obey him, [Dan. vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. xi.](#) and innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does. - Jonathan Edwards

Jer. 32:40 "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me". - Edwards

The outcome in conversion is always the same; they will always choose Christ (receive him), because God causes it to be so, yet man freely exercises his will without compulsion [see [code443a](#)]; he comes willingly, not forced because of the secret efficacious power as the Holy Spirit sweetly conforming the soul into compliance.

John Flavel: *Fourthly*, Coming to Christ notes the voluntariness of the soul in its motion to Christ. It is true, **there is no coming without the Father's drawing**; but that drawing hath nothing of coercion in it; **it doth not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness, persuades the will.** It is not forced or driven, *but it comes*; being made "willing in the day of God's power," Ps. 110:3. [[see code443a](#)]

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

Secondly, In what manner he draws men to Christ,

Thirdly, How it appears that none can come till they be so drawn.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports. To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually distinguished into physical and moral. The former is either by coercion, force, and compulsion; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man, which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who loves to reign over a free and willing people, Ps.110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Or, as that word may be rendered, they shall be voluntarinesses, as willing as willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible co-action, but in a moral way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus Christ. He draws with the bands of a man, as they are called, Hos. 11:14, i.e., in a way of rational

conviction of the mind and conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will. **But yet by moral persuasion, we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at the sinner's choice, whether he will comply with it or no.** For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ. And, in this respect, we own a physical, as well as a moral influence of the Spirit in this work; and so scripture expresses it, Eph. i. 19, 20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will; **there is a power as well as a tender; greatness of power;** and yet more, the exceeding greatness of his power; and **this power hath an actual efficacy ascribed to it,** he works upon our hearts and wills according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Thus he fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thess.1:11. Flavel, pg 69 vol. 2 Ser. 4

And this is that which the schools call *gratia efficax*, effectual grace; and others *victrix delectatio*, an overcoming, conquering delight; thus the work is carried on with a most **efficacious sweetness.** So that the liberty of the will is not infringed, whilst the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued and over-ruled. For want of this, there are so many almost Christians in the world [brought on much by the presumptuous sinner's prayer, coming to God without being called]; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works which come to nothing, called in scripture, a morning cloud, an early dew. [That's because they were never called; as Thomas Shepard says, God never spoke one word to them! see John 5:37] Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had never vanished or perished like embryos as they do. **So then, God draws not only in a moral way, by proposing a suitable object to the will, but also in a physical way, or by immediate powerful influence upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly and effectually persuading it to come to Christ.**

Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causeth upon the soul, turning it by a **sweet irresistible efficacy** from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ. Now all these are imported in, and done by the application of Christ to our souls; for when once the **efficacy of Christ's death,** and the **virtue of his resurrection,** come to take place upon the heart of any man, **he cannot but turn from sin to God,** and become a **new creature, living and acting by new principles and rules.** So the apostle observes, 1

Thess. 1:5, 6. speaking of the effect of this work of the Spirit upon that people, "Our gospel (saith he) came "not to you in word only, but in power; and in the Holy Ghost;" There was the effectual application of Christ to them. "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord," ver. 6. there was their effectual call. "And ye turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God," ver. 9. there was their conversion. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe," ver. 9. there was their life of sanctification or dedication to God. So that all these are comprehended in effectual application. John Flavel, vol. Method of Grace, p 19 [[2Chron. 20:6, ...none is able to withstand you.](#)]

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My further comments:

Now, let's look at another passage that makes this clearer. Romans 8:28-30, *The Golden Chain of Redemption*

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Those who God chose to love with a peculiar and special love (to foreknow) he predestined to be conformed to his image. There is the certainty of the outcome; all will come to him just as John 6:37 says, *All that the Father gives me will come to Me.* And those he predestined, these he called (by the effectual called as

opposed to the general call) and those he called, those he justified and those he justified those he glorified. So, those he calls with this effectual call are infallibly going to believe; they are not going to chose sin and Satan! These acts are done by God, man is passive in this [pg 1884], hence they receive Him; and come willingly as I said before; yet, they make a choice in the sense of Phil. 1:29, that the duty, desire and willingness to believe in Christ is the very thing given to them for that very end! and hence, it's always for Christ; every time, because God works it, Phil 2:13; He is the Promiser in the New Covenant, therefore He is the determiner of the event; and that infallibly, all for His glory.

This is in stark contrast to the Arminian scheme that says, God is for you, Satan is against you and you cast the deciding vote. Arminians assume that there is some virtue in us that was not erased after the fall, that we only need outward suasion and fine sounding arguments and just enough grace to put us in a neutral position, but no efficacious grace that determines the matter; that is left up to us; the choice is up to us in the final issues. So in this scheme, it is possible that no one would be saved which Arminians concede (and no one would, due to man's total depravity). Arminians are not a big fan of the imputation of Adam's sin on all his posterity, nor are they fans of God's eternal decree of election since it they say it does violence to man's so called liberty; In this scenario they believe that man can resist the effectual call.

More....

Let's take a view of this situation negatively, what conversion is not, and positively, what conversion is which we have already described above, but we'll paint the picture more.

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: skip to point 4.

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him.** The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who, in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. **It is one of the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life****

itself. When Scripture speaks of a union with Christ by faith, then this always applies to unity in the consciousness or the consciousness of unity: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17), where, however, precedes, “so that He might grant you though the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.” The Spirit’s activity, therefore, is antecedent, and only as a result of it does Christ dwell in the heart by faith. It is the drawing power of Christ Himself that in our faith draws us to His life. In this sense, then, Scripture clearly teaches that a reception of life from Christ by faith is possible for us— indeed, is necessary (John 6:47, 51). There is not merely a life of Christ in us but also a life of ours for God in union with Christ. According to Romans 7:4, the believer knows himself to be as closely united to the Mediator as husband to wife, and according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, the church is viewed as a bride presenting herself to her bridegroom, Christ. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” (Rev 22:17).

The Sovereignty of God Over The Wills of Men

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By G Clark

The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD,
Like the rivers of water;
 He turns it wherever He wishes.

Pr. 21:1

Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken *it*; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed *it*; I will also do it.
 Isa 46:10-11

There other similar passages like this like Jer. 10:23, "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." and Proverbs 16:9." A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps." and verse 19:21, "There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the LORD’s counsel—that will

stand." and 1John 4:4, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

So, let me ask a question. Is God forcing the king's heart as He *turns it wherever He wishes*? Is the king being dragged by his feet to do what he does, screamin' and hollarin'? Is the king just making a free will and arbitrary choice and it just so happens that it goes exactly the way God wants it to go. Or is there some secret power, some almighty power that transcends our understanding that is directing things according to God's will? and yet if the king does evil, God is not culpable. God had decreed that the Assyrians, a very evil and wicked people, would ransack Jerusalem in Isa. 10; were they forced? No! Were they saying, Please God don't have us do this? Could they have done otherwise and said, No Lord; far be it from us to rape and pillage. No, they love raping and pillaging. So that evil nation was an instrument in God's hand to do his will in punishing Israel and then God punishes Assyria for the haughtiness of their hearts. So, this being said, can God change a heart and infallibly have that heart be changed from a Satan lover to a God lover? and have that result occur every time the Holy Spirit comes upon his elect in a saving manner without doing violence to the will? without risking the creature to resist this call, this secret will of God, for that person to believe, to love God, to delight in holiness, to hate sin thus breaking that league between him and Satan (Gen 3:15, I will place enmity between your seed and her seed...), etc.? This can only happen if God, his almighty power, changes the nature of the persons in that seed line of the promise (thru regeneration), the seed line of the elect. If the heart is changed, as Gen. 3:15 clearly implies though in obscure language, then that person is irreversibly changed; he will not choose sin and Satan but choose God every time because his heart has been changed, his affections have been renewed; he is a new creature! *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*, Col. 3:10. See 1John3:9, "**No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's^[a] seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.**" One who is born of God, (by the will of God, i.e., not by man's will or deciding, John 1:13) cannot choose Satan or sin nor go back wholeheartedly to a life of sin, the practice thereof. The whole true nature of this affair, "new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.", wholly precludes this, but a running or rolling over to or receiving of Christ. In human terms or in a manner of speaking, this affair is all worked out before hand, fixed as it were, as well as due to God infinite sovereign power and wisdom, by the better promises of the new covenant.

What conversion is not: God only gives enough grace or outward suasion to bring the sinner to the point where he is able to make a choice from his own industry and strength to make the *self-directed* will's choice for Satan or Christ. It could go either way in Arminian thinking; that God does not determine the matter because that would be violating the person's so called liberty; that to be true love for God and hence true virtue, his choice must solely be from his own heart and not from any outside influence otherwise it is not a genuine love, and for God to impose himself upon man's will would constitute doing violence to the will and therefore, not fair.

Jonathan Edwards states:

"All their arguments suppose, that men's actions are no farther virtuous and rewardable, than as they are from themselves, the fruits of their own free will and self-determination. And men's own virtue, they say, is the only condition of salvation, and so must be the only thing by which salvation is obtained. And this being of themselves only, it surely follows, that their obtaining salvation is of themselves only." (p550) **And as Edwards comments on a necessary consequent of this Arminian view, that it robs God of the glory of his free grace: "Would not he be, as it were, all in the cause? Would not the glory properly belong to him, on whose pleasure the determination of the matter properly depended?" (p560) That is key to this whole discussion! We are not properly active in our conversion as Arminians, Pelagians and many other *isms* promote, but we are properly passive [pg 1884]. This is why Paul says in 1Cor4:7, "For who ^[a]makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?"**

And!!

§ 53. If God is not the disposing author of virtue, then he is not the giver of it. The very notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit. **1 John iv. 4.** "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (*i.e.*, have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict? Edwards, p554 Concerning Efficacious Grace, Vol. 2

Ans. First, this notion ignores the depraved nature of man which we inherit from Adam; man will always be unwilling to come to (or to believe) in God because of his being under the dominion of sin and the control of Satan [John 14:7, Rom. 8:7-8, etc.].

He cannot, of himself, free himself, but can only be set free by Christ, by divine intervention. Second, it denies God's sovereignty over the wills of men; man's will is not more powerful than God's will. So Jesus was correct when he told the Pharisees, "You are mistaken not knowing the scripture nor the power of God", that is, his converting power! that power noted in Eph 1:19, "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead..." That power! True conversion consists in a direct physical operation on the soul that effects this change of heart, that which is clearly prophesied in Ezek. 36:25, Jer. 32:40, Ezek, 11:19 and in other places, that says that God takes out the stony heart and puts in a heart of flesh that is able to receive the impression of the word, etc. Hence the outcome is always a true conversion, love for God, believing on Christ, compunction for sin, and the repentance thereof.

Valley of Dry Bones: This is a good example of God's sovereignty in election and conversion; that man is dead, blind, naked, and completely unable to come to spiritual life unless the Spirit sovereignly intervenes and breathes life into them! Spiritual life, that is! Life is not just coming to a place of awareness of the options set before them (as what the false notion of what Prevenient supposes), whether to choose or refuse Christ and that this choice is up to them; that the power is from them whether to believe or not; this life that is breathed into them goes further; it infallibly causes the soul to see and believe; to repent and love God. It is a saving life that is breathed in; it is God infallibly determining the outcome by the communication of the knowledge of himself, holiness, and joy and happiness to the creature, hence that which converts the soul; he is a new creation; the image of God is restored; it is salvation. It is the work that God will do in he will as John 6:29 says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." This is the infallible outcome in all of God's elect. John Flavel, "Yea, it is the effect of the Almighty Power of God, the exceeding greatness of his power is exerted in the work of faith, Eph. 1:19. It rises not out of nature, as common gifts do; but of this is expressly said, Eph. 2:8, *It is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Where this work is effectually wrought, we may reason as solidly as comfortably from it, both backward, to the electing love of God, and forward, to our eternal glorification with him, Rom. 8:30.*" The very *gift of believing* is promised in the New Covenant.

So when Arminians suppose that because reformed theology says that all the elect will infallibly be converted, they assume that God must force many to believe against their own will, thus violating their liberty and autonomousness of the their wills, making them robots. But they *ere in not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God*. For this

choice for Christ that the elect make upon their conversion is not your classic understanding of what choice is. It is not as though they could chose Satan and sin as well as Christ just like I could chose a Snickers Bar over M&Ms because I like Snickers a little better than the other, there being a chance as there is in many choices, a chance of choosing M&Ms. Conversion is way different. Yes, the decision for Christ is a choice but it's not the same "choosing" situation as Arminians make it out to be, as though an elect person could go the other way. No! **The Power of God in this affair makes it totally different**; God's power determines the outcome, the choice for Christ, i.e., believing in which He will not fail. The Arminian view is that this believing is not determined by God, but by man; and if that is the case, then, as they concede, man may not choose Christ, just like a person my not choose Snickers but buy M&Ms. This is the carnal thinking of Arminianism. And so they use this straw-man argument (robots...man's autonomusness, etc.) to derogate the sovereignty of God in election and God's sovereignty over the wills of men.

Now you see the value of doing a good exegesis of a particular doctrine or passage; what a clearer view do you get at the same time overcome traditions and prejudices. The whole counsel of God must be examined and weighed, comparing spiritual with spiritual, aka, according to the analogy of faith. G Clark

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: skip to point 4.

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him**. The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who, in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. It is one of the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life itself**. When Scripture speaks of a union with Christ by faith, then this always applies to unity in the consciousness or the consciousness of unity: "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph 3:17), where, however, precedes, "so that He might grant you

though the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man." The Spirit's activity, therefore, is antecedent, and only as a result of it does Christ dwell in the heart by faith. It is the drawing power of Christ Himself that in our faith draws us to His life. In this sense, then, Scripture clearly teaches that a reception of life from Christ by faith is possible for us— indeed, is necessary (John 6:47, 51). There is not merely a life of Christ in us but also a life of ours for God in union with Christ. According to Romans 7:4, the believer knows himself to be as closely united to the Mediator as husband to wife, and according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, the church is viewed as a bride presenting herself to her bridegroom, Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' " (Rev 22:17).

Free Grace and Man's Free Will

code82 code227

(God Rules Over the Wills of Men)

My comments in blue

by Augustine (with final comment by Flavel)

Here's the bottom line on this: Man, being in a totally depraved condition prior to conversion, will not believe upon Christ for eternal life nor can he (Rom 8:6-8, "For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."); he is bound by sin, blinded by Satan, a servant of Satan, etc. (1Cor2:14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." 2Cor4:4, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe,") The only way someone will come to Christ (meaning to believe in him) is if God the Spirit breathes spiritual life into him, i.e., causes him to be born again, giving him a new heart, etc. (John 3:8, "The wind blows where it

wishes..." Deut 30:16, *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.* Ezek. 11:19, "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them," John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;"). This operation of the Holy Spirit is called effectual vocation or the effectual call; it is effectual all the time in converting someone because it was God's good pleasure so to do, fulfilling his eternal decree of election, John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me", Eph 1:4, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,".

The person's stubbornness and prejudices are removed out of the way, the stony heart, (Ezek. 36:26, "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.") by a secret efficacious power that sweetly moves upon the soul making the soul wholeheartedly willing, hence Ps 110:3, *Your people shall be volunteers [or willing] in the day of Your power;* (in the day of his almighty power to convert the soul; It is not up to man to determine this event; we are passive in our conversion just like we were in our natural birth – see pg 1884) This is the power the Pharisees were ignorant of, so Jesus tells them, *You are in not knowing the scriptures nor the power of god.* They had not experienced this mighty power over their souls, obviously because they were still unregenerate (not saved); they were his enemies. (see footnote #2 on pg 1190)

This is extremely important in understanding the power of God in conversion and man's will in exercise; that God works it (John 1:13, John 3:8, etc.) without violating or doing violence to the will of man, yet God is the sovereign disposer of the event...*that all that the Father gives Me will come to me*, etc. God will bring his eternal purposes regarding election to pass, despite man's obstinacy and resistance and yet they all come willingly to the glory of God's grace!

Here's Augustine's comments from his book, *Grace and Free Will*: my comments in blue, red for emphasis

Grace and Free Will

by St. Augustine
code84 code227

CHAPTER 42.

GOD DOES WHATEVER HE WILLS IN THE HEARTS EVEN OF WICKED MEN

Who can help trembling at those judgments of God by which He does whatever He wills in the hearts of even wicked men, at the same time rendering to them according to their deeds? Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, rejected the salutary counsel of the old men, not to deal harshly with the people, and preferred listening to the words of the young men of his own age, by returning a rough answer to those to whom he should have spoken gently. Now where did such conduct arise, except from his own will? Upon this, however, the ten tribes of Israel revolted from him, and chose for themselves another king, even Jeroboam, so that the will of God in His anger might be accomplished, which He had predicted would come to pass. 1Kings 12.8-14 For what does the Scripture say? “The king did not listen to the people; for the turning was from the Lord, so that He might perform His saying which the Lord spoke to Ahijah the Shilonite concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” 1Kng 12.15 All this indeed was done by the will of man, although the turning was from the Lord.

Read the books of the Chronicles, and you will find the following passage in the second book: “Moreover, the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were neighbours to the Ethiopians; and they came up to the land of Judah and ravaged it, and carried away all the substance which was found in the king’s house.” 2Chr 21.16-17 Here it is shown that God stirs up enemies to devastate the countries which He adjudges deserving of such chastisement. Still, did these Philistines and Arabians invade the land of Judah to waste it with no will of their own? Or were their movements so directed by their own will that the Scripture lies which tells us that “the Lord stirred up their spirit” to do all this? Both statements to be sure are true, because they both came by their own will, and yet the Lord stirred up their spirit; and this may also be stated with equal truth the other way: The Lord both stirred up their spirit, and yet they came of their own will. [similar passage in 2Cor2:8 - But thanks *be* to God who ^[b]puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. (there is God's sovereign disposal of his grace) ¹⁷ For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. (there is man's creaturely free will in exercise answering to God's will.)] For the Almighty sets in motion, even in the innermost hearts of men, the movement of their will, so that He does through their agency whatever He wishes to perform through them—even He who does not know how to will anything in unrighteousness.

What, again, is the purport of that which the man of God said to King Amaziah: “Do not let the army of Israel go with you; for the Lord is not with Israel, not even with all

the children of Ephraim: for if you think to obtain with these, the Lord shall put you to flight before your enemies: for God has power either to strengthen or to put to flight." 2Chr 25:7-8 Now, how does the power of God help some in war by giving them confidence, and put others to flight by injecting fear into them, unless He who made all things in heaven and on earth, according to His own will, also works in the hearts of men?

We read also what Joash, king of Israel, said when he sent a message to Amaziah, king of Judah, who wanted to fight with him. After certain other words, he added, "Now wait at home; why do you challenge me to your hurt, so that you should fall, even you, and Judah with you?" 2Kng 14.10 Then the Scripture has this sequel added: "But Amaziah would not hear; for it came from God, so that he might be delivered into their hands, because they sought after the gods of Edom." 2Chr 25:20 Behold, now, how God, wishing to punish the sin of idolatry, worked this in this man's heart, with whom He was indeed justly angry, not to listen to sound advice but to despise it, and go to the battle in which he with his army was routed. God says by the prophet Ezekiel, "If the prophet is deceived when he has spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." Ezek 14.9

Then there is the book of Esther, who was a woman of the people of Israel, and in the land of their captivity she became the wife of the foreign King Ahasuerus. In this book it is written, that being driven by necessity to interpose in behalf of her people, whom the king had ordered to be slain in every part of his dominions, she prayed to the Lord. Ester 4.17 So strongly was she urged by the necessity of the case, that she even ventured into the royal presence without the king's command, and contrary to her own custom. Now observe what the Scripture says:14 "He looked at her like a bull in the vehemence of his indignation; and the queen was afraid, and her colour changed as she fainted; and she bowed herself upon the head of her delicate maiden who went before her. But God turned the king, and transformed his indignation into gentleness." Ester 15.10-11 DRM The Scripture says in the Proverbs of Solomon, "Even as the rush of water, so is the heart of a king in God's hand; He will turn it in whatever way He shall choose." Pr. 21.1 Again, in the 105th Psalm, in reference to the Egyptians, one reads what God did to them: "And He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants." Ps. 105.25 Observe, likewise, what is written in the letters of the Apostles. In the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, these words occur: "Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts;" Rom 1.24 and a little

afterwards: “For this cause God gave them up to vile affections;” Rom 1.26 again, in the next passage: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Rom 1.28 So also in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle says of various persons, “because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved; for this reason also, God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2Thes 2.10-12

Jesus has 3 offices: Priest, Prophet and King. This is part of what he does as king over his church. Examine this one. One of the biggest complaints that people have against God's sovereignty in election is that people think he forces Himself upon them, doing violence to the will, turning them into robots. This is a mistaken understanding, a straw-man argument to denigrate or unfairly criticize a most beautiful comforting doctrine. When the heart is changed by the Spirit, it becomes a willing heart.

CHAPTER 43.

GOD OPERATES ON MEN'S HEARTS: TO INCLINE THEIR WILLS HOWEVER HE PLEASES

From these statements of the inspired word, and from similar passages which it would take too long to quote in full, I think it is sufficiently clear that God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills however He wills, whether to good deeds according to His mercy, or to evil deeds after their own deserts—His own judgment being sometimes manifest, sometimes secret, but always righteous. This ought to be the fixed and immoveable conviction of your heart, that there is no unrighteousness with God. Therefore, whenever you read in the Scriptures of Truth, that men are led aside, or that their hearts are blunted and hardened by God, never doubt that some ill deserts of their own have first occurred, so that they justly suffer these things. Thus you will not run counter to that proverb of Solomon: “The foolishness of a man perverts his ways, yet he blames God in his heart.” Pr. 19.3 Grace, however, is not bestowed according to men’s deserts; “otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” Rom 11:6 For grace is so

designated because it is given gratuitously. Now if God is able, either through the agency of angels (whether good ones or evil), or in any other way whatsoever, to operate in the hearts even of the wicked, in return for their deserts—whose wickedness was not made by God, but was either derived originally from Adam, or increased by their own will—what is there to wonder at if, through the Holy Spirit, God works good in the hearts of the elect, having worked it that their hearts become good instead of evil?

CHAPTER 40.

PELAGIANS ARE IGNORANT IN MAINTAINING THAT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW COMES FROM GOD, BUT THAT LOVE COMES FROM OURSELVES

It is no wonder that “light shines in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it.” John 1.5 In John’s Epistle, the Light declares, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” 1John 3.1 And in **the Pelagian writings, the darkness says, “Love comes to us of ourselves.”** Now, if they only possessed the true love, that is, Christian love, they would also know where they obtained possession of it; even as the apostle knew when he said, “But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.” 1Cor 2.12 John says, “God is love.” 1John 4.16 **And thus the Pelagians affirm that they actually have God Himself, not from God, but from their own selves! And although they allow that we have the knowledge of the law from God, they would yet have it that love is from our very selves.** Nor do they listen to the apostle when he says, “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” 1Cor 8.1 Now what can be more absurd—no—what can be more insane and more alien to the very sacredness of love itself, than to maintain that from God proceeds the knowledge which, apart from love, puffs us up; while the love which prevents the possibility of this inflation of knowledge, springs from ourselves? **And again, when the apostle speaks of “the love of Christ as surpassing knowledge,” Eph 3.19 what can be more insane than to suppose that the knowledge which must be subordinated to love comes from God, while the love which surpasses knowledge comes from man? The true faith however, and sound doctrine, **declare that both graces are from God.** The Scripture says, “From His face comes knowledge and understanding;” Pr. 2:6 and another Scripture says, “Love is of God.” 1John 4.7 We read of “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.” Isa 11.2 Also of “the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2Tim 1.7 But love is a greater gift than knowledge; for whenever a man has the gift of knowledge, love is**

necessary by the side of it, so that he is not puffed up. For “love does not envy, does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up.” 1Cor 13.4

CHAPTER 29.

GOD IS ABLE TO CONVERT OPPOSING WILLS, AND TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE HEART ITS HARDNESS

Now if faith is simply of free will, and it is not given by God, then why do we pray for those who will not believe, that they may believe? It would be absolutely useless to do this unless we believe, with perfect propriety, that Almighty God is able to turn to belief, those wills that are perverse and opposed to faith. Man’s free will is addressed when it is said, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Heb 3:15 But if God were not able to remove from the human heart even its obstinacy and hardness, then He would not say through the prophet, “I will take from them their heart of stone, and will give them a heart of flesh.” Ezek. 11:19 That all this was foretold in reference to the New Testament is shown clearly enough by the apostle when he says, “You are our epistle ...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tablets of the heart.” 2Cor 3:2-3 We must not, of course suppose that such a phrase as this is used as if those who ought to live spiritually might live in a fleshly way. But inasmuch as a stone has no feeling—to which man’s hard heart is compared—what was there left Him to compare man’s intelligent heart to, but the flesh, which possesses feeling? For this is what is said by the prophet Ezekiel: “I will give them another heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, says the Lord.” Ezek. 11:19-20 **Now can we possibly (without extreme absurdity) maintain that there previously existed in any man the good merit of a good will, to entitle him to the removal of his stony heart, when all the while this very heart of stone signifies nothing else than a will of the hardest kind, and such that it is absolutely inflexible against God? For where a good will precedes, there is of course no longer a heart of stone.**

This is proof that before one is converted, he does not have a willing heart to come to Christ. He has a hard heart, confirming that man is totally depraved in that respect. Now he may seem willing and sincere as he does a sinner's prayer but that is only because his prayer is founded on natural principles (self love) excited by sweet

sounding sermons and good music, which all people are capable of, apart from any saving work of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 30.

THE GRACE BY WHICH THE STONY HEART IS REMOVED IS NOT PRECEDED BY GOOD DESERTS, BUT BY EVIL ONES

In another passage also, by the same prophet [Ezekiel], God, in the clearest language, shows us that it is not owing to any good merits on the part of men, but for His own name's sake, that He does these things. This is His language: "This I do, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, where you went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle you with clean water, and you shall be clean: from all your own filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols. A new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and the stony heart shall be taken away out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and will cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek. 36.22-27 Now who is so blind as not to see, and who is so stone-like as not to feel, that this grace is not given according to the merits of a good will, when the Lord declares and testifies "It is I, O house of Israel, who do this, but for my holy name's sake"? Now why did He say "It is I that do it, but for my holy name's sake," if it were not that they should not think that it was owing to their own good merits that these things were happening, as the Pelagians do not hesitate to say unblushingly? But there were not only no good merits of theirs, but the Lord shows that evil ones actually preceded; for He says, "But for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen." Who can fail to observe how dreadful is the evil of profaning the Lord's own holy name? And yet, for the sake of this very name of mine, He says, which you have profaned, I, even I, will make you good, but not for your own sakes; and as He adds "I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them." He says that He sanctifies His name, which He had already declared to be holy. Therefore, this is just what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer— "Hallowed be Your name." We ask for the hallowing among men of that which, in itself, is undoubtedly always holy. Then it follows, "And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you." Although

He Himself is always holy, He is nevertheless sanctified in those on whom He bestows His grace: by taking from them that stony heart by which they profaned the name of the Lord.

Contemplate this one. It's by Augustine, one of the great church fathers, Cir. 400AD. This will exercise your faculty of reasoning! Dig deep.

CHAPTER 31.

FREE WILL HAS ITS FUNCTION IN THE HEART'S CONVERSION; BUT GRACE TOO HAS ITS FUNCTION

Lest, however, it should be thought that men themselves in this matter do nothing by free will, it is said in the Psalm, "Do not harden not your hearts;" Ps. 95.8 and in Ezekiel himself, "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have impiously committed against me; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; and keep all my commandments. For why will you die, O house of Israel, says the Lord? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: and turn and live." Ezek. 18:31-32 We should remember that it is He who says, "Turn and live," to whom it is said in prayer, "Turn us again, O God." We should remember that He says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions," when it is even He who justifies the ungodly. We should remember that He says, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit," who also promises, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you." Ezek 36.26 How is it then, that He who says, "Make you," also says, "I will give you"? Why does He command, if He is to give? Why does He give if man is to make, unless it is that He gives what He commands when He helps the one whom He commands, to obey? **There is, however, always within us a free will—but it is not always good; for it is either free from righteousness when it serves sin—and then it is evil—or else it is free from sin when it serves righteousness—and then it is good.** But the grace of God is always good; and by it, it comes to pass that a man is of a good will, though he was before of an evil one. By it also, it comes to pass that the very good will which has now begun to be, is enlarged, and made so great that it is able to fulfill the divine commandments which it wishes, once it firmly and perfectly wishes it. This is the purport of what the Scripture says: "If you will, you shall keep the commandments;" Sir 15.15, so that the man who wills but is not able, knows that he does not yet fully will; and he prays that he may have so great a will that it may suffice to keep the commandments. And thus indeed he receives

assistance to perform what he is commanded. Then the will is of use when we have ability; just as ability is also of use when we have the will. For what does it profit us if we will what we are unable to do, or else do not will what we are able to do?

CHAPTER 10.
FREE WILL AND GOD'S GRACE ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY COMMENDED
Augustine

When God says, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," Zech. 1:3 one of these clauses—that which invites our return to God—evidently belongs to our will; while the other, which promises His return to us, belongs to His grace. Here, possibly, the Pelagians think they have a justification for their opinion which they so prominently advance: that God's grace is given according to our merits. In the East indeed, that is to say, in the province of Palestine in which the city of Jerusalem lies, Pelagius, when examined in person by the bishop, did not venture to affirm this. For it happened that among the objections which were brought up against him, this in particular was objected: he maintained that the grace of God was given according to our merits—an opinion which was so different from catholic doctrine, and so hostile to the grace of Christ, that unless he had anathematized it, as laid to his charge, he himself must have been anathematized on its account. He pronounced, indeed, the required anathema upon the dogma, but how insincerely his later books plainly show; for in them he maintains absolutely no other opinion than that the grace of God is given according to our merits. They collect such passages out of the Scriptures—like the one which I just now quoted, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you,"—as if it were owing to the merit of our turning to God, that His grace were given us — in which He Himself even turns to us. Now the persons who hold this opinion fail to observe that, **unless our turning to God were itself God's gift [that's the key! my insert, see Phil. 2:13, 1:29, Jn 6:29]**, it would not be said to Him in prayer, "Turn us again, O God of hosts;" Ps. 80:3 and, "You, O God, will turn and quicken us;" Ps. 80:7 and again, "Turn us, O God of our salvation," Ps. 85:4—with other passages of similar import, too numerous to mention here. For with respect to our coming to Christ, what else does it mean than our being turned to Him by believing? And yet He says: "No man can come to me, unless it was given to him by my Father." John 6:65

CHAPTER 11.
OTHER PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH THE PELAGIANS ABUSE

Then, again, there is the Scripture contained in the second book of the Chronicles: "The Lord is with you when you are with Him: and if you shall seek Him, you shall find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will also forsake you." 2Chr 15.2 This passage, no doubt, clearly manifests the choice of the will. But those who maintain that God's grace is given according to our merits, receive these testimonies of Scripture in such a way as to believe that our merit lies in the circumstance of our "being with God," while His grace is given according to this merit, so that He too may be with us. In like manner, that our merit lies in the fact of "our seeking God," and then His grace is given according to this merit, in order that we may find Him." Again, there is a passage in the first book of the same Chronicles which declares the choice of the will: "And you, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts; if you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever." 1Chron 28.9 **But these people find some room for human merit in the clause, "If you seek Him," and then grace is thought to be given according to this merit in what is said in the ensuing words, "He will be found by you." And so they labour with all their might to show that God's grace is given according to our merits—in other words, that grace is not grace. For, as the apostle most expressly says, to those who receive reward according to merit, "the recompense is not reckoned of grace but of debt."** Rom 4.4

CHAPTER 12.

PAUL PROVES THAT GRACE IS NOT GIVEN ACCORDING TO MEN'S MERITS

Now there was, no doubt, a decided merit in the Apostle Paul, but it was an evil one while he persecuted the Church; and he says of it: "I am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." 1Cor 15.9 And it was while he had this evil merit that a good one was rendered to him instead of the evil; and therefore he went on at once to say, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am." 1Cor 15.10 Then, in order to exhibit also his free will, he added in the next clause, "And His grace within me was not in vain, but I have labored more abundantly than all of them." He appeals to this free will of man in the case of others also, as when he says to them, "We beseech you that you do not receive the grace of God in vain." 2Cor 6.1 Now, how could he so enjoin them if they received God's grace in such a manner as to lose their own will? Nevertheless, lest the will itself should be deemed capable of doing any good thing without the grace of God, after saying, "His grace within me was not in vain, but I have

labored more abundantly than they all,” he immediately added the qualifying clause, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” 1Cor 15.10 In other words, Not I alone, but the grace of God with me. And thus it was neither the grace of God alone, nor was it he himself alone, but it was the grace Of God with him. Despite his call from heaven, and his conversion by that great and most effectual call, God’s grace was alone; this is because his merits, though great, were yet evil. Then, to quote one passage more, he says to Timothy: “But be a co-laborer with the gospel, according to the power of God who saves us and calls us with His holy calling—not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus.” 2Tim 1.8-9 Then elsewhere he enumerates his merits, and he gives us this description of their evil character: “For we ourselves also were formerly foolish, unbelieving, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” Tit 3.3 To be sure, nothing but punishment was due to such a course of evil desert! God, however, who returns good for evil by His grace, which is not given according to our merits, enabled the apostle to conclude his statement and say: “But when the kindness and love of our Saviour God shone upon us—not of works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the layer of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost, whom He shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Tit 3.4-7

CHAPTER 17.

THE FAITH THAT HE KEPT WAS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD

His last clause runs thus: “I have kept the faith.” 2Tim 4.7 But he who says this is the same one who declares in another passage, “I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful.” 1Cor 7.25 He does not say, “I obtained mercy because I was faithful,” but “in order that I might be faithful,” thus showing that even faith itself cannot be had without God’s mercy, and that it is the gift of God. This he very expressly teaches us when he says, “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Eph 2.8 They might possibly say, “We received grace because we believed;” as if they would attribute the faith to themselves, and the grace to God. Therefore, the apostle having said, “You are saved through faith,” added, “and that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God.” And again, lest they say they deserved so great a gift by their works, he immediately added, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph 2.9 It is not that he denied good works, or emptied them of their value, when he says that “God

renders to every man according to his works;" Rom 2.6, but it is because works proceed from faith, and not faith from works. Therefore it is from Him that we have works of righteousness, from whom also comes faith itself, concerning which it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Hab. 2.4

CHAPTER 21.
ETERNAL LIFE IS "GRACE FOR GRACE"

Perhaps you ask whether we ever read in the Sacred Scriptures of "grace for grace." Well you possess the Gospel according to John, which is perfectly clear in its very great light. Here John the Baptist says of Christ: "Of His fulness we have all received, even grace for grace." John 1.16 So that out of His fulness we have received, according to our humble measure, our particles of ability as it were, for leading good lives—"according as God has dealt to every man his measure of faith;" Rom 12.3 because "every man has his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that." 1Cor 7.7 And this is grace. But, over and above this, we shall also receive "grace for grace" when we have eternal life awarded to us, of which the apostle said: "The grace of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Rom 6.23 —having just said that "the wages of sin is death." He deservedly called it "wages," because everlasting death is awarded as its proper due for diabolical service. Now, when it was in his power to say, and to rightly say: "But the wages of righteousness is eternal life," he yet preferred to say: "The grace of God is eternal life." He did so in order that we may understand from this that God does not, for any merits of our own, but from His own divine compassion, prolong our existence to everlasting life—even as the Psalmist says to his soul, "Who crowns you with mercy and compassion." Ps. 103.4 Well now, is not a crown given as the reward for good deeds? However, it is only because He works good works in good men—of whom it is said, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure," Phil 2.13 —that the Psalm has it as just now quoted: "He crowns you with mercy and compassion," since it is through His mercy that we perform the good deeds for which the crown is awarded. However, it is not to be supposed for a moment, because he said, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do his own good pleasure," that free will is taken away. If this indeed had been his meaning, he would not have said just before, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Phil 2.12 For when the command is given "to work," their free will is addressed; and when it is added, "with fear and trembling," they are warned against boasting of their good deeds as if they were their own, by attributing to themselves the performance of anything good. It is pretty much as if the apostle had this question put to him: "Why did you use the phrase, 'with fear and trembling'?" And it is as if he answered the inquiry of his examiners by

telling them, "For it is God who works in you." Because if you fear and tremble, then you do not boast of your good works as if they were your own, since it is God who works within you.

Comments by **John Flavel** on Man's Ability to
Obey God's Commands

As to the first; It must be premised that the question doth not suppose the heart or will of a Christian to be at his own command and dispose in this matter; **we cannot resign it, and subject it to the will of God whenever we desire so to do; the duty indeed is ours, but the power by which alone we perform it is God's; we act as we are acted by the Spirit.** It is with our hearts, as with meteors hanging in the air by the influence of the sun; while that continues, they abide above; but when it fails, they fall to the earth; we can do this, and all things else, be they never so difficult, "Through Christ that strengthens us," Phil. iv. 13. But "without him we can do nothing," John xv. 5. He doth not say, without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly; but without me ye can do nothing at all. And every Christian hath a witness in his own breast to attest this truth. For there are cases frequently occurring in the methods of providence, in which, notwithstanding all their prayers and desires, all their reasonings and strivings, they cannot quiet their hearts fully in the dispose and will of God ; but, on the contrary, do find all their endeavours in this matter, to be but as the rolling of a returning stone against the hill. Till God say to the heart, be still, and to the will, give up, nothing can be done. pg 490 Vol. 4, The Mystery of Providence

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ." Col. 2:8

Grace and Free Will is Consistent! John Flavel, Vol. 4 pg 92

3. Christ's knocking at the door of the heart implies the method of the Spirit in conversion to be congruous and agreeable to the nature of man's soul. Mark Christ's expression in the text; he doth not say, "Behold I come to the door," and break it open by violence; no, Christ makes no forcible entries, whether sinners will or not; he will come in by consent of the will, or not at all. I stand and knock; if any man open the door I will come in to him. There is a great difference between a friendly admission by

consent, and a forcible entrance. In a forcible entrance bars of iron are brought to break open the door ; but in a friendly admission one knocks, and the other opens. Forcible actions are unsuitable to the nature of the will, whose motions are free and spontaneous; therefore it is said. Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It is true, the power of God is upon the will of man in the day of his conversion, or else it would never open to Christ; **but yet that power of God doth not act against the freedom of man's will, by co-action and force**; no, **but of unwilling he makes it willing; taking away the obstinacy and reluctancy of the will by the efficacy of his grace,** [see Ezek. 36:25, "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.] which some Divines call *victrix delectatio*, a sweet and pleasant victory; and so the door of the will still opens freely, Hos. xi. 4, "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." *I drew them*, there is Almighty Power; but how did this power draw them? *with the cords of a man*, i.e., with rational arguments convincing the judgment. **Beasts are driven and forced, but men are drawn by reason [sanctified reason! from a renewed mind]**, and will not move without it, if they act like themselves. It must be confessed, that when the day of God's power is come for the bringing home of a poor sinner to Christ, he cannot resist the power of God's Spirit, that draws him effectually: "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" [there's the communication of the knowledge of God that occurs at conversion, Col. 3:10, "renewed in knowledge...", 1Jn5:20, "...has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true..." that is, God in Christ.] yet still the soul comes freely by the consent of his will; for this is the method of Christ in drawing souls to him. There is in the day of a sinner's conversion a *kid*, an *offer* made for the will, both by Satan and Christ; Satan bids riches, honors, and pleasures, with ease and quietness to the flesh in the enjoyment of them. Abide where thou art, saith Satan, remain with me, and thou shalt escape all the persecutions, losses, and troubles of the world, which conscience entangles other men in; thou shalt draw thy life through peace and pleasure to thy dying day. O, saith the flesh, this is a good motion, what can be better for me? But then, saith Christ, does thou not consider that all these enjoyments will quickly be at an end, and what shall become of thee then? Behold, I offer you the free, full, and final pardon of your sins; peace and reconciliation with God; treasures in heaven; all these shall be yours with troubles, reproaches, and persecutions in this world. The understanding and conscience of a sinner being convinced of the vanity of earthly things, and the indispensable necessity of pardon and peace with God; I say, when a convinced judgment hath duly balanced these things, and laid them before the will, and the Spirit of God **puts forth his power in the renovation of it; it moves towards Christ freely, and yet cannot, according to its natural order, act otherwise than it doth.**

[hence, irresistible grace, 2Chron. 20:6, ...*none is able to withstand you.*] And, doubtless, this is the true meaning of that expression so often mistaken and abused, in Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in." What! By forcing men against the light of their consciences? [As Arminians falsely accuse Calvinists, the reformed] No; to the shame of many Protestants let us hear the gloss of Stella, a Popish commentator upon the place, 'Christ (saith he) compels men to come in, by showing to their will such an excelling good as it cannot but embrace.' For *voluntas naturaliter fertur in bonum*, the will is naturally carried to the best good. And thus the Spirit works upon the soul harmoniously, and agreeably to its own nature.

Comments by AW Pink on
 God's Will, Man's Will and Acts are Consistent with
 God's Decrees & Divine Covenants
 Compatibilism & Concurrence

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From the divine side, the covenant of grace is "ordered in all things and sure." There is not the slightest possibility of anything in it failing. Christ will "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," and not one of those given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world will be lost. But that does not alter the fact that while the elect are left here in this world they are bidden to "make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10), "if they may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also they were apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). The covenant has provided for the communication of effectual grace to secure the saints' obedience and perseverance; yet

that does not alter the fact that God still enforces His righteous claims upon them and deals with them as moral agents who are required to heed His warnings, obey His precepts, and use the means He has appointed for their preservation.

Some experience difficulty in fitting together those Scriptures which present eternal life as the present and inalienable possession of the believer with other passages that place it in the future and as only being attained unto by following a course of self-denial. Such verses as John 5:24 and Romans 6:23 are quite simple to them; but Romans 6:22; 8:13; Galatians 6:8; and Jude 21 they are at a loss to know what to do with. But there is nothing inconsistent between a believer acting from a principle of grace and life already communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, and his so acting that he may live. A man must be alive before he can eat; yet he must eat in order that he may live. Were he to cease entirely from the taking of food, would there be any life for him in a month's time? Neither would the Christian enter heaven if he entirely neglected the means of grace appointed for his spiritual preservation.

Of old, Moses said unto Israel, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. 30:6). Was he, then, inconsistent when, at the close of the same address, he declared: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: For he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (vv. 19, 20)? Was Moses there setting before them a "yea and nay gospel"? Emphatically, no; for he was the mouthpiece of Jehovah Himself. Nor was this appeal a "legal" one, but a strictly "evangelical" one. [compare Deut. 10:16 with verse 30:6] Alas, that so many today err, "not knowing the Scriptures." "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations"—not merely from Moses till Christ (Deut. 7:9)—yes, and with no others. This verse is just as much a part of the holy and inspired Word of God as is Ephesians 2:8, 9; and the one is needed by us as much as the other. It might be objected, This is bringing in a legalistic inducement and inculcating a mercenary spirit to put the believer upon using means in order to obtain his preservation, and setting before him heaven or eternal life as a reward for his faithfulness. In reply, let us quote from the renowned and evangelical Dutch theologian:

"A mercenary baseness is certainly unworthy of the high-born sons of God, but their heavenly Father does not forbid them to have any regard to their own advantage in the exercise of holiness. David himself confesseth that, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 'By them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward' (Ps. 19:9, 11). And the faith of Moses is commended because 'he had respect unto the recompense of the reward' (Heb. 11:26). Yea, that faith is required of all who come to God, that they 'must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him'—Heb. 11:6" (from Irenicon, by H. Witsius, 1696).

To anticipate one more objection—not with any expectation of convincing the carping critic, but rather in the hope of helping some who are in a state of bewilderment from the one-sided teaching of our unhappy day—**But does not all of the above inculcate the principle of human merit? No, for it is due alone to divine grace that the believer has had communicated to him a principle of obedience—a heart or nature which desires to please God.** Furthermore, it is solely for Christ's sake that God so liberally rewards the sincere endeavors of His people, for apart from the Mediator and His merits, they could not be accepted by Him. **Finally, there is no proportion whatever between the Christian's obedience and the reward he receives—the inheritance infinitely exceeding his poor efforts**—any more than there was in God's giving Canaan to Abraham and his seed because he left Chaldea.

False Conversions: How and Why

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Excerpt from vol. 4, pg 202

John Flavel

This sheds great light on the danger of the sinner's prayer and why so many people advocate it's use and why many seem so genuine in its practice!

Inference 1. If the opening of the heart to Christ be the great and direct intention and end of the gospel, *How are they deceived that bless themselves in the attainment of some lesser end and intentions of the gospel, whilst the great end (the effectual persuasion of the will to Christ) not at all effected upon them?* There are some collateral strokes, some by-effects as I may call them, which the gospel hath upon men. It would pity a wise considerate man to see how poor souls hug themselves with a conceited happiness in these lesser things, whilst they still stick fast in the state of unregeneracy. I

would fain undeceive such mistaken wretches who bow down under the power of self-deceit, and that in so great and important a point, in which their eternal salvation is concerned. There be two things which are exceeding apt to deceive men in this matter; namely,

1. Partial convictions on the understanding.
2. Transient motions upon the affections.

In these two things multitudes deceive themselves, as if the whole design of the gospel were accomplished upon them therein. (1.) **Partial convictions upon the understanding**; light and knowledge breaking into the mind, producing orthodoxy of judgment; this seems to be the effectual opening of the understanding to Christ, though alas! to this day they never saw sin in its vileness, much less their own special sin; nor Christ in his suitableness and necessity. People that live under the gospel can hardly avoid the improvement of their understandings by the light that shines upon them; knowledge grows, parts thrive; these enable them to discourse and defend the points of religion excellently. Yea, it may be from the strength of these gifts, they can pray with commendable variety and largeness of expression; these things beget applause from men, and confidence in yourselves, whilst all the while no saving influences are shed down to quicken, change, and spiritualize the heart. (2.) There are transient motions and touches of the gospel upon the affections, which give some men their **melting pangs** and moods now and then under the word, though it never settles into a spiritual frame, an habitual heavenliness of temper; of such the apostle speaks, Heb. 6:5. And this is the more dangerous, because they now seem to have attained all that is essential to religion, or necessary to salvation. For when unto the light of their understandings there shall be added melting affections, a man now seems to be complete in all that the gospel requires to the being and constitution of a Christian, as a great divine speaks; for thus poor souls are apt to reason, If I had only light in my mind, and never found any **meltings of my affections**, I might suspect myself justly to be an hypocrite; but there are times when my **affections** as well as my **understanding**, seem to feel the power of the gospel. And yet these things may be where the heart never effectually opens to Christ; all this may be but a morning dew, an early cloud, that vanishes away ; as is plain in John's hearers, John v. 35. and in Paul's hearers. Gal. 1:14, 15. For except the convictions upon the understanding be particular and effectual, and the motions upon the affections settled to a heavenly habit and temper, the man is but where he was before as to the real state and condition of his soul. Were your understanding so convinced of the evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin, and thy affections and

will thereupon so effectually determined to choose and embrace the Lord Jesus, upon a considerate and thorough examination of his own terms and articles propounded in the gospel; then you might conclude the great design of it were accomplished upon your soul; but to rest in **general convictions and transient affections** without this is but to mock and deceive your own soul. Alas! this comes not home to the main end of the gospel.

Inference 2. Learn from hence the prodigious stubbornness and hardness of the hearts of men living daily under the gospel, which still resist it, though it bear upon them in part of it. You have heard how all its commands, promises, threatenings, and examples, bear directly and jointly upon the hearts of sinners to get open the will to Christ; and yet how few are there, comparatively, that obey and answer this great design of it! All these are like heaven's great artillery planted against the unbelief and stubbornness of the hearts of men, to batter down their **carnal reasonings**, overthrow their vain hopes, and open a fair passage for Christ into their souls. 2Cor. 10:4, 5, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." If a mount be raised, and many cannon planted thereon, and all played against the wall of a fort, thousands of shots made, and yet no breach, not one stone moved out of its place, you will say, that is a strong wall indeed. Beloved, God hath, as I may say, raised a mount in the gospel, planted the great ordnance of heaven upon it, discharged many dreadful volleys of threatenings; nay, he hath as it were, come under the walls of the unbelieving soul, with terms of grace and mercy, and yet no opening; Oh prodigious obstinacy! "We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented," Matt. 11:17. Neither the sweet airs of gospel-grace, nor the dreadful thunders of the law, make any impression upon you. **O what an obdurate rock is the heart by nature!** Certainly, every Christian may see enough in others, and find enough in himself, without the help of other books to confute the **Arminian doctrine, which so extols and flatters the nature of man.** It is as possible to make an impression with your finger upon a wall of brass, as for the best sermon in the world, in its own strength, to make an **effectual saving impression** upon a sinner's will.

John Flavel, vol. 6 pg 191 Exposition of the Assembly's Catechism

Q. 6. To whom doth the Spirit apply Christ?

A. To those that were given him of the Father before the world was; Acts xiii. 48. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. John 14:17, Even the Spirit of truth,

whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [How can anyone pray in the sinner's prayer that he believes in Jesus, etc., without a spiritual sight of him or a saving knowledge of him? He can't; he is self-deceived and therefore cannot receive Him until faith be bestowed. This is a wicked presumption and yields a fatal security as is seen in Question 8] So it is here again, the cart before the horse. Calvin writes, *he [God] cannot be toughted with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes.* Confessing the Impassible God, pg 157. Study this subject of impassibility!]

Q. 8. What learn we from hence?

A. What a destitute thing the soul is that is out of Christ; Rev. 3:18, Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. [This is the state of mind of all unregenerate souls, a false peace; see Luke 11:21, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace."

And so the only way of salvation is by effectual vocation as seen in 1Cor. 1:30 and many other places, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—"

"Justifying faith is more properly called faith than acceptance, because the things received are spiritual and unseen, and because they are received as future, and entirely the free gift of God." Jonathan Edwards – Concerning Faith, p 589

We Are Passive In Our Conversion

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John Gill explains

1 Corinthians 4:7

For who maketh thee to differ from another

This question, and the following, are put to the members of this church, who were glorying in, and boasting of the ministers under whom they were converted, and by whom they were baptized, to the neglect and contempt of others; when the apostle would have them consider, and whatever difference was made between them and others, was made, not by man, but God; that whatever good and benefit they had enjoyed under their respective ministers, were in a way of receiving, and from God; and therefore they ought not to glory in themselves, nor in their ministers, but in God, who had distinguished them by his favours:

whatever difference is made among men, is of God; it is he that makes them to differ from the rest of the creation; from angels, to whom they are inferior; and from beasts, to whom they are superior; and from one another in their person, size, shape, and countenance, which is a physical, or natural difference. It is God that makes them to differ from one another in things of a civil nature; as kings and subjects, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, which may be called a political, or civil difference; and there is an ecclesiastical difference which God makes in his own people, who have gifts differing one from another; there are diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations among them, and all from the same spirit: but the grand distinction God has made among men, lies in his special, distinguishing, and everlasting love to some, and not others; in his choice of them in Christ unto everlasting salvation; in the gift of them to Christ in the eternal covenant; in the redemption of them by his blood; in his powerful and prevalent intercession for them; in God's effectual calling of them by his grace; in his resurrection of them from the dead to everlasting life, placing them at Christ's right hand, and their entrance into everlasting glory; when the distinction will be kept up, as in the above instances, throughout the endless ages of eternity; all which is owing, not to anything of man's, but to the free grace, sovereign will, and good pleasure of God.

And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?

whatever mercies and blessings men enjoy, they have in a way of receiving, and from God the Father of all mercies: all natural and temporal mercies are received from him; even such as respect the body, the make, form, and shape of it, perfection of limbs, health, strength, food, raiment, preservation of life, continuance in being, with all the comforts of it: and such as relate to the soul, its formation, which is by the father of spirits, its powers and faculties, natural light, reason, and understanding, all its endowments, abilities, all natural parts, and sharpness of wit; so that no man ought to glory in his wisdom, as if it was owing to himself, when it is all of God. All supernatural and spiritual blessings are received from God; such as a justifying righteousness, sanctifying grace, remission of sin, the new name of adoption, strength to perform good works, to bear and suffer reproach and persecution for Christ, and to persevere to the end, with a right and title to eternal glory.

Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?

To glory in any mercy, favour, or blessing received from God, as if it was not received from him, but as owing to human power, care, and industry, betrays wretched vanity, stupid and more than brutish ignorance, horrid ingratitude, abominable pride and wickedness; and is contrary to the grace of God, which teaches men humility and thankfulness. To God alone should all the blessings of nature, providence, and grace be ascribed; he ought to have all the glory of them; and to him, and him only, praise is due for them. That proud Arminian, Grevinchovius ^{F20}, in answer to this text, said,

``I make myself to differ; since I could resist God, and divine predetermination, but have not resisted, why may not I glory in it as of my own?''

We Have Abraham as Our Father!

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Ignorance of Regenerating Grace, Costly

Now multitudes think they are really saved by saying a prayer and by making a profession, yet wholly ignorant of any sovereign work upon their hearts. Many remain deluded by this means and settled into a stupid security, remain asleep and expose themselves to many other delusions and fatal securities. Hence the great duty of Christians is to examine themselves, to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, to use all diligence to make their call and election sure!

John Flavel, pg 104, Vol. 4 England's Duty

Look over Satan's kingdom, and you shall find a general stillness and quietness among his subjects; there is no trouble for sin, no strivings after salvation, no cryings out,

"What shall we do to be saved?" [Luke 11:21, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace."] Go into the crowds of carnal men and women, and you shall find them all intent and busy about other matters. How long shall you be in their company before you hear one groan for sin, or see one tear slide from their eyes on that account? Oh! What a marvellous thing is here! Do not their consciences know the guilt that lies upon them? Are they not aware of a day of reckoning which approaches? Yes, yes, these things are not hid from their consciences. What art then is used to keep them so still and quiet? Why, there are divers rattles to still the consciences of sinners, and they do it effectually. There are four causes and occasions of this wonderful stillness in the souls of sinners.

1. Ignorance of the nature of regenerating grace, taking that for regeneration, which is none of it; thus did the Jews, John 8:25, confidently affirm God to be their God, and yet they did not know him. How many poor ignorant creatures think there is no need of any other work of regeneration, but what passed upon them in baptism? They were born and baptized Christians, and that is enough, they think, to save them. Mat. 3:9, "We have Abraham as our father." They thought it sufficient that Abraham's blood ran in their veins, though there were not a spark of Abraham's faith kindled in their souls. The Lord forgive the sin of those men that lead poor souls into such fatal mistakes. Oh if men were but aware of the necessity of a greater and farther work to pass upon their souls than their baptism, common powerless profession, [e.g., the sinner's prayer] or the similar works which appear upon formal hypocrites, heaven and earth would ring with their cries. But ignorance of the nature and necessity of special regenerating grace, like a dose of opium casts the consciences of many into this deep sleep.

2. Freedom from grosser sins and pollutions of the world, stills and quiets the consciences of thousands; they have had a civil, sober, and fair education ; and though there be no grace and regeneration, yet what saints do they seem to themselves, being adorned with sobriety and civility! This stilled the conscience of the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Thus, like delicate Agag, they spruce up themselves with moral homolitical virtues, wherein many thousand Heathens were more gay than themselves; but justice will hew them to pieces as Agag was, for all their moral ornaments and endowments.

3. The strict performance of the external duties of religion quiets the consciences of many ; they question not but those that do so well shall fare well, and that God will never damn men and women that keep their church and say their prayers as they do. Thus the carnal Jews deluded themselves, crying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." As malefactors,

in some of our neighboring kingdoms, fly to the church from the hand of justice, so do these; but God will pluck them from the horns of the altar, and convince them that the empty name of religion is no security from damnation.

4. Many consciences are still and quieted in a natural, sinful state, by misinterpreting the voices of providence; it may be God prospers your earthly affairs, succeeds and smiles upon your undertakings; and this you conclude must be a token of his love and favour. But alas! this is a great mistake, the Lord gives you better evidences of his love than these; for who prospers more in the world than wicked men? And who are more crossed than the people of God? Read Job 21 and Ps. 73 and compare both with Eccl. 9:1 and you will quickly find the vanity of all hopes built upon such a foundation.

However, by such things as these are, the god of this world blinds the eyes of multitudes.

Upon the Ingrafting of Fruit-trees

code232

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:18 ESV

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Matthew 7:16-20 NKJV

More scriptural evidence that the sinner's prayer is built on sand, proceeding from natural principles, from the corrupt stock of Adam which corrupts all that comes forth, even though it looks like good fruit, i.e., sincere, humble, etc. He who is unconverted, is still *in Adam*, is a *bad tree* from which nothing good, nothing holy, nothing pleasing to God, can proceed; making any kind of prayer to God for anything, highly provoking, and

presumptuous. How this is so, Flavel explains below. Additional comments by Elisha Coles.

*Ungrafted trees can never bear good fruit;
Nor we, till grafted on a better root.
John Flavel, Husbandry Spiritualized, p 141, Vol. 5*

OBSERVATION

A WILD tree naturally springing up in the wood or hedge, and never grafted or removed from its native soil, may bear some fruit, and that fair and beautiful to the eye ; but it will give you no content at all in eating, being always harsh, sour, and unpleasant to the taste; but if such a stock be removed into a good soil, and grafted with a better kind, it may become a good tree, and yield store of choice and pleasant fruit.

APPLICATION.

UNREGENERATE men, who never were acquainted with the **mystery of spiritual union with Jesus Christ**, but still **grow upon on their natural root, old Adam**, may, by the force and power of natural principles, bring forth some fruit, which, like the wild hedge fruit we speak of, may, indeed, be fair and pleasant to the eyes of men, but God takes no pleasure at all in it; it is sour, harsh, and distasteful to him, **because it springs not from the Spirit of Christ**, Isa. 1:13, "I cannot away with it, it is iniquity," etc. But that I may not entangle the thread of my discourse, I shall (as in the former chapters) set before you a parallel betwixt the best fruits of natural men, and those of a wild ungrafted tree. [Already you are seeing why men think the sinner's prayer is ok because it looks like good fruit from the outward looks of it, which lends credibility to this prayer and so beguiles many into trusting in it. The fact is, that nothing good, i.e., holy and acceptable to God, no matter how good it looks, can come from a bad tree, Matt. 7:16, above. The tree must be made good through *regeneration*.]

1. The root that bears this wild fruit is a degenerate root, **and that is the cause of all this sourness and harshness in the fruit it bears**; it is the seed of some better tree accidentally blown, or cast into some waste and bad soil, where not being manured and ordered aright, it is turned wild. **So all the fruits of unregenerate men flow from the first Adam, a corrupt and degenerate root**; he was indeed planted a right seed, but soon turned a wild and degenerate plant; he being the root from which every man naturally springs, **corrupts all the fruit that any man bears from him**. It is observed by Gregory pertinently to my present purpose, *Genus humanum in parente primo, velut in*

radice putruit; Mankind was putrefied in the root of its first parent; Matt. 7:18, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

2. **This corrupt root spoils the fruit**, by the transmission of its sour and naughty sap into all the branches and fruits that grow upon it; they suck no other nourishment, but what the root affords them, and that being bad, spoils all; [all prayers, works, etc.] **for the same cause and reason, no mere natural or unregenerate man can ever do one holy or acceptable action**, because the corruption of the root is in all those actions. The necessity of our drawing corruption into all our actions, from this cursed root Adam, is expressed by a quick and smart interrogation. Job xiv. 4, "**Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.**" The sense of it is well delivered us (by .Mr. Caryl, *in loc.*) This question (saith he) may undergo a twofold construction. First, thus. Who can bring a morally clean person out of a person originally unclean ? and so he lays his hand upon his birth sin. Or, Secondly, which speaks to my purpose, it may refer to the action of the same man; man being unclean, cannot bring forth a clean thing; i.e., a clean or holy action; that which is originated is like its original. And that this sour sap of the first stock (I mean Adam's sin) is transmitted into all mankind, not only corrupting their fruit, but ruining and withering all the branches, the apostle shows us in that excellent parallel betwixt the two Adam's, Rom. 5:1, "Wherefore, as by one man [one, not only in *individuo*, sed "in *specie*, one representing the whole root or stock,] sin entered "into the world;" not by imitation only, but by propagation; and this brought death and ruin upon all the branches.

3. Although these wild hedge-fruits be unwholesome and unpleasant to the taste, **yet they are fair and beautiful to the eye**; a man that looks upon them, and doth not know what fruit it is, would judge it by its show and colour, to be excellent fruit; **[that is the deception and self-deceiving properties of the sinner's prayer!] for it makes a fairer show oftentimes than the best and most wholesome fruit doth; even so, these natural gifts and endowments which some unregenerate persons have, seem exceeding fair to the eye, and a fruit to be desired.** What excellent qualities have some mere natural men and women! What a winning affability, humble condescension, meekness, righteousness, ingenuous tenderness and sweetness of nature! **[which is why those who say the sinner's prayer look so convincing and sincere]** As it was (hyperbolically enough) said of one. *In hoc homine, non peccavit Ada*: Adam never sinned in this man; meaning that he excelled the generality of Adam's children in sweetness of temper and natural endowments. What curious phantasies, nimble wits, solid judgments, tenacious memories, rare elocution, etc., are to be found among mere natural men ! by which they are assisted in discoursing, praying, preaching and writing to the admiration of such as know them. **But that which is highly esteemed of men, is abomination to God**, Luke

xvi. 15. **It finds no acceptance with him, because it springs from that cursed root of nature, and is not the production of his own Spirit. [that's the sum of it.]**

4. If such a stock were removed into a better soil and grafted with a better kind, it might bring forth fruit pleasant and grateful to the husbandman; and if such persons (before described) **were but regenerated and changed in their spirits and principles**, what excellent and useful persons would they be in the church of God? And then their fruits would be sweet and acceptable to him. One observes of Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, that they came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold, i.e., they came into the church full of excellent human learning, which did Christ much service.

5. When the husbandman cuts down his woods or hedges, he cuts down these crab stocks with the rest, because he values them not any more than the thorns and brambles among which they grow; and as little will God regard or spare these natural branches, how much soever they are laden with such fruit. The threatening is universal, John iii. 3, "Except you be regenerate, and born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, Heb. 12:14, "**Without holiness no man** (be his natural gifts never so excellent) **shall see God.**" [an unregenerate sinners saying the sinner's prayer has not holiness yet; he is still a bad tree. So how can see even see the object (Christ) of his so called faith? He can't! It is just a fancy in his mind; a God of his own making. The true God and Christ, he is still blind to and he still hates, etc.] **Embellished nature, is nature still**, "That which is born of the flesh, is but flesh," however it be set off with advantage to the eye of man.

REFLECTIONS

A Presumptuous Soul's Reflection

By Elisha Coles

A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty, Ch3

1. To what purpose then do I glory in my natural accomplishments? Though I have a better an nature than some others have, yet it is a cursed nature still. These sweet qualities and excellent gifts, do only hide, but not kill the corruption of nature, I am but a rotten post gilded over, and all my duties but hedge-fruity which on, God makes no account of. **O cunning thought!** That the unlearned shall rise and take heaven, when I with all my excellent gifts shall descend into hell. Heaven was not made for scholars, as such, but for believers; as one said, when they comforted him upon his deathbed, that he was a knowing man, a *doctor of divinity*; O, said he, I shall not appear before God as a doctor, but as a man; I shall stand upon a level with the most illiterate in the day of judgment. What does it avail me that I have a nimble wit, while I have none to do myself good? Will my judge be charmed with a rhetorical tongue? Things will not be carried in that world, as they are in this. If I could, with Berengarius, discourse *de omni scibili*, of everything that is knowable; or with Solomon, unravel nature from the cedar, to the hyssop, what would this advantage me, as long as I am ignorant of Christ, and

the mystery of regeneration? My head hath often ached with study, **but when did my heart ache for sin?** Methinks, O my soul! thou trimmest up thyself in these **natural ornaments**, to appear before God, as much as that delicate Agag did, when he was to come before Samuel, and **fondly conceited** [effect of sinner's prayer, a fatal security] that these things would procure favour, or, at least, pity from him; but yet think not, for all that, *the bitterness of death is past*. Say not within thyself, Will God cast such a one as I into hell? Shall a man of such parts be damned? Alas? Justice will hew thee to pieces, as Samuel did that spruce king, and not abate thee the least for these things; **many thousand branches of nature, as fair and fruitful as thyself**, are now blazing in hell, because not transplanted by regeneration into Christ; and if he spared not them, neither will he spare thee. Flavel, p 141

"O see the vileness of thy nature, and the necessity of a change to pass upon it! First make the tree good, and then his fruit good; a new nature will produce new words and actions. To bind your souls with vows and resolutions, while you are strangers to a regenerate work, is to bind Samson with green withs, whilst his locks remain upon his head." [green withs = undried twigs or crude vegetable stalks, easily broken] Flavel, pg 314 Vol. V

At the latter day Christ will know none but such as have made "their robes white in the blood of the Lamb." All hangby's and ivyclaspers will then be shaken off, and those only retained that have his substance in them. Many shall come, and plead their works, what they have been, and what they have done [or what they professed in a sinner's prayer]; and their old hypocrisy will be so immoveable and impudent, that they will even expostulate the matter with him; "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works!" Matthew 7:22, of whom our Lord will profess, that he knows them not; "no, nor he never knew them." verse 23. His own he knows, by their likeness to him: he knows, and cannot but know, the members of his body: "my sheep I know, but who are ye?" will he then say to all that are but professing members of him; which will (indeed) be a doleful conclusion of their groundless (though specious) confidence: look to it therefore in time.

The Saving Knowledge of Christ

code233

It is the gift of God, not of works, not of any effort on man's part; he is wholly passive in his conversion, regarding the very first act of faith. Prior to this, man can do nothing to effect his salvation.

For who ^[a] makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*? *1Cor. 4:7*

My comments in [blue], red for emphasis

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

SAVING KNOWLEDGE NO. 782

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 24, 1867,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.” John 4:10.

<https://www.spurgeongems.org/vols13-15/chs782.pdf>

THE matter will turn, this morning, upon those few words, “If you knew the gift of God.” The woman of Samaria, who was met by our Lord at the well, was an object of electing love, but she was not yet regenerated. One difficulty alone lay in the way—she was an honest ingenuous spirit, willing to receive the truth, perfectly willing to be obedient to it. But ignorance lay like a stone before the door of her sepulcher. “If you knew the gift of God,” says Christ, “then you would have asked, and I would have given.” There was the one barrier. If that could be removed, she would be a saved soul.

The impediment which lay so much in her way was ignorance concerning the Lord Jesus Himself. She was not an uninstructed woman. She was evidently acquainted at least with portions of Biblical history. She could speak of “Father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle.” She was versed certainly in the peculiarities of her sect. “How is it that you, being a Jew, ask for a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

She was equally well-acquainted with the hopes which were common to her people and to the Jewish nation—“I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.” She was not, therefore, kept out of the kingdom on account of ignorance. In these matters she was better instructed. I am afraid there are some of you—for, alas! in this age there are hundreds of people who are educated in everything except their Bibles—who could answer questions upon most sciences, but concerning Christ crucified, they know not even so much as the very elements. But the point which kept this woman, I say, out of the kingdom was this, that she did not know

Christ. She knew not “the gift of God,” and who it was that said to her, “Give me to drink.”

And this, indeed, is enough to keep any of us out of peace, and life, and joy, for, until we know God in human flesh, we cannot find peace and comfort. The great riddle of, “What must I do to be saved?” remains unsolved till we know Christ and are found in Him. We may go about, and we may study this, and that, and the other, but we shall remain fools in the matters of eternal salvation until we come and sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and know Him, and are known of Him.

I shall essay, this morning, as God may help me, to speak with you upon **spiritual ignorance**, upon what would follow if that ignorance were removed, hoping that I may be allowed to say a few stirring things to some of you, to induce you to get rid of any ignorance which now bars you out of peace, and that others of you who know the truths of Jesus Christ, may be more earnest to tell to the unenlightened what you know yourselves, lest they should perish and their blood should be required at your hands.

I shall commence, then, this morning, by some few remarks upon the gift of God and the knowledge of it. And then, secondly, I shall turn to the “if” of the text, and what then? And thirdly, I shall take up the “if” of the text once more, and show what it has to do with the believer.

I. First, our text speaks of A GIFT AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

The latter half of the verse informs us that the gift of God is no other than the Man who spoke to the woman and said, “Give me to drink.” In fact, Jesus Christ is “God’s unspeakable gift” for whom we should daily and hourly lift up our hearts in gratitude to God. Christ was God’s gift to the fallen seed of man. Long ere this world was made, He ordained in His eternal purpose that Christ should be the covenant Head of His elect, their Surety, and their Redeemer: He gave Christ to us before He spread the starry sky. He was the Father’s goodly gift when the fullness of time was come. Many promises had heralded the Master’s coming, and at last He appeared, a babe of a span long in His mother’s arms.

His holy life and His suffering death were the gifts of God to us, for “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” To the whole company of God’s elect, Christ

Jesus is the priceless boon which the Father's love has bestowed upon them. And when you and I receive Jesus Christ into our heart, He evermore comes as a gift. **The faith by which we receive Him is a gift—the gift of God is faith, but Jesus Christ Himself never comes to a soul that has faith, as a reward.** [that's key; see Owen's comment on this. see end of [code293](#), or [code250](#) – on the 8th page]

No man ever received Christ by the works of the law or the deeds of the flesh. It is not possible, my brethren, that the highest and most perfect obedience should ever deserve such a reward as the gift of the Son of God. Conceive of any virtue, and you will not dare to blaspheme so much as to think that it could deserve the death of Christ. No, the price is too great to be a recompense for any of our exertions [i.e., any work of our own doings, e.g., sinner's prayer, sacraments of any kind, etc.] . It is the **spontaneous boon of heaven given to us, not on the footing of the law** [upon which the sinner's prayer is founded, it is a *legal act from a legal spirit or principle*, as opposed to an *evangelical spirit from a new principle of spiritual life, saving faith, true love for God.*], but on the grounds of the **sovereign grace of God, who gives as He wills** [Rom. 9:16] to the unworthy sons of men.

If you come to God with a price in your hands, you shall not have Christ. If you come to God thinking to force your way to heaven, or supposing that you could **even contribute towards your entrance there**, you shall find **the gates of the law shutting you out forever**. But if you come humbly penitent [which only converted people can do], confessing your soul-poverty, and plead with the Father that He would give to you His Son, you shall receive the gift of God into your soul most freely. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.” “We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” **Man is dead in sin, but Christ is a gift bringing life to the dead.**

The text uses the definite article, “If you knew the gift of God,” setting Christ as God's gift beyond all other gifts. True, the light of the sun is the gift of God to us. There is not a piece of bread we eat, nor a drop of water we drink, but what it may be called the gift of God. But the gift which comprehends, excels, and sanctifies all other gifts, is the gift of Jesus Christ to the sons of men. I wish I had the power to speak as I should of this gift,

but I am reminded by God's Word that it is "unspeakable." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

I can comprehend God's giving the earth to the children of men, giving to Adam and his seed dominion over all the works of His hands. I think I can understand God's giving heaven to His people, and permitting them to dwell at His right hand forever and ever. But that God should give the only begotten, "very God of very God," to take upon Himself our nature, and in that nature actually to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—this we cannot understand, and even the angels with their mightier intellects cannot grasp it fully. They look into it, but as they gaze they desire to see more, for even they feel they cannot search this out to perfection. An unfathomable depth of divine love is there in the condescending lovingkindness which gave Jesus Christ to die for us when we were yet sinners.

Beloved, it is an unrivalled gift. God has given to us such a treasure, that if heaven and earth were melted down, the price could not buy another like to Him. All eternity cannot yield such a person as the Lord Jesus. Eternal God, You have no equal! and becoming Son of Man, Your condescension has nothing that can rival it. Oh, what a gift! You cannot conceive of anything that you can put side by side with it. It is a gift, beloved, which comprehends all things within itself. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Get Christ and you have the pardon of sin, the justification of your person. **In the bowels of that redemption you shall find sanctification, adoption, regeneration.** Every covenant gift is wrapped up in Christ Jesus. "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me," not one sprig of it, but a whole bundle. All things that can possibly be needed for the Christian for time and for eternity, are given to him in the person of the Lord Jesus.

And as this gift comprehends all, so it sweetens all. Temporal mercies without Christ are like ciphers without a figure. But when you have these temporal mercies, and Christ stands in front of them, oh, what an amount they make! Temporal mercies without Christ are unripe fruit. But when Christ shines upon them, they grow mellow and sweet. Temporal mercies without Christ are the dry rivers—Christ fills them to the brim. They are like trees with leaves only, but Christ comes to give them fruit upon which we may live.

Brethren, what are all the mercies of this life to us without Christ? Would they not make our souls hunger? “Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you.” The full wine vat, or the barn that needs to be enlarged, what would these be without a Savior? O God, take them all away if You will, but give us more of Christ. Fill our hearts with the love of Christ, and You may empty the cupboard and purse if You will. Mercies are blessed when we have Christ with them, but if Christ be gone, they are but empty vanities.

Our Lord Jesus Christ **is a gift** [if we ask for it (assuming we know it, which we don't as the woman did not), before we actually ask, then it is no more a gift but a debt that God owes us. As Martin Luther said, “No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God.”] most precious moreover, my brethren, because he who gets it is sure that he has the favor of God. Other mercies do not necessarily bring with them God’s favor. God gives the most of this world full often to wicked men. He pours the husks out to the swine. As for His children, He often wrings out to them a full cup of bitterness. This world is not our portion, as we know right well. The wicked have their portion here, and they are full of fatness. Their houses are full of store, and they leave the rest of their substance unto their babes.

But get Christ, and you have God’s favor—you are sure of it. This is “The blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” It is a right-hand and a left-hand blessing. Get Christ, and it is all blessing and no curse whatsoever. If you have Christ, as sure as you live, God loves you, for there never was a soul that had Christ’s name written upon its forehead but what eternal love had inscribed it there, and in that writing had given a sure evidence and pledge of love that could not end.

If you have Christ, again, you must prize the gift, because this is a token of your everlasting salvation. Hell never did enclose within its gates a single soul that rested on the cross of Christ, and it never shall. If you have Christ, you have the melodies of heaven, you have the goodly land that “flows with milk and honey.” You shall never bear the wrath of God, Christ has borne it for you. You shall never hear it said, “Depart, you cursed,” for Christ has said it, “You are blessed forever and ever,” yea, and you shall be blessed.

We shall now turn to the further thought which stands linked to the one I have thus tried to lay before you.

In the text knowledge is put with the gift, “If you knew the gift of God.” Yonder woman in the wilderness is sorely vexed, her heart is ready to break. She has left the abode of her master, and journeyed far. She is faint herself, but a far greater trouble depresses her. Her child, her only boy, lies under yonder shrubs to die for want of a drop of water. Do you see the anguish depicted on her face? Do you hear her bitter cries? Ah, woman, you may well wipe your eyes, your distress is causeless. You have room for thanksgiving, and not for sorrow. Yonder is a spring of water, dip your pitcher and refresh your child. But beloved, what was the use of the spring of water to her if she could not see it? Till her eyes were opened, Hagar could not see that God had provided for her—she must suffer and her child must die till she could perceive the supply.

It is so with the gift of God. Beloved, until we know Christ, we famish for Him, but we find no relief. A sense of need is a very blessed work of grace, but it will not save you. You must get beyond knowing your need, you must perceive, accept, and enjoy the supply, or else assuredly you will perish, none the less because of your knowledge of your need. Now, a knowledge of Christ is the gift of God. No man ever knew Christ experientially and truly, except by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. In vain for those who are the **advocates of free agency and human power to talk** [will worship, the foundation of the sinner's prayer], but wherever you meet with a gracious spirit [a converted soul], you will be sure to find the confession that it was as much the work and gift of God to give us faith as to give us the object of faith—

“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in.
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perish’d in our sin.”

If God did nothing more for men than provide a Savior, and leave it for them to accept, if He never operated upon their souls and affections by His Holy Spirit, not one of Adam’s race would ever enter into eternal life. [Why? Because unconverted man is unwilling, blind, bound by sin and Satan, etc. He must be set free by the Spirit, etc.] If you would have a knowledge of Christ, you must have it through the Holy Spirit, for this

comes not by the works of the law [i.e., a prayer, a legal act], nor by the efforts of the flesh. **That which is born of the flesh is still flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and can make you acquainted with spiritual truth.**

A saving knowledge of Christ is always personal. The man does not take it at second hand, he does not get it from what his mother told him. She may be the instrument, the happy instrument, but the man learns for himself, or else he does not know savingly. Beware, beloved, of copying your religion out of other men's books. **It must be written with the pen of the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tablet of your own heart [part of regeneration],** or else you know nothing aright.

Observe also, that as this knowledge is spiritual, so, as it is spoken of in the text, it immediately concerns Christ. All other knowledge, whatever it may be, will fail to save unless we know the gift of God, unless we are clearly acquainted with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. **[And this must be given to us (freely, i.e., by free grace, not of ourselves, but by the will of God just as Christ was revealed to Peter by the Father, not by flesh and blood...Matt. 16:17)]** I say, with the person, for let me insist upon it, it is necessary for you and me to rest wholly upon the person, work, and righteousness of Jesus. You may know a great deal about His offices, you may have read much about what He did, but you must pass through all these, and get to Himself—"Come unto ME," says He, "all you who labor and are heavy laden." At His feet your soul must cast itself down, kissing the Son lest He be angry. Before Him, the Great High Priest, you must present yourselves, desiring to be sprinkled with His precious blood, and to be saved in Him. Remember He is a man like yourselves. Though "God over all, blessed forever," yet is He man of the substance of His mother. Let your soul advance to Him in thought this morning, lay hold upon Him!

If you cannot put your finger into the print of the nails, and your hand into His side literally, with Thomas, yet do it spiritually. Remember, it is to know Christ and His cross, which is the saving knowledge. And everything short of this will leave you short of eternal life. Brethren, it must be spiritual knowledge. Any acquaintance with Christ that can be derived from pictures, or that may come to us through the use of outward symbols, will be all valueless. **We must know Christ, not after the flesh, by the eye and**

ear, we must comprehend Him by our inmost souls being acquainted with Him. [But this is only revealed by the Spirit.]

Our heart must trust Him. Put away the crucifix! Let your soul wear the cross, not your body! Hang not up the image of Christ on the wall, hang it upon the walls of your heart, there let His image be stored. Bear about you the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life and character, and let your contemplations and thoughts be continually exercised about Him. [All of which is the fruit of the Spirit] This is the kind of knowledge of Christ—heart-knowledge, spiritual fellowship, the knowledge of the most vital part of the man, his soul, his newborn spirit.

Now, such knowledge as this, when God has once given it to us, becomes very operative upon the entire man. [aka, a new spiritual principle of life] He has found the great secret, and he feels inclined to tell it. He has learned a great mystery, and it at once affects all the parts and passions of his nature, making a new man of him. This knowledge he never loses—he may forget much, but he never can forget Christ if he has once known Him. Like the dying saint who had forgotten his wife, forgotten his children, forgotten his own name, and yet smiled sweetly when they asked him if he remembered Christ Jesus.

This is printed on the believer's heart—the warp and woof of his being bears this, like a golden thread, right through its center. Jesus, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and let my right hand forget its cunning, but never shall my heart forget You who has given Yourself for me! This is the knowledge which we should desire, the knowledge spoken of in the text. Desire it, I beseech you, above gold, yes, seek it above much fine gold. [hence Paul commands us to seek him...to grow in this knowledge]

O you who have it not, open your mouths and pant after it! Hunger and thirst to know Christ, and take no rest, and get no satisfaction till you do know Him! If you ask me how this can be, I remind you that God alone can reveal Him to you, but yet you are to use the means. “Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life,” and these are they which testify of Christ. Attend a Christ honoring ministry! If you have been sitting under any minister who does not extol Christ, and lift Him up before you, however eloquent and intelligent he may be, leave his ministry, it is not fit for poor dying souls to listen to.

You that need salvation can only find it in Christ. Seek, therefore, a ministry that is full of Christ. Christ the first, and Christ the midst, and Christ the last, and without end. Depend upon it, as men would think it folly to deal at a shop where the bread (so called) was not bread, where the food that was given was so adulterated as to yield no nutriment, so is it a sin on our part if we do not seek out the pure unadulterated milk of the Word, and endeavor to grow thereby.

Oh! how many souls are poisoned by listening to a ministry that is not full of Christ! But oh, if you do get a ministry that savors of the Lord Jesus, hear with both your ears, drink it in. Be like the thirsty furrows that do not refuse a single drop of heaven's rain. Receive with meekness the living Word. Add to this an earnest prayer for illumination. Wait upon God each day, and say, "Show me Your Son. Lo, I would know Christ. I would know Him so as to be saved by Him." And remember, "He that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened," "Ask and it shall be given you." They who seek the Lord shall in due time be found of Him. "He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." [Keep in mind, though God commands that we obey God, seek God, believe on Christ, this does not mean that we have it ourselves to do this; we do not; the Spirit must work it! There is much to say on this. God's salvation, his revealing the Son, is all left up to him; the council of his own will, not man's will in doing, seeking, etc. It is monergistic (God alone) as opposed to synergistic (God and man working together).]

II. The first word of the text is "If." "If you knew the gift of God." "IF." AND WHAT THEN?

The "if" seems to me to wear a black side. It supposes that there are many who do not know "the gift of God." Alas! no supposition, but a fearful fact. Dear hearer, may I ask you to look to your own soul now? You are a church member. You have been considered to be a Christian from your youth till the present time. At least you have reckoned yourself to be so. But ask yourself if you now know the gift of God. Is Jesus Christ all in all to you? Do you rest on Him as the unbuttressed pillar of your confidence? **Do you love Him? Is He your Master? Are you conformed unto His image?** Have you ever spoken to Him? Has He ever had communion with you—supping with you, and you with Him?

As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you know not Christ, your high profession is but a painted pageant to go to hell in. Your fancied experience is a will-o'-

the-wisp leading you to destruction, and all your **fond hopes** shall come tumbling about your ears, like a house that is **founded on sand**, which totters in the day of storm. I pray you, then, dear hearers, as you would be right at the last, make heart-searching inquiries now, and let this be the question, Whether you know the gift of God in your soul or no?

But we will deal better with the bright side, knowing that there are many here who do not know the grace of God at all, it is a mercy to think that they may know it, for the “If you knew” implies that some who do not know it yet may know it before they die. And thank God, some of you shall know it, and glorious results will follow at once. “If you knew the gift of God,” my dear hearer, you who are not yet converted, what a change would come over you! Let me single you out.

You are here, this morning, quite uninterested in religion. You have come here this morning out of curiosity to look at the large assembly and hear the strange preacher, but religion has no interest in it for you. Life and death, and all the problems that connect themselves with time and eternity, are nothing to you. You are a butterfly, flying from flower to flower. You have no deeper sense of things than a man of the world, who thinks to live and die, and so to come to his end.

Ah! but if you knew Christ, it would soon be different with you. That vain mind of yours would soon be full of thoughts. These worldly toys which are now so engrossing would then be put into their proper places. You would become thoughtful, and let me tell you, you would become infinitely happier than you are now, for your present ease is a hollow thing. You are afraid to try it. You dare not sit down and think for an hour of your own state and future—you know you dare not. But oh! “if you knew the gift of God,” you could endure sober thought, yea, it would be your delight. And as for the future, you would dare to look into it. Yea, it would be your greatest comfort to anticipate the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him.

As I think on some of you indifferent ones, I could gladly weep over you, not merely because of the hell which will be your portion, but because of the heaven which you are losing even now. A heaven below is to know Christ, and you are missing this. Man of pleasure! Christ is pleasure! Men who would have ease and peace! Christ is the true ease, and if you knew Him, you would find true peace.

Possibly there may be some few in this assembly to whom religion is not even a matter of indifference, but worse—they have persecuted it. They are accustomed to vent their sharpest wit upon anything religious. To them, godliness is always known by the name of cant, and if a man be known to profess religion, he is at once the butt of every sneer.

Ah, but if you knew Christ, you would not do this. Saul of Tarsus sought much the destruction of the people of God, but when once Christ had said to Him, “Why persecute you me?” and Saul understood that Christ was no other than God over all, the Redeemer of men, then he said, “Lord, what will you have me do?”

Ah, persecutor! You would be just as warm for the cause as you are hot against it if you did but know Christ. Man, you would not have the heart to spit into the face of the Crucified. You would never crucify Him afresh who died for His enemies. You would never be so cruel and barbarous as to trample on the members of Christ when you know that Christ, out of pure love, suffered for the sons of men. “If you knew the gift of God,” persecutor, it would be otherwise with you than it is now.

Ay, and there are some here who would never persecute, but nevertheless they trifle with religion. Many more belong to this class than to the two I have just mentioned. I know many of you are impressed when we are delivering the truth earnestly, and you vow what you do not pay, and you promise reformations which are never made. Ah, you triflers, you who halt between two opinions, who, like Felix, would wait for a more convenient season, “if you knew the gift of God,” this morning would be the convenient season.

Oh! **if God did but give you an understanding [1John 5:20]** of the preciousness and sweetness of Christ, you would not delay! Who delays to be crowned when the time has come for him to receive a kingdom? What heir would ever postpone the day in which he should enter into the heritage? Does the bridegroom put off the hour of his marriage? Do men wish their happiness to be removed far away? Oh, no! And if you knew what Christ would be to your soul, and what joy and blessedness you would have in receiving Him, you would say, “Now is my time as it is God’s time. O God, I give myself to You!” Trifler, may you yet know the gift of God!

Alas, there are some here who are not exactly triflers. They have serious thoughts, but they have some sin which they cannot give up. I cannot particularize cases, but there are such here. There are men here who would be Christ's, but the habit of taking intoxicating drink to excess clings hard to them. Have I not talked to some of you, who have with tears confessed the sin, and longed to be delivered from the snare, but you could not? Your besetting sins are too dear to you for you to give them up. With some it may be filthier vices still.

With others it is the thought, "Religion is too severe. To follow Christ is to give up so much. I must have a little more indulgence. I must for a little time at any rate drink of the wine of Satan's banquet." Ah, "if you knew the gift of God," **you would give up the sweetest thing earth ever knew, to know the greater sweetness of Christ.**

What! Will you put my Lord and Master in comparison with the painted harlot of this wicked world? Will you put the solid gold of heaven's kingdom in contrast with the filthy draff and dross of this world's merchandise? O my Master, You are no more to be compared to the riches and enjoyments of life, than the sun is to be likened to a glowworm. Let Christ arise in your soul, and all your starry joys will be gone. [Again, though this be the command, the Spirit must work it. We, in the flesh, cannot and will not. Rom. 8:7-8, etc.] You will find this one great joy fills your spirit to the brim and overflows, so that there is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory too great for your spirit to be able to compass. If you knew the gift of God, voluptuary, you would turn from your tables to feed on Him. You would leave your gilded couches of pomp and vanity, and all the world calls good or great. You would leave it all, turning from ashes to feed upon angels' food, even upon Christ the Lord, and the Redeemer of men.

There is another class here present, represented by some few, who would gladly be saved, but they fear they are too bad. They think that they could never be saved after delaying so long and sinning so foully. "If you knew the gift of God," you would never think that, for my Lord Jesus loves great sinners. "This Man," it is said, "receives sinners, and eats with them."

When the woman who had been a sinner washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, He did not utter an upbraiding word. The Lord is gentle, and full of compassion and tenderness and truth. He came not with a sword to slay, but

He came to be slain Himself, that we might not die. You have only to come to Him, and let this encourage you. He has said it, “Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” He cannot cast you out. He must receive you. His word binds Him to it. He cannot deny Himself, and therefore He cannot refuse you.

If it were proper for us to prolong this addressing of separate characters, I think there would be in this suggestion, “If you knew the gift of God,” something for everyone. I am sure if any of us who are now at enmity to God did but know what Christ is, if they could but know as with the knowledge I have before described, the person of the Lord Jesus, faith would follow immediately. [It is by faith, saving faith, the gift in Eph. 2:8, that is bestowed or given to us, that we come to this knowledge!] We should trust our souls to God, and feel safe in the hands of God’s appointed propitiation. Faith would be sure to be followed by prayer—we would cry to Him whom we now know, and prayer would be followed by His blessing.

At the heels of that would come holy love to Him. And holy love would prompt us to serve. Service would be followed by increasing strength, and increasing strength would augment daily joy, till we should go up Jacob’s ladder, gaining virtue after virtue by the power of the Son of God, till we were meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Each point in Christ’s character, if known, would work good in us.

For instance, “if you knew the gift of God,” that He came to save the vilest of the vile, how could you doubt or despair because of your sins? If you knew that the salvation of Christ is finished by Himself, and not by us, how could you dream of adding thereto, or think it necessary to bring your own feelings, and frames, and doings, to make the salvation complete which Christ has finished altogether apart from you? If you knew that Christ never forsook His people, would you be trembling and fearing lest in the hour of temptation He should fail you? If you knew how suitable Christ is to you, how ready He is to receive you, how full of love He is to all His people, how He feels in His heart all your pains and all your groans, how His honor is bound up in your salvation, how He has pledged Himself to bring every one of the saints to the Father’s right hand—if you knew all this, Christian, you would live above your doubts, and fears, and feelings. You would live a heavenly life, like one who has seen Christ, and then has been made like unto Him.

Beloved, if we were to take a walk, this morning, through the streets of London, how many cases we would see where we might say sorrowfully of the persons we looked upon, “Alas for you! If you knew the grace of God, what a difference would come over you!”

Perhaps at this very hour you will find the great mass of the working men in London in their shirt sleeves. It has not struck them at all that going to a place of worship is desirable. They will be lounging about. The penny paper has been taken, and they have begun to read that. But as yet the public house is not open—they feel as if there is nothing in the world to do but just lounge about and let the time run on.

Ah! stepping into such a house you might say, “If you knew the gift of God, your Sabbaths would assume quite a different appearance. You would not talk about pharisaic Sabbatarians, and the strictness of shutting up the house of drink, and only opening the house of worship, but you would feel the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable. Instead of wasting your time, it would seem to you as though Sabbaths were too short, and opportunities and means of grace too few. If you knew the gift of God, it would be otherwise with you, working man.”

Step into the next church or chapel, I do not care which, and observe the multitudes of the people going through the worship with mere **formality**, confessing what they never felt, and professing to believe what they know nothing of. [which is the essential problem of the sinner's prayer!] Ah, we might look into the face of each worshipper and say, “If you knew the gift of God, you would give up this formalism, and worship God in spirit and in truth.” We need not go far. There are many of you here in that state. May you know the gift of God, and forget formalities, and worship God in truth. At some places you may step into the church or meeting house, and listen to the minister—an eloquent address, but altogether Christless—no care about the souls of men, no dealing with human consciences. Pompous sentences, sounding periods, high flights, climaxes, and I know not what oratorical flower, but nothing concerning the weighty matter of eternity, about the undying soul, and the precious cleansing blood. Ah! preacher, “if you knew the gift of God,” if you had in your soul any sense of the preciousness of the salvation of Christ, you would preach after another fashion.

Step in where the Ritualist has dressed himself in all his gaudy apparel, flaunting like a peacock before God Himself, and you may well say to him, "If you knew the gift of God" you would lay aside these fooleries and come before God sooner in sackcloth than in your tag-rags, humbling yourself before the Most High as a poor, guilty sinner, most accursed of all the human race for having dared to call yourself a priest. For priest you are not for your fellow men, for one is priest, even Christ Jesus, and no other is priest, save only that all saints have a common priesthood which some cannot usurp to themselves alone, unless they dare to bring upon themselves the vengeance of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who called themselves priests and were not. "If you knew the gift of God," poor simpleton that you are, you would doff that priestly array, and bow before the great High Priest of our profession, and worship Him alone.

I might knock at that door yonder going down the street, after leaving that ritualistic "mass house," and might find the merchant in his counting house. He looks a little disconcerted that I should call upon him on the Sabbath morning and find him with his pen behind his ear. But he says he has no time to cast up his accounts at any other period. Ah, but "if you knew the gift of God," you would find other time, and find another occupation for this time than spending upon yourself what God claims to be His own.

I pass on into the chamber of sickness, and I see on the bed of death a sinner full of fears and dread about the world which lies before him. Listen to his groans. He has no hope. He has lived without Christ. The world has been his portion, and now he has to leave it, and he is unprepared to meet his Judge. All is dark as the pit whither he is going. How miserable his state as he feels he is parting with all he has loved, and for which he has lived, and that there is nothing before him but a dread unknown existence in another world.

Ah! if he only knew the gift of God, what a change there would be at once! What light, joy, and peace would come into that chamber! All its gloom would pass away, and in the place of it would come such rapture as would lead men to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." I shall not detain you longer. We might go down one street and up another for many a day, and we should find thousands to

whom we could say, “If you knew the gift of God, you would be another and different man from what you are.”

III. And now, lastly—THE “IF” OF OUR TEXT, AND HOW DOES IT CONCERN BELIEVERS?

It seems to me to concern believers this way. Evidently there are tens of thousands who do not know the gift of God. Inquiry, then, of the most solemn kind should at once be made, “Has this ignorance of theirs been my fault? These men know not the gift of God—how can they know it unless there is someone to teach them? How shall they hear without a preacher? Is this ignorance to be laid at my door?”

Beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you seat-holders and members of this place who know Christ yourselves, is there a person sitting next to you in the pew who does not know Christ, and have you done your best to tell him about Christ? I pause, that conscience may give its reply. And you who do often speak about Christ in the school or in the street, preaching or not preaching, let me ask you, do you so talk about Christ that people can understand you? Believe me, I try to use very simple words, but I often hear of words I have uttered which have not been understood by people present. I am always grieved when such is the case. God knows I would speak the most vulgar words I could find if people could understand them better. To me the finery of language is less than nothing. I would sooner preach Christ’s cross in the tongue of Billingsgate, if all would understand, than speak in the most polished tongue so that the poor could not comprehend me.

My dear brethren, that a soul should go to hell lost through our fine sentences, who shall be accountable for this? The watchman is not to speak in Greek to those who only know English, or even in good English to those who do not understand the language if it be well spoken. Augustine, I believe, frequently preached in exceedingly bad Latin, because it was the common talk of the people, and if he had spoken classic Latin he would not have been understood. And so must we do.

If any man does not know Christ, have you told it to him in all the ways which you can find out of making it plain and clear? If you have not, then some responsibility lies with you. Then next, suppose you have not, will you, my brethren, for the future resolve in God’s strength that if any man perishes for lack of knowledge, it shall not in the future

be your fault? Make no rash vows, but do solemnly put it to your heart. But if you cannot speak as you would, yet you will distribute such publications, and give away such tracts as may tell the Gospel simply. If you cannot do what you would, O resolve, dear brethren, to do what you can, that none here may be without the knowledge of Christ!

But though a professor, I shall venture to say to you, that the text seems to say to you, Do you know the gift of God yourself? When I asked you whether you told others about it, I think a question might have been raised—if you have not told others, it is very questionable whether you know it yourself. If you never weep for other men's sins, and never desire their salvation, you are not a saved soul. One of the first instincts of the saved soul is to say, "What can I do that others may be saved also?" Now, if you have done nothing, let a suspicion arise. And to us all, I think, there may be this query put—judging by my efforts, judging by my actions, judging by my inward feelings, may I not often ask myself, Do I know this gift of God? And may I not come, this morning, just as I did at the first, as a sinner, and look up to the wounds of Jesus, and cast myself again upon Him? If I never did believe before, Lord Jesus, I trust You now. Up till now if I have been a deceived one, here I am— “My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine: Now hear me while I pray. Take all my guilt away. Oh let me from this day Be wholly Thine.” [synergistic here; God is not dependent upon man's efforts or prayer for this knowledge; first, the sinner is wholly ignorant of this knowledge for it to properly be an object of his prayer as Spurgeon points out earlier, which makes the sinner's prayer a gross or wicked presumption; second, God is not dependent upon the creature, but the creature upon man. Second, the gift of faith is exactly that, a gift; it cannot be prayed for, otherwise, as Paul says in Romans 11, *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. It is no longer a gift, but is turned into a debt, for which God is not obliged, Romans 11:35, "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"* Now, after one is given this knowledge by faith, then the believer is commanded to ask for more, to increase his faith, to ask for his faith to be increased, Luke 17:5, and hence, Matt. 13:12, *to him who has [saving faith] more will be given...and Matt. 7:7-8, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find*; The first act of faith is wholly of God, *not of ourselves*, lest we boast; we are passive in it (John Owen and others); but subsequent acts of faith, we play a more active role, though the Spirit still works it as Edwards explains below. It is in this sense, we are

passive: we cannot ask for the first act of faith since it takes saving faith to ask for saving faith, that is, without faith we cannot please Him (Heb. 11:6), but after we have received the gift of faith, then we are commanded to pray for more of it...to seek him, to grow in grace and faith, hence, Luke 17:5, "...Lord, Increase our faith." & Matt. 7:7-8 above, and many other places; and in that sense we are more active. **Martin Luther** said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God."

We work all, God works all, we are the proper actors - Jonathan Edwards; it is not, God does all and we do nothing. Edwards explains:

§ 64. In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.]

The Danger of False Conversion

by Jonathan Edwards

And therefore this is the nature of spiritual affections, that the greater they be, the greater the appetite and longing is, after grace and holiness.

But with those joys, and other religious affections, that are false and counterfeit, it is otherwise. If before there was a great desire, of some sort, after grace; as these affections rise, that desire ceases, or is abated. It may be before, while the man was under legal convictions, and much afraid of hell, he earnestly longed that he might obtain spiritual light in his understanding, faith in Christ, and love to God: not now, when these false affections deceive him, and make him confident that he is converted, and his state good, there are no more earnest longings after light and grace; for his end is answered; he is confident that his sins are forgiven him, and that he shall go to heaven; and so he is satisfied. And especially when false affections are raised very high, do they put an end to longings after grace and holiness. The man now is far from appearing to himself a poor and empty creature; on the contrary, he is rich, and increased with goods, and hardly conceives of anything more excellent, than what he has already attained. -Jonathon Edwards, On Religious Affections

Footnote: It is an argument of want of grace, when a man saith to himself, as the

glutton said to his soul, "Take thy rest, for thou hast goods laid up for many years." So you have repentance and grace, and peace enough for many years: and hence the soul takes its rest, grows sluggish and negligent. Oh, if you die in this case, this might your soul will be taken away to hell." Shepard's Parable

Total Depravity of Man Expounded

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From this you will get a fuller appreciation for man's liableness to sin, corruption and self-reliance, and hence his complete depravity - his unwillingness and inability to believe on Christ without the sovereign, free, converting grace of God. John in John 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him;" [John Flavel & AW Pink comments below.](#)

CHAP. III

Within these smooth fac'd seas strange creatures crawl;

*But in man's heart far stranger than them all.
John Flavel Vol. 5 p 224*

OBSERVATION

IT was an unadvised saying of Plato, *Mare nil memorabile producit*: the sea produceth nothing memorable. But surely there is much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God manifested in those inhabitants of the water region; notwithstanding the sea's azure and smiling face, strange creatures are bred in its womb, "O Lord, (saith David) how manifold are thy works. In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts," Ps. 105:24, 25. And we read Lam. 4:5, of sea-monsters, which draw out their breasts to their young. Pliny and Purchas tell incredible stories about them. About the tropic of Capricorn, our seamen meet with flying fishes, that have wings like a rere-mouse [a bat], but of a silver colour; they fly in flocks like stares. There are creatures of very strange forms and properties; some resembling a cow, called by the Spaniards, *manates*, by some supposed to be the sea-monster spoken of by Jeremy. In the rivers of Guinea, Purchas saith, there are fishes that have four eyes, bearing two above, and two beneath the water, when they swim; both resembling a toad, and very poisonous. How strange, both in shape and property, is the sword-fish and thresher, that fight with the whale. Even our own seas produce creatures of strange shapes, but the commonness takes off the wonder.

APPLICATION.

Thus doth the heart of man naturally swarm and abound with strange and monstrous lusts and abominations, **Rom. 1:29, 30, 31**. "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." **O what a swarm is here! And yet there are multitudes more, in the depths of the heart!** And it is no wonder, considering that with this nature, we received the spawn of the blackest and vilest abominations. This original lust is productive of them all, James 1: 14, 15. Which lust, though it be in every man, *numerically* different from that of others, yet it is one and the same *specifically* for sort and kind, in all the children of Adam; even as the reasonable soul, though every man hath his own soul, namely, a soul individually distinct from another man's, yet it is the same for kind in all men. So that whatever abominations are in the hearts and lives of the vilest Sodomites, and the most profligate wretches under heaven; there is the same matter in thy heart out of which they were shaped and

formed. In the depths of the heart they are conceived, and thence they crawl out of the eyes, hands, lips, and all the members. Mat. 15:18, 19 "Those things (saith Christ) which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies;" even such monsters as would make a gracious heart tremble to behold. 'What are my lusts (saith one) but so many toads spitting of venom, and spawning of poison; croaking in my judgment, creeping in my will, and crawling into my affections?' The apostle in 1 Cor. v. 1. tells us of a sin, "not to be named;" so monstrous, that nature itself startles at it; even such monsters are generated in the depths of the hearts. Whence come evils? was a question that much puzzled the philosophers of old. Now here you may see whence they come, and where they are begotten.

REFLECTION.

And are there such strange abominations in the heart of man? Then how is he degenerated from his primitive perfection and glory! His streams were once as clear as crystal, and the fountain of them pure, there, was no unclean creature moving in them. What a stately fabric was the soul at first! And what holy inhabitants possessed the several rooms thereof! But now, as God speaks of Idumea, Isa. 34:11, "The line of confusion is stretched out upon it, and the stones of emptiness. The cormorant and bittern possess it; the owl and the raven dwell in it." Yea, as Isa. 13:21, 22, "The wild beasts of the desert lie there; it is full of doleful creatures, the satyrs dance in it, and dragons cry in those sometimes pleasant places." **O sad change! How sadly may we look back towards our first state!** and take up the words of Job, "O that I were as in months past, as in the days of my youth; when the Almighty was yet with me, when I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, when my glory was fresh in me," Job 29:2, 4, 5.

Again, think, O my soul, what a miserable condition the unregenerate abide in! Thus swarmed and over-run with hellish lusts, under the dominion and vassalage of divers lusts, Tit. 3:3. What a tumultuous sea is such a soul; **how do these lusts rage within them! How do they contest and scuffle for the throne!** [I think it was Edwards that said that if man knew that the throne of God was free for the taking, it wouldn't be safe for one hour.] And usually take it by turns; for as all diseases are contrary to health, yet some contrary to each other, so are lusts. Hence poor creatures are hurried on to different kinds of servitude, according to the nature of that imperious lust that is in the throne; and, like the lunatic, Mat. 17, are sometimes cast into the water, and sometimes into the fire. Well might the prophet say, "The wicked is like a troubled sea, that cannot rest," Isa. 7:20. They have no peace now in the service of sin, and less shall they have hereafter, when they receive the wages of sin. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." They indeed cry Peace, peace; but my God doth not so. The last issue and result of this is eternal death; no sooner is it delivered of its deceitful pleasures, but

presently it falls in travail again, and brings forth death, Jam. i. 15. [Hence a false peace from a mere profession of Christ and an ungrounded claim of an interest in Christ made in the Sinner's Prayer, leads to a fatal security; there is no security or true peace generated from such a profession of Christ; only from a proper self-examination of one's being regenerated by the Spirit of God and seeing fruit meet for repentance from which assurance comes. Jeremiah says regarding the heart, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And ^[a]desperately wicked; Who can know it? **Many are self deceived by this prayer.**]

Once more; and is the heart such a sea, abounding with monstrous abominations? **Then stand astonished, O my soul,** at that **free grace** which hath delivered thee from so sad a condition. O fall down and kiss the feet of mercy that moved so freely and seasonably to thy rescue? **Let my heart be enlarged abundantly here.** Lord, what am I, that I should be taken, and others left? **Reflect,** O my soul, upon the conceptions and bursts of lusts in the days of vanity, which you now blush to own. O what black imaginations, hellish desires, vile affections are lodged there! **Who made me to differ?** Or, how came I to be thus wonderfully separated? Surely, it is by thy free grace, and nothing else [in other words, I did not ask for it!! See Isaiah 65:1, "I was sought by *those who did not ask for Me*; I was found by *those who did not seek Me*." Because I did ask for it, God gets all the glory. See also Hosea 5:6, John 7:34, where even if the do try to seek Him, they will not find him.], that I am what I am; and by that grace I have escaped (to mine own astonishment) the corruption that is in the world through lust. O that ever the holy God should set his eyes on such an one; or cast a look of love towards me, in whom were legions of unclean lusts and abominations. [So the result of God's sovereign mercy on us should put a holy and reverential fear - an awe - a holy wonderment over our souls, as well as squashing all human boasting. The glory of God's grace is exclusively reserved for Him.]

THE POEM.

MY soul's the sea, wherein, from day to day,
Sins like Leviathans do sport and play.
Great master-lusts, with all the lesser try.
Therein increase, and strangely multiply.
Yet strange it is not, sin so fast should breed,
Since with this nature I received the seed
And spawn of ev'ry species, which was shed
Into its caverns first, then nourished
By its own native warmth; which like the sun
Hath quickened them, and now abroad they come;
And like the frogs of Egypt creep and crawl
Into the closest rooms within my soul.
My fancy swarms, for there they frisk and play,

In dreams by night, and foolish toys by day.
 My judgment's clouded by them, and my will
 Perverted, every corner, they do fill.
 As locusts seize on all that's fresh and green.
 Unclothe the beauteous spring, and make it seem
 Like drooping autumn; so my soul, that first
 As Eden seem'd, now's like a ground that's curst.
 Lord purge my streams, and kill those lusts that lie
 Within them; if they do not, I must die.

AW Pink (The insincerity of the Sinner's Prayer exemplified)

By way of introduction let us bring before the readers the following Scriptures. (1) "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" John 5:40. (2) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28.

The first of these passages applies to every unregenerate man and woman on this earth. While he is in a state of nature, no man can come to Christ. Though all excellencies, both Divine and human, are found in the Lord Jesus, though He is "altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5:16), **yet the fallen sons of Adam see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him.** They may be well instructed in "the doctrine of Christ," they may believe unhesitatingly all that Scripture affirms concerning Him, they may frequently take His name upon their lips, profess to be resting on His finished work, sing His praises, yet their *hearts* are far from Him. The things of this world have the first place in their affections. **The gratifying of self is their dominant concern.** They surrender not their lives to Him. He is too holy to suit their love of sin; His claims are too exacting to suit their selfish hearts; His terms of discipleship are too severe to suit their fleshly ways. They *will not* yield to His Lordship—true alike with each one of us till God performs a miracle of grace upon our hearts. **[All of which is clear evidence that the Sinner's Prayer is not truly sincere; he is self-deceived, praying to God with corrupt motives, guilty of presumptuous sin, Ps. 19:13]**

My note:

Here is a statement that I heard on the Ben Shapiro Show this morning that sums up original sin, man's depravity: his pride, self-reliance, self-righteousness, addictedness to his own will, practical atheism, and an Arminian/Pelagian bent:

"Man was born on third base, and he thinks he hit a triple."

This is so true! Now you can get a clearer sense of our miserable, self-deceived condition as we are born into the world.

**MAN'S TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND THE GRACE OF GOD, THE
INCORRUPTIBLE SEED
COMMENTARY BY JOHN CALVIN**

CODE481

ON

[PSALM 51:10-12](#)

<HTTPS://WWW.SACRED-TEXTS.COM/CHR/CALVIN/CC09/CC09016.HTM>

10. Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit [268](#) in my inward parts. **11.** Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not the Spirit of thy holiness from me. **12.** Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a free spirit.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God!

In the previous part of the psalm David has been praying for pardon. He now requests that the grace of the Spirit, which he had forfeited, or deserved to have forfeited, might be restored to him. The two requests are quite distinct, though sometimes confounded together, even by men of learning. He passes from the subject of the gratuitous remission of sin to that of sanctification. And to this he was naturally led with earnest anxiety, by the consciousness of his having merited the loss of all the gifts of the Spirit, and of his having actually, in a great measure, lost them. By employing the term *create*, he expresses his persuasion that nothing less than a miracle could effect his reformation, and emphatically declares that repentance is the gift of God. The Sophists grant the necessity of the aids of the Spirit, and allow that assisting grace must both go before and come after; but by assigning a middle place to the free will of man, they rob God of a great part of his glory. David, by the word which he here uses, describes the work of God in renewing the heart in a manner suitable to its extraordinary nature, representing it as the formation of a new creature.

As he had already been endued with the Spirit, he prays in the latter part of the verse that *God would renew a right spirit within him*. But by the term *create*, which he had previously employed, he acknowledges that we are indebted entirely to the grace of God, both for our first regeneration, and, in the event of our falling, for subsequent restoration. He does not merely assert that his heart and spirit were weak, requiring divine assistance, but that they must remain destitute of all purity and rectitude till these be communicated from above. By this it appears that our nature is entirely corrupt: for were it possessed of any rectitude or purity, David would not, as in this verse, have called the one *a gift of the Spirit*, and the other *a creation*.

In the verse which follows, he presents the same petition, in language which implies the connection of pardon with the enjoyment of the leading of the Holy Spirit. If God reconcile us gratuitously to himself, it follows that he will guide us by the Spirit of adoption. It is only such as he loves, and has numbered among his own children, that he blesses with a share of his Spirit; and David shows that he was sensible of this when he prays for the continuance of the grace of adoption as indispensable to the continued possession of the Spirit. The words of this verse imply that the Spirit had not altogether been taken away from him, however much his gifts had been temporarily obscured. Indeed, it is evident that he could not be altogether divested of his former excellencies, for he seems to have discharged his duties as a king with credit, to have conscientiously observed the ordinances of religion, and to have regulated his conduct by the divine law. Upon one point he had fallen into a deadly lethargy, but he was not given over to a reprobate mind;” and it is scarcely conceivable that the rebuke of Nathan the prophet should have operated so easily and so suddenly in arousing him, **had there been no latent spark of godliness still remaining in his soul**. He prays, it is true, that his spirit may be *renewed*, but this must be understood with a limitation. The truth on which we are now insisting is an important one, as many learned men have been inconsiderately drawn into the opinion that the elect, by falling into mortal sin, may lose the Spirit altogether, and be alienated from God. **The contrary is clearly declared by Peter**, who tells us that the word by which we are born again is an incorruptible seed, ([1Pe 1:23](#);) and **John is equally explicit in informing us that the elect are preserved from falling**

away altogether, ([1Jo 3:9](#).) However much they may appear for a time to have been cast off by God, it is afterwards seen that grace must have been alive in their breast, even during that interval when it seemed to be extinct. Nor is there any force in the objection that David speaks as if he feared that he might be deprived of the Spirit. It is natural that the saints, when they have fallen into sin, and have thus done what they could to expel the grace of God, should feel an anxiety upon this point; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth that grace is the incorruptible seed of God, which never can perish in any heart where it has been deposited. This is the spirit displayed by David. Reflecting upon his offense, he is agitated with fears, and yet rests in the persuasion that, being a child of God, he would not be deprived of what indeed he had justly forfeited.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation

He cannot dismiss his grief of mind until he have obtained peace with God. This he declares once and again, for David had no sympathy with those who can indulge themselves in ease when they are lying under the divine displeasure. In the latter clause of the verse, he prays as in the verses preceding, that the Holy Spirit might not be taken away from him. There is a slight ambiguity in the words. Some take תסמכני, *thismecheni*, to be the third person of the verb, because רוח, *ruach*, is feminine, and translate, *let the Spirit uphold me*. The difference is immaterial, and does not affect the meaning of the passage. There is more difficulty in fixing the sense of the epithet נדיבה, *nedibah*, which I have translated *free*. As the verb נדב, *nadab*, signifies *to deal liberally*, princes are in the Hebrew called, by way of eminence, נדיבים, *nedibim*, which has led several learned men to think that David speaks here of a princely or royal spirit; and the translators of the Septuagint rendered it accordingly ἡγεμονικον. The prayer, in this sense, would no doubt be a suitable one for David, who was a king, and required a heroic courage for the execution of his office. But it seems better to adopt the more extensive meaning, and to suppose that David, under a painful consciousness of the bondage to which he had been reduced by a sense of guilt, prays for a free and cheerful spirit. [269](#) This invaluable attainment, he was sensible, could only be recovered through divine grace.

From this excellent description of the fallen nature of natural man (unconverted man, still *in Adam*), you will see the hypocrisy of the sinner's prayer, that it is not at all consistent with reality of man's enmity with God. In other words, men are taught, in order to get saved, they can pray to God while being his arch enemies, blind to the existence of Him, ignorant of Christ, hater of all spiritual truths, and yet he confesses the exact opposite to recommend himself to God! That is a clear contradiction; it is absurd on its face. But carnal men don't want to go to hell, and want to quiet conscience, though they hate the very person they are petitioning! That is the reality of this situation; and it has its issue in a secure and stupid security. My comments in [blue], red for emphasis.

MISCELLANEOUS DISCOURSES

MEN NATURALLY GOD'S ENEMIES

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VOL. 2 PG 130-

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BY JONATHAN EDWARDS

SECT. I.*In what respects natural men are God's enemies.*

1. THEIR enmity appears in their judgments, their natural relish, their wills, affections, and practice. They have a very mean esteem of God. Men are ready to entertain a good esteem of those with whom they are friends: they are apt to think highly of their qualities, to give them their due praises; and if there be defects, to cover them. But of those to whom they are enemies, they are disposed to have mean thoughts; they are apt to entertain a dishonorable opinion of them: they will be ready to look contemptibly upon anything that is praiseworthy in them.

So it is with natural men towards God. They entertain very low and contemptible thoughts of God. Whatever honour and respect they may pretend, and make a show of towards God, [and the sinner's prayer is pretending - presumption, as is clearly demonstrated by man's actual depraved condition as Edwards aptly describes proving the sinner's complete insincerity], if their practice be examined, it will show, that they certainly look upon him as a Being that is but little to be regarded. The language of their hearts is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" *Exod. v. 2.* "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" *Job xxi. 15.* They count him worthy neither to be loved nor feared. They dare not behave with that slight and disregard towards one of their fellow-creatures, when a little raised above them in power and authority, as they dare, and do, towards God. They value one of their equals much more than God, and are ten times more afraid of offending such, than of displeasing the God that made them. They cast such exceeding contempt on God, as to prefer every vile lust before him. And every worldly enjoyment is set higher in their esteem, than God. A morsel of meat, or a few pence of worldly gain, is preferred before him. God is set last and lowest in the esteem of natural men.

2. They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. [So, despite what the sinner proclaims about God or his love to him, he is self-deceived] God is not such a being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God; yet from what they hear of him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature, they do not like him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and

righteous Being, and they do not like him upon this account; **they have no relish of such qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them.** It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate those attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness, in them. And on account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all his other attributes. They have greater aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all things; and because his omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he never will be otherwise than he is, an infinitely holy God.

It is from this disrelish that natural men have of the attributes of God, that they do not love to have much to do with God. The natural tendency of the heart of man is to fly from God, and keep at a distance from him, as far off as possible.—**A natural man is averse to communion with God,** and is naturally disinclined to those exercises of religion, wherein he has immediately to do with him. It is said of wicked men, **Psal. x. 4.** “God is not in all their thoughts.” It is evident, that the mind of man is naturally averse to thinking about God: and hence if any thoughts of him be suggested to the mind, they soon go away; such thoughts are not apt to rest in the minds of natural men. If anything is said to them of God, they are apt to forget it: it is like seed that falls upon the hard path, the fowls of the air soon take it away: or like seed that falls upon a rock. Other things will stick; but divine things rebound: and if they were cast into the mind, they meet with that there which soon thrusts them out again: they meet with no suitable entertainment, but are soon chased away.

Hence also it is, that natural men are with difficulty persuaded to be constant in the duty of secret prayer. They would not be so averse to spending a quarter of an hour, night and morning, in some bodily labour; but it is because they are averse to a work, wherein they have so immediately to do with God; and they naturally love to keep at a distance from him.

3. **Their wills are contrary to his will.** God’s will and theirs are exceeding cross the one to the other, God wills those things that they hate, and are most averse to; and they will those things that God hates. Hence they oppose God in their wills: there is a dreadful, violent, and obstinate opposition of the will of natural men to the will of God.

[Whatever the sinner promises to God in his pray to him for salvation, he is naturally averse to! What a contradiction if I ever heard of one. This prayer is a complete fraud. It is hypocrisy on a massive scale.]

They are very opposite to the commands of God. It is from the enmity of the will, (Rom. vii. 7.) that “the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Hence natural men are enemies to God’s government. They are not loyal subjects, but enemies to God, considered as Lord of the world. They are entire enemies to God’s authority.

4. **They are enemies to God in their affections.** There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God. And it often dreadfully breaks forth. Though it may in great measure lie hid in secure times, when God lets men alone, and they meet with no great disturbance of body or mind; yet, if God does but touch men in their consciences, by manifesting to them a little of his wrath for their sins, this oftentimes brings out the principle of malice against him. This is exercised in dreadful heart-risings, inward wranglings and quarrelings, and blasphemous thoughts; wherein the heart is like a viper, hissing and spitting poison at God. And however free from it the heart may seem to be, when let alone and secure, yet a very little thing will set it in a rage. Temptations will show what is in the heart. The alteration of a man’s circumstances will often discover the heart. Pharaoh had no more natural enmity against God than other men; and if other natural men had been in Pharaoh’s circumstances, the same corruptions would have put forth themselves in as dreadful a manner. The scribes and Pharisees had naturally no more malice in their hearts against Christ, than other men, and other natural men would, in their case, and having as little restraint, exercise as much malice against Christ as they did. When wicked men come to be cast into hell, then their malice against God will appear. Then their hearts will appear as full of malice, as hell is full of fire. But when wicked men come to be in hell, there will be no new corruptions put into their heart; but only old ones will then break forth without restraint. That is all the difference between a wicked man on earth, and a wicked man in hell, that in hell there will be more to stir up the exercise of corruption, and less to restrain it, than on earth: but there will be no new corruption put in. A wicked man will have no principle of corruption in hell, but what he carried to hell with him. There are now the seeds of all the malice that will be exercised then. The malice of damned spirits is but a branch of the root, that is in the hearts of natural men now. A natural man has a heart like the heart of a devil; only corruption is more under restraint in man than in devils.

5. **They are enemies in their *practice*.** *They walk contrary to him.* In their enmity against God, they are exceeding active. They are engaged in war against God. Indeed they cannot injure God, he is so much above them; but yet they do what they can. **They oppose themselves to his honour and glory;** they oppose themselves to the interest of his kingdom in the world: they oppose themselves to the will and command of God: and oppose him in his government. They oppose God in his works, and in his declared designs; while he is doing one work, they are doing the contrary. God seeks one thing, and they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers in opposing the kingdom of God.

SECT. II.

The degree of men's natural enmity to God.

I NOW proceed to say something with respect to the *degree* of this enmity: tending in some measure to show, how great enemies to God are natural men.

1. They have no *love* to God; their enmity is mere enmity without any mixture of love. A natural man is wholly destitute of any principle of love to God, and therefore never had the least exercise of this love. Some natural men have better tempers than others; and some are better educated than others; and some live a great deal more soberly than others: but one has no more love to God than another; for none have the least spark of that. The heart of a natural man is as destitute of love to God, as a dead, stiff, cold corpse is of vital heat. **John v. 43.** "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

2. *Every faculty and principle* of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. The nature of man is wholly infected with this enmity against God. He is tainted with it throughout, in all his faculties and principles. And not only so, but every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved to it. This enmity against God, has the absolute possession of the man. The apostle Paul, speaking of what he was naturally, says, "I am carnal, sold under sin." ¹³⁷ "

The *understanding* is under the reigning power of this enmity against God, so that it is entirely darkened and blinded with regard to the glory and excellency of God. The *will* is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the *affections* are governed by enmity against God: there is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A

natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast, is full of poison.

3. The power of the enmity of natural men against God, is so great, that it *is insuperable* by any *finite* power. It has too great and strong a possession of the heart, to be overcome by any created power. Indeed, a natural man never sincerely strives to root out his enmity against God; his endeavours are hypocritical; he delights in his enmity, and chooses it. Neither can others do it, though they sincerely, and to their utmost, endeavour to overcome this enmity. If godly friends and neighbors labour to persuade them to cast away their enmity, and become friends to God, they cannot persuade them to it. Though ministers use never so many arguments and entreaties, and set forth the loveliness of God; tell them of the goodness of God to them, hold forth God's own gracious invitations, and entreat them never so earnestly to cast off their opposition, and be reconciled; yet they cannot overcome it: still they will be as bad enemies to God, as ever they were.—The tongue of men or of angels cannot persuade them to relinquish their opposition to God. Miracles will not do it.—How many miracles did the children of Israel see in the wilderness! yet their enmity against God remained; as appeared by their often murmuring. And how often did Christ use miracles to this end without effect, but the Jews obstinately stood out. **Matt. xxiii. 37.** “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, now often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” And how great did the enmity of these people appear to be after all; how spiteful and venomous were their hearts towards Christ, as appears by their cruel treatment of him, in his last sufferings!

4. **They are mortal enemies to God;** *i e.*, They have that enmity in their hearts, that strikes at the life of God. A man may be no friend to another, and may have an ill spirit towards him; and yet not be his mortal enemy: his enmity will be satisfied with something short of the death of the person. But it is not so with natural men, with respect to God: they are mortal enemies. Their imbecility is no argument that this is not the tendency of the principle.

Natural men are enemies to the dominion of God; and their nature shows their good-will to dethrone him if they could! Yea, they are enemies to the being of God, and would be glad if there was no God. And therefore it necessarily follows, that they would cause that there should be none, if they could. **Psal. xiv. 1.** “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” This implies, not only an aptness to question the being of God; but, that he inclines it should be so. His *heart* says, *i. e.* his *inclination* says. The words in

the original are, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." That is, I would have none, I do not desire any, I wish there was none; that would suit my inclination best. Let the world be emptied of a God, he stands in my way. And hence he is an atheist in his heart.

The viper's poison is deadly poison; and when he bites he seeks the precious life. **And men are in this respect a generation of vipers.** Their poison, which is enmity against God, seeks the life of God. **Matt. iii. 7.** "O generation of vipers." **Psal. lviii. 3, 4.** "The wicked are estranged from the womb—Their poison is like the poison of a serpent." **Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.** "For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are the grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their vine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." The divine nature being immortal, and infinitely out of our reach, there is no other trial possible, whether the enmity that is naturally in the heart against God, be mortal or no, but only for God to take on him the human nature, and become man; so as to come within man's reach. There can be no other experiment. And what has been the event? Why, when once God became man, and came down to dwell here, among such vipers as fallen men, they hated and persecuted him; and never desisted till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. There was a multitude of them that appeared combined in this design. Nothing would do, but he must be put to death. All cry out, *Crucify him, crucify him. Away with him.* They had rather Barabbas, who greatly deserved death, should live, than he should not die. Nothing would restrain them from it; even all his preaching, and all his miracles: but they would kill him. And it was not the ordinary kind of execution that would satisfy them; but it must be the most cruel and most ignominious they possibly could invent. And they aggravated it as much as they could, by mocking him, and spitting on him, and scourging him. This shows what the nature and tendency of man's enmity against God is; here it appeared in its true colours.

5. Natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being whatsoever. Natural men may be very great enemies to their fellow-creatures; but not so great as they are to God. There is no other being that so much stands in sinners' way, in those things that they chiefly set their hearts upon, as God. Men are wont to hate their enemies in proportion to two things, *viz.* their opposition to what they look upon to be their interest,—and their power and ability. A great and powerful enemy will be more hated, than one who is weak and impotent. But none is so powerful as God.

Man's enmity to others may be got over: time may wear it out, and they may be reconciled. But natural men, without a mighty work of God to change their hearts, will never get over their enmity against God. They are greater enemies to God, than they are

to the devil. Yea, they treat the devil as their friend and master, and join with him against God. **John viii. 44.** “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning.”

SECT. III.

On what account men are enemies to God.

the general reason is, That God is opposite to them in the worship of their idols. The apostasy of man summarily consists in departing from the true God, to idols; forsaking his Creator, and setting up other things in his room. When God at first created man, he was united to his Creator; the God that made him was his God. The true God was the object of his highest respect, and had the possession of his heart. Love to God was the principle in his heart, that ruled over all other principles; and everything in the soul was wholly in subjection to it. But when man fell, he departed from the true God, and the union that was between his heart and his Creator was broken: he wholly lost his principle of love to God. And henceforward man clave to other gods. He gave that respect to the creature, which is due to the Creator.—When God ceased to be the object of his supreme love and respect, other things of course became the objects of it.

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as his god. If man do not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or some idol; it is impossible it should be otherwise; something will have the heart of man. **And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god; and therefore when man by the fall extinguished all love to the true God**, he set up the creature in his room. For having lost his esteem and love of the true God, and set up other gods in his room, and in opposition to him; and God still demanding their worship, and opposing them; enmity necessarily follows.

That which a man chooses for his god, he sets his heart mainly upon. And nothing will so soon excite enmity, as opposition in that which is dearest. A man will be the greatest enemy to him who opposes him in what he chooses for his god; he will look on none as standing so much in his way, as he that would deprive him of his god. **Judg. xviii. 24.** “Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?” A man, in this respect, cannot serve two masters, that stand in competition for his service. And not only, if he serves one, he cannot serve the other; but if he cleaves to one, he will necessarily hate the other. **Matt. vi. 24.** “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one,

and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And this is the very reason that men hate God. In this case it is, as when two kings set up in one kingdom, in opposition one to the other; and they both challenge the same throne, and are competitors for the same crown; they who are loyal, hearty subjects to the one, will necessarily be enemies to the other. **As that which is a man's god, is the object of his highest love; so that God who chiefly opposes him in it, must be the object of his greatest hatred.**

The gods which a natural man worships, instead of the God that made him, are himself and the world. He has withdrawn his esteem and honour from God, and proudly exalts himself. As Satan was not willing to be in subjection; and therefore rebelled, and set up himself; **so a natural man, in the proud and high thoughts he has of himself, sets up himself upon God's throne. He gives his heart to the world, worldly riches, worldly pleasures, and worldly honours;** they have the possession of that regard which is due to God. The apostle sums up all the idolatry of wicked men in their love of the world. **1 John ii. 15, 16.** "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And the apostle James observes, that a man must necessarily be the enemy of the true God, if he be a friend of the world. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." **James iv. 4.**

All the sin that men commit, is what they do in the service of their idols: there is no one act of sin, but what is an act of service to some false god. And therefore whereinsoever God opposes sin in them, he is opposite to their worship of their idols: on which account they are his enemies. God opposes them in their service of their idols, in the following respects:

1. He manifests his utter *abhorrence* of their attachment to their idols. Their idols are what they love above all things: they would by no means part with them. **This wickedness is sweet unto them. Job xx. 12.** If you take them away, what have they more? If they lose their idols, they lose their all.—To rend away their idols from them, would be more grievous to them, than to rend body and soul asunder: it is like rending their heart in twain. They love their idolatry: but God does not approve of it, but exceedingly hates it: he will by no means be reconciled to it; and therefore they hate him. God declares an infinite hatred of every act they do, in the service of their false

gods. He declares himself to be a holy and a jealous God; a God who is very jealous of his own honor; and that greatly abhors giving that honour to another.

2. He utterly *forbids* their cleaving to those idols, and all the service that they do to them. He not only shows that he dislikes it, but he utterly forbids it; and demands that they should worship him; serve him only, and give their hearts wholly to him: without tolerating any competitor. He allows them to serve their idols in no degree; but requires them to cast them away *utterly, and* pay no more worship to them, at any time. He requires *a final* parting with their idols. Not only that they should refrain from them for a while, but cast them away forever; and never gratify their idolatrous respect to them anymore. This is so exceeding contrary to them, and what they are so averse to, that they are enemies to God for it. They cannot endure God's commands, because they forbid all that in which their hearts are so engaged. And as they hate God's commands, so they hate Him whose commands they are.

3. He *threatens* them with everlasting damnation for their service of their idols. He threatens them for their *past* idolatry. He threatens them with his eternal wrath, for their having departed from him, and their having chosen to themselves other gods. He threatens them for that *disposition* they have in their hearts to cleave to other gods; he threatens the least degrees of that respect which they have in their hearts to their idols. He manifests that he will not tolerate any regard to them, but has fixed eternal death, as the wages of every degree of it. And he will not release them from their guilt; he holds them to their obligations; and he will accept of no atonement that they can make. He will not forgive them for whatever they do in religion; whatever pains they take; whatever tears they shed. He will accept of no money or price that they have to offer.

And he threatens every *future* act of their idolatry. He not only forbids them ever to be guilty of the least act, but forbids them on pain of eternal damnation. So strictly does God prohibit them from the service of their beloved idols! He threatens them with everlasting wrath for all exercises of inordinate love of worldly profit; for all manifestations of **inordinate regard** to worldly pleasures, or worldly honors. He threatens them with everlasting torments for their self-exaltation. **He requires them to deny and renounce themselves, and to abase themselves at his feet**, on pain of bearing his wrath to all eternity.

The strictness of God's law is a principal cause of man's enmity against God. If God were one that did not so much hate sin; if he would allow them in the gratification of

their lusts in some degree, and his threatenings were not so awful against all criminal indulgence; if his threatenings were not so absolute; **if his displeasure could be appeased by a few tears, a little reformation, or the like; they would not be so great enemies, nor hate him so much as they do.** But God shows himself to be an implacable enemy to their idols, and has threatened everlasting wrath, infinite calamity, for all that they do in the service of their lusts; and this makes them irreconcilable enemies to him.

For this reason, the scribes and Pharisees were such bitter enemies to Christ; because he showed himself to be such an enemy to their pride, conceit of their own wisdom, self-righteousness, and inordinate affectation of their own honor, which was their god. Natural men are enemies to God, because he is so opposite to them, in that in which they place their all. If you go to take away that which is very dear to a man, nothing will provoke him more. **God is infinitely opposite to that in which natural men place all their delight, and all their happiness.** He is an enemy to that which natural men value as their greatest honor and highest dignity; and to which they wholly trust; viz. their own righteousness.

Hence natural men are greater enemies to God, than they are to any other being. Some of their fellow-creatures may stand very much in their way, with regard to some things on which they set their hearts; but God opposes them with respect to ALL their idols, and his opposition to them is infinitely great. None of our fellow-creatures ever oppose us in any of our interests so much as God opposes wicked men in their idolatry. His infinite opposition is manifested by his threatening an infinite punishment, viz. his dreadful wrath to all eternity, misery without end. Hence we need not wonder that natural men are enemies to God.

This next section is very important; this objection to this doctrine is what deceives many, in grossly underestimating or even denying the enmity in man's heart and hence not see the hypocrisy of the sinner's prayer.

SECT. IV

The objection, that men are not conscious of this enmity, answered.

NATURAL men do not generally conceive themselves to be so bad; they have not this notion of themselves, that they are enemies to God. And therefore when they hear such doctrine as this taught them, they stand ready to make objections. Some may be ready to say, "I do not know, I am not sensible, that I hate God, and have a mortal enmity

against him. I feel no such thing in myself, and if I have such enmity, why do not I feel it? If I am a mortal enemy, why should not I know it better than anybody else? How can others see what is in my heart better than I myself? If I hate one of my fellow-creatures, I can feel it inwardly working." To such an objection I would answer,

If you do but observe yourself, and search your own heart, unless you are strangely blinded, you may be sensible of those things, wherein enmity does fundamentally consist. Particularly, you may be sensible that you have at least had a low and contemptible estimation of God; and that, in your esteem, you set the trifles and vanities of this world far above him; so as to regard the enjoyment of these things far before the enjoyment of God, and to value these things better than his love.—And you may be sensible that you despise the *authority* of God, and value his commands and his honour but very little. Or if by some means you have blinded yourself, so as to think you do regard them now, doubtless you can look back and see that you have not regarded them. You may be sensible that you have had a disrelish and aversion towards God; an opposition to thinking of him; so that it would have been a very uncomfortable task to have been confined to that exercise for any time. **The vanities of the world, at the same time, have been very pleasing to you; and you have been all swallowed up in them, while you have been averse to the things of religion.** If you look into your heart, it is there plain to be seen, that there is an enmity in your *will*, that it is contrary to God's will, for you have been opposing the will of God all your life long.—These things are plain; it is nothing but some great delusion that can hide them from you. These are the foundation of all enmity: and if these things be in you, all the rest that we have spoken of will follow of course.

2. One reason why you have not more sensibly felt the exercises of malice against God, is that your enmity is now exercised partly in your unbelief of God's being; and this prevents its appearing in other ways. **Man has naturally a principle of atheism in him;** an indisposition to realize God's being, and a disposition to doubt of it. The being of God does not ordinarily seem real to natural men. All the discoveries that there are of God's being in his works, will not overcome the principle of atheism in the heart. And though they seem in some measure to be rationally convinced, yet it does not appear real; the conviction is feint, there is no strong conviction impressed on the mind, that there is a God: and oftentimes they are ready to think that there is none. Now this will prevent the exercise of this enmity, which otherwise would be felt; particularly, it may be an occasion of there not being sensible exercises of hatred.

It may in some measure be thus illustrated: if you had a rooted malice against another man, a principle that had been long established there, and if you should hear that he was dead, the sensible workings of your malice would not be felt, as when you realized it that he was alive. But if you should afterwards hear the news contradicted, and perceive that your enemy was still alive; you would feel the same workings of hatred that you did before. **And thus your not realizing the fact, that God has a being, may prevent those sensible workings of hatred, that otherwise you would have.** If wicked men in this world were sensible of the reality of God's being, as the wicked are in another, they would feel more of that hatred which men in another world do. The exercise of corruption in one way, may, and often does, prevent it working in other ways. As covetousness may prevent the exercise of pride, so atheism may prevent malice; and yet it may be no argument of there being any less enmity in the heart; for it is the same enmity, working in another way. The same enmity that in this world works by atheism, will in another world, where there will be no room for atheism, work by malice and blasphemy. The same mortal enmity which, if you saw there was a God, might make you to *wish* there were none, may now dispose and incline you to think there *is* none. Men are very often apt to think things are as they would have them to be. The same principle disposes you to think God has no existence, which, if you knew he had, would dispose you, if it were possible, to dispossess him of it.

3. If you think that there is a God, yet you do not realize it, that he is such a God as he really is. You do not realize it, that he is so holy as he is; that he has such a hatred of sin as indeed he has; that he is so just a God as he is, who will by no means clear the guilty. But that in the Psalms is applicable to you: "these things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." [Psalm 1. 21.](#) So that your atheism appears in this, as well as in thinking there is no God. **So that your objection arises from this, that you do not find such a sensible hatred against that god which you have formed, to suit yourself; a god that you like better than the true God.** [An unconverted man is praying to a god that suits himself!] But this is no argument that you have not bitter enmity against the true God; for it was your enmity against the true God, and your not liking him, **that has put you upon forming up another in your imagination, that you like better.** It is your enmity against those attributes of God's holiness and justice, and the like, that has put you upon conceiving another, who is not so holy as he is, and does not hate sin so much, and will not be so strictly just in punishing it; and whose wrath against sin is not so terrible.

But if you were sensible of the **vanity of your own conceits, and that God was not such an one as you have imagined; but that he is, as he is indeed, an infinitely holy, just, sin hating and sin revenging God, who will not tolerate nor endure the worship of idols, you would be much more liable to feel the sensible exercises of enmity against him, than you are now.** And this experience confirms. For we see that when men come to be under convictions, and to be made sensible that God is not as they have heretofore imagined; but that he is such a jealous, sin hating God, and whose wrath against sin is so dreadful, they are much more apt to have sensible exercises of enmity against him than before.

4. **Your having always been taught that God is infinitely above you, and out of your reach, has prevented your enmity” being exercised in those ways, that otherwise it would have been.** And hence your enmity has not been exercised in revengeful thoughts; because revenge has never found any room here; it has never found any handle to take hold of; there has been no conception of any such thing, and hence it has lain still. A serpent will not bite, or spit poison, at that which it sees at a great distance; which if it saw near, would do it immediately. **Opportunity often shows what men are, whether friends or enemies.** Opportunity to do puts men in mind of doing; wakens up such principles as lay dormant before. Opportunity stirs up desire to do, where there was before a disposition, that without opportunity would have lain still. If a man has had an old grudge against another, and has a fair opportunity to be revenged, this will revive his malice, and waken up a desire of revenge.

If a great and sovereign prince injures a poor man, and what he does is looked upon as very cruel, that will not ordinarily stir up passionate revenge, because he is so much above him, and out of his reach. Many a man has appeared calm and meek, when he has had no power in his hands, and has not appeared, either to himself or others, to have any disposition to cruel acts; yet afterwards, when he came to have opportunity by unexpected advancement, or otherwise, has appeared like a ravenous wolf, or devouring lion. So it was with Hazael. “And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing! And Elisha answered, the Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria,” 2 Kings viii. 12, 13. Hazael was then a servant; he had no power in his hands to do as he pleased; and so his cruel disposition had lain hid, and he did not himself imagine that it was there: but afterwards, when he became King of Syria, and was absolute, having none to control

him; then it broke out and appeared, and he did as the prophet had foretold. He committed those very acts of cruelty, that he thought it was not in his heart to do. It was want of opportunity that made the difference. It was all in his heart before; he was such a dog *then as* to do this thing, but only had not opportunity. And therefore when he seems surprised that the prophet should say so of him, all the reason the prophet gives is, “The Lord hath showed me that thou shall be king over Syria. ¹³⁸”

Some natural men are such “dogs” as to do things, if they had opportunity, which they do not imagine it is in their hearts to do. **You object against your having a moral hatred against God; that you never felt any desire to dethrone him. But one reason has been, that it has always been conceived so impossible by you. But if the throne of God were within your reach, and you knew it, it would not be safe one hour.** Who knows what thoughts would presently arise in your heart by such an opportunity, and what disposition would be raised up in your heart. Who would trust your heart, that there would not presently be such thoughts as these, though they are enough to make one tremble to mention them? “Now I have opportunity to set myself at liberty—that I need not be kept in continual slavery by the strict law of God.—Then I may take my liberty to walk in that way I like best, and need not be continually in such slavish fear of God’s displeasure. And God has not done well by me in many instances. He has done most unjustly by me, in holding me bound to destruction for unbelief, and other things which I cannot help.—He has shown mercy to others, and not to me. I have now an opportunity to deliver myself, and there can be no danger of my being hurt for it. There will be nothing for us to be terrified about, and so keep us in slavery.”

Who would trust your heart, that such thoughts would not arise? or others much more horrid and too dreadful to be mentioned? And therefore I forbear. **Those natural men are foolishly insensible of what is in their own hearts,** who think there would be no danger of any such workings of heart, if they knew they had opportunity.

5. You little consider, how much your having no more of the sensible exercises of hatred to God, **is owing to a being restrained by fear.** You have always been taught what a dreadful thing it is to hate God, and how terrible his displeasure; that God sees the heart and knows all the thoughts; and that you are in his hands, and he can make you as miserable as he pleases, and as soon as he pleases. And these things have restrained you: and the fear that has risen from them, has kept you from appearing what you are; it has kept down your enmity, and made that serpent afraid to show its head, as otherwise it would do. If a wrathful man were wholly under the power of an enemy, he

would be afraid to exercise his hatred in outward acts, unless it were with great disguise. And if it be supposed that such an enemy, in whose power he was, could see his heart, and know all his thoughts; and apprehended that he would put him to a terrible death, if he saw the workings of malice there, how greatly would this restrain! He would be afraid so much as to believe himself, that he hated his enemy: but there would be all manner of disguise and hypocrisy, and feigning even of thoughts and affections.

Thus your enmity has been kept under *restraint*; and thus it has been from your infancy. You have grown up in it, so that it is become an *habitual* restraint. You dare not so much as think you hate God. **If you do exercise hatred, you have a disguise for it, whereby you endeavour even to hide it from your own conscience;** and so have all along deceived yourself. Your deceit is very old and habitual: there has been only restraint; not mortification.

There has been an enmity against God in its full strength It has been only restrained, like an enemy that durst not rise up and show himself.

6. **One reason why you have not felt more sensible hatred to God may be, because you have not had much trial of what is in your heart.** It may be God has hitherto, in a great measure, let you alone. The enmity that is in men's hearts against God, is like a serpent, which, if it be let alone lies still; but if anybody disturbs it, will soon hiss, and be enraged, and show its serpentine spiteful nature.

Notwithstanding the good opinion you have of yourself, yet a little trial would show you to be a viper, and your heart would be set all on rage against God. One thing that restrains you now is your hope. You hope to receive many things from God. Your own interest is concerned. So that both hope and fear operate together, to restrain your enmity from sensible exercises. But if once hope were gone, you would soon show what you were; you would feel your enmity against God in a rage.

7. If you pretend that you do not feel enmity against God, and yet act as an enemy, you may certainly conclude that it is not because you are no enemy, **but because you do not know your own heart.** Actions are the best interpreters of the disposition; they show, better than anything else, what the heart is. It must be because you do not observe your own behaviour, that you question whether you are an enemy to God.

What other account can you give of your own carriage, but only your being God's enemy? What other account can be given of your opposing God in your ways; walking so exceeding contrary to him, contrary to his counsels, contrary to his commands, and contrary to his glory? What other account can be given of your casting so much contempt upon God; your setting him so low; your acting so much against his authority, and against his kingdom and interest in the world? What other account can be given of your so setting your will in opposition to God's will, and that so obstinately, for so long a time, against so many warnings as you have had? What other account can be given of your joining so much with Satan, in the opposition he is making to the kingdom of God in the world? And that you will join with him against God, though it be so much against your own interest, and though you expose yourself by it to everlasting misery?

Such like behaviour in one man towards another, would be sufficient evidence of enmity. If he should be seen to behave thus, and that it was his constant manner, none would want better evidence that he was an enemy to his neighbour. If you yourself had a servant that carried it towards you, as you do towards God, you would not think there was need of any greater evidence of his being your enemy. Suppose your servant should manifest much contempt of you; and disregard your commands as much as you do the commands of God; should go directly contrary, and in many ways act the very reverse of your commands; should seem to set himself in ways that were contrary to your will obstinately and incorrigibly, without any amendment from your repeated calls, warnings, and threatenings; and should act so cross to you day and night, as you do to God; would he not be justly deemed your enemy? Suppose, further, when you sought one thing, he would seek the contrary; when you did any work, he would, as much as in him lay, undo and destroy that work; and suppose he should continually drive at such ends, as tended to overthrow the ends you aimed at: when you sought to bring to pass any design, he would endeavour to overthrow your design; and set himself as much against your interest, as you do yourself against God's honour. And suppose you should moreover see him, from time to time, with those who were your declared mortal enemies; making them his counsellors, and hearkening to their counsels, as much as you do to Satan's temptations: should you not think you had sufficient evidence that he was your enemy?—**Therefore consider seriously your own ways, and weigh your own behavior, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted?—see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done." Jer. ii. 23.**

SECT. V.

The objections, that they show respect to God, and experience some religious affections, answered.

NATURAL men may be ready to object, the *respect* they show to God, from time to time. This makes many to think that they are far from being such enemies to God. They pray to him in secret, and attend on public worship, and take a great deal of pains to do it in a decent manner. It seems to them that they show God a great deal of respect; they use many very respectful terms in their prayer; they are respectful in their manner of speaking, their voice, gestures, and the like.—But to this I answer, **That all this is done in mere hypocrisy. All this seeming respect is feigned, there is no sincerity in it: there is external respect, but none in the heart: there is a show, and nothing else.** You only cover your enmity with a painted veil. **You put on the disguise of a friend, but in your heart you are a mortal enemy.** There is external honour, but inward contempt; there is a show of friendship and regard, but inward hatred. **You do but deceive yourself with your show of respect; and endeavour to deceive God; not considering that God looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart.**—Here consider particularly,

1. That much of that seeming respect which natural men show to God, is owing to their education. They have been taught from their infancy that they ought to show great respect to God. They have been taught to use respectful language, when speaking about God, and to behave with solemnity, when attending on those exercises of religion, wherein they have to do with him. From their childhood, they have seen that this is the manner of others, when they pray to God, to use reverential expressions, and a reverential behaviour before him.

Those who are brought up in places where they have, commonly from their infancy, heard men take the name of God in vain, and swear and curse, and blaspheme; they learn to do the same; and it becomes habitual to them. And it is the same way, and no other, **that you have learned to behave respectfully towards God; not that you have any more respect to God than they; but they have been brought up one way, and you another.** In some parts of the world, men are brought up in the worship of idols of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone, made in the shape of men and beast. “They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calf.” **Hos. xiii. 2.** In some parts of the world, they are brought up to worship serpents, and are taught from their infancy to show great respect to them. And in some places, they are brought up in worshipping the devil, who appears to them in a bodily shape; and to behave with a show of great reverence and honor towards him. **And what respect you show to God has no better foundation;** it comes the same way, and is worth no more.

2. That show of respect which you make is forced. You come to God, and make a great show of respect to him, and use very respectful terms, with a reverential tone and manner of speaking; and your countenance is grave and solemn: you put on an humble aspect; and use humble, respectful postures, out of fear. You are afraid that God will execute his wrath upon you, and so you feign a great deal of respect, that he may not be angry with you. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." Psal. lxvi. 3. In the original it is, *shall thine enemies lie to thee*. It is rendered therefore in the margin, *shall yield feigned obedience to thee*. All that you do in religion is forced and feigned. Through the greatness of God's power, you yield feigned obedience. You are in God's power, and he is able to destroy you; and so you feign a great deal of respect to him, that he might not destroy you. As one might do towards an enemy that had taken him captive, though he at the same time would gladly make his escape, if he could, by taking away the life of him who had taken him captive.

3. It is not real respect that moves you to behave so towards God: you do it because you hope you shall get by it. It is respect to yourself, and not respect to God, that moves you. You hope to move God by it to bestow the rewards of his children. You are like the Jews who followed Christ, and called him Rabbi, and would make him a king. Not that they honored him so much in their hearts, as to think him worthy of the honor of a king; or that they had the respect of sincere subjects; but they did it for the sake of the loaves. "Jesus perceived that they would come and make him a king. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, how camest thou hither? Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." John vi. 15, 25, 26.

These things do not argue but that you are implacable enemies to God. If you examine your prayers and other duties, your own consciences will tell you, that the seeming respect which you have shown to God in them, has been only in hypocrisy. Oftentimes you have set forth in your prayers, that God was a great, a glorious, and an infinitely holy God, as if you greatly honoured him on the account of these attributes; and, at the same time, you had no sense in your heart of the greatness and glory of God, or of any excellency in his holiness. Your own consciences will tell you, that you have often pretended to be thankful; you have told God, that you thanked him you was alive, and thanked him for various mercies, when you have not found the least jot of thankfulness in your heart. And so you have told God of your own unworthiness, and set

forth what a vile creature you was; when you have had no humble sense of your own unworthiness.

If these forementioned restraints were thrown off, you would soon throw off all your show of respect. Take away fear, and a regard to your own interest, and there would soon be an end to all those appearances of love, honour, and reverence, which now you make. All these things are not at all inconsistent with the most implacable enmity. **The devil himself made a show of respect to Christ, when he was afraid that he was going to torment him;** and when he hoped to persuade Christ to spare him longer. “When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.” Luke viii. 28.

Some may perhaps object against this doctrine of their being God’s enemies, the *religions affections* they have sometimes experienced. They may be ready to say, That when they have come before God in prayer, they have not only used respectful terms and gestures, but they have prayed with affection; their prayers have been attended with tears, which they are ready to think showed something in the heart. But to this it is answered, that these affections have risen from other causes, and not from any true respect to God.

1. **They have risen from self-love, and not love to God.** If you have wept before God, from the consideration of your own pitiful case; that has been because you loved yourself, and not because you had any respect to God. If your tears have been from sorrow for your sins; you have mourned for your sins, because you have sinned against yourself, and not because you have sinned against God. “When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?” Zech. vii. 5.

2. Pride, and a good thought of themselves, very commonly has a great hand in the affections of natural men. They have a good opinion of what they are doing when they are praying; and the reflection on that affects them: they are affected with their own goodness. **Men’s self-righteousness often occasions tears.** A high opinion of themselves before God, and an imagination of their being persons of great account with him, has affected them in their transactions with God. There is commonly abundance of pride in the midst of tears; and often pride is in a great measure the source of them. And then they are so far from being an argument that you are not an enemy to God, that on the contrary, they are an argument, that you are. In your very tears, you are, in a vain conceit of yourself, exalting yourself against God.

3. **The affections of natural men often arise from wrong notions they have of God.** They conceive of God after the manner they do of men, as though he were a being liable to be wrought upon in his affections. **They conceive of him as one whose heart could be drawn, whose affections can be overcome, by what he sees in them.** They conceive of him as being taken with them, and their performances; and this works on their affections; and thus one tear draws another, and their affections increase by reflection. **And oftentimes they conceive of God as one” that loves them, and is a friend to them;** and such a mistake may work much on their affections. [But as Jesus said in Luke 6:36, *But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.* Often deceiving affections are raised when a pastor tells an unbeliever that Jesus loves them. So now he may imagine that he really loves Jesus, when he is still an enemy to Him!] But such affections that arise towards God, **as they conceit him to be,** is no argument that they have not the same implacable hatred towards God, **considered as he really is.** There is no concluding that men are not enemies, because they are affected and shed tears in their prayers, and the like. Saul was very much affected when David expostulated with him about pursuing after him, and seeking to kill him. David’s words wrought exceedingly upon Saul’s affections. “And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? and Saul lift up his voice and wept.” **1 Sam. xxiv. 16. chap. xxvi. 1.** etc. He was so affected that he wept aloud, and called David his son, though he was but just before seeking his life. But this affection of Saul was no argument that he did not still continue in his enmity against David. He was David’s mortal enemy before, and sought his life; and so he did afterwards, it was but a pang: his enmity was not mortified or done away. The next news we hear of Saul is, that he was pursuing David, and seeking his life again.

SECT. VIII.

God may justly withhold mercy.

If natural men are God’s enemies, hence we may learn, how justly God may refuse to show you mercy. For is God obliged to show mercy to his enemies? Is God bound to set his love on them that have no love to him; but hate him with perfect hatred? Is he bound to come and dwell with them that have an aversion to him, and choose to keep at a distance from him, and fly from him as one that is hateful to them? Even should you desire the salvation of your soul, is God bound to comply with your desires, when you always resist and oppose his will? Is God bound to put honour upon you, and to advance

you to such dignity as to be a child of the King of kings, and the heir of glory, while at the same time you set him too low to have even the lowest place in your heart?

This doctrine affords a strong argument for the absolute sovereignty of God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. If God is pleased to show mercy to his haters, it is certainly fit that he should do it in a sovereign way, without acting as any way obliged. God will show mercy to his mortal enemies; but then he will not be bound, he will have his liberty to choose the objects of his mercy; to show mercy to what enemy he pleases, and to punish and destroy which of his haters he pleases. And certainly this is a fit and reasonable thing. It is fit that God should distribute saving blessings in this way, and in no other, namely, in a sovereign and arbitrary way. And that ever anybody thought of or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God. But consider here the following things:

1. How causelessly you are enemies to God. You have no manner of reason for it, either from what God is, or from what he has done. You have no reason for this *from what he is*. For he is an infinitely lovely and glorious Being; the fountain of all excellency, all that is amiable and lovely in the universe, is originally and eminently in him. Nothing can possibly be conceived of that could be lovely in God, that is not in him, and that in the greatest possible degree.

And you have no reason for this, *from what God has done*. For he has been a good and bountiful God to you. He has exercised abundance of kindness to you; has carried you from the womb, preserved your life, taken care of you, and provided for you, all your life long. he has exercised great patience and long-suffering towards you. If it had not been for the kindness of God to you, what would have become of you? What would have become of your body? And what, before this time, would have become of your soul? And you are now, every day and hour, maintained by the goodness and bounty of God. Every new breath you draw, is a new gift of his to you. How causelessly then are you such dreadful enemies to God! And how justly might he for it eternally deprive you of all mercy, seeing you do thus requite God for his mercy and kindness to you!

2. Consider, how you would resent it, if others were such enemies to you, as you are to God. If they had their hearts so full of enmity to you; if they treated you with such contempt, and opposed you, as you do God; how would you resent it! Do you not find

that you are apt greatly to resent it, when any oppose you, and show an ill spirit towards you? And though you excuse your own enmity against God from your corrupt nature that you brought into the world with you, which you could not help; yet you do not excuse others for being enemies to you from their corrupt nature that they brought into the world, which they could not help; but are ready bitterly to resent it notwithstanding.

Consider therefore, if you, a poor, unworthy, unlovely creature, do so resent it, when you are hated, how may God justly resent it when you are enemies to him, an infinitely glorious Being; and a Being from whom you have received so much kindness!

3. How unreasonable is it for you to imagine that you can oblige God to have respect to you by anything that you can do, continuing still to be his enemy. If you think you have prayed, and read, and done something considerable for God; yet who cares for the seeming kindness of an enemy? What value would you yourself set upon a man making a show of friendship, when you knew at the same time, that he was inwardly your mortal enemy? Would you look upon yourself obliged for such respect and kindness? Would you not rather abhor it? Would you count such respect to be valued, as Joab's towards Amasa, who took him by the beard, and kissed him, and said, Art thou in health, my brother? And smote him at the same time under the fifth rib, and killed him! What if you do pray to God? Is he obliged to hear the prayers of an enemy? What if you have taken a great deal of pains, is God obliged to give heaven for the prayers of an enemy? He may justly abhor your prayers, and all that you do in religion, as the flattery of a mortal enemy. [Thomas Shepard calls any kind of prayer of this nature, a *wicked presumption*, highly provoking to God. Also, note Micah 3:4, "Then they will cry to the LORD, But He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, Because they have been evil in their deeds." and John 9:31, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners;"]

The Conscience

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Study this excerpt on what the conscience is. Flavel does an excellent job of it. From reading this, you'll see the way he (and other Reformers) interpret many bible passages in this light, hence the passage that says *in Your light we see light*, Ps 36:9 below - (light is knowledge in this case, which is part of God's glory; God's glory also consists in holiness, joy and happiness. These things such as knowledge (light) are communicated to God's elect, effecting their conversion, hence the *effectual call*...hence those who are *the called*). This is why multitudes, including me before I was converted, do not see; they do not see/understand or perceive spiritual things; it is all Greek to them, aka, foolishness (1Cor2:14). God had not spoken to them! i.e., communicated his light; hence, they are not in His light in order to see! God has not opened their eyes. The eyes of the elect, in each generation, he will open; but most eyes he leaves closed (God's *judicial blinding of many*). Read Isa. 6:9-10, *And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing,^[a] but do not understand; keep on seeing,^[b] but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull,^[c] and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."* This is not physical healing, but spiritual healing, i.e., saved from God's wrath due to the penalty of their sin! That being said, the scripture says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin...by stirring up one's conscience so that they feel the guilt of sin, the remedy of which is Christ's

speaking to the raging conscience likened by the raging waves of the sea, *Peace be still*. Flavel goes into this.

By this, it is clear that the prayer of an unconverted person does nothing to remove this guilt (which is a principle part or fruit of one being converted), that only Christ can remove! And he does this by the effectual call, as Owen stated, the only way of salvation is by *effectual vocation*. See John 6:44, & 65

Comments on Conscience by Flavel, pg 28, The Soul of Man

To this faculty [the understanding] belong two other excellent and wonderful powers of the soul, namely, 1. [Thoughts](#) 2. [Conscience](#).

1. The power or ability of cogitation; "Thoughts are properly the actings and agitations of the mind, or any actual operation of the understanding." They are the musings of the mind, which are acted in the speculative part of the understanding. It is observable that the Hebrew word "suach", which is used for meditation, or thinking, signifies both to think and to speak in the mind. When the understanding, or mind resolves, and meditates the things that come into it, that very meditation is an inward speaking, or hidden word in the heart, [Deut. 15:9](#). "Beware, lest there be a thought in thy wicked heart," as some render it: In the Hebrew it is "*davar im levavech*", a word in thy heart. So [Mat. 9:3, 4](#). "*eipon ei autois*", "they spake within themselves," i.e. "they thought in their hearts." The objects presented to the mind are the companions with whom our hearts talk and converse.

Thoughts are the figments and creatures of the mind: they are formed within it, in multitudes innumerable. The power of cogitation is in the mind, yea, in the spirit of the mind.

"The fancy indeed, while the soul is embodied, ordinarily, and for the most part presents the appearances and likenesses of things to the mind;" but yet it can form thoughts of things which the fancy can present no image of, as when the soul thinks of God, or of itself. This power of cogitation goes with the soul, and is rooted in it when it is separated from the body; and by it we speak to God, and converse with angels, and other spirits in the unbodied state, as will be more fully opened in the process of this discourse.

2. The conscience belongs also to this faculty; for it being the judgement of a man upon himself, with respect or relation to the judgement of God, it must needs belong to the understanding part or faculty. "Thoughts are formed in the speculative, but conscience belongs to the practical understanding." It is a very high and awful power; it is solo Deo minor, and rides (as Joseph did) in the second chariot; the next and immediate officer under God. He says of conscience with respect to every man, as he once said of Moses with respect to Pharaoh. "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh," [Exod. 7:1](#). The voice of conscience is the voice of God; for it is his vicegerent and representative. What it binds on earth, is bound in heaven: and what it looseth on earth is loosed in heaven. It observes records, and bears witness of all our actions; and acquits and condemns, as in the name of God, for them. Its consolations are most sweet, and its condemnations most terrible: so terrible, that some have chosen death, which is

the king of terrors, rather than to endure the scorching heat of their own consciences. The greatest deference and obedience is due to its command, and a man had better endure any rack or torture in the world, than incur the torments of it. It accompanies us as our shadow wherever we go: and when all others forsake us, (as at death they will) conscience is then with us, and is then never more active and vigorous than at that time. Nor does it forsake us after death; but where the soul goes, it goes, and will be its companion in the other world for ever. How glad would the damned be if they might but have left their consciences behind them, when they went hence! But as Bernard rightly says, "It is both witness, judge, tormentor, and prison;" it accuseth, judgeth, punisheth, and condemneth.

The Conscience (cont.)

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excerpt from John Flavel, pg 265, Vol. V,
[Navigation Spiritualized](#)

This is superb. My comments and added scriptures in [blue], red for emphasis.

CHAP. XX.

*Christ, with a word, can surging waves appease;
 His voice a troubled soul can quickly ease.*

OBSERVATION.

WHEN the sea works, and is tempestuous, it is not in the power of any creature to appease it. When the Egyptians would by their hieroglyphics express an impossibility, they did it by the picture of a man treading upon the waves. It is storied of Canute, an ancient Danish king, that when a mighty storm of flattery arose upon him, he appeased it by showing that he could not appease the sea. But one of his courtiers told him as he

rode near the sea-side, 'That he was Lord of the sea as well as land.' 'Well, (said the king) we shall see that by and by;' and so went to the water-side, and with a loud voice cried, 'O ye seas and waves, come no further, touch not my feet.' But the sea came up notwithstanding that charge, and confuted the flattery. But now Jesus Christ hath command of them indeed. It is said of him, Mat. 8:26, *That he rebuked them*. And Mark 4:38, He quiets them with a word, *Peace, be still*; as one would hush a child, and it obeyed him.

APPLICATION.

Conscience, when awakened by the terrors of the Lord, is like a raging tempestuous sea; so it works, so it roars; and it is not in the power of all creatures to hush or quiet it. **Spiritual terrors**, as well as spiritual consolations are not known till felt. O when the arrows of the Almighty are shot into the spirit, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against the soul; when the venom of those arrows drink up the spirits, and those armies of terrors charge violently and successively upon it, as Job 6:4 [*For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.*] What creature then is able to stand before them! Even God's own dear children have felt such terrors as have, *distracted them*, Ps. 81:15. Conscience is the seat of guilt; it is like a burning glass, so it contracts the beams of the threatenings, twists them together, and reflects them on the soul, until it smoke, scorch, and flame. If the wrath of the king be like the roaring of a lion, **then what is the Almighty's wrath!** which is burning wrath, Job 19:11 [*He has also kindled His wrath against me.*], a tearing wrath, Ps. 50:22 [*Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver:*], a surprising wrath, Job 20:23, and an *abiding wrath*, Job 3:36 [no such verse; copying error].

In this case no creature can relieve; all are physicians of no value; some under these terrors have thought hell more tolerable, and by a violent hand have thrust themselves out of the world into it to avoid these gnawings. [which is why many commit suicide after heinous acts, e.g., Judas, mass killers nowadays, etc.] Yet Jesus Christ can quickly calm these mystical waves also, and hush them with a word; yea, he is the physician, and no other. It is the **sprinkling of his blood** [reference to the sacrifices, the *sprinkling of blood* mentioned in Leviticus], which, like a cooling fomentation, allays those heats within. That blood of sprinkling speaks peace, when all others have practiced upon the soul to no purpose; and the reason is, because he is a Person, in whom God and man, justice and mercy meet and kiss each other, Eph. ii. 14. And hence fetches in peace to the soul, Rom. v. 1.

REFLECTION.

Can none appease a troubled conscience but Christ? Then learn, O my soul, to understand, and daily more and more to savor that glorious name, even Jesus, that delivers not only from the wrath to come, but that which is felt here also. O, if the foretaste of hell be so intolerable, if a few drops, let fall on the conscience in this life be so scalding and insufferable, **what is it to have all the vials poured out to eternity, when there shall be nothing to divert, mitigate, or allay it?**

Here men have somewhat to abate those terrors, some hopes of mercy, at least a possibility; but there is none. O my soul! how art thou loaded with guilt ! and what a *Magormissabib* wouldst thou be, should God rouse that sleepy lion in thy bosom! My condition is not at all the better because my conscience is quiet. Ah! the day is coming when it must awake, and will lighten and thunder terribly within me, if I get not into Christ the sooner. O Lord, who knows the power of thy wrath? O let me not carry this guilt out of the world with me, to maintain those everlasting flames, let me give no sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, till I feel the comfort of that blood of sprinkling, which alone speaketh peace. [Men of all sorts seek to quiet their consciences by various means; by false professions of faith, just going to church, hanging out with Christians, going through various religious services can quiet conscience, doing religious works of all sorts, i.e., *trusting in duties*, drowning themselves in worldly activities, drinking to excess, etc. This is the main purpose of all false religions - to quiet conscience; to pacify an angry God! who they know they have not obeyed. Wow! Now you see the import of John 6:63, *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.* And, John 15:3, *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.* Clean from what? Cleansed from their guilt that was associated with sin; and guilt has to do with punishment; but those who are *in Christ* (those to whom God has effectually spoken to or called) are no longer under condemnation that was due to guilt, Rom. 8:1. So, true peace of mind is a clear conscience! But many say *peace, peace when there is no peace*, [peace with God and hence peace of conscience as well] Jer. 6:14, *They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.* This is why it is vital to be under a good pastor who does not sugarcoat the gospel message of faith in Christ and repentance of sin (corrupt interpretations designed to accommodate carnal apprehensions).]

THE POEM

Among the dreadful works of God, I find
No metaphors to paint a troubled mind.
I think on this, now that, and yet will neither
Come fully up, though all be put together.
'Tis like the raging sea that casts up mire,
Or like to Aetna, breathing smoke and fire;
Or like a roused lion, fierce and fell;
Or like those furies that do howl in hell.
O conscience! who can stand before thy power,
Endure thy gripes and twinges but an hour?
Stone, gout, strappado [torture], racks, whatever is
Dreadful to sense, is but a toy to this.
No pleasures, riches, honours, friends can tell
How to give ease: In this 'tis like to hell.
Call for the pleasant timbrel, lute, and harp;
Alas! the music howls, the pain's too sharp
For these to charm, divert, or lull asleep;
These cannot reach it, no, the wound's too deep.
Let all the promises before it stand.
And set a Barnabas at its right hand;
These in themselves no comfort can afford,
'Tis Christ, and none but Christ can speak the word.
And he no sooner speaks but all is still,
The storm is over, and the mind tranquil.
There goes a pow'r, with his majestic voice,
To hush the dreadful storm, and still its noise.
Who would but fear and love this glorious Lord,
That can rebuke such tempests with a word?

Principle of Spiritual Life

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Thomas Shepard

On Self-examination Regarding Natural Principles vs.
The Principle of Spiritual Life

Parable of the Ten Virgins, p 282

Section IV Of Trial. We live in a country which hath goodly trappings, rich hangings glorious profession, burning lamps, and hence many think themselves rich when indeed poor; many look to meet the bridegroom when indeed they shall be shut out from the fellowship of the bridegroom. How shall I know that that all my sorrows, prayers, reformation, profession, is but a paint an appearance a fashion a church craft which will stand me in no stead when the Lord shall appear who shall judge the secrets of all hearts, by the word you hear this day; try it therefore by this rule, does it come from a principle of life or no? Your lamp burns, but look what is in your vessel that feeds this flame. That, as our divines speak, how the disciples could do greater works than Christ, and others wrought miracles besides Christ; how, then do they prove that he is Christ?

It is answered, in all his miraculous works we are to consider not only *quid fecit* i.e., what he did, but *qua virtute fecit*, from what power he did. The apostles and others did miracles but it was *aliena virtute*; Christ did them, but it was *propria virtute*. So many an unsound heart, he may do greater works than saints, and his lamp burn brighter.

Therefore, in this case, we are not to look so much to what is done, as from what power and principle it is done; for therein the best hypocrite ever fails. We shall ever observe in some beasts there are *umbra rationis* [shadow account], yet there is no rational soul, nor any wise man will believe that their acts proceed from such a principle; **so there are shadows of the power of grace in a carnal heart, and yet no judicious Christian will say they come from an inward soul or principle of life.** Consider, therefore, whether there is this principle or no; you see there is profession, you have a name to live in the judgment of all the church, but search your hearts, and see from what principle it proceeds; for, if this be wanting all is nothing. As he that had beer given him, when milk and wine and sugar were put into it to mend it, said, the wine is good and the milk is good, but the beer is bad; so profession, affection is good, but the heart, the man, is bad; (Jer 2:22) "Though thou wash thee with nitre, thy sin is marked before the Lord." And that the trial may be full and fair, I shall show negatively the several sorts of men that act not from an inward principle, yet carry it out as though the bitterness of death was past, and the bridegroom theirs.

1. **When a man's principle is nothing but the power of created nature expressing itself, and setting the best face forward, in the gilded rottenness of some moral performances, wherein a man saith he does what he can; for there is this principle in most of men, a desire to be saved; nature saith so; and according to the intention of this desire; so according men will do more or less;** and hereupon soothe up themselves, when they see they cannot do as others do, or as the Lord commands, I do as well as I can. Nay, when condemned by the word which meets them, I do as well as I can, I believe, I repent, I pray, I remember the word, I do as well as I can; and so they hope God accepts of that; and though I believe no man but may be hired to do more than he does, yet nature may do much. Hence, I heard an Arminian once say, If faith will not work it, then set reason a work, and we know how men have been kings and lords over their own passions by improving reason, and from some experience of the power of nature men have come to write large volumes in defense of it; and it is known the Arminians, though they ascribe somewhat to grace, and in words all to grace, yet indeed they lay the main stress of the work upon a man's own will and the royalty and sovereignty of that liberty. But to leave them, and to come to ourselves, is it not a common thing for men to make lies their refuge, and to say, I was in a woeful condition once, and never looked after God, but now I bless the Lord it is otherwise with me? How? Now I believe, repent, etc.

And so I confess all I do is full of weaknesses, yet I do what I can; and thus they are like to men that have old garments new dressed, they have made them as good as they can and like the young man, (Luke xviii 21), "All these things have I done from my youth; yet one thing was wanting, which was to forsake all, and so himself, that the disciples said, Who then can be saved? With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

You say you do as much as you can; I say do so, but it is impossible for man from any strength of man, and you have no more yet; John 1:13, "Born again not of the will of man, but of God." There is in some men a birth, like to the new birth, which is of the will and power of man; but, O, this is not this inward principle which the almighty power of God creates; and therefore know it, if you get no other oil in your lamps, you shall never meet the bridegroom.

2. **When a man's principle is the power of holy example**, whereby many a one is drawn to do more than otherwise he would. Many men think for a while as that man spoke; men talk of being worth thousands, I would fain see the men, ministers preach and others speak well, we must do this and that, but I would fain see the men that do it. Now it sometimes falls out that the Lord sets before men's eyes some pattern Christians; hereupon they think thus: Here are two contrary ways, they cannot both lead to heaven, their way is better than mine, and doubtless leads to life; mine doth not, therefore let me live like them. And hence there shall not be any fast but they will be at it, not a sermon near but they will go wet and dry to hear it, nor any duty in family but they will imitate it, and hence read and learn, that they may be like them. No Christians in the country hated but they will love them, nor ceremonies cast off but they will abhor them; and hence they reflect upon their patterns and think their estate safe, because they are as good as a Christian's outside. And hence, like some dead cattle, there is nothing good but their skin, so there is nothing good in these but their imitating outside. Thus it was with Joash while Jehoiada lived, 2 Chron 24. Hence, he fell like ivy with the oak, when God cut him down. Thus it was with these five foolish virgins; a man may follow good examples, but not rest in bare imitation of them. And hence, a blessed man is described (Ps 1) negatively, from not imitating the wicked, not from imitating the good; because good men may be in many things ill examples, and it ever proves so in these men that have no more than this principle; hence, if they be loose in their tongues, or on the Sabbath, their plea is, they are like unto them. **And hence, come all your acquired excellencies; a man is an imitating creature, led by example, and a carnal man, out of the heart of hypocrisy in himself, will imitate the divine nature which is in**

another, and hence, men not only take up such practices, but such opinions only, because such and such are of that mind. And men change practices and opinions as examples do change; in Joshua's time, great reformation; he no sooner died, but all fell off again; then they were for purity of ordinances and God's worship, now they serve Balaam. O, consider here in an outward, but no inward principle.

3. **Those whose principle is nothing but external applause and praise of men, and this will carry a man beyond all the best examples;** nay, sometime to be singular and a man alone; a Pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end while simplicity walks through the town unseen. Hence, a man will sometimes covertly commend himself, and myself ever comes in, and tells you a long story of conversion, and a hundred to one if some lie or other slip not out with it. **Why the secret meaning is, I pray admire me;** hence complain of wants and weaknesses; pray, think what a broken-hearted Christian I am; and hence, if comforted, they complain, if not, they will comfort themselves; hence many lift up eyes and hands, and fetch deep sighs in prayer, remember and note sermons, look now what a gift I have, hence, if you come to their company, they will have so many good words as may make you think well of them, and then the market is almost done with them, hence men forsake their friends, and trample underfoot the scorns of the world, they have credit elsewhere. To maintain their interest in the love of godly men they will suffer much; hence men in the ministry pray for grace to beautify and perfect their parts, that so they may preach, and convert, and have credit; hence men meditate new light, and profess deep things that few know, that men may worship the rising sun; **hence the Lord is neglected secretly, yet honored openly, because there is no wind in their chambers to blow their sails, and therefore, there they stand still, hence many men keep their profession when they lose their affection,** they have by the one a name to live, and that is enough, though their hearts be dead; and hence so long as you love or commend them, so long they love you, but if not they will forsake you; **they were warm only by another's fire, and hence having no principle of life within, soon grow dead. This is the water that turns a Pharisee's mill and the Lord passes a heavy doom, "You have your reward."** I have wondered that the opinion of men, nay, dream of men's thoughts should act men; only it is a curse of God, that when men despise his honor, the greatest good, they shall be fed with the basest good,

4. **Those whose principle is nothing else but their own gain of outward blessings.** Many there be that make not their honor so much as their bellies their gods and they rule them, (Phil 3:19), hence the shopkeeper will give good words when he sells his commodity, he should lose much of his custom else; and hence the minister preaches

conscionably that his gain may come in, 1 Thess 2:4, 5. Hence people would be as good as the best, they cannot get a lot in all the country else. Hence a man is sometime content to forsake all for Christ, that he may make a booty of Christ as Judas did. Hence when Christ feeds them with loaves, then the people will make him a king, (John 6), though afterward they cry, Crucify him. So men deal with Christ as the soldiers did that caught him, that they might strip him of his garments. And hence many men if they see sorrows and wants attending them, if they attend on Christ, forsake him. Look upon our own land; many, so long as they could enjoy Christ with fair weather, cry out of ceremonies, and profaning of Sabbath; yet this not being to be had, creep to them, and read the book for profaning thereof. Many shadows have been seen since our sun hath risen here, and this way they looked; but viewing other men's wants, and fearing their own losses, and conceiving they may meet with Massah in this wilderness, refuse to follow. And lest this should seem to be the cause, cry out, we are separatists, or strongly possess themselves against all relations, there is no living at all here.

Look but at home; how many doves (that prove but ravens and live on the prey) come hither to our windows, and have followed Christ to this world's end; when he fed them with loaves, they made him their king; but now he hath taken away what once they desired, because there is better bread to be labored for; now they forsake him, and live on the spoil. **This is no inward principle.** And hence when men's expenses for Christ exceed their receipts from Christ, they cease spending, and fall in the highway to begging at the door of the world.

5. **Those whose principle is nothing else but the strength of natural conscience which will set men a-doing when they have neither praise from men nor gain from Christ for their labor.** For the Lord deals with some men as the Romans did with some of their prisoners; they would chain a prisoner and his keeper together, and let them go up and down; so God chains many a poor prisoner of hell and his conscience together, and lets them go together. And hence many a man keeps peace with his conscience and cannot give it the slip for all the world heaped up with gold as Balaam said.

Now there are two things in a natural conscience, Rom 2:15 .

1. **To accuse;** hence a man dares not omit prayer, dares not commit a sin he has a mind to; conscience would then roar. Hence many keep constantly set duties in private, and tremble at small sins; not because they take any delight in the one or are weary of the other, **but because they are ever under the eye of this judge.**

2. **To excuse**, and to give much sweetness when a man follows the dictates thereof; hence a man, though carnal, will die for his religion, and that with some cheerfulness, **because conscience cheers within, and sings him asleep in trouble**. And hence a man will cry out of all the glorious hypocrisies of men **because to walk according to conscience is sweeter to him**. And hence a man comforts himself, It is my conscience; (Mark 12:33) to love God “is better than burnt offerings.” Hence a man will profit exceedingly in what he holds (Gal. 1:14), because zealous for it for conscience; **and yet this is but a principle of nature, not an inward principle of life, whose property is to seek the subversion of corrupt nature, as natural conscience seeks the garnishing of it and the actions thereof.**

6. **Those whose principle is the fear of death and hell; raised not so much by the power of conscience as by the power of the Word**. And hence come complaints about a man's estate; that a man can have no rest by all duties that he has done, or does. Hence following of the means, running to the best ministry, mourning and lamenting and confessing sin; (Matt 3:7) “O generation of vipers,” etc. And hence prizing of favor and comfort, Ps 78:34, 35. Hence many do take this for their conversion, and say, I heard such a minister at such a time, and then I cried out I was damned, and thought I saw the devil; yea, and to hell you may for all this, if no other principle. Indeed there is this fear in the elect, but drives them to the ark, as Noah, but those, when their fear is over, they fall to fight against the Lord.

7. **Those whose principle is nothing else but the immediate actings of the Spirit of God upon them**. For sometime the Spirit of God comes upon men as light shines on the mud wall, yet dwells not there as in the sun. And hence many speak, pray, prophesy admirably, as Balaam, Num 24:3, 4. Many men, like carters, bring others' goods that are not possessors of them. Now, these are,

1. **External enlargements**. And hence a man doth many things which he has no inward power to perform; the Spirit is there assisting; hence, he cannot do so at another time, but it is the Spirit only assisting. And hence a man may have abundance of knowledge and he not affected with it; he may live and pray with applause of men, others wish they were like him, yet live without love and speak without feeling, and do without life; hence men leave themselves here.

2. **Internal pangs**. **The Spirit of God begets some inward grief**, especially when outward evils press, then inward flashes and desires, but they are soon done. There is no spring, no principle within. What the difference is between saints' unevenness and this inconstancy you shall hear hereafter, yet these are wrestlings of spirit not yet conquering, and hence it possesses not the soul.

8. **When men's principle is nothing else but common gifts**, which are inward, and abiding long in the soul. **That a man now thinks he has grace, and sure signs of the Lord's love, and here is fastened.** When there be two things wherein it appears there is no inward principle:

1. **These gifts ever puff up, and make a man something in his own eyes**, as the Corinthian knowledge did. And many a private man thinks himself fit to be a minister, many a minister better than all the parish besides when Paul was the least of all the saints. And hence commonly they degenerate to pride and form.

2. **These keep men strangers to Christ and the life of faith; they have these affections, yet, ignorant of Christ, take these as signs of his love, and live without him.** And this is indeed the inner principle which all the wicked in the world want [lack]; **there is in true grace an infinite circle.** A man by thirsting receives, and receiving, thirsts for more. But hence the Spirit is not poured out abundantly on churches because men shut it out by shutting in and contenting themselves with their common graces and gifts, Matt 7:29. Examine if it be thus. If so,

1. You cannot come to the Lord; John 5:44, "How can ye believe?"

2. Nor to receive anything from the Lord if you do, James 4:3, "when you ask to spend it on your lust," when that carries you.

3. This pulls down the kingdom of the Lord Jesus when other things rule us and not himself alone.

4. Satan will have this against you as against Job, "You serve not the Lord for nought." To what purpose are your new moons, church reformations, if it be thus? Now, because it hath been replied to what was formerly said, that Christ was the vessel not our souls, I shall, therefore, confirm the latter to be the truth by these reasons:

1. Mystical places of Scripture are to be interpreted by plain. Now, though Christ may be the antitype of these vessels of the temple, yet he is not plainly said to be a vessel; but souls are called so, Rom 9:23; 2Cor 4:7, Acts 9:15. "Paul is a chosen vessel." 1Thes 4:4, "We are to possess our vessels in holiness." 2 Tim 2:20, "Vessels of honor"

2. The Spirit is not in Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain; hence John 3:34, "Christ hath received the Spirit without measure."

3. The foolish virgins had vessels, because it is said, "They took their lamps but no oil with them." Their folly was not in not providing vessels. Hence the foolish virgins did not afterward beg their vessels, but their oil.

4. The wisdom of the wise did appear in that they did provide oil for their vessels. If, therefore, the vessel be Christ, therein lies the wisdom of the wise, that they got the Spirit to put into Christ, and the folly of the foolish they got not the Spirit to put into him. Or the one got Christ Jesus full of the Spirit,

the other Christ Jesus void of it. When whoever hath Christ must have in him the fullness of the Spirit also.

5. The other interpretation crosses the main scope of this part of the parable, which is to show the difference between the virgins. All professed Christ went to meet the bridegroom, but here was the difference; they never looked for to get the Spirit in them. And this is most suitable to men raised out of the dregs of Popery, where works being abolished, Christ is owned, and therein do well, but herein fail.

Thus you have heard the use of trial negatively. What this inward principle is affirmatively you have generally heard, and shall more particularly in the other two doctrines. Only this I shall add it consists of two parts:

1. Our life in Christ by faith
2. Christ's life in us by his Spirit.

Faith empties the soul and looks upon it as dead and sees its life laid up in Christ, and hence forsakes itself and embraces the Lord of glory. Secondly, The Spirit comes and possesses a forsaken empty house and there lives and dwells. Both these the apostle mentions, Gal 2:20, Eph 3:17, John 15:4. As two married together, their souls live not where they are, but in each other. The one cares not how to please herself but her husband and *e contra*. So that lest any weak soul should be discouraged, that thinks there is no principle of life, because such a blind, empty, dead heart, wandering from God, etc. Nay, when the Lord quickens it, O, it is lost again. Nay when quickened, O, then, when it comes to, it is so feeble! I tell you it must be so. This makes you lay up your life in him; this death is your life. And lest any false heart should be here deceived that says he has Christ, "If you have not the Spirit of Christ you are none of his." The saints have this sometime, their temple is filled with glory; and for their general course they are admirers of the Lord Jesus, and account his life to be life, and all their life beside to be continual death. There is not any grace but they say, O that I had it!

The Consequences of False Doctrine

code238

(a *general redemption*) illustrated by Elisha Coles,
A Practical Discourse on God's Sovereignty, p127

For, according to the principles of general redemption, he [God] did and does for all alike; and no more for one than for another.

6. It makes men presumptuous, and carnally secure: how many have soothed up themselves in their impenitency and hardness of heart, and fenced themselves against the word, on this very supposition, That Christ died for all; and why then should not they look to be saved as well as any other? and so they lean, pretendedly, on the Lord, and transgress; not considering, **that those for whom Christ died, he purchased for them a freedom from sin, and not a liberty of sinning; nor impunity, but on terms of faith and repentance.** And that the tempter disturbs them not in their rest on such a foundation, may be one reason why men so stiffly adhere to it; and that those of the general principle are so seldom troubled with terrors of conscience. - Elisha Coles

My comment: Profession of faith does not save anyone. For many wanted to enter in, and though they said that they prophesied and cast out demons in His name etc., they were refuse at last, "depart from Me..." The only way of salvation is by *effectual vocation*; that is, you must be called; and the evidence that one is *effectually* called is that he has been given a new heart, i.e., regeneration has taken place by the Spirit of God, Titus 3:5, John 3:8 etc. To rest your hope on a profession is a weak foundation. Therefore, the scriptures admonishes us to examine ourselves to see if this

regeneration has actually taken place, to see if we are in the faith and exhibit fruit that is meet for repentance, Matt 3:8, James 2:18...

A Right Anthropology

code109 code239

From The Parable of the Ten Virgins
by Thomas Shepard

Pg 142-143

This is why prayers like the Sinner's Prayer are presumptuous and greatly provoke God. They flow from wicked principles and not from a new principle of life which only those who have been truly converted.

1. The root that bears this wild fruit is a degenerate root, and that is the cause of all this sourness and harshness in the fruit it bears; it is the seed of some better tree accidentally blown, or cast into some waste and bad soil, where not being manured and ordered aright, it is turned wild. **So all the fruits of unregenerate men flow from the first**

Adam, a corrupt and degenerate root; he was indeed planted a right seed, but soon turned a wild and degenerate plant; he being the root from which every man naturally springs, corrupts all the fruit that any man bears from him. It is observed by Gregory pertinently to my present purpose, *Genus humanum in parente primo, velut in radice putruit*: Mankind was putrefied in the root of its first parent, Matt. vii. 18, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

2. This corrupt root spoils the fruit, by the transmission of its sour and naughty sap into all the branches and fruits that grow upon it; they suck no other nourishment, but what the root affords them, and that being bad, spoils all; for the same cause and reason, no mere natural or unregenerate man can ever do one holy or acceptable action, because the corruption of the root is in all those actions. The necessity of our drawing corruption into all our actions, from this cursed root Adam, is expressed by a quick and smart interrogation, Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." The sense of it is well delivered us (by Mr. Caryl, *in loc.*) This question (saith he) may undergo a twofold construction. First, thus, **Who can bring a morally clean person out of a person originally unclean?** And so he lays his hand upon his birth-sin. Or, Secondly, which speaks to my purpose, it may refer to the action of the same man; man being unclean, **cannot bring forth a clean thing; i.e., a clean or holy action**; that which is originated is like its original. And that this sour sap of the first stock (I mean Adam's sin) is transmitted into all mankind, not only corrupting their fruit, but ruining and withering all the branches, the apostle shows us in that excellent parallel betwixt the two Adam's, Rom. V. 12 "Wherefore, as by one man [one, not only *in individuo, sed in specie*, one representing the whole root or stock,] sin entered into the world," not by imitation only, but by propagation; and this brought death and ruin upon all the branches.

3. Although these wild hedge-fruits be unwholesome and unpleasant to the taste, yet they are fair and beautiful to the eye; a man that looks upon them, and doth not know what fruit it is, would judge it by its show and color, to be excellent fruit; for it makes a fairer show oftentimes than the best and most wholesome fruit doth; even so, these natural gifts and endowments which some unregenerate persons have, seem exceeding fair to the eye, and a fruit to be desired. What excellent qualities have some mere natural men and women! What a winning affability, humble condescension, meekness, righteousness, ingenuous tenderness and sweetness of nature! As it was (hyperbolically enough) said of one, *In hoc homine, non peccavit* Adam: Adam never sinned in this man; meaning that he excelled the generality of Adam's children in sweetness of temper and

natural endowments. What curious fantasies, nimble wits, solid judgments, tenacious memories, rare elocution, etc., are to be found among mere natural men! By which they are assisted in discoursing, praying, preaching and writing to the admiration of such as know them. But that which is highly esteemed of men, is abomination to God, Luke xvi. 15. It finds no acceptance with him, because it springs from that cursed root of nature, and is not the production of his own Spirit.

The following excerpt of Jonathan Edwards' sermon is a very good reproof for those who oppose unconditional election, the limited atonement, and irresistible grace, and who promote the sinner's prayer, all of which fall under the category, *contending with your maker*. Excellent.

A Sermon on
Divine Sovereignty code110 code240

by
Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.v.html>

(excerpt)

Application

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which a little reflection may suggest to each of us. But the improvement which I shall at this time make of it,

shall be only in a *use of reproof* to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of his grace. This doctrine shows the unreasonableness, and dreadful wickedness, of your refusing heartily to own the sovereignty of God in this matter. It shows that you know not *that God is God*. If you knew this, you would be inwardly still and quiet; you would humbly and calmly lie in the dust before a sovereign God, and would see sufficient reason for it.

In objecting and quarrelling about the righteousness of God's laws and threatenings, and his sovereign dispensations towards you and others, you oppose his *divinity*, you show your ignorance of his divine greatness and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he should have divine honor. It is from low, mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppose his sovereignty, that you are not sensible how dangerous your conduct is; and what an audacious thing it is for such a creature as man to strive with his Maker.

What poor creatures are you, that you should set up yourselves for judges over the Most High; that you should take it upon you to call God to an account; that you should say to the great Jehovah, what dost thou? and that you should pass sentence against him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner; but this knowledge would be sufficient to still and calm you concerning all God's dispensations, and you would say with Eli, in [1 Sam. iii. 18](#). "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight."—But here I shall be more particular in several things.

1. It is from *mean thoughts* of God that you are not convinced that you have by your sins deserved his eternal wrath and curse. If you had any proper sense of the infinite majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, you would see, that to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and there to have no rest day nor night, is not a punishment more than equal to the demerit of sin. You would not have so good a thought of yourselves; you would not be so clean and pure in your own eyes; you would see what vile, unworthy, hell-deserving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to consider how you have set yourselves against him—how you have slighted him, his commandments and threatenings, and despised his goodness and mercy, how often you have disobeyed, how obstinate you have been, how your whole lives have been filled up with sin against God—you would not wonder that God threatens to destroy you forever, but would wonder that he hath not actually done it before now.

If you had not mean thoughts of God, you would not find fault with him for not setting his love on you who never exercised any love to him. You would not think it unjust in God not to seek your interest and eternal welfare, who never would be persuaded at all to seek his glory; you would not think it unjust in him to slight and disregard you, who have so often and so long made light of God. If you had not mean

thoughts of God, you never would think him obliged to bestow eternal salvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him.—What do you think of yourselves? what great ideas have you of yourselves? and what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to do so much for you though you treat him ever so ungratefully for the kindness which he hath already bestowed upon you all the days of your lives? It must be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjust in him not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earnestly called to you, so long and so often, and you would not be persuaded to hearken to him. What thoughts have you of God, that you think he is more obliged to hear what you say to him, than you are to regard what he says to you?

It is from diminutive thoughts of God, that you think he is obliged to show mercy to you when you seek it, though you have been for a long time willfully sinning against him, provoking him to anger, and presuming that he would show you mercy when you should seek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged, as it were, to yield himself up to be abused by men, so that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace shall not be in his own power, but he must be obliged to dispense them at their call?

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel against his justice in *the condemnation of sinners*, from the doctrine of original sin. It must be because you do not know him to be God, and will not allow him to be sovereign. It is for want of a sense how much God is above you, that those things in him which are above your comprehension, are such difficulties and stumbling-blocks to you: it is for want of a sense how much the wisdom and understanding of God are above yours, and what poor, short-sighted, blind creatures you are, in comparison with him. If you were sensible what God is, you would see it most reasonable to expect that his ways should be far above the reason of man, and that he dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see.—If men were sensible how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be so apt to be jealous of him, and to suspect him in things which lie beyond their understandings. It would be no difficulty with them to trust God out of sight. What horrid arrogance in worms of the dust, that they should think they have wisdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to pass sentence on it as unjust! If you were sensible how great and glorious a being God is, it would not be such a difficulty with you to allow him the dignity of such absolute sovereignty, as that he should order as he pleases, whether every single man should stand for himself, or whether a common father should stand for all.

3. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you trust in your *own righteousness*, and think that God ought to respect you for it. If you knew how great a Being he is, if you

saw that he is God indeed, you would see how unworthy, how miserable a present it is to be offered to such a Being. It is because you are blind, and know not what a Being he is with whom you have to do, that you make so much of your own righteousness. If you had your eyes open to see that he is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend yourselves to so great a Being by your gifts, by such poor affections, such broken prayers, wherein is so much hypocrisy, and so much selfishness.—If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you would wonder that ever you could think of purchasing the favor and love of so great a God by your services. You would see that it would be unworthy of God to bestow such a mercy upon you, as peace with him, and his everlasting love, and the enjoyment of himself, for such a price as you have to offer; and that he would exceedingly dishonor himself in so doing.—If you saw what God is, you would exclaim, as Job did, [Job xlii. 5, 6.](#) “Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” And as Isaiah did, [chap. vi. 5.](#) “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others. Thus God doth: he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of those who are in like circumstances; as it is said of Jacob and Esau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, [Rom. ix. 10-13.](#) With this sinners often quarrel; but they who upon this ground quarrel with God, suppose him to be *bound* to bestow his grace on sinners, for if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and bestow it on whom he pleases; and his bestowing it on some brings no obligation on him to bestow it on others. Has God no right to his own grace? is it not at his own disposal? and is God incapable of making a gift or present of it to any man? for a person cannot make a present of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impossible to *give a debt*.

But what a low thought of God does this argue! Consider what it is you would make of God. Must he be so tied up, that he cannot use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts? Is he obliged to bestow them on one, because it is his pleasure to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right to dispose of his gifts, as a man has of his money? or is it because God is not so great, and therefore should be more subject, more under bounds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as absolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a present of anything; he has nothing of his own to bestow. If he have a mind to show a peculiar favor to some, to lay some under special obligations, he cannot do it, on the supposition, because his favor is not at his own disposal! The truth is, men have low

thoughts of God, or else they would willingly ascribe sovereignty to him in this matter. [Matt. xx. 15.](#) “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”

God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own sovereign pleasure. And surely it is fit he should. How unreasonable is it to think that God stands bound to his enemies! Therefore consider what you do in quarrelling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend. Let all who are sensible of their misery, and afraid of the wrath of God, consider these things. Those of you who have been long seeking salvation, but are in great terrors through fear that God will destroy you, consider what you have heard, *be still, and know that he is God*. When God seems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; when he seems to frown upon you; when he shows mercy to others, your equals, or those who are worse, and who have been seeking a less time than you; *be still*. Consider who he is that disposes and orders these things. You shall consider it; you shall know it: he will make all men to know that he is God. You shall either know it for your good here, by submission, or to your cost hereafter.

Notes on the Impassibility of God

code111 code241

This is a brief comment on God’s impassibility, God without passions who never changes, his immutability, his simplicity, one divine essence, his eternal decrees, etc., all of which are inconsistent with a man centered, Arminian view of conversion; who or what the determining cause.

...for we know that these feelings belong not to God; he cannot be touched with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes. To image such a thing would be impiety. But the design is to show, that if he dealt with the people of Israel as they deserved, they would be made like Sodom and Gomorra. But as God was merciful, and embrace his people with paternal affection, he could not forget that he was a Father, but would be willing to grant pardon; as is the case with a father, who, on seeing his

son's wicked disposition, suddenly feels a strong displeasure, and then, being seized with relenting, is inclined to spare him. God then declares that he would thus deal with his people. John Calvin Commentaries, 13:402.

In the end, if God were seen as wishing for what he had not ordained, or changing his determined course of action based on his emotions, there would be implications for the entire doctrine of God. The 2nd London Confession of Faith closely connects God's spirituality, simplicity, and impassibility. For God to wish for what he has not ordained implies disunity in God, where one "part" of God is wishing for something which another "part" of God had chosen not to ordain. The resultant view of God would come dangerously close to denying his unity and simplicity, seeing God as composed of parts and attributes, rather than being one, simple, spiritual, perfect being whose essence is not a conglomeration of attributes but a united and singular whole. God is as much "without...parts" as he is "without...passion," and the two are inextricably connected. Confessing the Impassible God, pg 157-8

In other words for God to wish for someone to receive him, to believe on Him, that all God does is to wish they will repent, believe, etc., and that he is waiting for them to decide, is inconsistent with God immutability, his sovereignty over the wills of men, and his eternal decree to save some, and pass over others...*even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1:4*. God is not dependent upon the creature, but the creature dependent upon God. In some cases, it sounds like this is so, that God is waiting for man to respond from own resources, but this is only a *anthropopathism*, were God is lowering himself to our capacity of finite understanding, analogically speaking, so as to excite us to consider our miserable condition and hence our duty to believe, yet it is the Spirit who must work it and will work it in his elect.

This is excellent – describes the dangers of this fatal security as well as what constitutes a true conversion.

The Danger of the Common Profession of Christianity

code400, 112

by John Flavel
pg 536 vol. VI
excerpt from:

The Second Part,
evincing the
Possibility, Necessity, and Excellency
Of
Conversion to God

The only thing that makes men truly happy, and perfectly blessed in the world to come

§ IV. *Conversion frequently and fatally mistaken,*

2. Some think, the common profession of Christianity makes men Christians enough; they are no Heathens, Mahometans, or idolatrous Papists; but Protestants, within the pale of the true church; that is, professed reformed Christians.

But, friends, I beg you to consider that convictive text, 1 Cor. 4:20, "**The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.**" Many there be, that in words confess Christ, but in works deny him. And why were the foolish virgins (that is, professed reformed Christians) shut out of the kingdom of God; if the lamp of verbal profession, without the oil of internal godliness, were enough for our salvation? Matt. 25:3, 12. Believe it, sirs, many will claim acquaintance with Christ upon this account, and expect favor from him in the great day, of whom he will profess he never knew them, Matt. 7:22. **Christ need not have put men upon striving, as in an agony, to enter in at the strait gate, if baptism in our infancy, or verbal profession of Christianity, were all the difficulties men had to encounter in the way to heaven.**

3. Formality in external duties of religion, is another fatal mistake of conversion. Have not these been the inward thoughts of your hearts? As bad as we are, though we take liberty to swear, be drunk, and unclean sometimes; yet we say our prayers, keep our church, and hope for heaven and salvation, as well as those that are more precise.

But tell me, gentlemen, seriously, what do you say, or plead for yourselves more in all this, than those convicted hypocrites did, Isa. 58:2, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my way, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." Or to come nearer yet to your case, and cut off, at one stroke, forever this vain plea of yours, read and ponder God's own censure of it, in Jer. 7:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, and swear falsely, &c. and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say. We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord; but go ye now to my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel."

§ V. *Of the nature of true conversion.*

YOU have heard, that conversion does not consist in these external things; at your eternal peril be it, if you trust in them. **But true conversion is the turning of the whole man to God, Acts 26:18, it is nothing less, than the total change of the inward temper and frame of the heart, and the external course of the life, Isa. 55:8. It is not the cool confession, but the real forsaking of sin, in which we shall find mercy, Prov. 28:13.** Thy heart and will, love and delight, must turn sin out, and take Christ in, or thou art no gospel convert. **A true convert loaths every sin, and himself for sin,** Ezek. 36:31, but general confessions of sin are consistent with the full dominion of sin. Moreover, in all true conversion there is a positive turning unto God, a whole heart-choice of him, for your supreme and ultimate happiness and portion, Ps. 73:25³, [“Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; *But God is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”] and of the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Prince and Savior, Acts 5:31. And answerably, it will devote your whole life to his service and glory, Phil. 1:21. And thus it brings forth the new man, and the whole frame of your heart and life is marvelously changed and altered, 2Cor. 5:17, “Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.”

It may be, you will think such a change as this impossible to be made upon you. And so it is indeed, until the day of God's power come, Ps. 110:3¹, “They people shall be willing in the day of your power.” What! To forsake with loathing your old companions, and courses, which you have so long lived with and delighted in; and to embrace with highest pleasure, strict godliness, which you have so loathed, and ridiculed! This would be a strange alteration indeed. But as strange as it seems to be, it will be effected in a moment, when God fulfils that gracious promise (as I hope he is now doing) to you, Ezek. 36:26, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Operations follow nature. When the heart of a beast was given to that great king **Nebuchadnezzar**, Dan. 5:21, his dwelling was with the wild asses; they fed him with grass, like oxen. But let the spirit of a man return to him again, and he will blush to think of his brutish company, and way of life; and so will you of yours also. As marvellous a change as this has passed upon as eminent and notorious sinners as yourselves, Gal. 1:22, the God of the spirits of all flesh can with ease and speed produce all this by that Almighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

§ VI. *Of the hazards attending conversion.*

IF the Lord shall, in his rich grace and mercy to your souls, stir up in them the thoughts and resolutions of a change of your course; great care ought to be taken, in the time of this change, lest they miscarry in their remove from one state to another; multitudes miscarry betwixt a state of profaneness, and true godliness. To continue in the state of profaneness, is to be certainly lost; and so it is to take up short of Christ, in mere civility and formality in religion. This **middle state** takes up multitudes by the way, who do but change the open road, for a more private way to hell.

Mere civilized nature is unregenerated nature still; "They return, but not to the most High; they are like a deceitful bow," saith the prophet, Hosea vii. 16. They seem to aim at Christ, and salvation; but, as an arrow from a weak bow, it goes not home; or, as from a deceitful bow, it slants aside, and misses the mark. It is true, they are not openly profane, as they were before; but they take up and settle in an unregenerate state still: Their condition is the same, though their company be not.

This is excellently set forth by our Savior, Mat. xii. 43, 44, 45. The devil maybe cast out as a profane devil, and yet keep his propriety still as a former devil. The sense of that text is well expressed by one, in this note upon it; **That a restraint by formality, keeps the devil's propriety, and disposes the soul to final apostasy.** You are as far from Christ and salvation, under the power of formality, as you were before. He that is cured of a fever, hath no great cause to rejoice, if his fever has left him under a consumption, which will kill him as surely, though it may be less violently, or speedily.

§ VII. *Of the absolute necessity of a thorough change.*

WHATEVER the difficulties and hazards are, that attend this change by conversion unto God, the change itself is absolutely and indispensably necessary to every man's salvation. The door of salvation can never be opened, without the key of regeneration. Christ assures civil and formal Nicodemus, "That except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3. Think not conversion to be the attainment of some singular and extraordinary Christians, for it is the very point upon which every man's eternal happiness or misery depends. There is one law for all the world; they must be changed or damned. No restitutions or reformations, no common gifts or abilities, no religious duties or services, can save any man from hell, without a change by thorough conversion, **Rom. 8:8**, "They that are in the flesh, cannot please God."

Satisfy and please not yourselves with this: Though we live in sin, yet God is a merciful God. We will confess our sins to him, say our prayers, keep our church; and no doubt but God will be merciful to us, as well as others. Consider it, man, that this merciful God is also a God of truth; and this God of truth hath plainly assured thee, that all these external things signify nothing to thy salvation, unless you become a new creature, Gal. vi. 15, and that you must be born again, John 3:3. Say not, without this you will hope in God. If you hope in God, you must hope in his word, Ps. 119:11. **Now here will you find that word in the bible, that warrants the hope of salvation in the unregenerate person?** All scriptural hope is of a purifying nature, and evermore productive of a holy life, 1 John 3:3.

If you say, Christ died for the greatest of sinners, and you trust to be saved through him; it is true, he did so, but conversion is his only method of salvation, Tit. ii. 14, and those that are not washed by sanctification, have no part in him, or in his blood, John 13:8. He came not to save men continuing in their sins, but to save his people from their sins, Matt. 1:21. His way is to lead you through sanctification unto salvation, 2Thes. 2:13. If you have a mind to see whom, and how he saves; you have it before your eyes, Tit. i. 14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Those only are saved by him, that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, live not only soberly and righteously, but godly in this present world."

And this is the change I am here pressing you to; and until this change be made, you cannot find yourselves within the compass of any covenant-promise, Eph. ii. 12, but if you will turn to Heb. 12:14, you may, the very next minute, find yourselves barred out of heaven by a scripture threatening. **Let no man, therefore, impose so great a cheat upon his own soul, as once to imagine, that anything short of sound conversion can ever put him out of the danger of damnation.**

§ VIII. *Every man might do more than he doth, towards his own conversion.*

It is not in any man's power to convert himself; but yet because every man might do more towards it than he doth do, and doth it not, he is justly chargeable with his own damnation. We are bid, and bound to strive to enter in at the strait gate, Luke xiii. 24. **It is true, a man in his natural state, can do nothing that is spiritually, or supernaturally good;** yet he can do, and forbear to do many things, the doing or forbearing of which,

have a true (though remoter) tendency to his conversion; and not doing, or forbearing of them, his destruction is of and from himself.

You can, if you will, forbear to swear, and blaspheme the name of God. Who can, or does compel, or force your tongues to it? The devil can tempt, but not compel them; you can, if you will, stop, when nature is duly refreshed. Your wicked companions can provoke, but not force you. You can, if you please, shun lascivious books, and company, and keep your bodies chaste, at least from the external acts of uncleanness.

And why cannot you (if you please) perform, as well as neglect, the external acts of religious duties? The same feet that carry you to a tavern, can carry you to your closets, if you please to have them do so. Nor do I know any reason why you cannot compose yourselves, when engaged in God's public or private worship, to a close and serious attendance to those duties. The application of the mind to what is spoken is of great concernment to you; and if an unsanctified minister can apply his thoughts to compose a sermon, and preach it, I see no reason why an unsanctified hearer may not also compose, and apply his mind to hear it. And I am past all doubt, that something may be done beyond all this. You have some power certainly to reflect upon, and consider what concernment you have in the things you read or hear; and how they agree, or disagree with your experience.

Now, if men would but do this, (which certainly they have a power to do) though they cannot convert themselves, yet hereby they would lie in the hopeful way of converting grace; which is more than they could ever yet be persuaded to do. And though there be no positive certainty, or assurance, that conversion and salvation shall follow these acts; yet hope and probability are engagements enough. Hope sets all the world on work, without assurance. The ploughman ploughs in hope, and the merchant ventures in hope. Do but as much for your souls, as these do for their bodies.

“Will God ever ask you to do something you are not able to do? The answer is yes--all the time! It must be that way, for God's glory and kingdom. If we function according to our ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He wants to reveal Himself to a watching world.”

--Henry Blackaby—

The Arminians say that because God commands us to do something, like believing on the Son, we must, therefore have the innate ability to do so. Why else would he command us to repent and believe if we could not do it? their rationale goes. But this is a mistake. For if we had faith, God would not have to command us to believe, for we would believe already, because faith is believing (faith is often denominated as *believing* as well as *knowledge*¹). For not only is their anthropology wrong (man is dead in sin), but in order that God get all the glory of his free grace, the determining efficient to believe, it must come from Him, and that freely, not originating from us, answering to Eph. 2:7-10, “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” G. Clark

¹ Herman Bavinck puts it this way regarding this *knowledge*: “It is Gods’ will, however, to give human beings a higher, a supernatural and heavenly, destiny. To that end he had to furnish them the so-called “superadded gifts” both before and after the fall. He must grant them a supernatural grace by which they can know and love God in another, a better and higher way, practice better and higher virtues, and attain a higher destiny. This higher knowledge is faith (*fides*) and this higher love is charity (*caritas*).” Reformed Dogmatics, pg 358

The Sinner's Prayer robs God of the chief part of God's glory, the glory of his free grace.

Excerpt from

Justification by Faith Alone code113 Jonathan Edwards

Vol. 1, pg 635

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.xiii.ii.html>

(red for emphasis, [blue] my insert)

Third argument, namely, That to suppose that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, or any of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace.

That scheme of justification that manifestly takes from or diminishes the grace of God, is undoubtedly to be rejected; for it is the declared design of God in the gospel to **exalt the freedom and riches of his grace**, in that method of justification of sinners, and way of admitting them to his favor, and the blessed fruits of it, which it declares. The Scripture teaches, that the way of justification appointed in the gospel-covenant, is appointed for that end, that free grace might be expressed, and glorified; Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." **The exercising and magnifying of free grace in the gospel-contrivance for the justification and salvation of sinners, is**

evidently the chief design of it. And this freedom and riches of grace in the gospel is every where spoken of in Scripture as the chief glory of it. Therefore that doctrine which derogates from the free grace of God in justifying sinners, as it is most opposite to God's design, so it must be exceedingly offensive to him. [Hence, Thomas Shepard calls the sinner's prayer or any like prayer to try to gain God's favor, a *wicked presumption*. My insert.]

Those who maintain, that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, pretend that their scheme does not diminish the grace of the gospel; for they say, that the grace of God is wonderfully manifested in appointing such a way and method of salvation by sincere obedience, in assisting us to perform such an obedience, and in accepting our imperfect obedience, instead of perfect.

Let us therefore examine that matter, whether their scheme, of a man's being justified by his own virtue and sincere obedience, does derogate from the grace of God or no; or whether free grace is not more exalted in supposing, as we do, that we are justified without any manner of goodness of our own. In order to this, I will lay down this self-evident

Proposition, that whatsoever that be by which the abundant benevolence of the giver is expressed, and gratitude in the receiver is obliged, that magnifies free grace. This I suppose none will ever controvert or dispute.—And it is not much less evident, that it doth both show a more abundant benevolence in the giver when he shows kindness without goodness or excellency in the object, to move him to it; and that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.

1. It shows a more abundant goodness in the giver, when he shows kindness without any excellency in our persons or actions that should move the giver to love and beneficence. For it certainly shows the more abundant and overflowing goodness, or disposition to communicate good, by how much the less loveliness or excellency there is to entice beneficence. The less there is in the receiver to draw good-will and kindness, it argues the more of the principle of good-will and kindness in the giver. One that has but little of a principle of love and benevolence, may be drawn to do good, and to show kindness, when there is a great deal to draw him, or when there is much excellency and loveliness in the object to move good-will; when he whose goodness and benevolence is more abundant, will show kindness where there is less to draw it forth; for he does not so much need to have it drawn from without, he has enough of the principle within to move him of itself. Where there is most of the principle, there it is most sufficient for

itself, and stands in least need of something without to excite it. For certainly a more abundant goodness more easily flows forth with less to impel or draw it, than where there is less; or, which is the same thing, the more anyone is disposed of himself, the less he needs from without himself, to put him upon it, or stir him up to it. **And therefore his kindness and goodness appears the more exceeding great, when it is bestowed without any excellency or loveliness at all in the receiver, or when the receiver is respected in the gift, as wholly without excellency.** And much more still when the benevolence of the giver not only finds nothing in the receiver to draw it, but a great deal of hatefulness to repel it. The abundance of goodness is then manifested, not only in flowing forth without any thing extrinsic to put it forward, but in overcoming great repulsion in the object. **And then does kindness and love appear most triumphant, and wonderfully great, when the receiver is not only wholly without all excellency or beauty to attract it, but altogether, yea infinitely, vile and hateful.**

2. **It is apparent also that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.** This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that the less worthy or excellent the object of benevolence, or the receiver of kindness, is, the more he is obliged, and the greater gratitude is due. He therefore is most of all obliged, that receives kindness without any goodness or excellency in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness. And as it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the word of God. How often does God in the Scripture insist on this argument with men, to move them to love him, and to acknowledge his kindness! How much does he insist on this as an obligation to gratitude, that they are so sinful, and undeserving, and ill deserving!

Therefore it certainly follows, that the doctrine which teaches, that God, when he justifies a man, and shows him such great kindness as to give him a right to eternal life, does not do it for any obedience, or any manner of goodness, of his; but that justification respects a man as ungodly, and wholly without any manner of virtue, beauty, or excellency. **I say, this doctrine does certainly more exalt the free grace of God in justification, and man's obligation to gratitude for such a favor, than the contrary doctrine, viz. That God, in showing this kindness to man, respects him as sincerely obedient and virtuous, and as having something in him that is truly excellent and lovely, and acceptable in his sight, and that this goodness or excellency of man is the very fundamental condition of the bestowment of that kindness on him, or of distinguishing him from others by that benefit.** But I hasten to a

Fourth argument for the truth of the doctrine, That to suppose a man is justified by his own virtue or obedience, **derogates from the honor of the Mediator, and ascribes that to man's virtue which belongs only to the righteousness of Christ: it puts man in Christ's stead, and makes him his own savior, in a respect in which Christ only is his Savior. And so it is a doctrine contrary to the nature and design of the gospel, which is to abase man, and to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to Christ the Redeemer. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is a gospel-doctrine.**

Justification by Faith Alone (cont.)

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& more on ordo salutis, which comes first, faith or justification
Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 1, pg 640

Thus, I hope, I have made it evident, that the righteousness of Christ is indeed imputed to us. I proceed now to the

Third and last thing under this argument, That this doctrine, of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience. If acceptance to God's favour, and a title to life, be given to believers as the reward of Christ's obedience, then it is not given as the reward of our own obedience. In what respect so ever Christ is our Saviour, that doubtless excludes our being our own saviours in that same respect. If we can be our own saviours in the same respect that Christ is, it will thence follow, that the salvation of Christ is needless in that respect; according to the apostle's reasoning, [Gal. v. 4.](#) "Christ is rendered of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." Doubtless, it is Christ's prerogative to be our Saviour in that sense wherein he is our Saviour. And therefore, if it be by his obedience that we are justified, then it is not by our own obedience.

Here perhaps it may be said, that a title to salvation is not directly given as the reward of our obedience; for that is not by any thing of ours, but only by Christ's satisfaction and righteousness; but yet an interest in that satisfaction and righteousness if given as a reward of our obedience.

But this does not at all help the case; for this is to ascribe as much to our obedience as if we ascribed salvation to it directly, without the intervention of Christ's righteousness. For it would be as a great thing for God to give us Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness, in reward for our obedience, as to give us heaven immediately; it would be as great a reward, and as great a testimony of respect to our obedience. And if God gives as great a thing as salvation for our obedience, why could he not as well give salvation itself directly? and then there would have been no need of Christ's righteousness. And indeed if God gives us Christ, or an interest in him, properly in reward of our obedience, he does really give us salvation in reward for our obedience: for the former implies the latter; yea, it implies it, as the greater implies the less. So that indeed it exalts our virtue and obedience more, to suppose that God gives us Christ in reward of that virtue and obedience, than if he should give salvation without Christ.

The thing that the Scripture guards and militates against, is our imagining that it is our own goodness, virtue, or excellency that instates us in God's acceptance and favour. But to suppose that God gives us an interest in Christ in reward for our virtue, is as great an argument that it instates us in God's favour, as if he bestowed a title to eternal life as its direct reward. If God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward of our obedience, it will then follow, that we are instated in God's acceptance and favour by our own obedience, antecedent to our having an interest in Christ. For a rewarding any one's excellency, evermore supposes favour and acceptance on the account of that excellency: it is the very notion of a reward, that it is a good thing, bestowed in testimony of respect and favour for the virtue or excellency rewarded. So that it is not by virtue of our interest in Christ and his merits, that we first come into favour with God, according to this scheme; for we are in God's favour before we have any interest in those merits; in that we have an interest in those merits given as a fruit of God's favour for our own virtue. If our interest in Christ be the fruit of God's favour, then it cannot be the ground of it. If God did not accept us, and had no favour for us for our own excellency, he never would bestow so great a reward upon us, as a right in Christ's satisfaction and righteousness. So that such a scheme destroys itself; for it supposes that Christ's satisfaction and righteousness are necessary for us to recommend us to the favour of God; and yet

supposes that we have God's favour and acceptance before we have Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, and have these given as a fruit of God's favour.

Indeed, neither salvation itself, nor Christ the Saviour, are given as a reward of any thing in man: **they are not given as a reward of faith, nor any thing else of ours; we are not united to Christ as a reward of our faith, but have union with him by faith, only as faith is the very act of uniting or closing on our part.**¹ As when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage, he does not give himself to her as a reward of her receiving him in marriage. Her receiving him is not considered as a worthy deed in her for which he rewards her by giving himself to her; but it is by her receiving him that the union is made, by which she hath him for her husband. It is *on her part* the union itself. **By these things it appears how contrary to the gospel of Christ their scheme is, who say that faith justifies as a principle of obedience, or as a leading act of obedience; or (as others) the sum and comprehension of all evangelical obedience.** For by this, the obedience or virtue that is in faith gives it its justifying influence; and that is the same thing as to say, that we are justified by our own obedience, virtue, or goodness.

¹ Somewhat related to this is Edwards' comment on faith, the first act of it, in relation to subsequent acts of it; Owen makes a similar comment on faith, not being a reward meriting our justification but that it pleased God or order this timing as such: "And, as the congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act, so oftentimes the manifestation of justification in the conscience, arises as a great deal more from after acts, than the first act. And all the difference whereby the first act of faith has a concern in this affair that is peculiar, seems to be, as it were, only an accidental difference, arising from the circumstance of time, or its being first in order of time; and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, or any influence it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation." - Edwards, Justification by Faith Alone, pg 642

Owen's quote on this subject is a few pages down, but I'll quote it here for convenience sake:

For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.

Having thus considered the evidence of the truth of the doctrine, I proceed now to the

III. Thing proposed, viz. "To show in what sense the act of a Christian life, or of evangelical obedience, may be looked upon to be concerned in this affair."

From what has been said already, it is manifest that they cannot have any concern in this affair as good works, or by virtue of any moral goodness in them; not as works of the law, or as that moral excellency, or any part of it, which is the fulfilment of that great, universal, and everlasting law or covenant of works which the great lawgiver has established, as the highest and unalterable rule of judgment, which Christ alone answers, or does any thing towards it.

It having been shown out of the Scripture, that it is only by faith, or the soul's receiving and uniting to the Saviour who has wrought our righteousness, that we are justified; it therefore remains, that the acts of a christian life cannot be concerned in this affair any otherwise than as they imply, and are the expressions of, faith, and may be looked upon as so many acts of reception of Christ the Saviour. But the determining what concerns acts of christian obedience can have in justification in this respect, will depend on the resolving of another point, viz. Whether any other act of faith besides the first act, has any concern in our justification, or how far perseverance in faith, or the continued and renewed acts of faith, have influence in this affair. And it seems manifest that justification is by the first act of faith, in some respects, in a peculiar manner, because a sinner is actually and finally justified as soon as he has performed one act of faith; and faith in its first act does, virtually at least, depend on God for perseverance, and entitles to this among other benefits. But yet the perseverance of faith is not excluded in this affair; it is not only certainly connected with justification, but it is not to be excluded from that on which the justification of a sinner has a dependence, or that by which he is justified.

I have shown that the way in which justification has a dependence on faith, is, that it is the qualification on which the congruity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ depends, or wherein such a fitness consists. But the consideration of the perseverance of faith cannot be excluded out of this congruity or fitness, for it is congruous that he that believes in Christ should have an interest in Christ's righteousness, and so in the eternal benefits purchased by it, because faith is that by which the soul hath union or oneness with Christ; and there is a natural congruity in it, that they who are one with Christ should have a joint interest with him in his eternal benefits; but yet this congruity depends on its being an abiding union. As it is needful that the branch should abide in the vine, in order to its receiving the lasting benefits of the root; so it is necessary that the soul should abide in Christ, in order to its receiving those lasting benefits of God's final acceptance and favour. [John xv. 6, 7.](#) "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it

shall be done unto you.” [Ver. 9, 10.](#) “Continue ye in my love. If ye keep (or abide in) my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” **There is the same reason why it is necessary that the union with Christ should remain, as why it should be begun; why it should continue to be, as why it should once be.** If **it should be begun without remaining, the beginning would be in vain.** In order to the soul’s being now in a justified state, and now free from condemnation, it is necessary that it should now be in Christ, and not merely that it should once have been in him. [Rom. viii. 1.](#) “There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The soul is saved in Christ, as being now in him, when the salvation is bestowed, and not merely as remembering that it once was in him. [Philip. iii. 9.](#) “That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” [1 John ii. 28.](#) “And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” In order to persons being blessed after death, it is necessary not only that they should once be in him, but that they should die in him. [Rev. xiv. 13.](#) “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”—And there is the same reason why faith, the uniting qualification, **should remain, in order to the union’s once being.**

So that although the sinner is actually and finally justified on the first acts of faith, yet the perseverance of faith, even then, comes into consideration, as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. God, in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner’s first believing, has respect to perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith; and it is looked upon, and taken by him that justifies, as being as it were a property in that faith. God has respect to the believer’s continuance in faith, and he is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment it shall follow; and it being by divine constitution connected with that first faith, as much as if it were a property in it, it is then considered as such, and so justification is not suspended; but were it not for this, it would be needful that it should be suspended, till the sinner had actually persevered in faith.

And that it is so, that God in the act of final justification which he passes at the sinner’s conversion, **has respect to perseverance in faith, and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in the first act,** is further manifest by this, *viz.* That in a sinner’s justification, at his conversion there is virtually contained a forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment, not only of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that they shall be guilty of; because that first justification is decisive and final. **And**

yet pardon, in the order of nature, properly follows the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime pardoned, as is manifest both from reason and Scripture. **David**, in the beginning of [Psalm xxxii.](#) speaks of the forgiveness of sins which were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent on those sins, and on his repentance and faith with respect to them; and yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the [4th of Romans](#), as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin David there speaks of is the same that he committed in the matter of Uriah, and so the pardon the same with that release from death, or eternal punishment, which the prophet Nathan speaks of, [2 Sam. xii. 13.](#) “The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” Not only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in the order of time, but the pardon itself, in the order of nature, follows David’s repentance and faith with respect to this sin; for it is spoken of in the [Psalm xxxii.](#), as depending on it.

But inasmuch as a sinner, in his first justification, is for ever justified and freed from all obligations to eternal punishment; it hence of necessity follows, that future faith and repentance are beheld, in that justification, as virtually contained in that first faith and repentance; because repentance of those future sins, and faith in a Redeemer, with respect to them, or, at least, the continuance of that habit and principle in the heart that has such an actual repentance and faith in its nature and tendency, is now made sure by God’s promise.—If remission of sins, committed after conversion, in the order of nature, follows that faith and repentance that is after them, then it follows that future sins are respected in the first justification, no otherwise than as future faith and repentance are respected in it. And future repentance and faith are looked upon by him that justifies, as virtually implied in the first repentance and faith, in the same manner as justification from future sins is virtually implied in the first justification; which is the thing that was to be proved.

[excellent reasonings by Edwards]

And besides, if no other act of faith could be concerned in justification but the first act, it will then follow, that Christians ought never to seek justification by any other act of faith. For if justification is not to be obtained by after acts of faith, then surely it is not a duty to seek it by such acts: and so it can never be a duty for persons after they are once converted, by faith to seek to God, or believingly to look to him, **for the remission of sin, or deliverance from the guilt of it, because deliverance from the guilt of sin is part of what belongs to justification.** And if it be not proper for converts by faith to look to God through Christ for it, then it will follow, that it is not proper for them to pray for it;

for christian prayer to God for a blessing, **is but an expression of faith in God for that blessing**; prayer is only the voice of faith. But if these things are so, it will follow that the petition of the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts*, is not proper to be put up by disciples of Christ, or to be used in christian assemblies; and that Christ improperly directed his disciples to use that petition, when they were all of them, except Judas, converted before. The debt that Christ directs his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of, can mean nothing else but the punishment that sin deserves, or the debt that we owe to divine justice, the ten thousand talents we owe our Lord. To pray that God would forgive our debts, is undoubtedly the same thing as to pray that God would release us from obligation to due punishment; but releasing from obligation to the punishment due to sin, and forgiving the debt that we owe to divine justice, is what appertains to justification.

And then to suppose that no after acts of faith are concerned in the business of justification, and **so that it is not proper for any ever to seek justification by such acts, would be for ever to cut off those Christians that are doubtful concerning their first act of faith, from the joy and peace of believing**. As the business of a justifying faith is to obtain pardon and peace with God, by looking to God, and trusting in him for these blessings; **so the joy and peace of that faith is in the apprehension of pardon and peace obtained by such a trust**. This a Christian that is doubtful of his first act of faith cannot have from that act, because, by the supposition, he is doubtful whether it be an act of faith, and so whether he did obtain pardon and peace by that act. The proper remedy, in such a case, is now by faith to look to God in Christ for these blessings; but he is cut off from this remedy, because he is uncertain whether he has warranted so to do; for he does not know but that he has believed already; and if so, then he has no warrant to look to God by faith for these blessings now, because, by the supposition, no new act of faith is a proper means of obtaining these blessings. And so he can never properly obtain the joy of faith; for there are acts of true faith that are very weak, and the first act may be so as well as others: it may be like the first motion of the infant in the womb; it may be so weak an act, that the Christian, by examining it, may never be able to determine whether it was a true act of faith or no; and it is evident from fact, and abundant experience, **that many Christians are for ever at a loss to determine which was their first act of faith**. And those saints who have had a good degree of satisfaction concerning their faith, may be subject to great declensions and falls, in which case they are liable to great fears of eternal punishment; and the proper way of deliverance, is to forsake their sin by repentance, and by faith now to come to Christ for deliverance from

the deserved eternal punishment; but this it would not be, if deliverance from that punishment was not this way to be obtained.

But what is a still more plain and direct evidence of what I am now arguing for, is, that the act of faith which Abraham exercised in the great promise of the covenant of grace that God made to him, of which it is expressly said, [Gal. iii. 6](#). “It was accounted to him for righteousness”—the grand instance and proof that the apostle so much insists upon throughout the [4th chapter of Romans](#), and [3d chapter of Galatians](#), to confirm his doctrine of justification by faith alone—**was not Abraham’s first act of faith, but was exerted long after he had by faith forsaken his own country, [Heb. xi. 8](#).** and had been treated as an eminent friend of God.

Moreover, the apostle **Paul**, in the [3d chapter of Philip](#). tells us how earnestly he sought justification by faith, or to win Christ and obtain that righteousness which was by the faith of him, in what he did after his conversion. [Verse 8, 9](#). “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” And in the [two next verses](#) he expresses the same thing in other words, and tells us how he went through sufferings, and became conformable to Christ’s death, that he might be a partaker with Christ in the benefit of his resurrection; which the same apostle elsewhere teaches us, is especially justification. Christ’s resurrection was his justification; in this, he that was put to death in the flesh, was justified by the Spirit; and he that was delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification. And the apostle tells us in the verses that follow in that [3d chapter of Philippians](#), that he thus sought to attain the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and so to partake of the benefit of his resurrection, still as though he had not already attained, but that he continued to follow after it.

On the whole, it appears, that the perseverance of faith is necessary, even to the congruity of justification; and that not the less, because the sinner is justified, and perseverance promised, on the first act of faith, but God, in that justification, **has respect, not only to the past act of faith, but to his own promise of future acts**, and to the fitness of a qualification beheld as yet only in his own promise. And that perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation, not merely as a *sine qua non*, nor as an universal concomitant of it, but by reason of such an influence and dependence, seems manifest by many scriptures: I would mention two or three; [Heb. iii. 6](#). “Whose

house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” [Verse 14.](#) “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” [Chap. vi. 12.](#) “Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” [Rom. xi. 20.](#) “Well, because of unbelief they were broken off; but thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear.”

And, as the congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act, so oftentimes the manifestation of justification in the conscience, arises a great deal more from after acts, than the first act. And all the difference whereby the first act of faith has a concern in this affair that is peculiar, seems to be, as it were, only an accidental difference, arising from the circumstance of time, or its being first in order of time; and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, or any influence it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation.

Similar comment by John Owen on the order of nature of faith

For although faith be required in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.

And thus it is that a truly Christian walk, and the acts of an **evangelical**, child-like, believing obedience, are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be sometimes so spoken of in Scripture, viz. as an expression of a persevering faith in the Son of God, the only Saviour. **Faith unites to Christ, and so gives a congruity to justification, not merely as remaining a dormant principle in the heart, but as being and appearing in its active expressions.** The obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical, and performed with the Spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has all relation to Christ, the Mediator, and is but an expression of the soul’s believing union to Christ. All evangelical works are works of that faith that worketh by love; and every such act of obedience, wherein it is inward, and the act of the soul, is only a new effective act of reception of Christ, and adherence to the glorious Saviour. Hence that of the apostle, [Gal. ii.20.](#) “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God.” And hence we are directed, in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, [Col. iii.17.](#)

And that God in justification has respect, not only to the first act of faith, but also to future persevering acts, as expressed in life, seems manifest by [Rom. i. 17](#). For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” And [Heb. x.38, 39](#). “Now the just shall live by faith; **but if any man draw back**, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; **but of them that believe** [[an ongoing believing](#)], to the saving of the soul.”

So that as was before said of faith, so may it be said of a child-like believing obedience, it has no concern in justification by any virtue or excellency in it; but only as there is a reception of Christ in it. And this is no more contrary to the apostle’s frequent assertion of our being justified without the works of the law, than to say that we are justified by faith; for faith is as much a work, or act of christian obedience, as the expressions of faith, in spiritual life and walk. And therefore, as we say that faith does not justify as a work, so we say of all these effective expressions of faith.

This is the reverse of the scheme of our modern divines, who hold, that faith justifies only as an act or expression of obedience; whereas, in truth, obedience has no concern in justification, any otherwise than as an expression of faith.

Sinner’s Prayer, a Contradiction

going against the order of nature of justification, etc.

Excerpt from

Justification by Faith Alone

[code114](#) [code243](#)

Footnote #658 on pg 627

to Jonathan Edwards’ statement on
The order of nature (Ordo Salutis) in
man’s justification by faith alone,
pg 626 vol. 1

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.xiii.ii.html#fnf_xiii.ii-p43.1

5. No man has possessed a federal perfection, **except by imputation**, beside the first Adam while he obeyed without failure, and the second Adam when he completed his

work of humiliation. For no eminence of grace in a mere descendant of Adam could possibly attain to federal perfection, from the very nature of such perfection. Nor indeed can the perfect obedience of glorified saints rise higher than a conformity to the divine law as a rule; **their federal perfection is still derived from their union to Christ, and a consequent imputation, which implies a virtual approval.** Hence,

6. The federal perfection of Messiah is the proper and sole ground of an actual interest in reconciliation and justification. In other words, the righteousness of Christ, his perfect obedience unto death as our substitute, is that alone on account of which we can stand before God with acceptance, in reference to the charge of a federal failure in Adam.

7. An actual interest in this federal perfection is obtained only by a vital or an effectual union to the Lord our righteousness. This is plain from Scripture, and is perfectly rational. It is compared to the union of a vine and its branches, the head and members of the human body, &c. That a participation of nature between Christ and us, or an effectual union, is requisite for a ground of imputation is evident, not only from scriptural comparisons, and the rational consistence of such an idea, but also from the fact of the Savior's incarnation. **Without this union to us, our sin could not have been imputed to him; and without a vital union, his righteousness could not be imputed to us.** This is fairly and fully implied in many parts of Scripture, as might be shown if necessary.—**From whence it is plain, that union is the indispensable ground of imputation.**

8. Whoever is the subject of a vital union to Christ, is in a justified state, as partaker of a federal perfection, **prior to the performance of any moral duty whatever.** But in order to explain and prove this it is requisite to attend to the following particulars.

9. Union to Christ is of two kinds, on his part by his spirit; and on our part by faith, as explained in a preceding note. **In the former, we are passive; and in the latter, we are active.** In the one he acts as a sovereign dispenser of benefits; in the other we act as accountable creatures.

10. **By the order both of nature and of time, the union begins with him who is a quickening Spirit; and that of faith is consequent upon the other, and is the proper effect of it.**

11. **By his uniting act, which may be termed effectual calling,** the enmity of sin is **destroyed in the soul,** and the **Spirit of Christ is imparted,** which as occasion offers, will manifest itself as the Spirit of faith, or love, etc. Hence,

12. To the soul thus in Christ, whether infant or adult, there is no condemnation arising from federal delinquency; for this charge is answered by the union on his part; and righteousness is imputed.

13. From the premises it follows, that the generally received theological maxim is perfectly just and plain, namely, **that justification and regeneration are simultaneous.**— Union is the immediate cause of both; and because the one is a relative and the other a vital effect, there is no interference as to the order of time. **Thus a union of a tree and a branch by ingrafture, is attended with two simultaneous effects, the one relative and the other vital; it is related to the tree as a branch, and at the same time partakes of the vital sap.** The union, however, must precede both, as to nature and time.

14. But where two effects are both real, as distinguished from relative, the one must precede the other, both as to nature and time. Thus union precedes vitality, and this of necessity must precede vital acts; and regeneration, as the act of the Spirit of Christ, must necessarily precede believing, which is one mode by which a vital principle operates. For to suppose that the operation produces, or is prior to the principle, either in nature or in time, is a direct contradiction. [which is why the sinner's prayer is complete presumption.]

15. If the preceding steps of these remarks be thoroughly weighed, it will be found, that justification, according to Scripture, and just reasoning upon it, has for its foundation the federal perfection of Messiah, and takes place as the immediate result of union to him.

16. But since this union is twofold, the one as the effect of the other, that is, union by faith is the effect of union by the Spirit of Christ, and these, cause and effect, cannot possibly be simultaneous, there must necessarily be a twofold justification as the result of the corresponding unions. **Though in that union which is first in the order of nature and of time, the person, whether infant or adult, is passive** [see pg 1884]; the result however is the imputation of righteousness, which is Messiah's federal perfection, and which entitles to life eternal. And by that union which is the effect of the other, and consequently posterior in it in the order both of nature and of time, (and of which infants cannot be partakers,) this is, by the union effected by believing, the result is the imputation of the same righteousness in circumstances totally different.

Skip to item 20.

20. It may be objected, if there be any justification before believing, then an unbeliever may be justified; whereas the Scripture saith, "He that believeth not is condemned already." This objecting arises from a mistaken notion of the true meaning of such passages of Scripture. Condemnation, in the real import of Scripture, is leveled against the rejecters of Christ, or of the divine testimony, and these only, considered as free

agents in seeking acceptance with God and final happiness. These, not believing in Christ, while prevailing devoted to Moses or Mahomet, moral obedience or ceremonies, or indeed any other object whatever, reject in fact the testimony of God and his righteousness, and expose themselves to a double condemnation. They are condemned as being destitute of a perfect righteousness, and also for their actual disobedience to the divine authority. The sentence of the law is against them both as a covenant and as a rule; and the gospel which they reject will be a witness to prove the wickedness of their heart. But this can never take place in one who is vitally united to Christ. All allow that infants not believing are not to be ranked with unbelievers. To them no testimony is proposed, and therefore no testimony is rejected by them. Nor does any adult united to Christ reject the divine testimony, even before he believes. Let but the object of faith be presented to him, and his vital union secures the exercise of the living principle towards the proposed object in proportion as the terms are understood. A testimony not presented, or one presented in an unknown tongue, cannot be believed, notwithstanding the principle of faith. The existence of a principle does not necessarily imply its exercise, whether it be sense, reason, or faith. Men are not necessarily conversant with the objects of sense, because they possess the senses requisite for these purposes; nor are they always exercising the powers of the mind, however essential these powers are to human nature. In like manner, not exercising faith is a very different thing from not possessing the principle. **A vital union and the spirit of faith are inseparably and essentially connected**; but a vital union and believing are connected secundum quid, in certain circumstances. Without the circumstances of adult age, or a capacity of understanding, believing is impracticable. But how absurd would it be to say, that a sinner cannot be justified because he has not arrived at a certain advanced portion of understanding, or has not learned some language; as if a title to heaven depended on age, or knowing a language! And equally absurd is it to suppose that Christ cannot effect a vital union because the sinner's voluntary consent to it is wanting; as if God's high sovereignty were bound by the human will! That God requires the sinner's consent, as a matter of obligation, is a solemn fact; but God has not laid himself under any obligation that he will never unite a soul to Christ for justification of life but by the sinner's previous consent. He has declared, however, that the continued unbeliever, who is properly a willful rejecter of Christ and his righteousness, shall be condemned. **Hence it is evident, that to make believing essential to a vital union, on the part of Christ; and to make the exercise of faith on a divine testimony essential to its existence, are erroneous conclusions, derogatory to gospel grace, and founded on wrong notions of moral government.** -W

[What he is saying here is that no one can believe until he has been born again; until he has been regenerated, given a believing heart, etc. But Arminians believe that you must believe [first in order of time] in order to be accepted of God or to be saved - both meaning same thing. But this is the proverbial *cart before the horse*. For it takes saving faith (saving faith) to ask for salvation which is *not of yourselves!* As **Martin Luther** said, "No one can give himself faith; it is a gift of God." Yet by this very prayer, the sinners prayer, he is admitting that presently he has no saving faith; or else why would he be asking for it? And hence, the footnote above openly acknowledges this as a clear contradiction, for without faith, a saving faith, you cannot please God, Heb. 11:6, Romans 8:7, etc. Edwards makes this point on **page 341, vol. 1**, in a letter to Mr. Gillispie in the appendix to [On Religious Affections](#):

"That a believing that I am in a good estate, is no part or ingredient in the essence of saving faith, is evident by this, that the essence of saving faith must be complete in me, before it can be true that I am in a good estate. If I have not as yet acted faith, yea if there be any thing wanting in me to make up the essence of saving faith, then I am not as yet in a state of salvation, and therefore can have no ground to believe that I am so. **Anything that belongs to the essence of saving faith is prior, in the order of nature, to a man's being in a [believing] state of salvation, because it is saving faith that brings him into such a state. And therefore believing that he is in such a state cannot be one thing that is essential or necessary in order to his being in such a state; for that would imply a contradiction. It would be to suppose a man's believing that he is in a good estate to be prior, in the order of nature, to his being in a good estate. But a thing cannot be both prior and posterior, antecedent and consequent, with respect to the very same thing."]**

My comments reference on Isa. 53:2-6

*For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; **he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** Isaiah 53:2-6 ESV*

This is the condition of unregenerate man highlighted in red above. See also Romans 3. This is why saying some kind of prayer in order to curry God's favor is a wicked presumption, an act of man flowing from not a principle of spirit life (i.e., faith and holiness) but from a principle of self-love or self-preservation. It is a contradiction to say that an unregenerate man's prayer is genuine or truly sincere (though it may sound sincere) coming from a heart full of love for God, when in truth he *despises* and *rejects* him, seeing *no beauty* that he *should desire him!*

The Call to Eternal Life

code244

Effectual and Particular and Sweet

by Thomas Shepard , The Sound Believer, page 307-310

1. This call of offer hath three special qualifications. First, it is an **inward** as well as **outward**; for the Lord calls thousands outwardly, who yet never come, because they want [lack] and inward call to come; an inward, whispering, still voice of God's Spirit; and therefore it is said, "He that hath heard and learned" (not of man only, but) "of the Father cometh unto me." John 6:45. The Lord doth not stand at the outward door only, and call to open, but the Lord Jesus comes in; he comes near unto the very heart of a poor sinner, and makes that understand, Hosea 2:14, ""Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak ^[a]comfort to her." And the Lord makes his grace glorious, **and his mercy sweet unto the ears of his elect.** [This is that *greatness of his power in Eph. 1, and the day of his power Ps 110:3, Phil. 2:13, etc.*] Look, (saith the Lord Jesus), how I have left thousand in the world, and have had greater cause so to have left thee; but behold, I am come unto thee; O, come thou unto me.

2. It is a **particular** call; for there is a **general call** and offer of grace to every one. Now, though this be a means to make it particular, yet the Spirit of Christ, which is wont to apply generals unto particulars particularly, makes the call particular, that the soul sees that the Lord in special means me, singles out me in special to believe; otherwise the

souls of the elect will not be much moved with the call of God, so long as they think the Lord offers no more mercy to me than to any reprobate; and therefore the Spirit of Christ makes the call particular (Is. 43:1) "I have called thee by name." (John 10:5) "He calleth all his sheep by name;" not that the Lord calls any by their Christian name, (as we say) as the Lord did extraordinarily call Samuel, Samuel, and Paul, Paul; but the meaning is, look, as the Lord from before all worlds writ down their name in the book of life, and loves them in special, so in vocation, (the 3 of election), the Lord makes his offer and call special, and so special as if it were by name; for the soul at this instant feels such a special stirring of the Spirit upon it, which it feels now, and never felt before; as also its particular case so spoken unto, and its particular objections so answered, and the grievousness of its sin in refusing grace so particularly applied, as if God, the only Searcher of hearts, only spake unto it; and so dares not but think and believe that **the Lord meaneth me.**

3. It is effectual as well as inward and particular. (Luke 24:33) "Compel them to come in." (John 10:16) Christ's other sheep shall hear Christ's voice, and those he must bring home; for every inward call is not effectual. There came a man in without his wedding garment, (Matt. 22:6-8) whence our Saviour saith, "Many are called, but few chosen;" but this I now speak of, as calling out of purpose, (Rom. 8:28) and therefore never leaves the soul until it hath real possession of Christ, and rests there. **This call falls upon a sinner humbled, not hard hearted; and hence the call is effectual.** (Matt. 9:12, 13. 2Chron. 30:10-11). It is such a call as was in creation. (Rom. 4:17) And hence the soul cannot but come, and when it is come it cannot depart, like Peter, "Lord, whither should we go?" And therefore, though it hath never so many objections in coming to Christ, never so much weakness or heartlessness to close with Christ, yet the Lord brings it home, and there keeps it; and now it infinitely blesses God that ever the Lord gave it an eye to see, a heart to come and seek after Jesus Christ. Thus much of the nature of this call; now follows the necessity of it, appears in these three particulars:

1. No man should come unless first called; as it is in calling to an ordinary office, so it is in our calling much more unto special grace. The apostle saith, (Heb. 5:4) that "no man takes this honor but he that is called of God;" so what hath any man to do with Christ, to make himself a son of God, and heir of glory thereby, but he that is called of God? What have we to do to take other men's goods, unless called thereto? What have we to do to take the riches of grace and peace, if not called thereto? It is presumption to take Christ whilst uncalled, but not when you are called thereunto.

2. Because no man would come without the Lord's call. (Matt. 20:6-7) "Why stand you here all the day idle?" The answer was, "No man hath hired," or "called us thereto." When there is an outward call only, yet men will not come in. (Matt. 23:37) And therefore there must be an effectual call to bring men home. (Is. 15:5) And therefore you shall see many; let there be a legal command, suppose to sanctify a Sabbath, or to speak the truth; they have no objections against obedience unto this. But press them to believe,

show them God's call for it, they have more fears and objections rising against this than there be hairs on their head, because they would could not close with this.

3. Because no man could come, unless called. (John 6:44) "No man can come unto me, unless the Father draw him." And how doth the Father draw any man, but by this call? If the Lord should not come and speak himself, and make his call the most joyful tidings and the sweetest message that ever came to it, it would say, I have no heart, I cannot, I am not able, for (Rom. 2:32) "we are shut up under unbelief;" and therefore the Lord Jesus (Luke 15:5) must bring his sheep home upon his shoulders, else it will lie in the wilderness of its own droopings. Whereas, when the Lord effectually speaks, they could cannot but come.

– T Shepard

John 6:45 - *It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who [a]has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.* That is, they will come infallibly, hence the call is irresistible. That cannot not come! Very similar to the clear inference in **John 6:37**, *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me* – G Clark

The Irresistible Call

code115 code245

Foundations of Grace

Pg 100 – 108

Steven J Lawson

If any sinner is to know God, God must take the initiative to seek and to save. Because men hate the light, they will not come to it (John 3:19); no one in spiritual darkness will seek the Lord on his own initiative. Therefore, God must sovereignly bring the light to lost man. God must make Himself known to those who are spiritually blind. He must pursue the sinner. To those He pursues, God extends His irresistible call, His powerful summons by which He draws the lost sinner to faith in Himself. This divine call makes God known to the corrupt heart, leading the sinner to conversion.

1. **Divine Calling.** God take the initiative in calling the sinner to Himself. There is none who seeks after Him; rather, He is the Seeker. This was the case with Samuel:

Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵ and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. (1Sam. 3:4-5)

Describing his conversion, Samuel writes that God sought him graciously and sovereignly. Affirming this truth, Ronald Youngblood writes, “Although Samuel did not yet know that it was the Lord who was speaking to him (v. 7), his answer was typical of the servant who hears and obeys the divine call: “Here I am.” If God had waited for Samuel to seek Him, Samuel never would have been saved. The Sheppard must always take the initiative in seeking and calling the lost sheep himself, not vice versa. Sovereign grace is seeking grace.

2. Definite Calling. God calls His elect individually to Himself. This definite call was issued to Samuel:

And the LORD called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”

In this divine summons, God called Samuel by name. This call was issued to Samuel, not to anyone else. The Lord Jesus calls His sheep by name (John 10:3). He would call Matthew individually, saying, “Follow Me” (Matt. 9:9). Again He would call, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down” (Luke 19:5). And as He stood before the tomb of Lazarus, He would call, Lazarus, come out” (John 11:43). Had Jesus not said “Lazarus,” the entire graveyard would have come forth. The outward invitation of the gospel is extended indiscriminately to “whomsoever.” But the inward call is issued individually by name.

3. Dominate Calling. God always secures a favorable response in the heart of the one He calls inwardly. In this sense, God’s sovereign call is always effectual, or effective. It always effects the intended result:

And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. (1Sam3:8)

Samuel records how God’s call procured the desired response in his heart. This call is a sovereign summons, **a divine warrant that arrests the heart with omnipotent grace, making it captive to God.** The divine call always obtains its intended effect; it cannot be resisted ultimately. Henry [Matthew Henry] affirms this when he writes, “The call which divine grace designs to make effectual shall be repeated till it is so, that is, till we come

at the call; for the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand.” [see Isa 46:10, ““My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,””] This is the glorious triumph of sovereign grace in the hearts of the elect.

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Divine Sovereignty

The truth of the sovereignty of God over human hearts and events is the bedrock foundation of the doctrines of grace. Ezra teaches that God is free to work within human hearts, even those of unsaved men, turning them whatever direction He desires. No human heart is off limits to God.

1. Stirring Hearts. God is absolutely sovereign over the hearts of unconverted men, even those of the mightiest men on the earth. By arguing from the greater to the lesser, Ezra showed that God is free to direct any heart at any time:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: (Ezra 1:1)

The first verse of Ezra’s book speaks of God’s intervening control over Cyrus’s heart in the days of Israel’s exile. No matter how great an earthly ruler may be, God’s unrestricted right to rule is greater still. Even unsaved kings are lesser subjects to be used by God to carry out His eternal purposes. Explaining this text, Jerry Bridges states, “The text clearly says that King Cyrus issued the proclamation because God moved his heart. The destiny of God’s people was, humanly speaking, in the hands of the most powerful monarch of that day. In reality, though, their destiny was completely in God’s hand, **because He had the ability to sovereignly control the decisions on that monarch.**” This sovereign act reveals the scope of God’s authority to act as He pleases.

2. Subduing Hearts. God is absolutely free to turn human hearts as He desires, coordinating all people and events for His own glory:

²² And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel. (Ezra 6:22)

In this verse, Ezra described the scene surrounding Israel's dedication of the rebuilt temple following the return from Babylonian exile (515 BC). The people celebrated this significant rebuilding project, rightly recognizing that it had been accomplished because God had turned the heart of the Persian king. They gladly acknowledged the sovereign intervention of God in the king's heart. Recognizing the operation of this truth throughout the affairs of history, **Louis Berkhof** writes, "The Bible clearly teaches that the providence of God pertains not only to the being but also to the actions or operations of the creature. The general truth that men do not work independently, but are controlled by the will of God, appears from several passages of Scripture." This text in Ezra is definitely one of those signature passages. see Code446a

3. Superintending Hearts. **God is supremely free to plant into the human heart whatever He desires it to do.** In this way, God often directs people – even those who do not know Him – to do his bidding.

²⁷ Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, (Ezra 7:27)

Ezra wrote earlier that he had approached King Artaxerxes, seeking his permission to lead a second group of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem (458 BC). The purpose of this request was to complete the rebuilding of the temple in the holy city. Artaxerxes was agreeable, so he issued a decree granting Ezra's request (7:21). Afterward, the people recognized that this development was nothing less than the sovereign activity of God in the heart of his unsaved king. Here is strong evidence that God works sovereignly in the lives of men to effect His own purposes. Regarding this truth, Henry writes, "God can put things into men's hearts which would not arise there of themselves, and into their heads too, both by His providence and by His grace." **This is precisely what the Lord does in salvation. He intervenes in order to turn the stubborn heart to Himself as He grants the gifts of repentance and faith.**

Pg 109

Sovereign Election

Consistent with the other authors of Scripture, Nehemiah wrote about the doctrine of sovereign election. He recognized that, out of the mass of lost humanity, God had determined whom He would save. Since men are totally depraved and will not seek God, it is necessary that God make a distinguishing choice to save. It is obvious, then, that the reason some are not saved and others are lost lies entirely with God. All of mankind would remain lost if left to

themselves. But God chose His people from among those who were not seeking Him. Never was this truth more clearly seen than in the case of Abraham.

You are the LORD, the God who chose Abraham. (Neh. 9:7a)

From among the unconverted multitudes in the land of Ur, God chose Abraham. He did not make this choice on the basis of any good works within Abraham, whether actual or potential. Neither did He make it on the basis of foreseen faith in Abraham. Rather, this sovereign choice originated exclusively within God. Regarding this lofty truth, James Montgomery Boice writes, "Notice that God is the subject of every action: (1) 'You...chose Abraham and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham,' (2) 'You found his heart faithful to You,' (3) 'You made a covenant with him,' and (4) 'You have kept Your promise.'... The emphasis is entirely upon God. Boice is right. According to God's inscrutable wisdom, He chooses whom He wills for reasons known only to Himself. As it was with Abraham, so it is with all of God's elect.

The Irresistible Call

Nehemiah further upheld the doctrine of God's irresistible call, the biblical truth that God calls to Himself all whom He has chosen. The qualifying term irresistible means that when God chooses some to be saved, He sends the Holy Spirit in irresistible power, and the Spirit calls God's elect to Himself. The Spirit suddenly changes them from being God-haters to God-lovers. No one can resist the Spirit's power. He always secures the results for which He is sent. Having selected Abraham, God graciously brought him to Himself. [\[This is consistent with reason: When the Spirit says that He, Jesus, will deliver his people from their sin, that all that the Father has given Me will come to me, etc., that the stony heart \(the resistance!\) will be removed and a heart of flesh put in \(Ezek. 36:26\), there is no room for man's resistance! It did not say that if man cooperates, and so on, but Scripture says, he will surely do it. 1Thes5:24 As Edwards states beautifully:](#)

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it, Isa. lx. 22, "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." Surely this is the language of a promiser, and not merely a predictor. God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God

swears Rom. 14:11, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, etc., should serve and obey him, Dan. 7. After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in Isa. 11 and innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does. - Jonathan Edwards

Hence, the outcome will always be what God wills, hence man will always come to the effectual call of God and therefore it needs be irresistible...*For who can resist his will?* Romans 9:19 Hence this doctrine is self evident. Also, [2Chron. 20:6, ...*none is able to withstand you.*]

The Limitations of the Will

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Excerpt from *A Treatise of the Soul of Man*

By John Flavel

P 29

It has a political power over the faculties and passions of the soul, not by way of absolute command, but by way of suasion and insinuation. Thus it can oftentimes persuade the understanding and thoughts to lay by this or that subject, and apply themselves to the study of another. It can bridle and restrain the affections and passions, but yet it has no absolute command over the inner, as it has over the outward man. Its weakness and inability to govern the inner man appears in two things, more especially remarkable, viz. 1. It cannot, with all its power and skill command and fetch off the thoughts from some subjects, which are set on, at some times, with extraordinary weight upon the soul. However, the thoughts may obsequiously follow its beck at some times, yea, for the most part; yet there are cases and seasons, in which its authority and persuasions cannot disengage one thought.

As (1.) When God has to do with the soul, in the work of conversion, when he convinceth of sin and danger, and sets a man's evils in order before his eyes: These are terrible representations, and fain would the carnal will disengage the thoughts from such sad subjects, and strives by all manner of persuasions and diversions so to do, but all to no purpose, Ps. 2: 3. "My sin is ever before me." The thoughts are fixed, and there is no removing of them. It may

give them a little interruption, but they return with the more impetuous violence. And instead of gaining them off, they at last, or rather God by them gains over the will also.

(2.) When Satan has to do with the soul, in the way of temptation and hellish suggestion: Look, as the carnal will opposes itself to the thoughts in the former case to no purpose; so that the sanctified will opposes itself to them in this case, oft times with as little effect or success, as he that opposes his weak breath to the strong current of a mighty river. Well were it, if the sanctified will were now the master of the fancy, and could control the thoughts of the heart; but, like a mad horse, the fancy takes the bit in its teeth, and runs whither it pleases; the will cannot govern it. Think quite another way says the will, turn thy thoughts to other things; but notwithstanding, the soul turns a deaf ear to its counsels. 2. It cannot quiet and compose a raging conscience, and reduce it at its pleasure to rest and peace. This is the peculiar work of God. He only that stills the stormy seas, can quiet the distressed and tempestuous soul. The impotence of the will, in this case, is known to all that have been in those deeps of trouble. And this is the misery of the devil and the damned, that though they would never so lain, yet they cannot get rid of those tormenting impressions made upon them by their own trembling and condemning consciences. There would not be so many pale, sweating, affrighted consciences on earth, and in hell, if the will had any command or power over them.

Monergistic Regeneration

Man's Depravity Necessitates God's Election, Irresistible Grace, etc.

code247

Why did God create the world and people and stuff? To display and communicate his glory, which is his goodness, grace, mercy and love (to those he has chosen) and to display his justice, hatred of sin, etc., (to those he hasn't chosen; remember, God is the potter...Romans 9:21 *Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?*). In this way all of his attributes are shown as being most excellent (the excellence of the infinite and strict rectitude of his holy nature). It was his natural inclination to show his glory as the Sun displays its rays, as though the Godhead was incomplete without doing so, as the tree and the root are not complete until it bears fruit. These comments by Lawson fill in the rest.

A collections of short excerpts from Lawson's book, *The Foundations of Grace*. The key doctrines of grace are these:

Man's utter spiritual depravity: man will not believe and cannot believe until the Spirit works it. Romans 8:7-8; 3:11, etc.

Divine election or Sovereign Election: God chose before time began, who he will save, i.e., the *elect* or the *church*, or his *sheep* all meaning the same... Eph. 1, Rm. 8:29

Limited or Definite Atonement (Christ only died for the elect to secure their salvation) Rom. 8:29-34, Heb. 7:25, 2Pet3:9, etc.

Irresistible Grace: When God calls you, you cannot resist the call; you will be converted, that is, all the elect will be converted/saved in time. Ps. 110:3, Phil. 1:29, Deut. 30:6

Perseverance of the Saints: The elect will not perish, they will not lose their salvation, but God will see to it that they will go to heaven and be with him/enjoy him forever. "We are kept by the Power of God", 1Pet. 1:5, John 10:28

All these are interwoven in every page of scripture; Lawson (and the Reformers) brings them out in his book. It is these points that most people hate because they are a direct threat to their so called independence from God, their liberty. That's why many object by saying, God gave us free will... Lawson goes into this.

And this is all to the Glory of God which is the ultimate end that God had in mind in this whole scheme. "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; John 17:24

Here is an excerpt from Jonathan Edwards on why God created the world.

1. It seems a thing in itself proper and desirable, that the glorious attributes of God, which consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects, should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc. If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any exercise. The power of God, which is a sufficiency in him to produce great effects, must for ever have been dormant and useless as to any effect. The divine wisdom and prudence would have had no exercise in any wise contrivance, any prudent proceeding, or disposal of things; for there would have been no objects of contrivance or disposal. The same might be observed of God's justice, goodness, and truth. Indeed God might have known as perfectly that he possessed these attributes, if they never had been exerted or expressed in any effect. But then, if the attributes which consist in a sufficiency for correspondent effects, are in themselves excellent, the exercises of them must likewise be excellent. If it be an excellent thing, that there should be a sufficiency for a certain kind of action or operation, the excellency of such a sufficiency must consist in its relation to this kind of operation or effect; but that could not be, unless the operation itself were excellent. A sufficiency for any work is no further valuable, than the work itself is valuable [195](#) .

¹⁹⁵“The end of wisdom (says Mr. G. Tennent, in his sermon at the opening of the Presbyterian church of Philadelphia) is design; the end of power is action; the end of goodness is doing good. To suppose these perfections not to be exerted would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God’s wisdom be, if it had nothing to design or direct? To what purpose his almightiness, if it never brought anything to pass? And of what avail his goodness, if it never did any good?”

As God therefore esteems these attributes themselves valuable, and delights in them; **so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper exercise and expression**. For the same reason that he esteems his own sufficiency wisely to contrive and dispose effects, **he also will esteem the wise contrivance and disposition itself**. And for the same reason, as he delights in his own disposition to do justly, and to dispose of things according to truth and just proportion; so he must delight in such a righteous disposal itself. – Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 1

Monergistic Regeneration (cont.)

Excerpts from Vol. 1, [Foundations of Grace](#), by **Steven Lawson**, where he goes into the books of the bible and explains the doctrines of grace exemplified in those books.

My comments in [blue], red for emphasis.

SOVEREIGN GRACE: A FIRM FOUNDATION

By Steven J Lawson

The truths of sovereign grace form the strongest doctrinal foundation for any church or believer. The doctrines of God’s sovereignty in man’s salvation lay the sturdiest cornerstone and, thus, firmly undergird the lives and ministries of God’s people. The church’s worship is the purest when her teaching of sovereign grace is the clearest. Her manner of life is the cleanest when her exposition of the doctrines of grace is the richest. Her fellowship is the sweetest when her instruction in God’s sovereignty is the firmest. Her evangelism in the world is the strongest when her proclamation of transcendent theology is the boldest. The spiritual life of the entire church is elevated when her message is anchored to the highest view of God’s sovereign grace. It is in those times in history when the doctrines of grace have been presented in their rich

fullness that the church has most thrived. Here remains the church's firm foundation—the impregnable truths of sovereign grace. Concerning this sturdy foundation, Benjamin B. Warfield has written, "Now these Five Points form an organic unity, a single body of truth. They are based on two presuppositions that Scripture abundantly supports. The first presupposition is the complete impotence of man, and the second is God's absolute sovereignty in grace. Everything else follows. The meeting place of these two foundation truths is the heart of the Gospel, for it follows that if man is totally depraved, the grace of God in saving him must of necessity be sovereign. Otherwise, man will inevitably refuse it in his depravity, and will remain unredeemed." Warfield is correct in his estimation. Human guilt and divine grace clearly intersect in the gospel, and the doctrines of sovereign grace most vividly portray the greatness of the salvation of God. To the point, Boice succinctly states, "The doctrines of grace stand or fall together, and together they point to one central truth: salvation is all of grace because it is all of God; and because it is all of God, it is all for His glory." May all glory go to Him who supplies all grace. pg 312

By His Grace and For His Glory

The doctrines of grace are so called because these five major headings of theology, often identified as the five points of biblical Calvinism, contain the purest expression of the saving grace of God. Each of these five doctrines—radical depravity, sovereign election, definite atonement, irresistible call, and preserving grace—supremely display the sovereign grace of God. These five headings stand together as one comprehensive statement of the saving purposes of God. For this reason, there is really only one point to the doctrines of grace, namely, that God saves sinners by His grace and for His glory. These two realities—God's grace and glory—are inseparably bound together. Whatever most magnifies God's grace most magnifies His glory. And that which most exalts God's grace is the truth expressed in the doctrines of grace.

On the other hand, compromising any one of the five points dilutes and diminishes the grace of God. For instance, to speak of a mere partial corruption of man, one in which the lost sinner is only spiritually sick in his sin, makes a misdiagnosis that grossly diminishes the grace of God. Likewise, to espouse a conditional election that is dependent upon God's foresight of man's faith corrupts the grace of God. To teach that Christ made a universal atonement, making salvation possible for all (though actual for none), cheapens the grace of God. To believe in a resistible call that allows for the free will of man compromises the grace of God. And to think of reversible grace, which would allow man to fall away from the faith, contaminates the pure grace of God. These

views undermine the grace of God, and because of that, sad to say, they rob God of His glory. And yet, such views are widely held in the church today. In any syncretistic Arminian scheme of theology, salvation is seen as being partly of God and partly of man—whether it be that man adds his good works or that he contributes his own self-generated faith to the finished work of Christ. These schemes divide the glory between God and man. To whatever extent one deviates from any of the five doctrines of grace, one marginalizes the glory that is due to God alone for the salvation of sinners.

GIVING GLORY TO GOD ALONE

Writing shortly before his death in 2000, James Montgomery Boice noted, “Having a high view of God means something more than giving glory to God... it means giving glory to God *alone*. This is the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. While the former declares that God alone saves sinners, the latter gives the impression that God enables sinners to have some part in saving themselves. Calvinism presents salvation as the work of the triune God—election by the Father, redemption in the Son, calling by the Spirit. Furthermore, each of these saving acts is directed toward the elect, thereby infallibly securing their salvation. By contrast, Arminianism views salvation as something that God makes possible but that man makes actual. This is because the saving acts of God are directed toward *different* persons: the Son’s redemption is for humanity in general; the Spirit’s calling is only for those who hear the gospel; narrower still, the Father’s election is only for those who believe the gospel. Yet in none of these cases (redemption, calling, or election) does God *actually* secure the salvation of even one sinner! The inevitable result is that rather than depending exclusively on divine grace, salvation depends partly on a human response. So although Arminianism is willing to give God the glory, when it comes to salvation, it is unwilling to give Him *all* the glory. It divides the glory between heaven and earth, for if what ultimately makes the difference between being saved and being lost is man’s ability to choose God, then to just that extent God is robbed of His glory. Yet God Himself has said, ‘I will not yield My glory to another’ (Isa. 48:11).”

This is why the doctrines of grace are so desperately needed in our churches. They give glory to God alone. They define salvation as being all of God. When salvation is correctly perceived in this way, then—and only then—God receives all the glory for it. Only *sola gratia* produces *soli Deo gloria*. "Life cannot make sense without an understanding of the sovereignty of God and the sinfulness of man." p145

RADICAL DEPRAVITY p142

Solomon taught the first main heading of the doctrines of grace—the radical depravity of the human heart. Unregenerate man is plagued by sinful corruption. His entire being is polluted by sin—mind, emotions, and will. In the very depths of his inner person, he is defiled and governed by sin. Professing to be free, he is a slave of sin.

1. Depraved Heart. The unconverted heart is filled with coveting of every kind. Such wrongful desiring of what belongs to others is a deeply rooted problem in the human heart:

Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit. (Prov. 12:12)

The wicked, rather than being content with what they have, always crave what they do not have. What is worse, they go so far as to covet what evil men have schemed to obtain by wicked means. Bridges writes on this verse, “Man is always restless to press onwards to something not yet enjoyed.... The wicked emulate each other in wickedness; and if they see evil men more successful than themselves, they desire their net (Ps. 10:8–10; Jer. 5:26–28).”³⁹ The lust of unregenerate man’s eyes and flesh can never be satisfied.

2. Deceived Eyes. The unregenerate are self-deceived. They are astute at rationalizing their sinful behavior and adept at justifying themselves in their own eyes before God: *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit. (Prov. 16:2)*

The inward corruption of the sin nature causes lost men to live in a perpetual state of self-deception regarding their spiritual state before God. Presuming themselves to be morally clean, they are blind to their true wretched condition. Bridges writes, “If man were his own judge, who would be condemned?... Man will never believe his real character, until the looking-glass is held to his face with convincing light..... He confesses himself indeed to be a sinner. But what his sins are, he knows not.” Rather than seeing themselves as God sees them, the unconverted see themselves through self-righteous eyes of sin-excusing deception (12:15; 14:12; 21:2; 30:12).

3. Degenerate Mouth. The unconverted speak evil words from their wicked hearts, revealing their corrupt natures. They spew out all manner of evil things:

The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. (Prov. 15:28)

Radical depravity reveals itself most convincingly through the mouth. The lips of the wicked speak evil things because that is what fills their sin-defiled hearts. Bridges writes, “The wicked has no... restraint.... He cares not what he says. It is of little consequence to him, whether it be true, or well timed, or whom it wounds. His poisoned fountain poureth out poisonous waters. (Eccles. 10:3, 12–14).” Words provide the outward evidence of the inward corruption of the human heart.

4. Defiled Soul. The unsaved are morally unclean at the deepest levels of their innermost beings. None can claim to be pure before God:

Who can say, “I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin”? (Prov. 20:9)

The entirety of every unconverted person is corrupt. At the depths of their beings, they are depraved and defiled. What is worse, they cannot cleanse themselves through their own efforts or even cease from sinning. Waltke describes this problem as “‘humanity’s moral impotence,’ or inability to live without committing sin. All lost sinners are in ‘bondage to sin,’ rendering them ‘ethically impure’ and far from ‘sinless perfection.’” Ross adds, “Many passages affirm the inevitability of our sinfulness (Gen. 6:5; 1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 143:2), and Psalm 51:7 teaches that one can claim to be pure only if made pure by divine forgiveness.” In truth, all of man’s self-righteous efforts to cleanse himself only further compound his own impurity.

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

pg 175

Throughout his prophetic book, Jeremiah delivered the devastating doctrine of the radical depravity of the human heart. This foundational doctrine, the first main heading of biblical Calvinism, was a staple in Jeremiah’s teaching. The weeping prophet spoke of radical depravity with absolute clarity. The verses from Jeremiah listed below are some of the Bible’s most descriptive regarding the utter foolishness and stubborn hardness of the unconverted heart. The heart of the human problem, it is often said, is the problem of the human heart. For this reason, the truths Jeremiah taught were applicable not just to apostate Judah in his day, they apply to every unconverted person in every generation in every place in varying degrees:

1. Sensual Affections. The unregenerate heart is filled with spiritual adultery. Rather than loving God supremely, it turns its illicit affections to lust after false gods, especially the greatest idol of all—self:

If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me?" declares the Lord. (Jer. 3:1)

In this indictment, Jeremiah wrote that wayward Judah had become a filthy harlot. Rather than loving the Lord above all else, the people were culpable of craving forbidden deities. R. K. Harrison writes, "The imagery of harlotry, familiar from Hosea (Ho. 4:2, 10, 13, etc.), was applied to the nation's idolatry to show that the spiritual defilement of Israel had made reconciliation with God extremely difficult, if not actually impossible."⁵ So it is with all the unsaved. Their unregenerate hearts always fail to love God supremely, substituting other gods in His place. They lack a loyal love for God and are reduced to being spiritual adulterers, resulting in hostility toward God.

2. Senseless Mind. The fallen mind is foolish in choosing to practice evil rather than pursuing God and His holiness. The unconverted are spiritually ignorant about how to do good:

For my people are foolish they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are "wise"—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not. (Jer. 4:22)

Jeremiah recorded that the unregenerate are morally insane, possessing no spiritual understanding about how to do righteousness (5:21; 10:8, 14, 21; 51:17). On the other hand, they are stunningly brilliant in concocting and carrying out iniquity. Their entire inner being is backward regarding what is pleasing to God. They are wise toward sin and foolish toward good. Explaining their inverted nature, Charles L. Feinberg writes, "Their trouble is that they have no fellowship with the Lord in doing His will (cf. Hos. 4:1). Their moral values are completely reversed, majoring in evil and minoring in good (v. 22)." This foolishness describes every person suffering under the plague of radical depravity, which becomes "strengthened by habit and practice."

3. **Sightless Eyes.** The unbeliever also lives in spiritual blindness, groping about in moral darkness, and in spiritual deafness, being unable to hear the truth. Apart from a divine work of regeneration, he is unable to comprehend spiritual truth from God:

Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. (Jer. 5:21)

Jeremiah here documented the complete inability of the unregenerate mind to perceive the message of God's Word. An unbeliever has no spiritual capacity whatsoever to see and hear the truth of God with any degree of understanding. Commenting on this moral inability, Matthew Henry notes, "He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people... Their understandings were darkened and unapt to admit the rays of the divine light... they apprehend not the mind of God, though ever so plainly declared to them by the written word, by his prophets." Philip G. Ryken adds, "Their problem was not intellectual but spiritual. Their eyes and ears and minds were shut to the Word of God... it is only by the grace of God that anyone ever understands the message of salvation. The mind and heart of the natural man is closed to God's Word until he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit." Such spiritual blindness and deafness is characteristic of all unbelievers.

4. **Sinful Tongue.** All unbelievers are inwardly perverse, speaking deceptions and venomous lies. The fact is, the unconverted are ingenious and skilled in lying:

Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. (Jer. 9:5)

In this verse, God indicted apostate Judah for speaking damnable lies to the exclusion of the truth of God. Of this lying, Feinberg writes, "They went to great pains to deceive one another. To show the unnaturalness of their wickedness, Jeremiah says that the people trained their tongues contrary to their proper function. Lying takes more effort than speaking the truth, but they were willing to endure the drudgery of sin. They persisted in their wrongdoing. Their desire to do evil exceeded their power and strength."¹⁰ Ryken adds, "The words that came from their mouths were like so many poison darts. They even took their tongues to boot camp, training them for verbal combat: 'They have taught their tongues to lie.'" Whether it is a subtle distortion or a sharp denial of the truth, unsaved people are given to speaking what is not true. They speak out of their fallen natures.

5. Spiritual Inability. The unregenerate person cannot change his sin nature or act contrary to his wicked heart. His will is essentially imprisoned:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jer. 13:23)

Jeremiah unequivocally affirmed that the unbeliever does not have the innate ability to repent of his sin or turn to God for true righteousness. Man's will cannot act contrary to his corrupt nature. A fallen heart can give rise only to a rebellious will that will not submit to God. [Can a bad tree produce good fruit? My insert] Concerning this text, John Calvin writes, "God declares that the people are so hardened in their wickedness that there is no hope of their repentance. If an Ethiopian washed a hundred times a day, he would still remain black. Jeremiah condemns the Jews for their habitual practice of doing evil. They were unable to repent, for their wickedness had become inherent or firmly fixed in their hearts, like the blackness that is inherent in the skin of the Ethiopians or the spots belonging to the leopard." That is to say, no unregenerate heart can change its nature; it cannot choose contrary to itself toward God. Regarding this startling verse, Charles H. Spurgeon proclaims, "You can make yourself filthy by sin, but you cannot make yourself spiritually clean, do what you will... You can do evil all too readily; you can do it with both hands, greedily, and do it again and again, and not grow weary of it; but to return to the right path, this is the difficulty.... But remember, dear friends, that, even if an Ethiopian could change his skin, that would be a far smaller difficulty than the one with which a sinner has to deal, for it is not his skin, but his heart, which has to be changed." The unconverted simply cannot change their ways.

6. Sick Heart. The unconverted heart—man's entire inner person—is completely wicked and incurably sick. In his fallen spiritual condition, man is plagued and polluted by sin far beyond human comprehension:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9)

Jeremiah wrote that the unconverted heart is so deceitful that man cannot comprehend the depths of its depravity. All the mental, emotional, and volitional faculties within a person are desperately ill. Without mincing words, J.C. Ryle writes, "Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty

of our minds. **The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will**, are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. In short, ‘from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness’ about us (Isa. 1:6). The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum; but it lies deep down in the constitution.”¹⁴ A. W. Pink adds, “[Unregenerate man] will not come to Christ, because he does not want to, and he does not want to because his heart hates Him and loves sin.”¹⁵ The fact is, fallen man suffers from massive heart failure.

4. Spiritual Inability.

Jesus taught that it is absolutely impossible for spiritually dead sinners to exercise saving faith. They are marked by a volitional inability, having no free will with which to exercise faith toward Christ:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail.... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. (John 6:44a, 63–65)

In no uncertain terms, Christ declared the bondage of the unregenerate human will. He announced that no man can come to Him—meaning no one can believe upon Him—apart from a sovereign work of God. In itself, the human will lacks the capacity to choose Christ. When Jesus said, “No one can come to me,” He intentionally used the word *can* as opposed to *may*. This significant distinction indicates the difference between man’s ability to believe and his permission to come to Christ. In these verses, Jesus is saying that no unregenerate person has the inherent ability to believe upon Him. He may come to Christ—he has permission to do so. But he cannot do so—he lacks the ability. Pinpointing this truth, Pink writes, “These words of Christ make manifest the depths of human depravity. They expose the inveterate stubbornness of the human will.” Leon Morris adds, “People like to feel independent. They think that they come or that they can come to Jesus entirely of their own volition. Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility. No one, no one at all, can come unless the Father draws him.”

5. Spiritual Slavery. Jesus further taught that the unregenerate heart is entirely enslaved to sin. As a slave is bound to obey his master, a lost sinner must always choose to obey sin: Jesus answered them,

Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. (John 8:34)

Jesus proclaimed that the lost sinner's true master is sin. The unconverted man must do what sin commands. The entirety of his sinful nature—mind, emotion, and will—is fast bound in sin. Without equivocating, Calvin writes, "Here Christ declares that all who are not freed by Him are in slavery, and that all who derive the contagion of sin from corrupted nature are slaves from birth." Furthermore, no man can liberate himself from the power of sin. William Hendriksen explains, "Such a man is here called a slave of sin (cf. Rom. 6:16; 11:32; 2 Pet. 2:19). He is a slave, for he has been overcome and taken captive by his master, sin, and is unable to deliver himself from this bondage. He is as truly (nay, more truly) chained as is the prisoner with the iron band around his leg, the band that is fastened to a chain which is cemented into the wall of a dungeon. He cannot break the chain. On the contrary, every sin he commits draws it tighter, until at last it crushes him completely. That is the picture which Jesus draws here of sinners as they are by nature. Do the Jews regard themselves as free men? In reality they are slaves without any freedom at all. They are prisoners in chains." It is clear that committing acts of sin is the inevitable result—not the cause—of being enslaved to sin.

6. Spiritual Bondage.

Jesus announced that all unsaved people suffer an even greater bondage, being enslaved to Satan. Bound in his kingdom of darkness, the unconverted are under the restricting control of the devil, being induced to perform his deeds of rebellion:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. (John 8:44–45)

Jesus pronounced that the spiritual father of every unsaved person is the devil himself. To be "of your father the devil" means to belong to Satan and be held captive by him to do his will. Every unbeliever suffers this dreadful enslavement. Boice writes that the unconverted religious leaders whom Jesus addressed "thought they had it made because they were descended from Abraham physically. Jesus pointed out that God is interested in a spiritual relationship and that their actions indicated that they were actually children of the devil." Morris adds, "They take their origin from the devil, their father. Consequently they set their will on doing his evil desires. They voluntarily choose

to do his will.”¹⁸ Every aspect of one’s inner being is in bondage to Satan, including the will.

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

Painting a true picture of the nature of sinful man, Ezekiel taught the total corruption of the human heart. According to the prophet, sin has permeated the entirety of man’s fallen being. His complete person—mind, emotion, and will—has been ruined by the inward pollution of sin. Ezekiel taught that natural man is unable to do anything that is pleasing to God. To the contrary, he does evil all the time, provoking God’s wrath. Unregenerate man’s internal depravity means that he cannot understand, desire, or will to do what is good before God.

1. Stubborn Hearts. Unregenerate hearts are unwilling to listen to God’s Word. Because their spiritual ears are closed, they will not follow the Lord’s commands:

But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me. Because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. (Ezek. 3:7)

The people of Judah were stubborn and hard-hearted, unwilling to hear and heed God’s Word. With stiff necks and rebellious hearts, they resisted the divine message when it came to them. They had “a hard forehead,” indicating a mind closed to divine truth and a heart impenetrable to God’s Word. This hardened condition is true of all unconverted people, though more true of some than others. To this point, Calvin writes, “They purposely rejected the Word of God, and hardened themselves in obstinacy.... The people were not only disobedient to the Prophet but to God himself, as Christ also when he exhorts his disciples to perseverance in teaching. Therefore, says he, they will not hear you, because they will not hear me, and why am I and my teaching hated by them, unless because they do not receive my Father? (John 15:18).... The people’s hardness of heart was untamable, and... they were not only obstinate in heart but brazen in countenance.” In like manner, every unconverted heart is unwilling to submit to the Lord in order to receive His Word. P189

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

In his second epistle, Peter further reinforced the doctrine of radical depravity with emphatic clarity. The aging Apostle accomplished this by uncovering the inner corruption of false teachers who were soon to infiltrate the church. Their sin natures were unspeakably perverse and wicked, yet no different from those of the rest of the human race. Those seduced by these false teachers would be easily duped because they were of the same foul nature. Like attracts like. The corruption of the false teachers showed the radical depravity of the human heart, which is wholly given over to sin.

1. Useless Claims. The unregenerate make empty claims regarding faith in Christ. They are often self-deceived about their true standing before God, professing to be bought by Christ even though they are not:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

Peter warned his readers that many false teachers had invaded the early church, claiming to be saved. They professed faith in Christ, even claiming to have been bought by Him, but their professions were dead testimonies. They were not true believers; they had not been purchased by Christ. Concerning this verse, Boice writes, “It seems to speak of those who have actually been redeemed by Jesus’ death and yet perish. But we have to look closely at the nature of those about whom Peter is speaking. They are ‘false prophets,’ ‘false teachers’ who teach ‘destructive heresies.’ Are they Christians? No. Therefore, they are not saved people who perish, but rather unsaved people. How is it, then, that Peter can speak of them ‘denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them’? The best approach is to think of this as describing what these unbelieving teachers claimed rather than what they had actually received from Jesus.” The Reformation Study Bible concurs: “Peter is not saying Christians can lose their salvation (John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:28–30), but is describing the false teachers in terms of their own profession of faith (vv. 20–21). By teaching and practicing immorality they despise the lordship of Christ and prove their profession to be false (1 John 2:3, 4, 19).” The fact is, Christ had not died for these false prophets, no matter how much they claimed it was so. pg 305

Superstitious Hearts

The natural man [the unsaved man] fails to pursue God with supreme affection. On the contrary, he chooses to passionately pursue other gods: *“and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols.”* Ezek. 6:3-4

Despite being abundantly blessed by receiving the Law and the Prophets, Israel chose to worship the gods of the Canaanites. Idolatry flooded the people’s hearts as they rejected the true knowledge of God for blasphemous lies. Israel chose to worship at the “high places,” which were altars raised up to false gods. The Hebrew word for “idol” is derived from the word for “heat,” an indication of the illegitimate, burning passion in the people’s hearts, for false gods. Calvin comments, “Idols therefore may very properly derive their name from heat, because their superstitious worshippers inflame themselves with love.” To be sure, such rival affections flood all radically corrupt hearts. Indeed, idolatry is an inevitable fruit of radical depravity. Because of the inherent corruption of their sin-plagued souls, the unregenerate lust after other gods. Rather than guarding their hearts, which belong to God alone, they let themselves be gripped by illicit desires for idols. pg 190

Sensual Hearts

Because the unconverted fail to love God supremely, they shamefully misuse His good gifts. They use the things He gives to fashion gods of their own making.

“But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore¹⁶ because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty¹⁶ became his. ¹⁶You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be. ¹⁷You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.” Ezek. 16:15-17

In the days before the Babylonian exile, the people of Judah behaved like harlots, lusting after other gods. Rather than maintaining loyalty in their hearts toward God, they fell into spiritual unfaithfulness and flirted with idols. By this, they showed

themselves to be apostate. But the people magnified their sin by using the gold and silver that God had given them to fashion their own pagan gods. In short, they played the whore. Such is the tragic behavior of all unbelievers. They love the world and the things of the world to the exclusion of loving God, using His good gifts to spit in His face. It is not wonder that the love of the Father is not in them. pg 191

Divine Sovereignty

The doctrines of grace rest firmly upon this immovable foundation of the sovereignty of God. This unshakable divine supremacy is clearly taught in the book of Daniel. By the free exercise of His sovereign will, God determines the course of all human history. He always does as He desires on earth, regardless of the rebellious will of fallen men. No one can resist the sovereign will of God.

Unrivaled Sovereignty. God effortlessly controls the course of all human events, including the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms. This overruling providence implies that God also controls the lives of the individuals who live in these kingdoms.

*He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding; Dan. 2:21*

God alone bestows a delegated authority upon men – even fallen men – to rule over nations. He alone gives wisdom and understanding to rulers, even unsaved kings. Without these gifts of common grace, human monarchs would not have the intuitive insight they need to perform their task. Thus, all earthly kings are completely dependent upon God for their thrones and for their abilities. Calvin writes, “If God resigns the supreme government of the world, so that all things are rashly mingled together, he is no longer God. But in this variety he rather displays his hand in claiming for himself the empire over the world... God, I say, so changes empires, and times, and seasons, that we should learn to look up to him.” Calvin is right, but we also must look to God in the spiritual realm. Just as kings are dependent on common grace, sinful man is completely dependent upon God for saving grace, being unable to come to God or to save himself. Only by sovereign grace does man receive the wisdom and understanding necessary to believe. This is an unmerited gift that God confers as He desires (Rom. 9:15, Eph. 2:8).

Divine Regeneration

One of the distinguishing features of the biblical view of the new birth is what theologians refer to as monergism. The prefix *mono* means “one”. The Greek word *erg* refers to “a unit of work”; it is from this root that we get the English word *energy*, which describes a powerful working. Monergism, then, refers to one agent doing a work, and Monergistic regeneration communicates the truth that only one agent is active in the work of regeneration, that one being God. The new birth is a work produced singularly by God. He alone is active in regeneration, while man is passive [see pg 1884]. The greatly esteemed Puritan pastor John Owen comments, “To say that we are able by our own efforts to think good thoughts or give God spiritual obedience before we are spiritually regenerate is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the universal church in all ages.” God alone gives sinners new birth. God alone raises sinners from the dead and circumcises their hearts. God alone grants illumination and understanding of His Word to that we may believe in Christ. The biblical teaching is that “regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit unaided by human effort or cooperation.” (Alex Carnes) The point is simply this – the doctrines of grace are unequivocally monergistic. Charles Hodge, the noted Princeton theologian of the mid-nineteenth century, writes, “No more soul destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please... As it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience it is essential that he should be brought to a practical conviction of that truth. When thus convinced, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained.

Conversely, synergistic regeneration – the prefix *syn* meaning “together with” – lies on the other end of the theological spectrum, being distinctly man-centered. This Arminian view of the new birth claims not one but two agents – God and man, as if they were equal powers. Synergistic regeneration requires cooperation between God and man. Under this two-party view of the new birth, man must cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit must cooperate with man. In the end, man has the power of veto. It is touted that lowly, impotent man can resist the work of the omnipotent, sovereign Holy Spirit in salvation. Steven J Lawson, *Foundations of Grace* p 171

We Need Preachers of Divine Regeneration

On Thursday evening, February 15, 1883, Spurgeon preached a highly charged sermon titled "A Test for True Seekers." In that message, proclaimed with evangelistic fervor, "the Prince of Preachers" pressed his listeners on this direly important subject of the new birth. Spurgeon announced, "Do I address one here who imagines that an orthodox creed will save him? I suppose that no one is more orthodox than the devil, yet no one is more surely lost than he is. You may get a clear head, but if you have not a clean heart, it will not avail you at the last. You may know that Westminster Assembly's Catechism by heart, but unless you are born again, it will not benefit you. Did you say that you believed the thirty-nine articles? There is one article that is essential – 'Ye must be born again?' (John 3:7) And woe to that man who has not passed through that all-important change."

The necessity of the new birth is non-negotiable. Except one be born again, he cannot see or enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-5). But the nature of this spiritual birth is so supernatural, there is nothing man can do to induce it or restrain it. Like the blowing of the wind, it cannot be caused, controlled, or constrained (John 3:8). Regeneration is entirely a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of God, independent of man's fleshly manufacturing or manipulation.

An emphasis on divine regeneration of spiritually dead sinners was common in pulpits in past days. Not surprisingly, those were the days when the church was strongest. If we would see our churches vibrantly alive once more, the supernatural work of God in the soul of man – divine regeneration – must be proclaimed again in truth and power. Spurgeon knew the importance of this subject, and urged more preaching on it: "Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of this work. Pg 197 Lawson

The Effectual Call of God

The prophet Isaiah also taught God's irresistibly gracious call, a necessary doctrine that is inseparably connected to the truths of radical depravity, sovereign election, and definite atonement. Man is totally depraved: His mind is darkened, his heart is defiled, and his will is dead. In other words, man's fallen will is in bondage to sin, unable to act independently of its depraved nature. Left to itself, man's fallen will always chooses to sin and reject Christ. Therefore, God must effectually call the elect to faith in Christ if they are to be converted. This saving call by the Holy Spirit is so powerful that it always secures the God-intended result for which it is extended. The Holy Spirit overpowers the sin-hardened hearts of the elect and effectually draws them to the Lord, causing them to put their trust in Him. This is irresistible grace, the omnipotent work of the Lord

in the stubborn hearts of His chosen ones. Whenever any person comes to saving faith in the Lord, it is because he has been supernaturally drawn to believe. Steven Lawson, Foundations of Grace pg 165

John Flavel puts it this way: *That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God.* No man is compelled to come to Christ against his will; he that cometh, comes willingly, but even that will and desire to come is the effect of grace, Phil. ii. 13. "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." "If we desire the help and assistance of grace, (saith Fulgentius) even the desire is of grace; grace must first be shed forth upon us, before we can begin to desire it." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. 2:8. ...For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ. ...so the next words tell us what the Father does, [*Draw him*] That is, powerfully and effectually incline his will to come to Christ: "Not by a violent co-action, but by a benevolent bending of the will which was averse;" and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so neither is it by a simple moral suasion, by the bare proposal of an object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election; but it is such a persuasion, as hath a mighty overcoming efficacy accompanying it; pg 68-69 vol. 2 Sermon 4

G. Vos states: Reformed Dogmatics, p660

31. How does God move the will of man? In a manner that accords with the freedom and the spontaneous character of the will—not, therefore, by placing Himself against the will and bending it with force; also not by a physical or unspiritual power that occurs in baptism, as the Roman Catholics contend; but by bringing about a reversal in the root of life, out of which the will itself arises. The result of this, then, is that the will of itself works in the opposite direction than was previously the case, and that no longer unwillingly but spontaneously, willingly.

Regenerations – Monergism vs. Arminianism

One of the distinguishing features of the biblical view of the new birth is what theologians refer to as *monergism*. The prefix *mono* means "one." The Greek word *erg*

refers to “a unit of work”; it is from this root that we get the English word energy, which describes a powerful working. Monergism, then, refers to one agent doing a work, and *monergistic regeneration* communicates the truth that only one agent is active in the work of regeneration, that one being God. The new birth is a work produced singularly by God. He alone is active in regeneration, while man is passive [see pg 1884]. The greatly esteemed Puritan pastor John Owen comments, “To say that we are able by our own efforts to think good thoughts or give God spiritual obedience before we are spiritually regenerate is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the universal church in all ages.” God alone gives sinners new birth. God alone raises sinners from the dead and circumcises their hearts. God alone grants illumination and understanding of His Word so that we may believe in Christ. The biblical teaching is that “regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit unaided by human effort or cooperation.”

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Conversely, *synergistic* regeneration—the prefix *syn* meaning “together with”—lies on the other end of the theological spectrum, being distinctly man-centered. This Arminian view of the new birth claims not one but two agents—God and man, as if they were equal powers. Synergistic regeneration requires cooperation between God and man. Under this two-party view of the new birth, man must cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit must cooperate with man. In the end, man has the power of veto. It is touted that lowly, impotent man can resist the work of the omnipotent, sovereign Holy Spirit in salvation. Lawson, P 172

Sovereign Election

Consistent with the other biblical authors, Jeremiah also taught the doctrine of sovereign election. God revealed this majestic truth to Jeremiah at the time of his calling to the prophetic office. In the opening verses of his book, Jeremiah recorded that God had chosen him for salvation and ministry long before he was born. The prophet wrote that, before time began, God set His heart upon him with a distinguishing love and set him apart for His own purposes. Thus, Jeremiah did not treat the doctrine of sovereign election as a secondary truth, reserving it for an obscure section in his book. Rather, he

revealed it at the very outset of his prophecy, making it the firm foundation for all that would follow. From the opening verses of his book, Jeremiah taught the doctrine of election. As a potter fashions clay into different objects for different purposes, so God sovereignly purposes to make His elect into objects of saving grace.

1. Predetermined Choice. God has known those individuals He will save from eternity past. Before they were conceived, God set His heart upon them: *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.* (Jer. 1:5a) Jeremiah wrote that he was intimately known by God long before his birth. When God said He “knew” the prophet, He meant that He had chosen to love him with distinguishing love. Pink explains, “The word ‘foreknowledge’ is not found in the Old Testament. But ‘know’ occurs there frequently. When that term is used in connection with God, it often signifies to *regard with favor*, denoting *not mere cognition but an affection* for the object in view.” This is to say, God set His heart upon Jeremiah with electing love, choosing him for salvation and service before the foundation of the world. Jeremiah embraced this truth in order to endure the tough times that lay ahead for him in ministry.

2. Purposeful Choice. By an act of His sovereign will, God set Jeremiah apart to Himself for His own eternal purposes. In much the same way, God singles out His elect and determines what they will do to serve Him even before they are born: *Before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.* (Jer. 1:5b) In eternity past, God foreknew Jeremiah, having made the sovereign choice to consecrate him for His own purposes. God always chooses the elect with divine design for their lives. They are sovereignly appointed to serve God and do His work. Ryken elaborates upon this truth, saying, “When did God choose him? The prophet was set apart before he was born. While Jeremiah was being carried around in his mother’s womb, God was making preparations for his salvation and his ministry. To set something apart is to sanctify it or to dedicate it to holy service.... God is sovereign. He not only forms His people in the womb, He sets them apart for salvation from all eternity. God’s choice is not unique to Jeremiah; it is true for every believer. This is known as the doctrine of divine election.” As it was with Jeremiah, so it is with all God’s elect. They are chosen with divine design and purpose.

A Sovereign Work of God [my title]

Salvation, start to finish, is entirely a work of God’s grace. No spiritually dead sinner can work his way to heaven. No radically depraved individual can provide payment for

his sins. In the face of this moral inability, if any sinful creature is to be in right standing with God, whatever is needed must arise from outside of man. What man cannot do to save himself, God does. What man cannot offer to commend himself to God, God provides. This is saving grace—God doing for sinful man what he cannot do for himself. Through the life and death of His Son, God provides the righteousness by which sinners can be accepted into His holy presence. He freely pays the sin debt of all who believe upon Him.

According to the terms of the gospel, a sinner must believe upon Christ to receive this great salvation. Saving faith is absolutely necessary if a lost sinner is to be saved. But some would have us believe that this personal trust in Christ is man's contribution to salvation. In other words, God supplies the grace and man supplies the faith. Under this fifty-fifty scheme of salvation, God and man work together. Salvation is seen as partly of God and partly of man. In essence, God and man are co-saviors.

But there is one major problem with this: The Bible teaches that salvation is all of grace. That is to say, man makes no contribution whatsoever. Instead, God supplies all that is necessary. More specifically, divine grace produces both the redeeming grace of the cross and the believing grace by which this redeeming grace is received. Even saving faith is God's gift to the lost sinner, enabling him to trust Christ. God, then, supplies everything necessary for man's salvation: both the perfect righteousness of Christ and even the repentance and faith to believe. Man adds nothing except his sin. P199

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Out of the mass of morally defiled sinners, God has chosen to love certain individuals redemptively. This election unto salvation is based upon God's unconditional grace and distinguishing mercy, not upon any merit on man's part. God chose His elect, quite simply, because He chose them. To be sure, this discriminating selection by God was not made in a stoic, calculating way, for God is not an indifferent, mechanical deity. Rather, He is a God of deep love—electing love. He has set His affection upon His elect. The doctrine of election is the truth of God's fervent love for His chosen ones: And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." (Hos. 3:1)

In this real-life story, God told Hosea to press on in his love for his adulterous bride, Gomer, despite her gross iniquity. Hosea's unconditional love for Gomer would

beautifully portray God's unwavering love for His chosen ones, though they might be marred by great sin. The doctrine of election holds that God chooses to fix His heart upon His elect despite their defilements and perversions. His unconditional love toward these sinners is entirely undeserved. In response to this amazing love, John Calvin comments, "Wonderful was the patience of God, when He ceased not to love a people, whom He had found to be so perverse, that they could not be turned by any acts of kindness nor retained by any favours."⁴ That is, God chose His elect not because of them, but in spite of them. Such are the astonishing depths of the divine love behind God's sovereign electing grace. p203

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

In order to bring His elect to Himself in salvation, God must overcome their radical depravity by issuing a special inward call to them. This call is irresistible in its nature, infallibly bringing elect sinners to saving faith. God does not extend this effectual call to those who make themselves worthy, for none can do so. Also, He does not choose who gets the call on the basis of foreknowledge of who will respond positively, **for then man's decision would be the determining factor**. Rather, this special, sovereign summons is issued to sinners who are undeserving of mercy. Because God has chosen them to be the objects of His love, He determines that they will receive His grace:

I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, "You are my people" and he shall say, "You are my God."
(Hos. 2:23)

As Hosea was commanded to pursue his estranged wife, even so God seeks His chosen ones until He brings them to Himself. He pursues those He has chosen even while they are entangled in spiritual adultery, looking to other gods. There will be a remnant who will become His people through a supernatural work initiated and accomplished by God. Recognizing God's role in turning sinful man's heart to Himself, Henry writes, "He first says, They are my people, and makes them willing to be so in the day of His power, and then they avouch Him to be theirs." At a time when Israel was mostly lost and under God's wrath, He declared that He would suddenly show Himself compassionate to His people. In that day, God would effectually call those who were not His people—meaning they were unconverted—and they would respond to Him. They would suddenly say,

“You are my God!” They would be dramatically converted and enter into a saving relationship with the Lord. P204

More on Irresistible Grace by John Flavel

O grace, for ever to be admired! that God should send forth his word and Spirit to plow up my hard and stony heart, yea, mine, when he has left so many of more tender, ingenious, sweet, and melting tempers without any culture or means of grace. O blessed gospel, heart-dissolving voice! I have felt thine efficacy, I have experienced thy divine and irresistible power; thou art indeed sharper than any two-edged sword, and woundest to the heart; but thy wounds are the wounds of a friend. All the wounds thou hast made in my soul, were so many doors opened to let in Christ; all the blows you have my conscience, were but to beat off my soul from sin, which I embraced, and had retained to my everlasting ruin, had you not separated them and me. O wise and merciful Physician! Thou didst indeed bind me with cords of conviction and sorrow, but it was only to cut out that stone in my heart, which had killed me if it had continued there. O how did I struggle and oppose thee, as if you had come with the sword of an enemy, rather than the lance and probe of a skillful and tender-hearted physician? Blessed be the day wherein my sin was discovered and embittered! O happy sorrows, which prepared for such matchless joys! O blessed hand, which turned my salt waters into pleasant wine! And after many pangs and sorrows of soul, didst, at length, bring forth deliverance and peace. John Flavel, p 65 Vol. 5

Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causes upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ. Now all these are imported in, and done by the application of Christ to our souls; for when once the efficacy of Christ's death, and the virtue of his resurrection, come to take place upon the heart of any man, he cannot but turn from sin to God, and become a new creature, living and acting by new principles and rules. So the apostle observes, 1 Thess. i. 5, 6, speaking of the effect of this work of the Spirit upon that people, "Our gospel (saith he) came not to you in word only, but in power; and in the Holy Ghost;" There was the effectual application of Christ to them. "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord," ver. 6, there was their effectual call. "And ye turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God," ver. 9. there was their conversion. "So that ye were

ensamples to all that believe," ver. 9, there was their life of sanctification or dedication to God. So that all these are comprehended in effectual application. John Flavel, vol. Method of Grace, p 19

God hath entered into covenant with the Son, and sent him, stands obliged thereby, to bring the promised seed to him, and that he does by drawing them to Christ by faith; so the next words tell us the Father does, [*Draw him*] That is, powerfully and effectually incline his will to come to Christ: "Not by a violent co-action, but by a benevolent bending of the will which was averse;" and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so neither is it by a simple moral suasion, by the bare proposal of an object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election; but it is such a persuasion, as hath a mighty overcoming efficacy accompanying it; of which more anon. The words thus opened, the observation will be this: Doctrine: *That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God.* John Flavel, p68 vol. 2

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

(Lawson cont.)

The doctrines of grace come under the broader truth of God's absolute sovereignty over all His creation. The Bible teaches that nothing comes to pass apart from God's eternal purposes—even evil and disasters. We see this truth in Amos' declaration that calamities occur under the purview of the sovereignty of God:

Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it? (Amos 3:6)

Here, the word translated as "come" (*asah*) means "doing, making, or appointing." Clearly, God is the Initiator who appoints "disaster," a word (*raah*) meaning "evil" in the ethical sense. God is not the author of sin, but Amos directly asserted that God sovereignly brings disaster, even evil, on nations, cities, and individuals as a just punishment for their sins (cf. Gen. 18:17; 20:7). Clearly, all events, both good and evil, great and small, come about as the result of God's eternal decree. Recognizing this transcendent theology, Henry writes, "The evil of sin is from ourselves; it is our own doing. But the evil of trouble, personal or public, is from God, and it is His doing;

whoever are the instruments, God is the principle agent.” Thus, no disasters occur apart from the Lord. Even in the most difficult calamities, God remains absolutely sovereign.
P207

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

God chose those He would save before the foundation of the world. He purposed to know them in a special, saving way. Certainly, God could have chosen to save all. He also could have elected to save none. Instead, He determined to set His heart upon some—a multitude so vast that no one can number them. God knows these elect in a personal, intimate way:

You only have I known of all the families of the earth. (Amos 3:2a)

Through Amos, God declared that He had chosen—or known—His elect people from all eternity past. This declaration speaks of the deep, personal relationship God has with those He has chosen to be His. From among all the peoples of the earth, He has chosen some to be His own possession. The word translated “known” in this verse is the Hebrew word *yada*. The word connotes more than mere awareness or acknowledgement. Rather, it has to do with knowing someone intimately with deep, personal love. The Reformation Study Bible explains, “The Hebrew word for ‘know’ has a wide range of meaning, including sexual relations (Gen. 4:1). Here the term denotes God’s sovereign election of Israel as the object of His loving concern (Gen. 18:19; cf. Deut. 7:7–8).”

Seeing the truth of divine election in this verse, James Montgomery Boice writes, “The word ‘know’ (in ‘foreknew’) actually indicates God’s choice, just as in Amos 3:2, which the New International Version rightly renders: ‘You only have I chosen.’... Besides, the text does not say that God foreknew what certain individuals might do, only that He foreknew them as individuals to whom He would extend the grace of salvation.” This carries the idea of God’s sovereign activity whereby the object of His divine knowledge is chosen and set apart for a divine purpose. Far from merely knowing about His people, God intimately knows them, having chosen to enter into a relationship with them in eternity past.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

The book of Jonah clearly reveals God's sovereignty over all creation, a supreme authority that extends over all aspects of the affairs of man. This involves the doctrine of divine providence, which holds that the invisible hand of God controls all aspects of this world. God rules over all things, even salvation, so that His eternal purposes might be carried forth. This was a lesson that Jonah needed to learn. After three days and three nights in the fish's belly, the prophet finally came to his senses and confessed that all that pertains to man's salvation is, in fact, from God. At the bottom of the sea, Jonah declared a deep and profound theological truth: "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" (Jonah 2:9c). Jonah himself embodied this truth; his own heart conviction of sin, his genuine repentance, his true faith, and his supernatural deliverance were all from God. The many conversions of the people of Nineveh also showed that salvation is of the Lord.

1. Controlling Events. God's absolute sovereignty extends over the sea and every facet of the weather. God is the One who sends great storms as He orders all the circumstances and occurrences of life for His own purposes:

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. (Jonah 1:4)

When Jonah attempted to run away from God's will, he experienced God's control over the sea and the surrounding circumstances of his life. As Jonah fled by ship, a great storm arose on the Mediterranean, stopping Jonah in his tracks. Hugh Martin affirms, "The storm is attributed not to the elements of nature, but to the God of nature; to Him who is over all and 'above all.' He has established laws in nature; but they cannot administer themselves. The Lawgiver administers them.... He supports, maintains, controls, and moves them at His own pleasure." The point is abundantly clear: God controls all events on both a large and small scale, from an immense storm on the Mediterranean Sea to the individual life of one of his servants. P209

Sovereign Election: to Foreknow

In the opening of his book, Nahum gave an awesome description of the attributes of God. In detailing the divine character, he mentioned the Lord's sovereign choice of a people, whom He knows intimately. God chose His elect before the world began, apart from any good He might have foreseen in them. Election is a loving act of the sovereign will of God:

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. (Nah. 1:7)

God knows those who trust in Him. But they trust in the Lord because He knows them. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Hebrew verb *yada* (here translated as “knows”) means “to choose,” “to choose to love,” or “to select.” Arthur Custance writes, “The Septuagint translated the Old Testament Hebrew word *yada*, which means ‘to know,’ ‘to regard,’ ‘to care for,’ by the Greek word *ginosko*. In his treatment of *ginosko* in Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Bultmann comments that the compound form *proginosko* has the more basic meaning of foreordaining or electing rather than merely foreknowing, even as *yada* can also mean ‘to elect.’” The order of events in this verse is important. God knows His elect people, and that knowing precedes and produces the fact that they take refuge in Him. p214

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

Saving grace is always irresistible grace. It is a work of God that inevitably triumphs in the lives of the elect. Zechariah taught that within the nation of Israel, a remnant would be called to faith in Christ and would surely be converted:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (Zech. 12:10)

Zechariah looked ahead to a time when God would pour out His Spirit upon Israel. In that day, Israel would be brought to deep conviction of its sin, especially the sin of crucifying Christ, Zechariah said. At that time, which is still in the future, there will be a great turning to the Lord. God will do a work of sovereign grace in the hearts of many Jews, with the result that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26)—a reference to the vast majority in Israel [all Israel meaning, all true Israel, genuine believers or the church, the elect, – as Paul notes in Romans 9:6, *For they are not all Israel who are of Israel – my insert*]. God will pour out His Spirit on the house of David, bringing conviction of sin and granting true repentance, so that many will call upon His name with saving faith. In other words, God Himself will overcome the natural inclination of the unconverted heart, which is not able to seek God in and of itself.

Recognizing the absolute certainty of this fulfillment, MacArthur writes, “God, in His own perfect time and by His own power, will sovereignly act to save Israel.” Boice adds that Israel’s understanding of Christ’s crucifixion “will come about by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, for it is only as God pours out ‘a spirit of grace and supplication’ that the repentance and turning depicted in these verses occurs. It is only by the power of God’s Holy Spirit that they occur anywhere or to anyone.” It is God’s Spirit who causes unconverted sinners to look to the Savior they have long rejected. This is the basis of every true conversion. P217

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Malachi made known that God’s love is an electing love. As the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, He chooses to set His love upon His elect (Eph. 1:4) and rejects with severe displeasure those whom He passes over. God loves the elect deeply, but He hates the non-elect because of their sin. In truth, a holy God must hate all who sin and fall short of His glory. This is more than God hating the sin but loving the sinner; this is God making no distinction between the sinner and his sin. God’s wrath abides upon them (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6), but He has determined to love His chosen ones:

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated.” (Mal. 1:2–3a)

With sovereign, distinguishing love, God chose Jacob over Esau (Gen. 25:22–23). He loved the one and hated the other, a fact affirmed later by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 9:13). The Lord chose to love His elect in Christ from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). For this reason, God loved Jacob, not because he was Jacob, but because God had chosen him in Christ. MacArthur writes, “God reaffirmed His love to them, recalling His covenant of Jacob over Esau, father of the Edomites (cf. Gen. 25:23). In this closing book of the Old Testament, God’s electing love toward Israel, sovereign, undeserved, and persistent (cf. Rom. 9:13), is boldly and explicitly reiterated by the Lord Himself and illustrated by His choice of Jacob and his offspring. Unconditionally, and completely apart from any consideration of human merit, God elected Jacob and his descendants to become His heirs of promise (cf. Rom. 9:6–29).”

To this truth of election, Boice adds, “This striking comparison—between Jacob and Esau... is to remind the self-righteous, critical citizens of Jerusalem of the unmerited and

therefore electing love of God. They have had the audacity to demand that God show how He has loved them; utterly disregarding their unique status as His elect people. This is what God now brings to their willfully negligent attention. By birth Esau was as much a privileged child as Jacob; both were twin sons of the same Jewish father and mother, Isaac and Rebekah. Yet God had loved Jacob with a gracious love.” More than merely passing over Esau, God actively despised him as he was in his sin. P218

DIVINE REPROBATION

Although Joshua did not address the five points of the doctrines of grace per se, he did write about the sovereignty of God over the hearts of men. He showed that God is free to harden sinful hearts in order to carry out His purposes: *For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.* (Josh. 11:20)

During Joshua's advance into the Promised Land, God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites so that Israel might defeat and destroy them. This hardening was an act of divine judgment. God raised the Canaanites up for this purpose, that He might destroy them. This reveals God's supreme right to act upon the hearts of men as He pleases. About this verse, John Calvin pointedly writes, “God hardens them for this very end, that they may shut themselves out from mercy. Hence that hardness is called His work, because it secures the accomplishment of His design. Should any attempt be made to darken so clear a matter by those who imagine that God only looks down from heaven to see what men will be pleased to do, and who cannot bear to think that the hearts of men are curbed by His secret agency, what else do they display than their own presumption? They only allow God a permissive power, and in this way make His counsel dependent on the pleasure of men. But what saith the Spirit? That the hardening is from God, who thus precipitates those whom He means to destroy.” p93

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Jesus taught that before time began, God chose a vast number of individual sinners for salvation. He then gave these elect sinners to Christ to be His people. They were a love gift from the Father, a people who would worship the Son forever. Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus refers to these elect ones by the words “those whom the Father

has given me” or similar terms (6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24). These are the same ones Christ chose for Himself when He came to earth. Because he is enslaved to sin, man cannot exercise his will to choose Christ. The sovereign choice of God both precedes and produces man’s choice of Him. God’s choice is the determinative factor that effects the saving faith of all believers. p255

1. Eternal Choice. God the Father sovereignly chose His elect before time began, long before any person was born or came to believe upon Christ. He then gave those elect ones to Christ as a gift:

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (John 6:37–39)

Christ stated that no sinner can come to Him unless he or she previously has been given to Him by the Father. Implied in this statement is the doctrine of sovereign election. God exercised His sovereignty in eternity past by selecting those whom He then gave to Christ. Morris explains, “The words stress the sovereignty of God. People do not come to Christ because it seems a good idea to them. It never does seem a good idea to sinful people. Apart from a divine work in their souls (cf. 16:8) people remain more or less contentedly in their sins. Before they can come to Christ it is necessary that the Father give them to Him.” D. A. Carson writes that the expression “all that” is “used to refer to the elect collectively.” Boice further notes, “Who are these who have been given by God the Father to Jesus Christ? They are those about whom Paul writes in Ephesians: ‘For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4). These are the elect.”

Divine Foreknowledge

Just as he declared on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23), Peter stated in his first epistle that Christ was foreknown by the Father before the foundation of the world. That is, He was greatly loved by the Father and foreordained to His saving mission of entering this world to ransom the elect: He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake. (1 Peter 1:20) Peter had already taught that the elect were foreknown by the Father in eternity past (1:2). This means they were foreloved and foreordained in a redemptive sense. Here Peter used the same

word—foreknown—in regard to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the elect. He, too, was foreknown, meaning that He was foreloved by the Father and foreordained to His role of saving the elect. Calvin writes that God “ordained Him in His eternal council.” In other words, Jesus’ saving mission was set before the foundation of the world. But many long centuries of redemptive history had to pass before the time was ripe for His coming. When the time did come, however, Christ was “made manifest... for your sake”—that is, He appeared to save God’s elect. Christ fulfilled His appointed mission of redeeming those who had been given to Him by the Father. P296

Peter also explained that election is according to divine foreknowledge. In other words, God sovereignly chose His elect before time began with a special, saving love: *...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* 1Peter 1:2 As noted above, foreknowledge does not simply mean that God looked down the tunnel of time to see what would happen in the future. Some in the church teach that God looked ahead to see who would receive Him. According to this lame explanation, God chose those He foresaw choosing Christ. Thus, God’s will is really man’s will. But this view does severe injustice to the biblical doctrine of foreknowledge, which means “to love beforehand.” This tender word describes the Father’s strong affection for His chosen people, an unalterable love that began in eternity past—hence, foreknowledge. MacArthur writes, “Any sort of man-centered definition of foreknowledge is incompatible with God’s absolute sovereignty over all things.... [Foreknowledge] refers to God’s eternal, predetermined, loving, and saving intention.... Foreknowledge involves God’s predetermining to have a relationship with some individuals, based on His eternal plan. It is the divine purpose that brings salvation for sinners to fulfillment.... Foreknowledge, then, involves God predetermining to know someone by having an intimate, saving relationship, so choosing them from eternity past to receive His redeeming love.” That is to say, God set His affections upon His chosen ones in a love relationship before the foundation of the world. Lawson, *Foundations of Grace* p 294

Divine Foreknowledge

Over the thirty-plus years that followed Peter’s bold preaching in Acts 2, the Apostle never wavered from the doctrines of grace. Three decades later, when he wrote his two epistles—1 Peter in AD 63/64 and 2 Peter in AD 67—his doctrinal standard remained unaltered. Despite the passing of time, Peter continued to expound God’s sovereign grace in the salvation of undeserving sinners. In teaching these foundational truths, the

Apostle addressed believers who were persecuted and scattered abroad in Asia Minor. Seeking to comfort and embolden them, he reminded them that God remained absolutely in control, even during this dark stage of opposition. Although they were being vehemently rejected by the world, the Apostle wanted them to know that they had been intentionally chosen by God. Could any truth be more precious to persecuted saints than the doctrine of God's eternal, immutable election? Could any truth be more fortifying to their faith? Not surprisingly, this strong teaching was the first doctrinal truth introduced in the first verse of both 1 and 2 Peter. Peter had to expound this truth of sovereign grace for believers **who were in great need of encouragement**. But he taught all of the doctrines of grace, beginning with radical depravity. Lawson, Foundations of Grace p 290

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

Peter understood that the heart of the unconverted man is so resistant to the preaching of the gospel that God Himself must intervene and sovereignly work if the elect are to have faith in Christ. God must graciously overpower the unregenerate heart, causing it to believe upon the Savior. Apart from this irresistible calling, no one would believe.

1. Spiritually Sanctified. Peter asserted that all whom the Father chose and foreknew in eternity past are set apart from sin to obey Christ. This effectual separation is accomplished by the irresistible work of the Spirit: To those who are elect exiles... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ.... (1 Peter 1:1b–2a) In the original language, the word translated as “sanctification” means “to separate” or “to consecrate.” It refers here to all the Spirit does in the salvation of the elect. This saving ministry includes the Spirit's work of convicting of sin, drawing to Christ, producing regeneration, granting repentance, and bestowing saving faith. Calvin writes, “Our salvation flows from the gratuitous election of God... because He sanctifies us by His Spirit.... We hence conclude, that election is not to be separated from calling.”²⁶ The Spirit releases the elect from their otherwise inescapable bondage to sin and brings them to faith in Christ. He consecrates them and transfers them from a state of unbelief to one of faith.

2. Sovereignly Reborn. Peter exulted that all who are chosen and foreknown by the Father are regenerated by the Spirit. The truth of the sinner being “caused” to be born again is reason for great praise in the heart of every believer:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Peter 1:3, 23)

The new birth is a work of sovereign grace within the human soul. No one can cause himself to be born physically. Neither can anyone cause himself to be born again spiritually. God, who alone is active in regeneration, must cause the unbelieving sinner to be born again. Boice comments, “No one is responsible for his or her physical birth. It is only as a human egg and sperm join, grow, and finally enter this world that birth occurs. The process is initiated and nurtured by the parents. Likewise spiritual rebirth is initiated and nurtured by our heavenly Father and is not our own doing.” Regeneration is entirely a divine work of sovereign grace that occurs at the deepest level of one’s being. Leighton writes, “Natural birth has always been acknowledged as belonging to God’s prerogative: ‘Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him’ (Psalm 127:3). How much more is the new birth completely dependent on God’s hand!” MacArthur adds, “The new birth is monergistic; it is a work solely of the Holy Spirit. Sinners do not cooperate in their spiritual births (cf. Eph. 2:1–10) any more than infants cooperate in their natural births. Jesus told Nicodemus, ‘The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit’ (John 3:8).”

5. Purposefully Drawn. Peter further taught his readers that God has graciously called His chosen ones to model Christ-likeness. This divine summons includes suffering unjustly as Christ suffered in the days of His humiliation:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

This emulation of Christ in His suffering is non-negotiable. All believers have been called to believe in Christ. Included in this is the call to suffer unjustly for the sake of righteousness. Suffering was an integral part of the Father’s will for Christ, who was chosen and called by the Father to be the Savior of His people. It is the same for all who

are chosen and called by Christ to believe upon Him. In fact, suffering for Christ and the gospel is a confirming mark of God's election. MacArthur states, "Have been called refers to the efficacious salvation call. As soon as the Holy Spirit calls people from darkness to light, they become an enemy of the world and a target of unjust and unfair attack as they seek to obey Christ."

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

Peter affirmed that it is God's irresistible call that draws those who are chosen to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. This irresistible power triumphs in the hearts of the elect. Sovereign grace is always worked into the hearts of those chosen in effectual fashion.

1. Obtained Faith. Saving faith is graciously conveyed as a gift from God to all His elect. All to whom this gift of faith is given, in turn, use it to trust in Christ:

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1)

Peter stated that all believers "have obtained a faith." The word translated "obtained" means "to gain by divine will" or "to be chosen to receive something." In this case, Peter was teaching that all believers are chosen by God to receive saving faith. He was saying that the faith necessary for salvation is given by divine allotment to the elect. Kistemaker writes, "First, let us consider the meaning of the Greek verb to receive. It suggests that someone obtains something by casting lots (refer to Luke 1:9; John 19:24) or by the will of God (consult the Greek text of Acts 1:17). Peter uses this verb to indicate that man receives his faith from God in accordance with God's will. He reminds his readers that faith does not originate in themselves but is a gift from God." All who believe do so because they have been chosen by God to receive the gift of faith from Him.

2. Overruling Summons. Peter taught that the divine power of God gives His elect all things necessary for salvation. "All things" must include new life and saving faith. Believers trust in Christ because they have been sovereignly enabled to do so:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)

The call Peter mentioned here refers to the irresistible summons of God to the elect unto salvation. MacArthur comments, "As in all appearances of this call in the epistles, Peter's use of called here clearly refers to the effectual and irresistible call to salvation." Murray adds, "It is very striking that in the New Testament the terms for calling, when used specifically with reference to salvation, are almost uniformly applied, not to the universal call of the gospel, but to the call that ushers men into a state of salvation and is therefore effectual." All the elect receive this sovereign call of God to His own glory.

3. Chosen Calling. Peter insisted that all whom the Father has chosen will be called by the Spirit to salvation. Divine election and irresistible calling are inseparably bound together:

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (2 Peter 1:10)

This verse shows that Peter firmly believed that all whom God chooses He also calls. The Holy Spirit calls no more, no less, than the precise number of God's elect. Kistemaker writes, "Election and calling are and remain God's redemptive acts. God elects man in eternity (Eph. 1:4) but calls him in time (Rom. 8:30). Man does not elect or call himself, for Paul writes, 'God's gifts and His call are irrevocable' (Rom. 11:29). Hence, God alone decrees man's election and calling. The task for man is to appropriate his salvation, so that he is absolutely certain of the calling with which God has called him and can live in the knowledge that he is God's child (II Tim. 1:9). Calling is not merely an invitation; it is a royal command which man must obey. And election is evidence of God's grace and love toward man."

Supernaturally Illuminated

God commands divine light to shine into the darkened souls of unconverted sinners. Only through this divine initiative can the unconverted see and rightly respond to the truth of the gospel:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

Paul succinctly summarizes the irresistible call of God here. When a person is saved, it is because God decrees that His light should shine within. The basis for this teaching is the first act of Creation, in which God created everything out of nothing. So it is in the second act of creation, in which He creates repentance and saving faith out of nothing. Just as God said “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) on the first day of Creation, so He does again, spiritually speaking, in the salvation of His elect. Hodge writes, “This knowledge of God in Christ is not a mere matter of intellectual apprehension that one person may communicate to another. It is a spiritual discernment, to be derived only from the Spirit of God. God must shine into our hearts to give us this knowledge (Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:10, 14).” p 369

Exclusive Riches

Through His self-humbling death, Jesus took on a sacrificial poverty. In so doing, He made spiritually bankrupt sinners rich in grace: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* (2 Cor. 8:9)

Paul writes that Jesus Christ, who was infinitely rich throughout all eternity past—“rich in the possession of the glory that He had with the Father before the world was,” and “rich in the fullness of all divine attributes and prerogatives”—became temporarily poor. That is, Christ voluntarily relinquished the use of His divine prerogatives in order to die upon the cross for sinners. Through His sin-bearing death, spiritually bankrupt sinners have become spiritually rich—rich in grace, in forgiveness, and in all things pertaining to salvation. All this self-divesting of His eternal glory in His incarnation was “for your sake”—a clear reference to believers, as opposed to the world in general. Kistemaker writes, “Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, we are heirs and co-heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17). We are children of the light, filled with joy and happiness, and partakers of His glory. Through Christ’s death on the cross, we have ‘become the righteousness of God’ (5:21). We already are spiritually rich in this life and rich beyond comparison in the world to come.” 368

Exclusive Death

The self-giving, sacrificial love of Christ was supremely shown at the cross in His death for undeserving sinners. Those for whom Christ died all die in Him, which is to say, all for whom Christ died—exclusively believers—die to their old way of life:

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Cor. 5:14–15)

The phrase all have died defines the extent of the atonement. Christ died for all who died and no longer live for themselves. In other words, Christ died for all who died in Him. In this case, all can refer only to all believers, or the elect. Unbelievers never die to themselves, but live for this world. By contrast, all believers have come to the end of themselves and have died to themselves. They no longer live for their own selfish pursuits, but for the Lord. MacArthur writes, “It is crucial to understand the identity of the all for whom Christ died. The phrase one died for all, if it stood alone, could imply that Christ died for every person who ever lived. But Paul clarified his meaning by adding the phrase therefore all died.... Together, the two phrases define the all for whom Christ died as the all who died in Him through faith in Him.” Because only the elect die to themselves, they are the ones for whom Christ died. The love of Christ at the cross was for us, that is, for all believers, the elect.

Clarifying this critical text, Hodge adds, “He did not die for all creatures; nor for all rational creatures; nor for all apostate rational creatures. The all is of necessity limited by what the Scriptures teach of the design of His death.... It is so obvious that the death of Christ was designed to save those for whom it was offered.... His death involved, or secured their death. This was its design and effect, and, therefore, this clause limits the extent of the word all in the preceding clause.” 366

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

Paul was well-acquainted with the repulsive depravity of the human heart. First, he could look back upon his own pre-conversion days and remember the corruption of his own unregenerate heart. As the self-proclaimed chief of sinners, his heart had been hardened by much sin. Further, Paul had witnessed the depravity of the human heart firsthand as he ministered on his missionary journeys. As he preached the truth in Jewish synagogues, as well as before kings and to Gentiles, the light of the truth he brought exposed the darkness within human hearts, sparking hostile reactions. These responses revealed the worst within man—the depravity of the human heart.

1. **Hardened Mind.** The minds of unconverted people are hardened to the gospel. The message of salvation does not penetrate to their understanding:

But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. (2 Cor. 3:14)

In this verse, Paul described the state of the unconverted Jews. Their minds were hardened toward the gospel, so that they could not grasp its truth. Hodge explains that when Paul used the word mind here, “it means the whole inner man.... The word is used both of the understanding and of the feelings. It expresses an inaptitude both of seeing and feeling. They neither understood nor felt the power of the truth.” Such hardness of mind is characteristic of all those in unbelief.

2. Blinded Mind. The gospel is veiled to the unconverted. Further, Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so they might not see the glory of the gospel: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor. 4:3–4)

The true meaning of the cross is veiled to all unbelievers. It is a cloaked truth, shrouded with ambiguity and vagueness. Paul Barnett writes, “Such blindness is not merely the historic incapacity of the people of Israel under the old covenant (3:13–15). The darkness is universal, demonic and cosmic.” Under these conditions, the truth cannot be seen for what it is—the divine message that alone saves. The sinner’s mind is in total darkness regarding spiritual things. Furthermore, the devil exerts such an influence over unbelievers that he keeps them from apprehending the truth of the gospel. Satan’s purpose in spreading darkness over people’s minds is to prevent them from seeing the glory of Christ. Here is a double blindness. Not only is the gospel veiled (v. 3), but the sinner is blinded toward what is veiled (v. 4), the gospel truth. pg 364

Supernaturally Recreated

2. Supernaturally Re-created. In regeneration, the unconverted sinner, who is spiritually dead in sin, is supernaturally re-created. In His sovereignty, God makes the sinner a new creation:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God. (2 Cor. 5:17–18a)

Paul teaches that God’s work in applying salvation is a sovereign act of creation. Far greater than the Creation of the universe is the re-creation of a lost soul. In this creative miracle, the sinner becomes a brand-new being. Hodge explains, “Old opinions, views, plans, desires, principles, and affections have gone; new views of truth, new principles, new apprehensions of human destiny, and new feelings and purposes fill and govern the soul.”²⁸ All this is from God, a sovereign work of grace that He initiates and performs. Charles Spurgeon writes, “Nothing will be effected, unless Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, shall speak the quickening word. In His omnipotent voice lies the power, but only there.... We believe that in every case salvation is of the Lord alone and altogether. Regeneration is a supernatural work. Man must be born again from above—any power short of that from heaven will be ineffectual. The new creation is as much and entirely the work of God as the old creation.” Let us always remember, the greatest work God ever performs is re-creating lost sinners. p369

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

Pg 380

The doctrine of radical depravity holds that unregenerate people are corrupted by sin in the entirety of their inner persons. All that they are—mind, emotion, and will—is depraved. As it relates to spiritual things, their minds are darkened, their hearts are defiled, and their wills are dead. The prison epistles, especially Ephesians, provide much teaching on this pivotal doctrine, but the blackness of this truth only causes God’s grace to shine even brighter.

1. Spiritually Dead. The unconverted are spiritually dead in their sins, unable to do anything to commend themselves to God. They are devoid of all spiritual life, having a mere empty, meaningless existence:

You were dead in... trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1)

What is the spiritual condition of unregenerate people? It is not that they are merely sick. Rather, they are dead—devoid of all spiritual life. As a result, they are completely incapable of any right response to the gospel. After all, what can a dead man do? Nothing. Sinful man is unable to come to Christ, just as a corpse is unable to climb out of its coffin. John MacArthur writes, “Man does not become spiritually dead because he

sins; he is spiritually dead because by nature he is sinful.... That is the condition of every human being since the Fall, including every believer before he is saved. It is the past condition of believers and the present condition of everyone else.” J. C. Ryle notes, “I admit fully that man has many grand and noble faculties left about him, and that in arts and sciences and literature he shows immense capacity. But the fact still remains that in spiritual things he is utterly ‘dead,’ and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the Fall.” James Montgomery Boice adds, “Like a spiritual corpse, he is unable to make a single move toward God, think a right thought about God, or even respond to God—unless God first brings this spiritually dead corpse to life.” Dead means dead.

2. Spiritually Devilish. The unconverted live according to the dictates of the godless world system, over which Satan presides as the prince of this world. The devil holds all unbelievers captive, and they are unable to escape his tyranny by their own efforts:

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. (Eph. 2:1–2)

Paul taught that unregenerate sinners live according to the values and standards of the world order, which is contrary to God. As such, they are held captive by Satan, who is “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Under his evil rule, they habitually live as “sons of disobedience” in active rebellion against God. John Calvin notes, “Until God has worked in us by His grace, then, whose are we? The devil’s! He is our prince. To be brief, he has all authority over us, and rules us with a tyranny that is nothing else but a being carried off to him by force. St. Paul uses this word ‘spirit’ purposely, to show that the devil rules all our thoughts, all our affections, and all our desires, that he possesses us, and that we are all wholly his bond slaves. In a word, we cannot stir one finger, we cannot once move, we cannot think one thought, but the devil is at our elbow and draws us in such a way that we utterly become deadly enemies to God.” Because the devil holds them captive, all unbelievers live in disobedience to God.

Eternally Loved

God chose His elect for salvation. By this sovereign decision, He set them apart to Himself and chose to love them with a distinguishing love: Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. (Col.

3:12) God made His elect the chosen objects of His special, redemptive love. He does not love them because they first loved Him.¹ Neither does He love them because they have met some special condition. Rather, God loves His elect simply because He chose to love them. The reason originated within God Himself, not within the sinner.

MacArthur writes, "That believers are beloved of God means they are objects of His special love. Election is not a cold, fatalistic doctrine. On the contrary, it is based in God's incomprehensible love for His elect: 'In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will' (Eph. 1:4–5)." ¹¹ p386

¹ Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity Consisting of Three Books*, God's love to Christ is the foundation of his love to us, Matt. 3:17; Eph. 1:6. God loves all creatures with a general love, Matt. 5:44, 45, as they are the work of his hands; but he doth delight in some especially, whom he hath chosen in his Son, John 3:16; Eph. 1:6." Otherwise, the personal and pastoral implications would be devastating. If 1 John 4:10 were to be inverted, "In this is love, not that God loved us, but that we loved him," God would be passible indeed, and all men would be without hope. – *Confessing the Impassible God* p313 *[my insert]*

Definite Atonement

The Father's electing choice before the foundation of the world is inseparably connected with the death of Christ. God's chosen ones were elected in Christ, meaning within the sphere of His future atoning work. It was for these chosen ones (Eph. 1:4) that the Lord Jesus came into this world to die upon the cross. Christ was predestined to die for all who were predestined for eternal life, in order to secure their adoption (1:5, 10–11; 3:12).

1. Definite Redemption. Paul specified that Christ died in order to redeem those whom the Father had chosen. Through His death, He secured forgiveness of sins for all the elect:

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:4, 7–12)

By using pronouns such as we, our, and us in this text, Paul showed that the saving work of Christ upon the cross was very specific in its intent. It was designed by God to save His elect. In other words, Christ purposefully died in order to redeem those chosen by the Father, to secure forgiveness for all who would believe. Hendriksen explains, “From before the foundation of the world Christ was the Representative and Surety of all those who in time would be gathered into the fold. This was necessary, for election is not an abrogation of divine attributes. It has already been established that in the background of God’s decree is the dismal fact that those chosen are viewed as being, at the very outset, totally unworthy, having involved themselves in ruin and perdition. Now sin must be punished. The demands of God’s holy law must be satisfied.... ‘In Christ,’ then, saints and believers, though initially and by nature thoroughly unworthy, are righteous in the very sight of God, for Christ had promised that in their stead He would satisfy all the requirements of the law, a promise which was also completely fulfilled (Gal. 3:13).” p386

Sovereignly Graced

In the act of regeneration, God bestows the gift of saving faith to spiritually dead sinners. By this divine work, God enables them to believe upon Christ:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)

Saving faith is a gift that God must give. Until He bestows this gift, no one can believe. But when He does, the sinner inevitably uses the gift of faith and is converted. MacArthur explains, “Our response in salvation is faith, but even that is not of ourselves [but is] the gift of God. Faith is nothing that we do in our own power or by our own resources. In the first place we do not have adequate power or resources.... When we accept the finished work of Christ on our behalf, we act by the faith supplied by God’s grace. That is the supreme act of human faith, the act which, though it is ours, is primarily God’s—His gift to us out of His grace.”

However, some people fail to acknowledge that faith is God’s gift. Of these, Calvin says, “He that attributes to himself any freedom of will, and takes upon himself to have any means or ability to do good of himself, certainly denotes his intention to step into God’s place and to show himself to be a creator.... And you, hypocrite, confess the same with your mouth, and yet you only lie, since you think that you have some freewill to advance yourself to good and to salvation. And so you deny the first article of your faith, for you make God only half a Creator.”

Sovereignly Called

God must call spiritually dead sinners to Christ if they are to believe upon Him. This irresistible call is extended to all God's elect:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. (Eph. 4:1)

God's call to belief is an irresistible summons that is extended to all of His elect. The external call of the preacher takes God's Word to the sinner's ear. Only the internal call—the sovereign call of God's Spirit—can take the Word from the ear to the heart, leading to salvation. When this call is issued by God, it always draws the sinner to faith in Christ. Murray writes, "We often fail to grasp the rich meaning of biblical terms because in common usage the same words have suffered a great deal of attrition. This is true in respect of the word 'call.' If we are to understand the strength of this word, as used in this connection, we must use the word 'summons.' The action by which God makes His people the partakers of redemption is that of summons. And since it is God's summons it is an efficacious summons.... The summons is invested with the efficacy by which we are delivered to the destination intended—we are effectively ushered into the fellowship of Christ. There is something determinate about God's call; by His sovereign power and grace it cannot fail of accomplishment."

Sovereignly Granted

Paul affirmed that God grants saving faith to the sinner, which enables him to believe in Christ. Saving faith is a sovereign gift of God: For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. (Phil. 1:29) Being dead in sin, an unregenerate sinner has no capacity to believe upon Christ. God must grant faith. According to this verse, just as God gives times of suffering to believers, He gives saving faith to elect sinners. This gift is the supernatural ability to believe in Christ. Hendriksen writes, "Whether or not one regards Eph. 2:8 as proof for the proposition that such faith is God's gift, the conclusion is at any rate inescapable that here in Phil. 1:29 faith—not only its inception but also its continued activity—is so regarded."

Sovereign Election

Radical depravity makes the truth of sovereign election an absolute necessity. Fallen man loves sin and hates the gospel. Left to himself, no lost sinner seeks God or chooses to believe upon Christ. Therefore, God must initiate all that is necessary for any sinner to be saved. The doctrine of election teaches that God has chosen some individuals out of the fallen human race for salvation. Divine election is based exclusively on the mercy of God, not upon human merit, good works, or foreseen faith. Paul taught this truth with theological precision as he wrote to the Thessalonians. 1. Divine Choice. Paul emphatically taught the Thessalonians that God chose His elect for Himself. Out of the fallen human race, He made a distinguishing choice:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you. (1 Thess. 1:4)

Paul affirmed that the believers in Thessalonica had been chosen by God. The original saving choice in salvation was made by God, not man. Morris writes, "Election protects us from thinking of salvation as dependent on man's whims, and roots it squarely in the will of God.... Election, as Paul's words imply, proceeds from the fact of God's great love (notice the connection between love and election also in 2 Thess. 2:13). It is not a device for sentencing people to eternal torment, but for rescuing them from it."³⁴ MacArthur adds, "In salvation, the initiating will is God's not man's (cf. John 1:13; Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 9:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1). Man's will participates in response to God's prompting."³⁵ Elect sinners become believers because God chose them to be so. P397

Irresistible Call

In the perfect unity of God's saving purpose, there is a singular focus within the Godhead. And yet, the persons of the Trinity play unique roles in the fulfillment of this purpose. As sovereign election is the work of God the Father and definite atonement the work of God the Son, irresistible call is the work of God the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father chose are the very ones whom the Son redeemed and the same ones whom the Spirit calls. In perfect cooperation with the Father and the Son, the Spirit works in the salvation of the elect. According to His sovereign power, He regenerates, convicts, and calls within time those who were chosen before time began. It is the Spirit's effectual ministry to bring all the elect to saving faith in Christ.

1. Supernatural Power. Paul taught that the Holy Spirit works with supernatural power in the elect. He causes them to believe the gospel as the Word is preached by God's messengers:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thess. 1:4–5)

When the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit works “in power.” Divine might is unleashed in the preacher to proclaim the truth and in the elect to receive it. As Paul preached in Thessalonica, the power of God was evident, and many were converted as a result. Hiebert explains, “[Paul and his companions] well knew that only a power beyond themselves could accomplish the task of transforming spiritually benighted souls, and they knew that the Spirit was working through them to that end.” But not only did the preachers know this power, so did elect sinners when they heard the truth. The power of the Spirit “delivered them from spiritual bondage.”⁴¹ John Stott underscores the necessity for this sovereign power as he writes, “Blind eyes and hard hearts do not appreciate the gospel.... [There must be]the internal operation of the Holy Spirit. It is only by His power that the Word can penetrate people’s mind, heart, conscience and will.”⁴² This is the irresistible call to salvation. Pg400

Imparted Repentance

God must grant the repentance that leads to salvation if any unconverted sinner is to escape the captivity of Satan. A turning of the heart from sin to Christ can come only from God:

And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24–26)

Satan holds unconverted man captive to do his evil bidding. Thus, lost mankind’s will is doubly bound, once by his own sin nature and again by Satan. When the gospel is preached, the unregenerate person is completely unable to believe upon Christ. It is only by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the heart that the elect one comes to repentance. Only God can liberate the will, enabling the sinner to come to faith in Christ. Recognizing this bondage to sin, MacArthur writes, “All genuine repentance must be the product of God’s sovereign grace, just as is every aspect of salvation.... No

person, no matter how sincere and determined, can truly repent and change his own sinful thoughts and ideas and correct his own sinful life. Only God can work that miracle in the heart.” In other words, God in His sovereignty must give repentance to the captive sinner before he can believe in Christ. This is a necessary component of man’s supernatural conversion by grace. P423

Irresistible Power

Paul stated the necessity for the Holy Spirit to regenerate elect sinners. In this supernatural work, God raises spiritually dead sinners to new life so that they might exercise His gift of saving faith in Christ:

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:4–6)

No living person was able to cause himself to be born physically. That matter is completely out of human hands, resting squarely with God’s sovereign will. So it is with the new birth—no unconverted sinner can cause himself to be born again. The radical corruption of the human heart—it is foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to lusts and pleasures, full of malice and envy, and hateful (v. 3)—means that man is spiritually dead, so God must act in sovereign power if salvation is to come. The Holy Spirit must produce what Paul calls “regeneration,” which is, Louis Berkhof writes, “that act of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in man, the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and the first holy exercise of this new disposition is secured.” Regeneration is entirely a supernatural work of God, “never directly perceived by man, and becomes known to him only because of its effects.” This miracle of regeneration is mysterious indeed. pg 424

Predetermined Appointment.

God appointed His elect unto eternal life before the foundation of the world. Every one of His chosen ones will surely believe and be saved:

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

When Paul preached the gospel, he knew the truth of divine election was no hindrance to his outreach. Instead, he saw sovereign grace as a guarantee of its success. As the Word of God was sounded by Paul, “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.” Bruce writes, “Appointed is used in some ancient documents in the sense of ‘to inscribe’ or ‘to enroll.’” In other words, those who believe have been enrolled by God among His elect. Appointed is in the passive voice, indicating that the elect are passive in this act, God alone being the active agent. In addition, appointed is in the perfect tense, which specifies action in the past with continuing relevance in the future. These who believe do so because they were sovereignly appointed by God to eternal life in eternity past. A. W. Pink writes, “Here we learn four things: First, that believing is the consequence and not the cause of God’s decree. Second, that a limited number only are ‘ordained to eternal life,’ for if all men without exception were thus ordained by God, then the words ‘as many as’ are a meaningless qualification. Third, that this ‘ordination’ of God is not to mere external privileges but to ‘eternal life,’ not to service but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all—‘as many as,’ not one less—who are thus ordained by God to eternal life will most certainly believe.”

Adding profound insight, John Calvin writes, “This verse teaches that faith depends on God’s choice. Since the whole human race is blind and stubborn, those faults remain fixed in our nature until they are corrected by the grace of the Spirit, and that comes only from election. Two people may hear the same teaching together; yet one is willing to learn, and the other persists in his obstinacy. They do not differ in nature, but God illumines one and not the other... He does not begin to choose us after we believe, but by the gift of faith He seals the adoption that was hidden in our hearts and makes it manifest and sure.” p434

Definite Atonement

At the very heart of evangelism is the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ. Luke recorded that Christ’s substitutionary death was for the sake of a very definite group of people. Working in perfect harmony with the Father’s eternal purpose and plan, Jesus died to save those whom God had chosen. He did not die for some different group, such as the entire world. Instead, Christ gave His life for all who had been given to Him by the Father—the elect. When Jesus died, He purchased the church with His blood. He laid down His life for all who would believe:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

This verse is remarkable in that it teaches that Jesus Christ purchased “the church” with His blood—the very blood of God. MacArthur notes, “Paul believed so strongly in the unity of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ that he could speak of Christ’s death as shedding the blood of God—who has no body (John 4:24; cf. Luke 24:39) and hence no blood.” This close unity between the Father and the Son is displayed here in the fulfillment of their saving purpose. The Father chose His elect, and Christ then made a definite atonement for them. Christ’s work is portrayed here as perfectly consistent with the Father’s intent. Jesus died for the same group chosen by the Father—His elect bride, the church, which is composed of all believers. Paul did not say that Jesus made the church redeemable. Rather, Jesus redeemed the church. At the cross, a definite transaction occurred between the Father and the Son on behalf of the true church of God’s elect. 436

Irresistible Call

As the gospel is preached, God is pleased to irresistibly draw His elect to faith in Jesus Christ. Unquestionably, it is the Lord alone who adds to His church. If any sinner is to repent, the Lord must grant the gift of repentance. If any sinner is to believe, God must supply the faith. Before a sinner can turn away from sin to Him, God must convict and call. He must open the heart before it can believe the gospel. All who are appointed by God to eternal life inevitably respond to God’s irresistible call and believe upon Christ. Thus, all believing is the result of sovereign grace. That is, saving faith is a gift God grants to the elect, enabling them to believe. Luke taught all of this through his inspired record in the book of Acts.

Granted Repentance

If any sinner is to be saved, God must give him the repentance that leads to salvation. The granting of repentance to the elect is a crucial part of the irresistible call of God: “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”... When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified

God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 5:31; 11:18) Repentance is a turning of the heart and sorrow over sin that is necessary for true salvation. All men are divinely commanded to repent (Acts 17:30), but no fallen sinner can do so of himself any more than he can forgive himself his own sins before God. The flesh cannot and will not repent, for “the flesh is of no avail” (John 6:63). This is why God must deposit repentance in the hearts of His chosen ones. By the repentance which God gives, the elect inevitably turn from sin to Christ. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, “Here is the depth of human iniquity. Here is the measure of the problem. People cannot repent;... their whole nature is against it.... So what can be done? We are commanded to repent and yet we cannot. And the answer is in Peter’s words in Acts 5.... Our only hope lies in the grace and the kindness and the goodness of God. And that is why He sent His Son into this world: it was in order to give us repentance.” Barrett adds, “It is not enough that God should grant forgiveness to those who repent; he first makes repentance possible.”

It is important to note that when God grants repentance, it inevitably leads to eternal life. Calvin comments, “The phrase ‘to grant repentance’ may be understood... [that] He circumcised their hearts by His Spirit (Deuteronomy 30:6) and gave them hearts of flesh in place of hearts of stone (Ezekiel 11:19). It is God alone who remakes people and gives them new birth.” Kistemaker clarifies, “Repentance is not something that originates in man’s heart on his own initiative. Repentance, as the believers in Jerusalem confess, is a gift of God: ‘God has granted repentance that leads to life’. That is, God grants his people the gifts of repentance, forgiveness of sin, and eternal life.” Again, every grace in salvation flows from God. p 437

Predetermined People

God chose a people for Himself long before the Creation of the world. That divine choice marked these individuals as God’s people before they actually believe within time:

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people. (Acts 18:9–10)

Soon after Paul began ministering in Corinth, he became discouraged by the great opposition and many obstacles he faced. Filled with despair, the Apostle was ready to move to another city that might be more receptive to the gospel. But God appeared to

Paul in a vision and told him that He had many people in Corinth—a reference to His chosen ones, those who would believe once the truth was preached to them. This truth of divine election gave the Apostle great courage to hold fast. The salvation of these chosen individuals was so certain, God regarded them as His people before they were even saved. Leon Morris writes, “They had not yet done anything about being saved; many of them had not even heard the gospel. But they were God’s. Clearly it is he who would bring them to salvation in due course.” Speaking to the certainty of God’s previous choice, James Montgomery Boice writes, “If God said, I have many people in this city, it must have been because God, who alone is able to see the future and determine it, was looking ahead, saying that by the preaching of the Word through Paul’s ministry He would bring many people to faith in Jesus Christ. They were His people and they would stand together as a church and bear witness in this most corrupt city.” The truth of divine election guarantees the success of the outreach of the church.

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Opened Door

The saving faith necessary for salvation comes from God as a divine gift exclusively bestowed upon His elect. Faith does not arise from within man, but must come down from God above:

And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)

Only God can open the door of faith for lost sinners to enter His kingdom. That is, only God can enable the unconverted to believe upon Christ. No man can open this door of faith by himself, for it is locked by sin, and only God has the key. This is another way of saying that God must bring sinners to faith in Himself. God graciously does this for His chosen ones. Calvin states, “Not only was the gospel preached with the external voice, but people were illuminated by the Spirit of God and so were called effectually to faith. The kingdom of heaven is indeed opened to us by the external preaching of the gospel. But no one enters without God reaching out his hand to him; no one draws near unless he is drawn inwardly by the Spirit.” God opens the door of faith in every conversion.

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Unlocked Hearts. 440

God also must open the human heart before it can receive the saving message and believe. Left to itself, the fallen soul is closed to the gospel:

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

Because of the radical depravity of man's fallen nature, the human heart is bolted shut by the twin locks of sin and Satan. In its natural state, no heart is open to God. When God saves His elect, He must open that heart so it can receive the message of salvation. The same word for "opened" is used later in Acts to describe the earthquake that struck Philippi, with the result that "immediately all the doors were opened" (16:26). Those closed and locked prison doors were instantly overpowered by the earthquake and made to open. This is precisely what God did to Lydia's heart—He instantly threw it open by a spiritual earthquake within her soul. Calvin writes, "Indeed, [believing] does not so stand in man's own impulse, and consequently even the pious and those who fear God still have need of the especial prompting of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, yet her heart had to be opened to receive Paul's teaching [Acts 16:14] and to profit by it."

Enabling Grace

It is only by the grace of God that any sinner is enabled to believe upon Christ. Human faith is exercised by divine grace alone:

And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed. (Acts 18:27)

Saving faith should never be considered to be man's contribution to his salvation. If such were the case, man would be his own co-savior. Instead, man believes exclusively through divine grace. That is, faith is exercised in Christ through the God-given ability to believe. Thus, saving faith is the sovereign gift of God freely given to the elect. To this point, Barrett writes, "That they became and continued to be believers was due only to the grace of God. Luke does not develop the theme of grace as Paul does, but makes it quite clear that faith comes through divine not human initiative." Faith is one of the essential elements God supplies for man's salvation. pg 441

Authored Faith.

Saving faith has its origin in Christ, the Author and Originator of it. Saving faith in Christ comes from Christ:

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. (Heb. 12:1b–2a)

No lost sinner can have faith in Christ until Christ creates it in him. Only then can an unregenerate person believe. Christ authors such saving faith for all the elect. Owen succinctly states, “Our faith from first to last is from Jesus Christ.” Morris agrees: “The ‘author and perfecter of faith’ (there is no ‘our’ in the Gr.) may mean that Jesus trod the way of faith first and brought it to completion. Or it may mean that He originated His people’s faith and will bring it to its perfection. Since it is not easy to think that the author sees the faith by which Jesus lived as essentially the same as our own, perhaps it is better to see the emphasis on what He does in His followers.” Hughes notes, “He alone evokes and stimulates faith; and it is because he is the pioneer of our salvation (Heb. 2:10) that he is the author of our faith. Our faith, moreover, is initiated and sustained by him because he has prayed the Father that we may come to faith (Jn. 17:20f.) and that our faith may not fail (Lk. 22:31f.)” 452

Sovereign Regeneration

A good summary

There may be no truth in the Bible more deeply loved and greatly cherished than the subject of the new birth. Here is the grace-centered message of a new beginning for those whose lives have been ruined by sin. Here is the life-changing truth that sinful men can be made new. When the new birth is caused by God, old things pass away – old practices, old cravings, old habits, old addictions, and old associations. Behold, new things come – new desires, new pursuits, and new passions. And entirely new life begins. Nothing could be more positive than this. It is no wonder that the truth of the new birth is so beloved.

Yet despite its great appeal, the new birth may be the most misunderstood doctrine in Scripture. Most people naively imagine that there is something they can do or cause themselves to be born again. They hear a well-meaning person say, “Believe and be born again,” and suppose that they can. So they try to effect their own regeneration. But this they cannot do. In attempting it, they are like someone who imagines he caused himself to be born physically. Did he meet with his parents and ask to be born? Did he initiate his own birth? Of course not. The truth is, the initiative in birth lies outside of the one being born. He is merely part of a process that started long before he

came into being. His parents acted, then God acted. And as a result, that individual was brought into the world. He did not cause his own birth to happen. The same is true in regard to spiritual birth. If you have experienced the new birth, it is not because you initiated it. Rather, it was an event that God brought about in you. More specifically, you were not born again because you exercised faith. In truth, the new birth preceded your faith and produced it. Saving faith is the fruit of regeneration, not the root of it. The biblically correct order of salvation – known in theological language as the *ordo salutis* – is not “Believe and be born again,” but the very opposite: “Be born again and believe.” The living God must act upon the spiritually dead soul and cause it to be born again. The new birth is by divine choice and sovereign initiative. God’s will affects the human will, not vice versa. Scripture intentionally uses the imagery of birth to underscore this essential truth of the sovereignty of God in regeneration.

John Murray, one of the foremost theologians of the twentieth century, affirmed the divine initiative in the new birth when he wrote, “For entrance into the kingdom of God we are wholly dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit, and action...which is compared to that on the part of our parents by which we were born into the world. We are as dependent upon the Holy Spirit as we are upon the action of our parents in connection with our natural birth. We were not begotten by our father because we decided to be. And we were not born of our mother because we decided to be. We were simply begotten and we were born. We did not decide to be born... If this privilege is ours it is because the Holy Spirit willed it and here all rests upon the Holy Spirit’s decision and action. He begets or bears when and where He pleases.”

Murray goes on to write, “Regeneration is the act of God and of God alone.” In other words, regeneration is monergistic, meaning that “the grace of God is the only efficient cause in beginning and effecting conversion.” The key word here is *only*. God is the only cause behind the new birth. The opposite of monergism is synergism. This latter word is derived from the Greek word *synergos*, meaning “working together.” According to the theory of synergistic regeneration, both the divine and human wills are active, and each must cooperate with the other. But what does the Scripture teach? According to James 1:18, “Of his own will he brought us forth” – an unmistakably monergistic statement. John 1:12-13 reads, “All who did receive him, who believed in his name...where born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

This view of the new birth could not be more monergistic. John 3:8 says, “The wind

blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Man does not effect the movement of the Spirit – God does. First Peter 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Clearly, regeneration is monergistic, the activity of only one will, namely, the divine will.

In the latter epistles of the New Testament, this truth of regeneration appears with intentional regularity (James 1:18; 1John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). This is a fundamental teaching within the doctrines of grace. It reveals that God must implant new life within your soul. God must effect a spiritual conception within you. God must impregnate your heart. In short, God must cause you to be born again. We will see this truth clearly taught as we consider three of the last authors of the New Testament – James, John, and Jude – and the contribution they made to the biblical truth of sovereign regeneration and the doctrines of grace as a whole. pg 458

Irresistible Call

Inseparably connected with the doctrine of election is the truth of monergistic regeneration. James teaches that the new birth is a sovereign act of God. The Holy Spirit produces new life in the Father’s elect when they are dead in trespasses and sins. The instrument the Spirit always uses in the new birth is “the word of truth.” The Spirit accompanies the proclamation of the Word with an irresistible inward call that causes the elect to believe the message of the gospel. [\[Flavel describes this irresistibility as a secret efficacious power that sweetly moves the will. “Conversion denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causes upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ.” “He rules not by compulsion but most sweetly.” “These are Christ’s regal acts. And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably.” “For he delights in *free*, not in *forced* obedience.” See also, Ps 110:3. My inserts\]](#) God does this in all of those who are His, even in those unnoticed or unwanted by this world:

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

When James wrote that God “brought us forth,” he was referring to sinners being born again. The Greek word translated as “brought us forth” is *apokueo*, which means “to be

birthed, to be bred or begotten.” James’ choice of this word makes a strong statement that regeneration is effected by the sovereign will of God (John 1:13, 1Peter 1:3). It is by His will – not the will of man – that the new birth is initiated and brought to pass. God’s will is the sole cause of man’s regeneration. Manton explains, “This word means natural birth, and sometimes it is used for creation. So we are said to be ‘His offspring’ (Acts 17:28). Some people apply these words to God’s creation of us, making people His firstfruits, or the most special part of the whole creation. But this is beside the point, for James speaks of this as birth that is through the word of truth. In the next verse he uses this to argue that we should be more aware of the duty of listening; therefore this birth implies the work of grace on our souls.” James referred to these first believers as “firstfruits of his creatures.” This initial ingathering was a guarantee of a fuller harvest of believers to come. The truth of sovereign regeneration stood behind this confidence of James, for he knew that God would overcome all resistance in the hearts of all the elect.

Calvin saw this very clearly. The Genevan Reformer explains, “When he says that God of His own will, or spontaneously, hath begotten us, he intimates that He was induced by no other reason, as the will and counsel of God are often set in opposition to the merits of men... As our election before the foundation of the world was gratuitous, so we are illuminated by the grace of God alone as to the knowledge of the truth, so that our calling corresponds with our election. The Scripture shows that we have been gratuitously adopted by God before we were born. Such a view of regeneration gives all glory to God. pg 468

Spiritual Devilry

The unconverted practice sin and, in so doing, reveal that they are of the devil, who sinned from the beginning. All unbelievers live under the dominion of the devil and follow his influence into sin:

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning... By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother... The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1John3:8a-10; 5:19b)

The one who practices sin gives evidence that he is unregenerate. The present tense of the verb translated as “practice” (*poieo*) indicates an ongoing, habitual lifestyle. Despite professing faith in Christ, some exhibit a habitual pattern of sin in their lives. They do so because they are “of the devil.” This means that all unsaved people live under the

sinister influence of Satan. Their sinful practices reveal the satanic tyranny in their lives. Newton writes, “The goals and aims of the devil are sinister, driving a person to live for self, not God. Whatever is contrary to God’s glory, this is what they fallen flesh pursues under the control of Satan. Herein, indeed, they are [Satan’s] agents and willing servants; and because the blessed God is Himself out of their reach, they labor to show their despite to Him in the person of His people.” Unbelievers are of their father the devil (John 8:44 and, as Satan’s children, practice in – a family resemblance. pg 475

Definite Atonement

And exposing Gnosticism

As stated earlier, John wrote his three letters to warn the church about the false teaching of Gnosticism, which, among other errors, denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (1 John 2:22; 4:3). Affirming the full humanity of Christ was necessary if one was to rightly and savingly believe that He had died upon the cross for sinners. The Gnostics also denied the full deity of Christ, which had to be affirmed if one was to believe in the infinite merit of His death. Because of these heresies, the doctrine of the atonement was under a brutal attack in the church and needed to be defended. John affirmed that Christ – fully God and fully man, the God-man – made the perfect atonement for undeserving sinners. He died for the elect of God throughout the world.

1. Propitiating Death. In His death, Jesus satisfied the righteous wrath of God, appeasing the Father’s just anger toward elect sinners who would believe upon Him. It was for His chosen people throughout the world that Christ died:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ...In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 2:1-2; 4:10)

John wrote that the death of Christ achieved an actual satisfaction of God’s holy wrath toward elect sinners. If Jesus had died for every individual in “the whole world,” God’s wrath toward everyone’s sin would have been appeased. As a result, there now would be no condemnation for anyone. But this is not the case. Only believers escape God’s wrath. Thus, it was for believers only – identified as “my little children,” “you,” and “we” – that Christ died. The substitutionary death of Christ was the actual propitiation for “our sins” – the sins of the elect around “the whole world,” among both Jews and Gentiles. Since Jesus died for those sins, God is eternally appeased toward the elect. Murray writes, “What does propitiation mean? In the Hebrew of the Old Testament it is

expressed by a word which means to 'cover.' In connection with this covering there are, in particular, three things to be noted; (1) it is in reference to sin that the covering takes place; (2) the effect of this covering is cleansing and forgiveness; (3) it is before the Lord that both the covering and its effect take place... To propitiate means to 'placate,' 'pacify,' 'appease,' 'conciliate.' And it is this idea that is applied to the atonement accomplished by Christ. Propitiation presupposes the wrath and displeasure of God, and the purpose of propitiation is the removal of this displeasure. Very simply stated the doctrine of propitiation means that Christ propitiated the wrath of God and rendered God propitious to His people." pg 477

Supernatural Life

God begets new life in a spiritually dead sinner through His supernatural work of regeneration. The new birth, in turn, produces a new way of life:

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. (1 John 2:29)

The word translated "born of him" (*gennao*) is the same one Jesus used when He told Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). The verb points to God as the sole Procreator in the new birth. He initiates this creative act by sovereign choice, and He **alone** is active at the moment of the new birth, **while man is passive**. R.K. McGregor Wright notes, "Regeneration of the soul is a supernatural act of God whereby He gives life to whomever He will. When the gospel is heard by one of the elect, the Holy Spirit takes that word and applies it savingly to the heart, ensuring the begetting of eternal life within the soul... So regeneration is an act of God and is instantaneous, taking place deep in the innermost subconscious reaches of the heart, and is therefore nonexperiential. It is accurately compared in the Bible with natural birth. A woman does not 'experience' fertilization until the developing egg begins to have biological effects that are unmistakable. What she is 'experiencing' is the development of a new life within – the process of pregnancy. Accordingly, conversion is our human response to the movements of the new life within."

The one who is "born of him" inevitably begins to practice righteousness as an ongoing lifestyle. MacArthur explains, "Those truly born again as God's children partake of their heavenly Father's righteous nature (1 Pet. 1:3, 13-16). As a result, they will display characteristics of God's righteousness. John looks from effect (righteous behavior) to cause (being truly born again) to affirm that righteous living is the proof of being born again." In other words, regeneration produces righteous living. pg 480

Sanctified Life

Those who are regenerated experience the life-changing power of God. The habitual practice of sin ceases and a new practice of righteousness commences:

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's^[a] seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:9-10)

John noted that when one is “born of God,” a radical change takes place. Old practices of sin stop. New practices of righteousness begin. This change occurs because God plants the divine “seed” within him in the new birth. This “seed” is the **divine nature** that God gives to the one who is “born of God.” This implantation is a **new heart, a new mind, and a new disposition** (Ezek. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:4). MacArthur writes, “This new nature exhibits the habitual character of righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22-24)... The New Birth involves the acquisition of a **seed**, which refers to the **principle of God’s life** imparted to the believer at salvation’s New Birth. John uses this image of a planted seed to picture the divine element involved in being born again.” Regeneration dethrones old practices of sin. pg 481

Selfless Love

The divine nature that a person receives when he is born of God includes the divine attribute of love. Because God is love, all who are born of Him exhibit love:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

John stated that the one who is “born of God” demonstrates genuine love for others, especially for other believers. This divine quality of love – which is initiating, sacrificial, long suffering, and forgiving – is evidenced in the believer because, in regeneration, the sinner receives the divine nature. God is love, and the one who is born of Him reflects His love for others. Calvin notes, “God is love – that is, it is His nature to love us... God is the fountain of love, this effect flows from Him and is diffused wherever the knowledge of Him comes... When anyone separates faith from love, it is as if he attempted to take away heat from the sun.” Those who truly are born again inevitably are marked by God-given love for others. pg 481

Saving Faith

The one who believes in Christ does so because he has been born of God. The act of regeneration causes saving faith to be exercised, not for a moment but throughout one's life.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. (1 John 5:1)

In this important verse, John taught that being “born of God” produces saving faith. The verb tenses indicate that the one who “believes” (present tense) has already been “born” (perfect tense) of God. That is, regeneration precedes and produces faith. **The proper biblical order is regeneration and then faith – not faith and then regeneration.** The exercising of saving faith is the first act of the newly regenerated heart. MacArthur writes, “The tense of the Greek verb indicates that ongoing faith is the result of the New Birth and, therefore, the evidence of the New Birth. The sons of God will manifest the reality that they have been born again by continuing to believe in God's Son, the Savior. The New Birth brings us into a permanent faith relationship with God and Christ.” The one who believes in Christ does so because he has been born of God by divine initiative. This faith in the Lord is ongoing through one's life, for just as it is produced by God, it is supernaturally sustained by God. pg 482

Subduing Faith

The saving faith that God creates in His elect is a victorious faith. It overcomes the evil world system:

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1Jn5:4-5)

When a person is regenerated, he is given saving faith. This faith is a dynamic, triumphant force that causes him to live victoriously over the world system. It should be noted that this text three times mentions that the believer “overcomes the world.” He does so because of his God-bestowed saving faith. Stressing this point, Hiebert writes, “The use of the neuter, ‘for whatsoever is born of God’ stresses not ‘the victorious person,’ and the perfect-passive participle presents this power as the abiding result of the new birth. The passive terms the attention from the believer himself to the God who wrought the new birth in him. This God-implanted new life is the true dynamic that ‘overcomes the world.’” pg 482

Sovereign Birth

Jesus Christ causes sinners to be born again just as He was born of a virgin. Both births

are sovereign, supernatural, and monergistic.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.
(1John 5:18)

In this verse, the first “born of God” refers to sinners who are born again. The second “born of God” refers to Christ and His virgin birth. **The supernatural birth of Christ made possible the supernatural birth of sinners.** MacArthur notes that “he who was born of God” actually “refers to Christ as the only begotten of the Father (cf. Jn. 1:14-18).” Thus, the virgin birth of Christ is a perfect picture of what it is to be born again. **The virgin birth was monergistic.** Mary was passive. Joseph was passive. But the Holy Spirit was active. That which was conceived in her was by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). So it is in the new birth. **The sinner is passive and the Holy Spirit is active,** creating new life within a spiritually dead heart. Pg 483

Sovereign Regeneration

In light of the teaching of the doctrines of grace in these latter books of the New Testament, the truth of regeneration should be valued all the more highly by every believer. In the new birth, God imparts new life to spiritually dead souls. God resurrects sinners to newness of life. God re-creates sinners, giving them new life in Himself. Simply put, regeneration is a work of God on behalf of helpless sinners.

The new birth is, first, instantaneous. When He does a work of regeneration, God instantly imparts new life to a spiritually dead soul. This powerful working is never to be considered a process, but a divine work that occurs at a point in time. Second, it is independent. **In the new birth, God’s will works independently of man’s will.** The grace of God is the sole efficient cause in effecting conversion. **He does not cooperate with man in the new birth; instead, He is the exclusive agent of regeneration.** Third, the new birth is irresistible. As the wind cannot be stopped by man when it blows, neither can the movement of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is a sovereign work of God in the heart of man. It cannot be hindered or thwarted. Fourth, it is individual. The new birth occurs one at a time. It is personal. Jesus calls His sheep by name. Fifth, it is inscrutable. There is a mystery to the new birth. No one can anticipate where the invisible hand of God will move next. God often regenerates the least likely candidates, those whom we would think would never be saved. Sixth, the new birth is irreversible. The one who is born again can never be unborn. The new life that is imparted to the sinner is eternal life, never to end. p 488

Spiritual Deception

Unconverted men, who re instinctively religious, often exercise a shallow, superficial

faith in Christ that does not save. It is a **spurious faith** that arises from the flesh, the result of which is a counterfeit conversion:

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25)

Although many supposedly “believed” in His name, Jesus did not “entrust” Himself to them. Both words – “believe” and “entrust” – are translations of the same Greek word (*pisteuo*). In other words, the people believed upon Christ, but He did not believe in them. In the superficiality of their faith, He recognized empty professions. Their faith was not true saving faith. John MacArthur writes that Christ “knows the true state of every heart... He saw in these people a superficial façade – a mere outward attraction to His spectacular signs (cf. 6:20). Genuine saving faith goes far beyond that. It demands wholehearted commitment to Jesus as the Lord of one’s life (Matt. 16:24-26); Romans 10:9.” Christ saw through the unbelief that was couched as saving faith. This “superficial façade” is a manifestation of the sinful corruption of the unconverted heart. pg492

Sovereign Election

In the face of such spiritual defiance, salvation cannot occur unless it is rooted and grounded in the sovereign will of God. Being dead in sin, unconverted man cannot exercise saving faith. **A dead man can do nothing of any spiritual significance.** So salvation must be trace back to the autonomous will of God, who freely chooses whom He will save. **Free will in salvation belongs exclusively to God** (although free will unto damnation belongs entirely to man). John was an able teacher and proponent of the doctrine of election, as we see in the Prologue to his gospel.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the ^[a]right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

Here is the first mention of salvation in the gospel of John. It is an unmistakably strong statement in the gospel of John. It is an unmistakably strong statement of the sovereign election and monergistic regeneration of God. **Those who receive Christ do not do so because of the inherent ability and initiative of their own wills, but because of the electing will of God.** By the sovereign activity of the Father, lost sinners were selected out of the fallen human race in order to be brought to faith in Christ. Recognizing the divine initiative taught in this text, MacArthur explains, “The great truth of election and sovereign grace is here introduced appropriately at the very foundation of John’s

mention of salvation.” MacArthur is right – divine sovereignty in salvation is unmistakable taught here at the very beginning of the fourth gospel. Standing behind the small phrase “of God” is the entirety of sovereign grace, beginning with His sovereign election of sinners. pg 494

Definite Atonement

In his gospel narrative, John chose to include the defiant statement of Caiaphas regarding the death of Christ. Without realizing the precision of his words, the high priest of Israel prophesied of a definite atonement for the elect of God. Caiaphas unknowingly defined the extent of the substitutionary atonement of Christ as being for the true children of God, whether they were of the remnant within the nation of Israel or elect Gentiles around the world. According to these worlds, Christ died for all those chosen by the Father for eternal life. By including these words, John reinforced his teaching of a definite atonement.

*⁴⁹And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰nor do you consider that it is expedient for ^[us]us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.
(John 11:49-52)*

In saying “one man should die for the people,” the high priest of Israel merely meant that it would be expedient for Jesus to be executed in order to spare the entire nation of Israel from Roman discipline. But as Caiaphas said this, unknown to him, he prophesied of the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners. Even more specifically, he foretold the definite atonement of Christ for “the people” among “the nation” – a reference to elect Jews. John then added that Jesus was to die also for “the children of God who are scattered abroad” – a reference to elect Gentiles. Through His particular death for all of those chosen by the Father, Jesus would gather them into one flock.

Regarding this definite atonement, A.W. Pink writes, “The great Sacrifice was not offered to God at random. The redemption-price which was paid at the Cross was not offered without definite design. Christ died not simply to make salvation possible, but to make it certain... The Atonement of Christ is sufficient because it is absolutely efficacious, and because it effects the salvation of all for whom it was made. Its sufficiency lies not in affording man a possibility of salvation, but in accomplishing their salvation with invincible power. Hence the Word of God never represents the

sufficiency of the Atonement as wider than the design of the Atonement.” Likewise, Charles H. Spurgeon once proclaimed, “We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, ‘No, certainly not.’ We ask them the next question - Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer, ‘No.’ They are obliged to limit this, if they are consistent. They say, ‘No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if and then follow certain conditions of salvation. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as infallibly so secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ’s death; we say, ‘No, my dear sir, it is you that do it.’ We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.” Clearly, it is the Arminian view of the universal atonement that limits the work of Christ at the cross. The biblical view of the atonement is unlimited in the application of its particular work toward all for whom it was intended. Pg 495

Redeeming Death

Through His death, Jesus ransomed the elect of God out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. His triumphant death will be the focus of praise for all the elect forever.

“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,” (Rev. 5:9)

According to this verse, Christ did not redeem all people. Rather, He ransomed many people out of (*ek*, “out of, from, separated from”) every tribe, language, people, and nation. That is, Christ’s death purchased a people for God from all people groups around the world. Hendriksen explains, “The Lamb did not purchase the salvation of every single individual. No, He paid the price for His elect, that is, for men out of every tribe and tongue, etc. Yet, on the other hand, there is nothing narrow or national about

this redemption. It is world-wide in its scope and embraces every group; ethnic (tribe), linguistic (tongue), political (people), and social (nation).” Focusing on the actual redemption Christ accomplished, John Murray writes, “Christ redeemed us to God by His blood (Rev. 5:9)...Christ did not come to put men in a redeemable position but to redeem to Himself a people...Christ did not come to make sins expiable. He came to expiate sins... Christ did not come to make God reconcilable. He reconciled us to God by His own blood.” All for whom Christ died – the elect – will find themselves around the throne of God. pg 508

Studying the Church Fathers

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On key doctrines of Grace

Excerpts from **Steven J Lawson’s** book, **Pillars of Grace**, describing some of the church fathers’ views on the irresistible call, God’s sovereignty in election, radical depravity of man, God’s sovereignty over the will of man in conversion, etc., and also on a good definition of sin.

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

p 265: Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

[Very good explanation of the will of man in conversion]

Anselm clearly believed that God effectually calls all whom He elects to salvation. This summons causes them to believe on Christ. In commenting on John 6:44, Anselm declared that the Father irresistibly moves the sinner to come to faith in Christ. He writes: “As the Father is said to draw by imparting an inclination, so there is nothing improper in asserting that he moves man. For as the Son says of the Father: ‘No man cometh to Me except the Father draw him,’ he might as well have said, except he move him.” Anselm rightly understood that God initiates conversion. Unregenerate men cannot come to Christ until they are drawn by the Father.

In this **divine initiative, God gives man a new will to believe**. Anselm writes: “Since a man is drawn or moved, by his will, to that which he invariably chooses, it is not improper to say, that God draws or moves him, when he gives him this will. And in this drawing or impelling it is not to be understood that there is any constraint, but a free and grateful clinging to the holy will which has been given.” Here Anselm taught that when God calls a sinner to Himself, there is no constraint, meaning undue coercion; when the Holy Spirit works in the heart, the sinner **then believes because he wants to do so. No one believes against his will. Rather, God changes the will so that the sinner freely believes.**

Likewise, Anselm asserted that God graciously gives grace and faith to man in order to bring about salvation. Without grace, he argued, one can achieve nothing toward salvation. Anselm boldly asserts: “It must all be attributed to grace, because ‘it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God who shows mercy’ (Rom. 9:16). For to all, except God alone, it is said: ‘What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it all, why do you boast as though you had not received it?’ (1 Cor. 4:7).” Convinced by Scripture, Anselm was clear in his belief that man’s salvation is exclusively the result of God’s sovereign, saving grace.

Pg 263:

Sinners, Anselm argued, have dishonored God and robbed Him of inherent glory, amassing an enormous debt that must be paid. He writes:

Sin is nothing else than not to render to God His due.... He who does not render to God this honor which is due to Him, robs God of what is His own, and dishonours God; and this is what it is to sin. ... Every one who sins [is] bound to pay back the honour of which he has robbed God; and this is the satisfaction which every sinner is bound to pay to God.... Nothing is less tolerable in the order of things than that a creature should rob his

Creator of the honour due to Him and not repay Him that of which he robs Him.... This is the debt which men owe to God. – Anselm

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

ON GRACE AND FREE CHOICE

On Grace and Free Choice (1128) proved to be the most profound and influential of Bernard's dogmatic works. This treatise has been called Bernard's commentary on Romans, as he addresses the essential problems of the relation of grace and freedom. Augustine's treatises against the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians are similar to this work. In it, Bernard asserted that, left to themselves, fallen human beings will only sin. Man's power to do good, he claimed, was lost through sin. For this reason, Bernard saw grace as necessary to incline the will to God and holiness. "Grace," he says, "changes the will from evil to good—not by destroying its freedom but by transferring its allegiance." He adds: "What was begun by grace alone is completed by grace and free will together. This happens in such a way that they contribute to each achievement not singly but jointly, not in turns but simultaneously. It is not that grace does part of the work and free will the rest. But each does the whole work, according to its peculiar contribution. Grace does it all and so does free will—except that while all is done in free will, all is done out of [or "by"] grace." In other words, Bernard contended that God's grace transforms the nature of man's will to good. p 276 [[very similar to Edwards' comments on page 123 & 1173](#)]

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Bernard held to the sovereignty of God over every realm, and he maintained that the distribution of saving grace is inextricably linked to God's supreme authority. He affirms that God, being under no obligation to create human beings, spoke them into being as an expression of His grace: "It was God's creative grace that out of nothingness raised us to the dignity of manhood; and from this appears our duty to love Him, and the justice of His claim to that love." Bernard recognized that mankind failed in that duty to love God, but he taught that God had sovereignly extended His saving love [[see pg 2066](#)] to His people. He writes: "O indulgent bounty of Divine love towards the sons of Adam, which does not cease to load us with benefits, not only where no merit was found, but often

even where entire demerit was seen.” In other words, God sovereignly chose to bestow His grace and mercy where it was least deserved.

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

Bernard plainly affirmed that the Scriptures teach the depravity of human nature. He especially acknowledged the bondage of the human will. Summarizing Bernard’s teaching, Anthony Lane writes: “The human will is always free in the sense that we will voluntarily and spontaneously. But left to themselves, fallen human beings will only to sin.” In this vein, Bernard describes man’s will as being “deteriorated by sin” and “under a yoke.” Moreover, he writes that the will is “inexcusable, because the will, when it was free, made itself the slave of sin.... Thus the soul, in some strange and evil way, is held under this kind of voluntary, yet sadly free necessity, both bond and free; bond in respect of necessity, free in respect of will: and what is still more strange, and still more miserable, it is guilty because free, and enslaved because guilty, and therefore enslaved because free.” In other words, man’s will is in bondage because of his own sin. Bernard adds, “We are free in the sense that we sin willingly, without anyone forcing us to sin—but not in the sense that we can do otherwise.” In short, man’s will is free only to sin.

p280

Bernard strongly rejected the heretical teaching of the fifth-century opponent of Augustine, Pelagius, who denied the doctrine of original sin. He writes: “We rest in the Christian faith, and not in the heresy of Pelagius, and confess that by generation and not by example was the sin of Adam imparted to us, and by sin death.” The problem, Bernard saw, is not that man merely imitates the bad example of Adam and others. Rather, it is that man is conceived with a sinful heart that is solely inclined to disobey God’s righteous commands. With this biblical understanding, Bernard “sought to answer those who desired to tone down or weaken the idea of man’s corruption in order to give more room to the freedom of man’s will.”

Looking at this subject from another perspective, Bernard maintained that regeneration is the sovereign working of God. A person is born again when God calls him or her, giving the gift of faith in Christ. He writes: “He [God] said ‘let there be light’ and there was light. He said ‘be converted’ and the children of men were converted. Clearly, then, the conversion of souls is the working of the divine, not the human, voice.”⁹⁸ The God who brought creation into existence with a word also causes salvation to happen by a mere command.

When God saves, He graciously changes the disposition of an individual to cause Him to want Christ. Bernard says, “It is grace which arouses our free choice, by sowing the seed of the good thought; it is grace which heals our free choice, by changing its disposition; it is grace which strengthens it so as to lead it to action; it is grace which saves it from experiencing a fall.”¹⁰¹ By grace, lost sinners are so changed as to want Christ for the first time.

DIVINE REPROBATION pg 283

Following Augustine, Isidore, and Gottschalk, Bernard held to the doctrine of divine reprobation. He affirmed that just as God elects some to salvation, He passes over others and leaves them in their sin. While the elect receive what they do not deserve, mercy, the reprobate suffer what they justly deserve, divine judgment. He notes, “Indeed, to saints and the elect tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; to the condemnable and reprobate, on the contrary, tribulation causes discouragement, and discouragement confusion, and confusion despair, which destroys them.” Bernard clearly recognized that there are two categories of people in God’s sight—those He intends to save (the elect) and those He intends to abandon to His judgment (the reprobate). Tribulation, he wrote, reveals the elect from the reprobate in that it works for the good of the first group but not of the second. Reaffirming this teaching in Romans 1, Bernard taught that the reprobate will inevitably fall into vanity: “The love of vanity is the contempt of truth, and the contempt of truth the cause of our blindness. And because they did not like, he says, to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them over unto a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28). Though salvation is freely offered to the reprobate, they remain lost and entangled in their sins. As a result, God gives their minds over to think increasingly evil thoughts. They will discover their wretched state when life ends.

INFLAMED BY SOVEREIGN GRACE pg 284

[an important purpose of the knowledge of divine things!]

The truths of sovereign grace generate awe toward God in the hearts of those who accept them. This wonder over God’s electing love and redeeming grace, in turn, fires these saints **with passionate zeal for Him. Far from merely instructing minds, these doctrines inflame souls and activate wills.** We see this dynamic at work in the long line of godly men who have upheld the sovereignty of God in salvation, for this grand

theology fueled a spiritual fire in these men, igniting their spirits with affection for the glory of God and causing them to live for Him with intensity. Perhaps no one exhibited more passion for Christ and **zeal for the glory of God** than Bernard of Clairvaux.

In this way, Bernard represents the powerful effect that the doctrines of grace should have on every believer. These teachings are not given merely as fodder for theological arguments. These doctrines should never produce dogmatism without devotion, convictions without compassion, allegiance without affections, or fanaticism without fervor. A cold, clinical Calvinism should be an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms.

Instead, this high theology should ignite a blazing doxology. In other words, an exalted view of God and His sovereign grace should lead inevitably to heartfelt worship. J. Ligon Duncan describes the doctrines of grace as “joy-giving, life-changing, Christ-exalting, [and] God-glorifying... truths.” When genuinely understood and embraced, he says, the truth of God’s sovereignty in the salvation of sinners is “soul-transforming, heart-animating, and life-altering,” bringing joy to sinners who have been found by the amazing grace of God. It was true of Bernard, and it should be true of us. The doctrines of grace should produce hearts bursting with love and devotion for the triune God who alone saves. – Steven J Lawson

Thomas Bradwardine (1300-1349), God, the determining factor in salvation

Armed with this new, biblical understanding, Bradwardine was quick to oppose the Pelagians. He says, “[It is the] damnable error of the Pelagians to apportion faith or grace, with a reference to its beginning in growth, namely by assigning the former to God, and a latter to us, when in fact the totality of faith and grace is to be wholly assigning to God.” Bradwardine clearly understood the biblical teaching on man’s ability and the cause of salvation.

No one, Bradwardine said, can make himself a son of God by his own efforts. Only the elect will be adopted. He says: “Now when they bring forward the quotation from the Gospel of John, ‘He gave them power to become sons of God,’ they seemed to wish to conclude from this that some became, or can become the elect sons of God in the course of their life.... He did not say, ‘He gave them power to make themselves sons of God,’ but ‘to be made sons of God.’ But by whom? Not by themselves. Not out of their own will.... Therefore they do not make themselves sons of God. God does this.” **God’s election is the determining factor in salvation.**

Bradwardine asserted that God must act in grace on man before any individual can act in faith toward Him. He writes, "When we act we are the ones who act, but He acts so that we may act." [similar to Edwards' comments, pg 123 & 1173, and Bernard's] God must work on the mind and heart before anyone who is spiritually dead can believe in Christ. Thus, the will of God is the determining cause in regeneration. Bradwardine adds, "The will of God is the efficient cause of anything whatever that is done." Elsewhere he writes, "In every action of the created will God's will is the necessary co-effector." In sum, God's will determines what man's will chooses.

PRESERVING GRACE

Bradwardine was fully convinced that those who enter into salvation by faith will never fall from grace. He affirms, "No one can lose his salvation because it is not based on the unchanging winds of human decision but founded upon the bedrock of the eternal will of God." The believer's eternal security, he held, rests on the eternal will of God in salvation. Man cannot negate what God chose to bring about in eternity past.

Moreover, Bradwardine recognized sovereign grace as the undivided effort by God to save His elect. Pelikan writes, "Bradwardine... identified the divine assistance of grace, together with justification, merit, perseverance to the end, and eternal blessedness, all as effects of predestination; and he took all of these to be implied in Augustine's definition of predestination as 'the preparation of grace.'" The God who elects and justifies is the One who grants perseverance to the end. Because this is so, sovereign grace irrevocably leads to eternal blessedness. From everlasting to everlasting, salvation is all of grace. – Steven J Lawson

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Gregory of Rimini (1300-1358), a Parisian philosopher-theologian of the Middle Ages, recounts the man-centered teaching that flowed from the churches during this time: "It is the opinion of many moderns that man, by his natural powers alone, with the general concurrence of God, can perform a morally good act in the present state of fallen nature, as for example to love God above all things, to be sorry for and to detest one's sins.... They depart from the definitions of the church and favor the condemned error of Pelagius." In short, many in the medieval church held that salvation was a cooperative effort, a combination of God's grace and human free will. Michael Horton comments, "The popular medieval phrase was, 'God will not deny His grace to those who do what

they can.” The modern idea that “God helps those who help themselves” was already in vogue.

John Wycliffe (1330-1384) pg 312
The Morning Star of the Reformation
One of the Pre-reformers

Wycliffe believed that election is unconditional. H. B. Workman, a Wycliffe biographer, explains the Oxford professor’s position: “The Church, as the mystical body of the predestinated, is a unity that knows nothing of papal primacies and hierarchies, and of the ‘sects’ of monks, friars, and priests; nor can the salvation of the elect be conditioned by masses, indulgences, penance, or other devices of sacerdotalism.” [e.g., [the sinner’s prayer](#)] There are no conditions that the elect must meet in order to be chosen by God; indeed, they are incapable of meeting any conditions.

IRRESISTIBLE CALL

Wycliffe made known the sovereign regeneration of God, which gives life to the elect, [causing them to believe](#) in Jesus Christ [see Deut. 30:6, Ez36:26]. Regarding the new birth, he states: “God Himself is certainly the first cause and the only cause of predestination.” He asserted that God must overcome man’s resistance in order for salvation to be received. Wycliffe writes: “Lord Jesus, turn us to You, and we shall be turned! [clearly, a reference to Lam. 5:21 or Jer. 31:18] Heal us and then we shall be verily holy; for without grace and help from You, may no man be truly turned or healed.” **No man can turn to Christ until he is turned by Him.** Wycliffe adds, “It is impossible for a creature to know anything unless it knows it through grounding from the authority of God teaching and moving to assent.” Wycliffe explains: “The prophet speaks ... of souls perfectly turning to God, saying... **He shall draw my feet, that is my soul and my affections, out of the snare, and the net of the love of this world.**” **God’s work of regeneration is irresistible.**

What is more, Wycliffe taught that regeneration is entirely of grace. He writes: “For all things are of grace... God’s goodness is the first cause which gives men these good things. And so it may not be that God does good, unless he does these good things freely by His grace.” He adds that even saving faith is the gift of God: “Faith is a gift of God; and so God gives it not to man, unless he gives it graciously. And thus all good things that men have are gifts of God. And thus, when God rewards a good work of man, [He crowns His own gift](#). And this is of grace.” Wycliffe maintained that God gives saving faith through grace. He writes: “The ground of all goodness is steadfast faith, or belief.

This, through grace and mercy, is obtained of God.” **Finally, he insisted that love for God comes from Him.** He says, “No man can... love God, or be chaste, unless God give it to him.” All these comments clearly show that Wycliffe believed God is the sole Author of saving faith and the love for Him that accompanies it.

Martin Luther

On the will vs. free grace and the [free] will of God

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Luther was also deeply convinced of the truth of the unconditional election of God. He believed that before time began, God chose out of fallen humanity those whom He would save. He affirms, “He ordains by His own counsel which and what sort of persons He wills to be recipients and partakers of His preached and offered mercy.” He adds:

All things take place according to God’s election. Jacob was loved by God because he had been elected, and he obtained mercy because it thus pleased God from eternity, just as also He said to Moses: “I will show mercy, etc.” (Ex. 33:19).... It is solely because of a merciful God that anyone is chosen or is righteous, inasmuch as all men are equally a part of the mass of perdition and no one is righteous before God unless he receives mercy... that everything depends on a merciful God and not on someone’s will is evident and proved by the fact that in order that God might show this to be the case and that man might know that it is not due to his own running but to the mercy of God, that he wills and runs.

Luther also addressed the doctrine of election in his introduction to his commentary on Romans, affirming that if not for God’s election of some to receive salvation, no one would be saved:

In chapters 9, 10, and 11 he teaches of God’s eternal predestination—out of which originally proceeds who shall believe or not, who can or cannot get rid of sin—in order that our salvation may be taken entirely out of our hands and put in the hand of God alone. **And this too is utterly necessary. For we are so weak and uncertain that if it depended on us, not even a single person would be saved;** the devil would surely

overpower us all. But since God is dependable—His predestination cannot fail, and no one can withstand Him—we still have hope in the face of sin.

Luther made this same point when commenting specifically on Romans 9:16, saying: “Concerning the statement, ‘**It depends not upon man’s will or exertion, but upon God’s mercy,**’ I respond:... ‘**You must despair, give God the glory, and confess that you did not start it.**’ When I was a monk I depended on such willing and exertion, but the longer [I worked at it] the farther away I got. What I have now I have not from exertion but from God. So in this passage Paul was saying everything against presumption, so that we may say, ‘Lord, whatever [good] there is in us exists by Your grace.’” It is clear that Luther believed that salvation depends on the determinative will of God, not the will of man.

That thought prompted Luther to rejoice that God’s election puts the outcome of salvation entirely in His hands. Luther says, “God has taken my salvation out of my hands into His, making it depend on His choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by His grace and mercy.” **Fallen man can never choose to believe on Christ due to the deadening effects of original sin.** But by His electing love, God makes salvation certain for His elect.

Luther insisted that the doctrine of election should be preached because it humbles man, thus preparing the unconverted soul for the gospel. He says: “It is thus for the sake of the elect that these things are published, in order that being humbled and brought back to nothingness by this means they may be saved. **The rest resist this humiliation, indeed they condemn this teaching of self-despair, wishing for something, however little, to be left for them to do themselves;** so they remain secretly proud and enemies of the grace of God. This, I say, is one reason, namely, that the godly, being humbled, may recognize, call upon, and receive the grace of God.” Commenting elsewhere on the humbling effect of this doctrine, he writes:

No man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone. For as long as he is persuaded that he himself can do even the least thing toward his salvation, he **retains some self-confidence** and **does not altogether despair of himself, and therefore he is not humbled before God,** but **presumes that there is—or at least hopes or desires that there may be—some place, time, and work for him, by which he may at length attain to salvation.** But when a man has no doubt that everything depends on the will of God, then he completely despairs of himself and chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work; then he has come close to grace, and can be saved.

When a man is thus brought to the end of himself and receives God's salvation as a gift, Luther said, the doctrine of God's election becomes **beautiful and sweet**. He affirms, "The matter of predestination and election... is not as deep a subject as is commonly thought, but rather is a wonderfully sweet thing for those who have the Spirit." Elsewhere he adds, "**This will is not to be inquired into, but reverently adored**, as by far the most **awe-inspiring secret** of the Divine Majesty, reserved for Himself." The doctrine of sovereign election **should instill awe and reverence in a believer's heart**.

Luther concluded that the doctrine of election is "very strong wine and the most complete meal, solid food for those who are perfect, that is, the most excellent theology." However, "he who has not denied himself and learned to subject his questions to the will of God and hold them down will always keep asking why God wills this and does that, and he will never find the reason." The unconverted heart will always reject this teaching. **One must be taught by God in order to receive it.**

Pg 357

The will of the natural man, Luther insisted, **cannot choose to come to God to accept the offer of salvation**. He writes:

To say:

man does not seek God, is the same as saying: man cannot seek God, as you may hence gather: If there were potency or power in man to will good, the movement of Divine omnipotence would not suffer it to remain inactive or keep holiday.... Paul's whole aim is to make grace necessary to all men, and if they could initiate something by themselves, they would not need grace... "free-will" is utterly laid low, and nothing good or upright is left to man; for he is declared to be unrighteous, ignorant of God, a despiser of God, turned away from Him and unprofitable in His sight.... Here is unbelief, disobedience, sacrilege, blasphemy towards God, cruelty and mercilessness towards one's neighbor, and love of self in all the things of God and of man! **Here you have the glory and potency of "free-will"!**

Luther was adamant on this impotency of the will. In explaining John 6:44, he says: "When Christ says in John 6: 'No man can come to Me, except My Father which hath sent Me draw him' (v. 44), **what does He leave to 'freewill'?**... Here, indeed, He declares, not only that the works and efforts of 'free-will' are unavailing, but that even the very word of the gospel (of which He is here speaking) is heard in vain, unless the Father Himself speaks within, and teaches, and draws. 'No man, no man can come,' He says, and what He is talking about is your 'power whereby man can make some endeavour

towards Christ.’ In things that pertain to salvation, He asserts that power to be null.” **No man has the power to believe the gospel on his own.**

With this thought in mind, Luther was quick to refute those who held that man contributes to his salvation. He says: “Granted that they attribute very little to ‘free will,’ yet they teach that we are able to obtain righteousness and grace by that ‘very little.’” **Luther believed man contributes nothing to his salvation, not even “very little.”**

Luther described the radical change that comes over the **human will** when God issues His saving call. He writes: “If God works in us, the will is changed, and being gently breathed upon by the Spirit of God, **it again wills and acts from pure willingness and inclination and of its own accord, not from compulsion,** so that it cannot be turned another way by any opposition, nor be overcome or compelled even by the gates of hell, **but it goes on willing and delighting in and loving the good, just as before it willed and delighted in and loved evil.”** Elsewhere he adds: “The will does nothing. It is rather the substance in which the Holy Spirit works also in those who resist, as in Paul. **But working on the will of him who resists He moves the will to consent.”** When God changes a sinner’s heart, that person no longer hates and resents God. He now wants God and joyfully accepts His offer of salvation.

In the end, Luther had no doubts that salvation is God’s work from beginning to end. He writes: “We are people who have been born, not fashioned by man, but ‘begotten.’ **This is not our work. As little as a child contributes to its being born, so little do we contribute to our being spiritually born.** God is the Father... the ‘Word of Truth’ is the mother.” **No one contributes to his natural birth. Neither, Luther reasoned, does anyone contribute to his supernatural birth.**

Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity, pg 168

(4.) Christ teaches easily. Others teach with difficulty. They have difficulty in finding out a truth, and in inculcating it. ‘Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.’ [Isa 28:10](#). Some may teach all their lives, and the word take no impression. They complain, ‘I have spent my labour in vain;’ [Isa 49:4](#), plowed on rocks; but Christ the great Prophet teaches with ease. He can with the least touch of his Spirit convert: he can say, ‘Let there be light;’ with a word he can convey grace.

(5.) **When Christ teaches he makes men willing to learn.** Men may teach others, but they have no mind to learn. ‘Fools despise instruction.’ [Prov 1:7](#). They rage at the word,

as if a patient should rage at the physician when he brings him a cordial; thus backward are men to their own salvation. But Christ makes his people a 'willing people.' [Psa 110:3](#). They prize knowledge, and hang it as a jewel upon their ear. Those that Christ teaches say, as [Isa 2:3](#), 'Come let us go up to the mountains of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in them;' and as [Acts 10:33](#); 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things commanded.'

(6.) When Christ teaches, he not only illuminates but animates. He so teaches, that he quickens. 'I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall have lumen vitae, the light of life.' [John 8:12](#). By nature we are dead, therefore unfit for teaching. Who will make an oration to the dead? But Christ teaches them that are dead! he gives the light of life. As when Lazarus was dead, Christ said, 'Come forth,' and he made the dead to hear, for Lazarus came forth: so when he says to the dead soul, Come forth of the grave of unbelief, he hears Christ's voice, and comes forth, it is the light of life. The philosophers say, *calor et lux concrescunt*, 'heat and light increase together.' Where Christ comes with his light, there is the heat of spiritual life going along with it.

Related passage: John 6:45, "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—"

William Tyndale (1494-1536)

Excerpt from Steven Lawson, Pillars of Grace p 404

THE IRRESISTIBLE CALL

Tyndale believed that divine election is inseparably linked to the irresistible call of the Spirit. All whom the Father has chosen, he maintained, are divinely brought to saving faith in Christ. This is a work God must do because man is dead in his sin and cannot choose to believe the gospel. Before anyone can believe, Tyndale writes, "the Spirit must first come, and wake him out of his sleep with the thunder of the law, and fear Him, and show him his miserable estate and wretchedness; and make him abhor and

hate himself, and to desire help; and then comfort him again with the pleasant rain of the gospel.”⁷⁴ Elsewhere he restates this work of the Spirit in these terms: “Note now the order: first God gives me light to see the goodness and righteousness of the law, and my own sin and unrighteousness; out of which knowledge springs repentance.... Then the same Spirit works in my heart trust and confidence, to believe the mercy of God and His truth, that He will do as He has promised; which belief saves me.” The sovereign work of the Spirit brings the elect sinner to faith in Christ.

This spiritual awakening is known as regeneration or the new birth. It is, Tyndale said, a sovereign work of God in the spiritually dead soul of the lost sinner. He writes, “We are, in... our second birth, God’s workmanship and creation in Christ; so that, as he which is yet unmade has no life or power to work, no more had we, till we were made again in Christ.” **Tyndale strongly denied that the sinner has anything to do with his regeneration**, writing, “The will has no operation at all in the working of faith in my soul, no more than the child has in the begetting of his father: for Paul said, ‘It is the gift of God,’ and not of us.” **Just as a child does not cause the conception of his father or even of himself, an unsaved person does not initiate his salvation.** That work is done upon him by the Spirit of God.

When a sinner is regenerated by the Spirit, Tyndale taught, he then believes on Christ through faith. **This faith does not arise from within the sinner.** Rather, it is a gift of God. Tyndale says, “True faith is... the gift of God; and is given to sinners, after the law has passed upon them, and has brought their consciences unto the brim of desperation and sorrows of hell.” Elsewhere he writes, **“Faith springs not of man’s fantasy, neither is it in any man’s power to obtain it; but it is altogether the pure gift of God poured into us freely, without all manner doing of us, without deserving and merits, yea, and without seeking for us; and is... God’s gift and grace, purchased through Christ.”** He described **saving faith** as “mighty in operation, full of virtue, and ever working; which also renews a man, and begets him afresh, altering him, changing him, and turning him altogether into a new creature and conversation.” The gift of faith works a great change in those to whom it is given.

Tyndale maintained that God bestows the gift of saving faith on the elect. He writes, “Of the whole multitude of the nature of man, whom God has chosen, and to whom He has appointed mercy and grace in Christ, to them sends He His Spirit; which opens their eyes, shows them their misery, and brings them unto the knowledge of themselves; so that they hate and abhor themselves.” He adds, “When His word is preached, faith roots herself in the hearts of the elect; and as faith enters, and the word of God is believed,

the power of God looses the heart from captivity and bondage under sin.” The Spirit regenerates God’s elect, enabling them to hear the Word and believe it. The result is that they are set free from captivity to sin.

Tyndale held that it is an evil thing to teach that man has free will to believe in Christ.

He states: “Is it not a froward and perverse blindness, to teach how a man can do nothing of his own self; and yet presumptuously take upon them the greatest and highest work of God, even to make faith in themselves of their own power, and of their own false imagination and thoughts.” **To say that fallen man has the ability in himself to believe, Tyndale stated, is perverse and presumptuous.** [*a wicked presumption – Thomas Shepard, e.g., because the sinner’s prayer from a creature’s so called free will is not from a spiritual sight of Christ by an newly infused principle of spiritual life, i.e., faith, but from natural principles such as self-love or self preservation which, by the way, devil’s are capable of!*] Such a doctrine denies the teaching of Scripture and robs God of His glory. He advises: “Beware of the leaven that says, we have power in our free-will, before the preaching of the gospel, to deserve grace, to keep the law of congruity, or God to be unrighteous.... And when they say our deeds with grace deserve heaven, say thou with Paul, (Romans 6) that ‘everlasting life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’” For Tyndale, it was essential that believers keep this truth before their eyes—that salvation is the gift of God, not something they earn or deserve.

Theology of John Calvin

On Free Will and God’s Free Will

My comments in [\[blue\]](#)

Radical Depravity pg 444

Depravity is indeed “total,” Calvin taught—the mind, affections, and will are ruined by original sin. Calvin says, “Corruption does not dwell in one part only, but... no part is free from its deadly taint.” In Calvin’s thinking, “The whole man, from the crown of the head

to the sole of the foot, is so deluged, as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin, and, therefore, everything which proceeds from him is imputed as sin." Elsewhere he adds, "Sin has seized both on the mind and heart." No part of man's nature is free from the taint of sin.

The result of total depravity is **moral inability** [e.g., see [Romans 8:7-8](#)], Calvin said. Man can only sin; he cannot do any truly good works on his own. Calvin writes, "The Holy Spirit teaches us in Scripture, that our mind is smitten with so much blindness, that the affections of our heart are so depraved and perverted, that our whole nature is so vitiated, that we can do nothing but sin, **until He forms a new will within us.**" Illustrating the change that must occur in man's soul, he adds, "[We] are born lions, tigers, wolves and bears, until the Spirit of Christ tames us, and from wild and savage beasts forms us to be mild sheep." Man is responsible for this inability, Calvin says: "Our inability to [resist sin] is our own fault. If **lust, in which sin has its dominion**, so enthralls us, **that we are not free to obey our Father**, there is no ground for pleading necessity as a defense, since this evil necessity is within, and must be imputed to ourselves." This moral inability amounts to slavery. Calvin writes:

*Man is a slave of sin.... Man's spirit is so alienated from the justice of God that man conceives, covets, and undertakes nothing that is not evil, perverse, iniquitous, and soiled. Because the heart, totally imbued with the poison of sin, can emit nothing but the fruits of sin. Yet one must not infer there from that man sins as constrained by violent necessity. For, man sins with the consent of a very prompt and inclined will. But because man, by the corruption of his affections, very strongly keeps hating the whole righteousness of God and, on the other hand, is fervent in all kinds of evil, it is said that **he has not the free power of choosing between good and evil**—which is called free will.*

The result of human depravity, Calvin maintained, is divine judgment and eternal punishment. He writes, "By Adam's sin we are not condemned through imputation alone, as though we were punished only for the sin of another; but we suffer his punishment, because we also ourselves are guilty; for as our nature is vitiated in him, it is regarded by God as having committed sin." The entire human race is condemned before God, helpless to save itself.

Irresistible Call pg 455

Moreover, Calvin understood that God must first call individual sinners before they will turn to Him in faith. He says: "No one will dedicate himself to God till he be drawn

by His goodness, and embrace Him with all his heart. He must therefore call us to Him before we call upon Him.” God works in a special way in the elect, Calvin taught, so that they believe the gospel. He adds, “The effectual cause of faith is not the perspicacity [the quality of having a ready insight into things; shrewdness] of our mind, but the calling of God.” Thus, it is through God’s **efficacious grace** that His elect are granted faith by which to trust Him.

Calvin maintained that divine election leads to God’s irresistible call, resulting in faith. He says: “We are near [God], not as having anticipated His grace, and come to Him of ourselves, but because, in His condescension, He has stretched out His hand as far as hell itself, to reach us.... He first elects us, and then testifies His love by calling us.” Furthermore, Calvin affirmed that God brings all of those He has chosen to faith in Christ. He writes, “Christ brings none to the Father, but those given Him by the Father; and this donation, as we know, depends on eternal election.” The elect, he adds, are regenerated by the Spirit: “[God] declares His election when He regenerates His elect by His Holy Spirit and thus inscribes them with a certain mark, while they prove the reality of their sonship by the whole course of their lives, and confirm their own adoption.” In regeneration, Calvin writes, “The one thing which distinguishes His elect from the Reprobate is, that... He presents the former with **new eyes...** and **inclines their hearts** to obey His word.” Using a similar metaphor, Calvin says, “God prepares His elect for hearing, and gives them ears for that purpose.” Calvin thus affirmed that God grants the faith by which the elect see the truth, hear the gospel, and believe in Christ.

Calvin spoke clearly on this matter when commenting on John 6:44, which reads: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.” He writes: “We ought not to wonder if many refuse to embrace the Gospel; because no man will ever of himself be able to come to Christ, but God must first approach him by His Spirit; and hence it follows that all are not drawn, but that God bestows this grace on those whom He has elected. True, indeed, as to the kind of drawing, **it is not violent, so as to compel men by external force**; but still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, **which makes men willing who formerly were unwilling** and reluctant.” Here Calvin again emphasized that God initiates the sovereign work of regeneration and that not all people are drawn to Christ, only the elect. Not even one of the elect can come to Christ unless God acts first. This is because all men are dead in sin and can do nothing to move toward Christ. God must overcome man’s stubborn resistance.

Because of man's sinfulness, Calvin believed, no one will turn to God in his own power, but must be changed by God. Only then, he said, will a man trust in Christ. He writes: "It is entirely the work of grace and a benefit conferred by it that our heart is changed from **a stony one to one of flesh**, **that our will is made new**, and that we, created anew in heart and mind, at length will what we ought to will." The new birth, he said, is not a work that is part God and part man, but entirely a **monergistic** work of sovereign grace.

Calvin gave careful attention to the cause-and-effect relationship between God's grace and man's will. He writes: "The human will is of itself evil and therefore needs transformation and renewal so that it may begin to be good, but that grace itself is not merely a tool which can help someone if he is pleased to stretch out his hand to [take] it. **That is, [God] does not merely offer it, leaving [to man] the choice between receiving it and rejecting it**, but **He steers the mind** to choose what is right, He moves the will also effectively to obedience [[see Phil. 2:13](#)], He arouses and advances the endeavor until the actual completion of the work is attained." For Calvin, sovereign grace is the cause and saving faith is the result.

Thomas Watson is great. Here you'll see the power of Christ [[Ps 110:3](#)], of his Spirit, in the secret efficacy of his power over the soul of man, to sweetly change the will without doing any violence to it. In this way he saves all this chosen ones at his will, according to his eternal decree of election; for *who can resist his will?* This is humbling (designedly so I may say) and once this beauty is seen, it will lead you to a more ardent endearment Him and to a more holy and fearful reverence of him so that you will esteem him, worship him and contemplate him and love him in a due manner. This infers clearly that your faith increases in this process over time and you are made more conformable to him and hence pleases God all the more.

How does Christ's teaching differ from other teaching?

By Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity, pg 167-170

[code120](#) [code249](#)

Several ways.

(1.) Christ teaches the heart. Others may teach the ear, Christ the heart. 'Whose heart the Lord opened.' [Acts 16:14](#). All that the dispensers of the word can do is but to

work knowledge, Christ works grace: they can but give the light of the truth; Christ gives the love of the truth; they can only teach what to believe, Christ teaches how to believe.

(2.) Christ gives us a taste of the word. Ministers may set the food of the word before you, and carve it out to you; but it is only Christ can cause you to taste it. 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' [1 Pet 2:2](#). 'Taste and see that the Lord is good.' [Psa 34:4](#). It is one thing to hear a truth preached, another thing to taste it; one thing to read a promise, another thing to taste it. David had got a taste of the word. 'Thou hast taught me: How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' [Psalm 119:902, 103](#). The apostle calls it the savour of knowledge. [2 Cor 2:14](#). The light of knowledge is one thing, the savour another. Christ makes us taste a savouriness in the word.

(3.) **When Christ teaches, he makes us obey.** Others may instruct, but cannot command obedience: they teach to be humble, but men remain proud. The prophet had been denouncing judgments against the people of Judah, but they would not hear. 'We will do whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven.' [Jer 44:17](#). Men come as it were, armed in a coat of mail that the sword of the word will not enter; but when Christ comes to teach, **he removes this obstinacy** [see [Ezek. 36:24:26](#), "I will remove the heart of stone..."]; he not only informs the judgment, **but inclines the will** [see [Deut. 30:6](#), "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart...so that you will love the Lord...", [Ezek. 11:19-20](#), etc.]. He does not only come with the light of his word, but the rod of his strength, and makes the stubborn sinner yield to him. His grace is irresistible.

(4.) Christ teaches easily. Others teach with difficulty. They have difficulty in finding out a truth, and in inculcating it. 'Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.' [Isa 28:80](#). Some may teach all their lives, and the word take no impression. They complain, 'I have spent my labour in vain;' [Isa 49:9](#), plowed on rocks; but Christ the great Prophet teaches with ease. He can with the least touch of his Spirit convert: he can say, 'Let there be light;' with a word he can convey grace.

(5.) When Christ teaches **he makes men willing to learn**. Men may teach others, but they have no mind to learn. 'Fools despise instruction.' [Prov 1:1](#). They rage at the word, as if a patient should rage at the physician when he brings him a cordial; thus backward are men to their own salvation. But Christ makes his people a 'willing people.' [Psa 110:0](#). They prize knowledge, and hang it as a jewel upon their ear. Those that Christ teaches say, as [Isa 2:2](#), 'Come let us go up to the mountains of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in them;' and as [Acts 10:03](#); 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things commanded.'

(6.) When Christ teaches, he not only illuminates but animates. He so teaches, that he quickens. 'I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall have lumen vitae, the light of life.' [John 8:12](#). By nature we are dead, therefore unfit for teaching. Who will make an oration to the dead? But Christ teaches them that are dead! he gives the light of life. As when Lazarus was dead, Christ said, 'Come forth,' and he made the dead to hear, for Lazarus came forth: so when he says to the dead soul, Come forth of the grave of unbelief, he hears Christ's voice, and comes forth, it is the light of life. The philosophers say, *calor et lux concresecunt*, 'heat and light increase together.' Where Christ comes with his light, there is the heat of spiritual life going along with it.

Use one: Of information. (1.) See here an argument of Christ's Divinity. Had he not been God, he could never have known the mind of God, or revealed to us those *arcana caeli* [the secrets of Heaven], those deep mysteries, which no man or angel could find out. Who but God can anoint the eyes of the blind, and give not only light, but sight? Who but he, who has the key of David, can open the heart? **Who but God can bow the iron sinew of the will? [Romans 9:19, "For who can resist his will?"] He only who is God can enlighten the conscience, and make the stony heart bleed.**

(2.) See what a cornucopia, or plenty of wisdom is in Christ, who is the great doctor of his church, and gives saving knowledge to all the elect. The body of the sun must needs be full of clearness and brightness, which enlightens the whole world. Christ is the great luminary; in him are hid all treasures of knowledge. [Col 2:2](#). The middle lamp of the sanctuary gave light to all the other lamps; so Christ diffuses his glorious light to others. We are apt to admire the learning of Aristotle and Plato; alas! what is this poor spark of light to that which is in Christ, from whose infinite wisdom both men and angels light their lamps.

(3.) See the misery of man in the state of nature. Before Christ becomes their prophet they are enveloped in ignorance and darkness. **Men know nothing in a sanctified manner, they know nothing as they ought to know.** [1 Cor 8:8](#). This is sad. **Men in the dark cannot discern colours so in the state of nature they cannot discern between morality and grace they take one for the other, *pro dea nubem* [They mistake the cloud for the goddess herself]. In the dark the greatest beauty is hid. Let there be rare flowers in the garden, and pictures in the room, in the dark their beauty is veiled over; so, though there be such transcendent beauty in Christ as amazes the angels, man in the state of nature sees none of this beauty. What is Christ to him? or heaven to him? **The veil is upon his heart.** A man in the dark is in danger every step he takes; so man in the **state of nature [unconverted]** is in danger, at every step, of falling into hell. Thus it is before Christ teaches us; nay, the darkness in which a sinner is, while in an unregenerate state, is worse than natural darkness; for natural darkness affrights. 'An horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham.' [Gen 15:12](#). But the spiritual darkness is not accompanied with horror, men tremble not at their condition; nay, they like their condition well enough. 'Men loved**

darkness.' [John 3:19](#). This is their sad condition, till Jesus Christ comes as a prophet to teach them, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

(4.) See the happy condition of the children of God. They have Christ to be their prophet. 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.' [Isa 54:13](#). 'He is made to us wisdom.' [I Cor 1:10](#). One man cannot see by another's eyes; but believers see with Christ's eyes. 'In his light they see light.' Christ gives them the light of grace and the light of glory.

This is an excellent narrative about conversions which will clear up many perplexities that people have as to whether or not they are really converted. And it also sheds light on why the sinner's prayer to curry God's favor to seek salvation seems so sincere when it is really not in the majority of cases, leading to a stupid security, and why those who are really converted prior to the prayer do it anyways because it was traditionally taught to them; or they don't think they are truly converted when saying this prayer, when they actually were, and so are unwittingly, truly seeking it by faith which is what believers do because of their new nature, that *new principle of life infused*. Hence, believers are the generation that seeks Him, Ps 24:6.

My comments in [blue], red for emphasis

A Narrative of Conversions

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The Manner of Conversion Various

By Jonathan Edwards

Vol. 1 p 350

SECT. II.

The manner of conversion various, yet bearing a great analogy.

I therefore proceed to give an account of the *manner* of persons being wrought upon; and here there is a *vast variety*, perhaps as manifold as the subjects of the operation; but yet in many things there is a *great analogy* in all.—Persons are first awakened with a sense of their miserable condition by nature, the danger they are in of perishing eternally, and that it is of great importance to them that they speedily escape and get into a better state. Those who before were secure and senseless, **are made sensible** how much they were in the way to ruin, in their former courses. **Some are more suddenly seized with convictions**—it may be, by the news of others' conversion, or something they hear in public, or in private conference—**their consciences are smitten**, as if their hearts were pierced through with a dart. **Others are awakened more gradually**, they begin at first to be something more thoughtful and considerate, so as to come to a conclusion in their minds, that it is their best and wisest way to delay no longer, but to improve the present opportunity. They have accordingly set themselves seriously to meditate on those things that have the most awakening tendency, on purpose to obtain *convictions*; and so their awakenings have *increased*, till a sense of their misery, by God's Holy Spirit setting in therewith, has had fast hold of them. *Others* who before had been somewhat religious, and concerned for their salvation, have been awakened in a new manner; and made sensible that their slack and dull way of seeking, was never like to attain that purpose.

These awakenings when they have first seized on persons, have had two effects; *one* was, that they have brought | them immediately to quit their sinful practices; and the looser sort have been brought to forsake and dread their former vices and extravagancies. When once the Spirit of God began to be so wonderfully poured out in a general way through the town, people had soon done with their old quarrels, backbitings, and intermeddling with other men's matters. The tavern was soon left empty, and persons kept very much at home; none went abroad unless on necessary business, or on some religious account, and every day seemed in many respects like a Sabbath-day. The *other* effect was, that it put them on earnest application to the means of salvation, reading, prayer, meditation, the ordinances of God's house, and private conference; their cry was, *What shall we do to be saved?* The place of resort was now

altered, it was no longer the tavern, but the minister's house that was thronged far more than ever the tavern had been wont to be.

There is a very great *variety*, as to the *degree* of fear and trouble that persons are exercised with, before they attain any comfortable evidences of pardon and acceptance with God. Some are from the beginning carried on with abundantly more encouragement and hope than others. Some have had *ten* times less trouble of mind than others, in whom yet the issue seems to be the same. Some have had such a sense of the displeasure of God, and the great danger they were in of damnation, that they could not sleep at nights; and many have said that when they have laid down, the thoughts of sleeping in such a condition have been frightful to them; they have scarcely been free from terror while asleep, and they have awakened with fear, heaviness, and distress, still abiding on their spirits. It has been very common, that the deep and fixed concern on persons' minds, has had a painful influence on their bodies, and given disturbance to animal nature.

The awful apprehensions persons have had of their misery, have for the most part been *increasing*, the nearer they have approached to deliverance; though they often pass through many changes and alterations in the frame and circumstances of their minds. Sometimes they think themselves wholly senseless, and fear that the Spirit of God has left them, and that they are given up to judicial hardness; yet they appear very deeply exercised about that fear, and are in great earnest to obtain *convictions* again.

Together with those fears, and that exercise of mind which is rational, and which they have just ground for, they have often suffered many needless distresses of thought, in which *Satan* probably has a great hand, to entangle them, and block up their way. Sometimes the distemper of melancholy has been evidently mixed; of which, when it happens, the tempter seems to take great advantage, and puts an unhappy bar in the way of any good effect. One knows not how to deal with such persons; they turn everything that is said to them the wrong way, and most to their own disadvantage. **There is nothing that the devil seems to make so great a handle of, as a melancholy humour; unless it be the real corruption of the heart.**

But it is very remarkable, that there has been far less of this mixture at this time of extraordinary blessing, than there was wont to be in persons under awakenings at other times; for it is evident that many who before had been exceedingly involved in such difficulties, seemed now strangely to be set at liberty. Some persons who had before, for a long time, been exceedingly entangled with peculiar temptations of one sort or other, unprofitable and hurtful distresses, were soon helped over former stumbling-blocks, that hindered their progress towards saving good; convictions have wrought more kindly, and they have been successfully carried on in the way to life. And thus *Satan* seemed to be restrained, till towards the latter end of this wonderful time, when God's Holy Spirit was about to withdraw.

Many times persons under great awakenings were concerned, because they thought they were *not* awakened, but miserable, hard-hearted, senseless, sottish creatures still, and sleeping upon the brink of hell. The sense of the *need* they have to be awakened, and of their

comparative hardness, grows upon them with their awakenings; so that they seem to themselves to be very *senseless*, when indeed most *sensible*. There have been some instances of persons who have had as great a sense of their danger and misery, as their natures could well subsist under, so that a little more would probably have destroyed them; and yet they have expressed themselves much amazed at their own *insensibility* and sottishness, at such an extraordinary time.

Persons are sometimes brought to the **borders of despair**, and it looks as black as midnight to them a little before the day dawns in their souls. Some few instances there have been, of persons who have had such a sense of God's wrath for sin, that they have been overborne; and made to *cry out* under an astonishing sense of their guilt, wondering that God suffers such guilty wretches to live upon earth, and that he doth not immediately send them to hell.

Sometimes their guilt doth so stare them in the face, that they are in exceeding terror for fear that God will instantly do it; but more commonly their distresses under **legal awakenings** have not been to such a degree. [*Legal as opposed to evangelical; evangelical has to do with faith, faith in the Savior, who has obeyed for us in our place, hence he is our Surety. Legal or legalism is doing things or works, works of obedience to please God without faith. The Jewish dispensation was a legal dispensation, the covenant of works, that is, if you keep this law perfectly you will merit eternal life, do this and live. Consequently this existence was quite disheartening and dreadful, horrifying terrors of conscience in many, since no one could keep the law, the sacrifices could not take away their sins nor the guilt of sin, so relief could only come through another way, that being by a Surety which was Messiah. So by this means, the law leads people to Christ who satisfied the law for us. Believers in the Old Covenant times, such as Abraham, saw this truth: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad, John 8:56, as Jesus relayed to the Pharisees, and saw the purpose of the ceremonial law as a shadow or type which pointed to Christ, the anti-type; but unbelievers did not see this.*] In some, these terrors do not seem to be so sharp, when near comfort, as before; their convictions have not seemed to work so much that way, but to be led further down into their own hearts, to a further sense of their own universal depravity and deadness in sin.

The corruption of the heart has discovered itself in various exercises, in the time of **legal convictions**; [*knowing that whatever one does to try to merit God's favor is fruitless on our own account. This many people know intuitively, but don't know the way out of this dilemma.*] sometimes it appears in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy, and Satan the old inhabitant seems to exert himself, like a serpent disturbed and enraged. Many in such circumstances, have felt a great spirit of envy towards the godly, especially towards those who are thought to have been lately converted, and most of all towards acquaintance and companions, *when they* are thought to be converted. Indeed, some have felt many heart-risings against God, and murmurings at his way of dealing with mankind, and his dealings with themselves in particular. It has been much insisted on, both in public and private, that persons should have the utmost dread of such envious thoughts; which if allowed tend exceedingly to quench the Spirit of God, if not to provoke him finally to forsake them. And when such a spirit

has much prevailed, and persons have not so earnestly strove against it as they ought to have done, it has seemed to be exceedingly to the hinderance of the good of their souls. But in some other instances, where persons have been much terrified at the sight of such wickedness in their hearts, God has brought good to them out of evil; and made it a means of convincing them of their own desperate sinfulness, and bringing them off from all self-confidence.

The drift of the Spirit of God in his *legal strivings* with persons, have seemed most evidently to be, to bring to a conviction of their absolute dependence on his sovereign power and grace, and an universal necessity of a mediator. This has been effected by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness and guiltiness in his sight; their pollution, and the insufficiency of their own righteousness; that they can in no wise help themselves, and that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them and all that they do, and in casting them off for ever. There is however, a vast variety, as to the manner and distinctness of such convictions.

As they are gradually more and more convinced of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts: they seem to themselves to grow worse and worse, harder and blinder, and more desperately wicked, instead of growing better. They are ready to be discouraged by it, and oftentimes never think themselves so *far off from good*, as when they are *nearest*. Under the sense which the Spirit of God gives them of their sinfulness, they often think that they differ from all others; their hearts are ready to sink with the thought, that they are the worst of all, and that none ever obtained mercy who were so wicked as they.

When awakenings *first begin*, their consciences are commonly most exercised about their *outward vicious course*, or other acts of sin; but *afterwards*, are much more burdened with a *sense of heart-sins*, the *dreadful corruption of their nature, their enmity against God, the pride of their hearts*, their unbelief, their rejection of Christ, the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills; and the like. In many, God makes much use of their own experience, in the course of their awakenings and endeavors after saving good, *to convince them of their own vile emptiness and universal depravity*.

Very often under first awakenings, when they are brought to reflect on the sin of their past lives, and have something of a terrifying sense of God's anger, they set themselves to walk more strictly, and confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, with a secret hope of appeasing God's anger, and making up for the sins they have committed. And oftentimes, at first setting out, their affections are so moved, that they are full of tears, in their confessions and prayers; which they are ready to make very much of, as though they were some atonement, and had power to move correspondent affections in God too. Hence they are for a while big with expectation of what God will do for them; and conceive they grow better apace, and shall soon be thoroughly converted. But these affections are but short-lived; they quickly find that they fail, and then they think themselves to be grown worse again. They do not find such a prospect of being soon converted, as they thought: instead of being *nearer*, they seem to be *farther* off; their hearts they think are grown harder, and by this means their fears of

perishing greatly increase. But though they are disappointed, they renew their attempts again and again; and still as their attempts are multiplied, so are their disappointments. All foils, they see no token of having inclined God's heart to them, they do not see that he hears their prayers at all, as they expected he would; and sometimes there have been great temptations arising hence to leave off seeking, and to yield up the case. But as they are still more terrified with fears of perishing, and their former hopes of prevailing on God to be merciful to them in a great measure fail; **sometimes their religious affections have turned into heart-risings against God, because he will not pity them, and seems to have little regard to their distress, and piteous cries, and to all the pains they take.** They think of the mercy God has shown to *others*; how soon and how easily others have obtained comfort, and those too who were worse than they, and have not laboured so much as they have done; and sometimes **they have had even dreadful blasphemous thoughts**, in these circumstances.

But when they reflect on these wicked workings of heart against God—if their convictions are continued, and the Spirit of God is not provoked utterly to forsake them—they have more distressing apprehensions of the anger of God towards *those* whose hearts work after such a sinful manner about *him*; and it may be, have great fears that they have committed the *unpardonable* sin, or that God will surely never show mercy to them who are such vipers; and are often tempted to leave off in despair. But then perhaps by something they read or hear of the infinite mercy of God, and all-sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners, they have some encouragement and hope renewed; but think that as yet they are not fit to come to Christ; they are so wicked that Christ will never accept of them. And then it may be they set themselves upon a new course of fruitless endeavours, in their own strength, to make themselves better; and still meet with new disappointments. **They are earnest to inquire, what they shall do?** They do not know but there is something else to be done, in order to their obtaining converting grace, that they have never done yet. It may be they hope, that they are something better than they were; but then the pleasing dream all vanishes again. **If they are told, that they trust too much to their own strength and righteousness, they cannot unlearn this practice all at once**, and find not yet the appearance of any good, but all looks as dark as midnight to them. Thus they wander about from mountain to hill, seeking rest, and finding none. When they are beat out of *one* refuge, they fly to *another*; till they are as it were debilitated, broken, and subdued with **legal humblings**; **[doing things trying to repent or doing works trying to please God, but due to their insufficiency and corruptions, lose all hope and despair, and hence are lowered into the dust probably like the tax collector in Luke 18:13 who but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'** **hence legal humblings.]** in which God gives them a conviction of their own utter helplessness and insufficiency, and discovers the true remedy in a clearer knowledge of Christ and his gospel.

When they begin to seek salvation, they are commonly profoundly ignorant of themselves; they are not sensible how blind they are, and how little they can do *towards* bringing

themselves to see spiritual things aright, and *towards* putting forth gracious exercises in their own souls.

They are not sensible how remote they are from love to God, and other holy dispositions, and how dead they are in sin. When they see unexpected pollution in their own hearts, they go about to wash away their own defilements, and make themselves clean; and they weary themselves in vain, till God shows them that it is in vain, and that their help is not where they have sought it.

But some persons continue wandering in such a kind of labyrinth, ten times as long as others, before their own experience will convince them of their insufficiency; and so it appears not to be their own experience only, but the convincing influence of God's Holy Spirit with their experience, that attains the effect. God has of late abundantly shown, that he does not need to wait to have men convinced by long and often repeated fruitless trials; for in multitudes of instances he has made a shorter work of it. He has so awakened and convinced persons' consciences, and made them so sensible of their exceeding great vileness, and given them such a sense of his wrath against sin, as has quickly overcome all their vain self-confidence, and borne them down into the dust before a holy and righteous God.

There have been some who have not had great terrors, but have had a very quick work. Some of those who have not had so deep a conviction of these things *before* their conversion, have much more of it afterwards. **God has appeared far from limiting himself to any certain method in his proceedings with sinners under legal convictions.** In *some* instances, it seems easy for our reasoning powers to discern the methods of divine wisdom, in his dealings with the soul under awakenings; in others, his footsteps cannot be traced, and his ways are past finding out. Some who are *less distinctly* wrought upon, in what is preparatory to grace, appear *no less eminent* in gracious experiences afterwards.

There is in nothing a greater difference, in different persons, than with respect to the *time* of their being under trouble; some but a few days, and others for months or years. There were many in this town, who had been, before this effusion of the Spirit upon us, for years, and some for many years, concerned about their salvation. Though probably they were not thoroughly awakened, yet they were concerned to such a degree as to be very uneasy, so as to live an uncomfortable disquieted life. They continued in a way of taking considerable pains about their salvation; but had never obtained any comfortable evidence of a good state. Several such persons, in this extraordinary time, have received light; but many of them were some of the *last*. They first saw multitudes of others rejoicing, with songs of deliverance in their mouths, who before had seemed wholly careless and at ease, and in pursuit of vanity; while they had been bowed down with solicitude about their souls. Yea, some had lived licentiously, and so continued till a little before they were converted; and yet soon grew up to a holy rejoicing in the infinite blessings God had bestowed upon *them*.

Whatever minister has a like occasion to deal with souls, in a flock under such circumstances, as this was in the last year, I cannot but think he will soon find himself under a necessity, greatly to insist upon it with them, that God is under no manner of obligation to show mercy to any natural man, whose heart is not turned to God: and that a man can challenge nothing either in *absolute justice*, or by *free promise*, from any thing he does before he has believed on *Jesus Christ*, or has true repentance begun in him. **It appears to me, that if I had taught those who came to me under trouble, any other doctrine, I should have taken a most direct course utterly to undo them.** [For example, many pastors say that if you say the sinner's prayer that God is faithful to answer you and save you. But God is not obliged to do it; he owes no man his favor or salvation, not to mention this turns God into a debtor. This sets cements person into a stupid security that ultimately damns him.] I should have directly crossed what was plainly the drift of the Spirit of God in his influences upon them; for if they had believed what I said, it would either have promoted *self-flattery* and *carelessness*, and so put an end to their awakenings; or cherished and established their contention and strife with God, concerning his dealings with them and others, and blocked up their way to that *humiliation* before the Sovereign Disposer of life and death, whereby God is wont to prepare them for his consolations. And yet those who have been under awakenings have oftentimes plainly stood in need of being encouraged, by being told of the infinite and all-sufficient mercy of God in Christ; and that it is God's manner to succeed diligence, and to bless his own means, that so *awakenings and encouragements, fear and hope, may be duly mixed, and proportioned to preserve their minds in a just medium between the two extremes of self-flattery and despondence*, both which tend to slackness and negligence, and in the end to *security*. I think I have found that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed, than those in which the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, with regard to the salvation of sinners, and his just liberty, with regard to answering the prayers, or succeeding the pains, of natural men, continuing such, have been insisted on. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as some from these words, **"That every mouth may be stopped;"** (Rom 3:15) endeavouring to show from thence, that it would be just with God for ever to reject and cast off mere natural men.

As to those in whom awakenings seem to have a saving issue, commonly the first thing that appears after their legal troubles, is a conviction of the *justice of God* in their *condemnation*, appearing in a sense of their own exceeding sinfulness, and the vileness of all their performances. In giving an account of this, they expressed themselves very variously; some, that they saw God was *sovereign*, and might receive others and reject them; some, that they were convinced, God might justly bestow *mercy* on every person in the town, in the world, and damn themselves to all eternity; some, that they see God may justly have no regard to all the pains they have taken, and all the prayers they have made; some, that if they should seek, and take the utmost pains all their lives, God might justly cast them into hell at last, because all their labours, prayers, and tears cannot make an atonement for the least *sin*, nor

merit any blessing at the hands of God. Some have declared themselves to be in the hands of God, that he may dispose of them just as he pleases; some, that God may glorify himself in their damnation, and they wonder that God has suffered them to live so long, and has not cast them into hell long ago.

Some are brought to this conviction by a great sense of their sinfulness, in general, that they are such vile wicked creatures in heart and life: *others* have the sins of their lives in an extraordinary manner set before them, multitudes of them coming just then fresh to their memory, and being set before them with their aggravations. Some have their minds especially fixed on some particular wicked practice they have indulged. **Some are especially convinced by a sight of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts.** Some, from a view they have of the horridness of some particular exercises of corruption, which they have had in the time of their awakening, whereby the enmity of the heart against God has been manifested. Some are convinced especially by a sense of the sin of *unbelief*, the opposition of their hearts to the way of salvation by Christ, and their obstinacy in rejecting him and his grace.

There is a great deal of difference as to *distinctness* here; some, who have not so clear a sight of God's justice in their condemnation, yet mention things that plainly imply it. They find a disposition to acknowledge God to be just and righteous in his threatenings; and that they are undeserving: and many times, though they had not so particular a sight of it at the beginning, they have very clear discoveries of it soon afterwards, with great humblings in the dust before God.

Commonly persons' minds immediately before this discovery of God's justice are exceedingly restless, in a kind of struggle and tumult, and sometimes in mere anguish; but generally, as soon as they have this conviction, it immediately brings their minds to a calm, an unexpected quietness and composure; and most frequently, though not always, *then* the pressing weight upon their spirits is taken away, and a general hope arises, that some time or other God will be gracious, even before any distinct and particular discoveries of mercy. Often they then come to a conclusion within themselves, that they will lie at God's feet, and wait his time; and they rest in that, not being sensible that the Spirit of God has now brought them to a frame whereby they are prepared for mercy. For it is remarkable, that persons when they first have this sense of the justice of God, rarely, at the time, think anything of its being that *humiliation* they have often heard insisted on, and that others experience.

In many persons, the first conviction of the justice of God in their condemnation, which they *take particular notice of*, and probably the first distinct conviction of it that they *have*, is of such a nature, as seems to be *above* any thing merely legal. **Though it be after 'legal humblings, and much of a sense of their own helplessness, and of the insufficiency of their own duties; yet it does not appear to be forced by mere legal terrors and convictions; but rather from a high exercise of grace, in saving repentance, and evangelical humiliation.** For there is in it a sort of complacency of soul, in the attribute of God's justice, as displayed in his threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners. Sometimes at the discovery of it, they can

scarcely forbear crying out, it is just! it is just! Some express themselves, that they see the glory of God would *shine bright* in their own condemnation; and they are ready to think that if they are damned, they could take part with God against themselves, and would glorify his justice therein. And when it is thus, they commonly have some evident sense of free and all-sufficient grace, though they give no *distinct* account of it; but it is manifest, by that great degree of hope and encouragement they then conceive, though they were never so sensible of their own vileness and ill-deservings as they are at that time.

Some, when in such circumstances, have felt that sense of the excellency of God's justice, appearing in the vindictive exercises of it, against such sinfulness as theirs was; and have had such a submission of mind in their idea of this attribute, and of those exercises of it—**together with an exceeding loathing of their own unworthiness, and a kind of indignation against themselves**—that they have sometimes almost called it a willingness to be damned; though it must be owned they had not clear and distinct ideas of damnation, nor does any word in the Bible require such self-denial as this. But the truth is, as some have more clearly expressed it, that salvation has appeared *too good for them, that they were worthy of nothing but condemnation, and they could not tell how to think of salvation being bestowed upon /hem, fearing it was inconsistent with the glory of God's majesty, that they had so much contemned and affronted.*

That calm of spirit that some persons have found after their **legal distresses, [they know intuitively that legal obedience does not work! Only God's righteousness imputed works,]** continues some time before any **special and delightful manifestation is made to the soul of the grace of God as revealed in the gospel. But very often some comfortable and sweet view of a merciful God, of a sufficient Redeemer,** or of some great and joyful things of the gospel, immediately follows, or in a very little time: and in some, **the first sight of their just desert of hell, and God's sovereignty with respect to their salvation, and a discovery of all-sufficient grace, are so near, that they seem to go as it were together.**

Excellent summary here:

These gracious discoveries given, whence the first special comforts are derived, are in many respects very various. More frequently, Christ is distinctly made the object of the mind, in his all-sufficiency and willingness to save sinners; but some have their thoughts more especially fixed on God, in some of his sweet and glorious attributes manifested in the gospel, and shining forth in the face of Christ. Some view the all-sufficiency of the mercy and grace of God; some, chiefly the infinite power of God, and his ability to save them, and to do all things for them; and some look most at the truth and faithfulness of God. In *some*, the truth and certainty of the gospel in general is the first joyful discovery they have; in *others*, the certain truth of some particular promises; in some, the grace and sincerity of God in his invitations, very commonly in some particular invitation in the mind, and it now appears real to them that God does indeed invite them. Some are struck with the glory and wonderfulness of the dying

love of Christ; and some with the sufficiency and preciousness of his blood, as offered to make an atonement for sin; and others with the value and glory of his obedience and righteousness. In some the excellency and loveliness of Christ, chiefly engages their thoughts; in some his divinity, that he is indeed *the Son of the living God*; and in others, the excellency of the way of salvation by Christ, and the suitableness of it to their necessities.

Some have an apprehension of these things so given, that it seems more natural to them to express it by *sight or discovery*; *others* think what they experience better expressed by the *realizing conviction*, or a *lively or feeling sense of heart*; meaning, as I suppose, no other difference but what is merely circumstantial or gradual.

There is, often, in the mind, some *particular* text of Scripture, holding forth some evangelical ground of consolation; sometimes a *multitude* of texts, gracious invitations and promises flowing in one after another, filling the soul more and more with comfort and satisfaction. Comfort is first given to some, while *reading* some portion of Scripture; but in some it is attended with no *particular scripture* at all, either in *reading or meditation*. In some, many *divine things* seem to be discovered to the soul as it were at once; *others* have their minds especially fixing on some *one thing* at first, and afterwards a sense is given of *others*; in *some* with a swifter, and *others* a slower, succession, and sometimes with interruptions of much darkness.

The way that grace seems sometimes first to appear, after legal humiliation, is in earnest longings of soul after God and Christ: to know God, to love him, to be humble before him, to have communion with Christ in his benefits; which longings, as they express them, seem evidently to be of such a nature as can arise from nothing but a sense of the superlative excellency of divine things, with a spiritual taste and relish of them, and an esteem of them as their highest happiness and best portion. Such longings as I speak of, are commonly attended with firm resolutions to pursue this good for ever, together with a hoping, waiting disposition. When persons have begun in such frames, commonly other experiences and discoveries have soon followed, which have yet more clearly manifested a change of heart.

It must needs be confessed that Christ is not *always distinctly and explicitly* thought of in the first sensible act of grace, (though most commonly he is,) but sometimes he is the object of the mind only *implicitly*. Thus sometimes when persons have seemed evidently to be stripped of all their own righteousness, and to have stood self-condemned as guilty of death, they have been comforted with a joyful and satisfying view, that the mercy and grace of God is sufficient for them—that their sins, though never so great, shall be no hinderance to their being accepted; that there is mercy enough in God for the whole world, and the like—when they give no account of any particular or distinct thought of Christ. But yet, when the account they give is duly weighed, and they are a little interrogated about it, it appears that the revelation of mercy in the gospel, is the ground of their encouragement and hope; and that it is indeed the

mercy of God through Christ that is discovered to them, and that it is depended on in him, and not in any wise moved by any thing in them.

Sometimes disconsolate souls have been revived, and brought to rest in God, by a sweet sense of his grace and faithfulness, in some special invitation or promise; **in which nevertheless there is no particular mention of Christ, nor is it accompanied with any distinct thought of him in their minds: but yet, it is not received as out of Christ, but as one of the invitations or promises made of God to poor sinners through his Son Jesus.** And such persons afterwards have had clear and distinct discoveries of Christ, accompanied with lively and special actings of faith and love towards him.

[In the next several paragraphs, Edwards doesn't expressly talk about the sinner's prayer and Arminianism, but implies it, in how many people who are genuinely wrought upon, converted, yet due to this new thing that has happened to them of which they are completely unfamiliar with, they unwittingly go ahead with tradition and say the sinner's prayer as though they were still under the covenant of works...*what must we do*, though now they are doing it by faith, hence, evangelically, evangelical obedience, no longer legal]

Frequently, when persons have first had the gospel-ground of relief discovered to them, and have been entertaining their minds with the sweet prospect, they have thought nothing at that time of their being *converted*. To see, that there is an all-sufficiency in God, and such plentiful provision made in Christ, after they have been borne down, and sunk with a sense of their guilt and fears of wrath, exceedingly refreshes them. **The view is joyful to them; as it is in its own nature glorious, gives them quite new and delightful ideas of God and Christ, greatly encourages them to seek conversion.** This begets in them a strong resolution to devote themselves and their whole lives to God and his Son, and patiently to wait till God shall see fit to make all effectual; and very often entertain a strong persuasion, that he will in his own time do it for them.

There is wrought in them a holy repose of soul in God through Christ, with a secret disposition to fear and love him, and to hope for blessings from him in this way. [What Edwards just described here can only happen via saving grace as he notes next.] Yet, they have no imagination that they are now *converted*, it does not so much as come into their minds: and very often the reason is, that they do not see that they *accept* of this sufficiency of salvation they behold in Christ, having entertained a wrong notion of acceptance; not being sensible that the obedient and joyful entertainment which their hearts give to this discovery of grace, is a real acceptance of it. They know not that the sweet complacency they feel in the mercy and complete salvation of God, as it includes pardon and sanctification, and is held forth to them only through Christ, **is a true receiving of this mercy, or a plain evidence of their receiving it.** They expected I know not what kind of *act of soul*, and perhaps they had no distinct *idea* of it themselves.

And indeed it appears very plainly in some of them, that *before* their own conversion they had very *imperfect ideas* what conversion was. It is all new and strange, and what there was no clear conception of before. It is most evident, as they themselves acknowledge, that the expressions used to describe conversion, and the graces of God's Holy Spirit—such as *a spiritual sight of Christ, faith in Christ, poverty of spirit, trust in God, &c.*—did not convey those distinct *ideas* to their minds, which they were intended to signify. Perhaps to some of them it was but little more than the names of *colours* are to convey the ideas to one that is *blind* from his birth.

In this town there has always been a great deal of talk about conversion and spiritual experiences; and therefore people in general had formed a notion in their own minds what these things were. **But when they come to be the *subjects* of them, they find themselves much confounded in their notions, and overthrown in many of their former conceits.** And it has been very observable, that persons of the greatest understanding, and who had studied most about things of this nature, have been more confounded than others. Some such persons declare, that all their former wisdom is brought to nought, and that they appear to have been mere babes, who knew nothing. It has appeared, that none have stood more in need of instruction, even of their fellow-Christians, concerning their own circumstances and difficulties, than they: and it seems to have been with delight, that they have seen themselves thus brought down, and become *nothing*; that free grace and divine power may be *exalted* in them.

It was very wonderful to see how persons' *affections* were sometimes moved—when God did as it were suddenly open their eyes, and let into their minds a sense of the greatness of his grace, the fulness of *Christ*, and his readiness to save—after having been broken with apprehensions of divine wrath, and sunk into an abyss, under a sense of guilt which they were ready to think was beyond the mercy of God. **Their joyful surprise has caused their hearts as it were to leap,** so that they have been ready to break forth into laughter, tears often at the same time issuing like a flood, and intermingling a loud weeping. Sometimes they have not been able to forbear crying out with a loud voice, expressing their great admiration. In some, even the view of the glory of God's sovereignty, in the exercises of his grace, has surprised the soul with such sweetness, as to produce the same effects. I remember an instance of one, who, reading something concerning God's *sovereign* way of saving sinners, as being self-moved—having no regard to men's *own righteousness* as the motive of his grace, but as magnifying himself and abasing man, or to that purpose—felt such a sudden rapture of joy and delight in the consideration of it: and yet then he suspected himself to be in a Christless condition, and had been long in great distress for fear that God would not have mercy on him.

Many continue a long time in a course of gracious exercises and experiences, and do not think themselves to be converted, but conclude otherwise; and none knows how long they would continue so, were they not helped by particular instructions. There are undoubted

instances of some who have lived in this way for many years together, and these circumstances had various consequences, with various persons, and with the same persons, at various times. Some continue in great encouragement and hope, that they shall obtain mercy in a steadfast resolution to persevere in seeking it, and in an humble waiting in it before God. **But very often, when the lively sense of the sufficiency of *Christ* and the riches of divine grace, begins to vanish, upon a withdrawment of divine influences, they return to greater distress than ever.** For they have now a far greater sense of the misery of a natural condition than before, being in a new manner sensible of the reality of eternal things, the greatness of God, his excellency, and how dreadful it is to be separated from him, and to be subject to his wrath; so that they are sometimes swallowed up with darkness and amazement. **Satan has a vast advantage in such cases to ply them with various temptations, which he is not wont to neglect: in such a case, persons very much need a guide to lead them to an understanding of what we are taught in the word of God concerning the nature of grace, and to help them to apply it to themselves.**

I have been much blamed and censured by many, that I should make it my practice, when I have been satisfied concerning persons' good estate, to signify it to them. This has been greatly misrepresented abroad, as innumerable other things concerning us, to prejudice the country against the whole affair. But let it be noted, that what I have undertaken to judge of, has rather been *qualifications*, and declared experiences, than *persons*. Not but that I have thought it my duty, as a pastor, to assist and instruct persons in applying scripture-rules and characters to their *own* case; **(in which, I think, many greatly need a guide)**; and I have, where the case appeared plain, used freedom in signifying my hope of them to others. But I have been far from doing this concerning all that I have had some hopes of; and I believe have used much more caution than many have supposed. Yet I should account it a great calamity to be deprived of the comfort of rejoicing with those of my flock, who have been in great distress, whose circumstances I have been acquainted with, when there seems to be good evidence that those who were dead are alive, and that those who were lost are found. I am sensible the practice would have been safer in the hands of one of a riper judgment and greater experience: but yet, there seemed to be an absolute necessity of it on the fore-mentioned accounts; and it has been found what God has most remarkably owned and blessed amongst us, both to the persons themselves, and to others.

Grace in many persons, through this ignorance of their state, and their loosing on themselves still as the objects of God's displeasure, has been like the trees in winter, or like seed in the spring suppressed under a hard clod of earth. Many in such cases have laboured to their utmost to divert their minds from the pleasing and joyful views they have had, and to suppress those consolations and gracious affections that arose thereupon. And when it has once come into their minds to inquire, whether or no this was not true grace, **they have been much afraid lest they should be deceived with common illuminations and flashes of affection, and eternally undone with a false hope.** But when they have been better instructed, and so brought to allow of '*hope*, this has awakened the gracious disposition of their hearts into life

and vigour, as the warm beams of the sun in the spring have quickened the seeds and productions of the earth. Grace being now at liberty, and cherished with hope, has soon flowed out to their abundant satisfaction and increase.

There is no one thing that I know of which God has made such a means of promoting his work amongst us, as the news of others' conversion. This has been owned in awakening sinners, engaging them earnestly to seek the same blessing, and in quickening saints. Though I have thought that a minister declaring his judgment about particular persons' experiences, might from these things be justified; yet I often signify to my people, how unable man is to know another's heart, and how unsafe it is to depend merely on the judgment of others. I have abundantly insisted, that a manifestation of sincerity in *fruits brought forth*, is better than any manifestation they can make of it in *words* alone: and that without this, all pretences to spiritual experiences are vain. This all my congregation can witness. And the people in general have manifested an extraordinary dread of being deceived; being exceeding fearful lest they should build wrong. Some of them have been backward to receive hope, even to a great extreme, which has occasioned me to dwell longer on this part of the narrative.

Conversion is a great and glorious work of God's power, at once changing the heart, and infusing life into the dead soul; though the grace then implanted more gradually displays itself in some than in others. But as to fixing on the *precise time* when they put forth the very first act of grace, there is a great deal of difference in different persons; in some it seems to be very discernible when the very time was; but others are more at a loss. In *thin respect*, there are very many who do not know, even when they have it, that *it is* the grace of conversion, and sometimes do not think it to be so till a long time after. Many, even when they come to entertain great hopes that they are converted, if they remember what they experienced in the first exercises of grace, they are at a loss whether it was any more than a common illumination; or whether some *other* more clear and remarkable experience which they had afterwards, was not the *first* of a saving nature. The manner of God's work on the soul, sometimes especially, is very *mysterious*; and it is with the kingdom of God as to its manifestation in the heart of a convert, as is said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up, he knoweth not how; for the earth bringeth forth of herself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." (Mark 4:26-28)

Various manners of conversion; this is good.

In *some*, converting light is like a glorious brightness suddenly shining upon a person, and all around him: they are in a remarkable manner brought out of darkness into marvelous light. In many *others* it has been like the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, and it may be is presently hid with a cloud; and then it appears again, and shines a little brighter, and gradually increases, with intervening darkness, till at length it breaks forth

more clearly from behind the clouds. And many are, doubtless, ready to *date* their conversion wrong, throwing by those lesser degrees of light that appeared at *first* dawning, and calling some more remarkable experience they had *afterwards*, their conversion. This often, in a great measure, arises from a wrong understanding of what they have always been taught, that conversion is a *great* change, wherein *old things are done away, and nil things become new*, or at least from a false inference from that doctrine.

Persons commonly at first conversion, and afterwards, have had many texts of Scripture brought to their minds, which are exceeding suitable to their circumstances, often come with great power, as the word of God or of *Christ* indeed; and many have a multitude of sweet invitations, promises, and doxologies flowing in one after another, bringing great light and comfort with them, filling the soul brimful, enlarging the heart, and opening the mouth in religion. And it seems to me necessary to suppose, that there is an immediate influence of the Spirit of God, oftentimes, in bringing texts of Scripture to the mind. Not that I suppose it is done in a way of immediate revelation, without any use of the memory; but yet there seems plainly to be an immediate and extraordinary influence, in leading their thoughts to such and such passages of Scripture, and exciting them *in the memory*. Indeed in some, God seems to bring texts of scripture to their minds no otherwise than by leading them into such frames and meditations, as *harmonize* with those scriptures; but in many persons there seems to be something more than this.

Those who, while under legal convictions, have had the greatest terrors, have not always obtained the greatest light and comfort; nor have they always light most suddenly communicated; but yet, I think, the *time* of conversion has generally been most sensible in such persons. Oftentimes, the first sensible change after the extremity of terrors, is a calmness, and then the light gradually comes in; *small glimpses* at first, after their midnight darkness, and *a word or two of comfort*, as it were softly spoken to them. They have a *little taste* of the sweetness of divine grace, and the love of a Saviour; **when terror and distress of conscience begin to be turned into a humble, meek sense of their own unworthiness before God**. There is felt, inwardly, sometimes a disposition to praise God; and after a little while the light comes in more clearly and powerfully. But yet, I think, more frequently, great terrors have been followed with more sudden and great light and comfort; when the sinner seems to be as it were subdued and brought to a calm, from a kind of tumult of mind, then God lets in an extraordinary sense of his great mercy through a Redeemer."

Converting influences very commonly bring an extraordinary conviction of the *reality* and certainty of the great things of religion; **though in some this is much greater some time after conversion, than at first**. They have that sight and taste of the divine excellency there is in the gospel, which is more effectual to convince them, than reading many volumes of arguments without it. It seems to me, that in many instances, when the glory of Christian truths has been set before persons, and they have at the same time as it were seen, and tasted, and felt the divinity of them, they have been as far from doubting their truth, as they

are from doubting whether there be a sun, when their eyes are open in the midst of a clear hemisphere, and the strong blaze of his light overcomes all objections. And yet, many of them, if we should ask them why they believed those things to be true, would not be able well to express or communicate a sufficient reason to satisfy the inquirer; and perhaps would make no other answer but that they *see them to be true*. But a person might soon be satisfied, by a particular conversation with them, that what they mean by such an answer is, **that they have intuitively beheld, and immediately felt, most illustrious and powerful evidence of divinity in them.**

Some are thus convinced of the truth of the *gospel* in general, and that the Scriptures are the word of God': others have their minds more especially fixed on some particular *great doctrine* of the gospel, some particular truths that they are *meditating on*, or *reading of*, in some portion of Scripture. Some have such convictions in a much more remarkable manner than others: and there are some who never had such a special sense of the certainty of divine things impressed upon them, with such inward evidence and strength, have yet very clear exercises of grace; i.e., of love to God, repentance, and holiness. And if they be more particularly examined, they appear plainly to have an inward firm persuasion of the reality of divine things, such as they did not use to have before their conversion. And those who have the most *clear* discoveries of divine truth, in the manner that has been mentioned, cannot have this *always* in view. When the sense and relish of the divine excellency of these things fades, on a withdrawalment of the Spirit of God, they have not the medium of the conviction of their truth at command. In a dull frame, they cannot recall the *idea* and inward sense they had, perfectly to mind; things appear very dim to what they did before. And though there still remains a habitual strong persuasion; yet not so as to exclude temptations to unbelief, and all possibility of doubting. But then, at particular times, by God's Help, the same sense of things revives again, like fire that lay hid in ashes. I suppose the *grounds* of such a conviction of the truth of divine things to be just and *rational*; but yet, in some, God makes use of their own reason much more sensibly than in others. Oftentimes persons have (so far as could be judged) received the first saving conviction from *renaming* which they have heard *from the pulpit*; and often in the course of reasoning they are led into *in their own meditations*.

The arguments are the *same* that they have heard hundreds of times; but *the force of the arguments, and their conviction by them*, is altogether new; they come with a new and before unexperienced power. *Before*, they *heard it was so*, and they *allowed it* to be so; but now they *see it* to be so indeed. Things now look exceeding plain to them, and they wonder they did not see them before.

They are so greatly taken with their new discovery, and things appear so plain and so rational to them, that they are often at first ready to think they can convince others, and are apt to engage in talk with every one they meet with, *almost* to this end; and when they are disappointed, are ready to wonder that their reasonings seem to make no more impression.

Many fall under such a mistake as to be ready to doubt of their good estate, because there was so much use made of their own reason in the convictions they have received; they are afraid that they have no illumination above the natural force of their own faculties; and many make that an objection against the spirituality of their convictions, that it is so easy to see things as they now see them. They have often heard, that conversion is a work of mighty power, manifesting to the soul what neither man nor angel can give such a conviction of; but it seems to them that these things are so plain and easy, and rational, that any body can see them. If they are asked, why they never saw thus before; they say, it seems to them it was because they never *thought* of it. But very often these difficulties are soon removed by those of another nature; for when God withdraws, they find themselves as it were blind again, they for the present lose their realizing sense of those things that looked so plain to them, and, by all they can do, they cannot recover it, till God renews the influences of his Spirit.

Persons after their conversion often speak of religious things as seeming *new* to them; that preaching is a *new* thing; that it seems to them they never heard preaching before; that the Bible is a *new* book: they find there *vein* chapters, *new* psalms, *new* histories, because they **see them in a new light**. [Ps36:9, *in your light we see light*.] Here was a remarkable instance of an aged woman, of above seventy years, who had spent most of her days under Mr. Stoddard's powerful ministry. Reading in the New Testament concerning *Christ's* sufferings for sinners, she seemed to be astonished at what she read, as what was *real* and very *wonderful*, but quite *new* to her. At first, before she had time to turn her thoughts, she wondered within herself, that she had never heard of it before; but then immediately recollected herself, and thought she had often *heard of it*, and *read* it, but never till now *saw it as real*. She then cast in her mind, how *wonderful* this was, that the Son of God should undergo such things for sinners, and how she had spent her time in ungratefully sinning against so good a God, and such a Saviour; though she was a person, apparently, of a very blameless and inoffensive life. And she was so overcome by those considerations, that her nature was ready to fail under them: those who were about her, and knew not what was the matter, were surprised, and thought she was a dying.

Many have spoken much of their hearts being drawn out in *love* to God and Christ; and of their minds being wrapt up in delightful contemplation of the glory and wonderful grace of God, the excellency and dying love of *Jesus Christ*; and of their souls going forth in longing desires *after God and Christ*. Several of our young children have expressed much of this; and have manifested a willingness to leave father and mother and all things in the world, to go and be with Christ. Some persons having had such longing desires after Christ, or which have risen to such degree, as to take away their natural strength. Some have been so overcome with a sense of the dying love of Christ, to such poor, wretched, and unworthy creatures, as to weaken the body. Several persons have had so great a sense of the glory of God, and excellency of Christ, that nature and life seemed almost to *sink* under it; and in all probability, **if**

God had showed them a little more of himself, it would have dissolved their frame. I have seen some, and conversed with them in such frames, who have certainly been perfectly sober, and very remote from anything like *enthusiastic wildness*. And they have talked, when able to speak, of the glory of God's perfections, the wonderfulness of his grace in Christ, and their own unworthiness, in such a manner as cannot be perfectly expressed after them. Their sense of their exceeding littleness and vileness, and their disposition to abase themselves before God, has appeared to be great *in proportion* to their light and joy.

Such persons amongst us as have been thus distinguished with the most extraordinary discoveries, have commonly nowise appeared with the assuming, self-conceited, and self-sufficient airs of enthusiasts; but exceedingly the contrary. **They are eminent for a spirit of meekness, modesty, self-diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves. No persons appear so sensible of their need of instruction, and so eager to receive it, as some of them; nor so ready to think others better than themselves.** Those that have been considered as converted amongst us, have generally manifested a longing to *lie low*, and in the dust before God; withal complaining of their not being able to lie low enough.

They speak much of their sense of excellency in the way of salvation by free and sovereign grace, through the righteousness of Christ alone; and how it is with delight that they renounce their own righteousness, and rejoice in having no account made of it. Many have expressed themselves to this purpose, that it would lessen the satisfaction they hope for in heaven to have it by their *own righteousness*, or in any other way than as bestowed by *free grace*, and for *Christ's sake alone*. They speak much of the inexpressibleness of what they experience, how their *words* fail, so that they cannot declare it. And particularly they speak with exceeding admiration of the superlative excellency of that pleasure and delight which they sometimes enjoy; how a *little* of it is sufficient to pay them for *all* the pains and trouble they have gone through in seeking salvation; and how far it exceeds all earthly pleasures. Some express much of the sense which these spiritual views give them of the *vanity* of earthly enjoyments, how mean and worthless all these things appear to them.

Many, while their minds have been filled with *spiritual delights*, have as it were forgot their food; their bodily appetite has failed, while their minds have been entertained with *meat to eat that others knew not of*. The light and comfort which some of them enjoy, give a new relish to their *common blessings*, and cause all things about them to appear as it were beautiful, sweet, and pleasant. All things abroad, the sun, moon, and stars, the clouds and sky, the heavens and earth, appear as it were with a cast of *divine glory* and sweetness upon them. Though this joy include in it a delightful sense of the safety of their own state, yet frequently, in times of their highest spiritual entertainment, **this seems not to be the chief object of their fixed thought and meditation.** The supreme attention of their minds is to the glorious excellencies of God and Christ; and there is very often a ravishing sense of God's love

accompanying a sense of his excellency. They rejoice in a sense of the faithfulness of God's promises, as they respect the future, eternal enjoyment of him.

The unparalleled joy that many of them speak of, is what they find when they are lowest in the dust, emptied most of themselves, and as it were annihilating themselves before God; when they are nothing, and God is all; seeing their own unworthiness, depending not at all on themselves, but alone on Christ, and ascribing all glory to God. Then their souls are most in the enjoyment of satisfying rest; excepting that, at such times, they apprehend themselves to be not sufficiently self-abased; for then above all times do they long to be lower. Some speak much of the exquisite sweetness, and rest of soul, that is to be found in the exercise of resignation to God, and humble submission to his will. Many express earnest longings of soul to praise God; but at the same time complain that they cannot praise him as they would, and they want to have others help them in praising him. They want to have *every one* praise God, and are ready to call upon *every thing* to praise him. They express a longing desire to live to God's glory, and to do something to his honour; but at the same time complain of their insufficiency and barrenness; that they are *poor and impotent creatures, can do nothing of themselves, and are utterly insufficient to glorify their Creator and Redeemer.*

While God was so remarkably present amongst us by his Spirit, there was no book so delightful as the Bible; especially the Book of Psalms, the Prophecy of Isaiah, and the New Testament. Some, by reason of their love to God's word, at times, have been wonderfully delighted and affected at the sight of a Bible; and *then*, also, there was *no time* so prized as the Lord's day, and *no place* in this world so desired as God's house. Our converts *then* remarkably appeared united in dear affection to one another, and many have expressed much of that spirit of love which they felt toward all mankind; and particularly to those who had been least friendly to them. Never, I believe, was so much done in confessing injuries, and making up differences, as the last year. Persons, after their own conversion, have commonly expressed an exceeding great desire for the conversion of others. Some have thought that they should be willing to *die* for the conversion of any soul, though of one of the meanest of their fellow-creatures, or of their worst enemies; and many have, indeed, been in great distress with desires and longings for it. This work of God had also a good effect to unite the people's affections much to their minister.

There are some persons whom I have been acquainted with, but more especially two, that belong to other towns, who have been swallowed up exceedingly with a sense of the awful greatness and *majesty* of God; and both of them told me to this purpose, that if at the time, they had entertained the least fear that they were not at peace with this so great a God, they should certainly have died.

It is worthy to be remarked, that some persons, by their conversion, seem to be greatly helped as to their *doctrinal* notions of religion. It was particularly remarkable in one, who,

having been taken captive in his childhood, was trained up in Canada, in the **popish religion** [legalistic, sacramentalist, etc.]. Some years since he returned to this his native place, and was in a measure brought off from popery; but seemed very awkward and dull in receiving any clear notion of the protestant scheme, till he was *converted*; and then he was remarkably altered in this respect.

This is good:

There is a vast difference, as observed, in the degree, and also in the particular *manner*, of persons' experiences, both *at* and *after* conversion; *some* have grace working more sensibly in one way, *others* in another. *Some* speak more fully of a conviction of the *justice* of God in their condemnation; *others*, more of their consenting to the way of salvation by *Christ*; and some, more of the actings of love to God and *Christ*. Some more of acts of affiance, in a sweet and assured conviction of the truth and faithfulness of God in his promises; others, more of their choosing and resting in God, as their whole and everlasting portion; and of their ardent and longing desire after God, to have communion with him; and others, more of their abhorrence to themselves for their past sins, and earnest longings to live to God's glory for the time to come. But it seems evidently to be the *same work*, the *same habitual change* wrought in the heart, it all tends the same way, and to the *same end*; and it is plainly the *same spirit* that breathes and acts in *various* persons. There is an endless *variety* in the particular manner and circumstances in which persons are wrought on; and an opportunity of seeing so much will show, that God is further from confining himself to a particular method in his work on souls, than some imagine. I believe it has occasioned some good people amongst us, **who were before too ready to make their own experience a rule to others, to be less censorious and more extended in their charity**; and this is an excellent advantage indeed. The work of God has been *glorious* in its variety; it has the more displayed the manifold and unsearchable wisdom of God, and wrought more charity among his people.

There is a great difference among those who are converted, as to the degree of hope and satisfaction they have concerning their own state. Some have a high degree of satisfaction in this matter almost constantly; and yet it is rare that any enjoy so full an assurance of their interest in Christ, that self-examination should seem needless to them; unless it be at particular seasons, while in the actual enjoyment of some great discovery God gives of his glory and rich grace in Christ, to the drawing forth of extraordinary acts of grace. **But the greater part, as they sometimes fall into dead frames of spirit, are frequently exercised with scruples and fears concerning their condition**.

They generally have an awful apprehension of the dreadful nature of a false hope; and there has been observable in most a great caution, lest in giving an account of their experiences, they should say *too much*, and use too strong terms. Many, after they have related their experiences, have been greatly afflicted with fears, **lest they have played the**

hypocrite, and used stronger terms than their case would fairly allow of; and yet could not find how they could correct themselves.

I think the main ground of the doubts and fears, that persons after their conversion have been exercised with, about their own state, has been, that they have found so much corruption remaining in their hearts. At first, their souls seem to be all alive, their hearts are fixed, and their affections flowing; they seem to live quite above the world, and meet with but little difficulty in religious exercises; and they are ready to think it will always be so. Though they are truly abased under a sense of their vileness, by reason of former acts of sin; yet they are not then sufficiently sensible, what corruption still remains in their hearts; and therefore, are *surprised* when they find that they begin to be in dull and dead frames, troubled with wandering thoughts at the time of public and private worship, and utterly unable to keep themselves from them. When they find themselves unaffected, while yet there is the greatest occasion to be affected; and when they feel worldly dispositions working in them—pride, envy, stirrings of revenge, or some ill spirit towards some person that has injured them, as well as other workings of indwelling sin—their hearts are almost sunk with the disappointment; and they are ready presently to think that they are mere hypocrites.

They are ready to argue, if God had, indeed, done such great things for them, as they hoped, such ingratitude would be inconsistent with it. They complain of the hardness and wickedness of their hearts; and say there is so much corruption, that it seems to them *impossible there should be any goodness there*. **Many of them seem to be much more sensible how corrupt their hearts are, than before they were converted;** and some have been too ready to be impressed with fear, that instead of becoming better, they are grown much worse, and make it an argument against the goodness of their state. But in truth, the case seems plainly to be, that now they feel the pain of their own wound; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts, that they did not use to have. They take more notice of what sin is there, which is now more burdensome to them; they strive more against it, and feel more of its strength.

They are somewhat surprised that they should in this respect find themselves so different from the *idea* they generally had entertained of godly persons. For, though grace be indeed of a far more excellent nature than they imagined; **yet, those who are godly have much less of it, and much more remaining corruption, than they thought.** They never realized it, that persons were wont to meet with such difficulties, after they were once converted. When they are thus exercised with doubts about their state, through the deadness of their frames; as long as these frames last, they are commonly unable to satisfy themselves of the *truth* of their grace, by all their self-examination. When they hear of the signs of grace laid down for them to try themselves by, they are often so clouded, that they do not know how to apply them. They hardly know whether they have such and such things or no, and whether they have

experienced them or not. That which was the sweetest, best, and most distinguishing in their experiences, they cannot recover a sense of. **But on a return of the influences of the Spirit of God, to revive the lively actings of grace, the light breaks through the cloud, and doubting and darkness soon vanish away.** [There are reasons for these various actings of the Holy Spirit; He comes and he goes, etc., and when his influence wanes, one fears that he may not be saved.]

Persons are often revived out of their dead and dark frames, by religious conversation: while they are talking of divine things, or ever they are aware, their souls are carried away into holy exercises with abundant pleasure. And oftentimes, while relating their past experiences to their Christian brethren, they have a sense of them revived, and the same experiences in a degree again renewed. Sometimes, while persons are exercised in mind with several objections against the goodness of their state, they have scriptures one after another coming to their minds, to answer their scruples, and unravel their difficulties, exceedingly apposite and proper to their circumstances. By these means, their darkness is scattered; and often, before the bestowment of any new remarkable comforts, especially after long-continued deadness and ill frames, there are *renewed humblings*, in a great sense of their own exceeding vileness and unworthiness, as before their first comforts were bestowed.

Many in the country have entertained a mean thought of this great work, from what they have heard of *impressions* made on persons' *imaginations*. But there have been exceeding great misrepresentations, and innumerable false reports, concerning that matter. It is not, that I know of, the profession or opinion of *any one person in the town*, that any weight is to be laid on any thing seen with the bodily eyes. I know the *contrary* to be a received and established principle amongst us. I cannot say that there have been no instances of persons who have been ready to give too much heed to vain and useless *imaginations*; but they have been easily corrected, and I conclude it will not be wondered at, that a congregation should need a guide in such cases, to assist them in distinguishing *wheat* from *chaff*. But such impressions on the imaginations as have been more usual, seem to me to be plainly no other than what is to be expected in human nature in such circumstances, and what is the *natural result* of the strong exercise of the mind, and impressions on the heart.

I do not suppose, that they themselves imagined they saw anything with their *bodily eyes*; but only have had within them *ideas* strongly impressed, and as it were lively pictures in their minds. For instance, some when in great terrors, through fear of hell, have had lively ideas of a dreadful furnace. Some, when their hearts have been strongly impressed, and their affections greatly moved with a sense of the beauty and excellency of *Christ*, have had their imaginations so wrought upon, that, together with a sense of his glorious spiritual perfections, there has arisen in the mind an *idea of* one of glorious majesty, and of a sweet and gracious aspect. Some, when they have been greatly affected with *Christ's* death, have at the same time a lively *idea of Christ* hanging upon the cross, and his blood running from his wounds. Surely such

things will not be wondered at by them who have observed, how any strong affections about temporal matters will excite lively *ideas* and pictures of different things in the mind.

The vigorous exercises of the mind, doubtless, more strongly impress it with imaginary *ideas* in some than others, which probably may arise from the difference of constitution, and seems evidently in some, partly to arise from their peculiar circumstances. When persons have been exercised with extreme terrors, and there is a sudden change to light and joy, the imagination seems more susceptible of strong *ideas*; the inferior powers, and even the frame of the body, are much more affected, than when the same persons have as great spiritual light and joy afterwards; of which it might, perhaps, be easy to give a tea-son. The forementioned Reverend Messrs. *Lord* and *Owen*—who, I believe, are esteemed persons of learning and discretion where they are best known—declared, that they found these *impressions* on persons' *imaginations* quite different things from what fame had before represented to them, and that they were what none need to wonder at— or to that purpose.

There have indeed been some few instances of *impressions* on persons' *imaginations*, which have been somewhat mysterious to me, and I have been at a loss about them. For, though it has been exceeding evident to me, by many things that appeared both then and afterwards, that they indeed had a greater sense of the spiritual excellency of divine things accompanying them; yet I have not been able well to satisfy myself, whether their imaginary *ideas* have been more than could naturally arise from their spiritual sense of things. However, I have used the utmost caution in such cases; great care has been taken both in public and in private to teach persons the difference between **what is spiritual and what is merely imaginary.** I have often warned persons not to lay the stress of their hope on any *ideas* of any outward glory, or any external thing whatsoever, and have met with no opposition in such instructions. **But it is not strange if some weaker persons, in giving an account of their experiences, have not so prudently distinguished between the spiritual and imaginary part; of which some who have not been well affected to religion might take advantage.**

There has been much talk in many parts of the country, as though the people have symbolized with the *quakers*, and the *quakers themselves* have been moved with such reports; and some came here, once and again, hoping to find good waters to fish in; but without the least success, and have left off coming. There have also been reports spread about the country, as though the first occasion of so remarkable a concern was an apprehension that the world was near to an end; which was altogether a false report. Indeed, after this concern became so general and extraordinary, as related, the minds of some were filled with speculation, what so great a dispensation of Divine Providence might forebode; and some reports were heard from abroad, as though certain divines and others thought the conflagration was nigh; but such reports were never generally looked upon worthy of notice.

The work which has now been wrought on souls, is evidently the same that was wrought in my venerable predecessor's days; as I have had abundant opportunity to know, having been

in the ministry here two years with him, and so conversed with a considerable number whom my grandfather thought to be savingly converted at that time; and having been particularly acquainted with the experiences of many who were converted under his ministry before. And I know no one of them, who in the least doubts of its being the same spirit and the same work. Persons have now no otherwise been subject to impressions on their imaginations than formerly: the work is of the same nature, and has not been attended with any extraordinary circumstances, excepting such as are analogous to the extraordinary degree of it before described. And God's people who were formerly converted, have now partaken of the same shower of divine blessing—in the *renewing, strengthening, edifying influences* of the Spirit of God—that others have in his *converting influences*; and the work here has also been plainly the same with that of other places which have been mentioned, as partaking of the same blessing. I have particularly conversed with persons, about their experiences, who belong to all parts of the country, and in various parts of *Connecticut*, where a religious concern has lately appeared: and have been informed of the experiences of many others by their own pastors.

It is easily perceived by the foregoing account, that it is very much the practice of the people here, to converse freely one with another about their spiritual experiences; which many have been disgusted at. But however our people *may have*, in some respects, gone to extremes in it, it is, doubtless, a practice that the circumstances of this town, and neighboring towns, have naturally led them into. Whatsoever people have their minds engaged to such a degree in the same affair, that it is ever uppermost in their thoughts, they will naturally make it the subject of conversation when they get together, in which they will grow more and more free. Restraints will soon vanish; and they will not conceal from one another what they meet with. And it has been a practice which, in the general, has been attended with many good effects, and what God has greatly blessed amongst us: but it must be confessed, there may have been some ill consequences of it; which yet are rather to be laid to the *indiscreet management* of it than to the *practice itself*; and none can wonder, if among such a multitude some fail of exercising so much *prudence* in choosing the time, manner, and occasion of such discourse, as is desirable.

God is Not Obligated to Save You

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A Wicked Presumption Expounded

Excerpt from The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners

By Jonathan Edwards

5. Consider how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you, and how just it would therefore be, if he should refuse to hear you when you call upon him. You are ready, it may be, to complain that you have often prayed, and earnestly begged of God to show you mercy, and yet have no answer of prayer. One says, I have been constant in prayer for so many years, and God has not heard me. Another says, I have done what I can; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able; I do not see how I can do more; and it will seem hard if after all I am denied. **But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him?** God has called earnestly, and for a long time; he has called and called again in his word, and in his providence, and you have refused. You were not uneasy for fear you should not show regard enough to his calls. You let him call as loud and as long as he would; for your part, **you had no leisure to attend to what he said; you had other business to mind; you had these and those lusts to gratify and please, and worldly concerns to attend;** you could not afford to stand considering of what God had to say to you. When the ministers of Christ have stood and pleaded with you, in his name, sabbath after sabbath, and have even spent their strength in it, how little was you moved! It did not alter you, but you went on still as you used to do; when you went away, **you returned again to your sins, to your lasciviousness, to your vain mirth, to your covetousness, to your intemperance, and that has been the language of your heart and practice,** [Exodus 5:2](#). **"Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?"** Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? **And yet is it now very hard that God does not hear your earnest calls, and that though your calling on God be not from any respect to him, but merely from self-love?** The devil would beg as earnestly as you, if he had any hope to get salvation by it, and a thousand times as earnestly, and yet be as much of a devil as he is now. Are your calls more worthy to be heard than God's? Or is God more obliged to regard what you say to him, than you to regard his commands, counsels, and invitations to you? What can be more justice than this, [Proverbs 1:24](#), &c. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

6. **Have you not taken encouragement to sin against God, on that very presumption, that God would show you mercy when you sought it?** And may not God justly refuse you that mercy that you have so presumed upon? You have flattered yourself, that though you did so, yet God would show you mercy when you cried earnestly to him for it: how

righteous therefore would it be in God, to disappoint such a wicked presumption! It was upon that very hope that you dared to affront the majesty of heaven so dreadfully as you have done; **and can you now be so sottish as to think that God is obliged not to frustrate that hope?**

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect secret prayer which God has commanded, to gratify his lusts, to live a carnal vain life, to thwart God, to run upon him, and contemn him to his face, thinking with himself, "If I do so, God would not damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me;" must God be accounted hard because he will not do according to such a sinner's presumption?

Cannot he be excused from showing such a sinner mercy when he is pleased to seek it, without incurring the charge of being unjust; if this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honour and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuse of vile men, though they disobey, despise, and dishonour him, as much as they will; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace must not be in his own power and at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call. He must take these bold and vile contemners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it, and must forgive all their sins, and not only so, but must adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow eternal glory upon them. What mean, low, and strange thoughts have such men of God, who think thus of him! Consider, that you have injured God the more, and have been the worse enemy to him, for his being a merciful God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How just is it therefore that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being the worse to God because he is a being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. **This ought to win us, and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more**, has something inexpressibly bad in it, and does in a peculiar manner enhance guilt, and incense wrath; as seems to be intimated, [Romans 2:4, 5](#). "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The greater the mercy of God is, the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been contrariwise with you; the consideration of the mercies of God being so exceeding great, is the thing wherewith you have encouraged yourself

in sin. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account ventured to be a very great sinner. Though it was very offensive to God, though you heard that God infinitely hated sin, and that such practices as you went on in were exceeding contrary to his nature, will, and glory, yet that did not make you uneasy; you heard that he was a very merciful God, and had grace enough to pardon you, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. How long have some of you gone on in sin, and what great sins have some of you been guilty of, on that presumption! Your own conscience can give testimony to it, that this has made you refuse God's calls, and has made you regardless of his repeated commands. Now, how righteous would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful!

Your ingratitude has been the greater, that you have not only abused the attribute of God's mercy, taking encouragement from it to continue in sin, but you have also presumed that God would exercise infinite mercy to you in particular; which consideration should have especially endeared God to you. You have taken encouragement to sin the more, from that consideration, that Christ came into the world and died to save sinners; such thanks has Christ had from you, for enduring such a tormenting death for his enemies! Now, how justly might God refuse that you should ever be the better for his Son's laying down his life! It was because of these things that you put off seeking salvation. You would take the pleasures of sin still longer, hardening yourself because mercy was infinite, and it would not be too late, if you sought it afterwards; now, how justly may God disappoint you in this, and so order it that it shall be too late!

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Indeed it would not become the glory of God's majesty to show mercy to you, so sinful and vile a creature, for anything that you have done; **for such worthless and despicable things as your prayers, and other religious performances.** It would be very dishonourable and unworthy of God so to do, and it is in vain to expect it. He will show mercy only on Christ's account; and that, according to his sovereign pleasure, on whom he pleases, when he pleases, and in what manner he pleases. **You cannot bring him under obligation by your works; do what you will, he will not look on himself obliged.** But if it be his pleasure, he can honourably show mercy through Christ to any sinner of you all, not one in this congregation excepted.

History of Redemption, pg 581

Is it any wonder, then, that a **self-righteous spirit** is so represented in Scripture, and spoken of, as that which is most fatal to the souls of men? And is it any wonder, that

Christ is represented in Scripture as being so provoked with the Pharisees and others, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and were proud of their goodness, and thought that their own performances were a valuable price of God's favour and love?

Let persons hence be warned against a self-righteous spirit. You that are seeking salvation, and taking pains in religion, take heed to yourselves that you do not trust in what you do. Harbour no such thoughts, that God now, seeing how much you are reformed, how you are sometimes affected, will be pacified towards you, and will not be so angry for your former sins; that you shall gain on him by such things, and draw his heart to show you mercy. **If you entertain the thought, that God is *obliged* to do it, and does not act justly if he refuse to regard your prayers and pains; if you quarrel with God, and complain of him for not doing it, this shows what your opinion is of your own righteousness,** namely, that it is a valuable price of salvation, and ought to be accepted of God as such. Such complaining of God, and quarrelling with him, for not taking more notice of your righteousness, plainly shows that you are guilty of arrogance, thinking yourself sufficient to offer the price of your own salvation.

Excellent discourse on moral inability as not excuse for non compliance to God's commands and invitations in answer to the common objection that God is not sincere in his offers of the Gospel to those he knows will not repent.

On Freedom of the Will

code123 code253

Part III, Section IV

<https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/will/will.iv.iv.html>

Pg 50-51

III. Though the opposition of the Will itself, or the very want of Will to a thing commanded, implies a moral inability to that thing; yet, if it be, as has been already shown, that the being of a good state or act of will, is a thing most properly required by Command; then, in some cases, such a state or act of Will may properly be required, which at present is not, and which may also be wanting after it is commanded. And therefore those things may properly be commanded, for which men have a moral Inability.

Such a state or act of the Will, may be required by Command, as does not already exist. **For if that volition only may be commanded to be, which already is, there could be no use of precept: Commands in all cases would be perfectly vain and impertinent.** [So, regarding conversion, why would God command or invite one to believe the gospel if he already has saving faith; it's impertinent.] And not only may such a Will be required, as is wanting before the Command is given, but also such as may possibly be wanting afterwards; such as the exhibition of the Command may not be effectual to produce or excite. **Otherwise, no such thing as disobedience to a proper and rightful Command is possible in any case; and there is no case possible, wherein there can be a faulty disobedience.** Which Arminians cannot affirm, consistently with their principle: for this makes obedience to just and proper Commands always necessary, and disobedience impossible. And so the Arminian would overthrow himself, yielding the very point we are upon, which he so strenuously denies, viz. that Law and Command are consistent with necessity.

If merely that Inability will excuse disobedience, which is implied in the opposition or defect of inclination, remaining after the Command is exhibited, **then wickedness always carries that in it which excuses it.** By how much the more wickedness there is in a man's heart, by so much is his inclination to evil the stronger, and by so much the more, therefore, has he of moral Inability to the good required. His moral Inability consisting in the strength of his evil inclination, is the very thing wherein his wickedness consists; and yet, according to Arminian principles, it must be a thing inconsistent with wickedness; and by how much the more he has of it, by so much is he the further from wickedness.

Therefore, on the whole, it is manifest, that moral Inability alone (which consists in disinclination) never renders anything improperly the subject matter of Precept or Command, and never can excuse any person in disobedience, or want of conformity to a command.

Natural Inability, arising from the want of natural capacity, or external hindrance, (which alone is properly called Inability,) without doubt wholly excuses, or makes a thing improperly the matter of Command. If men are excused from doing or acting any good thing, supposed to be commanded, it must be through some defect or obstacle that is not in the Will itself, but either in the capacity of understanding, or body, or outward circumstances.— Here two or three things may be observed,

1. As to spiritual acts, or any good thing in the state or imminent acts of the will itself, or of the **affections**, (which are only certain modes of the exercise of the Will,) if persons are justly excused, it must be through want of capacity in the natural faculty of understanding. Thus the same spiritual duties, or holy affections and exercises of heart, cannot be required of men, as may be of angels; the capacity of understanding being so much inferior. So men cannot be required to love those amiable persons, whom they have had no opportunity to see, or hear of, or know in any way agreeable to the natural state and capacity of the human understanding. **But the insufficiency of motives will not excuse;** unless their being insufficient arises not from the moral state of the Will or inclination itself, but from the state of the natural understanding. The great kindness and generosity of another may be a motive insufficient to excite gratitude in the person that receives the kindness, through his vile and ungrateful temper: in this case, the insufficiency of the motive arises from the state of the Will or inclination of heart, and does not at all excuse. But if this generosity is not sufficient to excite gratitude, being unknown, there being no means of information adequate to the state and measure of the person's faculties, this insufficiency is attended with a natural Inability, which entirely excuses it.

2. As to such motions of body, or exercises and alterations of mind, which do not consist in the imminent acts or state of the Will itself — but are supposed to be required as effects of the will, in cases wherein there is no want of a capacity of understanding that inability, and that only, excuses, which consists in want of connexion between them and the Will. If the will fully complies, and the proposed effect does not prove, according to the laws of nature, to be connected with his volition, the man is perfectly excused; he has a natural Inability to the thing required. For the Will itself, as has been observed, is all that can be directly and immediately required by Command; and other things only indirectly, as connected with the Will. If therefore, there be a full compliance of Will, the person has done his duty; and if other things do not prove to be connected with his volition, that is not criminally owing to him.

Next, is a very good point on this subject of *commands and invitations*; Arminians accuse Calvinists that God's invitation to eternal life to those he knows will not believe, is insincere; that he invites those to eternal life knowing that they are reprobate and will not repent. Edwards answers this below. But also, Edwards explains in another discourse, this is no different than God's threatenings to believers lest they perish knowing that they will not be perish (this is a means to excite one to obedience); or as Paul says in *1Cor9:27*, "But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." **knowing certainly that he will not be.**

3. Both these kinds of natural Inability, and all Inability that excuses, may be resolved into one thing; namely, want of natural capacity or strength; either capacity of understanding, or external strength. For when there are external defects and obstacles, they would be no obstacles, were it not for the imperfection and limitations of understanding and strength.

Corol. If things for which men have a moral Inability may properly be the matter of Precept or Command, then they may also of invitation and counsel. Commands and invitations come very much to the same thing; the difference is only circumstantial: Commands are as much a manifestation of the will of him that speaks, as invitations, and as much testimonies of expectation of compliance. The difference between them lies in nothing that touches the affair in hand. **The main difference between Command and invitation consists in the enforcement of the Will of him who commands or invites. In the latter it is his kindness, the goodness from which his Will arises: in the former it is his authority.** But whatever be the ground of Will in him that speaks, or the enforcement of what he says, yet, **seeing neither his Will, nor his expectation, is any more testified in the one case than the other; therefore, a person being directed by invitation, is no more an evidence of insincerity in him that directs — in manifesting either a Will or expectation which he has not — than a person being known to be morally unable to do what he is directed by command is an evidence of insincerity.** **So that all this grand objection of Arminians against the Inability of fallen men to exert faith in Christ, or to perform other spiritual duties, from the sincerity of God's counsels and invitations, must be without force.**

God Is Not A Debtor

code124 code255

No man can do anything to merit eternal life. Grace must be freely given or else it is not grace but a debt owed to man, Romans 11:6, *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.* And Romans 11:35, *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* ³⁵ *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”*

Here Thomas Shepard explains this from his book, [The Sincere Convert](#) pg 68 & 85

Pg 68 Chap. IV

Here, likewise, is matter of reproof to such as seek to come out of this misery from and by themselves [e.g., by a prayer or other sacramental work]. If they be ignorant, they hope to be saved by their good meaning and prayers. If civil, by paying all they owe, and doing as they would be done by, and by doing nobody any harm. If they be troubled about their estates, then they lick themselves whole by their mourning, repenting, and reforming. O, poor stubble, can you stand before this consuming fire without sin? Can you make yourself a Christ for yourself? Can you bear and come from under an infinite wrath? Can you bring in perfect righteousness into the presence of God? This Christ must do, else he could not satisfy and redeem. And if you can not do thus, and have no Christ, desire and pray that heaven and earth shake till you have worn your tongue to the stumps; endeavor as much as you can, and others commend thee for a diligent Christian; mourn in some wilderness till doomsday; dig your grave there with thy nails; weep buckets full of hourly tears, till you can weep no more; fast and pray till your skin and bones cleave together; promise and purpose with full resolution to be better; nay, reform your head, heart, life, and tongue, and some, nay, all sins; live like an angel; shine like a sun; walk up and down the world like a distressed pilgrim going to another country, so that all Christians commend and admire thee; die ten thousand deaths; lie at the fire back in hell so many millions of years as there be piles of grass on the earth, or sands upon the sea shore, or stars in heaven, or motes in the sun; I tell you, not one spark of God's wrath against your sin shall be, can be, quenched by all these duties, nor by any of these sorrows, or tears; for these are not the blood of Christ. Nay, if all the angels and saints in heaven and earth should pray for you, these cannot deliver you, for they are not the blood of Christ. Nay, God, as a Creator, having made a law, will not forgive one sin without the blood of Christ; nay, Christ's blood will not do it neither, if you do join never so little that you have or do unto Jesus Christ, and make yourself or any of thy duties copartners with Christ in that great work of saving thee. Cry out, therefore, as that blessed martyr did, None but Christ, none but Christ.

Continued on pg 85, Chap V

But I pray, and that often.

This you may do, and yet never be saved. (Isa. 1:11.) *To what purpose is your multitude of sacrifices?* Nay, thou mayest pray with much affection, with a good heart, as you think, yet a thousand miles off from being saved. (Prov. 1:8.)

But I fast sometimes, as well as pray.

So did the scribes and Pharisees, even twice a week, which could not be public, but private fasts. And yet this righteousness could never save them.

But I hear the word of God, and like the best preachers.

This you may do too, and yet never be saved. Nay, you may so hear, as to receive much joy and comfort in hearing, nay, to believe and catch hold on Christ, and so say and think he is thine, and yet not be saved; as the stony ground did, (Matt, 13), *who heard the word with joy, and for a season believed.*

I read the Scriptures often.

This you may do too, and yet never be saved; as the Pharisees, who were so perfect in reading the Bible, that Christ needed but only say, "It hath been said of old time;" for they knew the text and place well enough without intimation.

But I am grieved and am sorrowful, and repent for my sins past.

Judas did thus, (Matt, 27:3); he repents himself with a legal repentance for fear of hell, and with a natural sorrow for dealing so unkindly with Christ, in betraying not only blood, but innocent blood. True humiliation is ever accompanied with hearty reformation.

O, but I love good men and their company.

So did the *five foolish virgins* love the company, and (at the time of extremity) the very oil and grace of the wise; yet they were locked out of the gates of mercy.

But God hath given me more knowledge than others, or than I myself had once.

This you may have, and be able to teach others, and think so of yourself too, and yet never be saved.

But I keep the Lord's day strictly.

So did the Jews, whom yet Christ condemned, and were never saved.

I have very many good desires and endeavors to get to heaven.

These you and thousands may have, and yet miss of heaven.

Many shall seek to enter in at that narrow gate, and not be able.

True, you will say, Many men do many duties, but without any life or zeal; I am zealous.

So you may be, and yet never be saved, as **Jehu**. Paul was zealous when he was a Pharisee, and if he was so for a false religion, and a bad cause, why, much more may you be for a good cause; so zealous as not only to cry out against profaneness in the wicked, but civil honesty of others, and hypocrisy of others, yea, even of the coldness of the best

of God's people; you may be the fore horse in the team, and the ringleader of good exercises amongst the best men, (as Joash, a wicked king, was the first that complained of the negligence of his best officers in not repairing the temple,) and so stir them up unto it; nay, you may be so forward as to be persecuted, and not yield an inch, nor shrink in the wetting, but may manfully and courageously stand it out in time of persecution, as the thorny ground did: so zealous you may be, as to like best of and to flock most unto the most zealous preachers, that search men's consciences best, as the whole country of Judea came flocking to John's ministry, and delighted to hear him for a season; nay, you may be zealous as to take sweet delight in doing of all these things. (Isa. 58:2, 3,) "They delight in approaching near unto God," yet come short of heaven.

But thou will say, True, many a man rides post that breaks his neck at last; many a man is zealous, but his fire is soon quenched, and his zeal is soon spent; they hold not out; whereas I am constant, and persevere in godly courses. So did that young man; yet he was a graceless man. (Matt. xix. 20,) "All these things have I done from my youth; what lack I yet?"

It is true, hypocrites may persevere; but they know themselves to be naught all the while, and so deceive others; but I am persuaded that I am in God's favor, and in a safe and happy estate, since I do all with a good heart for God. This you may verily think of yourself, and yet be deceived and damned, and go to the devil at last. "*There is a way,*" says Solomon, "*that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.*" For he is a hypocrite **not only that makes a seeming outward show of what he has not**, but also that hath a true show of what indeed there is not. The first sort of hypocrites deceive others only; the latter, having some inward yet common work, deceive themselves too. (James i. 26,) "*If any man seem to be religious,*" (so many are, and so deceive the world;) but it is added, "*deceiving his own soul.*" Way, you may go so fairly, and live so honestly, that all the best Christians about you may think well of you and never suspect you, and so may pass through the world, and die with a deluded comfort that you shall go to heaven and be canonized for a saint in thy funeral sermon, and never know you are counterfeit till the Lord brings thee to thy strict and last examination, and so you receive that dreadful sentence, "Go, ye cursed." So it was with the five foolish virgins, that were never discovered by the wise, nor by themselves, until the gate of grace was shut upon them. If you have, therefore, no better evidences to show for thyself, that your estate is good, than these, I will not give a pin's point for all your nattering false hopes of being saved. But it may be you have never yet come so far as to this pitch; and if not, Lord, what will become of thee? **Suspect yourself much**, and

when, in this shipwreck of souls, you see so many thousands sink, cry out, and conclude, It is a wonder of wonders, and a thousand and a thousand to one, if ever you come safe to shore.

O, strive, then, to be one of them that shall be saved, though it cost you your blood and the loss of all that you have; labor to go beyond all those that go so far and yet perish at the last. Do not say that, seeing so few shall be saved, therefore this discourages me from seeking, because all my labor may be in vain. Consider that Christ here makes another and a better use of it. (Luke iii 21.) Seeing that "*many shall seek and not enter, therefore,*" saith he, "*strive to enter in at the strait gate.*" Venture, at least, and try what the Lord will do for thee. Wherein doth the child of God, and so how may I, go beyond these hypocrites that go so far?

In three things principally.

First. **No unregenerate man, though he go never so far, let him do never so much, but he lives in some one sin or other, secret or open, little or great.** Judas went far, but he was covetous. Herod went far, but he loved his Herodias. Every dog hath his kennel; every swine has his swill, and every wicked man his lust. For no unregenerate man has fruition of God to content him, and there is no man's heart but it must have some good to content it; which good is to be found only in the fountain of all good, and that is God, or in the cistern, and that is in the creatures. Hence, a man having lost full content in God, he seeks for and feeds upon contentment in the creature which he makes a god to him; and here lies his lust or sin, which he must needs live in. Hence, ask those men that go very far, and take their penny for good silver, and commend themselves for their good desires — I say, ask them if they have no sin. Yes, say they; who can live without sin? And so they give way to sin, and therefore live in sin. Nay, commonly, all the duties, prayers, care, and zeal of the best hypocrites are to **hide a lust**, as the whore in the Proverbs, that wipes her mouth, and goes to the temple, and pays her vows; or to feed a lust, as **Jehu** his zeal against Baal was to get a kingdom. There remains a root of bitterness in the best hypocrites, which, howsoever it be lopped off sometimes by **sickness** or **horror of conscience**, and a man hath purposes never to commit again, yet there it secretly lurks; and, though it seems to be bound and conquered **by the word**, or **by prayer, or by outward crosses, or while the hand of God is upon a man**, yet the inward strength and power of it remains still; and therefore, when temptations, like strong Philistines, are upon this man again, he breaks all vows, promises, bonds of God, and will save the life of his sin.

Secondly. No unregenerate man or woman ever came to be poor in spirit, and so to be carried out of all duties unto Christ. If it were possible for them to forsake and break loose forever from all sin, yet here they stick, as the scribes and Pharisees; and so, like zealous Paul before his conversion, they fasted and prayed, and kept the Sabbath, but they rested in their legal righteousness, and in the performance of these and the like duties. Take the best hypocrite, that has the most strong persuasions of God's love to him, and ask him why he hopes to be saved. He will answer, I pray, read, hear, love good men, cry out of the sins of the time. And tell him again that a hypocrite may climb these stairs and go as far, he will reply, True, indeed; but they do not what they do with a sound heart, but to be seen of men. Mark, now, how these men feel a good heart in themselves and in all things they do; **and therefore feel not a want of all good, which is poverty of spirit; and therefore here they fall short.** (Is. lxvi. 2.) There were many hypocrites forward for the worship of God in the temple; but God loathes these, because not poor in spirit; to them only, it is said, the Lord will look. I have seen many professors very forward for all good duties, but as ignorant of Christ, when they are sifted, as blocks. And if a man (as few do) know not Christ, **he must rest in his duties, because he knows not Christ,** to whom he must go and be carried if ever he be saved. I have heard of a man that, being condemned to die, thought to escape the gallows, and to save himself from hanging, by a certain gift he said he had of whistling. So men seek to save themselves by their gifts of knowledge, gifts of memory, gifts of prayer; and when they see they must die for their sins, this is the ruin of many a soul, that, though he forsake Egypt and his sins and flesh pots there, and will never be so as he has been, yet he never comes into Canaan, but loses himself and his soul **in a wilderness of many duties,** and there perisheth.

Thirdly. If any unregenerate man come unto Christ, he never gets into Christ, that is, never takes his eternal rest and lodging in Jesus Christ only. (Heb. 6:4-5) Judas followed Christ for the bag; he would have the bag and Christ too. The young man came unto Christ to be his disciple; but he would have Christ and the world too. They will not content them-selves with Christ alone, nor with the world alone, but make their markets out of both, like whorish wives, that will please their husbands and others too. Men in distress of conscience, if they have comfort from Christ, they are contented; if they have salvation from hell by Christ, they are contented; but Christ himself contents them not. Thus far a hypocrite goes not. So much for the first doctrine observed out of the text. I come now to the second.

Continual Supplies of Grace

code256

Man's utter dependence upon God, etc
& the Defectibility of Adam (man without Christ)

code125

excerpts from John Flavel, [Method of Grace](#)
<https://thepuritans.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/flavel-vol-2.pdf>

The following excerpts from John Flavel show the necessity of our dependence upon Christ either for natural sustenance (*in him we live and move and have our being*, Acts 17:28, or for spiritual strength, *for without Me you can do nothing*, John 15:45. This will shed light on the main difference between the Old Covenant or the Covenant of Works

under which Adam was (Adam being the federal head of all mankind), and the New Covenant or the Covenant of Grace in which the remnant or elect are promised a surety, righteousness and a continual supplies of grace to prevent any *fall* again, *we are kept by the power of God* (1Pet1:5). The whole purpose of this was to show man's nothingness compared to the infinite glory of God; actually, to display God glory, the *ultimate end* in the creation of the universe; that God's glory and especially, Christ, would be *preeminent* (Col. 1:18); that man of himself is insufficient, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God," (2Cor 3:5).

pg 349

Sixthly, The same power which created the world, still underprops and supports it in its being: the world owes its conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God, without which it could not subsist one moment. Just so it is with the new creation, which entirely depends upon the preserving power, which first formed it, Jude ver. 1. "Preserved in Christ Jesus," and 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." As in a natural way "we live, move, and have our being in God," Acts xvii. 28, so in a spiritual way, we continue believing, repenting, loving, and delighting in God; **without whose continued influence upon our souls, we could do neither.**

p 322-23 First use for information.

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine which asserts the possibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace? The desire of **self-sufficiency** was the ruin of Adam, and the conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes of his posterity. This doctrine is not only contradictory to the current stream of scripture, Phil. ii. 13, 1 John 1:13, with many other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and overthrow.

5. The necessity of saving grace in all sufferers for Christ, will farther appear from this consideration, that he who will run all hazards for Christ, **had need of a continual supply of strength and refreshment from time to time.** He must not depend on anything that is failable; for what shall he do then when that stock is spent, and he hath no provision left to live upon? Now all natural qualifications, yea, all the common gifts of the Spirit, are failable and short-lived things; they are like a sweet flower in the bosom, that is an ornament for a little while, but withers presently. Or like a pond or brook occasioned by a great fall of rain, which quickly sinks and dries up, because it is not fed by springs in the bottom, as other fountain-waters are; and hence it is they cannot continue and hold

out when sufferings come, Mat. 13:21, because there is no root to nourish and support. The hypocrite will not always call upon God, Job 27:10. Though they may keep company with Christ a few miles in this dirty way, yet they must turn back at last, and shake hands eternally with him, John 6:66. These comets may seem to shine for a time among the stars, but when that earthly matter is spent, they must fall and lose their glory. But now grace is an everlasting principle, it hath springs in the bottom that never fail, "I shall be in him (saith Christ) a well of water springing up into eternal life," John 4:14. The Spirit of God supplies it from time to time, as need requires. **It hath daily incomes from heaven**, 2 Cor. 1:5, Phil. 4:13, Col. 1:11. So that it is our union with Christ, the Fountain of grace, that is the true ground of our constancy and long suffering. pg 29 Vol. VI

It is true, that our ability to stand is not from our own inherent grace; "For by his strength shall no man prevail," 1 Sam. 2:9. And yet it is as true, that without grace, both inherent in us, and excited and prepared for a storm, we cannot expect to stand; for these two, grace inherent in us, and grace exciting and assisting without are not opposed, but co-ordinated. Grace in us, is the weapon by which our enemy falls; **but then that weapon must be managed by the hand of the Spirit**. Well then, look upon this as a choice mercy, which tends so much to your stability. Pg 23, Vol. VI

Adam, (man without Christ) Defectible

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[Fountain of Life \(Vol. 1\) by John Flavel, Sermon 28](#)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/flavel/fountain.v.xxviii.html>

Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it will. The angels left to themselves, quickly left their own habitations, [Jude 6](#). Upon which, one well observes, That the best of created perfections, are of themselves defectible. Every excellency without the prop of divine preservation, is but a weight which tends to a fall. The angels in their innocence, were but frail, without God's sustentation; even grace itself is but a creature, and therefore purely dependant. It is not from its being and nature, but from the assistance of

something without it, that it is kept from annihilation. What becomes of the stream, if the fountain supply it not? What continuance has the reflection in the glass, if the man that looks into it, turn away his face? The constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, are the food and fuel of all our graces. The best men will show themselves but men if God leave them. He who has set them up, must also keep them. It is safer to be humble with one talent, than proud with ten; yea, better to be an humble worm, than a proud angel. Adam had more advantage to maintain his station than any of you. For though he were left to the liberty of his own mutable and self-determining will; and though he was created upright, and had no inherent corruption to endanger him, yet he fell.

And shall we be self confident, after such instances of human frailty! Alas, Christian! What match art thou for principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness! **“Be not high-minded, but fear.” When you have considered well the example of Noah, Lot, David, and Hezekiah, men famous and renowned in their generations, who all fell by temptations; yea, and that when one would think they had never been better provided to cope with them. Lot fell after, yea, presently after the Lord had thrust him out of Sodom, and his eyes had seen the direful punishment of sin. Hell, as it were, rained upon them out of heaven. Noah, in like manner, immediately after God’s wonderful, and astonishing preservation of him in the ark; when he saw a world of men and women, perishing in the floods for their sins. David, after the Lord had settled the kingdom on him, which for sin he rent from Saul, and given him rest in his house. Hezekiah was but just up from a great sickness, wherein the Lord wrought a wonderful salvation for him. Did such men, and at such times, when one would think no temptations should have prevailed, fall; and that so foully? **Then “let him that thinks he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” O be not high minded, but fear.****

Inference 2. Did Christ stand his ground, and go through with his suffering-work, when all that had followed him, forsook him? Then a resolved adherence to God, and duty, though left alone, without company or encouragement, is Christ-like, and truly excellent. You shall not want better company than that which has forsaken you in the way of God. Elijah complains, [1 Kings 19: 10](#) “They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away” And yet all this did not damp or discourage him in following the Lord; for still he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.

Paul complains, [2 Tim 4: 16](#) “At my first answer no man stood by me, all men forsook me: nevertheless the Lord stood with me.” And as the Lord stood by him, so he stood by

his God alone, without any aids or support from men. How great an argument of integrity is this! He that professes Christ for company, will also leave him for company. But to be faithful to God, when forsaken of men; to be a Lot, in Sodomy a Noah, in a corrupted generation; oh, how excellent is it! It is sweet to travel over this earth to heaven, in the company of the saints, that are bound it thither with us, if we can; but if we can meet no company, we must not be discouraged to go on. It is not unlike, but before you have gone many steps farther, you may have cause to say, as one did once, Never less alone, than when alone.

Inference 3. Did the disciples thus forsake Christ, and yet were all recovered at last? Then, though believers are not privileged from backsliding, yet they are secured from final apostasy and ruin. The new creature may be sick, it cannot die. Saints may fall, but they shall rise again, [Micah 7: 8](#). The highest flood, of natural zeal and resolution, may ebb, and be wholly dried up; but saving grace is “a well of water, still springing up into everlasting life,” [John 4: 14](#). God’s unchangeable election, the frame and constitution of the New Covenant, the meritorious and prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, do give the believer abundant security against the danger of a total and final apostasy. “My Father, which gave them me, saith Christ, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand,” [John 10: 29](#).

And again, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth who are his,” [2 Tim. 2: 19](#). Every person committed to Christ by the Father, shall be brought by him to the Father, and not one wanting.

God has also so framed and ordered the new covenant, that none of those souls, who are within the blessed clasp and bond of it can possibly be lost. It is settled upon immutable things: and we know all things are as their foundations be, [Heb. 6: 18, 19](#). Among the many glorious promises contained in the bundle of promises, this is one, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

And as the fear of God in our hearts, pleads in us against sin, so our potent intercessor in the heavens pleads for us with the Father; and by reason thereof, we cannot finally miscarry, [Rom. 8: 34, 35](#). Upon these grounds, we may (as the apostle in the place last cited does) triumph in that full security which God has given us; and say, What “shall separate us from the love of God?” Understand it either of God’s to us, as Calvin, Beza,

and Martyr do; or of our love to God, as Ambrose and Augustine do: it is true in both senses, and a most comfortable truth.

Inference 4. Did the sheep fly, when the shepherd was smitten; such men, and so many forsake Christ in the trial? Then learn how sad a thing it is for the best of men to be left to their own carnal fears in a day of temptation: This was it that made those good men shrink away so shamefully from Christ in that trial: "The fear of man brings a snare," [Prov. 29: 25](#). In that snare these good souls were taken, and for a time held fast. Oh what work will this unruly passion make, if the fear of God do not over-rule it! Is it not a shame to a Christian, a man of faith to see himself out done by an Heathen? Shall natural conscience and courage make them stand and keep their places in times of danger; when we shamefully turn our backs upon duty, because we see duty and danger together?

When the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidius Priscus not to come to the senate; or, if he did, to speak nothing but what he would have him; the senator returned this brave and noble answer, "That as he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if, being there, he were required to give his advice, he would speak freely, that which his conscience commanded him." The emperor threatening that then he should die; he returned thus, "Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do you what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in me to die constantly." O think, what mischief you; fears may do yourselves, and the discovery of them to others. O learn to trust God with your lives, liberties, and comforts, in the way of your duty; and at that time you are afraid trust in him; and do not magnify poor dust and ashes, as to be scared, by their threat, from your God and your duty. The politic design of Satan herein, is to affright you out of your coverts, where you are safe, into the net. I will enlarge on this no farther; I have elsewhere laid down fourteen rules for the cure of this, in what of mine is public.

Inference 5. Learn hence, How much a man may differ from himself, according as the Lord is with him, or withdrawn from him. The Christian does not always differ from other men, but sometimes from himself also; yea, so great is the difference betwixt himself and himself, as if he were not the same man. And where is he that does not so experience it? Sometimes bold and courageous, despising dangers, bearing down all discouragements in the strength of zeal, and love to God: at another time faint, feeble, and discourage at every petty thing. Whence is this but from the different administrations of the Spirit, who sometimes gives forth more, and sometimes less, of

his gracious influence. These very men that flinched now, when the Spirit was more abundantly shed forth upon them, could boldly own Christ before the council, and despised all dangers for his sake.

A little dog, if his master be by, and encourage him, will venture upon a greater beast than himself. Peter stood at the door without, when the other disciple, (or one of the other disciples, as the Syrian turns it, and Grotius approves it as the best), i.e. one of the private disciples that lived at Jerusalem, went in so boldly, [John 18: 16, 17](#). We are strong or weak, according to the degrees of assisting grace. So that as you cannot take the just measure of a Christian by one act, so neither must they judge of themselves, by what they sometimes feel in themselves.

But when their spirits are low, and their hearts discouraged, they should rather say to their souls, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him:" It is low with me now, but it will be better.

pg 154 vol. 2 Method of Grace, Flavel

How securely is the saints inheritance settled upon them, seeing they are in common with Jesus Christ f Christ and his saints are joint-heirs, and the inheritance cannot be alienated but by his consent; he must lose his interest, if you lose yours. Indeed Adam's inheritance was by a single title, and moreover, it was in his own hand, and so he might, (as indeed he soon did) divest himself and his posterity of it, but it is not so betwixt Christ and believers; we are secured in our inheritance by Christ our co-heir, who will never alienate it; and therefore it was truly observed by the father, Job was happier upon the dunghill, than Adam was in paradise. The covenant of grace is certainly the best tenure, as it hath the best mercies, so it gives the fullest security to enjoy them.

from Method of Grace, (Vol. 2) p349 John Flavel:

Sixthly, The same power which created the world, still underprops and supports it in its being; the world owes its conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God, without which it could not subsist one moment. Just so it is with the new creation, which entirely depends upon the preserving power, which first formed it; Jude ver. 1. "Preserved in Christ Jesus," and [1 Pet. 1:5](#). "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." As in a natural way "we live, move, and have our being in God," [Acts 17:28](#), so in a spiritual way, we continue believing, repenting, loving, and delighting in God; without whose continued influence upon our souls, we could do neither. [And that's why Adam fell; all his perseverance depended upon him and not God, which is the whole point of the bible; for my namesake says God! for my glory!]

My note:

Here is a statement that I heard on the Ben Shapiro Show this morning that sums up original sin, man's depravity: his pride, self-reliance, self-righteousness, addictedness to his own will, practical atheism, and an Arminian/Pelagian bent:

"Man was born on third base, and he thinks he hit a triple."

This is so true! Now you can get a clearer sense of our miserable, self-deceived condition as we are born into the world.

This will give you more depth of understanding God's sovereignty over all things including sin and its use for God's glory. Bavinck explains that it occurs not by mere permission but by God's will. He also mentions that man, and in fact all things created are mutable, and in the case of man, defectible as Adam was, even having been created righteous and holy. Also included are comments on the image of God and God's glory.

Sin and the Will of God

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From

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 3, pg 62-67

[skip to pg 62]

Not Mere "Permission"

Christian theology, for that matter, when speaking of God's government over sin, never stopped with the idea of permission. For if both Scripture and Christian thought forbade placing sin completely or partly outside the will and providence of God, a solution could only be attempted by making a distinction in the manner of God's government over the good and over the evil. And indeed, though in a sense it can be said that God willed sin, that is, he willed that there would be sin, he willed evil in a totally different sense than good. He takes delight in the good but hates evil with divine hatred. In order that this difference in God's government may stand out, we need first of all to point out that God and humanity, though never separate, are nevertheless always distinct. Faith is a gift. God causes people to believe; still, formally speaking, it is not God who believes, but the human being. This applies even more intensely to the sinful deed. Materially, certainly, this must be attributed to God, **but formally it remains the responsibility of human beings. When a murderer kills somebody, all the planning ability and the power he needs for that purpose come from God, but the act, from a formal point of view, is his, not God's.** Indeed, the fact of homicide taken by itself is not yet a sin, for the same thing frequently occurs in war and on the scaffold. **What makes homicide a sin is not the matter, the substrate, but the form, that is, the depravity, the lawlessness (ἀνομία) of the deed; not the substance but the accident in the act.**[99]

Lodged against this view is the objection that this distinction, even though correct, actually makes no difference because it places the formal aspect of the deed, the sinfulness in the sin, outside God's government.[100] This comment is only partly correct: it contains truth, not in general but in this particular case as it pertains to sin. In respect of faith, no one will infer from the fact that humans are the formal subject of it that it therefore lies outside God's providence. But it is true that, in the case of faith, things are very different than in the case of sin. **Faith, after all, is an absolute gift and excludes all merit; sin, by contrast, is a human deed and carries guilt with it.** Consequently, sin here must be opposed not to faith, which is given by God out of grace, but to the good that humans would have done had they not fallen. **That good, materially speaking, would have been totally the work of God; formally, however, human beings would be the subject of it, and for them it would have carried with it—not of itself but in**

virtue of the covenant of works—a claim to reward. Now, sin is no more situated outside God's providence than the good, on the ground that it formally has humanity, not God, as subject.

Yet there is more. In the case of the good, God's providence must be understood as God himself by his Spirit working in the subject and positively enabling this subject to do good. [e.g., Isa. 26:12] In the case of sin, it may not be pictured that way. Sin is lawlessness, deformity, and does not have God as its efficient cause, but at most as its deficient cause. Light cannot of itself produce darkness; the darkness only arises when the light is withdrawn. God, therefore, is at most the negative or incidental cause of sin; its real and positive cause is located in human beings. However, because sin is merely a form and not a substance, it is in no way placed outside God's providence by being formally a human act. He impacts it in a way that completely corresponds to the nature of sin. Just as in his providence he governs all things in keeping with their nature, so in the domain of morality God also upholds the ordinances he has established specifically for that domain. Sin also arises and develops in accordance with a fixed law, not the laws of nature or of logic but those that are increaded in the ethical life and are still operative in its destruction. Sickness, decomposition, and death are the antipodes of health, development, and life, but are no less than these controlled from beginning to end by fixed laws. In the same way, there is a law of sin that determines its entire history both in individuals and in humanity as a whole. And precisely this normativity in sin proves that God's kingdom governs in and over it as well. People who sin do not make themselves free and independent of God; on the contrary, though they were sons and daughters before, they are now slaves. Those who commit sin become the slaves of sin.[101]

Possibility of Sin as God's Will

By the distinction of the material and the normal aspect of sin, however, we have not yet [in any way] answered the question why God included sin in his decree and its execution. The answer is implied in the providence of God as it also pertains to sin. Scripture repeatedly states that God uses sin as punishment of the wicked (Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Judg. 9:23–24; John 12:40; Rom. 1:21–28; 2 Thess. 2:11–12), as a means of saving his people (Gen. 45:5; 50:20), to test and chastise believers (Job 1:11–12; 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:13; 11:19; 2 Cor. 12:7), and to glorify his name (Exod. 7:3; Prov. 16:4;

Rom. 9:17; 11:33; etc.). Precisely because God is the absolutely Holy and Almighty One, he can use sin as a means in his hand. Creatures cannot do that; with the least contact, they themselves become polluted and impure. **But God is so infinitely far removed from wickedness that he can make sin, as an unresisting instrument, subservient to his glorification.** There are countless examples that prove that also in this connection “when two parties do the same thing, it is not the same.” It was God’s will that Shimei cursed David, that Satan tested Job, that Jews and Gentiles wanted to give up God’s holy servant Jesus to death—still in all these iniquities, human creatures are guilty and God is innocent. **For even when he wants there to be evil, he only wants it in a way that is holy: though using it, he never commits it.** And for that reason, he has also allowed sin in his creation. He would not have tolerated it had he not been able to govern it in an absolute holy and sovereign manner. He would not have put up with it if he were not God, the Holy and Omnipotent One. But being God, he did not fear its existence and its power. **He willed it so that in it and against it he might bring to light his divine attributes.** If he had not allowed it to exist, there would always have been a rationale for the idea that he was not in all his attributes superior to a power whose possibility was inherent in creation itself. **For all rational creatures as creatures, as finite, limited, changeable beings, have the possibility of apostatizing.** But God, because he is God, never feared the way of freedom, the reality of sin, the eruption of wickedness, or the power of Satan. So, both in its origin and its development, God always exercises his rule over sin. He does not force it, nor does he block it with violence but rather allows it to reach its full dynamic potential. He remains king yet still gives it free rein in his kingdom. He allows it to have everything—his world, his creatures, even his Anointed—**for evils cannot exist without goods.** He allows it to use all that is his; he gives it opportunity to show what it can do in order, in the end, as King of kings, to leave the theater of battle. For sin is of such a nature that it destroys itself by the very freedom granted it; it dies of its own diseases; it dooms itself to death. At the apex of its power, it is, by the cross alone, publicly shown up in its powerlessness (Col. 2:15).[102]

For that reason God willed there to be sin. “Although, therefore, what is evil, insofar as it is evil is not a good, nevertheless it is well that not only good but also evil should exist. For, were it not a good that evil things should also exist, the Omnipotent Good would most certainly not allow evil to be, since beyond doubt it is just as easy for Him not to allow what He does not will, as it is for Him to do what He wills. Unless we believe this, the very first sentence of our profession of faith is endangered, wherein we profess to believe in God the Father Almighty.”[103] Because he knew he was absolutely able to control sin, “he deemed it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist at all.”[104] **He thinks and guides evil for good and makes it subservient to his**

glory. Augustine even employs an array of images to assign to sin a place in the order of the whole. **There it has the same function as the shadows in a painting, the solecisms and barbarisms in the language, the contrasts in a song.**[105] **God composed the order of history, like a beautiful poem, of antithetical elements to heighten the beauty and harmony of the whole.**[106] Though these images contain some truth, they easily occasion misunderstanding. They tend to make sin appear necessary and entirely fitting in the whole of things. They sacrifice the particular to the universal and as a result offer no reconciliation or solace to those who wrestle with sin or experience suffering. **But it is true that also and even especially in God's government over sin his attributes are splendidly displayed. The riches of God's grace, the depth of his compassion, the unchanging nature of his faithfulness, the inviolable character of his justice, the glory of his wisdom and power have shone out all the more brilliantly as a result of sin.** When humans broke the covenant of works, God replaced it with the greatly improved covenant of grace. When Adam fell, God gave Christ as Lord from heaven. It is precisely God's greatness to so rule and overrule sin that against its own genius and intent it becomes serviceable to the honor of his name. And therefore the sin that is in the world, so far from being able to rob us of our faith in God, his love, and his power, rather confirms and strengthens us in that faith. "If there is evil, there is a God. For there would be no evil, if the order of good were removed, the privation of which is evil; and there would be no such order, if there were no God." [107]

Although sin has thus been subject to God's government from the beginning, **its origin is in the will of the rational creature, not in God.** At this point, however, there immediately arises another problem. How can sin ever be explained in terms of the will of a being created after God's image in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness? The Pelagian notion that the first human existed in a state of childlike innocence, of moral indifference, already proved unacceptable to us earlier; [108] it does not explain the fall but changes it into a minor misfortune and renders unintelligible the fact that from it such appalling consequences and horrendous miseries for the entire human race should result. If a spring can produce such a stream of polluted water, it must itself be inwardly polluted. It is impermissible, therefore, to so minimize the distance between the state of integrity and the state of corruption that the transition becomes easy and gradual. Humans were not created morally indifferent by God, but positively holy. Still we have to bear in mind the following as well. In the first place, God most certainly willed the possibility of sin. The possibility of sinning is from God. **The idea of sin was first conceived in his mind.** [109] God eternally conceived sin as his absolute polar opposite and thus, in that sense, included it in his decree, or else it would never have been able to arise and exist in reality. **It was not Satan, nor Adam and Eve, who first**

conceived the idea of sin: God himself as it were made it visible to their eyes. By means of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the probationary command, he clearly showed human beings the two roads they could take. And before the fall he even permitted an evil power from without to insinuate itself into Paradise, using the snake as its medium, and to discuss with Eve the meaning of the probationary command. There is therefore no doubt that God willed the possibility of sin.

In the second place, in keeping with this objective possibility, God so created angels and humans that they could sin and fall. They did not yet possess the highest [gift];[110] they were placed at the beginning of the road, not the end. The gift of perseverance, which is and always remains a gift and can never really be merited and be part of the nature of a creature, was still denied to them. [Adam, in the covenant of works, did not have the promise of continual supplies of grace as new testament believers do in the covenant of grace so as not to fall and perish.] Otherwise it would have seemed as if God feared the power of sin and wanted to prevent it by force. Angels and humans, accordingly, received the grace by which they could stand, not the grace by which they would stand in perpetuity.[111] They did not yet possess the highest, inadmissible freedom, that is, the freedom of no longer being able to want to sin. The **image of God** in humanity was therefore still limited; it had not developed in all its fullness; it still had its limit in the possibility of sinning. Humanity was positioned in the good, but the **possibility of evil** still lay right alongside it. Human beings, though they walked on the right road, could stray onto a side road. They were good, but changeably so. God alone is fully existent in all his attributes and herefore immutable. Creatures, however, become and can therefore also degenerate. All that has been created can change (*pan ktiston trepton*). If matter and form are distinct, as is always the case in creatures, there is always a possibility that the matter can change its form. What has been formed can be deformed and hence again be reformed; what has been created can become a miscreant and hence also be re-created. Moral freedom, however vigorous, is inherently distinct from logical necessity and physical force. A creature naturally incapable of sin, therefore, is a contradiction.[112]

In the third place, in the question concerning the origin of sin the **faculty and activity of the imagination** must be considered. In earlier times dogmatians paid little attention to this subject, even though they were aware that in the case of humans temptation is first of all and primarily directed toward the imagination and thereby seeks to affect desire and the will.[113] In **mysticism**, however, the imagination played a large role. According to Böhme, it was by fantasy that Lucifer imagined himself into the abyss of sin; he dipped deeply into fantasy, so it took hold of him and surrendered itself

to him in his life.[114] And in fact this is how things always go in the origination of the sinful act, as Thomas à Kempis describes it: “At first it is a mere thought confronting the mind; then imagination paints it in stronger colours; only after that do we take pleasure in it, and the will makes a false move, and we give our assent.”[115] The mind entertains the idea of sin, the imagination beautifies and converts it into a fascinating ideal, desire reaches out to it, and the will goes ahead and does it. Thus, in the case of both angels and humans, the imagination was the faculty that made the violation of the commandment appear as the road to equality with God.[116]

God’s Decree With Respect to Sin

Reformed Dogmatics by Geerhardus Vos

Pg 103-106

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16. *How does one designate God’s decree as it functions with respect to sin?*

A permissive decree (decretum permissivum). This term has become accepted in Reformed dogmatics and is even found in most confessions. Our own [Belgic]

Confession, on the doctrine of providence (Article 13), says, “All our enemies cannot harm us without His permission and will.”

Here and there objection is made to this distinction. Beza states it is not difficult to show that it is completely misunderstood by some, in a way that removes the devils and evil men from God’s control except that He keeps their actions and the consequences of their actions within certain limits. Nevertheless, Beza also wishes to see the terms *decernius* and *permissivum* (decreeing and permitting will) maintained, provided that they are explained correctly.

Danaeus speaks more dismissively: “From this it follows that that sophistical distinction that one is accustomed to make between God’s permission and His decree ought to be abandoned, because what happens by God’s permission happens with His will and consequently by virtue of His decree.”

a) First, it should be observed that by permissive decree the Lutherans understand something entirely negative. By it they mean that God does not decree to prevent or hinder sin by a positive act. Thus, sin itself is fully present in God’s decree as sure and certain. Concerning it God has nothing more to decide. His permissive decreeing, taken strictly, means to say that He does not decree rather than that He certainly decrees not, namely, to counter sin. This, of course, is a wrong and inadequate view. It teaches that sin has its reality and certainty from man. The former is true, as we have seen; the latter cannot be conceded. For, as for all things, so also for sin, certainty must lie in the decree of God. **A permissive decree cannot be a bare budding in our spirit.**

b) Others understand the permissive character of God’s decree concerning sin more in another sense, namely as follows: God decrees in a positive manner that certain things will happen. However, sin as an unavoidable consequence adheres to these things that God decrees. Thus, if He wills these things, He must also permit sin. So, it comes down to this: God has permitted sin not for itself but because of its necessary connection with other things that He willed. Usually this is worked out further as follows: At issue above everything was the freedom of the human will, that man, therefore, should choose for himself what he wanted, good or evil. Thus, involved as well in this freedom, in this possibility of going in either direction, was the permitting of evil, of sin. This view is entirely unacceptable. It still makes only the possibility of sin an object of God’s decree,

but not the certainty of sin. We must not only maintain that God tolerated that possibility but also that its certainty is the result of His permissive decree. It may not be thought as though God decreed to create man and then to wait on how the choice of man would turn out. That would be the Pelagian conditional decree applied to the situation of man before the fall. This view, then, is also completely at home within the orbit of Pelagian ideas.

c) There are different conceptions of God's permissive decree that do not really pertain to the decreeing act but more to its execution and so need not be discussed here—for example, the difference between the formal and the material in sin. This is a point that has its place in the doctrine of providence and not here. Although one would see this distinction as a solution, it is of no help here, for God's decree concerns both the formal and the material.

d) It is not possible to explain fully in a corroborating way how we are to think about God's permissive decree. We wish, in general, to maintain the following:

1. The permissive decree is no less a certain decree than any other. Any thought as though we can speak of hesitation or uncertainty in God must be excluded by far. God is certain in everything He decrees, and for all things their certainty is secure solely in the decree of God. Also sin, in order to be certain, must be through God's decree. The one who denies this deviates from Reformed doctrine. **Just on this point lies the one great error of the church father Augustine, who wanted to make sin only an object of God's foreknowledge but not of God's decree. Calvin says as decisively as possible, "Man falls because God's providence has so ordained it, but he falls by his own fault" (Institutes, 1.18.4); "I acknowledge that it is a horrible decree. Still, no one can deny that God certainly has known how it would turn out with man and that therefore He has known because he has so foreordained it in His decree." "For the first man has fallen because the Lord judged that it ought to be so. Why He judged that remains hidden to us" (3.23.7, 8). But Calvin also lets the reverse come out, as we immediately hope to see.**

2. As its object the permissive decree had sin in view as something contrary to God's holy nature and on which His displeasure must rest. To permit something always means that it arouses my disapproval. **Therefore, because on the one hand sin is against God's holy nature, on the other**

hand there must have been considerations in God that nonetheless caused Him to decree to permit it. It is not granted to man to know these considerations in detail. It must be enough for us to know that through sin God knew to glorify Himself by His righteousness and His redeeming love.

3. **By permitting sin in His decree God remains completely free of any wrong.** Calvin: “The destruction of the godless depends on God’s decree such that the cause and nature of that destruction is to be sought in man himself.” “Through his own malevolence, man has corrupted the nature that he had received from his God.” “God could not have judged other than that man ought to fall, because He saw that thereby the honor of His name would properly come to light. And where one speaks of God’s honor, there His justice must immediately be in view, for what deserves praise, must be just.” Thus, according to Calvin, it is a just decree, both in its origin as in its content (cf. Institutes, 2.4.3–5, where Calvin goes much further than we would presume to and where in principle he rejects the permissive decree).

In the execution of this decree, too, there is nothing that can make God a cause of sin. On this point Scripture speaks as emphatically as possible. God tempts no one to evil (Jas 1:13). God is light and in Him there is no darkness (1 John 1:5). **God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes** (Eccl 7:29). **The Spirit of God teaches His children to praise all that is good as the work of God but also to ascribe blame for all that is evil only to themselves.** This testimony of the Spirit in the believer, founded on God’s word, teaches us how this matter appears in God’s light, and we must believe it though that same light does not illumine our understanding.

The origin of sin, its nature, what is it, Gnostic ideas about it, man’s attempt to dominate it or overcome it and a correct understanding of “flesh” as opposed to the Gnostic/dualist view in relation to sin and its effects on the soul. And, lastly, is sin only an act of the will as Pelagius believes? Fascinating!

Evolving Out Of a Sinful Nature?

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(pg49)

From
Reformed Dogmatics
 By Hermon Bavinck
 Vol. 3, pg 51-59

[skipping to page 51]

In the first category are those who locate the **origin of sin in the domination of humans by matter**. **Greek philosophy** was generally committed to the view that the role of reason was to curb one's sensual urges and passions. Jews assumed the existence in humans of an "impulse toward evil" (יצר הרע) that in the course of one's physical development steadily gained in strength, reached its peak in sexual desire, and while not evil in itself nonetheless seduced humans into a variety of sins.[55] This notion regularly returns in ascetic movements. Catholic theology even recognized its relative validity when in the case of humans devoid of the controls of the **superadded gift** they spoke of a natural conflict between flesh and spirit and of a "sickness" and "faintness" (*morbus* and *languor*) of human nature.[56] In modern philosophy and theology, sin is often similarly derived from an original opposition between nature and reason, sensuality and intellect, a lower and a higher self, flesh and spirit, egoistic and social tendencies. Sensuality in this view, though not itself considered sinful, is nevertheless regarded as the occasion and stimulus to sin. All sin, therefore, essentially consists in a person's mind serving his or her sensuality and permitting it to control it; **and all virtue consists in humans ruling over nature by their reason** and thus developing into free and independent personalities.[57] For this view people even eagerly appeal to the Pauline doctrine of the flesh (σάρξ) and delight in this scriptural support.

Great insight on the Gnostic and dualistic/Platonist view:

But this interpretation of sin is marked by half heartedness. One has to make a choice: either the sensual nature of humans is not as such sinful, sin arising only if reason and will comply with its demands—and then the theory relapses into Pelagianism; or one's sensual nature is inherently sinful and then sin is inherent in matter as such—and the anthropological interpretation has to proceed to the cosmic. This, accordingly, is precisely what happened in the thinking of many. **Plato** assumed the existence of **eternal matter** (ὕλη) alongside of and over against God. Though the cosmos was a work of reason, from the beginning there was also at work in it another factor, a **blind force that could not be completely controlled by the demiurge**. **Therefore, God could not**

make the world as good as he wanted it to be: he was bound to finiteness, to matter. The cause of sin, suffering, and death, therefore, lies in the corporeal; matter (ὕλη) holds back the invasive and pervasive power of the idea. **The body is a prison house of the soul**, the source of fear and unrest, of desire and passion.[58] **Matter (ὕλη) has the same significance in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism and in numerous ascetic and theosophical schools of thought.**[59] Related to this doctrine of Plato are all the theories that derive sin from matter, which, though created by God, is opposed to him;[60] or from the finiteness, “the original imperfection,” of creatures;[61] or, generally speaking, from the realization of the “**cosmic idea.**”

This interpretation of sin in terms of creaturely existence, however, cannot consistently avoid somehow having to go back to God to locate the origin of sin in his nature or work. In the thought of Plato, **matter (ὕλη) itself had eternal and independent status alongside God.** In Parsism and Manicheism, two personal divine entities stood eternally over against each other as the creators of light and darkness and gave to the existing world its dual character. **Neoplatonism** and **Gnosticism** made the creation, fall, redemption, and so on into aspects of an emanation that as the “unknown deep” (βυθος ἀγνωστος), the **absolute pleroma**, issued from God in **ever-descending formations**, finally giving existence to the material world with its ignorance, darkness, sin, suffering, and death, but then, by a process of redemption, led that divinely emanated but now fallen world back to God.[62]

Theosophy, in the case of Böhme and Schelling, fed on these ideas when it attempted to interpret the personality of God, the Trinity, creation, fall, and redemption in terms of the being of God.[63] The **three potencies** assumed in God—to ensure his becoming person, mind, spirit—are at the same time the basic elements of another existence, namely, that of the world. As person, God has the freedom and the power also to project outside himself and to set in polar tension the potencies that are present in him and that he eternally controls.[64] In that tension lies the possibility of sin. In the original creation, the first either ideally or also in reality, these potencies were at rest. Sin, misery, darkness, death, and so on **existed only potentially; they slumbered in the womb of creation.** But humans, who bore these potencies within themselves, broke their oneness and unleashed the evil forces that were potentially present in the creation. A world like the present one, with so much savagery and misery, can only be explained in terms of a fall. This fall is the Ur-fact of history.[65] Hegel, even more strongly, viewed it as a fall that the idea of the Absolute realized itself in the world as its own alternative existence. However much he regarded nature as a product of reason, he could not deny that it was powerless to fully realize the Idea; he therefore stated that

the Idea, in giving existence to such a world, had become unfaithful to itself, had in fact apostatized from itself.[66] **Thus he paved the way for the pessimism that, in the manner of Buddhism, considers existence itself the greatest sin, a sin committed by the blind irrational will, which is the ultimate guilty party.**

The Enigma of Sin's Origin

The Sinful "Flesh"

Pg 54

This theory erroneously tries to keep itself afloat with an appeal to the idea of **flesh** (בשר and σαρξ) in Scripture, especially in Paul. This word first of all denotes the material substance of the human body (1 Cor. 15:39); second, the body itself that is composed of **matter** in contrast to **spirit** (πνευμα), **mind** (νοος), and **heart** (καρδια) (Rom. 2:28; 2 Cor. 7:5; Col. 2:5); further, in the Old Testament sense of humans as earthly, weak, fragile, and transient beings (Gen. 6:3; 18:27; Job 4:17–19; 15:14–15; 25:4–6; Pss. 78:39; 103:14; Isa. 40:6; Jer. 17:5; Rom. 3:20; 1 Cor. 1:29; Gal. 2:16); and finally in Paul the sinful life-orientation of humans. Thus he speaks of “carnal,” “in the flesh,” of “being, living, walking according to the flesh,” of “the body of sin,” “the mind of the flesh” (Rom. 3:7; 7:14; 8:3f.; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 10:2–3; etc.). In this sense “flesh” is contrasted with “spirit,” though not with the human πνευμα, which, after all, is also sinful and needs sanctification (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:23; 1 Thess. 5:23), but with the “Holy Spirit” (πνευμα ἅγιον) of God (Rom. 8:2, 9, 11), which renews the human spirit (Rom. 7:6; 8:14; Gal. 5:18) and also consecrates the body and puts it at the disposal of righteousness (Rom. 6:13, 19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:13, 15, 19–20), **thus putting in people a “new person” (καινος ἄνθρωπος) in opposition to the old sinful life-orientation, the “flesh” (σαρξ) of the “old person” (παλαιος ἄνθρωπος)** (Rom. 7:5f.; 8:1ff.; Gal. 5:13–25; Eph. 2:3, 11; Col. 3:9). Some now have the idea that in this view the “flesh” is not only the seat and organ of sin but also its source and origin.[68] But this cannot be maintained against or squared with the undeniable fact that Paul clearly traces sin to the temptation of the serpent and the transgression by Adam (Rom. 5:12; 2 Cor. 11:3). Paul also speaks of the defilement of the **body and of the spirit and desires the cleansing of both** (2 Cor. 7:1) and lists, **among the works of the flesh, a range of spiritual sins such as idolatry, strife, anger, and even heresy** (Gal. 5:19f.). **[keep in mind that Gnostic view believes matter is evil and spirit is good; yet Paul says that both need to be cleansed.]** Paul describes hostility against God as the “mind of the flesh” (φρονημα της σαρκος; Rom. 8:7) and accepts the existence of evil spirits, which, after

all, have no σαρξ (Eph. 6:12). [Positively] Paul recognizes Christ, though born of a woman (Gal. 4:4) and of Jewish stock “according to the flesh” (το κατὰ σάρκα; Rom. 9:5), **as being without any sin** (2 Cor. 5:21) and calls the body a temple of God, claiming all its members for the service of righteousness [**again, this view is against Gnosticism, that the body being matter, is evil.**] (Rom. 6:13, 19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:13–20). Finally, Paul teaches a resurrection of dead bodies (1 Cor. 15), and in principle opposes asceticism (Col. 2:16; 1 Thess. 4:4). The proponents of the view that Paul considers the “flesh” to be the principle of sin, accordingly, often turn around halfway by saying that human flesh is not itself sinful and does not automatically bring sin with it but does incite and tempt people to sin.[69]

Other scholars have therefore expressed the view that Paul, when he uses the word σαρξ in an ethical sense, completely ignores the original meaning.[70] This in itself is not too likely, however, and fails to do justice to the connection Scripture repeatedly makes between the earthly, weak, and transient nature of humans and their sin. There is undoubtedly a close connection between the two; while the sensual nature of humans is not itself sin, **nor the source or principle of sin, it is its dwelling place** (Rom. 7:17–18) **and the instrument of its dominion over us** (Rom. 6:12). **Human beings are not pure spirit but from the earth, people of “dust,”** and become living souls (1 Cor. 15:45ff.), and are therefore connected with the cosmos and always have bodies as their instrument and as organs of their activity (Rom. 6:13; 8:13). This sensual nature gives to sin, as it characterizes our humanity, a character distinct from that of the angels, both in origin and in essence. Temptations come to us from without via “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride in riches” (1 John 2:16). **It is the sensual nature of human beings that makes their sin such that they make a god of their belly, that they think the things that are below, that they are self-seeking and live for themselves, and honor the creature more than the Creator** (Rom. 1:21ff.; Phil. 2:4, 21; 3:19; Col. 3:2; etc.).

Σαρξ denotes the sinful life-orientation of humans who in soul and body turn away from God and toward the creature. The Pauline use of the word “flesh” becomes clear to us when we abandon the familiar Greek contrast between the material and the immaterial and replace it with the biblical contrast between the earthly and the heavenly, the divine and the creaturely, between what is below and what is above. Thus Jesus spoke of the flesh in John 3:6. Flesh became “the proper designation of the race as self-evolved and self-continued. Human nature as now constituted can produce nothing but its like, and that like is now sinful. Flesh therefore may be appropriately used for the principle of corrupt nature in the individual, for the obvious reason that it is in the

course of the flesh, or of the ordinary production of human nature, that the evil principle invariably originates.”[71]

Sin as God’s Design?

The explanation of sin from the sensual nature of humans cannot, however, as noted above, stop here but has to move on to locating its cause in the material nature or the finiteness of the creature, and so in an eternal and independent power alongside God, or in the dark nature or blind will in the divine being itself. [the Gnostic view] This view of the origin of sin commends itself over the preceding one by its profounder insight into the power and dominion of sin. It has a keen eye not only for its ethical and anthropological but also for its cosmic and theological meaning. It takes seriously the undeniable truth that a power as appalling as sin cannot have originated accidentally, outside God’s will and counsel. It finds support in the whole present state of the world, both the physical world and the world of ethics. Everywhere in nature and history there are **stark and deep contrasts** that seem to be necessary for life and development. Heaven and earth, light and darkness, day and night, summer and winter, storm and quiet, war and peace, labor and rest, prosperity and adversity, love and hate, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, life and death, truth and falsehood, sin and virtue: these are the contradictory factors of which the whole of our existence is composed and without which there can apparently be no continuation and progress. What storms are in nature, wars and revolutions in society, peasants and slaves in a drama, solecisms and barbarisms in a language, antitheses in a public address, false notes in music, **dark shadows on a painting:** that sin is in the world.[72] All activity seems also to presuppose some hindrance. A pigeon might imagine it could fly better in a vacuum, but precisely the resistance of the air is what enables it to fly. Similarly, human beings may think they could live better without sin, but in fact sin is necessary for their moral perfection (**Kant**). The law of contradiction is the fundamental law of all that is, the “source of eternal life. What prompts, even compels, us to act is contradiction alone. Without it there would be no movement, no life, no progress, but everlasting repose, the death slumber of all forces.”[73] What would be a life without sin? It would be an existence without content, an empty abstraction without opportunity for struggle and victory or conflict and reconciliation; without material for drama and song, for science and art. That was the reason why Dante could paint his inferno with colors derived from this earth, but for the portrayal of heaven this earth offers no materials (Schopenhauer). The proponents of this view of the origin of sin delight in appealing to many verses in Scripture that speak of a necessity of sins and disasters (Matt. 18:7; Luke 24:26; John 9:3; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:20); to the teaching of Augustine and Calvin, who include sin

in God's counsel and providence; to the well-known words in the Easter vigil of the Roman missal: "O truly necessary sin of Adam that is wiped out by the death of Christ! O happy fault that was worthy to have such and so great a Savior!" There is so much truth in this conception that it need not surprise us that it has at all times fascinated people. Sin is not accidental or arbitrary but incorporated in the counsel of God. It is so intertwined with our whole existence that we cannot even picture a holy life or a sinless history. **It is, against its will, made subservient by God Almighty to the revelation of his attributes and the honor of his name.**

Still, despite all the truth that is concealed in this idea and will come out even more clearly later on, it cannot and may not be accepted. In the first place, it robs sin of its ethical character. **Sin is certainly not only and not always an act of the will, as Pelagianism teaches, and certainly also a state of the will, but it never completely occurs apart from the will.** Augustine said: "All sin is voluntary." This sentiment is undoubtedly true when understood in the sense in which Augustine understood it. In the view being considered, however, sin is made analogous to and—in **Gnostic** and theosophic fashion—equated with the physical phenomena of darkness, sickness, death, and so on. **Moreover, it is inferred from the flesh, from matter, from the essence of creatures, from the nature of God, and thus made into a substance or a necessary quality of the existence of things. In the process, sin is deprived of its ethical character and degraded to a physical phenomenon. [Sin cannot be a substance because then God would have had created it which would make God the author of sin which is blaspheme.]**

Second, **in this view sin is made eternal and invincible.** Inasmuch as it is not ethical but physical in nature, it is necessarily a feature of what exists, God as well as the universe, and indispensable to the existence of everything. Not only is the good necessary to evil, but, conversely, evil is necessary to the good. Evil, here, is not a quality of the good and of existence but is itself a kind of existence and good, without which even the good cannot exist. **Human beings who strove to be freed from sin would entertain a wicked wish and work for their own ruin.** A world without sin could not be, and a state of glory would be nothing but a dream.

In the third place, **in this view sin ceases to be antithetical; it simply becomes a lower or lesser degree of the good, in its place as good as the good itself.** It becomes a component in life and history that is always destined to disappear but never does: a not-yet being what a creature ought to be, yet never becomes or can become, a pure negation that has no reality and exists only in thought. "As far as good and evil are concerned, they also indicate nothing positive in things, considered in themselves, nor

are they anything other than modes of thinking, or notions we form because we compare things to one another.”[74]

In the fourth place, in this view God has to become the author of sin. Parsism and Manichaeism still shrank from this conclusion, set the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness in direct opposition to each other, and placed an eternal divine being at the head of each. The god of nature is very different from the god of the good, the moral power, which asserts itself in the human conscience.[75] But **Gnostic philosophy** and **theosophy** incorporated the opposites into a single Absolute. God himself, in order to become a person or spirit, had to carry within himself and to perpetually overcome a dark nature as well. By a conflictual process, before and from without or in and through the world, he himself arrives at divine existence. In himself he is an “**unknown abyss**” (βυθος άγνωστος), a dark nature, **a blind will**, and as such the **creator of matter**. “In order for there to be no evil, God himself would have to not be.”[76]

Not only does Scripture testify against this view, but the moral consciousness of all humans rises up in protest against it. Sin may be whatever it is, but one thing is certain: God is the Righteous and Holy One who prohibits it in his law, witnesses against it in the human conscience, and visits it with punishments and judgments. Sin is not rational, nor is it lawful; it is lawlessness (άνομια); it is not necessary to the existence of creatures, much less to the existence of God. The good is necessary even for evil to exist, but the good does not need evil, nor does holiness need sin, nor truth falsehood, nor God Satan. If sin, nevertheless, frequently serves to bring the good to fuller disclosure and to glorify God’s attributes, this occurs—against sin’s intent, not with its consent and cooperation—by the wisdom and omnipotence of God. Against its own genius, sin is forced to serve the honor of God and the coming of his kingdom. Thus evil frequently pays tribute to the good, the lie is overtaken by the truth, and Satan, to accomplish his deceptions, often has to appear as an angel of light. But all this is attributable, not to sin, but to the almighty power of God, **who is able to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life out of death**.

[I think we are seeing this effect described below in our current Biden administration!
Evil is rampant!]

Finally, this entire false conception has a horrible effect on the practice of life. If philosophy announces in so many words “God is to blame for everything; humans are blameless,” then in practice libertinism and pessimism are not far behind. This is the libertinism that considers sin an illusion, and this illusion, as the only sin, erases all boundaries between good and evil, falsifies or, with Nietzsche, transvalues all moral

concepts, and, under the rallying cry of the emancipation of the flesh, glorifies bestiality as geniality. **This is the pessimism that, blind to sin, has eyes only for suffering, projects the blame for all that suffering upon the irrational act of an absolute will, and seeks deliverance from suffering in the destruction of the existing world.** Judging by the outcome, so-called independent philosophy is also guided by the native tendency of all humans to justify themselves and to charge God with injustice.⁷⁷

⁷⁷John H. Edwards, in "The Vanishing Sense of Sin," points out how positivism, pantheism, Buddhism, and others are accompanied with a weakened consciousness of sin. One can add to this list the new religion of Christian Science, according to which matter, illness, sin, and death exist only in the mind; they can be nothing except the results of material consciousness, but material consciousness can have no real existence, because it is not a living reality (Mary Baker G. Eddy, Unity of Good, 1898)

Comments on Gnosticism by John Flavel

John Flavel, A Treatise of the Soul of Man pg 34

(3.) A third sort there are, who deny that souls are created substances, and proceeded from God; but affirm withal, that he created them *simul, et semel*, together and at once, as the angels were, and not one by one, as men are born into the world. "Of this opinion was Plato, who thought all human souls to be created together before their bodies, and placed in some glorious and suitable mansions, as the stars, till, at last, growing weary of heavenly, and falling in love with earthly things, for a punishment of that crime, they were cast into bodies, as into so many prisons." Origen sucked in this notion of the pre-existence of souls: and upon this supposition it was that a Porphyry tells us, in the life of Plotinus, he blushed as often as he thought of his being in a body, as a man that lived in reputation and honour, blushes when he is lodged in a prison. The ground on which the Stoics bottomed their opinion was, the great dignity and excellency of the soul, which inclined them to think they had never been degraded and abased, as they are by dwelling in such vile bodes, but for their faults; and that it was for some former sins of theirs, that they slid down into gross matter, and were caught into a vital union with it; whereas, had they not sinned, they had lived in celestial and splendid habitations, more suitable to their dignity.

But this is a pure creature of fancy; for, (1.) No soul in the world is conscious to itself, of such a pre-existence, nor can remember when it was owner of any other habitation than that it now dwells in. (2.) Nor does the scripture give us the least hint of any such thing. Some indeed would catch hold of that expression, [Gen. 2:2](#). "God rested the seventh day from all the works which he had made;" and it is true, he did so, the work of creation was finished and sealed up, as to any new species or kinds of creatures to be created; no other sort of souls will be created, than that which was at first: but yet God still creates individual souls, (My Father worketh hitherto and I work) of the same kind and nature with Adam's soul. And, (3.) For their detrusion into these bodies as a punishment of their sins in the former state; if we speak of sin in individuals, or particular persons, the scripture mentions none, either original or actual, defiling any soul in any other way but by its union with the body. Pre-existence therefore is but a dream.

Trading With God

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A good commentary on one's duty to trade his talents to gain more, that is, to *grow in grace* by a due application of the talents or graces God has given us, by the due exercise of them - seeking God, prayer, meditations upon God's word, growing in knowledge of God, etc., so as to grow in grace and be transformed into the image of Christ (2Cor3:18). John Owen wrote a piece dealing with this entitled *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*. See the parable of the talents in Matt. 25, where many exercised this duty and grew in grace and whereas the one who did not know God (evidenced by his wrong notion of God...His harshness, the typical view of one who is unsaved, under condemnation

of the law and the guilt for the violation thereof, etc., and never experienced God's mercy and compassion), hid his talent and thus bore no fruit and even what he thought he had, was taken from him: 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Comments on growing in grace - in conforming our souls into the image of God, the image of his holiness.

Excerpts from
A Saint Indeed
 by John Flavel
 Vol. 5
 (Matt. 25:14, 15)

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Thirdly, The disease of Laodicea is here opened to them in its aggravations; "Thou saidst I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not," &c. To be really graceless and Christless, is a miserable condition; but to be so, and yet confidently persuaded of the contrary, is most miserable; to have the very symptoms of death upon us, and yet tell those that pity us we are as well as they, is lamentable indeed! O the efficacy of a spiritual delusion! This was their disease, gracelessness; and the aggravation of it, was their senselessness.

Secondly, We have a proper remedy prescribed, ver. 18, "**I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich,**" etc. In which we have to *consider*. *First*, what is prescribed for the cure. *Secondly*, Where it is to be had. *Thirdly*, How to be obtained.

First, What are the remedies prescribed; and they are three; *gold, white raiment, and eye-salve*. First, *gold*, the cure of poverty, yea, **gold tried in the fire**; i.e., **grace** that hath been variously proved already; and the more it is proved, the more its truth will be conspicuous. The next is *white raiment*, the remedy against nakedness. And, lastly, *eye-salve*, the effectual cure of blindness. Under all these choice *metaphors*, more choice and excellent things are shadowed, even spiritual graces, real holiness, more precious than gold. Christ's imputed righteousness, the richest garment in all the wardrobe of heaven; and spiritual illumination, the most excellent *collyrium* or eye-salve that ever was, or can be applied to the mental eye or understanding; of man in this world.

Secondly, Where these precious remedies may be had; and you find Christ hath the *monopoly* of them all; **Buy of me**, saith Christ in the text; **he is the repository of all graces**. Angels, ministers, ordinances cannot furnish you with them without Christ.

Thirdly, How they may be obtained from him; *Buy of me*. On this place Estius, and others, build their doctrine of merit; which is to build a superstructure of hay and stubble upon a foundation of gold. The

exigence of the very text itself destroys such conceits; for what have they that are poor, wretched, miserable, and want all things, to give as a price, or by way of merit for those inestimable treasures of grace? Buying therefore in this place can signify or intend no more than the acquisition, compassing, or obtaining these things from Jesus Christ, in the use of such means and methods as he hath appointed; and in the use of them we merit grace no more than the *patient* merits of his *physician* by coming to him, and carefully following his prescriptions in the use of such medicaments as he freely gives him. And that place Isa. 55:1. (from which this phrase seems to be borrowed) fully clears it; "He that hath no money, let him come and buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

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4. *Fourthly*. View the precious worth of grace in its excellent effects and influences upon the soul in which it inheres.

(1.) It adorns with incomparable ornaments, which are of great price in the sight of God, 1 Pet. iii. 4. Yea, it reflects such beams of glory in the soul where its seat is, that Christ himself, the author, is also the admirer of it; Cant. iv. 9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse! Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the chains of thy neck!" and as one overcome with its excelling beauty, he saith, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," Cant. vi. 5.

(2.) It elevates and ennobles a man's spirit beyond all other principles in man; it sets the heart and affections upon heaven, and takes them up with the glory of the invisible world, Phil. iii. 20, "But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." **Whilst others are trading for corn and wine, for sheep and oxen, for feathers and trifles, the gracious soul is trading with God for pardon and peace, for righteousness and life, for glory and immortality**; "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," John i. 3.

(3.) It doth not only raise the spirit by conversing with God, and things above, but transforms the soul, by that converse into the likeness of those heavenly objects it converses with; **"It changes them into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18**. So that though the sanctified man still remains the who he was, yet not the *what he was* before; the very temper of his Spirit is altered.

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Inf. 6. To conclude. *Is there such precious worth in saving grace? Then bless God for, and diligently use all means to increase and improve it in your souls*. It is gold for preciousness, and for usefulness, and must not be laid up in a napkin. That is a sin condemned by the very scope of that parable. Mat. xxv. 14, 15, &c.

All Christians indeed have not the same advantages of improvement; but all must improve it according to the advantages they have, in order to an account. Reserved Christians, who live too abstracted from the society and communion of others, and disperse not their streams abroad to the benefit of others, nor improve the graces of others for their own benefit, are wanting both to their

own duty and comfort. See you a man rich in grace, O trade with him if you can to improve yourselves by him; and the rather, because you know not how soon death may snatch him from you, and with him all his stock of grace is gone from you too, except what you made your own whilst you conversed with him. But alas! Instead of holy, profitable, soul-improving communion [trading with God¹], some are sullenly reserved; some are negligent and lazy; some are litigious and wrangling; more apt to draw forth the dross than the gold; I mean the corruptions, than graces of others. **And how few there be that drive a profitable trade for increase of grace,** is sad to consider.

¹To take God in Christ for, and instead of that thing, the withholding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot. (Ps142:4,5) There is never a crook which God makes in our lot, but it is in effect Heaven's offer of a blessed exchange to us; such as, "*Sell whatever you have, and you shall have treasure in heaven.*" (Mk. 10:21) In managing of which exchange, God first puts out His hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next and take some heavenly things from Him in the stead of it, and particularly His Christ. Why has God emptied your left hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch out your right hand to God in Christ, take Him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore, the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, "*the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearly of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*" (Matt. 13:45, 46) Do this, and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot. Thomas Boston

Ps 142:4-5 Look on *my* right hand and see, For *there is* no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul. ⁵I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, "*You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.*"

And as grace is not improved by communion with men, so I doubt most Christians thrive but little in their communion with God. **We are too seldom in our closets, too little upon our knees;** and when we are there, we gain but little; we come not off such gainers by duty as we might. O Christians! Think when you are hearing and praying, I am now trading with heaven for that which is infinitely better than gold. God is rich to all that call upon him. What a treasure may I get this hour, if the fault be not in mine own heart?

CHAP. X.

*By navigation one place stores another,
And by communion we must help each other.*

John Flavel, pg 241 Vol. V

OBSERVATION

THE most wise God hath so dispensed his bounty to the several nations of the world, that one standing in need of another's commodities, there might be a sociable commerce and traffic maintained amongst them all, and all combining in a common league, may, by the help of navigation, exhibit mutual

succours to each other. The staple commodities proper to each country, I find expressed by the poet, Bart. Coll.

Hence comes our sugars from Canary isles;
 From Candy currants, muskadels, and oils;
 From the Molucco's, spices; balsam um,
 From Egypt; odors from Arabia come;
 From India, gums, rich drugs, and ivory;
 From Syria, mummy; black, red ebony,
 From burning Chus; from Peru, pearl and gold;
 From Russia, furs, to keep the rich from cold;
 From Florence, silks; from Spain, fruit, saffron, sacks;
 From Denmark, amber; cordage, firs, and flax;
 From Holland, hops ; horse from the banks of Rhine;
 From France and Italy the choicest wine;
 From England, wool ; all lands as God distributes.
 To the world's treasure pay their sundry tributes.

APPLICATION.

Thus hath God distributed the more rich and precious gifts and graces of his Spirit among his people; some excelling in one grace, some in another, though every grace, in some degree, be in them all; even as in nature, though there be all the faculties in all, yet some faculties are in some more lively and vigorous than in others; some have a more vigorous eye, others a more ready ear, others a more voluble tongue; so it is in *spirituals*. Abraham excelled in *faith*, Job in *patience*, John in *love*. These were their peculiar excellencies. All the elect vessels are not of one quantity; yet even those that excel others in some particular grace, come short in other respects of those they so excelled in the former, and may be much improved by converse with such as in some respects are much below them. The solid, wise, and judicious Christian may want that liveliness of affections and tenderness of heart that appear in the weak and one that excels in gifts and utterance may learn humility from the very babes in Christ.

And one principal reason of this different distribution is to maintain fellowship among them all, 1 Cor. xii. 21, "The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." As in a family where there is much business to be done, even the little children bear a part, according to their strength, Jer. vii. 18, "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, the women knead the dough." So in the family of Christ, the weakest Christian is serviceable to the strong. There be precious treasures in these earthen vessels, for which we should trade by mutual communion. The preciousness of the treasure should draw out our desires and endeavours after it; and the consideration of the brittleness of those vessels in which they are kept, should cause us to be the more expeditious in our trading with them, and make the quicker returns. For when those vessels (I mean bodies of the saints) are broken by death, there is no more to be gotten out of them. That treasure of grace which made them such profitable, pleasant, and desirable companions on earth, then ascends with them into heaven, where every grace receives its adolescence and perfection; [That is, in heaven we will live by sight! Sight is faith perfected. We will see him as he is. Faith on earth is imperfect - we see, by the eyes of faith, as through a glass darkly,

etc.] and then, though they be ten thousand times more excellent and delightful than ever they were on earth, yet we can have no more communion with them till we come to glory ourselves. Now therefore it behoves us to be enriching ourselves by communication of what God hath dropt into us, and improvement of them, as one well notes. We should do by saints, as we use to do by some choice book lent us for a few days, we should fix in our memories, or transcribe all the choice notions we meet with in it, that they may be our own when the book is called for, and we can have it no longer by us.

REFLECTION

Lord, how short do I come of my duty in communicating to, or receiving good by others! My soul is either empty and barren, or if there be any treasure in it, yet is but as a treasure locked up in some chest, whose key is lost, when it should be opened for the use of others. Ah Lord! I have sinned greatly, not only by vain words, but sinful silence. I have been of little use in the world. How little also have I gotten by communion with others? Some it may be, that are of my own size, or judgment, or that I am otherwise obliged to, I can delight to converse with; but O, where is that largeness of heart and general delight I should have to, and in all thy people? How many of my old dear acquaintance are now in heaven, whose tongues were as choice silver, while they were here, Prov. 10:20. And blessed souls! How communicative were they of what you gave them? **O what an improvement had I made of my talent this way, had I been diligent!** Lord pardon my neglect of those sweet and blessed advantages. O let all my delight be in thy saints, who are the excellent of the earth. Let me never go out of their company, without an heart more warmed, quickened, and enlarged, than when I came amongst them.

THE POEM.

TO several nations God doth so distribute
 His bounty, that each one must pay a tribute
 Unto each other. Europe cannot vaunt,
 And say, Of Africa I have no want.
 America and Asia need not strive.
 Which of itself can best subsist and live.
 Each country's want, in something, doth maintain
 Commerce betwixt them all. Such is the aim
 And end of God, who doth dispense and give
 More grace to some, their brethren to relieve.
 This makes the sun ten thousand times more bright.
 Because it is diffusive of its light;
 Its beams are gilded gloriously; but then
 This property doth gild them o'er again.
 Should sun, moon, stars, impropriate all their light,
 What dismal darkness would the world benight?
 On this account men hate the vermin brood.
 Because they take in much, but do no good.
 What harm, if I at yours my candle light?

Except thereby I make your room more bright.
 He that by pumping sucks and draws the spring
 New streams, and sweeter, to the well doth bring.
 Grace is a treasure in an earthen pot;
 When death hath das'd it, no more can be got
 Out of that vessel; then, while it is whole.
 Get out the treasure to enrich your soul.

A Concluding Speech

John Flavel, pg 292, Vol. V

I HAVE now done, and am looking to heaven for a blessing upon these weak labours; what use you will make of them, I know not, but this I know, that the day is coming, when God will reckon with you for this, and all other helps and means afforded to you; and if it be not improved by you, be sure it will be produced as a witness against you. Sirs, I beg you, in the name of Christ, before whom both you and I must shortly appear, that you receive not these things in vain. Did I know what other lawful means to use that might reach your hearts, they should not be in vain to you; but I cannot do God's part of the work, nor yours; only I request you all, both masters, common men, and all others into whose hands this shall come, that you will lay to heart what you read; pray unto him that hath the key of the house of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, to open your hearts to give entertainment to these truths. Alas! If you apply it not to yourselves, I have labored to no purpose; the pen of the scribe is in vain; but God may make such an application of them, in one storm or another, as may make your hearts to tremble. Oh, sirs! When death and eternity look you in the face, conscience may reflect upon these things to your horror and amazement, and make you cry out, as Prov. v. 12, 13, "How have I hated knowledge, and my heart despised reproof and have not obeyed the voice of my teacher, nor inclined my ears to them that instructed me?" And O what a dreadful shriek will such souls give, when the Lord opens their eyes to see that misery that they are here warned of! But if the Lord shall bless these things to your conversion, then we may say to you, as Moses did to Zebulun, the mariners tribe, Deut. 33:12, "Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out." The Lord will be with you, which way soever you turn yourselves; and being in the bosom of the covenant, you are safe in the midst of all dangers. O thou, that art the Father of spirits, that formed and can easily reform the heart, open your the blind eye, unstop the deaf ear, let the world take hold upon the heart. If you will but say the word, these weak labours shall prosper, to bring home many lost souls unto thee. Amen.

The Use of Reason

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This is a good explanation of the proper use of reason; suited for the old Covenant but unable to perceive the mysteries of the New Covenant vs. the Old Covenant, without divine revelation. See Luke 8:10, Matt. 13:11, "And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'

Excerpt from

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

By John Owen pg 39 (p45 online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/just.iv.vi.html>

Explanation of the Doctrine of Justification

Sixthly. We can never state our thoughts aright in this matter, unless we have a clear apprehension of, and satisfaction in, *the introduction of grace by Jesus Christ into the whole of our relation unto God, with its respect unto all parts of our obedience*. There was no such thing, nothing of that nature or kind, in the first constitution of that relation and obedience by the law of our creation. **We were made in a state of immediate relation unto God in our own persons**, as our creator, preserver, and rewarder. There was no mystery of grace in the covenant of works. No more was required unto the consummation of that state but what was given us in our creation, enabling us unto rewardable obedience. **“Do this, and live,”** was the sole rule of our relation unto God. **There was nothing in religion originally of that which the gospel celebrates under the name of the grace, kindness, and love of God, whence all our favorable relation unto God does now proceed**, and whereinto it is resolved; nothing of the interposition of a mediator with respect unto our righteousness before God, and acceptance with him; — which is at present the life and soul of religion, the substance of the gospel, and the centre of all the truths revealed in it. **The introduction of these things is that which makes our religion a mystery, yea, a “great mystery,”** if the apostle may be believed, **1 Tim. iii. 16**. All religion at first was suited and commensurable unto reason; but being now become a mystery, men for the most part are very unwilling to receive it. But so it must be; and unless we are restored unto our primitive rectitude, a religion suited unto the principles of our reason (of which it has none but what answer that first state) will not serve our turns.

Wherefore, of this introduction of Christ and grace in him into our relation unto God, there are no notions in the natural conceptions of our minds; nor are they discoverable by reason in the best and utmost of its exercise, 1 Cor. ii. 14. For before our understanding were darkened, and our reason debased by the fall, there were no such things revealed or proposed unto us; yea, the supposition of them is inconsistent with, and contradictory unto, that **whole state and condition** wherein we were to live to God, — seeing they all suppose the entrance of sin. **And it is not likely that our reason, as now corrupted, should be willing to embrace that which it knew nothing of in its best condition, and which was inconsistent with that way of attaining happiness which was absolutely suited unto it: for it has no faculty or power but what it has derived from that state; and to suppose it is now of itself suited and ready to embrace such heavenly mysteries of truth and grace as it had no notions of, nor could have, in the state of innocence, is to suppose that by the fall our eyes were opened to know good and evil, in the sense that the serpent deceived our first parents with an expectation of. Whereas, therefore, our reason was given us for our only guide in the first constitution of our natures, it is naturally unready to receive what is above it; and, as corrupted, has an enmity thereunto.**

Hence, in the first open proposal of this *mystery*, — namely, of the love and grace of God in Christ, of the introduction of a mediator and his righteousness into our relation unto God, in that way which God in infinite wisdom had designed, — the whole of it was looked on as mere folly by the generality of the wise and rational men of the world, as the apostle declares at large, [1 Cor. i.](#); neither was the faith of them ever really received in the world without an act of the Holy Ghost upon the mind in its renovation. And those who judge that there is nothing more needful to enable the mind of man to receive the mysteries of the gospel in a due manner but the outward proposal of the doctrine thereof, do not only deny the depravation of our nature by the fall, but, by just consequence, wholly renounce that grace whereby we are to be recovered. Wherefore, reason (as has been elsewhere proved), acting on and by its own innate principles and abilities, conveyed unto it from its original state, and as now corrupted, is repugnant unto the whole introduction of grace by Christ into our relation unto God, [Rom. viii. 7](#). An endeavor, therefore, to reduce the doctrine of the gospel, or what is declared therein concerning the hidden mystery of the grace of God in Christ, unto the principles and inclinations of the minds of men, or reason as it remains in us after the entrance of sin, — under the power, at least, of those notions and conceptions of things religious which it retains from its first state and condition, — is to debase and corrupt them (as we shall see in sundry instances), and so make way for their rejection.

Hence, very difficult it is to keep up *doctrinally* and *practically* the minds of men unto the reality and spiritual height of this mystery; for men naturally do neither understand it nor like it: and therefore, every attempt to accommodate it unto the principles and inbred notions of *corrupt reason* is very acceptable unto many, yea, unto the most; for the things which such men speak and declare, are, without more ado, — without any exercise of *faith* or *prayer*, without any *supernatural illumination*, — easily intelligible, and exposed to the common sense of mankind. But whereas a declaration of the mysteries of the gospel can obtain no admission into the minds of men but by the effectual working of the Spirit of God, [Eph. i. 17–19](#), it is generally looked on as difficult, perplexed, unintelligible; and even the minds of many, who find they cannot contradict it, are yet not at all delighted with it. And here lies the advantage of all them who, in these days, do attempt to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, in the whole or any part of it; for the accommodation of it unto the common notions of corrupted reason is the whole of what they design. And in the confidence of the suffrage hereof, they not only oppose the things themselves, but despise the declaration of them as *enthusiastical canting*. And by nothing do they more prevail themselves than by a pretence of reducing all things to reason, and contempt of what they oppose, as unintelligible *fanaticism*. But I am not more satisfied in any thing of the most uncontrollable evidence, than that the understandings of these men are no just measure or standard of spiritual truth. Wherefore, notwithstanding all this fierceness of scorn, with the pretended advantages which some think they have made by traducing expressions in the writings of some men, it may be improper, it maybe only not suited unto their own genius and capacity in these things, we are not to be “ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

This is a good commentary on prosperity being a means to discover of what make the person's soul is; regenerate or unregenerate. Also, that prosperity in unregenerate souls greatly leads them to center their thoughts and desires solely upon earthly things, and in so doing, transform their souls into that very image.

Prosperity A Great Trial

From pg 539, Vol. V

By John Flavel

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SECT. IV.

PROSPERITY discovers many sad symptoms of a naughty heart and, among others, these are ordinarily most conspicuous.

1. *First*, It casts the hearts of some men into a deep oblivion of God, and makes them lay aside all care of duty; *Raro fumant foelicibus arce*; the altars of rich men seldom smoke, Deut. xxxii. 13, 14, 15. Jeshurun sucked honey out of the rock, eat the fat of lambs, and kidneys of wheat. But what was the effect of this; he kicked and forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. Instead of lifting up their hearts in an humble thankful acknowledgment of God's bounty, they lifted up the heel in a wanton abuse of his mercy. In the fattest earth we find the most slippery footing.

He that is truly gracious may, in prosperity, remit some degrees; but a carnal heart there loses all that which in a low condition he seemed to save. Augur's deprecation, as to himself, no doubt, was built upon his frequent observation how it was with others; Prov. 30:8, 9, "Lest I be full, and deny God."

It is said Eccl. v. 12, "That the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep;" and I wish that were the worst injury it did him; but alas! **It will not suffer him to pray, to meditate, to allow time and thoughts about his eternal concernments; he falls asleep in the lap of prosperity, and forgets that there is a God to be served, or a soul to be saved.** O this is a dangerous symptom of a very graceless heart!

2. *Secondly*, Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and mould their hearts into their own similitude and nature; [the same effect that contemplating spiritual things, contemplating God's glory, does to the saints, transforming them into the very image of those things as the Spirit works it! 2Cor3:18.] **the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments.** So those graceless, yet prosperous persons are described, Job xxi. 11, 12, 13, "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ : they spend their days in wealth." *They take the timbrel*, not the Bible, "They rejoice at the sound of the organ;" not a word of their rejoicing in God, "They sent forth their little ones

in the dance." That is all the catechism they are taught." They spend their days in wealth:" their whole time, that precious stock and talent **is wholly laid out upon these sensitive things; either the pleasure of it powerfully charms them, or the cares of it wholly engross their minds, that there is no time to spare for God.** *They live in pleasure upon earth*, as it is, Jam. v. 5. just as the fish lives in the water, its proper element; Take him off from these things, and put him upon spiritual, serious, heavenly employments, and he is *Piscis in arido*; like a fish upon the dry land.

Now, though prosperity may too much influence and ensnare the minds of good men, and estrange them too much from heavenly things; **yet thus to engross their hearts, and convert them into their own similitude and nature**, so that these things should be the centre of their hearts, the very proper element in which they live, is utterly impossible.

A hypocrite indeed may be brought to this, because, though Janus like, he have two faces, yet he really hath but one principle, and that is wholly carnal and earthly. So that it is easy to make all the water to run into one channel, to gather all into one entire stream, in which his heart shall pour out all its strength to the creature.

But a Christian indeed hath a double principle that acts him; **though he have a law of sin that moves him one way, yet there is in him also the law of grace, which thwarts and crosses that principle of corruption.** **So that as grace cannot do what it would, because of sin; so neither can sin do what it would, because of grace,** Gal. v. 17.

The heart of a Christian, in the midst of ensnaring, sensitive enjoyments, finds indeed a corrupt principle in it, which would incline him to fall asleep upon such a soft pillow, and forget God and duty; but it cannot. O no! It cannot do so; there is a principle of grace within him, that never leaves jogging, disturbing, and calling upon him till he rise and return to Ibis God, the true rest of his soul.

3. *Thirdly*, A false pretender to religion, a hypocritical professor, meeting with prosperity and success, grows altogether unconcerned about that interest of religion, and senseless of the calamities of God's people. Thus the prophet convinces the Jews of their hypocrisy, Amos vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, "They were at ease in Zion, and trusted in the mountain of Samaria;" **And so, having a shadow of religion, and a fullness of all earthly things, they fell to feasting and sporting.** "They drank wine in bowls, and anointed themselves with the chief ointments, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." They condoled not, *Gnal sheber*, over the breakings or tearing to pieces of Joseph; if they were out of danger once, let the church shift for itself, they are secure in a warm nest. Let the birds of prey catch and devour that flock with which they sometimes associated, they are not touched with it. Moses could not do so, though in the greatest security and confluence of the honors and pleasures of Egypt, Acts vii. 23. Nehemiah could not do so, though the servant and favorite of a mighty monarch, and wanted nothing to make him outwardly happy; yet the pleasures of a king's court could not cheer his heart, or scatter the clouds of sorrow from his countenance, whilst his brethren were in affliction, and the city of his God lay waste, Nehemiah ii. 1, 2, 3. Nor indeed can any gracious heart be unconcerned and senseless; for that union that all the saints have with Christ their head, and with one another, as fellow-members in Christ, will beget sympathy among them in their sufferings, 1 Cor. xii. 26.

SECT. V.

BUT as the fire of prosperity discovers this and much more dross in a graceless heart, so it discovers the sincerity and grace of God's people. I say not that it discovers nothing but grace in them; O that it did not! Alas! Many of them have had a great deal of dross and corruption discovered by it, as was noted before. But yet in this trial, the graciousness and uprightness of their hearts will appear in these, and such like workings of it.

1. *First, Under prosperity, success, and honour, the upright heart will labor to suppress pride, and keep itself lowly and humble?* And still the more grace there is, the more humility there will be. If God lift him up, he v/ill lay himself low, and exalt his God high. So did Jacob when God had raised and enlarged him; Gen. xxxii. 10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant, for with ray staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands."

Great was the difference in Jacob's outward condition at his return, from what it was at his first passage over Jordan; then poor, now rich; then single and comfortless, now the head of a great family. Yea, but though this outward estate was altered, the frame of his heart was not altered. Jacob was a holy and humble man when he went out, and so he was when he returned. He saw a multitude of mercies about him, and among them all, not one but was greater than himself.

I dare not say every Christian under prosperity can at all times manifest like humility; but I am sure what pride and vanity so ever may rise in a gracious heart tried by prosperity, there is that within him which will give check to it. He dare not suffer such proud thoughts to lodge quietly in his heart; for, alas! He sees that in himself, and that in his God, that will abase him. Grace will make him look back to his original condition, and say, with David, "What am I, O Lord God? And what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 2 Sam. vii. 18.

It will make him look in, and see the baseness of his own heart, and the corruptions that are there, and admire at the dealings of God with so vile a creature. O, thinks he, if others did but know what I know of myself, they would abhor me more than now they esteem and value me.

2. *Secondly, Prosperity usually draws forth the saints love to the God of their mercies; that which heats a wicked man's lusts, warms a gracious man's heart with love and delight in God.*

These were the words of that lovely song which David sang in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul; and he said, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," Psal. xviii. title and ver. 1. compared. These outward things are not the mam grounds and motives of their love to God; no; they love him when he takes away, as well as when he gives; but they are sanctified instruments to inflame their love to God; they boil up a wicked man's lusts, but they melt a gracious man's soul. O in what a pang of love did David go into the presence of God under the sense of his mercies! his melting mercies! when he thus poured out his whole soul in a stream of love to his God, 2 Sam. vii. 19, 20, "Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee?" An expression that turns up the very bottom of his heart.

3. *Thirdly, Prosperity and comfortable Providences do usually become cautions against sin, when they meet with a sanctified soul.* This is the natural inference of a gracious soul from them; hath God pleased me, then hath he obliged me to take more care to please him; let me not grieve him, that hath comforted me! So Ezra ix. 13, "After such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments! What! Break thy commandments who hath broken our bonds! God forbid!

It was an excellent resolution of a Christian once, who receiving an eminent mercy at the same time he felt himself under the power of a special corruption. "Well, (saith he) now will I go forth in the strength of this mercy, to mortify and subdue that corruption." I will not measure every Christian by the eminent workings of grace in some one; but surely so far I may safely go, that sincerity knows not how to sin, because grace has abounded, any more than it dare sin, that grace may abound.

4. *Fourthly, A truly gracious soul will not be satisfied with all the prosperity and comforts in the world for his portion.* *Not thine, Lord but thee,* is the voice of grace. When providence had been more than ordinarily bountiful in outward things to Luther, he began to be afraid of its meaning, and earnestly protested, God should not put him off so, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul," Lam. iii. 24, and the soul can best tell what it hath made its choice, and whereon it has bestowed its chief delights and expectations. *An unsound heart will accept these for its portion;* if the world be sure to him, and his designs fail not there, he can be content to leave God, and soul, and heaven, and hell at hazard; but so cannot the upright. These things in subordination; but neither these, nor anything under the sun, in comparison with, or opposition to God.

Vol. 5, pgs. 441-445

How a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining, or desponding under the hand of God? Now there are nine special helps. I shall here offer, to keep thy heart in this condition; and the first shall be this: to work upon your hearts this great truth,

1. *That by these cross providences, God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon thy souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end.*

Afflictions fall not out by causality, but by counsel, Job 5:6, Eph. 1:11, by this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints, Isa27:9, "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," etc. Heb. 12:10, "But he for our profit," etc., Rom. 8:28, "All things work together for good." They are God's workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are tuned into blessings and benefits, Ps. 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." And sure, then, you have no reason to quarrel with, but rather to admire that God should concern himself so much in your good, to use any means for the accomplishment of it. Phil. 3:11, "Paul could bless God, if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead." "My brethren, (saith James) count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations," Jam. 1:2-3. My father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry

with him? All that he does is in pursuance of and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. O It is my ignorance of god's design, that makes me quarrel with him! He say to you in this case, as to Peter, "What I do you know not now, but hereafter you shall know it."

Help 2. *Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them.* Can I look that scripture in the face with a ripening, discontented spirit, 2Sam. 7:14, "I shall be his father, and he will be my son; if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of children of men. Nevertheless, my mercy shall not depart away from him." O my heart! My haughty heart! Do you well to be discontented, when God has given you the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves. Christians have two sorts of goods, the goods of the throne, and the goods of the footstool; movables, and immovables. If God have secured these, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of those; indeed, if he had cut off his love, or discovenanted my soul, I had reason to be cast down; but this he has not, nor can he do it.

Help 3. It is of marvelous efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, *to call to mind, that thine own father has the ordering of them.* Not a creature moves hand or tongue against you, but by his permission. [\[not that God operates only by bare permission, for then God would be dependent upon the creature, and God would be only a predictor of events and not the promiser of them; for to promise something without his sovereign disposal and determination of things is a great absurdity. – Edwards paraphrased; see the doctrine of concurrence and compatibility\]](#) Suppose the cup be a bitter cup, yet it is the cup which your father has given you to drink; and can you suspect poison to be in that cup which he delivers you? Foolish man, put home the case to you own heart, consult with you own bowels.; can you find in your heart to give you child that which would hurt, or undo him? No, you would as soon hurt yourself as him; "If thou then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children," how much more does God? Matt. 7:11. The very consideration of his nature, a God of love, pity, and tender mercies, or of his relation to you as a Father, Husband, Friend, might be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet you in this case; and yet you have his word too, Jer. 25:6, "I will do you no hurt." You lie too near his heart to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs do; would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician when he has studied the case of his patient, prepared the most excellent receipts to save his life, to hear him cry out, O he has undone me! He has poisoned me; because it gripes and pains him in the operation? O when will you be ingenious!

Help 4. *God respects you as much in a law, as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low;* nay, to speak home, he manifests, more of his love, grace and tenderness, in the time of affliction, than prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, so he will not forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you and alter their respects as your condition is altered. When providence has blasted your estates, your summer friends may grow strange, as fearing you may be troublesome, to them; but will God do so? No, no! "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Heb. 13:5. Indeed if adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were a sad condition; but you may go to God as freely as ever. "My God (saith the church) will hear me," Mic. 7:7. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could yet encourage himself in the

Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or child had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less would God. Why then are you so troubled? Thought your condition be changed, you Father's love and respects are not changed.

Help 5. *And what if by the loss of outward comforts, God will preserve your souls from the reigning power of temptation? Sure then, you have little cause to sink you hearts by such sad thoughts about them.* Are not these earthly enjoyments the things that made men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour, Matt. 19:22, "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." And if this be God's design, what have I done in quarrelling with him about it? We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard rich bales of silk, and precious things, to preserve the vessel and their lives with it, and everyone say they act prudently; we know it is usual for soldiers in a city besieged, to batter down, or burn the fairest buildings without the walls, in which the enemy may shelter in the siege; and no man doubts but it is wisely done. Such as have gangrened legs or arms, can willingly stretch then out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the chirurgeon for his pains. And must God only be repined at, for casting over what will sink you in a storm? For pulling down that which would advantage your enemy in the siege of temptation? For cutting off of what would endanger your everlasting life? O inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things, for which you grieve, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls? Well, what Christ does in this, you know not now, but hereafter you may.

Help 6. It would much stay the heart under adversity, to consider *That God, by such humbling providences, may be accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited.* And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, have you not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these, that he would keep you from sin, discover to you the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature; that he would kill and mortify your lusts, that your heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ/ Why now, by such humbling and impoverishing strokes, God may be fulfilling your desire. Would you be kept from sin? **This is the way: now God takes away the food and fuel that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, as a mean to kill them.** Would you have your heart to rest no where but in the bosom of God? **What better way can you imagine providence should take to accomplish your desire, than by pulling from under your head, that soft pillow of creature delights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this, peevish child!** How do you exercise you Father's patience? If he delay to answer your prayers, you are ready to say he regards you not; if he do that which really answers to scope and main end of them, but no in the way you expected, he were crossing all your hopes and aims; is this ingenuous? It is not enough that God is so gracious to do what you desire, but you must be so impudent to expect he should do it in the way which you prescribed?

Help 7. Again, it may you heart, if you consider, *that in these troubles, God is about that work, which if you did see the design of, your soul would rejoice.* [\[Jonathan Edwards said that it is important that Christians study the word so as to come to a knowledge of the wisdom of the way of salvation and in this sense Flavel explains.\]](#) We, poor creatures, are bemisted with much ignorance and are not able to discern how particular providences work towards God's end; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we

are exposed to straits; though yet, then he led them, and is now leading us, but *by the right way, to a city of habitations*. If you could see how God, in his secret counsel, has exactly laid the whole plot and design of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; this way, and by these means such a one shall be saved, and by no other; such a number of afflictions I appoint for this man, at this time and in this order; they shall befall him thus, and thus they shall work for him. Could you, I say, but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations to each other, together with the general respect and influence they all have unto the last end of all the conditions in the world, you would choose that you are now in, had you liberty to make your own choice. Providence is like a curious piece of arras [a wall hanging tapestry...], made up of a thousand shreds, which single we know not what to make of, but put together, and stitched up orderly, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. **As God works all things according to the counsel of his own will, so that the counsel of God has ordained this as the best way to bring about your salvation;** such a one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appointed for him; such a one an earthly heart, so may impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

Added excerpt from page 590 - Flavel

Think it not then debasing to you to be so often exposed to trials. If God did not value you highly, he would not try you so frequently. What would become of you if your condition here should be more settled and quiet than now it is? I believe you find dross enough in your hearts after all the fires into which God has cast you. Surely there is filth enough in the best of God's people to tale all this, it may be a great deal more trouble than they have yet met with. We fancy it a brave life to live at ease; and if we meet with longer respites and intervals of trial than usual, we are apt to say, We shall never be moved, as David did, ps. 30:6, or we shall die in our nest, as it is Job 29:18. Our hard and difficult days are over; but woe to you if God should give us the desire of our hearts in this. See what the temper of those men's spirits is, that meet with no changes, Ps. 55:19, "Because they have no changes, therefore, they fear not God." O it is better to be preserved sweet in brine, than to rot in honey.

Infer. 3 Thirdly, *Let none boast in a carnal confidence of their own strength and stability*. You are in a state of trial, Hitherto God has kept you upright in all your trials; bless God, but boast not; you are but feathers in the wind of temptation if God leave you to yourselves. Peter told Christ, (and doubtless he spoke no more than he honestly meant) "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." And you know what he did when the hour of his trial came, Matt. 26:35. Angels left to themselves have fallen. It is better to be a humble worm than a proud angel.

Added excerpt from page 315, Parable of the Ten Virgins by Thomas Shepard, regarding the feigned esteeming of Christ by hypocrites

IV. I add, he esteems him [Christ] thus,

1. As his present good; so that if the Lord do withdraw or deny himself, now unto him nothing in this world can for present quiet him, Jer. 50:4,5. Hence those in their judgments acknowledge Christ the greatest good, and when they are dying, and see he will so at the last day, **yet now for the present a little more liberty in sin, sloth, lust, honor, gain, lots, large accommodations are better.** You never saw him. O, vile world; thy Lord will one day condemn you out of your own mouth; thy own will was more dear to thee than his, this world's ease better than his peace, etc. When you lie on your death beds, you esteem him then. Why? Because he serves your turn then. Hence, before you did not.

Pg 456

While God keeps men under sad temptations, wants, and afflictions; O, then they are humble, and pray; but when blessed with ease, and peace, and plenty, and honor, then how lofty and secure! This is better than the Lord. Never such a decay of the spirit of prayer; never was there such a confusion in the world, such burning of cities, slaying of men, rents of churches, God minding to stain the pride of all glory; and yet never such hearts.

Save this and study it! It is one of the most important things to think about. Am I saved? How do I know it? What is the evidence of it? This will increase your faith and endearment to God from a dead and slothful frame to a more lively frame of daily contemplation and prayer, love to and adoration of God and due exercise of being spiritual minded.

Further comments on prosperity from John Flavel and Thomas Shepard

Chap. IV
Upon the Feeding of fat Cattle
By John Flavel
vol. 5 p 170

Fat beasts you kill, the lean you use to save;

God's dispensations some such meaning have

Observation

It is a good observation of a Father, and well applied: Oxen for use are daily yoked and kept short, whilst those that are designed for the shambles, are let loose in green pastures to feed at pleasure. Store beasts fare hard, and are kept lean and low; feeding beasts are excused from the yoke, whilst others are labored and wrought hard every day; the one hath more than he can eat, the other would eat more if he had it.

Application

Thus deals the Lord oft-times with his own elect, whom he designs for glory; and with the wicked, who are preparing for the day of wrath. This are filled with earthly prosperity and creature-enjoyments, like lusty and wanton beasts turned out at liberty in a fat pasture, whilst poor saints are kept hard and short, Amos 4:1, "*Hear this world, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria, which oppress the poor, crush the needy.*" These metaphorical kine are the prosperous oppressors of the world, full fed, and wanton, wicked men. It is true, heaven hath not all the poor, nor hell all the rich; but it is a very common dispensation of providence to bestow most of the things of this world upon them that have no portion in heaven; and to keep them short on earth, for whom that kingdom is provided. Let me draw forth the similitude in a few particulars.

1. The beasts of slaughter have the fattest pastures; so have the ungodly in the world; "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have "more than heart could wish," Ps 73:7. Their hearts are as fit as grease, Ps 119:70. These be they that fleet off the cream of earthly enjoyments, "whose bellies are filled with hidden treasures," Ps 17:14, "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked," Job 9:24. O what full estates what an affluence of earthly delights hath God cast in upon some wicked men! There is much 14

Reflections

A reflection for a voluptuous worldling

Doth my prosperity fat me up for hell, and prepare me for the day of slaughter? Little cause have I then to glory in it, and lift up my heart upon these things, Indeed, God hath given (I cannot say blessed me with) a fullness of creature-enjoyments; upon these my carnal heart seizeth greedily and securely, not at all suspecting a snare lying in these things for the ruin of my soul. What are all these charming pleasures, but so may rattles to quiet my soul, whilst its damnation steals insensibly upon it? What are all my businesses and employments in the world, but so many diversions from the business of life? There are but two differences betwixt me and the poorest slave the devil hath on earth; such are whipped on to hell by outward miseries, and I am coached to hell in little more pomp and honour; these will have a less, and I a greater account in the day of reckoning. O that I had never known prosperity! I am now tumbling in a green pasture, and shortly shall be hanging up in the shambles of hell. If this be the best fruit of my prosperity, if I were taken captive by cruel cannibals, and fed with

richest fare, but withal understood, that the design of it were to fat me up like a beast for them to feed upon, how little stomach should I have to their dainties! I my soul! It were much better for thee to have a sanctified poverty, which is the portion of many saints, than an ensnaring prosperity, set as a trap to ruin thee forever.

A reflection for a poor Christian

2. The wisdom of my God hath allotted me but short commons here; his providence feeds me, but from hand to mouth; but I am, and well may be, contented with my present state; that which sweetens it is, that I am one of the Lord's preserved. How much better is a morsel of bread and a draught of water here, with an expectancy of glory hereafter, than a fat pasture given in, and a fitting for the wrath to come? Well, since the case stands thus, blessed be God for my present lot! Though I have but a little in hand, I have much in hope; my present troubles will serve to sweeten my future joys; and the sorrows of this life will give a lustre to the glory of the next. That which is now hard to suffer, will then be sweet to remember; my songs will then be louder than my groans now are.

[Elisha Coles \(Calvinist theologian in England in the 1650s\) comments on this same subject:](#)

Are other men prosperous in the world, and free from trouble, while you are reduced to a low estate, and chastened every morning? have, perhaps, but a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, etc., yet think not your portion mean, or hardly dealt out; good things are to come; they are growing in the other world; and at the time of harvest the Lord will send his angels for you; yea, your Lord himself will come and fetch you thither; and "you shall be forever with him, in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are rivers of pleasures for evermore; and then you will sing, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;" at least say so now. As Abraham dealt by his concubines' children, so doth God by the Ishmaels of the world, he gives them portions, and sends them away, Genesis 25:6. But the inheritance he reserves for his Isaacs; to them he gives all that he has, yea, even himself; and what can we have more! - Elisha Coles

Gen 25:5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

Gen 25:6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

THE POEM

Those beasts which for the shambles are design'd
 In fragrant flow'ry meadows you shall find,
 Where they abound with rich and plenteous fare,
 Whilst others graze in commons thin and bare.
 Those live a short and pleasant life, but these
 Protract their lives in dry and shorter leas.
 Thus live the wicked; thus they do abound
 With earthly glory, and with honour crown'd
 Their lofty heads unto the stars aspire,
 And radiant beams their shining brows attire.
 The fattest portion's serv'd up in their dish;

Yea, they have more than their own hearts can wish.
 Dissolv'd in pleasures, crown'd with buds of May;
 They, for a time, in these fat pastures play,
 Frisk, dance and leap, like full-fed beasts; and even
 Turn up their wanton heels against the heaven;
 Not understanding that this pleasant life,
 Serves but to fit them for the butcher's knife.
 In fragrant meads they tumbling are to-day,
 Tomorrow to the slaughter led away.
 Their pleasure's gone, and vanish like a bubble,
 Which makes their future torments on them double.
 Meanwhile God's little flock is poor and lean,
 Because the Lord did ne'er intend or mean
 This for their portion; and besides doth know
 Their souls prove best, where shortest grass doth grow.
 Cheer up, poor flock, although your fare be thin,
 Yet here is something to take comfort in:
 You here securely feed, and need not fear,
 The infernal butcher can't approach you here.
 'Tis somewhat that; but, oh! Which far transcends,
 Your glorious shepherd's coming, who intends
 To lead you hence unto that fragrant hill,
 Where, with green pastures, he his flocks fill;
 Or which he from celestial casements pours
 The sweetest dews, and constant gracious show'rs;
 Along whose banks rivers of pleasures glide,
 There his bless'd flocks for ever shall abide,
 O envy not the worldling's present joys.
 Which to your future mercies are but toys,
 Their pasture now is green, your's dry and burn'd,
 But then the scene is chang'd, the tables turn'd.

Psalm 73

3 So, Lord, when You awake,
 You shall despise their image.
21 Thus my heart was grieved,
 And I was vexed in my mind.
22 I *was* so foolish and ignorant;
 I was *like* a beast before You.
23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with You;
 You hold *me* by my right hand.
24 You will guide me with Your counsel,
 And afterward receive me *to* glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven *but You?*
 And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
²⁷ For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish;
 You have destroyed all those who *do* desert You for harlotry.
²⁸ But *it is* good for me to draw near to God;
 I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
 That I may declare all Your works.

1Cor4:15-18

¹⁵ For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Another excerpt from Vol. IV, pg 97:

Ah it is good that God takes such a course with some sinners, else the word would do them no good; and to this purpose is that in Job 36:8-10, "And if they be bound in fetters, and Holden in cords of affliction; then he shewith with them their work and their transgression, that they have exceeded; and openeth their ears to discipline." This is that rough course the obstinacy of men's hearts makes necessary for their recovery, and therefore it is very observable, that some words of God have lain dead in some sinners hearts for years together, and at last have begun to work under some smart and close rod. Alas, while all things are pleasant and prosperous about us, the word hath but little operation and effect: Jer. 22:21-22, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear; this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity; surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness." That is, Your eyes are so dazzled with the beautiful flowers, and your ears so charmed with the Syren songs or earthly delights, that my word can take no place upon you. Let an east wing blow and wither up these flowers; then the word shall work, and conscience resent the concernments of eternity. This course God is fain to take with many of you; here you sit from Sabbath to Sabbath under the word, and nothing takes place upon your hearts. Will you not hear the voice of my word? Go, death, saith God, smite that man's child dead, I will try what that will do; go, poverty, and blast this estate, and see what that will do; go, sickness, and smite his body, and shake him over the grave's mouth, I will see what that will do. Thus God sends to sinners, as Absalom sent to Joab, who refused to come near him, till he set fire to his field of corn, and then away comes Joab, 2Sam. 14:29-31. And thus the Lord opened the heart of the Jailor, by putting him into a fright, a panic fear of death, Acts 16:27. And thus doth the Lord devise means to bring back his banished.

And one last comment by Thomas Shepard that relates to this subject of prosperity and its spiritually numbing effects: It is this tendency to abuse our liberty that remains in believers in varying degrees, that God keeps them *lean* as Flavel stated above.

A Call For National Repentance for National Sins
Excerpt from *A Wholesome Caveat* by Thomas Shepard Pgs 294-295
(The great Puritan of England and America, 1630s)
Red for emphasis

Use 2. Hence see the reason why the Lord hath deprived his churches of their liberty, and his government over them at sundry times, and hath put them under iron yokes and bonds, and sore pressures; the reason is shown - they have **either openly or more secretly cast off the government of the Lord**; here hath been the ail of all churches famous and glorious, Ps 81:14, "O that they had hearkened! I should then soon have subdued their enemies." The cause is not so hard to find to a discerning spirit who is privy in any measure to the counsels of God, 1 Kings 9:8, 9, Solomon hath a promise that "the Lord's eyes and heart shall be to his people" which are under him; but if once they slip the collar, then woe; and why? **"Because they forsook the Lord that brought them out of Egypt;" they had liberty, but they cast it off.**

What do you think was the moving cause of all those bloody persecutions, when the blood of dogs was more precious than of Christian churches? Were not they godly? Yes, I do not doubt of it. But as it was here, though humbled they must be in bondage, because they had cast off the government of the Lord Jesus. And hence in the apostle's time, evil times were come, **sad apostasies from the truth**, and because it was long before they were low enough. And hence, (Rev. vi) till the fifth seal was opened, no crying; as it was with Israel in bondage, no prayer to purpose and **because the Lord saw they would abuse all liberties if they had them**. And hence in Constantine's time when peace came in, contention came with it, and **so abused all that their peace was their poison**. And hence in the primitive churches they began to cast off the government of the Lord Jesus; murmurings there were, hence came persecution; but they were a precious people, and made blessed use of it. And the Lord couples their chief persecution with their rest. And it is said, (Acts 9:31) "Then had the churches rest," etc.

And what do you think of the reason of the long reign of Antichrist exalting himself above God and all that is called God, bringing the church under the heaviest bondage for body and soul that ever the earth saw? **Men did not love the truth either speculative to guide their minds or practical to rule their wills and hence left to this day.**

What is the cause of bleeding Germany's woe? O poor Germany! whence the gospel first brake out in its full strength, that now it is a field of blood, that men in woods like satyrs are afraid of men, and men in cities glad to eat the entrails of beasts and sometimes the flesh of their own babes to preserve their lives. What, was there no evil but the common condition of the church to be under the cross? Ask them, they cannot tell what ails them, but curse the emperor and Swedes, etc. O, think of it with sorrow, in secret, for them that know it not themselves; **they have secretly, I say, secretly cast off the government of a merciful Christ and hence are under the hand of unmerciful men.**

What is the cause in our native country, notwithstanding all prayers and tears, no deliverance? Truly, men do not know it, but the Lord sees it; **they know not how to use their liberty.**

This is one of the best discourses in what to look for to confirm your saving interest in Christ. Many Christians have scruples and doubts as to whether or not they are saved. This production of Shepard clears that up, a great consolation.

The Image of God Restored in our Sanctification

code130

Evidence of our Assurance of our Good Estate!

Heb 6:4,5, 2Tim3:5, Deut. 5:29 etc.

Thomas Shepard,

from The Sound Believer, p 352-362

Sect. IV - Fourthly, Sanctification

This is the fourth benefit, which follows in order of nature, our justification, reconciliation and adoption; for upon our being sons in adoption, we receive the image of our heavenly Father, in sanctification; because we are under grace. Hence it comes to pass, that we are freed from the reigning power of sin, Rom. 6:14, **so that our sanctification follows our justification, and adoption goes not before it.** In justification we have the love and righteousness of the Son; in reconciliation, the love of the Father; in adoption, the love of the Father, and presence of the Spirit assisting, witnessing; in sanctification, the **image of our Father** by the same Spirit; and this I conceive with submission, is the seal of the Spirit, mentioned, Eph. 1:13. The seal sealing, is the Spirit itself; and seal sealed, consists, *First*, in the expression of it in adoption. *Secondly*, in the impression of it in sanctification, and that he only shall pass full and clear expression and testimony of the Spirit is after all God's work is finished in glorification, but the beginning of it is here in adoption, a fuller measure of it in sanctification. God's seal is ever set to some promise (as men's seals to some bond, not to planks) the Lord's promise of actual justification and reconciliation, pertains only to men sanctified or called; in adoption therefore we receive the Spirit, which looks both way; testifying either you're sanctified, are justified, or you're called, are justified and reconciled.

I speak not now of external sanctification by outward show and profession, and common illumination and operation of the Spirit upon men, from which many fall away, Heb. 10:29 [and Heb 6:4-6], but of **internal and special [i.e., saving grace]**; the nature of which you may best conceive in these three particulars:

1. It is the renewing of a man, Tit. 3:5¹, so that by it a man is morally made a new man, another man; All things are become new, 2Cor. 5:17, he has new thoughts, new opinions of things, new desires, new prayers, and praises, new dispositions; regeneration not differing from it.

¹ *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

2. It is a renewing of the whole man, 1Thes. 5:23 [*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely*], for in every part and faculty of man is corrupt by the first Adam, so they are renewed by the second Adam; not that we are perfectly renewed in this life by Christ, as we are corrupt by Adam, but in part in every faculty, Rom. 6:19. And hence arises our **spiritual combat and warfare with sin, yea with all sin**; it is not because of our sanctification simply (for if it were perfect, we should war and wrestle no more); but from the imperfection of it. And this renewal in part, is in every part, even in the whole man. And as the first Adam propagates sin chiefly and radically in the soul, especially into the heart of man; **and from thence it diffuses itself like leaven, into the whole lump of our lives**, so the Lord Jesus chiefly communicates this renewal into our hearts, and thence it sweetens our lives; and hence it is called the **inner man** [that new and vital living principle of life: faith grace and truth...Owen], Romans 7:22, Eph. 3:16. You see a little holiness in a Christian, I tell you, if he be of the right make, there is a kind of **infinite endless holiness within him, from whence it springs** [John 7:38, *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*]; as there is a kind of endless infinite wickedness in a wicked man, from whence his sins spring; if a man be outwardly holy, but not

within, he is not sanctified, no more than the painted sepulchres of the proud Pharisees; if any man say his heart is good, should he make no show in his life, he speaks not the truth, if the apostle may be believed, 1John1:6. For sanctification is a renewal of the whole man, within and without; it is not for a man to have his teeth white, and his tongue tipt, and his nails pared. No, no; the Lord makes all new when he comes.

3. **It is a renewal unto the image of God**, or of God in Christ; an unsanctified man may be in a sort renewed in the whole man, his outward conversation may be fair, his mind may be enlightened, his heart may taste of the heavenly gift, etc., Heb. 6:4, 5. He may have a form of godliness, 2Tim3:5, he may have strong resolutions within him unto godliness, Deut. 5:29, and hence with the five foolish virgins may be received into the fellowship of the wise, and not discerned of them neither, till the gate is shut; but they are never renewed in their whole man *after the image of God*, i.e., they do not know things and judge of them as God does, they do not love and will holiness and the means thereto, as God does, they hate not sin as God does, they do not delight in the whole law of God, it is not writ in their hearts, and hence they love it not as God does; and this is to cut off the thread between a sanctified and unsanctified spirit; by sanctification a man is renewed unto God's image, once lost, but here again restored, Eph. 4:24, John 1:16, *We receive from Christ, grace for grace*, as the seal of the wax has tittle for tittle to that in the seal itself; we are changed into the image of Christ by beholding him in the glass of the gospel, by faith, 2Cor3:18. *I delight in the law of God in my inward man*, Rom. 7:23, and hence a Christian by the life of sanctification, lives like unto God, at least **has a holy disposition and inclination** (the habits of holiness) so to do, Gal. 2:19, *I live unto God, he calls us from darkness unto his marvelous light, that we might show forth his virtues*, and that this is true sanctification, may thus appear; because our sanctification is opposed to our original corruption, as our justification to our original and contracted guilt of sin; now as **original corruption is the defacing of God's image by contrary dispositions to sinfulness**, so our sanctification can be nothing else but the removal of this pollution, by the contrary habits and dispositions to be like unto God again; our sanctification is to be holy, Lev. 20:7. Our holiness has no other primary pattern but God's holiness, 1Pet. 1:14-16, so that our sanctification is not the righteousness and holiness as it is inherent in Christ, for that is the matter of our justification, and therefore sanctification must be that holiness which is derived unto us from Christ, whereby we are made like unto him; and thus Christ is made sanctification unto us, 1Cor.1:30. There should be no difference between Christ our righteousness and sanctification, if that holiness which is in Christ should be both to us. Hence also sanctification is not the immediate operation of the Spirit upon us, without created habits of grace abiding in us, as the spirit that came upon **Balaam**, and mightily affected him for a time, but left him as destitute of any grace, or change of his nature, as the ass he rode on. No, no; **it renews you unto the image of God himself, if you be truly sanctified**. And therefore let those dreams of the Familists (denying all inherent graces, but only those that are in Christ, to be in the saints) let them vanish and perish from under the sun, and the good Lord reduce all such who in simplicity are misled from this blessed truth of God. I will not now enter into that depth concerning the means of our sanctification, in mortification by Christ's death, and vivification by the resurrection of Christ; this may suffice for explication of the nature of it.

Only see, and forever prize this privilege, all you blessed souls whom the Lord has justified; you have many sad complaints. What is it to me, if I be justified in Christ and be saved at last by Christ, and my heart remains all this while unholy and unsubdued unto the will of Christ; that he should comfort me

and my unholy heart be always grieving him; what thought the Lord save me from misery but save me not from my sin? Oh consider this benefit. It is true, you find a woeful sinful nature within you, cross and contrary to holiness, and leading you daily into captivity; yet remember the Lord has given you another nature, a new nature; there is something else within you which makes you wrestle against sin, and shall in time prevail over all sin, Mat. 12:20¹. This is the Lord's grace sanctifying of you. Oh be thankful that the Lord has not left you wholly corrupt, but has begun to glorify himself in you and to bless you in turning you from your iniquities.

¹ *A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.*

1. **By this you have a most sweet and comfortable evidence of your justification and favor with God;** he that denies this must whatever distinctions he has) abolish many places of scripture, especially the epistles of James and John, who had to do with some spirits, that pretended faith and union to Christ, and communion with him, and so long as it was thus, this was evidence sufficient to them of their justified estates. What says James? *Thou says thou has faith, show to me then;* Prove it, says he: I will prove it by the blessed fruits and works which flow from it, as Abraham manifested his, James 2:18,22. What says John? You talk (says he) *of fellowship and communion with Christ* and yet what holiness is in your hearts of live? *If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if you walk in the light,* then although your holiness and confession, and daily repentance for sin do not wash away your sin, *yet the blood of Christ does wash us,* 1John1:6, 7. Again *you say, you know Christ,* and the love and good will of Christ toward you, and that he is the *propitiation for your sins*. How do you know this? Says he, *He that says I know him and keep not his commandments, he that keeps not the commandments, is a liar,* 1Jn2:4. True, might some reply, he that keeps not the command of Christ, has hereby a sure evidence that he know him not, and that he is not united to him, but is this any evidence that we do know him, and that we are united to him, if we do keep his commandments? Yes verily says the apostle, *hereby we do know that we know him,* if we keep his commandments, verse 8, and again, verse 5, *Hereby know we that we are in him.* What can be more plain? What a vanity is this to say, that this is running upon a covenant of works? **Is not sanctification the writing of the law in our hearts³, a special benefit of the covenant of grace as well as justification?** Heb. 13:10, 12. And can the evidencing then of one benefit, of such a covenant by another, be a running upon the covenant of works? Is it a truth contained in the covenant of grace, namely, that he that is justified, is also sanctified, and he that is sanctified is also justified? And is it an error against grace to see this truth, that he that is sanctified is certainly justified? And that therefore he that knows himself sanctified may also know thereby that he is justified. Tell me, how will you know that you are justified? You will say, by the testimony of the Spirit; and cannot the same Spirit shine upon your graces, and witness that you are sanctified as well? 1John4:13, 14¹, 1Cor 2:12² Can the Spirit make the one clearer to you and not the other?

¹ *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* ¹⁴ *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

² *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

³ Ezek. 11:19, 36:26, Jer. 31:33 - *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts*

Oh beloved, it is a sad thing to hear such questions and such cold answers, also that sanctification possibly may be an evidence; may be, it is not certain. Assuredly, to deny it, is as bad as to affirm that God's own promises of favor are true evidences thereof, and consequently that they are lies and untruths; for search the scriptures, and consider sadly, how many evangelical promises are made unto several graces, i.e., unto such persons as are invested with them; you may only take a taste from Matt. 5:3, 4, etc. Where our Savior (who was not legal preacher) pronounced, and consequently evidences blessedness by eight or nine promises, expressly made to such persons as had inherent graces of poverty, *mourning, meekness*, etc. there mentioned; the Lord Jesus leaving those precious legacies of his promise unto his children, that are called by those names of *mourners, poor in spirit, pure in heart*, etc. That so everyone may take and be assured of his portion manifested particularly therein; that I many times wonder how it comes to pass, that this so plain and ancient principle of catechism (for to it was among the Waldenses many hundred years since) grounded on so many scriptures, should come to be so much as questioned in our days; sometimes I think it arises from some wretched lusts men have a mind to live quietly in; desirous to keep their peace, and yet unwilling to forsake their lusts; and hence they exclude this witness of water, the witness of sanctification, to testify in the court of conscience, whether they are beloved of God, and sincere hearted or no, because this is a full witness against them, and tells them to their faces, *that there is no peace to the wicked*, Isa. 57 ult., Deut. 29:19, 20¹, and that they *have nothing to do to take God's name in their polluted lips*, who secretly hate to be reformed, Ps. 50:16²

¹¹⁹and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.

²But to the wicked God says: "What *right* have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?"

[this is key here: this how we get a witness of the Spirit that Christ is ours, our sanctification in action! Shepard explains]

In others, I think it does not arise from want of grace, **but because the spirit of grace and sanctification runs very low in them**; it is so little that they can scarce see it by the help of spectacles; or if they do, they doubt continually of the truth of it; and hence, because it can speak little, and that **little very darkly and obscurely for them**, they have no great mind that it should be brought in as any witness for them. Others, I think, may have much grace and holiness, yet for a time cast it by as an evidence unto them, because they have experience how difficult and troublesome it is to find this evidence; and when it is found, how troublesome to read it, and keep it fair, and thereby have constant peace and quietness; and hence arise those speeches, why do you look to your sanctification, a blotted evidence? You may have it today and lose it tomorrow, and then where is our peace? And I do believe the Lord deprives many of his saints from the comfort of this evidence; either because they look only to this and not unto Christ, and their justification by faith, Rom 5:1, or else because there is

some secret lust of guile of spirit, Ps. 32:1, 2 [*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.* ² *Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.*], which the Lord by sore and long shakings about their calling and sanctification, would first winnow out; or because there is a perverse forwardness of spirit, whereby, because they feel not that measure of sanctification which they would, do therefore vilify, and so come to deny what indeed they have; *because they feel a law of sin in their members, leading them captive; will not, with Paul, take notice of the law of their minds, whereby that inner-man delight in the law of God, and mourns bitterly under the body of death, by which they might see with Paul, that there is no condemnation to such Rom. 8:1.* To conclude, whatever is the cause of this crookedness of judgment, I do believe that the general cause is want of attendance and standing unto the judgment of the scriptures in this controversy. For if this was stood unto, men would not produce their own experience, namely, that they could never find any evidence from sanctification, but they have met with it in another way, by the immediate witness of the Spirit only; nor would men cry it down, *because grace being mixed with so much corruption, it can hardly be discerned, and so will be always left in doubts,* and that the heart is deceitful, and many that have evidenced their estates hereby, have been deceived. I confess thus the popish doctors argue against assurance of faith from the scriptures without special and extraordinary revelations, but what is all this to the purpose, if the scriptures make it an evidence? *Away then with corrupt experience, shall this be judge, or the scripture rather?* What though many judging of themselves by marks and signs have been deceived; yet, *if the scripture make it an evidence* (as we have proved) then, though men *through their own weakness or wickedness* have been deceived by misapplying the promises; yet the scriptures cannot deceive you. What though it be difficult to discern Christ's grace in us? *Yet, if the scriptures will have us try our estates by that rule, which in itself is easy, but to our blindness and weakness difficult many time so see;* who shall, who dare condemn the holy scriptures? Which as they shall judge us at last, should judge us no. Suppose that diverse books, and many ministers sometimes give false signs of grace and God's favor; yet, do the scriptures give any? I shall propose one thing to conscience, is the conclusion to this discourse. Suppose you were now lying on your death-bed, comforting yourself in your elected and justified estate; suppose the Spirit of God should now grapple with your conscience, and tell you, if you are justified, then you are called, and sanctified, 2Thes. 2:13, 14 [*But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^d to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.* ¹⁴ *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*] Is it thus with you? What will you answer? If you say, you are not sanctified, the world and Spirit will bear witness then against you, and say, they you are not elected nor justified; if you say, you know not, you look not to sanctification, or fruits of the Spirit, they will then reply, how then can you say that you are elected or justified? For it is a truth as clear as the sun, and as immovable as heaven and earth; none are elected and justified but they are also sanctified, Romans 8. And now tell me, how can you have peace unless you make your faces like flint before the face of God's eternal truth, or heal your consciences by such a plaster as will not stick? *If therefore the Lord ever made sin bitter to you, yet holiness be sweet;* if continuance in sin has been an evidence unto you of your condemnation, Oh let the riches of the grace of Christ in redeeming you from the lamentable bondage and power of sin, *be an evidence to you of your salvation;* do not scorn, or secretly despise the Spirit of grace, [Zach 4:10] as many in this degenerate age do, saying, you look to graces and fruits, and marks and signs, and a holy frame of heart and sanctification; what is your sanctification? Oh let it be the more precious unto you, *mourning that you have so little, and blessing the Father of all grace*

for what little you have, wearing it as a bracelet of gold about your neck, knowing hereby that you are born of God, and that the whole world lies in wickedness, and shall perish without this, 1 John 5:18, 19.

2. This is your glory and beauty, this is glorification begun; what greater glory than to be like God? To be like unto God is to be next to God; and therefore this is called glory, 2Cor3:18, we are changed from glory to glory. Every degree of grace is glory, and the perfection of glory in heaven consists chiefly in the perfection of grace; what is the work of some men at this day, but to cast reproach upon sanctification, our glory. [However, the earthly man, unregenerate, is being formed into an earthly image; see [code129a](#)]

3. This will give you abundance of sweet peace, and therefore, Heb. 12:11 *[For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.]* It is called the quiet fruit of righteousness; for from whence come the sore troubles and continual doubts of God's favor in many men's consciences? Is it not some decay or guile here? Ps. 32:1, 2 *[Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.]* Is it not some boldness to sin; that they walk not in fear, and therefore not in the consolation of the Holy Ghost? Is it not their secret dalliance with some known sin, continued in with impenitency? Is it not because they labor with some strong and unmortified corruption, pride, or passions that they are in daily pangs and throes of conscience for? Ps. 32:1-4 *[Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.]* What was the rejoicing of Paul? Was it not that in all sincerity and simplicity he had his conversation among men? 2Cor1:12 *[For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity^[d] and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.]* What was Hezekiah's peace when dying, as he thought? Was it not this, *Lord, remember I have walked before thee uprightly?* Isa. 38:2, 3. Not that this was the ground of their peace, for that only is free grace in Christ but this is the means of your peace, John 14:22, 23, it is a curse peace which is kept by looking to Christ, your living your lust.

4. This is that which will make you fit for God's use, 2Tim. 2:20, 21¹, a filthy unclean vessel is good for nothing till cleansed; God will not delight to glorify himself much by an unsanctified person; what is your wife, children, friends, family the better for you, if your heart remain unsanctified?

¹ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,^[d] he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

5. A little holiness is eminently all, springing up to eternal life; this little spring shall never cease running, but it shall fill heaven itself, and your soul in it with abundance of glory, John 4:14¹, and 8:38². You despise it, because it is little; [Zach. 4:10, don't despise small beginnings, etc.] I tell you this little is eminently all, and contains as much as shall be poured out by you so long as God is God. It is true, you

say it is weak, and often foiled, and gives you not complete power and victory over all sin; yet know, that this shall, like *the house of David, grow stronger and stronger*, and it shall at last prevail, and the Lord will not *break* thee, though you are *bruised*³ by sin daily, until judgment come to victory; and the prince of this world shall be judged, and your soul perfected in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Jn 4:14

² Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Jn 7:38

³ A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. Isa 42:3

A good explanation of assurance as related to the image of God being restored by the Spirit by John Owen:

Being Sealed by the Holy Spirit

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The image of God communicated to the elect
Excerpt from Communion with God by John Owen, pg 372
God

<https://ccel.org/ccel/owen/communion/communion.i.viii.iii.html>

4. Another effect we have of his, [Rom. viii. 16](#), "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." You know whose children we are by nature, — children of Satan and of the curse, or of wrath. By the Spirit we are put into another capacity, and are *adopted to be the children of God*, inasmuch as by receiving the Spirit of our Father we become the children of our Father. Thence is he called, [verse 15](#), "The Spirit of adoption." Now, sometimes the soul, because it has somewhat remaining in it of the principle that it had in its old condition, is put to question whether it be a child of God or not; and thereupon, as in a thing of the greatest importance, puts in its claim, with all the evidences that it hath to make good its title. The Spirit comes and bears witness in this case. An allusion it is to judicial proceedings in point of titles and evidences. The judge being set, the person

concerned lays his claim, produces his evidences, and pleads them; his adversaries endeavoring all that in them lies to invalidate them, and disannul his plea, and to cast him in his claim. In the midst of the trial, a person of known and approved integrity comes into the court, and gives testimony fully and directly on the behalf of the claimer; which stops the mouths of all his adversaries, and fills the man that pleaded with joy and satisfaction. So is it in this case. The soul, by the power of its own conscience, is brought before the law of God. There a man puts in his plea, — that he is a child of God, that he belongs to God's family; and for this end produces all his evidences, everything whereby faith gives him an interest in God. Satan, in the meantime, opposes with all his might; sin and law assist him; many flaws are found in his evidences; the truth of them all is questioned; and the soul hangs in suspense as to the issue. In the midst of the plea and contest the Comforter comes, and, by a word of promise or otherwise, overpowers the heart with a comfortable persuasion (and bears down all objections) that his plea is good, and that he is a child of God. And therefore it is said of him, Συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ Πνεύματι ἡμῶν. [[He's a witness to our Spirit. MS translator](#)] When our spirits are pleading their right and title, he comes in and bears witness on our side; at the same time enabling us to put forth acts of filial obedience, kind and childlike; which is called “crying, Abba, Father,” [Gal. iv. 6](#). Remember still the manner of the Spirit's working, before mentioned, — that he does it effectually, voluntarily, and freely [[freely: not owed as a debt as though someone asked for it or by compulsion, or from any influence outside himself; hence, God is sovereign, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy... For grace to be grace it must be given freely, Romans 11:6](#)] Hence sometimes the dispute hangs long, — the cause is pleading many years. The law seems sometimes to prevail, sin and Satan to rejoice; and the poor soul is filled with dread about its inheritance. Perhaps its own witness, from its faith, sanctification, former experience, keeps up the plea with some life and comfort; but the work is not done, the conquest is not fully obtained, until the Spirit, who work freely and effectually, when and how he will, comes in with his testimony also; clothing his power with a word of promise, he makes all parties concerned to attend unto him, and puts an end to the controversy.

Herein he gives us holy communion with himself. The soul knows his voice when he speaks, “*Nec hominem sonat.*” **There is something too great in it to be the effect of a created power.** When the Lord Jesus Christ at one word stilled the raging of the sea and wind, all that were with him knew there was divine power at hand, [Matt. viii. 25–27](#). And when the Holy Ghost by one word stills the tumults and storms that are raised in the soul, giving it an immediate calm and security, it knows his divine power, and rejoices in his presence.

5. **He seals us.** “We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, [Eph. i. 13](#); and, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,” [chap. iv. 30](#). I am not very clear in the certain peculiar intendment of this metaphor; what I am persuaded of the mind of God in it I shall briefly impart. In a seal two things are considered:— (1.) The *nature of it*. (2.) The *use of it*.

(1.) The *nature of sealing* consists in the **imparting of the image or character of the seal to the thing sealed**. This is to seal a thing, — to stamp the character of the seal on it. In this sense, the **effectual communication of the image of God unto us should be our sealing. The Spirit in believers, really communicating the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, unto the soul, seals us.** To have this **stamp of the Holy Ghost, so as to be an evidence unto the soul that it is accepted with God, is to be sealed by the Spirit;** taking the metaphor from the nature of sealing. [[Rev. 7:4](#)]³⁵⁶ And in this

sense is our Savior said to be sealed of God, [John vi. 27](#), even from that impression of the power, wisdom, and majesty of God that he had upon him in the discharge of his office.

(2.) The *end* of sealing is twofold:—

[1.] To *confirm or ratify* any grant or conveyance made in writing. In such cases men set their seals to make good and confirm their grants; and when this is done they are irrevocable. Or to confirm the testimony that is given by any one of the truth of any thing. Such was the manner among the Jews:— when any one had given true witness unto any thing or matter, and it was received by the judges, they instantly set their seals to it, to confirm it in judgment. Hence it is said, that he who receives the testimony of Christ “sets to his seal that God is true,” [John iii. 33](#). The promise is the great grant and conveyance of life and salvation in Christ to the souls of believers. That we may have full assurance of the truth and irrevocableness of the promise, God gives us the Spirit to satisfy our hearts of it; and thence is he said to seal us, by assuring our hearts of those promises and their stability. But, though many expositors go this way, I do not see how this can consist with the very meaning of the word. It is not said that the promise is sealed, but that we are sealed; and when we seal a deed or grant to any one, we do not say the man is sealed, but the deed or grant.

[2.] To *appropriate, distinguish, or keep safe*. This is the end of sealing. Men set their seals on that which they appropriate and desire to keep safe for themselves. So, evidently, in this sense are the servants of God said to be sealed, [Rev. vii. 4](#); that is, marked with God’s mark, as his peculiar ones, — for this sealing answers to the setting of a mark, [Ezek. ix. 4](#). Then are believers sealed, when they are marked for God to be heirs of the purchased inheritance, and to be preserved to the day of redemption. Now, if this be the sealing intended, it denotes not an act of sense in the heart, but of security to the person. The Father gives the elect into the hands of Christ to be redeemed; having redeemed them, in due time they are called by the Spirit, and marked for God, and so give up themselves to the hands of the Father.

If you ask, now, “Which of these senses is chiefly intended in this expression of our being sealed by the Holy Ghost?” I answer, The first, not excluding the other. We are sealed to the day of redemption, when, from the stamp, image, and character of the Spirit upon our souls, we have a fresh sense of the love of God given to us, with a comfortable persuasion of our acceptation with him. But of this whole matter I have treated at large³⁵⁷ elsewhere.

Thus, then, the Holy Ghost communicates unto us his own likeness; which is also the image of the Father and the Son. “We are changed into this image by the Lord the Spirit,” [2 Cor. iii. 18](#); and herein he brings us into fellowship with himself. Our likeness to him gives us boldness with him. His work we look for, his fruits we pray for; and when any effect of grace, any discovery of the image of Christ implanted in us, gives us a persuasion of our being separated and set apart for God, we have a communion with him therein.

Jonathan Edwards: God may have a real and proper pleasure or happiness in seeing the happy state of the creature; yet this may not be different from his delight in himself; being a delight in his own infinite goodness; or the exercise of that glorious propensity of his nature to diffuse and communicate himself and so gratifying this inclination of his own heart. This delight which God has in his creature’s happiness, cannot properly be said to be what God receives from the creature. For it is only the effect

of his own work in and communications to the creature; in making it, and admitting it to a participation of his fullness. As the sun receives nothing from the jewel that receives its light, and shines only, by a participation of its brightness. God's Chief End in Creation

The Subject of Faith

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In receiving the image of God
 Excerpt from The Sound Believer, pg 275
 by Thomas Shepard

2. The subject matter of faith.

This is the second thing in the description of faith, the soul of a humble sinner, is the subject or matter of faith. I do not mean, the matter out of which faith is wrought, (for there is nothing in man out of which the Spirit begets it) but that wherein faith is seated; I mean also, the habit of faith, not the principle of it; for that is out of man in the Lord Jesus, who is therefore called our hope, as well as our strength; the soul therefore is the subject of faith, called the heart, Rom. 10:9, compared with Matt. 6:21, for we cannot come to Christ in this life with our bodies, we are here absent from the Lord, 2Cor5:6, but the soul can go to him, the heart can be with him, as the eyes can see a thousand miles off, and receive the species or image of things into it; so the soul enlightened by faith, can see Christ afar off, it can long for, choose and rest upon the Lord of life and receive the lively image of Christ's glory in it, 2Cor3, ult. If Christ were present upon earth, the soul (not the body) only could truly receive

him; Christ comes to his elect only by his Spirit; and hence our spirits only are fit to receive him, and close with him. Thousands hear Christ outwardly, that inwardly are deaf to all God's calls, their spirits see not, taste not, feel not; it is therefore the soul that is the subject of faith; and, I say, it is a humbled empty soul, which is the subject; for a full, proud, unbroken spirit cannot, nay, will not receive Christ, as we have proved. And therefore, Luke 14, the servant is commanded to bid the *poor, halt, blind, and lame to come in*; They would not make excuses as other did. They that were stung to death with fiery serpents, were the only men that the brazen serpent was lifted up for them *to look upon*, and so be *healed*, John 3:14.

What it Means To Be Dead in Sin

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by Thomas Shepard, The Sincere Convert

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But here is not all. Consider, secondly, every man is born stark dead in sin. (Eph. 2:1.) He is born empty of every inward principle of life, void of all grace, and hath no more good in him (whatsoever he thinks) than a dead carrion hath. And he is under the power of sin, as a dead man is under the power of death, and cannot perform any act of life; their bodies are living coffins to carry a dead soul up and down in. It is true, (I confess,) many wicked men do many good actions, as praying, hearing, alms deeds; but it is not from any inward principle of life. External motives, like plummetts on a dead (yet artificial) clock, set them a-running. Jehu was zealous, but it was only for a kingdom; the Pharisees gave alms only to be seen of men. If one write a will with a dead man's hand deceased, that will cannot stand in any law; it was not his will, because it was not writ by him, by any inward principle of life of his own. Pride makes a man preach, pride makes a man hear, and pray sometimes. Self-love stirs up strange desires in men, so that we may say, This is none of God's act by his grace in the soul, but pride and self-love. Bring a dead man to the fire, and chafe him, and rub him, you may produce some heat by this external working upon him; but take him from the fire again, and he is soon cold; so many a man that lives under a sound a minister, under the lashes and knock of a chiding, striving conscience, he hath some heat in him, some affections, some fears, some desires, some sorrows stirred; yet take him from the minister and his chasing conscience, and he grows cold again presently, because he lacks an inward principle of life.

Which point might make us to take up a bitter lamentation for every natural man. It is said, (Ex. 12:30), "That there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house wherein there was not one found dead." O Lord, in some towns and families, what a world of these are there! Dead husband, dead wife, dead servants, dead children, walking up and down with their sins, (as fame says some men do after death,) with grave clothes about them; and God only knows whether ever they shall live again or not. How do men lament the loss of their dead friends! O, you have a precious soul in thy bosom stark dead; therefore lament your estate, and consider it seriously.

First. A dead man cannot stir, nor offer to stir; a wicked man cannot speak one good word, or do any good action, if heaven itself did lie at the stake for doing it, nor offer to shake off his sins, nor think one

good thought. Indeed, he may speak and think of good things, but he cannot have good speeches, nor good thoughts; as a holy man may think of evil things as of the sins of the times, the thought of those evil things is good, not evil, so *e contra*.

Secondly. A dead man fears no dangers, though never so great, though never so near. Let ministers bring a natural man tidings of the approach of the devouring plagues of God denounced, he fears them not.

Thirdly. A dead man cannot be drawn to accept of the best offers. Let Christ come out of heaven, and fall about the neck of a natural man, and with tears in his eyes beseech him to take his blood, himself, his kingdom, and leave his sins, he cannot receive this offer.

Fourthly. A dead man is stark blind, and can see nothing, and stark deaf, and hears nothing, he cannot taste anything; so a natural man is stark blind, he sees no God, no Christ, no wrath of the Almighty, no glory of heaven. He hears the voice of a man, but he hears not the voice of God in a sermon; "he savoreth not the things of God's Spirit."

Fifthly. A dead man is senseless, and feels nothing: so cast mountains of sin upon a wicked man, he feels no hurt until the flames of hell break out upon him.

Sixthly. A dead man is a speechless man; he cannot speak unless it be like a parrot.

Seventhly. He is a breathless man; a natural man may say a prayer, or devise a prayer out of his memory and wit, or he may have a few short-winded wishes; but to pour out his soul in prayer, in the bosom of God, with groans unutterable, he cannot. I wonder not to see so many families without family prayer. Why? They are dead men, and lie rotting in their sins.

Eighthly. A dead man has lost all beauty: so a mere natural man has lost all glory; he is an ugly creature in the sight of God, good men, and angels, and shall one day be an abhorring to all flesh.

Ninthly. A dead man has his worms gnawing him: so natural men have the worm of conscience breeding now; which will be gnawing them shortly.

Lastly. Dead men lack nothing but casting into the grave: so there lacks nothing but casting into hell for a natural man. So that, as Abraham loved Sarah well while living, yet when she was dead, he seeks for a burying-place for her to carry her out of his sight. So God may let some fearful judgment loose, and say to it, Take this dead soul out of my sight, etc. It was a wonder that Lazarus, though lying but four days in the grave, should live again. O, wonder thou that ever God should let thee live, that has been rotting in thy sin twenty, thirty, perhaps sixty years together.

III. Every natural man and woman is born full of all sin, (Rom. 1:29,) as full as a toad is of poison, as full as ever his skin can hold; mind, will, eyes, mouth, every limb of his body, and every piece of his soul, is full of sin; their hearts are bundles of sin; hence Solomon saith, "*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;*" whole treasures of sin. "*An evil man, (said Christ,) out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things;*" nay, raging seas of sin. The tongue is a world of mischief. What is the heart then? "*For out of the abundance of the heart the tongue speaketh :*" so that, look about thee and see, whatever sin is broached, and runs out of any man's heart into his life through the whole world, all those sins are in your heart; thy mind is a nest of all the foul opinions, heresies, that ever were vented by any man; thy heart is a foul sink of all atheism, sodomy, blasphemy, murder, whoredom, adultery, witchcraft, buggery; so that, if thou hast any good thing in thee, it is but as a drop of rosewater in a bowl of poison; where fallen it is all corrupted.

It is true you feel not all these things stirring in thee at one time, no more than Hazael thought he was or should be such a bloodsucker, when he asked the prophet Elisha if he were a dog; but they are in thee like a nest of snakes in an old hedge. Although they break not out into thy life, they lie lurking in thy heart; they are there as a filthy puddle in a barrel, which runs not out, because you happily wantest [lack] the temptation or occasion to broach and tap your heart; or because of God's restraining grace by fear, shame, education, and good company, thou art restrained and bridled up, and therefore when one came to comfort that famous picture, pattern, and monument of God's justice by seven years' horror, and grievous distress of conscience, when one told him he never had committed such sins as Manasses, and therefore he was not the greatest sinner since the creation, as he conceived, he replied, that he should have been worse than ever Manasses was, if he had lived in his time, and been on his throne.

Mr. Bradford would never have looked upon any one's lewd life with one eye, but he would presently return within his own breast with the other eye, and say, "In this my vile breast remains that sin, which, without God's special grace, I should have committed as well as he." O, methinks this might pull down men's proud conceits of themselves, especially such as bear up and comfort themselves in their smooth, honest, civil life; such as through education have been washed from all foul sins; they were never tainted with whoredom, swearing, drunkenness, or profaneness; and here they think themselves so safe, that God cannot find in his heart to have a thought of damning them. O, consider of this point, which may make thee pull your hair from your head, and turn your clothes to sackcloth, and run up and down with amazement and paleness in thy face, and horror in thy conscience, and tears in your eyes. What, though thy life be smooth, what, though your outside, thy sepulcher, be painted. O, you are full of rottenness, of sin, within. Guilty, not before men, as the sins of thy life make thee, but before God, of all the sins that swarm and roar in the whole world at this day, for God looks to the heart; guilty thou art therefore of heart whoredom, heart-sodomy, heart blasphemy, heart drunkenness, heart buggery, heart oppression, heart idolatry; and these are the sins that terribly provoke the wrath of Almighty God against thee. (Is. 57:17) *For the iniquity of his covetousness*, saith our translation, *I smote him*; but the Hebrew renders it better — *For the iniquity of his concupiscence* (which is the sin of his **heart and nature**) *I smote him*. As a king is angry and musters up his army against rebels, not only which brings his soldiers out to fight, but who keeps soldiers in their trenches ready for to fight. These sins of your heart are all ready armed to fight against God at the watchword or alarm of any temptation. Nay, I dare affirm and will prove it, that these sins provoke God to anger, and are as bad, if not worse, than the sins of thy life.

1. **The sin of your heart or nature is the cause**, the womb that contains, breeds, brings forth, suckles all the litter, all the troop of sins that are in thy life; and therefore, giving-life and being to all other, it is the greatest sin.

2. **Sin is more abundantly in the heart** than in the life. An actual sin is but a little breach made by the sea of sin in your heart, where all sin, all poison, is met and mingled together. Every actual sin is but as a shred broken off from the great bottom of sin in the heart; and hence Christ saith, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and out of the evil treasure of the heart we bring forth evil things.*" A man spending money (I mean sin in the life) is nothing to his treasure of sin in the heart.

3. **Sin is continually in the heart**. Actual sins of the life fly out like sparks, and vanish; but this brand is always glowing within; the toad spits poison sometimes, but it retains and keeps a poisonous nature

always. Hence the apostle calls it "*sin that dwells in me,*" that is, which always lies and remains in me. So that, in regard of the sins of your heart, you do rend in pieces and break, 1. All the laws of God. 2. At one clap. 3. Every moment of thy life. O, methinks the thought of this might rend a heart of rock in pieces; to think I am always grieving God at all times, whatsoever I do.

4. **Actual sins are only in the life and outward porch; sins of the heart are within the inward house.** One enemy within the city is worse than many without; a traitor on the throne is worse than a traitor in the open field. The heart is Christ's throne. A swine in the best room is worse than in the outward house. More I might say; but thus, you see, sins of the life are not so bad, nor provoke God's wrath so fiercely against thee, as the sins of your heart. Mourn, therefore, not so much that you have not been so bad as others are, but look upon your black feet — look within your own heart, and lament that, in regard of your sins there, you are as bad as any; mourn not so much merely that you hast sinned, as that you have a nature so sinful, that it is your nature to be proud, and your nature to be vain and deceitful, and loathe not only thy sins, but yourself for your sin, being brimful of unrighteousness. But here is not all. Consider fourthly,

IV. *That whatever a natural man doth is sin;* as the inside is full, so the outside is nothing else but sin, at least in the sight of a holy God, though not in the sight of blind, sinful men. Indeed, he may do many things, which, for the matter of them, are good; as he may give alms, pray, fast, come to church: **but as they come from him they are sin;** as a man may speak good words, but we cannot endure to hear him speak, because of his stinking breath which defiles them. Some actions indeed, from their general nature, are indifferent, for all indifferences lie in generals; but every deliberate action, considered in *individuo*, with all its circumstances, as time, place, motive, end, is either morally good or morally evil, as may be proved easily; morally good in good men, morally evil in unregenerate and bad men. For let us see particular actions of wicked men.

1. All their *thoughts* are only evil, and that continually. (Gen. vi. 5)
2. All their words are sins, (Ps. 50:16); *their mouths are open sepulchers*, which smell filthy when they are opened.
3. All their civil actions are sins, as their eating, drinking, buying, selling, sleeping, and ploughing. (Prov. 21:4)
4. All their religious actions are sins, as coming to church, praying, (Prov. 15: 8, 9; 28:9), fasting and mourning; roar and cry out of thyself till doomsday, they are sins. (Is. 58)
5. All their most zealous actions are sins, as Jehu, who killed all Baal's priests; because his action was **outwardly and materially good**, therefore God rewarded him with temporal favors; but because he had a hawk's eye to get and settle a kingdom to himself by this means, and so was theologically evil, therefore God threatens to be revenged upon him. (Hosea 1:4.)
6. Their wisdom is sin. O, men are often commended for their wisdom, wit, and parts; yet those wits, and that wisdom of theirs, are sin. (Rom. 8) *The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God.*

Thus all they have or do are sins; for how can he do any good action whose person is filthy? "*A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.*" You are out of Christ; therefore all your good things, all your kindnesses done unto the Lord, and for the Lord, as you think, are most odious to him. Let a woman seek to give all the content to her husband that may be, not out of any love to him, but only out of love to another man, he abhors all that she doth. Every wicked man wants an inward principle of

love to God and Christ, and therefore, though he seeks to honor God never so much, all that he doth being done, out of love to himself, God abhors all that he performs. **All the good things a wicked man doth are for himself, either for self-credit or self-ease, or self-content, or self-safety**; he sleeps, prays, hears, speaks, professes for himself alone; hence, acting always for himself, he commits the highest degree of idolatry; **he plucks God out of his throne, and makes himself a god, because he makes himself his last end in every action**; for a man puts himself in the room of God as well by making himself his *finis ultimus*, as if he should make himself *primum principium*. **Sin is a forsaking or departing from God.** Now, every natural man remaining always in a state of separation from God, because **he always wants [lacks] the bond of union, which is faith, is always sinning**; God's curse lies upon him; therefore he brings out nothing but briars and thorns.

Objection. But you will say, If our praying and hearing be sin, why should we do these duties? We must not sin.

Answer

1. Good duties are good in themselves, although, coming from thy vile heart, they are sins.
2. It is less sin to do them than to omit them; therefore, if you will go to hell¹, go in the fairest path thou canst in thither.
3. Venture and try; it may be God may hear, **not for thy prayers' sake, but for his name's sake.** [In other words you may get saved despite your wicked prayer as Shepard says in another place!] The unjust judge helped the poor widow, not because he loved her suit, but for her importunity; and so be sure you shall have nothing if you do not seek. What though you are a dog, yet you are alive, and are for the present under the table. Catch not at Christ², snatch not at his bread, **but wait till God give thee him**; it may be you may have him one day. O, wonder then at God's patience, that you live one day longer, who have all your lifetime, like a filthy toad, spit your venom in the face of God, that he has never been quit of you. O, look upon that black bill that will one day be put in against thee at the great day of account, where thou must answer with flames of fire about your ears, not only for thy drunkenness, thy bloody oaths and whoring, but for all the actions of your short life, **and just so many actions so many sins.**

¹ "If you will go to hell." This is too coarse and insulting. The condition of the unconverted is in itself dark and perilous enough. It is wrong therefore to throw out jeering language, which may deeply wound those who are struggling between hope and fear; and will only give disgust and irritation to the secure.

² "Catch not at Christ." This must not be so understood as though it were not the duty of an unconverted sinner to endeavor immediately to believe in Christ. But the endeavor ought so to be made as to lay himself open to the full conviction of his sin and misery; and so as to beware of imagining that he can believe by his own power, or rashly to conclude that he has believed.

Thou hast painted thy face over now with good duties and good desires; and a little honesty, amongst some men, is of that worth and rarity, that they think God is beholding to them, if he can get any good action from. But when thy painted face shall be brought before the fire of God's wrath, then thy vileness shall appear before men and angels. O, know it, that as thou dost nothing else but sin, so God heaps up wrath against the dreadful day of wrath." Thus much for man's misery in regard of sin.

Now follows his misery in regard of the consequents or miseries that follow upon sin. And these are, 1. Present. 2. Future.

First. Man's present miseries, that already lie on him for sin, are these seven ; that is, – First. God is his dreadful enemy. (Ps. v. 5.)

Question. How may one know another to be his enemy?

Answer

1. By their looks. 2. By their threats. 3. By their blows.

So God,

1. Hides his face from every natural man, and will not look upon him. (Isa. 59:2)
2. God threatens, nay, curses every natural man. (Gal. 3:10.)
3. God gives them heavy, bloody lashes on their souls and bodies.

Never tell me, therefore, that God blesses you in your outward estate; no greater sign of God's wrath than for the Lord to give thee thy swing, as a father never looks after a desperate son, but lets him run where he pleases. And if God be your enemy, then every creature is so too, both in heaven and earth.

Secondly. God hath forsaken them, and they have lost God. (Eph. ii. 12.) It is said, that, in the grievous famine of Samaria, doves' dung was sold at a large price, because they wanted [lacked] bread. O, men live and pine away without God, without bread, and therefore the dung of worldly contentments are esteemed so much of, thou hast lost the sight of God, and the favor of God, and the special protection of God, and the government of God. Cain's punishment lies upon thee in thy natural estate; thou art a runagate from the face of God, and from his face thou art hid. Many have grown mad to see their houses burnt, and all their goods lost. O, but God, the greatest good, is lost. This loss made Saul cry out in distress of conscience, (1 Sam. 28:15,) The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me; the loss of the sweetness of whose presence, for a little while only, made the Lord Jesus Christ cry out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? whereas thou hast lost God all thy lifetime. O, thou hast a heart of brass, that canst not mourn for his absence so long. The damned in hell have lost God, and know it, and so the plague of desperate horror lies upon them; thou hast lost God here, but know it not, and the plague of a hard heart lies upon you, you that can not mourn for this loss.

Thirdly. They are condemned men, condemned in the court of God's justice, by the law which cries, Treason, treason against the most high God, and condemned in the court of mercy, by the gospel, which cries, Murder, murder against the Son of God, (John iii. 18;) so that every natural man is damned in heaven, and damned on earth. God is thy all-seeing, terrible Judge; conscience is your accuser, a heavy witness; this world is thy jail; thy lusts are thy fetters [hence, being in bondage to sin]. In this Bible is pronounced and writ thy doom, thy sentence. Death is thy hangman, and that fire that shall never go out, thy torment. The Lord hath in his infinite patience reprieved thee for a time; O, take heed and get a pardon before the day of execution come.

Fourthly. Being condemned, take him, jailer; he is a bond-slave to Satan, (Eph. ii. 3;) for, His servants ye are whom ye obey, saith Christ. Now, every natural man does the devil's drudgery, and carries the

devil's pack; and howsoever he says he defies the devil, yet he sins, and so does his work. Satan has overcome and conquered all men in Adam, and therefore they are under his bondage and dominion. And though he cannot compel a man to sin against his will, yet he has power, —

First. To present and allure man's heart by a sinful temptation.

Secondly. To follow him with it, if at first he be something shy of it.

Thirdly. To disquiet and rack him, if he will not yield, as might be made to appear in many instances.

Fourthly. Besides, he knows men's humors, as poor wandering, beggarly gentlemen do their friends in necessity, (yet in seeming courtesy,) he visits and applies himself unto them, and so gains them as his own. O, he is in a fearful slavery who is under Satan's dominion, who is, —

1. A secret enemy to thee.

2. A deceitful enemy to you, that will make a man believe (as he did Eve, even in her integrity) that he is in a fair way, when his condition is miserable.

3. He is a cruel enemy or lord over them that be his slaves, (2 Cor. iv. 3;) he gags them so that they cannot speak, (as that man that had a dumb devil,) neither for God, nor to God, in prayer; he starves them, so as no sermon shall ever do them good; he robs them of all they get in God's ordinances, within three hours after the market, the sermon is ended.

4. He is a strong enemy. (Luke 11:21.) So that if all the devils in hell are able to keep men from coming out of their sins, he will: so strong an enemy, that he keeps men from so much as sighing or groaning under their burdens and bondage. (Luke 11:21.) *When the strong man keeps the palace, his goods are in peace.*

Fifthly. *He is cast into utter darkness;* as cruel jailers put their prisoners into the worst dungeons, so Satan doth natural men, (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4:) *they see no God, no Christ; they see not the happiness of the saints in light; they see not those dreadful torments that should now in this day of grace awaken them and humble them.* O, those by-paths which thousands wander from God in, they have no lamp to their feet to show them where they ere. You that are in your natural estate, are born blind, and the *devil hath blinded you eyes more by sin,* and *God in justice had blinded them worse for sin,* so that you are in a corner of hell, because you are in utter darkness, *where you have not a glimpse of any saving truth.*

Sixthly. They are bound hand and foot in this estate, and cannot come out, (Rom. v. 6; 1 Cor. ii. 14;) for all kind of sins, like chains, have *bound every part and faculty of man,* so that he is sure for stirring; and those are very strong in him, they being as *dear as his members,* nay, as his life, (Col. iii. 7); so that when a man begins to forsake his vile courses, and purposes to become a new man, devils fetch him back, world entices him, and locks him up; and flesh says, O, it is too strict a course; farewell, then, merry days and good fellowship. O, you may wish and desire to come out some time, but cannot put strength to your desire, nor endure to do it. You may hang down your head like a bulrush for sin, but thou canst not repent of sin; you may presume, but you can not believe; you may come half way, and forsake some sins, but not all sins; you may come and knock at heaven's gate, as the foolish virgins did, but not enter in and pass through the gate; you may see the land of Canaan, and take much pain to go into Canaan, and may taste of the bunches of grapes of that good land, but never enter into Canaan, into heaven, but thou lie bound, hand and foot, in this woeful estate, and here thou must lie and rot

like a dead carcass in his grave, until the Lord come and roll away the stone, [even take away the stony heart!] and bid thee come out and live.

Lastly. They are ready every moment to drop into hell. God is a consuming fire against you, and there is but one paper wall of thy body between your soul and eternal flames. How soon may God stop your breath! There is nothing but that between you and hell; if that were gone, then farewell all. You are condemned, and the muffler is before your eyes. God knows how soon the ladder may be turned; you hang but by one rotten twined thread of your life, over the flames of hell every hour. Thus much of man's present miseries.

Comments on True Virtue, Human Freedom, Concurrence,
Original Sin, the Image of God in Man,
&
Dependency Upon a Sovereign God

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Excerpts from Reformed Dogmatics, by **Hermon Bavinck**, Edited by John Bolt
Pg 241, 241 & 243

My comments in [blue]

It is a fact that subjective religion is not just an act of worship and adoration but primarily a disposition or mind-set that expresses itself in such devotion. Also, the distinction between moral virtues and theological virtues is too supernaturalistic and dualistic. There is of course some truth in it,

the truth that also in a fallen humanity¹ there is still remnants of the image of God, and moral virtues are not – even religion is not – totally eradicated. But the moral virtues and also religious disposition must be renewed and reborn to be truly good. Thomas Aquinas therefore recognized that the theological virtues (faith, hope and love) “bring about the actuality of religion which works certain things in proper order toward God” but which nevertheless are themselves excluded from religion; and whereas intellectual and moral virtues are according to human nature, the theological virtues are above nature. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1,2, qu. 62, art. 2) John Bolt, Editor, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pg 240

¹pg 241: But in fallen humanity this predisposition is corrupted band, being fecundated by an untrue and impure objective religion, also produces worship that is “idolatry” or “will-worship”. Two things are, therefore, necessary for a religion to be true: first, that the objective religion that come to us from without again makes God known to us as he really is; second, that the corrupted religious predisposition in human beings be regenerated and renewed. Hence in this sense subjective religion is “a virtue infused by the Holy Spirit.” (Hoorneck, *Disputatio theologica practica*, II, 207, 213) But this definition is inadequate. A human being has many virtues both in intellect and will. Hence the peculiar nature of the virtue at work in religion must be further qualified. [\[This is where Jonathan Edwards’ piece, *The Nature of True Virtue*, sheds light; there is a true virtue founded mainly upon faith in and true love for God \(holiness\), and a virtue that seems true but is not, founded upon the natural principles of self-love.\]](#) In earlier times this “virtue” was described as piety, reverence, fear, faith, etc. and similarly today as respect, deference, fear, a feeling of dependency. Still, these terms are not specific enough, for to some degree we have all these feelings in relation to creatures as well. There has to be an essential distinction between religious worship and civil devotion, between the feelings of fear, respect, deference, etc., as we have them toward God and those feelings as we have them toward creatures. That distinction can consist only in the fact that in religion the *absolute* dignity and power of God and *absolute* subjection on our part come into play. We are only partially dependent on creatures; as fellow creatures we are on the same level with them. God, however, is a being on whom we depend totally² and who decides about our weal and woe in every respect. Among pagans this divine absoluteness is as it were divided over many deities, but in his own territory every one of these deities nonetheless possesses such power that human beings are totally dependent on him for their good fortune or misfortune.

²We are dependent in the manner and sense that we simultaneously remain rational and moral creatures who are akin to God, are his offspring and his image. We are absolutely dependent in such a manner that the denial of this dependence never makes us free, while the acknowledgement of it never reduces us to the status of a slave. On the contrary: in the conscious and voluntary acceptance of this dependence, we human beings arrive at our greatest freedom. We become human to the degree that we are children of God. (John Bolt, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pg 243)

General and Special Revelation

Also thoughts from Augustine on Philosophy,

And Sin – the privation of good [code394](#)

Hermon Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pg 322

The idea and existence of God, the spiritual independence and eternal destiny of the world, the moral world order and its ultimate triumph—all these are problems that never cease to engage the human mind. Metaphysical need cannot be suppressed. Philosophy perennially seeks to satisfy that need. It is general revelation that keeps that need alive. It keeps human beings from degrading themselves into animals. It binds them to a supersensible world. It maintains in them the awareness that they have been created in God's image and can only find rest in God. General revelation preserves humankind in order that it can be found and healed by Christ and until it is. To that extent natural theology used to be correctly denominated a "preamble of faith," a divine preparation and education for Christianity. General revelation is the foundation on which special revelation builds itself up.

Without general revelation, special revelation loses its connectedness with the whole cosmic existence and life.

It is one and the same God who in general revelation does not leave himself without a witness to anyone and who in special revelation makes himself known as a God of grace. Hence general and special revelation interact with each other, "God first sent forth nature as a teacher, intending also to send prophecy next, so that you, a disciple of nature, might more easily believe prophecy." (Tertullian). Nature precedes grace; grace perfects nature. Reason is perfected by faith, faith presupposes nature. Cf. P. Hofstede de Groot, *Institute Theologia Natura*

My comments: Everyone has experienced general revelation – see Ps19, *the heavens declare the glory of God*, etc. (Also Romans 1:19-20: *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,^[9] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*). We look at creation and know that there is a God and that innate principle, what is left in our souls subsequent to the fall of Adam, the much defaced image of God, along with our conscience in us, testifies that we owe obedience to Him and are accountable to him. Special revelation is the communication from God of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without which you cannot be saved. As Jesus informs Peter after Peter had confessed Christ as God and Savior, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* There ya go; that is special revelation; not every receives this, only those to whom God has chosen to reveal the Son.

On the insufficiency of general revelation, however, there can scarcely be any doubt. In the first place, it is evident from the fact that this revelation at most supplies us with knowledge of God's existence and of some of his attributes such as goodness and justice, but it leaves us absolutely unfamiliar with the person of Christ, who alone is the way to the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 14:6; 17:3; Acts 4:12) General revelation, therefore, is insufficient for human beings as sinners; it knows nothing of grace and forgiveness; it is frequently even a revelation of wrath (Romans 1:18-20). Grace and

forgiveness, which for fallen human beings have to be the primary content of religion, are acts of God's good pleasure, not of nature and necessity. General revelation can at best communicate certain truths but conveys not facts, no history, and therefore changes nothing in existence. It somewhat illumines the mind and restrains sin but does not regenerate the nature of human beings and the world. It can instill fear but not trust and love.

This discourse on Romans 7:7-25 is good for **self-examination** - to see if you be in the faith. For Bavinck goes into the difference between how the unregenerate deal with sin compared to the regenerate. In this situation, the unregenerate are easily self-deceived, thinking because they are fighting against sin, they are in favor with God!

Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck
Vol. 3, pg 81-82
& Ver. 17 p 133-134

The Spread of Sin

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& Romans 7:17 Explained
Good for self-examination

Sin Universal

Of the texts cited for the contrary view, only **Romans 7:7–25** requires some further discussion. Pelagians have at all times appealed to this pericope to prove that the mind (νοῦς) or the spirit (πνεῦμα) in humans has remained free from sin, and the latter only resides in the flesh (σάρξ); in modern times this exegesis has been adopted almost universally. But Augustine in his later period and all his followers, both in the Catholic Church and in Protestant churches, have consistently rejected this interpretation and understood verses 14–25 as having been said by Paul as regenerate and with reference to the present, an explanation that is still advocated by Delitzsch, Philippi, Luthardt, Harless, Thomasius, Umbreit, Kohlbrugge, and others.[3] The latter exegesis deserves preference for various reasons: (1) Paul argues, in Romans 7:7–25, that the law from which the believer, by having died with Christ, has been released, is itself not sinful. And he does this by showing that the law has first brought the believer to the knowledge of his sin and his death (vv. 7–13) and that even now **it still has the consent of his inner self, although his flesh is still opposed to it** (vv. 14–25). In this connection the argument that the law still has the consent of the believer, though the believer is released from it, is necessary. For the thesis that the law itself is holy, it is not enough that the unregenerate should approve of it but necessary that the regenerate approve of it. Paul, accordingly, speaks from verse 14 on in the present tense, not to make the description more vivid, **but because as a regenerate person he loves and approves of the law**. Since the law served mediately to give him the painful experience of his sin and death, since in communion with Christ (v. 4; Gal. 2:19–20) Paul died to the law by the law and was freed from its curse (Gal. 3:13), he thereby learned to know it as holy, just, and good and testifies to and confirms the law by faith (Rom. 3:30). (2) Because Paul, following the course of his argument, wants to honor the holy character of the law, he throws all the blame on sin. First, it was an objective power that initially, as long as he lived without the law (v. 9), did not exist for Paul and was not known by him. Then sin, working by means of the law, produced covetousness in him (v. 8) and was able to do this because that covetousness resided in him by nature and he was carnal (v. 14).[4] Finally sin, thus revived and revealed as sin, made him die (vv. 9ff.), that is, made him despair of himself and his own righteousness.

But since this death was a death in communion with Christ (Gal. 2:19), Paul also rose again by that death, **was inwardly reborn in his will and inner disposition, so that he can now make a sharp distinction between the center and the periphery of his being. Inwardly, in terms of his will, his inner self, he loves God's law, but in his members there lives another power and another law, namely, sin. Such a deep distinction is nowhere in Scripture assumed in the case of the unregenerate. In the case of the latter, there is indeed a knowledge of God and of the law and a doing by nature of the things of the law (Rom. 1:19; 2:14–15), that is, a struggle between reason and sensuality, conscience and covetousness, intellect and heart. However, a struggle between "flesh" and "spirit," as Paul pictures it here, occurs only in the life of the regenerate (Gal. 5:17): only they can say they love the law of God, approve of it, and want to keep it with all their heart.** (3) Although as a regenerate person Paul still calls himself "of the flesh," "sold into slavery under sin" (Rom. 7:14), he does not mean by it that he is "in the flesh" (8:8–9) or walks "according to the flesh" (8:4). He only describes himself in those words because, on account of the sin "dwelling in his members," he cannot do what he wants to do and is held captive by "that law of sin in his members." Although he is wretched, because with the flesh he serves the law of sin, still he thanks God through Jesus Christ and with his mind (νοῦς) serves the law of

God (v. 25); and it is above all this latter thing that is further developed in Romans 8. In Christ he is righteous and walks according to the Spirit. (4) Add to this that, **if Romans 7:14ff were to be understood of the unregenerate, rebirth itself would be unnecessary, a helping grace would be sufficient, and the entire teaching of Scripture on sin and grace, justification and sanctification, faith and repentance would be toppled.** Romans 7:7–25 is rather a strong proof for the total depravity of human nature. For if the regenerate person still has to complain so intensely about the power of sin that resides in him or her, then the unregenerate person is totally—without knowing it—a servant of sin, being in the flesh and walking according to the flesh; and the mind of the flesh is hostility to God.

Romans 7:7-25 explained

Good for Self-examination

Hermon Bavinck, vol. 3 p 143-144

& Vol. 3, pg 144

The Reformation spoke out against that position, asserting that also the impure thoughts and desires that arose in us prior to and apart from our will are sin. By this it meant to say, not that all desiring was sin in a psychological and philosophical sense, but that in a scriptural and theological sense concupiscence made us guilty before God. And in this it was undoubtedly correct. For sin certainly began with a conscious and voluntary act of the will. But that first sinful act did not pass us by without leaving a trace; it in fact corrupted human nature and left a condition that in all respects is contrary to the law of God. So although sin originated by the will, it does now exist outside of the will and is also rooted in all the other faculties and powers of human beings, in soul and body, in the lower and the higher cognitive and conative capacities (Gen. 6: 3; 8: 21; Exod. 20: 17; Pss. 19: 13; 51: 5; Jer. 17: 9; Matt. 5: 28; Mark 7: 21; Rom. 7: 7, 15–17; 8: 7; Gal. 5: 7; etc.). “Sin cannot exist without the will because without the will it cannot exist as it is; without the will, however, it cannot be, because without the will, what exists cannot remain.” [Augustine]

Lutheran and Reformed theologians, therefore, usually fought against the position that all sin was voluntary. By taking that stance, they did not at all mean, however, that there could also be sin that totally and absolutely passed by the faculty of the will. The point is to gain a correct view of the nature and operation of the will. The will, after all, is absolutely not the whole of our capacity for desire but only a special power and expression of it. [40] In this restricted sense, the will is antecedent only to our actual sins, as James 1: 15 speaks of it, but absolutely not to the sins of our state and to our involuntary sins. If the condition of being voluntary in this sense were a necessary element of sin, not only all impure thoughts and desires would cease to be sin, but almost all actual sins could be excused with the motto “To understand all is, in a way, to forgive all.” In order to maintain the innocence of concupiscence, Bellarmine, accordingly, already arrived at the statement “Not everything that is contrary to the law is sin”; the involuntary motions, though in conflict with the law, are nonetheless not sins. [R. Bellarmine]

However, though it is true that the voluntary element in this restricted sense is not always a constituent in the concept of sin, the sins of the human state and involuntary sins still do not totally occur apart from the will. There is not only an antecedent but also a concomitant, a consequent, and an approving will. Later, to a greater or lesser degree, the will approves of the sinfulness of our nature

and takes delight in it. And also when later the will, illumined by reason, fights against it, or the born-again person can testify with Paul that he does not will the evil that he does [cf. Rom. 7: 7– 25], then this certainly decreases the degree of sin but does not define the nature of the sin. For sin has its standard only in God's law. Paul definitely denominates as sin the evil he does not will but nevertheless commits and so agrees that the law is good. But even then the sin that is done without having been willed does not occur totally apart from the will. For, certainly, Paul can say: "It is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells within me" [Rom. 7: 17], thus drawing a contrast between his regenerate "I" and unregenerate flesh, but Augustine already rightly explained these words as follows: "Even though I do not consent to lust (concupiscence) and even if I do not pursue my desires, nevertheless, I still feel desire and am personally present in that very part of me. For I am not one person in my mind and another in my flesh. But then what am I? For I exist both in my mind and in my flesh. For the two natures are not contrary but the one human being is composed of both, inasmuch as God, the God by whom the person was made, is one." [Augustine] Certainly, it is not one person who does this sin in the flesh and another who does not want this sin. In both instances it is the same person who, on the one hand, impurely pursues what is forbidden (concupiscence) and who nevertheless in the deepest part of his will turns away from it and fights it. And since a human being, also the born-again person for as long as he or she is in the flesh, always to some degree desires what is forbidden, even though he or she fights it in the restricted sense, it can be said that at the most fundamental level all sin is voluntary. There is nobody or nothing that compels the sinner to serve sin. Sin is enthroned not outside the sinner but in the sinner and guides the sinner's thinking and desiring in its own direction. It is the sinner's sin insofar as the sinner has made it his or her own by means of his or her various faculties and powers. [P. Melancthon, *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, art. 2]

Notes on self examination by Hermon Bavinck:

Finally, just as in the natural world every creature seeks the food that suits it, so the new life in the believer is always drawn toward the gospel, the word of Christ, the Scriptures, as the basis of its support, as the food by which it is strengthened. Scripture becomes not more but increasingly less dispensable and more glorious to those who are growing in the faith. The witness of the Holy Spirit in their hearts binds them to Scripture to the same degree and with the same force as to the person of Christ himself.

- Bavinck, pg. 103 Vol. 4, *Reformed Dogmatics*

What is Sin

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[Pg 137, Augustine on Philosophy, Its insufficiency, and What is Sin](#)

Augustine's firm point of departure was the human being, his self-consciousness, his ineradicable yearning and need for truth, happiness, and goodness, all of which are one. This starting point is certain and reliable (against the skeptics), since doubt itself still assumes belief in truth and self-consciousness is the final ground of truth. Augustine himself was consumed by this burning love of truth. Admittedly, Augustine accepted two cognitive organ, sense and intellect. But the knowledge gained by the latter goes far beyond that of the former. The sensible is not the truth itself but only an

image of it. Eternal, immutable truth can only be found by the activity of the mind. Augustine does not deny that we can also rise up to the invisible through the visible, but as a rule he looked for the way to truth, not outside of ourselves through nature, but through the activity of the human spirit. There, in reason, his own and that of everyone, he finds eternal, immutable truths that themselves again refer back to and converge in God, who is the supreme truth, and the only good, eternal reason, the origin of all things. Therefore, because God is himself the whole truth, being itself, the good and the beautiful, there is rest of human beings thinking and striving in him alone. The knowledge of self and the knowledge of God are the two poles between which all human thought oscillates. Though knowledge of nature is not despised, it is made subordinate. “I desire to know God and the soul! O that I may know myself! O that I may know You!” God is the sun of spirits. We neither see nor know truth except in and by his light.

Still, philosophy is not sufficient, not only as a result of the inability of reason to find the way to truth but also and especially because it is blocked by pride (*superbia*). Humility alone is the way to life. Hence there is another way to the truth, the way of authority, the way of faith. On the one hand, faith assumes a measure of knowledge, but, on the other, it seeks to know, strives after knowledge. Augustine attempted to prove from nature, and especially from human nature, not only the existence of God and the immortality of the soul but also the Trinity. But for him God is not abstract, unqualified being but the living One, the supreme truth and the highest good, the greatest bliss and therefore the only being fully able to satisfy the human heart. All of Augustine’s thoughts I religious, theological; he views everything in the light of God. In that light he also views the world. On the one hand, it is nonbeing, an image, and therefore perishable. On the other, as God’s creation, it is a work of art created in accordance with the ideas in the mind of god, little by little, step by step, realizing those ideas and forming a universe that contains the richest diversity within itself. Things individually differ from each other in the measure of being and thus also of the truth and goodness each possesses. Creation is a cosmos, based on idea, number, order, spacious, immeasurable commonwealth in which miracles are events only against that which is known of nature, in which sin is merely a privation compensated for by punishment and a cocontributor to the beauty and harmony of the whole.

In the most beautiful song of creation, this antithesis is also needed. Sin is like the contrast in a speech, like barbarisms in language, like shadows in a painting. Augustine thus attempts to fit evil into the order of the whole. But he does not thereby excuse sin. The truth is, he does not locate the end of things in the ethically good but in the fact that Creation is, and will increasingly be, a harmonious revelation of all God’s attributes and perfections. And to that end, by the will of God, sin is subordinated as well. Also, we know how deeply and seriously Augustine view sin: “You have not yet considered what a great burden sin is.” Augustine saw it all around him and felt it: human beings seek God and need him while at the same time they cannot and will not come to him. What is good in humanity is only the fact that they exist. Humanity as a whole is a “mass of perdition.” Sin is, above all, haughtiness – pride (*superbia*) in the soul and lust (*concupiscentia*) in the body. In Adam we all sinned, and thus sin became the fate of us all. It is lack of God (*carentia dei*), a privation of good (*privatio boni*), not an inability not to sin. Salvation from this condition exists only by grace, which has its origin in predestination and is objectively revealed in the person and work of Christ. Objective grace is the sure and proper foundation of the Catholic (universal, nor Roman Catholic) faith but must also come into us subjectively as internal grace to infuse faith and love.

The Ground of Faith

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Excerpts from Hermon Bavinck's,
Reformed Dogmatics

pgs., 578, 591-593 on **regeneration**, believing (conversion), being an act of the Holy Spirit without doing violence to man's creaturely freedom/liberty

(Doctrine of Concurrence)

God does not work by compulsion

The Ground of Faith

Inadequacy of Proofs

Pg 578

As soon as Christian theology started to reflect seriously on the final and deepest ground of faith, it came to the conclusion that no single intellectual or historical proof advanced for the truth of revelation can ultimately serve as such. The apologists of the second century attached great value to those proofs and, against pagan naturalism, stressed that faith is a free rational act. Still, even among them one already finds the realization that all those proofs are powerless to effectually move a person to faith. Something different and something more is needed, viz., divine grace. Irenaeus compares it to the dew and the rain, which make the fields fruitful. **But Augustine was the first to clearly understand and confess the necessity of internal grace.** Elsewhere he ascribes great value to the church as a motive for believing; but his doctrine of internal grace proves that this motive was not for him the final and deepest cause of this faith. **That cause was God alone. "God works our faith, acting in a marvelous way in our heart in order that we may believe."** (Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 2, 6.) **Believing, after all, is always voluntary: "no one believes except willingly." To that end God by his grace bends the will and prompts us to believe with the intellect.** (Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII) Later theologians as well ascribed great power to the "preamble of faith" and the motivations toward belief; and among them the church increasingly assumed a more prominent place. But all these theologians admit that these motives so not make revelation "evidently true" but only "evidently credible." They rule out rational doubt and demonstrate that it is not unreasonable to believe while it is unreasonable to assume the contrary. (Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*) But they are not sufficient. Indeed, when dealing with the philosophical proofs for the trinity, Thomas expressly states: "Whoever tries to prove the Trinity of persons by natural reason detracts from faith." Such proofs are of little value against opponents "because the very insufficiency of the reasons confirms them in their error inasmuch as they judge that we consent to the truth of faith on the basis of such weak reasons. (Aquinas) Revelation may ever so much be made credible by the proofs, yet it is and remains a truth of faith. (Bellarmine) In Roman Catholic theology too it must remain that, for otherwise the voluntary nature and the meritoriousness of faith would be lost. (Aquinas) Faith, therefore, accepts the truth, not on the basis of one's own insight, but on that of divine authority. "For faith does not assent to anything except on the ground that it has been revealed by God. (Aquinas) And in order for human

beings to acknowledge that authority of God, an antecedent change of will has to occur. Believing is indeed an act of the intellect, **but it presupposes a bending of the will by grace**; the intellect must be deposed toward faith by the will. (Aquinas) **The assent of faith, accordingly, occurs only by an act of God “moving inwardly through grace.”** (Aquinas) Gregory XVI, in a letter dated September 26, 1835, condemned the opinion of Hermes that the motivations toward belief were the true ground of faith in revelation. And the Vatican Council decreed that though these motives could make divined revelation credible, still “no one can consent to the gospel preaching, as he must to obtain salvation, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” (*Documents of Vatican Council 1, Session 3...*)

Demonstrating the Truth of Faith

Pgs 591-593

Now what is the experience by which faith in revelation is first aroused and invigorated? It naturally differs in different believers, but it is always of a religious–ethical, a spiritual nature. What really causes us to believe is not the insight of our intellect, **nor a decision of our will, but a power that is superior to us, bends our will, illumines our mind, and without compulsion still effectively takes our thoughts and reflections captive to the obedience of Christ** [2Cor. 10:5]. This is what Augustine confessed with he attributed faith to “internal grace”; what Thomas recognized when he said that “the assent of faith” came from God, “inwardly moving us through grace”; what the Vatican Council stated when it testified that faith does not arise “apart from the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” This was the conviction of the entire Reformation movement: faith is a gift of God, and effect of the Holy Spirit’s working. Believing is an act of the intellect, an immediate (= unmediated by proofs) linkage of the human consciousness to divine revelation.

But that faith presupposes a change in the relation of the whole person to God: it presupposes the new birth, the transformation of the will. **“no one believes except willingly”** (*Nemo credit nisi volens*). Knowledge is compelling; no one can deny a mathematical proposition. **But believing is free**; it is an act of supreme freedom inasmuch as it is an act of the deepest self-denial. **When God links salvation, not to knowing but to believing, that is proof that he does not coerce nor wishes to coerce anyone.** The Letter to Diognetus states beautifully: “It is not like God to use compulsion.” Precisely because faith is not the fruit of scientific proofs, it does not arise outside of the human heart and will. That is the truth implicit in the doctrine of Kant and the neo-Kantians concerning moral faith. **Nor, on the other hand, is it a decision of the will**, a postulate. Neither is faith an imperative of the will. **People cannot believe when they please; the will cannot order the consciousness to accept something as truth when that consciousness itself does not in any way grasp that truth.** Believing is not arbitrary, but neither is it blind. It presupposes a change of will: function follows being. It is itself a free, spontaneous, intellectual recognition of the word of God. Just as the human eye, seeing the sun, is immediately convinced of its reality, so the regenerate person “sees” the truth of God’s revelation. For the regenerate person faith in revelation is as natural as the recognition of the moral law is for the moral person. It is increased in the nature of the spiritual life; it is rooted in the mysterious depths of the regenerate heart. Believers cannot relinquish their faith. In the life of Christians, faith in revelation is inseparable from faith in themselves. Indeed, they can deny themselves, sacrifice their lives, but they cannot relinquish their faith. In the life of Christians, faith in revelation is inseparable from faith in themselves. (S. Hekstra, *Wijsgerige Godsdienstwetenschap*) Christians would have to abandon faith in

themselves, in their adoption as children of God, in the forgiveness of their sins, in the trustworthiness and faithfulness of God, if they cease to understand revelation as the word of God. Faith in revelation is inseparable from the best that is in them. In their best moments they are most firmly established in that faith. Whatever may arise to challenge it, they cannot and may not act otherwise.

Finally, opposition to and resistance against this faith of theirs is rife, not just from without, but even much more from within. However much their will has been bent and their intellect enlightened, there remains much in believers that resists the obedience of faith. Faith, since it is the conviction of things not seen, is a continual struggle. The sins of the heart and the errors of the mind gang up on faith and often have appearance in their favor. As long as believers are on earth, there remains in them a dualism, a dualism not of the head and the hearts, but of the flesh and the spirit, of the “old” and the “new” person. **Faith more or less retains a supernatural character insofar as it transcends the nature of unspiritual persons. It is not yet fully natural; the moment it becomes natural it ceases and become sight.** **Faith is above all faith because it sees something that the unspiritual do not perceive.** On the other hand, this dualism, however painful, serves to confirm faith. For if faith does not arise from the natural habits of human beings and is not the conclusion of a syllogism nor a decision of the will, its presence is simultaneously a proof of its truth. **Our own spirit does not by nature impel us to call God our Father and to count ourselves among his children.** There is an essential and easily recognizable difference between the witness of the Holy Spirit, when he says to our soul, “I am your salvation,” and the temptation of Satan, when he whispers, “Peace, peace, and no danger.” “Can a person, impelled by the devil, possibly call God Abba! Father!” in faith?” (Heidegger, *Copus Theol.*) Christian faith points back to the testimony of the Holy Spirit. “Though theology scoffs and philosophy scorns, God himself is the final ground of my faith in God” (Beets).

FAITH IS NECESSARY BUT NO GROUND

Code426

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck’s book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 209-212, 221-223
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther’s works]

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

Some Footnotes modified or deleted for smoother reading

FAITH IS NECESSARY BUT NO GROUND

Now God says in his law (Deut. 25: 1) that the righteous must be acquitted and the unrighteous condemned, and everyone’s conscience and sense of justice agrees with this. Even God acts according to this rule: he by no means clears the guilty, nor does he condemn the innocent (Exod. 20: 5ff., 34: 7;

Num. 14: 18). “One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 17: 15; cf. Exod. 23: 7; Prov. 24: 24; Isa. 5: 23). Yet, seemingly in flat opposition to this and contrary to what he himself has said (Rom. 1: 18; 2: 13), Paul says that God justifies the ungodly (4: 5). For humans have no righteousness in themselves on the basis of which they could be acquitted by God. **Those who think in a Pelagian way and find the ground for acquittal in faith, that is, in the good disposition, virtues, and good works of humans, and mark them as perfect since they carry the warrant of perfection in themselves, or are counted as perfect by God for Christ’s sake, are at all points in conflict with Scripture and the Christian confession.** For Scripture testifies that by the works of the law no “flesh” can or will be justified (Isa. 64: 6–7; Rom. 3: 19–20; 8: 7; Eph. 2: 2; and so forth). The works accomplished after justification by faith cannot be considered for justification, **because then the order of redemption would be reversed and justification would be made dependent on sanctification, and also because those good works are still always imperfect and polluted by sin, and not in keeping with the full requirement of the divine law** (Matt. 22: 37; Gal. 3: 10; James 2: 10). God, being faithful and true, cannot view as perfect that which is not perfect. As the righteous and holy One, God cannot give up the demands of the law nor content himself with a semi-righteousness, which is basically no righteousness at all. Scripture, accordingly, sets the person’s own righteousness and the righteousness of faith or the righteousness of God in contrast to each other (Rom. 10: 3; Phil. 3: 9); **they are mutually exclusive** as “works” and “faith” (Rom. 3: 28; Gal. 2: 16), as “reward” and “grace” (Rom. 4: 4; 11: 6). Hence, since according to the law God condemns, and has to condemn us on account of our sin, it has pleased him to disclose his righteousness, that is, his judiciary, and in this connection also his acquitting righteousness, in another way, that is, apart from the law and the works of the law, solely through the gospel. God, that is, put forward Christ as a means or sacrifice of atonement, thus showing himself to be righteous and at the same time able to justify or acquit those who have faith in Jesus (3: 21–26). [112] Christ’s sacrifice, accordingly, provided the ground for his acquittal of those who, though of themselves ungodly, nevertheless have faith in Jesus. In this disclosure of acquitting righteousness, the person of Christ with his sacrifice and faith in his name occupy a pivotal place. The two are inseparably bound up with each other: the righteousness of God has been revealed in Christ by his being put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, but he is that *δια πίστεως* (*dia pisteōs*, through faith; 3:25), and people are justified freely, out of grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (3: 24). In a word, the righteousness of God is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ (3: 22). But what is the place occupied by each of these two in God’s righteousness? **Is Christ or is faith, or is a combination of these two, the ground, “the material or meritorious cause,” for his act of acquittal?** Aside from those who modernize Paul, view faith as a good disposition that is completely separate from Christ and his sacrifice, and have God accept the will for the deed, only two approaches are possible. **The first is that of Roman Catholics, Remonstrants, rationalists, mystics, as well as numerous modern Protestants, who, though sharply diverging among themselves, have in common the fact that, while linking faith in some fashion with the person of Christ, they nevertheless locate the righteousness on the basis of which God acquits the sinner, in whole or in part, in the human subject.** Granted that righteousness may be imperfect, but God nevertheless counts it as perfect, either for Christ’s sake or because it is a form of obedience to God’s will expressed in the gospel and makes the human agent acceptable to God, or because it is perfect in principle and carries within itself the warrant of future perfection.

But this view does not stand up in the face of the clear pronouncements of Scripture. For, in the first place, the righteousness of God in terms of which he acquits believers is objectively revealed in the gospel, apart from the works of the law and before faith (Rom. 1: 17; 3: 21), as is also the reconciliation that God brought about in Christ between himself and the world (2 Cor. 5: 19). For God has put Christ forward as a propitiatory sacrifice (ἱλαστηριον, *hilastērion*; Rom. 3: 25), and this Christ was handed over to death for our trespasses (4: 25), died for us (5: 6–11), became a curse for us (Gal. 3: 13), was made to be sin (2 Cor. 5: 21), and was thus raised for our justification (Rom. 4: 25), because we were or had to be justified in him. He, therefore, is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1: 30), and our righteousness is not based on works **but is from God** (Phil. 3: 9), a gift of his grace (Rom. 3: 24; 5: 15–17). We are justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (3: 24), by his blood (5: 9), in Christ (Gal. 2: 16). In Rom. 5: 12ff. Paul asserts that between Christ and Adam there is a kind of parallelism. On the basis of one trespass all humanity is condemned and subjected to death; similarly [but in the opposite direction], the gift of God, that is, righteousness in Christ, became a δικαίωμα, that is, a verdict of acquittal, for many (5: 16). One δικαίωμα (dikaiōma, that is, the verdict of acquittal pronounced upon Christ in his resurrection; 4: 25) leads for all to justification and life, that is, the act of justification that carries life with it (5: 18). By the obedience of one person the many are treated as righteous (5: 19). Alongside the righteousness that God granted in Christ and on the basis of which he justified Christ as mediator of the covenant for all his own in his resurrection, **there is no room for a justification consisting in faith or love**. If there were, the latter would nullify the former.

In the second place, faith is never presented as the ground for justification. Righteousness, or justification, is ἐκ πίστεως (*ek pisteōs*, **through faith**) or δια πίστεως (*dia pisteōs*, **through faith**) or πίστει (*pistei*, **by faith**; Rom. 1: 17; 3: 22, 26, 28, 30; Gal. 2: 16; 3: 8, 24; Phil. 3: 9; and so forth) **but never δια πίστιν (*dia pistin*, on account of faith)**. We do read in Phil. 3: 9 that Paul possessed “a righteousness that is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that is based on faith,” but this righteousness is clearly “through faith” and “from God.” He only says that he possessed God’s righteousness for himself on the basis of faith. **Faith never occurs as righteousness itself or as a part of it; on the contrary, it is from faith precisely because it is according to grace.** Grace and faith are not opposed to each other; but faith and works, the righteousness that is of faith and the righteousness that is of works, are [opposed to each other] (Rom. 3: 20–28; 4: 4–6, 13–14; 9: 32; 10: 5–6; Gal. 2: 16; 3: 11–12, 23, 25; 5: 4–5; Eph. 2: 8–9). **Faith does not justify by its own essence or act because it itself is righteousness, but by its content, because it is faith in Christ, who is our righteousness.** If faith justified on account of itself, the object of that faith (that is, Christ) would totally lose its value. **But the faith that justifies is precisely the faith that has Christ as its object and content.** Therefore, if righteousness came through the law, and if faith were a work that had merit and value as such and made a person acceptable to God, then Christ died for nothing (Gal. 2: 21). In justification faith is so far from being regarded as a ground that Paul can say that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4: 5). Even when his doctrine elicits the accusation that it leads to indifference and wickedness, he never defends himself by saying that faith is in whole or in part the ground of justification (3: 5–8; 6: 1). Instead, he affirms that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, inasmuch as Christ died and was raised for them (8: 33–34).

In the third place, **since faith is therefore not a work, but a relinquishment of all work**, an unqualified trust in God who gives life to the dead (4: 17), who raised Christ from the dead (4: 24), who in Christ

gave “a righteousness from God” (δικαιοσύνη ἐκ θεοῦ: Phil. 3: 9; Rom. 10: 3–11; 1 Cor. 1: 30), the expression that “faith was accounted as righteousness” **cannot mean that faith itself was accepted by God as a work of righteousness in place of or alongside** “the righteousness of God in Christ.” The word λογίζεσθαι (logizesthai) can certainly mean “to hold or consider a person for what he or she is” (1 Cor. 4: 1; 2 Cor. 12: 6). **However, it can also have the sense of “to credit to a person something one does not personally possess.”** Thus the sins of those who believe are not counted against them although they do have them (Rom. 4: 8; 2 Cor. 5: 19; cf. 2 Tim. 4: 16); and thus they are counted against Christ, although he was without sin (Isa. 53: 4–6; Matt. 20: 28; Rom. 3: 25; 8: 3; 2 Cor. 5: 21; Gal. 3: 13; 1 Tim. 2: 6). Similarly, to those who believe, **a righteousness is imputed that they do not have** (Rom. 4: 5), and for that reason that **act of imputation is a gift** (κατὰ χάριν, kata charin, according to grace; 4: 4), an act of crediting someone with righteousness apart from works (4: 6). The phrase “to reckon faith as righteousness” is an abbreviated way of saying that God in faith imputes his righteousness—the righteousness granted in Christ—to persons and on that basis acquits them. This is confirmed by that other expression “the righteous will live by faith.” **Faith is not actually the principle and source of life, for Christ is life and grants life** (Rom. 5: 17–18; 6: 4ff.; 2 Cor. 4: 10–11; Gal. 2: 20; Col. 3: 3–4; 2 Tim. 1: 10; cf. John 1: 4; 6: 33ff.; 11: 25; 1 John 1: 2; 5: 11; etc.). Those who believe have life precisely because they receive it from Christ. Similarly, those who believe have the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, *dikaïosynē theou*), which God grants them in Christ.

Add to this, finally, **that if faith itself is the ground of justification, God is contenting himself with a lesser righteousness than he demands in his law.** In that case the gospel does not confirm the law, as Rom. 3: 31 says, but nullifies it. God then relinquishes his own righteousness and denies himself. Or he accounts faith as something it is not, as a complete and sufficient righteousness, and so fails to do justice to his truthfulness. **The charge lodged by the proponents of infused righteousness against imputed righteousness that God regards certain people as something they are not—returns upon their own heads: they have God count something as righteousness which it is not. [That’s the key distinction – this error leads to proponents of the sinner’s prayer and like prayers for salvation, all to curry God’s favor, the wicked presumption that Thomas Shepard calls.]—In addition, they deprive believers of consolation.** If our faith—a faith that is often little and weak and hidden under an overlay of doubt and fear, and that according to the proponents of infused righteousness **can be lost altogether—if that faith is the ground for our justification, the Christian life is a life of continual fear and uncertainty. Instead of being fixed on Christ, the eye of faith is then consistently turned inward to oneself.** A truly Christian life lived in the service of God becomes impossible, for, before one can truly speak of good works, one’s dread before God as Judge has to be transmuted into the consciousness of his fatherly love. [See the parable of the talents where the wicked servant hid his talents (could not serve God) because he saw God as a harsh task master. This is typical of the unregenerate. But Christians, due to their weak faith and wrong ideas of the nature of God, may have similar thoughts and hence not serve God in a due manner.)

Faith is Not a Formal Cause

Pgs. 221-223 vol. 4

Active and Passive Justification

In the third place, the above distinction makes it possible for us to regard faith as **simultaneously a receptive organ and an active power**. If in every respect justification comes after faith, faith becomes a condition, an activity that has to be performed in advance and cannot be purely receptive. [this is the Arminian position, which is why many churches favor the Sinner's Prayer.] But if the righteousness on the basis of which we are justified **exists completely outside of us in Christ Jesus [that's the key!]**, it can naturally be appropriated by us only because we accept it in childlike faith. "The forgiveness of sins is a thing promised for Christ's sake. Therefore it can be accepted only by faith, since a promise can be accepted only on faith." [Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. 4 par. 40-47] **Faith, therefore, is not the material or formal cause of justification; it is not even a condition or instrument (instrumental cause) of justification**, for it does not relate to justification as, for example, the eye to seeing or the ear to hearing. Faith is not a condition on which, and not an instrument or organ by which, we receive this benefit, **but the very act of accepting Christ and all his benefits as he by his Word and Spirit offers himself to us, and faith therefore includes the consciousness that he is my Lord and that I am his possession.** **Faith** therefore is not an instrument in the true sense, one that serves as the means by which a person accepts Christ, but is a sure knowledge and firm confidence that the Holy Spirit works in one's heart and by which he [the Spirit] persuades and assures people that, despite all their sins, they share in Christ and all his benefits. [Calvin]

But if this is saving faith, it cannot be a "knowledge of history" or a "bare assent" to certain truths; then it is by its very nature a living and active faith, **and it is not in every respect antithetical to all work**. It constitutes a contrast to the works of the law in a double sense, that is, in the fact that the latter can neither be the material nor the instrumental cause of justification. **It is also antithetical to the works of faith** (infused righteousness, obedience, love) the moment these are in even the slightest degree regarded as a ground for justification, as constituting in part or in whole the righteousness on the basis of which God justifies us. **For that is Christ and Christ alone. Faith itself is not a ground for justification; neither, therefore, are the works that proceed from it.** But faith is not opposed to work if by it one should mean that only a dead, inactive faith can justify us. For the dispute between Rome and the Reformation was not about whether we are justified by an active or an inactive faith, by a living or a dead faith. But the question was, as it was for Paul, whether faith with its works justifies us before God or in our conscience, or whether faith justifies apart from works. Nor is faith opposed to the works of faith insofar as these works, as the fruits of faith, are used by the Holy Spirit to assure believers of the genuineness of their faith and thus of their salvation. [Heidelberg Catechism, Q86] In this sense faith itself is even a work (John 6: 29), the best work and the principle of all good works. The Reformed therefore also said that, indeed, **"it is faith alone that justifies; nevertheless the faith that justifies is not alone,"** and spoke, in addition to "the justification of the sinner," also of a "justification of the righteous." In this sense Paul and James are also in agreement. Granted, it is not correct to say that Paul speaks only of the "justification of the sinner" whereas James speaks of the "justification of the righteous." But both deny that the ground of our justification consists in the works of the law, and both acknowledge that faith, that is, **living faith, the faith that includes and produces good works, is the means by which the Holy Spirit assures us of our righteousness in Christ.** In this connection the only difference is that Paul fights against dead works while James wages a campaign against a dead faith. The faith that justifies is the certainty—produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit—of our righteousness in Christ. **Therefore, not the more passive but the more lively and forceful it is, the more it justifies us.**

Faith, accordingly, is active along with works and is “brought to completion by the works” (James 2:22).

Justification is Forensic, Not Ethical

Code423

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck’s book,

Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 204-206

Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther’s works]

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

Some Footnotes modified or deleted for smoother reading

JUSTIFICATION IS FORENSIC, NOT ETHICAL

To correctly assess the benefit of justification, people must lift up their minds to the judgment seat of God and put themselves in his presence. [J. Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxi] When they compare themselves with others or measure themselves by the standard that they apply to themselves or among each other, they have some reason perhaps to pride themselves in something and to put their trust in it. But when they put themselves before the face of God and examine themselves in the mirror of his holy law, all their conceit collapses, all self-confidence melts, and there is room left only for the prayer: “Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you” (Job 4: 17–19; 9: 2; 15: 14–16; Ps. 143: 2; cf. 130: 3), and their only comfort is that “there is forgiveness before you, so that you may be revered” (Ps. 130: 4). If for insignificant, guilty, and impure persons there is to be a possibility of true religion, that is, of genuine fellowship with God, of salvation and eternal life, then God on his part must reestablish the broken bond, again take them into fellowship with him and share his grace with them, regardless of their guilt and corruption. He, then, must descend from the height of his majesty, seek us out and come to us, take away our guilt and again open the way to his fatherly heart. If God were to wait until we—by our faith, our virtues, and good works of congruity or condignity—had made ourselves worthy, in part or in whole, to receive his favor, the restoration of communion between him and ourselves would never happen, and salvation would forever be out of reach for us.

This is why so much depends on the benefit of justification, and it is rightly denominated the article on which the church either stands or falls. For the fundamental question that arises in this connection is this: What is the way that leads to communion with God, to true religion, to salvation and eternal life: God’s grace or human merit, his forgiveness or our works, gospel or law, the covenant of grace or

the covenant of works? If it is the latter, if our work, our virtue, our sanctification is primary, then the believers' consolation ends, and they remain in doubt and uncertainty to their last breath. Then Christ is violated in his unique, all-encompassing, and all-sufficient mediatorial office, and he himself is put on a level with other humans, with ourselves. Then God is robbed of his honor, for if humans are justified on the basis of their works, they have reason to boast of themselves and are, partly or totally, the craftsmen of their own salvation.

Driven by these three motives, the Reformation took up cudgels against Rome and confessed with great unanimity that the grace of God is the only impelling and efficient cause of our entire salvation. And by "grace" it meant not some metaphysical quality that was infused into humans who did "as much as they could" and elevated them to a supernatural state (*gratia elevans*), but rather the forgiving mercy and favor of God that precedes all human effort and again receives them, freely and without obligation, into his fellowship. The establishment of the covenant of grace proceeds from God and from him alone. It is he and he alone who for his own sake blots out our transgressions and no longer remembers our sins (Isa. 43: 25). We are justified by his grace as a gift (Rom. 3: 24; Gal. 3: 18; Eph. 2: 8; Titus 3: 5–7). More specifically, it is the Father from whom this benefit proceeds, for he is the lawgiver and judge (James 4: 12), but also the merciful God, who abounds in steadfast love, and blots out transgressions for his name's sake (Num. 14: 18; Pss. 32: 2; 103: 3; 130: 4; Isa. 43: 25; Rom. 3: 24; 4: 6; 8: 33; 2 Cor. 5: 19). He himself paved a way in Christ to distribute this benefit, so that Christ, too, possessed the power to forgive sins (Matt. 9: 2–6; John 5: 22, 27), and himself sent the Holy Spirit to apply this benefit to the hearts of his children (John 14: 26; Rom. 8: 15–16; 1 Cor. 6: 11). In the past, Reformed theologians put it as follows: The Father justifies effectively; the Son, meritoriously; the Holy Spirit, applicationally. And to complete the picture at once, let us add: faith apprehends, the sacraments seal, and works declare. [B. deMoor, Comm. Theo. IV 562]

But if the salvation of humans originates in a free and gracious act of God, it is certainly of the utmost importance to know of what this act consists, in other words, what justification means. At this point it is already quite clear that in itself it cannot consist in anything other than a judgment, in our terms, a changed disposition and mood toward us. For when people are legitimately angry with another person, the former cannot begin a sincere and intimate relationship with the latter unless they start by putting aside their anger and again become favorably disposed toward the other. And so it is also with the Lord our God. In Christ he loved the world and reconciled it to himself, not counting their sins against them (John 3: 16; 2 Cor. 5: 19). Although his wrath was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of humans, yet in the gospel God brought to light a righteousness apart from the law (Rom. 1: 17–18; 3: 20ff.). This righteousness, therefore, is not opposed to his grace, but includes it as it were and paves the way for it. It brings out that God, though according to the law he had to condemn us, yet in Christ has had different thoughts about us, generously forgives all our sins without charging us with anything, and accords to us divine compassion and fatherly sympathy in place of wrath and punishment. Justification, therefore, is not an ethical but a juridical (forensic) act; nor can it be anything other than that because all evidence of favor presupposes favor, and every benefit of grace presupposes grace. Rome, indeed, asserts the contrary. But in doing so, it reverses the true order. It makes God's grace dependent on human conduct and, along with all other nomistic schools of thought, builds religion on a foundation of morality. To the degree that it nevertheless tries to explain good works in terms of a prevenient and infused grace, it contradicts itself and finds itself compelled to

again trace the gift of grace to a free disposition of God that is in no way motivated by the human situation but has its basis solely in his good pleasure.

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Justification: Objective and Subjective; Active and Passive

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Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 200-204
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther's works]
Some Footnotes modified or deleted for smoother reading

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OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE; ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

Although there is no material difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology with respect to the doctrine of justification, in the latter, nevertheless, it occupies a different place and acquires a different accent. This is first of all evident in the fact that Luther ever-increasingly pushed predestination into the background. Calvin, on the other hand, increasingly made it the center of his theology and also viewed justification in its light. “When the Lord calls, justifies, and glorifies us, he declares nothing other than his eternal election.” [Bavinck, RD III, 522-28] It is the elect who are justified. [Calvin] It is completely true that Calvin never for that reason weakens the objective satisfaction of Christ nor the benefit of justification, but what does follow from this fact is that the righteousness of Christ is presented to us much more as a gift granted to us by God than as a benefit we accept by faith. The objective act of donation is prior to the subjective act of acceptance. [Calvin] On the other hand, Calvin maintains our “being justified apart from our own merits” not only for the two reasons derived, respectively, from the sufficient merits of Christ and the comfort of believers, but no less firmly on account of the glory of God. Calvin feels that he is in the presence of God, placed before his judgment seat; and looking up at the holiness and majesty of God, he no longer dares to speak, with reference to puny sinful humans, of works of their own, of merits, or of reason for boasting in themselves. On the contrary, nothing befits such a person other than humility and confidence in God’s mercy. The elect are justified by God so that they would glory in him and in nothing else. [Calvin] In the third place, especially in his opposition to Osiander, Calvin makes a sharp distinction between justification and sanctification, for the former is a purely forensic act; but he never separates the two and consistently keeps them very closely connected. Christ, after all, cannot be divided anymore than the light and the warmth of the sun, though the two certainly produce distinct effects. [Calvin] Christ does not justify anyone whom he does not also at the same time sanctify. We, accordingly, are not justified by works, but neither are we justified without works. [Calvin] “Indeed, we do not contemplate Christ from afar in order that his righteousness might be imputed to us, but because we put on Christ and are ingrafted into his body—in short because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him.” [Calvin] Thus while in Calvin’s thinking justification kept its place and value, it did not become the one thing that overshadowed everything else in the order of salvation. It was given a place between election and the gift of Christ on the one hand, and salvation and glorification on the other. It was “something in the middle of the transition from eternal predestination to future glory.” [Luttege]

Yet, although Calvin proved his independence also in the doctrine of justification, he did not solve all the problems that present themselves in the study of this article of faith. This applies especially to the relationship of justification to election and satisfaction, on one hand, and to sanctification and glorification, on the other. If justification has a place somewhere between the two, there is always a reason to connect it more with the preceding or more with the following group of benefits, depending on the choice made, and justification itself acquires a different meaning. If one’s purpose is to maintain the objective forensic character of justification, it is natural to tie it closely with election and satisfaction. It then becomes the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which took place long before, in the gospel, in the resurrection of Christ, or even from eternity, and is then appropriated much later by the subject in faith. Then that faith is no more than a vessel or instrument, a merely passive thing, [Calvin] so that it becomes hard to derive from it the new life of sanctification. On the

other hand, if a person is focused more on practical than on speculative interests, one naturally tries to forge a close connection between justification and faith. In that case, justification coincides with the benefit of the forgiveness of sins, which is received and enjoyed in faith, and faith becomes communion with Christ. It has Christ dwell in us through his Spirit, assures us of God's benevolence toward us, and pours out new life and new powers in our hearts. [Calvin]

In Calvin, these two perspectives are still connected with each other, but in Reformed theology they soon split apart, and both developed in a one-sided direction. Under the influence of **Socinianism** and **Remonstrantism**, **Cartesianism** and **Amyraldism**, there sprang up the **neonomian view of the order of salvation, which made the forgiveness of sins and eternal life dependent on faith and obedience, which, in keeping with the new law of the gospel, had to be accomplished by the human agent**. Parallel to this movement ran that of Pietism and Methodism, which, for all the difference between the two, nevertheless equally shifted the center of gravity to the side of the subject, and insisted either on a lengthy period of religious experience or on a sudden conversion as the condition for the acquisition of salvation. Out of reaction to this came anti-neonomianism, which had justification precede faith, **and antinomianism, which traced justification to the eternal love of God and dissolved sin and satisfaction into "inadequate" concepts from which humans had to liberate themselves by the superior insight of faith**.⁹⁴ [Reminds me Christian Science, where sin is just a wrong idea in your head from which you must be *liberated* by the power of your mental strength. There is nothing new under the sun.]

As a rule, Reformed theologians tried to avoid the two extremes and to that end soon began to employ the distinction between **active and passive justification**. This distinction does not yet occur in the works of the Reformers, who usually speak of justification in a concrete sense; [Commrie also acknowledges this] they do not deal with justification from eternity, in the resurrection of Christ, in the gospel, before and after the gift of faith, but sum up everything in a single concept. That is why in some of their pronouncements they offer support to those who place justification before faith, but they can with equal warrant be cited as advocates of the belief that justification always occurs through and from within faith. But with the rise of nomism [**legalism**] and antinomianism [**no law to be observed at all**], Reformed theologians were compelled to undertake [deeper] conceptual analysis and, to avoid both errors, differentiated between active and passive justification. On the one hand, they rejected the nomism that had the benefit of forgiveness come into being only upon faith, "experience," or conversion of the human agent. On the other hand, they were also on their guard against antinomianism and almost unanimously rejected the doctrine of eternal justification.⁹⁸ Thus they commonly assumed that, even if one could with some warrant speak of a justification in the divine decree, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the gospel, active justification first occurred only in the internal calling before and until faith, but the intimation of it in human consciousness (in other words, passive justification) came into being only through and from within faith.⁹⁹ In this connection they did their utmost to keep the two parts as closely connected as possible and to assume only a logical, not a temporal, distinction between them. Even at that, however, others continued to object to this distinction. After all, the gospel mentions no names and it says to no one personally: Your sins have been forgiven. Therefore no person can and may start with the belief that one's sins have been forgiven.

In the Reformed position, there seemed to be all the less warrant and freedom for such a personalized statement, inasmuch as on it the satisfaction of Christ is not universal but particular. The preacher of the gospel cannot give to anyone the assurance that one's sins are forgiven, since he does not know the elect; and the persons who hear that gospel can and may not believe this either, since before and without faith they cannot be conscious of their election. So it seemed that the practical conclusion was that they must first be cast down by a deep sense of guilt, then by faith seek refuge in Christ, surrender to him, become actively involved with him, and thus gradually, persuaded by self-examination of the genuineness of their refuge-taking faith, receive the boldness to consider themselves assured of the forgiveness of their sins and future salvation. The human agent, accordingly, must first believe, that is, become actively involved with Christ, so that then one could be justified by God. **But in that way the ground of their justification had again been shifted from God to the human agent, from Christ's righteousness to the activities of faith, from the gospel to the law. [typical progression of thinking of Arminians, and many modern day protestants, etc., that leads to the sinner's prayer and similar works.]** Just as in Lutheran theology, so also in Reformed theology no agreement was achieved. Soon after the Reformation, two schools of thought emerged on the scene that have persisted and still today make themselves felt both in doctrine and in life.

⁹⁴Cf. H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 181–83 (# 55); ... The “**New Lights**” from Zwijndrecht also taught **that God never exercises his wrath but only loves from eternity and that Christ has revealed this to us. What Christ delivers us from, therefore, is the despair and fear of God's wrath and punishment. In this way he reconciles us to God (not God to us). It is faith in Jesus's preaching, namely, that God is love, that justifies us and leads us to follow him.** Ed. note: Zwijndrecht is a town in the Dutch province of South Holland, just across the Maas River from Dordrecht and southeast of Rotterdam. From the 1820s to the 1840s it was the home of a small mystical, pantheistic sect, referred to by its critics as “New Lights,” thanks to their Quaker-like commitment to the inner light of revelation. Eschewing sacraments and civil laws of marriage, the group developed a bad reputation and disbanded in 1846 when a number of its members were attracted to Mormonism and emigrated to the United States.

⁹⁸Thus the Westminster Confession, XI, 4; in E. F. K. Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1903); It was also of utmost importance to Comrie, Holtius, and Brahe that justification be considered as eternal. They were correct in noting that the just judgment concerning the elect as an immanent act (*actus immanentus*) in God was eternal and indistinguishable from his essence. However, they judged it as indifferent whether one called this immanent act “justification” or not, as long as the substance remained firm. Second, they accepted a notion of eternal justification since they regarded all of God's immanent acts as eternal, including, for example, creation. These, however, must never exclude God's acts in time. On the contrary, justification, which as a benefit is firmly fixed in God's decree, is nonetheless realized in time, for example, in the resurrection of Christ, in the gospel, in the application [of Christ's benefits] to all the elect in their proper time (A. Comrie, *Brief over de regtvaardigmaking des zondaars*, 91ff.). Third, they explained expressly that their chief concern was whether the application of Christ's righteousness **was mediated or unmediated; whether it preceded or followed faith; and whether it is a free, sovereign act of God, or whether in some way it comes to pass through human cooperation, for example, by means of the condition of faith** (J. J. Brahe, *Godgeleerde stellingen*, 20ff....

⁹⁹Thus theologians mentioned above and many others, for example, Ursinus, Piscator, Bucanus, Owen, Trigland, Leydekker, Hoornbeek, Holtius; In the Reformed Confessions, as is the case in Calvin,

justification is described in such a way that we receive the righteousness, the benefits of Christ, even justification itself, by faith. E. F. K. Müller, ...

Objections to Imputation Answered

Code422

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 212-214
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther's works]
My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

OBJECTIONS TO IMPUTATION

Still, the objection that is raised against imputed righteousness has to be considered seriously. Bellarmine [an Arminian] developed this objection along the following lines: if the righteousness of Christ is only imputed to us and therefore remains outside of us, it cannot be the essential form in which we are justified before God. God's judgment, certainly, corresponds to truth. He cannot pronounce righteous a person who is not righteous. As long as the righteousness of Christ is only imputed and remains outside of a person, that person is not righteous and can therefore not be declared righteous. People will say: but sinners are clothed by faith with the righteousness of Christ! Still, though that be the case, if someone appears in a dual form, an extrinsic and an intrinsic form, that person will be named not according to the first but according to the second form. Let an Ethiopian put on a white garment; he nevertheless remains a black man and is called thus, even if he is white in terms of his extrinsic form. Indeed, there is a stronger analogy. Christ, too, can be viewed in two ways (forms): according to his intrinsic form, he was holy; according to his extrinsic form, he was burdened with our sins. Yet he is not named after the latter form but after the former. Similarly, in justification the righteousness that is imputed cannot be our true form; we can only be justified on the basis of an indwelling righteousness. **This objection of Bellarmine returns in the work of all the critics of Reformation doctrine.** Everything that is charged against the doctrine of imputed righteousness can be materially summed up in this objection.

To begin with the last analogy: in Scripture Christ is very definitely named and treated according to his extrinsic form. It is even said that he was made to be sin for us and became a curse for us. In a legal or juridical sense Christ can be called a sinner, though to avoid the antinomian misunderstanding this practice is not to be recommended. Thus it is said in Rom. 4: 5 and 5: 6 that God justifies the ungodly. It is impossible, in this connection, to use stronger language. The opponents of imputed righteousness should not lodge their objection against Luther and Calvin but against Paul. Furthermore, the simile of the Ethiopian is a most unfortunate choice. The two forms in which a human being appears in justification are related very differently than the black skin and the white garment in the case of the Ethiopian. **A person is ungodly in an ethical sense, but on account of the righteousness of Christ that person becomes righteous in a juridical sense.** The act of putting on a white garment in no way changes the legal state of the Ethiopian. A more correct image is that of a child who, having been graciously adopted by a wealthy man, can as a future heir be called rich even though at the moment he or she does not yet own a penny. God declares sinners righteous, adopts them as children, promises them Christ and all his benefits; for that reason they are called righteous and will one day gain possession of all the treasures of grace.

The imputation of Christ's righteousness, moreover, is totally misconstrued by Bellarmine and his associates. [a straw-man argument – very common] They picture it as a fiction that is opposed to reality. Imputed righteousness, according to them, is a righteousness that exists only in the imagination, whereas infused righteousness, according to them, is the only real and true righteousness. That picture, however, is completely mistaken. Justification is as real as sanctification, and imputation is no less real than infusion. **The only difference is this: in justification righteousness is granted to us in a juridical sense, while in sanctification it becomes ours in an ethical sense. Both are very real and very necessary.** The judge must first validate someone's claim to a piece of property

before one can take possession of it. This first act is not a fiction or an illusion that cuts no ice and conflicts with reality. On the contrary: needed first is the imputation of righteousness, the recognition of a claim, and only then can the infusion of righteousness follow, the act of taking possession of that to which one is entitled. Now if all this is true in the case of an earthly judge, how much more in the case of the heavenly judge? **If God justifies the ungodly, that is not a fiction, a putative imputation, but a present and future reality.** The way God administers justice is the way it is and remains forever, and that is also how one day, on the day of judgment, it will be recognized by everyone. **For when God justifies the ungodly, he does it on the basis of a righteousness that he himself has effected in Christ.** By Christ's sacrifice, against all hostile powers, he has acquired the right to acquit the ungodly, and when he issues a verdict he will also carry it out. After the ungodly have become righteous in a **legal sense, [i.e., in a forensic sense]** **they will certainly also become righteous in an ethical sense.** For God is he who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom. 4: 17). And a justifying faith consists above all in an unshakable trust in that God of miracles with whom all things are possible.

The righteousness on the basis of which the ungodly are justified, accordingly, is indeed not their own. **It is "a righteousness of God" in contrast to their own.** Still, it is not an alien and external righteousness in the sense that it does not concern the person so justified and is in no way connected with that person. **On the contrary, already in the pact of salvation (*pactum salutis*) Christ positioned himself in relation to his own and assumed their place as mediator.** In the state of humiliation he died for their sins and was raised for their justification. **A covenant of grace, a mystical union between Christ and his church, existed long before believers were personally incorporated into it—or else Christ could not have made satisfaction for them either.** The imputation and donation of Christ and all his benefits by God takes place before the particular persons come to believe. Specifically that imputation and donation takes place in the internal calling, and regeneration is the **passive acceptance** of this gift of grace. God also had to give that gift in order for us to be able to receive it. **The very first gift of grace given us already presupposes the imputation of Christ, for Christ is the only source of grace, the acquirer and distributor of the Spirit, who is his Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.** Accordingly, the righteousness that is the basis for justification is only "alien" in a certain sense. It is the righteousness of the head, but for that reason also of all the members, of the Mediator but therefore also of all the members of the covenant.

We Are Sinners Explained

Code425

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 191-194
Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther's works]

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION

Faith, therefore, includes two things: believing that we are sinners and believing that out of grace God justifies us for Christ's sake. We also have to accept the first [that we are sinners], not because we experience it ourselves, but because God says so.

Even if we do not recognize any sin in ourselves, we must nevertheless believe that we are sinners. Hence the apostle says: "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby justified" (1 Cor. 4: 4). For just as the righteousness of God is alive in me by faith, so by the same faith sin is alive in me; i.e., by faith alone we must believe that we are sinners, because it is not obvious to us. If truth be told, most of the time we do not seem to be conscious of ourselves [as sinners]. Therefore we must stand by God's judgment and believe the words by which he tells us that we are unjust, because he cannot tell a falsehood. [41]

Usually, however, Luther distinguishes this belief that we are sinners from faith in a restricted sense and calls it contrition, confession, self-humiliation, and so forth. For the authentic belief that God grants us his righteousness is above all born from the knowledge and confession of our sins. "Those who know this cry to God and, humbled, seek to be raised up and to be cured of this (evil) will. Those who do not know [it], however, do not seek, and those who do not seek, do not receive; neither are they therefore justified, because they are ignorant of their own sin." [42] Contrition, accordingly, precedes the faith that embraces the righteousness of God in Christ. Now if people thus believe God at his word that there is no righteousness in themselves but only in Christ, they justify God, and that is passive justification. "To justify God in his words" is "for him to be made just and true in his speech, or, alternatively, for his speech to be made just and true. This happens, moreover, by believing and accepting [those works] and by holding them to be true and just." [43] But this passive justification by which we on our part justify God "coincides with God's justification of us actively, because he regards as righteousness the faith that justifies his words." The two coincide: "When he is justified he justifies, and when he justifies he is justified." Indeed: "God's passive and active justification and faith or belief in him are the same. The fact that we justify his speech is his own gift, and on account of that very gift he regards us as just, that is, justifies us." [44]

By virtue of the intimate connection that Luther posits here between justification and faith, he also refrains from reducing justification to a mere sentence that God pronounces to himself and that has no further consequences. Instead, the act of regarding as just immediately brings with it the act of making just. When we justify God by faith, he justifies us in his word (speech), that is, "he makes us to be like his Word, namely, righteous, true, wise, and so forth. And thus he transforms us into his Word, not, however, his Word into us. Moreover, he makes us such at the time when we believe his Word to be such, that is, righteous and true. For then the same formal character exists both in his Word and in the believer, that is, the character of truth and righteousness." [45] God is justified "when he justifies the ungodly and infuses grace, or when he is believed to be just in his own words." And thus God "is effectively justified in us and praiseworthy inasmuch as he makes us like himself." [46] The act of justifying is described as "regarding as righteous" (*justum reputare*) and so forth but sometimes—in the same sentence and for the sake of variety also—by "making, perfecting, and acquitting as righteous and as justice" (*justum facere, perficere ac absolvere justum ac justitiam*). [47] The death of Christ is the death of sin and his resurrection is the life of righteousness, because by his death he made

satisfaction for sin and by his resurrection he brought about righteousness for us. His death, therefore, does not just signify, but also effects the forgiveness of sins. And his resurrection is not only “a sacrament of our righteousness but also effects it in us.” [48] “All our good exists outside us in Christ, because that good is Christ,” but all of this also exists in us by faith and hope in him. [49] In the same way Luther can say that our sin is covered by Christ’s dwelling in us, [50] that God justifies believers because they confess their sins and seek their righteousness in him. [51]

Nevertheless, we would also err if we inferred from this that Luther located righteousness itself—the righteousness that is the basis for justification—in believers. His intent is clearly otherwise. The self-righteous person, that is, the person who wants to be justified by works, does not believe God at his word, does not justify God, but dishonors him and makes him a liar. Such a person does not humble himself nor acknowledge himself to be a sinner; he does not seek to be justified and yearn for righteousness but believes he already possesses it.

The situation is very different in the case of believers, not only at the start but also throughout their lives, and even in death. **They do not say to God, “We can and will do what you command in your law,” but rather confess, “We have not done, and cannot do, what you command, but give what you command; give us both the will and the ability to do what you ask! The self-righteous person trusts in a righteousness he achieved; the believer aspires to a righteousness to be acquired.”** [52] The believer is indeed in principle righteous, for although a person is only righteous because he is so regarded by God; still “no one is so regarded unless he fulfills the law by work. But no one fulfills the law except those who believe in Christ. And thus the Apostle argues that outside of Christ no one is just, no one fulfills the law.” [53] **In other words, while believers may in principle be righteous, the righteousness they possess is due solely to God’s grace and is not the ground on which they put their trust.** At the start of their lives as believers as well as in the course of their lives, **they continue to take God at his word. They continue to believe that they are sinners and that their righteousness is grounded solely in the righteousness of God.**

Thus, while on earth, they are and remain sick as well as healthy, sinners as well as righteous, guilty and innocent. **“Intrinsically the saints are always sinners; extrinsically, therefore, they are always justified. Hypocrites, on the other hand, are always intrinsically righteous; extrinsically, therefore, they are always sinners.”** **To be extrinsically righteous signifies that we are not righteous in ourselves or on account of our works, “but only by virtue of God’s imputation. For justification is neither in us nor in our power.** Therefore our righteousness is neither in us nor in our power. **Intrinsically and from within ourselves we are and will always remain impious.”** [54] Just as a sick person is sick within himself and may be called healthy if he believes the promise of improvement made by a competent physician and obeys his instructions, so **believing sinners** are **“in actual fact sinners but righteous on account of the imputation and promise of God that they derive from him until they are perfectly healed.”** [55] Justification, accordingly, is always a work in progress. “People of faith spend their entire life in seeking justification.” [56] In their case it is better to speak of “the justified” (*justificati*) than of “the just” (*justi*), for Christ alone “is just, **and we are still always being justified and in the process of justification.”** [57] **Guided by this view of justification, Luther was led in the end to warn against both false security and despair. Our entire life on earth, he said, is “a time of desiring righteousness, yet in no way of fully attaining it; it is fully attained only in a future life.” Even after our justification, God permits original sin**

to remain operative in us, in order that by it he might keep us in fear and humility and prompt us continually to resort to his grace. On the other hand, we need not give in to despair because we cannot radically remove internal sin from us, for that is not possible in this life, and God forgives those and does not impute sin to those who invoke his mercy. “Therefore the royal road and the road of peace in the Spirit is to know sin and to hate it and to walk in the fear of God in such a way that he does not impute sin and permit us to be controlled by it; and to pray for his mercy that we may be released from it and he does not impute it. Fear excludes the one: false security; and mercy [excludes] the other: despair. The former is a foolish complacency; the latter a lack of hope in God.” [58]

Thus the life of Christians remains a life of faith. They do not experience and know that they are justified, for they are only righteous by imputation of God, but they call for it and hope it, believe and expect it, [59] and in that hope are gladdened and assured. [60] God does not forsake the work of his hands but accomplishes what he has promised. [61] Christians exhibit that faith in their obedience to God’s Word. For the best Christians are not those “who are very learned and read much and own many books. But they are the best who most freely do what they read in books and teach others. However, they are not able to act freely unless they possess love through the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, in our age they are most to be feared who become very rich in book learning but remain unlearned as Christians. [62] Obedience, furthermore, does not consist in the accumulation of many good and great works with the idea that they are good because they are hard, but is frequently manifest in fidelity to what is small and of little significance. [63] In all that we do the main thing is that we let God work through us and do not assess his word by the standard of our works but our works by the standard of his word. [64]

Justification

The Error of Antinomianism On Sin

Code427

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck’s book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 224-225

Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

[All footnotes are from Luther’s works]

Some Footnotes modified or deleted for smoother reading

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

Elements of Justification

Now as it concerns the forgiveness of sins, this does not consist, as Rome asserts, in the removal of the pollution of sin, inasmuch as it has justification consist in the “infusion of grace” and has forgiveness depend on sanctification. Nor does it only consist in the removal of the liability to guilt (*reatus culpae*), that is, practically in the deliverance from eternal punishment, while the punishment for venial sins committed after the infusion of grace had to be expiated by believers themselves either here or in purgatory hereafter [he's talking about this error in Roman Catholicism], since guilt and punishment are correlative concepts. However, the forgiveness that is a part of justification is nothing less than the complete acquittal of all the guilt and punishment of sin, not only of past and present but also of future sins. Some, out of fear of antinomianism, objected to this rich and inclusive view of forgiveness and therefore confined it to acquittal from the guilt of past and repeatedly confessed sins, with an appeal also to Matt. 6: 12; 1 John 1: 9; 2: 1; and so forth. Against antinomianism they thus defended an important truth. It is a fact that believers, after receiving forgiveness, still make many mistakes, even fall into grave sins, and continue to experience numerous vicissitudes in life as punishment. Rome takes this to mean that believers still have to expiate for their venial sins themselves and thereby fails to do justice to the richness and grace of forgiveness. Antinomianism, wanting to honor this grace (in error), infers from it that the sins that believers commit are charged not to the new but to the old “person,” and that believers no longer even have to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. Against this all Reformed theologians maintained that while forgiveness removes the “actual liability” of sin, it does not remove its “potential liability”; that is, forgiveness removes the punishment but not the fact that it deserves punishment. The latter remains as long as sin remains. Sin brings with it, especially in the case of believers, a sense of guilt, pain, regret, alienation from God, remorse, and so forth. It takes away one’s tranquility of conscience, the boldness and assurance of faith. That is unavoidable. The nature of sin is such that it necessarily brings with it a sense of guilt and liability to punishment. Even when believers, having long before received forgiveness, later take a deeper look at the corruption of their own heart, they feel a need even to confess the sins of their youth and to trace their guilt even to their conception and birth (Pss. 25: 7; 51: 4–5). In that case,

In that case, confession is not a condition for forgiveness, but those who truly know their sin naturally confess it and in the face of it feel all the greater need for the consolation of forgiveness. For believers, prayer for forgiveness remains a daily necessity. But in that case they do not pray in doubt and despair; they do not pray as though they are no longer children of God and again face eternal damnation; they pray from within the faith as children to the Father who is in heaven, and say Amen to their prayer. And this praying is not just a felt need but also an actual necessity, for justification does not consist in a transcendent acquittal of the sinner on the part of God in the court of heaven but is an act that passes from one sphere to another, is carried by the Holy Spirit into the consciousness of believers, and in this holistic sense bears the name “justification” in Scripture. Thus confession and prayer are the way by which God again arouses and reinforces this consciousness of forgiveness. Under the impact of the awareness of sin, this consciousness of forgiveness goes into hiding. Though faith as disposition (*habitus*) remains, it can no longer express itself in deeds. Needed, after our falling into sin, is self-humiliation, confession, the prayer for forgiveness, in order that this faith may again revive and the Spirit of God may again clearly and forcefully bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

If we were completely positioned in faith, we would never question the forgiveness of our sins, our status as children of God, or our future inheritance in Christ, nor would we ever construe any disaster

in this life as a punishment from the Lord, but only as fatherly chastisement. But to be perfectly positioned in faith would be possible only if we were also positioned above sin. Inasmuch as this is not the case, and sin always entails doubt, repentance and confession continue to be the means by which God restores us to his fellowship and assures us of his favor. From this, however, it must not be inferred, with Rivetus (et al.), that God over and over and in each case forgives only past sins and sins that have been confessed. The truth is, all the sins of the church have been transferred to Christ, and he has made full payment for them in his blood. In the imputation of Christ to the elect in the pact of redemption, in incarnation, and resurrection, in the external and internal call, he is granted to them with all his benefits. The moment they accept this gift of God, they are also on their part at once put in a new relation to God, one that is unchangeable and unbreakable. While for a time the activities of faith may be lacking, nevertheless the gift of faith by which they are incorporated into Christ and accept all his benefits cannot be lost (John 3: 36; Rom. 8: 30; Gal. 3: 27; Heb. 9: 12; 10: 12, 14; etc.). Christ, moreover, is not given them for a moment at the beginning, but is and remains their mediator and with his righteousness continually covers all their iniquity.[152] He justifies not only their person but also their works, even though the best of them are still stained with sin. Believers therefore also always have the right and the freedom, after every lapse, to go with confidence to the throne of grace and plead on the basis of the faithfulness of him whose gift of grace and calling are irrevocable (Rom. 11: 29; Heb. 4: 12; 1 John 1: 9). As Luther put it: "Because Christ alone is righteous and possesses righteousness, we are to this very moment always in process of being justified."

CALLING AND REGENERATION

code420

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs. 29-33
 Bavinck is a Dutch reformed theologian (1854 to 1921)

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

The Triune God produces all things in creation and new creation by his Word and Spirit. All things thus speak to us of God. God's call as law comes to all people in nature, in history, and in a variety of experiences. While insufficient unto salvation, this call upholds human existence in society and culture,

despite the ubiquity of sin. Though the restricted call unto salvation comes through the word of the gospel, it may not be separated from nature and history. The Logos who became incarnate is the same as he by whom all things were made. Grace does not abolish nature but restores it. Still, the special call of the gospel does not proceed from law and invite us to obedience, but it flows forth from grace and invites us to faith.

The call to faith must be universally preached; this is Christ's command. **The outcome must be left in God's hands; we are simply to obey.** The gospel is to be preached to human beings, not as elect or reprobate, but as sinners, all of whom need redemption. Of course, not to each individual person can it be said, "Christ died in your place." But neither do those who preach a hypothetical universalism do that since they only believe in the possibility of universal salvation, conditional upon human acceptance. And this no one knows for sure. God's offer is sincere in that he only tells us what we must do—believe. Since it is clear from history that the outcome of God's call does not universally lead to faith, we cannot avoid the intellectual problem. It is not solved through weakening the call by expanding it for the purpose of greater inclusiveness. Acknowledging in humility the mystery of God's will, **we recognize that God's own glory is its final purpose** and believe that his Word never returns to him empty.

The call of law also prepares the way for the gospel, not in the Arminian sense of an evolution from preparatory grace to saving grace through human willing, but as the created natural foundation for salvation. God does link his work of grace to our natural lives¹; creation, redemption, and sanctification are the work of the Triune God in the divine economy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is sovereign and his grace is rich and varied. Following Augustine, Reformed theology distinguishes an external or revealed call from the **savingly efficacious internal call of the Holy Spirit.** This distinction honors the universality of sin, the need to have the word of proclamation take root in a sinner's heart by a special work of God, and ascribes all of our salvation to God's mercy and activity. **This change is so dramatic that it is properly called "rebirth" or "regeneration."**

The notion of rebirth is found in other religions of the Ancient East, notably in mystery religions such as Mithraism. Attempts to explain the Christian understanding of regeneration by means of the dying and rising gods of the mystery religions are not very persuasive. Even considering the paucity of our knowledge about the mystery religions, their ideas and practices come from a different religious environment and worldview. The New Testament here rather builds on the Old Testament, where the whole people of Israel as well as individual persons are told that they need new hearts, a new birth only God can accomplish (Ps. 51: 1–3). From the baptism of John through the preaching of Jesus and into the apostolic proclamation, the one consistent message is the need for μετανοια, for a radical turnabout, if one wishes to enter the kingdom of heaven. One must be "born from above" (John 3: 6–8). By faith, Christ or his Spirit is the author and origin of a new life in those who are called (Gal. 3: 2; 4: 6) so that they are now a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5: 17). While there is a difference between the Old Testament and New Testament in language and manner of presentation, the basic truth is the same. Whether rebirth is called "circumcision of the heart," "the giving of a new heart and a new spirit, a drawing from the Father, or a birth from God, it is always in the strict sense a work of God by which a person is inwardly changed and renewed. This change is signified and sealed in baptism.

In the missionary context of the early church, the rebirth signified by baptism was a momentous and life-changing event for the believer. Moving beyond this context, as the church began baptizing infants and children, the connection between baptism and regeneration had to be modified. In Western Catholicism, regeneration was increasingly understood in terms of the infusion of sacramental grace at the time of baptism. In the Eastern church, a similar result was achieved but thought of in terms of implanting a new seed of immortality. A new quality was infused into the soul, and baptism itself became essential for salvation. Remaining in the state of grace depends on the mediation of the church and its sacraments.

It is this sacramental system that the Reformation protested, restoring a direct relationship between God and the soul through the Holy Spirit. The Word of Scripture took priority over church and sacrament. This brought its own difficulties as the Anabaptists rejected church and sacraments as means of grace and made personal faith and confession the condition for baptism. In response, Lutherans again made regeneration dependent on baptism and, by implication, on the church, thus creating a dualism between primary regeneration, which precedes faith, and subsequent secondary renewal, which arises from faith. Reformed theologians wrestled mightily with this issue but found no solution satisfactory to everyone when it came to grounds for baptizing the children of believers. The attempt to ground it in a notion of prebaptismal regeneration satisfied some but ran aground on the reality that some who are baptized do not come to full faith as adults. Maintaining the continuity of the spiritual life proved difficult, and due to the **Enlightenment, the notion of rebirth fell into disfavor and was replaced by humanistic notions of moral development, improvement, and nurture.**

It was **Schleiermacher** who restored the idea of regeneration to theology, making it the center of his understanding of the Christian faith. For him, regeneration is the new consciousness of God's grace and human dependence on God gained by sharing in the consciousness of Christ. In the Mediating Theology, sin played a more significant role, but at bottom the new life in Christ was a participation in a new personality; there was no objective atonement for sin or justification, **only a subjective appropriation of new consciousness.** Faith's content is here reduced to mystical experience.

This locus of theology, namely, soteriology, is as beset with difficulties as are the doctrines of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ. While it is understandable that missionary proclamation begins with repentance and faith and only after that speaks of regeneration, upon reflection on Scripture and experience we come to realize that, properly speaking, **regeneration must precede faith.** **If salvation rests in God's will and not in the human will, that order is inviolable.** Augustine must be chosen over Pelagius. However, there are ethical/ practical considerations too. Could overemphasis on regeneration lead some to feel uncertain about their regeneration and thus be paralyzed in their response to the gospel call—waiting for God to regenerate them? Similarly, what about children of believers? Does the church baptize children of believers on the ground of presumed regeneration? Or, as in Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism, does baptism somehow impart a seed of regeneration? The Reformed tradition distinguishes regeneration and faith, baptizes infants on the basis of covenant promises, but also acknowledges that the Holy Spirit could work sovereignly in the hearts of children apart from the preaching of the Word.

Because notions of rebirth are found outside of Scripture in the world's religions, it is important to be clear about the distinguishing features of the biblical view. Unlike Buddhism or Hinduism, rebirth does not mean reincarnation. While rebirth does apply to the Christian understanding of conversion, it is not sufficient to compare the biblical view with initiation into Greek mystery religions or even with Jewish proselytism. **It is more than a change of consciousness, an enlightenment of the mind, or even a reformation of conduct, though it includes all of these.** Nor should we be satisfied with the **gnostic** notion of redemption as the deliverance of the inner self from the "flesh" or matter. [Gnostics believed that all matter is evil; so salvation to them is dying! - the soul being set free from its body, being that the body is matter and all matter is evil; yep, that's crazy.] Neither rationalism nor mysticism provides us with a correct view of regeneration.

It is helpful to recognize a broader and more narrow use of the term "regeneration." In the broadest and fullest sense, regeneration refers to the total transformation of a person; in the restricted sense, it has in view the implantation of new life that then leads to conversion and further sanctification. The active word of God here—calling—must also be differentiated from the passive reception or fruit of God's initiating work. **God's call has both an external and internal component.** The external proclaimed Word addresses human consciousness persuasively; human response requires an inner work of the Holy Spirit. In **Reformed** thought, God's inner call logically precedes the outward call, though Word and Spirit must never be separated. The Reformed tradition also acknowledges the reality of the faith community's involvement in the external call upon its own children as a gracious work of God the Holy Spirit.

This operation of the Holy Spirit is both immediate and irresistible. The point made by Reformed theology here against the Pelagians, Arminians, and theologians of Saumur is that God's operation on the human person is independent of the will as well as the intellect. **There is no room here to speak of cooperation or of God merely enlightening the mind, which then informs and changes the will.** Though the term "irresistible" was used by opponents of the Reformed faith and does not sufficiently capture the Reformed view, its meaning is clear: **When God freely chooses to renew a person's will, no one can withstand God. God's inner call is efficacious.**

While the Augustinian and Reformed view can and does make room for human beings as created, rational, moral agents, **the Pelagian and Remonstrant view cannot account for Scripture's teaching about the radical need for grace.** **If grace is resistible, God is deprived of his sovereignty; if the human will is capable on its own of assenting to God, then regeneration is unnecessary; and if, as the Pelagian and Remonstrant position teaches, some **prevenient grace** is necessary to prompt human willing, then the notion of an indifferent will remains a fiction.** [see [Bavinck's comment on indifferent freedom and prevenient grace, code419](#)] The only gain here is an apparent but not real one, as becomes apparent with the case of children who die in infancy. Either they are saved by sovereign grace alone without any choosing on their part, or such grace is insufficient and all infants who die before choosing are lost. **The Pelagian and Arminian position is not at all merciful.**

The purpose of regeneration is to make us spiritual people, those who live and walk by the Spirit. This life is a life of intimate communion with God in Christ. Though believers are made new creatures in Christ, this does not mean that their created nature is qualitatively transformed. Believers remain

fully human, fully created image-bearers of God as in the beginning. As in creation itself, no new substance enters into the world with redemption; the creature is liberated from sin's futility and bondage. Sin is not of the essence of creation but its deformity; Christ is not a second Creator but creation's Redeemer. Salvation is the restoration of creation and the reformation of life. Redemption is not coercive; it delivers people from the compulsion and power of sin. The new life comes from God and is born in his love.

¹See *Preparatory Grace* comments by Bavinck ([code419](#) in the footnotes)

Who Determines the Outcome of God's Calling to Repentance?

An In Depth Look at Regeneration, Ordo Salutis

[code416](#)

Man's Will or God's Will

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,

Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 41-53

THE PARTICULAR CALL OF GRACE pgs 41-44

Scripture and experience testify, however, that all these workings of external calling do not always and in every case lead people to a sincere faith and salvation. Hence the question arises: [What is the](#)

ultimate cause of this diverse outcome? In the Christian church, in the main, a threefold answer was given to that question. Some said that this diverse outcome was due to the human will, whether that will had received the power to accept or reject the gospel from its natural self, or from the grace of the Logos, or from the grace of baptism, or from that of the calling. According to this view, there is no distinction between **external** and **internal**, or between **efficient** and **efficacious calling**. Inwardly and essentially the calling is always and in every case the same. It is only called efficacious in terms of the outcome when a person responds to the call. After everything we have said previously about Pelagianism, this answer does not call for a lengthy refutation. It clearly offers no solution. In practice one can indeed confine oneself to the proximate cause and attribute unbelief specifically to the human will. In that case, one is speaking truthfully (Deut. 30: 19; Josh. 24: 15; Isa. 65: 12; Matt. 22: 2–3; 23: 37; John 7: 17; Rom. 9: 32; etc.): the sinful will of humans is responsible for their unbelief. But even in practice all believers at all times and in all schools of thought have attributed their faith and salvation to God's grace alone. There is nothing that distinguishes them other than that gift of grace (1 Cor. 4: 7). **Ultimately, therefore, this difference cannot lie in the human will. If one nevertheless insists on considering will the final cause, one is instantly faced with all the psychological, ethical, historical, and theological objections that have at all times been raised against Pelagianism. It introduces incalculable caprice and weakens sin; the decision about the outcome of world history is put in the hands of humans, the governance over all things is taken away from God; his grace is canceled out.** Even if one ascribes the power to choose for or against the gospel to the restoration of grace, this does not help matters. In that case one introduces a grace that consists solely in the restoration of volitional choice, **one that is nowhere mentioned in Scripture, that actually presupposes regeneration and yet has to bring it about only after the right choice has been made**. [F.H.R. Frank] On this position one also gets stuck with all the millions of people who have never heard of the gospel or died as infants and for that reason were never in a position to accept or reject Christ. Accordingly, the free will of humans cannot be the ultimate cause of faith and unbelief.

Another answer to the above question was therefore devised by Bellarmine. He rejected both the doctrine of Pelagius and that of Augustine, sought a path somewhere between them, and said that the efficacy of the call depended on whether it came to a person at an opportune time when the will was inclined to follow it (congruitas).[14] Agreeing with this congruism are the views of Pajon, Kleman, as well as Shedd, who considers salvation "in the highest degree probable" for everyone who makes serious and diligent use of the means of grace. [W.G.T. Shedd] But this answer, too, is unsatisfactory. In this congruity theory there is indeed an important truth that, while ignored by Methodism, comes into its own in the Reformed doctrine of preparatory grace. But it is completely unable to explain the efficacy of the call. **The reason is that it is inherently nothing other than moral suasion, which in the nature of the case is powerless to create the spiritual life that, according to Scripture, is the result of regeneration**. Further, it presupposes that a human being is fit one moment and unfit the next to accept grace, thus locating sin in circumstances and weakening it in humans. In addition, it makes the ultimate decision dependent on the human will and thereby again provokes all the objections mentioned above and lodged by Bellarmine himself against Pelagianism. Finally, it links calling and conversion by a thread of congruity, which, being moral in nature, can at all times be broken by the will and hence cannot guarantee the efficacy of the call. Augustinians, Thomists, and Reformed theologians, therefore, located the reason why in one person the calling bore fruit and in another **it did not in the nature of the calling itself**. The first group said that when the call was efficacious, a

“triumphant delight” (*delectatio victrix*) was present, which granted not only the capacity to act (*posse*) but also the will to act (*velle*). The Thomists spoke of a “natural predetermination” or “natural action of God” that prompted the capacity to act (*posse agere*), conferred by “sufficient calling,” to pass into action. The Reformed, however, objecting to the use of these terms, took exception especially to the description of an act of God in conversion as “natural” and preferred to speak of an “external” and an “internal” call. This distinction already occurs in Augustine, was taken over from him by Calvin, and was further adopted in Reformed theology. Earlier this twofold calling was referred to **by other terms** as well, such as the “material and formal,” the “revealed” call and the call of “God’s good pleasure,” the common and the personal, the universal and the special call, but the terms “external” and “internal” call gained the upper hand and gradually pushed out the others.

Now although this distinction does not occur in so many words in Scripture, it is based on Scripture.

1. It is already implied in the fact that all humans are the same by nature, worthy of condemnation before God (Rom. 3: 9–19; 5: 12; 9: 21; 11: 32), dead in sins and trespasses (Eph. 2: 2–3), darkened in their understanding (1 Cor. 2: 14; Eph. 4: 18; 5: 8). They cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3: 3), are the slaves of sin (8: 34; Rom. 6: 20), enemies of God (8: 7; Col. 1: 21), do not and cannot submit to God’s law (Rom. 8: 7), are unable to think or do anything good from within themselves (John 15: 5; 2 Cor. 3: 5); though the gospel is for the benefit of humans, they are hostile toward it and despise it as an offense or folly (1 Cor. 1: 23; 2: 14). Hence the difference that occurs among people after the calling is inexplicable in terms of human capacities. God and his grace alone make the difference (1 Cor. 4: 7).

2. Simply the preaching of the Word by itself is not sufficient (Isa. 6: 9–10; 53: 1; Matt. 13: 13ff.; Mark 4: 12; John 12: 38–40; etc.). Hence in the Old Testament already we learn of the promised Spirit who would teach everyone and grant them all a new heart (Isa. 32: 15; Jer. 31: 33; 32: 39; Ezek. 11: 19; 36: 26; Joel 2: 28). To that end he was poured out on the day of Pentecost to witness to Christ along with and through the apostles (John 15: 26–27), to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16: 8–11), to regenerate people (John 3: 5ff.; 6: 63; 16: 13), and to lead them to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 12: 3).

3. The work of redemption, therefore, is ascribed completely, both subjectively and objectively, to God. This is not just meant in a general sense, the way we say that God works all things by his providence, but definitely in the restricted sense that by a special divine power he works regeneration and conversions. So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy (Rom. 9: 16). The calling is the implementation of divine election (8: 28; 11: 29). It is God who renews the human heart and inscribes his law on it (Ps. 51: 12; Jer. 31: 33; Ezek. 36: 26), who enlightens the eyes of the heart (Ps. 119: 18; Eph. 1: 18; Col. 1: 9–11), opens the heart (Acts 16: 14), makes his own recognize his Son as the Christ (Matt. 11: 25; 16: 17; Gal. 1: 16), and draws people to him with spiritual power (John 6: 44; Col. 1: 12–13). He causes the gospel to be preached, not only in words but also in demonstration of the spirit and power (1 Cor. 2: 4; 1 Thess. 1: 5–6), and himself gives wisdom (1 Cor. 2: 6–9). He, in short, is at work in us, enabling us both to will and to work according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2: 13) and to that end uses a power like the power by which he raised Christ from the dead and made him sit at his right hand (Eph. 1: 18–20).

4. The very act by which God accomplishes this change in humans is often called “rebirth” (John 1: 13; 3: 3ff.; Titus 3: 5; etc.), and the fruit of it is called a new heart (Jer. 31: 33), a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 17), his workmanship created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 10), the work of God (Rom. 14: 20), and his building (1 Cor. 3: 9; Eph. 2: 21; etc.). This is to say that what is brought about in humans by the grace of God is much too rich and great for it to be explained in terms of the “moral suasion” of the preaching of the Word.

5. Finally, Scripture itself speaks of calling in a dual sense. Repeatedly it refers to a calling and invitation to which there was no positive response (Isa. 65: 12; Matt. 22: 3, 14; 23: 37; Mark 16: 15–16; etc.). In that case it could say that while God did everything on his part (Isa. 5: 4), people in their obstinacy refused to believe and resisted God’s counsel, the Holy Spirit, and calling (Matt. 11: 20ff.; 23: 37; Luke 7: 30; Acts 7: 51). But Scripture also knows a calling from God—a realization of election—that is always efficacious. This is especially true in Paul (Rom. 4: 17; 8: 30; 9: 11, 24; 1 Cor. 1: 9; 7: 15ff.; Gal. 1: 6, 15; 5: 8; Eph. 4: 1, 4; 1 Thess. 2: 12; 2 Tim. 1: 9; also cf. 1 Pet. 1: 15; 2: 9; 5: 10; 2 Pet. 1: 3). Believers are therefore repeatedly described simply as “those who are called” (Rom. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 1: 2, 24), and “those who are called in Christ” or “in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7: 22); that is, those who are called by God belong to Christ and live in communion with him. In addition, Paul also knows of a preaching of the gospel to those who reject it. To them the gospel is foolishness (1 Cor. 1: 18, 23), a fragrance from death to death (2 Cor. 2: 15–16). They do not understand it (1 Cor. 2: 14). As a power of God (1 Cor. 1: 18, 24), it proves itself to those who are called by God according to his purpose (Rom. 8: 28; 9: 11; 11: 28; Eph. 1: 4–5).

REGENERATION: SCRIPTURAL TEACHING pgs 46-53

The idea of rebirth has its roots in the Old Testament. The word *παλιγγενεσία* does not occur in the Septuagint except that Job says (14: 14): *ὑπομένω ἕως ἂν παλιν γενωμαι* (“I would wait until my release should come”). But materially the idea of rebirth clearly occurs already in Israelite religion. Entirely in keeping with the Old Testament dispensation, it is first of all a matter for the people as a whole. At the time of the giving of the law and later in prophecy the word is first of all addressed to all the people God has included in his covenant, and on the basis of that covenant the people are confronted with the demand that they serve the Lord with all their heart and soul (Deut. 10: 10; Josh. 22: 5). But as apostasy, unfaithfulness, and the hardness of people’s hearts became more and more evident in history, the prophets stressed with increasing forcefulness that an inner change had to come, not only among the people as a whole, but also in the heart of every member of that people in particular. **And in that respect human beings of themselves are unable to bring it about** (Gen. 6: 5; 8: 21; Job 14: 4; 15: 16; Ps. 51: 5). **No more than an Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots can Israel do good, for it has learned to do evil** (Jer. 13: 23). **The heart is deceitful above all things and lethally corrupt** (Jer. 17: 9). **A stupid man will no more get understanding than the colt of a wild ass is born human** (Job 11: 12). But what human beings cannot bring about in themselves or others God will do in the future. **He alone can create a clean heart** (Ps. 51: 10–12). **He will take away their stony heart and give them a heart of flesh, circumcise the foreskin of their heart, put a new spirit within them, inscribe the law in their heart, and cause them to walk in his statutes.** Then Israel will be his people, a shoot of his planting, a work of his hands, that he may be glorified (Deut. 10: 16; 30: 1–6; Isa. 54: 13; 60: 21; Jer. 24: 7; 31: 18, 31ff.; 32: 8ff.; Ezek. 11: 19; 36: 25ff.).

Initially John the Baptist and then Jesus required such an internal change from all who want to enter the kingdom of heaven. The people of Israel, despite all its external privileges, was nevertheless corrupt through and through. Despite its circumcision, it needed baptism, the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, in which a person is totally immersed in order to rise again as another person to a new life (Matt. 3: 2ff.). To obtain the benefits of the kingdom, a radical turnaround, a μετανοια, is needed. Those who want to enter the kingdom must break with their entire previous life, lose their life (Matt. 10: 37–39; 16: 25; Luke 14: 26), leave behind everything (14: 33), take up their cross and follow Jesus (Matt. 10: 38), become a child (18: 3), return to the Father with a confession of sin (Luke 15: 18), and go through the narrow gate and walk down the narrow path (Matt. 7: 14). Those who really do this are enabled to do so by God himself. For human beings are by nature evil (7: 11). Out of their hearts come nothing but wickedness (15: 19). Like a bad tree, they cannot produce good fruit (7: 17ff.). Accordingly, if there is to be good fruit, the tree must be made good first, something only God can do (19: 26). Children of God and citizens of his kingdom are those who have been planted by the heavenly Father (15: 13), to whom the Son has revealed the Father and the Father the Son (11: 25–27; 13: 11; 16: 17). Whereas they were spiritually dead before, they have a true life now and await eternal life (8: 22; Luke 15: 24; 18: 30). In all Christ's teaching as we find it in the first three Gospels, though the word "rebirth" does not occur, the matter itself is clearly presented. So when in his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus says that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he or she is born anew (from above) of water and the Spirit (John 3: 3–8), he is not contradicting his teaching in the other Gospels but briefly and pointedly summing up for the teacher Nicodemus what he has explained elsewhere at greater length and in more popular form. Nicodemus, we must know, was a distinguished man, a teacher in Israel, a member of the supreme council. He had heard of Jesus's miracles and on that basis regarded him a teacher sent by God. But being still in doubt whether Jesus was the Messiah, he went to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews in order to achieve certainty through a confidential interview with him. Nicodemus, accordingly, began the conversation with the admission that he viewed Jesus as a teacher sent by God and endowed by God with the capacity to do his works, and evidently wanted to go on to ask what one must do to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus, not giving him the time to pose that question, immediately answered: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" [John 3: 3 RSV]. **And with that answer, he abruptly cut off all human self-effort, all Pharisaic law observance, as the way to the kingdom.**

Also, for that reason, Jesus does not speak of being born a second time, literally anew, but of being **born from above**. He stresses, not that entry into the kingdom requires a second birth (although regeneration can of course be called that), but wants especially to bring out for Nicodemus that only a birth from above (v. 3), **of water and the Spirit** (v. 5), of the Spirit (v. 8), admits a person to the kingdom. This birth occurs in contrast to that of the flesh, for what is born of the flesh is flesh (v. 6). **It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of humans, but of God** (John 1: 13). **For that reason it is as equally incomprehensible in origin and direction as the wind, but nevertheless possible, for it is a birth of the Spirit** (3: 8). After first having said in general that it is a birth from water and spirit (both without the article, v. 5), he specifically speaks in verses 6 and 8 of the Spirit (with the article) and that this Spirit, as the Spirit of God, can bring about this great work of regeneration from above. Hence, in speaking of **water** in verse 5, Jesus is not speaking of baptism, but describes by this term the nature of birth from above. It is a birth that has the character of a renewal, **a purification, of which water is a symbol** (Ezek. 36: 25; cf. the combination of Spirit and fire, Matt. 3: 11), and confers

the existence of a new spiritual life. And that is something this birth from above can bring about, for it is a birth from the Spirit, who is God himself (John 3: 6–8).

The apostles, too, frequently speak of regeneration but describe it in varied terms, sometimes viewing it in a broad, and then again in a narrow sense. James (1: 18) says that God of his own will brought us forth (ἀπεκυσεν; cf. the same word in v. 15: “Sin when it is full-grown brings forth death” [RSV]), that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. This ἀποκυεῖν arises from the will of God, from whom all good and perfect gifts descend, and who offers us the greatest proof of his fatherly love in that he has brought us forth as his people. This came about by means of the word of truth (or just the truth [3: 14; 5: 19], or the perfect law, the law of liberty, the royal law [1: 25; 2: 8, 12]), which did not stop outside of or over against us so that we can only hear it, **but was planted in us, is written on the tables of our hearts, according to Heb. 8: 10; 10: 16, and can therefore save our souls** (James 1: 21). And the goal of this regenerative process is that Christians should be the firstfruits of God’s creation, as the true Israel, the special possession of God, like the people of Israel who existed in the days of the Old Testament (Exod. 19: 5; Deut. 7: 6; 14: 2; 26: 18; Ps. 135: 4; Isa. 43: 21; Mal. 3: 17; cf. 1 Pet. 1: 23; 2: 9)

pg 51 More on Man’s Depravity – moral inability, spiritual blindness, etc.

Even more than in Paul, rebirth or regeneration occupies a central place in John. For what is born of flesh is flesh (3: 6) and **hostile to God**. Those who are born only of natural descent (1: 13) are of the world (8: 23; 15: 19) and belong to the world (14: 17, 19, 22; etc.), are from below (8: 23) and from the devil (8: 44), do not comprehend the light of the Logos (1: 5), do not receive him (1: 11), love the darkness more than the light (3: 19–20), do not hear what God says (8: 47), do not know God (8: 19; 15: 21), do not see the kingdom of God (3: 3), walk in darkness (12: 35), hate the light (3: 20), and are the slaves of sin (8: 34). Neither can they see the kingdom of God (3: 3), believe (5: 44; 12: 39), hear the Word of God (8: 43), come to Christ (6: 44), or receive the Holy Spirit (14: 17). **What is needed, therefore, is rebirth or regeneration**. Such an event is a γεννηθῆναι ἀνωθεν (“being born from above”: 3: 3; cf. 3: 31; 8: 23; 19: 11; of God: 1: 13; 1 John 3: 9; etc.) of **water** and **Spirit** (John 3: 5), that is, of the Spirit (3: 6, 8), **whose cleansing activity is symbolized by water** (cf. Ezek. 36: 25–27; Matt. 3: 11). **It is mysterious and marvelous, so that no one knows its origin or essence** (John 3: 8). In John this event of rebirth, therefore, is not as directly connected with the call as it is in Paul, but viewed rather as a work of the Father, who gave his own to Christ beforehand and leads them to Christ in time. Even before his incarnation, after all, Christ worked in the world as Logos (1: 1–13). As light he shone in the world, but the world did not recognize him (1: 5, 9–10). He came to his own, to Israel, but his own did not receive him (1: 11). But even then his coming was not totally fruitless, for as many as received him already received power to become children of God. And they were such as were born of God (1: 12–13; cf. 1 John 5: 1). Before people came to Christ and believed in him, they were already of God (John 8: 47), of the truth (18: 37). **They were given to the Son by the Father** (6: 37, 39; 17: 2, 9). He drew them to Christ (6: 44), and all those who thus come to Christ, far from being rejected or lost, are preserved by him for eternal life (6: 39; 10: 28; 17: 12). Christ came to bring into the fold those who were already his sheep given him by the Father (10: 27), to impel them to hear his voice and follow him, and to gather them into one flock (10: 16; 11: 52). He came to give those who in a sense were already the children of God (11: 52), the ἐξουσία, the right and authority, to become such children [1: 12], with a view toward

manifesting themselves as such, as people born of God, as τέκνα του θεου, and to show this particularly in brotherly love, in love for those who are similarly born of God (1 John 5: 1).

Some scholars mistakenly trace this Johannine teaching to a **gnostic dualism**. [J.H. Scholten] But this dualism is not intrinsic in creation, for all things were originally created by the Logos (John 1: 3). The world in general is the object of God's love (3: 16). God gave his Son, not to condemn the world, but to save it (3: 17; 12: 47). **By nature all people belong to the world, which hates the light because its works are evil** (3: 19–20). **So then it depends on faith whether a person receives eternal life** (3: 15–16, 36). **That faith** is a **"work"** (ἔργον, 6: 29), **a coming** (5: 40; 6: 35, 37, 44; 7: 37), **an act of receiving** (1: 11–12; 3: 11ff.; 5: 43), **thirsting and drinking, hungering and eating** (4: 13–15; 6: 35, 50ff.; 7: 37). It **does not bypass the intellect and will**; in fact, only those who want to do the Father's will can know whether Jesus's teaching is from God or whether he speaks on his own authority (7: 17). Unbelief, therefore, is also attributed to the stubborn will of people (5: 40; 8: 44). A person remains responsible for it (3: 19; 9: 41; 12: 43; 15: 22, 24). God sent his Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (3: 16, 36; 6: 47; 20: 31). By faith, therefore, one receives eternal life, passes from death into life (1 John 3: 14), has overcome the evil one and the world (2: 14; 5: 4), and possesses the anointing of the Holy One (2: 20, 27). Perdition is no longer an issue, for Christ preserves his own (John 10: 28–29) and the seed of God remains in them (1 John 3: 9). Yet believers are still admonished to remain in Christ and in his word (John 15: 4–10; 1 John 2: 24), that they may manifest the new life that is given to them in doing right (2: 29), in self-purification (3: 3), in self-preservation (5: 18), and in love for God and one's fellow believers, for God is love (4: 7–8; 5: 1). For sin continues to cling to believers throughout their lives (1: 8). Perfect godlikeness will be their lot only in the future (3: 2).

Accordingly, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, while there is a difference between them in language and manner of presentation, there is essentially complete agreement. Whether **rebirth is called the "circumcision of the heart,"** the giving of a new heart and a new spirit, **"efficacious calling,"** a drawing by the Father, or **birth from God, it is always in the strict sense a work of God by which a person is inwardly changed and renewed. It has its deepest cause in God's mercy;** it is based on the **resurrection of Christ** and is brought about in communion with Christ, to whom the Word bears witness, and manifests itself in a holy life. Sometimes, as in John, the words stress that it is the **principle of the new life whose consequence is the faithful hearing and reception of Jesus's words.** Sometimes the other side comes more clearly to the fore. Then it is the unfolding and development of that new life that stands out. **The two are most intimately intertwined, however, and belong inseparably to the one concept of regeneration.** There is one verse, however, in which the word "rebirth" is given a much broader meaning. In Matt. 19: 28 Jesus says that at the "renewal of all things," when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, the twelve disciples who had left everything behind and followed him would also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The absence of all further detail is proof that the word that Jesus used in the Aramaic must have referred to something that was well known. And that was in fact the case. Old Testament prophecy, focusing on the end time, already expected a renewal of heaven and earth (Isa. 11: 1–9; 65: 17–25; 66: 22; etc.). This expectation carried over into apocryphal literature and into the faith of the entire Jewish people.[F.W. Weber] The messianic kingdom would also bring with it a metamorphosis in nature and all earthly relations. Jesus confirms this expectation, as also the apostles do later (2 Pet. 3: 10–13; Rev.

21: 1, 5), and describes the change as a “rebirth.” If we link this meaning with the above, it turns out that Scripture speaks of rebirth mainly in three ways: (1) as the principle of the new life planted by the Spirit of God in humans before they believe, (2) as the moral renewal of humans manifesting itself in a holy walk of life, and finally (3) as the restoration of the whole world to its original completeness. Thus rebirth encompasses the entire scope of re-creation from its very first beginning in the heart of people to its ultimate completion in the new heaven and new earth.

Notes on the order of salvation from Hermon Bavinck (ordo salutis)

Now since regeneration is basically the re-creation of the whole person in the image of him who created humans, the capacity to believe (potential, seminal, or “habitual” faith, the seed or root of faith) is automatically implied. Pg 101 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

In addition, it was overlooked that in regeneration the seeds of hope and love (and so forth) are always implanted as well, that in principle the whole person is renewed by it. Aside from this, however, it is perfectly true that in regeneration, along with all human capacities and powers, the capacity to believe is also restored. To the regenerate person, believing in God or in Christ as such is just as natural as it is for everyone to believe in the world of the senses. Admittedly, just as every potentiality results in actions only when it receives a kind of stimulus from without, and a grain of wheat only germinates in the warm shelter of the soil, so also the capacity to believe implanted by regeneration only becomes an act of faith in response to the ongoing internal calling. But in regeneration, God nevertheless restores the vital rapport that originally existed between him and humanity. Created in God’s image, humans are again related to God himself and to all that is his: to his Christ, to the things of the Spirit, to his Word, to his church, to his heaven, to the things that are above. Crucified to the world and to sin, the regenerate live to God. And thus, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they also know God and are saved through that knowledge (John 17: 3). Pg 101-102 Vol. 4, Reformed Dogmatics

G. Vos states in his Reformed Dogmatics, pg 635

e) Concerning the essence of this union (with Christ] in a positive sense, we can say that it is: [skip to point 4.](#)

4. A reciprocal unity. Establishing this unity is of course a work of Christ. **Man does not take the initiative here by taking hold of Christ and drawing Him to himself or bringing himself to Him.** The impossibility and inconceivability of that follows from what has already been said. **How by any act from his side would man ever be able to make himself master of the Holy Spirit? It is entirely the reverse: Christ sends His Spirit, who, in the first grace that befalls man in the grace of regeneration, establishes the mystical bond. After this has happened and has also penetrated into the consciousness, one can certainly say that faith reaches out reciprocally to Christ, and the activity of faith and the nurturing of the spiritual life resident in union with Christ keep pace. But faith in itself, as subjective habit or subjective act, is not able to effect unity with Christ. **It is one of the manifestations of the life of the Savior in us rather than the source of this life itself.** When Scripture speaks of a union with Christ by faith, then this always applies to unity in the consciousness or the consciousness of unity: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17), where, however, precedes, “so that He might grant you though the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.” The Spirit’s activity, therefore, is antecedent, and only as a result of it does Christ dwell in the heart**

by faith. It is the drawing power of Christ Himself that in our faith draws us to His life. In this sense, then, Scripture clearly teaches that a reception of life from Christ by faith is possible for us— indeed, is necessary (John 6:47, 51). There is not merely a life of Christ in us but also a life of ours for God in union with Christ. According to Romans 7:4, the believer knows himself to be as closely united to the Mediator as husband to wife, and according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, the church is viewed as a bride presenting herself to her bridegroom, Christ. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” (Rev 22:17).

The Nature of God Proves Free Grace

The nature of God proves all grace, special and common, must be freely given by God and not owed to the creature; it necessarily follows that election has to be true and cannot be otherwise.

Notes on the Doctrine of God and & God’s Delights in His Glory

By G Clark

Code434

See also [code438](#)

The nature of God, his immutability, impassibility, simplicity, sovereignty, etc., proves unconditional election. For if God is unchangeable, then there was never a time where he did not intend to save particular persons. He always was intending to save his elect. For if he was waiting [in time] to see if someone was going to believe in him all the while being neutral at best whether he was going to save him or not (or just wishing to save them) and then he would intend to save him, infers a change in his will, and infers that God depends upon the creature causing a change in His being or actuality. God would be somewhat moved upon by the creature. But this cannot happen in God; he is not moved upon by anything; he is self-moved (divine impassibility) as well as that there is no change in God, he is immutable – God’s will does not undergo change. He is not dependent upon the will of the creature not only because God cannot undergo change but also is contradictory to the nature of God as being self-sufficient, sovereign and simple, Romans 11:34-35 –

“For who has known the mind of the LORD?

Or who has become His counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?”

So God being purely active (or purely actual - divine simplicity: not composed of *active and passive potency* as creatures are), he has always loved the church, the elect, **from the counsel of his own will** and hence Scripture accommodates this profound truth of a *pure act*, the act of God's eternal will in election, choosing to love, to the capacity of our understanding by the words *choosing, election, electing, etc.* (See Edwards' comments on this below) God has always loved the church in this manner, clearly pointing to his immutability, simplicity and impassibility, and sovereignty. (e.g., Ps103:17, *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting...* Also Jer. 31:3, *I have loved you with an everlasting love;*] but others, he never knew them, Matt. 7:21-23, *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, [the verb *knew* or to *know* is to show saving favor, the fruit of the *divine love* of the Father] For the love of God, the foundation of election, is an act of God's will, and hence is freely given, not founded upon the *common affection* which is the result of being acted upon or moved by something outside himself which is impossible with God (divine impassibility, self-sufficiency, etc.); on the contrary, God says that *I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy*, Romans 9:15.*

God cannot be actualized (changed into a new state of being, new states of affection, or have a new thought or change of his will by another entity or agent outside himself since there is no *passive potency* in God to be actualized because he is a purely actual (divine simplicity: not composed of passive and active potency as humans are and therefore liable to change to a different state of being); he is THE cause without a cause, and hence, God's immutability, impassibility; the two are inseparable, the latter flowing from the former. God's impassibility means that God does not *undergo* change by anything or agent. God cannot receive anything from the creature but is always giving and sustaining; he is self-sufficient, perfect, infinite and boundless in his being. "God is not someone who is done unto. He only gives but does not receive," "He does not receive new actuality of being from creatures or from others."

[James Dolezal, God Without Passions – YouTube video]. Job 35:4-8

God is the first cause in everything not the second; God is not the great Responder as Edwards notes. In other words he is already predisposed, or of a mind to save his elect irrespective of their works (hence his eternal decree of election, his good pleasure). So the sinner's prayer is at best superfluous, and at worse, a wicked presumption. In other words, God's actuality, the state of his mind toward the creature, cannot change from neutral to determinative to save due to one's prayer. Free grace, to be free, is wholly of God's sovereign will alone, to have mercy on whom he'll have mercy, as Paul says in

Rom. 9:16, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." Free grace excludes all human boasting. Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 11:6

Edwards explains, in this instance, regarding prayer:

It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. **He is omniscient**, and with respect to his knowledge **unchangeable**. **God never gains any knowledge by information**. He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God **is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people**; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; **for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God**, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence **is within himself only**; **he is self-moved**; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. 36:35, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.--When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to God, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. As he hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we desire to receive any mercy from him, should humbly supplicate the Divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honour paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to ourselves, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with suitable confession, may excite a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God, may make us sensible of his majesty, and in a sense fit to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

- Jonathan Edwards, Sermon IV The Prayer Hearing God, pg 113, Vol. 2

About God's Delight In His Glory

God's Immutability, Self-sufficiency, Perfection, Eternality, Impassibility

Miscellaneous Observations – Heaven

Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2, pg 626

Goodness of God - Love of God Happiness of heaven. God stands in no need of creatures, and is not profited by them; neither can his happiness be said to be added to by the creature. But yet God has a real and proper delight in the excellency and happiness of his creatures: he hath a real delight in the excellency and loveliness of the creature, **in his own image in the creature**, as that is a manifestation, or expression, or shining forth of his own loveliness. God has a real delight in his own loveliness, and he also has a real delight in the shining forth, or glorifying of it. As it is a fit and condecant thing that God's glory should shine forth, so God delights in its shining forth. So that God has a real delight in the spiritual loveliness of the saints; **which delight is not a delight distinct from what he has in himself, but is to be resolved into the delight he has in himself; for he delights in his image in the creature, as he delights in his own being glorified; or as he delights in it, that his own glory shines forth, and so he hath real proper delight in the happiness of his creatures, which also is not distinct from the delight that he has in himself, for it is to be resolved into the delight that he has in his own goodness;** for as he delights in his own goodness, so he delights in the exercise of his goodness, and therefore he delights to make the creature happy, and delights to see him made happy, as he delights in exercising goodness, or communicating happiness. **This is no proper addition to the happiness of God, because it is that which he eternally and unalterably had. God hath no new delight when he beholds his own glory shining forth in his image in the creature, and when he beholds the creature made happy from the exercises of his goodness; because those and all things are from eternity equally present with God. This delight in God cannot properly be said to be received from the creature, because it consists only in a delight in giving to the creature; neither will it hence follow that God is dependent on the creature for any of his joy, because it is his own act only that this delight is dependent on, and the creature is absolutely dependent on God for that excellency and happiness that God delights in. God cannot be said to be the more happy for the creature, because he is infinitely happy in himself, and he is not dependent on the creature for any thing, nor does he receive any addition from the creature.** But yet in one sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight for the loveliness and happiness of the creature, viz. as God would be less happy if he were less good, or if it were possible for him to be hindered in exercising his own goodness, or to be hindered from glorifying himself. God has no addition to his happiness, when he exercises any act of holiness towards his creatures; and yet God has a real delight in the exercises of his own holiness, and would be less happy if he were less holy, or were capable of being hindered from any act of holiness.

The Doctrine of God

Code438

Comments on Classical Theism, Specifically, Simplicity
Followed by notes on Impassibility and immutability

By G Clark

My additional comments in [\[blue\]](#)

[For more on theism, see Van Til's comments on Christian Theism at code475](#)

F.J. Sheed (1930), writing around the same time as Berkhof, offers a similarly sobering assessment: "A study of what is happening to theology in its higher reaches would almost certainly take as its starting point the attribute of simplicity, and show that every current heresy begins by being wrong on that."

These doctrines of divine simplicity, immutability and impassibility is foundational to seeing the rest of scripture in its proper light. It will guard your heart from many heresies and give you a right view of God.

Notes on God's Simplicity

These doctrines of divine simplicity, immutability and impassibility is foundational to seeing the rest of scripture in its proper light. It will guard your heart from many heresies and give you a right view of God.

In light of this, A note regarding the comments Dr. Dolezal and others make, that the attributes of God are distinguished *ad extra* to the glorification of God, yet *ad intra*, they are identical with one another, that his justice is his love, is his mercy, is his patience, his omniscience, etc., and that his attributes are identical with his essence. *The former (ad intra view) is in question/speculation; the latter is true.* In disagreement, Dr. White argues God's attributes are distinguishable *ad intra* (as does Charles Hodge and G. Vos, noted below in the article). I think the articles below do a good job in explaining the difficulties in understanding the part of the doctrine of simplicity in classical theism with which Dr. White, so far, contends.

Dr. White says that the attributes of God are distinguishable in God (*ad intra*) while at the same time distinguishable in their due exercise (*ad extra*). And I think the reason is, is that Dr. White does not consider them *metaphysical parts* which would defy the doctrine simplicity if they were. They are just names that describe God, who he is and what he is like, not describing constituent parts in God. I think that's what he means. His attributes are not in God as parts of God; they are God, e.g., God is love, light, wisdom, sanctification, life, etc., describing God who he is and what he is like – not in God as pieces that make up God. In a warning, Dr. White said (paraphrasing), *Beware of figments of imagination coming from your own brain.* Which, by the way, Dr. White said that this was the 'MO' of the medieval period: *if you can imagine it in your mind then it exists in reality. Nobody in the bible functioned on that basis.* (Dr. James White, video, Jan 2022) This would include the conclusions that Aquinas and other scholastics in his day come up with in some areas of theology. **Also, keep in mind that it was Aquinas who was chief supporter of the effort to counter the Reformation in the Council of**

Trent! So this is White's position so far, as of Jan 2022. I have read commentaries by John Owen and other that mock the 'scholastics', that they go too far in their speculations or have presuppositions that are wrong. You have to be really careful in learning Christian doctrine, in formulating your views of what scripture says, by not going beyond what is written. John Calvin made specific mention of this. That being said, It sounds to me like Dr. White is correct.

So, below are two articles that I think will clarify what appears to me (so far) to be a **misunderstanding** of Dolezal *et al* about a particular aspect of this doctrine of simplicity by Dr. White. And then I'll add my two bits to it, as I see it so far.

Two articles:

No Biblical Support for Divine Simplicity?



Another Objection to Simplicity

In the [previous post \[copied below, following this article\]](#) we considered one common objection to divine simplicity: it makes God's attributes indistinguishable. This view, most popularly held by Charles Hodge, fails to make a proper distinction between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*. In the end, this view makes "an objective difference in God," to quote Bavinck.[\[1\]](#)

In this post, I want to consider another prominent objection to simplicity: it isn't taught in Scripture.

Is It Biblical?

James White recently indicated that the historical formulation of divine simplicity (specifically in Turretin) is mere philosophical abstraction, and that defenders of simplicity have scuttled the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*.[\[2\]](#) I will refrain from responding to Dr. White directly until he releases his official response to simplicity, but he raises a very common question: is simplicity biblical?

Before answering this question, I want to emphasize the fact that *this is a good question*. It would be a mistake to think that only one side of this debate cares about the authority of Scripture, while the other is beholden to Aristotelian naval-gazing. However, defenders of simplicity have been wrongfully accused of philosophical abstraction for a very long time.

Over 300 years ago, Petrus van Mastricht encountered this exact same objection. He specifically responds to the objection that “not even one iota about simplicity exists in the Scriptures.” [3] In response, he summarizes six “orthodox arguments” from Scripture to defend simplicity. [4] For a modern example, Beeke and Smalley also anticipate and answer the claim that “divine simplicity is a ‘metaphysical abstraction,’ not a biblical teaching.” [5]

Because this objection is so common, let’s take a quick look at two biblical arguments for simplicity.

Good and Necessary Consequence

One strong biblical argument for simplicity is that other biblical doctrines demand it. James Dolezal notes, “There is no single biblical proof text for this doctrine. It follows, rather, by way of good and necessary consequence from a number of other doctrines that are clearly taught in Scripture.” [6] As others have pointed out, we arrive at the orthodox formulation of the Trinity in the exact same way.

D. Scott Meadows writes,

“The stock philosophical language used in trinitarian theology came about ‘by good and necessary consequence;’ it was ‘deduced from Scripture’ (WCF 1.6). The 1689 LBCF statement on this is similar, recognizing that doctrinal truth ‘is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture’ (1.6). Adherents to [simplicity] believe the same thing about it as the doctrine of the Trinity. Both are truly and rationally deduced from Scripture and necessarily contained in it.” [7]

As the argument goes, certain doctrines are explicitly taught in Scripture and those doctrines require divine simplicity to be coherent. Therefore, if 1) a certain doctrine can be proven exegetically and 2) that doctrine necessitates simplicity, then 3) simplicity is just as “biblical” as the original doctrine. So Sam Waldron concludes from 1.6 of the 1689 LBCF, “What may be by sound logic deduced from Scripture, that is to say, what is necessarily contained in it, *has the authority of Scripture itself.*” [8]

Meadows explains further,

“An illustration may be helpful. Consider a numerical series: 1, 3, __, __, 9, 11, 13, __, 17. It is a fact to state that the numbers 5, 7, and 15 are just as legitimate a part of this series as 1, 3, 9, 11, 13, and 17, though the former numbers are not explicitly stated and the latter are. Whatever doctrine is justifiably deduced from and truly contained in Holy Scripture is just as true and authoritative as that which it states explicitly.” [9]

This extremely common argument is illustrated by the chart below. The top row indicates which doctrines necessitate simplicity, or are necessitated by simplicity, according to the theologians on the left column.

	God's...												
	Independence	Perfection	Pure Act	Act of Creation	Spirituality	Unity	Infinity	Immutability	Eternality	Power	Omniscience	Omnipresence	Righteousness
Turretin ¹	x	x	x			x							
Dolezal ²	x			x		x	x	x	x				
Mastricht ³	x	x			x		x	x	x				
a Brakel ⁴		x	x		x								
Charnock ⁵	x					x		x		x	x		
Bavinck ⁶	x							x	x			x	
Berkhof ⁷	x (self-existence)							x					
Beeke and Smalley ⁸	x				x	x							x
Duby ⁹	x (aseity)			x		x ¹⁰	x	x					

¹ Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1., Edited by James T. Dennison, Jr. Translated by George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 1:191.

² Dolezal, *All That Is in God*, 45–50. Dolezal, “God Without Parts: Simplicity and the Metaphysics of Divine Absoluteness” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2011), 96, 106, 114.

³ Mastricht, 2:144.

⁴ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Vol. 1, trans. Bartel Elshout, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2007), 1:97–98.

⁵ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, 63, 62, 117, 162, 232. Found here: https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/charnock/attributes_p.pdf

⁶ Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2020), 119. “It is clear that the *oneness* and *unity* of God is directly connected with the incommunicable attributes.”

⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 62.

⁸ Beeke and Smalley, 625, 627, 628.

⁹ Steven J. Duby, “Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account” (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 2014), 138–169, 206–228, 127–138, 192–205, 170–192.

¹⁰ Duby speaks of “singularity,” which may be slightly different than “unity.”

As we see, this is not a new or obscure argument. Beeke and Jones comment on Stephen Charnock’s method, “Charnock affirmed that divine simplicity is absolutely essential for understanding the other divine attributes; indeed, all other divine attributes depend upon this concept. In discussing the divine attributes (e.g., His immutability and eternity), the concept of divine simplicity is axiomatic for Charnock’s understanding of the doctrine of God, as it was for Reformed scholastic divines.” [\[10\]](#)

Most of the criticisms of simplicity that I’ve seen today are attacks on the doctrine in a vacuum without concern for how it is necessarily interconnected with other doctrines. When modern theologians do this, they unwittingly (and often with good intentions!) undermine God’s immutability, aseity, perfection, etc. Yet, each of these plain biblical doctrines require divine simplicity.

Thus Dolezal concludes, “...though the cognitive realization of divine simplicity requires that we contemplate the implications of other doctrines, it is not for that reason any less biblical.” [\[11\]](#)

Two Forms of Predication

The second biblical argument I want to summarize in this post is a bit more direct than the previous.

Bavinck summarizes this second common argument: “Scripture, to denote the fullness of the life of God, uses not only adjectives but also substantives: it tells us not only that God is truthful, righteous, living, illuminating, loving, and wise, but also that he is truth, righteousness, life, light, love, and wisdom (Jer. 10:10; 23:6; John 1:4–5, 9; 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 John 1:5; 4:8). Hence, on account of its absolute perfection, every attribute of God is identical with his essence.” [12]

Sometimes Scripture speaks of God as *loving* (John 3:16), other times it speaks of God as *love* (1 John 4:8). So Wittman notes, “Aquinas recognizes two kinds of predication throughout Scripture, one concrete (‘living’) and the other abstract (‘life’), each equally applicable to God’s being as much as his act...The question is how to account for both forms of predication.” [13]

The doctrine of simplicity, then, arises from carefully trying to account for both types of predication.

When it comes to the abstract or substantive predication, they are most accurately interpreted as statements about God’s very nature. Commentators rightly conclude that 1 John 1:5 uses “light” as “the description of the being of God” [14] and “a penetrating description of the being and nature of God.” [15] Likewise, in 1 John 4:8, “John equates God with a qualitative noun “love”...By his very nature, God is love.” [16] Few commentators disagree.

Beeke and Smalley note that this conclusion makes sense in context. They observe, “When John writes that ‘God is light’ and ‘God is love,’ his contextual concern was to demonstrate that God is so closely identified with holiness and love that it is impossible to know him and fellowship with him while walking in the ‘darkness’ of unrepentant sin, in particular, in hatred of one’s brother (1 John 1:5–10; 4:7–11, 16).” [17]

John Frame understands the proper conclusion of these substantive texts (even though he wavers on simplicity elsewhere). On John 4:24, 1 John 1:5, and 1 John 4:8 he writes, “These expressions state what God really and truly is. In other words, they describe his essence, not merely what he happens to be on some occasions. But note that there are three of these attributions, not just one. So God’s essence can be described in three different ways. I am inclined to say that these expressions describe the whole divine essence from three different perspectives.” [18] [I think that is key. Therefore, as I say in my opinion later, these attributes are not ‘parts’ per se, they don’t make up God, they just describe God as he is, and hence do not qualify to be categorized as *parts* and hence to be said that they are identical with one another is a mis-construal of things, a dead end; not even a mute point at best. Frame and Bavinck makes this point in the next paragraph!]

Frame comes to the conclusion that each substantive claim about God refers to His entire essence from different perspectives. This is the historic position of divine simplicity. As Bavinck says, “God is so abundantly rich that we can gain some idea of his richness only by the availability of many names.

Every name refers to the same full divine being, but each time from a particular angle, the angle from which it reveals itself to us in his works.” [19] Spirit, light, and love are not different “things” in God. They are three different ways of referring to the same “thing,” which is God Himself.

So Frame observes, “The passages above do not show that *all* of God’s attributes are necessary to his being and perspectives on that being, but they do provide a pattern and a way of thinking about divine attributes to which it is hard to find plausible exceptions.” [20] For this reason, William Perkins writes, “It is manifest that to have life and to be life, to be in light and to be light in God are all one...Therefore, whatever is in God is His essence; and all that He is, He is by essence.” [21]

Conclusion

The claim that divine simplicity as taught by Francis Turretin, John Owen, and James Dolezal lacks biblical support is extremely misguided. These men, along with the others listed above, arrive at divine simplicity as a necessary consequence of Scripture. This method of forming doctrine in no way contradicts the principle of *sola Scriptura*. Instead, it recognizes that the authority of Scripture extends to the “necessary consequence” of Scripture.

Robert Lethem comments on the phrase “good and necessary consequence” from WCF 1.6,

“This is a profoundly important statement. It points to the need for careful thought in reading, preaching, and thinking about the Bible. It mandates theology. In order to begin to grasp the whole counsel of God, we need to be able to make legitimate deductions from the Bible. Orderly thought is the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. Attempts to disparage the mind, and dismiss the intellectual reflection of Scripture as ‘cerebral’ undermine the teaching of Scripture and begin to unravel the message of salvation. In short, this chapter mandates systematic theology. That, of course, is how the church has defended itself against heresy. In the early church, it was found that simply to repeat the words of the Bible left the church defenseless. The gospel itself was threatened by unthinking repetition of biblical words and phrases.” [22]

This principle in chapter one of the confession is the foundation for the Trinity and simplicity in chapter two. If you reject this principle, you *cannot* affirm either doctrine. Consistency demands that we use the same method to arrive at both simplicity and the Trinity.

References:

[1] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 119 and 119n77.

[2] <https://www.aomin.org/aoblog/theologymatters/on-divine-simplicity-and-natural-theology>

[3] Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, Vol. 2, *Faith in the Triune God*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 2:148.

[4] *Ibid.*, 2:147–148.

[5] Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, *Revelation and God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 1:630. They interact directly with Feinberg on this point.

- [6] James Dolezal, *All That Is In God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017), 44.
- [7] https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=498
- [8] Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist confession of Faith*, 5th edition (UK: EP Books, 2016), 51. Emphasis added.
- [9] https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=498
- [10] Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 62.
- [11] Dolezal, 44.
- [12] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, *God and Creation*, 2:173.
- [13] Tyler R. Wittman, "'Not a God of Confusion but of Peace': Aquinas and the Meaning of Divine Simplicity." *Modern Theology* 32, no. 2 (April 2016): 157. Emphasis added.
- [14] B.F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 14.
- [15] Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC Vol. 51, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 19.
- [16] Herbert W. Bateman IV and Aaron Peer, *John's Letters: An exegetical guide for preaching and teaching* (Kregel Academic, 2018), 252.
- [17] Beeke and Smalley, 1:631.
- [18] John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2013), 431. Unfortunately, Frame makes seemingly contradictory statements throughout this section.
- [19] Bavinck, 2:177. Emphasis added.
- [20] Frame, 432.
- [21] William Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020), 6:12–13.
- [22] Robert Lethem, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2009), 139.

Previous post:

A Friendly Response to James White on Divine Simplicity



James White agreeing with William Lane Craig on anything is almost as shocking and confusing as the “Martha” scene in Batman v. Superman. Or, depending on what you think of both men, it may be more like the reunion of Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy.

But regardless of their previous disagreements and our opinions of them, they have joined forces to critique divine simplicity in the Reformed Scholastic tradition. While the two doctors have multiple objections to simplicity, **I want to focus on just one common objection: divine simplicity removes all distinction between God’s attributes.**

Dr. White believes that **simplicity described in Classical Theism** makes God’s attributes all mean the same thing.^[1] He says,

“As Aquinas evidently takes this...you cannot discuss the attributes of God in a way that would make them different to one another because that then implies parts which denies the simplicity of God. So, God’s omniscience is His omnipresence and His imminence...and basically Craig was saying, ‘That doesn’t make any sense.’ And I was sitting there going, ‘Yeah. He’s right. It doesn’t make any sense.’ **And yet that’s the Classical Theism stuff that’s being presented now.**”^[2]

But does anyone actually teach that God’s attributes are all identical? Or, to use White’s examples, does anyone actually teach that God’s omniscience *is* His omnipotence?

They certainly do...in a way.

An Understandable Misunderstanding

It is not difficult to find theologians affirming exactly what White says.

- **James Dolezal**, in his watershed book on Classical Theism, says, “It further follows from God’s non-compositeness that in Him all His attributes are really identical with each other.”^[3]
- **John Owen** seems to say the same thing: “The attributes of God, which alone seem to be distinct in the essence of God, are all of them essentially the same with one another, and every one the same with the essence of God.”^[4]
- **Francis Turretin** says, “The attributes of God cannot really differ from his essence or from one another (as one thing from another) because God is most simple and perfect.”^[5]
- Petrus van Mastricht denies any objective difference between the attributes: “[The attributes] do not differ really, as one thing from another, but by our reason or thought.”^[6]
- **Joel Beeke** and Paul Smalley write, “God’s simplicity means that he has no parts, and his attributes and essence are all one in him.”^[7]

On face value, it seems like White has spotted a serious issue with divine simplicity. Indeed, he is not the first to make this observation. **Charles Hodge** made the same point.

In a statement similar to White's, Hodge writes, "If in God eternity is identical with knowledge, knowledge with power, power with ubiquity, and ubiquity with holiness, we are using words without meaning when we attribute any perfection to God." [8] Again he writes, "We must not confound the attributes, making them all mean the same thing, which is the equivalent to denying them all together." [9]

Hodge apparently had the same concern as White. And, based on the quotes listed above, it may seem like their concern is well grounded.

But is it really possible that Dolezal, Owen, Turretin, Mastricht, Beeke, Smalley, and countless others never considered this objection? **Is it really true that they all forbid *any* distinction between the attributes? Do they teach, as White says,** "You cannot discuss the attributes of God in a way that would make them different to one another?"

They certainly do not.

A Better Explanation

Dr. White's mischaracterization of simplicity is actually very common. For this reason, many defenders of simplicity have anticipated and answered it directly.

Richard Muller writes, "The various modern readings of simplicity as indicating an utter absence of distinction in the Godhead misinterpret the traditional doctrine." [10] In an article on Aquinas' doctrine of simplicity, **Tyler Wittman** notes, "With its purely negative function, **simplicity rules out composition and divisibility in God but not distinction.**" [11] Explaining Turretin's ideas of "comparative" and "absolute" simplicity, Steven Doby writes, "Absolute simplicity excludes composition of all kinds, though, **crucially, not distinctions of all kinds.**" [12]

So, these advocates of simplicity believe that the doctrine has *never* ruled out all distinction, as White claims. For lack of space (and skill on my part), we can't go through all the work of Dolezal, Owen, Turretin, Mastricht, Beeke, and Smalley on this subject. But a quick look at Francis Turretin will show a better explanation of simplicity than that offered by White.

In-n-Out Attributes

As noted above, **Turretin** does believe God's attributes are identical *in some sense*. He says, "Attributes may be mutually **predicated of each other in an identical sense** inasmuch as they may be considered as **having unity and identity with each other.**" [13]

However, he is still able to distinguish between them because he differentiates between God's attributes *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Theologians speak of God *ad intra* when they refer to things strictly *within* God's being. They speak of God *ad extra* when they refer to God's action *in creation*.

So, Turretin is able to say the attributes are **indivisibly identical** *ad intra* yet distinguishable *ad extra*. He writes, "The properties are many on the part of the object and end (or of the operations and effects), but not on the part of the subject or principle, which is one and perfectly simple." [14]

In regards to the subject (*ad intra*), the attributes are identical. In regards to the object (*ad extra*), they are distinct. For Turretin, even justice and mercy are not separate *ad intra*. Again he writes,

"The divine attributes may be regarded either absolutely and subjectively in themselves (and on the part of God) or relatively as to their effects towards creatures (or on the part of the object). I confess that in the latter way punitive justice and sparing mercy are opposed, but not in the former (concerning which we treat)." [15]

à Brakel makes a similar point:

"We understand these **attributes to be one from God's perspective**, however, such that they can neither be divorced from the divine Being nor essentially and properly from each other as they exist in God [ad intra], but are the simple, absolute Being of God Himself. We, however, relate these attributes as distinct entities by themselves. Justice and mercy are one in God [ad intra], but we differentiate between them in reference to the objects towards which they are manifested, and the effects of these manifestations [ad extra]." [16]

You can see how careful à Brakel is to distinguish between "in God" and not "in God." **He and Turretin carefully teach that the multiple attributes have their foundation in the divine essence but do not reflect actual distinctions within the essence.** Duby writes, "Turretin clarifies that the foundation of the distinction between...one attribute and another is not intrinsic to the acting of the subject (God), for that would compromise his simplicity." Instead of finding their distinctions between one another in their subject, **the attributes find their distinctions in their objects and effects.** Duby continues,

"While there is no distinction between 'thing' and 'thing' in God himself, the distinction of the attributes does have a 'foundation in the thing' (*fundamentum in re*) or an extramental distinction because of the diversity of objects and effects to which our conceptions of the attributes respond." [17]

The attributes are not different *things*. **But the one thing, which is God's essence, is known by its effects in creation.** Furthermore, those effects do legitimately teach something about the one *thing*, even if what they teach is incomplete.

Beeke and Smalley conclude, "If asked how the attributes are distinct when God is simply one, we reply with Turretin that they are distinct intellectual concepts by which God reveals himself to man

on a human level and they are properly said to be distinct because they represent God's activity 'as to their various objects and effects.'" [18]

Conclusion

Do **Classical Theists** say the attributes are indistinguishable? Yes, *ad intra*.

Do they say the attributes cannot be distinguished *at all*? No, they say the attributes can be distinguished *ad extra*.

Muller summarizes Alain of Lille saying,

"Everything in God is God, allowing no essential distinction between the various divine attributes and affirming the utter simplicity of the divine being. **The distinction between the attributes, therefore, is not in God himself but in the effects of God's work *ad extra***. Nonetheless, given that these attributes are evident to us by way of causality, they are not merely names of terms applied by us to God **but are in fact proper designations of the divine substance**." [19]

Beeke and Smalley suggest a prism to illustrate this position. They write, "For us to understand and appreciate God's attributes, we must view the full spectrum of colors through the prism of God's Word, but in God, the attributes shine a single, infinitely brilliant light." [20] In this illustration, the spectrum of colors coming out of the prism are like God's attributes *ad extra* because they reveal something about the singular light going into the prism, **which is like God's simple essence *ad intra***.

We comprehend God's attributes as distinct not because there is actual complexity within God, but because we cannot comprehend the fullness of God's being. We must comprehend Him in parts because we can't comprehend Him any other way. As Turretin says, we comprehend Him "imperfectly and inadequately on account of the weakness of the human intellect and the eminence and perfection of the divine nature." [21] And again, "For what we cannot take in by one adequate conception as being finite, we divide into various inadequate conceptions so as to obtain some knowledge of him." [22]

The Puritan William Ames agrees, "Because we are not able to take in this essence in one act of comprehension, it is explained as manifold, that is to say, as if consisting of many attributes." [23] Cornelius Van Til also states, "God himself has in his revelation instructed us to make distinctions with respect to his being. These distinctions help us to understand something of the wealth and richness of his being." [24]

Turretin, Ames, and Van Til all affirm here that we distinguish between God's attributes because of 1) our finitude and 2) the "the richness of his being." Therefore, the distinctions made between the attributes are not based on any real distinction in God's essence, as Hodge (and White) believes. Instead, we distinguish between them in order to comprehend different aspects of God's indivisible being.

I want to give Dr. White the benefit of the doubt and assume that he has studied and spoken on this topic elsewhere, but he unfortunately does not present the position accurately in [this video](#). The “Classical Theism stuff” being presented today does not deny *all* distinction between the attributes. It denies distinction *ad intra* but demands it *ad extra*.

Although this whole debate may seem like doctrinal minutia, what is more fundamental to our faith than the very being of God? All believers should strive to worship and love God *as He is*. As Van Til rightly understood, we don’t study theology with merely pragmatic motivations. Instead, “The question of truth and of duty is primary.” [25] This is why we care about the details. We have a duty to love and worship God as He has revealed Himself to us.

Further Reading:

- Beeke and Smalley give a helpful introduction to simplicity and actually respond to White’s specific objection: *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Volume 1 by Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley.
- To frame the current debate: *All That Is in God* by James Dolezal.
- Read the relevant sections of Charles Hodge’s and Turretin’s theologies to compare and contrast their views.
- If you can get it, Steven Duby wrote a helpful guide to Turretin’s understanding of simplicity: Steven J. Duby, “Receiving No Perfection from Another: Francis Turretin on Divine Simplicity.” *Modern Theology* 35:3 (July 2019).

References:

- [1] He raises that concern clearly in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXOxFdDcQVw>
- [2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKCLbxqWnEo&t=1s>. I’m not sure which video White is referencing, but here’s a similar quote from Dr. Craig: “Even though God would be a purely spiritual substance and not composed of spiritual parts, nevertheless he could have the property of omniscience and the property of omnipotence and the property of holiness or goodness—and these aren’t the same property. To be omniscience is obviously not be good. To be omnipotent is not the same as to be eternal. So, there can be a plurality or multiplicity of properties that God would have. And therefore, there would be composition in that sense. I find that sense unobjectionable. But the Thomist can’t even allow that.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIUv-pg0KmA>
- [3] James Dolezal, *All That Is In God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017), 42.
- [4] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 12 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966), 72.
- [5] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), 1:188.
- [6] Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, Vol. 2, *Faith in the Triune God*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 117.
- [7] Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, *Revelation and God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 625.
- [8] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:372.
- [9] *Ibid*.

- [10] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, *The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 45.
- [11] Wittman, Tyler R. "Not a God of Confusion but of Peace': Aquinas and the Meaning of Divine Simplicity." *Modern Theology* 32, no. 2 (April 2016), 160.
- [12] Steven J. Duby, "Receiving No Perfection from Another: Francis Turretin on Divine Simplicity," *Modern Theology* 35:3 (July 2019), 526.
- [13] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:189.
- [14] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:189.
- [15] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:189. Brakel makes the same argument from the same attributes.
- [16] Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Vol. 1, trans, Bartel Elshout, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2007), 89. Underline added.
- [17] Duby, "Receiving No Perfection from Another: Francis Turretin on Divine Simplicity," 528.
- [18] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, *God and Revelation*, 632.
- [19] Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, *The Divine Essence and Attributes*, 44.
- [20] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, *God and Revelation*, 632.
- [21] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:189.
- [22] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:187–188. He adds: "The divine attributes are the essential properties by which he makes himself known to us who are weak and those by which he is distinguished from creatures; or they are those which are attributed to him according to the measure of our conception in order to explain his nature." And again, "He who conceives what is actually and really one and simple in God as actually and really diverse, conceives what is false. But he who conceives that which is actually one in itself as more than one virtually and extrinsically or objectively, does not conceive of what is false. Rather, he conceives the thing imperfectly and inadequately on account of the weakness of the human intellect and the eminence and perfection of the divine nature." *Ibid.*, 1:187 and 1:189. Emphasis added.
- [23] William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John Dykstra Eusden (1629; repr. Grand Rapids: 1968), 84.
- [24] Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1974), 323.
- [25] Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 21.

My Two Bits:

If constituent parts or *metaphysical parts* are things that are less than God and more fundamental than God, then they cannot be in God; God is not made up of them; God is not a composite being in this sense [true, and Dolezal et al, agrees here]; but are his attributes to be considered metaphysical parts? Because they are distinct in their exercise or display (*ad extra*), does that make them *parts*, being more fundamental than God when we say that God has these attributes? I don't think so. They just describe God's essence as Frame and Bavinck said above in the first article. So what Dr. Dolezal is saying is that those attributes that are displayed *ad extra* are distinct, displaying his works, his glory, etc., [true], but *ad intra* they are

not distinct, but are all equal to each other – his assumption being, that they are now considered *parts* (metaphysical), **that because his attributes are identical to his essence [true], then these parts must be identical with each other. But, as I mentioned in a my comment above, that if these attributes are not to be considered parts at all, then Dolezal’s conclusion about identity of the parts is a mute point at best. And so this identity issue should never come to the fore.** If that is not the case then his attributes must be finite and more fundamental than God, i.e., *parts*; but how can that be if *God is love, light, wisdom, etc.*?? For there is not love in God or wisdom in God, etc., but God is those very things. It is just that these attributes describe who God is according to our way and capacity of understanding Him; Again, **they are not properly parts of him.** We are composite beings and we think compositely; we cannot have a simple thought of a simple God just like we can’t have an infinite thought of an infinite God. And if he is those things then those things can’t be called a *parts*; I think Dr. Dolezal would agree with this reasoning. God’s attributes when considered *ad intra* are not less than God or more fundamental than Him, which is the key point of contention (or in misunderstanding): **they are Him!** Hence, properly speaking, they are not *parts*, yet they are still distinguishable because they are only describing God, his ‘isness’, who he is, not what he is composed of. They describe God in different ways of who he is, as Frame and Bavinck mentioned, hence, in that sense, they are distinct, and yet are not *parts* metaphysical or otherwise that make up God.

Here’s another way to say this:

Regarding the doctrine of simplicity, specifically the attributes of God *ad intra*, whether they are parts [metaphysical] or not - if they are parts then they would be finite in their being and would be more fundamental than God such that when added up or combined, make God who he is; but finite added to other finites can’t make God who is infinite in his being. Also, all that is in God is God, not finite parts, since infinite parts to make an infinite God is impossible and doesn’t make sense. Furthermore, since this would require his attributes (supposed parts) to be less than God, etc., doesn’t reconcile with the fact that God is love; there is not a part of God that is love; God is love, 1John 4:16. This is a profound and deep mystery. And I would think that the other attributes can be treated the same, e.g., God is mercy, light, truth, omniscient, omnipresent, sanctification, etc. Therefore, God’s attributes cannot qualify as a *part* in this scheme of Simplicity where, *ad intra*, all God’s attributes are not distinct, but being that they are Him, they are only identical with his essence *ad intra* but distinct *ad extra*.

Summary

So when Dr. Dolezal, *et al*, considers God’s attributes *ad intra*, they are assuming that God’s attributes are *parts*; that, all added up, make God who he is, to be God. But I say, properly speaking, they are not *parts*; they are not things that make up God; they are what God is, what he is like, e.g., God is love, etc., in which case his attributes are identical with his essence - that’s true; but they are not identical with each other, though they work inextricably and harmoniously with one another. So, because they pursue this line of thinking that the attributes are *parts* when considered *ad intra*, and since simplicity demands that God has not parts, the logical consequence of this error in thinking is that they must be identical with one another *ad intra*. And that’s where the problem lies.

Note on Simplicity

The doctrine of **divine simplicity** is a safeguard against attempts to make God divisible. He is one in his essence, as well as one numerically. Neither the diversity of divine attributes nor his Trinity contradicts simplicity,... William Edgar, editor, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* by Cornelius Van Til, note 7 pg 323

Notes on God's Impassibility by G Clark

Now you have to ask the question, why are we not taught these doctrines nowadays? Fallen human nature tends to drift away from Truth, God, etc. And that is what happened starting about the 1600s-1800s (The Enlightenment period) as people glommed onto the scientific method to answer life's deep spiritual concerns trying to solve a "problem" rather than trying to clarify the "mystery." God cannot be put into an intellectual box where he can be solved like a mathematical problem, which inevitably leads to error – wrong ideas of God (as Job had!) So this subject drifted away into obscurity.

In my writing below, I add at the end, John Owen's commentary on John 3:16. I did this for this reason: when I read his comments for the first time several years ago, he mentions that God does not have common affections as man does, but he never formally went into nor mentioned the term *impassibility* or *simplicity* etc. But after I read Weinandy's book *Does God Suffer* as well as James Dolezal's and Samuel Renihan's books on impassibility, I read Owen's comments again and saw much more clearly what Owen was talking about. You'll see things more clearly in other's writings and sermons after you get this knowledge, you'll understand far more clearly the depth of what they are saying, and you'll be able to discern false teaching more so! This is why Hosea said that *my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*. See also Prov. 1

"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?

²³ If you turn at my reproof,^[a]

behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;

I will make my words known to you.

²⁴ Because I have called and you refused to listen,

have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,

²⁵ because you have ignored all my counsel

and would have none of my reproof,

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when terror strikes you,

²⁷ when terror strikes you like a storm

and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,

when distress and anguish come upon you.
²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently but will not find me.
²⁹ Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
³⁰ would have none of my counsel
and despised all my reproof,
³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way,
and have their fill of their own devices.
³² For the simple are killed by their turning away,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
³³ but whoever listens to me will dwell secure
and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”

Here we go:

First, the rubric we should use in examining this doctrine of classical theism in understanding God, who he is and what he is like, **should be directed toward clarifying a mystery as opposed to trying to solve a problem**. The reason for this is that God is ineffable, beyond our comprehension, transcending our understanding. So at best we can only clarify the mystery, never arriving at a final and complete answer. God is an infinite fountain of knowledge and we can never come to the end of it. **Thinking that we can solve this ‘problem,’ tends to errors in understanding God’s nature and in the end, reduces our esteem, praise, reverential awe, amazement, wonder and adoration of Him.**

That being said, many things are going to be weighed in your mind all of which help paint the picture of this mystery, clarifying it as you add colors and definition to the canvas, never seeing him as he is, but only through the eyes of faith; and that is described as looking through a glass darkly.

Many people have wrong ideas of God; they tend to think that God is a perfect version of them without the human limitations, a greater being in the class of beings, not someone who is an infinite distance from us, completely transcendent, yet immanent, closely relating to his creatures. This alone is a mystery. [See Ps 50:21 where God tells the wicked, *you thought that I was altogether like you.*]

People think God has affections just like us; that he is moved by things outside himself causing him to take on different states of being or *actuality* such as being angry or more angry, or love like humans love; we see someone that’s attractive, etc., so it affects us so that the *passive potential* (or potency) in us to love is actualized and we thus love the object by which we are affected. What I have just described is not in God. No common affections can be assigned to him; I’ll explain.

God is one divine essence. Even though the scripture assigns him many attributes such as love, mercy, patience, kindness, etc., these are anthropomorphisms – they merely describe what God is like according to our way of conceiving things due to our limited creaturely capacity. God in speaking to us in his word, lowers himself to our level of imbecility as Owen puts it. These attributes are not properly in God, for God is not composed of parts, metaphysical or physical; he is one simple pure essence, not

a composite being as all created things are. All that is in God is God. If God were composed of parts, then he would be dependent on those parts, finite parts that cannot be in God, in order to make him what he is, to be God, an infinitely boundless being. Yet finitude cannot add up to an infinitude which God is. Also, God is not dependent on things or parts that are not God in order for him to be God! And if God were composed of these parts, who put them together?? God becomes a created being dependent upon someone else.

Now we get to the subject of divine impassibility; that there are no passions in God as we humans have. God is not aroused to new states of actuality by things or person outside himself. For God to be aroused like us, he would have to have parts, i.e., *passive potency* or *potential* that could be actualized, causing God to become something that before he was not (which would argue against his divine perfection, and immutability) He would, for example, have to have a *potential* in him to be angry or to love, that upon seeing or experiencing something outside himself would affect those ‘potentials’ causing him to be angry or to love, just like what happens in us. But here is the key: God does not have those ‘potentials’ in him or *parts* as noted in the London confession to be actualized. He is one pure essence and hence he is *pure act*. [see Owen’s definition at [code306a](#), see *purely active: ‘God is never idle’* – for comments by Hermon Bavinck and also [code25](#), [code305a](#)] So, for example then, how does he love? This is where you have to put your thinking cap on and chew on this for a while. If he has no parts, then this love has to be a sovereign act of his own will and not an act of love caused or influenced by outside stimuli. God does not undergo anything. And thus the scripture says, *God is love*, John 4:16

And now you can see what Paul was saying about God choosing those for eternal life; it was not the common affections like in us, that something in the creature attracted God or caused him to love and hence show favor by choosing him for eternal life, but was this described in Romans 9:15, ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” God is *pure act*. He is not a composite being like us who are composed of actuality and potency, that is, we have in us *parts* that can be actualized as we are affected by things outside ourselves, after which, because we are thus affected, our state of being changes, say from sad to happy. But think about this: God is immutable; he does not change; he does not change from being sad to happy, etc. How can he, if he is *pure act* and not composed of these parts, passive potency or potential? This is one reason why people unwittingly believe in the Sinner’s Prayer or any other man made sacrament (due to a misunderstanding of God’s impassible nature; they think God is like them), as a means to convince God or *cause* God to save them as though man had something in him to recommend himself to God, and thus cause God to be moved or acted upon, actualizing his love (as though God were passible). But the opposite is the case as seen in 1John 4:19, *We love because he first loved us*. We don’t produce anything in God; God is not in the state of *becoming* constantly responding to the creature; he just is; pure act.

Notes John Owen’s comments from his book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* pg 94 and pg 123:

“This would make the cause of sending his Son to die to be a common love, or rather wishing that he might do good¹ or show mercy to all, and not an entire act of his will or purpose, of knowing, redeeming, and saving his elect;” pg. 94

¹In which case, God’s love would be a passible love in which there would be something in God, a potency *to do good or show mercy*, that needed to be actualized by the creature via for example the sinner’s prayer. In this way there would be a change of state of being in God from neutrality to desiring to show mercy in responding to the creature. But this violates God’s immutability, his simplicity (he is pure act, not potency & actuality) and he is impassible. So God’s nature rules out the wicked presumptuous nature of the sinner’s prayer. See Owen’s comments below on page 7.

“For a close of all; that which in the cause we affirm may be summed up in this: Christ did not die for any upon condition², *if they do believe*; but he died for all God’s elect, *that they should believe*, and believing have eternal life.” Also, and this is a good point by Owen, “Faith itself is among the principal effects and fruits of the death of Christ; as shall be declared. It is nowhere said in Scripture, nor can it reasonably be affirmed, that if we believe, Christ died for us, as though our believing should make that to be which otherwise was not, - the act create the object; but Christ died for us that we might believe. Salvation, indeed, is bestowed conditionally; but faith, which is the condition, is absolutely procured.” Pg 123

²This ‘conditional’ rubric infers that God is passible, that man’s will is determinative in this affair, that God can undergo a change in his state of being by causes outside himself. This view is strongly maintained by Arminian/Pelagians which are most people’s view, man’s attempt at maintaining his supposed autonomy and his warped view of the liberty of his will.

We cannot produce a change of being or state of being in God because God is simple; he is not a composite being of *actuality* and *potency*, potency being the potential that needs to be actualized by something outside himself as in the case with humans. We humans, composite beings of actuality and potency, are affected by things, hence affections – we can be moved upon, and experience changes in us; but God is immutable and impassible, without affections (passions) and simple. He does love but not in the passible sense; he is love. In us we have potency mixed with actuality; potencies are the things that are actualized by causes outside ourselves after which we change into a different state of being. Now when we think of God, we tend to impose our composite way of thinking onto the being of God, thus thinking that God is like us, having passions (potency) or potentials to be actualized into a new state of being. But God is already love, mercy, justice, etc., without any arousals from causes from outside himself. He is pure act, simple, non-composite; nothing in him (i.e., potency) to be actualized. His caring, loving, etc., is not a passible caring, loving, or mercying, etc.; he is those things, hence his name: I AM WHO I AM.

Taking this a step further in application, if God were like us, then his saving grace towards us would not be freely given, but the result of us causing in him a potency, i.e., a common affection to be actualized. Not only is this contrary to divine simplicity, but also to his free sovereign grace; it would not be free, an act solely from his own council of his will, from pure act. His saving grace would owed, Romans 11:6, ⁵*So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.* ⁶*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.* It would be a debt. But God is not indebted to anyone, Rom. 11:34-5, ³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” Thus we cannot produce any change in a state of being in God to cause him to show favor to us because there is no

potency in him that can be actualized; he is already *pure act*, simple in being, not a composite being of actuality and potency; only created things or human beings are so.

It is not that God doesn't care; you cannot make God care more! And, how can you add to the unboundedness of his love and care and mercy? You can't. Therefore, we cannot arouse something in him (i.e., a potency) to save us by what we do or say. So now you know what 'free' means in the theological sense. God's love, his grace, etc., is freely given of his own will; not caused or coerced or bribed.

God does not need to be aroused by you to cause him to love you in his divine manner, a love that is impassible and boundless; in other words he cannot love you more or care for you more than he does already. If he did he would be changeable or mutable and not perfect in his being; and not only that, his love, for instance, would be finite and dependent upon you! Well if that were the case, since you are a sinner and have nothing in you that warrants God's favor, and if he were passible, he would never have saved you but would have had no mercy on you and would have judged you and cast you into hell. You don't want a passible God! But because he is pure act, without these potencies in him, his eternal (and impassible) love is not based upon the creature but on his own immutable eternal act of his will. Weinandy explains further:

Actually, since God does not suffer, his love becomes **absolutely free in its expression** and **supremely pure in its purpose**. [*free, meaning that his love is not aroused or caused by anything outside himself; it is from the council of his own will, i.e., an act of his will as Owen notes. That's why grace is freely given as opposed to a dept. Man deserves judgment, not grace! So it must be freely given, hence a testimony to God's impassibility, etc.*] If God did suffer, it would mean that God would need not only to alleviate the suffering of others, but also his own suffering, and thus there would be an inbuilt self-interest in God's love and consolation. However, since God does not suffer, his card for those who do suffer is freely given and not evoked by some need on his part.²⁷ His love is freely expressed entirely for the sake of those he loves. Weinandy, pg 160

It is impossible for the Trinity to be more loving, for the persons of the Trinity self-actualizing potential to become more loving. Weinandy, p 161

M. Dodds: Only an entirely perfect being, subject to no defect and lacking in nothing [*a being without parts, i.e., without potencies that can be actualized as they can be in humans*], is able to love with a fully gratuitous love.'

See footnote #29, near the bottom of this discourse, for an important application of this doctrine!

If God is pure act without these potencies in him, then he loves, cares solely from his own will or council, i.e., a *fully gratuitous love*. This is incredible! This is why grace is freely given and why we are passive in our conversion; conversion happens to us; we do not work to attain it or cause God to give it to us. See Eph. 2:8-9, faith is a gift, not of ourselves!!! This is the mystery that we can understand but cannot comprehend, *for God to be love fully in act is beyond human comprehension – Weinandy p161.*

Now you can see more clearly the meaning of Romans 9:10-

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for *the children* not yet being born, **nor having done any good or evil**, that the purpose of God **according to election** might stand, **not of works but of Him who calls**), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

And what Eph. 1:11

¹¹ *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things **according to the counsel of his will**,*

-that is, not by the council of our will, but by his will only; why? If he was dependent upon our will, it would infer that God is dependent upon the creature and that God responds to the creature via his actualizing of supposed 'passive potency' (parts). But he doesn't have passive potencies! He is pure act, one divine essence, no parts that can be actualized are in him. In other words people think that it is the creature that moves God to respond (via for example, the sinner's prayer); that God undergoes a change in state of being by the creature thus causing God to act. But this is impossible since God is simple (divine simplicity – one divine essence), immutable (he cannot change) and impassible (God is not affected by anything outside himself); he is pure act. All these three things are interwoven in a divine fabric, so to speak, that if you take away one thread the whole fabric is destroyed. And as Jonathan Edwards said, the fact that our all comes from him:

The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. **And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence.** Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that *it* should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?¹

Bavinck states:

He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. **He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself.** Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, **he may not love anything else except with a view to himself.** **He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.**

When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts. For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

Note Edwards' words, "how is it possible that *it* should have anything to add to God". Here is God's simplicity, immutability and impassibility and perfection stated. For if man could cause God to undergo a change in disposition, then God would be mutable and passible!

John Flavel makes this clear regarding our absolute dependence upon God, in his comments on the soul in his book, *The Treatise of the Soul of Man*, pg 21

"A substance which has an essential principle of life in itself; a living, active being. A living soul, says Moses in the text; and hereby it is distinguished from, and opposed to matter or body. The soul moves itself and the body too; it has a self-moving virtue or power in itself; whereas the matter, or body is wholly passive, and is moved and acted, not by itself, but by this vital spirit, James 2:26, "The body without the spirit is dead." It acts not at all, but as it is acted by this invisible spirit. This is so plain, that it admits of sensible proof and demonstration. Take mere matter, and compound or divide it, alter it, and change it how you will, you can never make it see, feel, hear, or act vitally without a quickening and actuating soul. Yet we must still remember, that this active principle, the soul, though it has this vital power in itself, it has it not from itself, but in a constant receptive dependence upon God, the first cause, both of its being and power."

God cannot receive anything from the creature since God is perfect, lacking nothing, and thus can't receive anything, for if he could, God would be lacking something; but he is perfect. If he could receive something, then before he wasn't perfect, was lacking something and hence, not God! To add to him would be adding to him who cannot be added to, for he is infinite. Also, nothing can take away from his felicity...and on and on. The more you ruminate on this subject, you'll get more familiar with the terms and in how they all interrelate.

The problem that many have is that they are trying to make God more relational, more give and take in their composite way of thinking since we are creatures; we think that way. They think that if God is immutable, impassible and simple that he is just inert, [see [codeinert](#)] static, a rock, a metaphysical iceberg; but the true nature of God as depicted by these terms make him boundless in his love, mercy, patience, hence wholly relational to his creatures. We cannot cause God to care more than he does! Think about that!

What you don't want is a passible God who would be finite in his attributes, not boundless; for the parts in him in this case have to be finite, and hence being passible, he would respond to our corrupted nature and treat us as our sins deserve. But if he is not passible, but pure act, then he is not moved by our sinfulness by necessity, which would inevitably lead to our being judged, but he can, by an act of his will (an eternal act in his eternal decree), he can choose to save, to have mercy on whom he will, overlooking our sin.

This is why John Owen attributes the foundation of the Father's electing love to an act of his will and not the passible common affection which would depend upon us doing something to arouse (actualize) his potential love. But he loved us without our arousing him!!! without us doing any good or evil (Rom

9). If God were passible it would limit God's love, making it finite and not boundless in its operation. And as I said before, due to our total depravity, we could never arouse his love but would be subject to his justice in our deserved condemnation!

Excerpt from

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

by John Owen, Book IV, Chp II

<https://ccel.org/ccel/owen/deathofdeath/deathofdeath.i.x.ii.html>

In this excerpt John Owen mentions some terms and understandings relating to impassibility but does not mention term impassibility nor explain it in depth; that was my first exposure to this doctrine. Note that he only says that affections are not in God and that this was a commonly accepted doctrine during his time (1600s) by all kinds of Christians. Beginning about the time of the Enlightenment in the 17th & 18th centuries this doctrine faded into obscurity. Now that I've read several books on impassibility, simplicity, and immutability of God, I have gotten a much more deeper understanding of Owen's comments as I re-read this excerpt. Note the terms that Owen uses such as *act of the will, free, unchangeable purpose, natural affection, and common affection, and transcendent love*. He doesn't mention the term 'pure act', but from that flows an understanding of the term *act of his will*.

In this excerpt Owen refers to the Arminian view of God's love as a "natural inclination, velleity, and propensity to the good of *'the world,'* as well as the common affection of love in opposition to *divine love* as an act of His will as the foundation of the Father's saving mercy. The key here is that since God is impassible and pure act, that nothing in the creature causes God to show mercy or saving love, it must be an act of his will as Owen describes and not the common affection or natural inclination etc.

With that in mind, read Owen's comments on an . In this excerpt, Owen is comparing the reformed view with the Arminian view of what kind of love is meant in John 3:16 – the common affection and a natural inclination to good, or an act of His will.

My comments in [blue].

This place, I say, the Universalists exceedingly boast in; for which we are persuaded they have so little cause, that we doubt not but, with the Lord's assistance, to demonstrate that it is destructive to their whole defense: to which end I will give you, in brief, a double paraphrase of the words, the first containing their sense, the latter ours. Thus, then, our adversaries explain these words:— “ *'God so loved,'* had such a natural inclination, velleity, and propensity to the good of *'the world,'* Adam, with all and every one of his posterity, of all ages, times, and conditions (whereof some were in heaven, some in hell long before), *'that he gave his only-begotten Son,'* causing him to be incarnate in the fulness of time, to die, not with a purpose and resolution to save any, but *'that whosoever,'* what persons soever

of those which he had propensity unto, *'believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,'* should have this fruit and issue, that he should escape death and hell, and live eternally." In which explication of the sense of the place these things are to be observed:—

First, What is that love which was the cause of the sending or giving of Christ; which they make to be a *natural propensity to the good of all*. Secondly, Who are the objects of this love; *all and every man of all generations*. Thirdly, Wherein this giving consisteth; of which I cannot find whether they mean by it the appointment of Christ to be a recoverer, or his actual exhibition in the flesh for the accomplishment of his ministration. Fourthly, *Whosoever*, they make distributive of the persons in the world, and so not restrictive in the intention to some. Fifthly, That life eternal *is the fruit obtained by believers*, but not the end intended by God.

Now, look a little, in the second place, at what we conceive to be the mind of God in those words; whose aim we take to be the advancement and setting forth of the free love of God to lost sinners, in sending Christ to procure for them eternal redemption, as may appear in this following paraphrase:—

“ ‘God’ the Father *'so loved,'* had such a peculiar, *transcendent love*, being an *unchangeable purpose* and an *act of his will* [see [code454b ref act of his will](#)] concerning their salvation, towards *'the world,'* miserable, sinful, lost men of all sorts, not only Jews but Gentiles also, which he peculiarly loved, *'that,'* intending their salvation, as in the last words, for the praise of his glorious grace, *'he gave,'* he prepared a way to prevent their everlasting destruction, by appointing and sending *'his only-begotten Son'* to be an all-sufficient Saviour to all that look up unto him, *'that whosoever believeth in him,'* all believers whatsoever, and only they, *'should not perish, but have everlasting life,'* and so effectually be brought to the obtaining of those glorious things through him which the Lord in his free love had designed for them.”

In which enlargement of the words, for the setting forth of what we conceive to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, these things are to be observed:—

First, What we understand by the *"love"* of God, even that act of his will which was the cause of sending his Son Jesus Christ, being the most eminent act of love and favour to the creature; for love is *velle alicui bonum*, “to will good to any.” And never did God will greater good to the creature than in appointing his Son for their redemption. Notwithstanding, I would have it observed that I do not make the purpose of sending or giving Christ to be absolutely subordinate to God’s love to his elect, as though that were the end of the other absolutely, but rather that they are both co-ordinate to the same supreme end, or the manifestation of God’s glory by the way of mercy tempered with justice; but

in respect of our apprehension, that is the relation wherein they stand one to another. Now, this love we say to be that, greater than which there is none.

Secondly, By the “*world*,” we understand the elect of God only, though not considered in this place as such, but under such a notion as, being true of them, serves for the farther exaltation of God’s love towards them, which is the end here designed; and this is, as they are poor, miserable, lost creatures in the world, of the world, scattered abroad in all places of the world, not tied to Jews or Greeks, but dispersed in any nation, kindred, and language under heaven.

Thirdly, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων, is to us, “*that every believer*,” and is declarative of the intention of God in sending or giving his Son, containing no distribution of the world beloved, but a direction to the persons whose good was intended, that love being an unchangeable intention of the chiefest good.

Fourthly, “*Should not perish, but have life everlasting*,” contains an expression of the particular aim and intention of God in this business; which is, the certain salvation of believers by Christ. And this, in general, is the interpretation of the words which we adhere unto, which will yield us sundry arguments, sufficient each of them to evert the general ransom; which, that they may be the better bottomed, and the more clearly convincing, we will lay down and compare the several words and expressions of this place, about whose interpretation we differ, with the reason of our rejecting the one sense and embracing the other:—

The first difference in the interpretation of this place is about the cause of sending Christ; called here *love*. The second, about the object of this love; called here the *world*. Thirdly, Concerning the intention of God in sending his Son; said to be that believers might be *saved*.

For the FIRST, By “*love*” in this place, all our adversaries agree that *a natural affection and propensity in God to the good of the creature, lost under sin, in general, which moved him to take some way whereby it might possibly be remedied*, is intended. We, on the contrary, say that by *love* here is not meant an inclination or propensity of his nature¹, but *an act of his will* (where we conceive his love to be seated), *and eternal purpose to do good to man, being the most transcendent and eminent act of God’s love to the creature*.

That both these may be weighed, to see which is most agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost, I shall give you, first, some of the reasons whereby we oppose the former interpretation; and, secondly, those whereby we confirm our own.

First, *If no natural affection, whereby he should necessarily be carried to any thing without himself, can or ought to be ascribed unto God, then no such thing is here intended in the word love; for that cannot be here intended which is not in God at all.* [Doctrine of Simplicity: God is not a composite

being, composed of parts such as love, mercy, patience, etc., but he is those things!] But now, that there neither is nor can be any such natural affection in God is most apparent, and may be evidenced by many demonstrations. I shall briefly recount a few of them:—

First, Nothing that includes any imperfection is to be assigned to Almighty God: he *is God all-sufficient*; he is our *rock*, and his work is perfect. But a **natural affection** in God to the good and salvation of all, being never completed nor perfected, carrieth along with it a great deal of imperfection and weakness; and not only so, but it must also needs be exceedingly prejudicial to the absolute blessedness and happiness of Almighty God. Look, how much any thing wants of the fulfilling of that whereunto it is carried out with any desire, natural or voluntary, so much it wanteth of blessedness and happiness. So that, without impairing of the infinite blessedness of the ever-blessed God, no natural affection unto any thing never to be accomplished can be ascribed unto him, such as this general love to all is supposed to be.

Secondly, If the Lord hath such a **natural affection** to all, as to love them so far as to send his Son to die for them, whence is it that this affection of his doth not receive accomplishment? whence is it that it is hindered, and doth not produce its effects? why doth not the Lord engage his power for the fulfilling of his desire? “It doth not seem good to his infinite wisdom,” say they, “so to do.” Then is there an affection in God to that which, in his wisdom, he cannot prosecute. This among the sons of men, the worms of the earth, would be called a brutish affection.

Thirdly, **No affection or natural propensity to good is to be ascribed to God which the Scripture nowhere assigns to him, and is contrary to what the Scripture doth assign unto him.** Now, the Scripture doth nowhere assign unto God any natural affection whereby he should be naturally inclined to the good of the creature; the place to prove it clearly is yet to be produced. And that it is contrary to what the Scripture assigns him is apparent; for it describes him to be free in showing mercy, every act of it being by him performed freely, even as he pleaseth, for “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.” Now, if every act of mercy showed unto any do proceed from the free distinguishing will of God (as is apparent), certainly there can be in him no such natural affection. [In other words, from the standpoint of impassibility, there is no potency in God that can be actualized by anything outside of God, i.e., by the creature, by anything the creature does or says such as a sinner’s prayer or sacramental act, to curry God’s favor and cause God (actualizing this potency) to show favor. This also places God in debt to the creature and hence grace is not free, not freely given (because it’s caused by the creature. See [code439](#), [Common Love vs. Divine Love](#) for more in depth comment in Owen’s alluding to God’s *impassibility*.)] And the truth is, if the Lord should not show mercy, and be carried out

towards the creature, merely upon his own distinguishing will, but should naturally be moved to show mercy to the miserable, he should, first, be no more merciful to men than to devils, nor, secondly, to those that are saved than to those that are damned: **for that which is natural must be equal in all its operations; and that which is natural to God must be eternal.** Many more effectual reasons are produced by our divines for the denial of this natural affection in God, in the resolution of the Arminian distinction (I call it so, as now by them abused) of God's antecedent and consequent will, to whom the learned reader may repair for satisfaction. So that the love mentioned in this place is not that natural affection to all in general, which is not. But, —

Secondly, It is the *special love of God to his elect*, as we affirm, and so, consequently, not any such thing as our adversaries suppose to be intended by it, — namely, a *velleity* or *natural inclination to the good of all*. For, —

First, The love here intimated is absolutely the most eminent and transcendent love that ever God showed or bare towards any miserable creature; yea, the intention of our Saviour is so to set it forth, as is apparent by the emphatical expression of it used in this place. The particles "so," "that," declare no less, pointing out an eximiousness peculiarly remarkable in the thing whereof the affirmation is [made], above any other thing in the same kind. Expositors usually lay weight upon almost every particular word of the verse, for the exaltation and demonstration of the love here mentioned. "So," that is, in such a degree, to such a remarkable, astonishable height: "God," the glorious, all-sufficient God, that could have manifested his justice to eternity in the condemnation of all sinners, and no way wanted them to be partakers of his blessedness: "loved," with such an earnest, intense affection, consisting in an eternal, unchangeable act and purpose of his will, for the bestowing of the chiefest good (the choicest effectual love): "the world," men in the world, of the world, subject to the iniquities and miseries of the world, lying in their blood, having nothing to render them commendable in his eyes, or before him: "that he gave," did not, as he made all the world at first, speak the word and it was done, but proceeded higher, to the performance of a great deal more and longer work, wherein he was to do more than exercise an act of his almighty power, as before; and therefore gave "his Son;" not any favourite or other well-pleasing creature; not sun, moon, or stars; not the rich treasure of his creation (all too mean, and coming short of expressing this love); but his Son: "begotten Son," and that not so called by reason of some near approaches to him, and *filial, obediential* reverence of him, as the angels are called the sons of God; for it was not an angel that he gave, which yet had been an expression of most intense love; nor yet any son by adoption, as believers are the sons of God; but his begotten Son, begotten of his own person from eternity; and that "his only-begotten Son;" not any one

of his sons, but whereas he had or hath but one only-begotten Son, always in his bosom, his Isaac, he gave him:— than which how could the infinite wisdom of God make or give any higher testimony of his love? especially if ye will add what is here evidently included, though the time was not as yet come that it should be openly expressed, namely, whereunto he gave his Son, his only one; not to be a king, and worshipped in the first place, — but he “spared him not, but delivered him up” to death “for us all,” [Rom. viii. 32](#). Whereunto, for a close of all, cast your eyes upon his design and purpose in this whole business, and ye shall find that it was that believers, those whom he thus loved, “*might not perish*,” — that is, undergo the utmost misery and wrath to eternity, which they had deserved, — “*but have everlasting life*,” eternal glory with himself, which of themselves they could no way attain; and ye will easily grant that “greater love hath no man than this.” Now, if the love here mentioned be the greatest, highest, and chiefest of all, certainly it cannot be that common affection towards all that we discussed before; for the love whereby men are actually and eternally saved is greater than that which may consist with the perishing of men to eternity.

Secondly, The Scripture positively asserts this very love as the chiefest act of the love of God, and that which he would have us take notice of in the first place: [Rom. v. 8](#), “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” and fully, [1 John iv. 9, 10](#), “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” In both which places the eminency of this love is set forth exceeding emphatically to believers, with such expressions as can no way be accommodated to a natural velleity to the good of all.

Thirdly, That seeing all love in God is but *velle alicui bonum*, to will good to them that are beloved, *they* certainly are the object of his love to whom he intends that good which is the issue and effect of that love; but now the issue of this love or good intended, being *not perishing*, and *obtaining eternal life* through Christ, happens alone to, and is bestowed on, only elect believers: therefore, they certainly are the object of this love, and they alone; — which was the thing we had to declare.

Fourthly, That love which is the cause of giving Christ is also always the cause of the bestowing of all other good things: [Rom. viii. 32](#), “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Therefore, if the love there mentioned be the cause of sending Christ, as it is, it must also cause all other things to be given with him, and so can be towards none but those who have those things bestowed on them; which are only the elect, only believers. Who else have grace here, or glory hereafter?

¹What I think Owen is saying here doesn't really relate to possible or impossible so much as it has to do with God's natural propensity regardless of any outward causes that may actualize any potency in God to show favor. So if it is God's propensity to show good to all, then no one is going to hell; he would show equal favor to devils, reprobates, and the elect; he would, by *necessity*, show good to all. Then Owen says, *If no natural affection, whereby he should necessarily be carried to any thing without himself can or ought to be ascribed unto God [there's the passableness – my insert], then no such thing is here intended in the word love. This is true; there is no potency in God (since he is simple) as there is in humans, that something outside himself can arouse a common affection (potency) such as love. God is love. He is already pure act; no one can make him love more than he is acting.*

You see, there is nothing loveable in us; so if God did have potency, the common affection of love that needed to be actualized by man, would never get actualized due to man's radical depravity, hence, Romans 8:7-8, ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And Heb. 11:6, without faith it is impossible to please Him, and other like passages such as 1Cor2:14, ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Added comments by Alan Quinones Ph.D. Candidate, The Master's Seminary

<https://tms.edu/m/05-Toward-the-Worship-of-God-as-Actus-Purus-Alan-Quinones.pdf>

Contemporary critics, nonetheless, say that if God is truly an unmoved mover, He can only be "rigid dead substance," wholly inactive and immobile. As James Dolezal explains, however, "the very opposite is the case. The God of classical theism is not unmoved because He lacks actuality and dynamism, but because He is pure unbounded act and dynamism and thus cannot be moved to some additional state of actuality, power, or liveliness." Similarly, Muller writes, "Immutability does not indicate inactivity or unrelatedness, but the fulfillment of being." God is therefore, as Charnock put it, "nothing but vigor and act." Life is in Him "originally, radically, therefore eternally," and He has by His nature "that life which others have by his grant" (cf. 1 Tim 6:16). Alan Quinone, Master's Seminary

God is therefore like an architect who from eternity holds a blueprint of the form of what He intends to build, and then affects His work over time. In these egressions, God is not transitioning from passive potency to actuality, but is rather directing His essence to the execution of His *ad extra* works. Once more, the change is outside, about, and around God, but not in Him. While God is pure actuality, His creation stands, in relation to Him, *in potentia*. This makes creation entirely dependent upon God to reach actualization. [See [code305a](#) [code306a](#)]

As it is widely known, the doctrine of predestination stands as one of the chief tenets of the Reformed faith. One of its principal articles, moreover, is the belief that one ought to look no further than God's will as the ultimate cause for either the election or the reprobation of men; for, as Paul wrote, "He has mercy on whom He

desires, and He hardens whom He desires” (Rom 9:18). This is precisely the point against which Arminianism reacts so strongly.

Predestination comments by Alan Quinones

In their first article of affirmation, the followers of Jacob Arminius sought to redefine the doctrine of predestination as indicating that God has eternally determined to save “those who ... shall believe on his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith ... and on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath.” In other words, something outside of God—namely man’s faith, obedience, and perseverance, or else his incorrigibility and unbelief—moves Him either to elect or reprobate men.

Pink thus explained, “Perverters of this truth [predestination] invariably seek to find some cause outside God’s own will, which moves Him to bestow salvation on sinners.” In doing so, they undermine the perfection and all-sufficiency of God, for they make Him liable to change, and to have His own counsels “disturbed,” in the words of van Mastricht, “subjugated to a master, as it were.” Nevertheless, because of God’s pure actuality, nothing in creation can be greater or prior to His will, which is always in act and never in potency. After all, whatever is in *potentia* is also caused, and therefore dependent upon its cause to reach actualization.

The will of God cannot thus be said to be dependent upon any external causes, whether instrumental, impulsive, or final. This is why Jonathan Edwards wrote that our language concerning God’s decree is ultimately improper, though no “more improper than all our other ways of speaking about God.” The doctrine of predestination, nevertheless, must be defined under the assumption that all the decrees of God are harmonious. And, as this study has shown, they are harmonious precisely because they entail **one simple and eternal act, which is identical with the divine essence.**

My comments cont.:

God’s love is not the passable kind as it is in humans, but impassible; it’s the highest form of love (*God so loved* in Jn 3:16- J Owen) that passes knowledge, an act of his will, being that he is pure act; that is, it is from the council of his own will. There is the mystery. If we don’t cause God to love us then why does he love those he loves or why does he say in Romans 9, *I will have mercy on whom I have mercy?* But that fact is that he does, in the end, is for His glory! That’s the mystery and it should lead us to reverential awe, praise, humility and obedience to his commands.

This is the love that passes knowledge. We cannot comprehend it. And I think the same thing goes for those he reprobates. Yes, they are guilty and without excuse, but we can’t chalk that up to the creature alone as though God is just responding to their sin and rebellion and so damns them; God is not dependent upon the creature! Ultimately, it all comes down to God’s will. Either way, regarding election or reprobation, He is not the Great Responder as Edwards notes. He is sovereign in all that he does. See the London Baptist Confession regarding the will of God and his decree.

1. God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree. ([Isaiah 46:10](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#); [Hebrews 6:17](#); [Romans 9:15, 18](#); [James 1:13](#); [1 John 1:5](#); [Acts 4:27, 28](#); [John 19:11](#); [Numbers 23:19](#); [Ephesians 1:3-5](#))

Edwards explains, in this instance, regarding prayer: note the comments on the nature of God; he doesn't mention the word impassible but he clearly teaches it here when he says that God is not moved or persuaded by the prayers of his people; this seems strange but as I noted above, we cannot cause God to care, etc. more than he does already.

It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. He is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge unchangeable. God never gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only; he is self-moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. 36:35, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.--When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

Doctrine of God cont.

God's Sovereignty Over the Wills of Men & Doctrine of Concurrence

By G Clark

God's relations with his creatures vs. Deism Divine Simplicity, Immutability and Impassibility

This is, by far, not an exhaustive treatise on this subject, but is principally to introduce these subjects to you that have, since the 1700s, drifted by the wayside rarely to be ever heard again, since it is man's nature is to want to have their brains entertained with notions that tickle their carnal apprehensions of

divine things or accommodate their whining appetites. That being said, here are the dots to connect in your mind. Through much meditation on these we become more familiar with them and they begin to manifest in a beautiful image (of his glory), that excites and leads us to our duty. Look for a common thread in the following passages, God will and the Creature's will. These passages are very deep theologically, and many miss the meaning. Hint: man is desperately attempting to defend his supposed autonomy, his supposed self-directed will and as Psalm 50:21 states, thinks God is altogether like himself. This following explanation requires much re-reading and contemplation over several months and even years. But it is crucial that you learn this so that you come to a right knowledge of God, as F.J. Sheed warns:

F.J. Sheed (1930), writing around the same time as Berkhof, offers a similarly sobering assessment: "A study of what is happening to theology in its higher reaches would almost certainly take as its starting point the attribute of simplicity, and show that every current heresy begins by being wrong on that."

First, some notes on the doctrine of Concurrence, God's ultimate sovereignty over the wills of men:

Edwards on God's Promises vs. a Predictor

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event;** that it is no part of the ordering of God, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he has not the disposal.

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. [Isa. Lx. 22.](#) "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." [Also [Isa 46:11-9](#) above.] **Surely this is the language of promiser, and not merely a predictor. God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. Xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. Vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. Xi.](#) And innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.**

Bottom line: these doctrines should have a reverential awe over our mind and affections leading us to more ardent worship, adoration, prayer, dependence upon God, and obedience, exciting us to our duty. For God is orchestrating everything; whether one is going to hell, in which a person willingly goes, or one who will be born again (converted) in which case he willingly comes, without coercion or doing any violence to man's liberty, his creaturely freedom. This is a great mystery as to how this all works, that God is sovereign over the wills of men yet rules and directs them without coercion; but it is

true as many scriptures plainly demonstrate. So do not let the fact that you cannot have an infinite thought about an infinite God, or have a notion of God's impassibility (since we are passible creatures), or have a simple thought of God's simplicity (the fact that he is not a composite being but one divine essence) and so on, cause you to reject these doctrines!

The words of Thomas Watson in *A Body of Divinity*:

From Adam's sudden fall, learn how sad it is for a man to be left to himself. Adam being left to himself, fell. Oh then, what will become of us, how soon fall, if God should leave us to ourselves! A man without God's grace, left to himself, is like a ship in a storm, without pilot or anchor, and is ready to dash upon every rock. Make this prayer to God, 'Lord, do not leave me to myself. If Adam fell so soon who had strength, how soon shall I fall who have no strength!' [and are living in much worse times of temptation and corruption than Adam was before he fell – my insert] Oh! Urge God with this hand and seal, 'My strength shall be made perfect in weakness.' 2Cor 12:9

Pertinent scriptures:

1Sam. 2:7 - The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

Prov 16:4 - The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Romans 9:19- ¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

²² *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Prov 16:9 - The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Ps 37:32 - The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way;

Jas 4:14 - Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— ¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Prov 19:21 - Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Prov. 21:1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

Prov 20:24 - A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

Ps 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Ps115:3 - Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Isa 46:9- for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, **and I will do it.**

Jer. 10:23 - I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

Exod. 3:21 - And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty,

Exod. 7:3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴Pharaoh will not listen to you.

Regarding the doctrine of concurrence, where God's eternal decree is consistence with man's liberty; in other words, God does not make men to be as puppets or blocks of wood. Though God decrees man will do this or that, man is still an accountable creature to God and is responsible for his actions, yet God does not do violence to their will, e.g., via coercion. This is a great mystery. We can understand it, believe it, but cannot comprehend it. There are many instances of this in Scripture, e.g., 2Cor. 8:16-17, Isaiah 10, the Story of Joseph and his brothers, and Exodus 14 and Acts 4. Here is the warning; because many do not understand the mystery, they deny this truth altogether; they do not have a right notion of the nature of God, and thus suffer in many trials, e.g., Job.

Jonathan Edwards on Concurrence

§ 64. In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.

In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, "God worketh in you both to will and to do."

Now read these:

Exod. 14:8 - And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.

Exod. 8:15 - But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them [there's man hardening his own heart of his own accord! not forced.], as the LORD had said.

Exod. 14:32 - But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Gen. 50:19 Joseph

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me [there is man doing evil of his own accord, not forced by God.], but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^l should be kept alive, as they are today.

Isaiah 10: Assyria Here God had ordained, just like Herod and Pontius Pilate, *et al*, in Acts 4:27-8 (see below), that Assyria would attack Israel to punish them for their idolatry, yet God does not force them to do this; they are just wicked people who like raping and pillaging nations; and the Assyrians did not say to God, Oh please God have us not do this wicked thing nor did they acknowledge God in any way, but of their own corrupt accord they did what had been decreed by God! And then! God punishes the Assyrians because of the wickedness of their hearts! This is an excellent example of Concurrence.

...for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. Acts 4:27-28 ESV

Judgment on Arrogant Assyria

⁵ Woe to Assyria, **the rod of my anger;**
the staff in their hands is my fury!

⁶ Against a godless nation I send him,
and against the people of my wrath I command him,
to take spoil and seize plunder,
and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. [There is God's decree regarding Assyria]

⁷ But he does not so intend,
and his heart does not so think;
but it is in his heart to destroy,
and to cut off nations not a few; [there is the clear evidence that Assyria is not being coerced by God]

⁸ for he says:

"Are not my commanders all kings?

⁹ Is not Calno like Carchemish?

Is not Hamath like Arpad?

Is not Samaria like Damascus?

¹⁰ As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,
whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

¹¹ shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols
as I have done to Samaria and her images?"

¹² When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he^l will punish the speech^l of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³ For he says:

"By the strength of my hand I have done it,
and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;

I remove the boundaries of peoples,
and plunder their treasures;

like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones.

¹⁴ My hand has found like a nest
the wealth of the peoples;
and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,
so I have gathered all the earth;
and there was none that moved a wing
or opened the mouth or chirped."

¹⁵ **Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it,
or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it?**

As if a rod should wield him who lifts it,
or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

¹⁶ Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts
will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
and under his glory a burning will be kindled,
like the burning of fire.

¹⁷ The light of Israel will become a fire,
and his Holy One a flame,
and it will burn and devour
his thorns and briers in one day.

2Cor. 8:16 is a textbook example of concurrence:

2Cor. 8:16-17 - *But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus [there is God's divine influence to effect his will in the creature] the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. [There is Titus doing this of his own accord without any coercion whatsoever. He freely does it because he wants to, just like Joseph's brothers wanted to kill Joseph, just like Pharaoh did not want to let God's people go as God had told Moses.]* So you might object and say that God predicts all these things not because God has sovereign control over man's wills but because God just knows everything before it happens. I answer with this explanation by Jonathan Edwards:

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event**; that it is **no part of the ordering of God**, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. **For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he has not the disposal.**

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and

therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. [Isa. Lx. 22.](#) "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." **Surely this is the language of promiser, and not merely a predictor.** God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. Xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. Vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. Xi.](#) And innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.

Other passages that show God working in us:

Phil 2:13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

1Cor15 ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Isa 26:12 - O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works.

Eph 2:10 - ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

John 6:29 ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Dan 4 - Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." ³³ Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

Nebuchadnezzar Restored

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;
³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
 and he does according to his will among the host of heaven
 and among the inhabitants of the earth;
 and none can stay his hand
 or say to him, "What have you done?"

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Amos 3:6 - Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?

Eph 1:5- In love ⁵ he predestined us[□] for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known[□] to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Immutability

Job 23:10 But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.

Mal. 3:6 "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

Application: Because God is not passible - that he does not have common affections assigned to him as we humans do, where our affections are the result of arousals or influences outside ourselves that actuate those potentials (e.g., love, anger, etc.) in us

which God does not have, him being simple (not composed of parts, i.e., potencies waiting to be actualized), then God is pure act; he 13

Acts 17:26 - And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for “In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.’

God is everywhere, but not in a salvific manner. He's a lot closer than you realize. *For it is in Him that we live and move and have our being.* Act 17:28. God is far away, however, in another sense in that one's lips may praise him, but their hearts are far from him, Isa 29:13, *And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me,...”* Now Deism says that God made everything, but he does not relate to his creatures; all of creation is just like a wound up clock left to run on its own while God is off in the distance only observing how things will shake out. Many of our founding fathers were Deists. In fact I think we came into the world with this line of thinking.

Jonathan Edwards: 1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, **eternally, unchangeably,** and **independently glorious and happy:** that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being. The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, **out of nothing.** And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?

Bavinck states:

He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. **He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself.** Inasmuch as he himself is the absolutely good and perfect one, **he may not love anything else except with a view to himself.** **He may not and cannot be content with less than absolute perfection.** **When he loves others, he loves himself in them: his own virtues, works, and gifts.** For the same reason he is also blessed in himself as the sum of all goodness, of all perfection. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 2 p 211]

Cornelius Van Til states:

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men. God is love. He loves himself above all else. He loved himself from all eternity when he had as yet made no creatures to love. But when he made creatures, he made them lovable like himself. He loved them because in loving them, he loved himself above all else. Pg 132 Common Grace & the Gospel

We are not autonomous, self-willed creatures!!! But we think we are and we come into this world thinking we are. Unregenerate man worships his own will. Note the words of John Flavel on this doctrine of concurrence:

“But still the pride of nature will not let men see the necessity of divine efficacious influences upon the will and the consistency thereof with natural liberty.” Pg 28 A Treatise on the Soul of Man

In other words man thinks he is independent of God, self-sufficient, self-willed; in fact, we act as if we are God. In other words man thinks he is independent of God, self-sufficient, self-willed; in fact, we act as if we are God. When you see this more clearly as you contemplate these passages it will transform your thinking on what we are truly like and what God is truly like. This is what Eve was tempted with, to decide for herself what was good or evil, thus declaring here independence from God, disregarding God’s law; and this has been the problem (or curse) with man since then! God punishes sin with sin; the sin that Eve was guilty of.

Ps 2:4, *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.*

Rom. 1:24 - ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient

to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

John 6

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Phil 1:29 - For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

John 6:29 - ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Edwards on God's Promises vs. a Predictor repeated again for your learning!

§ 52. If it be as the Arminians suppose, **that all men's virtue is of the determination of their own free will, independent on any prior determining, deciding, and disposing of the event;** that it is no part of the ordering of God, whether there be many virtuous or few in the world, whether there shall be much virtue or little, or where it shall be, in what nation, country, or when, or in what generation or age; or whether there shall be any at all: then none of these things belong to **God's disposal**, and therefore, surely it does not belong to him to **promise** them. For it does not belong to him to promise in an affair, concerning which he has not the disposal.

And how can God promise, as he oftentimes does in his word, glorious times, when righteousness shall generally prevail, and his will shall generally be done; and yet that it is not an effect which belongs to him to determine; it is not left to his determination, but to the sovereign, arbitrary determination of others, independently on any determination of him; and therefore surely they ought to be the promisers? For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it. [Isa. Lx. 22.](#) "I the Lord do hasten it in its time." [Also [Isa 46:11-9](#) above.] **Surely this is the language of promiser, and not merely a predictor. God promises Abraham, that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him." God swears [Rom. Xiv. 11.](#) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." And it is said to be given to Christ, that every nation, &c. should serve and obey him, [Dan. Vii.](#) After what manner they shall serve and obey him, is abundantly declared in other prophecies, as in [Isa. Xi.](#) And innumerable others. These are spoken of in the next chapter, as excellent things that God does.**

Bottom line: these doctrines should have a reverential awe over our mind and affections leading us to more ardent worship, adoration, prayer and obedience, exciting us to our duty. For God is orchestrating everything; whether one is going to hell, in which he willingly goes¹, or one who will be born again (converted) in which case he comes willingly, without coercion or doing any violence to man's liberty, his creaturely freedom. This is a great mystery as to how this all works, that God is sovereign over the wills of men yet rules and directs them without coercion; but it is true as many scriptures plainly demonstrate. See Ps. 110:3

¹This could be one reason why we must fear God, have a reverential awe of Him, for in Phil. 2:12b-13 it says, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [why?]* ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

The words of Thomas Watson in *A Body of Divinity*:

From Adam's sudden fall, learn how sad it is for a man to be left to himself. Adam being left to himself, fell. Oh then, what will become of us, how soon fall, if God should leave us to ourselves! A man without God's grace, left to himself, is like a ship in a storm, without pilot or anchor, and is ready to dash upon every rock. Make this prayer to God, 'Lord, do not leave me to myself. If Adam fell so soon who had strength, how soon shall I fall who have no strength!' [and are living in much worse times of temptation and corruption than Adam was before he fell – my insert] Oh! Urge God with this hand and seal, 'My strength shall be made perfect in weakness.' 2Cor 12:9

Ps 51:10-12 ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, **and take not your Holy Spirit from me.** ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

And in the end, we will cast our crowns before him for we will see that it was all Christ's works in us, *for we are his workmanship*...Eph. 2. See also Edwards' comment § 64 above.

Rev. 4:9 - ⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. **They cast their crowns before the throne,** saying,

¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and **by your will they existed** and were created."

This is one reason why we are so absolutely dependent upon God: If God ceased to exist, we would cease to exist. As Acts 17:28 says, *for in Him we live and move and have our being*.

Concurrence in The work of Conversion Seen in Ezek. 36:24-27, 11:19; Jer. 24:7, Deut. 30:6, Acts 16:14

Here you can see the will of God in converting his elect while at the same time the elect are not forced but come willingly - that they have new hearts that will love God. A forced love is impossible.

Ezek. 36

²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Ezek. 11

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Jer. 24

⁷ I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

Deut. 30

⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Prior to Deut. 30:6, God commands them in verse 10:16, ¹⁶ *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.* knowing that without his saving grace they cannot and will not do it; so in verse 30:6, God says that he will do it. But the key is that he does it without doing violence their liberty, but by a secret efficacy of the Spirit that changes the will, the heart. This is seen the conversion of Lydia in Acts 16:14, *“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized,”* Just like God who put it into the heart of Titus the same earnest care and then Titus being himself very earnest went to them of his own accord. (2Cor. 8:16-17) So it is with our conversion; God who works in us *to will and to work for his good pleasure*. He works within us and we come of our own accord, i.e., willingly and wholeheartedly, not by compulsion. God promises that all his elect will be saved; not one of them lost and yet none are forced to believe. That is the mystery as to how all this actually happens. We know or understand this mystery; we believe it, but we cannot comprehend it, but we do get clearer and clearer understandings of it.

Acts 4:27-28

Here in acts 4 you see God’s eternal decree predestinating certain things to happen (God’s sovereignty over the wills of men) and yet what they did was not forced upon them; they did it of their own accord, very similar to the Assyrians in Isaiah 10. This is amazing, which is the effect of a mystery - to generate adoration, reverential awe, and worship and a thirst for more understandings of it.

...for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. Acts 4:27-28 ESV

Ps. 139:16-17

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

2Kings 7:3-

³ Now there were four men who were lepers^[c] at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? ⁴ If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die." ⁵ So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there. ⁶ For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against us." ⁷ So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, and fled for their lives.

The Doctrine of God

Code442

Does God Suffer

by Thomas Weinandy

God as *Actus Purus*

(pure act)

Pg 120 - 128

My comments in [\[blue\]](#)

Having just argued that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity demands that the divine persons be immutably and impassibly who they are, not in a stagnant or inert manner, but in a way that is supremely dynamic and supremely relational, I now want to put forth the purely philosophical reasons for why God is immutable and impassible. Because these arguments are solely philosophical in nature, and thus according to reason, and not founded upon revelation, they will concern the one God rather than the

Trinity since reason alone cannot establish that God is a trinity of persons. However, as we will see, what is established through revelation and doctrine is reinforced and in accord with what can be grasped by reason, and vice-versa.

The Christian biblical and patristic tradition holds that God is almighty, all-powerful, all-perfect, eternal, immutable, and impassible. But what is it about the very nature of God which demands that he possess these and similar attributes? Here I would argue, in accordance with Aquinas

, that God's nature is '*to be*', that he is *ipsum esse* (to-be itself) and thus, *actus purus* (pure act). In order to understand what it means for God to be '*to-be itself*' it is first necessary to discern the meaning of *esse* (to be) with regards to finite beings.

In finite beings Aquinas makes a distinction between what something is, its essence or quiddity, and that something is. 'I can know, for instance, what a man or a phoenix is and still be ignorant whether it has being or reality. From this it is clear that being is other than essence or quiddity, unless perhaps there is a reality whose quiddity is its being. Thus, for Aquinas, *esse* is that act by which something actually does exist. *Esse* (to be) is a verb and as such does not possess any quiddity, but purely specifies the act by which something exists and so is the foundation of all subsequent actions performed by the existing being.¹⁸

¹⁸Because *esse* has not quiddity it cannot be conceptualized by the mind. Being a verb, *esse* designates action as do all verbs, but here it specifies that act by which a being is and without which it would not be. For Aquinas 'a being is said to be in as much as it possesses being (*esse*)'. Thus *esse* is the basis of all subsequent actions.

G Phelan writes:

Things which 'have being' are not 'just there' (Dasein) like lumps of static essence, inert, immovable, unprogressive, and unchanging. The act of existence (*esse*) is not a state, it is an act, the act of all acts, and therefore, must be understood as act and not as any static and definable object of conception. *Esse* is dynamic impulse, energy, act – the first, the most persistent and enduring of all dynamisms, all energies, all acts. 'The Existentialism of St. Thomas,' *Selective Paper*, ed. AG Kirn 1967

While *esse* (to be) and *essentia* (quiddity) are distinct in that *esse* possesses no quiddity and *essentia* possesses not *esse*, yet they are not realities in themselves. Rather, only beings actually exist and so *esse* and *essentia* are related to one another, for Aquinas, in an act-potency relationship. *Esse* makes to be what potentially is and potentially *what* is only is because of *esse*.²⁰

²⁰Aquinas states: ‘That in which act is present is a potentiality, since act, as such is referred to potentiality. **Therefore, in every created substance there is potentiality and act.**’ [This is key; all created things are composites – actuality and potential actuality, aka, passive potency. God is not a composite being, hence simple, hence the term divine simplicity. See code306; see *potentiality* on the second page]

Because esse and essentia are distinct within finite reality, no finite being, whether it be a man, dog, or star, is of such a nature that its nature demand that it be. Therefore, Aquinas argues that the esse of finite creatures must come from an extrinsic cause.²¹

²¹Aquinas states:

Whatever belongs to a thing is either caused by the principles of its nature...or comes to it from an extrinsic principle...Now **being itself** cannot be caused by the form or quiddity of a thing (by ‘caused’ I mean by an efficient cause) because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible. **It follows that everything whose being is distinct from its nature must have being from another.** *De Ente et Essentia*

‘There must be a reality that is the cause of being for all things, because it is pure being (esse tantum). If this were not so, one would go on to infinity in causes, for everything that is not pure being has a cause of its being.’ [In other words, ‘**the metaphysical buck has to stop somewhere.**’ Edward Feser] This being who is pure esse is ‘the first cause of God.’ Aquinas’ understanding of God as pure esse is founded upon what esse is in creatures. **God must be pure esse for this is what finite being lack, and what they must be given if they are to be.** If God were not pure esse, he would be in the same situation as creatures and so be in need of esse himself. While finite beings are composite beings in which their essence and esse are in an act-potency relationship, God, whose very nature is to be, *ipsum esse*, is not composite, and ‘**therefore his essence is his existence,**’ that is, his very nature or quiddity is ‘to be’ and nothing more.

What must be grasped and remembered, something which Aquinas’ critics never seem to do, is that **esse is an act, that esse is a verb.**²⁴

²⁴D. Burrell states that to say God is *ipsum esse* or *actus purus* is to say that ‘God’s essence is to exist, more precisely as: “to be God is to be to-be.”’

Being pure act (pure verb) as *ipsum esse* does not mean that God is *something* fully in act, such as a creature might actualize its full potential, but rather that God is act pure and simple. Because God is *ipsum esse* **he has no self-constituting potency which needs**

to be actualized in order for him to be more fully who he is, not because he is *something* fully in act, but again, because he is act pure and simple. God is *actus purus*.²⁵

²⁵Aquinas argues that his understanding of God as *ipsum esse* and *actus purus* is totally in keeping with the biblical revelation that God is 'He Who Is' (Exod. 3:14). 'He who Is' is the most proper name of God 'For it does not signify form, but simply existence itself. Hence since the existence of God is his essence itself, which can be said of no other, it is clear that among the other names this one specially denotes God, for everything is denominated by its form. 1. Because God's name is 'he Who Is' and thus specifies that his essence is 'to be,' he is unknowable for human beings cannot conceive what pure being is. To know that the proper name of God is to-be (*ipsum esse*) is different from knowing what to be *to-be* is or means. Thus Aquinas' understanding of God is totally in keeping with the biblical understanding. For God in revealing his name as 'He Who Is,' has also revealed that he is unknowable.

Because God is *actus purus* it is evident why God is all-perfect, and thus immutable. If 'esse [to be] is the actuality of all acts, and on account of this is the perfection of all perfections,' then God as *actus purus* 'must needs be most actual, and therefore most perfect; for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection. God is then perfect not because he has perfected all his potential, but, being *ipsum esse* [to be itself], he is perfection itself.

This is why God is immutable. Because God is **pure act** it is impossible for him to acquire more perfection through some change which would make him more actual. 'Everything which is in any way changed, is in some way potentiality. Hence it is evident that it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable.' Being pure act, God possesses 'all the plenitude of perfection of all being. He cannot acquire anything new' through change, that is, by actualizing some potential.²⁷ [Doctrines of divine simplicity: God is one pure divine essence, not a composite being composed of actuality and potential actuality (an act-potency relationship) in which the potentials can be actualized by something or someone outside himself as humans are so affected or moved upon.] While the attribute of immutability is a negative attribute, it is founded on something that is entirely positive – God Being pure act or being itself. God is immutable not because his is static, inert, or inactive, but precisely because he, as pure act, is supremely active and dynamic and cannot ontologically become more in act. As M. Dodds states.

The true significance of the attribute of divine immutability in the theology of St. Thomas consists, not in the fact that it indicates the invariable self-identity of god, but in the fact that it indicates the dynamic and boundless perfection of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* Far from

implying, therefore, that God may be somehow static or inert, the attribute of immutability directly signifies that God, as pure *esse* is pure dynamic actuality.

God then is supremely immutable because he is supremely in act.

The problem is that all critics of Aquinas and the Christian tradition consistently interpret divine immutability in a positive manner, as if to say that God is immutable is to conceive him as static and inert. As was noted earlier, Barth [see code498] gives one of the most striking accounts of this understanding when he states that if God were absolutely immutable, he would be utterly immobile and lifeless, and thus God would be death.

Dodds, in what is by far the best comprehensive study on Aquinas' understanding of divine immutability, comments on this misinterpretation by noting that 'it is quite possible for us to assume that when immutability is predicated of God, it is that creaturely sort of immutability, whose image is present in our imagination, which is intended. The result of such an assumption is, as we have seen, usually a monstrous image of the unchanging God.'

²⁷Aquinas also writes: 'All motion or mutation, in whatever way it is predicated, results from some potentiality since motion is the act of something existing in potency. Therefore, since God is pure act, having no admixture of potency, there cannot be any change in him.' [my comment: humans and all other created are compounded things consisting in passive potency and actuality; they are compounded things as opposed to God who is not; he is simple, one divine essence, not compounded in his essence, not being made up of things, i.e., *without parts*, hence God is *pure act* or *pure actuality*. There is nothing in him (potency) that can be moved upon (hence God cannot suffer or undergo anything from without himself) to cause him to alter his actuality, his state of being, e.g., to make him change, to be more happy or less happy, or suffer any emotion as is the case with us humans who are not *simple*. You will see that the doctrine of divine simplicity, immutability, impassibility, eternity and perfection are all interdependent and cannot be separated. You try to pull out one of these threads of truth and the whole garment will unravel.]

Owen, on God's love, is an act of his will, not a passible passion of love, *I will have mercy on whom I have mercy...from the council of his own will, not from outside influence.*

G. Grisez argues that because one holds that God is immutable, it does not follow that he is 'standing still, fixed, inert, or rigid.' Moreover, to say that God 'is not affected by man's suffering and stops with this negation, one strongly suggests that he is cold and

unconcerned about evil. One must negate of God everything descriptive of entities given in experience.

I state in *Does God Change?*

One should not be misled into thinking that God's immutability is like the immutability of a rock only more so. What God and rocks appear to have in common is only the fact that they do not change. The reason for their unchangeableness is for polar-opposite reasons...God is unchangeable not because he is inert or static like a rock, but for just the opposite reason. He is so dynamic, so active that no change can make him more active. He is act pure and simple.

This should be kept in mind when one considers process theology or any other theology that predicates change in God in order to make him more dynamic. In making God mutable, process theology's notion of God has more in common with rocks than does Aquinas' notion of God.

What the critics consistently fail to grasp is that God's immutability is not opposed to his vitality. Nor need one hold together in some dialectical fashion his immutability and his vibrancy, as if in spite of being immutable he is nonetheless dynamic. Rather, it is precisely God's immutability as *actus purus* that guarantees and authenticates his pure vitality and absolute dynamism. Thus, when the critics assert that because Aquinas and the tradition believe God to be immutable they espouse a static and inert conception of god, they but demonstrate their own lack of understanding.

Aquinas did not treat impassibility when considering the various attributes of God within his two *Summae*. It arises primarily in the context of discussing God's willing and loving. The objection is raised: 'It seems that love does not exist in God. For in God there are no passions. Now love is a passion. Therefore love is not in God.' Obviously, Aquinas wants to hold that God does love and does so supremely. **He therefore distinguishes between passion and love within human beings and love (without passibility) within God.**

In response to the above objection Aquinas argues that passion in human beings pertains to the will and to the objects toward which the will tends. The will tends toward the good as an object known and so loved. In human beings the knowledge of a thing as good arouse the sensitive appetite (pertaining to the senses) with its concomitant sensible emotion, which in turn motivates the will to desire and obtain the good as loved. For example, I come to know someone and in so doing I find him or her to be good and attractive. This knowledge arouses within me thoughts and feelings of love and affection and so my will desires to express this love in the hope of becoming friends with the person. For Aquinas, this process, this arousal of the sensitive appetite through sensitive knowledge with its concomitant sensible emotion by a known and loved good is passion. 'Therefore acts of the sensitive appetite, inasmuch as they have

annexed to them some bodily change, are called passions.’ In human beings then passion denotes a twofold change. First, through knowledge of a know good the sensitive appetite is aroused, which carries with it a sensible bodily emotional change; and second, the will is thus motivated and moved to desire and obtain the good as loved.³⁷

³⁷ Since this process is the activating of the intellect and the will to desire and obtain a known good as loved, it exemplifies, for Aquinas, an act-potency relationship which therefore marks a change.

In contrast God does not undergo this passible process. God is not corporeal and so does not possess sensitive knowledge or a sensitive appetite. ‘Therefore, there is no passion in God.’³⁸

³⁸ Aquinas further states:

Moreover, every passion of the appetite takes place through some bodily change, for example, the contraction or distension of the heart, or something of the sort. Now, none of this can take place in God, since he is not a body or a power in a body [simplicity: he is one pure simple essence, not of parts, metaphysical or physical]...There is therefore no passion of the appetite in him.

However, God does possess intellect and will. God, being pure act, knows and wills in the one act that he himself is. While God does not then possess an sensitive intellect and a sensitive appetite, both of which pertain to human knowing or willing as a corporeal being, God does possess and intellectual appetite in that his will is focused on the known good [himself!] and so loved. Therefore, ‘there are certain passions which, though they do not befit God as passions, do not signify anything by the nature of their species that is repugnant to the divine perfection. [Aquinas] **What Aquinas means here is that there are human passions which are not contrary to the nature of God but, because he possesses them not through a passible process but as part of his unchanging nature, they are not passions, strictly speaking, within him.**

Aquinas can equally state that ‘Love, therefore, and joy and delight are passions, [but] in so far as they denote acts of the intellectual appetite they are not passions. It is in this latter sense that they are in God.’⁴²

What has become evident from the above discussion is that Aquinas, in denying passion in God, is simply denying of God the passible and so changing process which is inherent within human passion. **Thus there is no passion in God, not in the sense that he does not love, but because, being pure act, there is no need to and arousal of his will to**

love the good and so to come to desire the good and rejoice in it. [That is KEY! God cannot be made to care more or love more that he does in his perfect immutable unboundedness, etc. All things are done by the council of his own will, not the council of anything outside himself! He already loves you without you having to convince him or do anything to merit his favor, e.g., he has always loved the church, an eternal love. So that the love that moved the Father to elect some was not the passible passion, but an act of his will seen in Romans 9: "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. Romans 9:15-16] God's arousal to the good as loved, and so rejoicing and delighting in it, is eternally and perfectly in act.⁴³

⁴³In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* Aquinas states that 'there must be love in God according to the act of his will.'

If there were changeable and passible passions within God, as there are found in human beings, it would mean that he is not fully loving for he would have to actualize further 'loving' potential. This is why Aquinas states that God 'loves without passion.' This only means that he loves without undergoing the passible processes and changes that are inherent within human love. While God is not passionate in the sense that there are passible passionate changes within him, he can be said, although Aquinas does not say this, to be passionate in the sense that his will is fully and wholly fixed on the good as loved. Being fully in act his love is fully in act and therefore his passion is fully in act. God cannot become more passionate or loving by actualizing, as human beings do, some further potential and so become more passionate or loving. God is supremely passionate because he is supremely loving and he is both because both are fully **in act** since God is *ipsum esse* [to be itself] is pure act. **This is why 'God is love' (1Jn 4:6).** God would not be simply love if he were not pure love in act, and thus absolute passion in act. God is impassible precisely because he is supremely passionate and cannot become any more passionate. [M Dodds speaks of 'the dynamic stillness' of God's immutable love.] God simply loves himself and all things in himself in the one act which he himself is.

Doctrine of God cont.

The Nature of God Proves Free Grace

Code434

The nature of God proves all grace, special and common, must be freely given by God

and not owed to the creature; it necessarily follows that election has to be true and cannot be otherwise.

Notes on the Doctrine of God and
& God's Delights in His Glory

By G Clark

See also [code438](#)

The nature of God, his immutability, impassibility, simplicity, sovereignty, etc., proves unconditional election. For if God is unchangeable, then there was never a time where he did not intend to save particular persons. He always was intending to save his elect. For if he was waiting [in time] to see if someone was going to believe in him all the while being neutral at best whether he was going to save him or not (or just wishing to save them) and then he would intend to save him, infers a change in his will, and infers that God depends upon the creature causing a change in His being or actuality. God would be somewhat moved upon by the creature. But this cannot happen in God; he is not moved upon by anything; he is self-moved (divine impassibility) as well as that there is no change in God, he is immutable – God's will does not undergo change. He is not dependent upon the will of the creature not only because God cannot undergo change but also is contradictory to the nature of God as being self-sufficient, sovereign and simple, Romans 11:34-35 –

"For who has known the mind of the LORD?

Or who has become His counselor?"

³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?"

So God being purely active (or purely actual - divine simplicity: not composed of *active and passive potency* as creatures are), he has always loved the church, the elect, **from the counsel of his own will** and hence Scripture accommodates this profound truth of a pure act, the act of God's eternal will in election, choosing to love, to the capacity of our understanding by the words *choosing, election, electing, etc.* (See Edwards' comments on this below) God has always loved the church in this manner, clearly pointing to his immutability, simplicity and impassibility, and sovereignty. (e.g., Ps103:17, *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting...* Also Jer. 31:3, *I have loved you with an everlasting love;*] but others, he never knew them, Matt. 7:21-23, *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, [the verb *knew* or to *know* is to show saving favor, the fruit of the *divine love* of the Father] For the love of God, the foundation of election, is*

an act of God's will, and hence is freely given, not founded upon the *common affection* which is the result of being acted upon or moved by something outside himself which is impossible with God (divine impassibility, self-sufficiency, etc.); on the contrary, God says that *I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy*, Romans 9:15.

God cannot be actualized (changed into a new state of being, new states of affection, or have a new thought or change of his will by another entity or agent outside himself since there is no *passive potency* in God to be actualized because he is a purely actual (divine simplicity: not composed of passive and active potency as humans are and therefore liable to change to a different state of being); he is THE cause without a cause, and hence, God's immutability, impassibility; the two are inseparable, the latter flowing from the former. God's impassibility means that God does not *undergo* change by anything or agent. God cannot receive anything from the creature but is always giving and sustaining; he is self-sufficient, perfect, infinite and boundless in his being. "God is not someone who is done unto. He only gives but does not receive," "He does not receive new actuality of being from creatures or from others."

[James Dolezal, God Without Passions – YouTube video]. Job 35:4-8

God is the first cause in everything not the second; God is not the great Responder as Edwards notes. In other words he is already predisposed, or of a mind to save his elect irrespective of their works (hence his eternal decree of election, his good pleasure). So the sinner's prayer is at best superfluous, and at worse, a wicked presumption. In other words, God's actuality, the state of his mind toward the creature, cannot change from neutral to determinative to save due to one's prayer. Free grace, to be free, is wholly of God's sovereign will alone, to have mercy on whom he'll have mercy, as Paul says in Rom. 9:16, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." Free grace excludes all human boasting. Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 11:6

Edwards explains, in this instance, regarding prayer:

It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. **He is omniscient**, and with respect to his knowledge **unchangeable. God never gains any knowledge by information.** He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God **is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people;** yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; **for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God,** than new

knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence **is within himself only**; he is self-moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. 36:35, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.--When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to God, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. As he hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we desire to receive any mercy from him, should humbly supplicate the Divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honour paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to ourselves, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with suitable confession, may excite a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God, may make us sensible of his majesty, and in a sense fit to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

- Jonathan Edwards, Sermon IV The Prayer Hearing God, pg 113, Vol. 2

The Doctrine of God Seen in the Writings of Jonathan Edwards
 About God's Delight In His Glory
God's Immutability, Self-sufficiency, Perfection, Eternality, Impassibility

Miscellaneous Observations – Heaven
Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2, pg 626

Goodness of God - Love of God Happiness of heaven. God stands in no need of creatures, and is not profited by them; neither can his happiness be said to be added to by the creature. But yet God has a real and proper delight in the excellency and happiness of his creatures: he hath a real delight in the excellency and loveliness of the creature, **in his own image in the creature**, as that is a manifestation, or expression, or shining forth of his own loveliness. God has a real delight in his own loveliness, and he also has a real delight in the shining forth, or glorifying of it. As it is a fit and condecant thing that God's glory should shine forth, so God delights in its shining forth. So that God has a real delight in the spiritual loveliness of the saints; **which delight is not a delight distinct from what he has in himself**, but is to be resolved into the delight he has in himself; for he delights in his image in the creature, as he delights in his own being glorified; or as he delights in it, that his own glory shines forth, and so he hath real proper delight in the happiness of his creatures, **which also is not distinct from the delight that he has in himself**, **for it is to be resolved into the delight that he has in his own goodness**; for as he delights in his own goodness, so he delights in the exercise of his goodness, and therefore he delights to make the creature happy, and delights to see him made happy, as he delights in exercising goodness, or communicating happiness. **This is no proper addition to the happiness of God, because it is that which he eternally and unalterably had. God hath no new delight when he beholds his own glory shining forth in his image in the creature, and when he beholds the creature made happy from the exercises of his goodness; because those and all things are from eternity equally present with God. This delight in God cannot properly be said to be received from the creature, because it consists only in a delight in giving to the creature; neither will it hence follow that God is dependent on the creature for any of his joy, because it is his own act only that this delight is dependent on, and the creature is absolutely dependent on God for that excellency and happiness that God delights in. God cannot be said to be the more happy for the creature, because he is infinitely happy in himself, and he is not dependent on the creature for any thing, nor does he receive any addition from the creature.** But yet in one sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight for the loveliness and happiness of the creature, viz. as God would be less happy if he were less good, or if it were possible for him to be hindered in exercising his own goodness, or to be hindered from glorifying himself. God has no addition to his happiness, when he exercises any act of holiness towards his creatures; and yet God has a real delight in the

exercises of his own holiness, and would be less happy if he were less holy, or were capable of being hindered from any act of holiness.

A Summary

on

Divine Impassibility, Simplicity, Immutability,
Perfection, Eternality, and Self-sufficiency

By G Clark

God speaks to us in Scripture as though he were a man so as to accommodate the knowledge of himself to our limited capacity. If he spoke in 'God talk' to us we would never understand him so he must babble to us as a father would speak to his new born baby. So scripture is rightly stated, though improperly assigns body parts to God such as a nose or arm and assigns to him attributes as though these things are *parts* of God or make up God. Neither of these things are properly of God or in God for God is one divine essence, not consisting of parts, metaphysical or physical. If he were, then he would be dependent upon something that is not God, more fundamental than Himself, for him to be God, as well as dependent upon the entity that put those parts together in the first place, which would mean that we should be worshipping that person and not God! And because God is not composed of any kind of parts (he is not a composite being as humans are) he is *pure act*. In other words, he is not composed of actuality and potential actuality or passive potency. There are no parts in him that are dormant so to speak, that are awaiting for some outside cause to cause those parts (potencies) to actualize, like love for instance. So, we cannot cause God to love us or care for us, for being pure act, his care is unbounded and freely given and thus cannot be made more than it is. He already loves you with an unbounded perfect love. You'll have to meditate on that. His perfection demands this too; for nothing can be added to God nor cause God to be more than he is. He is love; He is justice... He just is! referring to his name, I AM. He isn't I AM and I WAS and will BECOME. He is not increasing in love or *becoming* something he wasn't before as time goes on because that would infer that he has potencies in him that are continually being actualized by causes outside himself and that he is not eternal but in time and hence a creature like us. But only creatures are subject to these things. Also, he being self-sufficient, he needs nothing from the creature to cause him to do anything. God cannot receive anything from the creature for he lacks nothing; he is perfect. If he could be added to, then he was not God. Romans 11:35,

³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" Now you can begin to understand Paul's reaction to God's purposes in Romans 11:

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the LORD?
Or who has become His counselor?"

³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?"

³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever.
Amen.

Now read Jonathan Edwards' comment on God's nature:

The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. **And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence.** Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that *it* should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?¹

Now, impassibility, immutability, God's perfection and eternity all are related to his simplicity; they are all threads in a fabric, neither of which can be removed without destroying the whole garment.

God is eternal; he transcends time. Time is that period between changes which only has to do with all created things. Man is a created being. And being created, he is mutable, that is, he is subject to changes in his state of being happy to sad, to be caused to love, or to seek revenge, etc., which is why we have *affections*; we are *affected* by things outside ourselves. We are filled with *passive potencies* waiting to be aroused; hence we are passible. But God, being simple, not composite, is not so, hence, cannot be affected, i.e., changed. He does not undergo anything. He is without succession. He is pure act. He is love, he is mercy, etc. So the prosperity movement and the sinner's prayer are all presumption, trying to get God to be affected with our acts. Now God does say to pray for things, but with a proper mindset, having an understanding of who God really is and not just a genie in a bottle...it is his will to be done, not our will. Now you can see more clearly James 4:13

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

This subject of *pure act* is amazing; it is pure because there are no parts in God, i.e., no passive potencies or things that can be actualized (and hence change in God) as they are in creatures. So now, apply this to John 3:16. What love is this describing? Is it a common love like we humans have that is caused in him by outward appearances, etc. Or is it a divine love that passes knowledge, that is, an *act of his will* (as Owen and others put it). God is not responding to the creature as though he is loveable, because we are not loveable; we were dead in sin, haters of God, self-willed stubborn and selfish. For as John said in 1John 4, *We love because he first loved us*. Or in Romans 9 where God is said to have loved Jacob before he had done anything good or evil:

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (*for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil*, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*"

And so, the *act of his will* is seen in Romans 9:15

¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

In this sense, his love and mercy has to be *freely given*; freely as opposed to caused, coerced or bribed by something or someone outside himself (divine simplicity); God is not a debtor, he owes no one anything. This is one reason why the sinner's prayer is presumption; salvation is received; it happens to you due to God's good pleasure; his freedom to choose to love whom he will. All the heresies of the world hinge on a misunderstanding or rejection of God's freedom to do as he pleases and hence they despise it. It threatens their supposed autonomy, man's declaration of his independence from God, and so that's why you have all these religions of the world saying that you can come to God by your own will, by your own *stock and furniture* and that God is obligated to oblige. The *freewillers and* unregenerate men in general are offended when you mention the doctrines of predestination, election or man's bondage to sin because this is a direct condemnation of them on this key issue. Their first response is, "Well, God gave us free will" as though man is an autonomous being independent of God's

sovereign control; that it's not fair that God do violence to our liberty (which is a total misunderstanding of how God does rule over the wills of men.), that God has no right to rule over them. Roman Catholicism is built on the concept of sacramentalism, where man has devised many ways to curry God's favor. All this is a desperate attempt to maintain man's supposed autonomy.

Now, you do believe of your own accord, but this is a gift and not of yourselves, Eph. 2:8-9. So being that God is *pure act*, this act of his will, that flows from this truth, is from himself alone, from the council of his own will according to his *good pleasure* (same thing) and not a reaction to anything outside himself which, in that case, would make it a passible love, not impassible. It is not that God is not loving or that he is some inert, static, metaphysical iceberg. It's the opposite; because his love is impassible, it is uncaused, without limit, unbounded, and perfect. It does not depend upon your performance, etc. He cannot love more than he does now which is unbounded, for how can you add to unboundedness? He cannot love you or care for you more than he does now. This passes knowledge.

So when God created mutable creatures, time was a necessary concomitant. Since all creatures are mutable, time is the distance between successive changes. One reason why God is immutable is because there are no succession or changes in God – there is no past or present with God, hence he cannot change since time is the distance between successive changes. So we as creatures cannot cause God to change in any fashion.

On Prayer: Even though God says to pray for things and God is said to respond to these prayers, this again, is God speaking to us in baby talk, for God's state of being is not caused to change by anything outside himself. Then why does he ask us to pray? See Edwards' comment on this:

It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. **He is omniscient**, and with respect to his knowledge **unchangeable**. **God never gains any knowledge by information**. He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God **is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people**; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; **for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge**. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence **is within himself only; he is self-moved**; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, namely, in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea,

when he has promised it; as Ezek. 36:35, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.--When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

Now you can see the wicked and presumptuous nature of the Arminians or Pelagians in their approach to how one is converted, to be saved. They think that God is like man in that we can actualize some potential in God, an affection of love and mercy for instance, to cause God to save them. They believe that God is passible as opposed to impassible. They believe that you can convince God via the sinner's prayer to have mercy on you,... to come into your heart, etc. So why didn't Jesus tell Nicodemus that in John 3, when Nicodemus asked how to attain eternal life? See John 3:3-

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born ^aagain, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ **The wind blows where it wishes**, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. **So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**"

⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

Basically, Jesus tells him, *the wind blows where it wishes*. In other words, just like Paul said in Romans 9, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*. It's not by your will, e.g., your *Arminian* prayer or what you do, e.g., Roman Catholic sacramentalism, that moves God to save you, for God is unmoved; he is the cause without a cause, the *Unmoved Mover*. All things are done by the council of his will, Eph. 1:11,

¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him **who works all things according to the counsel of His will**,

Regarding this wicked presumption noted above, read Ps 50:16-

¹⁶ But to the wicked God says:

*"What right have you to declare My statutes,
Or take My covenant in your mouth, [there's the presumption!!]*

¹⁷ Seeing you hate instruction

And cast My words behind you? [There's man's depraved nature, the fountain of presumption]

¹⁸ When you saw a thief, you consented^{sq} with him,

And have been a partaker with adulterers.

¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil,

And your tongue frames deceit.

²⁰ You sit *and* speak against your brother;

You slander your own mother's son.

²¹ These *things* you have done, and I kept silent;

You thought that I was altogether like you; [there's man's ignorance of God's true nature]

But I will rebuke you,

And set *them* in order before your eyes.

²² "Now consider this, you who forget God,

Lest I tear *you* in pieces,

And *there be* none to deliver:

²³ Whoever offers praise glorifies Me;

And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright*

I will show the salvation of God."

The truth is we are passive in our conversion. We do nothing to warrant God's favor. As Jesus told Nicodemus, you must be born again [there's the passivity noted: something happens to us]. You can see this in John 1:12 & Isa. 65:1:

¹² But as many as **received Him**, to them He gave the ^{sq}right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³**who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jn. 1:12-13**

"I was sought by *those who* did not ask for Me;

I was found by *those who* did not seek Me. **Isa. 65:1**

This is why God's love for the church, the elect is totally from the council of his own will, that is, an act of his will and not from an *affection* in God (a passive potency in God that needs to be actualized) because there are no passive potencies in God to be actualized!! He is one divine essence and pure act. All that is in God is God, not a bunch of metaphysical parts. This is heavy; in one sense I don't understand it but I adore it and though this mystery is understood in another sense, it is not comprehended.

God speaks to us as though he is like us, lowering himself to our level of imbecility, to have us understanding something of what he is like, not what he actually is, and thus, to

excite us to our duty to obey, to believe, to repent, etc. and yet it is the Spirit that must work all this.

More Comments on an *Act of His Will* [see [code454b](#) ref act of his will]

In the Old Testament, why did God love Israel? Ans.: Deut. 7:6-10

⁷ The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸ [but because the LORD loves you](#), [there's the *act of his will*; impassible love, divine, *agape*, *not because they did anything good*] and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers,

That's the answer: *because the Lord loves you*. This has to be an *act of his will* as opposed to impassible love which is dependent upon the creature to arouse God to love in which case his love would be finite, conditional, passible, not freely given but a debt. If this was not the case, read Mal. 3:6 below:

"For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."

Why would they be consumed? Because if God does change, it is because he is passible, having affections (passive potencies) in him that are aroused, altering his state of being from, for example, love to hate. This change or mutability is not in God, hence he could not be passible, always changing in his state of being because of what the creature does and doesn't do. Thankfully this is not the case with God regarding his elect of which Israel was a type, otherwise we would be consumed. This is why you don't want a God who is passible, not simple, and mutable.

So he chose to love Israel not because they were worthy, therefore it has to be an act of his will...Not from a re-action (common affection) to any good in them, for they were a stiff-necked people; but from pure act only, a divine love, because he loved them! This is heavy and has multiple applications.

See Deut 9-

"Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before

you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. "Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, **for you are a stubborn people**. Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, **you have been rebellious against the Lord** .
Deuteronomy 9:4-7 ESV

See Rom. 9:11-

¹¹ (for *the children* not yet being born, **nor having done any good or evil**, that the purpose of God according to **election** might stand, **not of works** but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "**Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.**"

This is why John Owen said that the *so loved* in John 3:16 was an act of his will and not the common affection, an affection in God that was aroused by the creature's goodness that caused him to *so love*, because there is no goodness in the creature! This choosing to show favor is election, and act of his will. Think on these things! Mull them over in your mind. [[see code454b ref act of his will](#)]

He loved us not because of anything we did (which would be a passible love) For all our acts or works are as filthy rags. And even before we were converted we were continually provoking the Lord, yet God chose us. Why? Because he loved us; it all comes to that, an act of his will. This is a great mystery. I understand it; I don't comprehend it, however, I adore it. So his love is unconditional, a fruit of his impassibility, simplicity and immutability! A fruit of him being God. In fact, this is why election is true. See Romans 9 above! If it were conditional it would be passible, God being aroused by some good in us. And as a result God would not be free in the disposal of his love and all his other gifts, but would be indebted to the creature! But this is what unregenerate man hates; he hates the fact that God is sovereign and free to do as he pleases. They hate God's freedom in this sense because they love their own supposed freedom from God...the idol of *will worship*.

God is always giving, an infinite fountain of good, never receiving anything from the creature for he is perfect, self-sufficient, unchanging, in need of nothing, etc., because, All things are from him and through him and for him. To Him be the glory; not to us be glory, which would be the case if God's love were passible – but because it is not, all the glory belongs to God. See Ps. 115:

Ps 115-

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,

But to Your name give glory,
 Because of Your mercy,
 Because of Your truth.
² Why should the ^{1a}Gentiles say,
 "So where *is* their God?"
³ But our God *is* in heaven;
 He does whatever He pleases.
⁴ Their idols *are* silver and gold,
 The work of men's hands.

Isa 64:6

But we are all like an unclean *thing*,
 And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;
 We all fade as a leaf, [there's our mutability]
 And our iniquities, like the wind,
 Have taken us away.
⁷ And there is no one who calls on Your name,
 Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;
 For You have hidden Your face from us,
 And have consumed us because of our iniquities.

Paul said that in my flesh there is no good thing and in the above text in Isaiah it is said that all our works are as filthy rags. Thank God that he is without change and is impassible for the only way God loves us and cares for us is because of an act of his will not because we deserve it. I loved them because I loved them, i.e., not because they/we were worthy.

Common Love vs. Divine Love, Distinguished & God's Impassibility

Code439

Excerpt from *Does God Suffer* by Thomas Weinandy

pp 160-163

(read the footnotes!!) my comments in [blue].

We have previously argued that God cannot suffer because he cannot be deprived of any aspect of his fully actualized goodness which would cause him to suffer [to undergo a change in his state of being, being affected by something outside himself such as changing from indifference to love]. Moreover, since suffering is not constitutive of

love, we can also perceive why the absence of suffering in God does not necessarily imply the absence of love and thus divine indifference. Actually, since God does not suffer, his love becomes absolutely free in its expression and supremely pure in its purpose. *[free, meaning that his love is not aroused or caused by anything outside himself; it is from the council of his own will, i.e., an act of his own will as Owen notes.]* If God did suffer, it would mean that God would need not only to alleviate the suffering of others, but also his own suffering, and thus there would be an inbuilt self-interest in God's love and consolation. However, since God does not suffer, his card for those who do suffer is freely given and not evoked by some need on his part.²⁷ His love is freely expressed entirely for the sake of those he loves. For Aquinas, moreover, what God does to alleviate suffering is done solely for the good and benefit of those suffering and not his own. But if God's love does not involve suffering, what is the relationship between the suffering encountered by human beings and the love of God?

²⁷ Aquinas states that God does not act for the acquisition of something, that is, he never acts in order to acquire some good for himself. Rather, God acts 'only to communicate his perfection, which is his goodness.' Obviously, God is able to act in such a totally unselfish manner only because, as pure act, he is in need of nothing.

In response to Moltmann, M. Dodds rightly perceives that a suffering God who, by necessity, is an ontologically imperfect being, 'will inevitably seek his own perfection and try to overcome his own deficiency. Only an entirely perfect being, subject to no defect and lacking in nothing, is able to love with a fully gratuitous love.'

W. Hill likewise states: It is this uniqueness of divine being, whereby God does not and cannot suffer in himself, that explains why he can love unfathomably, in a totally altruistic way, why divine love can be what the New Testament calls *agape* rather than only the self-fulfilling *eros* of Greek rational thought.

Again we must first recall that God as pure act and, correlatively, the trinity of persons as subsistent relations fully in act means that the divine attribute of love is fully in act. The trinity of persons subsist in relation to one another, as the one God, with their love for one another fully completely actualized. They are immutable and impassible in their love for one another, not because their love is static or inert, but because it is utterly dynamic and totally passionate in its self-giving. It is impossible for the Trinity to be more loving, for the persons of the Trinity possess not self-actualizing potential to become more loving. This is not only in keeping with the biblical proclamation that God is love, but it actually gives to it befitting, exact, and even literal philosophical and theological depth. God 'is' love because God's love, as reciprocally expressed within the Trinity, is fully in act.²⁹

²⁹God's love as fully actualized in the pure act that he is as a trinity of persons accounts for the all-consuming passion of God expressed in the Old Testament.

It should be noted that to say that God's love is fully in act in no way implies that we can fully grasp what it means to say such. We can know that the trinity of persons love one another fully and completely, but we cannot fully comprehend what such a loving relationship is like. For God to be love fully in act is beyond human comprehension. Again we can know what the mystery is, but we cannot comprehend the mystery.

Moreover, we now can grasp why God cannot merely be 'ethical immutable' as I.A. Domer, K. Barth, K. Ward, R. Swinburne and others have proposed. **If God is not pure goodness and love ontologically in act, and thus ontologically immutable, then there is not philosophical or theological ground upon which one can claim that God will always be ethical and faithful. Only an ontologically immutable God, in the pure act that he is, embraces, fully in act, goodness itself and love itself. Only as such is he always assured to act ethically in his dealings with human beings and so remain faithful to his promises. [great application of these three doctrines]** The 'ethical immutability' of the Bible (if that is in fact only what the Bible actually asserts) testifies to and mandates the 'ontological immutability' of god.

R. A. Muller writes:

Ethical, intentional constancy...must have an ontological basis. The constancy of the divine purpose, the consistency of the God who is what he is and will be what he will be, must also indicate a consistency, and immutability of the divine being...The issue is not so much whether Scripture declares ontological immutability, but that this concept is strongly implied. [see the theology of Karl Barth at code498]

Two extraordinary and marvelous conclusions can be drawn from this which bear upon God's love and human suffering.

First, God as a trinity of persons, in their love for human beings, never needs to actualize some aspect of love in order to become more loving.³⁰ **[This is a key application from divine impassibility, immutability, and simplicity!]**

³⁰J. Quinn argues that it is the love expressed within the Trinity that is the basis for the Trinity's love for human beings. As the persons of the Trinity give themselves entirely to one another in love so they give themselves entirely to human beings in love. It is this complete self-giving love of the Trinity, especially witnessed within the Incarnation, which is the Trinity's answer to human suffering. [My comment: I don't get this preoccupation with human suffering; Weinandy goes on toward the end of his book on this subject. It seems Weinandy is a universalist and has a wrong idea of salvation (as can be seen in the following quotes) in short, that because man suffers, he partakes in Christ's suffering, and hence has an interest in Christ, and so God will save all since all suffer. Weinandy states: "However, all suffering, whatever its cause is to redound to the glory of those who suffer. In light of the cross of Christ, while suffering may be

due to evil, it can be transfigured through the Holy Spirit into a means of obtaining and manifesting heroic virtue. (pg 281) Then he quotes Pope John Paul II, “suffering is, in itself, an experience of evil. But Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation.” Here’s another quote from Weinandy on this: “Christians, in their own suffering, and in solidarity with and on behalf of others, offer their lives, in union with Christ, as a sacrifice, even unto death, not only to achieve peace and justice within the world, but also for the eternal salvation of all.” Here’s an example that Weinandy recounts, of a Jewish Christian, Edith Stein, who suffered during the Holocaust and how her suffering was used for the saving of many people, which I think is blasphemous: “Moreover, and more so, she exemplifies a person who made her own suffering and death a sharing in the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of her own Jewish people and for the redemption of her German nation (pg 282) ...She must suffer on behalf of, ‘for our people.’ This was the very answer, she believed, which had been provided by her heavenly Father and which had been obediently carried out by his son in the love of the Spirit. So, in communion with Christ, one was called to offer one’s own life as an atonement for sin for the salvation of all. Then, in a subsequent footnote, #⁸² pg 286, he says, “After she began seeing the destiny of Israel from the standpoint of the Cross, our newly beatified sister let Christ lead her more and more deeply into the mystery of his salvation to be able to bear the multiple pains of humankind in spiritual union with Him and to help atone for the outrageous injustices in the world. As *Benedicta a Cruce* – Blessed by the Cross – she wanted to bear the cross with Christ for the salvation of her people, her Church and the world as a whole. She offered herself to God as a ‘sacrifice for genuine peace’ and above all for her threatened and humiliated Jewish people. After she recognized that God had once again laid a heavy hand on his people, she was convinced ‘that the destiny of this people was also my destiny.’ (pg285—286)

God’s love possesses, as does human love, many different facets and expressions. His love embraces goodness, commitment, affection, joy, kindness, generosity, strength, courage, power, and passion (see 1Cor13:4-7). Because sin affects human beings and their relationship to him, God’s love, as does human love, also embraces mercy, compassion, patience, forgiveness and even sorrow and grief. At times it equally, again as does human love, entails justice, anger, admonition, correction, rebuke, and even condemnation. Within human being all these various aspects of love are actualized at disparate times depending upon which aspect of love is appropriate given the circumstances. In his relationship to the created order and to human beings in particular, because God’s love is fully in act, he need not actualize, depending upon the changing situations and circumstances, these various facets of love. All of these facets of love are fully actualized and wholly contained within the one fully actualized love of God as a trinity of persons. When a human person repents of sin, God need not change the manner of his love within himself from being that of an admonishing love to that being a forgiving love. When an innocent person suffers an injustice, God need not

adapt himself to as to express compassionate love toward the persons so injured and simultaneously adapt his love so as to reprove the perpetrator of the injustice. Eternally God is immutably and impassibly adapt to every situation and circumstance, not because his love is indifferent and unresponsive, but because his love, with all its facets, is fully in act, and so he is supremely and utterly responsive to every situation and circumstance. God is unconditionally adaptable in his dynamic and passionate love because **his love is immutably and impassibly in act.**³¹

³¹In Chapter 1, fn. 39 I noted that , while J. Galot and H.U. von Balthasar (and maybe K. Barth as well) hold that God is immutable and impassible in himself, yet in their own distinctive manner, they feel obliged to argue that, in his freely constituted relationship with humankind, he is indeed passible. [see code498] The reason for proffering such a position lies in their belief that God's immutability and impassibility are incompatible with his engaging in a loving relationship with human kind, a relationship in which he is compassionate and merciful, and even suffers. What they have failed to grasp is the argument that I have just offered. **They do not perceive that God's immutability and impassibility do not make him less loving toward humankind, but actually guarantee that his love contains all it various attributes fully and perfectly in act.** Immutability and impassibility must never be perceived, as Galto and von Balthasar do, as stumbling blocks that need to be overcome, as if, despite being immutable and impassible, God is nonetheless, in a dialectic fashion, still loving and merciful. Rather, God's immutability and impassibility are the absolute presuppositions and prolegomena for ensuring that he is **perfectly loving**. Moreover, by attempting to distinguish between God-in-himself and God-for-us, a distinction that is highly dubious in itself, they have place a breach between God as he truly is and God who relates to us. Such a chasm is not only philosophically unwarranted, but is also theologically detrimental to biblical revelation and the Christian tradition, which glories in the fact that God actually interacts with and relates to us as he truly is in the fullness of his divinity. God need not 're-fashion' himself in order to interact with us.

**[perfectly in act or perfectly loving: I think this is the rationale behind Owen's comment that the "so loved" in John 3:16 has to be an act of his will and not a passible love, the result of God undergoing or being affected by the creature! In this passible case, his love would be finite, limited in its exercise and conditional upon our performance. Hence, God's simplicity, immutability and impassibility displayed altogether, is seen in his impassible love. It has to be an act of his will and not God being dependent upon the creature - that God does not have potency (i.e., love in this case) in him that needs to be actualized by the creature (hence his divine simplicity necessitating his impassibility, immutability, and perfection). For God's love would not be an impassible love if he depended upon the creature; and if he did, no one would be saved, hence Mal. 3:6, because I change not, Oh Jacob, you are not consumed. This has tremendous pastoral implications for providing help to people who need to know that God's love is perfect, full and unbounded in its actuality and exercise despite our dire circumstances.*

If God did need, sequentially in a potency/act manner, to adapt and re-adapt and re-adapt himself again to every personal situation in every momentary instance, he would be conceive as an infinite mega-computer (PC, obviously, and user-friendly) continuously and simultaneously processing trillions of conflicting bits of emotional data. He would then be seen to be perpetually entangled in an unending internal emotional whirligig.³² [Not to mention, God would be dependent upon the creature, constantly responding to him in acts of judgment due to man's total depravity; i.e., you don't want a passible God! Actually, he wouldn't be God if he were passible for then he would not be simple nor immutable since he would be composed of parts, i.e., potencies.]

³²P. Helm argues that if God's love is seen as dispositional in a human manner, then we might think of God as exercising this disposition depend upon the need of creatures. 'Once the need vanishes, the disposition vanishes.'

But this is altogether the wrong way of thinking about the character of God; for it supposes that there are occasions when God is less than wholly active, and moreover that these are the typical conditions of his existence. So that while it may be helpful to think of God's moral attributes as dispositions, in that they have the stability and uniformity that dispositions in general have, unlike human dispositions that are always/eternally exercised. They are maximally active; that is, there is no actual situation in which God requires to exercise a given disposition in which that disposition is not exercised, every disposition that comprises the divine character is exercised, and each is exercised never not exercised where it is appropriate for it to be exercised. *The Impossibility of Divine Passibility*, pp. 124-25

Correlatively, because all of the facets of God's love are fully actualized within the love of God, human persons are able to know in faith, and even experience, that love in accordance with their personal situation at any one time. If a person sins, he or she knows and experiences God's love as a rebuke and as an admonishment. If the person repents, he or she knows and experiences God's love as compassionate and forgiving, and so rejoices in his merciful love.³³

³³R. Creel states that 'if I repent and consequently experience God's forgiveness, it is not because God has responded to my repentance that I feel forgiveness; rather it is the case that by my repentance I have put myself in the stream of his forgiveness.' *Divine Impassibility*, p30. While I basically agree with Creel, I would want to say that God does respond to 'my repentance' though he does so in a manner that does not imply a change in him since his forgiveness is a facet of his fully actualized, and so unchanging love. [that God does not act passibly as though the creature aroused (actualized) some potential in God.]

If a person suffers die to injustice, he or she knows, in faith and sometimes by experience, that God's loveingkindness and consolation are present. God's love as fully

actualized is ‘ready made’ to meet any situation, and human beings are able to know and experience this love in all its varied actualized fulness. Therefore, not only are joy, kindness, and generosity truly contained within the fully actualized love of God, but also compassion, mercy, grief, and even anger are also truly subsumed within his perfect love.³⁴

³⁴This notion of God’s fully actualized love as containing all the various facets and expressions of love provides theological depth and philosophical precision to the patristic understanding which equally subsumed God’s anger under the rubric of God’s love.

Aquinas states that ‘God takes pity (*miseretur*) on us through love alone. While some facets of love within human beings entail suffering, such as compassion and grief, they are subsumed and contained within the perfectly actualized love of God, but now devoid of the suffering which would render his love less than perfectly actualized. While compassion is defined as ‘suffering with,’ the heart of compassion is the love expressed within the suffering and not the suffering itself. Thus God is perfectly compassionate not because he ‘suffers with’ those who suffer, but because his love fully and feely embraces those who suffer. What human beings cry out for in their suffering is not a God who suffers, but a God who loves wholly and completely, something a suffering God could not do.

Pure Act

Code460

Comments help explain the ‘pure act’ of the impassible God

G. Vos – Reformed Dogmatics pg 476

& Thomas Weinandy – Does God Suffer

[After reading Geerhardus Vos’s comments below on God’s nature, he mentions things that pertain to God’s impassibility indirectly. So I thought I would expound on this below](#)

with applications for believers. I highlighted in red the key words referencing this subject. Refer to [code439](#) on more treatment of this subject.

Vos:

37. Show that this righteousness of God is compatible with His grace and His love for sinners, from which this grace flows. [see Ps. 85:10-11, Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.]

The difficulty in grasping the compatibility of these two lies in our own psychological experience. In our limited minds, attitudes of anger and love at the same time with regard to the same subject generally exclude each other. Even in the most favorable case conceivable, that of a loving father toward his child, we do not have complete likeness to what is present in God. A father can indeed be angry and punish his child and at the same time love his child. His punishing, however, is not an exercise of justice in the same sense as the punishing of sinners is for God. It is rather a chastising that he administers to the child precisely because he loves it in his heart and seeks its well-being, although a God-given paternal authority is also expressed in this chastisement. Also, if we imagine the case of a judge passing sentence on his son, whom he loves, it is not completely the same, for the judge does not pronounce judgment of himself as if both love for his child as well as the impulse to sentence and to punish came from his own heart in the same sense. It is rather the case that his sense of justice arises from his sense of official responsibility toward God. He pronounces judgment before God; he loves of himself.

With God, on the other hand, both love and the impulse for righteousness **flow directly from His own being and not from any relationship to something else.** [that is, he is impassible; nothing outside himself moves him to actions; he is self-moved.] He loves, is merciful, gracious, kind—and at the same time, **with equally the same spontaneity,** He is angry with the sinner and in His righteousness wishes to punish him. **That this is so incomprehensible for us stems not only from the fact that we cannot find a perfect parallel for it in our own experience;** it stems much more from the fact that evidence against this concurrence seems to occur again and again **in our sinful experience.**

When we feel angry toward someone, then there is not room in us for favor toward him. Self-centered, human anger cannot coexist with it. Our anger “does not work bring

about the righteousness of God” (Jas 1:20). That is precisely because it is an anger that occupies our entire spirit and with the mist of passion clouds our vision so that we can no longer see and judge impartially. The anger of man is always so little a holy anger that, once inflamed, it derives new strength from the entirety of the object against which it is directed. Every virtue that we note in our enemy can incite us to new rage. That was the case with the Jews and Christ.

My comments with quotes from Thomas Weinandy; this give insight on why we need to know this (application).

We *passible* humans are not ‘pure act’ in our being as God is. We are *composite* creatures composed of actuality and potential actuality; we are mutable! God’s anger, love, mercy, kindness, etc., is boundless in its actuality and is not waiting to be actualized by causes outside himself; it is not something in God that needs to be awakened by our acts which would make God like us having passions, as I said, God being stimulated from causes outside himself. But God is fully actualized already in all his attributes. For example, we cannot cause God to care more for us that he does already; his love and care is boundlessly continuously actualized already. This is incomprehensible to our thinking. So as Owen said regarding the love in John 3:16, was an act of his will, not a common love or common affection of love that is in man. God does not choose one over the other because he sees something good in us, for God is impassible; has not the passions as man has that needs to be actualized into action. There is no *passive potential* in God that can be actualized. In this sense there are not *parts* in God that make us God. So this is why the love in John 3:16 has to be an *act of his will* not a *passible act* like the passions or emotions in man since God is *pure act*; his being is not a *composed* of actuality (act) and *potential actuality* (as man is). The following quote is from *Does God Suffer*, by Thomas Weinandy:

G.I. Prestige’s comments are again appropriate:

It is clear that impassibility means not that God is inactive or uninterested, not that he surveys existence with Epicurean impassibility from the shelter of a metaphysical isolation, but that **his will is determined from within instead of being swayed from without**. It safeguards the truth that the impulse alike in providential order and in redemption and sanctification come from the will of God. *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 7

Now, Romans 9:16 becomes clear; an act of God's will is seen in the statement by Paul when he describes God's act of his will in election: *"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* God did not choose because he was moved by the creature! But it was an act of his will. It has to be! God is pure act, immutable, impassible (both are intertwined, inseparable). Think on this. This is a wonderful mystery.

Weinandy continues, page 162 regarding God's pure actuality:

In his relationship to the created order and to human beings in particular, because God's love is fully in act, he need not actualize, depending upon the changing situations and circumstances, these various facets of love. All of these facets of love are fully actualized and wholly contained within the one fully actualized love of God as a trinity of persons....Eternally God is immutably and impassibly adapted to every situation and circumstance, not because his love is indifferent and unresponsive, but because his love, with all its facets is fully in act, and so he is supremely and utterly responsive to every situation and circumstance.

More insight is seen in footnote #29 & #31 page 161

²⁹God's love as fully actualized in the pure act that he is as a trinity of persons accounts for the all-consuming passion of God expressed in the Old Testament.

It should be noted that to say that God's love is fully in act in no way implies that we can fully grasp what it means to say such. We can know that the trinity of persons love one another fully and completely, but we cannot fully comprehend what such a loving relationship is like. For God to be love fully in act is beyond human comprehension. Again we can know what the mystery is, but we cannot comprehend the mystery.

Moreover, we now can grasp why God cannot merely be 'ethical immutable' as I.A. Domer, K. Barth, K. Ward, R. Swinburne and others have proposed. **If God is not pure goodness and love ontologically in act, and thus ontologically immutable, then there is not philosophical or theological ground upon which one can claim that God will always be ethical and faithful. Only an ontologically immutable God, in the pure act that he is, embraces, fully in act, goodness itself and love itself. Only as such is he always assured to act ethically in his dealings with human beings and so remain faithful to his promises.** [great application of these three doctrines] The 'ethical immutability' of the Bible (if that is in fact only what the Bible actually asserts) testifies to and mandates the 'ontological immutability' of God. [see code498 on Barth's theology]

R. A. Muller writes:

Ethical, intentional constancy...must have an ontological basis. The constancy of the divine purpose, the consistency of the God who is what he is and will be what he will be, must also indicate a consistency, and immutability of the divine being...The issue is not so much whether Scripture declares ontological immutability, but that this concept is strongly implied.

³¹In Chapter 1, fn. 39 I noted that , while J. Galot and H.U. von Balthasar (and maybe K. Barth as well) hold that God is immutable and impassible in himself, yet in their own distinctive manner, they feel obliged to argue that, in his freely constituted relationship with humankind, he is indeed passible. The reason for proffering such a position lies in their belief that God's immutability and impassibility are incompatible with his engaging in a loving relationship with humankind, a relationship in which he is compassionate and merciful, and even suffers. What they have failed to grasp is the argument that I have just offered. **They do not perceive that God's immutability and impassibility do not make him less loving toward humankind, but actually guarantee that his love contains all it various attributes fully and perfectly in act.** Immutability and impassibility must never be perceived, as Galto and von Balthasar do, as stumbling blocks that need to be overcome, as if, despite being immutable and impassible, God is nonetheless, in a dialectic fashion, still loving and merciful. Rather, God's immutability and impassibility are the absolute presuppositions and prolegomena for ensuring that he is **perfectly loving**. Moreover, by attempting to distinguish between God-in-himself and God-for-us, a distinction that is highly dubious in itself, they have place a breach between God as he truly is and God who relates to us. Such a chasm is not only philosophically unwarranted, but is also theologically detrimental to biblical revelation and the Christian tradition, which glories in the fact that God actually interacts with and relates to us as he truly is in the fullness of his divinity. God need not 're-fashion' himself in order to interact with us.

Comments on Song of Solomon

Code440

in John Owen's & Jonathan Edwards' works

Note the allusions to God's divine nature,

Immutability

First, a letter to my daughter on this subject:

What we were talking about the other day or what I said regarding what you don't receive from husband, you can get from Christ Jesus. We as fallen creatures try to suck

life out of the breast of the world, whether it be money, food, relations i.e., husbands, girl friends of boy friends, our children...all of which can be idols! That's why Jesus said in Luke 14:26, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife [or husband] and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." This is a statement of comparison; we are not supposed to really hate them but to supremely prefer Christ in a comparison to them. *He is altogether lovely*, Song of Solomon 5:16. In your thoughts etc., work towards this disposition towards Christ. That's the answer!

His mouth *is* most sweet,
 Yes, he *is* altogether lovely.
 This *is* my beloved,
 And this *is* my friend,
 O daughters of Jerusalem!

Remember the woman at the well who had 5 husbands! And what did Jesus say?

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water [the water at that well, natural water, worldly things, etc.] will thirst again [will thirst for them over and over to no avail], ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him [that is, contemplating his glory, his person as we learn of him, growing in knowledge of Him...] will never thirst [will never thirst for empty and vain things that the world offers]. But the water that I shall give him [his graces! His glory, that new principle of life, faith, grace & love] will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Once you drink of this water, you will not thirst for the things of the world anymore to the extent as you did before. You'll be more in balance. You will then have peace in your soul and not go from one extreme to the other...That's one reason why Jesus is called the rock of my salvation, the covert from the storm, etc. Isa. 32:2, *And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

What the Jesus does in our lives is to wean us off idols, onto Him, getting us back into a right balance. You can see this in the Song of Solomon and Ps 45. John Owen and Jonathan Edwards comment:

Owen's comments first:

(2dly), Times of gracious discoveries either of the glory of Christ in himself, or of his love unto us, are seasons that call for this duty. The glory of Christ in his person and offices is always the same, and the revelation that is made of it in the Scripture varies not; but as unto our perception and apprehension of it, whereby our hearts and minds are affected with it in an especial manner--there are apparent seasons of it which no believers are unacquainted withal. Sometimes such a sense of it is attained under the dispensation of the Word; wherein as Christ on the one hand is set forth evidently crucified before our eyes, so on the other he is gloriously exalted. Sometimes it is so in prayer, in meditation, in contemplation on him. As an ability was given unto the bodily sight of Stephen, to see, upon the opening of the heavens, "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand," Acts 7:55, 56--so he opens the veil sometimes, and gives a clear, affecting discovery of his glory unto the minds and souls of believers; and in such seasons are they drawn forth and excited unto invocation and praise. So Thomas--being surprised with an apprehension and evidence of his divine glory and power after his resurrection, wherein he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. 1:4--cried unto him, "My Lord and my God," John 20:28. There was in his words both a profession of his own faith and a solemn invocation of Christ. When, therefore, we have real discoveries of the glory of Christ, we cannot but speak to him, or of him. "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him," John 12:41. And Stephen, upon a view of it in the midst of his enraged enemies, testified immediately, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." And thereby was he prepared for that solemn invocation of his name which he used presently after, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts 7:56, 59. And so, also, upon his appearance as the Lamb, to open the book of prophecies; wherein there was an eminent manifestation of his glory seeing none else could be found in heaven, or earth, or under the earth, that was able to open the book, or so much as to look thereon," Rev. 5:3. "The four and twenty elders fell down before him," and presenting all the prayers of the saints, "sang a new song" of praise unto him, verses 8-10. This is our duty, this will be our wisdom, upon affecting discoveries of the glory of Christ; namely, to apply ourselves unto him by invocation or praise; and thereby will the refreshment and advantage of them abide upon our minds.

So is it also as unto his love. The love of Christ is always the same and equal unto the church. Howbeit there are peculiar seasons of the manifestation and application of a sense of it unto the souls of believers. [God does not change, but we do in our perception and in our experiences of him.] So it is when it is witnessed unto them, or

shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy ghost. Then is it accompanied with a constraining power, to oblige us to live unto him who died for use and rose again, 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. And of our spiritual life unto Christ, invocation of him is no small portion and this sense of his love we might enjoy more frequently than for the most part we do, **were we not so much wanting unto ourselves and our own concerns.** [hence the dangers of worldliness] For although it be an act of sovereign grace in God to grant it unto us, and affect us with it, as it seems good unto him, yet is our duty required to dispose our hearts unto its reception. Were we diligent in casting out all that "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" **which corrupts our affections, and disposes the mind to abound in vain imaginations; were our hearts more taken off from the love of the world, which is exclusive of a sense of divine love; did we more meditate on Christ and his glory;**-we should more frequently enjoy these constraining visits of his love than now we do. So himself expresseth it, Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." [this is often misunderstood as salvific message to those who are lost; but it is Christ wooing his church to come back to their first love, which is Him!] He makes intimation of his love and kindness unto us. But oftentimes we neither hear his voice when he speaks, nor do open our hearts unto him. **So do we lose that gracious, refreshing sense of his love, which he expresseth in that promise,** "I will sup with him, and he shall sup with me." [This is where we should be living off Christ rather than trying to squeeze every drop of life out of worldly dainties, relations, etc. Drink of this water (the infinite fountain of good that I will give you, and you will never thirst again (for the things of the world...)] No tongue can express that heavenly communion and blessed intercourse which is intimated in this promise. The expression is metaphorical, but the grace expressed is real, and more valued than the whole world by all that have experience of it. This sense of the love of Christ and the effect of it in communion with him, by prayer and praises, is divinely set forth in the Book of canticles. The church therein is represented as the spouse of Christ; and, as a faithful spouse, she is always either solicitous about his love, or rejoicing in it. And when she has attained a sense of it, **she aboundeth in invocation admiration and praise.** So does the church of the New Testament, upon an apprehension of his love, and the unspeakable fruits of it: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Rev. 1:5, 6. This, therefore, is another season that calls for this duty.

Loc.4899:

(3.) The church of mankind is the other part of the rational creation whereon the image of God is renewed. Love unto the person of Christ, proceeding from faith, is their life, their joy, and glory. It was so unto the church under the Old Testament. The whole Book of Canticles is designed to no other purpose, but variously to shadow forth, to insinuate and represent, the mutual love of Christ and the church. **Blessed is he who understands the sayings of that book, and has the experience of them in his heart.** The **45th Psalm**, among others, is designed unto the same purpose. All the glorious descriptions which are given of his person in the residue of the prophets, were only means to excite love unto him, and desires after him. Hence is he called "*chemdat kol-hagohim*", Hag. 2:7, "The Desire of all nations"-- he alone who is desirable unto, and the only beloved of the church gathered out of all nations.

Loc.5071

A due consideration of, and meditation on, the proposal of the person of Christ unto us in the Scripture, are the proper foundation of this love. This is the formal reason of our faith in him, and love unto him. He is so proposed unto us in the Scripture, that we may believe in him and love him, and for that very end. And in particular with respect unto our love, to in generate it in us, and to excite it unto its due exercise, are those excellencies of his person [which is his glory we are to contemplate, upon which to meditate day, Joshua 1:8, and night so as to be conformed to the same image...2Cor3:18, see below in red, also see code129a]--as the principal effect of divine wisdom and goodness, which we have before insisted on--frequently proposed unto us. John Flavel states:

code129a View the precious worth of grace in its excellent effects and influences upon the soul in which it inheres. (1) It adorns with incomparable ornaments, which are of great price in the sight of God, 1 Pet. 3:4. Yes, it reflects such beams of glory in the soul where its seat is, that Christ himself, the author, is also the admirer of it; Cant. 4:9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse! Thou hast ravished my heart with one of then eyes, with one of the chains of thy rock!" and as one overcome with its excelling beauty, he says, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," Cant. 6:5. (2) It elevates and ennobles a man's spirit beyond all other principles in man; it sets the heart and affections upon heaven, and takes them up with the glory of the invisible world, Phil. 3:20, "But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." While others are trading for corn and wine, for sheep and oxen, for feathers and trifles, the gracious soul is trading with God for pardon and peace, for righteousness and life, for glory and immortality: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," John 1:3. (3) It does not only raise the spirit by conversion with God, and things above, but transforms the soul, by that converse into the likeness of those heavenly objects it converses with; "It changes them into the same image," 2Cro3:18. So that though the sanctified man still remains the *who he was*, yet not the *what he was* before; the very temper

of his Spirit is altered. (4) It does not only transform the soul in which it is , but preserves the subject in which it is; it is a singular preservative from sin; so that though sin be in them still, and works in them still, yet it cannot prevail in them still to fulfil the lusts of it, as it was wont to do, Gal. 5:17. Sin conceives, but cannot bring forth fruit unto death; this gives a miscarrying womb. (5) It does not only preserve it from sin, but grace establishes the soul, in whom it is, far beyond any other arguments without, or any other principles within man. "It is a good thing to be established in grace," Heb. 13:9 This is that which the apostle calls our own steadfastness, or that ballast we have within ourselves; which keeps us right and stable. O the excellency of grace! (6) To conclude: it is the root of all that precious fruit which we bring forth to God in this world; it is the root of every gracious word in our lips, and of every gracious work in our hands; be the heavenly discourses and prayers never so sweet, still grace is the root of the matter, Job 19:28. O then what a precious thing is grace! p 530 Vol. 5 Flavel

To this end is he represented as "altogether lovely," and the **especial glories of his person** are delineated, yea, drawn to the life, in the holy records of the Old and New Testaments. It is no work of fancy or imagination--it is not the feigning images in our minds of such things as are meet to satisfy our carnal affections, to excite and act them; but it is a due adherence unto that object which is represented unto faith in the proposal of the gospel. Therein, as in a glass, do we behold the glory of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and have our souls filled with transforming affections unto him.

The whole Book of Canticles is nothing but a mystical declaration of the mutual love between Christ and the church. And it is expressed by all such ways and means as may represent it intense, fervent, and exceeding all other love whatever; which none, I suppose, will deny, at least on the part of Christ. And a great part of it consists in such descriptions of the person of Christ and his love as may render him amiable and desirable unto our souls, even "**altogether lovely.**" To what end does the Holy Spirit so graphically describe and represent unto us the beauty and desirableness of his person, if it be not to ingenerate love in us unto him? **All want of love unto him on this proposal is the effect of prevalent unbelief.** It is pretended that the descriptions given of Christ in this book are allegorical, from whence nothing can be gathered or concluded. But God forbid we should so reflect on the wisdom and love of the Holy Spirit unto the church--that he has proposed unto the faith of the church an empty sound and noise of words, without mind or sense. The expressions he uses are figurative, and the whole nature of the discourse, as unto its outward structure, is allegorical. But the things intended are real and substantial; and the metaphors used in the expression of them are suited, in a due attendance unto the analogy of faith, to convey a spiritual understanding and sense of the things themselves proposed in them. The church of God will not part with the

unspeakable advantage and consolation--those supports of faith and incentives of love--which it receives by that divine proposal of the person of Christ and his love which is made therein, because some men have no experience of them nor understanding in them. The faith and love of believers is not to be regulated by the ignorance and boldness of them who have neither the one nor the other. The title of the **45th Psalm** is, "shir jedidot", "A song of loves;"--that is, of the mutual love of Christ and the church. And unto this end--that our souls may be stirred up unto the most ardent affection towards him--is a description given us of his person, as "**altogether lovely.**" To what other end is he so evidently delineated in the whole harmony of his divine beauties by the pencil of the Holy Spirit?

These next two entries are excellent!

Loc.8302

So, to manifest how nigh he is unto us, it is said that "he stands at the door, and knocks," Rev. 3:20, in the continual tender that he makes of himself and his grace unto our souls. For he is always accompanied with the glorious train of his graces; and if they are not received, he himself is not so. It is to no purpose to boast of Christ, if we have not an evidence of his graces in our hearts and lives. But unto whom he is the hope of future glory, unto them he is the life of present grace.

Sometimes it may be that He is withdrawn from us, so as that we cannot hear his voice, nor behold his countenance, nor obtain any sense of his love, though we seek him with diligence. In this state, all our thoughts and meditations concerning him will be barren and fruitless, bringing in no spiritual refreshment into our souls. And if we learn to be content with such lifeless, unaffected thoughts of him as bring in no experience of his love, nor give us a real view of the glory of his person, we shall wither away as unto all the power of religion.

What is our duty in this case is so fully expressed by the spouse in the Canticles, as represents it plainly unto the minds of believers, who have any experience of these things, chap. 3:1-4, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." The like account she gives of herself, and of her behaviour on the like occasion, chap. 5:2-8.

This is the substance of what by this example we are instructed unto. The Lord Christ is pleased sometimes to withdraw himself from the spiritual experience of believers; as to any refreshing sense of his love, or the fresh communications of consolatory graces. Those who never had experience of any such thing, who never had any refreshing communion with him, cannot be sensible of his absence; - they never were so of his presence. But those whom he has visited, - to whom he has given of his loves, - with whom he has made his abode, - whom he has refreshed, relieved, and comforted, - in whom he has lived in the power of his grace, - they know what it is to be forsaken by him, though but for a moment. And their trouble is increased, when they seek him with diligence in the wonted ways of obtaining his presence, and cannot find him. Our duty, in this case, is to persevere in our inquiries after him, in prayer, meditation, mourning, reading and hearing of the Word, in all ordinances of divine worship, private and public, in diligent obedience, - until we find him, or he return unto us, as in former days.

It were well if all churches and professors now would manifest the same diligence herein as did the church of old in this example. Many of them, if they are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, cannot but be sensible that the Lord Christ is variously withdrawn from them, if ever they had experience of the power of his presence. Yet are the generality of them far from the frame of heart here described in the spouse; for they are slothful, careless, negligent, and stir not up themselves to inquire after him, or his return unto their souls. So was it with Laodicea of old, so was it with Sardis, and so it is to be feared that it is with many at present. But to return.

Generally, Christ is nigh unto believers, and of a ready access; and the principal acting of the life of faith consist in the frequency of our thoughts concerning him; for hereby Christ liveth in us, as he is said to do, Gal. 2:20. This we cannot do, unless we have frequent thoughts of him and converse with him. It is often said among men, that one lives in another; this cannot be but where the affections of one are so engaged unto another, that night and day he thinks of him, and is thereby, as it were, present with him. So ought it to be between Christ and believers. He dwells in them by faith; but the acting of this life in them (as wherever life is, it will be in act and exercise) are proportionable unto their thoughts of him, and delight in him.

If, therefore, we would behold the glory of Christ, the present direction is, that on all occasions, and frequently when there are no occasions for it by the performance of other duties, we would abound in thoughts of him and his glory. I intend not at present

fixed and stated meditations, which were spoken unto before; but such thoughts as are more transient, according as our opportunities are. And a great rebuke it ought to be unto us, when Christ has at any time in a day been long out of our minds. The spouse affirms that, ere she was aware, her soul made her as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, Cant. 6:12. It so fell out, that when she had no thoughts, no design or purpose, for attendance on communion with Christ, that she was surprised into a readiness and willingness unto it. So it will be with them that love him in sincerity. Their own souls, without previous designs or outward occasions, will frequently engage them in holy thoughts of him; which is the most eminent character of a truly spiritual Christian.

Loc.9726

Whilst we are in this life, the Lord Christ is pleased, in his sovereign wisdom, sometimes to withdraw, and, as it were, to hide himself from us. Then do our minds fall into clouds and darkness; faith is at a loss; we cannot behold his glory; yea, we may seek him, but cannot find him. So Job complains, as we observed before, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him," chap. 23:8, 9. Which way soever I turn myself, whatever are my endeavours, in what way or work of his own I seek him, I cannot find him, I cannot see him, - I cannot behold his glory. So the church also complains, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour," Isa. 45:15; and the Psalmist, "How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?" Ps. 89:46. This hiding of the face of God is the hiding of the shining of his glory in the face of Christ Jesus, and therefore of the glory of Christ himself, for it is the glory of Christ to be the representative of the glory of God. The spouse in the canticles is often at a loss, and herein bemoans herself, that her Beloved was withdrawn, - that she could neither find him nor see him, chap. 3:1, 2; 5:6.

Men may retain their notions concerning Christ, his person and his glory. These cannot be blotted out of their minds but by heresy or obdurate stupidity. They may have the same doctrinal knowledge of him with others; but the sight of his glory does not consist therein. They may abide in the outward performance of duties towards him as formerly; but yet all this while, as unto the especial gracious communications of himself unto their souls, and as unto a cheerful refreshing view of his glory, he may withdraw and hide himself from them.

As under the same outward dispensations of the Word he does manifest himself unto some, and not unto others - ("how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" John 14:22), - whereon they to whom he does so manifest himself do see him to be beautiful, glorious, and lovely (for "unto them that believe, he is precious"); whilst the others see nothing hereof, but wonder at them by whom he is admired, Cant. 5:9; - so, in the same dispensation of the Word he sometimes hides his face, turns away the light of his countenance, clouds the beams of his glory unto some, whilst others are cherished and warmed with them.

Two things we must here speak unto.

1. Why does the Lord Christ, at any time, thus hide himself in his glory from the faith of believers, that they cannot behold him?

2. How we may perceive and know that he does so withdraw himself from us, so that, however we may please ourselves, we do not indeed behold his glory.

1. As unto the first of these, though what he does is supposed an act of sovereign, unaccountable wisdom, yet there are many holy ends of it, and consequently reasons for it. I shall mention one only. He does it to stir us up in an eminent manner unto a diligent search and inquiry after him. Woeful sloth and negligence are apt to prevail in us in our meditations on heavenly things. Though our hearts wake (as the spouse speaks, Cant. 5:2), in a valuation of Christ, his love, and his grace, yet we sleep as unto the due exercise of faith and love towards him. Who is it that can justify himself herein? - that can say, "My heart is pure, I am clean from this sin?" Yea, it is so far otherwise with many of us, that he is for ever to be admired in his patience, - that on the account of our unkindness and woeful negligence herein, he has not only withdrawn himself at seasons, but that he has not utterly departed from us. Now, he knows that those with whom he has been graciously present, - who have had views of his glory, although they have not valued the mercy and privilege of it as they ought, yet can they not bear a sense of his absence and his hiding himself from them. By this, therefore, will he awake them unto a diligent inquiry after him. Upon the discovery of his absence, and such a distance of his glory from them as their faith cannot reach unto it, they become like the doves of the valleys, all of them mourning every one for his iniquity, and do stir up themselves to seek him early and with diligence. See Hosea 5:15. So wherever the spouse intimates this withdrawing of Christ from her, she immediately gives an account of her restless diligence and endeavours in her inquiries after him until she have found

him, chap. 3:1-4; 5:2-8. And in these inquiries there is such an exercise of faith and love, though it may be acting themselves mostly in sighs and groans, as is acceptable and well-pleasing to him. We are like him in the parable of the prophet that spake unto Ahab, who having one committed unto him to keep, affirms that whilst he was busy here and there, he was gone. Christ commits himself unto us, and we ought carefully to keep his presence. "I held him," saith the church, "and would not let him go," Cant. 3:4. But whilst we are busy here and there, while our minds are overfilled with other things, he withdraws himself, - we cannot find him. But even this rebuke is a sanctified ordinance for our recovery, and his return unto us.

2. Our second inquiry is, how we may know when Christ does so withdraw himself from us, that we do not, that we cannot, behold his glory....

Loc.12436 - Owen cont.

Yea, Paul is so delighted with this, that he makes it his motto, and the token whereby he would have his epistles known, 2 Thess. 3:17, 18, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Yea, he makes these two, "Grace be with you," and, "The Lord Jesus be with you," to be equivalent expressions; for whereas he affirmed the one to be the token in all his epistles, yet sometimes he useth the one only, sometimes the other of these, and sometimes puts them both together. This, then, is that which we are peculiarly to eye in the Lord Jesus, to receive it from him, even grace, gospel-grace, revealed in or exhibited by the gospel. He is the head-stone in the building of the temple of God, to whom "Grace, grace," is to be cried, Zech. 4:7.

Grace is a word of various acceptations. In its most eminent significations it may be referred unto one of these three heads: -

1. Grace of personal presence and comeliness. So we say, "A graceful and comely person," either from himself or his ornaments. This in Christ (upon the matter) is the subject of near one-half of the book of Canticles; it is also mentioned, **Ps. 45:2**, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." And unto this first head, in respect of Christ, do I refer also that acceptation of grace which, in respect of us, I fix in the third place. Those inconceivable gifts and fruits of the Spirit which were bestowed on him, and brought forth in him, concur to his personal excellency; as will afterward appear.

2. Grace of free favour and acceptance. "By this grace we are saved;" that is, the free favour and gracious acceptance of God in Christ. In this sense is it used in that frequent expression, "If I have found grace in thy sight;" that is, if I be freely and favourably accepted before thee. So he "giveth grace" (that is, favour) "unto the humble," James 4:6; Gen. 39:21, 41:37; Acts 7:10; 1 Sam. 2:26; 2 Kings 25:27, etc. 3. The fruits of the Spirit, sanctifying and **renewing our natures, enabling unto good**, and preventing from evil, are so termed. Thus the Lord tells Paul, "his grace was sufficient for him;" that is, the assistance against temptation which he afforded him, Col. 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:6, 7; Heb. 12:28.

Loc.14308

The **chastity** we owe unto him requires another frame. The necessity, usefulness, and excellency of gospel obedience shall be afterward declared. It is marvellous to see how hard it is to keep some professors to any faithfulness with Christ in this thing; - how many disputes have been managed, how many distinctions invented, how many shifts and evasions studied, to keep up something, in some place or other, to some purpose or other, that they may dally withal. Those that love him indeed are otherwise minded. Herein, then, of all things, do the saints endeavour **to keep their affections chaste and loyal to Jesus Christ**. He is made unto them of God "righteousness;" and they will own nothing else to that purpose: yea, sometimes they know not whether they have any interest in him or no, - he absents and withdraws himself; they still continue solitary, in a state of widowhood, refusing to be comforted, **though many things offer themselves to that purpose**, because he is not. When Christ is at any time absent from the soul, when it cannot see that it has any interest in him, many lovers offer themselves to it, **many woo its affections [the world and its bewitching enchantments]**, to get **it to rest on this or that thing for relief and succour**; but though it go mourning never so long, it will have nothing but Christ to lean upon. Whenever the soul is in the wilderness, in the saddest condition, there it will stay until Christ come for to take it up, until it can come forth leaning upon him, Cant. 8:5.

The many instances of this that the book of Canticles affords us, we have in part spoken of before.

This does he who has communion with Christ: - **he watcheth diligently over his own heart, that nothing creep into its affections, to give it any peace or establishment before God, but Christ only.** Whenever that question is to be answered, "Wherewith shall I

come before the LORD, and appear before the high God?" he does not gather up, "This or that I will do;" or, "Here and there I will watch, and amend my ways;" but instantly he cries, "In the Lord Jesus have I righteousness, All my desire is, to be found in him, not having on my own righteousness."

2. In cherishing that Spirit, that holy Comforter, which Christ sends to us, to abide with us in his room and stead. He tells us that he sends him to that purpose, John 16:7. He gives him to us, "*vicariam navare operam*," saith Tertullian, - to abide with us for ever, for all those ends and purposes which he has to fulfil toward us and upon us; he gives him to dwell in us, to keep us, and preserve us blameless for himself. His name is in him, and with him: and it is upon this account that whatever is done to any of Christ's is done to him, because it is done to them in whom he is and dwells by his Spirit. **Now, herein do the saints preserve their conjugal affections entire to Christ**, that they labour by all means not to grieve his Holy Spirit, which he has sent in his stead to abide with them. This the apostle puts them in mind of, Eph. 4:30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit." ...

LocLoc.23850

First, That we may love him with a pure unmixed love. It is true, it is the person of Christ as God and man that is the proper and ultimate object of our love towards him; but a clear distinct consideration of his natures and their excellencies is effectual to stir up and draw forth our love towards him. So the spouse in the Canticles, rendering a reason of her intense affections towards him, says that "he is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand;" that is, perfect in the beauty of the graces of the Holy Spirit, which rendered him exceeding amiable. So also Ps. 45:2. Would you, therefore, propose Christ unto your affections, so as that your love unto him may be sincere and without corruption, as it is required to be, Eph. 6:24, **that you may not lavish away the actings of your souls upon a false object, and think you love Christ, when you love only the imaginations of your own breasts?** -- consider his human nature, as it was rendered beautiful and lovely by the work of the Spirit of God upon it, before described. Do you love him because he was and is so full of grace, so full of holiness, because in him there was an all-fullness of the graces of the Spirit of God? **Consider aright what hath been delivered concerning him, and if you can and do, on the account thereof, delight in him and love him, your love is genuine and spiritual; but if your love be merely out of an apprehension of his being now glorious in heaven, and there able to do you good or evil, it differs not much from that of the Papists, whose love is much regulated in its actings by the good or bad painting of the images whereby they represent him.** You are often

pressed to direct your love unto the person of Christ, and it is that which is your principal duty in this world; but this you cannot do without a distinct notion and knowledge of him. There are, therefore, three things in general that you are to consider to this purpose:--

Jonathan Edwards quote re Song of Solomon
w/ Special attention to patience

We cannot expect that, after a long time of degeneracy and depravity in the state of things in the church, all should come to rights at once, **it must be a work of time**. And for God's people to be over-hasty and violent, in such a case, being resolved to have everything rectified at once, or else forcibly to deliver themselves by breaches and separations, is the way to hinder things coming to rights as they otherwise would. It is the way to keep them back, and to break all in pieces. Indeed the difficulty may be so intolerable as to allow of no delay, and God's people cannot continue in the state wherein they were, without violations of God's absolute commands: but otherwise, though the difficulty may be very great, another course should be taken. God's people should have recourse directly to the throne of grace, to represent their difficulties before the great Shepherd of the sheep, who has the care of all the affairs of his church; and, when they have done, they should wait patiently upon him. If they do so, they may expect that in his time he will appear for their deliverance; **but if, instead of that, they are impatient, and take the work into their own hands, they will betray their want of faith, will dishonour God, and have reason to fear that he will leave them to manage their affairs for themselves as well as they can. If they had waited on Christ patiently, continuing still instant in prayer, they might have had him appearing for them, much more effectually to deliver them.** He that believeth shall not make haste. And it is for those that are found patiently waiting on the Lord, under difficulties, that he will especially appear, when he comes to do great things for his church; as is evident by Isa. 30:18, at the latter end, and Isa. 49:23. and Ps. 37: 9, and many other places.

I have somewhere, not long since, met with an exposition of those words of the spouse, several times repeated in the book of Canticles, *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please*. It was the only satisfying exposition that ever I met with, and was to this purpose, namely, That when the church of God is under great difficulties, and in distress, and Christ does not appear for her

help, but seems to neglect her, as though he were asleep, **God's people, or the daughters of Jerusalem, in such a case, should not show a hasty spirit, and, not having patience to wait for Christ to awake for their help till his time comes, take indirect courses for their own deliverance, and use violent means for their escape, before Christ appears to open the door for them; and so, as it were, stir up, and awake Christ, before this time.** When the church is in distress, and God seems not to appear for her in his providence, he is very often represented in Scripture as being asleep; as Christ was asleep in the ship, when the disciples were tossed by the storm, and the ship covered with waves. And God's appearing for his people's help, is represented as his awaking out of sleep, Ps. 7:6. Ps. 35:23. Ps. 44:23. Ps. 59:4. Psal.73:20. Christ has an appointed time for his thus awaking out of sleep; **and his people ought to wait upon him, and not, in an impatient fit, stir him up before his time.** It is worthy to be observed, how strict this charge is given to the daughters of Jerusalem; it is repeated three times over in the book of Canticles, chap. 2:7.—3:5.—8:4. In the 2d chapter and six first verses, are represented the support Christ gives his church, while she is in a suffering state, as the lily among thorns. In the 7th verse is represented her patience in waiting for Christ, to appear for her deliverance, when she charges the daughters of Jerusalem **not to stir up, nor awake her love till he please, by the roes, and the hinds of the field; which are creatures of a gentle, harmless nature. They are not beasts of prey, do not devour one another, do not fight with their enemies, but flee from them; and are of a pleasant loving nature,** Prov. v. 19. In the next verse, we see the church's success, in this way of waiting under sufferings, with meekness and patience; Christ soon awakes, speedily appears, and swiftly comes; Cant. ii. 8. "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills!"

Does God Love Everybody?

Code441

A Commentary on God's Nature

By G Clark

This is a common question that many people ask. What it really boils down to is this: does God love everyone to an extent that God will save them from hell and have them be with Him forever in heaven? In other words, does God have a special or saving love for all? The answer to that is no; because if he did love all in that manner, he would save everyone. But not all are saved - far from it. But there is a kind of love that God has for people, his creatures, in this sense – that he rains on the just and the unjust, that is, he provides bountifully to many people who are on the way to hell, those who God has

no intention to save. These are called reprobates, the Ishmaels of the world, as opposed to God's elect, his church. God died for his church, for his sheep (John 10), not for the goats, the un-elect; for as John Owen stated in his book *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, regarding Gen. 3:15,

Yea, that first distinction between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is enough to overthrow the pretended universality of the covenant of grace; for who dares affirm that God entered into a covenant of grace with the seed of the serpent?

But why is this the case? If we study the nature of God we understand more of this mystery. God in his simplicity (that he is one divine essence), is immutable, impassible, perfect and self-sufficient.

God is not dependent upon the creature for anything nor does God properly receive anything from the creature for that would argue that God is not perfect, that he lacks something. Jonathan Edwards notes:

As to the *first* of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any **indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God**; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, **that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being**. The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. **And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence**. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that *it* should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?

That God is simple means that God is one divine essence – all that is in God is God. There is nothing in God that is not God that makes him to be God. He is not a composite being composed of parts of any kind, physical or metaphysical. He is not made up of love, mercy, compassion, patience, etc.; **he is those things**, e.g., God is love, he is mercy and so on. He just IS; not going to be or was; he is. Hence his name, I AM. Another way to say this is that God is *pure act*. He does not have *potential actuality (passive potency)* and *actuality* in him all mixed together. A potential actuality in him would be something that needs to be actualized by something or someone outside himself...to influence him

or cause that potential actuality to actualize, for example, to cause this potential actuality of love in God to love something or someone. Now, because God does not have these metaphysical parts in him waiting to be actualized, this can't happen. His love or mercy is already actualized and in its full unbounded exercise! Nothing you do or don't do can cause God to love you more or care for you more than he does right now! Think about that! Affections that are in us (potential actuality) are caused to be actualized all the time because all created beings are not simple but composites, exposed to constant changing by outward causes. We are mutable. If this was God's nature then he would change all the time depending upon those outside causes to our great disadvantage; but this can't be, not only because He is The *first cause* without a cause, the *unmoved mover*, but also because God is immutable (impassibility is a subset of immutability). This is heavy, isn't it? Lots to ponder. So this love that God is (impassible love, that God does not undergo or is not moved upon to love), is not like the love that is caused in us (passible, we undergo or are moved upon or are affected, hence, our affections), that we, in ignorance, attribute to or predicate of God; for most people think God is like them, but perfect and without human limitations. In fact, they also have a wrong notion of what perfect means. How can you add to perfection? Or how can you add to God's infinitude? The key is that God loves and cares full time, perfectly and unboundedly, solely due to the council of his own will, as God freely chooses to do so without regard to anything else. Otherwise it wouldn't be *freely given*, hence the term, *free grace*. (The Arminians, Pelagians, Roman Catholics and all unregenerate people hate the idea that God is free and they are not! They believe that man is free and autonomous, and that God must cater to their desires and wills. That's why you have all these false religions that are founded upon man's supposed freedom and good works to try to appease God or curry his favor. The sinner's prayer is an outgrowth of this view which Thomas Shepard calls a wicked presumption.)

So how does this love of God that saves people work? What is this love?
 Ans: It is an act of his will! That's the only way to describe it...something that is indescribable. It has to be that. It cannot be the common affection that we humans have. If God is not caused by anything or anyone to love (a common or saving love), then it has to be self moved, aka, *an act of his will*, a free act of his will, which is why God's grace is only freely given and not owed to the creature as a debt because of the creature's works or whatever he does to try to curry God's saving favor (love). It is a function of God being *pure act* and not the result of arousals of supposed *passive potencies* in him, because

there are none in him! he is *simple*, i.e., not composite in his being as humans and all created things are. This act of his will is seen in scriptures like this in Eph. 1 (highlighted in red, my comments in [blue])

⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He [Ⓜ]made us accepted in the Beloved.

⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and [Ⓜ]prudence, ⁹having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, [there's the act of his will!!! He purposed it in himself, not the result of outward causes] ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, [Ⓜ]both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹²that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

See it? God does not undergo or is affected (hence affections) by anyone or anything. Why? Because he is God and not like us. We are composite beings affected by things all the time, but God is not composite, but is *pure act*. All his acts are from the council of his own will, not the result of potencies in him that are aroused by things outside himself. You'll have to think on this for awhile to have it sink in.

In other words, if God is not caused to do things, e.g., love, have mercy, etc., then it must be solely an act of his will according to his good pleasure and not by the arousal of some potency in him, which would be a common affection as it is in humans. So does this make God a metaphysical iceberg, some inert, static, cold being? NO! His love, his mercy, etc., is perfect, unbounded in its exercise, not determined by his creatures. If it were, we would all be destroyed, sent to hell because our sin, or rebellion of God would require his justice; but in his mercy, he chose some to save. This is incomprehensible to our feeble minds. Now you can see the meaning of Mal. 3:6,

“For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

If God was changeable, that there were affections (passive potencies) in God that could be wrought upon by our performance or lack thereof (sin, and God then being dependent upon the creature), then God would be changeable, mutable in his state of

being, say from neutral to angry – angry in that we are sinners and we are liable to his justice, which is why Malachi said that if God was changeable, moved upon by his creatures, we would be judged for our sin and sent to hell, i.e., no one would be saved! But because God, in an act of his will, said in Romans 9:15-

“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy [there’s the act of his will], and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, [there it is! That God’s act of his will, to have mercy is not due to man’s will - God is not caused or aroused by man in any way because God is pure act, having no passive potency in him to be wrought upon!] but of God who shows mercy [there’s the act of his will again].

He is not subject to passions as humans are hence God’s impassibility. God’s love is an *impassible* love as opposed to being *passible*. The human affection of love is passible; it’s caused in us (actualized) by outward influences or appearances, etc. Before I knew my first girl friend, I did not love her; but after I saw her, my affections (potencies in me, i.e., *parts*) were actualized or wrought upon, and so I loved her. See? But with God it is not so! See Romans 9-

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for *the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil*, that the purpose of God according to election [not man’s will] might stand, *not of works but of Him who calls*), ¹² it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*”

This is a great mystery; we can understand it but not comprehend it. Do you see this? - that God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they had done anything good or evil? This is inhuman. It is total mercy to Jacob when he would have deserved justice; it is love divine, an act of his will, God’s freedom to choose/love, not the passible love or common affection that possesses humans. Otherwise, Jacob would have been consumed as time played out. For all that are in Adam are subject to the curse of the law, unless God has mercy. You don’t want a passible God! For then his love would be limited and conditional.

It is a misunderstanding of God’s true nature that many reject God’s sovereignty in election, predestination, etc., and in essence reject God, and thus deprive themselves of the peace, consolation, immovable hope, wonderment, reverential awe, excitement to obedience and due worship, praise, honor and esteem of God. Is it any wonder that God’s people go through trials and temptations as a result of falling short of this knowledge? See Job. For God disciplines those he loves. The clear inference is that he does not discipline those he does not love (love in the saving sense); for those he leaves to their own devices. See the words of Elisha Coles on this:

Are other men prosperous in the world, and free from trouble, while you are reduced to a low estate, and chastened every morning? have, perhaps, but a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, etc., yet think not your portion mean, or hardly dealt out: your good things are to come; they are growing in the other world; and at the time of harvest the Lord will send his angels for you: yea, your Lord himself will come and fetch you thither; and "you shall be forever with him, in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are rivers of pleasures for evermore: "and then you will sing, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;" at least say so now. As Abraham dealt by his concubines' children, so doth God by the Ishmaels of the world, he gives them portions, and sends them away, (Genesis 25:6). But the inheritance he reserves for his Isaacs; to them he gives all that he has, yea, even himself; and what can we have more! - Elisha Coles, The Sovereignty of God

Now read Jonathan Edwards' comments again on God's nature in his discourse on why God created the world and you'll see him weave these doctrines in his answer.

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"And now I cannot think of what I have said, but I have only intimated what I adore."

Stephen Charnock
English Puritan, 1600s

More On Regeneration

And Erroneous Ideas of It

code417

This goes deeper into regeneration, the different views some philosophers and false religions like, for instance, Buddhism had about it. In this you'll see how people can get into serious error on what regeneration is and thus be self deceived: it is not a new illumination of, enlightenment of or a new consciousness of God but a transformation of the whole soul, all its faculties, that is described in Scripture, a new creation, the image of God re-instamped upon the soul. False teachers will use Christian words but assign different meanings to them to suit their goals.

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 41-53

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF REGENERATION

Even greater than the differences over the order and time is the disagreement existing in dogmatics over the nature of rebirth or regeneration. As stated above, the word “rebirth” is also used outside of Scripture and in very different senses. Sometimes it was used to denote the doctrine of metempsychosis (reincarnation), which, coming perhaps from India, penetrated Greece and found ardent advocates in Pythagoras and his school. When, from the end of the eighteenth century onward, the literature of India became known in Europe, Oriental wisdom began to exert strong influence on Western thought. **Buddhism and theosophy** penetrated Christianity, and along with them the doctrine of metempsychosis was welcomed by many, under the name “rebirth,” as noble divine wisdom. [Sometimes its proponents try to represent reincarnation also as a Christian Doctrine that Jesus himself taught. [cf. C. Anderson *Die Lehre von der Wiedergeburt auf...* (Hamburg, Germany, 1899)] But this Indian rebirth has nothing in common, other than the name, with the Christian doctrine of rebirth. **Whereas Scripture means by rebirth an internal, spiritual, and moral transformation that only indirectly influences the body, Buddhism** construes it as a countlessly repeated incorporation of souls in a series of different bodies without it effecting any change in the soul itself. And to Buddhists, this repeated reincarnation is not an object of hope and eager expectation but, on the contrary, an object of fear and dread from which they seek to free themselves by the suppression of their consciousness and will. This doctrine of metempsychosis, accordingly, does not belong in this section but will be treated later, in the doctrine of the last things. That is also the case with the meaning of the word “rebirth” (παλιγγενεσία), which occurs, among other places, in Matthew 19: 28. The world renewal referred to there can most certainly be described with the word “rebirth” and is also closely associated with the internal, spiritual rebirth of believers, but is nevertheless distinct from it. It is no longer implied in the word “rebirth” as it is ordinarily used today and will be discussed later in the locus of eschatology.

The Greeks, furthermore, spoke of initiates in the mysteries as the “born-again,” and the Jews similarly described proselytes. This usage seems also to have been followed by Christian authors when they repeatedly applied the word “rebirth” to the act of converting to Christianity and specifically to baptism, the rite in which this passage became visible to all. In this connection one cannot tell either whether, and to what extent, the meaning of the word included an inner renewal of the heart. In the early years of the church the sign and the thing signified always went hand in hand and were not so clearly differentiated as was the case later. In any case, the internal change also automatically implied an external, visible turnabout, the abandonment of Judaism or paganism, and the act of joining the Christian church by baptism. Even today such an objective sense is occasionally attached to “rebirth.” Bishop Waterland, **for example,**

said that regeneration is not “a change of mind” but “a change of stand,” so that even Simon Magus, though he remained in “the gall of bitterness,” could be called “regenerate.” [C. Hodge] Ritschl, too, spoke of a “state” or “stand” of rebirth [“Stand der Wiedergeburt”] [There you see how subjective their views on regeneration are as opposed to an objective clear transformation of the soul from a God hater to a God lover who delights in his word, and in biblically spiritual things.]

Here we have the view of regeneration from the Arminians et al:

Akin to this is the view of regeneration held by those who regard the human will as not at all corrupted, or merely weakened, by sin. In that case, as in the thinking of Pelagius, no internal grace is needed or, as in the case of the semi-Pelagians, only an ancillary, cooperating kind of grace. And regeneration, accordingly, need not consist in a renewal of the faculties of intellect and will, in an infusion of new dispositions, but only concerns the operations of those faculties. This was the view of regeneration presented by Socinians, Remonstrants, and rationalists. They were even more or less averse to the word, emphasizing, when they continued to use it, that it was a “figurative way of speaking, whose elements are not to be pressed, unless we want to fall into many absurdities.” Rebirth is a figurative expression for the “reformation of life as previously lived, according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus”; it only relates to the habits and actions of life. Actually regeneration and conversion are one and the same thing, viewed in the former case from God’s perspective and in the latter from the human perspective.

Another view from John Cameron who thought the will was not corrupted by sin:

According to others, regeneration consists in a renewal of the human consciousness. But here again we must distinguish two distinct tendencies. Reformed theologians, like their Catholic and Lutheran counterparts, taught that regeneration not only brought about a change in the actions but especially also in the faculties of a person. As a result of the psychological view that the will always and automatically follows the latest pronouncement of the practical intelligence and with a view toward maintaining the moral nature of humans also in conversion, John Cameron [1580–1625], who for a short while was a professor at Montauban, adopted the view that in regeneration the enlightenment of the mind was sufficient since in consequence the will would automatically be guided in the right direction. The Reformed in the Netherlands almost unanimously opposed this view and stuck with the pronouncement of the Synod of Dort that in regeneration the Holy Spirit not only enlightens the mind but also infuses new qualities into the will. ⁷⁰ Footnote #70 is fascinating:

Canons of Dort, III– IV, art. 12, “Rejection of Errors IV.” In this connection **one can again differentiate between the faculties that are transformed in regeneration or conversion.** Depending on whether sin is located more in the intellect, the emotions, or the will, and, accordingly, viewed more as darkness, passion, or aversion from and hostility to God, the emphasis in re-creation is on the enlightenment of the mind, the regulation of the emotions, or the renewal of the will. The picture also differs depending on the way conversion itself is experienced, in keeping with one’s personal sinful state. Even one’s psychology exerts its influence. **Melanchthon, for example, in the early period spoke only of the mind and heart (affections) and barely mentioned the will.** It was included in and subject to the emotions. As a result, **conversion consisted mainly in the infusion of new emotions.** Later, when he spent more time with Aristotle and adopted his psychology, he distinguished the will from the emotions, placed the will outside of and above them, gave it a measure of power to regulate and guide them, and even came to the point where **he gave it the power, in conversion, to cooperate with God’s grace (synergism).** Cf. E. F. Fischer, *Melanchthons Lehre von der Bekehrung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1905), 19ff., 47ff., 97ff.

Still, **Cameron** exerted great influence on the school of Saumur (Amyraut, Cappellus, Pajon) and **by his ideas laid the groundwork for the later rationalism.** Here, accordingly, **regeneration is equated with the illumination that precedes faith.** It is also possible, however, **to equate regeneration with the renewal of the consciousness** that arises from faith or coincides with it. **Luther**, for example, saw regeneration one moment as the gift of faith and another as the change effected in the consciousness by faith and consisting in comfort, joy, peace, and so forth. “Where the forgiveness of sin is, there is life and blessedness.” This terminology is also followed in the Lutheran confessions: one moment regeneration is a benefit distinct from justification and then again the two are equated. **Ritschl** and his disciples appealed to the latter meaning of the word “regeneration” when they accepted no other rebirth than that which originates by faith. In the Christian, a new life begins with the birth of faith. **This faith brings with it a fundamental transformation of the mind, a life in the power of God in place of the incapacity that prevailed till then.** And not only the Göttingen school promoted this doctrine but others as well, especially H. Cremer, E. Cremer, and Althaus, who, having adopted it, defended it with vigor.

Overlooked here, however, is the fact that Luther and his followers often speak of regeneration in a different sense and distinguish it from justification. When they do, it is not just an elevation and renewal of the consciousness resulting from the exercise of faith but specifically an **infusion of spiritual energies preceding faith.** Catholics in this connection spoke of “infused grace.” Lutheran theologians spoke of “the gift of spiritual life,” “a generous bestowal of the powers of believing and of saving faith,” or “the illumination of our mind and the arousal in our heart of trust,” [H.F.F. Schmid] and the **Reformed** express themselves along similar lines. But they stressed even more vigorously that not just the actions and not even the faculties alone **but also the whole person with all one’s capacities, soul and body, heart, intellect, and will, is the subject of**

regeneration. [the correct view] Regeneration, therefore, consists in dying to the “old man” that must not only be suppressed but also killed and in the rising of a totally new person created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. [J. Calvin]

But it struck many that not even this concept of regeneration is deep enough. According to **Gnosticism**, true redemption consists in the deliverance of the inner self from the bonds of matter. On account of its corruptibility, the body is not susceptible to redemption, and also the soul, which is most intimately bound up with the body, cannot be purged of its many defects. **Redemption, therefore, has a bearing only on the spirit (πνευμα) and is obtained by humans, first of all, through knowledge, but second, also by means of the mysteries,** among them particularly a threefold baptism with water, fire, and spirit. These mysteries free the spirit, protect it from evil angels, impart to it heavenly and divine powers, and make it a partaker of the divine nature. **Rebirth,** accordingly, is at the center of doctrine and cultic worship but is at the same time, as it is in the pagan mysteries, transmuted into a physical process. [G, Kruger, “Gnosis, Gnosticismus] Similarly, in **Neoplatonism** people sought a most intimate union with the deity by way of purification, illumination, and contemplation; the soul (or the spirit), we are told, is by nature divine but is oppressed by the external world (matter, observation, conceptual imagery, and so forth) and hindered from becoming one with the deity. But when it **frees itself from all earthly ties,** suppresses all its conceptual images, kills consciousness and will, and turns inward to its own deepest being, it finds God himself there and enters into full communion with him. [i.e. you save yourself] On this sublime level there is no longer any barrier between God and the soul. The soul has become pure luminosity, spiritualized and divinized. All distinction and separation is gone: God and the soul are one.

These ideas, which are essentially characteristic of all **mysticism**, also penetrated the Christian church, primarily through the writings of **Pseudo-Dionysius**. In part they were taken over and standardized by Rome in the **doctrine of the superadded gift, of habitual grace, and of the vision of God** in terms of being (*per essentiam*); and they return in all mystics in Protestantism as well as in Catholicism. Of course, by that time they have all been given a **Christian coloring**, elaborated by some in a more theistic direction, by others in a more pantheistic direction. But in all cases, they insist on claiming a higher knowledge of God and a more intimate fellowship with God than those that are attainable by the ordinary believer. According to this position, **regeneration becomes an essential participation in the divine nature, a substantial union of the soul with the deity.** This reality is expressed in various ways: God voices his eternal word in the soul; he brings forth his Son in us; Christ himself is born in us, just as he was once conceived

in Mary; he is born and brought forth in us just as the Son was eternally born of the Father; God so accomplishes the creation of the new creature that he gives up Adam's flesh and blood into death and offers a new heavenly flesh and blood in its place; Christ changes us, not by reparation but by annihilation; he does not bestow another set of qualities but another nature and another being; and to be born again is to become truly Spirit.

When regeneration is thus traced back from the actions to the faculties, and from the faculties to the soul itself, and from the soul to its essence and substance, it naturally and necessarily has to take place in the unconscious. Now in the past, in psychology and hence also in the locus on regeneration, little notice was taken of the unconscious. Factually it was assumed, for the benefit of regeneration was also granted to small children before they became self-conscious. The Holy Spirit, it was said, could also work in their hearts apart from the Word preached. And "although our children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, since they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, and so again are received unto grace in Christ." Moreover, against the Anabaptists it was stated that believers did not have to know, and could not always know, the time of their regeneration. [J Calvin, Institutes] Rebirth as such, it was said, was not a matter of experience but of faith. "This birth is neither seen nor apprehended but only believed." [Luther] But ever since Leibniz "the unconscious" has become of great significance both in philosophy and in psychology. The term, however, is unclear and can be taken to mean very different things. If we leave out of account, as being irrelevant here, those workings of our biological, physiological, and negative functions that occur completely outside of our consciousness and can be known only by intentional scientific research, there still remain essentially two areas that may be treated under the heading of the unconscious. In the first place, one can list under this heading all those impressions, ideas, passions, desires, and so forth, that at any given moment are not present in our consciousness but that, surrounding it on all sides or more or less dimly hidden beneath the threshold of it, may return to it on some occasion or other by recollection, association, and so forth. Belonging to this storehouse are all those impressions we have accumulated since our early childhood, as well as all those skills and abilities we have acquired by long practice and training. In the second place, the unconscious may also be associated with all those intuitions that strike the consciousness like lightning, have such weighty significance in the lives of geniuses, heroes, prophets, and seers, and also assert themselves in clairvoyance, somnambulism, telepathy, and a wide range of occult phenomena. In the opinion of many people, these phenomena point back to mysterious

forces hidden in the human mind or to another spiritual world with which humans are, or can be, in touch.

Depending on whether the unconscious was viewed in the former or the latter sense, modern psychologists of religion presented a different version of regeneration or conversion. In the first case, regeneration was said to occur when concepts, impressions, experiences, and so forth sometimes dating back to one's earliest years, gradually or suddenly **returned to one's consciousness** as a result of some shocking event, drove out the up-until-then-dominant conceptions and desires, and brought into existence a whole new world of thoughts and ideals. [notice that has nothing to do with a biblical regeneration, being transformed into the image of Christ, etc., and what that means.] In that case **regeneration essentially meant a transformation of one's consciousness**. But others found this explanation unsatisfactory, not because it was contradicted by the facts, but because it would deprive religious phenomena of all their validity and value. Hence they assumed the presence in these phenomena, specifically in conversion, of the operation of an objective supernatural factor that guarantees not indeed the form but the content of these phenomena. All people, after all, interpret the experiences they have in their own way, in their own language and concepts. But the experience itself arises from contact, from a connection, with the supreme reality we call God. And from that connection there comes to people new energy, a new, broader, and richer life. They feel united with that Being, who works throughout the universe and saves both themselves and all the world.

Here Bavinck points out the weakness of philosophy in their various understandings of regeneration:

Both explanations of regeneration (conversion) appear to be new and original but are reminiscent of those that have been given to it throughout the centuries, **by rationalism on the one hand and mysticism on the other**. The former is more **deistic**, the latter more **pantheistic**. The former explains everything in terms of the working of the word; the latter goes back behind the word and speaks of the spirit. In the former, regeneration has a purely moral character; in the latter, it is the revelation of a supernatural power. Both interpretations, however, bring out the serious weaknesses inherent in the psychology of religion. If, in accordance with its original intent, this science seeks to be totally unbiased and does not wish to be guided by any *a priori* conviction, it can, at least to some extent, observe and describe the religious phenomena in question, **but it cannot penetrate their inner nature**, nor, in the absence of any norm, pronounce itself on their validity and value. **It remains embarrassed and powerless as it faces the question of truth**. It may perhaps clarify a good many things psychologically, **but it has**

no answer based on logic. Inasmuch as it cannot be content with such a negative outcome—since every science after all is in pursuit of truth—in pursuing its investigations it very soon comes into conflict with the impartiality it initially adopted, views the phenomena in light of certain religious or philosophical convictions, and attempts to offer an explanation that is composed on the basis of these rather free, subjective, and arbitrary premises. Consequently, and by way of example, conversion then becomes a phenomenon that is on a level with various other alterations of human consciousness, or, equally arbitrarily, is explained in terms of the unconscious inward operation of some supernatural factor. But what conversion really is and, similarly, what faith, prayer, justification, religion, and so forth really are, neither the psychology nor the philosophy of religion can tell us. **Only Scripture can.**

Remember, Pelagius was an English monk who believed that man comes into this world innocent, without sin; he only begins to sin because of the bad examples set by adults, parents, etc., therefore he believed that one could believe on Christ for salvation without any determining grace (saving grace) by the Holy Spirit. Augustine argued strongly against him way back in about 400 A.D. and in the final issue, Pelagius was kicked out of the church for his heresy. Arminians and semi-Pelagians are in the same boat in that salvation is in the hands of man's will in *deciding*; and that God gives them information and tries to persuade them (moral suasion) in that direction (prevenient grace, which concept is not in the bible but only in men's brains), that the final decision is up to man, up to the almighty will of man and not God! (we call this will-worship, that man is ultimate) It's like this: God is for you, Satan is against you and you cast the deciding vote. This is what is preached in most churches.

The Irresistible Call of God in Regeneration Explained

code418

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck's book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 80-84

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

IMMEDIATE AND IRRESISTIBLE

For all these reasons the Reformed unanimously held on to the linkage between external and internal calling and hence also to the order of calling and regeneration. They opposed the notion that the division of the call into an external and an internal one was a "division into two separate species" and viewed it as a "division of the whole into its parts and members." Just as, by taking this position, they turned

against the **Anabaptists** on the one hand, so against **Pelagians** of all sorts they took the position that the external call and moral suasion by the Word is insufficient for salvation and has to be followed by a special operation of the Holy Spirit in the human heart.

This operation of the Spirit was, first of all, called an **immediate** one. [as opposed to mediate, using another cause other than the Spirit himself, i.e. a direct act without using an intermediary means. Another example on this: Some people think that God speaks directly to them, that God told me this or that, thus in an *immediate* manner (which is dangerous by the way) as opposed to reading their bibles where God speaks infallibly, the bible being an indirect or a *mediate* manner to learn of God.] With this term they did not, however, intend to negate what they had earlier said about the connection between the external and internal call, but rather to define their position against two alternative currents. First of all, against the **Remonstrants [Arminians]**, who held the working of God's Spirit to be a **purely moral one, a working whose fruit was dependent on human assent and compliance**. Posted between God's activity and its effect in the human heart (which is regeneration) is thus the **free human will**. **Over against that position the Reformed [e.g., Calvin, Edwards, Owen, etc.] said that the operation of God's Spirit in regeneration is immediate; in other words, that God's Spirit itself directly enters the human heart and with infallible certainty brings about regeneration without in any way being dependent on the human will**. Second, by adopting the term "**immediate**," they sided against Cameron and the theologians of Saumur, who deemed the "**enlightenment of the intellect**" to be sufficient in regeneration and believed that this enlightened intellect then so impacts the will that, by virtue of its character, it must necessarily follow the intellect. **Accordingly, what we have here is an immediate operation of God's Spirit in the human intellect but not in the human will**. Over against this Saumurian position the **Reformed generally claimed that the Holy Spirit not only impacted the human will through the intellect, but also that it penetrated the will directly and there instilled new habits immediately**. [e.g., when God open the heart of Lydia.]

In the second place, if the operation of God's Spirit in regeneration is absolutely independent of the human will, it may be called "irresistible." Augustine already stated: "Aid must be given to the weakness of the human will in order that divine grace may be inexorably and invincibly effective." Materially the Augustinians and Thomists [referring to Thomas Aquinas] among Catholic theologians, such as the **Jansenists**, also agreed with this position, for they assume an essential distinction between "sufficient" and "efficacious" grace, seeing the former as conferring the capacity and the latter as conferring the actual willing and accomplishing, and hence taught an **infallible activity of**

efficacious grace. But Rome firmly rejected this doctrine. At **Trent** it stated that when the human heart has been touched by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, “neither is man himself utterly without doing anything while he receives that inspiration, forasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet he is not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in his sight.” And to remove all doubt and uncertainty concerning the sense of this pronouncement, it declared at the [First] Vatican Council: “Faith in itself is a gift of God, even if it does not work through love; and an act of faith is a work pertaining to salvation. Through this act man freely renders obedience to God Himself by consenting to and by cooperating with His grace, when he could resist it.” By that decree the infallible operation of grace is factually denied and the decision about whether a person will be saved or not **is made a matter of the human will.** [Man will defend his supposed autonomy and will to the death!] From ancient times, that was the teaching of **Pelagians** and **semi-Pelagians**, which in the Molinistic and Congruistic systems of the Jesuits won out over Augustine and Thomas and found acceptance also among the **Anabaptists**, **Socinians**, the later **Lutherans** (et al.), and in the Netherlands by the **Remonstrants**.

The term “irresistible grace” is not really of Reformed origin but was used by Jesuits and Remonstrants to characterize the doctrine of the efficacy of grace as it was advocated by **Augustine** and those who believed as he did. The Reformed in fact had some objections to the term because it was absolutely not their intent to deny that grace is often and indeed always resisted by the unregenerate person and therefore could be resisted. **They therefore preferred to speak of the efficacy or of the insuperability of grace, or interpreted the term “irresistible” in the sense that grace is ultimately irresistible.** The point of the disagreement, accordingly, was not whether humans continually resisted and could resist God’s grace, but whether they could ultimately—at the specific moment in which God wanted to regenerate them and work with his efficacious grace in their heart—still reject that grace. [that’s the key point at issue between Arminians et al and the Reformed view] The answer to this question, as is clearly evident from the **five articles of the Remonstrants**, is most intimately tied in with the doctrine of the corruption of human nature; with election (based or not based on foreseen faith); the universality and particularity of Christ’s atonement; the identification of, or the distinction between, the sufficient call (**external**) and the efficacious call (**internal**); and the correctness of the distinction between **the will of God’s good pleasure** and the **revealed will** in the divine being. Whereas the Remonstrants appealed to Isa. 5: 1–8; 65: 2–3; Ezek. 12: 2; Matt. 11: 21–23; 23: 37; Luke 7: 30; John 5: 34; and Acts 7: 51, and to all the exhortations to faith and repentance occurring in Scripture, the Reformed theologians took their cue from the picture

Scripture offers of fallen humanity as blind, powerless, natural, dead in sins and trespasses (Jer. 13: 23; Matt. 6: 23; 7: 18; John 8: 34; Rom. 6: 17; 8: 7; 1 Cor. 2: 14; 2 Cor. 3: 5; Eph. 2: 1; etc.), and from all the forceful words and images with which the work of grace in the human soul is described (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31: 31; Ezek. 36: 26; John 3: 3, 5; 6: 44; Eph. 2: 1, 6; Phil. 2: 13; 1 Pet. 1: 3; etc.). So they spoke of the efficacy and invincibility of God's grace in regeneration and articulated this truth in a confession at the Synod of Dort.

[My comment on this: God tells the Israelites in Deut. 10:16, *Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked¹⁰ no longer*. He is basically saying to them, convert yourself by the power of your own will in choosing to do so knowing that they cannot and will not do it. (Romans 8:7-8, *Because the ¹¹carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.* ⁸*So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*) So, twenty chapters later in Deut. 30:6 God says, *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live*. The will in is bondage to sin, so the only way one is delivered from this bondage to be free to worship God acceptably is by God's sovereign efficacious power that sweetly transforms the whole man, sweetly moving his will into compliance.

Third, the activity of God in regeneration was also described as a “**physical operation**.” But there was much controversy over the correctness of this description. People were agreed that the adjective “moral” or “ethical” was too weak and wide open to misunderstanding as well. Just as on the point of human incapacity people had objected to calling it “moral incapacity,” although this incapacity was in no way rooted in the substance of human nature, so in connection with the work of God's Spirit in the human heart, people could not confine themselves to the term “moral.” This word, after all, had been used by the Remonstrants to indicate that the operation of grace was dependent on human consent and compliance and therefore resulted only externally in a change of the actions of the will, a reformation of life. And people could be even less content with the word “moral” when later, in the Reformed churches themselves, **Cameron** and his pupils Amyraut, Testard, Daillé, and Blondel described “particular” or “subjective” grace (which they distinguished from “universal” or “objective” grace) as an “ethical” or “moral” grace and in so doing paved the way for the congruist doctrine of Pajon and Placaëus. But then exactly what was the correct description was hard to say. The **Synod of Dort** stated that “regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead and the making alive . . . **is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead**, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches.” And theologians speak of a “physical” or “hyperphysical,” a “real” or “effective,” a “persuasive” or “effective,” a

“supernatural” or “divine” working of the Holy Spirit. But whatever word was used, the intent was clear: the working of grace in regeneration is not “simply natural” because it has to do with a rational, moral being, who, however corrupted by sin, nevertheless remains a human being and therefore has to be restored in keeping with that human nature. Neither is this working “simply ethical,” for it is not dependent on the consent of humans but, with divine power, penetrates their inmost being and re-creates them, in principle, according to the image of God. It is therefore in a class of its own, simultaneously ethical and natural (supernatural), powerful and most pleasing¹.

¹John Flavel and others describe the power of God in converting the soul, as a power that sweetly moves the will into compliance without doing violence to man’s creaturely liberty. Hence Ps. 110:3, *Your people shall be volunteers [or willing] In the day of Your power;*

Objections to Saving Grace in Regeneration
by Arminians, Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, etc.
God Does Not Work By Compulsion
(with a short comment on Preparatory Grace)

code419

Excerpt from Hermon Bavinck’s book,
Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 4, pgs 84-87

My inserts in [blue], red for emphasis

THE REMONSTRANT OBJECTION

Against this confession of God's omnipotent and infallibly effective grace in regeneration, the Remonstrants cite a series of Scripture verses that contain all sorts of admonitions and threats and are addressed to the heart and conscience, the mind and the will, of humans. But against this Scripture "proof," the Reformed are nevertheless consistently in a more favorable position than their opponents. [They site those passages with this reasoning: why would God command us to do anything that we are not able to do by our own power? In other words, we don't need God's determining grace (insuperable as Bavinck calls it), we can do these things, e.g., choose to savingly believe on Christ, without it. This is short sighted, of course and clearly against many scriptures having to do with man's total or radical depravity (bondage of the will), e.g., 1Cor. 2:14, Rom. 8:7-8.] For if one proceeds from the free will and wants to maintain it before all else as the most precious good, one cannot possibly do justice to all those texts that unmistakably teach God's efficacious and insuperable grace. On the other hand, if one proceeds along theological lines and seeks above all to secure the rights of God, one will still always have room left for the content of the Scripture verses that consistently address and treat humans as rational, moral beings. This is how humans were created by God, this is how they are upheld by his providence, and this is how they are renewed and saved in re-creation. **But this is precisely what is denied by the Remonstrants. Their primary objection is always that the doctrine of efficacious and insuperable grace introduces a "natural" coercion into the spiritual life, militates against the nature of rational beings, renders humans totally passive, and undermines moral freedom and responsibility. Pelagianism, accordingly, is always out to maintain the resistibility of the calling and to let regeneration, conversion, sanctification, preservation, and so forth, depend on a decision of the will. Regenerated and justified are only those persons who voluntarily and antecedently meet some condition—believes, repents, is disposed to keep God's commandments, and so forth.**

In so doing, Pelagianism immediately wraps itself up in countless insoluble difficulties. If humans are by nature capable of meeting those conditions, they are in fact so good that there is no need whatever for regeneration in a scriptural sense. In that case, a moral upbringing and self-improvement are more than sufficient.¹ If humans have to receive the power to accept or reject the gospel in advance by the **prevenient grace conferred in baptism or calling, then here too a kind of irresistible grace precedes believing, for preparatory grace is granted to all without their knowledge or consent.** Then regeneration actually does occur before the decision of the human will, for "functioning follows being" (*operari sequitur esse*). The act follows the ability to act. The will enabling persons to accept the gospel, according to the Gospel of John, is a renewed and regenerate will existing prior to the act of acceptance. In that case,

however, it is impossible to understand how, after all this, a “free” act of volition is still possible. The will, after all, thanks to the good power conferred on it without its consent, has already been determined for good, and is so determined precisely in the same measure as it received the power to make a good choice. The more one construes the will as being weakened by sin, the more power one accords to it in prevenient grace, the more, and to the same degree, its indifferent freedom ceases to exist. [this indifferent freedom is what Arminians believe the condition that the will is in, or has to be in, in order for what proceeds out of it to be genuine, for if God by his determining grace moves the will out of this *indifferent state*, they consider this doing *violence* to their liberty, an act against man’s so called *autonomy*, which fallen man defends to the death. Naturally, this all stems from a huge error in their idea human anthropology, man’s deadness in and bondage to sin.] In addition, it is unfathomable why such an act of free will is still necessary. For if God has to renew human beings beforehand and irresistibly to the extent that they can choose for the gospel, what purpose does the maintenance of the indifferent freedom of the will still serve other than again to frustrate God’s grace, to render his covenant of grace as shaky and unstable as the covenant of works was before the fall, and to picture Christ as being even more powerless and loveless than Adam? For he has accomplished and acquired everything, but when he wants to apply it, his power and his love bounce off the human will, a will, mind you, that has even been endowed with new energies! Merely to rescue a pseudo freedom attributed to humans, God is deprived of his sovereignty, the covenant of grace of its firmness, and Christ of his royal power.

This would be somewhat understandable if something were gained by it, but in reality one loses everything. Not only is the indifferent freedom of the will saved only in appearance, but in the case of infants this whole doctrine proves inadequate and even merciless. We have to make a choice here: either the grace granted to children is sufficient for salvation and, if they die in infancy, opens the gates of heaven—and in that case they are saved without any contribution of their own and without having made a choice of their own—or it is not sufficient, but in that case all infants who die before they can make a choice are lost, and of the children who grow to maturity, thousands upon thousands apostatize by their own freewill choices.

Pelagianism in its various forms seems to be merciful, but in essence this attitude is nothing other than the mercy of the Pharisee, who does not trouble himself about publicans. In order to save freedom of the will in the case of a few thousand adults—and then only in appearance—it is prepared, proportionately speaking, to abandon

millions of infants to damnation. In the final analysis, it remains a riddle what Pelagianism can have against God glorifying his efficacious grace in the lives of sinners.

If it raised the question why God would only grant his grace to many and not to all, it would find a well-disposed response everywhere. Who has not felt that question rising in his or her own mind and has not been profoundly moved by it? But that question comes back in either case and is answered neither by Pelagius nor by Augustine. All without distinction must rest in the good pleasure of God. **Those who confess God's sovereignty are by no means in a less favorable position than the defenders of free will.** For, as was shown above, external grace, in the Reformed view, grants to all who live under the gospel at least as much grace as, in the Pelagian view, is granted to them in so-called "sufficient grace," and is judged sufficient by them for making a free choice for or against the gospel. The doctrine of the internal calling does not deprive the external calling of any blessing or benefit that according to Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, or Remonstrants is bestowed in it by God. According to the Reformed view, all those who are externally called remain objectively in the same condition as that in which they are according to other confessions. **The Reformed only claim that all that abundant grace for and in humans, if it is not specifically the grace of regeneration, is insufficient to move people to a free and decisive acceptance of the gospel.** What is needed to believe in Christ, according to the clear teaching of the Gospel of John, **is nothing less than a rebirth, a working of God's power on a par with raising Christ from the dead** (Eph. 1: 19–20). **All lesser grace, however rich and wonderful it may be, is insufficient. A grace that does not regenerate people yet restores their will to the point where they can opt for the gospel is nowhere taught in Scripture and is also a psychological absurdity.** Even if their response were wrong (hence a "no"), it would produce absolutely no detrimental change in the condition of those who, according to the confessions of all Christians, will finally perish on account of their unbelief.

In any case the Reformed have the edge over the proponents of free will. The advantage is that God's counsel will stand, that his covenant of grace will not waver, that Christ is the true and perfect Savior, that goodness will one day triumph **infallibly** over evil. What serious objections could possibly be raised against that position? **If, without our knowledge, we can share in Adam's condemnation—a fact that nobody can deny—why could we not much more, without our knowledge, be received into God's favor in Christ? Certainly this grace is not one that involves force.** To speak for a moment in strong language: if this grace did not by virtue of its very nature exclude force and God actually used force, who would in the end have the right or even the desire to complain if by this action he or she were snatched out of eternal perdition and

transferred into eternal life? Who would agree with the man who complained that someone had rescued him from mortal danger without respecting his freedom of choice? [This is the kind of reasoning is consistent and makes total sense, but Arminians et al are blind to this; they just don't think things through.] But it is not so: in the internal calling and regeneration, there is no coercion² on the part of God. Not a single godly person, even if one had been snatched like a piece of kindling from the fire, has ever spoken of coercion² in connection with the work of grace. It would likely have been their wish that God had more forcefully broken sin in them and made them partakers of salvation and blessedness without their having to travel such a long road of struggle and grief. **But that is not how God acts in the work of grace: all coercion is alien to its essence.** [See John Flavel's or Owen's comments on God *sweetly* moving the will.] **There is no more reason to speak of coercion here than in connection with a person's birth.** It is indisputably the case that the differences among people—in gender, class, privileges, physical strength, gifts of intellect and heart (and so forth)—are not first of all caused by their conduct but come along with their conception and birth. Who has a right to complain if he or she has been apportioned less than others? Who can boast if he or she has been entrusted, not with one or two, but with five or ten talents? **Who are so foolish as to throw away the gifts bestowed on them over others, the inheritance that their parents have left them, the treasures of culture available to them at birth because they received them apart from their consent and knowledge, out of pure grace?** [Excellent point! This can be applied to many social evils that we seeing today with made up Marxist ideas such as *white privilege* and so forth. People like blacks are really not complaining at white people's privileges, but against God's sovereign disposal of his gifts and graces!! They are shaking their fists at God! with a *high hand* I might add!]

If one should wish to call this unequal apportionment in the natural or spiritual domain a kind of physical coercion **or dare to charge it with being unjust**, one must adopt the theory of **Origen** and of present-day theosophists that originally all souls were the same and that all diversity is due to the varying behaviors and actions of people. In that perspective only the law of karma prevails in the world, the law of reward based on performance, as it was also set forth and elaborated by nomistic Judaism. **But the Christian religion is diametrically opposed to this view.** Jesus did not pronounce blessed the self-righteous but the poor in spirit and the meek. He came not to call the righteous but publicans and sinners to repentance, to seek and to save what is lost. The grace of God in Christ, grace that is full, abundant, free, omnipotent, and insuperable, is the heart of the gospel.

READ THE FOOTNOTES!

¹A Short Note on *Preparatory Grace* – (though *prevenient grace* is not scriptural as Bavinck rightly notes, it is helpful to understand this subject of *Preparatory grace* so that the two are properly distinguished and not conflated.)

8. Finally, this call [[the universal proclamation of the gospel](#)] is not only a repressive but also a preparatory grace. Christ came into the world for judgment (κρίσις), for a fall but also for a rising of many (Mark 4: 12; Luke 2: 34; 8: 10; John 9: 39; 15: 22; 2 Cor. 2: 16; 1 Pet. 2: 7–8). This call by law and gospel is also intended, through what it gives and brings about both in humanity as a whole and in individual persons, to pave the way for the coming of Christ. Reformed theologians [Canon of Dort] have definitely rejected such a preparatory grace **in an [Arminian sense](#)**. [Remonstrant Confession and *Apologia pro confessione*, XI.4.] **The spiritual life that is implanted in regeneration differs essentially from the natural and moral life that precedes it. It is brought about, not by human activity or evolution, but by a creative act of [God](#)**. Some theologians, accordingly, preferred to call the activities that precede regeneration “antecedent actions” rather than “preparatory actions.” Still one can speak of “preparatory grace” in a sound sense. The expression is even eminently valuable against all Methodist trends that ignore the natural life. For the confession of preparatory grace does not imply that, by doing what they can on their own—regularly going to church, listening attentively to the Word of God, acknowledging their sins, and yearning for salvation, and so on—people can earn or make themselves receptive to the grace of regeneration on the basis of a merit of congruity. On the contrary, it implies that God is the creator, sustainer, and ruler of all things and that, even generations before they are born, he orders the life of those on whom he will in due time bestow the gift of faith. Humans did not originate on the sixth day by evolving from lower creatures, but are created by the hand of God. Still, his creation may be considered prepared by the antecedent acts of God. Though Christ himself came down from above, yet his coming had been prepared for centuries. **Although nature and grace are distinct and may not be confused or mingled, God does link the two**. Creation, redemption, and sanctification are, in an “economic” sense, attributed to the Father, Son, and Spirit, but these three constitute the one true God, and together they accomplish the whole work of redemption. No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him or her; and no one receives the Holy Spirit except those to whom the Son sends him. For that reason we can properly speak of a preparatory grace. God himself, in many different ways, prepares for his gracious work in human hearts. He aroused in Zacchaeus the desire to see Jesus (Luke 19: 3), produced distress in the crowd that listened to Peter (Acts 2: 37), caused Paul to fall to the ground (9: 4), disconcerted the jailer at Philippi (16: 27), and so directs the lives of all his children even before and up to the hour of their rebirth. Even if on their part they have not yet received the benefits of reconciliation and justification and have not yet been born again and given faith, yet they are already the objects of his eternal love, and he himself already leads them by his grace to the Spirit, who alone can regenerate and comfort them. All things, accordingly, are connected by divine prearrangement to their subsequent “enlistment” and calling in the church. Conception and birth, family and

lineage and people and land, upbringing and education, development of heart and mind, preservation from hideous sins, above all from blaspheming the Holy Spirit, or perhaps abandonment to all sorts of wickedness, disasters and judgment, blessings and benefits, the preaching of law and gospel, distress about sin and fear of judgment, development of conscience and the felt need for salvation: all of this is grace preparing people for rebirth by the Holy Spirit and for the role that they as believers will later play in the church. True: there is only one way to heaven, but many are the leadings of God both before and on that journey, and the grace of the Holy Spirit is abundant and free. Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy were brought into the kingdom differently from either Manasseh or Paul, and each performed a different task in the service of God. Pietism and Methodism tend to ignore these leadings, limit God's grace, and want to convert and mold everyone according to a single model. But Reformed theology respects the free sovereignty of God and **marvels** at the riches of his grace. Hermon Bavinck, Vol. 4, pgs 39-41

² Now if regeneration is neither an actual creation (an infusion of substance) nor a merely external moral amendment of life, it can only consist in a spiritual renewal of those inner dispositions of humans that from ancient times were called "habits" or "qualities." These new "habits" are distinguished, on the one hand, from the Holy Spirit, who effects them but does not coincide with them; they serve, on the other hand, as intermediaries between the essence (or substance) of the human soul and body and the activities that, as people mature and receive the enlightenment of Scripture and the guidance of the Spirit, spring from those "habits" in the **intellect, the emotions, and the will**. Hence, though these are new qualities that regeneration implants in a person, they are nevertheless no other than those that belong to human nature, just as health is the normal state of the body. **They are "habits," dispositions, or inclinations that were originally included in the image of God and agreed with the law of God and whose restoration liberates the fallen, sinful human nature from its darkness and slavery, its misery and death.** [This is the chief part of God's image that was lost at the fall of Adam, that is restored in regeneration!] They cannot be described in more beautiful language than what is used in the **confession of Dort**: **"When God carries out his good pleasure in his chosen ones, he, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds."** [Canons of Dort, III-IV, art. 12] **Regeneration, accordingly, works so little with coercion that it is truer to say that it liberates people from the compulsion and power of sin:** it "is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing." In addition, the Holy Spirit confers on these infused qualities a lasting character: though they are not inherently inadmissible [loseable] and do not owe their permanence to the will of humans, they derive their stability from the communion of the Holy Spirit, who created them, continually preserves and confirms them, and elevates the life that was infused in regeneration to a level above sin, corruption,

and death. From its earliest beginnings the spiritual life is eternal life, and the seed that remains in the regenerate is imperishable. This has been denied by all who make the regeneration that is granted to the children of believers in their youth dependent for its continuity on a **decision of the will** that they must make later and leads to the distinction between a first and a second regeneration, between baptismal regeneration and a later spiritual renewal that again depends on the persons themselves. One cannot even stop here but must, in the interest of consistency, proceed to the acceptance of a series of rebirths, all of which can be lost and regained. Hollaz, for example, tried to argue that regeneration can be nullified three, four, or more times and yet regained. By taking that position, we are absolutely misjudging the love of God, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit, as well as the nature of the spiritual life. For this life is essentially distinct from all natural life. It is born of God, flows down to us from the resurrection of Christ, and is from the beginning effected, maintained, and confirmed in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. For that reason it cannot sin or die, but lives, works, and grows, and in due time manifests itself in deeds of faith and conversion. Bavinck, vol. 4, pgs 94-95

Eternal Generation of the Son God's Disposition to Diffuse Himself

code192

This excerpt from Bavinck expounds on Edwards' discourse on God disposition to diffuse himself in *an emanation of his own infinite fullness*, his internal glory *ad extra*, in abundance, as a spring tends to overflowing, etc.

Excerpt from Reformed Dogmatics

By Hermon Bavinck

Vol. 2 pg 308

The Holy Trinity

Son: Generation or Filiation

The special qualification of the second person in the Trinity is filiation. In Scripture he bears several names that denote his relation to the Father, such as word, wisdom, logos, son, the firstborn, only-begotten and only son, the image of God, image (εικων), substance (υποστασις), stamp (χαρακτηρ) [cf. Heb. 1:3]. The doctrine of “eternal generation” (αιωνος γεννησις), so called for the first time by Origen, was based on these names and a few texts cited above. In using these terms we are of course speaking in a human and hence an imperfect language, a fact that makes us cautious. Yet we have the right to speak this language. For just as the Bible speaks analogically of God’s ear, eye, and mouth, so human generation is an analogy and image of the divine deed by which the Father gives the Son “to have life in himself.” But when we resort to this imagery, we must be careful to remove all associations with imperfection and sensuality from it. The generation of a human being is imperfect and flawed. A husband needs a wife to bring forth a son. No man can ever fully impart his image, his whole nature, to a child or even to many children. A man becomes a father only in the course of time and then stops being a father, and a child soon becomes wholly independent from and self-reliant vis-à-vis his or her father. But it is not so with God. Generation occurs also in the divine being. [Code192a](#) God’s fecundity is a beautiful theme, one that frequently recurs in the church fathers. God is no abstract, fixed, monadic, solitary substance, but a plenitude of life. It is his nature (ουσια) to be generative (γεννητικη) and fruitful (καρπογονος). It is capable of expansion, unfolding, and communication. Those who deny this fecund productivity fail to take seriously the fact that God is an infinite fullness of blessed life. All such people have left is an abstract deistic concept of God, or to compensate for this sterility, in pantheistic fashion they include the life of the world in the divine being. Apart from the Trinity even the act of creation becomes inconceivable. For if God cannot communicate himself, he is a darkened light, a dry spring, unable to exert himself outward to communicate himself to creatures.

Still, that generation is to be conceived in divine terms. In the first place, it is spiritual. The Arians, in opposing the idea of divine generation, objected that all generation necessarily brings along with it separation (τομη) and division (διάρσεις), passion (πάθος) and emanation (ἀπορροιά). And that would be correct if it were physical, sensual, and creaturely. But it is spiritual, divine, and therefore simple, without division (ἀρρευστως) or separation (ἀδιάρετως). It occurs without flux and division. While giving rise to distinction and distribution in the divine being, it does not create divergence and division. Athanasius writes: “Inasmuch as God is simple, the Father of the Son is indivisible and without passion, for although in the case of humans we speak of outflow and inflow, we cannot predicate these things of anything that is incorporeal.” The most striking analogy of divine generation is thought and speech, and Scripture

itself suggests this when it calls the Son “Logos” [Speech, Word, Reason]. Just as the human mind objectivizes itself in speech, so God expresses his entire being in the Logos [Christ]. But here, too, we must note the difference. Humans need many words to express their ideas. These words are sounds and therefore material, sense-related. They have no existence by themselves. But when God speaks, he totally expresses himself in the one person of the Logos, whom he also “granted to have life in himself” (John 5:26 NIV).

In the second place, therefore, divine generation implies that the Father begets the Son out of the being of the Father, “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,” as the Nicene symbol has it. The Arians, by contrast, contended that the Son had been brought forth by the will of the Father out of nothing. This, however, is not generation but creation, as John of Damascus points out. Creation is “the bringing into being, from the outside and not from the substance of the Creator, of something created and made entirely dissimilar [in substance],” while “begetting” means “producing of the substance of the begetter an offspring similar in substance to the begetter.” The Son is not a creature but he is “God over all, forever praised!” (Rom. 9:5 NIV). Accordingly, he was not brought forth by the will of the Father out of nothing and in time. Rather, he is generated out of the being of the Father in eternity. Hence, instead of viewing “generation” as an actual work, a performance (*ενεργειά*), of the Father, we should ascribe to the Father “a generative nature” (*φυσις γεννητική*). This is not to say, of course, that the generation is an unconscious and unwilled emanation, occurring apart from the will and power of the Father. It is not an act of an antecedent decreeing will, like creation, but one that is so divinely natural to the Father that his concomitant will takes perfect delight in it. It is a manifestation of what is truly expressive of his nature and essence, and therefore also of his knowledge, will, and power, in fact of all his virtues.

In the third place, therefore, the church confesses its belief in the eternal character of this generation. The Arians said that there was a time when the Son did not exist (*ην ποτε οτε ουκ ην*). They appealed especially to the words “he brought me forth,” or “created me” in Proverbs 8:22, and pointed out the antinomy between the terms “eternal” (*αιωνος*) and “begetting” (*γεννησις*). But if the “Father” and the “Son” bear their names in a metaphysical sense, as Scripture incontrovertibly teaches, it follows that the generation in question has to be eternal as well. For if the Son is not eternal, then of course God is not the eternal Father either. In that case he was God before he was Father, and only later—in time—became Father. Hence, rejection of the eternal generation of the Son involves not only a failure to do justice to the deity of the Son, but also to that of the Father. It makes him changeable, robs him of his divine nature,

deprives him of the eternity of his fatherhood, and leaves unexplained how God can truly and properly be called “Father” in time if the basis for calling him “Father” is not eternally present in his nature. We must, accordingly, conceive that generation as being eternal in the true sense of the word. It is not something that was completed and finished at some point in eternity, but an eternal unchanging act of God, at once always complete and eternally ongoing. Just as it is natural for the sun to shine and for a spring to pour out water, so it is natural for the Father to generate the Son. The Father is not and never was ungenerative; he begets everlastingly. “The Father did not by a single act beget the Son and then release him from his ‘genesis,’ but generates him perpetually.” For God to beget is to speak, and his speaking is eternal. God’s offspring is eternal.

Pg 322 Vol. 2

The life of God is divinely rich: **it is fecund** [producing or capable of producing an abundance of offspring or new growth, rich, proliferating; and I would say, overflowing like a spring or as a fountain, God being the fountain of all good, a spring as having a disposition to overflow, etc... seen in John 4:14, *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*”]; it implies action, productivity. The doctrine of the Trinity, accordingly, speaks of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. Both of these acts are essentially distinct from the work of creation: the former are immanent relations, while the latter is work *ad extra*. The former are sufficient in themselves: God does not need the creation. He is life, blessedness, glory in himself. Still, the creation is most closely connected with this **fecundity**.

Amillennialism, Old Testament Kingdom Prophecy and the New Covenant Hermeneutic

Code474

I think view of the latter days is the most consistent view compared to Premillennialism, Postmillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism – and significantly so! The hermeneutic is to use New Covenant/New Testament didactic (teaching) texts, those that are plain and simple to interpret the more difficult, obscure, figurative texts of the Old Testament and Revelation. This is the “key” that opens the understanding of the latter days. It is becoming more apparent to me that the tendency for many is to try to figure out what prophecies in Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and so on, mean by doing this in reverse, not considering the teaching texts in the New Testament. This opens one up to inconsistent speculations leading to many illogical, inconsistent and absurd conclusion. Dean Davis and others like Sam Storms, Sam Waldron, Tim Conway spell this out very well.

Chapter 17

OT Prophecies Considered: Daniel

Excerpts from *The High King of Heaven* by Dean Davis

My inserts in [blue]; in red to emphasize

The Coronation of the Divine Son of Man (vv. 13-14) pg 359

As Daniel continues to watch, still another vision appears before his inward eye. He beholds a Personage—One like a Son of Man—coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days. An entourage, presumably of angels, brings him near to the throne (v. 13). At this point, God gives him dominion, glory, and a kingdom—or a right of sovereignty—so that all peoples, nations, and languages might serve him. Unlike the dominion of the four beasts, the dominion of the Son of Man will be everlasting. Unlike the kingdoms of the four beasts, the Kingdom of the Son of Man—which is the fruit of his dominion—will never pass away or be destroyed (v. 14).

Regarding this brief, opaque text, three great questions arise, questions that only the NT can answer in such a way as **to bring clarity and conviction**: (1) Who is the One like a Son of Man, (2) What is the nature of the transfer of authority here envisioned, and (3) When exactly does the transfer occur?

As for the One like a Son of Man, nearly all evangelical commentators identify him as the Messiah, the divine-human Lord Jesus Christ (Dan. 9:25-26). True, our text displays a certain parallel between the inheritance of the Son of Man (v. 14) and the inheritance of the saints (vv. 18, 27), suggesting to some that the Son of Man symbolizes the saints. But Daniel explicitly identifies this Personage as One who is like a Son of Man, and he uses the singular pronoun throughout to speak of him. As for the parallelism, the NT explains all, declaring that through Christ the saints will indeed reign (and judge) upon the earth (Rev. 2:26-27, 5:10). Very importantly, in the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus over and over again spoke of himself as the **Son of Man**; it was, by far, his favorite self-designation, meant not only to identify him as the Messiah, but as a divine Messiah whose true origin is heaven itself. Notably, towards the end of his earthly course he explicitly cited this text while speaking to the Sanhedrin about his Parousia, lest there should be any confusion at all about which “Son of Man” he understood himself to be (Mt. 26:64, Mark 14:62)!

But what about the nature and timing of the transfer of authority from the Ancient of Days to his Messiah? Admittedly, the most natural reading of the text—apart from any reference to explicit NT teaching on the subject—is to say that God will bestow absolute and universal sovereignty upon the Messiah at the Judgment described in the vision immediately preceding; and, indeed, that it may well be the Messiah himself who executes that Judgment (vv. 9-12). Interestingly, certain OT apocrypha, along with several NT texts, make it clear that this was indeed the impression of at least some Jews in Jesus’ day, possibly including John the Baptizer himself (Mt. 3:12, John 12:34). However, the ambiguity here is considerable, and it stands as an open invitation to search the NT for much-needed help.

Happily, the NT does not disappoint. When was it, according to the NT, that Christ came to the Ancient of Days, riding upon the clouds of heaven (v. 13)? And when was it that God gave him dominion, glory, and absolute sovereignty over all creation, so that in the end all peoples, nations, and men of every tongue might serve both him and his Father (v. 14)? As we have already seen, both Jesus and his apostles answer fulsomely: **All this occurred when the Father highly exalted Christ by raising him from the dead**, catching him up into heaven on clouds of glory, seating him at his own right hand, and bestowing upon him all authority in heaven and earth, so that he might apply and consummate the redemption that he achieved through his humiliation on earth, **thereby bringing the Kingdom to its full, final, and glorious form** (Luke 19:12, Mt. 28:18ff, Acts 1:9-11, 2:22-36, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 1:1-3).

On this score, **Rev. 4-5** is of special importance. Indeed, one might well argue that these two chapters constitute a NT elaboration of Dan. 7:9-14. In Revelation 4 we behold the Ancient of Days, the eternal Creator and Judge of the world, seated in glory upon his throne. In Revelation 5 we then behold the Redeemer. Using apocalyptic imagery quite reminiscent of Daniel 7, the Spirit here depicts the **session of the Lord Jesus Christ**. **Having “prevailed” on earth to fulfill all righteousness and atone for the sins of his people, the Lion/Lamb enters heaven, comes before the Father, and, in taking a scroll from his hand, receives all authority in heaven and on earth** (Rev. 5:1-7, 12). Henceforth, he is authorized to “break the seals” on God’s last will and testament. That is, he is commissioned to superintend the remainder of Salvation History with a view to applying the merits of his redemptive work to the elect, gathering in a people for God’s possession from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, thereby creating a kingdom of priests who will inherit (the fullness of) eternal life and who will everlastingly reign upon the earth (Rev. 5:8-14). This is Daniel 7:9-14, writ large.

But this line of interpretation raises a legitimate question: Why, in Daniel 7, would the Spirit represent the heavenly reign of Christ as coming after the Last Judgment? Several answers, rooted in NT eschatology, come to mind.

First, the text itself hints that here we are in fact dealing with **two visions rather than one**, for both begin with the telltale introductory phrase: “I saw in my vision by night” (vv. 2-12, 13-14). Yes, the chapter as a whole may indeed be reckoned as a single vision; but at the very least, these verbal markers suggest that 7:13-14 touches upon a new (though related) theme. The NT, as we have just seen, seems to confirm this very thing in Revelation 4-5, where first we have a vision of God the Father as Judge, and then a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ as the High King of Heaven, with divine authority to rescue his people from the Judge.

Secondly, the burden of Daniel 7 is to speak of the great inversion of rulership that will occur at the end of Salvation History. It is, then, altogether fitting for the Spirit to touch on Christ’s heavenly reign in such a way as to emphasize its end result, precisely as he does in verse 14.

Finally, the sequence of the two visions effectively underscores a pervasive biblical theme: The Messianic Son of Man is subordinate to the Ancient of Days; the Ancient of Days is the fountainhead of all divine authority, from whom the Son of Man will receive the right to rule in such a way as to create the eternal Kingdom of God. As we have seen, the NT fleshes out this important theme in a number of texts, especially 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

Given that Daniel received this vision in an era when God was pleased to conceal or veil the mystery of the Eternal Covenant, it should not surprise us that here much eschatological truth is fused, hidden, or (purposely) left unclear. This includes the two stages of the Kingdom, the Messiah's heavenly reign, its distinctly redemptive character, the exact sequence of events leading up to the Judgment, the Messiah's role in the Judgment, and his role in the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness. But in the NT—and especially in Revelation 4-5—all is unveiled, clarified, and set in good order. Therefore, the NT mysteries of the Kingdom—and the NCH [New Covenant Hermeneutic] that is built upon them—have prevailed, not only to open up Daniel 7, but all OTKP [Old Testament Kingdom Prophecy]. Without them we are at sea. With them, we reach our desired haven and stand confidently upon solid ground.

Chapter 18

OT Kingdom Prophecies

Considered: Zechariah
Pg 381

We turn our attention now to the most prolific—and most fascinating—of the three post-exilic prophets: Zechariah (fl. 500 BC). Like his rough contemporaries, Haggai and Malachi, this great OT priest, seer, and martyr comforted a subjugated and much enfeebled nation with visions and prophecies of a glorious future. Over and again, he spoke of the coming of the Messiah, the final defeat of Israel's enemies, and the final restoration of God's people, land, temple, priesthood, and holy city—Jerusalem.

Our focus in the present chapter is Zechariah 12-14. It is the second of two lengthy prophetic oracles dealing with the future Kingdom of God. In order to understand the second well, let us look briefly at the first.

Zechariah 9-11

In essence, these three chapters constitute a single word of promise: In days ahead, God will send the Messiah, a mighty warrior-king who will lead Israel—fully regathered to her homeland in a Second Exodus from all the nations where God had scattered them—to victory over her perennial foes, and then to the eternal enjoyment of his covenant promises and blessings (9:1-10:12). We observe, however, that this oracle concludes on a dark and mysterious note: Far from following their Messiah, it appears that Israel's wicked leaders will actually reject their God-sent Shepherd-King, thereby annulling the Old Covenant, forfeiting God's protection, and exposing the nation to destruction (11:1ff)! And yet, in spite of all this, God will still have mercy upon a portion of his people, whom Zechariah calls "the afflicted of the flock" (10:2; 11:7, 11; 13:7).

How are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? Here, NT hindsight gives us much-needed insight: **The afflicted of the flock are a remnant of elect Jews (Rom. 9:6ff), called by God** to recognize

the divine-human Messiah (11:11; John 1:14, 6:40), enlist in his spiritual army (10:5f, 2 Cor. 10:4-6, 2 Tim. 2:4), preach his Gospel (9:10, 10:4f, 2 Cor. 2:14-16), **gather eschatological “Judah” and “Ephraim”** from the four corners of the earth to their spiritual homeland (9:11-17, 10:6; Titus 2:11-14), and— together with their new-born Gentile brethren—follow him to consummate victory on the Day of the LORD (9:11-17; Rev. 6:1-2, 19:11-16).

Summary:

We find, then, that Zechariah’s first oracle is primarily fulfilled in the first stage of the Kingdom; the stage in which Christ, through his humiliation and exaltation, purchases the “the Israel of God,” gathers her out of the Domain of Darkness, and leads her in triumphant Gospel combat beneath the banner of the High King of Heaven.

Zechariah 12-14

This brings us to Zechariah’s second oracle, found in chapters 12-14. Here again his theme is the coming Kingdom, but this time with an emphasis upon the Consummation. I have entitled it “Jerusalem in that Day,” since here the expression “in that Day” occurs some 15 times! To read the oracle itself is to see why: In essence, it is a **series of prophetic “snapshots,”** most of which look ahead to one or another facet of the **eschatological “Day”** wherein God will bring his Kingdom purposes to **complete fulfillment**. As we shall see, the prophet does indeed include a few references to the **Era of Proclamation**. But again, the emphasis here clearly falls upon the Consummation; upon the Day in which the LORD God will intervene in history one last time to execute final judgment upon Israel’s enemies, administer final redemption to his people, and usher them into the everlasting age of blessing and worship for which they have patiently waited, hoped, and longed, generation after generation.

In short, the “burden” of Zechariah’s final oracle is to reveal the final acts of God in the final stages of Salvation History.

Interpretive Approaches

As every student of the prophetic Scriptures knows, Zechariah 12-14 contains especially difficult and controversial OTKP’s. Therefore, we do well to ask at the outset: What method of prophetic interpretation will best guide us through the maze of competing views, and bring us safely to the insight and certainty we desire?

As we have seen, our **premillennarian** brethren are not shy about answering: We must use the method of prophetic literalism. Wayne Grudem, a respected historic premillennarian, is among them. Citing Zechariah 14:5-17, he writes:

Here again the description does not fit the present (Church) age, for the Lord is King over all the earth in this situation. But it does not fit the eternal state, either, because of the disobedience and rebellion against the Lord that is clearly present ... (Passages like this) indicate some future stage in the history of redemption which is far greater than the present church age but which still does not see the removal of all sin and rebellion and death from the earth.”

In this defense of premillennialism, Grudem does not openly espouse prophetic literalism. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that he approaches Zechariah's prophecy—and all OTKP—on the assumption that it is indeed the only valid method of prophetic interpretation. And if Grudem is right, then his conclusion is also right: Zechariah's oracle must be fulfilled in the eschatological agony, conversion, and millennial exaltation of ethnic Israel. For the prophetic literalist who is trying to honor NT revelation, there is simply no other option.

However, as natural as this approach may appear to be, we have seen repeatedly that the NT positively rejects it both by precept and example. For again, both Christ and the apostles consistently teach that the true sphere of fulfillment of all OTKP is the New Covenant, and also the new spiritual nation to which it gives birth: the eschatological "Israel of God," the Church (comprised of Jew and Gentile). But if this is so, then we cannot interpret this or any other OTKP literally. Rather, we must interpret it *eschatologically, covenantally, typologically, and ecclesiologically*. We must understand it as a "veiled" and "mysterious" representation of life under the New Covenant; life in one or both of the stages of the spiritual Kingdom that the New Covenant creates. Importantly, to adopt this approach is to see immediately that in Zechariah's great oracle, God was *speaking not only to OT Jews, but also—and primarily—to the Christian Church, supplying her with the wisdom, strength, and comfort she will need for her arduous pilgrimage through the Domain of Darkness, especially as she enters the last of the last days (Col. 2:2, Eph. 4:3, 13)*.

A Critique of Premillennial Approaches

I have suggested that the NCH gives us the best possible understanding of Zechariah 12-14. We should rejoice that it does, *seeing that premillennial views involve so many intractable problems*. Because of the popularity of those views, let us mention a few of the most important.

First, the oracle says nothing at all about a temporary millennial reign of Christ. Anyone who reads the text objectively, refusing to import millennial presuppositions into it, *will see immediately that Zechariah is speaking of the conversion of eschatological Israel, the Last Battle, the Day of the LORD, and the eternal worship of the World to Come*. It is completely counterintuitive to think that an oracle so grand—so cosmic—in its scale, should have as its *terminus ad quem* a temporary millennial reign of the Messiah, rather than the ultimate glories of the perfected Kingdom of God.

Secondly, we have already seen that this oracle gives us one of at least five different OT prophecies of the Last Battle. We have also seen that if we interpret them all literally, it is impossible to reconcile the conflicting data. Therefore, the only viable solution is to affirm, with the **NCH [new covenant hermeneutic]**, that in each such prophecy the Spirit is giving us a symbolic—*a typologically veiled*—revelation of the final clash between the Church and the World, a clash whose true nature is fully disclosed only in the NT. This approach alone retains the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and perspicuity of Scripture.

Thirdly, there is the problem of anachronisms. Do we really want to say, for example, that in our technologically advanced age the nations of the earth will come up against ethnic Israel riding horses, camels, and donkeys; or that they will bring cattle with them to serve as food (12:4, 14:15)?

Good questions

Fourthly, there are theological problems. How is it that in the Millennium—when Christ himself is allegedly seated upon his throne in Jerusalem—that **Israel and the nations will revert to observing the Mosaic Law**; a Law that, according to the NT, **Christ himself fulfilled** and **rendered obsolete** (Mt. 5:17, Rom. 10:4, Heb. 8:13)? In particular, will parents really take it upon themselves to administer Mosaic sanctions by executing the false prophet who sprang from their loins (13:2-4; Deut. 18:20, 13:13)? Will the nations really go up to a physical Jerusalem to join ethnic Israel in observing the Feast of Booths (14:16)? Will they really bring animal sacrifices to a physical Temple; and will priests really lay those sacrifices upon a physical altar, or boil them in physical cooking pots (14:20-21)? The mind steeped in NT revelation simply cannot bring itself to assent to such propositions. Instead, it looks immediately and instinctively for NT antitypes; **for the NT spiritual realities of which all these mysterious pictures are OT types, shadows, and symbols.**

Finally, what about the bearing of the rest of the book upon the interpretation of this particular oracle? Was there ever an OT prophet whose writing more fully embodied the “apocalyptic” mode of divine revelation than Zechariah? Was there ever a prophet who more consistently edified and encouraged God’s OT people by clothing his great eschatological revelations in vision and symbol? If, as all agree, the first half of Zechariah’s book (Zech. 1-8) is completely devoted to eight mystical visions loaded with Messianic and Kingdom symbolism, is it not likely that the second half of the book (Zech. 9-14), which is devoted to two great prophetic oracles, is loaded with Messianic and Kingdom symbolism, as well? Indeed, since the first half of the book also contains a number of prophecies, and the second half also contains a number of visions, is it not clear that the whole book is apocalyptic through and through, and that we must therefore interpret it symbolically, rather than literally?

Key!!

We conclude, then, from evidence found both in the OT and the New, that premillennial interpretations of Zechariah 12-14 are fatally flawed, and that our only hope of penetrating to the deep meaning of this great oracle lies in the skillful use of the NCH. In a moment, we will attempt this very thing. First, however, I must offer one further introductory word.

Snapshots Ahead

As mentioned above, Zechariah’s final oracle is composed of a series of prophetic “snapshots.” The Reformation Study Bible explains it this way:

Our understanding of the teaching of Zechariah is greatly helped when we recognize that the prophet gives pictures of the future in snapshot fashion, in which the pictures are not placed in any particular sequence. When we read a passage, we see only what is happening in that snapshot, not how it relates to the other snapshots.

In this helpful observation, the key word is sequence. Yes, the snapshots are related, but thematically, rather than chronologically. We see this vividly in the frequent appearance of the **eschatological marker “in that Day.”** Through the use of this expression, the Spirit is letting us know that he is now speaking of the two-staged Kingdom of God and Christ. But through its use he is also

letting us know that he is now giving us yet another cameo; yet another fresh miniature portrait of some event or characteristic of life proper to that (particular stage of the) Kingdom.

Does the oracle as a whole have any chronological drift or momentum? To be sure. Moreover, once we abandon premillennial literalism and futurism in favor of the NCH, we are able to see it clearly. Broadly speaking, it turns out that the prophecy is much like Ezekiel 36-39: It passes from the Era of Proclamation and Probation (the Kingdom of the Son), through the Last Battle and the Day of the Lord, into the World to Come (the Kingdom of the Father). Nevertheless, even as we bear this overall perspective in mind, we must recognize that each snapshot stands more or less on its own. Yes, its exact place in the total oracle will help us to interpret it; but having received that help, we must look for its **essential meaning in the OT symbols themselves, and in the NT truths to which those symbols so mysteriously point**.

With all this as introduction, we are ready at long last to begin our exegetical journey through Zechariah 12-14.

Strong in the LORD (12:1-9)

The opening prophecy, highly reminiscent of material found in chapters 9-10, sounds the theme of the oracle as a whole: In the eschatological conflict between “Israel” and the nations (i.e., between the Church and the World), God will be the strength of his people, leading them through much suffering to final triumph. Importantly, here the phrase “in that day” recurs five separate times. The **NCH** would have us receive this as a sign that we are dealing with events to occur in the eschatological era, which is the New Covenant era, the Kingdom era, and the Church era. We must, then, with the Spirit’s help, endeavor to “decode” the prophecy, so as to discern the NT meanings here embedded in OT language and imagery.

Since each of the nine verses in our snapshot is a prophetic nugget in its own right, I will briefly comment upon them one verse at a time.

In verse 1, Zechariah characterizes the entire forthcoming oracle (chapters 12-14) as “the burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.” It is a burden not only because it brings heavy tidings, but also because it burdens the prophet with a sense of urgency to deliver it to God’s people.

It concerns, not ethnic Israel, but eschatological “Israel:” the Church, which will be composed of Jews and Gentiles living and serving together as one family and one nation under Christ (Gal. 6:16, Eph. 2:15, Rev. 12:1f).

Good summary:

Importantly, the oracle emanates from the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos, the One who is sovereign over all history for the sake of his people and his glory (Rom. 8:28, Eph. 1:11-12). Since Zechariah will speak of the Consummation later in his oracle, we may safely conclude that here, in the opening snapshot, his focus is largely upon the Church’s spiritual warfare throughout the entire Era of Proclamation and Probation; throughout the first stage of the Kingdom; throughout the stage that the Holy Spirit, in the Revelation, refers to as “the Great Tribulation” (Acts 14:22, Rev. 7:14).

According to verse 2, the sovereign God has purposed to make the Church—the NT City of God (Gal. 4:26, Heb. 12:22)—a cup that causes reeling to all the (hostile) peoples around her. All who reject her Gospel and attack her will become **drunk with God’s judicial blindness**, and will therefore stagger and fall beneath his judgments (Jer. 25:15-16, 2 Thess. 2:1ff). Such is the fate of all who would harm his (gospel) prophets; of all who would touch the apple of his eye (Psalm 105:15, Zech. 2:8, Rev. 11:5). The eschatological siege—mounted throughout the Church Era—will not only be against the capital city of the holy nation (i.e., Church leaders and public institutions), but against the tribal villages as well (i.e., the laity themselves). All who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (Mt. 5:10-12, 1 Thess. 3:1-4, 2 Tim. 3:12).

Very good here:

In verse 3 the imagery changes, though the message remains much the same. In the eschatological Era, God will place the Church as a stone before all peoples. Those who build their lives upon this stone—by building them upon the Christ whom the Church proclaims—will live (Mt. 7:24ff; 1 Tim. 3:15). But those who stumble over it (1 Peter 2:4-8) and thereafter seek to “lift” it out of their way via persecution, will be severely injured. Indeed, Jesus, the Head of the Church, says that all such persons will be ground to dust and scattered like powder (Mt. 21:44). Throughout the Era of Proclamation, many (unbelieving) peoples will gather against the Church; at the end of the age, all will (14:2).

In verse 4 the Spirit uses OT martial imagery to promise that throughout the Era of Proclamation God will continually watch over—and rise to the defense of—his **eschatological “house of Judah,” the redeemed tribe of his Messianic Son, the Church**. This calls to mind the many occasions in which God confounded the plans of the enemies of Christ’s apostles, so that they might fully proclaim the Gospel to one and all, and so finish their course victoriously, with great joy (Acts 4:1-27, 5:17ff, 12:1-19, 13:4-12, 16:16-40, 18:1-17, 19:21ff, 20:24, 2 Tim. 4:18).

Verses 5-6 depict the gladness and dynamism of the eschatological “clans of Judah”—that is, of Church leaders serving all throughout the Era of Proclamation. In verse 5 we find them reveling in the spiritual vitality, loyalty, and support of “the inhabitants of Jerusalem;” glorying in the gifts and graces of everyday Christians eager to serve the cause of Christ. Here, one thinks of the apostle Paul, effusing over the prayers, outreach, and generosity of the Gentile assemblies he had founded (2 Cor. 8, 9; Phil. 1:3-11, 4:10ff, 1 Thess. 1, 2).

Verse 6 pictures the great unction and effectiveness of these latter-day Gospel warriors: Ablaze with the Spirit, they will be led in triumph in Christ, diffusing the knowledge of the Redeemer in every place, and infallibly building up his Church (2 Cor. 2:14-17, Eph. 4:7-16). Some (i.e., those who are being saved) they will “consume on the right hand,” torching their opposition to Christ, and so transforming them into spiritual brethren and fellow-citizens of the Jerusalem above (Phil. 3:20). Others (i.e., those who are perishing), they will “consume on the left hand,” consigning them, through their own impenitence, to the fires of judgment (John 3:19-21, 20:23, Acts 13:46). At the end of the Era of Proclamation, when the battle is over and the victory complete, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem will dwell securely in their eternal home(s), with none to frighten or attack again (John 14:3).

The message of verse 7—a prophetic nugget best interpreted in isolation from verses 5-6—is that “in that Day” God will pour a new social dynamic into the **eschatological nation**: None of his people will glory above the rest. Special honors will no longer be accorded to a royal family, or to the inhabitants of a capital city (let Rome take note!). Instead, God will distribute the gifts of his Spirit in such a way as to preclude divisions in Christ’s Body; in such a way that the members of the Body will have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:22-25). Therefore, far from seeking to exalt himself, he who is greatest in that Day will be the servant of all (Mark 9:35); each will regard his brother as more important than himself (Phil. 2:3); and all will seek glory and honor, not for themselves, but for Christ (2 Cor. 10:17, Gal. 6:14).

Verse 8 uses vivid OT imagery to declare that throughout the **Era of Proclamation** the LORD will defend his NT warriors and make them mighty through God for the tearing down of (spiritual) strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4f). Though their bodies may indeed feed the flames, not a hair of their head (i.e., their regenerate souls) will perish (Luke 21:18, John 17:11, 15, 1 Cor. 13:3). In and of themselves they are a picture of spiritual weakness and poverty, but they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them, even to the extent of casting (spiritual) mountains into the depths of the sea (Zech. 4:6-7; Mt. 5:3, 21:21, 2 Cor. 12:9, Phil. 4:13). Through them, God’s eschatological Zerubbabel will build his Church (Zech. 4:1-10, Mt. 16:18).

While verse 9 is indeed applicable to the entire Church era, its contents and position at the end of this prophetic snapshot suggest that here the Spirit is mainly looking ahead to the Day of the LORD, a theme to be taken up in chapter 14. If so, the judgment here in view will be the one which immediately follows the Last Battle, when Christ descends from heaven to rescue his beleaguered Bride and to destroy the assembled enemies of God, once and for all (14:2f, Rev. 19:11ff).

Before Strength, Tears (12:10-14)

How is it that **eschatological Jerusalem** [the church] will become a cup of reeling to the nations (12:2); how is it that God will so zealously come to her aid (12:4, 9); how is it that his people will find such great strength for the battle (12:5-7)? Zechariah’s next prophetic snapshot supplies the answer: They will enjoy these blessings because “in that Day” God will grant them deep, Spirit-wrought repentance and faith in Christ (12:10-14).

This will be the key to their eschatological victory. Why? Because this kind of repentance and faith will be the earmark of their regeneration and justification; because regeneration and justification will make them members of the New Covenant nation; and because the parties to the New Covenant are destined to inherit the promise of the New Covenant: redemptive rescue from every enemy of the Domain of Darkness, and redemptive restoration to all the blessings of eternal life. Such a people—with such a covenant-keeping God on their side—cannot fail to triumph in **the great eschatological clash of the kingdoms!**

When will this beautiful prophecy be fulfilled? **Premillennial** interpreters, bound by their literalist hermeneutic, feel compelled to interpret it ethnically, and therefore futuristically. John MacArthur writes, “Israel’s repentance will come because they look to Jesus, the One whom they rejected and crucified, in faith at the Second Advent.” But this view is deeply problematic. How did the Jews

described in 12:1-9 enjoy such strength and blessing from God if they were not yet converted to Christ? How shall the houses of David, Nathan, Levi, and Shimei suddenly reappear on the stage of history just prior to Christ's return? And how can Israel's national conversion be effected by the visible return of Christ, when, according to pervasive NT teaching, God's pleasure and purpose in NT times is to save sinners strictly by the "foolishness of preaching" (Mt. 28:18ff, John 17:17, Romans 10:14ff, 1 Cor. 1:21)?

No, premillennial literalism cannot uncover the meaning of this prophecy, nor can it illumine the time of its fulfillment. But the NCH can. Let us therefore bring that hermeneutic to the text for a closer look.

Zechariah's words will be fulfilled "in that Day," that is, in the eschatological era, the **New Covenant era** (12:11). Moreover, as the words themselves make clear, they will be fulfilled in the first stage of that Era: The **Era of Proclamation and Probation**. [or the age of the church - from Pentecost till Christ returns. That's the amillennialist's *millennium* – not a literal 1000 years but figurative one...a long period of time.]

Verse 10 gives us the theme, verses 11-14 elaborate. Each phrase of the long first verse is rich with meaning and deeply affecting.

In that Day, the sovereign God will **pour out his Spirit** upon the **house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem**. In other words, beginning at Pentecost and continuing right up to the Consummation, he will pour out his Spirit upon his elect, both Jew and Gentile (Acts 2:1ff). As the NT teaches, these are God's latter-day Israel (Gal. 6:16), his royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), and his chosen city of habitation (Gal. 4:26, Eph. 2:22, Rev. 21:1-4).

When the Spirit falls upon them, he will be to them "a Spirit of grace and supplication." That is, he will graciously make known to them the grace of God provided in Christ, and he will move them to supplicate God and Christ for a salvation they desperately need (John 1:14, Acts 2:37, Acts 11:18, 16:30, 20:24, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-14).

In this process, the NT saints of all generations "... will look upon (him) whom they pierced." The NT explains: When Christ is lifted up through the preaching of the Cross (John 3:14-15, 12:32), **the Spirit will enable** God's people to look upon him (Christ), **behold his deity** (John 1:14, 6:40, 14:9), and see that, in a very real sense, it was they themselves who nailed him to the Tree. How so? Because the (God-ordained) death that he died, he died not for his own sins, but for theirs (Mark 10:45, Rom. 6:10, 1 Peter 3:18, Rev. 5:1ff). Moreover, the same Spirit will enable these newborn saints not only to look upon Christ as the God-Man, but also to look to Christ as their Redeemer; he will enable them to trust, obey, and believe in Christ—and Christ alone—for the salvation of their immortal souls (John 4:14-15, 6:29, 40, Heb. 12:2).

In the end, the fruit of this spiritual rebirth will be joy unspeakable and full of glory; but the birth itself will not be without mourning and tears (Luke 15:7, John 16:21, 1 Peter 1:8). This is the theme of the rest of the prophecy. Conviction of sin—and corresponding sorrow over all that sin has cost God,

Christ, and man—will run deep, deep as the grieving of parents over the loss of their only son (12:10); or deep as the grieving of a whole nation over the loss of a godly and beloved king (12:11; 2 Chron. 35:20-27, Mt. 26:75, Luke 7:36-50, John 16:8-14). This sorrow will also be universal: It will touch every inhabitant of the land, every marriage, every generation of every family (e.g., David and his son, Nathan; Levi and his grandson, Shimei), and every institution (e.g., kings, priests, people), (11-14). And yet Zechariah's words are indeed glad tidings, for here, draped in OT type and shadow, is yet another proclamation of one of the great promises of the Kingdom: Through the eschatological gift of the Spirit—and the resulting gifts of repentance, faith, and a new, circumcised heart—all of God's people will be holy (Deut. 30:6, Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:24-32, 1 Peter 1:16, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:11, Heb. 8:6-13). All of God's people will be born again (John 3:3, 7, 1 Peter 1:23).

In passing, I want to acknowledge an element of truth present in premillennial interpretations of this passage. **Premillennarians** say that this is an OT prophecy of the latter-day conversion of ethnic Israel. In part they are right, for whenever a Jewish man or woman is called to Christ, it is fulfilled (Rom. 11:5). It will also be fulfilled when God, at the end of the age, through the preaching of the Gospel, calls a great multitude of Jews to faith in the first of Israel's "firstborn" sons, thus grafting (much of) ethnic Israel back into the vine of Abraham, the father of all the faithful (Rom. 4:1ff, 8:29, 11:11-32, Col. 1:18, Heb. 1:6, 12:23).

We must understand, however, that these are only partial fulfillments of our text, and that Zechariah 12:10-14 is fully fulfilled, neither in Jewish converts alone, nor in Gentile converts alone, but in all converts; in the **One New Man** and the **One New Nation** that is the Spirit-filled Body of Christ, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles (**Eph. 2:15, 1 Peter 2:9**).

So then, our premillennarian brothers are correct when they assert that this prophecy is fulfilled among latter-day Jews. But they err when they say it is fulfilled exclusively among latter-day Jews, exclusively at the end of the age, and exclusively at the Second Coming of Christ. Thanks be to God for the NCH, which helps to see all these things clearly, and so to make our way, together, towards his amazing eschatological truth!

After Tears, Cleansing (13:1-6)

This is the third prophetic snapshot in Zechariah's oracle. Aided by the NCH, we can readily discern its essential meaning: In the New Covenant Era, and as a result of Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin, God will sanctify his Church, purging it—and ultimately the whole world—of idolatry, false religion, and the deceiving spirits that are behind them. God's people themselves will have a role in this, as they use Church discipline—wherever and whenever necessary— to maintain the spiritual purity of their assemblies. Let us look briefly at the text itself to see exactly how the Spirit conveys this encouraging message.

In verse 1 God unveils the basis, or ground, of his sanctifying work in the Church. Every phrase is rich with meaning. "**In that Day**," points ahead to the **Era of Fulfillment**, especially the **Era of Proclamation**. "A fountain will be opened"—at Calvary, where Christ's blood will be shed in order to make atonement for sin; in order to secure the regeneration, sanctification, and eventual glorification of God's covenant people (Mk. 14:24, Rom. 3:25, 8:29-30). "**For the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem**"—

for the **Messiah's spiritual seed**, and for **God's spiritual City: the Church of all ages** (Luke 1:32-33, John 10:11, 15, Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:25). "For sin and impurity"—not only to forgive it, but also to wash it away; to cleanse (the souls of) God's people from all inward defilement. Again, such cleansing—such sanctification—is the focus of our text, a focus shared by the apostle when he wrote of Christ that "... (he) gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14; 2 Cor. 7:1, Eph. 4:26-27, Col. 1:22, John 1:9).

Verse 2 specifies two results of the open **fountain of Christ's blood**. First, God will cut off the names of the idols from the land. That is, by the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit, he will remove the names of every false god from the lips of his NT people, seeing that henceforth they will desire only to call upon his name and the name of his Son (Ezek. 36:25, 1 Cor. 1:2, 8:1-6, 2 Tim. 2:22). And secondly, he will remove the false prophets and the unclean spirit from the land. In other words, he will remove false prophets, false teachers, and the deceiving spirits that animate them, from the Church, a people seated in heavenly places in Christ, and therefore justly referred to here as the inhabitants of Immanuel's Land (1 Tim. 4:1-3, 2 Tim. 3:1ff, Heb. 12:22, 2 Peter 2:1f, 1 John 4:1-6).

Verse 3 intimates one way in which the cleansing will come about. Under the Law, false prophets who enticed Israel to serve other gods were punishable by death; and indeed, relatives of such prophets—including their parents—were specifically warned not to hesitate in delivering them up to that punishment (Deut. 13:6-11). In our text, God is therefore saying that "in that Day" eschatological Israel will, at long last, rise eagerly to the fulfillment of their duty under the Law. Zealous for the presence of the Holy One of Israel in their midst, they will be willing even to hand their own (spiritual) children over to death.

The NT fulfillment of this prophecy is not difficult to see: In the Era of Proclamation, Christian parents will subject even their own children—whether physical or spiritual—to Church discipline, discipline up to and including the spiritual "death penalty" of excommunication (Mt. 18:15-18, 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 1 John 2:19, 4:1-4, Rev. 2:2). However, they will do so in love and hope; love for their souls, and hope that through such discipline they (the children) will again be restored to life among the people of God (1 Cor. 5:5, 2 Cor. 2:3f). Thus shall the Holy Spirit—and the Holy People—preserve the spiritual purity of Immanuel's Land: the Church of Christ.

Verses 4-6 picture a Day when the Spirit-filled people of God will be so vigilant and so discerning that false prophets will not dare to ply their wicked trade among them. Verse 6, which alludes to the physical self-abuse practiced by the worshipers of pagan gods (Lev. 19:28, 1 Kings 18:28), is a parable of what will occur: When **eschatological Israelites [the church]** confront false prophets wearing the telltale marks of their idolatrous faith (e.g., error, immorality, confusion, disunity, etc.), they (the false prophets) will try, unsuccessfully, to conceal the truth with outright lies. Many NT texts—and the bloody theological battlefield of Church history—display the fulfillment of this prophecy: Always and everywhere, ravenous spiritual wolves—false brethren, false teachers, and false prophets dressed up as Christ's sheep—have sought to infiltrate the Lord's folds and win a following, only to be discovered, reprov'd, and expelled by the faithful undershepherds of the flock (Mt. 7:15, Acts 20:29, Gal. 2:1-5, 6:13, 2 Peter 2:1, Jude 1:4, Titus 1:10-16, 1 John 4:1f, Rev. 2:2).

The Revelation: Purpose and Literary Genre

Chapter 19

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At the beginning of our journey, we identified four fundamental flashpoints of controversy in the Great End Time Debate: The Kingdom of God, the proper interpretation of OTKP, the Millennium, and the Consummation. Happily, our close study of the Kingdom supplied welcome insights into the other three questions. Having learned that the Kingdom appears in two simple stages—the Kingdom of the Son (i.e., the heavenly, mediatorial reign of Christ) followed by the Kingdom of the Father (i.e., the glorified World to Come)—we realized that the thousand years of Revelation cannot be a third, intermediate stage of the Kingdom sandwiched between the other two, as premillennarians assert. Similarly, having learned that the two stages of the Kingdom are separated by a single Consummation at the Parousia of Christ, we realized that the Consummation cannot be fragmented into multiple comings, resurrections, and judgments, as premillennarians also assert. In short, our study of the Kingdom has gone far towards resolving the End Time Debate in favor of the classic amillennial view of Salvation History.

It remains, however, for us to probe Revelation 20 itself. If it does not describe a future millennial reign of Christ on earth, what exactly does it describe? If, as I have suggested along the way, it speaks of the Kingdom of the Son, is there anything in the Revelation broadly, or in Revelation 20 itself, to support this view? Our purpose in Part 4 of our journey is to find out.

Let us begin, then, by getting a feel for the Revelation as a whole. In particular, let us see if there is anything in the purpose, literary genre, and structure of the book that will help us better understand the Millennium of Revelation 20.

The Purpose of the Revelation

We begin to discern the purpose of the Revelation when we consider the circumstances in which it was given.

The year, according to most scholars, is around 95 A.D. John, in all probability the last living apostle, is now in his 80's (John 21:21-23). Because of his faithfulness in preaching the Gospel, the Roman authorities have exiled him to a penal settlement on the island of Patmos (1:9, John 21:21-23). It has been over 60 years since Christ's ascension. The Lord is tarrying, and among many believers the expectation of his Parousia is waning (2 Peter 3:1f). The demonic emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68), a vicious persecutor of the Roman Christians, has come and gone. Titus has decimated Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Under Domitian (A.D. 81-89), persecution has spread throughout the Empire and reached Asia (A.D. 81-9). More is now looming (2:3, 10, 13). And beyond this external threat, there are internal, as well. Heretical "Christian" sects have grown in size and number, whose members are seeking to penetrate the orthodox churches and draw away disciples (2:2, 6, 14-15, 20-24). Some churches are even tolerating them in their midst (2:14f, 20f). Meanwhile, others are in decline: The love of certain Christians is growing cold (2:4, 3:1-2); others, having thus far escaped the fires of persecution, are

falling in love with the world, and sinking into apathy and hedonism (3:14-21). The situation is dire. The faltering Church needs a word from the Lord.

The Revelation as a Gift to the Universal Church

The Revelation—all 22 chapters of it—is that word. Notably, at the very outset it is described as a gift: a gift from God the Father—through Christ, through the Spirit,² through angelic mediation, and through the apostle John—to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:1-6, 9, 22:8). Seven, however, is the biblical number of perfection or completeness (Gen. 2:2,3). The meaning is clear. God gave the Revelation, not just to the seven churches of Asia, but also to what the seven churches represent: the complete Church, the Universal Church. Likewise, the seven lampstands symbolize the one universal Church, especially in her present ministry as the Light of God and Christ to a world sunk in deep spiritual darkness (Rev. 1:13, 20)

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that history bears out this important truth. Like the seven churches, the universal Church has always had strengths and weaknesses; like the seven churches, it has always faced persecution, deception, and temptation; and like the seven churches, it has therefore always needed the Revelation. The book is, then, a great gift from the head of the universal Church, to the universal Church, for the help of the universal Church. Note carefully an important implication of this truth: the Revelation was not meant to be a closed book—not when it was given, not now, and not ever (Rev. 22:10). The Lord desires his whole Church—past, present, and future—to understand, obey, preach, and profit from the Revelation.

And that includes chapter 20, as well!

The Revelation as a Prophecy to the Universal Church

John also describes the Revelation as a prophecy (Rev. 22:10, 18). Now according to the apostle Paul, he who prophesies speaks to men for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3). This short definition wonderfully captures the flavor—and the purpose—of the book. Everywhere we turn, we hear the exalted Christ prophesying to his Church. Everywhere we find him teaching, warning, and encouraging her, so that she may “overcome” all opponents and safely enter the completed Kingdom at his return (2:11, 2:26, etc.).

Since this idea is so important—namely, that the Revelation is essentially an extended prophecy—let us develop it a little further by looking at the three fundamental ways in which the High King of Heaven here prophesies to his beloved Bride.

The Prophet Teaches His Church

First, Christ teaches the Church. Here I especially have in mind the way he builds up the Church Militant in her understanding of her true place in the world and in history; in other words, the way in which he gives her a biblical worldview.

In this regard, Revelation 12 is central. It begins with a vision of the Bride, God’s elect of all times and places. From the very outset, we see her as God sees her: She is a heavenly Woman with an earthly mission (12:1). In her OT embodiment, she gives birth to the promised Seed of the Woman—to Christ (12:5a; Gen. 3:15). When she does, the Dragon and his demonic minions try to kill the infant Jesus, but

cannot (12:4). Indeed, even when they do succeed in killing the Lamb of God, they altogether fail in “devouring” him, for he rises from the dead and ascends to the Father’s own right hand, where he now sits as High Prophet, Priest, and King of heaven. And from that heavenly seat he shall soon come again, this time to act the part of a shepherd against the enemies of his flock, shattering them once and for all with a rod of iron (12:5b, Psalms 2:9, 23:4).

For now, however, the Woman (i.e., the Bride in her specifically NT embodiment) must remain upon the earth. Therefore, in an eschatological Exodus from the Domain of Darkness, she flees into the wilderness of this fallen evil world (12:6). There she will remain for “1260 days” (or “a time, times, and a half a time,” or “42 months,” Rev. 11:2, 12:14, 13:5). Recalling the prophet Elijah’s three and a half year exile in the wilderness, these symbolic numbers mark the entire inter-adventual era—the Era of Proclamation—as a season of exile and tribulation for the people of God (1 Kings 17:1f). They will not, however, endure it alone: The Lord will faithfully nourish and aid his people all throughout their long wilderness sojourn, even as he did Israel and Elijah in theirs (12:6, 14-16). [this era is the age of the Christian church, from Pentecost to the 2nd advent. Dean Davis calls it the Era of Proclamation.]

But what exactly will the Church in the wilderness be doing as she awaits Christ’s return? The answer is found in verses 7-12: She will be waging war. Yes, the text itself says that Michael and his angels will wage war against the Dragon and his angels. But on closer inspection, we realize that this is simply a picture of heaven’s part in a war that the saints will be waging on earth. It is not a physical war, but a spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4, Eph. 6:12). It is the fulfillment of the Great Commission; the proclamation of the Gospel; the declaration of the saving power of the blood of the Lamb; the faithful testimony of the people of God to the Person and Work of the Christ of God (12:11). As they preach and teach—and as God’s elect everywhere hear the truth and receive it—the Kingdom of Christ continually pours into the earth (12:10). As it does, the kingdom of Satan, who formerly deceived and ruled the whole world, is continually spoiled and cast to the ground (Mt. 12:29). Hence, Satan’s fury against the Woman; hence the Groom’s diligent watch-care over his beloved and persecuted Bride (12:13-17).

Very good here:

Here, then, in a prophetic vision of stupendous theological reach and power, we find Christ teaching the Church Militant who she is, what she is about, what she can expect, and upon whom she can count, as she makes her way out of eschatological Egypt, through the eschatological wilderness of Sin, and into the eschatological Promised Land. Fittingly, this rich chapter stands in the middle of the book, for in many ways it supplies us with the keys to the whole book. Thanks be to God for such a wonderful prophetic gift!

The Prophet Exhorts His Church

Secondly, the Lord exhorts the Church. In particular, he exhorts her by teaching and warning about four great enemies that she will encounter over and over again during her long journey through the wilderness of this world.

The first is the Dragon, that serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan (12:9). He—along with his host of evil angels—is the invisible spiritual ruler of the fallen world-system through which the saints must pass on their way to the Promised Land. As we have seen, this teaching pervades the NT.

However, in the Revelation the Spirit draws upon various OT texts to depict the world-system as an unholy trinity; an unholy idol that fallen, rebellious, and deceivable mankind is all too inclined to worship. It is comprised of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Harlot. As we are about to see, these OT symbols correspond to God-given institutions, originally designed for the good of mankind, but now co-opted and corrupted by the Dragon (13:1, 4, 16:13). Ever since the Fall, he is the one enemy lurking behind the other three. Let the saints understand and beware (1 Peter. 5:8).

The second enemy is the **Beast** (13:1-4). This is the political or governmental face of the world-system (Daniel 7:1f). The NT teaches that civil government is a good, post-fall gift of God, designed to restrain evildoers through a faithful administration of his retributive justice (Rom. 13:1f). However, it also teaches that sin can and does corrupt human governments, sometimes to such an extent that they become unconscious instruments of the Satanic (2 Thess. 2:1f, Rev. 13:2, 4). When this occurs, deceived sinners will worship the Beast, rather than God (13:4). And when that occurs, the Beast will wage war against the people of God who, out of loyalty to their heavenly King, refuse to worship the Beast, and urge sinners to turn away from it towards Christ (11:7, 13:7, 17:14).

[Excellent comment on the mark of the beast \[code-beast\]](#) Conversely, see [Watson's comment on the image or stamp of holiness upon God's people using the same search code](#)

In the Revelation, Christ repeatedly exhorts his people concerning the Beast. Above all, he warns them not to receive his mark—his name, or the number of his name—on their right hand or on their forehead (14:9, 11, 15:2, 20:4). Here again the Spirit draws upon OT imagery to speak symbolically to God's NT people (Ezekiel 9). **The saints now have the seal of the living God on their foreheads** (7:3). In other words, because of their faith in Christ they now belong to the Father; they are his adopted sons and daughters, carrying his Name (Rom. 8:15, 1 Peter 1:17). How then shall they give their ultimate allegiance, whether in **thought** (symbolized by a mark on the forehead) or in **deed** (symbolized by a mark on the hand) [see [code-beast](#)], to any mere man or human institution? Note also that in Scripture six is the number of man (Gen. 1:26ff, Rev. 13:18, NIV), and three is the number of God Triune. Therefore, 666 is the number of man **seeking to supplant the triune God**; the number of man audaciously representing himself as the proper object of worship (13:16-18). The implications are clear: Men take the mark of the Beast whenever and wherever they worship the anti-christian, self-deifying State. And again, throughout the Revelation Christ warns his own that they must never do this evil thing.

Additionally, the heavenly Prophet exhorts his people not to succumb to the threats or actual persecutions of the Beast, even if this means the loss of work, supply, reputation, or life itself (2:10, 13:17). He buttresses this exhortation with a twofold promise: The Lord will always be at his suffering people's side, and he has already prepared a victor's wreath for each one who overcomes (2:10, 12:14-16). Note carefully that in Revelation 20, as elsewhere in the book, Christ again exhorts the whole Church concerning the Beast: Those who refuse to receive his mark (of ownership), but instead remain faithful until death, will enter heaven as disembodied spirits, there to reign in life with their High King until he comes again at the end of the age to raise them from the dead and bestow upon them the glories of the World to Come (20:4-6). More on this later.

The third enemy is the **False Prophet**, also called the **Beast from the Earth** (Rev. 13:11-18, 16:12-16, 19:20, 20:10). A careful reading of the relevant texts shows that this **beast** symbolizes, not simply false religion, but false religion willingly pressed into the service of the self-deifying State. Energized by Satan (13:11), and authorized by the State itself (13:12), those people who function as the False Prophet use both coercion (13:12, 16-17) and religious deception (13:14-15) to set up “an image” to the Beast. That is, they seek to organize, implement, and encourage the worship of the State and/or the person in whom the State is embodied at any given moment in history.

The False Prophet is present throughout the entire Era of Proclamation. In John’s day he was embodied in “... the emperor cult and the Commune of Asia, a council of distinguished representatives promoting loyalty to the emperor.”³ In our own day, he rears his head wherever government propagandists encourage the adulation of the Chairman, the Fuehrer, the King, or the President. Notably, Revelation 13:13-15 implies that in some instances Satan will actually empower the False Prophet(s) to deceive men with miraculous signs (Exodus 7:8-13).

Most assuredly, this will be the case at the end of the age. The Gospels and epistles warn us that when the (final) Antichrist arises to deceive the whole world, he will perform “false signs and wonders” (Mt. 24:24, 2 Thess. 2:1-2, 9-12). Not surprisingly, we receive the same warning in the Revelation: John sees three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. They are demonic spirits, performing signs and going abroad to the kings of the whole world, in order to assemble them for the battle of the Great Day of God the Almighty (16:12-16). As I will argue later, Revelation 20:7-10, in remarkably similar language, predicts this very thing one final time. Clearly, the High Prophet of Heaven very much desires his Church to be fully prepared for the last (embodiment of the) Beast, the last False Prophet, and the Last Battle.

The fourth and final enemy is the Great Harlot, also referred to as Babylon the Great and the Great City (17:1, 3, 5, 18). The relevant chapters make it clear that the Harlot represents the economic, commercial, and cultural face of the world-system. As such, she is not so much a persecutor or religious deceiver as she is a seductress (17:4). In former times, she tempted the world through such luxurious commercial centers as Babylon, Tyre, and Sidon. In John’s day, she tempted it through Rome. In our own day, she tempts it through wealthy, pleasure-mad cities now situated all over the globe, and also through omnipresent electronic wizardry wherein she bares her ample bosom and offers herself freely for a simple click.

John sees that at any given moment the entire world-system is in bed with the Harlot, spiritually speaking: Nations, kings, and merchants—all have fallen to her allurements (18:3). As a general rule, she likes to collude with the Beast and the False Prophet, doing all she can to persecute the Church (17:6) and entice saints and sinners alike with her sorceries (i.e., fake, demonic spiritualities, 18:23). Accordingly, no sooner do we begin to learn about the Harlot, than we hear the prophetic word of the Lord to his Church: “Come out of her, my people, that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues” (18:4, 3:14-22). As he speaks, the saints receive both warning and promise: Satan’s woman, the Harlot, is doomed to destruction. In part, it will come at the hand of the Beast himself, who will one day turn against her (17:14-18). However, in far greater part it will come at the hand of Christ, who, in a single hour, will make her utterly desolate (18:19) and render her an eternal

prison house of Satan and his demons (18:2). Meanwhile, Christ's Woman—comprised of all who hear his call, flee the Great City, and loyally cling to him in faith—is destined for final rescue and restoration; is destined to become a Holy City and a glorious Bride, forever dwelling with God and Christ under brand new heavens in a brand new earth (19:7-8, 21:2). Let all the saints be warned ... and take heart.

The Prophet Comforts His Church

Finally, the heavenly Prophet uses the Revelation to speak comfort to his Bride. Yes, as trembling Christians well know, the Revelation repeatedly issues warnings of inevitable tribulation and certain judgment. However, the more they read, the more they realize how much comfort is offered along with those warnings, and how many different forms that comfort takes.

For example, at the very outset of the book, Christ comforts his pilgrim people with a majestic vision of his own divine nature, covenant faithfulness, and Messianic glory (1:9-20).

He then comforts them with manifold assurances of his presence in, and faithful watch-care over, all his churches, even as he manifests the tough love that he feels for each one (2:1-3:22).

He comforts them with rich, symbolic representations of his heavenly, mediatorial reign, the saints share in it, and his absolute sovereignty over all remaining history (4:1-5:14).

He comforts them with scenes of the spirits of departed believers safely home in heaven, praying for divine justice, and waiting eagerly for the resurrection of their bodies at his return to the earth (6:9-11, 20:4-6).

He comforts them with portraits of his own Parousia in power and glory at the end of the age (14:14-20, 19:11-21).

In conjunction with that, he also comforts them with visions of ultimate justice: of final rewards for the faithful saints, and of final retribution against the persecuting and God-hating "inhabitants of the earth" (6:9-17, 11:11-19, 15:1-4, 16:17-21, 20:7-15).

Similarly, he comforts them with several "sneak previews" of the glorified Church surrounding the throne of God Triune, exultantly lifting up the eternal worship that will fill the World to Come (7:9-17, 14:1-5).

And, of course, he comforts them with two luminous chapters supplying mysterious, thought-provoking glimpses of the (eternal) life of the saints in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21-22).

Conclusion

Summing up, we have seen that the great purpose of the Revelation is prophetic; that in it, God, through Christ, speaks to the universal Church in order to teach, warn, exhort, and comfort her, so that she might make a worthy and triumphant pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world into the eschatological Promised Land.

This is highly relevant to Part 4 of our study for the very important reason that it naturally and powerfully inclines us to an "ecclesiastical" interpretation of Revelation 20. In particular, it suggests that Revelation 20 cannot possibly be what many premillennarians claim it is: a divine afterthought, in which the Spirit suddenly shifts his focus from the Church to ethnic Israel, and from the Church era to a future Millennium. No, just like the rest of the book, chapter 20 must also focus on the Church, and on the present evil age through which the Church makes her difficult pilgrimage (Rev. 12). As we have just

seen, this conclusion flows naturally from the One who gave it (the Head of the Church); from the ones to whom he gave it (the seven churches, emblematic of the universal Church); and from the purposes for which he gave it (to teach, warn, and comfort the Church). Moreover, as we shall soon see, it also flows naturally from a careful study of the structure, contents, and symbolism of Revelation 20 itself.

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An Overview of Ezekiel 40-48

Good summary!

Having ruled out the premillennial approach, it appears that there is only one route open to us: We must apply the **NCH** so as to uncover the NT truth here **embedded in OT language** and imagery. In other words, we must adopt an amillennial interpretation. While limitations of space prevent me doing so in great detail, I think it only fair to my **premillennarian** brethren that I make an honest effort to open up this challenging text at least a little, especially since it is among the two or three most difficult OTKP's in all of Scripture.

Here, then, is my approach. In the pages ahead I will comment at some length on each of the seven sections mentioned above. Following Keil, my thesis will be that these nine chapters do indeed describe the life of God's people in the eschaton, in the new heavens and the new earth. I will argue that in giving this climactic vision to Ezekiel, the Spirit of God was using **ideas** and **imagery drawn from the entire corpus of OT revelation (but especially from the Law)** to picture the Church in the World to Come as the Israel of God, now returned to the Paradise of God, all through the Person and Work of the Christ of God.

With the Master's keys firmly in hand, we are ready to begin!

The Everlasting Mountain (40:1-4)

These verses set the stage for Ezekiel's grand tour of life in the World to Come. In a vision, the prophet is transported to the land of Israel, where he is set atop a very high Mountain. Upon its southern slopes he sees a structure like a city (1-2). Suddenly an angel appears, who takes him to the structure and urges him to listen carefully so that he (Ezekiel) may relate all he hears to God's people, thereby encouraging their hearts (3-5). The tour is about to begin.

Again, this is a vision. As such, it is only natural to expect that its contents are symbolic (cf., Daniel 2, 4, 7, 8, Zech. 1-6, Rev. 4-22). And indeed, we have already seen that the NT attaches rich **symbolic meaning** to each and every one of the fundamental elements of Ezekiel's vision: the Mountain, the Temple, the Service of Worship, the City, and the Promised Land. Therefore, like Ezekiel's angel, it (the NT) must be our guide.

In these introductory verses, the central symbol is the very high Mountain. Its significance is illuminated by Israel's history. As Moses received the pattern for ethnic Israel's ceremonial worship on Mt. Sinai, so Ezekiel beholds—in modified OT imagery—the pattern for eschatological Israel's ceremonial worship on this Mountain (Ex. 24-31). As Moses surveyed ethnic Israel's temporary Promised Land from the heights of Mt. Nebo, so Ezekiel surveys **eschatological Israel's eternal**

Promised Land from the heights of this Mountain (Deut. 32:48-52). And as **ethnic Israel** worshiped God in his temple situated atop Mt. Zion, so—according to Ezekiel—**eschatological Israel** [the true church] will worship God in his Temple atop this high **Mountain**, this **eschatological Zion** (2 Chron. 5:1ff).

But what exactly does the **Mountain** represent? As we saw earlier, even the OT prophets used this particular symbol to represent the **new heavens and the new earth**; a **fully transformed World** from which every trace of moral and natural evil has been removed, so that the glory of God may fully dwell therein (Isaiah 11:9, 25:6-8, 57:13, 65:25, Joel 3:14-17).

This interpretation is confirmed by Revelation 21:1-11. There we learn that John, just like Ezekiel, was carried away in the Spirit to a great and high Mountain. What did he see? The Holy City—New Jerusalem—coming down out of heaven from God (21:10-11). And where, in fact, did the Holy City settle, there to remain forever? It settled upon a new earth, for the former heavens and the former earth had passed away (vv. 21:1-2). Thus, John, in accordance with the principle of **Progressive Revelation**, was given to see what Ezekiel could not: **The Mountain of God is none other than the new earth**, the glorious home of Christ's glorified Bride and God's glorified people (21:3). For the present, the **Church** is a light shining in the darkness of this fallen world; **she is as a City upon a high Hill** (Mt. 5:14, John 1:5). However, in that day—according to Ezekiel and John—she will shine like a City on a Mountain, the highest Mountain of all!

The Everlasting Temple (40:5-42:20)

This portion of the vision describes the Temple Area and its contents. Ezekiel's journey begins here because in the World to Come the Temple—or rather the worship of him who inhabits the Temple—will be of first importance. Also, as he learns later in his tour, the Temple Area will be situated at the absolute center of the Land. Thus, by speaking first of the center of life in the World to Come, the Spirit alerts us to the fact that in the eschaton the worship of God in Christ will lie at the heart of all things.

If we limit ourselves to the essentials, the plan of the Temple Area is fairly easy to describe.¹¹ It is a perfect square (42:15-20). At the exact center is the altar (43:13-17). Behind the altar, to the West, stands the Sanctuary, or the Temple itself. Elevated upon its base, it is comprised of the Most Holy Place (another perfect square), the Holy Place, and a portico. The whole structure is enclosed on the North, South, and West by three galleries containing 90 side rooms (41:5-11). The Sanctuary and the altar are enclosed by a small rectangular court (40:47). On either side of the Sanctuary, just outside this court, are buildings with more chambers for the priests (42:1-10). Behind the Sanctuary to the West are three separate buildings, two of which contain utensils for the preparation of the various sacrifices (46:19-20). On the North, East, and South sides of the Temple court there are gateways, each containing chambers for the Temple guards (40:28-38). Surrounding the entire Temple Area is a large outer court, bounded by four high walls each measuring 500 cubits in length. Thus, it too is a perfect square. In the middle of the Northern, Eastern, and Southern walls there are large gates, each with chambers for the Temple guards (40:5, 16-20). Ezekiel's tour was "outside-in" and "inside-out." He enters through the Eastern Gate of the outer court, proceeds towards the Most Holy Place of the Temple (which he does not enter), and exits again through the Eastern Gate.

While it is undoubtedly true that each element of this vision contains rich typological significance, we cannot see the trees until we behold the forest. In other words, we must first ask ourselves, “What does the Temple Area as a whole symbolize?” The NT answers in no uncertain terms. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days” (John 2:18). For Christ, the Temple of God was—and would be—his body. The apostle Paul elaborates, declaring that God the Father gave Christ to be head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23, 5:22ff). So then, the **Temple** is not simply Jesus’ physical body, but rather his **mystical Body, the Church, of which he is the Head**. Paul states this explicitly, affirming that Christ’s **ever-expanding Church** is a “holy Temple in the Lord, in whom (the saints) are being built together into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-21).

These NT passages reveal the true sphere of fulfillment of Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple Area. In other words, God was using OT ideas and images to give him a glimpse of the Church—the Body of Christ—as she will exist in the eschaton. John the Revelator confirms that this vision was indeed symbolic. In a vision of his own he describes the new earth. However, he sees no temple in it. Why? Because “. . . the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple” (Rev. 21:22). Thus, in the World to Come (the very theme of Ezekiel’s prophecy) there will be no Temple made of wood or stone. However, John does see a holy city, adorned as a Bride for her Husband, and declares that she herself is the tabernacle (or temple) of God, the place where He will live and be among them forever (21:1-4). In short, John tells us that Ezekiel’s vision of the **eschatological Temple of God is fulfilled in the glorified Body of Christ**.

We conclude, then, with Duguid, that Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple Area is “architectural theology”, that it uses OT temple imagery to set forth important theological truths about Christ and the Church. In particular, we may say that in this early portion of the vision the Spirit uses OT type and shadow to picture the completed Body of Christ, enjoying the life of Christ, because of the merits of the Work of Christ, even as it awaits the gift of the glory of God the Father at the Coming of Christ. This thesis requires further explanation. It is best, however, to offer it as we look at some of the more important details of Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple Area.

1. The Outer Walls (40:5, 16-20)

The outer walls—which are very high, thick, and strong—are “walls of salvation” (40:5, 16-20; Isaiah 60:18). They represent the mighty power of the Person and Work of Christ “to separate the holy from the common”; to deliver and preserve his Body from the presence, power, and penalty of sin (42:20). Even today, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the High King of Heaven has erected a **legal and spiritual barrier between his Church on the one hand, and the world, the flesh, the devil, and the judgments of God on the other** (Ex. 14:19-20, John 17:15, 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, 1 Pet. 1:1-2, Rev. 18:4). In the Age to Come, that barrier will be perfect and complete. The sin and defilement that entered ethnic Israel’s former temple area will never enter spiritual Israel’s **eschatological Temple Area** (Ezek. 8-9, Rev. 22:15). The God who abandoned **ethnic Israel’s earthly sanctuary** will never abandon **spiritual Israel’s heavenly sanctuary** (Ezek. 10). In the words of one commentator, the World to Come will be a “Paradise with Walls”—**walls of salvation that mightily keep evil out and God in**. Therefore, it will be a world that can never fall again.

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The Everlasting Wholeness (47:1-12)

This short but beloved portion of **Ezekiel's vision** might aptly be called the Restoration of All Things (Mt. 19:28, Acts 3:21). **Under rich types, it depicts God, through Christ, by the Spirit, bestowing everlasting wholeness upon his creation**; transforming our present sin-cursed earth into the Land of Promise; turning the former things into the new heavens and the new earth (Rom. 8:18-25, Rev. 21:1, 5).

The narrative is well worth a brief retelling. The prophet is now brought to the door of the Temple. There he sees a little stream of water welling up from beneath the threshold, flowing just south of the altar (where the Laver was situated in former times), and then out through the two East Gates of the Temple District (vv. 1-2; 1 Kings 7:23f). Mysteriously enough, the further the stream flows, the deeper and wider it becomes, until at last it is an unfordable River (vv. 3-5). Suddenly, the prophet notices a great many trees growing on the two banks of the River (vv. 6-7).

At this point, the angel explains all: The River will first go east, then south, and then through the desert, until at last it empties into (something like) the Dead Sea, whose (salty) waters will therefore be healed (v. 8). Indeed, everywhere it goes, the River will bring life, so much so that (what seems to be) the Dead Sea itself will again be filled with fish. As a result, fishermen, with nets in hand, will station themselves all along its shores, even from En Gedi to En Eglaim (v. 10); however, its swamps and marshes will be left for salt (v. 11). All kinds of trees will grow along the banks of the River, trees whose leaves will never wither, and whose fruit will never fail. The water continually flowing from the Sanctuary will give them eternal life, so that their fruit will ever serve for food, and their leaves for healing (12).

Again, I reckon this to be a vision of the **Restoration of All Things**. Here we have a "mysterious" OT picture of what Christ will accomplish at his Parousia, when he subjects all things to himself by the exertion of his mighty power; when he consummates his redemptive work by making all things new (Phil. 3:21, Rev. 21:5). It is important to note, however, that the vision also gives us a kind of retrospective; that it also pictures something of the works of God by which this, the final goal of Salvation History, has now been reached.

We can better understand all this by bringing NT light to bear on some of the symbols involved. The **waters** are, of course, **the life-giving Spirit of God**, long promised by his OT prophets (Psalm 46:6, Isaiah 44:3, Ezek. 39:29, Joel 2:28, 3:18, Zech. 14:8). **They flow forth from the Temple of God, which typifies both the Person of Christ** (John 2:19, 4:10-14, 7:37-39, Acts 2:33), **and the Body of Christ, his Church** (Eph. 1:23, 2:22). In the Era of Proclamation, they flowed through faithful Christians (who are fishers of men) to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Mt. 4:19, John 20:22-23, Acts 2, 10). Now, at the Parousia, they flow through Christ himself into all creation.

Other details are rich with significance. The waters pass by the altar: They are given solely on the ground of Christ's substitutionary life and death. They also pass over the site historically reserved for the laver: They provide spiritual cleansing from the guilt and stain of sin (John 13:10, 1 Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:5). Also, as they flow outward, they grow from a trickle to a mighty rushing River. Here again we have

a retrospective, a picture of the infallible advance of the Kingdom of the Son, of which Jesus himself often spoke (Mt. 13:31-33). But above all, this is a picture of the mighty work of the Spirit at Christ's return, when he raises the dead, transforms the living, lifts the (salt of the) curse from nature, swallows up death in victory, and floods the whole creation with the healing, life-giving glory of God (Rom. 8:18-25, Phil. 3:21, 1 Cor. 15:51ff).

In that Day, only the swamps and marshes surrounding the Dead Sea (which covers the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah) will be left in salt. That is to say, only those who have refused to take the water of life will eternally remain under the curse and judgment of God (Deut. 29:23; Mt. 25:46, John 4:10, 7:38, Jude 1:7, Rev. 18:2).

In passing, we should note that this particular OTKP is outstanding for taking up the biblical motif of Paradise Lost and Regained. The waters flowing from beneath the Temple threshold remind us of the great River that flowed out of Eden (Gen. 2:10-14). The trees on either side of the River—trees that nourish and heal—remind us of the Tree of Life that stood in the midst of the Garden (Gen. 2:9, 3:22, 24). As for Paradise itself, it is true that Ezekiel, like all the OT prophets, typically describes it in terms of the Promised Land. That was only natural: Since he and his contemporaries lived under the Law, the prophetic Spirit was pleased to frame the promise of the Eternal Covenant in terms drawn from the Law; in terms of an eternal restoration to life with God in the land (Deut. 30:1-10). In the Revelation, however, “true truth” comes out. There we see what Ezekiel only hints at here: When Christ returns, the River of Life will indeed transform all creation into the Promised Land. But more than this, it will transform the Promised Land into Paradise itself. There the River will ever flow; there the Tree of Life will ever nourish and heal; and there the Last Adam will ever dwell, in glory, with his beloved Bride (Rev. 21:1-2, 22:1-2, 14).

The Everlasting Homeland (47:13-48:29)

Having spoken to the prophet about the Temple at the heart of the Holy District, and the Holy District at the heart of the land, God now brings Ezekiel's grand tour to a close by unveiling the boundaries and distribution of the Promised Land itself. Here, the central theme is inheritance. This is the land that God will cause his people to inherit, and this is the place where he will cause them to inherit an everlasting life of God-centered and Christ-centered worship. Thus, as in the Revelation, so here: The Spirit is giving us a picture of the eschatological Church worshiping God in the new heavens and the new earth.

In 47:15-23, Ezekiel learns about the borders of Israel's eschatological homeland. They are patterned after the ideal given to Moses (Num. 34:1-12). The message is: In the eschaton, the LORD will bring to pass what Joshua could not, but what God's Greater Joshua could and did. At long last, his people will enter his rest; they will fully **occupy the Land of Promise** (Heb. 3:7-4:10). Moreover, God himself explicitly tells us that this is the land he promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the same land that the apostles identified as the World to Come and the new heavens and the new earth (Gen. 12:7, 15:18-21, 22:17, 28:4, Psalm 37:11; Mt. 5:5, Rom. 4:13, 8:18f, 2 Peter 3:13).

And there is more. It appears, for example, that the eastern boundaries of the five northern tribes reach almost to the Euphrates River (47:15-17, 48:1-5). This recalls the glory days of the United

Kingdom, days that pictured the universal dominion of Solomon's greater Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—in the Age to Come (Psalm 72, I Kings 4:20-21). Also, here there are no longer any tribes living across the Jordan. This tells us that in the Age to Come all Israel, being bound together in Immanuel himself, will gladly dwell together in Immanuel's Land (Josh. 22:19, Isaiah 8:8, John 10:16, Rom. 8:16-17, Heb. 12:22).

Finally, we learn that the **right of inheritance is given not only to Israelites, but also to resident aliens** (vv. 21-23). This depicts NT teaching to the effect that citizenship in God's Kingdom **is not based upon physical birth or descent, but solely upon a God-given, faith-filled** desire to live with Immanuel himself, and so—at his Second Coming—in his everlasting land (Isaiah 8:8). Whether Jew or Gentile, all such persons are the true sons of Abraham; therefore, along with father Abraham himself, they will inherit the Promised Land (Rom. 4:9-25, 8:12-17, Mt. 8:11, Gal. 3:28, Eph. 2:11-22).

In 48:1-29 the theme of inheritance is especially prominent. The new homeland was indeed promised in days of old, but forfeited by sin. Now, however, grace has abounded, and it is fully inherited at last.

The passage—which discusses the territorial allotments in the new Israel—displays a **remarkable symmetry**. In essence, God divides the Land into 13 parallel strips, the length of each one running from west to east. First, he allots the seven northern strips: the northern-most to Dan, after whom comes Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah (48:1-7). Then—at considerable length, so as to emphasize its importance—he allots the territories within the central Holy Strip (48:8-22). At its own center lies the Holy District, a **perfect square** which itself is divided into three strips. The topmost is the territory of the Levites; the central contains the temple and the territory of the (Zadokite) priests; the lowermost contains the City, its surrounding open spaces, and the pasturelands cultivated by City workers drawn from the several tribes of Israel. On either side of the Holy District are the territories of the Prince. Finally, God allots the territories of the five southern tribes: Benjamin (closest to the Holy Strip), followed by Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad (48:23-29).

Here again, as Duguid puts it, we have “theology in geographical form.” The picture is loaded with theological significance, a significance that should expand the mind and rejoice the heart of believers in Jesus. Let us take a moment to explore it.

We have already seen that the Temple-centeredness of Israel's eschatological homeland depicts, under OT type and shadow, the God-centered and Christ-centered worship of the Church in the World to Come (Rev. 4-5, 7).

So too does the orientation of the tribal territories, which, like the door of the Temple itself, is towards the East. Here we glimpse the spiritual orientation of **God's eschatological people**, who, through all eternity, will gaze **eastward**, looking expectantly for **fresh dawns of the glory of the LORD** over the Land, and fresh entrances of his glory through the Temple Gates. According to a slightly different **metaphor**, **the orientation of the tribal allotments pictures the Bride of Christ**, who, through all eternity, will watch for fresh visitations of her Beloved; of the One who, at the close of her arduous pilgrimage upon the earth, suddenly rose like the Morning Star, and—in power and great glory—circled

the Earth from east to west, gathering her to his side, so that in the end he might bring her to his everlasting home (Ezek. 43:1-5, Mt. 2:1, 24:27, 25:1f, John 14:1f, 2 Peter 1:19, Rev. 2:28, 7:2, 22:16).

According to 47:13-14, each tribe will receive an **equal allotment** of land for a permanent possession. This recalls Jesus' Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, wherein we find the compassionate landowner giving each laborer a denarius, irrespective of how long he worked (Mt. 20:1-16). It also reminds us of his Parable of the Wedding Feast, where entrance to the Feast is said to depend not upon what one has done, but simply upon the possession of a proper wedding garment (Mt. 22:1-14). All three texts teach the same glorious NT truth: While the saints standing in the Kingdom may indeed be a reward for their own good works, their presence in the Kingdom is an inheritance, a gracious gift of God, bequeathed to them through the Christ who so lovingly and effectually worked on their behalf (Mt. 25:34, Gal. 3:26-4:7, Rom. 8:12-17, Rev. 21:7).

The **precise arrangement of the twelve tribes** also seems to convey NT truth. For example, in the new order, Benjamin will be situated south of the Holy District, while Judah will lie to its north. Under the Divided Monarchy, these two tribes constituted the entire Southern Kingdom. The message, then, is that the eschatological division of the land into northern and southern regions will in no way reflect a spiritual division rooted in sin. To the contrary, here all former divisions have been overcome, for now all the tribes are perfectly united around the central sanctuary and under the Prince. Certainly this pictures the perfect spiritual unity of the Church around her great High Priest and Sacrifice; perhaps it also **pictures her spiritual unity around the Prince of Life**, the High King who nevertheless reigns at all times in glad submission to his Royal Father (Acts 3:15, 5:31, 1 Cor. 15:27-28). In eschatological Israel, the blood of Christ will have broken down every dividing wall, with the result that to all eternity there will be one flock, one kingdom, and one holy nation living in the land (Ezek. 34:23, 37:24, Zech. 14:9, John 10:16, Gal. 3:28, Eph. 2:11-22, 4:1f, 1 Peter 2:9).

We observe also that the eight tribes closest to the Temple are the descendants of Jacob's wives (Leah and Rachel), while the four tribes situated at the extremities of the land are the descendants of their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah (Gen. 30:1-13). Since the OT prophets often represented the Gentiles as (blessed) servants of eschatological Israel, Ezekiel may have done the same here, by way of vision (Isaiah 49:22-23, 60:1-14). If so, the lesson is not that in the eschaton the Gentiles will be second-class citizens dwelling at maximal distance from Christ, but rather that God, in the last days prior to the Consummation, graciously grafted them into the vine of Israel, making them "handmaids" of the (Jewish) heirs of the Kingdom, but also co-heirs with them of the glorious covenant promises given to Abraham and his seed (John 10:16, Rom. 4:1f, 11:11-24, Gal. 3:1-14, Eph. 2:11-22).

The Everlasting City (48:30-35)

Fascinatingly, the capstone of Ezekiel's vision of the World to Come is devoted to a subject almost completely overlooked in all that has gone before: the City. For the exiles—and indeed for godly Jews of all subsequent generations—"the City" could be none other than Jerusalem, the very same Jerusalem whose **eschatological restoration** is sung by OT prophet after prophet. It is, then, quite understandable that the Spirit of God, having devoted 95% of Ezekiel's vision to a description of Israel's Temple-Centered life in her **eschatological homeland**, should bring the prophecy to a close with a few words about the **future of the Holy City, Jerusalem**. By so aligning Ezekiel's message with the rest of

OTKP, the Spirit would only strengthen Israel’s ancient hope of eternal life in the land with their faithful, covenant-keeping God.

And yet, with the benefit of **NT hindsight**, we can see clearly that the City God actually had in mind was very different than the one the OT saints had in mind. This is apparent from certain curiosities within the text itself, and also from explicit NT teaching, especially as that is found in the Revelation.

Concerning the curiosities, we observe in chapters 40-48 that the word “**Jerusalem**” does not appear once. Also, **Ezekiel’s City lies outside the Temple Area**, whereas in historical times the Temple was always situated inside the walls of Jerusalem. Similarly, Ezekiel’s City is clearly subordinate to the Temple, since the Temple alone is situated in the midst of the Holy District. Note also that the tribal names of the twelve territorial allotments differ from the tribal names on the twelve gates of the City: The latter include Levi and Joseph, but exclude Ephraim and Manasseh. Finally, and most tellingly, God assigns the City a completely new name: **The LORD is There**. We conclude, then, that the text loudly and repeatedly hints at a great eschatological mystery: The Eternal City of God will be different from the Jerusalem of old; it will have a new nature, a new identity, and therefore a new name.

As we have seen, in the NT the mystery is finally unveiled: The true and everlasting City is not made of brick and mortar, **but of living stones; the saints themselves are not only the Temple of God, but also the Jerusalem of God** (John 4:21, Gal. 4:26, Heb. 12:22, 1 Peter 2:5, Rev. 3:12). Knowing this, they steadfastly persevere in their pilgrimage through this fallen world, eagerly awaiting their Lord’s return and the manifestation, in glory, of the eternal City whose Builder and Maker is God (Col. 3:1-3, Heb. 11:10, 16, 13:14).

Notably, this theme is especially prominent in the Revelation, where God’s elect hear the Spirit calling them out of the Great City (Babylon) and into the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 11:8, 16:19, 18:1ff). Neither is a physical structure, both are spiritual populations; they are distinct realms with distinct rulers, whether Satan or Christ. As Ezekiel himself saw, just prior to the Consummation, Satan’s forces will attack the Beloved City (Ezek. 38-39, Rev. 20:9). But God—in Christ—will intervene to destroy the Great City and glorify the Holy City; a City that will be without stain or wrinkle or any such thing; a City that will be worthy to be called the Bride and the Wife of the Lamb (Eph. 5:27, Rev. 18:1f, 21:1-2, 9). This is the City that all God’s people—from Abraham on—have seen, sang, and faithfully striven to enter by the narrow gate (Luke 13:24).

6. Ezekiel and the Revelation

I want to conclude this long chapter with a few words about the usefulness of the Revelation for helping us discern the true meaning of certain OTKP’s. Its great value is rooted in two fundamental facts. **On the one hand, the Revelation is very much like OTKP in that it uses OT ideas and images to convey NT truth.** On the other hand, it is different from OTKP in that it goes on to incorporate specifically New Testament ideas and images, thereby pointing the way to a proper interpretation of the Old. In other words, just like the Gospels and the Epistles, the Revelation confirms the New Covenant Hermeneutic. It does so, however, by using apocalyptic rather than didactic language.

Two illustrations from the book of Ezekiel should make this important point clear, and also serve to undergird the New Covenant interpretations I have offered in this chapter.

Two Views of the Last Battle

In our study of Ezekiel 34-39, I argued that the prophet used OT ideas and images to describe the Last Battle, the final **clash between Christ** and **Satan**, the **Church** and the **World**. The Revelation positively confirms this view. The primary proof text is Rev. 20:7-10, where the Spirit identifies the **eschatological opponent** of God's people as Gog and Magog. Observe, however, that in the Revelation the Holy Spirit subtly departs from Ezekiel's portrait of the battle so as to encourage an ecclesiological interpretation of both texts.

For example, here in the Revelation, Gog and Magog come up upon "the breadth of the earth" (i.e., the whole world, wherever Christians are living). Here they surround "the camp of the saints" (i.e., Christians everywhere, who are "encamped," like Israel after the Exodus, in the wilderness of this fallen world-system). And here they surround "the Beloved City" (i.e., Christ's beloved Church, a City built of living stones).

That the Spirit here has the Church in view is further confirmed by 20:4-6, where we learn that it is only the followers of Jesus—many of whom were faithful unto death in the face the Beast's persecutions—who enter heaven to reign with Christ throughout the thousand years. This helps us to identify the "saints" of Rev. 20:9 who are to endure the Last Battle at the end of the thousand years: They too are the followers of Jesus (Rev. 1:9). We conclude, then, that Revelation 20—and a great many other NT texts—identifies the true contestants of the Last Battle as the Church and the World; and that here the Spirit of God is teaching us to read Ezekiel 38-39 as giving all of God's people a veiled OT revelation of this very thing (Mt. 24:15, 21, 2 Thess. 2:1f, 1 John 2:18, Rev. 11:7-10, 16:12-16, 19:17-21).

Two Views of the World to Come

This brings us to our second illustration. In the course of our study, I have argued that Ezekiel 40-48 **uses OT types and shadows to describe the life of God's people in the eschaton**, in the new heavens and the new earth. Revelation 21-22 confirms this view. Indeed, it is safe to say that these two chapters serve as a kind of NT commentary on Ezekiel's final vision. The many similarities tell us that John's vision is actually based on Ezekiel's. However, the many differences—the many additions and NT elucidations—tell us that John's vision is also meant to interpret Ezekiel's. In other words, here in Revelation 21-22 the Spirit of God uses apocalyptic language—signs and symbols, frequently drawn from the OT—to confirm what the more didactic Gospels and Epistles positively teach: All OTKP—including Ezekiel 40-48—is fulfilled under the New Covenant that Christ introduced, and in the twofold spiritual Kingdom that he brought into the world.

Let us take a moment to illustrate how this works.

Like Ezekiel, John is carried away in the Spirit to a great and high **Mountain**, upon which he sees a City (Ezek. 40:2, Rev. 21:10). Here, however, we learn what the **Mountain** represents: **The new heavens**

and the new earth. For just as John sees the Holy City “coming down from heaven” to alight upon the Mountain (21:10), so too he sees it coming down from a new heaven to alight upon a new earth (21:1-2). The two are one: the Mountain and the New Earth. So then, Ezekiel’s Mountain (and the land as well) stands for the new world that Christ will create at his Parousia, a world in which there will no longer be any curse, tears, mourning, pain, or death (Rev. 21:2, 22:3).

Like Ezekiel, John sees a City (Ezek. 40:2, Rev. 21:2, 10). Or, to be more precise, Ezekiel saw “a structure like a City”—which was the Temple—while John saw a City, but no Temple, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its Temple (Rev. 21:22). Already, the two visions begin to converge. And the convergence continues, for just as Ezekiel beholds the glory of God entering the Temple, so John beholds the City “having the glory of God” (Ezek. 43:1-5, Rev. 21:11). Thus, God and the Lamb are the Temple in which the City dwells, but the City is the Temple in which God and the Lamb dwell! John’s is a “Temple-City” where God “will dwell among the sons of Israel forever” (Ezek. 43:7); where “he shall dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be among them” (Rev. 21:3). In the glorified Temple-City, the promise of the Eternal Covenant is fully fulfilled (Ezek. 37:27).

Like Ezekiel, John sees the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates of the City (Ezek. 48:31-34, Rev. 21:12). However, John also sees the names of the twelve apostles written on the foundation stones of the City walls (Rev. 21:14). This beautiful symbolism confirms two crucial NT truths: **The City is the Church, the antitype of OT Jerusalem; and the Church—comprised of all God’s saints, both OT and New—is the one true eternal habitation of God**, built upon the foundation of Christ’s holy apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone (Gal. 4:26, Eph. 2:20). Ezekiel, then, beheld the Church, but he could not yet behold the foundation of the Church, God having foreseen something better, such that the OT prophet(s) could not be made complete apart from the NT saints (Heb. 11:39-40).

Like Ezekiel, John hears that no foreigners can enter God’s sanctuary (Ezek. 44:9, Rev. 21:27). In John’s case, however, the meaning of “foreigners” finally becomes clear: They are (willful) strangers to God’s Covenant of Grace, which, in NT times, was offered in Christ; having spurned it, they remain in their sins, under judgment, outside the City (Rev. 22:10-15).

Finally, like Ezekiel, John saw the River of the Water of Life flowing from the throne of God; and on either side of the River, trees bearing fruit for food and leaves for healing (Ezek. 47:1, 7, 12; Rev. 22:1-2). John, however, sees much more, and much to illumine the true meaning of Ezekiel’s vision. For example, he beholds the water flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1). **This confirms that the water does indeed represent the Holy Spirit**, whom God, in both stages of the Kingdom, pours out richly upon his people (and his new creation) through Christ (Acts 2:33, Titus 3:6). Very importantly, John also identifies the trees as the Tree of Life (22:2). The message here, aptly situated at the end of the NT canon, is that through the Last Adam—the One who perfectly fulfilled the Covenant of Works in behalf of his people—the saints have returned to Paradise; indeed, they now enjoy Eternal Life in all its fullness, the same Life offered to man in Eden, but forfeited when the First Adam fell into sin. To all eternity, the twelve crops of fruit—emblematic of the divine life of Christ bestowed because of his fruitful Work—will sustain God’s people; to all eternity the leaves of the Tree—emblematic of

the restorative power of Christ's life and work—will bring ever-increasing wholeness to the nations of the saints (Rev. 22:2).

We conclude, then, that the Revelation is indeed a precious resource for opening up the meaning of Ezekiel's Oracle of Good News, and of OTKP in general. However, that usefulness is useful only to those who are well established in **NT eschatology and the NCH, both of which the Revelation presupposes and abundantly confirms.** [NCH is the New Covenant Hermeneutic]

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The Vision Interpreted (vv. 15-28)

As the vision draws to a close, Daniel inquires as to the meaning of what he has just seen, and receives a measure of further illumination from one of the angels involved. The section falls nicely into four parts. I will comment briefly on each one, highlighting aspects of special relevance for our study.

In verses 15-18 we find the prophet—grieved and troubled at the persecutions yet in store for God's people—asking for more light on the vision as a whole. One of the angels in attendance responds, identifying the four beasts as four kings/kingdoms that will arise “out of the earth.” However, the emphasis here, as elsewhere, falls upon the eternal Kingdom of God, which the Most High—the sovereign LORD of all history—will bestow upon the saints from heaven above (cf., Dan. 2:44-45). As we have seen, verses 13-14, supplemented by an abundance of NT teaching, reveal that **God will accomplish the final reversal at the Parousia of the glorified Son of Man.** This is the blessed hope of all the saints, both OT and New (Titus 2:13).

In verses 18-20, Daniel relates that even after this general explanation he remained curious about the details surrounding the fourth beast. As if in answer to his curiosity, the vision suddenly resumes, and he sees the little horn making war against the saints and prevailing over them (v. 21). In a moment, the angel will explain the meaning of these ominous words. But first the prophet's vision ends with yet another sighting of the coming of the **Ancient of Days** (who is Christ at his Parousia), vindicating the faith (and the faithfulness) of the saints, and bestowing upon them the joys of eternal kingdom life (1 Thess. 3:1-10). Now the motif of the entire vision—indeed, of the entire book—is clear: **God faithfully warns of coming conflict so as to produce endurance; then he graciously promises coming triumph so as to produce courage, hope, and eager expectation.**

In verses 23-27, we have the angel's (partial) explanation of the vision of the fourth beast. Several key points—much illumined by the NT—may be made.

First, the **fourth beast**, which is **emblematic of the final earthly kingdom**, will be different from all the rest, largely because it will succeed in devouring the whole earth (v. 23). Here, the global hegemony of the ancient Roman Empire is partly in view. However, that very hegemony anticipates something far greater, something eschatological, and the true burden of this verse: In the days of the fourth beast, Satan will finally achieve his age-old purpose—manifested from the very **beginning at Babel**—of **creating a counterfeit kingdom** that overspreads the entire world (Gen. 11:1-9). Later, John will foresee much the same thing, writing, “And all the world marveled and followed the **beast**” (Rev. 13:3; 12:9, 16:4). Only “the saints”—the true spiritual Church of all generations, but especially of the last

generation—will refuse to marvel, follow, worship, and otherwise receive his mark of ownership (Rev. 13:8, 17:8, 20:4).

Secondly, the verbiage of verse **24** suggests to some commentators that the life of the fourth beast is destined to unfold in three separate stages. In the first, the beast arises from the Great Sea: This marks the advent of the ancient Roman Empire. In the second, **“ten” horns** (i.e., kings/kingdoms) arise from head of the Beast: This marks the totality (symbolized by the **number ten**) of the serial manifestations of Greco-Roman culture subsequent to the fall of ancient Rome. In the third, **one final horn** arises, subduing “three” of its ten predecessors. This speaks of the **final eschatological embodiment of the Roman Empire**, achieved by the Antichrist, who suddenly consolidates the residuum of Roman power and influence (symbolized by the number 3). This approach, advocated by **E. J. Young**, is quite attractive in that it allows us to see how, from the time of Christ right up to the Consummation, the territories, peoples, and culture of the ancient Roman Empire remain near the center of the drama of world history.

There are, of course, other views. For example, many of our **dispensational** brethren, adopting a highly futuristic interpretation of this verse, look for an end time confederacy of ten European nations, over (the remnant of) which the Antichrist will rule after subduing three of them. However, this approach seems too futuristic: Certainly the text itself does not teach it explicitly. Moreover, if the numbers ten and three are meant symbolically, then the dispensational view becomes a prescription for fruitless speculation and failed “fulfillments” based upon the ebb and flow of European politics. By my lights, Young’s approach is far preferable.

Verse 25 sketches the character and career of the Antichrist. He is arrogant and blasphemous; he will attempt to alter well-established customs and laws (including many pertaining to religious observances); and—for a brief, divinely ordained season—he will “wear out” the saints (i.e., persecute them to the point of apparent defeat). This, as we have seen, is none other than the Last Battle, which, according to the NT, will be pitched by the **Man of Lawlessness** and his subservient world-system against the true spiritual Church of Christ (Mt. 24:9-13, 2 Thess. 2:1f, Rev. 11:7-10, 16:14, 20:8).

In verses 26-27 the angel brings his message to a close by once again sounding a note of final triumph. The NT fully illumines his words. At Christ’s return, the Son of Man will execute final judgment, destroying not only the Antichrist and his followers, but also **“the dragon”** that inspired and empowered them all (Mt. 25:41, 2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 17:14, 19:19-21, 20:10). After this, the kingdoms of the world will become the (universal) Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he—and the saints with him—will reign forever and ever, amen (v. 27, 1 Cor. 15:28, Rev. 11:5, 22:5).

Conclusion

We have seen that the NCH richly opens up this majestic but mysterious OTKP, giving us a simple, biblically coherent interpretation, thereby greatly encouraging the NT saints of all times.

Alas, premillennial views do not fare so well. Premillennarians assert, for example, that verses 9-12 do not describe the Last Judgment at all, but instead speak of a lesser judgment that will immediately

precede Christ's millennial reign. Regarding verses 13-14, some among them, following Scofield, argue that Daniel is describing a special "investiture" in heaven, by which Christ, just prior to his millennial reign, will receive authority from the Father to descend to the earth and rule there. Others—such as Fausset, Walvoord, and Pentecost—contend that these verses, and verses 26-27 as well, simply describe Christ's Second Coming in order to inaugurate his millennial kingdom upon the earth.

The great difficulty with all such views—apart from the fact that they are needlessly complicated and confusing—is that they miss the thrust of the chapter as a whole. Again, the **Spirit's evident purpose** in giving Daniel this vision was to **illumine, prepare, strengthen, and encourage all the saints of subsequent times with a revelation of the entire course of "the kingdoms of this world;"** a revelation of all that must occur up to and including the Consummation, after which God's everlasting Kingdom will appear in its glorious fullness. Premillennarians, bound by their own eschatology, are forced to deny this, and to assert that Daniel 7 merely takes us to the end of the Era of Proclamation, after which there is still much more to come: the Millennium, the (last) Last Battle (i.e., at the end of the Millennium), and the (last) Last Judgment—all of which the Spirit neglected to mention, not only here, but in chapter 2 as well! The net effect of this error is to eclipse the grandeur of what God actually revealed, becloud the vision of the saints, and defer their fondest dreams for an extra thousand years!

We conclude, then, that **unlike premillennarian literalism**, the **NCH** gives us a **profoundly satisfying interpretation of Daniel 7**; an interpretation that richly equips Christ's Church for the dramatic closing scenes of the present evil age, even as it kindles their hopes for a glorious, everlasting, heavenly Kingdom soon to come!

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Let us take a moment to examine this view in some detail. My approach will be to go through our text verse by verse, offering interpretations guided by the RTAV. The translation, with slight (and significant) modifications imported from other versions, is that of the very literal New American Standard Bible.

[Daniel's 70 week Prophecy on page 372](#)

Verse 24

Seventy sevens have been decreed over your people and over your holy city, to finish (the) transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make atonement for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

In this verse, Daniel gives us the theme of the entire prophecy. It is, as it were, a condensed (and rather cryptic) heading, of which all that follows is a detailed elaboration.

[Good summary here:](#)

What is that theme? Advocates of the RTAV would sum it up this way: God has decreed a set period of time in which he will fulfill all his redemptive purpose and plan; in which he will bestow all his redemptive promises upon all his redeemed people. In other words, here Gabriel declares that the

prophecy to follow will give us the remainder of all Salvation History, from Daniel's day to the Parousia of Christ, the Judgment, and the advent of the World to Come. It will survey all that the LORD will do between now and the Consummation to bring his people and their world into the eternal Kingdom of God.

This soul-stirring interpretation is more than confirmed at the very outset. Gabriel declares that seventy sevens are decreed over the people of God and the Holy City. He says nothing of years, or weeks of years. Manifestly, these numbers are symbolic. But why were they chosen, and what do they mean? Doubtless they allude to the seventy years of Israel's exile and captivity, and therefore appear here by way of a grand promise: In the seventy sevens ahead, God will fully deliver his people from their exile and captivity, and fully restore them to all his covenant blessings.

The key word here is "**fully**." In the Bible, the **numbers seven and ten symbolize fullness, perfection, and completion**. Seventy sevens, being 7x7x10, mystically expresses perfect completeness (see Mt. 18:22). So then, speaking as he did, Gabriel was simply saying, "God has decreed a set period of time within which he will fulfill, perfect, and complete his redemptive purposes. I am about to tell you what will happen in it."

Leupold puts it this way: "The seventy heptads is the period in which the divine work of greatest moment is brought to perfection."⁹ If this interpretation is correct, it means that the terminus ad quem of the prophecy is indeed the Parousia of Christ at the end of the age. This in turn implies that the seventy sevens are not calendar years, and that henceforth no calculations (or 360 day years) are possible or needed. What a relief!

God's decree concerns Daniel's people and his Holy City. Who and what are they? Here, we must take care. The Jerusalem of verse 25a is indeed earthly Jerusalem, and the people who rebuilt it were indeed ethnic Jews. But as I will argue in a moment, the City of verse 25b, and the City and Sanctuary of verses 26-27, are different. They appear after the coming of Messiah the Prince (25b). They arise in NT times, under the New Covenant. Therefore, according to the NCH, they represent Christ's Church. And as we have seen, Daniel and his godly OT compatriots will be members thereof in excellent standing (John 10:16, Heb. 11:40)!

Gabriel now unveils six redemptive blessings that God will bestow upon his total "Israel" over the course of the seventy sevens (Gal. 6:16). They appear in two triads: The first three pertain to redemptive rescue from sin, the second three to redemptive restoration to eternal life. While textual peculiarities make the exact translation of some these words difficult, the basic message is clear enough, and the NCH richly helps us to uncover the meanings involved.

Good summary:

My take is as follows. By the end of the seventy sevens—and because of the total redemptive work of Christ, both in his humiliation and exaltation—God will have completely: (1) finished (or restrained) the transgression of his people (i.e., stopped their transgressing, as well as the power of their former transgressions to condemn them); (2) made an end of (or sealed up, concealed) their sins (i.e., stopped their sinning, as well as the power of their sins to condemn them); (3) made atonement through Christ

for their iniquity, thereby reconciling them to God; (4) brought in everlasting righteousness (i.e., imputed and imparted Christ's righteousness to his people, so that in the end they may dwell where perfect righteousness dwells, 2 Peter 3:13); (5) sealed up vision and prophecy (i.e., fulfilled all previous canonical visions and prophecies); and, (6) anointed the Most Holy (i.e., bestowed divine glory and perfect holiness upon his eschatological Sanctuary, which is the Body and Bride of his Son, the Church, Eph. 3:21, Rev. 21:1-11).

These are all Kingdom blessings, to be introduced by the New Covenant that will create the Kingdom. Therefore, since the Kingdom comes in two stages, there is a sense in which we Christians already enjoy them; there is a sense (largely forensic) in which we have already taken possession of them. Nevertheless, the accent here definitely falls upon the end, the eschaton, the final state. Commenting on the blessings of the completed Kingdom, and indicating Gabriel's purpose in declaring them to Daniel, Leupold writes:

In these six statements we have the sum of all the good things that God promised to men perfectly realized. With this verse we stand at the ultimate goal of the history of the Kingdom of God. What follows will unfold the successive stages by which this goal is realized and present the main features to be looked for and borne in mind by the people of God. We have just seen the essentials of God's program for the ages.

Verse 25

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven sevens; and for sixty-two sevens it will be built again with open square and moat (or wall), even in troubled times.

This verse spans the bulk of the remainder of Salvation History: 69 of the **70 sevens**. According to the ESV, the marginal reading of the ASV, and the advocates of the RTAV, it is properly divided into **two distinct parts**: the first seven, and the 62 sevens that follow it. The first seven begins with a decree to restore and rebuild earthly Jerusalem. Most likely it is the decree issued by Cyrus in 538 BC, though the precise date is of little importance, since the first "seven" is not a week of years, but an era of Salvation History whose exact duration we neither know nor need to know (Ezra 1:1-4, Isaiah 44:28; cf., Dan. 9:23). The first seven ends with the coming of Messiah the Prince. This is first advent of Christ, through whose earthly work—through whose humiliation—all the blessings of v. 24 were purchased and are thereafter bestowed.

Now the 62 sevens begin. They too symbolize an era, the era in which Christ builds his Church. However, here Gabriel uses OT typological language to speak of NT realities, **casting the growth of the Church in terms of the growth of the City of God**. The reference to its open square (or streets) suggests expansive growth outwards. The reference to a moat or wall suggests divine protection. Pointing to the very real but also limited success of world evangelization, Leupold paraphrases, "She shall again be built extensively, yet within fixed limits."¹¹ The growth shall occur "in troubled times," a phrase echoed in the Revelation, where the Spirit refers to the Church Era (and indeed to all Salvation History) as "the great tribulation." Yes, God has decreed the rearing up of Christ's Church; but he has also

decreed much trouble for the saints who will build it (Rev. 7:14; Acts 14:22, Rom. 5:3, 2 Cor. 1:4, 1 Thess. 3:4).

This division of the 69 weeks into two distinct eras (an OT and a New) is decisive for the interpretation of the prophecy as a whole, seeing that it places Christ's first advent at the end of the first seven, rather than at the end of the 69. In particular, it radically challenges the interpretation of verses 26-27 offered in the TFAV and the DTAV. However, the superiority of this approach to verse 25 is so clear that one wonders how we could have missed it for so long! Above all, it immediately helps us to understand why Gabriel did not simply refer to 69 sevens, but instead to seven sevens and 62 sevens. Moreover, as we are about to see, once we accept this framework, it sheds an abundance of fascinating—and eschatologically vital—light on the 70th seven of verses 26-27. We turn to them now.

Verse 26

Then after the 62 sevens the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its (or, his) end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed.

This is the first of two verses dealing with the seventieth seven; with the third and final stage of Salvation History. Again, it is not a week of seven literal years, as repeated exposure to dispensational claims may incline us to believe. No, it is an era of brief but uncertain duration, **the era in which God will bring Salvation History to a close in final conflict, final judgment, and final redemption**. This interpretation buttresses the RTAV, since it finds Daniel doing here exactly what we would expect, exactly what he has done before, and exactly what he will do again: giving us nothing less than the Consummation, the dramatic closing scenes of God's plan for the ages. I say it with respect: On this score, the other two views are not worthy to be compared.

The theme of verse 26 is the end time agony of the true spiritual Church of Christ. The close of the present evil age is near. The Great Commission is nearly accomplished. Lawlessness abounds, and deep darkness covers the earth. At this point, says the angel, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. Obviously, this cannot refer to his atoning death, as argued by the two other views. But what does it mean? **Leupold** suggests that the "cutting off" is best illuminated by the "having nothing":

(The "having nothing") implies that he shall not have that which normally might be expected to fall to his lot, such as followers, influence, and the like. If that is the case, then the preceding statement must have involved his being "cut off" in the sense of losing all influence and prestige that he ever had before men. The season of the successful building of the City and the Sanctuary is at an end. As far as the world is concerned, Messiah shall be a dead issue. His cause will seem to have failed.

At that time—amidst such widespread apostasy from the law and Gospel of God—the world-system will take action: The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the City and the Sanctuary (2 Thess. 2:1ff). The prince is not Titus, but the Antichrist, the very Antichrist whom we meet over and again in **Daniel's visions** (7:8, 11, 21-22, 24-26, 11:36ff). His people are the eschatological seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), the "sons of the evil one" (Mt. 13:38), the followers of the Beast (Rev. 13:1f). As

for the City and the Sanctuary, Leupold opines: “These represent the visible institution called the Church. These shall be destroyed, and with them the influence of the Christ that we now still know and feel to be abroad in the earth.”¹³ Doubtless this destruction will involve a new measure of Christian martyrdom. Nevertheless, the primary meaning is that religious freedom for Christians will be universally denied, and the institutional Church forced underground. Daniel has already seen this coming (7:21, 25). It is explicitly predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. It appears also in Revelation 11:7-10, where the Spirit represents the end time **Church under the image of two OT witnesses**; witnesses whom the **Beast** kills and leaves for dead on the bloody streets of the City of Man, just as he did their Lord.

Regarding the final sentence of this verse, Leupold contends that it is the Antichrist whose end will come with a flood of divine judgment at Christ’s Parousia. Like Pharaoh and his obedient armies, he will be utterly swept away (2 Thess. 2: 8, Rev. 15:1-4). This could be. However, the context seems to favor the idea that here too the outward, **institutional Church is in view**: Her end will come with a flood of opposition and persecution (Psalm 18:4, Isaiah 59:19). To the very end of the seventieth seven, there will be war against the saints (Rev. 12:15, 17). Desolations—both of the institutional Church and her persecutors—are determined (Rev. 11:1-2).

Verse 27

And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction—one that is decreed—is poured out on the desolator.

Here Gabriel further instructs Daniel about the key events of the seventieth seven, this time with a concluding emphasis upon the destruction of the destroyer, the Antichrist. As the long verse opens, we learn that throughout the final seven, he (the Antichrist) will cause a strong covenant to prevail over “the many.” Leupold explains:

The idea is that as he seeks to take the place of the Christ, so he shall imitate Him in some way. As the Lord made a covenant with his own to give them strong assurances as to what he would do, so Antichrist will inaugurate a covenant that will prevail; which is to say, compel the masses to accept it and abide by it. It shall not, therefore, be a gracious covenant of love, as are the Lord’s covenants, but a covenant of terror, compulsion, and violence.

C. F. Keil, an early proponent of the RTAV, concurs. Highlighting the religious dimension of the Antichrist’s “agreement” with the world, he writes, “The ungodly prince shall impose upon the mass of the people a strong covenant that they should follow him and give themselves to him as their God” (Rev. 13:4).¹⁵ The interpretation offered by these two outstanding commentators is compelling, seeing that 2 Thessalonians 2:1f supplies a more or less identical picture of the purpose, character, and career of the Man of Lawlessness.

Very good:

How will the global rule of the Antichrist affect the Church? In a reprise of the message of verse 26, Gabriel answers by declaring that in the middle of the last seven he will put a stop to sacrifice and

offering. This means that (roughly) half way through his hegemony, he will suddenly turn against the Church and suppress her public worship. At this point, he will become “one who makes desolate,” a destroyer. With destructive intent, he will now come against the saints “upon the wing of abominations.” That is, he will fly into global power and influence—and so to apparent victory over Christ’s little flock—riding upon the persuasive force of detestable idols: a counterfeit gospel (i.e., religion, ideology) and counterfeit signs and wonders that seem to validate it (Mt. 24:23-24, 2 Thess. 2:8-12).

This will indeed be the Church’s darkest hour (Mt. 24:21, Rev. 13:7). Yet it is, after all, only an hour, and one that her Redeemer himself has triumphantly passed through. Therefore, it is an hour of hope. For no sooner will the counterfeit prince launch his great war against the saints, than the glorified Christ will appear in the skies above the Earth to rescue them. Then, in the Judgment that follows, he will pour out complete destruction upon all who thought to destroy his own: Apollyon, Antichrist, and “the many” who so foolishly followed them into the Last Battle (Mt. 24:29-31, 25:31ff, 1 Thess. 4:13f, 2 Thess. 1:3-10, 2:8, 11-12, Rev. 19:20, 20:10).

Conclusion

The prophecy of Daniel’s Seventy Sevens—possibly the most difficult in the entire prophetic canon—is a case study in the indispensability of the New Covenant Hermeneutic. Without it, the vision is a maze; a labyrinth from which there is no escape. With it, the way into the open field of truth becomes clear at last.

Our survey of the three main interpretations has made this evident.

Because the advocates of the TFAV have indeed grasped the true structure of NT eschatology, as well as the importance of the NCH, they have produced a fairly viable interpretation, one that has understandably remained popular over the years. However, we have seen that upon closer inspection it fails to do justice to the nuances of the text itself, and also to the grand theme and substance of the book as a whole.

Meanwhile, advocates of the DTAV, having largely misunderstood NT eschatology and imposed an alien OT hermeneutic upon it, have given us an exotic interpretation that is exegetically untenable and theologically flawed. The widespread popularity of this view therefore reflects a serious failure on the part of the modern evangelical church to grasp the true structure of NT theology, and the NCH that naturally flows from it. Happily, it appears that Dispensationalism is now on the wane. I do not think it can be otherwise, seeing that in the end the Spirit of Truth must (and will) draw Christ’s true spiritual Church back to the NT, where alone she will receive the keys to OTKP, Daniel 9, and all the rest of the eschatological truth she will need to stand strong amidst the rigors of the last of the last days.

The NT itself promises this very thing. It tells us that the Lord loves his Bride (John 13:1); that he will prepare her for the Last Battle (John 16:13); and indeed, that one day he will cause her to attain to the unity of the faith, right down to eschatological faith (Eph. 4:11f). When he does, I believe he will draw her to the Reformed Two Advent View of Daniel 9.

Again, the reasons are many. **This view includes all the strengths of the other two, while avoiding their weaknesses. It is true to the text, and true to the context: the Book of Daniel as a whole. It harmonizes perfectly with NT eschatology, and draws upon it richly for a right understanding.**

But best of all—to my mind at least—is the intriguing fact that the RTAV seems to come at just the right time. Somehow, it perfectly suits the dark, difficult, and dangerous days through which the global Church is now passing. In other words, this interpretation of Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Sevens may well be an eschatological gift from the exalted Lord himself; a special opening of our understanding by which, even now, he is supplying his beloved Bride with just the right mix of tough realism, steadfast hope, and eager expectation, so that she will be fully prepared for the return of her beloved Husband, the High King of Heaven (Luke 24:35, John 16:13, 2 Tim. 3:1f, 1 Peter 4:1-2, 12-13).

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The Stricken Shepherd, the Gathered Flock (13:7-9)

We come now to the fourth prophetic snapshot of Zechariah’s oracle. Quite fittingly, it brings the first part of the oracle—the part dealing with the Era of Proclamation—to a close (12:1-13:9), even as it transitions to the second and concluding part, the part dealing with the Consummation and the World to Come (14:1ff).

The great theme here is the God-ordained atoning death of the Good and Faithful Shepherd of God’s flock—the Lord Jesus Christ—and the subsequent gathering of the flock (the Church) that will infallibly issue from it. Accordingly, like those preceding it, **this snapshot spans the entire Era of Proclamation**, teaching us yet again (13:1) that through the Work of Christ (in the days of his humiliation) all the previously promised blessings of the Kingdom will flow to God’s people: strength for victorious spiritual warfare (12:1-9), tears of repentance in token of justifying faith (12:10-14), and inward spiritual cleansing, resulting in outward covenant loyalty to God (13:1-6). Let us explore these ideas by looking briefly at each of the three verses comprising our text.

As the prophecy opens (verse 7), we hear the voice of the LORD commanding a sword to awaken against his Shepherd, against the Man who is his Associate. This cryptic line anticipates whole tracts of NT theology. The sword of the LORD, emblematic of divine retribution for sin, has been asleep, seeing that in ages past God mercifully “passed over” the sins of his people (Isaiah 66:16, Jer. 50:35-37, Ezek. 21:1ff, Rom. 3:25). Now, however, by his all-controlling Providence, the God of Justice awakens it on Mt. Golgotha, so that it may fall, in mercy and grace, upon a Substitute, the very One he has appointed to be the eternal Shepherd of his people (Isaiah 53:2ff, Zech. 13:1; Mt. 27:46, Mark 10:45, John 3:14-16, 12:27-33, Acts 2:23, 4:27-28).

So that the great work of atonement may be accomplished, this Shepherd will stand before God in two ways. First, he will be “the Man,” the Last Adam, who will serve as the Head, Representative, and Substitute of his people; and who, in that capacity, will bear in his own person the just penalty for their sins (John 10:11, Rom. 3:21-26, 5:12ff, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18). But secondly, he will also be God’s Amith: not just a man, but also a divine (and therefore a holy) Peer, Friend, and Companion to the Father. As such, he will be in perfect tune and walk in perfect step with the Father’s nature, purpose, plan,

presence, and power. Therefore, he will win a perfect righteousness for his own, later to be imputed to every afflicted sheep that puts his trust in him (John 8:29, 55, Rom. 3:26, 5:1, 2 Cor. 5:21)!

When God strikes his Shepherd, the sheep will be scattered. There will be two kinds of them. First, there are “the little ones,” loyal but frightened and disoriented Jewish disciples of the Good Shepherd who are temporarily scattered but later regathered (Mt. 26:31). But secondly, there are impenitent Jews who ought to have followed their Messiah, but refused to, and who will therefore be scattered permanently, through divine judgment at the hands of Rome (Mt. 8:12, 23:36-39, Luke 21:20-22). Here Zechariah anticipates NT teaching to the effect that the Good Shepherd’s death will indeed result in judgment, but much more in mercy, seeing that, because of it, God will be able to lay his hand upon the little ones—the afflicted of the flock (11:7, 11)—for salvation. He will be able—and he will begin—to gather his eschatological flock, the spiritual Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

Verses 8-9 speak of this very thing. Note carefully that at this juncture the prophecy enters the **eschatological era, the last days; days in which the exalted Christ spearheads the thrust of the Gospel into the earth, so that he may enter into covenant with all his people** (v.9). Therefore, “all the land” of verse 8 cannot refer simply to Palestine (as premillennarians claim), but rather to that which OT Palestine typified: the whole earth, the earth that in the end will become Immanuel’s Land (2:12, 3:9, 9:16, 12:12, 13:2; Rom. 4:13). Says one commentator, “This is not to be taken in a literal sense, but as representing the domain covered by the Kingdom of God.”

If this view is correct, the message of verse 8 is solemn indeed, but comforting as well: By the end of Era of Proclamation, “two parts”—i.e., the larger portion—of all who hear the Gospel will perish from “the land” through their willful disobedience to it. However, through God’s sovereign grace (v. 9), one part—i.e., a smaller portion, an elect remnant, a little flock—will be gathered safely into his Shepherd’s fold, and will therefore remain in the Land. Having safely passed through the Judgment, they will inherit eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth (Mt. 7:13-14, Luke 12:32, 1 Cor. 1:26-31, Eph. 1:6, 2:8-9, 1 Peter 2:4-10).

This line of interpretation seems thoroughly vindicated by verse 9, where we hear God making marvelous promises that resonate deeply in the heart of every NT believer. First, he will bring the Shepherd’s flock through the fire: Despite all manner of painful temptations and persecutions, God will preserve his elect in Christ until they safely enter the World to Come (John 10:29, 17:15, 1 Cor. 1:4-9, 10:13, Jude 1:1). And secondly, he will test and refine them, even as men test and refine silver and gold. This immediately calls to mind the words of the apostle Peter, who encouraged believers to understand that God uses manifold trials as a kind of holy fire by which to purify the faith and character of his people, so that at the revelation of Christ they themselves may receive praise, glory, and honor from him (1 Peter 1:6-9; Proverbs 17:3, Isaiah 43:2, John 15:2, Rom. 5:1-5, Eph. 5:25-27, Heb. 12:1ff)!

Verse 9—and the prophecy as a whole—concludes, appropriately enough, with a reiteration of the great covenant formula. God’s people will call on his Name, and he will answer them; he will say, “They are My people,” and they will say, “The LORD is my God.”

When exactly will all this happen? Doubtless it will happen throughout the entire Era of Proclamation: It will happen when, in the fires of conviction, God's people first call upon Christ for salvation (Luke 18:13, Acts 2:37f); and it will happen later, when, in the fires of temptation and persecution, they call upon him for strength and deliverance (Rom. 15:30-32, Phil. 4:13, 2 Tim. 4:18). However, to judge from its position in the text, it may well be that the Spirit especially has in view the end of the age, when the saints will have finished passing through the fires; when they will have finally entered the World to Come; when they now call upon the Name of the LORD in eternal praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. The Revelation certainly seems to confirm this: When John beholds the Holy City descending to the new earth as a Bride adorned for her Husband, he also hears these triumphant words: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and he shall dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be among them" (Rev. 21:3). Here, the days of fire are over; here the everlasting Day of glory has begun!

Many commentators, and especially **premillennarians**, assert that this prophecy refers exclusively to God's dealings with ethnic Israel. However, as I have tried to show in my exegesis of it, the logic of the NCH, the text itself, and the context surrounding it, all argue against it. Will Jewish disciples of Jesus be able to see themselves in this text? Yes. Will God's latter-day dealings with ethnic Israel fulfill it? To be sure. **But again, this is not because Zechariah's words refer exclusively to ethnic Israel. Rather, it is because they refer comprehensively to the eschatological "Israel of God"—the Church—and because elect Jews are part of that Church; it is because they are part of the one flock that has the one Shepherd as its Head (John 10:16, Gal. 6:16).** Therefore, I would concur with these comments found in the *Reformation Study Bible*:

These verses envision God's chosen Shepherd who suffers at the hand of God (v. 7). Out of this judgment emerges the true people of God (v. 9). No clearer picture of Jesus and his suffering Church is given in the Old Testament.⁶

The Last Battle (14:1-2)

Like the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel, Zechariah's oracle has eschatological momentum: It is ever moving towards the grand finale of Salvation History. Here in chapter 14, which brings both the oracle and the book to a close, Zechariah reaches his goal: a colorful mosaic of five prophetic snapshots, all dealing with the majestic events of the Consummation and with the life of the World to Come. Having already addressed many of these prophecies in earlier portions of this book, my comments here will be somewhat briefer.

I have entitled the first snapshot The Last Battle (14:1-2). Here Zechariah picks up a theme first mentioned in 12:1-9, bringing it to its logical conclusion: The age-long warfare between the Church and the World will culminate in a final, decisive clash between the two. As ever, this revelation of the Last Battle is instructive, forthright, and sobering, but also laden with comfort. Indeed, verse 1 sounds the note of final victory at the very outset, a note that resonates throughout the entire chapter: In the end, God will effect a great judicial inversion, such that the manifold "goods" maliciously taken from his people—their work, their property, their health, their honor, their right to public worship, their very lives—will be restored to them once and for all (Mt. 10:29-30, Luke 6:20-26, Heb. 10:34). Like Israel's

heroes of old, Christ will plunder the plunderers, and will cause the meek who trust in him to inherit the land (Gen. 14:1ff, 1 Sam. 30:1f, Psalm 37:9, 11, Mt. 5:5).

Verse 2 gives us the Last Battle itself. As elsewhere, so here: The Spirit uses images drawn from Israel's long history of attack by hostile nations to picture the final assault of a consolidated world-system against the visible Church (Psalm 48, Ezek. 38-39; Rev. 20:9). God himself, through the secret workings of his Providence, will bring it to pass, in part to sanctify the Bride of Christ, in part to move sinners to repentance (13:9, Ezek. 38:4, Eph. 5:27, 2 Thess. 1:3f, 2:3, Rev. 13:5-10). Since, according to 1 Cor. 15:46, the "natural" (i.e., physical) events and institutions of OT history were meant to picture spiritual NT realities, we cannot assume that the specific forms of suffering mentioned here will literally come to pass. According to the NCH, the essential message of our text is simply that a **Satanically controlled world government** will maliciously and effectively suppress—though not completely destroy—the visible Church (2 Thess. 2:1ff, Rev. 13:5-10). Nevertheless, Zechariah 14:2, pervasive NT teaching, Church history, and current events themselves all agree in reminding us that God has indeed appointed his children to holy tribulation, and that the **purifying fires of the Last Battle** will be as intense as any they have ever known (Acts 14:22, 1 Thess. 3:1-5, 2 Tim. 3:12, Heb. 11:35-40, Rev. 11:7-13). Thankfully, that tribulation will be as brief as it is intense, and will be followed immediately by joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The Day of the LORD (14:3-5)

According to the NT, it is Christ himself who will bring the **Last Battle to a close at his Parousia**, when he arrives in power and glory in the skies above the earth to destroy his enemies and to glorify both his people and their world (Mt. 13:36-43, 24:29-31, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, 2 Thess. 1, 2, 2 Peter 3, Rev. 11:11-19, 14:14-20, 16:17-21, 19:11-21, 20:7-15). According to the NCH, the snapshot before us is a symbolic picture of that very thing. Let us see if our text—and its context—justifies this important conclusion.

Verse 3 tells us that at the time of "Jerusalem's" **eschatological agony**, the LORD himself will go forth and fight against her foes, even as he did on many previous occasions in Israel's history (Exodus 14:1ff, 15:1-18, Isaiah 36-37, Rev. 15:2-3). This will be the last of them, the great and notable Day of the LORD. However, from the NT we know that the Day of the LORD will in fact be the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ at his Parousia (2 Cor. 1:14, Phil. 2:16, 2 Thess. 2:2, 2 Peter 3:4, 10). Therefore, this particular snapshot is indeed fulfilled at Christ's Parousia, and must be interpreted accordingly.

Verse 4 pictures the LORD creating an unexpected way of escape for his people; verse 5 pictures them using it. This is God's way with all his people, both OT and New (1 Cor. 10:13). Quite intentionally, the imagery used here reminds us of Israel's miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1ff). Importantly, verse 4 is not telling us that Christ will literally stand upon the Mount of Olives; or that he will literally split it apart so as to create a literal valley. Similarly, verse 5 is not predicting that literal Jews of a physical Jerusalem will flee to the tiny village of Azel. Those who take this approach fall into confusion by abandoning the **NCH**, which teaches us to interpret this prophecy figuratively, in terms of NT truth.⁷

The key!

What then is the real message of verses 4-5? We begin to receive our answer when we remember that a number of OT texts picture the God of judgment treading upon the high places of the earth so as to split valleys and melt mountains beneath his omnipotent feet (Psalm 97:5, Isaiah 64:1-2, Micah 1:3-4, Nahum 1:5). Similarly, we remember that in OT times the LORD was faithful not only to rescue his people from coming destruction, but also to provide them with cities—or other places—of refuge, to which they could flee (Gen. 19:20-26, Numbers 35:9f, Joshua 6:1ff, 1 Sam. 24:22). Bearing all this in mind, we can readily discern the essential character of the promise found in these verses: In the Day of the LORD, when the world itself is about to undergo final destruction, the presence and power of the covenant-keeping God of Israel will descend to the earth and draw near to his beloved, persecuted City. Then he will supernaturally open a way for his people to flee eastward towards him (for the LORD likes to come to his children from the East: Isaiah 63:1, Ezek. 43:4, Rev. 7:2), and so find safety in an appointed City of Refuge. When the last of his redeemed children have entered that City, the LORD himself will come, with all his holy ones, executing final judgment upon all of his and Israel's enemies.

It requires but a small step into the NT to see exactly how these broad theological promises will be fulfilled: In the Day of the Lord Jesus, the glorified Christ himself will descend from heaven to the skies just above the earth, circling the globe from east to west, even as the earth and its works begin to melt with intense heat (Mt. 24:27, 2 Peter 3, Rev. 7:2). By his Spirit and through the agency of his holy angels he will swiftly draw near to his people (his Beloved City) wherever they may be, and will supernaturally open a way through the air for his saints to fly to him, who is their one true City of Refuge (Mt. 13:36-43, 1 Thess. 4:13ff). When in this way he has gathered all his children safely to his side, he, they, and all the holy angels will “come” in such a way as to consign the enemies of God—both human and angelic—to the fires of God's eternal judgment (Mt. 13:42, 25:31ff, Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 6:2, Rev. 19:20, 20:10).

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The Judgment to Come (14:12-15)

These verses, which reprise the battle imagery of 12:1-4, draw heavily upon OT Law and history to depict the **eschatological defeat** of the enemies of Christ's Church at his Parousia, and the eternal punishment to follow (Mt. 24:29-25:46, 1 Thess. 1, 2 Thess. 2, Rev. 11:7-13, Rev. 14:14-20, 19:11-21, 20:7-15).

Verse 12, a ghastly portrait of the eternal destruction of the wicked in hell, represents their torments in terms of the plagues that formerly befell God's enemies, whether in Egypt (Ex. 7-12), or, more aptly, at the gates of Jerusalem itself, where the Angel of the Lord struck the Assyrian army and rescued the trembling but trusting people of God (Isaiah 36-37; cf. Lev. 26:16, Deut. 28:22, 2 Thess. 1:9, Rev. 20:10,14).

Verse 13 tells us that, as in OT times, so again at the Last Battle: God will judge his enemies by confusing their thoughts, undermining their unity, and turning their hand one against another (Judges 7:22, 1 Sam. 14:20). The final destruction of Antichrist's kingdom will be heralded by the preliminary destructiveness of war within his kingdom (Dan. 11:36ff, Rev. 17:16-18). Conceivably, this verse also portrays the eternal hatred and conflict of the wicked in hell.

Very good:

Verse 14 enlarges upon 14:1, speaking of the **eschatological plunder** to occur after the Last Battle. The royal tribe (the Church) will fight bravely in defense of the Holy City (also the Church), teaching, preaching, and encouraging one another in such a way that they will endure to the end, and so be saved (14:14, NAS, NIV; Mt. 10:22, Acts 14:22, 1 Thess. 3:2-3, Rev. 2:10). As a reward for their faithfulness, Christ, at his return, will cause the world and its wealth, now purged of sin, to pass forever into the custody of the saints (Luke 19:15f). In that Day, all things will be theirs, they will be Christ's, and Christ will be God's (1 Cor. 3:21-23). The humble in Christ will inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5).

Verse 15 declares that the final plague will fall even upon the animals that carried God's enemies into battle. This recalls the "ban" under which God placed all living things when he sent Joshua into Canaan; into the land of the Amorite, whose iniquity had then grown full (Gen. 15:16, Deut. 20:16-18). The NT meaning is this: When the world's iniquity is finally complete, Christ, God's eschatological Joshua, will return and utterly destroy it. The former things will pass away, so that new and eternal things may spring forth (Isaiah 42:9, 1 Cor. 7:31, 1 John 2:17). God himself will make all things new, and will bestow those things upon his beloved sons and daughters, who will be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Gal. 4:1-2, Rom. 8:17, Rev. 21:1-5, 7).

The Worship to Come (14:16-21)

Our final snapshot pictures worship in the World to Come. It is divided into two parts. The first speaks of the **eschatological Feast of Booths** (vv. 16-19), the second of the perfect holiness of eschatological Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 20-21). Earlier, we discussed the reasons why a **literal, premillennial interpretation of this text is impossible**. Let us therefore see what help the NCH can offer us in disclosing the deep, NT meaning of Zechariah's words.

On the surface of things, the message of verses 16-19 is quite simple: In the World to Come there will be two different kinds of nations (or families). Both of them, at one time or another prior to the Judgment, came up with hostile intent against Jerusalem (v. 16). Now, however, the first group goes up annually (and eternally), not to attack Jerusalem, but rather to worship God as their King, and also to celebrate the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem's holy precincts. Meanwhile, the other group, which apparently has Egypt as its head, consists of stiff-necked nations that persistently refuse to go up. These the LORD will punish with a plague of drought (vv. 17-19).

How can we best understand the meaning of this mysterious prophecy? To begin with, we must ponder for a moment the typological meaning of the **Feast of Booths**. A look at Leviticus 23:33-34 reveals that this was an especially joyful feast celebrated at harvest time, wherein Israel was to commemorate not only their great deliverance from Egypt, but also God's faithfulness in leading them through the wilderness of Sinai (where they camped in "booths" or "tabernacles") into the Promised Land. **Here is the key to understanding Zechariah's prophecy, a prophecy designed to comfort devout OT saints with a picture of the eternal worship of the glorified Church, and so cast in the language and imagery of Israel's most joyful OT feast!**

This background information—along with the **NCH**—enables us to see all things clearly. For example, now we can see that Zechariah's **eschatological Feast of Booths** will indeed be a harvest feast, since

here, in the World to Come, all the saints will have been gathered into the barn of God's completed Kingdom (Mt. 13:30, John 4:38, Rev. 14:14-16). Formerly, they were temporary enemies of God and of his people; but Christ, at various times prior to the Judgment, harvested them through the Gospel and turned them into eternal friends (Mt. 9:37, Acts 26:17-18, Rom. 5:8, 1 Tim. 1:12-12, Titus 3:3f). Also, this will be an everlasting Feast: The saints will forever "go up" in worship, through Christ, unto God their King (1 Peter 2:5, Rev. 7:9-10, 14:1-4). Finally, this will be a joyful Feast: In his City—and as his City—Christ's people will ever rejoice, not only in the hour of their own personal deliverance from the Domain of Darkness, but also in the subsequent faithfulness of their Good Shepherd, who safely led his flock through the deadly wilderness of this present evil age, past the Judgment, and into the Promised Land (John 6:38-40, Gal. 1:4, Phil. 1:6, Rev. 12:7-17, 19:11).

But what are we to make of Egypt, and of the families of the earth that follow Egypt's lead in refusing to go up? Clearly, these typify all men and nations who refused to participate in the **eschatological exodus**; who refused to accept spiritual rescue from the Domain of Darkness, and spiritual transfer into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13); who refused to follow in the footsteps of Moses, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (i.e., of the fallen world-system); who refused to walk with Christ through the wilderness of this world to the Promised Land (Heb. 11:26, Rev. 12:1f).

Puzzlingly, we find these **rebellious nations** still upon the earth, yet far from Zion and Jerusalem, where the friends of God celebrate the Feasts of God. But in Revelation 22—which also describes the World to Come—the puzzle is solved. Here again we find these nations far from Jerusalem, outside the gates of the Holy City (Rev. 22:15). Now, however, we have learned that in fact they are in the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 66:24, Rev. 19:20, 20:10, 14). It is, therefore, in death (and hell) that the impenitent enemies of God will endure the very plague of drought that they chose for themselves in life, when they refused to drink of the Rock, and to follow the Rock, that God offered them in the Gospel (Mt. 12:43 NAS, Luke 16:24, John 7:37, 1 Cor. 10:4, Rev. 21:6, 22:17).

Part two of our prophecy (vv. 20-22) celebrates the perfect, all-pervading holiness of the World to Come. In that world, the distinction between holy and common, clean and unclean, has completely disappeared (Acts 10:15). The bells on the horses are holy. The cooking pots in the LORD's house are holy—as holy as the altar itself. Yes, even the cooking pots in the houses of the people of Jerusalem and Judah are holy, so holy that men may boil their sacrifices to God in them. Here the boundary between sacred and the profane has been obliterated. Here, every act is an act of worship, every day is the Lord's Day. Here, every Canaanite—a type of unregenerate, sinful man—has been expelled (14:21, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 John 2:19, Rev. 22:15). Here, Israel itself has become the eternal house of the gracious, loving Redeemer who fought triumphantly in their behalf: the LORD of hosts (14:21, Eph. 2:22).

For this reason, in that Day the saints will weep no more, but in an eternal celebration of the Feast of Booths they will rejoice in the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; in the Holy One of Israel who, by his righteous life and atoning death, so mightily prevailed that he made both them and their world forever holy, even as he is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16, Rev. 5:5, 21:2, 22:11).

Conclusion to Part 3

Thank you for joining me in a long, challenging journey over the rough terrain of OTKP. Hopefully, you have found it well worth the time and effort involved.

Speaking for myself, in thinking and writing about these challenging texts I have been impressed over and over again with the power and fruitfulness of the NCH. By way of conclusion to Part 3 of our study, let me touch briefly on four special blessings that come to mind.

Key points:

First, the **NCH** wonderfully opens up OTKP. Above all, it does this by clarifying its true sphere of fulfillment, the New (and Eternal) Covenant in Christ, and the two-staged spiritual Kingdom that it creates. Once we are clear on this fundamental point, it is but a small step to **mastering the typological method of OT prophetic interpretation, by which we learn to see NT spiritual realities promised and described under a type-laden veil of OT symbolism.** The end result is that the **NCH** gives us skill, confidence, and good success in discerning the Spirit's intended meaning in all OTKP.

Secondly, the NCH properly exalts the New Testament, restoring it to its place of honor in the progress of divine revelation. **For too long, huge swaths of the evangelical community have seen the glory of Christ and the Gospel eclipsed by eschatologies mired in a literal interpretation of OT prophetic texts.** The sad result has been that the Old Covenant overshadows the New; the Millennium overshadows the two-staged Kingdom of Christ; and ethnic Israel overshadows spiritual Israel, the Church. The NCH heals this theological wound, disclosing Christ and the Eternal Covenant as the one true body towards which all former shadows bent; the one true goal towards which all Salvation History ran (Col. 2:17).

Thirdly, the NCH marvelously discloses and magnifies the Christ-centered unity of the Scriptures. Speaking of the OT Scriptures—and therefore of OTKP—the Lord Jesus himself said, “These are they that testify of me” (John 5:39). And they testify, not just of him, but also of the New Covenant that he introduced, and the two-staged spiritual Kingdom that it creates. Once we see this—and once we embrace the hermeneutic that it entails—then every tile in the vast mosaic of Scripture **falls neatly into place, with the result that we fall down in awe before the majestic portrait of the Person and Work of Christ reflected therein.**

Finally, the NCH helpfully prepares the Church for her arduous but victorious Gospel ministry at the end of the age. Henceforth, the sleek, sharply pointed shafts of OTKP—whether pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic—are deposited as so many arrows in her spiritual quiver. Henceforth, **she can draw them out to warn the wicked, evangelize the lost, and teach, exhort, and encourage the saints.** Thus shall Christ's NT scribes nourish one another with things old and new; thus shall they pass triumphantly through the Greatest Tribulation, the Last Battle, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment; and thus shall they enter the glorious World to Come, where they will live forever with their heavenly Husband and King, who at long last has returned for his beloved Bride and safely brought her home.

Conclusion

(Chp 19 The Revelation: Purpose and Literary Genre)

Summing up, we have seen that the great purpose of the Revelation is prophetic; that in it, God, through Christ, speaks to the universal Church in order to **teach, warn, exhort, and comfort her, so that she might make a worthy and triumphant pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world into the eschatological Promised Land.**

This is highly relevant to Part 4 of our study for the very important reason that it naturally and powerfully inclines us to an “ecclesiastical” interpretation of Revelation 20. In particular, it suggests that Revelation 20 cannot possibly be what many **premillennarians** claim it is: a divine afterthought, in which the Spirit suddenly shifts his focus from the Church to ethnic Israel, and from the Church era to a future Millennium. **No, just like the rest of the book, chapter 20 must also focus on the Church, and on the present evil age through which the Church makes her difficult pilgrimage** (Rev. 12). As we have just seen, this conclusion flows naturally from the One who gave it (the Head of the Church); from the ones to whom he gave it (the seven churches, emblematic of the universal Church); and from the purposes for which he gave it (to teach, warn, and comfort the Church). Moreover, as we shall soon see, it also flows naturally from a careful study of the structure, contents, and symbolism of Revelation 20 itself.

The Literary Genre of the Revelation

The Revelation is an outstanding example of a literary genre called biblical apocalyptic. The Greek word *apokalypsis* conveys the idea of the removal of a veil, so that something once hidden is now revealed. There is, then, a sense in which one might say that all Scripture is “apocalyptic,” since in all Scripture there is an unveiling of special God-given truths that sinful man could not otherwise know, understand, or enjoy. However, as a general rule, theologians use this word far more narrowly. That is, they use it to speak of a particular kind of Scripture. For such as these, biblical apocalyptic may be defined as **predictive prophecy** in which the Holy Spirit—using vision and symbol—unveils divine truth about the course, character, and consummation of Salvation History.

In our discussion of OTKP, we have run across this kind of literature more than once. For example, chapters **24-27 of Isaiah**, which focus on final judgment and final redemption on the Day of the LORD, supply an outstanding example of **pre-exilic apocalyptic**. From the season of Israel’s exile we have **Daniel 7, which is likely the single greatest OT depiction of the course and character of Salvation History.** From the same era we also have **Ezekiel 38-39**, which is likely the single greatest OT depiction of the **consummation of Salvation History**; of the Last Battle and the Day of the LORD. Finally, from post-exilic times we have the visions and prophecies of Zechariah, all of which again make rich use of symbols to display both the course and conclusion of Salvation History.

In the NT, **apocalyptic texts** are less plentiful, seeing that in NT times there is an unveiling of all that God had previously hidden under type, shadow, and symbol. Nevertheless, the NT is not without its apocalyptic elements. Some of Jesus’ parables have an apocalyptic feel to them (Mt. 13:36-43, 47-50). His Olivet Discourse, alluding as it does to a number of OTKP’s, contains the marks of biblical apocalyptic (Mt. 24, Mark 13). Similarly, Paul’s discourse on the Consummation, written to the

Thessalonian Christians, draws frequently upon OT apocalyptic texts, even as it teaches on distinctly apocalyptic themes (2 Thess. 2).

And then there is the Revelation—a book that is manifestly apocalyptic, (almost) entirely apocalyptic, and uniquely apocalyptic vis-à-vis the rest of Holy Scripture. Do we wish to understand it properly? If so, we cannot ignore its genre. Nor can we ignore the unique way in which it embodies this genre. Therefore, drawing upon the definition given above, let us take a few moments to examine the Revelation as a true but biblically unique instance of biblical apocalyptic. In what follows, I will characterize it as (1) a predictive prophecy, (2) singing the glory of the High King of heaven, (3) communicated by way of vision and symbol, and (4) serving as the Grand Finale of all Scripture.

A Predictive Prophecy

We have already discussed some of the ways in which the Revelation is a prophecy; the ways in which it teaches, warns, and comforts Christ's Church. However, in doing so it frequently incorporates predictions of historical events yet future to the reader/hearer. Therefore, this long prophecy clearly falls into the category of biblical apocalyptic.

It is, however, biblical apocalyptic of an extraordinary kind. Why? Because in making its predictions about the future, it tells us little or nothing new about the future. That is, it tells us little or nothing that was not **already foretold in OTKP under type, shadow, and symbol**; or it tells us little or nothing that was not already unveiled, explained, and practically applied in the **Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles**.

Think for a moment about the prophetic themes we just discussed. In the Revelation, Christ gives John—and the Church—visions of the Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Harlot. How are we to understand them? The answer is: We could not possibly understand them unless Christ, in the rest of the NT, had already given us keys by which to unlock their meaning; unless he had given us straightforward didactic teaching about all four. And the same is true of OT apocalyptic. How are we to understand the visions and prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah? The answer is: **We cannot, apart from the revelations of the Didactic NT. The latter is the hermeneutical key to the former**.

This point cannot be overemphasized. Yes, like all biblical apocalyptic, the Revelation contains predictive prophecy. But because of its unique place in the biblical canon—because it serves as the Grand Finale of all Scripture—the things it predicts in vision and symbol cannot be new. For if, in the Revelation, God meant to give us new truth about the future (e.g., new truth about a seven year Tribulation, or the career of the Antichrist, or a future millennium, etc.), he would also have had to give us more didactic revelation by which to interpret the symbols used to convey the new truth. But he did not. Instead, he simply closed the canon with the Revelation. Therefore, we may safely assume that the truth hidden beneath its symbols is old truth, and that everything we need to understand those symbols has been given to us previously in the rest of the NT. In short, the Revelation is not a puzzle to be figured out; rather—for those who know their Bibles and understand NT eschatology—it is a celebration to be enjoyed. I will have more to say on this important point below.

Singing the Glory of the High King of Heaven

Biblical apocalyptic is predictive prophecy with a particular theme. It likes to explore the course, character, and consummation of Salvation History, and to do so in ways that encourage God's suffering people with the hope of final justice and redemption: of final rescue from the powers of evil, final retribution against the agents of evil, and final restoration to the promised covenant blessings of God.

Great summary:

In our study of OTKP, we saw the manifold ways in which the Spirit developed these great themes in OT times. In prophet after prophet, he spoke of a final regathering of God's people; of their final restoration to the Promised Land; of the coming of the Messiah; of the advance of his kingdom in the Days of the Messiah; of the conversion of the Gentiles; of ongoing victory over God's enemies; of the Last Battle, the Day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal World to Come. Importantly, these themes are the sum and substance of NT eschatology, as well. However, in the OT "true truth" on these themes remained largely veiled under symbolic, typological language. Moreover, because of this veiling, the exact sequence of the great eschatological events also remained obscure. For this reason, God himself pronounced OTKP in general—and OT apocalyptic in particular—a closed book; but a closed book that would indeed be opened in the last days (Jer. 23:20, Dan. 12:4, Heb. 1:1f).

When, however, we reach the NT, the wraps come off. The mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed. The heart of Salvation History (the Eternal Covenant in Christ) is disclosed. The character of Salvation History—that it consists of successive administrations of the Eternal Covenant—is manifested. And the course of the Salvation History—the stages in which it unfolds, and the key events proper to each stage—is illumined once and for all. As a result, God's people hold in their hands, at long last, the key to understanding all Salvation History, all OTKP, and all OT apocalyptic!

But if this is so, why, in the Revelation, would God revert to the use of biblical apocalyptic in order to prophesy to Christ's pilgrim Church? I have already suggested an answer to this important question: He did so because he desired not only to teach, warn, and encourage the saints one final time (just as he had in the rest of the NT), but also to give them the Grand Finale of all Scripture. That is, he desired to weave the Christ-centered history, poetry, prophecy, and doctrine of the whole Bible into the final movement of the great symphony of Scripture. In the eyes of the High Poet of Heaven, biblical apocalyptic was apparently the perfect vehicle for doing this very thing.

We must, however, look a little closer. Yes, like all biblical apocalyptic the Revelation has as its theme the course, character, and consummation of Salvation History. But here again it is unique, this time because its focus is largely on a particular portion of Salvation History: the Heavenly Mediatorial Reign of Christ. Or, to state the case more precisely, its focus is largely on the Exaltation of Christ; on all the **eschatological acts and events** by which the Father is pleased to honor the One who, out of love for him and his people, humbled himself even to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:1-11).

In a moment we will examine the structure of the Revelation, in order to see exactly how God accomplished this. Here it suffices to say that in this unique expression of biblical apocalyptic God was pleased to draw upon all previous biblical revelation in order to focus the saints' attention on the High King of Heaven: on his resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of the Father; on his

absolute sovereignty over all the subsequent events of history; on his infallible declaration of the Gospel—through the Church Militant—to “the (sinful) inhabitants of the earth;” on his continual judgments against their enemies; on his rush to the rescue of his little flock in the days of the Last Battle; and especially on his glorious Parousia at the end of the age, when he himself will execute final judgment, administer final redemption, and bring in the new heavens and the new earth, the eternal home of God and the redeemed.

Does all of this help us to understand Revelation 20? Indeed it does! For if the theological focus of the whole book is on the High King of Heaven—on the course, character, and consummation of his heavenly, mediatorial reign—how likely is it that this one chapter suddenly takes up the theme of a future earthly reign? No, the Revelation is a predictive prophecy that sings the glory of the High King of Heaven through and through. To see this is to see the meaning of Revelation 20 as well.

Communicated by Way of Vision and Symbol

This is the third element of biblical apocalyptic, namely that it uses vision and symbol to communicate prophetic truth about Salvation History. But once again we find that the Revelation does this in a unique manner, **since it uses vision and symbol, not to veil truth yet to come, but simply to celebrate truth previously unveiled in the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles.** Therefore, its language is not really “mysterious,” since in the **Didactic NT we already have the keys by which to understand it. It is, however, still symbolic, with the result that we must interpret its images symbolically, rather than literally.**

If there were any doubt about this, it should be quickly dispelled simply by looking at the first verse of the Revelation. There we learn that God “... sent and signified (the Revelation) by his angel to his servant John” (1:1). The Greek word for “signify” is *semaino*, a verb closely related to the noun *semeion*, meaning “sign.” So then, in choosing this particular word to describe the prophecy as a whole, the Spirit teaches and admonishes us to interpret the Revelation as a book of signs or symbols. If we will obey him, we will not go far wrong.

It is true, of course, that all interpreters, whatever their eschatological persuasion, are ready to acknowledge that the Revelation contains symbols. However, some interpreters, while agreeing that the Revelation contains symbols, refuse to acknowledge that in virtue of its literary genre it is in fact a book of symbols, a book that must therefore be interpreted symbolically from start to finish.

Good analysis of the right hermeneutic:

The result of this refusal is an **inconsistent hermeneutic.** For example, pressured by the obvious, the **prophetic literalist** will readily concede that the sword coming from Christ’s mouth is a symbol for the word of God (1:16); or that the Spirit symbolizes the **exalted Christ as a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes** in order to remind us that our Sacrifice for sin is now the omnipotent and omniscient High King and High Priest of Heaven (5:6). When, however, the literalist comes to the **144,000** of all the tribes of the children of Israel (7:4); or to the **Two Witnesses** who prophesy and (briefly) perish on the streets of the Great City (11:8); or to Christ’s admonition to the saints against taking the mark of the **Beast** (13:16-18); or to the gathering of the kings of the whole world at the **Mountain** of Megiddo (16:14) ... then he suddenly abandons the symbolic **hermeneutic for a literal, thereby abandoning a**

consistent method of interpretation for an inconsistent. How well I remember a certain respected prophetic literalist complain that a symbolic, typological hermeneutic will leave the prophetic interpreter “at sea,” bobbing up and down on the swells of mere subjectivity. But perhaps it is really the literalist who is at sea, bobbing back and forth at his own good pleasure between two diametrically opposed approaches to the interpretation of apocalyptic literature in general, and the Revelation in particular.

Davis’ notes on the mark of the beast (seen several pages later as well): In the Revelation, Christ repeatedly exhorts his people concerning the Beast. Above all, he warns them not to receive his mark—his name, or the number of his name—on their right hand or on their forehead (14:9, 11, 15:2, 20:4). Here again the Spirit draws upon OT imagery to speak symbolically to God’s NT people (Ezekiel 9). The saints now have the seal of the living God on their foreheads (7:3). In other words, because of their faith in Christ they now belong to the Father; they are his adopted sons and daughters, carrying his Name (Rom. 8:15, 1 Peter 1:17). **How then shall they give their ultimate allegiance, whether in thought (symbolized by a mark on the forehead) or in deed (symbolized by a mark on the hand), to any mere man or human institution?** Note also that in Scripture six is the number of man (Gen. 1:26ff, Rev. 13:18, NIV), and three is the number of God Triune. Therefore, 666 is the number of man seeking to supplant the triune God; the number of man audaciously representing himself as the proper object of worship (13:16-18). The implications are clear: Men take the mark of the Beast whenever and wherever they worship the anti-christian, self-deifying State. And again, throughout the Revelation Christ warns his own that they must never do this evil thing. **[In other words, the mark of the beast on their forehead and hands is to be taken figuratively for what people think (signified by *on the* forehead) and consequently, what people do (signified by *on their hands*). Believers have the *mind of Christ*, so they think vastly differently about spiritual things, sin, worship of the true God (in spirit and truth) and consequently, what they do is pleasing to God because it’s done by faith in the Son of God – or, say it this way, our acts testify to our having saving faith as Abraham was justified by his works in the same sense described by James in Jas. 2:18. Because the unregenerate man has not this mindset, a regenerate soul, the restored image of God in him, a new creation, he is told by Christ, “I never knew you; depart from me, you **workers** of lawlessness.” Mt. 7:23 There’s the consequence of the unregenerate mind, his works are lawless...apart from Christ, outside of faith, having other motives than a love for God, but by motives, for instance, of self love, self preservation, to be seen by men, etc. And so, they are cast out into outer darkness. Taking this a step further, how does this unregenerate mindset get further hardened? Prosperity! John Flavel comments: “Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and molds their hearts into their own similitude and nature; the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments.” In this is seen the process of the securing this earthly image on their foreheads and hence their evil works that follow. This is heavy.**

If, then, we hope to understand the Revelation—and especially chapter 20—we must recognize that it is indeed a unique instance of biblical apocalyptic; that it communicates previously revealed NT truth in vision and symbol; that it does so consistently, in all portions of the book (save for chapters 2-3, where didactic teaching predominates); and that in order to understand it, we must consistently adopt an appropriate hermeneutic. That would be the NCH, according to which we see all biblical prophecy as using types, shadows, and symbols to communicate “true truth”—NT truth—about Christ, the Eternal Covenant, and the twofold spiritual Kingdom he introduced under that covenant. When we do,

we will immediately understand the 144,000, the Two Witnesses, the Mark of the Beast, the Battle of Armageddon, and the thousand year reign of Christ proclaimed in Revelation 20.

Serving as the Grand Finale of All Scripture

I have argued that the Revelation is indeed an instance of biblical apocalyptic, but also that it is a unique instance, appearing as it does at the end of the Bible, where it serves as the Grand Finale of all Scripture; of all special revelation. Since this point is so important for a proper understanding of the book as a whole, let us pause to consider it more closely.

Think for a moment of your favorite symphony. Now think of its final movement. What is it that makes the final movement a grand finale? Three simple answers come to my mind.

First, it appears at the end of the symphony: There is no more music to come.

Secondly, it reprises all the themes heard in the previous two or three movements. However, when it does, it does so very “grandly.” **That is, it skillfully, artistically, and majestically weaves together all the earlier motifs, so that we not only hear them again, but also hear them afresh;** hear them in new, startling, and beautiful relations with one another; hear them in such a way that the whole symphony is somehow poured into the last part of the symphony.

And thirdly, because it is a grand finale, it does not typically introduce new musical themes, but rather devotes itself more or less exclusively to a fresh, inspirational recapitulation of the old.

All three of these observations apply to the Revelation, and in a way that helps us understand the book to its very depths.

Like a grand finale, the Revelation appears at the end of the great **symphony of biblical revelation**. Doubtless it was the last book of Holy Scripture to be given by God. Appropriately enough, it therefore appears as the last book of our Bible. Moreover, its contents veritably scream to us that it should be the last book, since it is so thoroughly taken up with the Last Things: the character and course of the Last Days, the Last Battle, the Last Resurrection and the Last Judgment, all of which occur at the Last Coming of the Last Man, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The claims of Church History’s false prophets notwithstanding, Christians find it unthinkable that God, having given us a book like this, should give us any more, as indeed the Revelation itself implies (Rev. 21:18-19). The Revelation is the Book of the End, and so rightly belongs at the end of the Book; at the end of the symphony of Scripture as its final glorious movement (1:8, 2:26, 21:6, 22:13).

Great summary of proper interpretation, etc.:

Like a grand finale, the Revelation also incorporates and skillfully weaves together ideas and images from the preceding movements of Scripture, whether OT or New. Here, biblical allusions abound, whether to the Garden of Eden, Moses, the Exodus, Elijah, Mt. Zion, the Temple, the birth of Jesus, the cruelty of Herod, the preaching of the disciples two by two, Christ’s resurrection, ascension, session, heavenly reign, and Parousia. Indeed, the Revelation cites or alludes to so many biblical texts that when we delve into it we immediately find the center columns of our reference Bibles bulging at the

seams! Westcott and Hort counted nearly 400 references to the OT, and many later commentators argue that they found too few. In Revelation 12 alone, there are quotes from, or allusions to, Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Daniel, Zechariah, Matthew, Luke, John, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Jude. All of this makes it clear that the Revelation is not historical narrative, law, poetry, gospel, or epistle. Rather, it is something unique, something completely new under the biblical sun: It is a final prophetic word to the universal Church, clothed in raiment from all that has gone before it, and so serving not only as a prophetic word, but also as the Grand Finale of all Scripture. If this is true, the implications are truly important. For if the Revelation is indeed the Grand Finale of all Scripture, then we ought not to expect it to introduce any new doctrines. It is not the purpose of a grand finale to introduce new themes, but rather to recapitulate the old. And when we closely examine the Revelation, that is precisely what we find. Here, there is nothing new; nothing other than what Christ and the apostles have already taught us in the Didactic NT; nothing new about the Holy Trinity, the creation, the Fall, the Eternal Covenant, the nature and structure of the Kingdom, or the Consummation at Christ's coming. What we do find is the Spirit speaking again—and over and over again—about all these “old” things. However, he does so in new and wondrous ways; in beautiful, powerful, and supremely inspiring visions and symbols; in a Grand Finale that incorporates and weaves together all that has gone before in Holy Scripture, even as it celebrates, one final time, the glory of the High King of Heaven.

The application to our theme in Part 4 is easy to see. If the Revelation really is the Grand Finale of all Scripture, how likely is it that just a few measures prior to its end (i.e., in chapter 20) the Lord Jesus would suddenly introduce a completely new eschatological theme (i.e., a future earthly stage of the Kingdom lasting a thousand years); a theme that would radically modify, if not completely overthrow, all he had previously taught us in the Didactic NT about the nature and structure of the Kingdom, the Consummation, the relationship of the Old Covenant to the New, and the proper interpretation of OTKP? Answer: NOT likely. Why? Because to do so would be to destroy the Grand Finale, belatedly and unexpectedly transforming the final movement of Scripture into the vehicle of a whole new movement; a new movement that must radically transform the Christian's understanding of every movement that preceded it, even as it postpones the completed Kingdom—and the Christian's completed joy—for an extra thousand years!

No, not likely at all!

Conclusion

We conclude, then, that a good understanding of the literary genre of the Revelation is most helpful for resolving the millennial controversy.

Yes, this book is an instance of biblical apocalyptic, but it is a unique instance.

Yes, it contains predictive prophecy, but it predicts nothing new.

Yes, it gives us the course, character, and consummation of Salvation History, but it tells us nothing new about them, preferring instead simply to exalt and sing the glories of the One who dwells at the center of them all.

And yes, it communicates in symbols, but in symbols whose meanings are old; symbols whose meanings have been disclosed previously in the Didactic NT, so that (for God's NT scribes) the Revelation is an open book, and not a sealed one.

For all these reasons, I conclude that Revelation 20 cannot possibly be introducing new truth about a future millennial stage of the Kingdom; new truth that would radically modify, upend, and overthrow the old. Rather, Revelation 20—and indeed the book as a whole—must simply be giving us the Grand Finale of all Scripture. It must be recapitulating and celebrating old truths, albeit in a new and breathtakingly beautiful way; a way that, fittingly enough, exalts him who is the living heart of all divine revelation: the High King of Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. pg 425

Pg 459 on the Last Battle and Judgment, Rev. 16-17

Revelation 17:1-6 ESV

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

Commentary by Dean Davis on pg 459

In verses 3-6, John describes his vision of the **Great Harlot**. She is seated upon the beast of revelation 13:1-10. Here is the **world system as temptress**, working in concert with the world system as persecuting political power. Gorgeously arrayed and holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, she is like the Rome of John's day, enticing men to lives of idolatry, materialism, drunkenness, and sensuality. But this is more than Rome. This is **Babylon the Great**, the mother of all spiritual harlots and all the abominations of the earth. This is, is as it were, the **satanic prototype that begets every historical incarnation of the world's system is temptress**. The saints of every generation have met and struggled with her corrupt children: Sodom, Egypt, Tyre, Sidon, Babylon, Rome, and the wealthy sin besotted cities of the world. Therefore we see that she is drunk, not only with the wine of her own immorality, but also with the blood of the saints. She cannot abide the light that emanates from them, light that pierces the darkness of her own soul. Therefore, as for Christ's, so for the saints: She seeks to extinguish their light by putting them to death.

The Revelation: Purpose and Literary Genre

Excerpt from *The High King of Heaven*
by Dean Davis

Chapter 12

Pg 409 – 417

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At the beginning of our journey, we identified four fundamental flashpoints of controversy in the Great End Time Debate: The Kingdom of God, the proper interpretation of OTKP, the Millennium, and the Consummation. Happily, our close study of the Kingdom supplied welcome insights into the other three questions. Having learned that the Kingdom appears in two simple stages—the Kingdom of the Son (i.e., the heavenly, mediatorial reign of Christ) followed by the Kingdom of the Father (i.e., the glorified World to Come)—we realized that the thousand years of Revelation cannot be a third, intermediate stage of the Kingdom sandwiched between the other two, as premillennarians assert. Similarly, having learned that the two stages of the Kingdom are separated by a single Consummation at the Parousia of Christ, we realized that the Consummation cannot be fragmented into multiple comings, resurrections, and judgments, as premillennarians also assert. In short, our study of the Kingdom has gone far towards resolving the End Time Debate in favor of the classic amillennial view of Salvation History.

It remains, however, for us to probe Revelation 20 itself. If it does not describe a future millennial reign of Christ on earth, what exactly does it describe? If, as I have suggested along the way, it speaks of the Kingdom of the Son, is there anything in the Revelation broadly, or in Revelation 20 itself, to support this view? Our purpose in Part 4 of our journey is to find out.

Let us begin, then, by getting a feel for the Revelation as a whole. In particular, let us see if there is anything in the purpose, literary genre, and structure of the book that will help us better understand the Millennium of Revelation 20.

The Purpose of the Revelation

We begin to discern the purpose of the Revelation when we consider the circumstances in which it was given.

The year, according to most scholars, is around 95 A.D. John, in all probability the last living apostle, is now in his 80's (John 21:21-23). Because of his faithfulness in preaching the Gospel, the Roman authorities have exiled him to a penal settlement on the island of Patmos (1:9, John 21:21-23). It has been over 60 years since Christ's ascension. The Lord is tarrying, and among many believers the expectation of his Parousia is waning (2 Peter 3:1f). The demonic emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68), a vicious persecutor of the Roman Christians, has come and gone. Titus has decimated Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Under Domitian (A.D. 81-89), persecution has spread throughout the Empire and reached Asia (A.D. 81-9). More is now looming (2:3, 10, 13). And beyond this external threat, there are internal, as well. Heretical "Christian" sects have grown in size and number, whose members are seeking to penetrate the orthodox churches and draw away disciples (2:2, 6, 14-15, 20-24). Some churches are even tolerating them in their midst (2:14f, 20f). Meanwhile, others are in decline: The love of certain Christians is growing cold (2:4, 3:1-2); others, having thus far escaped the fires of persecution, are falling in love with the world, and sinking into apathy and hedonism (3:14-21). The situation is dire. The faltering Church needs a word from the Lord.

The Revelation as a Gift to the Universal Church

The Revelation—all 22 chapters of it—is that word. Notably, at the very outset it is described as a gift: a gift from God the Father—through Christ, through the Spirit,² through angelic mediation, and through the apostle John—to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:1-6, 9, 22:8). Seven, however, is the biblical number of perfection or completeness (Gen. 2:2,3). The meaning is clear. God gave the Revelation, not just to the seven churches of Asia, but also to what the seven churches represent: the complete Church, the Universal Church. Likewise, the seven lampstands symbolize the one universal Church, especially in her present ministry as the Light of God and Christ to a world sunk in deep spiritual darkness (Rev. 1:13, 20)

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that history bears out this important truth. Like the seven churches, the universal Church has always had strengths and weaknesses; like the seven churches, it has always faced persecution, deception, and temptation; and like the seven churches, it has therefore always needed the Revelation. The book is, then, a great gift from the head of the universal Church, to the universal Church, for the help of the universal Church. Note carefully an important implication of this truth: the Revelation was not meant to be a closed book—not when it was given, not now, and not

ever (Rev. 22:10). The Lord desires his whole Church—past, present, and future—to understand, obey, preach, and profit from the Revelation.

And that includes chapter 20, as well!

The Revelation as a Prophecy to the Universal Church

John also describes the Revelation as a prophecy (Rev. 22:10, 18). Now according to the apostle Paul, he who prophesies speaks to men for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3). This short definition wonderfully captures the flavor—and the purpose—of the book. Everywhere we turn, we hear the exalted Christ prophesying to his Church. Everywhere we find him teaching, warning, and encouraging her, so that she may “overcome” all opponents and safely enter the completed Kingdom at his return (2:11, 2:26, etc.).

Since this idea is so important—namely, that the Revelation is essentially an extended prophecy—let us develop it a little further by looking at the three fundamental ways in which the High King of Heaven here prophesies to his beloved Bride.

The Prophet Teaches His Church

First, Christ teaches the Church. Here I especially have in mind the way he builds up the Church Militant in her understanding of her true place in the world and in history; in other words, the way in which he gives her a biblical worldview.

In this regard, Revelation 12 is central. It begins with a vision of the Bride, God’s elect of all times and places. From the very outset, we see her as God sees her: She is a heavenly Woman with an earthly mission (12:1). In her OT embodiment, she gives birth to the promised Seed of the Woman—to Christ (12:5a; Gen. 3:15). When she does, the Dragon and his demonic minions try to kill the infant Jesus, but cannot (12:4). Indeed, even when they do succeed in killing the Lamb of God, they altogether fail in “devouring” him, for he rises from the dead and ascends to the Father’s own right hand, where he now sits as High Prophet, Priest, and King of heaven. And from that heavenly seat he shall soon come again, this time to act the part of a shepherd against the enemies of his flock, shattering them once and for all with a rod of iron (12:5b, Psalms 2:9, 23:4).

For now, however, the Woman (i.e., the Bride in her specifically NT embodiment) must remain upon the earth. Therefore, in an eschatological Exodus from the Domain of Darkness, she flees into the wilderness of this fallen evil world (12:6). There she will remain for “1260 days” (or “a time, times, and a half a time,” or “42 months,” Rev. 11:2, 12:14, 13:5). Recalling the prophet Elijah’s three and a half year exile in the wilderness, these symbolic numbers mark the entire inter-adventual era—the Era of Proclamation—as a season of exile and tribulation for the people of God (1 Kings 17:1f). They will not, however, endure it alone: The Lord will faithfully nourish and aid his people all throughout their long wilderness sojourn, even as he did Israel and Elijah in theirs (12:6, 14-16). [\[this era is the age of the Christian church, from Pentecost to the 2nd advent. Dean Davis calls it the Era of Proclamation.\]](#)

But what exactly will the Church in the wilderness be doing as she awaits Christ’s return? The answer is found in verses 7-12: She will be waging war. Yes, the text itself says that Michael and his angels will wage war against the Dragon and his angels. But on closer inspection, we realize that this is simply a

picture of heaven's part in a war that the saints will be waging on earth. It is not a physical war, but a spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4, Eph. 6:12). It is the fulfillment of the Great Commission; the proclamation of the Gospel; the declaration of the saving power of the blood of the Lamb; the faithful testimony of the people of God to the Person and Work of the Christ of God (12:11). As they preach and teach—and as God's elect everywhere hear the truth and receive it—the Kingdom of Christ continually pours into the earth (12:10). As it does, the kingdom of Satan, who formerly deceived and ruled the whole world, is continually spoiled and cast to the ground (Mt. 12:29). Hence, Satan's fury against the Woman; hence the Groom's diligent watch-care over his beloved and persecuted Bride (12:13-17).

Very good here:

Here, then, in a prophetic vision of stupendous theological reach and power, we find Christ teaching the Church Militant who she is, what she is about, what she can expect, and upon whom she can count, as she makes her way out of eschatological Egypt, through the eschatological wilderness of Sin, and into the eschatological Promised Land. Fittingly, this rich chapter stands in the middle of the book, for in many ways it supplies us with the keys to the whole book. Thanks be to God for such a wonderful prophetic gift!

The Prophet Exhorts His Church

Secondly, the Lord exhorts the Church. In particular, he exhorts her by teaching and warning about four great enemies that she will encounter over and over again during her long journey through the wilderness of this world.

The first is the **Dragon**, that serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan (12:9). He—along with his host of evil angels—is the invisible spiritual ruler of the fallen world-system through which the saints must pass on their way to the Promised Land. As we have seen, this teaching pervades the NT. However, in the Revelation the Spirit draws upon various OT texts to depict the world-system as an unholy trinity; an unholy idol that fallen, rebellious, and deceivable mankind is all too inclined to worship. It is comprised of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Harlot. As we are about to see, these OT symbols correspond to God-given institutions, originally designed for the good of mankind, but now co-opted and corrupted by the Dragon (13:1, 4, 16:13). Ever since the Fall, he is the one enemy lurking behind the other three. Let the saints understand and beware (1 Peter. 5:8).

The second enemy is the **Beast** (13:1-4). This is the political or governmental face of the world-system (Daniel 7:1f). The NT teaches that civil government is a good, post-fall gift of God, designed to restrain evildoers through a faithful administration of his retributive justice (Rom. 13:1f). However, it also teaches that sin can and does corrupt human governments, sometimes to such an extent that they become unconscious instruments of the Satanic (2 Thess. 2:1f, Rev. 13:2, 4). When this occurs, deceived sinners will worship the Beast, rather than God (13:4). And when that occurs, the Beast will wage war against the people of God who, out of loyalty to their heavenly King, refuse to worship the Beast, and urge sinners to turn away from it towards Christ (11:7, 13:7, 17:14).

In the Revelation, Christ repeatedly exhorts his people concerning the **Beast**. Above all, he warns them not to receive his mark—his name, or the number of his name—on their right hand or on their forehead (14:9, 11, 15:2, 20:4). Here again the Spirit draws upon **OT imagery** to speak **symbolically** to

God's NT people (Ezekiel 9). The saints now have the seal of the living God on their foreheads (7:3). In other words, because of their faith in Christ they now belong to the Father; they are his adopted sons and daughters, carrying his Name (Rom. 8:15, 1 Peter 1:17). **How then shall they give their ultimate allegiance, whether in thought (symbolized by a mark on the forehead) or in deed (symbolized by a mark on the hand), to any mere man or human institution?** Note also that in Scripture six is the number of man (Gen. 1:26ff, Rev. 13:18, NIV), and three is the number of God Triune. Therefore, 666 is the number of man seeking to supplant the triune God; the number of man audaciously representing himself as the proper object of worship (13:16-18). The implications are clear: **Men take the mark of the Beast whenever and wherever they worship the anti-christian, self-deifying State.** And again, throughout the Revelation Christ warns his own that they must never do this evil thing.

[In other words, the mark of the beast on their forehead and hands is to be taken figuratively for what people think (signified by *on the forehead*) and consequently, what people do (signified by *on their hands*). Believers have the *mind of Christ*, so they think vastly differently about spiritual things, sin, worship of the true God (in spirit and truth) and consequently, what they do is pleasing to God because it's done by faith in the Son of God – or, say it this way, our acts testify to our having saving faith as Abraham was justified by his works in the same sense described by James in Jas. 2:18. Because the unregenerate man has not this mindset, a regenerate soul, the restored image of God in him, a new creation, he is told by Christ, "I never knew you; depart from me, you **workers** of lawlessness." Mt. 7:23 There's the consequence of the unregenerate mind, his works are lawless...apart from Christ, outside of faith, having other motives than a love for God, but by motives, for instance, of self love, self preservation, to be seen by men, etc. And so, they are cast out into outer darkness. Taking this a step further, how does this unregenerate mindset get further hardened? Prosperity! John Flavel comments: "Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and molds their hearts into their own similitude and nature; the whole strength of their souls goes out to those enjoyments." In this is seen the process of the securing this earthly image on their foreheads and hence their evil works that follow. This is heavy.

Additionally, the heavenly Prophet exhorts his people not to succumb to the threats or actual persecutions of the Beast, even if this means the loss of work, supply, reputation, or life itself (2:10, 13:17). He buttresses this exhortation with a twofold promise: The Lord will always be at his suffering people's side, and he has already prepared a victor's wreath for each one who overcomes (2:10, 12:14-16). Note carefully that in Revelation 20, as elsewhere in the book, Christ again exhorts the whole Church concerning the Beast: Those who refuse to receive his mark (of ownership), but instead remain faithful until death, will enter heaven as disembodied spirits, there to reign in life with their High King until he comes again at the end of the age to raise them from the dead and bestow upon them the glories of the World to Come (20:4-6). More on this later.

The third enemy is the **False Prophet**, also called the Beast from the Earth (Rev. 13:11-18, 16:12-16, 19:20, 20:10). A careful reading of the relevant texts shows that this beast symbolizes, not simply false religion, but false religion willingly pressed into the service of the self-deifying State. Energized by Satan (13:11), and authorized by the State itself (13:12), those people who function as the False Prophet use both coercion (13:12, 16-17) and religious deception (13:14-15) to set up "an image" to the Beast. That is, they seek to organize, implement, and encourage the worship of the State and/or the person in whom the State is embodied at any given moment in history.

The False Prophet is present throughout the entire Era of Proclamation. In John's day he was embodied in "... the emperor cult and the Commune of Asia, a council of distinguished representatives promoting loyalty to the emperor."³ In our own day, he rears his head wherever government propagandists encourage the adulation of the Chairman, the Fuehrer, the King, or the President. Notably, Revelation 13:13-15 implies that in some instances Satan will actually empower the False Prophet(s) to deceive men with miraculous signs (Exodus 7:8-13).

Most assuredly, this will be the case at the end of the age. The Gospels and epistles warn us that when the (final) Antichrist arises to deceive the whole world, he will perform "false signs and wonders" (Mt. 24:24, 2 Thess. 2:1-2, 9-12). Not surprisingly, we receive the same warning in the Revelation: John sees three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. They are demonic spirits, performing signs and going abroad to the kings of the whole world, in order to assemble them for the battle of the Great Day of God the Almighty (16:12-16). As I will argue later, Revelation 20:7-10, in remarkably similar language, predicts this very thing one final time. Clearly, the High Prophet of Heaven very much desires his Church to be fully prepared for the last (embodiment of the) Beast, the last False Prophet, and the Last Battle.

The fourth and final enemy is the Great Harlot, also referred to as Babylon the Great and the Great City (17:1, 3, 5, 18). The relevant chapters make it clear that the Harlot represents the economic, commercial, and cultural face of the world-system. As such, she is not so much a persecutor or religious deceiver as she is a seductress (17:4). In former times, she tempted the world through such luxurious commercial centers as Babylon, Tyre, and Sidon. In John's day, she tempted it through Rome. In our own day, she tempts it through wealthy, pleasure-mad cities now situated all over the globe, and also through omnipresent electronic wizardry wherein she bares her ample bosom and offers herself freely for a simple click.

John sees that at any given moment the entire world-system is in bed with the Harlot, spiritually speaking: Nations, kings, and merchants—all have fallen to her allurements (18:3). As a general rule, she likes to collude with the Beast and the False Prophet, doing all she can to persecute the Church (17:6) and entice saints and sinners alike with her sorceries (i.e., fake, demonic spiritualities, 18:23). Accordingly, no sooner do we begin to learn about the Harlot, than we hear the prophetic word of the Lord to his Church: "Come out of her, my people, that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues" (18:4, 3:14-22). As he speaks, the saints receive both warning and promise: Satan's woman, the Harlot, is doomed to destruction. In part, it will come at the hand of the Beast himself, who will one day turn against her (17:14-18). However, in far greater part it will come at the hand of Christ, who, in a single hour, will make her utterly desolate (18:19) and render her an eternal prison house of Satan and his demons (18:2). Meanwhile, Christ's Woman—comprised of all who hear his call, flee the Great City, and loyally cling to him in faith—is destined for final rescue and restoration; is destined to become a Holy City and a glorious Bride, forever dwelling with God and Christ under brand new heavens in a brand new earth (19:7-8, 21:2). Let all the saints be warned ... and take heart.

The Prophet Comforts His Church

Finally, the heavenly Prophet uses the Revelation to speak comfort to his Bride. Yes, as trembling Christians well know, the Revelation repeatedly issues warnings of inevitable tribulation and certain

judgment. However, the more they read, the more they realize how much comfort is offered along with those warnings, and how many different forms that comfort takes.

For example, at the very outset of the book, Christ comforts his pilgrim people with a majestic vision of his own divine nature, covenant faithfulness, and Messianic glory (1:9-20).

He then comforts them with manifold assurances of his presence in, and faithful watch-care over, all his churches, even as he manifests the tough love that he feels for each one (2:1-3:22).

He comforts them with rich, symbolic representations of his heavenly, mediatorial reign, the saints share in it, and his absolute sovereignty over all remaining history (4:1-5:14).

He comforts them with scenes of the spirits of departed believers safely home in heaven, praying for divine justice, and waiting eagerly for the resurrection of their bodies at his return to the earth (6:9-11, 20:4-6).

He comforts them with portraits of his own Parousia in power and glory at the end of the age (14:14-20, 19:11-21).

In conjunction with that, he also comforts them with visions of ultimate justice: of final rewards for the faithful saints, and of final retribution against the persecuting and God-hating "inhabitants of the earth" (6:9-17, 11:11-19, 15:1-4, 16:17-21, 20:7-15).

Similarly, he comforts them with several "sneak previews" of the glorified Church surrounding the throne of God Triune, exultantly lifting up the eternal worship that will fill the World to Come (7:9-17, 14:1-5).

And, of course, he comforts them with two luminous chapters supplying mysterious, thought-provoking glimpses of the (eternal) life of the saints in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21-22).

Conclusion

Summing up, we have seen that the great purpose of the Revelation is prophetic; that in it, God, through Christ, speaks to the universal Church in order to teach, warn, exhort, and comfort her, so that she might make a worthy and triumphant pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world into the eschatological Promised Land.

This is highly relevant to Part 4 of our study for the very important reason that it naturally and powerfully inclines us to an "ecclesiastical" interpretation of Revelation 20. In particular, it suggests that Revelation 20 cannot possibly be what many premillennarians claim it is: a divine afterthought, in which the Spirit suddenly shifts his focus from the Church to ethnic Israel, and from the Church era to a future Millennium. No, just like the rest of the book, chapter 20 must also focus on the Church, and on the present evil age through which the Church makes her difficult pilgrimage (Rev. 12). As we have just seen, this conclusion flows naturally from the One who gave it (the Head of the Church); from the ones to whom he gave it (the seven churches, emblematic of the universal Church); and from the purposes for which he gave it (to teach, warn, and comfort the Church). Moreover, as we shall soon see, it also flows naturally from a careful study of the structure, contents, and symbolism of Revelation 20 itself.

Common Grace and the Gospel

By Cornelius Van Til

Code475

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 58-148, 158-208

The following are excerpts from **Van Til's** work, *Common Grace and the Gospel*. He has described several subjects in an excellent and profound manner. Van Til uses several terms that I am unfamiliar with, but read along anyway – this is a must read!!

These subjects, and more, are addressed:

Common Grace, the knowledge of God and man's consciousness thereof, Man's total depravity, the testimony of the Spirit and revelation, restraining grace, man's suppression of the knowledge of God, epistemology, the ontological trinity, secondary and primary (first) causes, remote, proximate and ultimate causes, conception of mystery, positive and natural revelation, the two wills of God, basic interpretative concept: the doctrine of the ontological trinity, God's immutability, God's love for mankind in general, etc., the general offer of the Gospel to all - explained vis-à-vis to the elect, Original Sin, Adam's federal headship, abstractions, process of differentiation, civil righteousness, Heb. 6:4 explained, the hypocrite described, what is transgression, the nature of God, Particularism - unconditional election, sovereignty of God & Divine providence & objections raised, kicking against the pricks, Karl Barth [code498], Common Grace in Romanism, the process of differentiation, Aristotle, Descartes and Aquinas – theistic proofs of God's existence can lead to idolatry, neutral reason and Romanist natural theology; limiting or supplementative concepts, Scholasticism, the gift of logical reason, dialectical theology, reason vs. faith, non-Christian thinking, analogical thinking, the image of God, Romans 7:14-17

Excerpt from

Common Grace and the Gospel

My comments in [blue]

Notes on man's depravity:

The main point is that if man could look anywhere and not be confronted with the revelation of God then he could not sin in the biblical sense of the term. Sin is the breaking of the law of God. God confronts man everywhere. He cannot in the nature of the case confront man anywhere if he does not confront him everywhere. God is one; the law is one. If man could press one button on the radio of his experience and not hear the voice of God then he would always press that button and not the others. But man cannot even press the button of his own self-consciousness without hearing the requirement of God. Van Til, pg 177

Calvin starts off his discussion of theology in his Institutes by saying that man's consciousness of himself and his consciousness of God are involved in one another. In saying this he is only

reflecting what Paul so clearly says in his first chapter of the epistle to the Romans when he speaks of man as unavoidably knowing God.

Hoeksema rightly lays great stress on the total depravity of man. But man's total depravity spells his ethical disobedience to his Creator. Man cannot become and remain apostate except in relation to the revelation of God's character and will that is everywhere and always present in him. Van Til, pg 216

3. Hepp

Hepp has offered us a well-worked out discussion of Reformed epistemology [[why and how to you know what you know? Christian epistemology: the study of how one might know, or rationally believe, that Christianity is true](#)]. His book in which he does so is called *Het Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. In the first volume he deals with what he calls the general testimony of the Spirit. It is to be followed by another, in which he is to deal with the special testimony of the Spirit.

Hepp wants to build on what Bavinck and other Reformed theologians have done. In modern times Bavinck has come nearer than any one else to teaching a general testimony of the Spirit. But even he did not mention it by name. He only prepared the way for the idea. When we come to the definitely constructive portion of Hepp's work, the argument he presents runs somewhat as follows. As the special testimony of the Spirit testifies within us to the truth of Scripture, so the general testimony of the Spirit testifies within us to truth in general. The whole of the world about us is a manifestation of the truths of God. It is the Spirit's task to set forth the fulness of this revelation before the eyes of men. This may be called the testimonium Spiritus Sancti *externum*. This external testimony reveals to man; but to this must be added the internal testimony to assure men of the truth of this revelation. "Why? All revelation takes place by way of means. This is always true whether or not the revelation pertain to God or to created things. God never reveals Himself directly to us, but always through something that stands between Him and our ego. If not we should need to be able to look into the very essence of God, we should need to be fitted for a *visio Dei per essentiam*." Revelation as such cannot give us certainty. If we had nothing but revelation, says Hepp, we should be compelled to believe in the objects on their own account. We should therefore rather say that the objects are but messengers of the Holy Spirit. Absolute certainty I, as a creature, can obtain only when the Holy Spirit, quite independently of the objects themselves, makes me believe that their revelation brings the truth to me. And that takes place when I receive the testimonium *generale internum*. This, says Hepp, is the essence of the testimony of the Spirit. It assures but does not reveal. It assures me of the truth of the revelation about me.

This general testimony, however, does not assure me of all truth. It assures me of central truths only. These several truths do not relate to one another as members of a hierarchy. They are relatively

independent of one another. There are three groups of central truths, those pertaining to God, those pertaining to man, and those pertaining to the world.

In connection with the truths pertaining to God, Hepp then discusses the value of the **theistic proofs**. His thought here is very similar to that of Bavinck. These proofs, he argues, put into set formulas that which comes to us from the cosmos as a whole. They press with power upon our consciousness, but cannot give us certainty. General revelation, which is, as it were, concentrated in these proofs, would lead to a guess if it were not for the testimony of the Spirit. Hepp is most insistent that we shall keep the two concepts, revelation and assurance, rigidly apart. Even in paradise Adam could not have lived by revelation as such. Without the general testimony there would have been uncertainty. Now doubt is sin, and in paradise there was no sin. We must therefore hold that even in paradise there was, in addition to general revelation, the general internal testimony of the Spirit to that revelation.

The second group of general truths centers about man. How is man to be certain of his self-existence? Only by the general internal testimony of the Spirit. How does man know that he can depend on his senses, on the axioms of his thought, and on the norms of his moral and aesthetic appreciation? Only by the general internal testimony of the Spirit.

The third group of central truths deals with the world. This world presents itself as working according to *prima principia*. How do I know that this is true? Only by the general internal testimony of the Spirit.

Thus the general internal testimony of the Spirit may be said to be the foundation of all science, religion, morality, and art. We come now to the most pivotal point of all. "From the marriage of the general testimony and revelation (here taken in its wide signification of God-revelation, man-revelation, and cosmos-revelation) faith is born. Wherever the internal testimony attests to the external testimony, man cannot withhold his assent. And faith always consists of giving assent by means of one's reason to some witness or other." Hepp calls this faith *fides generalis*. He says that modern philosophy has, quite generally, allowed for this *fides generalis*. Yet, he adds, there is a difference, even a great difference, between the faith of modern philosophy and the general faith as we should hold to it. For the modern philosopher, faith is, he says, after all, second to knowledge. For Christianity, on the other hand, faith offers far greater certainty than does science. "As for certainty knowledge cannot stand in the shadow of the *fides generalis*. For this rests on higher than subjective and objective grounds, on a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, on the testimony of God in the heart of every man."

Now it is because of this *fides generalis*, resulting from the marriage of revelation and the general testimony, that men accept the general truths with respect to God, man, and the world. "Taken generally mankind does not deny the central truths. By far the greater majority of men recognize a higher power above themselves and do not doubt the reality within and beyond themselves." Here we reach the climax of the whole matter. There are central truths to which the generality of mankind,

because of the irresistible power of the Spirit's internal general testimony, must of necessity give their consent.

Our criticism of this position of Hepp will, quite naturally, be similar to that which we have made of Bavinck. As long as he is unwilling to argue along exclusively Christian lines, Hepp is unable to escape making concessions to a Roman type of natural theology. He makes many valuable negative criticisms against rationalism and empiricism. But he is not fully conscious, it seems, of the fact that even a negative criticism of non-Christian positions, must be undertaken from the presupposition of the Christian position. Hepp cannot effectively oppose the natural theology of Rome if he argues against it with the methods of a scholastic type of natural theology. He apparently has two methods of reasoning against false philosophies: one based on neutral premises, and, then, an additional one based on Christian premises.

When Hepp deals with the “**theistic proofs**” he, like Bavinck, attributes a certain value to them even when they are constructed along non-Christian lines. Hepp says that Kant underestimated the value of these arguments. In his whole discussion of the proofs Hepp allows that an argument based upon would-be neutral ground, can have a certain validity. Of these proofs, constructed on a neutral and therefore non-Christian basis, Hepp says that they cry day and night that God exists. To this we reply that they cry day and night that God does not exist. For, as they have been constructed, **they cry that a finite God exists.** [see [Van Til's note below](#)] Nothing more could come from the procedure on which they have been constructed. They have been constructed on the assumption that we as human beings may make our start from the finite world, as from something that is ultimate. They take for granted that we already know from our study of the phenomenal world the meaning of such words as “cause” and “being” and “purpose,” whether or not we have referred this phenomenal world to God. To avoid a natural theology of the Roman sort, we shall need to come to something like a clear consciousness of the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian mode of argument with respect to the revelation of God in nature. God is, and has been from the beginning, revealed in nature and in man's own consciousness. We cannot say that the heavens probably declare the glory of God. We cannot allow that if rational argument is carried forth on true premises, it should come to any other conclusion than that the true God exists. Nor can we allow that the certainty with respect to God's existence would be any less if acquired by a ratiocinative process rather than by intuitions, as long as man was not a sinner. The testimony of the Spirit may well be conceived as originally controlling Adam's reasoning powers as well as his intuitive powers. On the other hand, when man has become a sinner, his intuitive powers are as sinful as his reasoning powers. There may be more area for error in a sorites than in an intuition, but the corruption of sin has penetrated to every activity of man.

Van Til notes in *The Defense of the Faith*, pg. 163: “We accept this God upon Scriptural authority. In the Bible alone do we hear of such a God... We do not first set out without God to find out highest philosophical concept in terms of which we think we can interpret reality and

then call this highest concept divine. This was, as Windelband [1848-1915, a German, neo-Kantian philosopher] tells us, [the process of the Greeks](#). This has been the process of all non-Christian thought. It is from this process of reasoning that we have been redeemed. [On such a process of reasoning only a finite god can be discovered.](#)" [Van Til, *Common Grace* pg. 8]

Thus the imperative necessity of introducing the distinction between the psychologically and the [epistemologically](#) interpretative, becomes again apparent. God still speaks in man's consciousness. Man's own interpretative activity, whether of the more or of the less extended type, whether in ratiocination or in intuition, is no doubt the most penetrating means by which the Holy Spirit presses the claims of God upon man. The argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity is objectively valid. We should not tone down the validity of this argument to the probability level. The argument may be poorly stated, and may never be adequately stated. But in itself the argument is absolutely sound. Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold. It is not merely as reasonable as other positions, or a bit more reasonable than other positions; it alone is the natural and reasonable position for man to take. By stating the argument as clearly as we can, we may be the agents of the Spirit in pressing the claims of God upon men. If we drop to the level of the merely probable truthfulness of Christian theism, we, to that extent, lower the claims of God upon men. This is, we believe, the sense of Calvin's Institutes on the matter.

On the other hand, every man by his sinful nature seeks violently to suppress the voice of God that keeps on speaking within him through his created nature. One way sinful human nature has of suppressing the claims of God within itself, is by saying that the objective argument for the existence of God is of doubtful validity. Sinful human nature loves to speak of abstract principles of truth, goodness, and beauty. It loves to speak of a God because it hates the God.

If we take both the original human nature and the sinful human nature, and realize that everywhere both are active, we have done once for all with the natural theology of Rome. On the objective side we have done with it, inasmuch as we claim for the statement of the Christian position absolute validity. For science and philosophy, as well as for theology, we frankly take our basic presuppositions from Scripture. Scripture tells us that God, the God who has more fully revealed Himself in Scripture than in nature, is yet speaking to us in the created universe about us. Scripture says that from the beginning He has spoken there. It says that man has known this fact, and that by his efforts at perversion he has well-nigh succeeded in silencing the voice of revelation, but that deep down in his heart he is still aware of this revelation and will be held responsible for it. We must not lower these claims to the probability level. On the subjective side we have done with a Romanist type of natural theology, because we realize the sinful nature is everywhere active. There are no *capita communissima*, on which believers and nonbelievers can agree without a difference. There are no central truths on which all agree. The disagreement is fundamental and goes to the heart of the matter.

Thus we are no longer face to face with the dilemma with which Gilson confronts the Calvinist. As long as we seek refuge from Romanism by having less Romanism we shall not escape the sword of Gilson. To withdraw to the inner fortress of central truths, and make even these merely probable in the objective field, and to withdraw to the psychologically primitive (intuitions, *beseffen*) in the subjective field, helps matters not at all. Gilson will find us still. Quite rightly he asserts that the attenuations of language are of no help in this matter. If we speak of the sense of deity and of the seed of religion, and mean by that some degree of common epistemological response on the part of believer and non-believer, however small the area of agreement, and however primitive the nature of the response, Gilson has a right to confront us with his dilemma. The escape from the dilemma lies, we believe, as suggested, in doing what Kuyper and Bavinck and Hepp have all at one place or another told us to do, namely, offer an interpretation of life in its totality on the basis of the principle Scripture offer. That principle is the ontological trinity. In answer to his challenge, we would tell Gilson that, unless he is willing with us to interpret nature and all things else in terms of the ontological trinity, he can get no meaning into human experience. The interpretations of the natural reason, made by the aid of **abstract principles** and **brute facts** [codeBF, brutefactdef, code524 & codebrute]: isolated self-evident arguments, data in a void or *uninterpreted raw data* (Bahnsen: min-mark 27: <https://youtu.be/YmKKC70GIC4>) The unregenerate will only interpret these facts according to his [erroneous] presuppositions which is the error of natural theology (the traditional method of theistic proofs) as opposed to Rom. 1, a theology based upon revelation, where the whole of nature pictures God all at once, not by piecemeal increments of brute facts (bare facts), that in the natural mind (who naturally suppresses the knowledge of God), will only lead him to the probability of a finite God, not the God of Scripture; facts should not be isolated from the framework in which they come, that is they should be related to the plan of God to be rightly understood. Bahnsen explains this very well in that video on Natural Theology and the Proofs.] can, in the nature of the case, lead with rationalism (Parmenides) into a universal validity that is empty of content, or with empiricism (Heraclitus) to a particularism that has no universality, or to a phenomenalism that is a compromise between these two positions and shares the weaknesses of both.

B. The Positive Line Of Concrete Thinking

What has been said by way of criticism on the remnants of abstract thinking found in Kuyper, Bavinck, and Hepp has virtually suggested the direction of thought we would follow in approaching the question of common grace. The ontological trinity will be our interpretative concept everywhere. God is our concrete universal; in Him thought and being are coterminous, in Him the problem of knowledge is solved.

If we begin thus with the ontological trinity as our concrete universal, we frankly differ from every school of philosophy and from every school of science not merely in our conclusions, but in our starting-point and in our method as well. For us the facts are what they are, and the universals are what they are, because of their common dependence upon the ontological trinity. Thus, as earlier discussed, the facts are correlative to the universals. Because of this correlativity there is genuine progress in history; because of it the Moment has significance.

To make progress in our discussion we must, it seems, learn to take time more seriously than we have done. What does it mean to take time more seriously? It means, for one thing, to realize that we shall never have an exhaustive answer to the common grace problem. We have already made a good deal of the Christian concept of mystery. With all our admiration for Bavinck we yet found that he allowed himself to be influenced by the Greek ideal of the comprehension of God. This ideal works havoc with true Reformed theology. Perhaps we may here learn anew from the greatest of theologians, John Calvin.

Calvin lays great stress upon the incomprehensible will of God. This is particularly the case in his treatise on the predestination of God. In replying to Pighius and Georgius he falls back on this point again and again. In the first section of the book Calvin gives the doctrine of election “a slight touch.” But even in this “slight touch” he refers to Rom. 9.20 (Rom 9:20). Of it he says: “The apostle in this appeal adopts an axiom, or universal acknowledgment, which not only ought to be held fast by all godly minds, but deeply engraven in the breast of common sense; that the inscrutable judgment of God is deeper than can be penetrated by man.” ¹⁰² (102Calvin’s Calvinism, First Part, A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God, translated by Henry Cole, p. 32.) When we must answer such as argue along the lines of Pighius, says Calvin, we ask whether there be “no justice of God, but that which is conceived of by us.” When men cannot see a reason for the works of God they are immediately “prepared to appoint a day for entering into judgment with Him.” “What do you really think of God’s glorious Name? And will you vaunt that the apostle is devoid of all reason, because he does not drag God from His throne and set Him before you, to be questioned and examined.” Calvin steadfastly refuses to permit abstract universal ideas to rule God. We are to hold that the will of God, the will of the inscrutable God is “the highest rule of righteousness.” God’s will is to be set “above all other causes.” Men who follow “their own natural sense and understanding” appeal to abstract justice, “because they presume to subject the tribunal of God to their own judgment.” We should rather rest content with the Word of God. May we keep our ears open to it and shut them to the voice of strangers.

The problem Calvin is discussing is that of predestination. The objection raised against the doctrine of predestination is, of course, that it condemns **secondary causes** to insignificance. Pighius, says Calvin, “knows not how to make the least distinction between remote and proximate causes.” Pighius urges the full-bucket difficulty against Calvin’s insistence that God’s counsel is the ultimate cause of whatsoever comes to pass.

Calvin in turn insists that it is quite legitimate to urge man’s sin as the proximate, and God’s counsel as the ultimate, cause of man’s final perdition. Does he think he can offer an explanation of the relation between the ultimate and the proximate cause that will satisfy the demands of a logic, such as Pighius employs? Not for a moment. He calls on Pighius to forsake his logic with its phenomenal foundation. “Pighius, on the contrary, begins his building from the earth’s plain surface, without any

foundation at all." Pighius would ask why God created such natures as he knew would sin. Pighius knows how to employ a well-turned syllogism. There is no escaping the force of his objection. If God is the ultimate cause back of whatsoever comes to pass, Pighius can, on his basis, rightly insist that God is the cause of sin. Calvin knew this. He attempts no answer by means of a non-Christian methodology. With Augustine he would throw man back into the consideration of what he is, and what is the capacity of his mind. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God." This is a reason for man and "all that is due him." That was Paul's answer and Augustine's answer. It is also Calvin's answer: "Paul comparing, as he here does, man with God, shows that the counsel of God, in electing and reprobating men, is without doubt more profound and more deeply concealed than the human mind can penetrate. Wherefore, O man, consider (as the apostle adviseth thee)

We are to remember, then, that on the question of the relation of God's counsel to what takes place in time "the wisdom of Christ is too high and too deep to come within the compass of man's understanding." There is nothing "in the whole circle of spiritual doctrine which does not far surpass the capacity of man and confound its utmost reach." When such a subject as predestination is discussed "numberless unholy and absurd thoughts rush into the mind." How shall we meet these unholy thoughts and arguments in ourselves and in others? We shall not meet them by trying to defend such doctrines on the basis of a logic that assumes secondary causes to be ultimate causes. We shall not meet them on the basis of a logic that starts from brute facts [see [codeBF](#), [brutefactdef](#), and [code524 & codebrute](#)], and handles them according to abstract universal principles., We shall meet them rather by offering the ontological trinity as our interpretative concept. This will at once lay us open to the charge of the full-bucket difficulty. We are not to be affrighted by the charge of holding the contradictory. "But I would repeat my being perfectly aware how much absurdity and irreconcilable contradiction these deep things seem to profane persons to carry with them." We shall meet this charge of contradiction by asserting that we are the true defenders of the meaning of second causes. History has meaning just because God's counsel is back of it. Sin can be given as the reason for man's destruction just because men were "fitted for destruction," and faith can be given as a reason for man's final glory just because believers were "afore prepared unto glory." "Godly consciences" 119 need not be disturbed by the reasonings of rationalists, or irrationalists or rationalist-irrationalists. There is, in fact, a beautiful harmony between remote and proximate causes. The harmony exists—of that, faith is sure. Faith is reasonable—of that, faith is also sure. Faith alone is reasonable—of that, faith is once more sure. Faith abhors the really contradictory; to maintain the really contradictory is to deny God. Faith adores the apparently contradictory; to adore the apparently contradictory is to adore God as one's creator and final interpreter.

Says Calvin: "If, then, nothing can prevent a man from acknowledging that the first origin of his ruin was from Adam, and if each man finds the proximate cause of his ruin in himself, what can prevent our faith from acknowledging afar off, with all sobriety, and adoring, with all humility, that remote secret counsel of God by which the Fall of man was thus preordained? And what should prevent the same faith from beholding, at the same time, the proximate cause within; that the whole human race is individually bound by the guilt and desert of eternal death, as derived from the person of Adam; and

that all are in themselves, therefore, subject to death and to death eternal? Pighius, therefore, has not sundered, shaken or altered (as he thought he had done) that pre-eminent and most beautiful symmetry with which these proximate and remote causes divinely harmonize!”

The “scholars of God,” those who are “gifted, not with the spirit of this world, but with His own heavenly Spirit” may know the things freely given them by God; but they know them because they have learned to know their places as creatures before the incomprehensible God.

There can be little doubt that if Calvin’s conception of mystery were more closely adhered to in our discussion of common grace, we should lose less time and energy in misunderstanding one another. The charges of rationalism and irrationalism that have been hurled back and forth would subside to a considerable extent if we all learned to think less along rationalist-irrationalist and more along Calvin’s lines. Any tendency toward either rationalism or irrationalism lowers the genuine significance of history.

The imperative necessity of maintaining a clear-cut distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian conception of mystery in connection with any problem, and in particular with the common grace problem, may now become apparent. The common grace problem deals with this question: What do entities which will one day be wholly different from one another have in common before that final stage of separation is reached? We dare not expect to approach anything like a specific answer to this problem, so long as we allow our thinking to be controlled by abstractions. But abstractions will be with us as long as we do not distinguish clearly between the Christian and the non-Christian concept of mystery.

We have already observed that the invariable concomitant of confusing the two conceptions of mystery is the lowering of the claims for the objective validity of the Christian-theistic position. The **theistic proofs** are said to be objectively weak. They are said to be worth something but not a great deal. Our position as Christians is merely said to be objectively at least as good as the position of our enemies. The result will naturally be that we relieve the pressure of God’s claims upon created man. We say to him that, as far as the objective evidence is concerned, he is living up to the requirements of the case if he merely arrives at the existence of a God, at a divinity *überhaupt*. At least he need not feel that he is falling below the mark, if he is doubtful that the true God exists. Now apply this to man’s moral attitude toward God. Both parties to the debate on common grace should be willing to agree that Adam and Eve had the requirements of God’s law written on their hearts. We need not concern ourselves here with the distinction between the “works of the law” and the “law.” We are not speaking now of man’s ethical reaction to God. We are speaking only of God’s revelational relationship to man. And on that point all should be equally anxious to maintain that God originally spoke plainly to man, both in the “book of nature” and in the “book of conscience.” Wherever man would turn he saw the living God and His requirements. Whether he reasoned about nature or whether he looked within,

whether it was the starry heavens above or the moral law within, both were equally insistent and plain that God, the true God, stood before him.

It should also be recognized that man was, from the outset, confronted with **positive**, as well as with **natural**, revelation. Dr. Vos speaks of this as pre-redemptive special revelation. God walked and talked with man. Natural revelation must not be separated from this supernatural revelation. To separate the two is to deal with two abstractions instead of with one concrete situation. That is to say, natural revelation, whether objective or subjective, is in itself a limiting conception. It has never existed by itself so far as man is concerned. It cannot fairly be considered, therefore, as a fixed quantity, that can be dealt with in the same way at every stage of man's moral life. Man was originally placed before God as a covenant personality.

It is no doubt with this in mind that Calvin speaks of sinners as being **covenant breakers**. The phrase has come into common usage among Reformed theologians. Common as the usage of the phrase may be, however, the point we have made perhaps needs stressing. All too easily do we think of the covenant relation as quite distinct and independent of natural revelation. The two should be joined together. To speak of man's relation to God as being covenantal at every point is merely to say that man deals with the personal God everywhere. Every manipulation of any created fact is, as long as man is not a sinner, a covenant-affirming activity. Every manipulation of any fact, as soon as man is a sinner, is a covenant-breaking activity.

In this connection a word may be said about the question already touched upon as to whether any conclusions may be drawn about the attitude of God from observation of facts. In Schilder's discussion of the proof texts adduced by the Christian Reformed Church Synod of 1924, he speaks from time to time about "facts as such." From the "facts as such," he warns, we are not to conclude any such thing as an attitude of God toward the reprobate. "Beware, that you do not separate the facts from faith." The point comes up again and again. As over against a Romanizing type of natural theology this warning of Schilder is no doubt in order. And we have observed that as Reformed theologians we have not yet outgrown Rome's natural theology entirely. We have already criticized the idea of brute fact [see **codeBF**, **brutefactdef**, and **code524 & codebrute**]. But there is another side to the story.

If there are no brute facts, if brute facts are mute facts, it must be maintained that all facts are revelational of the true God. If facts may not be separated from faith, neither may faith be separated from facts. Every created fact must therefore be held to express, to some degree, the attitude of God to man. Not to maintain this is to fall back once again into a natural theology of a Roman Catholic sort. For it is to hold to the idea of brute fact after all. And with the idea of brute fact goes that of neutral reason. A fact not revelational of God is revelational only of itself.

Schilder tells us, further, that the attitude of God is revealed only to the extent that we know of the **will of His eternal counsel**. He speaks of this in connection with the story of the sons of Eli. In God's final purpose he has determined to slay the sons of Eli. Yet Eli is told to tell his sons that God desires not their death. "The father Eli may, and must say to his sons: be converted, ye children of Eli, for

Jehovah desires not your death; that is the revealed will, the command, which you are to obey. He hates sin. But in addition to this we are informed afterwards, that as far as the **secret will of God** is concerned, Jehovah did desire their death as just punishment; in part because of this they harden themselves against warning; inasmuch as wickedness is punishment as well as pollution. And in this hidden will it is that the attitude of God appears.”

Should Schilder wish to generalize the point he makes with respect to the sons of Eli, he would end up with the notion of brute fact (search **brutefactdef & codebrute**) . To set the problem before us as clearly as possible, we do well to think of it in connection with Adam in paradise. Would it be possible to maintain that only by the later revelation of God’s final purpose could anything be known of His attitude toward man? Then Adam would at the beginning have known nothing of God’s attitude toward him. No revelation of God’s final purpose had yet been made. The whole future, as far as Adam’s knowledge was concerned, was conditioned by his obedience or disobedience. But if this act of obedience or disobedience was to have any significance, it had to be obedience or disobedience with respect to God, whom he knew. His moral act could not be action in a void. He knew something of God and of God’s attitude toward him without any unconditional revelation about God’s final purpose.

We must go further than this. Man was originally created good. That is to say, there was, as a matter of fact, an ethical reaction on the part of man, and this ethical action was approved by God. It may be said that. God created man with a good nature, but that the test was still to come as to whether he would voluntarily live in accord with this good nature. But surely Adam could not live for a second without acting morally. The “good nature” of Adam cannot be taken otherwise than as a limiting concept. The objective and the subjective aspects were correlative of one another. Further still, the decisive representative act was still to come. Granted that Adam’s nature was an active nature, this active nature itself must be taken as a **limiting concept** in relation to the decisive ethical reaction that was to take place in connection with the probationary command. This goes to prove that the representative act of obedience or disobedience presupposed for its possibility the revelational character of everything created. It goes to prove, further, that man’s good ethical reaction must be taken as an aspect of that revelatory character of everything created. To be sure, this good reaction was not the consummated good that shall be attained in the case of those that will be in glory. Yet it was a good ethical reaction. It was good not so much in a lower sense as in an earlier sense.

The importance of stressing the idea of the earlier and the later, needs to be insisted on. We know, of course, that in God’s mind there are those that are reprobate and those that are elect. This fact being revealed to us, we know that some men will be finally rejected and some men will be finally accepted. And there is no dispute as to what is the ultimate cause with respect to this difference. Both parties to the debate are with Calvin, as over against Pighius, heartily agreed that God’s counsel is the ultimately determinative factor. But the difference obtains with respect to the meaning of the historical. And here the problem is, more specifically, to what extent we should allow our notion of the earlier to be controlled by our notion of the later. We think that the notion of the earlier must be stressed more than has been done heretofore.

If we make the earlier our point of departure for the later, we begin with something that believers and unbelievers have in common. That is to say, they have something in common because they do not yet exist. Yet they do exist. **They exist in Adam as their common representative.** They have seen the testimony of God in common. They have given a common good ethical reaction to this testimony, the common mandate of God. They are all mandate-hearers and covenant-keepers. God's attitude to all is the same. God has a favorable attitude to all. He beheld all the works of His hands and, behold, they were good. God was pleased with them.

But this favorable attitude of God to this early common perfect nature must be taken as correlative to the representative moral act of Adam. We may and must hold that every fact was revelational. Every fact was the bearer of a requirement. But, even as such, it was expressive of a favorable attitude of God to man. Without all this the ethical act of representation would have to take place in a void. At the same time, this original situation was an historically unfinished situation. It required further ethical action as its correlative. The continuance of the situation required, on the part of man, the representative affirmation of God as God. And this correlativity implied that the situation would, in any case, be changed. Whether Adam was to obey or to disobey, the situation would be changed. And thus God's attitude would be changed.

We need at this point to be fearlessly **anthropomorphic**. Our **basic interpretative concept**, the doctrine of the ontological trinity, demands of us that we should be so. We have met the full-bucket difficulty by asserting that history has meaning, not in spite of, but because of, the counsel of God who controls whatsoever comes to pass. From the point of view of a **non-Christian logic** the Reformed Faith can be bowled over by means of a single syllogism. **[A syllogism is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true. In its earliest form, a syllogism arises when two true premises validly imply a conclusion, or the main point that the argument aims to get across.]** God has determined whatsoever comes to pass. Man's moral acts are things that come to pass. Therefore man's moral acts are determined and man is not responsible for them. So Pighius argued against Calvin. Calvin replied, **in effect, that just because God has determined everything, secondary causes have genuine meaning.** Applying this to the case in hand, we would say that we are entitled and compelled to use anthropomorphism not apologetically but fearlessly. We need not fear to say that God's attitude has changed with respect to mankind. We know well enough that God in himself is **changeless**. But we hold that we are able to affirm that our words have meaning for no other reason than that we use them analogically.

Accordingly we would not speak of God's love of creatureliness always and everywhere. Schilder uses this idea. He says that God greatly loves creatureliness everywhere, whether in the drunkard, the anti-Christ or the devil. Creatureliness is then conceived of statically, as though it were something to be found anywhere and everywhere the same and always by itself. But creatureliness should be used as a

limiting concept. It is never found in moral beings, whether men or angels, except in connection with an ethical reaction, positive or negative. We cannot intelligently speak of God's love of creatureliness in the devil. God's good pleasure pertains no doubt to the devil. But that is because the devil is frustrated in his opposition to God. God once upon a time loved the devil. But that was before the devil was the devil. We shall make no progress on the common grace problem with the help of abstractions.

We need not hesitate to affirm, then, that in the beginning **God loved mankind in general**. That was before mankind had sinned against God. A little later God hated mankind in general. That was after mankind had sinned against God. Is there any doubt that the elect, as well as the reprobate, were under the wrath of God? Calvin says that the whole human race is "individually bound by the guilt and desert of eternal death, as derived from the person of Adam." So the elect and the reprobate are under a common wrath. If there is meaning in this—and who denies it? there may and must, with equal right, be said to be an earlier attitude of common favor. Indeed, the reality of the "common wrath" depends upon the fact of the earlier "common grace." But after the common, in each case, comes the conditional. History is a process of differentiation. Accordingly, the idea of that which is common between the elect and the reprobate is always a limiting concept. It is a commonness for the time being. There lies back of it a divine as if. One syllogism, based on non-Christian assumptions, would call this dishonesty. Pighius knew how to turn such syllogisms; but Calvin knew how to answer them. Invariably he answered them by turning to the words of Paul, "Who art thou, O man?" He answered them by rejecting the whole of the non-Christian methodology, based on the ideas of brute fact and abstract universal. [see [codeBF](#) and [code524 & codebrute](#)] Pighius cannot shake the symmetry with which the proximate and remote causes divinely harmonize, even though he can easily prove that no man can comprehend their connection. Man has sinned against the true God, whom he knew for what He is. When man first sinned he did not know God as fully as we know Him now, but he did know God for what He is, as far as he knew Him at all. And it was mankind, not some individual elect or reprobate person, that sinned against God. Thus it was mankind in general which was under the favor of God, that came under the wrath of God. We have said that after the common in each case comes the conditional. What then is meant by the conditional? This question has caused much trouble. The synod of 1924 of the Christian Reformed Church, before referred to, gave the general offer of the gospel as evidence of common grace. Hoeksema, on the other hand, denies that there may be said to be any such thing as a well-meant offer of salvation to a generality of men, including elect and non-elect. He thinks he finds clear support in Calvin's treatment of the general offer in relation to predestination.

If any progress is to be made in the discussion of this most perplexing aspect of the perplexing problem of common grace we shall need, in our humble opinion, to stress, as we have tried to do throughout, the idea of the earlier and the later, that is to say, the historical correlativity of universal and particular. All too frequently our difficulty is needlessly enhanced in that those who affirm, and those who deny, employ in the defence of their positions such arguments as are constructed out of the

ideas of brute fact and abstract law. A rather typical argument employed is that expressed in the following words of Hepp: "Is there not a sort of grace in the hearing of the gospel by the non-elect? They hear that God has no pleasure in their death, but rather that they be converted and live. As time-believers the Word may bring them joy." Here Hepp inserts a paraphrase of Heb 6.4, (Heb 6:4) as proof that there may be a grace which is non-saving for the reprobate.¹²⁹ (129)Hepp offers much valuable material on the question of common grace in a series of articles in which he seeks to prove that common grace is taught in Scripture (Credo, July 1, 1940 ff.). He then adds: "Let us not look at the lot of the non-elect in the congregation from the view-point of judgment only. Truly that judgment is a reality. But the enjoyments, which they sometimes have under the preaching of the gospel also have temporary reality, as a non-saving work brought about as they are by the Spirit."

Hepp here speaks as though it were already known who are and who are not elect. He speaks as though a preacher may approach a certain individual whom he knows to be reprobate, and tell him that God has no pleasure in his death. But this is to forget the difference between the earlier and the later. The general presentation comes to a generality. It comes to "sinners," differentiated, to be sure, as elect and reprobate in the mind of God, but yet, prior to their act of acceptance or rejection, regarded as a generality. To forget this is to move the calendar of God ahead.

Arguing as Hepp argues is virtually to accept the really contradictory. It at least approaches the idea that the same ultimate will of God wills, and yet wills not, the salvation of sinners. If it does not do this, as it is obviously not intended to do, it makes for a mechanical alignment of common and special grace. All agree that common grace is not a small quantity of special grace; yet if the matter of the conditional presentation be handled as Hepp handles it, there is great difficulty in escaping the quantitative idea. It may then, to be sure, be asserted that common grace is a lower kind of grace, a grace meant for this life only, but it is difficult to see how this lower grace is the result of the presentation of the gospel which deals with the highest grace, that is, saving grace.

The difficulties at this point are, we must believe, considerably reduced if we observe the ideas of the earlier and the later. Calvin does not hesitate to say of mankind that it was originally "placed in a way of salvation." And while mankind in general was in a way of salvation, salvation was offered to all men. He recounts this as an historical fact. He argues with Pighius as to whether it was absolutely or conditionally offered, but he does not dispute the fact that it was offered to all men in Adam. "The truth of the matter is, that salvation is not offered to all men on any other ground than on the condition of their remaining in their original innocence." From this fact that God did at the earliest point in history offer eternal life to all men, Calvin takes his departure. One who argues like Pighius is easily able to raise objections to this as being quite impossible. He will say: God, according to the doctrine of election, did not mean to save all men. Then what meaning has it to offer eternal life to all men? And how dare you say that God placed man in a way of salvation? But Calvin does not allow himself to be led astray by reasoning based on non-Christian assumptions. True reasoning, he says in

effect, will rather maintain that the general offer has meaning and is possible because it has actually been made by God. And while it is true that this whole question of the universal offer of salvation is one of these things that can only “be fully understood or perceived by faith,” we yet see such harmony between ultimate and proximate causes on the frankly revelational basis as cannot be seen otherwise.

It is with this background that Calvin then attacks the question of Christ’s command to preach the gospel to all men alike. Pighius drew from the universality of this command the conclusion that God must mean all men to be saved. Against this Calvin argues that the promise is not unconditional. Speaking of the promise of Jer. 31:33 to the effect that God will write His law in their hearts, he says: “Now a man must be utterly beside himself to assert that this promise is made to all men generally and indiscriminately.” It is evident that God by His counsel did not ordain all men to eternal life. Yet the fact of Christ’s command remains. “It is quite manifest that all men, without difference or distinction, are outwardly called or invited to repentance and faith.”

Pighius sees a contradiction here. And on non-Christian presuppositions there would be a contradiction here. But with the Christian distinction between ultimate and proximate causes we hold, though we cannot intellectually penetrate the question exhaustively, that, instead, there is genuine harmony here. There are, we can show Pighius, no two ultimate wills in God contradicting one another. Yet we need the idea of **two wills, that of command and that of secret counsel**. We harmonize the two, as far as we can harmonize that which involves the incomprehensible God, by the ideas of **correlativity** and **conditionality** as these ideas are themselves determined in their meaning by the concept of God.

The universality of the gospel presentation or invitation or promise or command— they all come to the same thing, and Calvin is not afraid to use them indiscriminately— comes to mankind in general. It comes to sinful mankind, to mankind that has once before, when “placed in a way of salvation,” been offered salvation. It comes to a generality that has once in common, in one moment, in one man, rejected the offer of eternal life through Adam. Mankind is now, to use words corresponding to the earlier stage, placed in a way of death. Meanwhile the fact of Christ’s redemptive work, in promise or in fulfilment, has come into the picture. Christ has not died for all men. He has died only for His people. But His people are not yet His people except in the mind of God. They are still members of the sinful mass of mankind. It is with them where they are that contact is to be made. The offer or presentation is not to those who believe any more than to those who disbelieve. The offer comes to those who have so far neither believed nor disbelieved. It comes before that differentiation has taken place. It comes thus generally, so that differentiation may have meaning. Christ is to be a savor of life unto life to some and a savor of death unto death to others. Those who eventually disbelieve will be the more inexcusable.

The analogy of Calvin’s argument here to his idea of original general revelation is apparent. As God’s general revelation, natural and positive, plus the probationary command, originally invited all men to eternal life, as Calvin puts it, and men, of whom God had determined from all eternity that they should

not inherit eternal life, yet were rendered inexcusable by the invitation when they rejected it, so now again, a second time, while it is still as certain as ever with God that they shall be lost eventually, and while historically they have by their sin placed themselves in the way of eternal death, they are **rendered the more inexcusable by the gospel invitation, and have added to their condemnation by their second rejection of God.**

Pighius objects that all this is to make of God a mocker. But Calvin introduces again his distinction between primary and secondary causes. Men “untaught of God” do not understand. They, he says in effect, use syllogisms “from the earth’s plain surface, without any foundation at all.” Believers, on the other hand, use syllogisms on the foundation of the ontological trinity. They know that all men have placed themselves in the way of death. “For the nature of the whole human race was corrupted in the person of Adam.” 136 How such as are chosen by God to eternal life, who are by God’s secret counsel to be glorified, how, in short, the elect can yet, by historical representative disobedience, come under the wrath of God, they cannot understand. Must we say that the wrath of God under which they rest, according to the revealed will of God, does not tell us of the real attitude of God to them? Must we say that the real attitude of God to them is revealed only in God’s electing love? Must we say that the threat of eternal death to those that are the elect was meaningless because God willed, with His secret will, that they should finally be saved? The elect did actually disobey and they came actually under the wrath of God, while yet for all eternity they are under the favor of God. Pighius here, if he desires, can use his charge of two ultimate wills in God. He may argue that, if the doctrine of foreordination is to be carried through consistently, history is naught but a puppet dance. We hold, as we are told in Scripture to hold, that the disobedience of the elect was a real disobedience and that on account of it they came under the wrath of God. For men “taught of God” it is possible to see the harmony here between the attitude of wrath, which, in this sense, the elect share with the reprobate, and the eternal attitude of God’s favor to the elect only. They distinguish between primary and secondary causes. They hold to two wills in God. They know there is no conflict between these wills. They know this not because they have been able to penetrate intellectually the relationship between the two. They know it by faith, and they know it intellectually so far as to see that, unless we may hold that harmony rests in God, all human experience is a farce. They do not hesitate to say to those of the mind of Pighius that only Christianity is rational, though not rationally penetrable by the mind of man.

This mode of reasoning Calvin applies to the case of the reprobate. Their case is not inherently more difficult than the case of the elect. How can we understand that they were first taken into a generality with the elect and said by God to be good? Was not God’s attitude to them displayed in that instance? Of course in God’s mind there was a difference all the time. They were to him the children of wrath, even while they were pronounced good by Himself, in the earliest stage of their history. It was not some abstraction like creatureliness in them that was the object of God’s favor. As concrete beings, eventually to be haters of God but not yet in history haters of God, rather, as yet in Adam good before God, the reprobate are the objects of God’s favor. But all this was conditional. God gave them, as it

were, a sample of what would be theirs if they obeyed representatively in Adam. It was, as it were, a “lend-lease” proposition. How could God offer eternal life to the reprobate in Adam, if He did not finally mean to give it to them? Pighius would urge that to say that He did would be to make of God a mocker. Calvin would answer that God did it, and that it is the exact equivalent of God’s threat of eternal death to the elect, which was involved in the same probationary command. That exactly is history. The Moment has significance, and can have significance, only against the background of the counsel of God. Threats and promises are real and genuinely revelatory of the attitude of God, just because of the counsel of God that is back of history. Thus “the calumny is washed off at once.” We should not be surprised at the generality of the invitation to salvation. We should not argue that the general invitation reveals nothing of the attitude of God, on the ground that God’s particular will is back of all. “Wherefore, God is as much said to have pleasure in, and to will, this eternal life, as to have pleasure in the repentance; and He has pleasure in the latter, because He invites all men to it by His Word. Now all this is in perfect harmony with His secret and eternal counsel, by which He decreed to convert none but His own elect. None but God’s elect, therefore, ever do turn from their wickedness. And yet, the adorable God is not, on these accounts, to be considered variable or capable of change, because, as a Law-giver, He enlightens all men with the external doctrine of conditional life. In this primary manner He calls, or invites, all men unto eternal life. But, in the latter case, He brings unto eternal life those whom He willed according to His eternal purpose, regenerating by His Spirit, as an eternal Father, His own children only.”

Next: Interesting comments on being *epistemologically fully self-conscious*. This explains the hardening of the heart over time to full maturity in the reprobate, *coming into their own*, so to speak, maturing in their open enmity against God and the knowledge of Him, similar to the sin of the Amorites that would eventually be complete, coming to fullness ripe for judgment, Gen 15:16; or the softening of the heart and maturing in humility and the graces of the Spirit over time in the elect.

We are, therefore, to steer clear of Platonic abstractions. We are not to use the general offer of the gospel as an abstract idea. Schilder holds that, as a general truth, we may say to the anti-Christ or the devil that whosoever believes will be saved. But to make such a statement to the anti-Christ or to the devil as though it could involve them personally would be wholly meaningless. The anti-Christ and the devil are historically finished products. They are such as have finally disbelieved. The general gospel offer could make no point of contact with them. The conditional for them has passed. They have finally negated God and have been, or are being, frustrated by God; in their rejection of God they are *epistemologically fully self-conscious*. God loved the devil when the devil was an unfallen angel; God loved the anti-Christ and offered Him eternal life when he was in Adam; now that they have become the devil and the anti-Christ, God hates them exclusively. *The general offer has meaning only with respect to those who are at an earlier stage of history*. It has meaning with respect to the elect and the reprobate when they are, and to the extent that they are, members of an as yet *undifferentiated* generality.

In a non-Christian scheme of thought abstract universals and particulars stand over against one another in an unreconcilable fashion. Such was the case in Plato's philosophy. Aristotle sought to remedy the situation by teaching that the universals are present in the particulars. But he failed to get genuine contact between them, inasmuch as for him the lowest universal (*infima species*), was, after all, a supposed abstraction from particulars. Hence the particulars that were presupposed were bare particulars, having no manner of contact with universality. And if they should, per impossible, have contact with universality, they would lose their individuality. Pighius reasoned on the basis of such Platonic-Aristotelian assumptions. [See Van Til on this.] He therefore concluded that a general offer of salvation must destroy all differentiation and have universalism for its natural effect. If the general is to have any meaning, he argues, it must swallow up the particular. And if the particular is to have meaning, the meaning of the general must be denied.

The whole thrust of Calvin's thought is opposed to this. For him the general and the particular are coterminous in God. That is implied in the doctrine of the ontological trinity. And with this ontological trinity and the counsel of God as the background of history, it is possible to give genuine meaning to the general without doing despite to the particular. In fact the general is a means toward the realization of the particular. The very possibility of differentiation presupposes as its concomitant a correlative generality. God as the lawgiver is working out His eternal plan. God has an attitude of favor toward the originally created good nature of man. The individual men are included in this generality. They are not contrasted with this generality as those that believe or disbelieve. It could not be said of this original promise that "the contents of this externally general message is particular and applies to the elect only." 138 Nor could we say that because this promise is conditional, "it is also particular and God in reality promises eternal life only to the elect." Such, we are persuaded, is not Calvin's intention with his stress on the conditional character of the promise.

The burden of the whole matter lies in the fact that on any Platonic, or semi-Platonic, basis, the conditional can have no meaning. Only on a Christian, and more specifically only on a consistently Christian, basis can the conditional have meaning. Certain as we are that this is true, certain as we are that Christianity is objectively valid and that it is the only rational position for man to hold, we are as certain that we cannot exhaustively explain the relation of the infinite to the finite. To do so would be to exhaust the being of God. In his article on Predestination, Warfield says that because Calvin believed in the freedom of God, he did not believe in the liberty of man to seek exhaustive knowledge of God. Mystery, says Bavinck, is the heart of Dogmatics. But it is Christian, not Platonic, mystery that constitutes this heart.

Differentiation described here:

If, then, we think along the lines suggested by Calvin, we may think of the universal offer of salvation as an evidence of common grace. It is evidence of earlier rather than of lower grace. All common grace is earlier grace. Its commonness lies in its earliness. It pertains not merely to the lower dimensions of

life. It pertains to all dimensions, and to these dimensions in the same way at all stages of history. It pertains to all the dimensions of life, but to all these dimensions ever decreasingly as the time of history goes on. At the very first stage of history there is much common grace. There is a common good nature under the common favor of God. But this creation-grace requires response. It cannot remain what it is. It is conditional. Differentiation must set in and does set in. It comes first in the form of a common rejection of God. Yet common grace continues; it is on a “lower” level now; it is long-suffering that men may be led to repentance. God still continues to present Himself for what He is, both in nature and in the work of redemption. The differentiation meanwhile proceeds. [I think what he means here is that the non-elect get harder and harder of heart over time (history), hence differentiate themselves from the elect, who get softer and softer in heart over time, differentiating themselves from the non-elect. I heard it described this way: the wheat as they mature, bow down in humility and meekness, whereas the false wheat, the tares, mature un-bowed, proud, non bending, stiff necked so to speak, thus differentiating themselves from the wheat.] The elect are, generally speaking, differently conditioned from the non-elect. They are separated into a special people. In the New Testament period they have the influences of Christian surroundings brought to bear upon them. The non-elect are, generally speaking, conditioned in accordance with their desert; most of them never come within earshot of the external call of the gospel and have no Christian influence brought to bear upon them. Thus it becomes increasingly difficult to observe that which is common. We may be tempted to think of it as a merely formal something. We may, like the impatient disciples, anticipate the course of history and deal with men as though they were already that which by God’s eternal decree they one day will be. Yet God bids us bide our time and hold to the common, as correlative to the process of differentiation. Pighius would say that the universal offer of salvation must be taken as an unconditional promise that God will write His law on every heart, and we may be tempted to answer that the universal offer is formal and is, because conditional, after all only particular, but Scripture would have us use the notion of generality as a **limiting concept** still. **Common grace will diminish still more in the further course of history.** With every conditional act the remaining significance of the conditional is reduced. God allows men to follow the path of their self-chosen rejection of Him more rapidly than ever toward the final consummation. God increases His attitude of wrath upon the reprobate as time goes on, until at the end of time, at the great consummation of history, their condition has caught up with their state. On the other hand God increases His attitude of favor upon the elect, until at last, at the consummation of history, their condition has caught up with their state. While in this world, though saved and perfect in Christ, they are yet, because of their old nature, under the displeasure of God.

[Excellent comment on Romans 7:14-17 here - & The process of differentiation and the concept of being epistemologically self-consciousness – hardening in sin vs. softening – next 10 pages or so: code480](#)

Again abstractions should be avoided. To say that God loves his people but hates their sin is to avoid the issue. Believers, in this life, are, and continue to be, both under the favor and under the disfavor of

God. **Sin is not an abstract something**. The “new man” is responsible for the sin of the “old man.” When Paul says it is no longer he but sin that dwelleth in him that performs certain actions, he does not seek to lift the “new man” from under the responsibility of the sin of the “old man.” He merely means to prove that the “**new man**” is a genuine reality, whatever the appearance to the contrary. The idea of the **old nature** as a generality, as something the elect have in common with the non-elect, is still an important factor in the present situation. So, then, the ideas of **common wrath and common grace** must both be kept as constitutive factors in measuring the present historical situation by the Word of God.

What has been said may also help us to some extent in an intelligent discussion of the attitude of believers toward unbelievers. That attitude should, if our general approach be at all correct, be a conditional “as if” attitude. The attitude of Christ’s followers is, as Christ has told us, to be in positive imitation of God’s attitude. Hence we are to make practical use of the concept of “mankind in general.” We are to use this notion as a limiting concept. We are not to forget for a moment that no such thing exists in any pure state. We are therefore to witness to men that in themselves they are enemies of God. We are to witness to them that this enmity appears even in such dimensions as that of counting and weighing. This is done if, among other things, we build separate Christian day schools. And we are to oppose men more definitely to the extent that they become **epistemologically more self-conscious**. To say to the anti-Christ that God loves sinners, and therefore may love him, is to cast pearls before swine. For all that, we still need the concept of “mankind in general.” We are to think of non-believers as members of the mass of humankind in which the **process of differentiation** has not yet been completed. **[the wheat and the tares are not fully mature yet]** It is not to the righteous and to the unrighteous as fully differentiated that God gives His rain and sunshine. It is not to unbelievers as those that have with full self-consciousness expressed their unbelief that we are to give our gifts. We are to give our “rain and sunshine” as God gives them, on the basis of the limiting concept, to the as yet **undifferentiated** or at least not **fully differentiated** mass of mankind.

By thus substituting the ideas of earlier and later for lower and higher we may get something approaching a solution to the question of territories. There is no single territory or dimension in which believers and non-believers have all things wholly in common. As noted above, even the description of facts in the lowest dimension presupposes a system of metaphysics and epistemology. So there can be no neutral territory of cooperation. Yet unbelievers are more self-conscious epistemologically in the dimension of religion than in the dimension of mathematics. The process of differentiation has not proceeded as far in the lower, as it has in the higher dimensions. Does not this fact explain to some extent our attitude in practice? We seek, on the one hand, to make men **epistemologically self-conscious** **[how and when do we know things]** all along the line. As Reformed Christians we do all we can, by building our own educational institutions and otherwise, to make men see that so-called neutral weighing and measuring is a terrible sin in the sight of God. To ignore God anywhere is to insult the God who has told us that, whether we eat or drink or do anything else, we are to do all to His glory.

But when all the reprobate are **epistemologically self-conscious**, the crack of doom has come. [in other words, e.g., the sin of the Amorites is now complete, it's come to its full measure, ripe for God's judgment.] **The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God.** So while we seek with all our power to hasten the **process of differentiation** in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for "the day of grace," the day of **undeveloped differentiation**. Such tolerance as we receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than the later, stage of history. And such influence on the public situation as we can effect, whether in society or in state, presupposes this undifferentiated stage of development. [fascinating!]

Excellent insight here on the hypocrite, temporary faith and Heb. 6:4:
codehypo2

And this tolerance, on the one hand, and influence, on the other hand, extends, in varying degrees, to all dimensions. Because of the fact of **undifferentiation** we are tolerated in our religious life as we are tolerated in the field of weighing and measuring. And we have influence in the religious life as we have influence in the lower dimensions. [undifferentiated: one has not fully developed into this sinful, fully epistemologically conscious mindset, "hardened of heart" condition where he is willfully waging war against God and knows it.] **Those who have no depth of earth yet, sometimes and in some cases, receive with joy the seed of the Word. They have a temporal faith.** The problem of the inner ego and the more circumferential aspect of the human person, discussed by Kuyper with the help of the copper-wire illustration, need not much concern us. It is not a question of psychology. Psychologically the whole individual is involved even to the depth of his being. When he receives the witness of the living God through nature about him, through his conscience within him, and by means of the preaching of the gospel, he is deeply engaged psychologically in an interpretative endeavor. But this deep psychological interpretative endeavor, by which he joins to himself all the multitudinous forms of the voice of God, is still, itself, merely the revelational voice of God. The question of his ethical response has not yet been broached. The real question is one of epistemology and therewith of man's ethical attitude toward God. If men were **fully self-conscious epistemologically** they would violently suppress the psychologically interpretative voice within them. **But to the extent that they are not self-conscious epistemologically, they may even taste of the heavenly gift, be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and not rebel.** [incredible insight here!! this explains why it is too hard to discern false brethren and how many can be self-deceived.] **They allow themselves to be affected by it to some extent.** It is the nostalgia of the prodigal who has left the father's home but sometimes has misgivings. On his way to the far country he may halt, he may even turn back for a distance, thinking that after all it was good and natural for a son to be in the father's home. Soon he will crucify unto himself the Son of God afresh, but for the moment the voice of God drowns out his own. He is at the moment not at all himself; he is not yet fully himself.

It is thus that we finally come to some fruitful insight into **the problem of civil righteousness or the works of non-regenerate men**. It is not that in some lower dimension no differentiation, epistemological or psychological, needs to be made by believers. It is not that there is even a square foot of neutral territory. It is not that in the field of civics or justice, any more than in any other particular dimension, men, to the extent that they are epistemologically self-conscious, show any righteousness. The problem, as already suggested, faces us in every dimension. There are non-believers who go to church, there are those who give to the cause of missions. [codehypo1] Nor are they hypocrites, properly speaking. **The hypocrite is a person who is epistemologically self-conscious to a large degree.** He “joins the church” for the sake of reward. He may very well do the works of the law externally. Dillinger often walked well-dressed in fashionable society. May not a criminal give many and fine Christmas presents today to those whom he plans to murder tomorrow? He does the works of the law. Schilder makes much of the fact that the works of the law may be thus externally performed. But the problem cannot be settled in this fashion. The very existence of the hypocrite requires us to go back of the hypocrite. To be able to act the hypocrite he must know the requirements of proper society thoroughly. How does he know the requirements of society? Because he has mingled in society and has had its requirements inscribed upon him as a demand. **The very possibility of self-conscious hypocrisy presupposes an earlier undifferentiated state.** It is from that undifferentiated stage that we must make our beginning.

Schilder insists that we are not to interpret Paul’s words in Rom 2:14 as though they meant that the heathen do the works of the law by their own nature. This is in itself true enough. Yet it is equally true that the question of general revelation is of basic importance for an understanding of Paul’s words. The fact of general revelation may, and must, always be presupposed. Schilder himself allows for this possibility. When seeking to explain the passage, he employs the idea of the remnants of the image of God and the idea of God’s general providence. Yet he holds that the first reason for the performance of the works of the law, on the part of the reprobate, must be found in their sinful nature. The sinner, says Schilder, does the works of the law hypocritically. That is to say, Schilder would have us make a large **degree of epistemological self-consciousness** on the part of the non-believer the chief and primary point of departure. We shall get further in stating Paul’s meaning if we make a low stage of epistemological self-consciousness our starting point. Paul is not saying that we deal with a group of people that are master simulators, having been in contact with the highest requirements of the law of God, and a group that is able to “dress as well as the best.” On the contrary he is arguing that even those who have not had the special revelation of the oracles of God given to the Jews must yet be said to be sinners, that is, **covenant-breakers**. All men need the justice of God, for all are sinners. Yet there is no sin unless there be transgression and **there is no transgression unless there be knowledge of the law.**

Sidebar comment: And not only is there transgression from the knowledge of the law, but their witness of the miracles that Jesus did acerbates their judgment for their transgressions, John 15: 24-25, ²⁴ If I had

not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have ^[a]sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

Having not the externally promulgated law, the heathen yet have enough knowledge of the law or will of God to render them without excuse. Do some think that the wrath of God is revealed upon the heathen unjustly on the ground that they have no knowledge of the will of God? Let them realize, says Paul in effect, that the revelation of God is present with all men everywhere. Let them know that even from the beginning of history this knowledge has been about all men everywhere. All men are responsible for the original positive revelation of God to mankind, as well as for the natural revelation that still surrounds them. Do some wonder whether that revelation of God has been persistent and insistent? Let them realize that that revelation is so close to all men as to be psychologically one with them. It is so close to them that, in spite of all their efforts to bury it, it speaks through their own moral consciousness. The law of God as a demand of God is written on their very hearts. The Westminster Confession does not hesitate to say that the law, not merely the works of the law but the law itself, was originally written on man's heart. And the reference given for that statement is Rom 2.14–15. To this is then added the fact that man originally had a true epistemological reaction to this revelation of God. Man was created in "knowledge, righteousness and true holiness." This original, true, epistemological reaction in paradise is in turn revelational and therefore further requisite for the sinner.

Sin has not been able to efface all this requisitional material from the consciousness of man. The very activity of his consciousness is a daily reminder to him of the will of God. **Though he has tried over and over again to choke the voice of God he has not been able to do so.** His evil nature would fain subdue the voice of the creation nature, but it cannot wholly do so. Involuntarily men think back, with the prodigal, to the father's home. And when the prodigal turns his face momentarily toward the father's house there comes to him the voice of approval. He may "with joy" receive the gospel though he have no depth of earth. **On the other hand, when he reasserts his true self, his self that is on the way to the swine-trough,** there is still a voice pursuing him, this time the voice of disapproval. **So he wavers as an unfinished product.** He does the works of the law not as the devil or as the anti-Christ does them. **They do them as arch-simulators of Christ and His people.** The devil appears as an angel of light. **Hypocrites imitate him.** It is not thus that the average non-believer does them. If such were the case, the end of time would be here. **If all non-believers did the works of the law primarily from their self-consciously developed evil nature they would, by force of their principle, seek to wipe all believers off the face of the earth.** But "the man of sin," the "son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God," is restrained (2 Thes 2:3–4). When no longer restrained he will attempt to make hypocrites of all unbelievers. He will work "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thes. 2:10). In punishment for their sin "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they

all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:11–12). Till such time as the “son of perdition” has not been given free power, and till such time as God has not in that connection sent a strong spirit of delusion, mankind in general is not fully self-conscious of its inherent opposition to God. The pressure of God’s revelation upon men is so great that they are, from their own point of view, in a sort of stupor. With the prodigal they are on the way to the swine-trough, but with the prodigal they have misgivings in leaving the father’s house. The heathen have such misgivings; those that hear the gospel may have such misgivings in a greater measure, as they taste the powers of the age to come.

In this manner the ideas of God’s general providence, his general revelation, the remnants of the image of God in man, the general external call of the gospel, and man’s evil nature may be brought into something of a harmonious unity. All things happen according to God’s providence. That is basic. There is, according to this providence, to be a development in the direction of evil and a development in the direction of the good. These two developments grow in conjunction, in correlativity, with one another. Therefore all factors must be taken into consideration in all the problems with which we have to deal. The general development of history, of which the two developments mentioned are subdivisions, comes about through God’s presentation of Himself as He is, in varying degrees of self-revelation, to man, plus man’s reaction to this presentation. God always presents Himself as He is. His attributes face man as man faces God. The revelation of God is always objectively valid. The greatest obscuration the sin of man can cast over the face of nature and his own consciousness, cannot destroy the validity of revelation. Vanity and corruption are, to be sure, seen in nature. But men ought, argues Calvin, to see even this as evidence of God’s presence, of God’s presence in judgment. Evil is found in man’s heart. Again, even this is evidence of God’s presence; man is pursued by the voice of accusing conscience. When the accusing conscience challenges the wisdom of his choice against God, the voice of God is heard again. The prodigal turns about for a moment, stands still, takes a few steps back, his conscience approving, his emotional life responding with joy; the remnants of the image of God appear even while he is on his general downward path. In some cases the gospel call is heard. This tends to make some of those that hear it walk back a little farther still. But underneath it all the evil nature is operative. That nature accounts for the fact that all this turning and yearning is temporary and has not arisen from true faith in God. That nature accounts for the fact that the sinner will soon turn with more determination than ever toward the swine-trough. Even if he continues to do the works of the law, as well he may, he will do them more and more self-consciously for the sake of reward. Finally, he may become a worthy disciple of Satan who may appear as an angel of light to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect of God.

[Good comments on Total Depravity and in reference to the image of God in man:](#)

In this way, too, we may perhaps be on the way to seeing a bit more clearly the relation between common grace and total depravity. If we stress the fact that common grace is earlier grace, it appears

that it is something in connection with which total depravity shines forth in the fulness of its significance. Negatively, there is no possible toning down of the doctrine of total depravity; the attitude of favor spoken of is in no sense directed toward man's evil nature as such. It is directed toward the individual in so far as he is, **epistemologically speaking, unconscious of the real significance of the path he is treading.** [hence the term, *epistemologically self-consciousness*, used above] And he is such an individual because he is a member of the mass of mankind which, in the providence of God, **has not come to the climax of the process of differentiation.** [I think a good example of this is Pharaoh of Egypt who hardened his own heart over time...] Positively, common grace is the necessary correlative to the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity has two aspects, **one of principle and one of degree.** The first representative act of man was an act that resulted historically in the total depravity of the race. This act was performed against a mandate of God that involved mankind as a whole; without that "common mandate" it could not have been done; without that common mandate the "negative instance" would have been an operation in a void. Thus mankind came under the common wrath of God. But the process of differentiation was not complete. This common wrath, too, was a stepping-stone to something further. The elect were to choose for God and the reprobate were each for himself to reaffirm their choice for Satan. The reprobate were to show historically the exceeding sinfulness of sin. **Totally depraved in principle, they were to become more and more conformed in fact to the principle that controlled their hearts.** They do this by way of rejecting the common call, the common grace of God. That is to say, they do it by way of rejecting God to whatever extent God reveals Himself to them. In the case of some this includes the gospel call, while in the case of most it does not. In every case, however, there is growth in wickedness on the part of those who have seen more of the common grace of God. So it appears that in every case of the historical process common grace is the **correlative** to total depravity.

Sidebar comment: So those who saw Jesus' miracles, though they may have not heard the gospel, their not repenting of their sin was acerbated all the more, John 15: 24-25, ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

Thus we have the "relative good" in the "absolutely evil" and the "relatively evil" in the "absolutely good." Neither the "absolutely evil" nor the "absolutely good" are **epistemologically as self-conscious** as they will be in the future. God's favor rests upon the reprobate and God's disfavor rests upon the elect to the extent that each lacks epistemological self-consciousness. In neither case is it God's ultimate or final attitude, but in both cases it is a real attitude. As there is an "old man" in the believer, so there is an "old man" in the unbeliever. As there are the remnants of sin in the believer, so there are the remnants of the image of God in the unbeliever. And as the "old man" in the believer does not, in the least, detract from his status as believer, so the "old man" in the unbeliever does not, in the least,

detract from his status as unbeliever. Each man is on the move. He is, to use a phrase of Barth with a Reformed meaning, an *Entscheidungswesen*.

Another parallel suggests itself. We are to regard the natural man as we regard nature. Or rather, we are to regard nature as we regard man. There is a parallelism between the two. They go through a similar history; they go together through the same history. They are aspects of the one course of events reaching toward the great climax at the end of the age. Both were originally created good. But it was a good that was on the move. Through the fall of man both came under the wrath of God. Nature as well as man is subject to vanity and corruption. Rom 8.19, Rom 8.22 But the vanity and corruption, which rest on man and nature by the curse of God, are also on the move. We must observe the “tendency” in both if we would describe either for what it is. Men ought, says Calvin, to be able to see the Creator’s munificence in creation. 143 Men ought, in the second place, to see God’s wrath upon nature. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:22). Thus there is a downward tendency in creation. Men ought to conclude, argues Calvin, that history will end in judgment. When they do not see their own sins punished as they deserve to be punished, men ought to conclude that punishment is deferred, not that it is not coming. Thus there is a tendency toward a climax of wrath and a deferment of this climax in order that the climax may truly be a climax, the end of a process. On the other hand, there is a tendency toward glory. The “earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19). In the “regeneration of all things” the vanity and the corruption will be swallowed up in victory. He that would describe nature for what it actually is, must describe it as thus on the move. And so he that would describe man for what he actually is, must describe him as on the move. Applying this to the unbeliever, who lives under earshot of the gospel call, we have the following. He must be looked at (a) as having been a member of an original generality that was good, (b) as having become a member of a second generality which is wholly corrupt in principle and is on the way to a grand climax of destruction, (c) as having become a member of that generality in the midst of which the supernatural redemptive process is operative, and as a member of a generality that lives under the long-suffering of God, which would lead it to repentance, (d) as a member of a generality that is, in some cases, crucifying to itself the Son of God afresh, (e) as a member of a generality in which that process of crucifixion is still incomplete. All these generalities are presupposed in the meaning of each individual confrontation of the non-believer with the gospel; they are the correlative of the meaning of the conditional with which each one who hears the gospel is faced. All these generalities must be presupposed as still genuinely operative factors in any individual man. Not till all history is done may we drop any one of them. **A fearless anthropomorphism based on the doctrine of the ontological trinity, rather than abstract reasoning on the basis of a metaphysical and epistemological correlativism, should control our concepts all along the line.** [deep] A fearless anthropomorphism need not hesitate to say that the prodigal sometimes yearns for the father’s house

even when on the way to the swine-trough, and that the father still yearns for his son, the son that has broken “the law of his being.”

Summing up what has been said in this section, we would stress the fact that we tend so easily in our common grace discussion, as in all our theological effort, to fall back into scholastic ways of thinking. If we can learn more and more to outgrow scholasticism in our notions about natural theology and natural ethics, we shall be perhaps a bit more careful both in our affirmations and in our negations with respect to common grace. We shall learn to think less statically and more historically. We shall not fear to be boldly anthropomorphic because, to begin with, we have, in our doctrines of the ontological trinity and temporal creation, cut ourselves loose once and for all from correlativism between God and man. We shall dare to give genuine significance to historical conditional action just because we have, back of history, the counsel of God. Accordingly we need not fear to assert that there is a certain attitude of favor on the part of God toward a generality of mankind, and a certain good before God in the life of the historically undeveloped unbeliever. These assertions are not depreciatory of, but rather conditional to, a full assertion of the total depravity of the sinner. If we can say of one who is elect that he was at one point in his history totally depraved, we can, with equal justice, say of a reprobate that he was at one point in his history in some sense good.

Summing up our discussion as a whole we would stress the importance of looking at the common grace question as an aspect of our whole philosophy of history. And this requires for our day, it is our humble judgment, something of a reorientation on the question of Apologetics. Perhaps we may speak of a return to Calvin on this point. At least we hold it to be in line with his Institutes to stress, more than has recently been done, the objective validity of the Christian reading of nature and history. Certainly no one would have hit upon the interpretation of nature and history that we as Christians have, if it had not been revealed by special grace. But this is primarily due to the fact that the natural man is blind. We dare not say that nature and history lend themselves quite as well to the non-Christian as to the Christian interpretation. That the non-Christian may present a plausible view of nature is quite true. **That it is impossible to convince any non-Christian of the truth of the Christian position, as long as he reasons on non-Christian assumptions, is also true.** All looks yellow to the jaundiced eye. But for all this we would still maintain, and this, we believe, is essentially Calvin’s view, that he who reads nature aright reads it as the Christian reads it.

It is only when we thus press the objective validity of the Christian claim at every point, that we can easily afford to be “generous” with respect to the natural man and his accomplishments. It is when we ourselves are fully self-conscious that we can cooperate with those to whose building we own the title. God’s rain and sunshine comes, we know, to His creatures made in His image. It comes upon a sinful human race that they might be saved. It comes to the believers as mercies from a Father’s hand. It comes upon the nonbeliever that he might crucify to himself the Son of God afresh. The facts of rain and sunshine, so far from being no evidence of anything in themselves, are evidences of all these

things, simultaneously and progressively. Then why not cooperate with those with whom we are in this world but with whom we are not of this world? Our cooperation will be just so far as and so far forth. It will be a cooperation so far as the historical situation warrants.

We realize that the practical difficulties will always be great enough. We realize, too, that, theoretically, the question is exceedingly complicated. And we realize that we have a long way to go. But the direction in which we ought to work is, in our humble opinion, reasonably clear.

Part 2

Chapter Four

Particularism And Common Grace

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In the first lecture of this series Dr. Robert K. Rudolph set forth for us the Reformed doctrine of God. He expounded the **Westminster Shorter Catechism** definition of God as the One who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. This self-contained and self-sufficient Being by the sovereign act of His will created the world. And since their creation by God all things whatsoever in this world are being controlled by His providence. **God controls “whatsoever comes to pass.”**

This sovereign God gave man a task to perform. It was to till the ground, to bring out its powers, to act as prophet, priest, and king in the midst of the world that God had made. He was to engage in scientific, artistic, and philosophical enterprises of every conceivable sort. Such was man’s cultural mandate. It was given to mankind as a whole. It was therefore a task that all men would have in common. Mankind was instructed with respect to this, its task, through its first representative, Adam. There was to be a reward for the faithful performance of it. He was to be given eternal life. And as his life when first given him was a life of perfection in a universe of perfection, so it may be thought that the eternal life that he would receive would be fulness of life with the rewards of his cultural labors all about him.

So far then we have (a) the sovereign God, (b) the universe created and controlled by God, (c) the representative of mankind confronted with the cultural mandate for all men, (d) with a reward of eternal life awaiting him on condition of love and obedience to God.

In the second lecture Professor John W. Sanderson told us how Adam sinned for all mankind. He broke the covenant that God had made with him for them. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). **Thus all men come into the world as covenant breakers.** And they are as such under the common curse of God.

In the third lecture the Reverend Mr. George S. Christian addressed us on the covenant of grace. He spoke of the immeasurable love of God, of God who so loved the world, the world of sinful, fallen mankind, that He sent His only Son into the world that whosoever should believe in Him might be saved. Again there was the note of commonness. First it was mankind as a unit that was given the common task of subduing the earth. Then mankind broke the covenant and God put all men under the curse, a common curse. After that it was Christ who came to save the world. And it is said that whosoever believeth on Him may be saved.

Particularism

Yet it was the sovereignty of God and the particularism of the gospel that was stressed in all three lectures. **The sovereign God has not seen fit to save all men.** The gospel is not universally offered to all men everywhere. Millions have never heard of it. And though it is true that whosoever believeth on Christ shall be saved it is also true that of themselves men cannot believe. They love darkness rather than light. They are dead in trespasses and sins. If they are to believe they must be made alive by the Spirit of God who takes the things of Christ and gives them to His people. It is they for whom and for whom alone Christ died. It is they and only they who were from all eternity ordained unto eternal life. This gospel of particularism goes right back to the original plan of God. When God through Adam assigned to mankind its common task, He did so with the ultimate purpose in mind of saving a people for His own possession. God approached all mankind through one man, Adam, and by this means was effecting His purpose with respect to particular men in the future. In this intricate manner the particular and the universal are from the outset of history intertwined with one another. God approaches the mass of mankind through one man as their representative and He approaches each individual human being throughout history through the mass of mankind that has been thus approached through one man. When John Brown is born he may find himself in Africa or in Europe; he may look into the mirror and find himself to be black or white. He may be unable to play ball with other children because of infantile paralysis or he may be a better ball player than his fellows. All the factors of his inheritance and environment are mediated through, and are expressive of, the covenant relationship that God from the beginning established with mankind. All the facts of life about him speak of the mandate of God upon mankind, and therefore upon him. And all these facts also speak of the fact that mankind has, through Adam, broken the covenant with God. Thus self-consciousness for John Brown is identical with covenant-consciousness. John Brown knows he is a covenant breaker to the extent that he knows anything truly at all.

Objections Raised

It is to this scheme of things that men constantly raise their objections. Listen to what the objector has to say. "So then," he explains in triumph, "all that is done by John Brown is a farce, is it? He would have been saved or doomed no matter what he would have done. Adam had to fall or there would

have been no people for your Christ to save. You want your Christ to save a special people. It was this special people that He had in mind from the beginning. He did not care for the rest of mankind. In fact your God must have hated the rest of mankind from all eternity. When you spoke of a common gift of life and a common mandate with the prospect of a common eternal life in glory, all that too was a farce and worse than a farce, was it not? God never meant to give the reprobate of whom you speak eternal life. He intended from the beginning to send them to hell for His own pleasure, regardless of what they might do.”

“And as for the elect of whom you speak did not God plan to save them from all eternity? Then all their deeds are also a meaningless performance. These elect of yours would get to heaven no matter what they did. Christ would die to take away any sins they might perform. And the sins they would perform would not really be sins, for they would be done of necessity. Then why speak of these elect as being under a common curse with the reprobate? Or why speak of any curse upon any man since all men sin by necessity? And why has your Christ come into the world at all, since the elect will be saved of necessity and the reprobate will be condemned of necessity. The whole of man’s moral standards are, on your basis, destroyed. Your God has no connection with anything that is moral according to the standards of civilized men.”

It is apparent from these words of the objector that he wants a “gospel” that is universal, that is favorable to all men. If he is to believe in a God it must be such a God as will do His best to save all men. He wants a God of love, a good God, One who is the cause of “good” and not of “evil.” But then, it will be observed that the objector is bound also to follow Plato when he says: “Then God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men; for few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good only is to be attributed to him: Of the evil, other causes are to be discovered.” [\[excellent analysis\]](#)

The “objector” then has a finite god. It is this god that he substitutes for the sovereign God of Scripture. His god does not control whatsoever comes to pass, but is himself surrounded by Chance. According to the Scriptures that, and that alone, is possible which is in accord with the plan of God; according to the objector anything is possible because possibility is beyond and above God. But to say that anything is possible, is to start with Chance. The objector has not been able to avoid assuming or presupposing something about the nature of all reality. He had to have something on which to stand in order to remove the scriptural doctrine of God, and that something on which he stands is the idea of Chance. And to interpret human experience in terms of Chance is wholly devoid of meaning.

But all this has been neatly kept under cover. The objector himself is usually not fully aware of the fact that his own position involves the idea of Chance. In that case what he appeals to when he raises his objections to the gospel is “experience” and “logic.” He says he experiences freedom. He asserts that this freedom enables him to initiate that which is wholly new in the world; and if this is so, it is illogical or contradictory to say that God controls “whatsoever comes to pass.” The Christian, the

objector asserts, holds that God is all glorious. God is full of glory in some such way as a bucket may be said to be full of water. At the same time, man, by his deed in history, by the exertions that proceed from his own choice, must seek to glorify God. That is as though he must add water to the bucket which he has himself said to be already full of water.

What is the Christian answer to such a charge as that? Perhaps he feels the need of help. And does not the objection voiced above concern all Christians, and therefore the entire Christian church? Surely all Christians want to do justice to human freedom and responsibility; none therefore want to be **determinists**. It seems as though the objector is right when he says that if one is to do justice to experience and logic then one must preach a gospel which includes all men. Then the gospel cannot in any sense be particularistic. **Then God must not merely offer salvation to all men everywhere, but He must have the intention of saving all men.** If then all men are not saved this is, in the last analysis, **due to their freedom to do that which is against the best intention and efforts of God.** God's efforts are common without difference, and the differentiation among men comes in because of the ultimate choice of man. But would not this lead to indeterminism?

A Conference Of All Christian Theologians

Let us call a conference of all Christian theologians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, orthodox Protestant and modern Protestant, traditional Protestant and dialectical Protestant, and ask this conference what reply must be given to the objector. Among others present we note in particular those who speak for **Thomas Aquinas, for Luther, for Calvin, for Arminius, for Schleiermacher, for Ritschl, and for Barth.**

The First Session

What marvelous agreement there seems to be among these Christian theologians. They agree negatively against the objector that it will not do to subject God to the universe of Chance. "How terrible!" they shout. They agree positively that we must hold to God as man's Creator and Lord and that it is only through Christ that man can be saved. They also agree that human experience and human logic must be interpreted in terms of God and Christ rather than that God and Christ must be interpreted in terms of human experience and logic.

What unison, what harmony!

But here we see that Socrates was right again. Men and gods agree so long as they talk of general principles. "But they join issue about particulars." On the generalities mentioned even the objector might agree. Even he would be glad to say, as Plato said, that we must posit a Good that is above all the distinctions of good and evil that men make. But then it is to be understood, the objector would

add, that this Good is “above all that men can say about it.” It is above good and evil. It is indeterminate. It is a subjective ideal even when, as in the case of Plato, it is hypostatized and thus made “real.”

Kant would also agree that men must posit the idea of God as Creator and Ruler of the world, so long as it is made clear that it is impossible for the theoretical reason to say anything about Him. Such a God, Kant would argue, must be an ideal of the practical reason, but cannot be known by means of the concepts of the theoretical or scientific reason. **With such a God we can do justice to human experience and to logic too. For then the human mind is assumed to be a law unto itself, and therefore its “experience” of freedom is taken to be ultimate.** And logic we then assume to be resting on this supposedly ultimate human experience. It therefore never pretends to make any assertions about anything that is beyond itself, Kant would say, and to talk of God as eternal is meaningless since man is temporal and has no experience of eternity. **Any God that exists must be subject to the same limitations to which man is subject.** If He is not, **Kant** would argue, then He is unknown and unknowable to man, and devoid of significance for man.

The Second Session

When thus challenged, as it were, by the objector to leave the formal introductory atmosphere of generalities and come to a discussion of particulars, the representative of Thomas Aquinas was given the floor first of all. As senior member of the fraternity he was entitled to this priority.

Surely, **Aquinas** argued, a synthesis must be possible between the objector and ourselves as representatives of the Christian church, for God has created man in His image. Do we not all agree on this? Therefore the reason of man, given by God Himself, must be honored as able to speak the truth in its own field. Let us listen then to Aristotle, the greatest representative of reason that has ever lived. He did not find it contradictory to believe in God. In fact he said that it is reasonable to believe in a first unmoved mover as the cause of the universe. And yet he started from experience as autonomous when engaged in his philosophical research. But Aristotle could not deal otherwise than with “essences.” And theology deals with the personal God as One who is. So Moses must be added to Aristotle. Theology must teach man that the Christian religion is only above, not against, human experience and logic.

The whole problem of the relation between the supernatural truths of faith and the natural truths of reason can be solved with **Aristotle’s** idea of the analogy of being. Aristotle says there is one being, but God expresses the fulness of this being, and man expresses in a lower degree this same being. This idea of gradation or of potentiality developing into actuality solves all difficulties between God and man. It

provides for the unity that reason requires (**univocism**) and it also provides for the diversity that the experience of freedom requires (**equivocism**).

How marvelously authority and reason seem to have been brought together here. Here the authority of the living voice of Christ and the reason of Aristotle seem to be in perfect unison with one another.

The objector was much pleased with this representative of the Christian church. He knew, if the sentiment expressed in this first speech of our conference of Christian theologians would prevail, that then the gospel would be made common to men.

Why should the objector object to singing the praise of being in general?

To sing the praise of being in general would be to sing the praise of man as well as the praise of God. It would be to substitute the idea of man's participation in God and God's participation in man for the idea of creation of man by God. Thus man would not need to live by the instruction of God except as God gave him advice about the laws of the universe. Thus the idea of authority—that of good advice, not that of absolute authority—would be extolled. Thus all grace would be common because God would also need the grace or good fortune of the world of Chance about Him. Here was the universalism the objector was looking for from the beginning. What was left of grace after the representative of Aquinas got through was nothing but the idea of the possibility of salvation, which possibility on Aquinas' scheme was not dependent exclusively on God after all, but also on Chance.

The Protestants agreed among themselves that it was somehow not right to join with the representative of Thomas Aquinas in his answer to the objector. With one accord they said that they must go to the Bible and not to the pope to get their instructions about the nature of the gospel and about answering the objector. Did not Protestantism recover the Bible, they asked. Are not all Protestants in agreement on this? Is not the Bible and what it teaches the end of all controversy?

The Conference Of All Protestant Theologians

It is disappointing indeed that no general Christian answer could be found to give to the objector. But such was the sad situation. There was such a basic difference between the Protestants and Roman Catholics as to the source of Christian doctrine that they could not tell the objector clearly what, in the light of Christianity, was the basic error of the objector's position.

Roman Catholicism has sought to combine the word of God and the word of man in the form of tradition as the rule of faith, said the Protestant theologians. How then can it indicate clearly what is wrong in the position of the objector, who took the word of man alone as the rule of faith, they asked.

So they met together in order to draw up an answer to the objector, and to show him that he needed the grace of God.

Again by the reason of seniority, the representative of Luther was first given the floor. He spoke in eloquent terms of the Scriptures as the word of God. "In terms of it alone, no matter what it teaches," he said, "we must interpret human experience. In it there is set forth, once for all, the system of truth by which men are to live."

In broad general lines he spoke of the contents of that system. He spoke of the triune God, sufficient to Himself from all eternity, causing the world to come into existence by an act of His will. He spoke of Adam and Eve in paradise and of how they were driven forth from the presence of God because they sinned against His express commandment. He spoke of men as sinners subject to the eternal wrath of God and headed for eternal doom because of their breaking of the law of God. He spoke of Christ who came into the world, who lived and died and rose from the dead. He said that those who believe in Christ should escape the wrath to come, and live forever in heaven in the presence of God and of their Savior.

At this point the representatives of **Schleiermacher**, **Ritschl**, and **Barth** simultaneously raised their hands asking for the floor. And when each of them in turn had spoken it appeared that there were two basically opposed conceptions of Scripture in the midst of this group of "Protestants."

They had agreed on the general statement that Scripture is the formal principle of Protestantism. But on the particulars as to how it is they disagreed. The three men mentioned stood over against the other three, the representatives of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius. The latter three said that the Bible is the direct revelation of God to man and as such contains a system of truth given once for all to men. The former three rebelled against this idea: they said that to hold such a position was worse than Romanism.

The idea of the Bible as a direct revelation of God to man and as therefore containing a system of truth by which man must live, they contended, was to reduce the personal relation between God and man to the impersonal system of law. It is, they argued, to explain the world deterministically in terms of causes, rather than personalistically in terms of reasons. The idea of cause is a mechanical idea. To be sure, science needs such ideas as cause. But then science deals, in the nature of the case, with the relations of things within the world. It cannot say anything about the relation of the world as a whole to God.

If men wish to speak of the relation of the world as a whole, or of man, to God they must give up using the concepts of the theoretical reason. For if they use these concepts dualism always results. Men must then, as Plato did, attribute what they call "good" to a good God back of the world, and what they call "evil" to an evil God back of the world. To avoid such dualism we must use the ideals of

the practical reason and posit a God who is good, in whom the “good” and the “evil” of the theoretical reason are “somehow” united.

And, above all, to think of the Bible as containing a system of conceptually stated truth is to think of the atonement along legalistic lines. It is to think of God as giving men laws and of men as breaking these laws and being in consequence liable to eternal punishment. It is to think of the sufferings of Christ and His merits mechanically. Men are then said to have the merits of Christ attributed to them in some such way as money may be transferred legally from one person to another.

True Protestantism, the representatives of **Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth** argued, must start with faith in Scripture as the revelation of God. But the God of this Scripture must Himself be a faith-construct. He must be conceived independently of the systems of thought devised by man’s philosophy, science, or even theology. He must be conceived as above the relative distinctions and differentiations of the human reason. He must therefore not be conceived as in any wise existing or as in any wise known otherwise than through Christ.

There must be no God in Himself, and no counsel of such a God according to which the course of the world is brought into existence and controlled.

There was therefore no original man, called Adam, who knew God and who broke the covenant that this God had made with him. Man, apart from his relationship to Christ, hovers on the verge of non-being. His reality consists in the fact that he is related to the Christ of whom the first Adam is but a sort of shadow.

Two things in particular these three men, the representatives of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth, wanted to stress as over against the position of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius. Both have to do with the centrality, and therefore the uniqueness, of the person and work of Christ. By enmeshing Jesus Christ in the realm of history as open to systematic interpretation by science, philosophy, or theology, the view of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius, they contended, virtually denied the very uniqueness of Christ that they were so anxious to maintain. The uniqueness and authority of Jesus Christ can be maintained, they argued, only if you introduce the notion of holy or primal history as over against secular or ordinary history. In holy history God is God for man and man is man for God through Jesus Christ. In holy history God is truly free, free to turn into the opposite of Himself, free to become identical with man. In holy history man is truly free for God, free to partake of the very attributes of God. Thus there is nothing that keeps God from freely choosing man, for the man He then chooses is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the electing God and also the elected man. The object of the grace of God is God Himself in man.

In the second place these three men claimed that in stressing the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ they had released the full and all-encompassing love of God for all mankind. If one holds to the idea of the Bible as the direct revelation of God, containing a system of doctrine, they said, then one

cannot escape the hard and fast dualism of some that are ultimately saved and of others that are ultimately lost. For on such a basis the love of God is not more ultimate than is the righteousness or justice of God. Therefore, on such a basis, there are those who are only the objects of the punishment of God and others who are only the objects of the love of God.

On the other hand, on the truly Christological basis of **Schleiermacher**, **Ritschl**, and **Barth**, they contended, the reprobation of men is always reprobation in Christ. Men cannot reject Christ unless they are in Christ. They cannot sin unless they are aware of their sins as forgiven in Christ. This point of view, they argued, and this alone, can furnish the foundation for the truly Protestant doctrine of eternal security. For here is security that lies deeply imbedded in the eternal love of God. In that love all men have been saved from all eternity. They participate from all eternity in the saving work of Christ. Every idea of God as arbitrarily choosing some to eternal life and of casting others into everlasting doom is thus done away. All men, to be men, must have been men in Christ from eternity. They must have partaken in the act of revelation of God which is identical with Christ. The subject dispensing the grace of God is man himself in God and with God.

In some such way as this the representatives of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth argued that they conceived of true Protestantism. They said that they had differences among themselves, and that they thought of these differences as important too. But they owned that their internal differences were as nothing in comparison with the great cleavage that separated them from **Luther**, **Calvin**, and **Arminius**.

For them Protestantism meant personal confrontation with God through Jesus Christ. And as long as one holds to the legalistic idea of the Bible as containing a system of truth one cannot meet God personally. Even the Romanist conception of the analogy of being, they contended, was not so impersonalistic as the orthodox Protestant doctrine of Scripture. If the representatives of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius really meant to be Protestants then why not join them in substituting the fully personal notion of the analogy of faith for the idea of a system of truth. Then they would be free from every attack on the part of science and they would have a fully personal relationship to God. They would then be able to answer the objector and yet hold to grace, even universal grace.

The Objector Again Rejoices

After the speeches of these representatives of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth, the objector was even more pleased than he had been when the representative of Thomas Aquinas had spoken. For he knew that this **analogy of faith** which these men were proposing as a substitute for the Romanist notion of the analogy of being was altogether in his favor. He knew that the philosophy of Kant, from

which this purely “theological” idea of the analogy of faith had been taken, was even more hostile, if possible, to the Christian religion than was the philosophy of Aristotle on which the analogy of being was built. For it is of the essence of the analogy of faith, as proposed by these three men, the objector knew, that the ideas of God and man be thought of as correlative to one another. God is then nothing but what He is in relation to man through Christ, and man is nothing but what he is in relation to God through Christ. If the idea of correlativity between God and man was already involved in the analogy of being, it came to its full and final expression in the idea of the analogy of faith.

According to the **analogy of faith**, thought the objector to himself, God apart from Christ is wholly **indeterminate**. How could He then have any control over man? How could He mean anything to man? Man could make God in his own image. And according to it man, apart from Christ, **is wholly indeterminate**. How could he sin against God except he be already forgiven in Christ? In this way man can project for himself a God who regards all men, however much they may violate His supposed commandments, as His children still. Man would, in short, project a God who would save all men if He could (save them and Himself, that is) from the unfortunate circumstances of a somehow hostile universe.

The objector laughed to himself as he thought of this conference of all Protestant theologians. He saw in this conference the means by which the gospel of the grace of a sovereign God might be most effectively destroyed from the world. If he could only get the representatives of Luther, of Calvin, and of Arminius to agree with the other three, then the church of Christ itself, the very agency that alone was preaching the gospel of particularism, would have sold itself out to the idea of common grace, grace common to all men everywhere, grace for God as well as grace for man, grace for all gods and for all men in a universe of Chance.

A Conference Of All Orthodox Protestant Theologians

The representatives of Luther, of Calvin, and of Arminius realized that they could not go along with the other three in answering the objector. They began gradually to sense the fact that the other three would preach only such a grace as is common grace, such a grace as the natural man himself is quite willing to accept, a grace that involves no repentance from sin. If God and man are made interdependent or commonly dependent upon a common universe then there can be no grace of God for man.

It was to point out this fact that the representative of Calvin spoke. He intimated simply that so long as one holds to the idea of interdependence between God and man in any form there could be no mention of grace. We have to come back to the system of Scripture according to which man is wholly dependent upon God because he is a creature of God, and to the idea that whatever comes to pass is controlled by God, he said.

Good comments on the philosophy of **chance** & the **law of contradiction**:

The very idea of Scripture, he continued, would be meaningless unless it was the voice of such a God. How could we think of Scripture as the infallible and sovereign word of God if God Himself were no sovereign? **How could the Scripture foretell the plan and purposes of God if He Himself were partly dependent upon forces outside Himself?** It would be wholly devoid of meaning to say that God can predict what will happen if the universe is run by Chance.

“In particular,” he said, “we shall have to stress that the will of man and all of its actions are genuinely significant within and only within the plan of God. And this shows,” he said, “that our system of theology is a system based upon Scripture which is presupposed as being the word of God, and upon God who is presupposed as being the God of Scripture.” For we cannot “prove,” either deductively or inductively, or by the principle of coherence in the way that the objector would require, that man’s will is genuinely significant within the plan of God. For if we did try thus to prove it, then this will of man would have to be woven into the being of God. And therewith we should be back to the analogy of being of Romanism or to the analogy of faith of the modern Protestantism of the three gentlemen who have just left us. On the other hand, we cannot show by an appeal to experience that the will of man has genuine significance only in relation to the plan of God in the way that would satisfy the objector. For if we tried thus to satisfy the objector we would have to show that the plan of God is itself dependent upon the will of man and then there would be no plan of God in the biblical sense of the term. We need therefore to maintain that our system of truth which we set over against the idea of the analogy of being and over against the idea of analogy of faith is frankly based upon Scripture as the word of that God who controls whatsoever comes to pass.

“Yet we can show negatively that unless the objector will drop his objections and stand with us upon the Scriptures of God and hold with us to the God of the Scriptures there is no meaning to his experience. Thus the **law of contradiction** may be used negatively as a means by which the two mutually exclusive views of life may be set apart from-one another. Thus it may be shown that if this law is to be used in the way that the objector would use it, then this very law would have no application to anything. On the **assumption of the ultimacy of human experience**, as involved in the position of the objector, the **universe is a universe of Chance. And in the universe of Chance, the law of contradiction has no fulcrum.** It is then like a revolving door resting upon chance moving nothing into nothing except for the fact that it then cannot move.”

“When this has been shown to the objector, then it will appear objectively (whether he will accept it or not) that his own environment and his own heredity has all the while actually been controlled by the God of the Scriptures. Otherwise there wouldn’t be any world. That is to say, it then appears that all the facts of this world, including the facts of man’s own consciousness as well as the facts of his environment, must be seen in the covenantal perspective in which, as was pointed out, the Scriptures put them in order to exist at all. All the facts therefore speak to all men everywhere of the fact that

God once spoke to mankind in general about their common creation and confrontation by God. All the facts speak of the one event that took place at the beginning of history and therefore of the fact that God was favorably disposed toward mankind and that He offered them eternal life on condition of love and obedience to Him with their whole hearts.”

“Operating in a vacuum” – good analogy:

It is thus, he argued, that the genuinely biblical idea of common grace to all mankind has its foundation at the beginning of history. It is thus also, he argued, that the genuine significance of the choice of the human individuals has its true foundation at the beginning of history. The two are interdependent. **The choice of the individual man, Adam, was so overwhelmingly important that the eternal weal and woe of all men depended upon it.** Such importance is nowhere else ascribed to the will of man. But such importance could be ascribed to the will of man only against the background of the fact that the sovereign God controlled whatsoever comes to pass. **Without that background the will of man would have operated in a vacuum. It could have had no significance even for the individual himself, let alone for the whole of the human race.**

“And how, without the all-controlling counsel of God,” he added, “could the consciousness of sin as it is found in every man, the consciousness of having broken the law of God, be seen for what it is? This consciousness can be seen for what it is, for what the Scriptures describe as being, only if seen in the light of the fact that God was originally favorable to mankind and that all mankind in Adam have turned against this favor of God given and offered to them.”

“And how could the fact that the environment of man is anything short of what corresponds with the internal deserts of man, as utterly wicked, be explained except for the fact that God still extends favor even upon those who deserve nothing but to be cast into eternal separation from Him? How could even the punishments of God by which men are kept from breaking forth into utter violence be fully seen for what they are except as evidence of the favor of God?”

“To be sure,” he continued, “this general or common grace is not common in every sense. God’s dealings with those who are to be in His presence and those who are to be finally driven forth from His presence **is never wholly common, common without difference.** From the beginning God’s favor was common only for the purpose of setting before man his task and his responsibility. **Commonness was from the outset correlative to difference in one common plan of God.** How much more then shall common grace to sinners imply the fact that it is for the purpose of placing men before a significant choice?”

Rain And Sunshine

“When God therefore gives His gifts to men, the gifts of rain and sunshine in season, these gifts are the means by which God’s challenge to man speaks forth. God’s challenge means that men are asked

to love God their Creator and to repent of sin and ask Him for His forgiveness. In long-suffering patience God calls men to Himself through these gifts. If they are not so conceived, then these gifts are not conceived according to their function in the plan of God. To say that the facts of rain and sunshine in themselves do not tell us anything of God's grace is to say in effect that the world and what is therein does not speak forth the revelation of God. But how can any fact in this world be a fact and be the kind of fact it is, except as revelational of the will of God to man? A fact in this world is what it is according to the function that it has to perform in the plan of God. Every fact is its function. **And therefore every fact contains, in conjunction with all other facts, the covenantal claims of God upon man. It is when seen as a part of this covenantal claim that the idea of common grace is seen for what it is.** When the sinner does not turn to God because of the challenge that comes to him through all the facts of the universe, his punishment is thereby greatly increased.

Sidebar comment: So those who saw Jesus' miracles, though they may have not heard the gospel, their sin of not repenting was acerbated all the more, John 15: 24-25, ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

The fact that the unbeliever who eventually turns out to have been a reprobate adds to his punishment because of his misuse of the gifts of rain and sunshine about him is not a proof against the idea that these facts are the gift of God's favor to him. On the contrary it were impossible that his punishment should be increased by his manipulation of the facts about him unless these facts were evidence of the undeserved favor of God in relation to him. From the beginning all the facts surrounding any man in the entire course of history were set in the framework of the covenant that God made with man. If they are in any wise separated from the framework then they become subject to the manipulation of the false logical and experiential requirements of the apostate man."

Christ For The World

"By thus placing all the facts of man's environment in covenantal perspective, the meaning of God's so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life, will be seen for its breadth of sweep and for its sovereign particularity. Christ is sent to the world of sinful men. He is sent to save sinners. These sinners will ultimately show themselves to have been either elect or reprobate. They will show themselves with clarity to have been either elect or reprobate in the fact of their acceptance or rejection of Christ if confronted by Him."

"Sinners are challenged as a class to accept Christ. They are challenged through Him to undertake the cultural task that all mankind was originally given to do through Adam. Not all sinners are thus

challenged. There is a delimitation as to the area where Christ comes to men. There are many to whom this second challenge and call does not come. This delimitation is due to the sovereign pleasure of God. **All men were confronted with the cultural task and with the promise of eternal life with God at the beginning of history. When all men rejected God and broke the covenant then God did not owe any of them a second call.** To be sure, He kept calling all men to repentance through all the facts about and within men. But He did not put the way of life positively before all men a second time. **Many were left in the misery into which they had cast themselves through their first disobedience and fall in Adam.** Yet Christ came to sinners as a class. He did not come to those who were already designated by Him as reprobate or as elect. To this class of sinners to whom He speaks through the preaching of the gospel, God says that He would have them turn unto Him and after repentance undertake the task of making all things subservient to the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ.”

“The Apostle Paul tells us what God has in mind through the coming of Christ. Christ, he says, is the first born of every creature. By Him all things were created. By Him all things consist. It pleased the Father that in Him as the head of the body which is the church, all things in heaven and on earth should be reconciled to God.”

“It is in this program of God, it is in connection with this work of Christ by which the world that was cursed of God should be reconciled unto Him for the greater glory of God, that common grace must have a part. All things in history must serve this glorious consummation. Even Satan and all his hosts must through his defeat by Christ serve the purpose of glorifying God. **If men do not accept the Christ but reject Him, if perhaps they crucify the Son of God afresh, they have thereby shown sin to be exceeding sinful. Twice over, once in Adam and again in direct relation to Christ, they have refused to undertake under God,** and for God, the performance of their cultural task. **Twice over they have joined Satan in seeking to ruin the ultimate plan of God. Twice over** they will be shown to have been defeated in their purpose. God will attain His purpose in spite of their rejection of Him both in relation to the first and in relation to the second Adam.”

Man’s Response To The Gifts Of God

“However, God not only gives good gifts to men in general, He not only calls men with the good news of the gospel to a renewed acceptance of their original task, He also restrains the wrath of man. He keeps the negative, and therefore destructive, force of sin from breaking out in the fulness of its powers. **All men everywhere are kept from working out self-consciously their own adopted principle as covenant-breakers and as the children of wrath. But none of them have reached maturity in sinning. If they had there would be no opportunity left for them to be frustrated in their evil efforts.**”

“For those who reject the Christ and those who have never heard of Christ, but who have sinned in Adam, are still laborers, even though unwillingly, in the cultural task of man. Being slaves to sin they are also partners in the defeat of Satan, unwilling slaves of God and His Christ. In spite of Satan’s best

efforts his followers are found to be contributors to the great edifice that is built by God through Him who is the first born of every creature. All the skills of those who are artificers in iron and brass, all the artistry of painters and sculptors and poets, are at the service of those who, under Christ, are anew undertaking the cultural task that God in the beginning gave to man.”

The Recipients Of Saving Grace

“In contrast with those who are slaves of sin and Satan, but who have to be unwilling workers in the performance of the cultural task of mankind, there are those who by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit have been made alive from the dead. They are those who have by the power of God believed in Christ as their substitute. They are now through Him no longer subject to the wrath to come. They are now through Him the heirs of eternal life. To them the promise that God had made to mankind, the promise of eternal life in fulness of a glorified earth and heaven, shall be fulfilled. With great enthusiasm they therefore undertake the cultural task of mankind. It is they who build the temple of the Lord in accord with the vision showed to them on the mount. The gifts of rain and sunshine they use in self-conscious subordination to their one great plan of accomplishing the cultural task that God has given to man. **The master plan of their lives is therefore radically diverse from the master plan of those that are still covenant breakers.** There is no common enterprise between covenant keepers and covenant breakers. That is to say there is no community project in which there is no difference of purpose. The covenant keepers are in control of the situation. They are in control of the situation because they are servants of Christ. This is true even when their enemies may for the moment seem to be the lords of creation. It is the meek who shall inherit the earth. The earth and the fulness thereof belong to the Lord and to those to whom in His sovereign grace He gives it. To them therefore belong all the common gifts of God to mankind. Yet that it may be the earth and the fulness thereof that is developed, the covenant keepers will make use of the works of the covenant breakers which these have been able and compelled to perform in spite of themselves. As Solomon used the cedars of Lebanon, the products of the rain and the sunshine that had come to the covenant breakers, and as he used the skill of these very covenant breakers for the building of the temple of God, so also those who through the Spirit of God have believed in Christ may and must use all the gifts of all men everywhere in order by means of them to perform the cultural task of mankind.

“How beautifully,” the representative of Calvin said, “all things thus fit together according to the plan of God. Though the system that we thus construct is still, as noted before, only an **analogical system**, and it is therefore true only to the extent that it actually re-expresses the revelation of the word of God, **yet we can see something of the symmetry of the truth of God.** And we can see how radically different the system of Scripture is from the system of the objector. Both systems have in them an aspect of particularity and an aspect of universality. The system of the objector, and of the modern Protestant, has such universality as involves the identity of God and man. It has common grace which is common, but which is not grace. At the same time this system has such particularity as to

destroy the very idea of unity or systematic coherence altogether. It has common grace which comes to such as have nothing in common because they live in total isolation.”

“In contrast with such a system we as believers in the word of God and in the God of the word presuppose this word and this God. We therefore presuppose the internal and eternal harmony between unity and diversity which lives within this internally self-complete God. It is on the basis of the presupposition of this God and of this word of God that there is both genuine individuality and genuine universality in the created world. Only on the basis of this presupposition can unity and individuality stand in relationship with one another without destroying one another. When we stress the commonness of the cultural task given to man, when we stress the commonness of the curse of God on man, the commonness of the non-saving grace of God to man, the commonness of the offer of the gospel to men, the commonness of all those who by birth are in the covenant of saving grace that God has made with believers and their seed, this commonness does not in the least tend to reduce the genuine significance of the particular. **On the contrary, this commonness is required in order that the process of particularization may be accomplished.**”

“The **commonness** is one of the two indispensable factors of the covenant which God has made with mankind. **The other factor is the genuineness of the choice of man.** And through the two factors operating in dependence upon one another God accomplishes His one great purpose of glorifying Himself through the deeds of men. It is His all-encompassing plan in relationship to which and within which the course of history in its **process of differentiation** takes place. **The choices of men therefore take place and have their significance in relation to the task that God has assigned to mankind as a whole.** These choices are either an acceptance or a rejection of the responsibility of performing this task. But both the acceptance and the rejection take place in relation to the same task. And there would be no such thing as a common task in relationship to which the choices of men could have their **genuine meaning** unless there were one plan of God according to which all things come to pass. **On the objector’s basis there would be no true commonness in history.**

“On the other hand there would be no **truly significant choices of men**, either by way of accepting or by way of rejecting the common task of mankind unless these choices are themselves subordinate to the one plan of God. **There would be nothing in relationship to which human choice could take place if it were not for the common plan of God back of all things**, and if it were not for the common task that God according to this one plan has set for men. **Without this all things would be indeterminate. There would be and could be no culture, no civilization, no history.**” [all this requires deep thought on this subject of man’s free will, vs. man being just a puppet on a string. Man’s will is creaturely, not as free as he thinks; it is not autonomous; it is derivative! Arminians assign some degree of autonomy to the will of man.]

“Thus then we return to the **particularism of the gospel**, that was so greatly stressed in the other lectures. It is not to tone down this particularism but rather to support it and to show it in the breadth of its significance and in the depth of its foundation that we dealt with common grace.”

“There is first the self-contained, eternally self-sufficient God. By His sovereign will this God created one world and through His providence He controls and leads this world to the end for which He has created it. At the beginning of the history of this world He created one human pair from whom all men were to spring. And through the first man, Adam, He dealt conditionally with the whole human race. Through Adam He confronted the entire human race with one cultural task. It was in relationship to this one task that Adam, representing all men, made his choice. His choice was therefore significant not in spite of, but because of, the fact that it took place in precisely such a situation and in such circumstances. What seemed to the objector to be determinism thus turns out to be the very condition for freedom and significant choice. If there was to be determinate experience for man it could not take place in a vacuum. It could take place only in relationship to the principle of unity back of all history, namely, the counsel of God, and in relation to the principle of unity within history, namely, the common cultural task set before man.”

“And so down through the ages each time the will of man is asked to function it functions in relation to the original cultural task that was given to mankind as a whole. For that cultural task continues to speak through every fact of man’s environment. It speaks always to all men. It speaks more narrowly and more intensely to those to whom the gospel of saving grace is offered. It speaks still more narrowly and still more intensely to those who are born within the sphere of the covenant of saving grace. And as man’s response to the original challenge was ultimately in the hands of the sovereign God and plan, **so the acceptance or rejection of this task by men still rests upon the sovereign will of God. It is God that wills man to will and to do what is required of him.**”

“Thus the **common task, the common curse, the common grace, the common call to the gospel, and a common participation in the promises of the covenant of grace are the background in relationship to which man’s original disobedience, his continued rejection of God in the face of the facts within and about him, his rejection of Christ when called to Christ, and his breaking of the covenant have their significance. And thus a true biblical commonness is seen to be involved in a true particularism of the gospel of God.**”

The Lutheran And The **Arminian** Leave

At this point in the long address of the representative of **Calvin** those who stood for the views of Lutheranism and Arminianism raised their voices in protest. For a while it had seemed to them that

things were not going so badly. But then when it appeared that only such a commonness was to be allowed as would fit within ultimate particularism of the gospel, they could keep silent no longer.

Even though it was clearly shown to them that unless one held to such a concept of commonness as is correlative to, and therefore necessarily implied in, particularism, he will be carried on to commonness without difference and to difference without commonness: they were not satisfied. Said the representative of Luther: "Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God in such a one-sided manner that the countenance of grace is virtually obliterated." Modern Calvinists teach with Calvin that "the purpose of the written Word is not to lead all men to faith and salvation, but to harden the hearts of the majority of the hearers." "But over against the idea of the sovereignty of God, in which we too believe, we must place the counterbalancing notion of man's freedom. We must therefore say that God intends to save all men through Christ and that Christ died for the purpose of saving all men. Particularism, in whatever form it appears, is founded not on the Word of God, but on human speculation as to the will and work of God." "But we know that though God in Christ intends to save all men, God's purpose is not accomplished in a part of mankind (Jn 3.18: 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God')."

The representative of Arminius agreed with this position. He spoke of it as a balanced position, a position in which justice was done to both God and man. Both the Lutheran and the Arminian were sure that when such a position was presented to the objector it might be expected that he would drop his objections and accept Christianity for himself. For the objector, they argued, was after all a reasonable person, and a "reasonable person" cannot refuse to admit that the Scriptures are the word of God, and that what they teach is true.

Meanwhile, the objector was again rejoicing. He had been very sad when the representative of Calvin had spoken. He realized much better than the Lutheran and the Arminian did that grace is no more grace if God who must give the grace must Himself be dependent on man, and that the freedom of man is no longer freedom when it is cut loose from the plan of God as the only atmosphere in which it can function. The Lutheran and the Arminian did not want particularism. For it they substituted a common grace by which Christ died for all men with the intention of saving them all. But on this basis God's purpose may be and is foiled by men.

On this basis God Himself is involved in the realm of possibility: how then can He even make salvation possible for any one man, let alone making it possible for all men? If God is not the source of possibility then He cannot make salvation possible for men: and if He is the source of possibility then He is the source because He is in control of all actuality.

The objector was glad when he saw that the Lutheran and the Arminian were once more following the road of the analogy of being of Romanism and of the analogy of faith idea of modern Protestantism. To be sure, he realized that they were doing it inadvertently. He realized that they

meant to hold to the grace of God. He realized that they did not want to obliterate the difference between the being of God and the being of man as is done in part in the Romanist and completely in the modern positions. None the less he rejoiced when he saw that the Arminian and the Lutheran were willing to introduce such a notion of common grace as tended to turn into the same destruction of grace as is involved in the Romanist and especially in the modernist Protestant views. The Lutheran and Arminian types of universalism, according to which a finite God does the best He can to save men, by making it possible, so far as He can, that they should be saved has in it a tendency toward the identification of God and man. And having in it this tendency toward the identification of God and man it at the same time has in it a tendency that leads to the destruction of the significance of the will of man.

The objector realized all this. And so at last he was left alone with the representative of Calvin.

Only in the Reformed faith is there true commonness and true particularism. The particularism of Calvin's view cannot possibly be supplemented with the **universalism** of the Lutheran and Arminian view. Each system has its own particularism and its own universalism. **The particularism of the Reformed faith requires a universalism that is based upon the Creator-creature distinction.** [see codeCC1] **The particularism of the system of the objector requires a universalism in which there is no difference between God and man.** The same must be said of the particularism of the modern Protestantism of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth. **Romanist** theology seeks to occupy middle ground between Christianity and paganism. Then as to orthodox Protestant theology it is in the Lutheran and in the Arminian systems that there is some measure of non-Christian universalism or commonness, in the idea of Christ dying for all men and making salvation possible for all men. Here God is supposed to have the same attitude toward all men without difference. **But the price the Lutheran and the Arminian pay for this identity of attitude is that of God's almighty and all-comprehensive control of all things. If the particularism of the Lutheran and the Arminian view is to be maintained, then God has to limit Himself when He creates man with a full will of his own.** And so when God gave His commandments to men He was not asking them to react to a situation over which He had full control. He was really only able to give them good advice as to how best to get along in the universe. **So man's will, in disobeying the law, was not really disobeying the law of God but making an exception to the orderly course of the universe. Therefore God could not make possible the salvation of man; He did not control the universe; He could do His best in the situation, but the situation was not fully under His control.**

Realizing all this the objector was finally compelled to face the choice between his own position and that of Scripture and the God of Scripture. Neither the Lutheran nor the Arminian was willing or able, according to his adopted principles, squarely to challenge the unbeliever and give him a reason why he should change his position. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian position could not be and was not clearly and fully made out except by **Calvin**. But at last it appeared that if there is to

be true challenge of the natural man by the gospel of the sovereign God then the particularism of this gospel must be supported by a commonness of the call of God to all men everywhere. **Common grace must support special or saving grace; saving or special grace cannot be adequately presented except in relationship to and in connection with common grace. Together they form the covenant framework in which the sovereign God deals with man.**

Chapter Five Common Grace And Witness-Bearing

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“Ye are my witnesses,” said Jehovah God to Israel through the mouth of His prophet Isaiah. “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise” (Is 43.21). In those words is summed up the whole task of the people of God in this world.

The New Testament through Peter tells us the same: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pt 2.9).

We Witness To The Unbeliever

If God’s people must bear witness of God, how did they come to be equipped for this task.’? The answer is that they have been “formed” by God for this purpose. They have not chosen this task. They have been chosen for it. They were not of themselves ready to obey when called to this task. Their hearts too were “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ... ” They were of a piece with those who walk “in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph 4:17–19).

From this vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, they have been redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ.” And this Christ was Himself “foreordained before the foundation of the world” for this task of redeeming His people (1 Pt 1:20). So they are “chosen in him before the foundation of the world.”

The Unbeliever Challenges Our Witness

The Christ chosen to redeem them and they chosen to be redeemed by Christ! “What a neat little circle,” someone will say. Your Christ Came to save only you, your own little group of Calvinists, or at best your own group of Fundamentalists. Is that to the praise of the glory of His grace? Your Christ died for the elect only; is your witnessing for God limited to telling the world this fact? Why should the

world be interested in such news as that? Have you no message of salvation for the world? Will you simply tell men that they are reprobate? Will you tell them that God intends to send them to perdition regardless of what they do? A “peculiar people!” Indeed you are. You have a God who “appoints” men to eternal death or “elects” them to eternal life irrespective of their good or evil deeds. I dare you to preach on Jn 3.16 (Jn 3:16). You are morally a Pharisee if you say that “whosoever will” may come. You have no love for men in your hearts. Or if you have, then you flatly contradict yourself. You say that whosoever will may come but you know that they cannot will to come. You ought to try preaching in a cemetery and see what results you have.

Notes on the image of God:

Seeking to satisfy this objector you assure him that God does not deal with men as with sticks and stones. According to our doctrine, you tell him: **Man has lost, through Adam the first man, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness which he originally had. He has lost what we call the image of God in the narrower sense.** But he has not lost his **rationality, his sense of moral responsibility and ability to will freely according to his nature. Man’s freedom and the contingency of second causes, you tell him, are not taken away by the idea of election.**

But the objector is not satisfied. He asks: “Do you not hold that even Adam, though created with this true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, had to sin? Was not the idea of his fall a part of the plan of God? Was not the Christ who should redeem your sinners chosen for that very purpose before the foundation of the world? And yet your Christ came only because of sin did He not? So in order that you might be redeemed in Him from sin unto good works, your God must have planned that you should be sinners. Is that not true?”

...Perhaps you will hesitate for a moment here. You know that sinners are dead and unable to come to life. You know that according to Scripture man is ethically bound to sin. **He has no ethical free will by which, of himself, to accept the gospel offered him.** So you say that the case of Adam was different? Adam was free not to sin and free to sin? Is it not because of his abusing this freedom that the slavery of sin has come upon all men? Yet you know that it was in accord with God’s counsel that Adam should sin.

Try as you may, you soon discover that you cannot present your position without seeming to the man to whom you are speaking to be contradicting yourself. And try as you may to avoid it, you find that in answering the seemingly limited objection of your inquirer with respect to the matter of salvation in Christ, you must bring into the picture the whole idea of the plan of God controlling all things of history and the place of man as a moral and rational creature in this plan. If you do not see this yourself, your questioner will soon force you to see it. **He will push you back, from the question of Christ dying for the elect only and yet being preached to all men,** to the idea of this Christ as the Son of God, and the Logos, the Creator of the world, and the sustainer of it. He will say that if Christ is Himself

God and if, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He has from all eternity determined whatsoever comes to pass (thus determining that only some men shall be saved), then His weeping over Jerusalem, and His bidding all that are weary and heavy laden to come to Him, is but a farce and a sham. [\[all apparent contradictions to unbelievers, but all made harmonious by a due knowledge of God and by eyes of faith in due exercise.\]](#) It is ethically reprehensible for Jesus to call man to Himself, if from all eternity He has determined that they shall reject Him. He may perform miracles before them in order to prove His divinity and in order to have them believe His message and yet He is also responsible for the words: “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (Jn 12:37–40). Christ performs miracles before their eyes so that they might believe, and yet He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they cannot believe. Is not that the plainest contradiction? the objector will say.

And then there is the point of the cosmic significance of Christ. Christ died to save only the elect, and yet Christ died “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth” (Eph 1:10). “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:19–20). So your Christ came to save the “world” yet not to save us. Do we not count for anything? Are we not part of the world? Or are you better than we?

Such then is the nature of the objection to the message of Christianity that, as Christians, holding to the Reformed faith, we are bound to meet. Your Christianity, the objector says, insults the intrinsic value and right of human personality. Your Christianity reduces man to the level of the machine. The God of Christianity is an arbitrary being, electing or rejecting men as He pleases apart from the actual merits of men. Even the Christ you offer, men say, contradicts Himself when He offers Himself to all sinners, since He as God intends to save only some of them.

Humility In Our Reply

Now what shall we say by way of response to this charge? In the first place we shall, of course, remember that all that we have received has been by grace. And if those who hold the Reformed faith do greater justice to the idea of God’s grace in the salvation of sinners, then they ought to be the humblest of all men. They ought to enter most sympathetically into the mind and heart of him who makes this objection. **Did they not themselves kick against the pricks and rebel against the overtures of God’s grace?**

And this attitude of humility holds over against those who with him name the name of Christ, as well as over against the unbeliever. With Bavinck let us say that all true Christians are at heart Augustinian and with Warfield let us say that every Christian who calls out unto God in anguish of heart is really a Calvinist.

Nay But—O Man

But if we must follow the examples of Augustine and Calvin on the point of humility, shall we not also follow them when, in answer to the objector, they quoted Paul saying: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus” (Rom 9:20)? Submit yourself to God. Then you shall be saved and your works shall follow after you. If not, you will be lost and the profit of your labor will be given to the meek who shall inherit the earth.

That is the central point of our witness unto men. **In the pride of their hearts, they worship and serve the creature, that is, themselves, more than the Creator.** **The natural man must be challenged in this, his assumed autonomy.** He must be compelled to look into the face of God.

General Revelation—All Know God

Men must be told that the revelation of God round about them and the revelation of God within their own constitution is clear and plain, rendering them without excuse. “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom 1:20–21).

All men know God. Every fact of the universe has God’s stamp of ownership indelibly and with large letters engraved upon it.

All men know not merely that a God exists, but they know that God, the true God, the only God, exists. **They cannot be conscious of themselves, says Calvin, except they be at the same time conscious of God as their creator.** This general revelation of God stays with man whatever his attitude toward God may be. **When he sins against God, he must sin against this God whom he knows. Otherwise sin would be sin in a vacuum.** Even in the hereafter, the lost and the evil angels still know God.

Sidebar comment regarding the reference to a vacuum: *So those who saw Jesus’ miracles, though they may have not heard the gospel, yet they knowing there is a God, etc., Romans 1, their not repenting of their sin was acerbated all the more, John 15: 24-25, ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is*

written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' There has to be a point of reference from which man strays, hence he sins. That point of reference is God's law or a non-conformity to God, hence, the presupposition that there is a God to whom we must give account. Without that, all is relative.

None Know God

Yet these same men to whom we must testify that they know God, must also be told that they do not know God. They walk in the midst of this world which is an exhibition house of the glories and splendors of God, full as it is of the works of his hands, and they ask, mind you, whether God exists. They profess to be open-minded on the question. They say that they will follow the facts wherever these may lead them. **But invariably they refuse to follow these facts.** They constantly conclude that God does not exist. Even when they conclude that a god exists and that with great probability, they are virtually saying that God does not exist. For the true God is not surrounded by, but is the source of possibility. He could not possibly not exist. We cannot intelligently think away God's existence.

When working in the laboratory as scientists, men act as though they are not dealing with materials that belong to God. They are like a thief who, entering into your home and exploring all kinds of things within it, claims that the question of the ownership of the house is of no concern to him. They are like those who go hunting in a woods clearly marked "No Gunning," without a permit from the owner.

How absurd, says the objector. Do you mean to say that men really know that they are creatures of God, and that there is punishment awaiting them if they are not thankful and obedient to Him and yet pretend to be looking for Him if haply they may find Him? **Do they know God and yet not know Him? How contradictory, how utterly absurd is this religion which you are asking me to believe. Your Bible is full of contradiction.** It says that man is made in the image of God, with freedom to choose for or against God. Yet you say that man has no freedom; he simply must do what his God has determined shall be done. You say that by virtue of man's creation in the **image of God**, he knows God, and at the same time you say that these image bearers interpret all things amiss since they do not know God. The answer is again: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" **If you do not accept this God, you are like a man swinging his arms in a vacuum.**

God's Attitude

Once more: Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing Him, manifest His attitude toward men. **God is love. He loves Himself above all else.** He loved Himself from all eternity when He had as yet made no creatures to love. **But when He made creatures, He made them lovable like Himself. He loved them because in loving them, He loved Himself above all else.** He made man perfect. And loving mankind, He offered them eternal life. It was seriously meant. It was no farce. All men disobeyed God.

All came under His wrath and curse. God continued to love Himself; He therefore had to punish every insult to His holiness.

The Common Curse

To be sure, He had from all eternity chosen for Himself a people in Christ and He had from all eternity chosen Christ to redeem a people for Himself. Yet when those who are the elect of God, together with all men, were disobedient to God, they were under His wrath. So real was this wrath and so serious the threat of eternal punishment, that, if they were to be saved Christ had to be punished in their stead.

Those then whom God loved with an everlasting love, He at the same time regards as objects of wrath because of their sin.

How absurd, says the objector! How contradictory! Your witness for Christianity makes no sense to a self-respecting, intelligent person.

The objector has the same objection all the time. It is to the effect that we are insulting the dignity of human personality. We are running roughshod over his moral sensibilities and over the legitimate claims of his power of reason. Is he to be asked to believe that human personality is thus absolutely determined by the creation and the all controlling providence of God?

Law Written In Hearts (Rom 2.14–15) (Rom 2:14–15)

To add insult to injury, the Bible tells us that all men as they know God, in that knowledge know the difference between good and evil. The requirement of God comes clearly home to the consciousness of man. In this sense the law of God is written in his heart. For every fact in revealing God requires man to use it to the glory of God. If the world is the Lord's and the fulness thereof then God wants man to own His sovereign sway over all things. He wants him not to act at any point as though he did not need to recognize God's ownership.

Law Not Written

At the same time the Bible says to these men that they do not have the law of God written in their hearts. According to the promise of God to Jeremiah (Jer 31:31) He will write His law upon the hearts of His people. Then they will be able to say: "O, how love I thy law." Man the sinner is told that he cannot know the truth and cannot love righteousness. Sinners are said to have their understanding darkened and to be enemies of God at the same time that they are told that they do know God and that they have the knowledge of right and wrong. And each time, the natural man is challenged to forsake his own judgment and submit to the judgment of God as He speaks in Scripture.

Common Grace

But what, you ask, does the question of Common Grace have to do with all this? Most of you will anticipate the reply. In the question of common grace there confronts us the same sort of situation that we have with respect to all other teaching of Scripture. Common grace presents us with a teaching that seems to contradict other teaching of Scripture.

Let us take the first and main point of the pronouncement made by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. In this first point mention is made of a favorable attitude of God to mankind as a whole, without distinction between elect and reprobate. As God was favorably disposed to the human race before the fall and offered the race as a whole eternal life, so even after the fall God gives His good gifts to men everywhere, thereby calling them to repentance and to performance of their task. The Christian view of God in relation to man must always begin, as Berkhouwer has emphasized, from this idea that God at the beginning of history was favorably disposed to mankind. And then in amazement we note that even after the fall, when mankind as a whole has become the object of His wrath, God still continues to give good gifts unto men, and by these gifts He calls them to repentance. "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee, (that is, is calculated to lead thee) to repentance" (Rom 2:4)?

Now how can this universal call to repentance be harmonized logically with the doctrine of election? God did not intend that all men should repent. Instead He intended from all eternity that some should not repent. How could they repent unless they heard the gospel of salvation through Christ? And to many millions of men this gospel was never offered. Many never heard of that only name by which they must be saved; and that is surely God's doing. The church is, no doubt, at fault if it is not zealous in its missionary enterprise. Ultimately, however, it was God's doing that millions of men lived in the darkness of heathendom and never heard the word of life.

But you say: "Paul does not assert that they were called to repentance in the sense that those who are confronted with the gospel are called to repentance unto eternal life." Even so the problem remains: **How can God have an attitude of favor unto those men whom He so obviously has not included in the number that could possibly be saved through the gospel of the blood of Jesus Christ?**

Well, the answer is that we cannot comprehend how it is possible, but the Scriptures reveal it to be true. [And that's where the mystery is understood and by faith, adored, but not comprehended!] And so we must learn to say to ourselves and to take seriously the words that, in following Paul, we say to the unbelievers: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

And what does this mean for us as Christians of the Reformed faith?

Not What It Means To Barth

In the first place it means that we cannot join Karl Barth in reducing God as He is in Himself to a relation that He sustains to His people in the world. Barth virtually seeks to meet the objector's charge

that Christianity involves a basic contradiction by rejecting the idea of God as He is in Himself and of God's counsel as controlling all things in the world. He says that Calvin's doctrine of God's counsel must be completely rejected. Only when it is rejected, is the grace of God permitted to flow freely upon mankind. And that means that God's love envelops all men. To be sure, **for Barth there is reprobation but it is reprobation in Christ.** The final word of God for all men, says **Barth**, is Yes. **It matters not that men have not heard of the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. For Jesus of Nazareth is not, as such, the Christ. All men are as men, of necessity in Christ. All grace is universal or common grace.** From the historic Christian point of view this is simply to say that the concept of grace **is so widened as no longer to be grace at all. How truly Herman Bavinck anticipated, as it were, this most heretical of heresies of our day when he pointed out that in the last analysis one must make his choice between Pelagius and Augustine. The grace of God as Barth presents it is no longer distinguishable from the natural powers of man. All men to be men, says Barth, must have been saved and glorified from all eternity in Christ.**

This is how **Barth** would meet the objection against the idea of the sovereign grace of God. There is no longer any sovereign God and therefore there is no longer any grace.

Common Grace According To Romanism

This is key to understanding how heresy comes about

In the second place there are the **Roman Catholics**. To be sure, they have not gone to the extremes of Barth or modern liberal Protestantism. They have not wholly reduced the being of God to a relationship to mankind. They have not, in modern **Kantian** style, made of God a projection into the void. Even so, they have no sovereign God. Their God does not control whatsoever comes to pass. **For in their view man has ultimate freedom to set at naught the purposes of God.** God, therefore, cannot reach the individual directly and determine his will and destiny. God can only reach toward the individual by means of classes.

God cannot, on the Romanist view, unmistakably make His imprint of ownership upon man. The image of God in man does not reach down into the penetralium of the consciousness of the individual. **If it did, the Romanist holds, man would lose his freedom.** **For freedom, in the Romanist sense of the term, means a bit of ultimacy or autonomy; a sharing in the freedom of God.** The idea of man's participation in the being of God or his participation with God in a common being, precludes the idea of man's being truly made in the image of God.

It follows from this that **Romanist theology** speaks of Adam as being originally in need of grace. Man then needs grace because he is finite. Accordingly, after man fell into sin he needed the same grace, **but still only the same grace.** **Thus, the concept of nature and grace takes the place of sin and grace. And the meaning of both sin and grace is thereby changed.**

Thus, once more the attempt is made to satisfy the objection against the sovereign grace of God and His electing sovereign power, by reducing the difference between special and common grace.

It is then not necessary to say: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” For the idea of grace is largely made over to his taste. And though very vague on the subject Romanist theology therefore, **like Barthianism and liberal Protestantism, holds that man’s being lost is ultimately determined by man himself.** Man is lost, Roman Catholic theologians often say, because he has not lived up to the light of nature that God has given him. And so the light that God gave unto the heathen for their conversion was really meant for their eternal salvation. And it is only because by their sins they live out of accord with that light, that God gives them over to eternal death. **Thus it is again man, not God, who ultimately decides his eternal destiny.** **And thus the problem of “contradiction” is solved by removing one of the horns of the dilemma.**

Common Grace According To The Remonstrants

Then thirdly come the Remonstrants or Arminians, who teach that “there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation.”

The central point of these words and similar ones from the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants is **that the final determination of the destiny of individual men is still left in the hands of men instead of in the hands of God.** [again, man tends to defend his autonomy] Again God cannot reach the individual except through a general invitation. God may begin the process of salvation by offering general grace to all. But this must mean that God in a general way intends to save all. No answer is given to the question that if God intends to save all men, why did He not make salvation known to all through the spreading of the gospel news? There is reference to the idea that they have not used the light of nature aright and thus have made themselves unworthy of the better news of the gospel.

But again, on this basis, the answer to the objector against the sovereign grace of God is not voiced in the words: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”

It is not till we assert that the ultimate destiny of all men everywhere, and therefore of each man individually is, in the last analysis, determined by God, that the problem of common grace comes clearly before us. For only when it is seen that according to Scripture God controls all of history and all the deeds of all men, evil deeds as well as good deeds, **that the question is squarely before us as to how then God can have any attitude of favor to those whom He has from all eternity intended not to redeem.**

Reprobation Must Rest On The Will Of God

We, therefore, cannot avoid taking note of a point of view sometimes advocated by those who are committed to the Reformed faith. I refer to the idea that reprobation rests ultimately upon the sin of man as the final cause. Reprobation is then said to be an act of punishment of God upon sin as committed by man. In this respect reprobation is said to differ from election. Election is said to proceed from God's eternal plan directly. But reprobation is not thus directly an act of the eternal plan of God. Reprobation is thus said not to be equally ultimate with election.

But surely, it is apparent that such a point of view leads us off the highway of the Reformed faith and tones down our witness to the world. **The world needs the sovereign God of Scripture.** Hence we must say that reprobation is not ultimately an act of justice with respect to the sin of man. **It is rather an act of the sovereign will of God. The fully Biblical, and therefore fully Reformed, position is not reached till God in His sovereign decree is made the ultimate cause of all that comes to pass in this world through the deeds of men, whether these deeds lead to their final destruction or by God's grace to their final glory.** Hence, too, we dare not say that Adam could, in the last analysis, have chosen to be obedient just as well as disobedient. **The fall of man is the proximate cause of reprobation (*propinqua reprobationis causa*).** But, says **Bavinck**, and again: "For that reason the fall of Adam, sin in general and all evil, is not only seen in advance but also in a sense willed and directed by God. There must therefore be, though hidden from us, a reason why God willed the fall: There is an *altius Dei consilium* which precedes the fall." Once more: There is but one and that an all-comprehensive plan of God.

Quite properly Bavinck refers in this connection to the reply that Calvin gave to Pighius when the latter objected to the counsel of God as the final source of the determination of the destinies of all men. In dealing with the 9th chapter of Romans and, therefore, with the difference between Esau and Jacob, Calvin says:

"Now if this 'afore prepared unto glory' is peculiar and special to the elect, it evidently follows that the rest, the non-elect, were equally 'fitted to destruction' because, being left to their own nature, they were thereby devoted already to certain destruction. That they were 'fitted to destruction' by their own wickedness is an idea so silly that it needs no notice. It is indeed true that the wicked procure to themselves the Wrath of God, and that they daily hasten on the falling of its own weight upon their heads. But it must be confessed by all, that the apostle is here treating of the difference made between the elect and the reprobate, which proceeds from the alone secret will and counsel of God."

Then Calvin goes on to treat of the passage from Isaiah already quoted, in which he speaks of **the blinding of man's eyes**. He points out how utterly destructive of the idea of the sovereign grace of God it would be **if anything that is done by men is made the ultimate or final cause of their destiny**. All men were corrupted in their nature by the fall of Adam. If this their corruption were the ultimate cause of their reprobation then God Himself would be confounded when seeking to save men. **For all would then be bound to be reprobate.** "If the wickedness of man be still urged as the cause of the difference

between the elect and the non-elect, this wickedness might indeed be made to appear more powerful than the grace of God which He shows toward His elect, if that solemn truth did not stand in the way of such an argument: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' "

Of the words of John, who also quotes the passage from Isaiah, Calvin says: "Now, most certainly, John does not here give us to understand that the Jews were prevented from believing by their sinfulness. For though this be quite true in one sense, yet the cause of their not believing must be traced to a far higher source. The secret and eternal counsel of God must be viewed as the original cause of their blindness and unbelief." 6

Proximate And Ultimate Cause

In answer to all objections made by those who seek the ultimate issues of life and death in man, Calvin distinguishes between proximate and ultimate causes. Man is the proximate and responsible cause of his eternal punishment. Men must be told that they will be eternally lost if they persist in their rebellion against God. They must be called to repentance. **Even so, back of their belief or unbelief is the sovereign will of God.** It is of that God that we must witness. If men object and disbelieve we yet reply: "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?"

Quite in accord with Calvin, Bavinck asserts that the difference between the Reformed and other approaches to the doctrine of grace is that they—following Augustine—did not stop with secondary causes but dared to climb up to God as the first and ultimate cause and therein found rest for their thought.

But in finding rest for their thought did they think that they could logically penetrate the **mystery of the relation of this ultimate will of God to the will of man as the secondary cause either of obedience or of disobedience?** Not at all. With Calvin they would say: "Here let human reasonings of every kind that possibly can present themselves to our minds cease forever."

Shall we not say this to ourselves, and mean it, with respect to the problem of common grace? How can God have an attitude of favor unto those who are according to His own ultimate will to be separated from Him forever? **The first and basic answer is that Scripture teaches it. But then we can see that in order to be disobedient and, therefore, to be punished for their own sin, they must be confronted with God in all that they do.** Historical causes have genuine meaning just because of God's ultimate plan. God reaches down into the self-consciousness of each individual. If the heathen are adding to their sins and to their punishment, and if for additional sin they are, as Paul tells us, given over unto still further sin by God, we can see that they must have the fact of God, as long-suffering and as calling them to repentance, before them. And we can also see that, therefore, the restraint of God

by which men are kept back from greater sin and from greater punishment is something that is an unmerited favor unto them.

We have not come into full sight of this problem till with Calvin and Bavinck we trace all things back to the **sovereign will of God**. Only then does the problem appear of how such a god, who ultimately has fixed the destinies of men, yet promises or threatens what appears to be opposed to this destiny. And the problem is as acute in the case of the elect as it is in the case of the reprobate. How are good deeds of men called their good deeds if they are gifts of God?

Moreover, when I add with Bavinck that though sin and its eternal punishment for some men is a part of the plan of God and, therefore, in a sense willed by God, yet they are not willed in the same sense and in the same manner as are the grace and salvation of the elect—I have not thereby met the objection of him who charges the Christian religion with **contradiction**. We shall need simply to hold both to the genuine meaning of historical causes and to the all inclusiveness of God’s will as the ultimate cause.

On the other hand, I cannot meet the objector by trying to show him that God is quite consistent with Himself since He, by His will, has determined to elect some and not elect others. If I say that God’s work in the direction of reprobation and in the direction of election differs not at all, then I am merely saying to the objector, **in effect, that I would solve his problem by denying the meaning of secondary causes altogether**. I must then wipe out the distinction between the revealed and the secret will of God. And I must say therefore that God’s eternal election of men implies that He had no attitude of disfavor unto them even for their sins. Thus I would wipe out the necessity for their atonement in history through the redemptive work of Christ. Says Calvin: “Let no one deceive himself by vain self-flattery. Those who come to Christ were before sons of God in His divine heart, while they were, in themselves, His enemies.”

Let us, rather than try to meet the objector’s desires for supposed consistency in logic, not deny the fact of God’s revelation of His general favor to mankind or the fact of God’s wrath resting upon the elect. To meet the objector and satisfy him we should have to deny the meaning of all **history** and of all **secondary causes**. We should need to wipe out the difference between God and man. **To the objector it is contradictory to say that God controls whatsoever comes to pass and also to say that human choices have significance.** [again, we come to a mystery understood by the faithful, but not comprehended all of which leads to adoration, worship, praise, and reverential fear of God. To the unbeliever, foolishness. The mysteries are hidden to them, Matt. 13:11]

All Teaching Of Scripture Is Apparently Contradictory

Rather let us say with Calvin: “And most certainly there is nothing in the whole circle of spiritual doctrine which does not far surpass the capacity of man and confound its utmost reach.” 10 If we are

really to witness to men for God, then it must be the God of Scripture, the sovereign God of whom we testify. This God demands that we submit our whole man, with all its powers, to Him. This God, therefore, wants us to tell men that they have really met Him; that they are really confronted with Him; that they really know Him; that their deeds of obedience or disobedience have genuine meaning in His sight; that if they believe they will be saved and that if they do not believe they will be lost. They must be shown that they are kicking against the pricks always and everywhere, since they do not submit their thoughts captive to the obedience of God or of Christ. And we do not thus witness if we ourselves reduce history to something that is meaningless.

Natural Theology And Common Grace

But there is another side to the story. If we are to witness to the God of Scripture we cannot afford to deny common grace. For, as noted, common grace is an element of the general responsibility of man, a part of the picture in which God, the God of unmerited favor, meets man everywhere. But neither can we afford to construct a theory in which it is implicitly allowed that the natural man, in terms of his adopted principles, can truly interpret any aspect of history. For the natural man seeks to interpret all the facts of this world immanentistically. He seeks for meaning in the facts of this world without regarding these facts as carrying in them the revelation and therewith the claims of God. He seeks to determine what can and cannot be, what is or is not possible, by the reach of human logic resting on man himself as its foundation.

Now surely, you say, no Reformed person would have any commerce with any such view as that. Well, I do not think that any Reformed person purposely adopts such a view. But we know how the Roman Catholic conception of natural theology did creep into the thinking of Reformed theologians in the past. And the essence of this natural theology is that it attributes to the natural man the power of interpreting some aspect of the world without basic error. Even though men do not recognize God as the Creator and controller of the facts of this world, they are assumed to be able to give as true an interpretation of the laws of nature as it is possible for finite man to give. It is admitted that man as a religious being needs additional information besides what he learns by means of his own research. But this fact itself indicates that on this basis the knowledge of God about salvation has no bearing upon the realm of nature. The realm of nature is said to be correctly interpreted by the natural man.

On this basis it is quite possible for Christians to join with non-Christians in the scientific enterprise without witnessing to them of God. The Christians and non-Christians have, on this basis, a certain area of interpretation in common. They have common ideas in the sense that they agree on certain meanings without any difference. It is not merely that they are together confronted with the natural revelation of God. It is not merely that men are, all of them together, made in the image of God. It is not merely that they have in them the ineradicable sense of deity so that God speaks to them by means of their own constitution. It is not merely that, as Kuyper stressed, all men have to think

according to the rules of logic according to which alone the human mind can function. It is not merely that all men can weigh and make many scientific discoveries.

Witness-Bearing In The Laboratory

All these things are true and important to maintain. But it is when in addition to these it is said that there are common notions, common reactions, about God and man and the world to all this speech of God, on which there is no basic difference between Christians and non-Christians, that natural theology is confused with natural revelation. And it is allowed that those who assume that the facts of this world are come from chance and those who presuppose that the facts of this world are created and controlled by God, have essentially the same interpretation of these facts. Thus the Christian and the non-Christian scientist could work together in the laboratory for days, for weeks and years and the Christian would have no other witness to give to his friend than to invite him to the prayer meeting or the Sunday service.

The Christian would on such a basis only reap the reward of his little faith were his friend to refuse to be interested in his religion. This friend, more consistently than the Christian, gives witness to his own faith. He will insist that he cannot believe in such a God as the Christians want him to bow unto since this God has created and determined all things. This God, he will say, does not allow men to experiment freely in the laboratory. The non-Christian may give witness to his faith in such words as these: "Your God hampers me in the making of my hypotheses. If I believe in Him I may make only such hypotheses as are in accord with the doctrines of creation and providence. I could not then think of evolution as a legitimate hypothesis with respect to the origin of man. Does not your God say in your Bible that man has not come from animal ancestry but is directly created in the image of God? Moreover your God, besides taking away from me the idea that any hypothesis may be taken as on a par with any other at the outset of an investigation, insists that I shall accept the contradictory position that supernatural things may happen and influence the order of the natural. That," he says, "makes the realm of natural law itself something that can be arbitrarily interfered with at will."

Thus the Christian working in the laboratory is confronted with the necessity of leaving the laboratory, giving it over entirely to the unbeliever or witnessing to the fact that only if Christianity is true is science possible and meaningful.

Are we then to fail to witness for our God in the field of science? Is it only because the unbeliever has never been confronted with the full implication of Christianity for the field of science that he tolerates us in his presence still? And are we to have a theory of common grace that prohibits us from setting forth the witness of God before all men everywhere? Is not the Christ to be set forth in His cosmic significance by us after all? Is it not true that there could be no science if the world and all that is therein is controlled by chance? Is it not true that the non-Christian does his work by the common

grace of God? A theory of common grace based on a natural theology is destructive of all grace, common or special.

Surely the witness to the God of the Scriptures must be presented everywhere. It must be, to be sure, presented with wisdom and with tact. But it must be presented. It is not presented, however, if we grant that God the Holy Spirit in a general testimony to all men approves of interpretations of this world or of aspects of this world which ignore Him and set Him at naught.

The non-Christian scientist must be told that he is dealing with facts that belong to God. He must be told this, not merely in the interest of religion in the narrower sense of the term. He must be told this in the interest of science too, and of culture in general. He must be told that there would be no facts distinguishable from one another unless God had made them and made them thus. He must be told that no hypothesis would have any relevance or bearing on these same facts, except for the providence of God. He must be told that his own mind, with its principles of order, depends upon his being made in the image of God.

And then he must be told that if it were not for God's common grace he would go the full length of the principle of evil within him. He would finish iniquity and produce only war. His very acts of courtesy and kindness, his deeds of generosity, all his moral good is not to be explained, therefore, in terms of himself and the goodness of his nature but from God's enabling him to do these things in spite of his sinful nature. "Will you not then repent in order to serve and worship the Creator more than the creature?"

Infra- And Supralapsarianism

Our conclusion then on the problem of common grace may, I hope, be along the lines marked out by Bavinck on the issue of infra- and supralapsarianism. Bavinck sought to avoid extremes in either direction. And how avoid extremes? How attain a balanced view? By not allowing our logic to dominate over the teachings of Scripture.

Supralapsarianism, when held without full regard for all scriptural data, led to a stressing of the final destiny of men through election and reprobation to such an extent as to render the means by which that end is attained of little value. It led to a virtual denial of second or historical causes.

Infralapsarianism, when held without full regard for all scriptural data, so stressed the significance of the historical fact of sin as the cause of the lost condition of men, as to endanger the basic importance of the fact that back of all the historical choices of men is the one all-controlling plan of the sovereign God. It led, sometimes, to a virtual denial of God's plan as the first or last ultimate cause as controlling all finite causes.

We shall not thus, argues Bavinck, permit our reason to legislate with respect to scriptural data. Ours is a sovereign God. His glory is the end of all things. But we cannot say that this glory, in the case of the reprobate, is manifested only and exclusively in the righteousness of their punishment. There is while they are in this world, proceeding from them that which cannot be explained exclusively in terms of their reprobation. So also we cannot say that God's glory, in the case of the elect, is accomplished exclusively in God's grace to them in Christ. There is much of sin in them that displeases God. That which proceeds from their "old man" is not from, but against the grace of God. So in the case of the reprobate; their doings are better than their principle of evil, if not governed by God's common grace, would lead one to expect.

Supra- or infralapsarianism, taken as some advocates of these views have taken them, were faulty in their imposing of the reach of human logic upon the data of revelation.

Is it not thus with us who love the Reformed faith today? Do we not need to come to an "agonizing re-appraisal" with respect to the whole matter? Our witness must come clearly before the world. We all love to honor God for the work of the Reformers. That work found its climax in the idea of the sovereign grace of God freely proclaimed unto men.

Shall we, the sons of that Reformation, bedim its challenge to men by going off on tangents in order to satisfy the illegitimate objections of sinful men?

A Balanced View Of Common Grace

There lies before us the highway of the Christian faith. May we ever drive upon it, without veering either to the left or to the right. If the wheels of an automobile are out of line the car will gradually tend to run off the pavement. You cannot drive an automobile effectively with one wheel on the pavement and the other on the soft shoulder next to the road. Let us, in all kindness, warn one another not to go off the highway either to the left or to the right.

Going off to the right by denying common grace or going off to the left by affirming a theory of common grace patterned after the natural theology of Rome is to fail, to this extent, to challenge the wisdom of the world.

In neither case is the call of God to man made truly universal. In denying common grace we say, in effect, that God does not really call some men to repentance at all. In affirming a natural theology type of common grace, we fail to show that God calls all men everywhere and in all dimensions of life.

In neither case do we show man the full glory of the gospel and of the Christ, the Savior of the world.

Ye are my witnesses!

Chapter 6

A Letter On Common Grace

(10 pages into the chapter)

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I may now add a few words about my view of the nature of facts and of the unbeliever's knowledge of them.

1. I hold that all the facts of the universe are exhaustively revelational of God.
 - a. This is true of the facts of man's environment in nature and history.
 - b. This is also true of man's own constitution as a rational and moral being.

2. In consequence of these two points I hold that all men unavoidably know God and themselves as creatures of God. Rom 1

A brief explication of each point may be in order. Dr. Masselink contends that according to my view the natural man has no knowledge of either God or morality. The reverse is true. I have greatly stressed the fact that all men know God. Following Dr. Machen I hold that Christianity is capable of scholarly defense. And this is so, I believe, because the facts of the universe clearly and unmistakably show forth the existence of God and of His truth.

Speaking of my view of man's natural knowledge of God, Dr. Masselink says:

The denial of "natural knowledge of God" and sense of morality is, to our mind, in conflict with Synod's declaration. P. 96

The reference is to the declarations of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church relative to the matter of Common Grace (1924). But I do not deny the "natural knowledge of God" or the "sense of morality." **To be sure I do deny that this natural knowledge of God and of morality is the result of common grace.** I think it is the presupposition of common grace. It is the presupposition also of saving grace.

First then, if there is to be a natural knowledge of God all the facts must clearly speak of God. Calvin maintains that they do and I have closely followed him. The following quotations and references are from the syllabus to which Dr. Masselink makes reference: An Introduction to Systematic Theology.

After quoting from Calvin's exposition on Romans chapter 1.20 (Rom 1:20) these words appear:

What Scripture therefore emphasizes is that even apart from special revelation, men ought to see that God is the Creator of the world. (Masselink, Introduction to Systematic Theology p 78)

Again, men ought to see the munificence of God. (ibid. p79) Even the result of sin in no wise reduces the perspicuity of God's revelation. "We would think of a man in the midst of heathendom and remember the elements in the revelation at his disposal in order to see then what logical conclusions he ought to draw if he reasoned correctly. In the first place, he ought to think of God as the creator of this world. In the second place, he ought to believe in the

providence of God. In the third place, he ought to think of the presence of a certain non-saving grace of God.” 31 Then the revelation through the facts of nature is brought into close relation with the original supernatural revelation that God gave to the human race through Adam. 32 At the beginning of history man was in direct contact with the living God through supernatural revelation and “man remains responsible for these facts.” (ibid. 84)

The facts of man’s constitution no less than the facts of his environment reveal God to man. Calvin says:

For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts toward God in whom he lives and moves because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves, nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone. (ibid. p 90)

Sin has not effaced this natural knowledge of God. A sense of deity is “indelibly engraven on the human heart.” Try as men will they cannot suppress this knowledge of God; “for the worm of conscience, keener than burning steel, is gnawing within them.” 35 So also the seed of religion is divinely sown in all. Men should have recognized God; the revelation from without and from within is a daily challenge to them to turn to God. 36 God’s power and divinity “are still displayed in man as well as about him, in the fact of the self-conscious activity of his person, in his own negative moral reaction to the revelation about and within him, in his sense of dissatisfaction with all non-theistic interpretations, and in a measure of involuntary recognition of the truth of the theistic interpretation as the true interpretation of the origin of the world.” (ibid. p97)

It is therefore utterly impossible for any man not to know God and morality.

The natural man has knowledge, true knowledge of God, in the sense that God through nature and man’s own consciousness impresses his presence on man’s attention. So definitely and inescapably has he done this, that try as he may, man cannot escape knowing God. It is this point that Paul stresses in the first two chapters of Romans. Man has the sense of deity indelibly engraven upon him. He knows God and he knows himself and the world as God’s creation. This is objective revelation to him. Even to the extent that this revelation is within man, i.e., in his own constitution, and as such may be called “subjective,” it is none the less objective to him as an ethically responsive creature, and he is bound to react as an ethical person to this objective revelation. – (ibid. p 27).

Or again:

The actual situation is therefore always a mixture of truth with error. Being “without God in the world” the natural man yet knows God, and, in spite of himself, to some extent recognizes God. By virtue of their creation in God’s image, by virtue of the ineradicable sense of deity within them, and by virtue of God’s restraining grace, those who hate God, yet in a restricted sense know God, and do good. (ibid. p 28).

If this be kept in mind, it will be seen that if, as Reformed theology has contended, both the doctrines of the absolute ethical antithesis of the natural man to God and of his relatively true knowledge and relatively good deeds must be maintained, we are not led into any inconsistency or self-contradiction. (ibid.).

In an essay on "Nature and Scripture" published in *The Infallible Word* the same sort of stress is found on the clarity of God's revelation to man in his environment and within himself. This is done over against the Roman Catholic concept of *analogia entis*. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all. As such he cannot deny himself. This God naturally has an all-inclusive plan for the created universe. He has planned all the relationships between all the aspects of created being. All created reality therefore displays this plan. It is, in consequence, inherently rational." (p 269)

Or again,

By the idea of revelation, then, we are to mean not merely what comes to man through the facts surrounding him in his environment, but also that which comes to him by means of his own constitution as a covenant personality. The revelation that comes to man by way of his own rational and moral nature is no less objective to him than that which comes to him through the voice of trees and animals. Man's own psychological activity is no less revelational than the laws of physics about him. All created reality is inherently revelational of the nature and will of God. Even man's ethical reaction to God's revelation is still revelational. And as revelational of God, it is authoritative. The meaning of the Confessions' doctrine of the authority of Scripture does not become clear to us till we see it against the background of the original and basically authoritative character of God's revelation in nature. Scripture speaks authoritatively to such as must naturally live by authority. God speaks with authority wherever and whenever he speaks.

At this point a word may be said about the revelation of God through conscience and its relation to Scripture. Conscience is man's consciousness speaking on matters of directly moral import. Every act of man's consciousness is moral in the most comprehensive sense of that term. Yet there is a difference between questions of right and wrong in a restricted sense and general questions of interpretation. Now if man's whole consciousness was originally created perfect, and as such authoritatively expressive of the will of God, that same consciousness is still revelational and authoritative after the entrance of sin to the extent that its voice is still the voice of God. The sinner's efforts, so far as they are done self-consciously from his point of view, seek to destroy or bury the voice of God that comes to him through nature, which includes his own consciousness. But this effort cannot be wholly successful at any point in history. The most depraved of men cannot wholly escape the voice of God. Their greatest wickedness is meaningless except upon the assumption that they have sinned against the authority of God. Thoughts and deeds of utmost perversity are themselves revelational, revelational, that is, in their very abnormality. The natural man accuses or else excuses himself only because his own utterly depraved consciousness continues to point back to the original natural state of affairs. The prodigal son can never forget the father's voice. It is the albatross forever about his neck. (*Infallible Word*, pp. 265-267)

In the pamphlet *The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel* the same procedure is followed as in the foregoing. The revelation of God to man in the created universe is said to be clear. Men therefore cannot help but know God. Man's own consciousness is part of the revelation of God to himself as an ethical reactor.

Paul makes bold to claim that all men know deep down in their hearts that they are creatures of God and have sinned against God their Creator and their judge. (p 5)

Paul knows that those who cling to the “wisdom” of the world do so against their better judgment and with an evil conscience. Every fact of “theism” and every fact of “Christianity” points with an accusing finger at the sinner, saying: “You are a covenant-breaker; repent and be saved!” (ibid.)

It is only against the background of this stress on the perspicuity of the natural revelation of God about and within man, and these as related to the original supernatural revelation vouchsafed to Adam in paradise, that the meaning of the statement that the natural man and the regenerated man have nothing in common epistemologically must be taken. *It is constantly put in that context.* The point is that when and to the extent that the natural man is engaged in interpreting life in terms of his *adopted principles then, and only then*, he has nothing in common with the believer. **But man can never completely suppress the truth.** On necessity he therefore knows that it is wrong to break the law of God. This point will receive further discussion under our second head dealing with,

2. Man As The Subject Of Knowledge

It is well to hear what Dr. Masselink has to say on my view of the natural man as the subject of knowledge. Something of this has already appeared in the preceding section; we now turn to the matter explicitly.

Says Dr. Masselink:

Our great difficulty with Van Til’s philosophy of Common Grace is his premise or starting point, namely, the absolute ethical antithesis between God and man. This premise controls his whole system of thinking. All of the objections which follow are immediately related to this primary premise, which Van Til himself declares is his starting point.

Van Til says: “We must begin by emphasizing the absolute ethical antithesis in which the ‘natural’ man stands to God.” (*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 25). All Reformed Theology, of course, asserts that there is an ethical antithesis between God and fallen man. **The question is whether it is absolute.** According to Webster’s dictionary the term absolute means without qualification, limitation or restriction. The question is whether the term absolute is not too sweeping and far-reaching here. (*Common Grace and Christian Education*, pg 73)

Good comments on man’s total depravity & common grace in the next several pages:

Dr. Masselink assumes that by the idea of the “absolute ethical antithesis” I must mean that man is as bad as he can be. “*The absolute ethical antithesis of God is the devil. If we place man ethically, in the same category with the devil, then what becomes of the image of God in man?*” (ibid., p. 74)

“Reformed theology distinguishes between total and absolute depravity. By total depravity we mean that human depravity extends to every function of the soul, intellect, will and emotions.... By absolute depravity we mean that man is as bad as he can be. With absolute depravity there can no longer be any curbing of sin through Common Grace.... The Devil and the Lost in Hell are absolutely depraved, because there is no Common Grace in Hell. The absolute ethical antithesis between God and ‘natural

man,' as Van Til says, must imply absolute depravity. By affirming the absolute ethical antithesis we fail to see how there can be any room left for Common Grace." 49

On this analysis of my view the following remarks are in order:

1. If Dr. Masselink had consulted my usage of the expression "absolute ethical antithesis" instead of going to the dictionary he would have found: (a) that I usually imply the expression **total depravity**. Apparently, Dr. Masselink has been unable to find the expression absolute depravity in my booklet on Common Grace. The expression total depravity is there constantly used. (b) For me the idea of total or absolute depravity means that the sinner is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). **In principle man is therefore blind. If he is to see the truth about God and himself he must be born again. He must be born again unto knowledge. (Cf. the discussion of Charles Hodge on this point in his Systematic Theology.) But in spite of the fact that man is spiritually dead, dead in principle, absolutely dead, not half or partly dead in principle, he may know and do much that is relatively good.**

Here we should again bring in the fact of the **non-saving grace of God**. In the case of Satan, the folly of his interpretation appears very clear. In the case of the sinner, however, we have a mixed situation. Through God's non-saving grace, the wrath of God on the sinner has been mitigated in this life. This appears along the whole line of man's interests. It appears along the line of man's physical life. Man is given an abundance of food and drink. It is shown in the fact that man's body, though weakened, is even so, particularly in some instances, a usable tool for the soul of man. It is shown in the fact that man's mind is not fully and exclusively bent upon evil. Though basically man is at enmity against God so that he is prone to hate God and his neighbor, this enmity against God does not come to full expression in this life. He is not a finished product. (Introduction to Systematic Theology, p. 98)

(c) The burden of the entire discussion in *Common Grace* is to the effect that it is fully consistent with the fact of total depravity to maintain that there is a genuine commonness between believer and unbeliever. There are those who have denied common grace. They have argued that God cannot have any attitude of favor at any stage in history to such as are the "vessels of wrath." **But to reason thus is to make logic rule over Scripture**. Against both Hoeksema and Schilder I have contended that we must think more **concretely and analogically** than they did, allowing ourselves to be led only by scriptural exegesis. **All the truths of the Christian religion have of necessity the appearance of being contradictory. But since we build our thinking on the ontological trinity and therefore on the revelation of this triune God as given in Scripture, we think analogically. We do not fear to accept that which has the appearance of being contradictory. We know that what appears to be so to us is not really so.** So also in the case of the question of common grace. We are not to say that God cannot have any attitude of favor to a generality of mankind, including both reprobate and elect, because our logic seems to require us to do so. In the case of common grace, as in the case of every other biblical doctrine, we should seek to take all the factors of Scripture teaching and bind them together into systematic relations with one another as far as we can. But we do not expect to have a logically deducible relationship between one doctrine and another. We expect to have only an analogical system.

Very good reasoning:

For this reason then we must not hesitate to say that God has a common attitude of favor to all mankind as a generality. We must not fear to assert that though the ultimate end of God for the elect is their salvation, they yet are under God's displeasure when they do not fully live up to His requirement for men. Similarly we must not fear to assert in the case of the reprobate that though they are ultimately vessels of wrath they yet can be in history, in a sense, the objects of the favor of God.

The case is similar with respect to the knowledge of unbelievers and their ability to do that which is relatively good. The fact that they are in principle opposed to God and would destroy the very foundation of knowledge and ethics, yet, in spite of this, because of God's common grace they can discover much truth and do much good.

We say that this is one factor of the whole situation. We do not say that it is the only factor. God loves the works of his hands, and the progress that they make to their final fulfillment. So we may and should rejoice with God in the unfolding of the history of the race, even in the unfolding of the wickedness of man in order that the righteousness of God may be most fully displayed. But if God tells us that, in spite of the wickedness of men, and in spite of the fact that they misuse his gifts for their own greater condemnation, he is long suffering with them, we need not conclude that there is no sense in which God has a favor to the unbeliever. There is a sense in which God has a disfavor to the believer because, in spite of the new life within him, he sins in the sight of God. So God may have favor to the unbeliever because of the "relative good" that God himself gives him in spite of the principle of sin within him. If we were to think of God and his relation to the world in a univocal or abstract fashion, we might agree with those who maintain that there is no qualitative difference between the favor of God toward the saved and toward the unsaved. Arminians and Barthians virtually do this. Or, we might agree with those who maintain that there is no sense in which God can show favor to the reprobate. On the other hand, if we reason concretely about God and his relation to the world, we simply listen to what God has told us in his Word on the matter. It may even then be exceedingly difficult to construct a theory of "common grace" which will do justice to what Scripture says. **We make Scripture the standard of our thinking, and not our thinking the standard of Scripture.** All of man's activity, whether intellectual or moral, is analogical; and for this reason it is quite possible for the unsaved sinner to do what is "good" in a sense, and for the believer to do what is "evil" in a sense.

With respect to the question, then, as to whether Scripture actually teaches an attitude of favor, up to a point, on the part of God toward the non-believer, we can only intimate that we believe it does. Even when we take full cognizance of the fact that the unbeliever abuses every gift of God and uses it for the greater manifestation of his wickedness, there seems to be evidence in Scripture that God, for this life, has a certain attitude of favor to unbelievers. We may point to such passages as the following: In Ps 145.9, we are told, "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." In seeking the meaning of such a passage, we must be careful. In the first place, it is to be remembered that God is constantly setting his own people in the center of the outflow of his goodness to the children of men. So, in Exodus 34.6, 7, we read: "And the Lord God passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God,

merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." In this passage we are, as it were, warned to think concretely on the question before us. God's mercy and grace is primarily extended to those whose sins are forgiven. If in any sense it is given to those whose sins are not forgiven, it must always be remembered that God does not overlook iniquity. We may therefore expect that in Ps 145 the Psalmist teaches nothing that is out of accord with what has been taught in Exodus 34. Thus, the primary meaning of Ps 145 is again that God's great favor is toward his people. **Even when God gives great gifts to non-believers, they are, in a more basic sense, gifts to believers.** Gifts of God to unbelievers help to make the life of believers possible, and in a measure, pleasant. But this does not detract from the fact that the unbeliever himself is, in a measure, the recipient of God's favor. There is a certain joy in the gift of life and its natural blessings for the unbeliever. And we may well think that Ps 145 has this in mind. Such joy as there is in the life of the unbeliever cannot be found in him after this life is over. Even in the hereafter, the lost will belong to the works of God's hands. And God no doubt has joy that through the works of evil men and angels, he is establishing his glory. Yet that is not what the Psalmist seems to mean. There seems to be certain satisfaction on the part of God even in the temporary joy of the unbeliever as a creature of himself, a joy which will in the end turn to bitterness, but which, nonetheless, is joy while it lasts.

Another passage to which we briefly refer is Matthew 5.44, 45. "But I say unto you, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." In this passage, the disciples of Jesus are told to deny themselves the selfish joy of expressing enmity against those that hate them. They are not to express their attitude of hostility. But this is not all they are to do. They are to replace the attitude of hatred with an attitude of love. He does not know but that this one who now hates him may one day become a believer. This is one factor in the total situation. Yet this is not to be made the only factor. It is not even the expressed reason for loving his enemy. The one guide for the believer's action with respect to the enemy is God's attitude toward that enemy. **And the believer is told definitely to love his enemy in imitation of God's attitude toward that enemy. God's attitude toward that enemy must therefore in some sense be one of love. It is no doubt the love of an enemy, and, therefore, in God's case, never the same sort of love as the love toward his children.** And to the extent that we know men to be enemies of the Lord, we too cannot love them in the same sense in which we are told to love fellow-believers. God no doubt lets the wheat and the tares grow together till the day of judgment, but even so, though God's ultimate purpose with unbelievers is their destruction and the promotion of his glory through their destruction, he loves them, in a sense, while they are still kept by himself, through his own free gifts, from fully expressing the wicked principle that is in them. (Introduction to Systematic Theology, pg 246-248).

(d) It is not in accordance with fact to say that the absolute ethical antithesis, even when taken as being such in principle only, is for me the starting point when dealing with the relation of the believer

and the non-believer. As the preceding quotations imply, my starting point is always the fact that God originally made man in His image and that He placed him in an exhaustively revelational context.

More on **total depravity**:

To be sure, we cannot agree with the Roman Catholic position. According to this position there is an area of knowledge, an area of interpretation, which believers and unbelievers have in common without difference. Similarly, the Arminian position calls for such a common or neutral territory of interpretation. 53 Over against this we must take into consideration the fact that the natural man is ethically depraved, “... wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.”

We need to recognize this complexity, and to see the problem it involves. It will not do to ignore the difference between Christians and non-Christians and speak of reason in general. Such a thing does not exist in practice. As dangerous as it is to speak of method in general without distinguishing clearly between the Christian theistic and the non-theistic method, so dangerous is it to speak of reason in general or of a “common consciousness” in general. We must therefore begin with:

(a) The Adamic consciousness, or, the reason of man as it existed before the fall of man. This reason was derivative. Its knowledge was, in the nature of the case, true, though not exhaustive. This reason was in covenant with God, instead of at enmity against God. It recognized the fact that its function was that of the interpretation of God’s revelation. In paradise Adam had a true conception of the relation of the particulars to the universals of knowledge with respect to the created universe. He named the animals “according to their nature,” that is, in accordance with the place God had given them in His universe. Then, too, Adam could converse truly about the meaning of the universe in general and about their own life in particular with Eve. Thus the subject-object and the subject-subject relationship was normal. In paradise man’s knowledge was self-consciously analogical; man wanted to know the facts of the universe in order to fulfill his task as a covenant-keeper.

(b) Then, secondly, we must think of the sinful consciousness, i.e., of the human reason as it became after the entrance of sin. Looked at from the point of view of its unredeemed character, we may speak of it as the unregenerate consciousness. This is the “natural man,” “dead in trespasses and sin.” The natural man wants to be something that he cannot be. He wants to be “as God,” himself the judge of good and evil, himself the standard of truth. He sets himself as the ideal of comprehensive knowledge. When he sees that he will never reach this ideal he concludes that all reality is surrounded by darkness. As a child would say, “If I cannot do this, no one else can,” so the “natural man” today says in effect that, since he cannot grasp knowledge comprehensively, God cannot either. The non-regenerate man takes for granted that the meaning of the space-time world is imminent in itself, and that man is the ultimate interpreter of this world, instead of its humble re-interpreter. The natural man wants to be creatively constructive instead of reconstructive. (Introduction to Systematic Theology, pg 25, 26)

It is only after we have dealt with what men have in common that we turn to that which separates them as sinners saved and sinners not saved. The fallen consciousness wants in principle to be creatively constructive. The regenerated consciousness wants, in principle, to be receptively reconstructive. So we might expect that two such mutually exclusive principles of interpretation could have nothing in common. But we cannot take such an absolutist position.

We are well aware of the fact that non-Christians have a great deal of knowledge about this world which is true as far as it goes.... That is, there is a sense in which we can and must allow for the value of knowledge of non-Christians. (ibid. p 26)

We do not make this point as a concession but rather as a fact taught directly by Scripture itself and as such observed in daily experience.

The question how those who are **totally depraved in principle** can yet do the natural good and have true knowledge “has always been a difficult point.” But no more or less difficult than all other Christian teaching. Pighius argues against Calvin that commonness must always be commonness without qualification. He contends that therefore the attitude of God to all men must be the same without difference. Hoeksema argues that since God has determined some men to be elect and others to be reprobate there must be nothing but difference between them. But the truly Reformed position does not go off on a tangent toward **Arminianism**, nor does it go off on a tangent with Hoeksema. Both types of thinking are univocal instead of analogical, abstract instead of concrete.

We therefore do not expect to be able to settle this difficult point, or any other difficult point, to the full satisfaction of either Hoeksema or the Arminians. We would do with this problem as we must do with all other theological problems. We would take all factors into consideration simultaneously and thus “hem in the question.” That is all that the fathers did when at Chalcedon they established the relation of the two natures of Christ to one another. They were not able to satisfy and neither did they desire to satisfy the “logical” demands of either the **Eutychians** who wanted a confusion of natures lest there be no identity between them, nor of the **Nestorians** who wanted two persons lest there be no difference between God and man.

Now, “In order to hem in our question we are persuaded that we must begin by emphasizing the absolute ethical antithesis in which the ‘natural man’ stands to God.”

From the point of view that man, as dead in trespasses and sins, seeks to interpret life in terms of himself instead of in terms of God, he is wholly mistaken. “From this ultimate point of view the ‘natural man’ knows nothing truly. He has chains about his neck and see shadows only.” (ibid.)

Dr. Masselink quoted this passage as though it controlled the whole discussion of the relation of the knowledge of believers and unbelievers. Nothing could be further from what is actually said. **The very idea of man’s ethical depravity as absolute in principle presupposes that men are inherently and originally in possession of the truth about God and themselves.**

We must therefore distinguish between natural man’s knowledge of God by virtue of the revelational character of all created reality, himself included, and the natural man’s being without God in the world

and blind because of sin. “The natural man has knowledge, true knowledge of God, in the sense that God through nature and man’s own consciousness impresses his presence on man’s attention.” (ibid. p27) But man seeks to suppress this revelation of God about and within him. “Having made alliance with Satan, man makes a grand monistic assumption.

Note: “The monistic view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms.” Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til’s book, Christian Apologetics, pg 31, footnote 3 [Van Til refers to this as “scale of being” in his writings.]

Not merely in his conclusion but as well in his method and starting point he takes for granted his own ultimacy.” (ibid.) He needs therefore, as Warfield put it, new light and new power of sight. The natural man has cemented colored glasses to his face. And all things are yellow to the jaundiced eye. So then “to the extent that he works according to this monistic assumption he misinterprets all things, flowers, no less than God.” (ibid.) However, lest someone should draw absolutistic conclusions, conclusions dictated by a supposed logic rather than by Scripture from what has been said, we hasten to add:

Fortunately the natural man is never fully consistent while in this life. As the Christian sins against his will, so the natural man “sins against” his own essentially Satanic principle. As the Christian has the incubus of his “old man” weighing him down and therefore keeping him from realizing the “life of Christ” within him, so the natural man has the incubus of the sense of Deity weighing him down and keeping him from realizing the life of Satan within him. The actual situation is therefore always a mixture of truth with error. Being “without God in the world” the natural man yet knows God, and, in spite of himself, to some extent recognizes God. By virtue of their creation in God’s image, by virtue of the ineradicable sense of deity within them and by virtue of God’s restraining general grace, those who hated God, yet in a restricted sense know God, and do good. (ibid.)

It appears then that the section in which I did use the expression “absolute ethical antithesis” is mainly directed against those who would interpret the idea of the antithesis to mean that man is as bad as he can be. The whole burden of the argument is that to hold to the idea of absolute or total ethical depravity does not need to, and must not lead to, the idea that man is now satanic. Since the antithesis is ethical and not metaphysical, God’s restraining grace keeps man from being as bad as he can be.

From the preceding discussion it will also be clear what reply I would make to another charge made by Dr. Masselink. He says: “The absolute ethical antithesis is in conflict with our conception of the Divine image in ‘natural man.’ ” And again, he adds: “If we assert that there is an absolute ethical antithesis between God and fallen man, then how can we speak of fallen man as bearing the image of God, unless with Hoeksema we restrict this to the strictly formal sense, meaning thereby that man is merely ‘capable of bearing God’s image.’ ” (Masselink, *op. cit.*, p 74)

This is good:

But I have argued at length, particularly against Barth, that the image of God in man consists of actual knowledge content. Man does not start on the course of history merely with a capacity for knowing God. On the contrary, he begins his course with actual knowledge of God. Moreover, he cannot even eradicate this knowledge of God. It is this fact that makes sin to be sin “against better knowledge.” In this I think I am in line with Reformed theology in general and with Calvin in particular.

At this point there no doubt emerges a difference between Dr. Masselink and me on the question of the function of common grace. I do not think it is the function of common grace to maintain the metaphysical status quo. **Roman Catholic** theology thinks of the creature as beginning as it were from the borders of non-being. There is, according to Roman theology, in man, as in created reality generally, an inherent tendency to sink back into non-existence. Hence the need of **supernatural aid** from the outset of man's being. **There is in Roman theology a confusion between the metaphysical and the ethical aspects of man's being.** If there is any one thing on which Bavinck has laid great stress throughout the four volumes of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, it is that true Protestantism is a matter of restoring man, the creature of God, to his true ethical relationship with God. **The destructive tendency of sin is not to be seen in a gradual diminution of man's rationality and morality. Man is not less a creature, a rational moral creature of God when he turns his back to God and hates his maker than he was before. Therefore when God gives to man His grace, His saving grace, this does not reinstate his rationality and morality. It reinstates his true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Col 3.10, Eph 4.24 It restores man ethically, not metaphysically. So too, if we take common grace to be that which has to do with the restraint of sin, then it is an ethical not a metaphysical function that it performs. It does not maintain, as Dr. Masselink seems to contend, the creatural characteristics of man. **It does not sustain the image of God in "the wider sense," consisting of man's rationality and morality. It keeps the man who will be rational anyway, by virtue of his creation in the image of God, from expressing his hostility to God in the field of knowledge to such an extent as to make it impossible for himself to destroy knowledge. And in restraining him in his ethical hostility to God, God releases his creatural powers so that he can make positive contributions to the field of knowledge and art. Similarly, in restraining him from expressing his ethical hostility to God there is a release within him of his moral powers so that they can perform that which is "morally" though not spiritually good.** The rationality and morality of man had not diminished through sin. Man cannot be amoral. But by sin man fell ethically; **he became hostile to God. And common grace is the means by which God keeps man from expressing the principle of hostility to its full extent, thus enabling man to do the "relatively good."****

True, we have to speak of sin as, in principle, destructive of the work of God. We have to speak "as if" sin might prevent God's plan for the universe from being realized. And this would seem to indicate that the world, metaphysically speaking, would have been destroyed by sin. And it might seem to indicate that common grace keeps the metaphysical situation intact. At the same time we know that sin and Satan were bound to be defeated. God planned this defeat before the foundation of the world. These two notions are limiting or supplementative concepts. They modify one another. We cannot make linear deductions from one of these principles taken by itself. Therefore we cannot say that the world was on the way to being destroyed by sin except for the fact that common grace came in and saved it from destruction. We must rather reason from the fact of God's all-comprehensive plan and make relative distinctions within it. **Then we conclude that common grace, by restraining sin, influences the condition of the universe as planned by God.** According to Dr. Masselink the created powers of the universe themselves tended to disappear into nothingness and have to be kept in existence through common grace. On this, then, there is disagreement between Dr. Masselink and me; **I would think of common grace as an ethical attitude on the part of God to mankind and an ethical response which is otherwise than this response would be if sin were allowed to go unchecked.**

The Conscience

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Dr. Masselink also criticizes me for thinking of conscience as revelational of God. “Van Til speaks of consciences as a means of general revelation. We cannot at all agree with this. There is a vast difference between God’s general revelation and human conscience. God’s general revelation is objective, whereas conscience is subjective; God’s general revelation is divine, whereas conscience is human; God’s general revelation is infallible, whereas conscience is fallible. Conscience is man’s answer to God’s general revelation. The Holy Spirit witnesses within man’s heart that God is holy and an avenger of evil, and conscience is man’s response to this internal witness. If there is an absolute ethical antithesis between God and man all functions of human conscience become impossible.”

This criticism is the same in intent as that made with respect to Machen in Dr. Masselink’s dissertation. “In the fifth place we do not like the way in which Prof. Machen speaks of conscience as a means of revelation.” In criticizing Machen’s view Dr. Masselink deals with Rom 2.14, 15, and concludes by saying: “Also here God’s general revelation namely, the work of the law, and conscience are distinguished.” He quotes Hepp as follows with approval: “To be sure the Holy Spirit is active in all of this, yet only in a mediate way. So there is a difference in principle between conscience and the General testimony which is directly a testimony of the Holy Spirit.”

The main charge against Machen and me is therefore that we have confused the divine and the human; but neither Machen nor I has done such a thing. Leaving out Machen’s views, I may point out that, as has appeared even in the quotations given, I take conscience to be an aspect of the created consciousness of man. And everything created is revelational of God. In this broad sense even the sinful reaction of man to the revelation of God in the narrow sense is still revelational of God’s general purpose. It is only by thus thinking of all created reality as revelational that the ethical actions of man can be properly focused. **Without thus making all created reality revelational of God the ethical reaction of man would take place in a vacuum.**

To be sure, the revelation of God in the consciousness of man is psychologically subjective. It is the human subject which, in its very constitution and function, speaks of God. Calvin wonders at the marvelous working of the human mind and heart as revelational evidence of the work of God. And Dr. Masselink admits that “also ‘conscience’ was often conceived as a means of revelation by the old Reformed theologians, but that ‘conscience’ was conceived of in a very broad way.” Well, it is in a broad way that I am taking it.

Nor was it only the “old Reformed theologians” who spoke of conscience as revelational in this broad way. Bavinck himself does so not once but repeatedly. Speaking of the comprehensiveness of God’s general revelation, he says: “He reveals himself also in the heart and conscience of every man, Job 34.8; 33.4; Prv 20.27; Jn 1.3– 5, 9, 10; Rom 2.14.15; 8.16. This revelation of God is general, in itself observable and intelligible to every man.” Discussing the principles of religion, Bavinck speaks as follows: “Thus there is not only an external, objective, but also an internal, subjective revelation.” Elsewhere he signifies the testimony of the Holy Spirit by which man accepts the truth of Scripture as revelational. “Objective revelation is therefore not sufficient; it must in a sense be continued and

completed in subjective revelation.” Other passages of similar import could be cited. **The main point is that if man could look anywhere and not be confronted with the revelation of God then he could not sin in the biblical sense of the term.** [hence, I think what Van Til means when he says *to sin in a vacuum*, what Paul intimated in Romans 4:15, *where there is no law, there is no transgression.*] Sin is the breaking of the law of God. God confronts man everywhere. He cannot in the nature of the case confront man anywhere if he does not confront him everywhere. God is one; the law is one. **If man could press one button on the radio of his experience and not hear the voice of God then he would always press that button and not the others. But man cannot even press the button of his own self-consciousness without hearing the requirement of God.**

A Letter on Common Grace, cont.

Theistic Proofs

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The question of the theistic proofs also involves the idea of the all-comprehensiveness and the perspicuity of general revelation in man’s consciousness as well as in the facts about him. Dr. Masselink rejects Machen’s view of conscience as revelatory of God. That is the question of revelation in and through the human subject. So he also rejects Machen’s acceptance of the “theistic proofs” as foundational to the truth of Christianity. That is the question of revelation in and through the facts of the universe in general. Following Hepp’s line of reasoning Dr. Masselink says that in the former case we would be making our certainty to rest upon the human subject, and in the latter case we would be making our certainty to rest upon the created object. In both cases we would be depending upon a creature. And certainty rests in God alone. With Hepp we must speak of the general internal testimony of the Holy Spirit as witnessing to general revelation. Then by this general testimony of the Spirit we have certainty.

Even the general external testimony of the Spirit, says Dr. Masselink, cannot by itself give certainty to man.

It is a revelation which comes to us as a witness. A revelation is a disclosure of the thoughts of God. The whole creation is full of God’s thoughts and they come to us in the General External Testimony of the Spirit. This general External Testimony of the Spirit can reveal God’s thoughts to us, but cannot give us certainty with regard to them. Why not? you ask. This is because all revelation takes place through means. We cannot know the essence of things except through the things themselves. If this revelation, therefore, would have to give us certainty in regard to these matters, it would have to do it through the things themselves. These would then in turn become the basis of our certainty. This we have already observed cannot be, as then the certainty is in the creation itself and not in the Creator. The absolute certainty I receive only then, when the Holy Spirit gives me this assurance that these things are so apart from the external revelation.

The point of importance here is again the question of revelation, especially of general revelation. This revelation discloses the thoughts of God. These thoughts come through the general external testimony of the Holy Spirit. But though the general external testimony reveals God to us this

testimony cannot give us certainty. The reason is that this revelation or testimony takes place through means, and the means are created facts, objective or subjective. So, since they are not God Himself, they cannot give us certainty with respect to God. Hence the need of a direct internal witness added to the external witness of the Spirit.

On this construction of Hepp's the following remarks are apposite:

1. It is not found in Kuyper and Bavinck or in the "Old Princeton theology." Hepp himself says that Bavinck came near to his idea of a general testimony of the Spirit, but that he did not quite attain unto it.

2. It is out of analogy with the relation of Scripture and the special internal testimony of the Holy Spirit witnessing to the truth of Scripture; this in spite of the fact that Hepp seeks to carry through the analogy. Calvin's doctrine of the internal testimony of the Spirit does not presuppose the lack of certainty in the revelation given in Scripture. On the contrary, for Calvin all revelation is objectively true and certainly true. But the sinner does not want to believe that which is in itself certain and clear as day. So the Holy Spirit in regenerating and converting man enables him to accept that which as unregenerate and unconverted he could not accept. It brings him back, in principle, to the normal state of affairs. The testimony of the Spirit within man is to the objective and certain truth of that which comes to man through external revelation.

3. Even the "immediate testimony" of the Holy Spirit has, at last, to terminate upon man. It has to be mediated to man through man's own consciousness. Otherwise it has no content. The human mind must think upon and reconstruct for itself the objective revelation given to it whether through Scripture or through "nature." But to think upon it is a psychological activity. It is an activity of the human mind. It is to the thinking subject that the internal testimony of the Spirit comes. It terminates upon this subject. It is unavoidably mediated to the ethically responsible subject through this very subject itself. Without mediation through both object and subject there is no revelation and no reception of revelation. Subjectivity in the objectionable sense of the term does not come into the picture of Christian thinking by the insistence that both the created object and the created subject are nothing but what they could not help but be, namely, revelational, exclusively revelational of God. **Subjectivity of the objectionable sort comes into the Christian's thinking only if he tones down this objective certainty.** For if he does and then tries to make up for it by the idea of an internal testimony of the Spirit, then the directness of this testimony unavoidably partakes of the nature of identification of the creature with God. **It leads to the position that only God can know God to be God with certainty.**

Dr. Masselink's criticism of my evaluation of the theistic proofs is quite different from his criticism of Machen's acceptance of these proofs. But the unity of these two criticisms lies in the fact that both Machen and I are out of agreement with Hepp's evaluation of them. And this evaluation of them by Hepp rests upon his doctrine of the external and internal general testimony of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Masselink's criticism of my view will be given first, then the views of Hepp stated; and after that an analysis made of the idea of the general testimony of the Spirit.

1. Dr. Masselink asserts that I deny any truth value to the theistic proofs. (Masselink, op. cit. pg 83) "According to Van Til, Bavinck's 'Theistic Proofs' have no value whatsoever. This too is a logical consequence of his major premise of the *absolute* between God and natural man." 73

This is again simply contrary to fact.

The argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity is objectively valid. We should not tone down the validity of this argument to the probability level. The argument may be poorly stated, and may never be adequately stated. But in itself the argument is absolutely sound. Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold. It is not merely as reasonable as other positions, or a bit more reasonable than other positions; it alone is the natural and reasonable position for man to take. By stating the argument as clearly as we can, we may be the agents of the Spirit in pressing the claims of God upon men. If we drop to the level of the merely probable truthfulness of Christian theism, we, to that extent, lower the claims of God upon men. This is, we believe, the sense of Calvin's Institutes on the matter. (Common Grace, pg 62)

Very good arguments here:

To say that the argument for Christianity and for the existence of God is absolutely valid I am merely applying the idea that God's revelation without and within man is perspicuous. If then man rightly interprets this revelation he has an absolutely valid argument for the truth. **But the sinner, so far as he works from his adopted principle which rests in himself as autonomous, does not interpret the facts of the universe rightly. How could he? He assumes himself to be ultimate. He therefore assumes also that the facts of the universe are not created but exist in themselves. He also assumes that man's reasoning powers are ultimate** and that they must therefore be determinative of what is possible and what is impossible in the realm of being.

Now in principle, the natural man interprets human experience upon these false assumptions. In principle he interprets all things in terms of man as the final reference point. And so he comes to the conclusion that god is some abstract principle beyond the cosmos, is some unifying principle within the cosmos, or is identical with the cosmos.

But the facts of the universe about him testify against such a distortion of them. Men ought to know, and know they ought to know and see God as their Creator and benefactor. They ought to see God as manifesting His wrath upon men when they behold the evils of nature. Similarly, they ought to see God as the Creator and benefactor when they behold themselves as image bearers of Him. They ought to see God as their judge when their conscience witnesses in approval or in disapproval of their deeds.

Man's depravity seen here again!

In order to receive knowledge we must also have God's general revelation and God's general internal revelation. (Common Grace and Christian Education, p 129)

So the interpretative effort, so far as it is **self-conscious, is a means by which the natural man seeks to suppress the truth about God and the World that he has both about and within himself.** But he cannot ever completely suppress the knowledge of God and of morality within himself. Dr. Masselink at one point expresses himself in a similar vein:

Can this disposition to receive knowledge ever be lost by sin? The answer is no, as it belongs to the image of God. The disposition through which we receive knowledge, however, is now corrupt. In the state of integrity before the Fall, the three means by which knowledge was received—disposition, natural revelation, and historical revelation—were all pure but now there is corruption. In Hell these three means continue too. The consciousness of the “I” is unchanged by sin, but the nature of “I” is changed. (ibid. 130)

This general revelation is basis for Common Grace, and not vice versa—Common Grace is basis for general revelation,—since general revelation is before the fall, and therefore existed before Common Grace. The image of God cannot be removed for two reasons: First, because it belongs to the essence of man, and, second, because man receives internal and external revelation. (ibid.)

Therefore prior to Common Grace, as its presupposition, we presuppose that man is of necessity confronted with the truth about himself as the creature of God. **This objective truth about man himself, this ineradicable truth, this inescapable confrontation by God, man, so far as he thinks from his sinful principle, seeks to suppress.** But he cannot suppress it. It comes to him with the pressure of God, the inescapable One. **God’s revelation is everywhere**, and everywhere perspicuous. **Hence the theistic proofs are absolutely valid.** They are but the restatement of the revelation of God, which, as Dr. Masselink says, is infallible. **God the Holy Spirit presses the revelation of God, external and internal, upon man.** I have not denied the general testimony of the Spirit any more than I have denied the validity of the theistic proofs. God the Holy Spirit presses upon men the revelation of God as being infallible, not as inherently unable to give certainty.

Even so, it is imperative that a distinction be made between what is the objective revelation of God, both external and internal, and what is our interpretation of that revelation. In preaching, the Reformed minister of the gospel seeks to bring the system of truth as given him in Scripture. But he does not claim that any sermon of his infallibly mediates the revelation of God to man. His sermons are true so far as they reflect the revelation of God. So too with the formulation of the theistic proofs, these are true so far as they reflect the revelation of God. They are true when they reflect scriptural procedure. And scriptural procedure involves making the **ontological trinity** the foundation of all predication.

But these arguments have often been stated otherwise. In the first place men have often formulated them and have built them upon the assumption of man as autonomous. This is, for instance, the case with Aristotle, with Descartes, with the British empiricists, with the rationalists, etc.

When the **theistic proofs** are thus constructed **they do not convey the revelation of God; they then become the means of suppressing that revelation in terms of the monistic assumption of the natural man.** How could “the theistic proofs” then be sound, for if they “prove” that the God of **Aristotle** exists, then they disprove that the God of Christianity exists.

Side note on natural theology, brute facts and traditional theism by Greg Bahnsen
My paraphrase from Greg Bahnsen’s teaching on problem with natural theology, the traditional theistic proofs:

[codeBF, brutefactdef, code524 & codebrute : isolated self-evident arguments, data in a void or *uninterpreted raw data* (Bahnsen: min-mark 27: <https://youtu.be/YmKKC70GIC4>) The unregenerate will only interpret these facts according to his [erroneous] presuppositions which is the error of natural theology (the traditional method of theistic proofs) as opposed to Rom. 1, a theology based upon revelation, where the whole of nature pictures God all at once, not by piecemeal increments of brute facts (bare facts), that in the natural mind (who naturally suppresses the knowledge of God), will only lead him to the probability of a finite God, not the God of Scripture; facts should not be isolated from the framework in which they come, that is they should be related to the plan of God to be rightly understood. Bahnsen explains this very well in that video on Natural Theology and the Proofs.]

Now it is the difference between theistic proofs when rightly and when wrongly constructed that I have been anxious to stress. It is this that I think has not been adequately stressed even in Bavinck. And this in spite of the fact that he has given us, perhaps better than other Reformed theologians, the means by which to distinguish between the right and the wrong way of reasoning about God. He has rejected the scholastic idea of natural theology. It was this scholastic natural theology that took into the Christian camp the false way of reasoning about God. It took over to a large extent the method of Aristotle. Bavinck himself has signalized the proofs as formulated wrongly as being invalid. Kuyper did the same thing. **He assigned a subordinate place to apologetics just because he assumed that it sought to prove to “reason” that of which “reason” cannot be the judge.**

In this criticism of the validity of the theistic proofs Kuyper too had a different position from that of “Old Princeton apologetics.” When I arrived at Princeton Seminary as a student, Professor William Benton Greene was the professor of apologetics. The method of apologetics that he taught was to a large extent based on Bishop Butler’s Analogy. It was based on the idea, as expressed by Butler, that there is an area or territory of interpretation on which Christians and non-Christians agree. To ask men to believe Christianity we must ask them only to apply the same principle of interpretation to Christianity and its phenomena that they have already applied to the realm of nature. Then they would have to admit that Christianity is very probably true as they had already admitted that God very probably exists.

In this method it is assumed that the reason of the natural man quite properly takes itself to be the judge of what is possible or impossible. Says Charles Hodge,

Christians concede to reason the *judicium contradictionis*, that is, the prerogative of deciding whether a thing is possible or impossible. If it is seen to be impossible, no authority and no amount or kind of evidence can impose the obligation to receive it as true. (Systematic Theology, vol. 1 p 51)

Now I have criticized this Old Princeton apologetics in the way that Kuyper and Bavinck and Hepp have criticized positions similar to it. Dr. Samuel Volbeda says that this method of apologetics does not do justice to the Pauline statement that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit since they are spiritually discerned.

Methodologically the Warfieldian scheme of Apologetics does not fit in with Reformed Hamartology and Soteriology. With you I believe that Apologetics should be so defined as not to carry with it implications contradictory of 1 Cor 2.14. 79

The Princeton method, so far as it worked by this method of appeal to the reason of man as such as the judge of the possible and the impossible, was flatly opposed to Old Princeton theology, according to which only that is possible which God in His sovereign will determines shall come to pass. Princeton apologetics did not live up to its own teaching in theology to the effect that the natural man must be born again unto knowledge. Princeton apologetics started with the non-believer from an abstract idea of possibility, based upon its calculations of what might probably happen, and then concluded that Christianity is very probably true.

But David Hume has long since shown the invalidity of such an argument. **Abstract** possibility presupposes the idea of Chance. And in Chance there are no probabilities, no tendencies one way or the other. And a Christianity that is probably true is not the Christianity of the Scripture.

So far as choice had to be made between the two positions, I took my position with Kuyper rather than with Hodge and Warfield. But there were two considerations that compelled me finally to seek a combination of some of the elements of each position. Negatively Kuyper was surely right in stressing that the natural man does not, on his principles, have any knowledge of the truth. But Hodge and Warfield taught the same thing in their theology. It was only in their apologetics that they did not lay full emphasis upon this teaching. Positively Hodge and Warfield were quite right in stressing the fact that Christianity meets every legitimate demand of reason. Surely Christianity is not irrational. To be sure, it must be accepted on faith, but surely it must not be taken on blind faith. Christianity is capable of rational defense. And what the Princeton theologians were really after when they said that Christianity is in accord with reason, is that it is in accord with the reason that recognizes its creatureliness and its sinfulness. It is only that the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian concepts of possibility and probability has not been adequately brought out by them.

The reason why these differences do not appear on the surface is that, as a matter of fact, all men are human beings who were created in the **image of God**. Even the non-regenerate therefore have in their sense of deity, though repressed by them, some remnant of the knowledge of God, and consequently of the true source and meaning of possibility and probability. It is to this remnant of a truly theistic interpretation of experience that Hodge really appeals when he speaks of the laws of belief that God has implanted in human nature. It is, of course, not only quite legitimate, but absolutely imperative to appeal to the "common consciousness" in this sense. But in order really to appeal to this "common consciousness" that is repressed by the sinner we must refuse to speak of a "common consciousness" that is not suppressed by the sinner.

The non-regenerate man seeks by all means to "keep under" this remnant of a true theistic interpretation that lingers in his mind. His real interpretative principle, now that he is a covenant breaker, is that of himself as ultimate and of impersonal laws as ultimate. It is he

himself as ultimate, by means of laws of logic that operate independently of God, who determines what is possible and probable. To the extent, then, that he proceeds self-consciously from his own principle of interpretation, he holds the very existence of God, and, of the creation of the universe, to be not merely improbable, but impossible. In doing so he sins, to be sure, against his better knowledge. He sins against that which is hidden deep down in his own consciousness. And it is well that we should appeal to this fact. But in order to appeal to this fact we must use all caution not to obscure this fact. And obscure it we do if we speak of the “common consciousness” of man without distinguishing clearly between what is hidden deep down in the mind of natural man as the revelation and knowledge of God within him, and what, in rejecting God, he has virtually adopted as being his final interpretative principle. (Introduction to Systematic Theology, pg 39, 40)

Again in the case of Kuyper and Bavinck, is it not to the common consciousness of mankind as involved in Calvin’s idea of the sense of deity, as involved in the very idea of the image of God that they can and do allow as a legitimate point to which we may appeal with the gospel? In spite of their rejection of apologetics as that discipline which must establish the foundation of the truth of Christianity, and in spite of their insistence that the natural man has no affinity for the truth of Christianity, they yet themselves appeal to that which lives in the consciousness of every man but which every man as a sinner seeks to suppress. Further, through criticizing the sort of method that was used at Old Princeton, Kuyper and Bavinck often used that very same method themselves. They, too, often appealed to a common consciousness of man as containing a body of truth on which there is not much disagreement between Christians and non-Christians.

Of course it was with great diffidence and hesitation that I sought a solution for the apologetic problem and for the problem of common grace by the means of thus sorting out, rejecting the weaknesses in both positions, and building upon the solid foundation in both, derived from Calvin and ultimately from St. Paul. But it was impossible to ignore the differences between the two positions. It was also impossible to agree with the Old Princeton position to the effect that appeal must be made to reason without differentiating between a reason conceived of as autonomous and reason conceived of as created.

Finally, it was impossible to agree with what seemed to be a lowering of the claim for Christianity by Kuyper and Bavinck when they concluded from the fact that sinful man cannot of himself accept the truth to the idea that there is no objectively valid reason to be given for the truth.

Here then is, so far as I am now able to see, the direction in which we ought as Reformed Christians to travel.

1. The foundation of the thinking of both the Amsterdam and the Old Princeton men was that which both derived via Calvin from Paul, namely, **the fact that God has unavoidably and clearly revealed Himself in general and in special revelation**. The whole triune God is involved in this revelation. The whole triune God testifies to man in this revelation. This is the general testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is nothing more than the Reformed philosophy of history. **God controls and therefore manifests His plan in “whatsoever comes to pass.”** It is His will of decree that comes to

expression in a measure, in nature and in history. In this decree lies the basis, the unity, and the guarantee of the success of “science.”

2. Both the men of Amsterdam and the men of Old Princeton agree that God has promulgated to mankind in Adam His will of command. He set before mankind the task of subduing the earth. Here lies the command for all men to engage in the scientific enterprise. Here also lies the expression of the generally benevolent attitude of God to mankind. This is not grace, for grace presupposes sin. But it presupposes God’s favorable attitude toward man. All men are responsible for proper reaction to this assignment of task.

In His **will of command** God deals with man as a created person; He deals with him conditionally. God wants self-conscious covenant reaction to His will of command and promise. But the entire covenantal transaction takes place according to the counsel of God.

3. Amsterdam and Old Princeton agree that the relation between the **will of decree** and **will of command** cannot be exhaustively understood by man. Therefore every point of doctrine is a “difficult problem.” **As men we must think analogically. God is the original and man is derivative. We must not determine what can or cannot be by argument that starts from the will of decree apart from its relation to the will of command.** In particular we must not say that God cannot display any attitude of favor to the generality of mankind because we know that He intends that ultimately some are “vessels of wrath.” On the other hand we must not argue from the revealed will of God with respect to man’s responsibility to the denial of man’s ultimate determination by the will of decree. **We need therefore at this point, which is all-inclusive, to be “fearlessly anthropomorphic.”**

Applying this to the case in hand, we would say that we are entitled and compelled to use anthropomorphism not apologetically but fearlessly. (Common Grace, pg 73)

And to think analogically, to be fearlessly anthropomorphic, is to think concretely, for it is to take all the factors of revelation into consideration simultaneously. It is to admit that no theological problem can be fully solved exhaustively. The Council of Chalcedon excluded logical deductions based on anything short of a combination of all the factors of revelation with respect to the God-man. So in the problem of common grace we must not argue for differences without qualification or for identities without qualification. The former is done by Hoeksema; the latter is done if we insist that there must be a neutral territory between believers and unbelievers.

More on Total Depravity:

4. Amsterdam and Old Princeton agree on the doctrine of sin. Both teach total depravity. **Total depravity for both means that sin has affected man in all his functions.** But it does not merely mean that. It also indicates how deeply sin has affected all his functions. **Man is “wholly defiled,” not partly defiled in all his functions. He hates God and his neighbor. He therefore seeks to suppress the truth within him. He worships and serves the creature more than the Creator. He cannot but sin.**

5. Amsterdam and Old Princeton agree on the doctrine of election. Both teach that God from all eternity planned to redeem a people unto Himself. Disregarding the differences between infra- and

supralapsarianism, all Reformed theologians, in accord with the Reformed confessions, teach that God is redeeming a people unto Himself. Those who are God's people are totally saved. They are saved in their every function. They are absolutely saved in principle. Paul calls them righteous and holy without qualification. John says they cannot sin.

6. Amsterdam and Old Princeton agree on the genuine significance of human responsibility. Their position has been called absolutist and determinist. It has been charged that with their doctrines of election and reprobation the "free offer of the gospel" would be meaningless. But Scripture teaches both the ultimate determination of the destiny of men by God and the fact that men die because of their sin. So both Amsterdam and Old Princeton, following Calvin, argued that the conditional is meaningful not in spite of, but because of, the plan of God in relation to which human responsibility takes place.

Hence both preached with conviction the universal or general offer of salvation to men as a class. They were not deterred by those who would impose "logic" upon Scripture either by way of rejecting election in favor of the sincerity of the general offer of the gospel, or by way of rejecting the sincerity of the offer of the gospel in favor of election. They thought concretely and scripturally rather than abstractively and deductively from one aspect of revelation.

7. Both Amsterdam and Old Princeton therefore taught common grace as well as the common offer of the gospel to the generality of mankind. From the beginning God had in mind His ultimate plan with respect to the final differentiations between men. Both infra and supralapsarians agree on this. But this did not reduce the favorable attitude toward mankind at the beginning of history. Why then should God's general favor not continue upon man even after the fall? Only if sin were taken to be the act of a being that is itself ultimate would that be the case. From eternity God rejected men because of the sin that they would do as historical beings. So He elected others because of the work that Christ would do for them and the Spirit would do within them in history. It is as true and as important thus to assert the significance of the historical whether as contemplated by God or as realized in fact as it is to say that history is what God intends by His plan that it shall be.

Thus the general favorable attitude toward mankind at the beginning of history becomes the sincere offer of the gospel and common grace to those who have sinned. All men were, because of sin, in the way of death (Calvin). To man as a class God comes with the sincere offer of the way of life (Rom 2). That is the general witness of the triune God to men.

Therefore God's good gifts to men, rain and sunshine in season, are genuinely expressive of God's favor unto them. At the same time they are a general testimony by which the Spirit of God labors with men to call them to repentance, and therefore to the fulfilment of the task originally assigned to mankind in Adam.

Therefore, also through common grace the natural man is enabled to do "good works."

Total depravity has two aspects, one of principle and one of degree. The first representative act of man was an act that resulted historically in the total depravity of the race. This act was

performed against a mandate of God that involved mankind as a whole; without that “common mandate” it could not have been done; without that common mandate the “negative instance” would have been an operation in a void. Thus mankind came under the common wrath of God. But the **process of differentiation was not complete**. This common wrath, too, was a steppingstone to something further. The elect were to choose for God and the reprobate were each for himself to reaffirm their choice for Satan. The reprobate were to show historically the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Totally depraved in principle, they were to become more and more conformed in fact to the principle that controlled their hearts. (Common Grace, pg 91)

It will now be apparent why I have found it impossible to agree with Hepp in his evaluation of the theistic proofs. There are two ways of constructing a proof for the existence of God. These two ways are mutually exclusive. The one is in accord with the basic construction of Reformed theology; the other is destructive of it. The one begins with the presupposition of the existence of the triune God of the Scriptures. The other begins with the presupposition of man as ultimate.

The nature of sin: suppressing the knowledge of God... and misleading presuppositions of philosophy:

The true theistic proofs undertake to show that the ideas of existence (ontological proof), of cause (cosmological proof), and purpose (teleological proof) are meaningless unless they presuppose the existence of God. This involves interpreting human reason itself in terms of God. It involves saying that unless human reason regards itself as being what Scripture says it is, created in the image of God, that then it has no internal coherence. To this must be added that it involves the **fact of sin as darkening the understanding and hardening the will**. Yet no one but a Christian will admit these two truths about himself. **By nature all men seek to suppress the facts of their sinfulness and creaturehood**. They cannot succeed in fully suppressing this truth. As you cannot mop the figure off the surface of an indelible linoleum so man cannot erase his creatureliness and sinfulness, try as he may.

One of the most subtle and apparently effective ways by which the natural man seeks to cover his guilt is by “proving the existence of God” to himself. By that means he makes an idol for himself. Worshiping his idol, his god, he seeks to make himself believe that he has done all that may be expected of him.

That the gods produced by the **“theistic proofs”** are frequently nothing but idols is plain to any one familiar with the history of **philosophy**. **Aristotle** proved the existence of a god; there must, he reasoned, be an **unmoved Mover** back of all movement. **Thomas Aquinas** used essentially the same method that Aristotle did in proving the existence of God. **Yet the god of Aristotle did not create the world, does not control it, is not even a person. Aquinas wanted to prove to those whose standard of judgment is reason rather than revelation that it is proper to believe in God. But the only god that he can rightfully hold to on this basis is such a god as no Christian should call God.**

In modern times **Descartes** used the ontological argument. But he started from the idea that he knew his own nature as man without first or at the same time knowing that God exists. This assumption is the exact opposite of that from which Calvin starts. **Calvin argues that not a word can truthfully be said about man himself unless it be presupposed that he is a creature of God**. Accordingly

Descartes, as well as Aristotle, had at best a finite god. And a finite god is, from the Christian point of view, an idol.

It is therefore quite impossible to speak intelligently of the theistic proofs without distinguishing between the method by which a Christian believer and the method by which a non-Christian uses them.

It is therefore the essence of Protestantism, and in particular of the Reformed theology to reject the **“natural theology” of Rome**. Kuyper and Bavinck have done so in no uncertain terms. And so has Hepp. And the whole genius of “Old Princeton” was against it.

A truly Reformed apologetic cannot be worked out unless one follows closely in Calvin’s wake. **Men ought to see God’s being as the being who is self-sufficient and self-contained. Men ought to see themselves as creatures, as beneficiaries of their Creator’s bounties. They ought to see themselves as under the law of God.** And men cannot but see themselves as such. **Yet such is the folly of sin, that men hold down the truth in unrighteousness.** They do this by assuming that they participate in the being of God, or that God’s being is of a piece with theirs. **So their systems of philosophy**, based as they are on this **monistic** assumption, are means by which men seek to suppress the truth about themselves. The result is folly and ruin to themselves.

Note: “The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms.” Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til’s book, *Christian Apologetics*, pg 31, footnote 3 [[Van Til refers to this as “scale of being” in his writings.](#)]

Either presuppose God and live, or presuppose yourself as ultimate and die. That is the alternative with which the Christian must challenge his fellow man.

If the Christian thus challenges his fellow man then he may be an instrument of the Spirit of God. **The proofs of God then become witnesses of God**; and witnesses of God are God witnessing to men. **The theistic proofs therefore reduce to one proof, the proof which argues that unless this God, the God of the Bible, the ultimate being, the Creator, the controller of the universe, be presupposed as the foundation of human experience, this experience operates in a void.** This one proof is absolutely convincing. To be sure, in so far as it is an interpretation of biblical and general revelation it cannot be assumed to be infallible. Only revelation to man (which includes revelation through man as a psychological being) is infallible. When man, even redeemed man, reinterprets this revelation, it cannot be said to be infallible in detail. Reformed theology does not attribute infallibility to its confessions. Yet the main points of doctrine of these confessions are, by Reformed men, assumed to be, for all practical purposes, a faithful reproduction of the truths of revelation.

It will now be apparent why I cannot agree with Hepp’s estimate of the proofs. Hepp does not distinguish between such proofs as are constructed upon true and such as are constructed upon false presuppositions. He simply speaks of the theistic proofs. He assumes that the non-believer can and

does correctly interpret the revelation of God. After warning us against overestimating the value of the proofs Hepp says:

The so-called proofs for the existence of God are not at all without value. They teach us that nature within us and round about us witnesses of God. They convey in set formulas, the speech which comes to us from the cosmos as a whole (cosmological proof), from the world of ideas (ontological proof), from the moral world (moral proof), from history (historical proof), from the purposiveness nature of things (teleological proof) and testify to us constantly that God reigns and that He is the Creator of the ends of the earth who does not faint or grow weary. They press powerfully upon our consciousness. But—they cannot give us the last ground of certainty. (*Testimonies Spiritus Sancti*, p 152)

Against the type of argument developed by the Old Princeton apologetics Hepp therefore objects because it claims certainty for the proofs. But certainty, says Hepp, cannot be derived from revelation, since revelation comes through media, whether subjective or objective. Certainty, he contends, comes from the testimony of the Spirit only.

In this objection of Hepp's against too great a reliance on the theistic proofs he leaves untouched what constitutes, we believe, the one great fault in them. **Hepp ignores the basic difference between a theistic proof that presupposes God and one that presupposes man as ultimate.** And this is not an oversight. Hepp's whole doctrine of the general testimony of the Spirit is constructed with the purpose of showing that there are certain central truths on which all men agree. Non-Christians as well as Christians can, he argues, correctly interpret God's general revelation. They can together put this revelation in set formulas, as they do in the case of the theistic proofs. Thus they can and do, together believe in certain central truths.

Here then the Christian and the non-Christian together interpret God's general revelation and together come to the same conclusion, namely, that God exists. But they are not certain of this truth, for revelation cannot give certainty. So the Holy Spirit testifies within them, so as to bring certainty within them with respect to the conclusion of their process of reasoning.

All this is in effect to have lapsed into the natural theology of Romanism. The doctrine of the general testimony of the Holy Spirit as developed by Hepp is in itself no cure for natural theology. Hepp assumes that the natural man can and does, even on his own interpretative principle, correctly interpret the revelation of God on central questions. There is then an area of fact, of revelation which non-Christians and Christians together interpret correctly. There is then a neutral territory, a "territory between," where men can positively build together on the house of science.

In this area the Holy Spirit does not testify to the non-believer through the believer to the effect that he must turn from idols to the service of the living God. On the contrary, in this area the Spirit testifies to both believer and unbeliever that they are right in believing God. The Spirit, as it were, testifies to Calvin that he is right in thinking of God as his Creator and Judge, and also testifies to Spinoza that he is right in believing in the existence of God as identical with all reality. Or, if this be not so, then the Spirit must testify to the contentless *form of God*, it must testify to the fact that God exists without any indication as to what is the nature of that God.

Now either idea, the idea that the Spirit should testify to the existence of a finite god, or to the existence of a mere form, devoid of content, is directly contrary to Scripture. **Nature within man and through the facts about man testifies that God as Creator, as controller of all things, and as judge, exists. It is to this that the Spirit testifies. And testifying to the existence of this God it testifies against the existence of such gods as men have made for themselves, often by means of the “theistic proofs.”**

It is in this conception of the theistic proofs and of the general testimony of the Spirit witnessing to what they express, to this idea of central truths on which Christians and non-Christians are in agreement, that I have rejected. I have rejected it for the same reason for which I have rejected the method of the Old Princeton apologetics. And I have rejected both in view of my close adherence to the Old Princeton and the Amsterdam theology. **It is, in short, because I hold the appeal to reason as autonomous to be both illegitimate and destructive from the point of view of Reformed faith that I am bound to reject Hepp’s position as well as that of Old Princeton apologetics.** But happily I can do so in view of the theology that I have learned from Old Princeton and Amsterdam.

In this connection I may explain to you a remark I made recently on the occasion when Dr. Masselink and I debated the question of common grace. I argued that on the basis of such an apologetics as Old Princeton furnished us we were still on an essentially **Romanist rather than on a Reformed basis. For it is of the essence of Romanism to argue with the non-believer on the ground of a supposedly neutral reason.** No Reformed person could espouse such a position and then honestly claim that his position was uniquely Calvinistic and as such calculated to save science.

In this Context I contended that a doctrine of common grace that is constructed so as to appeal once more to a **neutral territory** between believers and non-believers is, precisely like Old Princeton apologetics, **in line with a Romanist type of natural theology. Why should we then pretend to have anything unique?** And why then should we pretend to have a sound basis for science? **Nothing short of the Calvinistic doctrine of the all controlling providence of God, and the indelibly revelational character of every fact of the created universe, can furnish a true foundation for science.** And how can we pretend to be able to make good use of the results of the scientific efforts of non-Christian scientists, if, standing on an essentially Roman basis, we cannot even make good use of our own efforts?

Why live in a dream world, deceiving ourselves and making false pretense before the world? The non-Christian view of science:

- (a) presupposes the autonomy of man;
- (b) presupposes the non-created character, i.e., the chance-controlled character, of facts; and,
- (c) presupposes that laws rest not in God but somewhere in the universe.

Now if we develop a doctrine of common grace in line with the teachings of Hepp with respect to the general testimony of the Spirit, we are incorporating into our scientific edifice the very forces of destruction against which that testimony is bound to go forth. Then “we might as well blow up the science building with an atom bomb.” I have apologized for that statement. But to the meaning intended then I subscribe today. We should as Reformed Christians be able to present a well-

articulated philosophy of knowledge in general and of science in particular in order to justify our independent educational institutions.

Chapter Seven
A Reply to Criticism
Common Grace and the Gospel
 Pgs. 196-208

In his syllabus *Common Grace and Christian Education*, Dr. William Masselink charged me with beginning my whole system of thought with the idea of the Absolute Ethical Antithesis. I made reply to this charge in *A Letter on Common Grace*. There I made it clear that I begin rather with the creation of man as made in the image of God. Following Calvin, I then speak of all men as unavoidably knowing God (Rom 1:19). All men, even after the fall, know, deep down in their hearts, that they are creatures of God; that they should therefore obey, but that they have actually broken, the law of God.

Human Depravity: [codeHD]

After the fall, therefore, all men seek to suppress this truth, fixed in their being, about themselves. They are opposed to God. This is the biblical teaching on human depravity. If we are to present the truth of the Christian religion to men we must take them where they are. They are: (a) creatures made in God's image, surrounded by a world that reveals in its every fact God's power and divinity. Their antithesis to God can never be metaphysical. They can never be anything but image bearers of God. They can never escape facing God in the universe about them and in their own constitution. **Their antithesis to God is therefore an ethical one.** (b) Because of God's common grace, this ethical antithesis to God on the part of the sinner is restrained, and thereby the creative forces of man receive the opportunity of constructive effort. In this world the sinner does many "good" things. He is honest. He helps to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow men. He "keeps" the moral law. Therefore the "antithesis," besides being ethical rather than metaphysical, is limited in a second way. It is one of principle, not one of full expression. If the natural man fully expressed himself as he is in terms of the principle of ethical hostility to God that dwells within his soul, he would then be a veritable devil. Obviously he is often nothing of the sort. He is not at all as "bad as he may be."

All of this is found in my various writings. It was pointed out especially in *A Letter on Common Grace*. Yet Dr. Masselink keeps repeating the idea that I start my whole system of thought from the idea of the Absolute Ethical Antithesis, **and insists that I mean by this that man "at present is as bad as he can be."** Torch and Trumpet, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 15; cf. also an article, "New Views Regarding Common Grace," in The Calvin Forum, April, 1954. 2 Calvin Forum, p. 174. 3 Torch and Trumpet, p. 15. Masselink says that according to Reformed theology the antithesis is "principlial," not absolute. "I do not believe that Reformed Theology ever speaks of an 'absolute ethical antithesis.' By 'Principial Antithesis' is meant that natural man **in principle** is dead in sin and completely depraved." (Calvin forum p 174). "Natural man, however, is **absolutely depraved in principle.**" (Torch and Trumpet, p 15).

Masselink therefore also uses the term **absolute** with respect to the total depravity of man. **And I have repeatedly used the qualification that the depravity is absolute only in principle.** The only difference at this point seems to be that I add one more qualification than does Masselink. I am careful to note that the antithesis is ethical, and not metaphysical. I do not discover this distinction in Masselink. Perhaps this failure accounts for the fact that at other points he reasons as though the antithesis is not absolute in principle, even when this antithesis is conceived of ethically. I refer to the fact that he follows Dr. Valentine Hepp in his idea that there are general ideas of God, of man and the universe on which Christians and non-Christians have no principle difference. (cf. Letter on Common Grace).

In passing it may be noted that the usage of the phrase “absolute antithesis” is not so unheard of as Masselink surmises. So, for instance, Dr. Herman Kuyper uses it, and ties it in closely with the absoluteness of Christianity. He says: “In this connection it is in place to note that Calvin’s conception of common grace can help us in upholding the absoluteness of Christianity. Especially in recent years many who profess Christianity are unwilling to subscribe to the orthodox conception of Christianity as the only true religion. Instead of maintaining that there is an absolute antithesis between Christianity and all non-Christian religions, they prefer to look upon Christianity as the highest development of the seed of religion which is implanted in the heart of every man.”

The influence of sin:

A second point of criticism made on my views by Masselink and others pertains to the laws of logic. Says Masselink: “In his recent publication, ‘A Letter on Common Grace,’ Van Til says of reason in general that ‘such a thing does not exist in practice.’ The issue between us and Van Til does not at all concern a degree of difference in knowledge between the Christian and the non-Christian, but rather whether we with Kuyper can say that the laws of logic in natural man have not been completely destroyed by sin.”⁶ The reader will at once observe that it is wholly counter to the approach taken in this book to say that the laws of logic have been destroyed in the sinner. The whole point of the distinction between the antithesis as being ethical rather than metaphysical is that as a creature made in God’s image, man’s constitution as a rational and moral being has not been destroyed. The separation from God on the part of the sinner is ethical. How could it be metaphysical? Even the lost in the hereafter have not lost the power of rational and moral determination. They must have this image in order to be aware of their lost condition.

And this has a bearing on Masselink’s point that in my view the sinner’s consciousness would be entirely “devoid of ethical content.” “If this ‘God-consciousness and moral consciousness’ were entirely devoid of ethical content our Confession would be untrue when it speaks of ‘civil righteousness.’ ” (Torch and Trumpet, p15) **But the distinction between a metaphysical and an ethical antithesis is made for the specific purpose of avoiding the idea that there could ever be a stage in which man can be entirely devoid of moral consciousness.** It is because on the **Romanist** position this distinction cannot be made that the effect of sin is thought of in terms of the scale of being. Under the Aristotelian idea of the analogy of being, man, when “in puris naturalibus,” is well nigh devoid of ethical consciousness. It takes the *donum superadditum*, **a metaphysical notion**, in order to give him such a moral consciousness, even in paradise. [see Van Til @ code490 & code530] Then after the entrance of sin, when

this *donum superadditum* is removed, man sinks down close to the bottom of being and almost loses his ability to discern good and evil.

It will be difficult for Masselink to keep from falling into this line of thinking. He seems to operate with the idea of the scale of being in the sentence following the one quoted. "In hell the antithesis between God and natural man is absolute. There is no common grace nor civil righteousness in perdition." Now it is true that there is no common grace in the estate of the lost. But are the lost "devoid of ethical content?" Does not their conscience smite them forever for having offended the holiness of God? **Masselink makes the very idea of "ethical content" to depend upon the presence of common grace.** He thereby shows that on his view common grace, in restraining the principle of sin, keeps men from falling into a state where they are no longer able to have moral awareness. **This is in line with the Romanist idea of sin as having a deleterious metaphysical effect on man; it is out of line with Reformed thinking.**

The whole question of the **influence of sin**, whether it is ethical or metaphysical, is centrally expressed in the idea that except for the entrance of common grace, the whole world, including man, would have fallen to pieces. Herman Kuyper quite rightly rejects this notion when he says: "We also refuse to subscribe to Calvin's teaching in 2, 2, 17 to the effect that the fall of man would have resulted in the destruction of our whole nature, including our reasoning power, if God had not spared us. Calvin here seems to forget that the revolt in the world of angels did not have for its result that the devils have lost all **reasoning ability**, and he also leaves out of consideration the fact that the lost souls who will one day inhabit the place of torment will remain men and will retain a certain measure of intellectual power."

In *A Letter on Common Grace*, I expressed the idea that we need to use the ideas of "**metaphysical**" and "**ethical**" in connection with the fall of man as **limiting** or **supplementative** notions. We have to speak as if **sin** would have destroyed the work of God. That was certainly its ethical intent. But we know that this is not an ultimate metaphysical possibility, **for it was already, from all eternity, a part of the plan of God that sin should be defeated through the work of the Christ.** Genuine advance in Reformed thinking has come about in the last generation by means of the use of Christian supplementative, or limiting concepts. This use has enabled G. C. Berkouwer and others to avoid some of the **scholasticism** that must otherwise obtain. **Scholasticism** appears when, on the ground of the idea of election, we deduce that God cannot in any sense whatever have any attitude of favor to mankind as a group. It also obtains when, because we hold to the idea of responsibility, we hold also that there can therefore be no election. It obtains too when we say there can be no equal ultimacy of the idea of election and reprobation in God, or when we say that Adam's choice for obedience was equally ultimate with his choice for disobedience. In short, without thinking of our theological concepts as being **supplementative** of one another, **we fall into logicism.** We reduce the significance of the stream of history to the static categories of logic.

The **gift of logical reason** was originally given by God to man in order that he might order the revelation of God in nature for himself. It was not given him that he might by means of it legislate as to what is possible and what is actual. When man makes a "system" for himself of the content of revelation given him in Scripture, this system is subject to, not independent of, Scripture. Thus the idea

of system employed by the Christian is quite different from the idea of system as employed in modern philosophy.

Non-Christian thinking:

It is therefore pointless for Christians to tell **non-Christians** that Christianity is “in accord with the law of contradiction” unless they explain what they mean by this. For the non-Christian will take this statement to mean something entirely different from what the Christian ought to mean by it. The non-Christian does not believe in creation. Therefore, for him the law of contradiction is, like all other laws, something that does not find its ultimate source in the creative activity of God. Accordingly, the non-Christian will seek to do by means of the law of contradiction what the Christian has done for him by God. For the Christian, God legislates as to what is possible and what is impossible for man. **For the non-Christian, man determines this for himself.** Either positively or negatively the non-Christian will determine the field of possibility and therewith the stream of history by means of the law of contradiction.

This means that for the non-Christian the concepts that he employs while using the law of contradiction are taken to be exhaustive of the “essence of the thing” they seek to express. By taking each concept as wholly expressing the essence of a thing, **non-Christian thought** seeks to express the whole of reality, even of temporal reality, in terms of **concepts that are static**. Even when it is admitted, as it generally is in modern thought, that reality is exhaustively temporal and therefore not at all, or not fully, expressible in terms of concepts, still it is maintained or assumed that what is expressed by means of concepts is all that man can know. Men may then speak of revelation as another means of knowing reality. They may even say that this other reality is more basic than the reality that is known through conceptual manipulation. They will then posit a **dualism** between the idea of **faith** by which this wholly other reality is “known” and **reason** by which the world of phenomena is known. In any case the genuine significance of the facts of history is destroyed.

This is most clearly illustrated in the case of **dialectical theology**, In order to maintain the uniqueness of the facts of history this theology thinks it necessary to speak of primal history (*Geschichte*) in distinction from ordinary history (*Historie*). Ordinary history cannot, say Barth and Brunner, manifest anything unique. Ordinary history is history as the secular mind thinks of it. That is to say, history must be interpreted by means of concepts, and these concepts, in their view, kill all individuality. **Concepts**, we are told, can deal only with **abstract essences**. The individual is by means of these concepts reduced to an instance of a class. In fact, the individual is wholly lost in the concepts that describe it.

It is only in Reformed theology that the means are available to oppose this modern approach. That is not because Reformed theology has access to some means of manipulation of reality not open to other men. **It is rather because only in Reformed theology is full justice done to the idea of God as man’s creator. If God is really man’s creator then man’s thinking must be thought of as being analogical.** Therefore his concepts cannot rightly be employed as the instruments of a deductive system. **These concepts must be employed as means by which to display the richness of God’s revelation. When the apparently contradictory appears, as it always must when man seeks to know the relation of God to himself, there will be no denial of concepts such as election or human responsibility in the name of the law of contradiction.** Applied to the general problem of common grace, the idea of limiting or

supplementative concepts means that we shall not deny common grace nor, on the other hand, hold to a common grace that creates a neutral territory between believers and unbelievers.

The Image Of God In Man

Van Til

Code479

The necessity for the use of the idea of the **limiting or supplementative concept** may be illustrated further by observing what happens if it is not used with respect to the idea of man as the image-bearer of God.

It is customary in Reformed circles to distinguish between the image of God in the **wider** and the image of God in the **narrower sense**. But difficulty develops if we do not clearly stress that this distinction is not to be carried through deductively. This difficulty may be indicated by a brief summary of the work on *The Image of God (Het Beeld Gods)* by Abraham Kuyper, Jr. The **image of God** in the wider sense, Kuyper says, must be found in the **essence of man**. **And this essence of man remains unchanged in fallen man. "Man has been permitted to keep much, and is, in spite of his deep fall, capable of much, because he has kept the image of God in its essence and because Common Grace came to his assistance."** "This image of God cannot be lost since, if man could lose it, he would at the moment of losing it, cease to be a human being. The image of God in the **wider sense (sensu latiore)** has reference to the **human in man**, to that whereby man, in distinction from all other creatures, is man and not an angel or an animal or a plant."

Summarizing his own discussion of the image in the **wider sense** as being the **unchangeable essence of man**, Kuyper says that it must be sought in the first place in the "I through which man is a person, and then further in the two capacities which this marvelous 'I' controls, the **capacity to know and the capacity to will ...**" The image of God in the **narrower sense** is said to consist of **true knowledge, righteousness and holiness**. As usual, Eph 4.23–24 and Col 3.10 Eph 4.23–24, Col 3.10 are quoted in support of this. Kuyper also speaks of immortality as part of the image of God. But we need not, for our purpose, follow his analysis in detail. Our interest turns to the fact that **this image in the narrower sense is said to be lost**. "Thus the image of God in the narrower sense consisted of true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. **This image was lost, and in its place there came blindness, guilt, and sinfulness.**" **This image is lost, it disappears.**

Common grace's effect on the image of God:

What, we are tempted to ask, is the effect of the disappearance of this image in the narrower sense upon the image in the wider sense? The latter, it will be remembered, cannot, according to Kuyper, Jr., be lost. It is therefore called "the image as such" (*als zoodanig*). And the knowledge of this image as such is called **knowledge** as such. Yet through sin the reason which belongs to the unchangeable essence of man is said to be **darkened**. **His immortality that he possessed in paradise is lost. There is no longer any righteousness in his will.** Can we then continue to say that the essence of man, his person, his reason and will, have in no wise been affected by the true righteousness, true knowledge,

and true holiness? Or if we continue to say that the essence of man remains unchanged while his nature changes, does anything then remain to be said about this essence at all? Has it not become an entirely featureless entity?

Similar problems confront us with respect to the image of God in the narrower sense. **Is it so loosely, so “accidentally” related to the essence of man that it can be lost without affecting that essence at all?** Is the essence of man, the human personality, the image as such, with knowledge as such, completely devoid of ethical content? If so, is the ethical content to be a gift of pre-redemptive common grace after the fashion of the Romanist donum superadditum? [see Van Til @ code490 & code530] **Then special grace after the fall would be greater grace, but grace of the same sort that man was given before the fall.** Thus the initial antithetical distinction between a changeless essence and a changing nature turns into its opposite. Since the essence cannot in every sense be maintained to be unaffected by the loss of the perfect nature, **sin has a damaging effect on the essence of man after all. Common grace is then required to save the metaphysical situation intact.** “God the Lord intervened with Common Grace, a grace given to man as man, through which sin was restrained, the curse was checked, and natural life on earth, however drastically changed, was maintained. **A human race could develop itself, and history could begin its course. Without the entrance of Common Grace this would have been altogether impossible.**”

On the other hand the **remnants of the image of God** that remain in the sinner are said to be remnants of the image in the **narrower sense**. “The image of God does not consist only in true knowledge and service of God, and in righteousness and holiness, of which remnants are preserved in the religious feeling and in the moral life of the natural man, but also in the kingly control over the earth by man.” It is in line with this that the **author says**: “Without the entrance of Common Grace man would have lost the image of God, and would have come to the full expression of bitter hostility to God and to a life explosive with sin and unrighteousness. The life of his soul would have become like that of a devil, with respect to whom we cannot speak of common grace at all.” 23

Thus common grace is interchangeably said to be that which preserves some remnants of the image of God in the wider sense, and some of the remnants of the image of God in the narrower sense. In the former case common grace is required to save the metaphysical situation intact. Thus we are virtually back with the **Romanist** concept of the *donum superadditum* (see code530). **In the latter case common grace seems to be a means of toning down the doctrine of total depravity.** The “remnants” of the image of God in the natural man then appear to be little specks of true knowledge, true righteousness, and true holiness. The difference between the believer and the unbeliever then becomes one of degree. [a key distinction!]

It appears then that if we do use such concepts as “essence” and “nature” without stipulating that they are **limitative and supplementative of one another**, we not only get into confusion and contradiction, but we are inadvertently led into positions which we were trying to avoid.

All this is not surprising. In a non-Christian methodology such as **Romanism** took over from Aristotle, man is the final point of reference in predication. On this basis man is not regarded as the creature of God. **His intellect is therefore not thought of as being dependent upon God.** To be sure, the word

analogy is used to describe the relation of human to divine thought. But on the Aristotelian basis this idea of analogy is based upon the idea of participation rather than upon the idea of creation. [\[Search for 'proofs' in Van Til on this further on at codeproofs\]](#) Man is thought of as participating in the being of divinity by means of his intellect. By means of his concepts he is supposed to discover the essence of reality as something that is wholly changeless. Change in the created universe is then taken to be the same as Chance. Individual facts of the created world are taken to be characterized by Chance. Or if they have any reality at all it must be because they somehow participate in the eternity of the divine being. The result is that when man seeks to order the facts of the temporal world he must find their reality in a world of essences that are non-temporal. To thus explain the facts of history is, therefore, on this basis, to explain away the individuality that was to be explained. In using this **Aristotelian** scheme and applying it to the idea of the image of God in man, **Romanist theology** was driven to the idea of the scale of being. Near to non-being is man in *puris naturalibus*. He is there practically without ethical content. The ethical content must be placed upon him artificially by means of the idea of potential participation in divinity.

Hard to understand here:

Surely it is of the greatest importance for Reformed theology to use the concept of the image of God in man in truly **analogical fashion**, that is, **with the definite intent to think as creatures who are called upon to give order to the revelation of God**. Using human concepts **analogically** means to be deeply conscious, moment by moment, **that each concept employed must constantly be subject to the whole of the revelation of God**. And this implies the setting of such concepts as the essence of man and the nature of man in a definite **relationship of correlativity to one another**. The idea of the essence of man simply cannot be taken as standing for something wholly unchangeable. And the idea of nature cannot stand for something that can wholly change. So we find that in actual practice modifications are constantly being used. The essence is said to be affected by the change the nature undergoes. And the nature is itself in need of a "nature" within itself that is not wholly subject to change. When, therefore, the two notions are taken as beings self-consciously in supplementation of one another, better justice is done to the content of the revelation that one intends to express. Then the man who is created perfect, who falls into sin, who is the recipient of common and in some cases special grace, is seen in his historical development.

Then too, the doctrine of common grace can do better justice to the historical development of man. The **scholastic view** is in the nature of the case bound to do injustice to the significance of history. One of two things always takes place. Either an absolute and artificial separation is made between the essence and the nature of man, or, if the separation is overcome, **it is overcome by reducing the distinction to one of degree. The metaphysical and the ethical are either wholly separated or they are reduced to differences of degree.** [\[that's interesting\]](#)

Looking to the past, this appears in the following manner. The idea of grace, whether special or common, is said to be wholly inapplicable to pre-redemptive man because it is exclusively applicable to man who has become a sinner. This might seem to be in the interest of stressing the significance of the historical, that is, the significance of the fact of the fall of man. In reality this would lead to the destruction of the historical by reducing it to the non-rational or irrational. It is the sort of thing that one finds when it is asserted that Adam's choice in paradise for good was equally ultimate with his

choice for evil. **This is the essentially Arminian idea that God does not control whatsoever comes to pass but that man's deeds are ultimate.** On the other hand, when, on this scholastic basis, a continuation is sought between God's attitude toward man before and after the fall, this is sought along metaphysical rather than along ethical lines. That man is not wholly a demon (an ethical notion) is reduced to, or at least commingled with, the idea that man has the power of distinguishing good and evil, which Satan and the lost hereafter also have. **Then common grace becomes interchangeably that which maintains the remnants of the image of God in the wider or the image of God in the narrower sense of the term. In order to avoid the idea that man should be wholly devoid of ethical content it is thought necessary that he have remnants of the "true knowledge" and true morality such as Adam had.**

With singular sagacity Calvin avoided this scholastic approach when he spoke of the revelation of God as penetrating into the *penetralia* of man's psychological being. The sense of deity is the principle of continuity which he presupposes as that in relation to which the ethical reaction of man takes place. And this means that man is always reacting ethically to this revelation of God. He first lives under the general favor of God and reacts favorably. Then he reacts unfavorably and comes under the curse of God. So far as his ethical attitude is concerned this is in principle entirely hostile to God. Then grace comes upon the scene, both saving and non-saving grace. **It does not preserve some remnants either of the image of God in the wider or in the narrower sense, if these should be taken in scholastic form.** How can common grace keep sin from being principal hostility to God? There are no degrees in the principle of depravity. **In this narrower sense the image of God has been lost. On the other hand, common grace does not preserve remnants of the image in the wider sense,** if this image is thought of as that which is unchangeable. How can remnants be saved of that which was never subject to change?

Nor is it adequate to say, "By Common Grace He curbs sin, by Special Grace He purges from sin." (After criticizing me for not doing justice to the "positive operations" of common grace, Masselink continues to define common grace in purely negative terms.) Special grace restrains sin as well as does common grace. In fact, if it were not for the restraining activity of saving grace in the world there would be no restraining activity of common grace. On the other hand, not only saving grace acts positively; common grace does too. **It enables man to do many positive things which he would otherwise not be able to do. And the principle of continuity presupposed in all this is the idea of the image of God as itself revelational of God. The Holy Spirit testifies to man through his own constitution as well as through the facts of the universe around him, that he is God's offspring and should act as such. The sinner seeks to suppress this revelation within himself and around him. He cannot do so fully. He continues to be an image bearer of God; even the lost hereafter will be image bearers of God.** They will continue to receive the revelation of God within their own constitution; they cannot be devoid of ethical reaction. So the remnants of which the confession speaks cannot refer to the fact of man's religiosity or to the fact that he knows the difference between good and evil. His knowing this difference is the presupposition of his sinning against God, and therefore also of his being in any wise the recipient of God's grace, either saving or non-saving. **Common grace is therefore a favor to sinners by which they are kept from working out to the full the principle of sin within them** and thereby are enabled to show some measure of involuntary respect and appreciation for the law of God that speaks to them even through their own constitution as well as through the facts of the world outside.

Excellent comments on man's tendency to suppress the knowledge of God, Romans 1:18. What is the 'expert'? - see also [code518](#) on this. Creator-creature distinction, **man's assumed autonomy** of reason vs God's absolute authority and sovereignty, the Roman Catholic Apologetic, the **Arminian** view vs **Compatibilism**, the **irrational vs the rational view of reality and univocal vs analogical reasoning (Kant, Garth, Schleiermacher, etc.)**, a true interpretation of 'facts' in light of God's plan vs. **brute fact or chance**, and the summary of the **presuppositional apologetic**.

The Authority of God vs. Man's Supposed Autonomy

The "expert" view of Romanism,
Man's Supposed Autonomy &
Brute Fact of Romanism and Arminianism

[Code482](#)

Excerpts from Van Til's book,
The Defense of the Faith

Footnotes added from Dr. Scott Oliphant
(4th edition, pgs 144-170 4th ed.)

Chapter VII

Christian Apologetics (Authority and Reason)

Page 123-150 old ed.

Important subjects: Rome's theology about man's supposed autonomy, autonomous reason and feelings, and the subject of "mystery," brute fact, God's sovereignty over man, Rome's "expert" view idea, and the concept of "chance," etc. And then a good discussion on Arminianism's view of election in view of man's responsibility.

Note on Brute facts: my paraphrase from Greg Bahnsen's teaching on *Natural Theology and the Proofs*:

[[codeBF](#), [brutefactdef](#), and [code524](#) & [codebrute](#) : Brute facts are isolated self-evident arguments, data in a void or *uninterpreted raw data* (Bahnsen: min-mark 27: <https://youtu.be/YmKKC70GIC4>) The unregenerate will only interpret these facts according to his [erroneous] presuppositions which is the error of natural theology (the traditional method of theistic proofs) as opposed to Rom. 1, a theology based upon revelation, where the whole of nature pictures God all at once, not by piecemeal increments of brute facts (bare facts), that in the natural mind (who naturally suppresses the knowledge of God),

will only lead him to the probability of a finite God, not the God of Scripture; facts should not be isolated from the framework in which they come, that is they should be related to the plan of God to be rightly understood. Bahnsen explains this very well in that video on Natural Theology and the Proofs.]

The general principles of methodology that have been discussed in the preceding chapter must now be applied more fully to the problem of authority. Here, if anywhere, the difference between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic methodology becomes clearly apparent. For Rome the authority of the church, in particular that of the Pope, speaking *ex cathedra* is ultimate; for Protestantism the Scripture stands above every statement of the church and its teachers.

The question that now requires fuller discussion is as to how the Roman Catholic and how the Protestant approaches the non-believer on the question authority.

I

Non-Christian Views

To answer this question, it is well that we begin by asking what place the non-believer himself attributes to authority. And in order to discover the place allowed to authority by the natural man it is imperative to note what he means by authority.

There are those, of course, who deny that they need any form of authority. They are the popular atheists and agnostics. Such men say that they must be shown by "reason" whatever they are to accept as true. But the great thinkers among non-Christian men have taken no such position. They know that they cannot cover the whole area of reality with their knowledge. They are therefore willing to admit that there may be others who have information that they themselves do not possess. In everyday life this sort of thinking is illustrated in **the idea of the expert**. A medical doctor knows much about the human body that the rest of us do not know. Then among medical men there are those who, because of natural ability, industry and opportunity, make such discoveries as their fellows do not make. So everywhere and in all respects the **lesser minds are bound to submit to the authority of greater minds**.

In putting the matter in this way the nature of the authority that can be allowed by the natural man is already indicated. **The natural man will gladly allow for the idea of authority if only it be the authority of the expert in the use of reason**. Such a conception of authority is quite consistent with the assumption of the **sinner's autonomy**. [I think John 5:43 has direct bearing on Van Til's conclusion on the expert idea: "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him." i.e., they do not receive Christ's authority, but only that of men, they receive them because they are like themselves, seemingly autonomous!]

On the other hand, the conception of authority as something that stands "above reason" is unacceptable to the natural man. But it is not easy to distinguish in every instance when authority is considered to be "above reason." There are some forms of authority that might seem, at first sight, to be "above reason" while in reality they are not. Some discussion of this matter must therefore precede our analysis of the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant methods of presenting

the authority of Christianity to the natural man. Let us note then some of the forms of authority that are quite acceptable to the natural man because, **in his mind, they do not violate the principle of autonomy.**

First there is the need for authority that grows out of the existence of the endless multiplicity of factual material. Time rolls it ceaseless course. It pours out upon us an endless stream of facts. And the stream is really endless on the non-Christian basis. For those who do not believe that all that happens in time happens **because of the plan of God**, the activity of time like to that, or rather is identical with that of **Chance**. Thus, the ocean of facts has no bottom and no shore. It is this conception of the **ultimacy of time** and of **pure factuality** on which **modern philosophy**, particularly since the days of **Kant**, has laid such great stress. And it is because of the general recognition of the ultimacy of chance that rationalism of the sort that **Descartes**³, **Spinoza**, and **Leibnitz** represented, is out of date. It has become customary to speak of post-Kantian philosophy as irrationalistic. It has been said that **Kant** limited reason so as to make room for faith.⁴ Hence there are those who are willing to grant that man's emotions or his will can get in touch with such aspects of reality as are not accessible to the intellect. The **intellect**, it is said, is not the only, and in religious matters not even the primary instrument with which men come into contact with what is ultimate inhuman experience. There is the world of the moral imperative, of aesthetic appreciation, of the religious *a priori* as well as the world of science. There is in short the world of "**mystery**" into which the prophet or genius of feeling or of will may lead us.

³**René Descartes** (1596- -1650) is perhaps the seminal philosopher of the modern era. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, **Descartes attempted to extend certain knowledge of mathematical truths to other domains of knowledge**. His method was to accept universal doubt in order to ascertain at least one indubitable truth. The indubitable truth that he claimed to find was his own existence. His famous dictum, "*Cognito, ergo sum*" (I think, therefore I am) became the hallmark of modernist thought. Van Til regularly juxtaposes Descartes and Calvin. Whereas Descartes thought he had gained universal truth by way of his own indubitable existence, Calvin begins his *Institutes* by inextricably linking any self-knowledge with knowledge of God. Thus, Descartes' view exhibits autonomy, while Calvin's view entails our dependence upon God. This is a running theme in Van Til's thought.

⁴ This is actually an almost verbatim quote from the preface edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant says, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith," *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), 29.

It is of the greatest import to note that the natural man need not in the least object to the kind of authority that is involved in the idea of irrationalism. And that chiefly for two reasons. In the first place the irrationalism of our day is the direct lineal descendant of the rationalism of previous days. The idea of **pure chance has been inherent in every form of non-Christian thought in the past**. It is the only logical alternative to the position of Christianity according to which the plan of God is back of all. Both Plato and Aristotle were compelled to make room for it in their maturest thought. The pure "non-being" of the earliest rationalism of Greece was but the suppressed "otherness" of the final philosophy

of Plato. So too the idea of pure factuality or **pure chance as ultimate** is but the idea of “otherness” made explicit. Given the non-Christian assumption with respect to man’s autonomy the idea of chance has equal rights with the idea of logic.

In the second place modern irrationalism has not in the least encroached upon the domain of the intellect as the natural man thinks of it. Irrationalism has merely taken possession of that which the intellect, by its own admission, cannot in any case control. **Irrationalism has a secret treaty with rationalism by which the former cedes to the latter** so much of its territory as the latter can at any given time find the forces to control. Kant’s realm of the noumenal has, as it were, agreed to yield so much of its area to the **phenomenal**, as the intellect by its newest weapon can manage to keep in control. Moreover, by the same treaty irrationalism has promised to keep out of its own territory any form of authority that might be objectionable to the **autonomous intellect**. **The very idea of pure factuality or chance is the best guarantee that no true authority, such as that of God as the Creator and Judge of men, will ever confront man.** [Key point! Man knows God, but is suppressing him at every corner. Romans 1] If we compare the realm of the phenomenal as it has been ordered by the autonomous intellect to a clearing in a large forest we may compare the realm of the noumenal to that part of the same forest which has not yet been laid under cultivation by the intellect.

Side note: The **phenomenal** world is the world we are aware of; this is the world we construct out of the sensations that are present to our consciousness. The **noumenal** world consists of things we seem compelled to believe in, but which we can never know (because we lack sense-evidence of it).

Van Til speaks on chance: Now it is this basically and exclusively revelatory character of all the facts of the universe that is either openly or covertly denied by both rationalist and irrationalist forms of heresy. Both hold to a non-Christian view of *possibility*. Both hold that it is at least *possible* that the facts of the universe can be something other than revelatory of God. And this is, in effect, **to posit chance as equally ultimate with God**. And positing chance as equally ultimate with God is virtually the same as denying the existence of God. To say that the evidence, when fully and fairly considered, merely shows that God probably exists is tantamount to saying that he does not at all exist. **The God of Christianity is the God whose counsel or plan is the source of possibility**. The word *possibility* has no possible meaning excerpt upon the presupposition of the existence of the self-contained ontological Trinity as the source of it.

It should be noted, too, that in presupposing chance, rationalism is as irrationalistic as is irrationalism. **Rationalism is secretly, while irrationalism is frankly and openly, addicted to a philosophy of chance**. Both rationalism and irrationalism are therefore committed to a form of empiricism that is utterly out of accord with **Christian theism** [an orthodox study of God]. Though both are committed to a **supposedly neutral attitude**, an attitude that is willing to find in the facts whatsoever there is to be found, it is a foregone conclusion that they will never find Christian theism there. Having presupposed chance back of the facts, they can find chance and nothing but chance in the facts.²¹ *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 197-198

²¹Rationalism is irrationalist because it claims chance. Irrationalism is rationalist because it is committed to neutrality.

My Side note on natural theology, brute facts and traditional theism by Greg Bahnsen
My paraphrase from Greg Bahnsen's teaching on problem with natural theology, the traditional theistic proofs:

Brute facts are isolated assumed self-evident arguments, data in a void or *uninterpreted raw data* (Bahnsen: min-mark 27: <https://youtu.be/YmKKC70GIC4>) The unregenerate will only interpret these facts according to his [erroneous] presuppositions which is the error of natural theology (the traditional method of theistic proofs) as opposed to Rom. 1, a theology based upon revelation, where the whole of nature pictures God all at once, not by piecemeal increments of brute facts, that, in the natural mind (who naturally suppresses the knowledge of God), will only lead him to the probability of a finite God, not the God of Scripture; facts should not be isolated from the framework in which they come. Bahnsen explains this very well in that video on *Natural Theology and the Proofs.*] see also [codebrute](#)

The **realm of mystery** is on this basis simply the realm of that which is not yet known. And the service of irrationalism to rationalism may be compared to that of some bold huntsman in the woods who keeps all lions and tigers away from the clearing. This bold huntsman covers the whole of the infinitely extended forest, ever keeping away all danger from the clearing. This irrationalistic Robin Hood is so much of a rationalist that he virtually makes a universal negative statement about what can happen in all future time. In the secret treaty spoken of he has assured the intellect of the **autonomous man** that the God of Christianity cannot possibly exist and that no man therefore needs to fear the coming of a judgment. **If the whole course of history is, at least in part, controlled by chance, then there is no danger that the autonomous man will ever meet with the claims of authority as the Protestant believes in it.** For the notion of authority is but the expression of the idea that God by his counsel controls all things that happen in the course of history.

There is a second kind of authority that the natural man is quite ready to accept. It does not spring, as did the first, from the fact that the intellect can by definition not control the whole realm of chance. It springs from the fact that even that which the intellect does assert about the objects of knowledge is, of necessity, involved in **contradiction**. F. H. Bradley's great book, *Appearance and Reality*, has brought out this point with the greatest possible detail. The point is not that the many philosophers who have speculated on the nature of reality have actually contradicted each other and themselves. The point is rather that in the nature of the case all logical assertion with respect to the world of temporal existence must needs be, it is said, **self-contradictory in character**.

On this assumptions of the natural man logic is a timeless impersonal principle, and facts are controlled by chance. It is by means of universal timeless principle of logic that the natural man must, on his assumptions, seek to make intelligible assertions about the world of reality or chance. But this cannot be done without falling into self-contradictions. **About chance, no manner of assertion can be made. In its very idea it is the irrational.** And how are rational assertions to be made about the

irrational? If they are to be made, then it must be because the irrational is itself wholly reduced to the rational. That is to say if the natural man is to make any intelligible assertions about the world of “reality” or “fact” which, according to him is what it is for no rational reason at all, then he must make the virtual claim of rationalizing the irrational. To be able to distinguish one fact from another fact he must reduce all time existence, all factuality to immovable timeless being. But when he had done so he has killed all individuality and factuality as conceived of on his basis. Thus, the natural man must on the one hand assert that all reality is not-structural in nature and on the other hand that all reality is structural in nature. He must even assert on the one hand that all reality is non-structurable in nature and on the other hand that he himself has virtually structured all of it. Thus, all his predication is in the nature of the case self-contradictory.

Realizing this dilemma, many modern philosophers have argued that any intellectual system of interpretation is therefore no more than a perspective.⁶ No system, these men assert, should pretend to be more than a system “for us.” We have to deal with reality as if it will always behave as we have found it behaving in the past. The world of appearance formed by means of the exercise of the intellect must be taken as “somehow” similar to the world of Reality. And thus we seem to have come again upon the **idea of mystery**, the world of “faith” and of “authority” where prophets and seers may suggest to us the visions they have seen in night.

⁶After Immanuel Kant attempted to prove that knowledge of reality is had by way of subjective categories (i.e., categories of the mind), some prominent German philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), turned to "**perspectivism**." Perspectivism, given its more radical subjectivism, was able to incorporate contradictions, given that every truth was simply a truth for particular person. This view has affinities with present-day **postmodernism** generally, and a post-evangelicalism specifically.

Such then seems to be the present situation. Modern philosophy in practically all of its schools admits that all its speculations end in mystery. Speaking generally, modern philosophy (and science) is phenomenalistic **[by senses only, what we are conscious of]**. **It admits that ultimate reality is unknowable to man**. All systems of interpretation are said to be necessarily relative to the mind of man. And so it seems at first sight that modern philosophy ought, on its own principles, to admit that there is a dimension of reality that is beyond its reach and about which it ought therefore to be ready to listen by the avenue of authority. Modern philosophy would seem to be ready therefore to listen to the vice of “religion.” So far instance Dorothy Emmet⁷ views the matter.

“The heart of religion, as far as I can see it, seems to be an intuitive response to something which evokes our worship. Let me first explain what I here understand by ‘intuitive.’ I am using the word to mean a kind of apprehension which is reached by methods other than those of critical reflection. It is the kind of apprehension we use when we grasp the character of a person, or the demands of a situation, without being aware of the steps by which we have arrived at our judgment.”

⁷Dorothy M. Emmet (1904-2000) was a British political philosopher whose interests included metaphysics and social theory. For more than twenty years she was professor of philosophy at the university of Manchester.

On such a view it might seem that one should be able to accept the authority of Jesus. And Miss Emmet can allow for the authority of Jesus. But it is still **no more than the authority of the expert**. For those who think as she does, Jesus is nothing more than the kind of person they would like to be and could be if only they lived up to their own ideals.

The natural man then assumes that he has the final criterion of truth within himself. [Key point!] Every form of authority that comes to him must justify itself by standards inherent in man and operative apart from the authority that speaks. But what has been said has dealt only with modern philosophy. A word must be added about modern theology. Surely we shall find here a more ready recognition of the need of authority! More than that we shall expect to find here the advocates of authority! But in this we are disappointed. Modern theology is, to be sure, ready to defend the need and place of authority. **But it will defend no authority that is not acceptable to modern philosophy and science. It too advocates the authority of the expert only.**

II Modern Theological Views

It needs no argument to prove this contention true with respect to Schleiermacher,⁹ the father of modern theology. His great work *The Christian Faith* is largely controlled in its epistemology by the principle of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. He speaks, to be sure, of the religious man and of his absolute dependence upon God. He seems to limit the claims of the human intellect. He says that by means of it we cannot reach God. It is by our feeling of dependence that we have contact with God. But in all this he is simply setting forth a religious phenomenalism. **[one based on feelings/senses]** It is no virtue to decry the **autonomous intellect** if one sets up in its stead an **autonomous feeling**. And that is precisely what Schleiermacher does. In his theology **it is still the human personality as such that has the final criterion of truth within itself.**

⁹Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is sometimes called the "father of modern theology," in part, because he is the first well-known theologian to incorporate Kant's philosophy into his theology.

For a contemporary discussion of the relation between authority and reason on the part of a great churchman and a great philosopher we may turn to the work of A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*. Taylor pleads for a place for authority in human thought. **But no authority, he says, can be absolute. An absolute authority could not be transmitted through history and if it could be transmitted it could not be received.** The mind of man contributes to all that it receives. Kant has taught us this once for all and we cannot depart from it. Hence no orthodox doctrine of authority can ever be accepted. Such is the burden of Taylor's argument and it is typical of what one hears in varying forms.

The late archbishop William Temple also asks for no higher authority than that of the **expert** in his work, *Nature, Man and God*, London, 1925. The spiritual authority of revelation, he contends, "depends wholly upon the spiritual quality of what is revealed." And whether what is revealed be spiritual, of that, argues Temple in effect, **man himself must ever be the final judge**.

But what of **Karl Barth** and **Emil Brunner**?¹³ Have they not bravely contended for the "absolutely other" God? Are not they the "theologians of the Word"? Look at the lashing Barth gives the "consciousness theologians," the followers of **Schleiermacher** and **Ritschl**, just because they have been virtual ventriloquists, speaking in the name of God that which in reality proceeds only from themselves. (*Dogmatik*, 1927). Note too with what increasing consistency through the periods of his development Barth has set his theology over against that of "modern Protestantism." A true theology, argues Barth, has its chief canon in the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" instead of in the logic of Aristotle or Kant. **A true theology must break with all systems of philosophy, with all Promethean constructions of the human intellect and reach man in the depth of his being with the voice of God's authority speaking in its own name**. Here then it would seem that among all the "types of modern theology" we have found one that stands up like a Daniel against modern philosophy and science with the voice of the living God.

¹³ Van Til is thinking here primarily of the neo-orthodoxy associated with both Barth and Brunner (1889-1966). Neo-orthodoxy, in its reaction against liberalism, used the language of historic theology (thus, "orthodoxy"), but attempted to synthesize its concepts with concepts prevalent since Immanuel Kant (thus, "neo-").

Sad to say, however, the "absolutely other" God of Barth is absolutely other only in the way that a sky-rocket is "absolutely other" to the mind of the child. Barth's god has first been cast up into the heights by the projective activity of the world-be auton-escape it, [?] still controlled by some form of modern critical philosophy. And this means that the mind of man is always thought of as contributing **something ultimate** to all the information it receives. **Accordingly, the "absolutely other" god of Barth remains absolute just so long as he is absolutely unknown**. In that case **he is identical with the realm of mystery which the autonomous man admits of as existing beyond the reach of his thought**. It then has no more content and significance than the vaguest conception of something indeterminate. There is no more meaning in the idea of God as Barth holds it than there was in the idea of the apeiron, the indefinite, of Anaximander the Greek philosopher. On the other hand, when the god of **Barth** does reveal himself he reveals himself wholly. **For Barth God is exhaustively known if he is known at all**. That is to say to the extent that this god is known he is nothing distinct from the principles that are operative in the universe. **He is then wholly identical with man and his world**, it appears then that when the god of Barth is wholly mysterious and as such should manifest himself by revelation only, he remains wholly mysterious and does not reveal himself. On the other hand, when this god does reveal himself **his revelation is identical with what man can know apart from such a revelation**. **Thus, there is absolute authority which either says nothing or when it says something has lost its character as authority**. And the fact that Barth thinks of revelation dialectically means in this connection only **that his god is both absolutely hidden and absolutely revealed simultaneously**. And this can be maintained only if the very idea of authority as orthodox Christianity conceives of it **on the basis of the Creator-**

creature distinction has first been discarded.^A If this distinction is maintained there can be no such dialectical relationship between the hidden and the revealed character of God. In that case God cannot, to be sure, ever reveal himself exhaustively. The mind of man is finite and knows only by thinking God's thoughts after him. But what it knows it then knows truly. It has at its disposal the revelation of God. **This revelation does not hide God while it reveals him; it reveals him truly, though not exhaustively.**

^A**codeCC1** Van Til states: The distinction between the approach of the "ancient" mind and the "modern" mind is not fundamental. The "objectivism" of the ancient mind is only gradationally distinct from the "subjectivism" of the modern mind. **There is not true transcendence in Platonism, Aristotelianism, or Stoicism**, any more than there is in modern existentialism and dialecticism.

The only distinction that will set off the Christian Approach to knowledge and reality and therefore also the Christian doctrine of revelation from the non-Christian views is that between the fully Protestant or Reformed view that does, and the general non-Christian view, whether ancient or modern, whether rationalist or irrationalist, that does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic to its thought. There are those who serve and worship God, and those who serve and worship man. Calvin most adequately represents the former, and modern **existentialism** and **pragmatism** most adequately represent the latter. Thomas Aquinas seeks to combine the two positions. P 202 *Into to Systematic Theology*

What has been said about Barth holds, with minor changes, also for Emil Brunner and for such other theologians as Reinhold Niebuhr and John A. Mackay. In their theology, as in that of Barth, it is the **autonomous religious consciousness** that divides itself into two sections after the style of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. **The higher aspect of addresses itself to the lower aspect and insists upon obedience to its voice.** **Thus, men tell themselves that they have listened to and obeyed the voice of Jesus or of God, while they have only obeyed themselves.**

¹⁴ To try to understand Van Til's critique of Barth would take us beyond the present work. Two points, however, of explanation: For Barth, revelation is historical, but history is not revelational. Barth was concerned to emphasize the absolute freedom of God. The incarnation, therefore, while being a historical fact, was not itself revelational of God in the sense that God did not bind himself by taking on human flesh. Barth's notion of *Geschichte* is employed in order to explain how God can be both revealed in history, while not himself revelational. What takes place in history (*Historie*), cannot be identified with what takes place in *Geschichte*: So, says, Van Til, "God's revelation in Christ is and remains God's revelation. . . . At the same time this revelation reveals God wholly. . . . Both of these aspects are expressed in the idea of Jesus Christ as *Geschichte*." Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 15. This topic will present itself again in chapter 14.

¹⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), known more for his social action and ethics developed ideas coincident with neo-orthodoxy, particularly its dialecticism. Among his most significant works is *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.

¹⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) taught at Yale Divinity School from 1931 until his death. With his brother Reinhold, he developed what has been called a "Christian realism," which was akin to neo-orthodoxy. Among his best-known works is *Christ and Culture*.

¹⁷ Nels F. S. Ferré (1908-71) was a Swedish-American theologian. He taught at the Northern Baptist Andover-Newton Theological School and at Vanderbilt. Ferré had sympathies with neo-orthodox theology as evidenced in his works *Pillars of Faith*, *The Christian Understanding of God*, and *The Sun and the Umbrella*.

¹⁸ John A. Mackay (1889-1983) is best known as professor and president of Princeton Theological Seminary (1936-59) and as the founder, in 1944, of *Theology Today*. Among his works are *A Preface to Christian Theology and Protestantism*.

¹⁹ The struggle with modernism at Princeton Seminary included the appointment of Emil Brunner, but also the election of Homrighausen (1900-1982) to the chair of Christian education in 1939. See Cornelius Van Til, "Homrighausen Approved," *Presbyterian Guardian* 6 (July 1939): 136-37.

It appears then that, in Protestant circles at least, there seems in our day to be general agreement as to the nature of authority and the relation it is to sustain to reason. There is a quite general acceptance of authority but **it is merely the authority of the expert**. And this authority presupposes that, in the last analysis, man is dealing with an ultimately mysterious environment. **It takes for granted that God, no less than man, is surrounded by mystery**. It is no wonder that those who work on the **principle of the autonomy of reason** have no difficulty in accepting such a concept of authority. The followers of the autonomous reason have, in modern times, **themselves asserted the need of the idea of the ultimately mysterious**. **The Mysterious Universe, the universe in which facts are what they are for no rational reason, is the presupposition both of modern science and of modern philosophy**. And this position is not challenged by modern theology.

III The Roman Catholic View

Is it then to the church of Rome that we must go in order to find a challenge to the modern concept of reason as autonomous and of authority as merely that of those who have probed the realm of utter darkness a little more deeply than others? At first sight this might seem to be the case. A. E. Taylor relates a little story that might seem to point in that direction. "It relates," he says, "that a Roman Catholic theologian was in conversation with an outsider, who remarked that there seemed to be no real difference between the position of Rome and that of a well-known and highly respected 'Anglo-Catholic.'" 'Pardon me,' replied the theologian, 'we are at the opposite pole from X. He holds every doctrine we hold, but holds them all for the entirely irrelevant reason that he thinks them true.'" But this story in and by itself would not give an adequate notion of the Roman Catholic position either on

the **meaning of authority** or **on its relation to reason**. A brief word must therefore be said on this subject.

To ascertain the **Romish concept of reason**, we may start from the fact that by Roman Catholic theologians Aristotle is taken to be the “philosopher *par excellence*, as St. Thomas is the theologian.” Now theology, says Maritain, presupposes certain truths of the “natural order.” These truths are naturally known to all men and are worked out scientifically by the philosophers and particularly by Aristotle. “The premises of philosophy are self-supported and are not derived from those of theology.” Etienne Gilson²⁴ expresses the same thought when he says:

“The heritage of Greek thought, even when cut to the minimum and judged most critically, is still worthy of admiration. So true is this that a number of the Fathers were convinced that the pagan thinkers had access to the Bible without admitting to it. One first being, the supreme principle and cause of nature, source of all intelligibility, of all order, and of all beauty, who eternally leads a life of happiness, because, being thought itself, it is an eternal contemplation of its own thought, all that was taught by Aristotle; and if we compare his theology to the ancient mythologies we will see at a glance what immense progress human reason had made since the era of Chronos and Jupiter without the aid of Christian Revelation. Doubtless there were many lacunae, and numberless errors mingled with these truths. But they were still truths. Discovered by the natural reason of the Greeks, they owed nothing to faith; still discoverable today, with even greater ease, by the same natural reason, why should they owe more to faith in our own reason than in Aristotle’s?”

²⁴Etienne Gilson (18184-1978) was a French philosopher and theologian, and was one of the founders of the neo-Thomist movement. He helped the Pontifical Institute of Medical Studies in Toronto, Canada in 1929. Among his works is *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*.

He's workin' it here...

Besides this “natural order” which can be discovered by reason apart from faith, there is the order of faith. And as the assertions by reason in the natural order do not depend for their validity upon faith, so **those in the order of faith do not depend for their validity upon the assertions of reason**. “The affirmations of Catholic faith [I think he means - not in the *Roman Catholic* sense] ultimately depend on no reasoning, fallible or otherwise, but on the Word of God. For indeed whatever reason is able to know about God with a perfect knowledge, precisely because it is thus knowable, cannot essentially belong in the order of faith. [I have to assume because faith is imperfect in this life]

The order of nature as set forth by **autonomous reason** and the order of faith accepted exclusively on authority both deal with God and his relation to man. **The question that at once appears is as to how it may be known that the God of reason and the God of faith are the same God**. [Now we are getting somewhere!] There is the more reason for asking this question inasmuch as it is admitted that the reason which discovers the truths of the natural order is “wounded.” “The true Catholic position consists in maintaining that nature was created good, that it has been wounded, but that it can be at least partially healed by grace if God so wishes.” It might seem that grace must first restore the powers of reason at least to the extent of healing its wounds before reason can function normally. And Gilson

does in fact speak of a Christian philosophy which is the product of a reason [I think he meant “product of reason”] that is restored by grace. Such a philosophy, he argues, is the best philosophy. It is the best philosophy because in it reason best comes to its own. But even so the problem remains the same. Here it is Aristotle who has by means of this wounded reason constructed the truths of the natural order as noted. **Is then the God whom Aristotle discovers the same God of whom Christian theology speaks?**

Gilson himself confronts us with the seriousness of the problem when he says in pointed fashion that reason or philosophy can deal only with **essences** and not with **existence**. Yet it is of the existence of God that it is supposed to speak.

“When, for instance Aristotle was positing his first self-thinking Thought as the supreme being, he certainly conceived it as a pure Act and as an infinitely powerful energy; still, his god was but the pure Act of a Thought. This infinitely powerful actuality of a self-thinking principle most certainly deserves to be called a pure Act, but it was a pure Act in the order of knowing, not in that of existence. **Now nothing can give what it has not.** Because the supreme Thought of Aristotle was not ‘He who is,’ it could not give existence: **hence the world of Aristotle was not a created world.** [That is a KEY point! and is why Paul when disputing with the Greeks in Rome referred to God who is the Creator in distinction from creatures.] Because the supreme Thought of Aristotle was not the pure Act of existing, its self-knowledge did not entail the knowledge of all being, both actual and possible: the god of Aristotle was not a providence; he did not even know a world which he did not make and which he could not possibly have made because he was thought of as a Thought, nor did he know the self-awareness of “Him who is.”²⁹

²⁹ Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 66. As we have noted, for Aristotle, the highest possible thing was “thought thinking itself.” This thought could think nothing else, because to think anything else would mean that the highest thought would be dependent on something else to be what it is, and thus it would not be the highest. For Gilson and for Gilson’s Thomism, a distinction must always be made between **existence** (being) and **essence** (attributes of being). Because **Aristotle** argued that the highest thing is thought, he could not account for existence itself, only for thought itself. Thus, there could be no actuality of existence, and thus no accounting for that which is.

Taking over this philosophy of Aristotle, St. Thomas was bound, in comparison, to “translate all the problems concerning being from the language of essences into that of existences.” But could he do so without suppressing reason? Was it St. Thomas the theologian who, because of his faith, was able to make this transposition from the realm of abstract essences to that of existence? If it was, **then no progress has been made in solving the problem of the relation of authority and reason.** In fact, the problem then seems to be more difficult than ever. For the god of Aristotle has then begun to appear to be quite different from the God of the Christian faith. **Aristotle’s god**, it is admitted, **has not created the world, and does not know the world.** If such a god is the natural outcome of the activity of reason when it is not enlightened by faith does it not seem as though faith will have to reverse the doctrine of reason with respect to God? A philosophy that deals with essences only would seem to resemble a

merry-go-round hovering above reality but never touching it.³⁰ Yet according to Rome, St. Thomas (Aquinas) the Christian theologian need not at all ask St. Thomas the autonomous philosopher to reverse his decisions on the fundamental question about the existence of God.”

My Comment: The Aristotelian proof and the Thomistic proof of the existence of God is quite fascinating and makes sense; but then, for an unbeliever, has this not just confirmed his own belief of a god of his own making? Yep. Because, again, human philosophy is still blind to the truth of God’s true nature and being and the implications of him being the Sovereign Creator.

It would appear then that St. Thomas the theologian might appear with the God of Moses, the “he who is,” in order to present him for acceptance to St. Thomas the philosopher. If the God of Moses, the Creator and controller of the world, is the one to be accepted by St., Thomas the philosopher, he must first be reduced from an existent God to a pure essence, from the “He who is” to the “it that is not.” St. Thoams the philosopher is bound, by the principles of his beliefs about reality in general. And this involves the rejection of the existence of God whose existence and knowledge cannot be thus related.³¹ There would seem to be no escape from the conclusion that if we start with autonomous reason and contend that it deals with essence only, the being which comes to expression through these essences is a being whose very existence is that of correlativity to the human mind. Kant and his followers were not illogical when they drew this conclusion. We cannot start with Aristotle without eventually falling prey to Kant.

³⁰ “Hovering about reality but never touching it” because essences must have existence in order to be, and thus in order to be *real*.

³¹ In other words, the attempt to synthesize Christianity with Greek philosophy will end in futility.

Gilson seeks desperately to escape this conclusion. Like all Roman Catholic apologists he must at some time or other face this question as to how the “He who is” of Moses and the “it that is not” of Aristotle are related. He does so by arguing as follows: “Beyond a world wherein ‘to be’ is everywhere at hand, and where every nature can account for what other natures are but not for their common existence, there must be some cause whose very essence is **pure Act** of existing, that is, whose essence is not to be this and that, but ‘to be,’ is also to posit the Christian God as the supreme cause of the universe.” But this argument does not escape the dilemma just mentioned. **The logical implication of the method of Aristotle is his “god,” the “it that is not.”** That has been asserted by Gilson himself and it is clearly correct. **That is the only god that is accessible to reason alone.** Yet Gilson constantly speaks as though “the existence of one God, the sole Creator of the world” is also accessible to reason. And this God is supposed to be accessible to reason in the way that is shown in the quotation just given. **But how can a god who is not and a God who is the Creator of the world both be the logical implication of the one true method of philosophy?**

Yet it might seem that we have reached a position which involves the idea of absolute authority for at least one dimension of life. The order of faith and all that it contains is to be accepted purely on authority. Here then we seem to have reached the idea of **absolute rather than expert authority.**

Before we have finished with the **Roman Catholic view** of the relation of authority to reason, however, there are further matters to be considered.

In the first place it has been noted how valiantly Gilson seeks to defend the dia of the **autonomy of reason**. If then the dimensions of reason and of faith are finally to be brought together into union with one another there will have to be a compromise. If there is on thing on which Roman Catholics insist, it is that only on their position is it possible to do justice to the statement of St. Paul that every man naturally knows something of God, without compromising the uniqueness of the Christian faith. In other words, they maintain that it is in their system as a whole that there is a true union of the natural and the supernatural. But it is not difficult to see that if the **autonomy of reason** is to be maintained and the absolute **authority of faith** as well, any **union between them must be one of compromise**.

In the second place we may discover the nature of the compromise if we go back to the Roman Catholic conception of the nature of man, and especially of man's freedom in relation to God. **According to Roman Catholic theology man has a measure of autonomy over against the plan of God. God has to await man's decisions on many points. Thus, God does not really control whatsoever comes to pass.³⁴ And this means that man's ultimate environment is only partly under God's direction. All of this implies, in effect, that on the basis of Roman Catholic theology there is **mystery** for God as well as for man. God himself is therefore on this basis surrounded by **brute fact**. [isolated uninterpreted data or data in a void; fact should not be isolated from the framework in which they come. See **codeBF** and **code524 & codebrute**] It is no wonder then that, holding this doctrine of the **ultimacy of the mind and will of man** in its theology, Romish theology should recognize the legitimacy of the idea of **autonomy** in the field of philosophy. Even when it speaks of the Christian philosophy, as Gilson does, it must still base this philosophy upon the idea of autonomy. And even when it speaks of the original perfection of man when his reason was not "**wounded**" Rome still holds to the idea of **autonomy for the mind and will of man** to some extent. In all stage and in all respects of its thinking it is committed to this idea. In all stages and in all respects it is therefore also committed to the idea of **brute fact** as a part of man's ultimate environment.**

Now it is this fact that Rome is always and everywhere committed to the idea of brute fact as such, to eventuation apart from the counsel of god, that is all **determinative** on the question of its conception of the relation of reason to authority. A truly Christian concept of authority presupposes that in all hie does man is face to face with the requirement of God.³⁵ But how could man be face to face with the requirement of God if God does not control all things? How could God face man with this requirement there where he has no power to rule? It is only on the idea of the **comprehensiveness of the plan of God** [God's eternal decree] that a true concept of authority can be based. And this is to say, in effect, that only on the idea of the covenant as all comprehensive with respect to every phase of human life can the idea of authority find a footing.³⁶

³⁴This follows from a libertarian notion of free will in which God may know what man will do, but he may not in any way control his decisions.

³⁵See again Romans 1:18, 2:16, esp. 1:32

³⁶ By “covenant” here Van Til means the fact of God’s exhaustive presence and the requirements coincident with that presence for all mankind. This is, perhaps, the central notion of Van Til’s approach.

Our conclusion then is that while the Roman Catholic notion of authority seems at first sight to be very absolute – in fact even more absolute than that of Protestantism – it is in reality not absolute at all. Its idea of **autonomy** wins out in every case. And so it comes to pass that the Roman Catholic doctrines of faith are in **every instance adjusted to the idea of human autonomy**. To be sure, the natural man is said to be fallen, but he has fallen but a little way; even in the state of rectitude he justly insisted on autonomy. Does the fallen character of man consist in his using this autonomy unwisely? To be sure, the Christian man is healed by grace; but even when he is healed, he is still advised to exercise his autonomous will to some extent over against the plan of God. The concept of **covenant obedience** does not fit in anywhere in Roman Catholic theology or philosophy. Our conclusion must therefore be that even Rome offers nothing in the way of authority that is clearly different from the idea of the **expert** as this is willingly granted by the natural man. [**expert: man will listen to the wisdom of man and submit to that as opposed to the authority of Scripture. Van Til: “One such a view it might seem that one should be able to accept the authority of Jesus.”**]

The Roman Catholic concept of tradition only corroborates what has been said. In its “Devree concerning the canonical Scriptures” the Council of Trent speaks of the “unwritten traditions” which are as it were transmitted from hand to hand. These unwritten traditions are accorded the same authority as Scripture. Christian truth, it is said, has come to us by way of two distinct streams, one of which is found in Scripture and the second of which is found in tradition. To be sure this tradition may, to some extent at least, be itself reduced to writing. Yet there is no body of writings which the church officially accepts as containing the written statement of what it accepts as tradition. It is the living voice of the Church speaking in its official ministers, and especially the Pope, that is the final guardian of this tradition. Tradition is therefore finally that which the church propounds from time to time.

The bearing of this conception of tradition on the questions of authority and its relation to reason must now be drawn. The hierarchy of the church in general, and of the **Pope** in particular, is not to be thought of as itself subject to the final and comprehensive revelation of God. **There is not place anywhere in the whole of Roman Catholic thought for the idea that any human being should be wholly subject to God. On the contrary, the position of Rome requires the rejection of the counsel of God as all-determinative.** Hence the **Pope** himself, as he makes up his mind with respect to the **infallible pronouncement** that this office requires or permits him to make from time to time, must seek as an **expert to interpret the meaning of brute fact, of being in general**. What the Bible teaches him he will be required to relate to what his **autonomous reason** teaches him with respect to being in general. The result is that the voice of God as the controller and governor of man and the universe can never speak through the voice of the Pope. Those who listen to the voice of the Pope are listening to the **voice of an expert [as opposed to sola scriptura!]** who is supposed, for some wholly non-rational reason, to be able to peer more deeply into the realm of “Being” than other men.

It appears then, that so far from being the defender of the true Christian concept of authority and of reason, Rome offers a compromise on both ideas and therefore on the relation between them. Holding

to a concept of reason that is not itself interpreted in terms of the doctrine of **God as self-contained** it can offer no concept of authority that really stands above reason. Its authority therefore is the falling authority of one man dealing with “being in general” and guessing about it, over another man also dealing with “being in general” and guessing about it. **It is the authority that brings men into bondage.**

The entire position of Rome then with respect to authority and its relations to reason illustrates the weakness of Roman Catholic apologetics in general. **It has no clear-cut position that can be contrasted with that of the natural man. [Key point!] It cannot therefore challenge the position of the natural man with any effectiveness at any point.** Assuming the correctness of the starting point and the method of the natural man in the natural sphere **it cannot logically ask men to accept the authority of God even in the spiritual sphere.** [And that is the man problem with Rome and Arminianism.]

The Arminian View (codeArm)

It will appear to many as a very strange thinking to say that Arminian theology is similar to that of Romanism on the question of authority. Yet this is really the case. Of course, it is true that evangelical Arminians reject the ritualism and the hierarchy of Rome. **It is also true that individual Arminians are much better in their practical attitude toward Scripture than their system of theology permits them to be.** [for example, they insist of man’s will as free, not to be influence by God or anything outside themselves that would sway their will one way or the other, then they pray “O God, change that man’s heart, etc.” a clear contradiction to their own creed, that the will is self-directed, autonomous, etc.] It is only of this system of theology that we speak.³⁷ And of it – there is not escape from it – the assertion must be made that its conception of reason is similar to that of Rome and therefore its conception of authority cannot be very different from that of Rome.

³⁷ It is difficult to overstate the importance of this statement. We must keep in mind that Van Til is critical of faulty systems of theology and where those systems will take those who follow them consistently, not that individuals who hold those systems will necessarily go that far.

There is nothing on which Arminian theology is more insistent than that the Reformed doctrine of election does injustice to man’s responsibility. Yet the Reformed doctrine of election is but the consistent expression in the field of man’s relation to God of the general teaching of Scripture that all things in history happen by the plan of God. The Arminian doctrine of responsibility therefore presupposes the rejection of the idea of the plan of God as all-inclusive. And this means that the idea of **brute fact [chance; see codebrute] is one of the basic ingredients** of the Arminian position. Man is therefore once again partly related to God and partly to some form of “being in general.” **And this in term means that God himself is confronted with that which determines his powers and actions.** He is limited by the facts of Reality about him and his knowledge is accordingly surrounded by mystery.

Thus we are back at the arch foe of Christianity, namely, **the idea of human ultimacy or autonomy**. This idea of autonomy expresses itself in modern times by holding that in all that comes to man he gives as well as takes. Modern philosophy has, particularly since the day of Kant, boldly asserted that only that is real for man which he has, in part at least, constructed for himself.

This is very good here:

Nor is this modern form of manifestation of the would-be autonomous man illogical. **In every non-Christian concept of reality brute facts** [isolated self-evident, uninterpreted arguments or data in a void; fact should not be isolated from the framework in which they come.] **or chance** plays a basic role. **This is so because anyone who does not hold to God's counsel as being man's ultimate environment, has no alternative but to assume or assert that chance is ultimate. Chance is simply the metaphysical correlative of the idea of the autonomous man.** The autonomous man will not allow that reality is already structural in nature by virtue of the structural activity of **God's eternal plan**. [that's why Arminians despise God's decreeing anything especially election] But if reality is **non-structural in nature, then man is the one** who for the first time, and therefore in an absolutely original fashion, **is supposed to bring structure into reality**. But all this amounts only to saying that **modern philosophy** is quite consistent with its own principles when it contends that in all that man knows he gives as well as takes. **It is merely the non-rational that is given to him; he himself rationalizes it for the first time.** [man placing himself into the room of God.] And so that which appears to him as rationally related reality is so related primarily because he himself has rationalized it.

The modern form of **autonomy** expresses itself then both in a negative and in a positive fashion. Negatively it assumes or asserts that that which is "out there," that is, that which has not yet come into contact with the human mind, **is wholly non-structural or non-rational in character**. We are not now concerned so much to point out that this assumption is itself not very reasonable to make for one who claims to limit his assertions to what human experience can control. Human experience can hardly establish the universal negative assertion about the whole of reality and therefore about all future eventuality that is implied in the assumption of the average modern philosopher or scientist. What it is our main concern, however. To point out now is that the Arminian theologian is not in a good position to challenge this modern man in his attitude toward the authority of Scripture.

What is the attitude toward the idea of Scripture that we would expect to find on the part of modern man? Will he readily accept the idea? Will he be open-minded with respect to the "evidence" for the Scriptural teaching with respect to such doctrines as creation, providence, and miracles? Will he be open-minded with respect to revelation given about future eventuation? That is to say, will he be ready to accept information about that which happens in a realm totally beyond human experience or what has happened, does happen and will happen by way of influence from that realm that is totally beyond human experience upon the realm of human experience? The answer is obvious. **The entire idea of inscripturated supernatural revelation is not merely foreign to but would be destruction of the idea of autonomy on which the modern man builds his thought.** If modern man is right in his assumption with respect to his own autonomy then he cannot even for a moment logically consider evidence for the fact of the supernatural in any form as appearing to man. The very idea of such a God, says the modern follower of Kant, is fine as a **limiting notion**. Taken as a limiting notion it is quite innocent and even useful.³⁸ For then it stands merely for the ideal of exhaustive rationality. And science requires such an

ideal. But the idea of such a God as taken by orthodox Christians, that is as a constitutive rather than as a limiting concept, is meaningless; it would kill the idea of pure facts as the correlative to pure rationality. And the idea of pure fact as a limiting concept is as necessary to modern science as is the idea of pure rationality. [deep]

³⁸ A **limiting notion**, in this case, is one that needs another notion in order to be comprehensive. In this case, the limiting notion of God is the need of the notion of man as free.

It is therefore logically quite impossible for the natural man, holding as he does to the idea of autonomy, even to consider the "evidence" for the Scripture as the final and absolutely authoritative revelation of the God of Christianity. The God of Christianity is for him logically irrelevant to human experience. It would therefore be as sensible to talk about his revealing himself either in nature or in Scripture as it would be to ascribe to the man in the moon the perpetration of some murder in one's neighborhood.

This way of putting the matter may seem to some to be extreme. Yet we believe it to be strictly in accord with the facts. There are, to be sure, some among modern philosophers, particularly those of the theistic and personalist schools, who seem to be favorably disposed to what they call a positive religion. And among the positive religious they will pick out Christianity as the most acceptable. Mention may again be made of A. E. Taylor in his recent book *Does God Exist?* Taylor argues for "the existence of God" **but since he works on the assumption of the autonomy of man, the kind of god he believes in is, after all, a finite deity.** When he deals with the tenets of historic Christianity Taylor makes perfectly clear that, on this principle, one could not accept them as being what they are presented as being in Scripture. Speaking of the resurrection of Jesus he says: "That St. Paul and the other Apostles believed this is as certain as any fact of past history can be; it is quite another question whether that belief was not a mistaken interpretation of their experiences. Since it is a familiar fact that men do sometimes misinterpret their experience, there is nothing in the principle irrational in the suggesting that St. Paul and the other Apostles did this, and no man can prove 'beyond all shadow of doubt' that they did not." Taylor simply assumes that every human mind, that of an apostle no less than that of any other man, **contributes in an original sense to what it receives.** The result is that even if he could believe in a self-contained God- which on his premises he cannot - Taylor cannot believe that any man could receive any revelation from such a God without to some extent, in the very act of reception, confusing it with his own experiences that operate independently of this God.

The whole attitude of the modern man with respect to the idea of authoritative revelation such as is given in Scripture may therefore be summed up in the following points. **Such a God as Scripture speaks of simply does not exist.** This idea of the non-existence of God is involved, as has been noted, in the assumption of **brute factuality.** In the second place, if such a God did exist, he could not manifest himself in the world that we know. **For that world is known to be something other than the revelation of God; it is known to be a combination of brute factuality and the rationalizing activity of autonomous man with respect to them.** In the third place, even if such a God did reveal himself in such a world as is known to be something other than a manifestation of him, no man could receive such a revelation without falsifying it. In the fourth place, if in spite of these three points a revelation had been received in the past it could not be transmitted to men of the present time without their

again falsifying it. In the fifth place, if in spite of everything such a revelation of such a God as the Bible speaks of came to man today, he in turn could not receive it without falsifying it.

[This is good on Arminianism:](#)

Now, **Arminianism** has no valid argument for the idea of Biblical authority with which to challenge the position of modern man. Its own concept of man, as acting **independently of the plan of God** to some extent, and therefore its own view of the human mind as being ultimate in some respects, paralyzes its apologetical efforts. Like the Roman Catholic, the Arminian apologist is bound to start with his opponent on a supposedly common basis. The Arminian must grant that his opponent has rightly interpreted much of human experience in terms of the **autonomy of the human mind** and the **ultimacy of chance**. **But if the natural man who works with the idea of autonomy can correctly interpret the phenomenal world aright without God, why should he be ready to turn about suddenly and interpret spiritual things in terms of God? If he is consistent with himself he will not do so.**

[Key point here on atomism and different meanings behind the same words. This confusion of word meanings is critical in talking with Mormons, Roman Catholics, etc. We must define our terms, otherwise, it's like two ships passing each other in the night.](#)

As has been noted earlier, the Arminian is bound to present the Christian position in **atomistic** fashion. He will therefore first speak to the non-believer about the possibility of supernatural revelation as though the word possibility meant the same thing for the natural man and for the believer. But it does not. For the natural man the idea of possibility is on the one hand identical with **chance** and on the other hand with that which the natural man himself can **rationalize**. For him only that is practically possible which man can himself order by his logical faculties. But the word possibility means for the Christian that which may happen in accord with the plan of God.

Secondly the Arminian may speak to the natural man of the *probability* of supernatural revelation as though the word probability meant the same thing for the believer and for the non-believer. But it does not. For the non-believer, the meaning of the word probability is involved in his concept of the idea of possibility as just before discussed. Therefore, as **Hume**⁴⁰ has effectively shown in his criticism of the empirical probability argument for Christianity, there can be no presumption at all for the eventuation of certain things rather than of others, once one allows the idea of **chance** in this system at all. There can be no probability that God will supernaturally reveal himself to man unless it is certain that without the presupposition of such a revelation, man's experience, even of the realm of natural things is meaningless.

⁴⁰ David Hume (1711-76) was the most radical of the empiricists, arguing, among other things, that there could be no empirical basis for the notion of cause and effect. It was Hume's arguments that moved Kant toward his transcendental critique.

In the third place the Arminian will speak to the natural man about the historical *fact* of revelation as recorded in Scripture. He will stress the fact that Christianity is a historical religion. To that he will add that therefore it is simply a matter of evidence whether or not, say, the resurrection of Christ, is a fact. On this question, he will insist, anybody who is able to use the canons of historical study is as good a

judge as any other. The proof for the resurrection is then said to be just the sort of proof that men demand everywhere in questions of history.

But this argument about the facts of supernatural revelation again forgets that the **natural man's entire attitude** with respect to the facts that are presented to him will **naturally be controlled by his notions of possibility and probability** as already discussed. He may therefore grant that a man named Jesus of Nazareth arose from the dead. He need not hesitate, on his principles, to accept the fact of the resurrection at all. But for him that fact is a **different sort of fact from what it is for the Christian**. It is not the same fact at all. It is in vain to speak about the fact without speaking of the meaning of the fact. For the factness of the fact is to any mind that deals with it that which he takes it to mean. It is his meaning that is virtually the fact to him. And it is impossible even to present the fact for what it really is, namely, that which is according to its interpretation as given in Scripture, to the natural man, if one does not challenge his notions of possibility and probability that underlie his views of the facts of history. **To talk about presenting to him the fact of the resurrection without presenting its meaning is to talk about an abstraction**. The resurrection either is what the Christian says it is, or it is not. If it is, then it is as such that it actually appears in history.

Yet the **Arminian position** is committed to the necessity of presenting the facts of Christianity as being something other than he himself as a Christian knows they are. He knows that it is the Son of God who died in his human nature and rose again from the dead. But the fact of the resurrection about which he speaks to unbelievers is some nondescript something or other about which believers and non-believers are supposed to be able to agree.

In the fourth place, then, the Arminian will speak to the unbeliever about the Bible as the inspired and infallible revelation of God. He will argue that it is the most wonderful book, that it is the beset seller, that all other books lose their charm while the Bible does not. All of these things the unbeliever may readily grant without doing any violence to his own position and without feeling challenged to obey its voice. It means to him merely that some **experts** in religion have somehow brought to expression some of the deep fellow feeling with Reality that they have experienced. Their position allows for sacred books and even for a superior book. **But the one thing it does not allow for is an absolutely authoritative book**. Such a book presupposes the existence and knowability of the self-contained God of Christianity. But such a God, and the revelation of such a God in the universe and to man, are notions that, as has already been observed, **the natural man must resist**. So, he will naturally also **reject** that which is simply the logical implicate, of the idea of such a God and of such a revelation. The very idea of sin, because of which the idea of an externally promulgated supernatural revelation of grace became imperative, is meaningless for him. **For him sin or evil is a metaphysical action that is inherent in the concept of Chance**.

Next: Human Autonomy that Natural Man Assumes Roman Catholicism and Arminianism also, analogical or covenantal personality

Chapter VII Christian Apologetics (Authority and Reason)

Part V The Reformed View

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Van Til can be difficult to understand because he assumes you understand all the terms and "isms" he refers to, such as Arminianism. Arminianism (from Jacobus Arminius, Europe in the late 1500s) assumes that a *natural man* [someone who is unsaved] can believe in Christ by his own assumed power or will, that God does not determine the will in conversion but leaves it to the creature to determine the outcome of the conflict, that is, to believe or not to believe...and that *natural man* can frustrate or resist God's saving grace. It goes like this to the Arminian: God is for you, Satan is against you and you cast the deciding vote. Arminians have a wrong view of man's depravity due to Adam's sin, that man still has in himself some degree of virtue or love for God and knowledge of God that will enable him to believe, apart from the determining or regenerating power of the Holy Spirit (e.g., see John 3:8 and Titus 3:5). But if *natural man* is "dead in sin, blinded by Satan, at enmity with God, how can he be interested in something that he knows nothing about nor have a heart for it?? So man in an unregenerate condition cannot and will not believe unless the Spirit works it. (see Romans 8:7-8, John 3, etc.). In an unregenerate condition (natural man's condition = unsaved, unconverted) the natural man sees himself as "*ultimate*," vigorously defending his assumed autonomy, his independence from God, the same sin that Eve was guilty of...I will decide what is good or evil, I am ultimate, not God, not God's word or his will. It is this mindset that all mankind with which man is cursed coming into this world. They all have an ax to grind. There is no neutrality in the unregenerate man.

I was very brief here; this is a huge subject. Nevertheless, read this below; hopefully my explanation will shed light on Van Til's comments. Van Til (1895-1987)

Enough has now been said to indicate that the Roman Catholic and the Arminian methods, proceeding as they do by way of accepting the starting point and the method of the natural man with respect to a supposedly known area of experience, are self-refuting on the most important question of the Bible and its authority. **We repeat that many Arminians are much better than their position.** We also stress the fact that many of the things that they say about points of detail are indeed excellent. In other words, our aim is not to depreciate the work that has been done by believing scholars in the Arminian Camp. Our aim is rather to make better use of their materials than they have done by placing underneath it an epistemology and metaphysics which make these materials truly fruitful in discussion with non-believers.

Such a foundation it is that is furnished in the Reformed position. But it is furnished by the Reformed position simply because this position seeks to be consistently Christian in its start-point and methodology. And here it must be confessed that those of us who hold this position are all too often

worse than our position. Those who hold the Reformed position have no reason for boasting. What they have received they have received by grace.

The Reformed position seeks to avoid the weaknesses of the Roman Catholic and Arminian positions. Since these positions have now been discussed at length it will be immediately apparent what is meant. Since the natural man assumes the idea of brute fact [chance] in metaphysics and the idea of autonomy of the human mind in epistemology [knowledge: how you know what you know], the Reformed apologist realizes that he should first challenge these notions. He must challenge these notions in everything that he says about anything. It is these notions that determine the construction that the natural man puts upon everything that is presented to him. They are the colored glasses through which he sees all the facts. Now Romanism and Arminianism also seek to present to the unbeliever the facts of Christianity. We have seen that in reality their own false interpretations of the facts of Christianity mean that they do not really present the facts fully for what they are. But to the extent that they do present the facts as they are, they still do not challenge the natural man to take off his colored glasses. **And it is precisely this that the Reformed apologist seeks to do. He will first present the facts for what they really are and then he will challenge the natural man by arguing that unless they are accepted for what they are according to the Christian interpretation of them, no facts mean anything at all.**

Here then are the facts, or some of the main facts that the Reformed apologist presents to the natural man. There is first the fact of God's self-contained existence. Second, the fact of creation in general and of man as made in God's image in particular. Third, there is the fact of the comprehensive plan and providence of God with respect to all that takes place in the universe. Then there is the fact of the fall of man and his subsequent sin. **It is in relation to these facts and only in relation to these facts that the other facts pertaining to the redemptive work of Christ, are what they are. They would not be what they are unless the facts just mentioned are what they are. Thus, there is one system of reality of which all that exists forms a part. And any individual fact of this system is what it is in this system.** It is therefore a contradiction in terms to speak of presenting certain facts to men **unless one presents them as parts of this system.** The very factness of any individual fact on history is precisely what it is because God is what he is. It is God's counsel that is the principle of individuation for the Christian man. God makes the facts to be what they are.⁴¹

⁴¹Note that what is presented in this approach is theology in its depth and richness. Van Til begins with who God is and who we are in order to explain who Christ is and what he has done.

To be sure, man's actions have their place in this system. But they are not ultimately **determinative**; they are **subordinately** and **derivatively** important. [key terms here] **Hence, the idea of human autonomy can find no place in the truly Christian system anymore than can the idea of chance.** The human being is analogical rather than original in all the aspects of his activity. And as such its activity is truly significant.

It is natural that only the supernatural revelation of God can inform man about such a system as that. For this system is of a nature quite different from the systems of which the natural man speaks. For the latter system is that which man, assumed to be ultimate, has ordered by his original structural activity.

The natural man virtually attributes to himself that which a true Christian theology attributes to the self-contained God. The battle is therefore between the absolutely self-contained God of Christianity and the would-be wholly self-contained mind of the natural man. Between them there can be no compromise.

The idea of supernatural revelation is inherent in the very idea of this system of Christianity which we are seeking to present to the natural man. But if this is so then the idea of a supernatural, infallibly inscripturated revelation is also inherent in this system. Man as the creature of God needs supernatural revelation and man, become a sinner, needs supernatural redemptive revelation. He needs this revelation in infallibly inscripturated form lest he himself destroy it. As a hater of God, he does not want to hear about God. The natural man seeks to suppress the pressure of God's revelation in nature that is about him. He seeks to suppress the pressure of conscience within him. So, he also seeks to suppress the idea of the revelation of grace that speaks in Scripture. In every case it is God as his Creator and as his judge that asks of him to listen and be obedient. How can the autonomous man be obedient on his own assumptions? He cannot be obedient unless he reverses his entire position, and this he cannot do of himself. It takes the regenerating power of the Spirit to do that.

Having reached this point the Roman Catholic and the Arminian may argue that it was in the interest of avoiding this very impasse that they sought to make their point of contact with the natural man on a neutral basis. The reply of the Reformed apologist is as follows. Good preaching, he will say, will recognize the truth of Scripture that man has been blinded by sin, and that his will is perverted toward seeking self instead of God. But how can deaf ears hear, and blind eyes see? That is to say preaching is confronted with the same dilemma as is apologetical reasoning.⁴² In both cases the Roman Catholic and the Arminian tone down the facts of the gospel in order to gain acceptance for them on the part of the natural man. [very common] In neither case will the Reformed apologist do so. In both cases he will challenge the natural man at the outset. Both in preaching and in reasoning – and every approach to the natural man should be both – the Reformed theologian will ask the sinner to do what he knows the sinner of himself cannot do. The Reformed Christian is often Reformed in preaching and Arminian in reasoning. But when he is at all self-conscious in his reasoning, he will seek to do in apologetics what he does in preaching. He knows that man is responsible not in spite of but just because he is not autonomous but created. [A vital distinction: In other words, because we are created, i.e., creatures, we are wholly dependent upon God for all, i.e., we are not autonomous beings, self-sufficient, etc! See Edwards on this absolute dependence on God] He knows that the idea of analogical or covenant personality is that which alone preserves genuine significance for the thoughts and deeds of man. [as opposed to existentialism where significance is sought through self seeking.] So he also knows that he who is dead in trespasses and sins is none the less responsible for his deadness. He knows also that the sinner in the depth of his heart knows that what is thus held before him is true. He knows he is a creature of God; he has been simply seeking to cover up this fact to himself. He knows that he has broken the law of God; he has again covered up this fact to himself. He knows that he is therefore guilty and is subject to punishment forever; this fact too he will not look in the face.

⁴²This point is crucial to Van Til's approach. We should think of apologetics as we think of preaching – it is a confrontation of the gospel of God with the sinfulness of man. For an excellent exposition of this importance of preaching to Van Til's approach, see Edmund P.

Clowney, "Preaching the Word of The Lord: Cornelius Van Til, V.D.M.," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46, no. 2 (1984): 233-53.

Very important conclusion here:

And it is precisely Reformed preaching and Reformed apologetic that tears the mask off the sinner's face and compels him to look at himself and the world for what they really are. Like a mole, the natural man seeks to scurry under ground every time the facts as they really are come to his attention. **He loves the darkness rather than the light.** [John 3:19] **The light exposes him to himself.** And precisely this, neither Roman Catholic or Arminian preaching or reasoning are able to do.

As to the possibility and likelihood of the sinner's accepting the Christian position, it must be said that **this is a matter of the grace of God.** As the creature of God, made in the image of God, he is always accessible to God. As a rational creature he can understand that one must either accept the whole of the system of truth or reject the whole of it. He cannot understand why a position such as that of Roman Catholicism or of Arminians should challenge him. He knows right well as a rational being that only the **Reformed statement of Christianity is consistent with itself** and therefore challenges the non-Christian position at every point. He can understand therefore why the Reformed theologian should accept the doctrine of Scripture as the infallible Word of God. He can understand the idea of its necessity, its perspicuity, its sufficiency and its authority⁴⁴ as being involved in the Christian position as a whole.

⁴⁴ Necessity, perspicuity, sufficiency, and authority are considered to be the four primary attributes of Scripture. See Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1.

Key point here:

But while understanding them as being involved in the position of Christianity as a whole, it is precisely Christianity as a whole, and therefore each of these doctrines as part of Christianity, that are meaningless to him as long as he is not willing to drop his own assumptions of autonomy and chance.

It follows that on the question of Scripture, as on every other question, the only possible way for the Christian to reason with the non-believer is by way of **presupposition**. He must say to the unbeliever that unless he will accept the presuppositions and with them the interpretations of Christianity, **there is no coherence in human experience.** That is to say, the argument must be such as to show that unless one accepts the Bible for what true Protestantism says it is, **the authoritative interpretation of human life and experience as a whole, it will be impossible to find meaning in anything.** It is only when this presupposition is constantly kept in mind that a fruitful discussion of problems pertaining to the phenomenon of Scripture and what it teaches about God in relation to man can be discussed.

Van Til on The Doctrine of Sin And Redemption

Romanist vs The Reformed View

Excerpt from *The Defense of the Faith*

Page 158-166

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For Calvin sin is self-conscious rebellion on the part of the creature against his Creator and Benefactor. Even those who have sinned in Adam but not after the similitude of Adam are covenant breakers. They are responsible with Adam for the pre-redemptive supernatural revelation as it was conjoined to original natural revelation. For Romanism sin is only partly disobedience to God; it is also slipping back into non-being. With Calvin the idea of sin is exclusively ethical; with Rome sin as ethical is in large part reduced to a metaphysical lack. It is of the utmost importance to lay great stress on the ethical character of Reformation theology as over against Romanist theology. Reformed theology differs from Evangelicalism in the fact that it holds tenaciously to this ethical character of Christianity, while evangelicalism tends to veer to the idea of sin as a metaphysical defect. With its conception of the human will as partly autonomous, evangelicalism naturally tends to the idea of Romanism.

For Calvin redemption is exclusively ethical. Sin did not lower man in the scale of being. Sin did not take away from man any of the natural powers that God had given him. Sin did not tend to destroy the metaphysical situation. To be sure, sin had physical effects. It brought disease and death into the world. But the idea that the created world would have been destroyed by sin is an abstraction. It was not God's intention that it should. Hence it was from the beginning ultimately impossible that it should. The created world has not tendency to slip back into non-being. The fact that it needs each moment to be sustained by God does not prove that it has such a tendency. This fact only shows its actually dependent character. God intended from the beginning to uphold the universe as dependent upon himself.

In particular sin did not destroy any of the powers that God gave man at the beginning when he endowed him with his image. To be sure, here too there have been weakening results. But man still has eyes with which to observe and logical ability with which to order and arrange the things that he observes. So far from sin being inherently destructive of the metaphysical situation, it is rather true that the continuation of this situation is the presupposition of sin's ethical character.

For **Romanism** redemption is therefore at least in part metaphysical. For Romanism the natural tended even at the outset, before the fall, toward non-being. It therefore needed the **supernatural** [supernaturalism – that defines the image of God as a supernatural addition to nature. – see Bavinck @ code294a] that in order to draw it upward away from non-being. The supernatural must from the beginning remedy a defect inherent in the natural. The supernatural is therefore something that lifts man up in the scale of being. The tendency to slip into non-being is, on the Romanist view, a real possibility. It is an ultimate possibility. Romanism uses the notion of abstract possibility as an aspect of its theory of being. So then the redemptive is still largely what the original supernatural was, namely, a counteracting agent against the tendency of finite being to slip into non-being. Redemption thus is not “accidental,” [in the philosophical sense, like the *white of snow* is the *accident of snow*.] it is not primarily ethical. The distinction between nature and grace as used in Romanist thinking and the distinction between nature and grace as used in Reformation thinking are therefore quite different in meaning.

To set the doctrine of common grace in the proper perspective therefore requires setting off Reformed theology as a whole from Romanist and also from evangelical thinking. On a Romanist basis, even special grace is largely thought of along the lines of lifting man in the scale of being. **On its basis common grace would therefore be only gradationally different from special or saving grace.** No other

than gradational differences are possible once one holds to the human will as in some measure autonomous, and once one holds to the idea of man as participant in the same being with God. **The idea of saving grace is then the offering to all men or at least to groups of men the real or ultimate possibility of salvation along with the equally ultimate possibility of destruction.** In no case can God overcome completely the tendency of finite being to slip into non-being.

What holds for **Romanism** on this point also holds to some extent for **evangelicalism**. Here too saving grace is limited by abstract possibility and therefore by man's ultimate ability to resist the will or pleading of the Spirit of God. **The idea of grace is in part reduced from its high ethical concept to one of metaphysical gradation.**

On the basis of the Reformed view, however, saving grace is conceived of on wholly ethical lines. The metaphysical presupposition of conceiving the idea of grace thus exclusively along ethical lines is the fact that God controls whatsoever comes to pass. This rules out all abstract possibilities. It involves that man is always confronted with the revelation of God's will. It means that when he sinned, man sinned against this known revelation of God. Man is responsible for sin, and he alone is responsible for sin. When man sins, he is therefore wholly depraved. There was no excuse for his sinning in the fact that his being, as finite, was inherently defective, or in the fact that God's will for him was not wholly clear. On the other hand, it was God's will that sin should come into the world. **He wished to enhance his glory by means of its punishment and removal.**

But to hold strictly to man's utter responsibility for sin and yet to the fact that it was God's ultimate intention that it should come into the world through man, requires that one think analogically. And thinking analogically is thinking concretely. [*ectypal as opposed to archetypal knowledge; God lowers himself to our level of understanding when he communicates knowledge to us via scripture. Ectypal knowledge tells us what God is like not what he actually is.*] **It means thinking from the analogical system of truth revealed in Scripture. It involves accepting that which is apparently, though not really, contradictory.** All the concepts offered in Scripture therefore are supplemental of one another. It is not possible to begin with one doctrine, and deduce from that one doctrine certain other doctrines that must "logically follow from it," except one at the same time keep in mind that there are other doctrines that are, of necessity, in apparent contradiction to the first doctrine from which the beginning was made.

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Romanism does not believe in the doctrine of total depravity. It therefore thinks that the sinner, though wounded through sin, still is naturally able to know God.

On the other hand, Reformed theology does believe in total depravity. In consequence, Reformed theology teaches that man by nature has not knowledge of God or of morality at all. For Romanism natural knowledge of God springs from a human situation which is not totally despoiled by sin.

If in spite of this, according to the Scriptures and the Confession there are remnants of a true knowledge of God to be seen in man, then this must be explained in terms of common grace, through which God has restrained human depravity.

If we speak exactly, he adds, we should therefore place quotation marks about the phrase, “natural knowledge of God.” It might better be call “common grace knowledge.”

In addition to this qualitative distinction between the Reformed position and that of Romanism there is, says Ridderbos, a quantitative one. The Reformed Confessions speak of *small* remnants of the knowledge of God and o morality possessed by the natural man. And these small remnants must be upheld by common grace. Not holding to total depravity and not holding to common grace, Romanism works out a natural theology of full proportions.

Of these two points, the qualitative and the quantitative difference between the Reformed Faith and Romanism, the former is certainly for Ridderbos the more important. The difference in quantity is due to the difference in quality.

The question now is whether Ridderbos succeeds in signaling the qualitative difference between Romanism and the Reformed faith by simply inserting the ideas of total depravity and of common grace into a complex of doctrines assume to be essentially the same for both. Can Romanist theology and philosophy be repaired by thus inserting a block of material here and there into an edifice that is otherwise left unmolested? Can the ideas of total depravity and common grace be woven into the main motif of Romanism, that of *analogia entis*? [\[according to IV Lateran a relationship between divine being and creaturely being in which God is “ever greater” \(semper maior\), and \(2\), following Augustine, a relationship between divine immanence and divine transcendence.\]](#) It is that which must be done if one refuses to accept and answer the challenge of Gilson referred to above. Protestants, and especially followers of Calvin, can scarcely afford to allow the legitimacy of the idea that finite being has a tendency to slip back into non-being. Yet it is this which Ridderbos virtually does when he asserts that, were it not for common grace, every last bit of natural knowledge of God and of morality would have disappeared. He argues that except for the restraining force of common grace, God’s voice even in general revelation would have been silence altogether.

But how could the voice of God’s revelation in man be silence altogether unless man himself were destroyed? Will not men in the abode of the lost have knowledge of God and of morality? Is it not precisely because they then have all too clear a knowledge of God and of morality that they suffer before the face of God? To say so is fully in line with Calvin’s views. It is even of the essence of his view that men are what they are as inherently knowers of God. Yet evil spirits and the lost receive no common grace. Common grace is an attitude of favor of God toward men as men, as creatures made by himself in his own image. Common grace is the giving of good gifts to men though they have sinned against him, that they might repent and mend their evil ways. Common grace provides for the doing of relatively good deeds by sinful men who are kept from working out to its full fruition the principle of total depravity within them. Common grace thus is a means by which God accomplishes through men his purpose in displaying his glory in the created world, in history, before the judgment day. So there is no common grace in hell.

Of course, Ridderbos knows all this very well. He asserts I plainly. Yet he insists that the whole of general revelation must be suspended from common grace. And he insists that the whole of general revelation would disappear except for common grace. When he then faces the fact that Satan and the

lost cannot be thought of as recipients of common grace, he avers that even in their case there is a restraining force of God that keeps them confronted with the general revelation of God.

It is this last point that shows conclusively that Ridderbos thinks of the idea of finite, rational creatures as slipping back into the realm of non-being as a serious possibility. Man needs a restraining force, in addition to ordinary providence, in order to keep from falling into non-being. This restraining force is, in the nature of the case, not ethical in character. It does not intend to restrain the working of the sinful principle in man. It is not the means by which the potentialities of creation are to be brought to light. It is simply and purely metaphysical in character. Without this restraining force Satan and the lost would escape the punishment of God; they would escape him because they would be no more. Sin is therefore a force which, unless restrained, would lead to the destruction of finite rational creatures themselves. Sin is no longer an exclusively ethical opposition on the part of creatures of God against the will of God. For sin then presupposes a measure of autonomy in man by which he can destroy his own being and with it the revelation of God. Why else should it be necessary for God to introduce a force after the entrance of sin for the maintenance of created reality?

Now for Ridderbos common grace does in the course of human history what this metaphysical restraining force does in hell. To be sure common grace also does more than that. It also gives good gifts to men, makes them love the truth in a sense, cause them to produce civil righteousness. But the point now of importance is that for Ridderbos, common grace in history and the restraining force in hell both maintain the general revelation of God to man. In history this force is gracious in character; after history is finished this is no longer the case.

Thus, both the doctrine of total depravity and the doctrine of common grace are in some measure unintentionally adjusted to the Romanis idea of the analogy of being. There is no escaping this so long as one thinks of Protestantism, and especially of the Reformed Faith, as merely adding some building blocks to the edifice which is in part constructed along Romanists lines. Then there is no maintaining of the exclusively ethnic character of Reformation theology. To maintain this ethical character one needs, with Calvin, to presuppose the idea that man is inherently and inescapably, in history and after the consummation of history, in the realm of the blest and in the realm of the damned, in his very being revelational of the will of God. It is only thus that sin retains its ethical nature. It is only thus that sin can be total depravity both in extension and in intention. It is only thus that the fruition of sin can be tasted in the realm of the lost, for only thus is sin seen to be sin against the original gracious revelation of God to mankind.

Only by presupposing this utterly revelational character of man is it possible to maintain the exclusively ethical character of saving or special grace. Christ came to save men from sin. Did he come in part, at least, to maintain the metaphysical *status quo*? Surely not. Sin is exclusively ethical hostility to God. It is this ethical hostility to God that Christ came to remove. To be sure, sin must be spoken of as in intent destructive of the work of God. And since the work of Christ is indispensable as the only means by which the work of God through man in history could be accomplished, this work of Christ is itself a part of the providence of God. In this respect the work of Christ may be said to be "essential" to the plan of God. At the same time this work is "accidental" in Kuyper's use of the term. For it is only because of sin as ethical hostility to God that the work of Christ "became" "essential." These two notions are supplementary of one another. They limit one another.

A major Summary of Many Key Doctrines in Apologetics: Romanism, Arminianism, Man's assumed ultimacy, The Law of Contradiction, Regeneration, the Natural Man's views, Evangelicalism, Calvinism, the Reformed Positions on Apologetics – Reasoning by Presupposition. My comments in [blue]. I would call this mandatory reading and re-reading. I added the key footnotes that were added by **Dr. Scott Oliphant** (editor of the 4th edition of Van Til's book, *The Defense of the Faith*).

Christian Apologetics

How to Approach the Unbeliever

Excerpts from
The Defense of the Faith
 by Cornelius Van Til
 pgs. 69-114
 [pgs. 92 - 136 in the 4th ed.]
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I

Roman Catholicism

It is of the utmost importance to stress the point just made. If a Protestant finds it necessary to dispute with the Roman Catholic on the nature of Christianity itself he will find it equally necessary to dispute with him on the problems of the **point of contact**. A Protestant theology requires a Protestant apologetic.⁷

⁷We repeat here what has been said previously; this point cannot be overemphasized. One's theology, to the extent one is consistent, will dictate one's apologetic approach.

The difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic conception of the point of contact will naturally have to be formulated in a way similar to that in which we state the difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic theology. There are two ways of stating this difference. One very common way is to indicate first an area of doctrine that the two types of theology have in common, in order afterwards to enumerate the differences between them. This is the course followed in B.B. Warfield's justly famous little book, *The Plan of Salvation*. Between those holding to a plan of salvation, says Warfield, there are those who think of this plan along naturalist and there are others who think of this plan along supernaturalist lines. As against the Pelagians who hold to a naturalist view "...the entire organized Church -Orthodox Greek, Roman Catholic, Latin, and Protestant in all its great historical forms, Lutheran and Reformed, Calvinistic and Arminian – bears its consentient, firm and emphatic testimony to the supernaturalistic conception of salvation." (Warfield, *Plan of Salvation* p.111)

Continuing from this point Warfield then divides the supernaturalists into sacerdotalists⁹ and evangelicals. The issue between them concerns "the immediacy of the saving operations of God." The

Church of Rome, holding the sacerdotal point of view, teaches that “grace is communicated by and through the ministrations of the church, otherwise not” (p. 18). On the other hand, Evangelicalism “seeking to conserve what it conceives to be the only consistent supernaturalism, sweeps away every intermediary between the soul and its God, and leaves the soul dependent for its salvation on God alone, operating upon it by this immediate grace.” (p. 19). Now Protestantism and Evangelicalism are “coterminous, if not exactly synonymous designations.” (pg. 20)

⁹Sacerdotalism implies the necessity of some human mediator between God and man.

At this point Warfield goes on to mark the main variations within Protestantism. Among Protestants or evangelicals there are those who hold to a **universalistic** and there are those who hold to a **particularistic** conception of the plan of salvation. At this point Warfield goes on to mark the main variations within Protestantism. Among Protestants or evangelicals there are those who hold to a universalistic and there are those who hold to a particularistic conception of the plan of salvation. “All evangelicals agree that all the power exerted in the saving the soul is from God and that this saving power is exerted immediately upon the soul. But they differ as to whether God exerts this saving power equally, or at least indiscriminately, upon all men, be they actually saved or not, or rather only upon particular men, namely upon those who are actually saved” (p. 22). Signaling the difference between universalistic and particularistic evangelicals again, Warfield uses these words, “The precise issue which divides the universalists and the particularists is, accordingly, just whether the saving grace of God, in which alone is salvation, actually saves (pg 24).

It is not germane to our purpose to follow Warfield further as he differentiates once more between various forms of particularists. The “differences of large moment” (pg. 27) are now before us. Warfield defends particularism or Calvinism. And it has become customary to use the term evangelical with reference to non-Calvinistic Protestants.

What interests us now is the fact that, though beginning from the common denominator point of view, Warfield is compelled, each time he signals a new difference, to indicate that it is made in the interest of consistence. Protestants and Protestants in the interest of being more consistently supernaturalist than are the Roman Catholics. Calvinists are particularists in the interest of being more consistently evangelical than are the other Protestants. Calvinists aim at holding a position, according to Warfield, that shall be “uncolored by intruding elements from without” (pg. 21). Accordingly, the several conceptions of salvation “do not stand simply side by side as varying conceptions of that plan, each making its appeal in opposition to all the rest. They are related to one another rather as a progressive series of corrections of a primal error, attaining ever more and more consistency in the embodiment of the one fundamental idea of salvation (pg. 31).

It appears then that Warfield himself really suggests a better way of expressing such differences as obtain between Romanism and Protestantism, or between universalistic and particularistic Protestantism than he has himself employed. That better way is pointed out by Professor John Murray when he says, “It would appear, therefore, that the truer, more effective and, on all accounts, more secure defense of Christianity and exposition of its essential content is not to take our starting point from those terms that will express the essential creedal confession of some of its most widely known

historical deformations but rather from those terms that most fully express and give character to that redemptive religion which Christianity is. In other words, Christianity cannot receive proper understanding or its exposition proper orientation unless it is viewed as that which issues from, and is consummated in the accomplishment of, the covenant counsel and purpose of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” We are not to define the essence of Christianity in terms of its lowest but rather in terms of its highest forms. Calvinism is “Christianity come to its own.”¹¹ Beginning from Calvinism we should descend to universalistic Protestantism and thence to Romanism as deviations from the true view of Christianity.

¹¹Van Til here is paraphrasing Warfield in *Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Ethelbert Dudley Warfield (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 355. To quote: “In Calvinism, then, objectively speaking, theism comes to its rights; theism comes to its rights only in a teleological conception of the universe, which perceives in the entire course of events the orderly outworking of the plan of God, who is the author, preserver, and governor of all things, whose will is consequently the ultimate cause of all.”

It is Romanism with which we are now primarily concerned. Romanism should be regarded as *deformation of Christianity*, in fact as its lowest deformation. And this deformation expresses itself not merely at some but at every point of doctrine. The differences between Protestantism and Romanism are not adequately indicated if we say that Luther restored to the church the true doctrines of the Bible, of justification by faith and of the priesthood of all believers. The difference is rather that Protestantism is more consistently and Rome is less consistently Christian at every point of doctrine. It could not well be otherwise. Having inconsistency at one point of doctrine is bound to result in inconsistency at all points of doctrine. Rome has been consistently inconsistent in the confusion of non-Christian with Christian elements of teaching along the entire gamut of doctrinal expression.

The bearing of all this on the question of starting point may now be briefly suggested. In the question of starting point it is all-important that **we have a truly Christian doctrine of man**. But this Rome does not have. Without going into details, it may be asserted that Rome has a defective doctrine (a) with respect to the nature of man as he was created and (b) with respect to the effect of the entrance of sin upon the nature of man. “The important point of difference is,” says Charles Hodge, “that Protestants hold that original righteousness, so far as it consisted in the moral excellence of Adam, was natural, while the Romanists maintain that it was supernatural. According to their theory, God created man soul and body. These two constituents of his nature are naturally in conflict. To preserve the harmony between them, and the due subjection of the flesh to the spirit, God gave man the **supernatural gift of original righteousness**. It was this gift that man lost by the fall; so that since the apostasy he is in the state in which Adam was before he was invested with this supernatural endowment. In opposition to this doctrine, **Protestants maintain that original righteousness was concreated and natural**.” The objections to this view, as Hodge enumerates them, are (1) “That it supposes a degrading view of the original constitution of or nature. **According to this doctrine the seeds of evil were implanted in the nature of man as it came from the hands of God**. It was disordered or diseased, there was about it what Bellarmine calls a *morbus* or *languor*, which needed a remedy...” (2) “This doctrine as to original righteousness arose out of the **Semi-Pelagianism** of the Church of Rome, and was designed to sustain it.”

Suppose then that a Romanist approaches and unbeliever and asks him to accept Christianity. The unbeliever, in his eyes, is merely such a one as has lost original righteousness. The image of God in him which, according to Romanism consists as Hodge says, “**only of the rational, and especially the voluntary nature of man, or the freedom of the will.**” (p. 103) **is thought of as still intact**. That is to say, the unbeliever, is, perhaps barring extremes, correct in what he himself thinks of the powers of his intellect and will. There is not necessarily any sin involved in what the unbeliever, or natural man, does by way of exercising his capacities for knowledge and action. **On this view the natural man does not need the light of Christianity to enable him to understand the world and himself aright.** He does not need the revelation of Scripture **or the illumination of the Holy Spirit** in order that by means of them **he may learn what his own true nature is.** [all this is massively important.]

Christianity therefore needs, on this basis, to be presented to the natural man as something that is merely information additional to what he already possesses. The knowledge of Christianity is to be related to the knowledge derived from the exercise of man’s powers of reason and observation in a way similar to that in which at the beginning original righteousness was added to the image of God in man.

But without the light of Christianity, it is as little possible for man to have the correct view about himself and the world as it is to have the true view about God. On account of the fact of sin man is blind with respect to the truth wherever the truth appears. And truth is one. **Man cannot truly know himself unless he truly knows God.**¹⁴ Not recognizing the fact of the fall, the **philosophers**, says Calvin, throw everything into confusion. **They do not reckon with the fact that “at first every part of the soul was formed to rectitude” But that after the fall man is equally corrupt in all aspects of his being.** “They tell,” says Calvin, “there is great repugnance between the organic movements and the rational part of the soul. As if reason also were not at variance with herself, and here counsels sometimes conflicting with each other like hostile armies. But since this disorder results from the depravity of nature, it is erroneous to infer that there are two souls, because the faculties do not accord harmoniously as they ought.”

¹⁴That is, unless man truly knows God in a saving way. Men do know God according to the *sensus divinitatis*.

It appears then that there is a fundamental difference of opinion between Romanism and Calvin on the origin and nature of the “disturbance” in human nature. The view of Rome is essentially the same as that of the Greek philosophers: in particular, that of Aristotle. According to this view the disturbance is endemic to human nature because man is made up, in part, of non-rational elements.¹⁷ **To the extent that man consists of intellect he does not and cannot sin.** The “disturbance” in man’s make-up is not due primarily to any fault of his own. It is basically due to “God” who “made” him. On the other hand, according to Calvin, there is no “disturbance” in the nature of man as he comes forth from the hands of God. **The “disturbance” has come in as the result of sin.** Accordingly, every one of fallen man’s functions operates wrongly. The set of the whole human personality has changed. The intellect of fallen man may, as such, be keen enough. It can therefore formally understand the Christian position. It may be compared to a buzz-saw that is sharp and shining, ready to cut the boards that come to it. Let us say that a carpenter wishes to cut fifty boards for the purpose of laying

the floor of a house. He has marked his boards. He has set his saw. He begins at one end of the mark on the board. But he does not know that his seven-year-old son has tampered with the saw and changed its set. The result is that every board he saws is cut slantwise and thus unusable because too short except at the point where the saw first made is contact with the wood. As long as the set of the saw is not changed the result will always be the same.¹⁸ So also whenever the teaching of Christianity are presented to the natural man they will be cut according to the set of sinful human personality. The keener the intellect the more consistently will the truths of Christianity be cut according to an exclusively immanentistic pattern.¹⁹ The result is that however much they may formally understand the truth of Christianity, men still worship “the dream and figment of their own heart.”²⁰ They have what Hodge calls “mere cognition,” but no true knowledge of God.²¹

¹⁷This refers, in general, to Aristotle’s view that matter is inherently evil. Thus, to the extent that man is made up of nonrational, or material, elements, he is in need of repair.

¹⁸This is a very helpful metaphor for understanding the Reformed idea of the noetic effects of sin. The saw (analogous to our reasoning faculty) does indeed work; it is the same saw that was previously set correctly. Because of its faulty setting, however, even though it works, it always cuts the wrong slant.

¹⁹An “immanentistic pattern” is any pattern that attempts to work on the basis of this world alone (immanence) without reference to God and his creating and controlling the world.

²⁰Calvin, Institutes, 1.15.1

²¹Again, this “mere cognition” should be distinguished from the true knowledge of God that all people have by virtue of the *sensus divinitatis*. Mere cognition includes an understanding of the worlds and concepts, without an acknowledgment of the truth therein.

Still further as the “philosophers” and **Calvin** differ on the source and nature of the “disturbance” in human nature so they also differ on the remedy to be employed for the removal of that disturbance. **According to the philosophers, man does not need supernatural help for the removal of the disturbance within his being.** According to the Greek view, so largely followed by Rome, **man’s intellect has within itself the proper set. [similar to the view held by Pelagians and Arminians] The fall has not disturbed the set of the saw and therefore there is no need of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to reset it. [That is KEY!!]** The nature of the intellect and its activity is almost unaffected by what happens to man in the course of history.

In opposition to this view, Hodge, following the lead of Calvin, stresses the fact that the whole set of sinful man needs to be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. **The natural man must be “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”** (Col. 3:10) “New man,” νέον, says Hodge, in exposition of St. Paul, “agreeably to the ordinary distinction between νέον and παλαιός means recent, newly made, as opposed to (παλαιός) old. The moral quality or excellence of this recently formed man is expressed in the word ἀνακαινονμενον; as in Scriptural usage what is παλαιός is pure. This renovation is said to be εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν, not *in* knowledge, much less *by* knowledge, but *unto*

knowledge, so that he knows. Knowledge is the effect of the renovation spoken of." A little further Hodge adds: "The knowledge here intended is not mere cognition. It is full, accurate, living, or practical knowledge; such knowledge as is eternal life, so that this word here includes what in Eph. 4:24 is expressed by righteousness and holiness."

²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Hodge also exegetes Ephesians 4:24, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." "These words," says Hodge, "when used in combination are intended to be exhaustive, i.e., to **include all moral excellence**. Either term may be used in this comprehensive sense, but, when distinguished, *δικαιοσύνη* means rectitude, the being and doing right, what justice demand; *ὁσιότης*, purity, holiness, the state of mind produced with the soul is full of God. Instead of true holiness, the worlds of the Apostle should be rendered 'righteousness and holiness of the truth'; that is, the righteousness and holiness which are the effects or manifestations of the truth. By truth here as opposed to the deceit (*ἀπάτη*) mentioned in the twenty-second verse, is meant what in Col. 3:10 is called knowledge. **It is the divine light in the understanding of which the Spirit of truth is the author, and from which, as their proximate cause, all right affections and holy acts proceed.**" Repeatedly **Hodge stresses the fact that according to Scripture the natural man is incapable of himself to understand and accept the truth of Christianity.**" "The natural man, man as he is by nature, is destitute of the life of God, i.e., of spiritual life. His understanding is darkness, so that he does not know or receive the things of God. [see Rom. 8:6-8 and 1Cor2:14, Matt. 6:23] **He is not susceptible of impression from the realities of the spiritual world. He is as insensible to them as a dead man to the things of the world.**"

My comment:

[Due to his hard heart of stone that cannot receive impressions from a seal until it is made soft like wax, by the Spirit's power in regeneration, Ezek. 36:26, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."]

This following part of this paragraph is awesome!

In discussing regeneration Hodge asserts,

The Bible makes eternal life to consist in **knowledge¹**, sinfulness is blindness, or darkness; the transition from a state of sin to a state of holiness is a translation from darkness to light; men are said to be renewed unto knowledge, i.e., **knowledge is the effect of regeneration**, conversion is said to be effected by the revelation of Christ; the rejection of Him as the Son of God and Saviour of men is referred to the fact that the eyes of those who believe not are **blinded** by the god of this world.

Or again,

The heart in Scripture is that which thing, feels, wills, and acts. It is the soul, the self. A new heart is, therefore, a new self, a new man. It implies a change of the whole character. It is a new nature. Out of the heart proceed all conscious, voluntary, moral exercises. A change of heart, there, is a change which precedes these exercises and determines their character.

¹My Comment: Hence, faith is denominated not only by *believing* but also *knowledge*! Isaiah 53:11, “by his **knowledge** shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” This knowledge is a *saving knowledge* of Christ. G Clark

According to the evangelical doctrine the whole soul is the subject of **regeneration**. It is neither the intellect to the exclusion of the feelings, nor the feelings to the exclusion of the intellect; nor is it the will alone, either in its wider or in its more limited sense, that is the subject of the change in question...

Regeneration secures right knowledge as well as right feeling; and right feeling is not the effect of right knowledge, nor is right knowledge the effect of right feeling. **The two are the inseparable effects of a work which affects the whole soul.**”

We conclude then that it is natural and consistent for Roman Catholic apologetics to seek its point of contact with the unbeliever in a “common area” of knowledge. Roman Catholic theology agrees with the essential contention of those it seeks to win to the Christian faith that man’s consciousness of himself and of the objects of the world is intelligible without reference to God.

But herein precisely lies the fundamental point of difference between Romanism and Protestantism. According to the principle of Protestantism, man’s consciousness of self and of objects presuppose for their intelligibility the self-consciousness of God. In asserting this we are not thinking of psychological and temporal priority. We are thinking only of the question as to what is the final reference point in interpretation. The Protestant principle finds this in the self-contained ontological trinity. By his counsel the triune God controls whatsoever come to pass. If then the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting-point, it remains true that God is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate or final reference point in human interpretation.³¹ [It has to be since all things were made for Him, **Col. 1:16**; and, “For from him and through him and to him are all things.” **Rom. 11:36**, and it is in him that we live and move and have our being, **Acts 17:28**. All things are subordinate to his will, his self-glorification.]

³¹This point needs to be emphasized. Van Til affirms that the proximate starting point for all our thinking is, of necessity, the self. The apologetic point, however, is that the ultimate reference point with respect to predication is the triune God.

This is, in the last analysis, the question as to what are one’s ultimate presuppositions. When man became a sinner, he made of himself instead of god the ultimate or final reference point. And it is precisely this presupposition, as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy, that must be brought into question. If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him **according to his pattern. The sinner has cemented colored glasses to his eyes which he cannot remove. [He is dead in sin; captive of Satan, sin having complete dominion over him. When the Son sets you free, then you will be free, free from your blindness.] And all is yellow to the jaundiced eye.**³² There can be no intelligible reasoning unless those who reason together understand what they mean by their words.

³²Again, the metaphor here is helpful. The blindness of sin does not mean that we cannot see; it means rather that everything that we see is colored by our condition of depravity. What we see, therefore, we inevitably twist according to our own sinful desires.

[codeproofs]

In not challenging this basic presupposition with respect to himself as the final reference point in predication the natural man may accept the “**theistic proofs**” as fully valid. He may construct such proof. He has constructed such proofs. But the god whose existence he proves to himself in this way is always a god who is something other than the self-contained ontological trinity of Scripture. The Roman Catholic apologete does not want to prove the existence of this sort of God. **He wants to prove the existence of such a God as will leave intact the autonomy of man to at least some extent.** [that is key! Fallen man vigorously defends his supposed autonomy, so Rome and BTW many [Arminian] Christians do not want to offend, so they compromise here (unwittingly maybe) on God’s true sovereign nature.] Rome’s theology dose not want a God whose counsel controls whatsoever comes to pass.

It is natural then that Rome’s view of the point of contact with the unbeliever is what it is.

II Evangelicalism

This next part is very important:

We have spoken of the basic difference between Romanism and Protestantism on this question of the point of contact. **But not all Protestantism has been fully true to the Protestant principle.** Warfield has pointed this out admirably in the book discussed. It was **only in Calvinism** that the Protestant principle that salvation is of God alone has come to its consistent expression. Non-Calvinistic Protestants, frequently spoken of as **Evangelicals**, have conceived of “the operations of God looking to salvation universalistically” in order to leave room for an ultimate decision on the part of the individual human being. God, as it were, through Christ deposits a large sum of money in a bank and announces this fact in the daily papers, offering to each one who comes sufficient for all his needs. It is then, in the last analysis, up to the individual whether he wants to be and remain in the class of those who live by the generosity of this bank. God approaches man by means of universals. There are differences among evangelicals, but, in the last analysis, these differences are merely as to whether God approaches the individuals by means of a wider or a narrower species. **The final issue is always left up to the individual.** [In other words, God is for you, Satan is against you; you cast the deciding vote.] “Particularism in the process of salvation becomes thus the mark of Calvinism.” Warfield speaks therefore of Calvinism as being the only form of Protestantism “uncolored by intruding elements from without.” God’s action is the ultimate source of all determinate being.

For our purposes then the point of importance is that **Evangelicalism has retained something of Roman Catholicism both in its view of man and in its view of God.** Like Romanism, Evangelicalism thinks of human self-consciousness and consciousness of objects as to some extent intelligible without

the consciousness of God. It is to be expected that Evangelicalism will be in agreement with Rome on the question of the point of contact. Both forms of theology are colored by elements of an underlying naturalism.³⁵ Both are therefore unwilling to challenge the natural man's basic presupposition with respect to himself as the ultimate reference point in interpretation. Both are unwilling to prove the existence of such a God as controls whatever come to pass. [Arminians and many others despise God's sovereign and eternal decrees, especially of unconditional election. They see it as doing violence to their supposed liberty of their free will – that nothing outside of themselves can influence them one way or the other, which nothing but man putting himself in the room of God.]

³⁵ Van Til uses "naturalism" here in a generic sense, in which it is thought that there are aspects of "nature," including in this case the nature of man, that are thought to be self-evident.

The great textbook of Evangelical apologetics is Bishop Butler's famous *Analogy*.³⁶ It is not our purpose here to deal with its argument fully. Suffice it to point out that its argument is closely similar to that which is found, for instance, in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas. Butler holds to an Arminian view in theology. He therefore assumes that the natural man by "a reasonable use of reason" can interpret aright "the course and constitution of nature." If only the natural man will continue to employ the same "reasonable use of reason" with respect to the facts presented to him in Scripture about Christ and his work, there is every likelihood that he will become a Christian." [In other words, Arminians hold that man can come to God without being effectually called! But it is the Shepherd who calls his sheep; not the sheep calling the Shepherd!]

³⁶ Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) was the most influential Protestant apologist of the eighteenth century. The book to which Van Til refers, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), was a defense of Christianity against the prevalent deism of the day. Butler used a double negative argument to attempt to argue from the natural religion of the deists to the probability of revealed religion as well (given X in natural religion, it is *not so irrational* to believe Y in revealed religion). The basic thrust of Butler's argument is this: this (observed) life and the (unobserved) afterlife, taken together exhibit features that resemble known features of this life taken alone. For example, we can infer that this life is a training-ground which the early years of this life reader should note that they are term a training-ground for the next life from the way in which the early years of this life are a training-ground for the later ones. Parenthetically, the reader should note that the term "analogy" is not used in this same way by Butler, Aquinas, and Van Til, which is one reason why confusion remains with respect to the term itself in apologetics.

III

Less Consistent Calvinism

The question of starting-point then is largely determined by one's theology. In the first chapters it has been our aim to set forth the salient features of Christianity according to the principles of the Reformed faith. In particular it has been the aim to indicate the main features of Christianity after the fashion indicated by the great Reformed theologians of recent times. It is on the basis of the work of

such men as Charles Hodge, Herman Bavinck, and B.B. Warfield, to mention no others, that have formulated the broad outline of the Reformed life and world view. It is only by the help of such men that we have been enabled to attain to anything like a consistent Protestantism.

It is only to follow out their suggestion then if we follow their principles in apologetics as well as in theology proper. We are to defend, as Warfield himself so well expresses it, not some minimal essence of Christianity, nor every detail included in the doctrines of Christianity, but “just Christianity itself...including all its ‘details’ and involving its ‘essence’ – in its unexplicated and uncompromised entirety...”

And this Christianity we must bring to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. “It is,” says Warfield, “upon a field of the dead that the Sun of righteousness has risen, and the shouts that announce His advent fall on deaf ears; yea, even though the morning stars should again sing for joy and the air be palpitant with the echo of the great proclamation, their voice could not penetrate the ears of the dead. As we sweep our eyes over the world lying in its wickedness, it is the valley of the prophet’s vision which we see before us; a valley that is filled with bones, and lo! They are very dry. What benefit is there in proclaiming to dry bones even the greatest redemptions? How shall we stand and cry, O, ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord? In vain the redemption, in vain its proclamation, unless there come a breath from heaven to breathe upon these slain that they may live.” **“The Christian lives by virtue of the life that has been given him, and prior to the inception of that life, of course, he has no power of action; and it is of the utmost importance that as Christian men we should not lower our testimony to this supernaturalness of our salvation.”** **Regeneration, we have seen Hodge argue, is unto knowledge, righteousness and holiness.**

It would seem that we have dropped from this high plane to the level of evangelicalism when Hodge speaks of the office of reason in matters of religion. About this point there can be little cause for dispute. “Revelations cannot be made to brutes or to idiots.” Second, Hodge argues that “Reason must judge of the credibility of a revelation.” And “the credible is that which can be believed. Nothing is incredible but the impossible. What may be, may be rationally (i.e., on adequate grounds) believed.” What then is impossible? Hodge replies: “(1) That is impossible which involves a contradiction; as, that a thing is and is not; that right is wrong and wrong is right. (2) It is impossible that God should do, approve, or command what is morally wrong. (3) It is impossible that He should require us to believe what contradicts any of the laws of belief which He has impressed upon our nature. (4) It impossible that one truth should contradict another. It is impossible, therefore, that God should reveal anything as true which contradicts any well authenticated truth, whether of intuition, experience, or previous revelation.” Third, Hodge continues, “Reason must judge of the evidence of a revelation.” As “faith involves assent, and assent is conviction produced by evidence, it follows that faith without evidence is either irrational or impossible.” The second and third prerogatives of reason, says Hodge, are approved by Scripture itself. Paul “recognized the paramount authority of the intuitive judgments of the mind” and “Jesus appealed to his works as evidence of the truth of his claims.”

It is not our purpose here to deal fully with the question of reason and revelation. Suffice it to note the ambiguity that underlies this approach to the question of the point of contact. When Hodge speaks of reason he means “those laws of belief which God has implanted in our nature.” Now it is true, of

course, that God has planted such laws of belief into our very being. It is this point on which Calvin lays such great stress when he says that all men have a sense of deity. But the unbeliever does not accept the doctrine of his creation in the image of God. It is therefore impossible to appeal to the intellectual and moral nature of men, *as men themselves interpret this nature*, and say that it must judge of the credibility and evidence of revelation. For it this is done, we are virtually telling the natural man to accept just so much and no more of Christianity as, with his perverted concept of human nature, he cares to accept.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ It is crucial to understand, in light of Van Til's critique of Hodge here, that Hodge seems to have departed from the Reformed tradition before him at this particular point. (It should also be noted that Van Til follows Hodge on virtually every other point.) Just why this is the case cannot be discussed here. It should be noted, however, that Turretin whose Institutes Hodge and Old Princeton would have followed until the appearance of Hodge's Systematic Theology, says this: "The question is not whether reason has any use in theology. For we confess that its use is manifold both for illustration; for comparison; for inference . . . ; and for argumentation. . . . But the question is simply whether it bears the relation of a principle and rule in whose scale the greatest mysteries of religion should be weighed, so that nothing should be held which is not agreeable to it, which is not founded upon and cannot be elicited from reason. This we deny against the **Socinians** who ... contend that reason is the rule of religion of things to be believed, and that those things are not to be believed which seem to the mind to be impossible." **Francis Turretin**, Institutes of Elenctic Theology, vol. I, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, N.J. P&R, 1994), 1:24.

And later **Turretin** notes: "Thus Scripture, which is the first principle in the supernatural order, is known by itself and has no need of arguments derived from without to prove and make itself known to us. If God has stamped such marks upon all first principles that they can be known at once by all men, we cannot doubt that he has placed them upon this sacred first principle (in the highest degree necessary to our salvation)." *Institutes Elenctic Theology*, 1:89

Good comments on Arminianism in this paragraph:

To use once again the illustration of the saw: the saw ins in itself but a tool. Whether it will move at all and whether it will cut in the right direction depends upon the man operating it. So also reason, or intellect, is always the instrument of a person. And the person employing it is always either a believer or an unbeliever. If he is a believer, his reason has already been changed in its set, as Hodge has told us, by regeneration. It cannot then be the judge; **it is now a part of the regenerated person, gladly subject to the authority of God.** It has by God's grace permitted itself to be interpreted by God's revelation. If, on the other hand, the person using his reason is an unbeliever, then this person, using his reason, will certainly assume the position of judge with respect to the credibility and evidence of revelation, but he will also certainly find the Christian religion incredible because impossible and the evidence for it is always inadequate.

Hodge's own teaching on the blindness and hardness of the natural man corroborates this fact. To attribute to the natural man the right to judge by means of his reason of what is possible or impossible, or to judge by means of his moral nature of what is good or evil, is virtually to deny the "particularism"

which, as Hodge no less than Warfield, believes to be the very hall-mark of a truly Biblical theology. In such a case Christianity would not claim to interpret the reasoner himself. That **reasoner** would be taken as already having within himself, previous to his acceptance of Christianity, the ability rightly to interpret and rightly to employ the powers of his own nature. And this is the exact equivalent of the **Arminian position** when it claims that God made salvation objectively possible but did not actually save individual men.

The main difficulty with the position of Hodge on this matter of the point of contact, then, is that it does not clearly distinguish between the original and the fallen nature of man. Basically, of course, it is Hodge's intention to appeal to the original nature of man as it came forth from the hands of its Creator. But he frequently argues as though that original nature can still be found as active in the "common consciousness" of men. Now there is a large element of truth in the contention that the common sense of man has not strayed so far from the truth as have the sophistications of the philosophers. Outspoken, blasphemous atheism is not usually found among the masses of men. But this does not take away the fact that all men are sinful in all the manifestations of their personality.

Good comments on Romans 7

A comparison may tend to clarify this point. In the **seventh chapter of Romans**, Paul speaks of himself, though a believer, as having a law of sin within members which often controls him against his will.⁴⁶ His "new man" is the real man, the man in Christ Jesus. But his "old man" is the remnant of his sinful nature that has not been fully destroyed. Applying this analogy to the natural man we have the following. The sinner is the one whose "new man" is the man in alliance with Satan But his "old man" is that which wars within his members against his will; it is his nature as he came forth from the hand of his Creator. When the prodigal has left his father's house he is on the way to the swine-trough. But while on this way he has his misgivings. He seeks to make himself believe that his true nature consists in his self-assertion away from the father's house. But he kicks against the pricks. He sins against his better knowledge. It is quite in accord with the genius of Hodge's theology to appeal to the "old man" in the sinner and altogether out of accord with his theology to appeal to the "new man" in the sinner as though he would form a basically proper judgment on any question. Yet Hodge has failed to distinguish clearly between these two. Accordingly he does not clearly distinguish the Reformed from the Evangelical and Roman Catholic views of the point of contact. Accordingly he also speaks about "reason" as something that seems to operate rightly wherever it is found. **But the "reason" of sinful men will invariably act wrongly.** Particularly is this true when they are confronted with the specific contents of Scripture. **The natural man will invariably employ the tool of his reason to reduce these contents to a naturalistic level.** He must do so even in the interest of the principle of contradiction. **For his own ultimacy is the most basic presupposition of his entire philosophy.** It is upon this presupposition as its fulcrum that he uses the **law of contradiction**. **If he is asked to use his reason as the judge of the credibility of the Christian revelation without at the same time being asked to renounce his view of himself as ultimate, then he is virtually asked to believe and to disbelieve in his own ultimacy at the same time and in the same sense. [Wow!]**

⁴⁶Though Romans 7 is a contested passage, Van Til is following, at least, John Murray here in his understanding that Paul is writing about the conflict of a Christian.

Moreover, this same man, in addition to rejecting Christianity in the name of the law of contradiction, will also reject it in the name of what he calls his intuition of freedom. By this he means virtually the same thing as his ultimacy. Speaking of the “philosophers” Calvin says, “The principle they set out with was that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil... They also imagined that that distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life.” [Textbook Arminianism] If such a one is asked to accept the position of Christianity, according to which his destiny is ultimately determined by the counsel of God, he is asked to accept what to him makes right wrong and wrong right. [hence the darkness that is in unregenerate men.]

It is only to follow out the lead which Hodge in his theology, following Calvin, has given, if we seek our point of contact not in any abstraction whatsoever, whether it be reason or intuition. No such abstraction exists in the universe of men. We always deal with concrete individual men. These men are sinners. They have “an axe to grind.” They want to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They will employ their reason for that purpose. And they are not formally illogical if, granted the assumption of **man’s ultimacy**, they reject the teachings of Christianity. On the contrary, to be logically consistent they are bound to do so.⁴⁸ This point will engage us more fully in the sequel. For the moment it must suffice to have shown how the apologist is not only untrue to his own doctrine of man as the creature of God, but also defeats his own purpose if he appeals to some form of the “common consciousness of man.”

⁴⁸Van Til will argue also that the unbeliever, like the believer, cannot be logically consistent. If he were, however, he would be able completely to eradicate his creatureliness from his thinking and his living.

Before going on to discuss what appears to us to be a more truly Biblical view of the problem of the point of contact, we would call attention to one other form of inconsistent Calvinism on this matter. In his book, *Het Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, **D. Valentine Hepp** speaks about prima principia with respect to God, man and the world which, he says, men in general accept.³³

With respect to the central truths which speak to us from creation as such, there is little doubt among men. A few mistaken scientists, who insist on maintaining their mistaken starting-point, insist that they doubt whether God or man or world exist. They owe such statements, not to experience, but to their systems. But their number, though we hear much of them, is very small. Taken as a whole mankind does not deny the central truths. The great majority of men recognize a higher power above them, and do not hesitate to accept the reality of the world and of man.

The position of Hepp, as appears even from this one quotation, is similar to that of Hodge. Like Hodge, Hepp wants to appeal to a general faith in “central truths” that all men, when not too sophisticated, accept. **There seems to be for Hepp, as for Hodge, something in the way of a commonsense philosophy which the natural man has and which, because intuitive or spontaneous, is, so far forth, not tainted by sin.** It appears, however, even from the brief quotation given, that the “common notions” of men are sinful notions. For man to reflect on this own awareness of meaning and

then merely to say that a higher power, *a* God, exists, is in effect to say that God does not exist. It is as though a child, reflecting upon his home environment would conclude that *a* father or *a* mother exist. And to “recognize the reality of the world and of man” is in itself not even to recognize the elemental truths of creation and providence. It is not enough to appeal from the more highly articulated systems of non-Christian thinkers to the philosophy of the common consciousness, of common sense, of intuition, that is to something that is more immediately related to the revelational pressure that rest upon men.

Both Hepp and Hodge seem to be desirous of doing no more than Calvin does when he appeals to the sense of deity present in all men. But this notion, seeking to set froth as it does the teaching of Paul, that God’s revelation is present to every man, must be carefully distinguished from the reaction that sinful men make to this revelation. The revelation of God, not of a god, is so immediately present to every man, that, as Warfield, following Calvin, says: “The conviction of the existence of God bears the marks of an intuitive truth in so far as it is the universal and unavoidable belief of men, and is given in the very same act with the idea of self, which is known at once as **dependent** and **responsible** and thus implies one on whom it depends and to whom it is responsible.” **It is to this sense of deity, even this knowledge of God, which, Paul tells us (tom 1:19-20) every man has, but which, as Paul also tells us, every sinner seeks to suppress, that the Christian apologetic must appeal.**

What has been said up this point may seem to be discouraging in the extreme. It would seem that the argument up to this point has driven us to a denial of any point of contact whatsoever with the unbeliever. Is it not true that men must have some contact with the truth if they are to receive further knowledge of it? **If men are totally ignorant of the truth, how can they even become interesting in it?** If men are totally blind why display before them the colors of the spectrum? If they are deaf why take them to the academy of music?

Moreover, is not reason itself a gift of God? And does not the scientist, though not a Christian, know much about the universe? Does one need to be a Christian to know that two times two are four? And besides all this, does Christianity, while telling us of much that is *above* reason, require of us to accept anything that is *against* reason?

Our answer to this type of query is that it is precisely in the Reformed conception of the point of contact, and in it alone, that the historically so famous dilemma about the wholly ignorant, or the wholly omniscient, can be avoided. But before showing this positively it is necessary to indicate that in the Roman Catholic view this dilemma is insoluble.

If a man is wholly ignorant of the truth he cannot be interested in the truth. On the other hand if he is really interested in the truth it must be that he already possesses the main elements of the truth. It is in the interest of escaping the horns of this dilemma that Rome and evangelical Protestantism seek a point of contact in some area of “common knowledge” between believers and unbelievers. Their argument is that in teaching the **total depravity of man** in the way he does the Calvinist is in the unfortunate position of having to speak to deaf men when he preaches the gospel. We believe, on the contrary, that it is only the Calvinist who is not in this position.

Plato's famous allegory of the cave may illustrate the Roman Catholic position. The dwellers of this cave had chains about their necks and on their legs. They saw nothing but shadows and attributed echoes to these shadows. Yet they supposed that "they were naming what was actually before them." If one of them should be released, says Plato, he would need to get accustomed to the light of the sun. But he would pity those who were still in the cave. And "if he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who have never moved out of the den...would he not be ridiculous in their view? "Men would say of him that up he went and down he comes without his eyes; and that there is no use in even thinking of ascending; and if anyone tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender in the act, and they would put him to death."

Plato himself interprets this allegory in relation to **man's capacity for and knowledge of the truth**. The prisoners have eyes with which to see the truth; **all they need is to have their heads turned about so they may face the truth**.

It is in some such fashion that Rome thinks of the natural man. Following Aristotle's general method of reasoning, Thomas Aquinas argues that the natural man can, **by the ordinary use of his reason**, do justice to the natural revelation that surrounds him. He merely needs **some assistance [i.e., prevenient grace]** in order that he may also see and react properly to the supernatural revelation that is found in Christianity.⁵³

⁵³ Aquinas says, for example: "There is a two-fold mode of truth in what we profess about God. Some truths about God exceed all the abilities of the human reason. Such is the truth that God is triune. But there are some truths which the natural reason is also able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like. In fact, such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of natural reason." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame and London: Notre Dame University Press, 1957), 1.63.

According to the Roman view then, the natural man is already in possession of the truth in terms of a true interpretation of natural revelation. And he interprets natural revelation aright because he participates in the being of God. To be sure, he is said to be in possession of the truth only with respect to natural revelation. But if the natural man can and does interpret natural revelation in a way that is essentially correct there is no reason why he should need supernatural aid in order to interpret Christianity truly. At most he would need the information that Christ and his Spirit have come into the world. Hearing this news, he would not fail, as a rational being, to make the proper reaction to it. If the natural man's eyes (reason)_ enable him to see correctly in one dimension, there is no good reason to think that the same eyes will not enable him, without further assistance from without, to see correctly in all dimensions. There would be no reason why all of the prisoners of the cave could not break their chains and walk in the light of day. In fact, Plato gives no reason why those, who did not escape could not have escaped as well as the one who did.

On the other hand, it may be said that according to the Roman Catholic view the natural man does not give a fully correct interpretation of natural revelation. Does not Thomas Aquinas correct the interpretations that "the philosopher" has given of the things of nature? And does not the **Roman**

Catholic view of the image of God in man itself imply that even originally, before the fall, man was unable, without the *donum superadditum* [see Van Til @ code490 & code530] to know anything in a perfect way?

We reply that though Aquinas does correct some of the conclusions of Aristotle, he accepts the method of Aristotle as essentially sound. But, ignoring this, and granting for the sake of the argument that according to Rome the natural man's view of natural revelation is not fully correct, it should be noted that the only reason Rome can adduce for this fact is a defect in revelation itself. The prisoners of Plato's cave are not to be blamed for the fact that they see shadows only. They are doing full justice by the position in which they find themselves. If their heads are bound so that they see shadows only, this is due to no fault of theirs. It is due to the constitution and course of nature. According to this view the human mind is not originally and naturally in contact with the truth. The idea of freedom, as entertained by Roman theology, is based upon man's being metaphysically distinct from "god." And this is tantamount to saying that man is free to the extent that he has not "being." There is on this basis no genuine point of contact with the mind of the natural man at all. The ideas that man is out of contact with God and that he participates in the being of God are correlative to one another.

We do not object to the idea that the mind of man is said to be always in need of supernatural revelation. On the contrary we would stress the fact that even in paradise the mind of man needed and enjoyed a supernatural revelation. What we object to is the reason given for the need that man had of supernatural revelation even in paradise. The reason for this need, according to the Roman Catholic view, is virtually a defect in the original constitution of man. This implies that man is naturally, according to his original constitution, prone to error as well as to truth. The reason for this is that the god of Roman Catholicism does not control "whatsoever come to pass." Man is, accordingly, not exclusively confronted with that which reveals God. Man is also confronted with the ultimately non-rational.⁵⁸ On such a conception of reality in general it is natural that man's constitution should be thought of, on the one hand, as of itself possessing the truth and, on the other hand, as never able, by its natural action, to come into possession of the truth.

⁵⁴ Aquinas differed from "the philosopher," Aristotle, for example-in Thomas's insistence that creation was not eternal.

⁵⁵ This is a reference to the "superadded gift" of righteousness, which according to Romanist theology was needed at creation since the being of man could in no way include it.

⁵⁶ Van Til's reasoning here includes the notion that, in Romanist philosophical man participates in the being of God, yet that participation cannot include man's choice since it must be free of any outside constraint. So, if we "are" in God, but are "free" outside of his influence, we "are not" in God with respect to our choices. This is one way in which Van Til works out a rational/irrational dialectic with respect to elements of unbelief.

⁵⁷ That is, God spoke to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:16-17), and specified to them how they were to act in obedience before him.

⁵⁸The “ultimately nonrational,” in Romanist theology, includes the fact that man as created could not please God; man was also in need of an added righteousness. [[the *donum superadditum*](#). See [code530](#)]

On such a basis too, the addition of supernatural to natural revelation would not remedy matters. It would be as true of supernatural as of natural revelation that either it would not reach man or else if it did reach man, he would not be in need of it.

If natural revelation does not so envelope man as to make it impossible for him to look at anything that does not speak of God, then supernatural revelation will not do this either. If natural revelation does not of such a God as by his counsel surrounds man completely, then neither can supernatural revelation speak of such a God. But if it did, per impossible, speak of such a God, it could mean nothing to the mind of man as Rom conceives of it. *The revelation of a self-sufficient God can have no meaning for a mind that thinks of itself as ultimately autonomous.* **The possibility for a point of contact has disappeared.** The whole idea of the revelation of the self-sufficient God of Scripture drops to the ground **if man himself is autonomous or self-sufficient.** If man is not himself revelational in the internal structure of his being, he can receive no revelation that comes to him from without.⁵⁹ [[The natural man will defend his supposed autonomy to the death. He must be confronted with this.](#)]

⁵⁹Masselink’s position follows that of Hepp and, with it, that of Thomas Aquinas. See William Masselink, “New Views of Common Grace in Light of Historic Reformed Theology.” *The Calvin Forum* 19, no. 10 (May 1954): 1971.

On the other hand, if man is in any sense autonomous, he is not in need of revelation. If he is then said to possess the truth he possesses it as the product of the ultimately legislative powers of his intellect. It is only if he can virtually control by means of the application of the law of non-contradiction all the facts of reality that surround him, that he can know any truth at all. And thus, if he knows any truth in this way, he, in effect, knows all truth.

On the **Roman Catholic position**, then, man is, with the cave dwellers of Plato, by virtue of his own constitution, adapted to semi-darkness. Revelation would not do him any good, even though we might think of him as in need of it. If revelation is to come to him, it must com to him as the truth came to one of Plato’s cave-dwellers, in an accidental fashion. Or else man is, with the accidentally liberated cave-dweller of Plato, not in need of supernatural revelation; potentially he has all truth within his reach.

IV The Reformed Position

The fully Biblical conception of the point of contact, it ought now to be clear, is the only one that can escape the dilemma of absolute ignorance or absolute omniscience.

The one great defect of the Roman Catholic and the Arminian view is, as noted, that it ascribes ultimacy or self-sufficiency to the mind of man. [Massively important! Is this not what Eve was tempted with??] Romanism and Arminianism do this in their views of man as stated in their works on systematic theology. It is consistent for them, therefore, not to challenge the assumption of ultimacy as this is made by the non-believer. But Reformed theology, as worked out by Calvin and his recent exponents such as Hodge, Warfield, Kuyper, and Bavinck, holds that man's mind is derivative.¹ [i.e., it is wholly dependent upon God – we receive our all from God which argues absolute, perfect and universal derivation and dependence. – paraphrase from Jonathan Edwards] As such it is naturally in contact with God's revelation. It is surrounded by nothing but revelation. It is itself inherently revelational. It cannot naturally be conscious of itself without being conscious of its creatureliness. For man self-consciousness presupposes God-consciousness. Calvin speaks of this as man's inescapable sense of deity.

¹ Van Til states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: Calvin never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general a priori position. His position is as radically apposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, he must regard God as original and himself as derivative. He did not place God and man as **correlatives** next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: p128-9*: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness *the immediate but wholly derivative* starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the *remote but wholly ultimate starting point* of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the **false ideal of absolute comprehension**. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, **the non-Christian interpretation** of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that **it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man**. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of **comprehension knowledge**. This was done especially in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of **Leibniz**, a striking manifestation of the pride, "hubris," **of the sinner who wishes to be as God**.³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. There have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern

irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father's house. His "hubris" never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz's project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

For Adam in paradise God-consciousness could not come in at the end of the syllogistic process of reasoning. God-consciousness was for him the presupposition of the significance of his reasoning on anything.

To the doctrine of creation must be added the conception of the covenant.⁶⁰ Man was created as a historical being. God place upon him from the outset of history the responsibility and task of reinterpreting the counsel of God as expressed in creation to himself individually and collectively. **Man's creature-consciousness may therefore be more particularly signaled as covenant-consciousness.** But the revelation of the covenant to man in paradise was supernaturally mediated. This was naturally the case inasmuch as it pertained to man's historical task. Thus, the sense of obedience or disobedience was immediately involved in Adam's consciousness of himself. *[Why is this covenant awareness important. Because when natural man suppresses this truth and the knowledge of God and has a world view that things happen not by God's eternal controlling decree, but by chance (brute fact, See CodeBF, brutefactdef, and code524 & codebrute), this, in the mind of natural man, excuses him from obedience to God and therefore thinks he is not guilty of being a covenant breaker. Of course, this is all a wicked presumption.]* Covenant-consciousness envelops creature-consciousness. In paradise Adam knew that as a creature of God it was natural and proper that he should keep the covenant that God had made with him. In this way it appears that man's proper self-consciousness depend, even in paradise, upon his being in contact with both supernatural and natural revelation. God's natural revelation was within man as well as about him. Man's very constitution as a rational and moral being is itself revelational to man as the ethically responsible reactor to revelation. And natural revelation is itself incomplete. It needed from the outset to be supplemented with supernatural revelation about man's future. Thus, the very idea of supernatural revelation is correlatively embodied in the idea of man's proper self-consciousness.

⁶⁰Van Til has in mind here the Westminster Confession of Faith, 7.1. Beginning generally, the confession state, "The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward but by some voluntary condescension of God's part, which He hath been please do express by way of covenant." From this general notion, the Reformed have delineated the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

It is in this way that man may be said to be by his original constitution in contact with the truth while yet not in possession of all the truth. Man is not in Plato's cave. He is not in the anomalous position of having eyes with which to see while yet he dwells in darkness. He has not, as was the case with the cave-dwellers of Plato, some mere capacity for the truth that might never come to fruition.

Man had originally not merely a capacity for receiving the truth; he was in actual possession of the truth. The world of truth was not found in some realm far distant from him; it was right before him. That which spoke to his sense no less than that which spoke to his intellect was the voice of God. Even when he close his eyes upon the external world his internal sense would manifest God to him in his own constitution. The *matter* of his experience was in no sense in need of a mere *form* with which he might organize the raw material. On the contrary the matter of his experience was lit up through and through. Yet it was lit up for him by the voluntary activity of God whose counsel made things to be what they are. Man could not be aware of himself without also being aware of his responsibility to manage himself and all things for the glory of God. Man's consciousness of objects and of self was not static. It was consciousness in *time*. Moreover, consciousness of objects and of self in time meant consciousness of *history* in relationship to the plan of God back of history. Man's first sense of self-awareness implied the awareness of the presence of God as the one for whom he had a great task to accomplish.

It is only when we begin our approach to the question of the point of contact by thus analyzing the situation as it obtained in paradise before the fall of man that we can attain to a true conception of the natural man and his capacities with respect to the truth. **The apostle Paul speaks of the natural man as actually possessing the knowledge of God** (Romans 1:19-20). **The greatness of his sin lies precisely in the fact that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." No man can escape knowing God.** It is indelibly involved in his awareness of anything whatsoever. Man ought, therefore, as Calvin puts it, to recognize God. There is no excuse for him if he does not. The reason for his failure to recognize God lies exclusively in him. It is due to his willful transgression of the very law of his being.

Neither Romanism nor Protestant evangelicalism can do full justice to this teaching of Paul. In effect, both of them fail to surround man exclusively with God's revelation. **Not holding to the counsel of God as all-controlling they cannot teach that man's self-awareness always presupposes awareness of God.** According to both Rome and evangelicalism man may have some measure of awareness of objects about him and of himself in relation to them without being aware at the same time of his responsibility to manipulate both of them in relation to God. Thus, man's consciousness of objects, of self, of time and of history are not from the outset brought into an exclusive relationship of dependence upon God, *Hinc illae lacrimae!* [Literally translated, "Hence those tears," this means something like "that is the real offense or the underlying reason for the problem." The saying is from the Roman poet, Terence (fl. 170-160 B.C.) *Andria* 126. Footnote info from Dr. Scott Oliphant, editor of the 4th edition of Van Til's book.]

Of course, when we thus stress Paul's teaching that all men do not have a mere capacity for but are in actual possession of the knowledge of God, we have at once to add Paul's further instruction to the effect that all men, due to the sin within them, always and in all relationships **seek to "suppress" this knowledge on God** (Rom. 1:18, ASV). **The natural man is such a one as constantly throws water on a fire he cannot quench. He has yielded to the temptation of Satan, and has become his bondservant.** When Satan tempted Adam and Eve in paradise, he sought to make them believe that man's self-consciousness was ultimate rather than derivative and God-dependent. He argued, as it were, that it was of the nature of self-consciousness to **make itself the final reference point** of all predication. **He argued, as it were, that God had not control over all that might come forth in the process of time.** This

is to say, he argued, in effect, that as any form of self-consciousness **must assume its own ultimacy**, so it must also admit of its own limitation in the fact that much that happens is under no control at all. Thus, Satan argued, as it were, that man's consciousness of time and of the time's products in history, is, if intelligible at all, intelligible in some measure independently of God.

Romanism and Evangelicalism, however, do not attribute this assumption of autonomy or ultimacy on the part of man as due to sin. They hold that man should quite properly think of himself and of his relation to objects in time in this way. Hence, they do injustice to Paul's teaching with respect **to the effect of sin** on the interpretative activity of man. As they virtually deny that originally man not merely had a capacity for the truth but was in actual possession of the truth, so also, they virtually deny that the natural man suppresses the truth.

It is not to be wondered at that neither Romanism nor Evangelicalism are little interested in challenging the "philosophers" when these, as Calvin says, interpret man's consciousness without being aware of the tremendous difference in man's attitude toward the truth before and after the fall. **Accordingly, they do not distinguish carefully between the natural man's own conception of himself and the Biblical conception of him.** Yet for the question of the point of contact, this is all-important. If we make our appeal to the natural man without being aware of this distinction, we virtually admit that the natural man's estimate of himself is correct. [that is key!] We may, to be sure, even then, maintain that he is in need of information. We may even admit that he is morally corrupt. But the one thing which, on this basis, we cannot admit, is that his claim to be able to interpret at least some area of experience in a way that is essentially correct, is mistaken. **We cannot then challenge his most basic epistemological assumption** to the effect that his self-consciousness and time-consciousness are self-explanatory. **We cannot challenge his right to interpret** all his experience in exclusively immanentistic categories. **And on this everything hinges.** For if we first allow the legitimacy of the natural man's assumption about himself as the ultimate reference point in interpretation in any dimension, **we cannot deny his right to interpret Christianity itself in naturalistic terms.** [and so not the evangelist is at an impasse with him.]

The point of contact for the gospel, then, must be sought within the natural man. Deep down in his mind every man knows that he is the creature of God and responsible to God. **Every man, at bottom, knows that he is a covenant breaker. But every man acts and talks as though this were not so.** It is the one point that cannot bear mentioning in his presence. A man may have internal cancer. Yet it may be one point he will not have one speak of in his presence. He will grant that he is not feeling well. He will accept any sort of medication so long as it does not pretend to be given in answer to a cancer diagnosis. Will a good doctor cater to him on this matter? Certainly no. He will tell his patient that he has promise of life, but promise of life on one condition, that is, of an immediate internal operation. So it is with the sinner. He is alive but alive as a covenant-breaker. But his own interpretative activity with respect to all things proceeds on the assumption that such is not the case. Romanism and evangelicalism, by failing to appeal exclusively to that which is within man but is also suppressed by every man, virtually allow the legitimacy of the natural man's view of himself. They do not seek to explode the last stronghold to which the natural man always flees and where he always makes his final stand. **The cut off the weeds at the surface but do not dig up the roots of these weeds for fear that crops will not grow.**

The truly biblical view, on the other hand, applies atomic power and flame-throwers to the very **presupposition** of the natural man's ideas with respect to himself. It does not fear to lose a point of contact by uprooting the weeds rather than by cutting them off at the very surface. It is assured of a point of contact in the fact that every man is made in the image of God and has impressed upon him the law of God. In that fact alone he may rest secure with respect to the point of contact problem. For that fact makes men always accessible to God. That fact assures us that everyman, to be a man at all, must already be in contact with the truth. **He is so much in contact with the truth that much of his energy is spent in the vain effort to hide this fact from himself.** His efforts to hide this fact from himself are bound to be self-frustrative.

Only by thus finding the point of contact in man's sense of deity that lies underneath his own conception of self-consciousness as ultimate can we be both true to Scripture and effective in reasoning with the natural man. Man, knowing God, refuses to keep God in remembrance (Rom. 1:28).

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS (THE PROBLEM OF METHOD)

A discussion of the problem of methodology naturally follows upon that of the problem of the point of contact. If we have discovered what we shall think of the person to whom we are to make our address in the interest of winning him to an acceptance of Christianity, we must next inquire as to the way by which we shall lead him to a knowledge of the truth.

The Christian view of man and the Christian view of method are alike aspects of the Christian position as a whole. So also the non-Christian view of man and the non-Christian view of method are alike aspects of the non-Christian position as a whole. That such is indeed the case will appear as we proceed. For the moment the point is dogmatically asserted in order to indicate the plan of procedure for this chapter.

Our concern throughout is to indicate the nature of a truly Protestant, that is a **Reformed, apologetic**. A Reformed method of apologetics must seek to vindicate the Reformed life and world view as Christianity come to its own. It has already become plain that this implies a refusal to grant that any area or aspect of reality, any fact or any law of nature or of history can be correctly interpreted except it be seen in the light of the main doctrines of Christianity. But if this be true, it becomes quite impossible for the apologist to do what Roman Catholics and Arminians must do on the basis of their view of Christianity, namely, agree with the non-Christian in his principles of methodology to see whether or not Christian theism be true. From the **Roman Catholic** and the **Arminian** point of view the question of methodology, like that of starting-point, is a neutral matter. According to these positions the Christian apologist can legitimately join the non-Christian scientist or philosopher as he, by his recognized methods, investigates certain dimensions of reality. Neither the follower of Thomas Aquinas nor the follower of the "judicious Butler" would need, on his principles, to object when, for instance, A. E. Taylor² says:

“Natural science, let me say again, is exclusively concerned with the detection of laws of nature, uniformities of sequence in the course of events. The typical form of such a law is the statement that whenever certain definitely measurable events occur some other measurable event will also be found to occur. Any enquiry thus delimited obviously can throw no light on the question...whether God exists or not, the question whether the whole course of events among which the man of science discovers these uniformities of sequence is or is not guided by a supreme intelligence to the production of an intrinsically good result.”³

²A. E. Taylor (1869-1945), was a philosophical theist and is perhaps best known for his translation of a number of Greek philosophical texts. He was educated at Oxford and later became a fellow of Merton College there from 1891 to 1898. After teaching at Manchester and in Canada, he spent most of his career at the University of St. Andrews as professor of moral philosophy (1908-24), and then at the University of Edinburgh as the chair of moral philosophy from 1924 until his retirement in 1941.

³ A. E. Taylor, *Does God Exist?* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 13, 14.

The Reformed apologist, on the other hand, would compromise what he holds to be of the essence of Christianity if he agreed with Taylor. For him the whole of created reality, including therefore the fields of research with which the various sciences deal, reveals the same God of which Scripture speaks. **The very essence of created reality is its revelational character.** Scientists deal with that which has the imprint of **God's face upon it.** Created reality may be compared to a great estate. The owner has his name plainly and indelibly written at unavoidable places. How then would it be possible for some stranger to enter this estate, make researches in it, and then fairly say that in these researches he need not and cannot be confronted with the question of ownership? To change the figure, compare the facts of nature and history, the facts with which the sciences are concerned, to a linoleum that has its figure indelibly imprinted in it. The pattern of such a linoleum cannot be effaced till the linoleum itself is worn away. Thus inescapably does the scientist meet the pattern of Christian theism in each fact with which he deals. **The apostle Paul lays great stress upon the fact that man is without excuse if he does not discover God in nature. Following Paul's example Calvin argues that men ought to see God, not a god, not some supernatural power, but the only God, in nature.** They have not done justice by the facts they see displayed before and within them if they say that a god exists or that God probably exists. The Calvinist holds to the essential perspicuity of natural as well as Biblical revelation. This does not imply that a non-Christian and non-theistic interpretation of reality cannot be made to appear plausible. **But it does mean that no non-Christian position can be made to appear more than merely plausible.**

Roman Catholic apologists can, therefore, to the extent that their own theology does not teach the perspicuity of natural revelation, with consistency use the method of the natural man. Just as Rome, having a semi-pagan conception of the nature of man, can agree with the natural man's conception of the starting-point in knowledge, so also, having a semi-pagan concept of the nature of the objects man must know, can, to a large extent, agree with the natural man's conception of the method of knowledge.

Arminian apologists also, to the extent that their theology is faulty, can consistently agree with the non-believer on the question of methodology. Believing to some extent in the autonomy and ultimacy of human personality, Arminianism can, in a measure, agree on the question of starting-point with those who make men the final reference point in all human predication. [what they attribute to man's nature, depraved or not so much] So also, believing to some extent in the existence of facts that are not wholly under the control and direction of the counsel of God, Arminianism can agree on the question of method with those for whom the object of knowledge has nothing at all to do with the plan of God. [Arminians are not big fans of God's determined counsel of his will, his eternal decree, e.g., election, predestination, etc. because of their stance on human autonomy, self-reliance, and their idea of the liberty of their will independent of God's determination. It is man placing himself in the room of God. Nothing new. Read Owen's book, *A Display of Arminianism*]

In contradistinction from both Roman Catholics and Arminians, however, the Reformed apologist cannot agree at all with the methodology of the natural man. Disagreeing with the natural man's interpretation of himself as the ultimate reference-point, **the Reformed apologist must seek his point of contact with the natural man in that which is beneath the threshold of his working consciousness, in the sense of deity which he seeks to suppress. And to do this the Reformed apologist must also seek a point of contact with the systems constructed by the natural man. But this point of contact must be in the nature of a head on collision.⁴ If there is no head-on collision with the systems of the natural man there will be no point of contact with the sense of deity in the natural man.** So also, disagreeing with the natural man on the nature of the object of knowledge, the Reformed apologist must disagree with him on the method to be employed in acquiring knowledge. According to the doctrine of the Reformed faith all the facts of nature and of history are what they are, do what they do and undergo what they undergo, **in accord with the one comprehensive counsel of God. [i.e., his eternal decrees] All that may be known by man is already known by God. And it is already known by God because it is controlled by God.**

⁴Van Til's point here is that a point of contact is not a place on which believer and unbeliever stand together, but rather, because it is the foundation for the suppression of the true knowledge of God, the point of contact will express itself, in the unbeliever, in the form of self-deceptive suppression, not in the form of agreement with Christianity.

The significance of this for the question of method will be pointed out soon. For the moment this simple fact must be signaled as the reason which precludes the possibility of agreement on methodology between the Reformed theologian and the non-Christian philosopher or scientist. We may mention one point that brings out the difference in methodology between the two positions. It is the point with reference to the relevancy of hypotheses. For the non-Christian any sort of hypothesis may, at the outset of an investigation, be as relevant as any other. This is so because on a non-Christian basis facts are not what they are because of the systematic relation they sustain to God. On a non-Christian basis facts are "rationalized" for the first time when interpreted by man. But for one who holds that the facts are already part of an ultimately rational system by virtue of the plan of God it is clear that such hypotheses as presuppose the non-existence of such a plan must, even from the outset of his investigation, be considered irrelevant. [key point; man's effort to rationalize the irrational. So if

God is not the grand designer of the universe, that all is irrational, unrelated facts and chance, then the non-believer tries to put things together that fits his natural or carnal understanding, thus converting the irrational by rationalizing it. And I gather that this is the foundation behind evolutionary theory, man assigning his meaning to what appears as a massive series of chance happenings to try to make rational sense out of it, explaining it all apart from God's plan and design. Van Til goes into this idea of rationalizing the irrational later.]

Good notes on proper apologetics

I—REASONING BY PRESUPPOSITION

These things being as they are it will be our first task in this chapter to show that a consistently Christian method of apologetic argument, in agreement with its own basic conception of the starting point, must be by presupposition.⁵ To argue by **pre-supposition** is to indicate what are the **epistemological and metaphysical principles that underlie and control one's method**. The Reformed apologist will frankly admit that his own methodology presupposes the truth of **Christian theism**. Basic to all the doctrines of Christian theism is that of the **self-contained God**, or, if we wish, that of the ontological trinity. It is this notion of the **ontological trinity** that ultimately controls a truly Christian methodology. **Based upon this notion of the ontological trinity and consistent with it, is the concept of the counsel of God according to which all things in the created world are regulated.**

⁵ Van Til uses the notion of presupposition in a general way, but always to denote the fact that one's own world and life view must be based on the truth as it is found in Scripture, and more specifically, that truth is found, seminally, in the Westminster Standards. Because Van Til never defined a presupposition, some have confused it with paradigms, prejudices, *a priori* beliefs, etc. If we were to set forth his notion of a presupposition in general terms, perhaps the "Strawsonian" formula is the best representative: "P presupposes Q if and only if Q is true provided P is true or P is false." That is, a presupposition is that which is true and provides for the truth or falsity of another proposition. A presupposition in the way that Van Til uses it need not be confined to propositions, but includes the objective "state of affairs" as well. In that sense (i.e., in the objective-state-of-affairs sense), **unbelievers presuppose God even in their unbelief**. Not only so, but they presuppose God subjectively as well, in that all that they think and do presupposes the knowledge of God that they have by virtue of general revelation.

Christian methodology is therefore based upon presuppositions that are quite the opposite of those of the non-Christian. It is claimed to be of the very essence of any non-Christian form of methodology that it cannot be determined in advance to what conclusions it must lead. To assert, as the Christian apologist is bound to do if he is not to deny the very thing he is seeking to establish, that the conclusion of a true method is the truth of Christian theism is, from the point of view of the non-Christian, the clearest evidence of authoritarianism. In spite of this claim to neutrality on the part of the non-Christian the Reformed apologist must point out that every method, the supposedly neutral one no less than any other, presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism.

The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct. The issue between believers and non-believers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to “facts” or “laws” whose nature and significance is already agreed upon by both parties to the debate. The question is rather as to what is the final reference-point required to make the “facts” and “laws” intelligible. The question is as to what the “facts” and “laws” really are. Are they what the non-Christian methodology assumes that they are? Are they what the Christian theistic methodology presupposes they are?⁶

⁶ A "direct" appeal to facts and laws would include an acceptance of the facts and laws as themselves not revelatory of the Christian God. An "indirect" appeal would ask as to the presuppositions behind the facts and laws, which are presumed to make them possible. **This is at the core of what Van Til** (earlier in his career) called the **transcendental approach**. Without explicating the details of the concept itself, we could say that it refers, generally, to the preconditions that must obtain if anything else is to obtain as well. For an analysis of Van Til's method, see K. Scott Oliphint, "The Consistency of Van Til's Methodology," Westminster Theological Journal 52, no. 1 (1990): 27-49.

The answer to this question cannot be finally settled by any direct discussion of “facts.” It must, in the last analysis, be settled indirectly. The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument’s sake, in order to show him that on such a position the “facts” are not facts and the “laws” are not laws. **He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument’s sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do “facts” and “laws” appear intelligible.**⁷

To admit one’s own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is therefore to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*.⁸ The starting-point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another.

⁷ What is described in this paragraph is the basic sum and substance of how one engages the unbeliever apologetically. It is a two step approach: (1) Move to the unbeliever's position in order to show that it cannot consistently be lived or thought, and (2) ask the unbeliever to move to the Christian position in order to show how it alone can answer questions posed in the unbeliever's position. Of course, life is not as clean and wooden as that, so there will always be contours and complexities to the conversation that cannot be predicted in detail. These two general steps, however, should be a part of one's apologetic method.

⁸ This statement has been troublesome to many. One of the primary reasons for that is that a form of circular argument, sometimes labeled *petitio principii* (**begging the question**) is in fact a logical fallacy. Van Til is not advocating fallacious reasoning here. Though much more needs to be said, a couple of points should be remembered when Van Til wants to affirm circular reasoning. (1) Circular reasoning is not the same as a circular argument. A circular argument is one in which the conclusion of the argument is also assumed in one or more of the premises. Van Til's notion of circularity is broader and more inclusive than

a strict argument form. For example, in William Alston, *The Reliability of Sense Perception* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), Alston argues that it is impossible to establish knowledge in that knowledge area without at the same time presupposing some knowledge in that area. His example is an argument for the reliability of sense perception. Any argument for such reliability presupposes that reliability. And it does so *because of the epistemic situation in which human beings exist*. Alston is right here, it seems. Not only so, but, to go deeper, the epistemic and metaphysical situation in which human beings exist is one in which the source of and rationale for all that we are and think is, ultimately, in the triune God of Scripture, circularity in this sense is inevitable. We will never be outside the circular reasoning pinoy be seen in the context of the point he made above containing about context of image of God as we think and live - not in this life or the next. (2) Van Til's affirmation of "indirect" arguments. Any *petitio principii* is, by definition, a direct argument premises and a conclusion. Van Til's indirect method moves one out of the **context** of a direct argument and into the context of the rationale of any fact or law assumed to be, or to be true. Thus, **circularity is inextricably linked to the transcendental approach** and is not meant to be in reference, strictly speaking, to direct argumentation.

Good points here

Let us say that the Christian apologist has placed the position of Christian theism before his opponent. Let us say further that he has pointed out that his own method of investigation of reality presupposes the truth of his position. This will appear to his friend whom he is seeking to win to an acceptance of the Christian position as highly authoritarian and out of accord with the proper use of human reason. What will the apologist do next? **If he is a Roman Catholic or an Arminian, he will tone down the nature of Christianity to some extent in order to make it appear that the consistent application of his friend's neutral method will lead to an acceptance of Christian theism after all. But if he is a Calvinist this way is not open to him.** He will point out that the more consistently his friend applies his supposedly neutral method the more certainly he will come to the conclusion that Christian theism is not true. Roman Catholics and Arminians, appealing to the "**reason of the natural man**" as the natural man himself interprets his reason, **namely as autonomous**, are bound to use the direct method of approach to the natural man, **the method that assumes the essential correctness of a non-Christian and non-theistic conception of reality**. The Reformed apologist, on the other hand, appealing to that knowledge of the true God in the natural man **which the natural man suppresses by means of his assumption of ultimacy**, will also appeal to the knowledge of the true method which the natural man knows but suppresses. The natural man at bottom knows that he is the creature of God. He knows also that he is responsible to God. He knows that he should live to the glory of God. **He knows** that in all that he does he should stress that the field of reality which he investigates has the stamp of God's ownership upon it. **But he suppresses his knowledge of himself as he truly is**. He is the man with the iron mask. **A true method of apologetics must seek to tear off that iron mask**. The Roman Catholic and the Arminian make no attempt to do so. They even flatter its wearer about his fine appearance. In the introductions of their books on apologetics Arminian as well as Roman Catholic apologists frequently seek to set their "opponents" at ease by assuring them that their method, in its field, is all that any Christian could desire. In contradistinction from this, the Reformed apologist will point out again and again that the only method that will lead to the truth in any field is that method which recognizes the fact that man is a creature of God, that he must therefore seek to think God's thoughts after him.

It is not as though the Reformed apologist should not interest himself in the nature of the non-Christian's method. On the contrary he should make a critical analysis of it. He should, as it were, join his "friend" in the use of it. But he should do so self-consciously with the purpose of showing that its most consistent application not merely leads away from Christian theism but in leading away from Christian theism leads to destruction of reason and science as well.

An illustration may indicate more clearly what is meant. Suppose we think of a man made of water in an infinitely extended and bottomless ocean of water. Desiring to get out of water, he makes a ladder of water. He sets this ladder upon the water and against the water and then attempts to climb out of the water. So hopeless and senseless a picture must be drawn of the natural man's methodology based as it is upon the assumption that time or chance is ultimate. **On his assumption his own rationality is a product of chance.** On his assumption even the laws of logic which he employs are products of chance. The rationality and purpose that he may be searching for are still bound to be products of **chance**. So then the Christian apologist, whose position requires him to hold that Christian theism is really true and as such must be taken as the presupposition which alone makes the acquisition of knowledge in any field intelligible, must join his "friend" in his hopeless gyrations so as to point out to him that his efforts are always in vain.

It will then appear that Christian theism, which was first rejected because of its supposed authoritarian character, **[the authority is wrapped up in God's Word not man] is the only position which gives human reason a field for successful operation and a method of true progress in knowledge.**¹⁰

¹⁰This is another aspect of a transcendental approach. Vanb Til calls it the "impossibility of the opposite."

Two remarks may here be made by way of meeting the most obvious objections that will be raised to this method of the Reformed apologist. The first objection that suggests itself may be expressed in the rhetorical question "Do you mean to assert that non-Christians do not discover truth by the methods they employ?" The reply is that we mean nothing so absurd as that. The implication of the method here advocated is simply that non-Christians are never able and therefore **never do employ their own methods consistently**. Says A. E. Taylor in discussing the question of the uniformity of nature, "The fundamental thought of modern science, at any rate until yesterday, was that there is a 'universal reign of law' throughout nature. Nature is rational in the sense that it has everywhere a coherent pattern which we can progressively detect by the steady application of our own intelligence to the scrutiny of natural processes. Science has been built up all along on the basis of this principle of the 'uniformity of nature,' and the principle is one which science itself has no means of demonstrating. No one could possibly prove its truth to an opponent who seriously disputed it. For all attempts to produce 'evidence' for the 'uniformity of nature' themselves presuppose the very principle they are intended to prove."¹⁴¹ **Our argument as over against this would be that the existence of the God of Christian theism and the conception of his counsel as controlling all things in the universe is the only presupposition which can account for the uniformity of nature which the scientist needs.** But the best and only possible proof for the existence of such a God is that his existence is required for the

uniformity of nature and for the coherence of all things in the world. We cannot prove the existence of beams underneath a floor if by proof we mean that they must be ascertainable in the way that we can see the chairs and tables of the room. But the very idea of a floor as the support of tables and chairs requires the idea of beams that are underneath. But there would be no floor if no beams were underneath. Thus there is absolutely certain proof for the existence of God and the truth of Christian theism. Even non-Christians presuppose its truth while they verbally reject it.¹² They need to presuppose the truth of Christian theism in order to account for their own accomplishments.

¹² It should be noted, as we mentioned above, that the notion of presupposition that Van Til uses here has to do more with a state of affairs than with a belief one holds. His example of the beams under the floor is meant to highlight this point.

The second objection may be voiced in the following words; “While a Christian can prove that his Christian position is fully as reasonable as the opponent’s view, there is no such thing as an absolutely compelling proof that God exists, or that the Bible is the word of God, just as little as anyone can prove its opposite.” In this way of putting the matter there is a confusion between what is objectively valid and what is subjectively acceptable to the natural man. It is true that no method of argument for Christianity will be acceptable to the natural man. Moreover, it is true that the more consistently Christian our methodology, **the less acceptable it will be to the natural man.** We find something similar in the field of theology. It is precisely the Reformed faith which, **among other things, teaches the total depravity of the natural man, which is most loathsome to that natural man.** But this does not prove that the Reformed faith is not true. A patient may like a doctor who tells him that his disease can be cured by means of external applications and dislike the doctor who tells him that he needs a major internal operation. Yet the latter doctor may be right in his diagnosis. It is the weakness of the Roman Catholic and the Arminian methods that they virtually identify objective validity with subjective acceptability to the natural man. Distinguishing carefully between these two, the Reformed apologist maintains that there is an absolutely valid argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christian theism.¹³ He cannot do less without virtually admitting that God’s revelation to man is not clear. It is fatal for the Reformed apologist to admit that man has done justice to the objective evidence if he comes to any other conclusion than that of the truth of Christian theism.

¹³ Note here that the problem with argumentation is not with validity. A valid argument is one in which, if the premises are true, the conclusion must necessarily follow. It is the truth of the premises, however, that is always at issue and needs discussion in terms of the presuppositions behind the premises employed. One's subjective acceptance or rejection of an argument is not a criterion of its validity. The argument can be both valid and true, and yet rejected by a hard heart.

Great points here!

As for the question whether the natural man will accept the truth of such an argument, we answer that he will if God pleases by his Spirit to take the scales from his eyes and the mask from his face. It is upon the power of the Holy Spirit that the Reformed preacher relies when he tells men that they are lost in sin and in need of a Savior. **The Reformed preacher does not tone down his message in order that it may find acceptance with the natural man.** He does not say that his message is less certainly

true because of its non-acceptance by the natural man. The natural man is, by virtue of his creation in the image of God, always accessible to the truth; **accessible to the penetration of the truth by the Spirit of God**. Apologetics, like systematics, is valuable to the precise extent that it presses the truth upon the attention of the natural man. The natural man must be blasted out of his hideouts, his caves, his last lurking places. Neither Roman Catholic nor Arminian methodologies have the flamethrowers with which to reach him. In the all-out war between the Christian and the natural man as he appears in modern garb it is only the atomic energy of a truly Reformed methodology that will explode the last Festung [fortress] to which the Roman Catholic and the Arminian always permit him to retreat and to dwell in safety.{142}

II—SCRIPTURE

It has been pointed out that the difference between a Roman Catholic-Arminian and a Reformed type of argument lies in the fact that the former is **direct** and the latter is **indirect**. The former grants the essential truthfulness of the non-Christian theory of man and of method, while the latter challenges both. This difference will appear again and appear in its fundamental importance still more strikingly if the question of the place of Scripture in apologetics is brought up for consideration. A few remarks on this subject must suffice.

For better or for worse the Protestant apologist is committed to the doctrine of Scripture as the infallibly inspired final revelation of God to man. This being the case, he is committed to the defense of Christian theism as a unit. For him theism is not really theism unless it is Christian theism. The Protestant apologist cannot be concerned to prove the existence of any other God than the one who has spoken to man authoritatively and finally through Scripture.

The entire debate about theism will be purely formal unless theism be taken as the foundation of Christianity. But if it is so taken it is no longer theism as such but Christian theism that is in debate. Pantheist, deists and theists, that is bare theists, may formally agree that God exists. Socrates, in arguing about the nature of piety within Euthyphro says that men “join issue about particulars.” So if the whole debate in apologetics is to be more than a meaningless discussion about the that of God’s existence and is to consider what kind of God exists, then the question of God’s revelation to man must be brought into the picture. Even before the entrance of sin, as already noted, man required supernatural positive revelation as a supplement to revelation in the created universe around and within him.¹⁷ To understand God’s general revelation in the universe aright it was imperative for man that he see this revelation in relationship to a higher revelation with respect to the final destiny of man and the universe. **If then even man in paradise could read nature aright only in connection with and in the light of supernatural positive revelation, how much the more is this true of man after the fall.** In paradise the supernatural revelation of God to man told him that if he would eat of the forbidden tree he would surely die. Having eaten of this fruit he could therefore expect nothing but eternal separation from God as his final destiny. Of God’s intention to save a people for his own precious possession he could learn nothing from nature. Nor was this involved in the pre-redemptive supernatural revelation that had been vouchsafed to him in paradise. It had to come by way of post-lapsarian [post-fall] supernatural revelation. Covenant-breakers could expect nothing but covenant wrath. That God meant to bring covenant-breakers back into covenant communion with himself through the covenant of grace

could in no wise be discovered other than by supernatural redemptive revelation. B. B. Warfield brings out this point when he says that in addition to believing the supernatural fact, that is, God as a transcendent, self-existent being and in the supernatural act exemplified in creation and providence, the Christian must also believe in supernatural redemption. “As certainly as the recognition of the great fact of sin is an element in the Christian’s world-conception, the need and therefore the actuality of the direct corrective act of God—of miracle, in a word—enters ineradicably into his belief.”

¹⁷That is, God spoke to Adam and Eve in order to tell them what they must do to obey him, and what constitutes disobedience.

But supernatural redemption in itself would not be of any avail. “For how should we be advantaged by a supernatural redemption of which we know nothing? Who is competent to uncover to us the meaning of this great series of redemptive acts but God himself?...Two thousand years ago a child was born in Bethlehem, who thrived and grew up nobly, lived a life of poverty and beneficence, was cruelly slain and rose from the dead. What is that to us? After a little, as his followers sat waiting in Jerusalem, there was a rush as of a mighty wind, and an appearance of tongues of fire descending upon their heads. Strange: but what concern have we in it all? We require the revealing Word to tell us who and what this goodly child was, why he lived and what he wrought by his death, what it meant that he could not beholden of the grave and what those cloven tongues of fire signified—before they can avail as redemptive facts to us.”{144} **Going a bit beyond this it may be asserted that sinful man would naturally want to destroy a supernatural revelation that portrays his sin and shame and tells him that he is helpless and undone. This is out of accord with the pride that is a prime mark of the sinner. Hence the necessity for the inscripturization of the God-given post-lapsarian supernatural revelation of God to man.**

Thus the Bible, as the **infallibly inspired revelation of God to sinful man**, stands before us as that light in terms of which **all the facts of the created universe must be interpreted. All of finite existence, natural and redemptive, functions in relation to one all-inclusive plan that is in the mind of God.** Whatever insight man is to have into this pattern of the activity of God he must attain by looking at all his objects of research in the light of Scripture. “If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture.”{145}

What has been said so far on the subject of Scripture has dealt primarily with its place in Protestant doctrine. What bearing does this fact have upon the place of Scripture in Christian apologetics? And what bearing does it have upon the method of apologetics in general?

In the first place it must be affirmed that a Protestant accepts Scripture to be that which Scripture itself says it is on its own authority. **Scripture presents itself as being the only light in terms of which the truth about facts and their relations can be discovered.** Perhaps the relationship of the sun to our earth and the objects that constitute it, may make this clear. **We do not use candles, or electric lights in order to discover whether the light and the energy of the sun exist. The reverse is the case.** We have light in candles and electric light bulbs because of the light and energy of the sun. **So we cannot subject**

the authoritative pronouncements of Scripture about reality to the scrutiny of reason because it is reason itself that learns of its proper function from Scripture. ["light" is knowledge in Scripture.]

There are, no doubt, objections that occur to one at once when he hears the matter presented so baldly. We cannot deal with these fully here. For the moment it is of the greatest importance that this simple but basic point be considered apart from all subsidiary matters. All the objections that are brought against such a position spring, in the last analysis, from the assumption **that the human person is ultimate and as such should properly act as judge of all claims to authority that are made by any one.** But if man is not autonomous, if he is rather what Scripture says he is, namely, a creature of God and a sinner before his face, then man should subordinate his reason to the Scriptures and seek in the light of it to interpret his experience.

The proper attitude of reason to the authority of Scripture, then, is but typical of the proper attitude of reason to the whole of the revelation of God. The objects man must seek to know are always of such a nature as God asserts they are. **God's revelation is always authoritarian.** This is true of his revelation in nature no less than of his revelation in Scripture. The truly scientific method, the method which alone can expect to make true progress in learning, **is therefore such a method as seeks simply to think God's thoughts after him.**

When these matters are kept in mind, it will be seen clearly that the true method for any Protestant with respect to the Scripture (Christianity) and with respect to the **existence of God (theism)** must be the **indirect method of reasoning by presupposition.** In fact, it then appears that the argument for the Scripture as the infallible revelation of God is, to all intents and purposes, the same as the argument for the existence of God. Protestants are required by the most basic principles of their system to vindicate the existence of no other God than the one who has spoken in Scripture. But this God cannot be proved to exist by any other method than the indirect one of presupposition. **No proof for this God and for the truth of his revelation in Scripture can be offered by an appeal to anything in human experience that has not itself received its light from the God whose existence and whose revelation it is supposed to prove.** One cannot prove the usefulness of the light of the sun for the purposes of seeing by turning to the darkness of a cave. The darkness of the cave must itself be lit up by the shining of the sun. **When the cave is thus lit up each of the objects that are in it "proves" the existence and character of the sun by receiving their light and intelligibility from it.** [phenomenal reasoning; reminds my of Edwards!]

Great illustration here:

Now the **Roman Catholic** is not committed to any such doctrine of Scripture as has been expressed above. He can therefore build up his apologetics by the direct method. He can, as has already been shown, to a large extent agree with the natural man in his conception of both the starting point and the method of human knowledge. He can therefore join the non-Christian in his search for the existence or non-existence of God by the use of reason without any reference to Scripture. That is, he and the natural man can seek to build up theism quite independently of Christianity. Then when the Romanist has, together with his friend the natural man, built the first story of the house to the satisfaction of both, he will ask his friend to help in building the second story, the story of Christianity. He will assure his friend that he will use the same principles of construction for the second story that

they have together employed in their common construction of the first story. The second story is, according to Rome, to be sure, the realm of faith and of authority. But then this authority is but that of the **expert**. Rome knows of no absolute authority such as Protestantism has in its doctrine of Scripture, **Rome's authority is the authority of those who are experts in what they say are reported to be the oracles of God**. These oracles receive their authoritative illumination from the **expert** interpreters of them, **from the Pope first of all. [i.e., papal infallibility]** But such a concept of authority resembles that which Socrates referred to in *The Symposium* when he spoke of Diotima the inspired. When the effort at rational interpretation failed him, Socrates took refuge in mythology as a second best. The “hunch” of the wise is the best that is available to man with respect to that which he cannot reach by the methods of **autonomous reason**. No “wise man” ought to object to such a conception of the “supernatural.” It merely involves the recognition that he has not yet discovered the truth about all of reality by means of reason. So then the natural man need not really object, even from his own point of view, to the presentation of supernatural revelation as it is offered to him by the Roman Catholic apologist.

If the Roman Catholic method of apologetic for Christianity is followed then Christianity itself must be so reduced as to make it acceptable to the natural man. Since Rome is more than willing to grant the essential correctness of the starting point and method of the natural man in the “realm of nature” he cannot logically object to the conclusion of the natural man with respect to supernatural reality. The natural man need only to reason consistently along the lines of his starting point and method in order to reduce each of the Christian doctrines that are presented to him to naturalistic proportions.

As for the **Arminian way of reasoning**, it is, as already noted, essentially the same as that of Rome. The method followed by Bishop Butler follows closely that of Thomas Aquinas. According to Butler some of those who have no belief in or knowledge of Christianity at all have, none the less, quite rightly interpreted the “course and constitution of nature.” The cave has already been lit up by means of light that was not derived from the sun. By the use of the empirical method those who make no pretense of listening to Scripture are said or assumed to have interpreted nature for what it really is. **It is no wonder then that the contents of Scripture too must be adjusted to the likes of the natural man.** He will not accept them otherwise. And Butler is anxious to win him. So he says to him:

“Reason can, and it ought to judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence, of revelation. First, it is the province of reason to judge of the morality of Scripture; i.e., not whether it contains things different from what we should have expected from a wise, just, and good Being; for objections from hence have now been obviated; but whether it contains things plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice, or goodness—to what the light of nature teaches us of God.” *The Works of Joseph Butler*

Since even in the interpretation of “nature” the natural man must and does himself admit that he cannot know everything, he can certainly, without compromising himself in the least, allow that what Scripture claims about “supernatural” things may probably be true. Already accustomed to allowing for a measure of discontinuity even in his interpretation of the “course and constitution of nature” why should he not allow for a little more of this same sort of discontinuity in realms about which he admits that he still may learn? Such a concession will not break the principle of continuity that he has

employed in all his interpretations of things that he knows; his principle of continuity needs merely to be stretched. The natural man does not object to stretching his principle of continuity if he is compelled to do so by **virtue of the irrationality of reality; the only thing to which he strenuously objects is the submission of his own principles of continuity and of discontinuity to the counsel of God.**²⁵

²⁵As we will see below, Van Til utilizes the notions of the principle of continuity/discontinuity in order to show the inconsistency of unbelieving thought. These notions are aspects of Van Til's overall critique of unbelieving thought as inherently dialectical. The dialectic, generally, is one of rationalism/irrationalism. For Van Til, the non-Christian principle of continuity is best exemplified in Parmenides' monism. For Parmenides, all that is, is being. Anything else would be nonbeing and thus would not "be." The non-Christian principle of discontinuity is best exemplified in Heraclitus. Heraclitus taught that everything is in flux, and thus one never steps into the same river twice. So, the principle of continuity is focused on unity, and the principle of discontinuity is focused on diversity. Van Til was not abundantly clear in his many delineations of the Christian principles of continuity and discontinuity. At one place, for example, he says, "The true Christian apologist has his principle of discontinuity; it is expressed in his appeal to the mind of God as all-comprehensive in knowledge because all-controlling in power." In another place he says: "This involves the idea that God himself is wholly known to himself and that the created universe is also wholly known to him because wholly controlled by him. **This is the Christian principle of continuity.**" From these quotes, it looks as though the principle of continuity and discontinuity are the same. It is best perhaps to remember that the Christian principle of continuity, for Van Til, because of its focus on unity, is related to God's all-comprehensive knowledge and his all-comprehensive plan for history. The Christian principle of discontinuity, given its focus on diversity, is related to God's control of every aspect of his creation, thus his control and determination of every fact of history.

It appears then that as Arminianism together with Roman Catholicism is willing to join the natural man in his **supposedly neutral starting point and method**, so also Arminianism is forced to pay for these concessions by having the natural man to some extent dictate to him what sort of Christianity he may or may not believe. If the **natural man** is given permission to draw the floor-plan for a house and is allowed to build the first story of the house in accordance with his own blueprint, the Christian cannot escape being controlled in a large measure by the same blueprint when he wants to take over the building of the second story of the house. **Arminianism begins by offering to the natural man a Christian theology that has foreign elements in it. As over against the Reformed faith the Arminian has fought for the idea of man's ultimate ability to accept or reject salvation.** His argument on this score amounts to saying that God's presentation of his claims upon mankind cannot reach down to the individual man; it can only reach to the *infima* species.²⁶ **God has to await the election returns to see whether he is chosen as God or is set aside. God's knowledge therefore stands over against and depends to some extent upon a temporal reality which he does not wholly control.** When the Arminian has thus, as he thinks, established and defended human responsibility against the Calvinist he turns about to defend the Christian position against the natural man. But then he soon finds himself at the

mercy of the natural man. **The natural man is mercilessly consistent. He simply tells the Arminian that a little autonomy involves absolute autonomy, and a little reality set free from the plan of God involves all reality set free from the plan of God.** After that the reduction process is simply a matter of time. Each time the Arminian presents to the natural man one of the doctrines of Christianity, the natural man gladly accepts it and then “naturalizes” it.

²⁶ That is, "the lowest species.

It is no valid objection against this contention to say that certainly many Arminians do not hold to any naturalistic conception of Christianity. For the question is not so much now what individual Arminians believe. **Their belief at best involves a compromise with naturalism.**

Naturalism: They urged that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing “supernatural”, and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the “human spirit” (Krikorian 1944, Kim 2003). **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

But the point we are making now is about the method of apologetics that fits in with Arminian theology. And on that score we must, in simple honesty, assert that this method is essentially the same as the method of Roman Catholicism and is essentially **reductionistic** and therefore self-frustrative. It appears then that the first enemy of **Arminianism**, namely **Calvinism**, is its best friend. Only in the Reformed Faith is there an uncompromising statement of the main tenets of Christianity. All other statements are deformations. **It is but to be expected that only in the Reformed Faith will we find an uncompromising method of apologetics. Calvinism makes no compromise with the natural man either on his views of the autonomy of the human mind or on his views of the nature of existence as not controlled by the plan of God.** Therefore, **Calvinism** cannot find a direct point of contact in any of the accepted concepts of the natural man. He disagrees with every individual doctrine of the natural man because he disagrees with the outlook of the natural man as a whole. He disagrees with the basic immanentistic assumption of the natural man. For it is this basic assumption that colors all his statements about individual teachings. It is therefore this basic assumption of the natural man that meets its first major challenge when it is confronted by the statement of a full-fledged Christianity.

Another good illustration:

The Reformed apologist throws down the gauntlet and challenges his opponent to a duel of life and death from the start. He does not first travel in the same direction and in the same automobile with the natural man for some distance in order then mildly to suggest to the driver that they ought perhaps to change their course somewhat and follow a road that goes at a different slant from the one they are on. The Reformed apologist knows that there is but one way to the truth and that the natural man is travelling it, but in the wrong direction. The service stations along the highway will service cars going in either direction. And as there are seemingly more cars going in the wrong direction than there are going in the right direction, the upkeep of the road will be supplied largely by those going in the wrong direction. Speaking together at one of these service stations, two travelers going in opposite directions may be in perfect agreement when they eulogize the turnpike on which they are travelling and the premium quality of gasoline which they are getting. But like Bunyan’s Christian the Reformed apologist will tell his friend that the way he is going leads to the precipice. He points to the signs made by the builder of the road which all point the opposite way from that which his friend, the natural man,

is going. And when the reply is made by the natural man that he has been very successful in his trip so far, and that he too has been following signs, signs which point in the direction in which he is moving, the Reformed apologist will wipe out such of these signs as are near at hand and will challenge his friend to wipe out any of the signs he has ignored.

The Roman Catholic and the Arminian apologist would not be in a position to wipe out any of the signs that point in the wrong direction. An Arminian apologist meeting the natural man as both stop at one of the service stations is in a strange predicament. **Since he is a Christian he should really speak to the natural man about the fact that he is following the wrong signs.** His belief in creation demands of him that he warn his new acquaintance against following the wrong signs. But since he himself holds to a measure of **autonomy** for man and since this undermines his own belief in creation, he can at best say to his friend that it is doubtful which signs are right. Then as far as his **“neutral” apologetic method** is concerned, the Arminian, in the interest of getting his friend to go in the right direction, admits that the signs that point in the wrong direction are right. He himself goes in the wrong direction for some distance too with the natural man. He fully agrees with the natural man when together they start on their wrong course and he still fully agrees on the way to the city of destruction. Then suddenly he puts on the brakes and turns around, expecting that his friend will do the same. Thus, in the whole business he has dishonored his God (a) by practically admitting that his revelation is not plain and (b) by himself running away from God in his interpretation of natural revelation and in his subjection of supernatural revelation to the illegitimate requirements of the natural man. Meanwhile he has failed in his purpose of persuading the natural man to go in the right direction. The Roman Catholic and Arminian views of theology are compromising; in consequence the Roman Catholic and the Arminian method of apologetics is both compromising and self-frustrative.

Man's Knowledge of God

Man's absolute dependence on God, knowledge of God is analogical; our knowledge of God and things cannot be comprehensive.

Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith
By Cornelius Van Til
Pgs. 41-46
Code485

IV

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD UNIVERSE

What we have said about man's knowledge of God is really determinative for what we have to say about man's knowledge of the universe. By the term universe we now mean the whole of the created world including man himself and his environment.

The first question we must ask with respect to the relation of our knowledge of God to our knowledge of the universe is, which of these two is prior?

Man cannot help but know himself at once in relation to his environment. The subject of knowledge must know itself in relation to and in contrast with the object of knowledge.

This contention that man must know himself in relation to his environment is not merely a general consideration obtained by observation of experience. It is implied in the very bedrock of Christian-theism. This may be seen by again referring to our idea of God and of God's relation to the created universe. **Man exists by virtue of God's existence.** Man's environment precedes man. **God is man's ultimate environment,** and this environment is completely interpretative of man who is to know himself.

In other words man's environment is not impersonal. It is, moreover, not merely personal in the sense that simultaneous with his own appearance there are also other finite persons in relation to

which he knows himself to be a person. Back of this relationship of finite persons to other finite persons and to other finite but impersonal things is **the absolute personality of God**. Back of the question as to whether man needs other finite persons or needs a finite non-personal environment is the question of the environment of man's immediate environment. **God is man's ultimate environment and this ultimate environment controls the whole of man's immediate environment as well as man himself**. The whole of man's own immediate environment as well as man himself is already interpreted by God. Even the denotation of the whole universe exists by virtue of the connotation or plan of God. Thus, we have answered our question about temporal priority by answering the question of logical priority. Because man's knowledge of God is logically more fundamental than man's knowledge of the universe, we may be indifferent to the question of temporal priority. Even if in our psychological experience we know ourselves and the universe about us before we speak self-consciously of God, we have all the while known God if we have truly known anything else.

We have constantly emphasized the concept of God as being basic to everything else which a Christian believes. This is so because God exists, as he exists, necessarily. **For that reason, we cannot know ourselves in any true sense unless we know God**. He is our most ultimate and therefore absolutely indispensable environment. For that reason if we know him we know him truly though not comprehensively.

It follows from all this that we know the world truly though not comprehensively.

Our argument for the objectivity of knowledge with respect to the universe can never be complete and satisfactory unless we bring in the relation of both the object and the subject of knowledge to God. We may debate endlessly about psychological problems without fruitage if we refuse to bring in the metaphysical question of the nature of reality.^{85} If the Christian position with respect to creation, that is, with respect to the idea of the origin of both the subject and the object of human knowledge is true, there is and must be objective knowledge. In that case the world of objects was made in order that the subject of knowledge, namely man, should interpret it under God. **Without the interpretation of the universe by man to the glory of God the whole world would be meaningless**. The subject and the object are therefore adapted to one another. On the other hand, if the Christian theory of creation by God is not true then we hold that there cannot be objective knowledge of anything. In that case all things in this universe are unrelated and cannot be in fruitful contact with one another. This we believe to be the simple alternative on the question of the objectivity of knowledge as far as the things of this universe are concerned.

One of the points about which there has been much confusion when we speak of the objectivity of human knowledge is whether human knowledge of the world must be comprehensive to be true. Sometimes it is said that though we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge of God we may hope eventually if not now to have comprehensive knowledge of the things of this universe. But we believe that just for the reason that **we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge** of God we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge of anything in this world. Not as though anything in this world is infinite as God is infinite and for that reason not fully comprehensible, for it is not the infinity of things in themselves but once more the infinity of God that makes it impossible for us comprehensively to understand things in the created universe. The reason for this is not far to seek.

The things of this universe must be interpreted in relation to God. The object of knowledge is not interpreted truly if though brought into relation with the human mind, it is not also brought into relation with the divine mind. God is the ultimate category of interpretation. Now we cannot fully understand God's plan for created things and so we cannot fully understand things.

We see then that our knowledge of the universe must be true since we are creatures of God who has made both us and the universe. **Then too our knowledge of the universe cannot be comprehensive because our knowledge of God cannot be comprehensive.**

A word must here be said about the question of antinomies. It will readily be inferred what as Christians we mean by antinomies.^{86} They are involved in the fact that human knowledge can never be completely comprehensive knowledge. Every knowledge transaction has in its somewhere a reference point to God. Now since God is not fully comprehensible to us we are bound to come into what seems to be contradiction in all our knowledge. **Our knowledge is analogical and therefore must be paradoxical.** We say that if there is to be any true knowledge at all there must be in God an absolute system of knowledge. We therefore insist that everything must be related to that absolute system of God. Yet we ourselves cannot fully understand that system.

We may, in order to illustrate our meaning here, take one of the outstanding **paradoxes** of the Christian interpretation of things, namely, that of the relation of the counsel of God to our prayers. To put it pointedly: We say on the one hand that prayer changes things and on the other hand we say that everything happens in accordance with God's plan and God's plan is immutable.

The thing we are concerned about here is to point out that in the nature of the case there would have to be such a paradox or seeming contradiction in human knowledge. God exists as self-complete apart from us; he is all-glorious. Yet he created the universe that it might glorify him. This point lies at the bottom of every paradox or antinomy. We were in the nature of the case completely interpreted before we came into existence; the universal plan of God needed not to be supplemented by historical particulars and could not be supplemented in this way. The historical could not produce anything wholly new. This much we see clearly. God being what he is, it must be his counsel which acts as the indispensable and self-complete unity back of the finite one and many. The only alternative to saying this is to say that the historical produces the wholly new, and this would be to give up the basic idea of the Christian-theistic scheme, namely, the idea of God and of his creation and control of the universe. On the other hand, the historical must have genuine significance. Or else why should God have created it? Prayer must be answered, or God would not be God. The universe must really glorify God; that is the purpose of its existence. **So we seem to have on the one hand a bucket that is full of water and on the other hand we seem to add water to this bucket which we claim to be already full.**

It appears that there must seem to be contradiction in human knowledge. To this we must now add that the contradiction that seems to be there can in the nature of the case be **no more than a seeming contradiction.** If we said that there is real contradiction in our knowledge we would once more be denying the basic concept of Christian-theism, i.e., the concept of the self-complete universal in God. We should then not merely be saying that there is no complete coherence in our thinking, but we should also be saying that there is no complete coherence in God's thinking. And this would be the

same as saying that there is no coherence or truth in our thinking at all. If we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of real contradiction, we have destroyed all human and all divine knowledge; **if we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of seeming contradiction, we have saved God's knowledge and therewith also our own.**

We must note here again how impossible it is in an apologetic argument to close one's eyes to differences between various theological schools.{87} That fact comes out here more strikingly than anywhere else. **Arminianism has not been true to its own belief in creation.** With belief in creation, it stands committed to that view of God and of God's counsel and that view of man's relation to that counsel which we have outlined. Yet it has been untrue to all this in its insistence that the historical does produce the absolutely new. **For that reason, it has to think of the relation of God's counsel to man's activity as one of real contradiction. In order to avoid this "contradiction" it has simply thrown overboard the idea of the counsel of God, as controlling all things. Therewith it has in effect sought to destroy both divine and human knowledge and therewith it has destroyed the very meaning of history which it was so anxious to preserve. God cannot answer our prayers for the salvation of people if those people can reject that salvation when they wish.**

Man's Being is Derivative/Wholly Dependent Aquinas, Arminianism, Autonomy

Subjects: Man existence, etc., is completely derived from God, hence *derivative* in nature: absolute dependence. Aquinas and Romanism's view on human autonomy and ultimacy. Doctrine of Total Depravity. Man's finiteness and its implications.

Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith
By Cornelius Van Til
Pgs. 52-57
Code486

Chapter IV I

ETHICS AND THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

In order to deal with the Christian *summum bonum*, the Christian standard and Christian motivation, we may first intimate how directly the whole of Christian ethics is related to the Christian view of knowledge. I quote from the syllabus on Christian Ethics.

God, as absolute personality, is the ultimate category of interpretation for man in every aspect of his being. Every attribute of God will, in the nature of the case, be reflected primarily in every other attribute of God. There will be mutual and complete exhaustiveness in the relationship of the three persons of the trinity. Consequently no one of the persons of the trinity can be said to be correlative in its being, to anything that exists beyond the Godhead. **If then man is created it must be that he is absolutely dependent upon his relationship to God for the meaning of his existence in its every aspect.** If this is true it means that the good is good for man because it has been set as good for man by God. This is usually expressed by saying that the good is good because God says it is good. As such it is contrasted with non-Christian thought which says that the good exists in its own right and that God strives for that which is good in itself. We do not artificially separate the will of God from the nature of God. It is the nature as well as the will of God that is ultimately good. Yet since this nature of God is personal there is no sense in which we can say that the good exists in its own right.

a. Man as Made in God's Image

With these considerations as a background, we can think of man as he first appeared on the face of the earth. It follows logically that he appeared upon the earth as a perfect though **finite replica** of the Godhead. The original perfection of man in every respect, and in particular in the moral respect, is implied in the conception of God which lies at the foundation of the whole structure of Christian thought.

Now if there cannot be any evil in God it would be quite impossible to think that he should create man as evil. Again, this is true not only because we abhor the idea of attributing such a deed to God but because it would be a contradiction of his being so to do. Thus, we hold that man appeared originally with a perfect moral consciousness. It is this that the Genesis narrative tells us.{90}

The difference between Christian ethics and non-Christian ethics has not been made perfectly clear at this point unless we dwell on the fact that even in its **original perfect condition the moral consciousness of man was derivative¹** and **not the ultimate source of information as to what is good**. Man was in the nature of the case finite. Hence his moral consciousness too was finite and as such had to live by revelation. Man's moral thought as well as the other aspects of his thought had to be receptively reconstructive.

¹**Van Til** states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: **Calvin** never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general a priori position. His position is as radically apposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, he must regard God as original and himself as derivative. He did not place God and man as correlatives next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: p128-9*: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness *the immediate but wholly derivative* starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the *remote but wholly ultimate starting point* of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the **false ideal of absolute comprehension**. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, **the non-Christian interpretation** of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that **it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man**. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of **comprehension knowledge**. This was done especially

in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of **Leibniz**, a striking manifestation of the pride, “hubris,” **of the sinner who wishes to be as God.**³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. There have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father’s house. His “hubris” never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz’s project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

This then is the most basic and fundamental difference between Christian and non-Christian epistemology, as far as it has a direct bearing upon questions of ethics, that in the case of non-Christian thought man’s moral activity is thought of as **creatively constructive** while in Christian thought man’s moral activity is thought of as being **receptively reconstructive**. According to non-Christian thought, there is no absolute moral personality to whom man is responsible and from whom he has received his conception of the good, **while according to Christian thought God is the infinite moral personality who reveals to man the true nature of morality.**

It is necessary, however, to think of this revelation of God to man as originally internal as well as external. Man found in his own makeup, in his own moral nature, an understanding of and a love for that which is good. His own nature was revelational of the will of God. But while thus revelational of the will of God, **man’s nature, even in paradise, was never meant to function by itself.** It was at once supplemented by the supernatural, external and positive expression of God’s will as its **correlative**. Only thus can we see how basic is the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian view of the moral nature of man in relation to ethical questions.

b. Sin and Its Curse

The second point of difference that must be included in our general antithesis stated above concerns the question of the influence of sin on the moral consciousness of man. We cannot begin to give a survey here of all the Biblical material that bears on this question. Nor is this necessary. The main point is clear enough. Just as sin has blinded the intellect of man, so it has corrupted the will of man. This is often spoken of as the hardening of man’s heart. Paul says that the natural man is at enmity against God. **The natural man cannot will to do God’s will. He cannot even know what the good is.** The sinner worships the creature rather than the Creator. He has set all the moral standards topsy-turvy.

This **doctrine of the total depravity** of man makes it plain that the moral consciousness of man as he is today cannot be the source of information about what is ideal good or about what is the standard of the good or about what is the true nature of the will which is to strive for the good. It would seem plain enough that men have to choose on this point between the Christian and the non-Christian position.

It is this point particularly that makes it necessary for the Christian to maintain without any apology and without any concession that it is Scripture, and Scripture alone, in the light of which all moral

questions must be answered. Scripture as an external revelation became necessary because of the sin of man. No man living can even put the moral problem as he ought to put it, or ask the moral questions as he ought to ask them, unless he does so in the light of Scripture. Man cannot of himself truly face the moral question, let alone answer it.{91}

Man's moral consciousness then as it is today, is (a) finite and (b) sinful. If it were only finite and not sinful we could go to the moral consciousness of man for our information. Even then, however, we should have to remember that we could go there not because the moral consciousness would be able either to ask or to answer the moral question correctly in its own power alone, but because its own activity would be in fruitful contact with God from whom the questions and the answers would ultimately come.

It is true that the non-regenerate consciousness of man cannot entirely keep under the requirements of God that speak to it through its own constitution. Thus, God's will is heard through it, in spite of it. Hence the natural man excuses or accuses himself for his ethical action. But for the main point now under consideration this point may be ignored. *For to the extent that man is not restrained by God's common grace from living out his sinful principle, the **natural man** [the unbeliever, the unregenerate] makes his own moral consciousness the ultimate standard of moral action.*

c. The Regenerated Consciousness

But what then of the regenerated moral consciousness? In the first place the regenerated consciousness is once more in principle restated to its former place. This implies that we can go to it because we could originally go to it for our answers. This is of basic importance for it furnishes the point of contact between Christian and non-Christian ethics. As Christians we do not maintain that man's moral consciousness cannot under any circumstances and in any sense serve as a point of reference. But man's moral consciousness must be regenerated in order to serve as a reference point. Moreover, the regenerated consciousness is still finite. *It must still live by revelation as it originally lived by revelation. It can never become an ultimate information bureau.* Finally, the regenerated moral consciousness is changed in principle only, and therefore often errs. *Consequently, it must constantly seek to test itself by Scripture.* More than that, the regenerated consciousness does not in itself fabricate any answers to the moral questions. It receives them and reworks them. Now if this receiving, in so far as it implies an activity of the mind, be called the function of the moral consciousness, we may speak of it as a source of information. The regenerated moral consciousness which constantly nourishes itself upon the Scripture is as the plenipotentiary who knows fairly well what his authority desires.

So then we have before us the Christian and the non-Christian conception of the moral consciousness of man. Summing up the matter we may say (a) that there once was a moral consciousness that was perfect and could act as a source, but only as a proximate source, of information on moral questions; (b) that there now are two types of moral consciousness which to the extent that they work from their respective principles agree on no ethical answer and on no ethical question, namely the non-regenerate and the regenerate consciousness; (c) that the non-regenerate consciousness denies while the regenerate consciousness affirms that the moral verdict of any man must be tested by Scripture because of the sin of man.

d. Roman Catholicism

On the question discussed in this chapter **Roman Catholicism** takes a position halfway between that of Christianity and that of paganism. The notion of the human consciousness set forth in the works of **Thomas Aquinas** is worked out, to a great extent, by the form-matter scheme of Aristotle. In consequence a large measure of **autonomy is assigned to the human consciousness as over against the consciousness of God**. This is true in the field of knowledge, and it is no less true in the field of ethics.

In the field of ethics this means that even in paradise, before the fall, man is not thought of as being **receptively constructive in his attitude toward God**. In order to maintain man's autonomy—or, as Thomas thinks, his very manhood as a self-conscious and responsible being—man must, from one point of view at least, **be wholly independent of the counsel of God**. This is implied in the so-called “free-will” idea. **Thomas cannot think of man as responsible and free if all his actions have their ultimate and final reference point exclusively in God and his will**. Thus, there is no really Scriptural idea of authority in Romanism. [hugely important to see]

It follows that Rome has too high a notion of the moral consciousness of fallen man. According to Thomas, fallen man is not very dissimilar from Adam in paradise. He says that while the sinner needs grace for more things than did Adam he does not need grace more.{92} Putting the matter somewhat differently, **Thomas** says, “And thus in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength for one reason, viz., in order to do and wish supernatural good; but for two reasons, in the state of corrupt nature, viz., in order to be healed, and furthermore in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue, which are meritorious. Beyond this, in both states man needs the Divine help, that he may be moved to act well.”{93} In any case, **for Thomas** the ethical problem for man is as much one of finitude as it is one of ethical obedience. **Man is naturally finite. As such he tends naturally to evil**. He needs grace because he is a creature even though he is not a sinner. Hence God really owes grace to man at least to some extent. And man does not become totally depraved when he does not make such use of the grace given him as to keep himself from sin entirely. For in any case the act of his free will puts him naturally in grave danger. Fallen man is therefore only partly guilty and only partly blame. And he retains much of the same ethical power that man had in paradise. For ethical ability is virtually said to be implied in metaphysical ability or **free will**.

It follows still further than even the regenerate consciousness need not and cannot subject itself fully to Scripture. **Thomas is unable to do justice to St. Paul's position that whatever is not of faith is sin**. The entire discussion by Thomas of the cardinal virtues and their relation to the theological virtues proves this point. He distinguishes sharply between them. “Now the object of the theological virtues is God Himself, Who is the last end of all, as surpassing the knowledge of our reason. On the other hand, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something comprehensible to human reason. Wherefore the theological virtues are specifically distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues.”{94} In respect to the things that are said to be knowable by reason apart from supernatural revelation, then, the Christian acts, and should act, from what amounts to the same motive as the non-Christian. **Faith is not required for a Christian to act virtuously in the natural relationships of life**. Or if the theological virtues do have some influence over the daily activities of the Christian, this influence is of an accidental and subsidiary nature.

All in all, then it is clear that Romanism cannot ask its adherents to submit its moral consciousness to Scripture in any thorough way. And accordingly, Rome cannot challenge the non-Christian position in any thorough way.

Subjects: First (remote or ultimate) & second (proximate) causes, Arminianism's error on not distinguishing both causes, and their error of being against determinism and hence, saving grace. Is God the author of sin? answered by the two kinds of causes. God's decree seen in his will – secret, permissive and will of command.

Proximate and Remote Causes

(Or 1st & 2nd Causes)

The Important Distinction Between Them

Excerpt from

The Defense of the Faith

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 182-188

Code487

God's Decree Controls All Things

I further hold that the self-sufficient triune God “from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass—.” This is what I mean when I say that God is the ultimate cause back of all things. In this terminology I am merely reproducing Calvin's argument against Pighius in *The Eternal Predestination of God*. (See Henry Cole,

Calvin's Calvinism.) Calvin speaks of **remote and proximate causes**. I simply use the word ultimate instead of remote. I do not think there is any essential difference between Calvin's usage of the word remote and my usage of the word ultimate.

In various works Calvin had maintained the all-inclusiveness of the decree of God. **This, Pighius had argued, was in effect to make God the author of sin. Calvin denies vigorously that he makes God the author of sin.** "I have with equal constancy, asserted that the eternal death to which man rendered himself subject **so proceeded from his own fault** that God cannot, in any way, be considered the author of it" (Calvin's Calvinism, p. 127). **Here Calvin makes the distinction between remote and proximate causes. As the proximate cause of sin man is guilty before God. "But now, removing as I do from God all the proximate cause of the act in the Fall of man, I thereby remove from him also all the blame of the act leaving man alone under the sin and the guilt"** (Idem, p. 128). But Pighius argues that if man is the responsible cause of his sin, then God's eternal reprobation must logically be denied. **He identifies Calvin's conception of proximate cause with the cause, that is the only cause.** To this Calvin replies again by means of his **distinction** between remote and proximate causes. **There could be no responsible proximate cause unless there were also an all-comprehensive remote cause. He clinches his point by indicating that the doctrine of free grace cannot be maintained except upon the presupposition of a remote or ultimate cause back of the proximate cause.** "If the wickedness of man be still urged as the cause of the difference between the elect and the non-elect, this wickedness might indeed be made to appear more powerful than the grace of God which he shows toward the elect, if that solemn truth did not stand in the way of such an argument: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy'" (Idem, p. 80). Dealing with the blindness of sinners referred to in Acts 28:25, 26, Calvin says: "Some persons will here erroneously and ignorantly conclude that the cause and beginning of this obduracy in the Jews was their malicious wickedness. Just as if there were no deeper and more occult cause of the wickedness itself, namely, the original corruption of nature! And as if they did not remain sunk in this corruption because, being reprobated by the secret counsel of God before they were born, they were left undelivered!" (Idem, p. 81). Speaking still further of the cause of the sinner's blindness and of the Evangelist John's exposition of the famous Isaiah passage on this subject Calvin says: "Now, most certainly John does not here give us to understand that the Jews were prevented from believing by their sinfulness. For though this be quite true in one sense, yet the cause of their not believing must be traced to a far higher source. The **secret and eternal purpose and counsel of God must be viewed as the original cause of their blindness and unbelief**" (Idem, p. 81). Again, he adds: "The unbelief of the world, therefore, ought not to astonish us, if even the wisest and most acute of men fail to believe. Hence, unless we would elude the plain and confessed meaning of the Evangelist, that few receive the gospel, we must fully conclude that the cause is the will of God; and that the outward sound of that gospel strikes the ear in vain until God is pleased to touch them by the heart within" (Idem, p. 82).

When therefore you object to my saying that "God is the ultimate cause back of whatsoever comes to pass" **you will also need to reject Calvin's distinction between proximate and remote causes.** I was simply reproducing Calvin's argument against Pighius. With Pighius you will have to say that man's deeds of wickedness are the cause, the only or final cause of his eternal state. And therewith you have, as Calvin points out, virtually denied the doctrine of the sovereign grace of God in the case of the elect. I do not think that you can show how Ephesians 1:11 which says that God "worketh all things

after the counsel of his own will” is a “very different statement” from saying that God is the ultimate or remote cause back of all things, without falling into Arminianism.

I was much surprised when you objected to my simple reproduction of Calvin’s argument. I could not imagine that as a Calvinist you would hold with Pighius against Calvin. So, I looked up your own discussion of freedom in your book, “*Sin and Atonement*.” In your argument against **determinism**, you assert: “We hold that there is **genuine and absolute freedom** within certain areas of human life, a freedom for which God himself in his infinite foreknowledge holds man absolutely responsible” (pg 49). Then, speaking of our own choice of becoming a violinist or a missionary you add: “There was a period of time when the decision though foreknown of God was still indeterminate-“ (Idem, p. 50). In opposing determinism, **you do not carefully distinguish between fatalism and Calvinism. You do not mention foreordination but only foreknowledge**. You speak of man having “absolute freedom” in certain areas, and of the result as being “indeterminate” **without saying that it was indeterminate only in the sense that you as a man did not know the outcome**. Add all this to your peremptory rejection of my reproduction of Calvin’s argument and the question cannot be repressed to what extent you would hold to Calvin’s position rather than to that of Pighius.

Do you think Charles Hodge’s “great chapter distinguishing between necessity and certainty, showing that complete certainty is not dependent upon the idea of necessity” is out of agreement with Calvin’s doctrine of God as the remote cause of all things? If you can show it to be such it will surely be “anathema” to me; if you cannot show it to be such, why should you object to my statement that God’s decree is the ultimate though not the immediate cause of all things? Hodge says: “It may, however, be remarked that there is no difficulty attending the doctrine of foreordination which does not attach to that of foreknowledge. The latter supposes the certainty of free acts, and the former secures their certainty” (Systematic Theology, II, p. 301). **Or again, being the cause of all things God knows everything by knowing himself; all things possible, by the knowledge of his power, and all things actual by the knowledge of his own purposes**” (Idem I, pg 398). Again, “The futuration of events, according to the Scriptures, depends on the foreordination of God who foreordains whatever comes to pass” (Idem I, pg 400).

Your readers must certainly have been amazed at hearing that I unequivocally teach that God is the author of sin. You assert: “To say that Calvin knew that his opponent could ‘rightly insist that God is the cause of sin,’ is a direct contradiction of the statement, based upon many scores of Scripture passages, that ‘neither is God the author of sin’” (p. 78). What did I actually say? “If God is the ultimate cause back of whatsoever comes to pass, Pighius can, on his basis, rightly insist that God is the author of sin” (*Common Grace*, p. 66). First you misquote me. You quote me as saying: *on this basis* while I say *on his basis*. Then in your reproduction of my argument you omit this all-important phrase *on this basis*. Omitting that phrase makes me say the exact opposite of what I actually said. Pighius denies the validity of distinction between remote and proximate causes. Accordingly, he holds that a proximate cause in Calvin’s sense of the term is no real cause and that the only real cause of sin on Calvin’s basis must be God. Is he logically inconsistent with his own assumption when he reasoned thus? He is not. Calvin does not say that he is. He points to no flaw in Pighius’ reasoning. **Instead, he points to the necessity of introducing the distinction between remote and proximate causes. Then and then only, Calvin argues, is it really possible to establish the exclusive responsibility of man for sin. For then,**

and then only , is the freedom of man really established and are secondary cause given a true foundation.

In this connection you further assert: "It is of course characteristic of the school of thought to which Dr. Van Til belongs to deny the possibility of any distinction between God's permissive decrees and his compelling decrees" (p. 48). Was there any necessity of thus lumping me with a "school of thought" and asserting or suggesting that as a member of such a school I must hold so and so when as a matter of fact I do speak of the permission of god with respect to sin? (See the Syllabus on Introduction to Theology, Vo. II, p. 217.) But I am anxious that what God permits be not set in contrast over against that which God foreordains. In that case the will of man would again be thought of as the **final or ultimate cause of its own acts** and therewith God's grace be denied. [Arminians believe that their wills are self-directed, that all that they decide or will to do originates from them and not from anything or influence outside themselves; otherwise, violence is done to their supposed liberty, a liberty of the will that they strongly defend.] (The reader may find Calvin's evaluation of the idea of God's permission a of sin in *Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 244.) Are your "permissive decrees" in no sense "compelling decrees"? Would you deny the ultimate efficiency of God in order to make room for the entrance of sin? If you are not to make your distinction between permissive and compelling decrees to fall into a virtual argument for an Arminian conception of the freedom of the will, how can you avoid saying with Calvin that "whatsoever men do, they do according to the *eternal will and secret purpose of God*"?

The same school of thought to which I am supposed to belong is accustomed, you say, "to stop in the ninth chapter of Romans with the great and profound truth of the twentieth verse, O man, who art thou that repliest against God" without going on to the twenty-second verse in which Paul "so simply explains" why God brought Pharaoh into existence (pg. 46). Well, I am not in the habit of stopping with the twentieth verse any more than was Calvin. But neither do I think that the twentieth verse gives a merely arbitrary statement about God while the twenty-second verse gives a more profound reason for God's dealings with Pharaoh. In complete contrast with Calvin's approach (see *Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 246) you assert, while speaking of the passages of Romas 9:20, 21 and 9:22,23: "I do wish to emphasize very forcefully that the Apostle Paul does not stop with the first merely arbitrary answer. He goes forward to suggest a further and a much more profound analysis of God's plan of redemption" What is God, p. 53). I do not think the will of God is an arbitrary reason. I believe with Calvin that God's will "is and must be, the highest rule of all equity" (*Op cit.*, p. 190). I do not think that the explanation given in the twenty-second verse is offered as more profound or more ultimate than the point made in verse twenty. "Taking, then, an honest and sober review of the whole of this high and Divine matter," says Calvin, "the plain and indubitable conclusion will be that *the will of God* is the one principal and all-high *cause* of all things in heaven and earth" (Idem, p. 246). Or again, "But as the will of God is the surest rule of all righteousness, that will ought ever to be to us the principal reason, yea – if I may so speak – the reason of all reasons!" (Idem, p. 247). **But Calvin desires that his distinction between proximate and remote cause be always observed.** It is because his adversaries have failed to make this distinction which he considers so essential that they have done him grave injustice. **"Our adversaries load us with illiberal and disgraceful calumny, when they cast it in our teeth that we make God the author of sin, by maintaining that his will is the cause of all things that are done"** (Idem, p. 251). **Making the distinction between proximate and remote causes enable Calvin to do full justice to the longsuffering of God without giving up the decree of God as basic to whatsoever comes to pass.**

God's secret will, his divine decrees, are compatible with man's creaturely freedom, proper second causes in the doctrine of compatibilism. This is a wonderful mystery. God does no violence to man's liberty as Arminians assume, when the Spirit is said to convert the soul from unwilling to being willing, from unbelieving to believing. If this is not the case, as Arminians argue, then why does God say, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world, if the man's free will is left to determine the point in the conflict? As Edwards points out below:

§ 53. If God is not the disposing author of virtue, then he is not the giver of it. The very notion of a giver implies a disposing cause of the possession of the benefit. [1 John iv. 4.](#) "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (i. e. have overcome your spiritual enemies,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, plainly, he is stronger, and his strength overcomes. But how can this be a reason, if God does not put forth an overcoming, effectual strength in the case, but leaves it to free will to get the victory, to determine the point in the conflict? – Jonathan Edwards

The Creature/Creator Distinction

Subjects covered: Man's declaration of independence from God, his supposed authority and autonomy and ultimacy. Ways of knowing God, univocal vs equivocal, analogical, derivative vs absolute thoughts. Sin/total depravity, distinction between our creatureliness and the Creator.

Excerpt from

The Defense of the Faith

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 46-50

Code488

V

SIN AND ITS CURSE

What we have said thus far in this chapter about man's knowledge has not taken sin into consideration. We have spoken only of the normal situation as it existed when man was first created perfect by God. We must now ask what happened to the knowledge situation when sin entered into the heart of man.

We know that sin is an attempt on the part of man to cut himself loose from God. But this breaking loose from God could, in the nature of the case, not be metaphysical; if it were, man himself would be destroyed and God's purpose with man would be frustrated. Sin is therefore a breaking loose from God **ethically and not metaphysically**. **Sin is the creature's enmity and rebellion against God but is not an escape from creaturehood.**

When we say that sin is ethical we do not mean, however, that sin involved only the will of man and not also his intellect. **Sin involved every aspect of man's personality.** [hence the meaning of "every" is the "total" in the title of the doctrine, *Total Depravity*] All of man's reactions in every relation in which God had set him were ethical and not merely intellectual; the intellectual itself is ethical.

What then was the result as far as the question of knowledge is concerned of man's rebellion against God? The result was that **man tried to interpret everything with which he came into contact without reference to God**. The assumption of all his future interpretation was the self-sufficiency of intra-cosmical relationships. This does not signify that man would immediately and openly deny that there is a God. Nor does it mean that man would always and everywhere deny that God is in some sense transcendent. [see notes on transcendence, etc., at the bottom] What he would always deny, by implication at least, would be that God is self-sufficient or self-complete. **At best he would allow that God is a correlative to man**. He might say that we need God to interpret man, but he would at the same time say that in the same sense we need man to interpret God. He might say that the temporal cannot be interpreted without reference to the eternal, but he would at the same time say that the eternal cannot be interpreted without reference to the temporal. He might say that we need God in order to obtain unity in our experience, but he would at the same time say that God needs the historical many in order to get diversity into his experience. All these forms of correlativity amount in the end to the same thing as saying that the finite categories are self-sufficient. For that reason, we can make a very simple and all comprehensive antithesis between the knowledge concept of all non-Christian philosophies and the Christian view. Scripture says that some men worship and serve the Creator; they are the Christians. All other men worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

Christian-theism says that there are two levels of thought, **the absolute and the derivative**. Christian theism says that there are two levels of interpreters, **God who interprets absolutely** and man who must be the **re-interpreter** of God's interpretation. **Christian-theism says that human thought is therefore analogical of God's thought**. **In opposition to all this, non-Christian thought holds in effect that the distinction between absolute and derivative¹ thought must be wiped out**. To be sure, God's thoughts may be more comprehensive than ours, but it is not self-complete without ours. This means that as all being was thought of as equally ultimate, so now all thought is thought of as equally ultimate. There is only one level of interpreters; if God comes into the picture at all, it is as a collaborator with man. We do not think Gods thoughts after him, but together with God we think our thoughts that have never been thought either by God or by man. **Non-Christian philosophies hold that human thought is univocal instead of analogical**. [see the explanation of these terms in the article below]

¹**Van Til** states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: **Calvin** never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself.

He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general a priori position. His position is as radically apposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, he must regard God as original and himself as derivative. He did not place God and man as correlatives next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that “not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*: p128-9: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness *the immediate but wholly derivative* starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the *remote but wholly ultimate starting point* of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the *false ideal of absolute comprehension*. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, **the non-Christian interpretation** of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of *comprehension knowledge*. This was done especially in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of **Leibniz**, a striking manifestation of the pride, “hubris,” *of the sinner who wishes to be as God*.³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. There have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father’s house. His “hubris” never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz’s project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

Thus, the Christian concept of analogical thought and the non-Christian concept of univocal thought stand over against one another as diametrical opposites.

Non-Christian thought holds to the ultimacy of the created universe. It holds therefore to the ultimacy of the mind of man itself and must in consequence deny the necessity of analogical thought. It holds to the normalcy of the human mind as well as to its *ultimacy*. It holds to the normalcy of the human mind as it holds to the normalcy of everything else in the world.

Naturally this conception of the normalcy of the human mind does not imply that the human mind never makes mistakes. It only means that mistakes are thought of as natural and to be expected and have nothing to do with sin.

We can readily see from this that the non-theistic mind must set for itself the ideal of absolutely comprehensive knowledge as long as it has not become fully conscious of the implications of its own thought. However, it will maintain that it is unnecessary for man to have any comprehensive universal in order to live. As long as non-theistic thought still thinks it necessary for man to have an absolute universal it naturally has to set for itself the task of finding this universal, inasmuch as God has been put out of the picture. Then when it appears impossible for man ever to find a universal, inasmuch as the particulars of the time are by definition always ahead of any time-generated universal, man says that he does not need any absolute universal anyway except as a limiting concept.

It may be useful in this connection to point out that in the whole situation we have therefore to deal with three types of consciousness.

In the first place there is the Adamic consciousness. When man was first created, he was perfect. He recognized the fact that he was a creature; he was actually normal. He wanted to be nothing but a re-interpretor of the interpretation of God. He was receptive to God's revelation which appeared within him and round about him; he would reconstruct this revelation. He was receptively reconstructive. For that reason he had real though not comprehensive unity in his experience.{88}

In the second place we deal with the fallen or non-regenerate consciousness. It builds upon the non-theistic assumption. It in effect denies its creaturehood. It claims to be normal. It will not be receptive of God's interpretation; **it wants to create its own interpretation without reference to God**. It will not reconstruct God's interpretation. It will construct only its own interpretation. It seeks to be creatively constructive. It thus tries to do the impossible with the result that self-frustration is written over all its efforts. There is no unity and never will be unity in non-theistic thought; it has cut itself loose from the only existing source of unity. Yet since it could not cut itself loose from God metaphysically and since God, for the purpose of realizing his plan of redemption, *rudera* or *scintillae* of the knowledge of God and of the universe remain in man. Non-Christians know after a fashion, as Paul tells us in Romans. Thus, also there is a relative good in those who are ethically totally evil. The unity that they have in experience is a shadow unity, a unity that prevents them from falling into complete disintegration in this world. Hereafter complete disintegration will follow, though even hereafter the disintegration can only be ethical and not metaphysical; there must be a kingdom or mock-unity even in hell.

Notes on the meaning of univocal, etc.

Thinking About God: Univocally or Analogically?

[Jonathon Woodyard](#) / [May 11, 2020](#)

One of the realities that should govern your life is that there is a God and you are not him. That is, there is a Creator and there are creatures. We should not confuse the two. Christians have understood this in the past and have spoken, with a fair bit of consistency, accordingly.

To maintain this Creator/creature distinction, theologians have used the terms univocal, analogical, and equivocal when speaking about how we know God. Those who argue for some type of univocal understanding (e.g. John Duns Scotus in the 13th century) seem to believe “some predicates applied to God and humans must be univocal (i.e., mean exactly the same thing)” ([Horton, *Justification*, vol. 1, 139](#)). Others, like Thomas Aquinas (12th century), argued for an analogical view.

What’s the difference? Michael Horton offers a careful explanation.

Neither being nor knowledge is ever shared univocally (i.e., identically) between God and creatures. As God’s being is qualitatively and not just quantitatively distinct from ours, so too is God’s knowledge. God’s knowledge is archetypal (the original), while ours is ectypal (a copy), revealed by God and therefore accommodated to our finite capacities. Our imperfect and incomplete knowledge is always dependent on God’s perfect and complete knowledge.

A covenantal ontology requires a covenantal epistemology. We were created as God’s analogy (image bearers) rather than as self-existent sparks of divinity; therefore, our knowledge is also dependent rather than autonomous. So there is indeed such a thing as absolute, perfect, exhaustive, and eternal truth, but this knowledge is possessed by God, not by us. Rather, we have revealed truth, which God has accommodated to our capacity.

Following Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), our older theologians therefore argued that human knowledge is analogical rather than either univocal or equivocal (two terms are related analogically when they are similar, univocally when they are identical, and equivocally when they have nothing in common). Take the word ball. There is no obvious connection between a formal dance and an object that I bounce. Thus, the use of the word “ball” in these different contexts is equivocal. However, in sports, “ball” is used analogically. Football and baseball are not the same games; even the balls they use are qualitatively different. Nevertheless, they are similar enough for them both to be called ball games. Only when I am comparing one baseball game to another is ball used univocally—referring to exactly the same thing.

When we say that God is good, we assume we know what good means from our ordinary experience with fellow human beings. However, God is not only quantitatively better than we are; his goodness is qualitatively different from creaturely goodness. Nevertheless, because we are created in God’s image, we share this predicate with God analogically. Goodness, attributed to God and Sally, is similar but always with greater dissimilarity. At no point is goodness exactly the same for God as it is for Sally. The difference is qualitative, not just quantitative; yet there is enough similarity to communicate the point.

God reveals himself as a person, a king, a shepherd, a substitutionary lamb, and so forth. These analogies are not arbitrary (i.e., equivocal), but they are also not exact correspondence (i.e., univocal). Even when we attribute love to God and Mary, love cannot mean exactly the same thing for a self-existent Trinity and a finite person. In every analogy, there is always greater dissimilarity than similarity

between God and creatures. Nevertheless, God judges that the analogy is appropriate for his self-revelation. We do not know exactly what divine goodness is like, but since God selects this analogy, there must be a sufficient similarity to our concept of goodness to justify the comparison.

This doctrine of analogy is the hinge on which a Christian affirmation of God's **transcendence** and **immanence** turns. **A univocal view threatens God's transcendence, while an equivocal view threatens God's immanence.**—Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims Along the Way* (Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition), 53–55. [again, see below, the note on transcendence, and how this can help you see the application to understanding deism and **pantheism**. **Pantheism** is "Van Til's term for mutualism" – Dr. Lane Tipton. And Theistic Mutualism and Correlativism are the same thing.]

Van Til states on page 11, *The Defense of the Faith*:

It is not a sufficient description of Christian theism when we say that as Christians, we believe in both the **transcendence** and the **immanence** of God while **pantheistic** systems believe only in the immanence of God and **deistic** systems believe only in the transcendence of God. **The transcendence we believe in is not the transcendence of deism and the immanence we believe in is not the immanence of pantheism.** In the case of deism transcendence virtually means separation while in the case of pantheism immanence virtually means identification. And if we add separation to identification we do not have theism as a result. As we mean a certain kind of God when as theists we speak of God, so also we mean a certain kind of transcendence and a certain kind of immanence when we use these terms. The Christian doctrine of God implies a definite conception of the relation of God to the created universe. So also the Christian doctrine of God implies a definite conception of everything in the created universe (p. 6-7).

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and God becomes severely limited. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. **He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself.** He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*),

through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

Van Til, on pgs. 188-189 on man's creatureliness vs uncreatedness. What's the significance of this distinction? He explains this in his response to misplaced criticism by another theologian:

"As a matter of fact, I have frequently explained that by the term "**autonomous man**" I mean the idea of a man **who virtually denies his createdness**. As created in paradise man was a distinct ontological entity over against God. As made perfect he recognized that God his creator was also his lawgiver. Of his own accord, according to the law of his own being as God had made him, he was therefore a covenant keeper. But with the entrance of sin man was no longer willing to obey the law of his maker. He became a covenant breaker. **He sought to be a law unto himself**, that is, he sought to be **autonomous**. Speaking of my meaning of the word autonomous you say: "I do not think he means eternal or uncreated." But why can I not mean "uncreated" when I assert that I do? **I do not say that all men openly assert that they are non-created. What I have asserted time and again is that men virtually assume or presuppose that they are non-created**. If they do not assume or presuppose that they are created then what else are they doing than assuming or presupposing that they are not created **and therefore are not responsible to their creator?** Is this too broad and sweeping a statement to make about all sinners? The daily newspaper is unintelligible on any other basis. There are those who worship and serve the creature and there are those who worship and serve the Creator. This is the simple differentiation with which I am concerned. I try to call men back to the recognition of the fact that they are creatures of God by challenging their false assumption of their non-createdness, **their autonomy or ultimacy.**"

Edwards' comments on our dependence upon God is clear!

As to the first of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being. The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; **which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence.** Now, if the creature

receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature? pg 97 *The End For Which God Created the World*

Notes on Epistemologically Self-consciousness & Temporary Faith

Excerpt from

Common Grace and the Gospel

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 84-91

Code489

What has been said may also help us to some extent in an intelligent discussion of the attitude of believers toward unbelievers. That attitude should, if our general approach be at all correct, be a conditional “as if” attitude. The attitude of Christ’s followers is, as Christ has told us, to be in positive imitation of God’s attitude. Hence, we are to make practical use of the concept of “mankind in general.” We are to use this notion as a limiting concept. We are not to forget for a moment that no

such thing exists in any pure state. We are therefore to witness to men that in themselves they are enemies of God. We are to witness to them that this enmity appears even in such dimensions as that of counting and weighing. This is done if, among other things, we build separate Christian day schools. And we are to oppose men more definitely to the extent that they become **epistemologically more self-conscious**. To say to the anti-Christ that God loves sinners, and therefore may love him, is to cast pearls before swine. For all that, we still need the concept of “mankind in general.” We are to think of non-believers as members of the mass of humankind in which the **process of differentiation** has not yet been completed. [the wheat and the tares are not fully mature yet] It is not to the righteous and to the unrighteous as fully differentiated that God gives His rain and sunshine. It is not to unbelievers as those that have with full self-consciousness expressed their unbelief that we are to give our gifts. We are to give our “rain and sunshine” as God gives them, on the basis of the limiting concept, to the as yet **undifferentiated** or at least not **fully differentiated** mass of mankind.

By thus substituting the ideas of earlier and later for lower and higher we may get something approaching a solution to the question of territories. There is no single territory or dimension in which believers and non-believers have all things wholly in common. As noted above, even the description of facts in the lowest dimension presupposes a system of metaphysics and epistemology. So there can be no neutral territory of cooperation. Yet unbelievers are more self-conscious epistemologically in the dimension of religion than in the dimension of mathematics. The process of differentiation has not proceeded as far in the lower, as it has in the higher dimensions. Does not this fact explain to some extent our attitude in practice? We seek, on the one hand, to make men **epistemologically self-conscious** [one knows why he knows] all along the line. As Reformed Christians we do all we can, by building our own educational institutions and otherwise, to make men see that so-called neutral weighing and measuring is a terrible sin in the sight of God. To ignore God anywhere is to insult the God who has told us that, whether we eat or drink or do anything else, we are to do all to His glory. But when all the reprobate are **epistemologically self-conscious**, the crack of doom has come. [in other words, e.g., the sin of the Amorites is now complete, it's come to its full measure, ripe for God's judgment.] **The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God.** So while we seek with all our power to hasten the **process of differentiation** in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for “the day of grace,” the day of **undeveloped differentiation**. Such tolerance as we receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than the later, stage of history. And such influence on the public situation as we can effect, whether in society or in state, presupposes this undifferentiated stage of development. [fascinating!]

excellent insight here on the hypocrite:

And this tolerance, on the one hand, and influence, on the other hand, extends, in varying degrees, to all dimensions. Because of the fact of **undifferentiation** we are tolerated in our religious life as we are tolerated in the field of weighing and measuring. And we have influence in the religious life as we

have influence in the lower dimensions. [undifferentiated: one has not fully developed into this sinful, fully epistemologically conscious mindset, “hardened of heart” condition where he is willfully waging war against God and knows it.] Those who have no depth of earth yet, sometimes and in some cases, receive with joy the seed of the Word. They have a **temporal faith**. The problem of the inner ego and the more circumferential aspect of the human person, discussed by Kuyper with the help of the copper-wire illustration, need not much concern us. It is not a question of psychology. Psychologically the whole individual is involved even to the depth of his being. When he receives the witness of the living God through nature about him, through his conscience within him, and by means of the preaching of the gospel, he is deeply engaged psychologically in an interpretative endeavor. But this deep psychological interpretative endeavor, by which he joins to himself all the multitudinous forms of the voice of God, is still, itself, merely the revelational voice of God. The question of his ethical response has not yet been broached. The real question is one of epistemology and therewith of man’s ethical attitude toward God. If men were **fully self-conscious epistemologically** they would violently suppress the psychologically interpretative voice within them. **But to the extent that they are not self-conscious epistemologically, they may even taste of the heavenly gift, be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and not rebel.** [incredible insight here!! this explains why it is too hard to discern false brethren and how many can be self-deceived.] **They allow themselves to be affected by it to some extent.** It is the nostalgia of the prodigal who has left the father’s home but sometimes has misgivings. On his way to the far country he may halt, he may even turn back for a distance, thinking that after all it was good and natural for a son to be in the father’s home. Soon he will crucify unto himself the Son of God afresh, but for the moment the voice of God drowns out his own. He is at the moment not at all himself; **he is not yet fully himself.**

It is thus that we finally come to some fruitful insight into the problem of **civil righteousness or the works of non-regenerate men**. It is not that in some lower dimension no differentiation, epistemological or psychological, needs to be made by believers. It is not that there is even a square foot of neutral territory. It is not that in the field of civics or justice, any more than in any other particular dimension, men, to the extent that they are epistemologically self-conscious, show any righteousness. The problem, as already suggested, faces us in every dimension. There are non-believers who go to church, there are those who give to the cause of missions. Nor are they hypocrites, properly speaking. The hypocrite is a person who is epistemologically self-conscious to a large degree. He “joins the church” for the sake of reward. He may very well do the works of the law externally. Dillinger often walked well-dressed in fashionable society. May not a criminal give many and fine Christmas presents today to those whom he plans to murder tomorrow? He does the works of the law. Schilder makes much of the fact that the works of the law may be thus externally performed. But the problem cannot be settled in this fashion. The very existence of the hypocrite requires us to go back of the hypocrite. To be able to act the hypocrite he must know the requirements of proper society thoroughly. How does he know the requirements of society? Because he has mingled in society and has had its requirements inscribed upon him as a demand. **The very possibility of self-conscious**

hypocrisy presupposes an earlier undifferentiated state. It is from that undifferentiated stage that we must make our beginning.

Schilder insists that we are not to interpret Paul's words in Rom 2.14 as though they meant that the heathen do the works of the law by their own nature. This is in itself true enough. Yet it is equally true that the question of general revelation is of basic importance for an understanding of Paul's words. The fact of general revelation may, and must, always be presupposed. Schilder himself allows for this possibility. When seeking to explain the passage, he employs the idea of the remnants of the image of God and the idea of God's general providence. Yet he holds that the first reason for the performance of the works of the law, on the part of the reprobate, must be found in their sinful nature. The sinner, says Schilder, does the works of the law hypocritically. That is to say, Schilder would have us make a large degree of epistemological self-consciousness on the part of the non-believer the chief and primary point of departure. We shall get further in stating Paul's meaning if we make a low stage of epistemological self-consciousness our starting point. Paul is not saying that we deal with a group of people that are master simulators, having been in contact with the highest requirements of the law of God, and a group that is able to "dress as well as the best." On the contrary he is arguing that even those who have not had the special revelation of the oracles of God given to the Jews must yet be said to be sinners, that is, covenant-breakers. All men need the justice of God, for all are sinners. Yet there is no sin unless there be transgression and there is no transgression unless there be knowledge of the law.

Sidebar comment: And not only is there transgression from the knowledge of the law, but their witness of the miracles that Jesus did acerbates their judgment for their transgressions, John 15: 24-25, ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

Having not the externally promulgated law, the heathen yet have enough knowledge of the law or will of God to render them without excuse. Do some think that the wrath of God is revealed upon the heathen unjustly on the ground that they have no knowledge of the will of God? Let them realize, says Paul in effect, that the revelation of God is present with all men everywhere. Let them know that even from the beginning of history this knowledge has been about all men everywhere. All men are responsible for the original positive revelation of God to mankind, as well as for the natural revelation that still surrounds them. Do some wonder whether that revelation of God has been persistent and insistent? Let them realize that that revelation is so close to all men as to be psychologically one with them. It is so close to them that, in spite of all their efforts to bury it, it speaks through their own moral consciousness. The law of God as a demand of God is written on their very hearts. The Westminster Confession does not hesitate to say that the law, not merely the works of the law but the law itself, was originally written on man's heart. And the reference given for that statement is Rom 2.14–15. To this is then added the fact that man originally had a true epistemological reaction to this revelation of

God. Man was created in “knowledge, righteousness and true holiness.” This original, true, epistemological reaction in paradise is in turn revelational and therefore further requisite for the sinner.

Sin has not been able to efface all this requisitional material from the consciousness of man. The very activity of his consciousness is a daily reminder to him of the will of God. **Though he has tried over and over again to choke the voice of God he has not been able to do so.** His evil nature would fain subdue the voice of the creation nature, but it cannot wholly do so. Involuntarily men think back, with the prodigal, to the father’s home. And when the prodigal turns his face momentarily toward the father’s house there comes to him the voice of approval. He may “with joy” receive the gospel though he have no depth of earth. On the other hand, when he reasserts his true self, his self that is on the way to the swine-trough, there is still a voice pursuing him, this time the voice of disapproval. So he wavers as an unfinished product. **He does the works of the law not as the devil or as the anti-Christ does them. They do them as arch-simulators of Christ and His people.** The devil appears as an angel of light. Hypocrites imitate him. It is not thus that the average non-believer does them. If such were the case, the end of time would be here. **If all non-believers did the works of the law primarily from their self-consciously developed evil nature they would, by force of their principle, seek to wipe all believers off the face of the earth.** But “the man of sin,” the “son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,” is restrained (2 Thes. 2:3–4). **When no longer restrained he will attempt to make hypocrites of all unbelievers.** He will work “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved” (2 Thes. 2:10). In punishment for their sin “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:11–12). Till such time as the “son of perdition” has not been given free power, and till such time as God has not in that connection sent a strong spirit of delusion, **mankind in general is not fully self-conscious of its inherent opposition to God.** The pressure of God’s revelation upon men is so great that they are, from their own point of view, in a sort of stupor. With the prodigal they are on the way to the swine-trough, but with the prodigal they have misgivings in leaving the father’s house. The heathen have such misgivings; **those that hear the gospel may have such misgivings in a greater measure, as they taste the powers of the age to come.**

In this manner the ideas of God’s general providence, his general revelation, the remnants of the image of God in man, the general external call of the gospel, and man’s evil nature may be brought into something of a harmonious unity. All things happen according to God’s providence. That is basic. There is, according to this providence, to be a development in the direction of evil and a development in the direction of the good. These two developments grow in conjunction, in correlativity, with one another. Therefore, all factors must be taken into consideration in all the problems with which we have to deal. The general development of history, of which the two developments mentioned are subdivisions, comes about through God’s presentation of Himself as He is, in varying degrees of self-

revelation, to man, plus man's reaction to this presentation. God always presents Himself as He is. His attributes face man as man faces God. The revelation of God is always objectively valid. The greatest obscuration the sin of man can cast over the face of nature and his own consciousness, cannot destroy the validity of revelation. Vanity and corruption are, to be sure, seen in nature. But men ought, argues Calvin, to see even this as evidence of God's presence, of God's presence in judgment. Evil is found in man's heart. Again, even this is evidence of God's presence; **man is pursued by the voice of accusing conscience**. When the accusing conscience challenges the wisdom of his choice against God, the voice of God is heard again. The prodigal turns about for a moment, stands still, takes a few steps back, his conscience approving, his emotional life responding with joy; the remnants of the image of God appear even while he is on his general downward path. In some cases the gospel call is heard. This tends to make some of those that hear it walk back a little farther still. But underneath it all the evil nature is operative. **That nature accounts for the fact that all this turning and yearning is temporary and has not arisen from true faith in God. That nature accounts for the fact that the sinner will soon turn with more determination than ever toward the swine-trough.** Even if he continues to do the works of the law, as well he may, **he will do them more and more self-consciously for the sake of reward**. Finally, he may become a worthy disciple of Satan who may appear as an angel of light to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect of God.

Very clear teaching on the Roman Catholic doctrine of *donum superadditum* and the modern theological thinking of *Correlativism* or *Theistic Mutualism*. This book by Lane Tipton is superbly written so that you can really understand these issues.

Other subjects covered: **Anthropomorphism**, the **Image of God: Rome vs Reformed**, **Divine Simplicity**, **Thomas Aquinas' view**, **Pantheism**, Free will & natural man and the Roman Catholic apologetic. **Pantheism is "Van Til's term for mutualism"** – Dr. Lane Tipton.

Roman Catholicism, Arminian/Pelagianism and the *donum superadditum* vs. Reformed Theology

code490

Excerpts from Lane Tipton's book,
The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til

Preface

This volume expounds the doctrine of the **Trinity** in Cornelius Van Til's system of thought. Van Til developed classical Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism with what he termed "the representational

principle,” providing an account of God’s intra-Trinitarian life in contrast to all forms of subordinationism and offering a vision of God’s relation to the world that opposes all forms of **correlativism (a mutually interdependent relationship)** and **mutualism** (i.e., the notion that God, as Creator, participates in the change of the creature or that the creature participates in the essence of the Creator)...

my comments in [blue]

The Self-Contained Trinity

An Orientation to Van Til’s Doctrine of God

Pg 15-21

Be sure to read the footnotes!

Cornelius Van Til’s Trinitarian theology stands out uniquely in the twentieth century as a robust and self-conscious integration of the English Puritan and Continental Dutch confessional traditions. His application of confessional, Reformed Trinitarian theology to the development of classical federalism in dialogue with modern philosophy and theology constitutes a pioneering development in the history of Reformed theology. His penetrating engagement with **Roman Catholic** and **Modernist theology** offers great reward to those who are willing to read him with the patience and care needed to understand and appreciate one of the most profound theological minds of the past century.

A responsible reading of Van Til will turn up a distinctively Reformed conception of the triune God in **covenantal relation to image-bearing creatures** that does not appear in traditional Roman Catholic or Modernist (e.g., Barthian) alternatives. The integration of confessionally Reformed Trinitarian theology and classically Reformed federalism left a discernable impression on Van Til’s theology, which was indebted to **John Calvin**, the Westminster Confession of Faith, **Herman Bavinck**, **Geerhardus Vos**, **Charles Hodge**, and **A. A. Hodge**.

Under these theological influences, Van Til offered definite conceptions of the self-contained triune God in his covenantal relation to image-bearing creatures. He believed **that every error in Trinitarian theology stems from either conceiving of God as a participant in the becoming of the image-bearing creature or conceiving of the image-bearing creature as a partaker of the substance of the Godhead**. The former error appears in various forms of **Modernism** as expressed by **Schleiermacher** or **Barth**; the latter error occurs in **traditional Roman Catholicism** as found in **Thomas Aquinas** and **Robert Bellarmine**.

In contrast to both forms of error, Van Til strongly defended the confessional truths that God remains “most absolute” and “immutable” in his relation to image-bearing creatures (WCF 2.1) and that image-bearing creatures are not “in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead” (WCF 26.3). God does not partake of the **contingency and change** that **characterize the creature** any more than the creature partakes of the **simplicity and immutability** that characterize the Creator. The **Creator-creature distinction** is maintained at every point in the Creator-creature relation. [see **codeCC1** and see **code482** on chance]

In the language that permeates Van Til’s published corpus, he sought to avoid every form of **correlativism**, whether it be the doctrine that God and man exist together in a **mutual relation of dynamic change** (the **Modernist** and **Barthian** error) or that man is **reproportioned above his human nature to partake of the**

substance of God (the **Roman Catholic error**). Van Til was concerned that such **mutualizing conceptions** would eviscerate the catholic and Reformed doctrine of the immutable and absolute triune God in his covenantal relation to image-bearing creatures.

In his 1955 work, *The Defense of the Faith*, Van Til asserts that his “doctrine of God”¹ has been “self-consciously set in opposition to all forms of non-Christian thought which compromise or deny the self-contained character [of God] by thinking of him (or it) as **correlative to the universe**.”² Over against all forms of **correlativism** that teach that God changes in relation to creation, ranging from **Absolute Idealism** to **Process Theism**, Van Til maintains that “we speak of the immutability of God. Naturally God does not and cannot change since there is nothing besides his own eternal Being on which he depends (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).”³ Van Til therefore insists that “the attributes of God are not to be thought of otherwise than as aspects of the one simple original being; the attributes of God are not characteristics that God has developed gradually; they are fundamental to his being.”⁴ Van Til is quick to add that each Trinitarian person subsists distinctly as the **undivided essence of God**, and this entails that “no one of the persons of the trinity can be said to be **correlative in its being to anything that exists beyond the Godhead**.”⁵ The self-contained triune God does not exist in a correlative relation to the universe, with each side of the relation characterized by mutual change.⁶

This means that the **immutability** of God is not a **lifeless or inert conception**. [a very important point that Thomas Weinandy makes; go to code422 & codeinert] The immutable triune God is characterized by a fullness of **self-determined** and **self-contained activity**. Van Til observes, “God is life in himself.”⁷ He elaborates: “Thinking of the infinity of God in relation to time in this manner, we therefore think of that fulness of internal activity of which the movement in the temporally conditioned universe is a created replica.”⁸ The self-contained triune God relates to the creature as the absolute and living tripersonal God. The Trinitarian persons of the Godhead possess a self-contained and fully actualized dynamism that admits of no change or modification in relation to creation (Jas. 1:17). This self-contained Trinitarian life supplies the archetype after which God patterns the being and activity of the image-bearing creature.

Van Til’s concern to avoid **correlativism** moves one step further. Van Til not only maintains that the absolute and condescended triune **Creator does not participate in the becoming of the creature** (see WCF 2.1), but also insists that **the creature does not partake in any way of the substance of the Godhead** (see WCF 26.3). The former we could term front-door mutualism; the latter we could term back-door mutualism. In front-door mutualism, the triune God is claimed to participate in the **temporal becoming** of the creature by sharing in some third thing along with the creature (see Barth’s concept of God’s “third time” for us in the Christ-event).⁹ In **back-door mutualism**, the creature is claimed to participate in the being of God by way of an **ontological** reportioning supplied by the infused grace of the **donum superadditum**.¹⁰

Van Til reasons that while “man is the created image-bearer of God, God communicates to man a being similar to his own.”¹¹ Yet he immediately adds that “that communication is then not a participation in the eternal being of God, **but is the finite replication of the divine being**.”¹² As Van Til wrote in a letter to Carl F. H. Henry, seeking to **avoid both front-door and back-door mutualism**, we must “think of eternity as exclusively a characteristic of God and of time as exclusively a characteristic of the created world.” Any commingling of the two proves “fatal” to true religion.¹³ **The triune God no more partakes of man’s temporal becoming in his work of creation than man by nature and infused grace partakes of the eternal substance of the Godhead.**

This leads Van Til to oppose both ancient and modern species of front-door and back-door mutualism. Whether it be the *analogia temporis* of Barth or the *analogia entis* of Roman Catholicism,¹⁴ he says, “the idea of identifying man’s being with his participation in the act of God’s saving him is really only the modern equivalent of the **Greek notion of identifying man with his participation in the changeless being of God**.”¹⁵ **Whether it be**

the **front-door mutualism** that makes God a participant in change and time, or the **back-door mutualism** that makes man a partaker of the substance of the Godhead,¹⁶ Van Til stands out as perhaps the staunchest critic in the twentieth century of all species of **correlativism** and **mutualism**.¹⁷

This book supplies a sustained account of the classical Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism that Van Til presents as the comprehensive alternative to all forms of **correlativism** and **mutualism**. The theological foundations of the confessional Trinitarianism summarized by A. A. Hodge, the conception of the absolute personality of the triune God set forth by Herman Bavinck, the autothean¹⁸ doctrine of absolute Trinitarian persons developed by John Calvin, the living Trinitarian persons who exhaustively indwell one another in relations of coinherence as set forth by **Francis Turretin** and Charles Hodge, and “the deeper Protestant conception”¹⁹ of the image of God and the doctrine of the covenant of works expounded by Geerhardus Vos all converge to forge what Van Til termed the “representational principle.” Van Til’s representational principle is the programmatic response of confessional Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism to various expressions of correlativism and mutualism. The representational principle necessitates Van Til’s distinctive apologetical method of defending the truth of Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism as a unit.

Dr. Lane Tipton comments on Theistic Mutualism:

One way to try to describe what theistic mutualism is saying is this: typically mutualists will affirm that when you talk about the Creator-creature distinction initially, just God in himself, that God is immutable, self-contained, simple and um all of the classical attributes are affirmed – typically. Even Karl Barth will go so far as to affirm them. But the problem with mutualism is that when God relates to the creation, God, in that relation enters into a process of development along with the creation so that both God and creation are in a common mutual process of self-actualization of actualizing unactualized potential together in a common process of mutual evolution and development. And um, It’s become I think particularly problematic since the Enlightenment – it’s not an exclusively enlightenment problem by any stretch of the imagination; all ancient heresies at the end of the day are mutualistic in character I think, in one way or another. Ah, but particularly in the 19th and 20th century, in the shadow of Kant and Hegel and others – that what is affirmed in the creator-creature distinction, is denied in essence in the creator-creature relation; and um, and in so doing that, the divine and the human, the divine and the creaturely are commingled in various ways.

Dr. Lane Tipton, *Classical Theism and Theistic Mutualism in the Reformed Tradition* 8/4/20 – YouTube video, Min 14: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBaGNTrn1V4>

Footnotes:

1. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955), 37.
2. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 38.
3. Van Til, 25.
4. Van Til, 26.
5. Van Til, 69.
6. In *The Defense of the Faith*, Van Til makes crystal clear his strenuous opposition to all forms of **correlativism** or **pantheism** as enshrined in Absolute Idealism: “The charge that I have any tendency toward idealistic philosophy with its idea of God as at best correlative to the universe also appears to be unfounded. The whole structure of

the chapter from which I have quoted is self-consciously and at well-nigh every point directed at all forms of **correlativism** or **pantheism**” (p. 38n9).

7. Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1974), 212.

8. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 212.

9. For an excellent contemporary exposition and critique of Barth on this topic, see James J. Cassidy, *God’s Time for Us: Barth’s Reconciliation of Eternity and Time in Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016).

10. Consult Daria Spezzano’s useful overview of deification in the theology of Aquinas. Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God’s Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015). See the discussion in chapter 2 below for an account of the nature and function of the *donum superadditum* in traditional Roman Catholic theology. For the most incisive and penetrating discussion of the **doctrine of participation** in the theology of **Thomas Aquinas**, consult Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

11. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 232.

12. Van Til, 232.

13. Cornelius Van Til to Carl F. H. Henry, February 7, 1951, Van Til Papers, Montgomery Library, Westminster Theological Seminary.

14. For a stimulating volume that demonstrates Barth’s advocacy of a temporally reconfigured version of the *analogia entis*, consult Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010). As James J. Cassidy incisively observes, “Barth retains a temporally qualified *analogia entis*.” Cassidy, *God’s Time for Us*, 171.

15. Cornelius Van Til, *The New Synthesis Theology of the Netherlands* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 70.

16. Fundamental methodological criticisms aside, **Thomas Aquinas** commendably affirms divine simplicity and the immutability of God, and entirely avoids front-door mutualism. **He nonetheless holds to views** in other loci **that distinguish him sharply from Calvin, Vos, and Van Til** regarding the processional relations within the Godhead, the eschatology of the natural image of God, the *sensus divinitatis*, the character of grace, the nature of sin, the role of the incarnation, the function of the sacraments, and the essence of the beatific vision.

17. For all practical purposes, the terms correlativism and mutualism function synonymously throughout this volume.

18. See chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of divine personhood as it pertains to Calvin’s doctrine of the Son as *autotheos*.

19. Geerhardus J. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Anthropology*, trans. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012), 13. **Vos** insists that the **created image of God** includes, as **concreated, natural religious fellowship with God**. Adam needed to offer **covenantal obedience** to advance that natural religious fellowship to **its consummation in heavenly Sabbath rest**. The deeper Protestant conception stands over against the classical **Roman Catholic view** that denies Adam was created in natural religious fellowship with God and stood in need of the supernatural gift of the **donum superadditum**, an **ontological and ethical supplement**, in order to achieve fellowship with God. See chapter two for a fuller discussion of the deeper Protestant conception and its relation to Trinitarian theology.

*Notes on **Pantheism** by Van Til*

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God too near to him; he has identified the Creature with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and **God becomes severely limited**. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think Van Til is saying here, that God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (becoming *individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

The Immutable Triune Creator

*The Deeper Protestant Conception
of the Creator-Creature Relation*

pg21-29

The basic structure and theological content of Van Til's notion of the Creator-creature relation are indebted to what Vos in his *Reformed Dogmatics* terms the "deeper Protestant conception."²⁰ From the divine side, Vos teaches that the triune God remains absolute and immutable in his sovereignly willed relation to creation. From the human side, Vos argues that image-bearing Adam was created in natural religious fellowship with God and was constituted by covenant the federal head of the race. It is worth sketching this deeper Protestant conception from both the divine and the human sides in order then to outline Van Til's appropriation and enrichment of it.

The Deeper Protestant Conception from the Divine Side:

Vos and Van Til on the Creator-Creature Relation

Writing on the topic of creation in the first volume of his Reformed Dogmatics, Vos argues that creation was a “transitive act” that occurred “in time,” even though that transitive act was the work of the absolute triune Creator, in whom “no time distinction exists.”²¹ For this reason, creation did not and does not involve any change in God. Rather, the work of creation expressed the willing agency of the absolute and unchanging triune God. The triune God remains absolute as the Creator in his sovereignly willed relation to the world.

Vos quotes Voetius and follows the classical Reformed tradition on this matter. He argues:

Creation, actively considered, is not a real change because by it God is not changed by that act; it only requires a new relationship of the Creator to what is created. And this new relation, which is not real in God, can therefore not effect a real change in Him.²²

The absolute God remains unchanged both behind (ad intra) and in (ad extra) the relation wrought in the work of creation. The relation changes. Creatures in the relation change. But the simple and immutable triune Creator does not change. The mystery therefore resides in the fact that the Creator freely wills a “new relation” to creation that introduces no change in God, even as he actively relates to creation.

Good notes on pantheism:

Vos defines immutability as “that perfection in God whereby He is exalted above all becoming and development, as well as above all diminution, and remains the same eternally.”²³ And in answer to the question of why it is “necessary” to emphasize God’s immutability in his relation to creation, Vos explains that it is necessary “because **pantheism teaches that within God there is development, indeed, that the development of the world is nothing other than the process whereby God comes to self-consciousness.**”²⁴ The doctrine of divine immutability, the notion that the triune Creator remains essentially and personally unchanged in relation to creation, **provides a safeguard against all species of pantheism. Pantheism** is not merely the crass notion that all created things are indistinguishable from God. According to Vos, pantheism encompasses any view that God and the creation are submerged in a common time and engaged in mutual change. **Pantheism**, as Vos defines it, could easily function as a virtual synonym for **correlativism** as Van Til defines it.

Having rejected every permutation of pantheism, Vos asks the following question: “How are the creation of the world and God’s actions in time to be brought into agreement with His immutability?” He answers, “We must believe that all these deeds do not effect any change in God, since they do not require time in Him, although naturally their realization falls within time.”²⁵ This is precisely the locus of the mystery of the God-world relation from the standpoint of the deeper Protestant conception. The mystery is not that God takes mutable properties to himself as Creator in order to facilitate a give-and-take relationship between a mutable deity and mutable creatures. Rather, the mystery is that the self-contained triune God wills a bona fide relation to mutable creatures in time without himself participating in time and without himself undergoing change of any sort over time (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17).

Van Til, following Vos, insists that the self-contained and immutable triune God related to Adam in creation and covenant without any modification within himself. In the work of creation, Van Til emphasizes, **the triune God does not participate in man’s temporal becoming in a Christ-event (Barth)—nor does man, through the ontologically reportioning grace of the *donum superadditum*, participate in God’s eternal being (Roman Catholicism).**²⁶ This means that God remains absolute at every point in his relationship with Adam, and Adam remains the creature at every point in his relationship with God. **God does not undergo some sovereignly willed internal permutation or take to himself extrinsic properties of a temporal and mutable sort to relate to Adam as**

the created image of God. Neither does **Adam** receive **infused deifying grace** that enables a progressively ascending participation in the divine essence and eternal processions of the Godhead.

Van Til makes this point trenchantly in a letter to Carl F. H. Henry:

Starting with the Creator-creature distinction as basic to one's thought one need not and in fact cannot after that discuss such concepts as time and eternity by themselves. . . . As then it is fatal to fail to introduce the Creator creature distinction at the outset of one's thought so it is also fatal to fail to think of eternity as exclusively a characteristic of God and of time as exclusively a characteristic of the created world. It would be to make God subject to the conditions of his creatures, subject to change etc.²⁷

Notes on Pantheism by Van Til

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God too near to him; he has identified the Creator with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

codeCC1 Van Til states: The distinction between the approach of the "ancient" mind and the "modern" mind is not fundamental. The "objectivism" of the ancient mind is only gradationally distinct from the "subjectivism" of the modern mind. **There is not true transcendence in Platonism, Aristotelianism, or Stoicism**, any more than there is in modern existentialism and dialecticism.

The only distinction that will set off the Christian Approach to knowledge and reality and therefore also the Christian doctrine of revelation from the non-Christian views is that between the fully Protestant or Reformed view that does, and the general non-Christian view, whether ancient or modern, whether rationalist or irrationalist, that does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic to its thought. There are those who serve and worship God, and those who serve and worship man. Calvin most adequately represents the former, and modern **existentialism** and **pragmatism** most adequately represent the latter. Thomas Aquinas seeks to combine the two positions. Pg 202 *Into to Systematic Theology*

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and **God becomes severely limited**. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Van Til states on page 369:

In saying that God is a Spirit we do not think of some vague generic concept of spirituality of which God is one particular instance and man another. God is the absolute Spirit. He is the self-contained Spirit. He does not need materiality over against himself in order to individuate himself. He is the self-individuated Spirit. [In other words, I think was Van Til is saying here, that

God is not in an act of *becoming* via a correlative relationship with his creation – i.e., a pantheistic view. He is entirely distinct from his creation and he already *is!* and that by or of himself, a se. He is not becoming more conscious of himself nor *coming into his own* so to speak (*becoming individuated*), through a correlative relationship by being one with creation in the ongoing changes characteristic of all creatures. For one thing, God is immutable.]

Van Til insists that we must never at any point commingle the eternal Creator and the temporal creature in the Creator-creature relation. God is not at any point in his relation to creation subject to the conditions of time and change. God does not in creation participate in Adam’s becoming—any more than Adam, by infused deifying grace, participates in God’s being. The Creator-creature distinction must be maintained at every point in the Creator-creature relation. The immutability that characterizes God in distinction from the creature continues without qualification to characterize God in his relation to the creature (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17).

Van Til’s understanding of **anthropomorphic language** comports with his understanding of the Creator-creature relation. The Scriptures express the actions of the immutable and self-contained triune God in conceptual categories borrowed from creaturely activity. For instance, the Scriptures teach that God “hovers” over creation (Gen. 1:2) or “walks” in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). God’s actions are presented in finite and temporal avian and human terms, even though God is neither finite nor temporal. Anthropomorphic language, therefore, expresses the agency of the eternal and immutable triune God in temporal and mutable categories borrowed from the realm of creation.

Van Til follows **Herman Bavinck’s** treatment of anthropomorphic language. Bavinck explains it thoroughly, and we quote him at some length, in order to highlight its nature and function in classical Reformed theology:

Scripture necessarily speaks of God in anthropomorphic language. Yet, however anthropomorphic its language, it at the same time prohibits us from positing any change in God himself. There is change around, about, and outside of him, and there is change in people’s relations to him, but there is no change in God himself. . . . There is nothing intermediate between these two classes of categories: a deep chasm separates God’s being from that of all creatures. It is a mark of God’s greatness that he can condescend to the level of his creatures and that, though transcendent, he can dwell immanently in all created beings. Without losing himself, God can give himself, and, while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures. . . . We should not picture God as putting himself in any relation to any creature of his as though it could even in any way exist without him. Rather, he himself puts all things in those relations to himself, which he eternally and immutably wills—precisely in the way in which and at the time at which these relations occur. There is absolutely no “before” or “after” in God; these words apply only to things that did not exist before, but do exist afterward.²⁸

Bavinck’s work supplies the backdrop for Van Til’s conception of “fearless anthropomorphism” as he expounds the logic of the Creator-creature relation. Let us highlight three features of Bavinck’s presentation in this regard that are worthy of our attention.

First, Bavinck makes it clear that “**anthropomorphic language** . . . prohibits us from positing any change in God himself.”²⁹ There is “change around, about, and outside of him, and there is change in people’s relations to him, but there is no change in God himself.”³⁰ **Anthropomorphic language** staunchly defends the absolute immutability of God and prohibits ascribing change to him as he relates to creation and acts in time. There is change in the creature; there is change in the relation; but there is no change in any sense in God himself.

Anthropomorphic language ascribes the qualities of the creature to God's acts in time. But such language is never intended by Reformed theologians to be taken in a **univocal** way, as though God literally possesses creaturely qualities. God's acts in time do not require him to be temporal. God acts in the contingent and historical order of creation do not require him to be contingent and historical. God's acts in relation to **mutable and passible creatures do not require that he be mutable and passible like the creature**. There is no point of **univocity** between the Creator and the creature—no mutual sharing in mutability and temporality. Thus, **anthropomorphic language analogically depicts the actions of the immutable and impassible triune God in language and concepts borrowed from the creature**. Such an analogical conception of anthropomorphic language prohibits ascribing to God in his works *ad extra* the change and development resident in the creature.

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Second, **anthropomorphic language** demands that there be “nothing intermediate” between these two categories. There is the Creator, and there is the creature. There is no *tertium quid* that we must posit in order somehow to relate them to one another. God, as the Creator, relates to man, as the creature, precisely in the sovereignly willed relation established by creation (image of God) and in special providence (covenant). In that relation, God's self-contained and underived being and independent activity is at every point distinguished from the **derived being and dependent activity of man**.

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Van Til invokes in his work the logic of Vos's deeper Protestant conception of God's personal absoluteness and immutability expressed in the work of creation and in the event of the incarnation. The divine person of the Son cannot be eradicated or changed as he relates to creation or assumes a human nature. Van Til also follows Bavinck in the way he uses anthropomorphic language to express the mystery that characterizes the personal immutability of the triune Creator. These influences lead Van Til to advocate a “fearless anthropomorphism” as he sets forth the theology of the relation of the “changeless” triune God to the changing created world.³⁷

Along these lines, Van Til says that “the **immanent relations** within the three persons of the holy trinity are the foundation of the relations which the triune God sustains to the world.”³⁸ The **immanent** relations are foundational in the sense that the self-contained triune persons relate without modification to creation. He continues, “Unless we maintain the basic importance of the ontological trinity, God becomes involved in a **dynamism of chance**.”³⁹ The key premise Van Til maintains is that the self-contained and living persons of the Godhead remain such in the new relation to creation. **Anthropomorphic** language, then, is self-consciously designed in Reformed theology proper to oppose the notion that the persons of the Trinity undergo transmutation of any sort in the works of God *ad extra*.⁴⁰ To be “**fearlessly anthropomorphic**,” as Van Til advocates, involves giving full expression to the absolute and living Trinitarian persons, who relate as such to creation without undergoing any change of any kind.

Van Til's insistence that God remains immutable in relation to creation is rooted in **divine aseity**. [**God is of himself**] In *The Defense of the Faith*, he strongly maintains “the independence or aseity of God.”⁴¹ Van Til is explicit that “by this is meant that **God is in no sense correlative to or dependent upon anything beside his own being. God is the source of his own being, or rather the term source cannot be applied to God. God is absolute. He is sufficient unto himself**.”⁴² Van Til insists that God *a se* relates to creation without himself changing, so that “we speak of the immutability of God. Naturally God does not and cannot change since there is nothing besides his own eternal Being on which he depends (Mal 3:6; Jas. 1:17).”⁴³ God's aseity supplies the interior logic for his immutability in relation to creation. God, in his covenantal relation to his people, remains “absolute” and “cannot change” precisely because in his new relation of creation “there is nothing besides his own eternal Being on which he depends (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17).”⁴⁴ The Scripture proof texts cited by Van Til bring into view (1) God's redemptive covenantal relation to his people in Malachi 3:6 and (2) the Father's personal relation to

creation as the giver of every good and perfect gift in James 1:17. The triune God “is in no sense correlative to or dependent on anything beside his own being” in the sovereignly willed “new relation” to the created world.

Footnotes:

37. Van Til observes that “we are entitled and compelled to use anthropomorphism not apologetically but fearlessly. We need not fear to say that God’s attitude has changed with respect to mankind. We know well enough that God in himself is changeless. But we hold that we are able to affirm that our words have meaning for no other reason than that we use them analogically.” Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 73. It is not an analogical use of anthropomorphic language to say that God’s attitude changes if we mean by that univocal or literal change as found in the fluctuating attitudes of creatures. Van Til denies that God takes on accidental attributes that develop over time by which his attitude might change. When we say that God’s attitude has changed, or that he “now knows” Abraham believes him (Gen. 22:18), or is “grieved” over the wickedness of man (Gen. 6:6), or “hovers” over the formless void (Gen. 1:2), or “walks” with Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen. 3:8), we are speaking analogically regarding the relation of the immutable and living triune God to the changing creature. Anthropomorphism, as defined by Bavinck and Van Til, prohibits the notion that God literally changes in any way in his relation to creation before or after the fall (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). Anthropomorphic language describes the activity of the self-contained triune God in his relation to creation in terms and concepts borrowed from the creation. Mutable creaturely activity replicates on a creaturely level the immutable fullness of the triune God’s activity in relation to creation. It would be a supreme instance of category confusion to attribute to God the mutable qualities of the creature and call that fearless anthropomorphism. 38. Cornelius Van Til, *The Theology of James Daane* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959), 35. 39. Van Til, *The Theology of James Daane*, 35.

40. **John Frame** advocates for a species of theistic mutualism when he posits two modes of existence in God. The former mode denotes God’s timelessness and immutability apart from creation, and the latter denotes God’s temporality and mutability in relation to creation. He is explicit that “there are two modes of existence in God.” John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 572. The first is an “atemporal” mode of existence, and the second is the “historical” mode of existence (p. 571). Frame’s central claim is that the historical mode of existence in God “begins with creation itself” (p. 571). **Frame is explicit that “history involves constant change, and so, as an agent in history, God himself changes”** (p. 571). **God’s relation to creation involves a sovereign transmutation into the interiority of time and change—a true participation in the temporal order of creation.** **James Dolezal**, in his **useful critique of Frame’s species of theistic mutualism**, observes: “God’s act of creating is where Frame locates the origin of His temporality.” James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 94.

[Skipping to page 36.](#)

[Tipton goes into the Roman Catholic view of *donum superadditum* regarding the image of God in man and its clear inference to the support of Pelagianism and other heresies. 333](#)

The Deeper Protestant Conception from the Human Side: Image of God and Covenant or Image of God and Donum?

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Matching the deeper Protestant conception from the divine side, Vos speaks of the deeper Protestant conception from the human side. By virtue of the work of creation, Adam was formed from the dust of the earth and given the breath of life as the created image of God (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). By virtue of God's voluntary condescension in an act of special providence that the Reformed call "covenant" (Gen. 2:8–17), God offered Adam advancement beyond his natural religious fellowship in Eden into a confirmed and unbreakable fellowship with God beyond probation in Sabbath rest (Gen. 2:2). Adam's ultimate "blessedness and reward" under the covenant of works would be the immutable and condescended triune God himself (WCF 7.1). Adam could realize the eschatological potency inherent in the natural religious fellowship with God in which he was created through perfect obedience to God under the covenant of works. Confirmed fellowship with the triune God in heavenly Sabbath rest would comprise Adam's blessedness and reward beyond probation in earthly Eden (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4; Rom. 8:17; Ps. 73:25–26).

Vos penetrates to the creational core of the "new relation" from the human side of the deeper Protestant conception. He begins by observing that "in the idea that one forms of the image is reflected one's idea of the religious state of man and of the essence of religion itself."⁴⁸ What precisely is "the essence of religion itself" or "the religious state of man" on which true religion depends? Adam was endowed in the work of creation with "life in communion with God."⁴⁹ The image of God means that, for pre-fall Adam, "above all that he is disposed for communion with God, that all the capacities of his soul can act in a way that corresponds to their destiny only if they rest in God."⁵⁰

To clarify this "deeper Protestant conception"⁵¹ regarding the religious essence of man as the image of God, Vos contrasts it with the deeper Catholic conception. Vos argues that **Rome's deficient understanding of the image of God, coupled with its defective doctrine of original sin**, conspire to render Roman Catholic theology incapable of affirming that the created image of God includes natural religious fellowship with God.⁵²

Classical Roman Catholic theology denies that Adam was created in natural religious fellowship with God. Vos said that, for the deeper Catholic conception, it is "only by something that raises him above his created nature," that is, by a supernatural endowment, that Adam is enabled to "become a religious being, able to love, to enjoy his God, and to live in Him."⁵³ For classical Roman Catholic theology, the *imago Dei* does not itself include natural religious fellowship with God. The deeper **Catholic** conception therefore posits a supernatural gift, a ***donum superadditum*, which elevates Adam above his human nature and enables a supernatural fellowship with God**. The *donum superadditum* infuses an **ontological** and **ethical supplement** into Adam that **inaugurates a supernatural participation in the being of God** and begins the process of a graced fellowship with the persons of the Godhead.

Roman Catholic theology accordingly contains an "externalist" religious principle. The **externalism** rests in the fact that fellowship with God requires a **supernatural gift that enables fellowship with God**. That supernatural gift raises Adam above his created nature and is in that sense entirely external to him as the natural image of God. Vos says,

Out of this follows entirely the externalist character of Roman Catholic religion. It becomes something added to man, that he has but is not identified with him, does not enter into his essence. That man is like God in this natural sense is a purely deistic relationship.⁵⁴

Fellowship with God in the deeper **Catholic** conception comes to Adam from a **supernatural gift** of infused grace and not from a natural creational image endowment. That pinpoints the “externalist character” of the Roman Catholic conception of Adam’s religious relation to God. The religious relation is a graced relation, not a natural relation. The **religious relation is superadded to Adam and not natural to him as the image of God**.

This **nature-grace externalism** leads to the **defective conception of sin** in the deeper Catholic conception. The **defect expresses itself in a denial of total depravity**. The root problem resides in a “weakened conception of original sin.”⁵⁵ Vos says that according to the classical Roman Catholic theology, **man can only lose what was not essential to him, namely the supernaturally added gifts, the *dona superaddita*. Because of his fall, these are lost**. The essence of man, the *imago*, consisting in formal existence as spirit, in the ***liberum arbitrium* [freedom of the will], remained**. Because, however, there was no inner connection between the *similitudo* and the *imago*, the removal of the former cannot essentially change the latter. The *liberum arbitrium* **might be weakened a little; in reality it is unharmed**. In other words, by loosening the moral powers from the will, from the capacity of the will, and by denying that the former are natural in man, **Rome has in principle appropriated the Pelagian conception of the will as *liberum arbitrium***. [That is KEY!!! Go to [codefreewill1](#) for more on this] That capacity of free will has remained, and with that the possibility that man, even after the fall, can do something good.⁵⁶

Vos claims that the deeper Catholic conception draws its doctrine of original sin from **Pelagianism** and not from **Augustinianism**. **Original sin, on the Roman Catholic view, amounts only to the loss of the supernatural gifts and does not involve the loss of original righteousness or the corruption of the whole nature** (see WCF 9.2–3). In Vos’s estimation, the chief errors of the deeper Catholic conception consist in its denial that original righteousness inheres in Adam as the created image of God and in its severing of original righteousness from the operation of image-bearing Adam’s will. Thus, Rome has “in principle” appropriated the **Pelagian** conception of the will as *liberum arbitrium*.

In sharp contrast to the deeper Catholic conception, Vos observes that the deeper Protestant conception has maintained that “the image of God and original righteousness are to be identified,” and this means that “life in communion with God belongs to the nature of man and can nowhere be excluded.”⁵⁷ For the deeper Protestant conception, Adam was wholly inclined to God in righteousness before the fall and entirely opposed to God in rebellion after the fall. Thus, Vos summarizes:

According to our conception, our entire nature should not be free from God at any point; the nature of man must be worship from beginning to end. According to the deeper Protestant conception, the image does not exist only in correspondence with God but in being disposed toward God.⁵⁸

Adam was created as the image of God and entirely disposed toward God before the fall, but **has lost the moral excellence of original righteousness that was given in the work of creational image endowment**. As a result, he **hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation**; so as, a **natural man**, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin,” **cannot**

please God in any way (WCF 9.2; Rom. 8:8). Vos therefore sets the deeper Protestant conception antithetically over against the deeper **Catholic conception of the image of God and original sin**.
*Robert Strimple on the Image of God and the **Donum Superadditum***

Robert Strimple's presentation of the Reformed conception of the image of God, together with his critique of the Roman Catholic view, matches Vos's presentation in stunning ways, even though there is no evidence that Strimple read Vos's Reformed Dogmatics and ingested his presentation of the deeper Protestant conception. In his course on "God's Created Image," Strimple details the deeper Catholic conception of the image of God and offers penetrating criticisms.

This is a very good summary by Strimple:

According to Strimple's presentation of the Roman Catholic view of the image of God, Adam was created as the natural image of God, and as such possessed an **intrinsic defect that needed an ontological and ethical supplement of supernatural grace in the form of the *donum superadditum***—a point that sets the Roman Catholic doctrine of the image of God in the sharpest contrast to the Reformed view.

Regarding the ontological supplement that the *donum* supplies, Strimple quotes the Roman Catholic **Robert Bellarmine**, the finest of the **Counter-Reformation** theologians of the sixteenth century, who argues that by the grace of the *donum superadditum* Adam was originally "exalted above human nature and made participant in the nature of God."⁵⁹ Creation began an *exitus* that put Adam as the natural image of God "outside of God" and **in need of supernatural grace to inaugurate a *reditus* to God**. The grace given to Adam in the *donum superadditum* ontologically reportioned him above his created nature **to participate in the substance of the Godhead**.⁶⁰ The *donum superadditum* was therefore an **ontological supplement** that was **necessary before the fall to reportion human nature to participate in the divine nature**.⁶¹

Footnotes 60, 61 are important: Very interesting conclusions about Aquinas' doctrine! [codeaquinas1]

60. Lawrence Feingold makes the nature of the *donum superadditum* crystal clear. He says: "Another way to present the relation between the two orders of nature and grace is by using the analogy of the *exitus* and *reditus* [Everything comes from God (*exitus*) and, in a certain way, everything returns to God (*reditus*).] Creation puts the creature outside of God, giving it a place in the hierarchy of being. Man's natural end maintains the creaturely proportionality even while centering him on God as his end. The natural end thus effects a return to God according to the measure of the creature, as man loves, praises, and glorifies God according to the proportion of his nature. The return accomplished by the supernatural introduces the creature into the sphere of the divine through charity. **The supernatural end liberates man and angel from the limits of their creaturely proportionality, and brings them into mystical marriage with God.**" Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2010.

61. Dareia Spezzano comments that "Thomas (following Albert the Great) posits that the intellect itself is reportioned by the gift of supernatural intrinsic disposition in the soul, by

which God can be seen immediately: the light of glory...the essence of God itself becomes for the intellect the medium of the beatific vision (playing the role of species by informing the intellect)...The re-proportioning of the created intellect by the light of glory disposes it for union with the divine essence, making it perfectible by the divine essence as form by giving it a higher potency suitable for such a higher actualization.” Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God’s Grace: Deification according to St. Aquinas* (Ave Maria, FL.....2015)

But Adam also needed an ethical supplement to address a moral defect in him as the image of God. Strimple says regarding the image of God that, “in the Roman Catholic view, **moral agency was concreated and natural and the divine image consists in this and was not lost. Moral excellence**, however, **was superadded and supernatural**—a *donum superadditum*.”⁶² The nature-grace dualism inherent in classical Roman Catholic theology finds crisp expression in the distinction between Adam’s **natural endowments as created** and the **supernatural gifts that were added to him by the grace of the donum**.

Strimple asks why this distinction between the natural image and a superadded gift of original righteousness (**moral excellence**) should be made.⁶³ He then quotes Bellarmine again:

Man naturally consists of flesh and bones. He therefore has community of nature partly with the beasts and partly with the angels. By reason of the body he has sensual desires and appetites. By reason of the soul he has propensity to spiritual good. But between these two propensities, there exists a certain battle. And from that inherent battle there arises a difficulty in doing good.⁶⁴

Strimple explains that “this is spoken of in Roman Catholic traditional circles using the term **concupiscence**—a **natural effect of man’s dual nature**, of his **having two kinds of appetites**.”⁶⁵ Supernatural grace was thus gifted to Adam above and beyond the natural image endowment in order to maintain harmony within him. Natural concupiscence required a supernatural gift of righteousness, a donum superadditum designed to ameliorate the inherent conflict in Adam as the natural image of God. [and amazing concoction!]

The antithesis to the deeper Protestant conception is obvious. **Strimple comments** on the objections advocates of the deeper Protestant conception would raise against this deeper Catholic conception. He says,

The first objection being that the Roman Catholic position presents a **degrading view of man’s original state as created by his holy God**. Bellarmine speaks of a “disease,” a “languor” in man’s natural state which needed a “remedy.” And then the other side of it, point two, is that the Roman Catholic position presents a **falsely optimistic view of man’s fallen state**. Bellarmine wrote this: “The state of man after the fall differs no more from the state of man in natural purity than a man originally naked differs from a man who was once clothed but has been stripped of his clothing. Nor is human nature in any lower state, leaving out of account the original fault. Nor does it labor under greater ignorance or infirmity than it was and labored under as created in natural purity.”⁶⁶

In **Bellarmino's classical Roman Catholic view**, Adam's conflicted psychosomatic constitution required a remedy to address an inherent "disease" or "languor." Adam as the created image of God needed an ethical supplement to address an intrinsic moral defect due to concupiscence. **Such ethical supplementation was necessary before the fall.**

Strimple offers several penetrating criticisms of the Roman Catholic position. On the one hand, "the Scripture sees any conflict within the being of man as the result of sin."⁶⁷ But "**Roman Catholicism**, like **Gnostic** or **Manichean dualism**, sees the situation in exactly reverse terms, finding the origin of sin in a natural incompatibility between the elements of man's nature."⁶⁸ Contrary to the deeper Protestant conception of the image of God,

Rome sees sin as arising from the sensual appetites of the lower nature. . . . The only way in which Rome can avoid the conclusion that man was sinful as originally created is by adopting the Pelagian definition of sin . . . the **Pelagian** definition that says that sin is "voluntary transgression of known law." . . . And so Rome says the lower impulses are sinful when knowingly and willingly indulged. But not until then. And so the fact that man was created with lower, sensual appetites, that would be sinful when they were knowingly, willingly given into—that doesn't mean that he was created a sinner. . . . That goes along with the **Pelagian principle** that only acts of the will, or their subjective consequences, are truly sinful.⁶⁹

Strimple concludes:

The Roman Catholic position is infected by the virus, shall we say, of pagan, by which we mean Greek, **dualism**, on the one hand, . . . and is infected by the virus of **naturalistic voluntarism**, on the other hand. . . . As a result, Rome's doctrines of sin, of regeneration, of sanctification, as well as the entire Roman Catholic ethic, **are controlled by principles that have their roots in the pagan view of human nature and not at all in that which is specifically Christian.**⁷⁰

Strimple's work stands out along with that of **Vos** as one of the finest critical expositions and critiques of the **Roman Catholic theology** of the **image of God** and its bearing on **Rome's Pelagianized conception of sin.**

Van Til on the Image of God and the Covenant of Works

Van Til sets the deeper Protestant conception in stark contrast to the deeper Catholic conception regarding the doctrines of the image of God and original sin. In *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, he makes a programmatic contrast focuses on **Rome's doctrine of participation in the essence of God.**

Van Til not only rejects the Roman Catholic conception of participation in the being of God by creation and the supernatural grace of the **donum superadditum**, but he also sets forth a positive Reformed alternative along lines similar to what we have already surveyed in Vos. He argues:

Man is the created image-bearer of God. God communicates to man a being similar to his own. That communication is then not a participation in the eternal being of God, but is the finite replication of the divine being. It is only before the background of the fullness of the being of God as so far discussed that we can do justice to the communicable attributes. (Intro to Systematic Theology, 232)

[Skip to page 48 for a summary of Bavinck's view on Rom's *donum superadditum*:](#)

While **Bavinck** affirms wholeheartedly that the being of God provides the efficient and exemplary causality of Adam's created being, he strenuously denies the classical Roman Catholic doctrine of human participation in the being of God. He rejects the Roman Catholic doctrine of special creation, which teaches that the natural image of God before the fall needed ontologically reportioning grace to infuse extrinsic supernatural qualities, introduce the natural creature into a supernatural order, elevate the image-bearer above human nature to partake in the divine nature, and translate the creature into the supernatural and divine order of being. In its place, Bavinck sets forth the notion of image-bearing Adam as able to realize his concreated eschatological potential through covenantal obedience without the need of the ontological supplementation of the *donum superadditum*. In so doing, Bavinck self-consciously affirms the being of God as the efficient and exemplary cause of human being, while repudiating the classical Roman Catholic doctrine of participation in the substance of the Godhead.

Van Til on the image of God:

Man is the created image-bearer of God. God communicates to man a being similar to his own. That communication is **then not a participation in the eternal being of God** but is the **finite replica of the divine being**. It is only before the background of the fullness of the being of God as so far discussed that we can do justice to the communicable attributes. Pg 45 Def of Faith

[Skip to pg 50; more on the image of God from a Van Til's view \(Reformed\) compared to Rome's view on the subject of original righteousness concreated in Adam.](#)

Van Til extends his critique of the deeper Catholic conception beyond the **ontological** supplement contained in the *donum superadditum*. He also insists that Rome's doctrine proves deficient when it deals with the ethical aspect of the image of God and its related doctrine of original sin. Van Til declares, "It is all-important that we have a truly Christian doctrine of man. But this Rome does not have."⁷⁶ Van Til observes that "**Rome has a defective doctrine** (a) with respect to the nature of man as he was created and (b) with respect to the effect of the entrance of sin upon the nature of man."⁷⁷ This means, then, that "'the important point of difference is,' says Charles Hodge, 'that Protestants hold that original righteousness, so far as it consisted in the moral excellence of Adam, was natural, while the Romanists maintain that it was supernatural.'"⁷⁸ Van Til's use of Hodge anticipates almost verbatim the exposition provided by Strimple:

According to their [Roman Catholic] theory, God created man soul and body. These two constituents of his nature are naturally in conflict. To preserve the harmony between them, and the due subjection of the flesh to the spirit, God gave man the **supernature gift** of original righteousness. **It was this gift that man lost by his fall; so that since the apostasy he is in the state in which Adam was before he was invested with this supernatural endowment.** In opposition to this doctrine, **Protestants maintain that original righteousness was concreated and natural.**

The critique that Van Til enlists from Hodge illustrates the classical Reformed critique of Rome surveyed earlier from Vos and Strimple:

The objections to this view, as Hodge enumerates them are, (1) “That is supposes a degrading view of the original constitution of our nature. **According to this doctrine the seeds of evil were implanted in the nature of man as it came from the hands of God.** It was disordered or diseased, there was about it what Bellarmine calls a morbus or languor, **which needed a remedy.**” (2) This doctrine as to original righteousness arose out of the **Semi-Pelagianism** of the **Church of Rome, and was designed to sustain it.**”⁶¹

Key footnote!!!

⁶¹Van Til, 41. See also Hodge, Systematic Theology, 2:105. With characteristic insight, Van Til notes the apologetical implication of the **Roman Catholic conception of the image of God and the *donum superadditum***, when he says, “Suppose then that a Romanist approaches an unbeliever and asks him to accept Christianity. The unbeliever, in his eyes, is merely such a one as has lost original righteousness. The **image of God** in him which, according to **Romanism** consists as Hodge says, ‘only of the rational, and especially the voluntary nature of man, or the freedom of the will,’ **is thought of as still intact.** That is to say, the **unbeliever** is, perhaps barring extremes, **correct in what he himself thinks of the powers of his intellect and will.** There is not necessarily any sin involved in what the unbeliever, or natural man, does by way of exercising his capacities for knowledge and action. **On this view the natural man does not need the light of Christianity to enable him to understand the world and himself aright. He does not need the revelation of Scripture or the illumination of the Holy Spirit** in order that my means of them **he may learn what his own true nature is.** Christianity therefore needs, on this basis, to be **presented to the natural man as something that is merely information additional to what he already possesses.** The knowledge of Christianity is to be related to the knowledge derived from the exercise of man’s powers of reason and observation in a way similar to that in which at the beginning original righteousness was added to the image of God in man.” Van Til, Christian Apologetics, 42. Rome’s **blockhouse** apologetical method is a direct entailment of the deeper Catholic conception of the nature-grace (*imago Dei, donum superadditum*) dualism. Van Til’s point is that the deeper Catholic conception of man demands a **blockhouse apologetical method.**

Van Til’s advocacy of the deeper Protestant conception of the image of God over against the deeper Catholic conception could not be clearer. He elaborates:

Adam and Eve had the requirements of God's law written on their hearts... We are speaking only of God's revelational relationship to man. And on that point all should be equally anxious to maintain that God originally spoke plainly to man, both in the "book of nature" and in the book of conscience."

Van Til has a much more robust conception of natural revelation than Rome can achieve, precisely because Adam and Eve are by nature in religious fellowship with God as his law is written on their hearts. Thus, as a pre-fall image bearer,

Wherever man would turn he saw the living God and His requirements. Whether he reasoned about nature or whether he looked within, whether it was the starry heavens above or the moral law within, both were equally insistent and plain that God, the true God, stood before them.

This is the substantial outworking of the "new relation" and the natural religious fellowship in which Adam and Eve were created, in light of the deeper Protestant conception.

Good comments on man's depravity in an effort to **suppress** the knowledge of God -**Romans 1:18**

Apologetics by Presupposition

(and Reformed Apologetics)

Excerpt from *The Defense of the Faith*

By Cornelius Van Til

Code491

Apologetics

Pgs. 194-216, 219-259, 278-279

Pg. 252 in the 4th Ed.

My comments/additions in [\[blue\]](#)

Pg 194

Coming now to a brief statement of the method of defense that I use for the propagation of what I believe and how it differs from the traditional method I may note first that you have not, for all the length of your article, anywhere given a connected picture of my argument. Yet you at once characterize it in contrast with your own as being "negative and universal." Without the least bit of qualification, I am said to deny "that there is common ground of reasoning between those who accept Christian presuppositions and engage in the spread of the gospel, and those who do not accept Christian presuppositions and reject the gospel." (p. 41) The facts are far otherwise.

I am, to be sure, opposed to the traditional method of apologetics as this has found its most fundamental expression in the *Summae* of **Thomas Aquinas** the **Roman Catholic** and in **Bishop Butler the Arminian**. I seek to oppose Roman Catholicism and Arminianism in Apologetics as I seek to oppose it in theology. Does that make my main thesis universally negative? I think there is a better and more truly Biblical way of reasoning with and winning unbelievers than the **Romanist Arminian method** permits.

To begin with then I take what the Bible says about God and his relation to the universe as unquestionably true **on its own authority**. The Bible requires men to believe that he exists apart from and above the world and that he by his plan controls whatsoever takes place in the world. Everything in the created universe therefore displays the fact that it is controlled by God, that it is what it is by virtue of the place that it occupies in the plan of God. The objective evidence for the existence of God and of the comprehensive governance of the world by God is therefore so plain that he who runs may read. Men cannot get away from this evidence. They see it round about them. They see it within them. Their own constitution so clearly evinces the facts of God's creation of them and control over them **that there is no man who can possible escape observing it. If he is self-conscious at all he is also God-conscious**. No matter how men may try they cannot hide from themselves the fact of their own createdness. Whether men engage in inductive study with respect to the facts of nature about them or engage in analysis of their own self-consciousness they are always face to face with God their maker. **Calvin** stresses these matters greatly on the basis of Paul's teachings in Romans.

In maintaining the essential clarity of all of the created universe as revelational of God's existence and his plan Calvin is nothing daunted even by the fat of sin and its consequences. If there has been any "obscuration" in the revelation situation on account of sin this sin is in any case the fault of man. If in Adam, the first man, who acted for me representatively, I have scratched the mirror of God's general revelation round about and within me, I know at bottom that it is I who have scratched it. Men ought, therefore, says Calvin, to conclude that when some individual sin is not punished immediately it will be punished later. Their consciences operate on this basis.

One thing should be particularly stressed in this connection. It is the fact that man today is sinful because of what happened at the beginning of history.

"We are told that man could never have had a fruition of God through the revelation that came to him through nature as operating by itself. There was superadded to God's revelation in nature another revelation, a supernaturally communicated positive revelation. **Natural revelation**, we are virtually told, was from the outset incorporated into the idea of a **covenant relationship** of God with man. [God always operates by covenant when dealing with man. See **Owen's comments on covenants**.] Thus, every dimension of created existence, even the lowest, was enveloped in a form of exhaustively personal relationship between God and man. The "ateleological" not less than the 'teleological,' the 'mechanical' no less than the 'spiritual,' was **covenantal** in character" (*The Infallible Word*, p. 259) [**ateleological: not showing evidence of design or purpose**]

Even in paradise, therefore, supernatural revelation was immediately conjoined with natural revelation. Revelation in and about man was therefore never meant to function by itself. "It was from the beginning insufficient without its supernatural concomitant. It was inherently a limiting notion." (Idem, p. 267)

Having taken these two, revelation in the created universe, both within and about man, and revelation by way of supernatural positive communication as aspects of revelation as originally given to man, we can see that natural revelation is even after the fall perspicuous in character. "The perspicuity of God's revelation in nature depends for is very meaning upon the fact that it is an aspect of the total and totally voluntary revelation of God who is self-contained." (Idem, p. 269) God has an all-comprehensive plan for the universe. "He has planned all the relationships between all the aspects of created being. He has planned the end from the beginning. All created reality therefore actually displays this plan. It is, in consequence, inherently rational." (Idem, p. 269)

At this point we may add the fact of Scriptural revelation. God has condescended to reveal himself and his plan in it to sinners. It is the same God who speaks in Scripture and in nature. But in Scripture he speaks of his grace to such as have broken his covenant, to such as have set aside his original revelation to the. And as the original revelation of God to man was clear so is the revelation of grace in Scripture. "The Scriptures as the finished product of God's supernatural and saving revelation to man have their own evidence in themselves. (Idem, p. 271)

In all of this there is one thing that stands out. It is that man has no excuse whatsoever for not accepting the revelation of God whether in nature, including man and his surroundings, or in Scripture. God's revelation is always clear.

The first and most basic point on which my approach differs from the traditional one is therefore that: (a) I start more frankly from the Bible as the source form which as an absolutely authoritative revelation I take my whole interpretation of life. **Roman Catholicism** also appeals to Scripture but in practice makes its authority void. **Its final appeal is to the church and that is, in effect, to human experience.** Even **Arminianism** rejects certain Scripture doctrines (e.g., **election**) **because it cannot logically harmonize them with the general offer of salvation.** (b) I stress the *objective clarity* of God's revelation of himself wherever it appears. Both **Thomas Aquinas** and **Butler** contend that men have done justice by the evidence if they conclude that God *probably* exists. (I have discussed the views of Aquinas in *The Infallible Word* and those of Butler in the *Syllabus on Evidences*.) I consider this a compromise of simple and fundamental Biblical truth. It is an insult to the living God to say that his revelation of himself so lacks in clarity that man, himself through and through revelation of God, does justice by it when he says that God *probably* exists.

"The argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity is objectively valid. We should not tone down the validity of this argument to the probability level. The argument may be poorly stated, and may never be adequately stated. But in itself the argument is absolutely sound. Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold. It is not merely as reasonable as other positions, or a bit more reasonable than other positions; it alone is the natural and reasonable position for man to take. By stating the argument as clearly as we can, we may be

the agents of the Holy Spirit in pressing the claims of God upon men. If we drop to the level of the merely probable truthfulness of Christian theism, we, to that extent, lower the claims of God upon men." (*Common Grace*, p. 62) [codeproofs]

Accordingly I do not reject "the theistic proofs" but merely insist on formulating them in such a way as not to compromise the doctrines of Scripture. "The is to say, if the theistic proof is constructed as it ought to be constructed, it is objectively valid, whatever the attitude of those to whom it comes may be." (Idem, p49) (c) With Calvin I find the point of contact for the presentation of the gospel to non-Christians in the fact that they are made in the image of God and as such have the ineradicable sense of deity within them. Their own consciousness is inherently and exclusively revelational of God to themselves. No man can help knowing God for in knowing himself he knows God. His self-consciousness is totally devoid of content unless, as Calvin puts it at the beginning of his Institutes, man knows himself as a creature before God. There are "no atheistic men because no man can deny the revelational activity of the true God within him." (*Common Grace*, p 55) Man's own interpretative activity, whether of the more or less extended type, whether in ratiocination [reasoning] or intuition, is no doubt the most penetrating means by which the Holy Spirit presses the claims of God upon man? (Idem, pg 62) Even man's negative ethical reaction to God's revelation within his own psychological constitution is revelational of God. His conscience troubles him when he disobeys; he knows deep down in his heart that he is disobeying his creator. There is no escape from God for any human being. Every human being is by virtue of his being made in the image of God accessible to God. And as such he is accessible to one who without compromise presses upon him the claims of God. Every man has capacity to reason logically. He can intellectually understand what the Christian position claims to be. Conjoined with this is the moral sense that he knows he is doing wrong when he interprets human experience without reference to his creator. I am therefore in the fullest agreement with Professor Murray when, in the quotation you give of him, he speaks of the natural man as having an "apprehension of the truth of the gospel that is prior to faith and repentance." But I could not thus speak with assurance that the natural man could have any such apprehension of the truth of the gospel that is prior to faith and repentance if I held with the traditional view of Apologetics that man's self-consciousness is something that is intelligible without reference to God-consciousness. If man's self-consciousness did not actually depend upon his God-consciousness there would be no meaning to Romans 1:20. [For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen...so that they are without excuse.] Each man would live in a world by himself. No man could even have that intellectual cognition of the gospel which is the prerequisite of saving faith. In short, if the universe were not what the Calvinist, following Paul, says it is, it would not be a universe. There would be no system of truth. And if the mind of man were not what Calvin, following Paul, says it is, it could not even intellectually follow an argument for the idea that the universe is a universe. All arguments for such a universe we would come to him as outside that universe.

Yet it is the very essence of the positions of Aquinas and Butler that human self-consciousness is intelligible without God-consciousness. Both make it their point of departure in reasoning with the non-believers that we must, at least in the area of things natural, stand on the ground of neutrality with them. And it is of the essence of all non-believing philosophy that self-consciousness is taken as intelligible by itself without reference to God. Moreover the very theology of both Romanism and Arminianism, as already noted, requires a measure of subtraction of the self-consciousness of men

from its creaturely place. (d) Implied in the previous points is the fact that I do not artificially separate induction from deduction, or reasoning about the facts of nature from reasoning in *a priori* analytical fashion about the nature of human-consciousness. I do not artificially abstract or separate them from one another. On the contrary I see induction and analytical reasoning as part of one process of interpretation. I would therefore engage in historical apologetics. (I do not personally do a great deal of this because my colleagues in the other departments of the Seminary in which I teach are doing it better than I could do it.) Every bit of historical investigation, whether it be in the directly Biblical field, archaeology, or in general history, is bound to confirm the truth on the claims of the Christian position. But I would not talk endlessly about facts and more facts without ever challenging the **non-believer's philosophy of fact**. **A really fruitful historical apologetic argues that every fact is and must be such as proves the truth of the Christian theistic position.**

A fair presentation of my method of approach should certainly have included these basic elements that underlie everything else.

This paragraph in excellent:

It is only in the light of this positive approach that my statements to the effect that, epistemologically, believers and non-believers have nothing in common, can be seen for what it is. Even in *Common Grace* it is evident that by the sinner's epistemological reaction, I mean his reaction as an ethically responsible creature of God. Does the sinner react properly to the revelation of God that surrounds him, that is within him and that comes to him from Scripture? As I have followed Calvin closely in stressing the fact that men ought to believe in God inasmuch as the evidence for his existence is abundantly plain, so I have also closely followed Calvin in saying that **no sinner reacts properly to God's revelation. Is this too sweeping a statement? It is simply the doctrine of total depravity. All sinners are covenant breakers. They have an axe to grind. They do not want to keep God in remembrance.** They keep under the knowledge of God that is within them. **That is, they try as best they can to keep under this knowledge for fear they should look into the face of their judge.** And since God's face appears in every fact of the universe, they oppose God's revelation everywhere. They do not want to see the facts of nature for what they are; **they do not want to see themselves for what they are.** Therefore, they assume the **non-createdness** of themselves and of the facts and the laws of nature round about them. **[now you see why Evolution took hold and why it's wrong.] Even though they make great protestations of serving God they yet serve and worship the creature more than the Creator. They try to make themselves believe that God and man are aspects of one universe.** They interpret all things **immanentistically**. **[Hence many drift into pantheistic thinking ignoring God's transcendence. See the section on Pantheism by Van Til.]**

Notes on immanence:

What is the difference between immanent and transcendent?

The words transcendent and immanent often are seen together in theological language. The transcendence of God means that God is outside of humanity's full experience, perception or grasp. The immanence of God means that he is knowable, perceivable or graspable. -Encyclopedia.com

Shall we in the interest of a point of contact admit that man can interpret anything correctly if he virtually leaves God out of the picture? [point of contact: A baseline of agreement from where a discussion can proceed – I think that what Van Til means by this term - an agreed upon presupposition.] Shall we who wish to prove that nothing can be explained without God first admit some things at least can be explained without him? On the contrary we shall show that all explanations without God are futile. **Only when we do this do we appeal to that knowledge of God within men which they seek to suppress.** This is what I mean by presupposing God for the possibility of intelligent predication.

You ask what person is consistent with his own principle. Well, I have consistently argued that no one is and that least of all the non-Christian is. I have even argued in the very booklets that you review that if men were consistent, they would be end products and that then there would be no more reasoning with them. However, since sinners are not consistent, and have what is from their point of view an old man within them, they can engage in science and in the general interpretation of the created universe and bring to light much truth. It is because the prodigal is not yet at the swine trough and therefore still has of the substance of the Father in his pockets that he can do that and discover that, which for the matter of it, is true and usable for the Christian. Why did you omit that all important element in what I teach? In a booklet largely written in the defense of the idea of “commonness” as between believers and unbelievers against those who deny it you find nothing but the opposite. If your contention is that I have said precisely the opposite of what I wanted to say you should in fairness at least have discussed the points just now discussed.

What then more particularly do I mean by saying that epistemologically the believer and the non-believer have nothing in common? **I mean that every sinner looks through colored glasses.** And these colored glasses are cemented to his face. He assumes that self-consciousness is intelligible without God-consciousness. He assumes that consciousness of facts is intelligible without consciousness of God. He assumes that consciousness of laws is intelligible without God. And he interprets all the facts and all the laws that are presented to him in terms of these assumptions. This is not to forget that he also, according to the old man within him, knows that God exists. **But as a covenant breaker he seeks to suppress this.** And I am now speaking of him as the covenant breaker. Neither do I forget that no man is actually fully consistent in working according to these assumptions. The non-believer does not fully live up to the new man within him which in his case is the man who worships the creature above all else, any more than does the Christian fully live up to the new man within him, which in his case is the man who worships the Creator above all else. But as it is my duty as a Christian to ask my fellow Christians as well as myself to suppress the old man within them, so it is my duty to ask non-believers to suppress not the old man but the new man within them.

The necessity for this can be observed every time there is some popular article on religion in one of the magazines. There was a questionnaire sent out recently by one of them asking a certain number of people whether they believed in God. By far the greater number of them said that they did. But from further questions asked it appeared that only a very small number believed in the God of the Bible, the Creator and Judge of men. Yet they said that they believed in God. From such an article it is apparent that every sinner has the sense of deity and therefore knows God as his Creator and Judge. But from such an article it is also apparent that **every sinner seeks in one way or another to deny this.** They are

therefore without God in the world. They must, as Charles Hodge so well points out, be **renewed** unto knowledge (**Col. 3:10**) as well as unto righteousness and holiness. (**Eph. 4:24**)

Now neither Aquinas nor Butler makes any such distinctions as I have made. And in that they are but consistent. They do not make the Creator-creature distinction absolutely fundamental in their own thinking. How then could they consistently ask others to do so? **It is of the essence of their theology to maintain that God has made man so that he has such freedom as to be able to initiate something that is beyond the counsel of God.** For them the human self therefore is supposed to be able to think of itself as intelligible and of the facts and laws of the world as **manipulable** and therefore **intelligible apart from their relationship to God.** I have already pointed out that for this reason the traditional view of apologetics has no universe and has no real point of contact in the unbeliever. If either **Romanism** or **Arminianism** were right in their view of the self-consciousness of man, there could be no apologetic for Christianity at all. There would be no all-comprehensive plan of God. This much being clear it can be seen that the **Romanist** and the **Arminian** will, **in consistence with their own theology, not be able to challenge the natural man's false assumptions.** The traditional apologist must somehow seek for a point of contact within the thinking of the natural man as this thinking has been carried on upon false assumptions. **He cannot seek to stir up the old man in opposition against the new man in the non-Christian. He makes no use of such a distinction. He will allow for gradational differences within the natural man.** He will even make a great deal of these. To him therefore the passages of Paul to the effect that every man knows God and that man is made in the image of God are interpreted so as to do injustice to other equally important teaching of Scripture to the effect that the natural man knoweth not God. **All this is compromising theology.** It is no wonder that the Romanist and the Arminian will also follow a compromising apologetics.

The basic falseness of this apologetics appears in the virtual if not actual denial of the fact that the natural man makes false assumptions. Aquinas and Butler hold that the natural man, whom the Calvinist knows to be a covenant breaker and as such one who interprets God himself in terms of the universe, has some correct notions about God. I mean correct notions as to content, not merely as to form. Anyone who says, "I believe in God," is formally correct in his statement, **but the question is what does he mean by the word God?** The traditional view assumes that the natural man has a certain measure of correct thought content when he uses the word God. **In reality the natural man's "God" is always a finite God. It is his most effective tool for suppressing the sense of the true God that he cannot fully efface from the fibres of his heart.**

The natural man's god is always enveloped within a Reality that is greater than his god and himself. He always makes Reality, inclusive of all that exists, the *All* the final subject of which he speaks. With Thales he will say *All* is water, with Anaximenes *All* is air. With others he may be a dualist or a pluralist or an atomist, a realist or a pragmatist. **From the Christian point of view, he still has a monistic assumption in that he makes Reality to be inclusive of God and himself.**

Note: "The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms." Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til's book, *Christian Apologetics*, pg 31, footnote 3 [[Van Til refers to this as "scale of being" in his writings.](#)]

And there is not much that the traditional apologist can do about this. He has bound himself to confusion in apologetics as he has bound himself to error in theology. He must tie on to some small area of thought content that the believer and the unbeliever have in common without qualification when both are self-conscious with respect to their principle. This is tantamount to saying that those who interpret a fact as dependent upon God and those who interpret that same fact as not dependent upon God have yet said something identical about that fact.

All this is bound to lead to self-frustration on the part of the traditional apologist. Let us watch him for a moment. Think of him first as an inductivist. As such he will engage in “historical apologetics” and in the study of archaeology. In general, he will deal with the “facts” of the universe in order to prove the existence of God. He cannot on his position challenge the assumption of the man he is trying to win. That man is ready for him. Think of the traditional apologist as throwing facts to his non-Christian friend as he might throw a ball. His friend receives each fact as he might a ball and throws it behind him in a bottomless pit. The apologist is exceedingly industrious. He shows the unbelieving friend all the evidence for theism. He shows all the evidence for Christianity, for instance, for the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. Let us think of his friend as absolutely tireless and increasingly polite. He will then receive all these facts and toss them behind him in the bottomless pit of pure possibility. “is it not wonderful? He will say, “what strange things do happen in Reality. You seem to be a collector of oddities. As for my self I am more interested in the things that happen regularly. But I shall certainly try hard to explain the facts you mention in accord with the laws that I have found working so far. Perhaps we should say that laws are merely statistical averages and that nothing can therefore be said about any particular event ahead of its appearance. Perhaps there are very unusual things in reality. But what does this prove for the truth of your view?”

You see that the unbeliever who does not work on the presupposition of creation and providence is perfectly consistent with himself when he sees nothing to challenge his unbelief even in the fact of the resurrection of Christ. He may be surprised for a moment as a child that grows up is surprised at the strange things of life but then when he has grown up, he realizes that “such is life.” Sad to say **the traditional Christian apologist has not even asked his unbelieving friend to see the facts for what they really are.** He has not presented the facts at all. **That is, he has not presented the facts as they are according to the Christian way of looking at them and the Christian way of looking at them is the true way of looking at them. Every fact in the universe is what it is by virtue of the place that it has in the plan of God. Man cannot comprehensively know that plan. But he does know that there is such a plan. He must therefore present the facts of theism and of Christianity, of Christian theism, as proving Christian theism because they are intelligible as facts in terms of it and in terms of it alone.**

But this is also in effect to say that the Christian apologist should never seek to be an inductivist only. He should present his philosophy of fact with his facts. He does not need to handle less facts in doing so. He will handle the same facts, but he will handle them as they ought to be handled.

Now look at the **traditional apologist** when he is not an **inductivist** but an **a priori reasoner**. He will first show his fellow worker, the inductivist, that he defeats his own purposes. He will show that he who does not challenge the assumptions of his non-Christian friends has placed himself on a decline

which inevitably leads down from Locke through Berkeley to Hume, the skeptic. Then for his own foundation he will appeal to some internal ineffable principles, to some *a priori* like that of Plato or of Descartes. He will appeal to the **law of contradiction** either positively or negatively and boldly challenge the facts to meet the requirements of logic. Then he will add that the facts of Christianity pass the examination *summa cum laude*. Well, they do. And in passing the examination they invariably pass out of existence too. He can only prove the immortality of the soul if with **Plato** he is willing to prove also that man is divine. He can only prove the universe to have order if with the Stoics he is also willing to say **that God is merely its principle of order**. With the **Hegelian idealists** such as Bradley and Bosanquet or Royce he will prove all the facts of the Bible to be true by weaving them into aspects of a Universe that allows for them as well as for their opposites.

But usually, the traditional apologist is neither a pure inductivist nor a pure *a priorist*. Of necessity he has to be both. When engaged in inductive argument about facts he will therefore talk about these facts as proving the existence of God. If anything exists at all, he will say, something absolute *must* exist. But when he thus talks about what *must* exist and when he refuses even to admit that non-believers have **false assumptions** about their *musts*, let alone being willing to challenge them on the subject, he has in reality granted that the non-believer's conception about the relation of human logic to facts is correct. It does not occur to him that on any but the Christian theistic basis there is no possible connection of logic with facts at all. When the **non-Christian**, not working on **the foundation of creation and providence [that's key]**, talks about musts in relation to facts he is beating the air. His logic is merely the exercise of a revolving door in a void, moving nothing from nowhere into the void. But instead of pointing out this fact to the unbeliever the traditional apologist appeals to this non-believer as though by his **immanentistic method** he could very well interpret many things correctly.

That this traditionalist type of apologetics is particularly important in our day I have shown in my review of Dr. Richardson's and Dr. Canell's books on Apologetics. Dr. Richardson is a modernist. But he says he folds to the uniqueness of the facts of Christianity. At the same time, he holds that this holding to the uniqueness of Christianity and its facts is not inconsistent with hold to a form of coherence that is place upon human experience as its foundation. Dr. Carnell is an orthodox believer. To an extent he has even tried to escape from the weaknesses of the traditional method of apologetic argument. But he merely rejects its inductivist form. By and large he falls back into traditional methodology. And just to that extent he has no valid argument against Richardson. To the extent that he admits the type of coherence which Richardson holds to be valid he has to give up the uniqueness of the events of Christianity as he himself holds them. On the other hand, to the extent that he holds to the uniqueness of events the way Richardson holds to them, that extent he has to give up the coherence to which he himself as an orthodox Christian should hold. (See *Westminster Theological Journal*, Nov. 1948)

[Good discussion on God's immutability that is addressed elsewhere in Lane Tipton's excellent commentary, *The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til* dealing with the *theistic mutualism* promoted by John Frame and others.](#)

Your own handling of the question of the immutability of God exhibits exactly the same difficulty. You speak of the dynamical self-consistency of God as a concept that will make it quite easy to see how God's immutability can be consistent with the genuine significance of facts in the course of history. But to the extent that you explain how the immutability of God can be consistent with the actuality of

historical change you explain it away. You go so far as to define that very immutability in terms of God's constancy of relationship to the created temporal universe. "God's immutability consists in his perfectly unified plan in dealing with the world, which he created, God's absoluteness is in his perfectly consistent relatedness" (What is God? p. 32) Now if **God's immutability** is not first to be spoken of as an attribute that pertains to the character of God **as he is in himself apart from his relation to the universe**, then there is no problem anymore because one of the factors of the problem has been denied. To the extent that you have explained you have also destroyed the fact to be explained. And to speak of self-consistency after first reducing the self to a relationship is meaningless. On the other hand, you do not really hold to the identity of the being of God in himself with his relationship to the world. That is also plain from your general discussion of God. But then if you are to speak to an unbeliever with respect to the God who is really self-contained and ask him to think of this God along the lines of his own procedure, without challenging the assumptions that underlie that procedure, then he will simply say that such as God is so wholly beyond his experience that he can make nothing of him and that such a God is therefore meaningless to him. To this you can on your method offer him no adequate answer. [Theistic Mutualism basically says that God adapts or changes his nature, his properties, in order to relate to the changeableness of the creature.]

The general conclusion then is that on the traditional method it is impossible to set one position clearly over against the other so that the two may be compared for what they are. Certainly, there can be no confrontation of two opposing positions if it cannot be pointed out on what they oppose each other. On the traditional basis of reasoning the unbeliever is not so much as given an opportunity of seeing with any adequacy how the position he is asked to accept differ from his own.

But all this comes from following the Roman Catholic, Thomas Aquinas, or the Arminian Butler. If one follows Calvin, there are no such troubles. Then one begins with the fact that the world is what the Bible says it is. One then makes the claims of God upon men without apologies though always *suaviter in modo* [pleasantly in manner, powerfully in deed.] One knows that there is hidden underneath the surface display of every man a sense of deity. One therefore gives that sense of deity an opportunity to rise in rebellion against the oppression under which it suffers by the new man of the covenant breaker. One makes no deal with this new man. One shows that on his assumptions all things are meaningless. Science would be impossible; knowledge of anything in any field would be impossible. No fact could be distinguished from any other fact. No law could be said to be law with respect to facts. This whole manipulation of factual experience would be like the idling of a motor that is not in gear. Thus, every fact – not *some* facts – every fact clearly and not probably proves the truth of Christian theism. If Christian theism is not true, then nothing is true. Is the God of the Bible satisfied if his servants say anything less?

And have I, following such a method, departed radically from the tradition of Kuyper and Bavinck? On the contrary I have learned all this primarily from them. It is Kuyper's *Encyclopedia* that has, more than any other work in modern times, brought out the fact of the difference between the approach of the believer and of the unbeliever. It is Bavinck's monumental work which set a natural theology frankly oriented to Scripture squarely over against that of Romanism which is based on **neutral reason**. [codeproofs] It is Bavinck who taught me that the **proofs** for God as usually formulated on the **traditional method** prove a **finite God**. I have indeed had the temerity to maintain that these great

Reformed theologians have in some points not been quite true to their own principles. But when I have done so, I have usually tried to point out that when they did so and to the extent that they did so they had departed from Calvin.

Chapter X

The Defense of Christianity

Pgs. 209-216

Everything that has been said so far has bearing upon the question of apologetics. How shall Christians win unbelievers to an acceptance of Christian truth? Kuyper speaks much of the fact that, since the entrance of sin, truth must be set over against error. Satan is the prince of darkness. He instigated Adam to make alliance with him over against God. But God in his grace sent his Son to establish the kingdom of righteousness and truth.

There is a global war on between Christ and Satan. All men are participants in this war. They all wear uniforms; they are all for or against God. There are, that is, two principles opposed to one another. But those who fight for truth must fight with spiritual weapons only. Their opposition to Satan is in the interest of winning converts to the love of God in Christ.

There are those who do not like such martial terminology. But how can we avoid martial terminology and be true to the Bible? Is not Modernism and new-Modernism preaching a gospel of love that makes no ultimate distinction between truth and falsehood? Did not Paul warn us to put on the whole armor of God in order to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil? Was Christ's assertion that he came not to bring peace but a sword out of accord with his love for sinners?

[These next few paragraphs are really good](#)

Christians must present the truth in **terms of God the Creator, of man his creature** and also of this **man's rebellion against God**. Romanism and Evangelicalism do not want to think of the fall of man as having immediate significance for an argument between a Christian and a non-Christian. The Reformed view of theology alone takes the Bible story of Adam's representation seriously. Hence the Reformed view alone appreciates fully the **significance of the fall of man** for Apologetics.

The Reformed apologetic, therefore, does not take for granted, as does the Romanist and the Evangelical, that because men have "common notions" about God by virtue of their creation in God's image, that sinners and saints also have common notions when they are epistemologically self-conscious. The Reformed apologetic, following Calvin, will distinguish between what was true for Adam, then what is true for the sinner, the natural man, and after that what is true for the saint, the regenerated man.

After we have begun with the **Adamic Consciousness**, and then turned to the **unregenerate consciousness**, we must next consider the **regenerate consciousness**. The regenerate consciousness is

the Adamic consciousness *restored* and *supplemented*, but restored and supplemented in principle or standing only.

In the first place, the regenerated consciousness is the Adamic consciousness restored. It recognizes afresh its own derivative¹ character. [that its dependence on God is absolute.] It is able to do so only because God has regenerated it and thus made it confess its ethical depravity. God has quickened what was the natural man so that he now lives. The regenerate man can discern and do that which is spiritually good because it is God who works in him both to will and to do. In the second place, the regenerated consciousness is the Adamic consciousness supplemented. Adam was in the position of *posse peccare*, while the restored are in the position of *non posse peccare*. "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (1 John 3:9)

¹Van Til states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: Calvin never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general a priori position. His position is as radically apposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, he must regard God as original and himself as derivative. He did not place God and man as correlatives next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: p128-9*: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness the immediate but wholly derivative starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the remote but wholly ultimate starting point of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the false ideal of absolute comprehension. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, the non-Christian interpretation of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of comprehension knowledge. This was done especially in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of Leibniz, a striking manifestation of the pride, "hubris," of the sinner who wishes to be as God.³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. There have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern

irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father's house. His "hubris" never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz's project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

In the third place the regenerate consciousness is restored in principle but not in degree. The struggle of Romans VII remains the struggle of every Christian till the day of his death. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

I

The Place of Reason In Theology

Pg 211

In the first place, we can no longer figure with the Adamic consciousness as actually existing at the present time. We deal only with the non-regenerate and the regenerate consciousness. But the true meaning of the fallen and the regenerate consciousness cannot be maintained unless back of both lies the history of Adam and his fall. This does not mean that it is a matter of indifference whether or not we take the Genesis narrative with respect to Adam as historical. It is only if we do take this narrative as historical that a sound theology can be maintained. **Adam's sin was the willful transgression of man to the known revelation of God.** If we deny the historicity of the Genesis narrative, we shall be compelled to reduce man's responsibility for "sinfulness" is then virtually identical with "fate." Accordingly, such theologians as Otto Piper and Nels F.S. Ferre who virtually reduce the Genesis narrative to the status of myth, find themselves compelled to deny also the historic Christian Views of sin, of Christ, and of the atonement.

In the second place, we cannot speak of human reason in general, or of the human consciousness in general, except in the objective sense explained above. And as such we may call it a limiting concept in the Christian sense of the term. In other words, it is a concept that should never be employed to do duty by itself. **All men have a sense of deity**, but there is no man who has not at the same time also something else that at once **colors his sense of deity**. **All men are either in covenant with Satan or in covenant with God. The former invariably seek to suppress and therefore always misinterpret the general sense of deity within them.** The latter invariably seek to relate that general sense of deity to the revelation of God in Christ.

While therefore it is of the utmost consequence to recognize the fact of a "**common consciousness**" of god as the revelational pressure of God on man, it is of no less importance to note that, in so far as men are aware of their most basic alliances, **there are wholly for or wholly against God at every point of interest to man.**

In the third place, when we deal with the non-regenerate consciousness, we must think of it as it is according to its adopted monistic assumption. Hence, we cannot grant that it has any right to judge in matters of theology, or, for the matter of that, in anything else. The Scriptures nowhere appeal to the unregenerated reason as to a qualified judge. **On the contrary, Scripture says over and over that the unregenerate reason is entirely unqualified to judge.** When Scripture says: “Come, let us reason together,” it often speaks to the people of God, and, if it does speak to others, it never regards them as equal with God or as really competent to judge. **The unregenerate man has knowledge of God, that is of the revelation of God within him, the sense of deity which he seeks to suppress.** Scripture does appeal to this sense of deity in man, but it does so and can do so only by denying that man, when acting on his adopted monistic assumption, has any ability or right to judge of what is true or false, right or wrong.

In the fourth place, though Scripture does not appeal to the natural man as to a competent judge and though it considers the natural man as blind to spiritual things, the Scriptures continue to hold man responsible for his blindness.

In the fifth place, Scripture teaches us to speak and preach to, as well as to reason with blind men, because God, in whose name we speak and reason, can cause the blind to see. Jesus told Lazarus while dead to arise and come forth from the grave. The prophet preached to the dead bones in the valley till they took on flesh. So our reasoning and our preaching is not in vain inasmuch as God in Christ reasons and preaches through us. Once we were blind; God reasoned with us, perhaps through some human agency, and we saw.

I shall quote part of a summary of the type of argument I have constantly used. It appeared in *His* (April, 1948) magazine of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, as an answer to Professor William Pepperell Monague’s article, “Does the Universe Have a Mind?” in the *Saturday Review of the Literature* of September 6, 1947.

“Does the universe show any evidence in its behavior of being created and benign?” (S.R.L. p. 31) “To this time-honored theological question the answer must be a flat negative. Nature is tooth and claw, and life so constituted that each creature can preserve its existence only by devouring other creatures. If there is a God, he is either not omnipotent or not good, in any sensed of the world ‘good’ that the human conscience can sanction.”

That the position taken by Montague is fairly typical of the attitude of many modern philosophers and scientists needs no proof. Even when men do not express themselves as vigorously as does Montague, their attitude toward Christianity and its claims is frequently the same as his. It is therefore imperative that Christians investigate their own attitude toward such a criticism carefully.

When Christians look at evil and suffering, they say that it is the result of the sin of man. (Romans 5:12) They add that the nature of sin is therefore lack of conformity to and transgression of the will of God. They assert further that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) Christians interpret the “fact” of evil, therefore,

in the light of a story. And the story they get from the Bible, which they claim to be the Word of God. **Moreover, what is true of the fact of evil is true of every other fact.** Christians interpret every fact in the light of the same story. **For them the nature of every fact in this world is determined by the place in occupancies in the story.** The story they cannot get from any other source than supernatural revelation.

Great conclusion here!

The Christian finds that his conscience agrees to the truth of the story. He holds that those who deny the truth of the story have an axe to grind. They do not want the story to be true; they do not want to facts to be what they story says they are. They “protest too much.” And by protesting too much they testify, in spite of themselves, that their conscience does not tell them that the story is untrue. Their conscience tells them the reverse of what they say it does.

The Christian finds, further, that logic agrees with the story. Human logic agrees with the story, because it derives its meaning from the story. **The facts of the world are what they story says they are;** if logic would deal with facts rather than fancies it must itself, together with the facts, be a part of the story. By logic man must seek for coherence in his experience of the story. The story tells him that “seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Hence scientific predictions can be made. But the story also tells him that the final judgement will come in God’s time. Accordingly, these scientific predictions are contingent upon the maintenance of the course and constitution of nature by God.

Consider now what Montague has to say. He observes the “facts” of nature and says they are not what the Christian says they are. Involved in this mere looking at the facts is the assertion that they cannot be what the Christian says they are. Merely by looking at the facts Montague virtually claims to know what *did not* happen in the past and what *cannot* happen in the future. **By mere observation of facts, he knows that there has been no creation or fall and that there will be no judgment.** The merest statement of fact about any fact of nature, as Montague sees it, involves and is virtually identical with an ***a priori* universal negative judgment** about all possibility.

Great conclusion here:

On Montague’s position then the observation of facts is virtually identical with exhaustive insight into their nature. It is only on the basis of exhaustive insight into the nature of facts that one can determine just what they can or cannot be. And exhaustive insight presupposes control. In other words, on Montague’s scheme of things the mind of man must, for all practical purposes, take the place of God in the Christian scheme of things. To talk about what can or cannot exist according to logic is but to swing a sword in the sky unless it is first determined at what point logic meets reality. According to the Christian story, logic meets reality. According to the Christian story, logic and reality meet first of all in the mind and being of God. God’s being is exhaustively rational. Then God creates and rules the universe according to this plan. Even the evil of this world happens according to this plan. The only substitute for this Christian scheme of things is to assert or assume that logic and reality meet originally in the mind of man. The final point of reference in all predication must ultimately rest in some mind, divine or human. **It is either the self-contained God of Christianity or the would-be**

autonomous man that must be and is presupposed as the final reference point in every sentence that any man utters.

Good!

We would therefore ask Montague how it is that he, as a mere man claims what is tantamount to absolute a priori or analytical knowledge of all possibility. But if we should ask him this, he would, of course, disclaim any such thing. He would disown the attempt of Parmenides to equate all being with what can without contradiction be said about it by man. Neither has he any place for a first cause. "It seems rather that the thing or principle responsible for the origin of nature as we find it was a power of fecundity [fertility], self-repetition or increase and that the only hope of ascribing to it *mind* or *life* would depend on showing that those categories are interpretable as later phases, "emergent" yet inevitable developments of the principle of development itself."

Good reasoning:

But how then, we now inquire of Montague, is it that you can make universal negative propositions about all possibility if for you, according to your own assertions, possibility and even reality is something that exists prior to any mind and any logical assertion about it? If we hear a motor roar in a new Buick car while the car does not move, we assume that the driver merely does not want the car to move. He could pout the motor in gear at any time and the car would go. But when we see him take the motor out of the car and drop it in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with the avowed intention of making things move, we are not impressed. [Good argument against evolution...]

The Christian and the non-Christian may then be compared to one another in some such way as follows:

1. Both make presuppositions about the nature of reality:
 - a. The Christian presupposes the self-contained God and his plan for the universe
 - b. The non-Christian presupposes "Chaos and Old Night."
2. Neither can, as finite beings, by means of logic legislate what reality should be.
 - a. Knowing this the Christian observes facts and arranges them logically in self-conscious subjection to the plan of god revealed in Scripture.
 - b. Knowing this the non-Christian none the less constantly attempts the impossible.
 1. Negatively he says in effect that reality is not rationally constituted at all and that the Christian story therefore cannot be true. This is involved in his idea of "facts" as springing from "Chaos and Old Night."
 2. Positively he assumes that reality is after all rationally constituted and answers exhaustively to his logical manipulations. This is involved in his idea that any "cosmic mind" or God that is to be tolerated must be manipulable by categories devised by man without reference to "him" or "it."
3. Each claims that his position is "in accordance with the facts of experience."

- a. The Christian claims this because he interprets the facts and his experience of them in terms of his presupposition. The “uniformity of nature” and his knowledge of that uniformity both rest for him upon the plan of God.
- b. The non-Christian also interprets the facts in terms of his presuppositions. One of these presuppositions is that of **ultimate non-rationality**. On such a basis any fact would have a nature that is different in all respects from all other facts. Here is “Chaos and Old Night” with a vengeance. The second of these presuppositions is the **rationality of all reality in terms of the reach of logic as manipulated by man**. On such a basis the nature of any fact would be identical with the nature of every other fact. In practice the procedure of the non-Christian is that of keeping in careful balance the utter **equivocism** [open to interpretation, ambiguous] involved in his first and the utter **univocism** involved in his second presupposition. In any case the non-Christian can never so much as discover any fact. On his principles he knows nothing of its nature. But when he has discovered what he cannot discover he can tell us everything about it. On his principles he knows everything if he knows anything.

Notes on Equivocism and univocism:

Univocal (also, univocity): the view that there is only one kind of reality or existence; in epistemology, that the knowledge of God and creatures are identical

Comments by Kevin Deyoung on Dolezal’s book, All that is in God:

Dolezal’s response is that Scripture speaks of God anthropomorphically and anthropathically. Dolezal rejects a **univocist** approach to theology in which we presume that our language about God—in its propositional claims *and* in its forms and modes—literally describes God’s intrinsic act of being (as opposed to the view that says our language about God is true but must not be understood in the same way we might use the same language with reference to human beings). This response is right and salutary, so long as we don’t flatten the contours of Scripture and grow uncomfortable talking about God the way the Bible talks about God.

Equivocal (also, equivocity): the epistemological position that God’s knowledge and creaturely knowledge have nothing in common

4. Each claims that his position is “in accord with the demands of logic.”

- a. The Christian claims this because he interprets the reach of logic as manipulated by man in terms of his story and therefore in terms of his presupposition of God. The story tells him that nature is made subject to man and both subject to God and his purpose. Thus his logic is in gear with reality but it does not claim to control the possible.

- b. The non-Christian claims this, but cannot put any intelligible meaning into the claim. If he works according to his presupposition about the ultimate non-rationality of facts, there is no such thing as validity to logic. All logic is then *de facto* and therewith void. If he works according to his presupposition about the ultimate legislative character of logic as manipulated by man, then there are no facts that can be related to one another by logic. All facts are then reduced to logic; logic has validity but a validity that is purely formal.
5. Each claims that with respect to the problem of evil his position is in accord with conscience.
- a. The Christian claims this because he interprets his moral consciousness, as an aspect of his total experience, in terms of his presuppositions. He knows that the judge of the whole earth must do right. All the facts and problems of evil and ins take their meaning from and find their solution in terms of the story of Scripture. The approvals and disapprovals of this conscience take their meaning from its story and from this story alone.
- b. The non-Christian claims this because he takes this conscience to be **its own ultimate point of reference**. Evil has not come into the world because of man's disobedience; it is therefore metaphysically ultimate. Evil cannot be distinguished from good; what is, ought to be. Assuming that good could be distinguished from evil, there is no right to expect that the one will ever be victorious over the other. If those who think they are good succeed in making what they think is "good" to prevail upon earth, it can only be the suppression of the "good" of others who also think they are "good." Thus, power politics would forever replace all ethical distinctions.

The sort of argument outlined above differs from the traditional method of apologetics, the apologetics of "old Princeton." This apologetics was derived via Butler's famous *Analogy* from the scholastic position.

I shall indicate this in a general way by quoting a part of a series of articles on "Defending the Faith" which appeared in the *Torch and Trumpet*. (see pg. 219, pg. 306 in the 4th ed. See Reformed Apologetics [below, immediately following here code492](#))

Reformed Apologetics

A great discussion of [Reformed Apologetics](#) regarding the concept of **sin, free will of man, a role-play** of two kinds of believers ministering to an unbeliever – what do you say to an unbeliever and why? Challenge the unbeliever with his false presuppositions. Preach the whole truth in love. **Kicking against the pricks**, explained. **Free will** view by **Arminians** and their philosophy of **Chance vs determinism**. Law of **noncontradiction** and **exhaustive knowledge**. Man's assumed **ultimacy** or **autonomy = non-Christian irrationalism**. Calvin on man's **knowledge of God** – Romans 1.

Excerpts from

II

Defending the Faith

By Cornelius Van Til

Pg 219-259 (pg. 306 in the 4th ed.)

[Code492](#)

Footnotes from Scott Oliphant are added from the 4th edition of *The Defense of the Faith*

In this series of articles our concern will be to discover some of the main features of the Reformed approach in Christian Apologetics.

While seeking light on this question, let us turn first to the inaugural address of the late Dr. Valentine Hepp of the Free University of Amsterdam. The title of this address is Reformed Apologetic. Hepp says that a Reformed Christian must naturally be Reformed in his approach to the problem of Apologetics. Men and women do not walk about first as human beings and afterward as men and women. No more can a Reformed Christian first appear as a Christian and later as a Reformed Christian. A Reformed Christian is a Reformed Christian from the outset. If Hepp is right, then the Reformed Christian will have a distinctively Reformed approach when he is trying to win "**Mr. Black**" to become at once a Reformed Christian, not first a Christian and then a Reformed Christian. "Mr. Black" must become a Reformed Christian not in two but in one transaction.

The late Dr. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield once said that **Calvinism or the Reformed Faith is Christianity come to its own**. Warfield did not like to identify Calvinism with the so-called "five points of Calvinism": total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. Historically at least, Warfield asserts, these five points were but the "theological obverse" of the "five points of **Arminianism**." The "five points of Calvinism" are but so many branches of the tree of Calvinism.

Looked at as a unit, **Calvinism represents the "vision of God in his majesty."** Regarded a little more particularly, Calvinism implies three things. "In it, objectively speaking, **theism comes to its rights**; subjectively speaking, **the religious relation attains its purity; soteriologically speaking, evangelical religion finds at length its full expression and its secure stability."** Amplifying this statement Warfield

says: "I think it is important to insist that Calvinism is not a specific variety of theistic thought, religious experience, evangelical faith, but just the perfect manifestation of these things." There is but one kind of theism, religion, evangelicalism; and if there are several constructions laying claim to these names they differ from one another not as correlative species of a more inclusive genus, but only as more or less good or bad specimens of the same thing differ from one another."

If Warfield is right, then our conclusion must be the same as that based on Hepp's remarks. The Reformed Faith is theism come to its own. If there be other theisms, they are not true theisms. How could they be? Are there several true Gods? There is but one true God; there is therefore but one true theism, namely, Christian theism, the theism of the Bible. There is but one God, the God triune of the Scriptures. And it is the vision of this God "in his majesty" that constitutes the essence of the Reformed Faith. It is to the recognition of this God as wholly sovereign that the Reformed Christian would win "Mr. Black." [Mr. Black is the unbeliever.]

Two Negative Conclusions

Two general conclusions of a negative nature may now be drawn. First, the Reformed apologist cannot cooperate with the Romanist in the establishment of the existence of God. The theism of the Roman Catholic theology is not "theism come to its own"; it is a vague, general sort of theism. It is a theism in which the God of Christianity and the God of Greek philosophy, particularly the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle, are ground together into a common mixture. The theism of Romanist theology is a theism heavily freighted with pagan elements of thought. If such a theism were proved to be true, then the Christian theism of the Reformed Christian would be proved to be untrue. If with the Romanist we "prove" the existence of a god, then we have disproved the existence of *the* God of Christianity.¹⁶ It is only a perverted type of Christianity, such as constitutes Romanism, which fits onto the perverted type of theism which is "proved" by Romanist theologians.

The second major negative conclusion to be drawn from the remarks of Hepp and Warfield is that the Reformed apologist cannot co-operate with the "**evangelical**" in providing the truth of evangelicalism. By evangelicalism we mean what Warfield meant when he spoke of it as identical with the general **non-Reformed Protestantism.**¹⁷

¹⁶ The reason Van Til contends that proving the God of Romanism disproves the true God is, in part, that the attributes of the former conflict with the attributes of the latter. In the context of Romanist apologetics, God has not clearly revealed himself in nature is not sovereign over all the affairs of men, and is demonstrated on the basis of a mutual commitment to neutral principles. Such things do not comport with the triune God of Scripture.

¹⁷ The point Van Til makes here is important and should be underscored, as it will come into play below. In the work cited, Warfield delineates a number of different categories that help define how specific theological systems view salvation. He notes differences, for example, between autosoterism, sacerdotalism, universalism, and Calvinism. In this context, Warfield sees evangelicalism as virtually identical with Protestantism- both are supernaturalist, both understand God to be the originator of salvation, etc.

Given Warfield's discussion, the relationship of evangelicalism to Reformed theology can be seen from at least two different perspectives. If one views Christianity from a "lowest common denominator" perspective, then Reformed theology is a species of the more general evangelical religion. Warfield, however, prefers to view Christianity from the perspective of Calvinism which, he argues is the most consistent expression, and thus in that sense, the "highest" expression of theology compared to other, lesser consistent theologies including evangelicalism. Viewing theology in this latter way places the emphasis not on what unifies Christians doctrinally but on what (theologically, at least) purifies them. Van Til prefers Warfield's categories.

One should not think Warfield's view to be one of arrogance. We Christians responsible under God to be as biblical as we can be in our thinking *and* in our living. If we believe that the theology we hold is biblical, and is the most consistently biblical, then we will believe that it is the "highest" expression of biblical truth. If we do not believe that the theology we hold is the most consistently biblical, then we are foolish to hold it.

This second negative conclusion follows directly from the first. The evangelical does want to co-operate with the Romanist in proving the truth of theism. He argues that Protestants have many doctrines in common with Romanists, and that the existence of God is the most basic of them. Why then he asks in amazement, cannot Protestants co-operate with Romanists in proving the truth of theism? Why not have the Romanist help us build the first story of the house of Christian theism? After they have helped us build the first story of our house, we can dismiss them with thanks for their services and proceed to build the second story, the story of Protestantism, ourselves.

The answer to this is that if Romanists have helped us in building the first story of our house, then the whole house will tumble into ruins. It has already been noted that when they build the first story of their house the Romanists mix a **great deal of the clay of paganism with the iron of Christianity**. The concrete blocks may be those of Christianity, but the cement is nothing other than the sand of paganism. **Woe to the Protestant who seeks to build his Protestantism as a second story upon a supposedly theistic foundation, and a first story built by Romanism or by Protestants in conjunction with Romanists**. Only a defective Protestantism can be built upon the perverted theism of the Romanist type. For, as Warfield puts it, the precise characterization of evangelicalism is that which describes it as a defective Protestantism. **Warfield's point is that evangelicalism is inconsistent Protestantism**. It has carried into its system certain foreign elements - elements ultimately derived by way of Romanism from paganism.

Are We Extremists?

"But" some one will exclaim, "look where you have brought us! To what extremes you have gone! Not to speak of Romanists, are we not even to co-operate with evangelicals? I know many evangelicals who are much better Christians than are many Calvinists." But this is not the issue. The question is not as to who Christians are and who are going to heaven. We are not judging men's hearts. Many evangelicals are no doubt better **Calvinists** in practice than other men who are officially known as Calvinists.

The point is that we are now speaking of theological systems. When **Warfield** makes the high claim that Calvinism is "nothing more or less than the hope of the world,"⁵ he is speaking of the Reformed system of theology and of the Reformed point of view in general. Other types of theology are super-naturalistic in patches. To some extent they yield to the idea of **autosoterism, to the idea that man to some degree is saved by his own effort**. Therefore, argues Warfield, "Calvinism is just Christianity."⁶ But then, by precisely the same reasoning, *Reformed apologetics is the hope of the world*.¹⁸

¹⁸ The point to be made again: If Reformed theology is the hope of the world, then Reformed apologetics is the hope of the world. Reformed apologetics exists and subsists on the basis of Reformed theology.

A further objection may be met here: Have not certain Reformed theologians been willing in some measure to co-operate with Romanists in defending theism and with evangelicals in defending evangelicalism, in order, after that, to defend the specific doctrines of Calvinism. Are they all wrong and are you alone, right?

The answer to this objection is not easy. It would require separate and extensive discussion to do it justice. There is, no doubt, some measure of truth in the contention that at least some Reformed theologians have been willing to follow the method of co-operation first and distinctiveness afterward. Over against this stands the fact that other Reformed theologians, seeing, as they thought, the compromising result of such a method, have argued that the very idea of apologetics as a positive theological discipline is out of accord with the principles of the Reformed Faith. Or again, some have argued that apologetics must at most be given a very small task in the way of warding off the attacks of the enemy. The difference between Warfield and Kuyper on the question of apologetics is well known. Are we to be reprimanded in advance for not agreeing with Kuyper? Or for not agreeing with Warfield? Let us rather seek to listen to both Warfield and Kuyper and also to Calvin, and then do the best we can as well ask just what the genius of the Reformed Faith requires of us, is there anything else that anyone today can do?

A third party is anxious to ask a question here. Are all the efforts of evangelical apologists then to no avail? Are we to make no use whatsoever of the research done by them in such fields as biblical history and archaeology, to mention nothing more?

Let us reply to these questions with other questions. Reformed theologians do not co-operate with Arminian theologians in the preaching of the gospel. Do they therefore conclude that all Arminian preaching is to no avail? God uses even defective preaching to accomplish his purposes; so, God also uses defective reasoning to bring men to himself. And as for the results of evangelical scholarship, the Reformed apologist should gratefully employ all that is true and good in it. What is true and good in it derives from the measure of Calvinism any form of Christianity contains. But when it comes to the master plan of procedure, the Reformed apologist must go his own way; and it is only of the master plan that we speak when we deal with the question of apologetics in general. Solomon made use even of the Sidonians when building the temple of the Lord, but he did not give them membership on his building committee.

The Basic Difference

A fourth party now asks: "Granting all this for the sake of argument, can you tell us in a few words wherein you think the main difference consists between a Reformed and a Romanist of evangelical apologists?"

Here, indeed, is the heart of the matter. It is not easy to answer this question. But let us try to deal with it as best we can in a general way before going on to further specific points.

The basic difference between the two types of apologetics is to be found, we believe, in the **primary assumption** that each party makes. The **Romanist-evangelical** type of apologetics assumes **that man can first know much about himself and the universe and afterward ask whether God exists, and Christianity is true. The Reformed apologist assumes that nothing can be known by man about himself or the universe unless God exists, and Christianity is true.**¹⁹

¹⁹Note here that Van Til does not say that nothing can be known by man about himself or the universe unless the first believes. Nothing can be known unless Christianity is true. All true Christians believe this, because they believe that the universe is created and sustained by God. If that is true, then unbelievers know what know because of what Scripture says, i.e., because God created and sustains them. They cannot, however, account for their knowing and doing unless they trust in Christ and come to understand such things.

It will be observed that it is this very difference that exists between the **two types of theology**, the Romanist-**evangelical** and the **Reformed**. The former type of theology assumes that it first knows what human freedom is from "experience." It then adjusts the doctrines of Scripture concerning God and Christianity to its notion of freedom derived from experience. The Reformed type of theology begins with Scriptures and defines human freedom in terms of its principles alone.

It is natural that this difference which is basic in the two types of theology should also be basic in the two types of apologetics. **Thomas Aquinas**, the **Roman Catholic**, and Bishop Butler, the **Arminian**, both talk a great deal about the nature of man and of reality as a whole before they approach the question of the existence of God or of the truth of Christianity. At least, they assume much about the nature of man and of reality as a whole while they are speaking about the possibility of the existence of God or of the truth of Christianity. Over against them stands Calvin. He will not say one word about man or about the universe except in the light of the revelation of God as given in Scripture. The very first page of *The Institutes* is eloquent testimony to this fact.

Otherwise expressed, it may be said that the Reformed apologist does while the Romanist-evangelical apologist does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic in all that he says about anything. His argument is that unless this **distinction is made basic to all that man says about anything, then whatever man says is fundamentally untrue**. The **natural man, who assumes that he himself and the facts about him are not created**, therefore assumes what is basically false. Everything he says about himself, and the universe **will be colored by this assumption**. It is therefore impossible to grant that he is right, basically right, in what he says about any fact. If he says what is right in detail about any fact, this is in spite of, not because of his basically false assumption.

Since the Romanist-evangelical apologist does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic to the very first thing that he says about man or the universe, **he is willing to join hands with the natural man**, and together with him "discover" many "truths" about man and the universe. He will make common ground with the unbeliever as in science or in philosophy they investigate together the nature of Reality as a whole. He will agree with the natural man as he speaks about "being in general," and only afterward argue against the unbeliever for the necessity of introducing the Creator-creature distinction. So, **Butler** [an Arminian apologist] agrees with the deists on their view of the "course and constitution" of nature, and afterward tries to persuade them that they ought also to believe in Christ.

Of course, the reason why the one type of apologetics does and the other does not wish to make the Creator-creature distinction basic at the outset of all predications is to be found in the **differing conceptions of sin. The natural man does not want to make the Creator-Creature distinction basic in his thought. The sinner does not want to recognize the fact that he is a creature of God, as such responsible to God, and because of his sin under the judgment of God.** This is to be expected. But why should Christians who have confessed their sins to God, who have therefore recognized him as Creator and Lord, and especially why should evangelicals who confess that they hold to the Bible as their only infallible rule of authority, not wish to bring their every thought captive to the obedience of Christ? In other words, how do you account for the fact that evangelicals carry into their theology and into their apologetics so much foreign material? **It is, of course, because of their defective view of sin.** In fact, their defective view of sin is itself of foreign origin. More must be said about this subject later.

For the moment: let us be keenly aware of the fact that we who seek to escape the **defective views of sin and of creation involved in evangelical theology and apologetics are always defective in practice.** Precisely the same tendency toward the acceptance of a low view of and of creation that we deprecate in our brethren is found in ourselves. We should therefore seek to win ourselves in practice as well as our brethren in theory to an acceptance of the implications of a fully biblical view of sin and creation in the field of apologetics. Of these implications it will be our concern to speak in what follows.

III

The Believer Meets the Unbeliever²⁰

Torch and Trumpet

1951

Vol. Issue 2 pgs. 17ff

[Pg 225 in the book – this is a good role-play with and unbeliever, Mr. Black, an Arminian/traditional Evangelical, Mr. Grey, and a Calvinist/Reformed believer, Mr. White in their apologetic approach.](#)

²⁰ It should be noted here, as Van Til begins his hypothetical dialogue between Mr. Black, Mr. Grey, and Mr. White, that the discussion proceeds on the basis of the principles of the three men, not necessarily on the basis of their practice. Van Til is using this dialogue to highlight the differences in principle between the three positions. So, Mr. Black is not as black as he can be; neither do Mr. White and Mr. Grey fully display their "theological colors" in practice. The dialogue is for pedagogical, not practical, purposes.

In the first article of this series the contention was made that one who holds to the Reformed Faith in theology should, to be consistent, also hold to a **Reformed method in Apologetics**. In practice this means that we should try to win **Mr. Black**, the **non-Christian**, to an acceptance of Christianity as it is to be identified with the **Reformed Faith, which is Christianity come to its own**. We should not try to win men to acceptance first of Christianity in general and afterwards to "the five points of Calvinism." The transition from non-Christianity or paganism to the Reformed Faith as full-fledged Christianity must be made in one transaction.

To see clearly what is meant think of a dentist. You go to him with a "bad tooth." Does he take care of your tooth in two operations? To be sure, you may have to come back to have him finish the job. But it is one job he is doing. He takes all the decayed matter out before he fills the cavity. Well, Mr. Black is the man with the toothache, and you, as a Reformed Christian, are the dentist. Would you first convert him to Evangelicalism and then to the Reformed Faith? Then you would be like a dentist who would today take half the decayed matter out and fill the cavity, and tomorrow or next week take out the rest of the decayed matter and fill the cavity again. Or, rather, you would be like the dentist who takes part of the decayed matter out, fills the cavity, and then lets the patient go until a long time later he returns complaining again of a toothache.

Indeed, it is no fun to have the dentist drill deep into your tooth. And it is the last and deepest drilling that hurts most. So, Mr. Black is likely to feel more at home in the office of the "evangelical" dentist than in the office of the "Reformed" dentist. Will the latter have any customers? He is likely to fear that he will not. He is ever tempted, therefore, to advertise that he is cooperating with all good "conservatives" in all good dentistry, but that he has a specialty which it would be very nice for people to see him about.

The X-ray Machine

Let us now ask by what means we may diagnose **Mr. Black**. For that purpose, we use the X-ray machine. Whence do you know your misery? Out of the law, the revealed will of God, answers the Reformed Christian. Let us call him **Mr. White**. It is by means of the Bible, not by personal experience, that he turns the light on himself, as well as on Mr. Black. He does not appeal to "experience" or to "reason" or to "history" or to anything else as his source of information in the way that he appeals to the Bible.²¹ He may appeal to experience, but his appeal will be to experience as seen in the light of the Bible. So, he may appeal to reason or to history, but, again, only as they are to be seen in the light of the bible. He does not even look for corroboration for the teachings of Scripture from experience, reason or history except insofar as these are themselves first seen in the light of the Bible. For him the Bible, and therefore the God of the Bible, is like the sun from which the light that is given by oil lamps, gas lamps and electrical light is derived.

²¹ Note: "He does not appeal to experience, or to reason, or to history *...in the way that he appeals to the Bible.*" Van Til is not saying that such things cannot be used in apologetics, but that they cannot take the authoritative place reserved for Scripture alone.

Quite different is the attitude of the "evangelical" or "conservative." Let us call him **Mr. Grey**. Mr. Grey uses the Bible, experience, reason or logic as equally independent sources of information about his own and therefore about Mr. Black's predicament. I do not say that for Mr. Grey the Bible, experience and reason are equally important. Indeed, they are not. He knows that the Bible is by far the most important. But he none the less constantly appeals to "the facts of experience" and to "logic" without first dealing with the very idea of fact and with the idea of logic in terms of the Scripture.

The difference is basic. When Mr. White diagnoses Mr. Black's case he takes as his X-ray machine the Bible only. When Mr. Grey diagnoses Mr. Black's case he first takes the X-ray machine of experience, then the X-ray machine of logic, and finally his biggest X-ray machine, the Bible. In fact, he may take these in any order. Each of them is an independent source of information for him.

Mr. Grey Analyzes Mr. Black

Let us first look briefly at a typical sample of procedure generally followed in conservative or evangelical circles today. Let us, in other words, note how Mr. Grey proceeds with an analysis of Mr. Black. And let us at the same time see how Mr. Grey would win Mr. Black to an acceptance of Christianity. We take for this purpose a series of articles which appeared in the January, February and March 1950, issues of *Moody Monthly*, published by the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Edward John Carnell, Ph. D, author of *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* and professor of Apologetics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, wrote this series. Carnell's writings are among the best that appear in evangelical circles. In fact, in his book Carnell frequently argues as we would expect a Reformed apologist to argue. By and large, however, he represents the evangelical rather than the Reformed method in Apologetics.

When Mr. Carnell instructs his readers "How Every Christian Can Defend His Faith," he first appeals to facts and to logic as independent sources of information about the truth of Christianity. Of course, he must bring in the Bible even at this point. But the Bible is brought in only as a book of information about the fact of what has historically been called Christianity. It is not from the beginning brought in as God's Word. It must be shown to Mr. Black to be the Word of God by means of "facts" and "logic." Carnell would thus avoid at all costs the charge of reasoning in a circle. He does not want Mr. Black to point the finger at him and say: "You prove that the Bible is true by an appeal to the Bible itself. That is circular reasoning. How can any person with any respect for logic accept such a method of proof?"

Carnell would escape such a charge by showing that the facts of experience, such as all men recognize, and logic, such as all men must use, point to the truth of Scripture. This is what he says: "If you are of a philosophic turn, you can point to the remarkable way in which Christianity fits in with the moral sense inherent in every human being, or the influence of Christ on our ethics, customs, literature, art and music. Finally, you can draw upon your own experience in speaking of the reality of answered prayer and the witness of the Spirit in your own heart. . . . If the person is impressed with this evidence, turn at once to the gospel. Read crucial passages and permit the Spirit to work on the inner recesses of the heart. Remember that apologetics is merely a preparation. After the ground has been broken, proceed immediately with sowing and watering."⁷

It is assumed in this argument that Mr. Black agrees with the "evangelical," Mr. Grey, on the character of the "moral sense" of man. This may be true, but then it is true because Mr. Grey has himself not taken his information about the moral sense of man exclusively from Scripture. If with Mr. White he had taken his conception of the moral nature of man from the Bible, then he would hold that Mr. Black, **as totally depraved**, will, of course, misinterpret his own moral nature. True, Christianity is in accord with the moral nature of man. But this is so only because the moral nature of man is first in accord with what the Bible says it is, that is, originally created perfect, but now wholly corrupted in its desires through the fall of man.

The Boy or the Rock

If you are reasoning with a **naturalist**, Carnell advises his readers, ask him why when a child throws a rock through his window, he chases the child and not the rock. Presumably even a naturalist knows that the child, not the rock, is free and therefore responsible. "A bottle of water cannot ought; it must. When once the free spirit of man is proved, the moral argument - the existence of a God who imposes moral obligations - can form the bridge from man to God."

Here the fundamental difference between Mr. Grey's and Mr. White's approach to Mr. Black appears. The difference lies in the different notions **of the free will of man**. Or, it may be said, the difference is with respect to the nature of man as such. **Mr. White would define man, and therefore his freedom, in terms of Scripture alone**. He would therefore begin with the fact that man is the creature of God. **And this implies that man's freedom is a derivative freedom**. It is a freedom that is not and can not be wholly ultimate, that is, self-dependent. Mr. White knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him in this analysis of man and of his freedom. He knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him on this any more than he would agree on the biblical idea of total depravity.

Mr. Grey, on the other hand, must at all costs have "**a point of contact**" in the system of thought of Mr. Black, who is typical of the natural man. Just as Mr. Grey is afraid of being charged with circular reasoning, so he is also afraid of being charged with talking about something that is "outside of experience." And so, he is driven to talk in general about the "free spirit of man." Of course, Mr. Black need have no objections from his point of view in allowing for the "free spirit of man." That is at bottom what he holds even when he is a naturalist. His whole position is based upon the idea of man as a free spirit, that is, a spirit that is not subject to the law of his Creator God. And Carnell does not distinguish between the biblical doctrine of freedom, as based upon and involved in the fact of man's creation, and the doctrine of freedom, in the sense of autonomy, which makes man a law unto himself.

Of course, Mr. Black will be greatly impressed with such an argument as Mr. Grey has presented to him for the truth of Christianity. In fact, if Christianity is thus shown to be in accord with the moral nature of man, as Mr. Black himself sees that moral nature, then Mr. Black does not need to be converted at all to accept Christianity. **He only needs to accept something additional to what he has always believed**. He has been shown how nice it would be to have a second story built on top of the house which he has already built according to his own plans. [hence, the danger of starting with unbiblical presuppositions.]

To be sure, the evangelical intends no such thing. Least of all does Carnell intend such a thing. But why then does not the "Evangelical" see that by presenting the non-Christian with Evangelicalism rather than with the Reformed Faith he must compromise the Christian religion? And why does he not also see that in doing what he does the non-Christian is not really challenged either by fact or by logic? For facts and logic which are not themselves first seen in the light of Christianity have, in the nature of the case, no power in them to challenge the unbeliever to change his position. Facts and logic, not based upon the creation doctrine and not placed in the context of the doctrine of God's all-embracing Providence, are without relation to one another and therefore wholly meaningless.²⁴

²⁴ One of the main reasons that Van Til says that facts and logic, apart from the doctrines of creation and providence, "are without relation to one another" is that facts, on a non-Christian construal, are such that they arise from chance, have no interpretation, and cannot be truly known. [hence, are *brute facts - codebrute*] Logic, on the other hand, is assumed to be a "law" whereby its principles are true universally. How can it be, then, that chance-produced and controlled facts can have any relationship to something meant to be as immutable and universal as logic? On a non-Christian basis, therefore, the facts and laws cannot be shown to be related to each other, though such a relationship is taken for granted at almost every point.

It is this fact which must be shown to Mr. Black. The folly of holding to any view of life except that which is frankly based upon the Bible as the absolute authority for man must be pointed out to him. Only then are we doing what Paul did when he said: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor 1:20)?

Mr. White Analyzes Mr. Black

As a Reformed Christian Mr. White therefore cannot cooperate with Mr. Grey in his analysis of Mr. Black. This fact may appear more clearly if we turn to see how Mr. Black appears when he is analyzed by Mr. White in terms of the Bible alone.

Now, according to Mr. White's analysis, Mr. Black is not a murderer. He is not necessarily a drunkard or a dope addict. He lives in one of the suburbs. He is every whit a gentleman. He gives to the Red Cross and to the Red Feather campaigns. He was a boy scout; he is a member of a lodge; he is very much civic minded; now and then his name is mentioned in the papers as an asset to the community. But we know that he is spiritually dead. He is filled with the spirit of error. Perhaps he is a member of a "fine church" in the community, but nevertheless he is one of a "people that do err in their heart" (Ps 95:10). He lives in a stupor (Rom 11:8). To him the wisdom of God is foolishness. The truth about God, and about himself in relation to God, is obnoxious to him. He does not want to hear of it. He seeks to close eyes and ears to those who give witness of the truth. He is, in short, utterly self-deceived.

Actually, Mr. Black is certain that he looks at life in the only proper way. Even if he has doubts as to the truth of what he believes, he does not see how any sensible or rational man could believe or do otherwise. If he has doubts it is because no one can be fully sure of himself. If he has fears, it is because fear is to be expected in the hazardous situation in which modern man lives. If he sees men's minds break down, he thinks this is to be expected under current conditions of stress and strain. If he sees grown men act like children, he says that they, after all, were once children; if he sees them act

like beasts, he says that they were once beasts. Everything, including the "abnormal" is to him "normal." In all this Mr. Black has obviously taken for granted that what the Bible says about the world and himself is not true. He has taken this for granted. He may never have argued the point. He has cemented yellow spectacles to his own eyes. He cannot remove them because he will not remove them. He is blind and loves to be blind.

Do not think that Mr. Black has an easy time of it. **He is the man who always "kicks against the pricks." His conscience troubles him all the time.** Deep down in his heart he knows that what the Bible says about him and about the world is true. Even if he has never heard of the Bible, he knows that he is a creature of God and that he has broken the law of God (Rom 1.19-20; Rom 2:14-15). When the prodigal son left his father's house, he could not immediately efface from his memory the look and the voice of his father. How that look and that voice came back to him when he was at the swine trough! How hard he had tried to live as though the money with which he so freely entertained his "friends" had not come from his father! When asked where he came from, he would answer that he came "from the other side." He did not want to be reminded of his past. Yet he could not forget it. It required a constant act of suppression to forget the past. **But that very act of suppression itself keeps alive the memory of the past.**

So also, with **Mr. Black**. He daily changes the truth of God into a lie. He daily worships and serves the creature more than the Creator. He daily holds the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). But what a time he has with himself! He may try to sear his conscience as with a hot iron. He may seek to escape the influence of all those who witness to the truth. But he can never escape himself as witness-bearer to the truth.

His **conscience** keeps telling him: "Mr. Black, you are a fugitive from justice. You have run away from home, from your father's bountiful love. You are an ingrate, a sneak, a rascal! You shall not escape meeting justice at last. The father still feeds you. Yet you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not recognizing that the goodness of God is calculated to lead you to repentance (Rom 2:4). **Why do you kick against the pricks? Why do you stifle the voice of your conscience?** Why do you use the wonderful intellect that God has given you **as a tool for the suppression of the voice of God which speaks to you through yourself and through your environment?** Why do you build your house on sand instead of on rock? Can you be sure that no storm is ever coming? Are you omniscient? Are you omnipotent? You say that nobody knows whether God exists or whether Christianity is true. You say that nobody knows this because man is finite. Yet you assume that God cannot exist, and that Christianity cannot be true. You assume that no judgment will ever come. You must be omniscient to know that. And yet you have just said that all man declares about 'the beyond' must be based upon his brief span of existence in this world of time and chance. How, then, if you have taken for granted that chance is one of the basic ingredients of all human experience, can you at the same time say what can or cannot be in all time to come? You certainly have made a fool of yourself, Mr. Black," says Mr. Black to himself. "You reject the claims of truth which you know to be the truth, and you do that in terms of the lie which really you know to be the lie."

It is not always that Mr. Black is thus aware of the fact that he lives like the prodigal who would eat of the things the swine did eat, but who knows he cannot because he is a human being. **He is not**

always thus aware of his folly - in part at least, because of the failure of evangelicals, and particularly because of the failure of Reformed Christians to stir him up to a realization of his folly. The evangelical does not want to stir him up thus. It is in the nature of his own theology not to stir him up to a realization of this basic depth of folly. But the Reformed Christian should, on his basis, want to stir up Mr. Black to an appreciation of the folly of his ways.

However, when the Reformed Christian, Mr. White, is to any extent aware of the richness of his own position and actually has the courage to challenge Mr. Black by presenting to him the picture of himself as taken through the X-ray machine called the Bible, he faces the charge of "circular reasoning" and of finding no "point of contact" with experience. And he will also be subject to the criticism of the evangelical for speaking as if Christianity were irrational and for failing to reach the man in the street.

Thus, we seem to be in a bad predicament. There is a basic difference of policy between Mr. White and Mr. Grey as to how to deal with Mr. Black. Mr. Grey thinks that Mr. Black is not really such a bad fellow. It is possible, he thinks to live with Mr. Black in the same world. And he is pretty strong. So, it is best to make a compromise peace with him. That seems to be the way of the wise and practical politician. On the other hand, Mr. White thinks that it is impossible permanently to live in the same world with Mr. Black. Mr. Black, he says, must therefore be placed before the requirement of absolute and unconditional surrender. And surely it would be out of the question for Mr. White first to make a compromise peace with Mr. Black and then, after all, to require unconditional surrender. But what then about this charge of circular reasoning and about this charge of having no point of contact with the unbeliever?

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IV

A Consistent Witness

Pg 233

Torch and Trumpet

1951

Volume 1, Issue 3. Pages 16ff

The one main question to which we are addressing ourselves in this series of articles is whether Christians holding to the Reformed faith should also hold to a specifically Reformed method when they are engaged in the defense of the faith.

This broad question does not pertain merely to the "five points of Calvinism." When Lutherans or Arminians attack these great doctrines (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints) we, as Calvinists, are quick to defend them. We believe that these five points are directly based upon Scripture. But the question now under discussion is whether, in the defense of any Christian doctrine, Reformed Christians should use a method all their own.

The Negative Answer

People easily give a negative reply to this question. Do we not have many doctrines in common with all evangelicals? Don't all orthodox Protestants hold to the substitutionary atonement of Christ? More particularly, what about the simple statements of fact recorded in Scripture? How could anyone, if he believes such statements at all, take them otherwise than as simple statements of fact? How could anyone have a specifically Reformed doctrine of such a fact as the resurrection of Christ? If together with evangelicals we accept certain simple truths and facts of Scripture at face value, how then can we be said to have a separate method of defense of such doctrines?

The Positive Answer

Yet it can readily be shown that this negative answer cannot be maintained. Take, for example, the doctrine of the atonement. **The Arminian doctrine of the atonement is not the same as the Reformed doctrine of the atonement.** Both the Arminian and the Calvinist assert that they believe in the substitutionary atonement. But the **Arminian conception** of the substitutionary atonement **is colored**, and as Calvinists we believe discolored, **by his view of "free will."** According to the Arminian view, man has absolute or ultimate power to accept or to reject the salvation offered him. This implies that the salvation offered to man is merely the possibility of salvation.²⁶

To illustrate: suppose I deposit one million dollars to your account in your bank. It is still altogether up to you to believe that such wealth is yours, and to use it to cover the floor of your house with Persian rugs in place of the old threadbare rugs now there.²⁷ Thus, in the Arminian scheme, the very possibility of things no longer depends exclusively upon God, but, in some areas at least, upon man. What Christ did for us is made to depend for its effectiveness upon what is done by us. It is no longer right to say that with God all things are possible.

²⁶ That is, "the possibility of salvation" because Christ's death only provided for such a possibility. It did not actually save anyone, on this view.

²⁷ This illustration may be confusing. It might be better to suppose that I open a bank account, and promise to put one million dollars there, but only if you will believe that the million dollars is yours.

It is obvious, therefore, that Arminians have taken into their Protestantism a good bit of the leaven of Roman Catholicism. Arminianism is less radical, less consistent in its Protestantism than it should be. And what is true of Arminianism is true also, though in a lesser degree, of orthodox Lutheranism.

Mr. Grey On the Atonement

Now Mr. Grey, the evangelical, seems to have a relatively easy time of it when he seeks to win Mr. Black, the unbeliever, to an acceptance of "the substitutionary atonement." He can stand on "common ground" with Mr. Black on this matter of what is possible and what is impossible. Listen to Mr. Grey as he talks with Mr. Black.

"Mr. Black, have you accepted Christ as your personal Savior? Do you believe that he died on the cross your substitute? If you do not, you will surely be lost forever."

The Classic Arminian complaint against God's sovereignty and the Reformed view of man's free will:

"Well now," replies Mr. Black, "I've just had a visit from Mr. White on the same subject. You two seem to have a 'common witness' on this matter. Both of you believe that God exists, that he has created the world, that the first man, Adam, sinned, and that we are all to be sent to hell because of what that first man did, and so forth. **All this is too fatalistic for me.** If I am a creature, as you say I am, **then I have no ultimate power of my own and therefore am not free.** And if I am not free, then I am not responsible. So, if I am going to hell, it will be simply because your 'god' has determined that I should. **You orthodox Christians kill morality and all humanitarian progress. I will have none of it. Good-by!"**

"But wait a second," says Mr. Grey, in great haste. "I do not have a common witness with the Calvinist. I have a common witness with you against the Calvinist when it comes to all that determinism that you mention. Of course, you are free. You are absolutely free to accept or to reject the atonement that is offered to you. I offer the atonement through Christ **only as a possibility. You yourself must make it an actuality for yourself.** I agree with you over against the Calvinist in saying that 'possibility' is wider than the will of God. I would not for a moment say with the Calvinist that God's counsel determines 'whatsoever comes to pass.'"

"Besides, even extreme Calvinists like J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., virtually agree with both of us. Listen to what Buswell says: 'Nevertheless, my moral choices, are choices in which we are ourselves ultimate causes.' Buswell himself wants to go beyond the 'merely arbitrary answer' in Romans 9:20-21, which speaks of the potter and the clay, to the 'much more profound analysis of God's plan of redemption' in Romans 9:22-24, in which Paul pictures Pharaoh as 'one who, according to the foreknowledge of God, would rebel against God.'"⁹

Mr. Black On the Atonement

"Do I understand then," replies Mr. Black, "that you evangelicals and even the more moderate Calvinists are opposed to the determinism of the regular, old-style Calvinists of the historic Reformed Confessions? I am glad to hear that. To say that all things have been fixed from all eternity by God is terrible! It makes me shudder! What would happen to all morality and decency if all men believed such a teaching? But now you evangelicals have joined us in holding that 'possibility' is independent of the will of God. You have thus with all good people and with all modern and neo-modern theologians, like **Barth, made possible the salvation of all men.**"

"That means, of course, that salvation is possible too for those who have never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Salvation is therefore possible without an acceptance of your substitutionary atonement through this Jesus, of whom you speak. **You certainly would not want to say with the Calvinists that God has determined the bounds of all nations and individuals and has thus, after all, determined that some men, millions of them, in fact, should never hear this gospel.**" [[A major complaint by unbelievers and Arminians, etc.](#)]

"Besides, if possibility is independent of God as you evangelicals and moderate Calvinists teach, then I need not be afraid of hell. It is then quite possible that there is no hell.²⁹ Hell, you will then agree, is that torture of a man's conscience which he experiences when he fails to live up to his own moral

ideals. So, I do not think that I shall bother just yet about accepting Christ as my personal Savior. There is plenty of time."

²⁹ The point Van Til is making here is that, if God himself were subject to possibility such that one's decision were the **ultimate determiner** of what one does, then it would also be possible that what God has said about hell, or anything else, is not true. If it weren't true, it would not be God's fault, since he himself would be subject to the possible and the impossible, rather than the One who controls such things.

Mr. Grey's First Failure

Poor Mr. Grey. He really wanted to say something about having a common testimony with the Calvinists after all. At the bottom of his heart, he knew that Mr. White, the Calvinist, and not Mr. Black, the unbeliever, was his real friend. But he had made a common witness with Mr. Black against the supposed determinism of the Calvinist. Still, it was difficult for him to turn about face and also make a common testimony with Mr. White against Mr. Black. He had nothing intelligible to say. His method of defending his faith had forced him to admit that Mr. Black was basically right. He had given Mr. Black an opportunity of knowing what he was supposed to accept, but his testimony had confirmed Mr. Black in his belief that there was no need of his accepting Christ at all.

It is true, of course, that in practice Mr. Grey is much better in his theology and in his method of representing the gospel than he is here said to be. But that is because in practice every evangelical who really loves his Lord is a Calvinist at heart. How could he really pray to God for help if he believed that there was a possibility that God could not help? In their hearts all true Christians believe that God controls "whatsoever comes to pass." But the Calvinist cannot have a common witness for the substitutionary atonement with "evangelicals" who first make a common witness with the unbeliever against him on the all-determining question whether God controls all things that happen.

Requirements For Effective Witness

It must always be remembered that the first requirement for effective witnessing is that the position to which witness is given be intelligible. **Evangelicalism, when consistently carried out, destroys this intelligibility.**

The second requirement for effective witnessing is that he to whom the witness is given must be shown why he should forsake his own position and accept that which has offered him. Evangelicalism, when consistently carried out, also destroys the reason why the unbeliever should accept the gospel. Why should the unbeliever change his position if he is not shown that it is wrong? And, in particular, why should he change if the one who asks him to change is actually encouraging him in thinking that he is right? The Calvinist will need to have a better method of defending the doctrine of the atonement, for example, than that of the evangelical.

The Resurrection of Christ

We have dealt with the doctrine of the atonement. That led us into the involved question whether God is the source of possibility, or whether possibility is the source of God. It has been shown that the "evangelical" or **Arminian fundamentalist** holds to a position which requires him to make both of these contradictory assertions at once. But how about the realm of fact? Do you also hold, I am asked,

that we need to seek for a specifically Reformed method of defending the facts of Christianity? Take the resurrection of Christ as an example why can there be no common witness on the part of the evangelical and the Calvinist to such a fact as that?

Mr. Grey On the Resurrection

Once more Mr. Grey, the evangelical punches the doorbell at Mr. Black's home. Mr. Black answers and admits him.

"I am here again, Mr. Black," begins Grey, "because I am still anxious to have you accept Christ as your personal Savior. When I spoke to you the other time about the atonement you got me into deep water. We got all tangled up on the question of 'possibility.'"

"But now I have something far simpler. I want to deal with simple facts. I want to show you that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is as truly a fact as any that you can mention. To use the words of Wilbur Smith, himself a Calvinist but opposed to the idea of a distinctively Reformed method for the defense of the faith: 'The meaning of the resurrection is a theological matter, but the fact of the resurrection is a historical matter; the nature of the resurrection body of Jesus may be a mystery, but the fact that the body disappeared from the tomb is a matter to be decided upon by historical evidence.'¹⁰ And the historical evidence for the resurrection is the kind of evidence that you as a scientist would desire."

"Smith writes in the same book: 'About a year ago, after studying over a long period of time this entire problem of our Lord's resurrection, and having written some hundreds of pages upon it at different times, I was suddenly arrested by the thought that the very kind of evidence which modern science, and even psychologists, are so insistent upon for determining the reality of any object under consideration is the kind of evidence that we have presented to us in the Gospels regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, namely, the things that are seen with the human eye, touched with the human hand, and heard by the human ear. This is what we call empirical evidence. It would almost seem as if parts of the Gospel records of the resurrection were actually written for such a day as ours when empiricism so dominates men's thinking.'"

"Now I think that Smith is quite right in thus distinguishing sharply between the fact and the meaning of the resurrection. And I am now only asking you to accept the fact of the resurrection. There is the clearest possible empirical evidence for this fact. The living Jesus was touched with human hands and seen with human eyes of sensible men after he had been crucified and put into the tomb. Surely you ought to believe in the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact. And to believe in the resurrected Christ is to be saved."

"But hold on a second," says Mr. Black. "Your friend the Calvinist, Mr. White, has been ahead of you again. He was here last night and spoke of the same thing. However, he did not thus distinguish between the fact and the meaning of the resurrection. At least, he did not for a moment want to separate the fact of the resurrection from the system of Christianity in terms of which it gets its meaning. The spoke of Jesus Christ the Son of God, as rising from the dead. The spoke of the Son of God through whom the world was made and through whom the world is sustained as having risen

from the dead. And when I asked him how this God could die and rise from the dead, he said that God did not die and rise from the dead but that the second person of the trinity had taken to himself a human nature, and that it was in this human nature that he died and rose again. In short, in accepting the fact of the resurrection he wanted me also to take all this abracadabra into the bargain. And I have a suspicion that you are secretly trying to have me do something similar."

"No, no," replies Mr. Grey. "I am in complete agreement with you over against the Calvinist. I have a common witness with you against him. I, too, would separate fact and system. Did I not agree with you against the Calvinist, in holding that possibility is independent of God? Well then, by the same token I hold that all kinds of facts happen apart from the plan of God. So, we evangelicals are in a position, as the Calvinists are not, of speaking with you **on neutral ground**. With you, we would simply talk about the facts of Christianity without bringing into the picture anything about the meaning or the significance of those facts."

"It makes me smile," continues Mr. Grey, "when I think of Mr. White coming over here trying to convert you. That poor fellow is always reasoning in circles. I suppose that such reasoning in circles goes with his **determinism**. [That God determines the outcome, not man, not man's will.] He is always talking about his self-contained God. He says that all facts are what they are because of the plan of this God. Then each fact would of necessity, to be a fact at all, prove the truth of the Christian system of things and, in turn, would be proved as existing by virtue of this self-same Christian system of things. I realize full well that you, as a modern scientist and philosopher, can have no truck with such horrible, circular reasoning as that."

"It is for this reason that, as evangelicals, we have now separated sharply between the resurrection as a historical fact and the meaning of the resurrection. I'm merely asking you to accept the *fact* of the resurrection. I am not asking you to do anything that you cannot do in full consistency with your freedom and with the 'scientific method.'"

Mr. Black Replies on the Resurrection

"Well, that is delightful," replies Mr. Black. "I always felt that the Calvinists were our real foes. But I read something in the paper the other day to the effect that some Calvinist churches or individuals were proposing to make a common witness with evangelicals for the gospel. Now I was under the impression that the gospel had something to do with being saved from hell and going to heaven. I knew that the modernists and the 'new modernists,' like Barth, do not believe in tying up the facts of history with such wild speculations. It was my opinion that 'fundamentalists' did tie up belief in historical facts, such as the death and the resurrection of Jesus, with going to heaven or to hell. So, I am delighted that you, though a fundamentalist, are willing to join with the modernist and the neo-modernist in separating historical facts from such a rationalistic system as I knew Christianity was."

"Now as for accepting the resurrection of Jesus," continued Mr. Black, "as thus properly separated from the traditional system of theology. I do not in the least mind doing that. To tell you the truth, I have accepted the resurrection as a fact now for some time. The evidence for it is overwhelming. This is a strange universe. All kinds of 'miracles' happen in it. The universe is 'open.' So why should there

not be some resurrections here and there? The resurrection of Jesus would be a fine item for *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Why not send it in?"

Mr. Grey wanted to continue at this point. He wanted to speak of the common witness that he had, after all, with the Calvinist for the gospel. But it was too late. He had no "common" witness left of any sort. He had again tried to gallop off in opposite directions at the same time. He had again taken away all intelligibility from the witness that he meant to bring. He had again established Mr. Black in thinking that his own unbelieving reason was right. For it was as clear as crystal to Mr. Black, as it should have been to Mr. Grey, that belief in the fact of the resurrection, apart from the system of Christianity, amounts to belief that the Christian system is not true, is belief in the universe as run by Chance, is belief that it was not Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who rose from the dead.

To be sure, in practice the "evangelical" is much better in his witness for the resurrection of Christ than he has been presented here. But that is because every evangelical, as a sincere Christian, is at heart a Calvinist.³² **But witnessing is a matter of the head as well as of the heart. If the world is to hear a consistent testimony for the Christian faith, it is the Calvinist who must give it. If there is not a distinctively Reformed method for the defense of every article of the Christian faith, then there is no way of clearly telling an unbeliever just how Christianity differs from his own position and why he should accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.** We are happy and thankful, of course, for the work of witnessing done by evangelicals. We are happy because of the fact that, in spite of their inconsistency in presenting the Christian testimony, something, often much, of the truth of the gospel shines through unto men, and they are saved.

³² That is, every evangelical believes that one cannot separate the fact of the resurrection from its meaning; and every evangelical believes that God is sovereign over his creation, and his salvation.

V
 The Authority of Scripture
Torch and Trumpet
 1951
 Vol. 1, Issue 4, pgs. 16ff
 (Pg 241)

The difference between a Reformed and an Evangelical method of approach to unbelievers is our main concern in these articles. Our contention has been that the very nature of Reformed theology requires a distinct approach in the matter of its defense. Let us again discuss this question, this time in relation to the central problem of biblical authority. How will the Evangelical or Conservative urge upon the unbeliever the idea of accepting the Bible as the Word of God? He will, of course, tell the unbeliever that his eternal weal or woe is involved. "Christ died for your sins, and you must accept him as your Savior or you will be eternally lost," says Mr. Grey, the Conservative, to Mr. Black, the unbeliever.

Rational Probability

"But how can anyone know anything about the 'Beyond'?" asks Mr. Black.

"Well, of course," replies Mr. Grey, "if you want absolute certainty such as one gets in geometry, Christianity does not offer it. We offer you only 'rational probability.' Christianity, as I said in effect a moment ago when I spoke of the death of Christ, is founded on historical facts, which, by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty. All judgments of historical particulars are at the mercy of the complexity of the time-space universe. . . . If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?"¹² "And what is true of the death of Christ," adds Mr. Grey, "is, of course, also true of his resurrection. But this only shows that 'the Christian is in possession of a world-view which is making a sincere effort to come to grips with actual history.'"¹³

Gobble-de-Gook

By speaking thus, Mr. Grey seeks for a point of **contact** with Mr. Black. For Mr. Black, history is something that floats on an infinitely extended and bottomless ocean of Chance. Therefore, he can say that anything may happen. Who knows but the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God might issue from this womb of Chance? Such events would have an equal chance of happening with "snarks, boojums, splinth, and gobble-de-gook." God himself may live in this realm of Chance. He is then "wholly other" than us. And his revelation in history would then be wholly unique.

Now the Evangelical does not challenge this underlying philosophy of **Chance** as it controls the unbeliever's conception of history. He is so anxious to have the unbeliever accept the possibility of God's existence and the fact of the resurrection of Christ that, if necessary, he will exchange his own philosophy of fact for that of the unbeliever. Anxious to be genuinely "empirical" like the unbeliever, he will throw all the facts of Christianity into the bottomless pit of **Chance**. Or, rather, he will throw all these facts at the unbeliever, and the unbeliever throws them over his back into the bottomless pit of Chance.

Of course, this is the last thing that such men as Wilbur Smith, Edward J. Carnell, and L Oliver Buswell, Jr., want to do. **But in failing to challenge the philosophy of Chance that underlies the unbeliever's notion of "fact," they are in effect accepting it. [Either God is the master planner or chance rules history, etc., hence, why you have evolutionary thought, which is based on chance and un-creation, swallowed whole. Creation and evolution are incompatible.]**

This approach of Mr. Grey is unavoidable if one holds to an Arminian theology. **The Arminian view of man's free will implies that "possibility" is above God. But a "possibility" that is above God is the same thing as Chance. A God surrounded by Chance cannot speak with authority. He would be speaking into a vacuum.** His voice could not be heard. And if God were surrounded by Chance, then human beings would be too. They would live in a vacuum, unable to hear either their own voices or those of others. Thus, the whole of history, including all of its facts, would be without meaning.

It is this that the Reformed Christian, Mr. White, would tell Mr. Black. In the very act of presenting the resurrection of Christ, or in the very act of presenting any other fact of historic Christianity, Mr. White would be presenting it as authoritatively interpreted in the Bible. He would argue that unless

Mr. Black is willing to set the facts of history in the framework of the meaning authoritatively ascribed to them in the Bible, he will make gobble-de-gook of history.

Nobody Knows

If history were what Mr. Black assumes that it is, then anything might happen and then nobody would know what may happen. No one thing would then be more likely to happen than any other thing. **David Hume**, the great skeptic, has effectively argued that if you allow any room for **Chance** in your thought, then you no longer have the right to speak of probabilities. **Whirl would be king. No one hypothesis would have any more relevance to facts than any other hypothesis.** Did God raise Christ from the dead? Perchance he did. Did Jupiter, do it? Perchance he did. What is Truth? Nobody knows. Such would be the picture of the universe if Mr. Black were right.

No comfort can be taken from the assurance of the Conservative that, since Christianity makes no higher claim than that of rational probability, "**the system of Christianity can be refuted only by probability.** Perhaps our loss is gain."¹⁴ How could one ever argue that there is a greater probability for the truth of Christianity than for the truth of its opposite if the very meaning of the word probability rests upon the idea of Chance? On this basis nature and history would be no more than a series of pointer readings pointing into the blank.

But You Are Wrong pg 243

In assuming his **philosophy of Chance** and thus virtually saying that nobody knows what is back of the common objects of daily observation, Mr. Black also virtually says that the Christian view of things is wrong.

If I assert that there is a black cat in the closet, and you assert that nobody knows what is in the closet, you have virtually told me that I am wrong in my hypothesis. So, when I tell Mr. Black that God exists, and he responds very graciously by saying that perhaps I am right since nobody knows what is in the "Beyond," he is virtually saying that I am wrong in my "hypothesis." He is obviously thinking of such a God as could comfortably live in the realm of Chance. But the God of Scripture cannot live in the realm of Chance.

Mr. Black's response when confronted with the claims of God and his Christ, is essentially this: Nobody knows, but nevertheless your hypothesis is certainly wrong and mine is certainly right. Nobody knows whether God exists, but God certainly does not exist, and Chance certainly does exist.

When Mr. Black thus virtually makes his universal negative assertion, saying in effect that God cannot possibly exist and that Christianity cannot possibly be true, he must surely be standing on something very solid. Is it on solid rock that he stands? No, he stands on water! **He stands on his own "experience."** But this experience, by his own assumption, rests again on Chance. Thus, standing on **Chance**, he swings the "logician's postulate" and modestly asserts what cannot be in the "Beyond," of which he said before that nothing can be said.

The Law of Noncontradiction

Of course, what Mr. Black is doing appears very reasonable to himself. "Surely," he says, if questioned at all on the subject, "a rational man must have systematic coherence in his experience. Therefore, he cannot accept as true anything that is not in accord with the **law of noncontradiction**. So long as you leave your God in the realm of the 'Beyond,' in the realm of the indeterminate, you may worship him by yourself alone. But so soon as you claim that your God has revealed himself in creation, in providence, or in your Scripture, so soon I shall put that revelation **to a test by the principle of rational coherence.**"

"And by that test none of your doctrines are acceptable. All of them are contradictory. No rational man can accept any of them. **If your God is eternal, then he falls outside of my experience and lives in the realm of the 'Beyond,' of the unknowable.** But if he is to have anything to do with the world, then he must himself be wholly within the world. I must understand your God throughout if I am to speak intelligently of any relationship that he sustains to my world and to myself. Your idea that God is both eternal and unchangeable and yet sustains such relationships to the world as are involved in your doctrine of creation and providence, is flatly contradictory."

"For me to accept your God," continues Mr. Black, "you must do to him what **Karl Barth** has done to him, namely, strip **him of all the attributes that orthodox theology has assigned to him, and thus enable him to turn into the opposite of himself.** With that sort of God, I have a principle of unity that brings all my experience into harmony. And that God is wholly within the universe. If you offer me such a God and offer him as the simplest hypothesis with which I may, as a goal, seek to order my experience as it comes to me from **the womb of Chance**, then the **law of noncontradiction** will be satisfied. As a rational man I can settle for nothing less."

Rational Probability

"But how can anyone know anything about the 'Beyond'?" asks Mr. Black.

"Well, of course," replies Mr. Grey, "if you want absolute certainty such as one gets in geometry, Christianity does not offer it. We offer you only 'rational probability.' Christianity, as I said in effect a moment ago when I spoke of the death of Christ, is founded on historical facts, which, by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty. All judgments of historical particulars are at the mercy of the complexity of the time-space universe. . . . If the scientist cannot rise above -

Rationalism and Determinism

All this amounts to saying that Mr. Black, **the lover of a Chance philosophy, the indeterminist**, is at the same time an out-and-out determinist or fatalist. It is to say that Mr. Black, the irrationalist, who said that nobody knows what is in the "Beyond," is at the same time a flaming rationalist.³⁴ For him only that which - so he thinks - **he can exhaustively determine by logic must be.** He may at first grant that anything may exist, but when he says this, he at the same time says in effect that nothing can exist and have meaning for man but that which **man himself can exhaustively know.** Therefore, for Mr. Black, the God of Christianity cannot exist. For him the doctrine of creation cannot be true. There could be no revelation of God to man through nature and history. There can be no such thing as the resurrection of Christ.

³⁴ Note again Van Til's analysis that unbelieving thought is, at root, dialectical; it is driven by a rationalist/irrationalist dialectic.

Strangely enough, when Mr. Black thus says that God cannot exist and that the resurrection of Christ cannot be a fact, and when he also says that God may very well exist and that the resurrection of Christ may very well be a fact, he is not inconsistent with himself. For he must, to be true to his method, contradict himself in every statement that he makes about any fact whatsoever. If he does not, then he would deny either his philosophy of Chance or his philosophy of Fate. **According to him, every fact that he meets has in it the two ingredients:** that of **Chance** and that of **Fate**, that of the **wholly unknown** and that of the **wholly known**. Thus, man makes the tools of thought, which the Creator has given him in order therewith to think God's thoughts after him on a created level, into the means by which he makes sure that God cannot exist, and therefore certainly cannot reveal himself.

When Mr. White meets Mr. Black, he will make this issue plain. He will tell Mr. Black that his methodology cannot make any fact or any group of facts intelligible to himself. Hear him as he speaks to the unbeliever:

"On your basis, Mr. Black, no fact can be identified by distinguishing it from any other fact. For all facts would be changing into their opposites all the time.³⁵ All would be gobble-de-gook. At the same time, nothing could change at all; all would be one block of ice.³⁶ Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?³⁷ He clearly has. I know you cannot see this even though it is perfectly clear. I know you have taken out your own eyes. Hence your inability to see is at the same time unwillingness to see. Pray God for forgiveness and repent."

³⁵ If the **notion** of **ultimate chance** were true, then the identification of any fact at any time would be subject to essential change the moment it was identified, **since the world would be chaotic at root. On this basis, facts simply could not be identified in any meaningful way.** Given that facts are identified, the notion of ultimate chance is shown to be absurd; the Christian position is alone defensible.

³⁶ This is the rationalist pole of the **dialectic**. "Nothing could change at all" because the "laws" that serve to identify a thing must themselves be universal and universally valid.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:20

Mr. Grey On Logic

But what will be the approach of the Conservative, Mr. Grey, on this question of logic? He will do the same sort of thing that we saw him do with respect to the question of facts. Mr. Grey will again try to please Mr. Black by saying that, of course, he will justify his appeal to the authority of the Bible by showing that the very idea of such an appeal, as well as the content of the Bible, are fully in accord with the demands of logic.

"You are quite right in holding that nothing meaningful can be said without presupposing the validity of the law of noncontradiction," says Mr. Grey. "The conservative ardently defends a system of

authority." But "without reason to canvass the evidence of a given authority, how can one segregate a right authority from a wrong one? . . . Without systematic consistency to aid us, it appears that all we can do is to draw straws, count noses, flip coins to choose an authority. Once we do apply the **law of contradiction**, we are no longer appealing to *ipse dixit* authority,⁴⁰ but to coherent truth."⁴¹ The Scriptures tell us to test the spirits (1 Jn 4:1). This can be done by applying the canons of truth. God cannot lie. His authority, therefore, and coherent truth are coincident at every point. **Truth, not blind authority**, saves us from being blind followers of the blind."

⁴⁰ *Ipse dixit* authority is authority that has its foundation in the assertion itself; it is self attesting.

⁴¹ Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 71

⁴² *Ibid*, 72.

"Bring on your revelations," continues Mr. Grey. "Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man's assent.⁴⁴ Any theology which rejects Aristotle's fourth book of the *Metaphysics* is big with the elements of its own destruction."²⁰ "If Paul were teaching that the crucified Christ were objectively foolish, in the sense that he cannot be rationally categorized, then he would have pointed to the insane and the demented as incarnations of truth."²¹

Mr. Black's Reaction

"Well," says Mr. Black, "this is great news indeed. I knew that the modernists were willing with us to start from human experience as the final reference point in all research. I knew that they were willing with us to start with Chance as the source of facts, in order then to manufacture such facts of nature and of history as the **law of noncontradiction**, based on **Chance**, will allow. I also knew that the **new modernist, Karl Barth**, is willing to make over his God so that he **can change into the opposite of himself, in order that thus he may satisfy both our irrationalist philosophy of Chance and our rationalist philosophy of logic**. But I did not know that there were any orthodox people who were willing to do such a thing. But you have surprised me before. You were willing to throw your resurrection into the realm of Chance in order to have me accept it. So, I really should have expected that you would also be willing to make the law of noncontradiction rest upon man himself instead of God." "And I am extremely happy that not only the Arminian Fundamentalists but also you less extreme or moderate Calvinists, like Buswell and Carnell, are now willing to test your own revelation by a principle that is wholly independent of that revelation. It is now only a matter of time, and you will see that you have to come over on our side altogether."

"I do not like the regular Calvinists. But they are certainly quite right from their own point of view. Mr. White claims that I am a creature of God. He says that all facts are made by God and controlled by the providence of God. He says that all men have sinned against God in Adam their representative. He adds that therefore I am spiritually blind and morally perverse. **He says all this and more on the basis of the absolute authority of Scripture**. He would interpret me, my facts, and my logic in terms of the authority of that Scripture. He says I need this authority. He says I need nothing but this authority. **His Scripture, he claims, is sufficient and final**. And the whole thing, he claims, is clear."

"Now all this looks like plain historic Protestantism to me. I can intellectually understand the Calvinist on this matter of authority. I cannot understand you. You seem to me to want to have your cake and eat it. If you believe in scriptural authority, then why not explain all things, man, fact, and logic in terms of it? If you want with us to live by your own authority, by the experience of the human race, then why not have done with the Bible as absolute authority? It then, at best, gives you the authority of the expert."

"In your idea of the rational man who tests all things by the facts of history and by the law of noncontradiction, you have certainly made a **point of contact** with us. If you carry this through, you will indeed succeed in achieving complete coincidence between your ideas and ours. And, with us, you will have achieved complete coincidence between the ideas of man and the ideas of God. But the reason for this coincidence of your ideas with ours, and for the coincidence of man's ideas with God's, **is that you then have a God and a Christ who are identical with man.**" [Brings Christ down to man's level – dangerous.]

"Do you not think, Mr. Grey, that this is too great a price for you to pay? I am sure that you do not thus mean to drag down your God into the universe. I am sure that you do not thus mean to crucify your Christ afresh. But why then halt between two opinions? I do not believe Christianity, but, if I did, I think I would stand with Mr. White."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The point Van Til is seeking to make here is that compromising with unbelief for the sake of communication will end up stripping Christianity of its power and its coherence. Even unbelievers can sense that what is being offered in such cases is not fundamentally different from unbelief itself.

Special and General Revelation

Cornelius Van Til

Torch & Trumpet

1952

Vol. 2, Issue 2, Pgs. 5-8

(Or page 44 of 70 on the Lithium app)

[More on man's supposed autonomy and role-play with Mr. White, Black, etc.](#)

We are concerned in this series of articles with the problem of Reformed apologetics. In the first three articles we discussed the general nature of Reformed apologetics. Its method, we saw, is radically different from that of Romanist-evangelical apologetics. The latter starts from the presupposition **that man has a measure of ultimacy or autonomy**. This method assumes therefore that man can correctly interpret an area of life without referring to the God of the Bible. Over against this Reformed apologetics contends that man himself must first be interpreted in terms of the Bible before he can, without falsification, interpret any area of life.

The Bible

In the fourth and fifth articles we dealt with the Bible itself. Reformed theology holds that Scripture speaks for itself. The sort of God of which the Bible speaks cannot speak otherwise than with absolute

authority. The biblical notion of God as self-contained or self-sufficient and the notion that the Bible is self-authenticating are involved in one another.

This simple foundation truth of Protestantism is virtually rejected by evangelical Protestants.

Evangelicals make a two-fold charge against the Reformed doctrine of Scripture. On the one hand they say that it is irrationalistic. We saw how Carnell sets up the autonomous or "**rational man**" as a **judge before whom the Bible must prove its right to speak with authority**. This is as though a child were sitting in judgment on its parents, graciously permitting these parents to speak to it with authority.

On the other hand, evangelicals say that the Reformed doctrine of Scripture is rationalistic. We saw how Pieper, the Lutheran, sets up the **autonomous** man as judge over the contents of the Bible. He insists that inasmuch as the Bible teaches the "**freedom**" of man it can and must also teach the **doctrine of a changing God who adjusts himself to the ultimate decisions of man**.

The Autonomous Man

On the surface it seems strange that the Reformed doctrine of Scripture should be charged both with irrationalism and with rationalism. And on the surface, it also seems strange that the two seemingly exclusive charges spring from the same source, namely, from evangelicalism. Yet there is really nothing else that we could expect from evangelicalism. **The root error of evangelicalism, as noted earlier, is its ascription of a measure of ultimacy to man**. This partly ultimate man only claims its "rights" when it charges the idea of the absolute, self-authenticating authority of Scripture with irrationalism, and when it charges the idea of the absolute, self-consistent God with rationalism.

Evangelical Compromise

Of course, the **evangelical, Mr. Grey**, has the best of intentions in all this. He wants to win Mr. Black, the non-believer, to an acceptance of the Bible as God's Word and to an acceptance of the God of the Bible as his God. But Mr. Black has his conditions. Hard-pressed though he is, he none the less is not ready, he says, to consider the idea of an unconditional surrender, such as Mr. White, the Reformed apologist, has placed before him. Accordingly, Mr. Grey offers Mr. Black a compromise proposal. The principle of human autonomy and ultimacy is to be combined with that of biblical authority. Yet Mr. Black does not readily accept this compromise proposal.

Why not? Because he cannot clearly see, from Mr. Grey's reasoning, why he should exchange his position for that of Christianity at all. He is not shown by Mr. Grey how utterly desperate his own situation is. Nor is he shown how completely the Christian position solves the problems that are wholly baffling on his own position. Mr. Black is left in confusion. The witness of the gospel has not really been placed before him as a challenge!

Unconditional Surrender!

Meanwhile the Reformed apologist, Mr. White, has pressed upon Mr. Black the ultimatum of **unconditional surrender** to the authority of Scripture. He has shown that unless one presupposes this authority as absolute and not merely as that of an **expert** [man trusting in the wisdom of other men, John 5:44, ...you receive the glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only

God?], then man's experience operates in a vacuum. He has made plain to Mr. Black that all discussion about Christianity as being "in accord with the law of contradiction" is worse than pointless unless it first be asked on what fulcrum the *law of contradiction* itself rests. What sort of answer does Mr. Black give to this question? He prefers not to discuss this problem. He assumes that it rests on man's thought of as *ultimate* or *autonomous*. But on what does man then rest. Man, rests on a vacuum. And so, Mr. Black presents the picture of *man resting on "nothing," using the law of contradiction* as a revolving door in order by means of it to move "nothing" into "nothing." His whole procedure is that of an "encounter with nothing."

Mr. White has also made plain to Mr. Black that all discussion about Christianity being "in accord with the facts of experience" is worse than pointless unless one first has shown that he has a philosophy of fact that enables him at least to distinguish one fact from another. Can Mr. Black, on his assumed principle, distinguish one fact from another fact? No, his philosophy of fact is the philosophy of chance. His "principle of individuation," that is, the principle by which any fact is supposed to be different from any other fact, *is that of chance*. On this basis one cannot even count! No fact has any identity of its own. The procedure at the "tower of Babel" would be as orderly as the strictest military discipline in comparison with a scientific methodology based on such a philosophy of fact.

"So then," says Mr. White to Mr. Black, "you see that unless you are willing to presuppose the Bible as absolutely authoritative, your 'law of contradiction' could not get into gear with 'facts' and your 'facts' would not be amenable to the operation of the law of contradiction. *Only on the presupposition of the absolute authority of Scripture as the Word of that God who controls 'whatsoever comes to pass' do you have a philosophy of 'reason,' a philosophy of 'the law of contradiction' and a philosophy of 'facts' that enables you to make sense out of life. Unconditional surrender to the absolute authority of Scripture is your only hope.* It is your only hope for eternity. It is also the only hope for your scientific and philosophic endeavor in this life."

It appears then that the Reformed doctrine of Scripture is the only truly Protestant doctrine of Scripture. It also appears that unless we are willing to begin from this fully Protestant doctrine of Scripture, we cannot with Paul *challenge the wisdom of this world, showing that it has been made foolishness with God.*

General Revelation

It is to be expected that with a specifically Reformed concept of Scripture there goes a specifically Reformed concept of revelation through nature and history. And it is also to be expected that this specifically Reformed doctrine of revelation in nature and history will be charged with being both irrationalistic and rationalistic by Romanists and non-Reformed Protestants or evangelicals.

Calvinistic Rationalism

Let us look first at that aspect of the Reformed teaching on revelation in nature and history that is frequently charged with being rationalistic. The Reformed faith stresses the fact that it is God's plan that is being realized in and through what man does as well as in and through man's environment. Whatsoever comes to pass comes to pass in accordance with the one all comprehensive plan or counsel of God.

All the **facts** that confront man as he looks about himself and as he looks within himself are therefore **revelational of God**. The human mind as knowing no less than the trees that are known is revelational of God. For what happens according to the plan of God happens in accordance with the nature of God's being. Nothing could exist, either as directly made by God or as made by man, the creature of God. **The subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge alike are revelational of God.**

The apostle Paul says in the first chapter of Romans that all men know God. They cannot help but know God. Therefore, they cannot help but know that they themselves are creatures of God. **Human self-consciousness involves God-consciousness. Human self-consciousness would be self-consciousness in a vacuum unless it implied consciousness of God.** **Calvin speaks of this when he says that man has the sense of deity ineradicably impressed upon him.** Therefore, his freedom is the freedom of God's creature. It is freedom to do that which is in accord with or to do that which is against the revealed will of God, but in either case that which is in accord with the plan of God.

Evil

Special emphasis should be placed upon the fact that even the evil that man does by virtue of his sinful will is still in accord with the plan of God and as such is revelatory of God. **Man, not God, is the responsible author of sin.** But man could not sin if his sinning were not, in spite of himself, revelatory of God. **Man does not sin in a vacuum. He could not sin in a vacuum. The possibility of sin presupposes the all-comprehensive plan of God. God reveals his holiness in his wrath upon the sinner.** God is angry with the wicked every day. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). Paul tells us that the sinner's conscience excuses or accuses him according as he obeys or disobeys the revealed will of God (Rom 2:14-15). Man's self-consciousness is moral self-consciousness. And as self-consciousness in general involves consciousness of God, **so man's moral self-consciousness involves consciousness of covenant relationship to God. To know himself at all, man must know himself to be a covenant being. He knows he is either keeping or breaking the covenant.**

Calvin greatly stresses the fact that all things that happen in history are revelational of God. Men ought to see God everywhere, he says. God is clearly to be seen by men whether they look round about them or within them, whether they look to the past or look to the future. The whole scene of history in all of its aspects reveals God to man. Men ought to see God as their Creator. They ought to see him as their bountiful benefactor. They ought to see him as their judge. He is everywhere clearly to be seen. Men cannot look in any direction without seeing the face and therewith the claims of God. Every man walks under the brilliant spotlight of the revelational claims of God.

The Foundation of Science

When modern Calvinists present their views on the foundation and unity of human knowledge in the fields of science, philosophy, and theology they constantly refer to this basic, inescapable revelational character of all **created reality**. The essence of false science, false philosophy and false theology consists therefore in the suppression and rejection of this revelational foundation of human effort and enterprise. And the very purpose of squarely opposing those who reject this revelational foundation of man's work is to the intent that this work might be placed upon its proper foundation again. The

antithetical effect of the Christian's effort is not an end in itself. The idea of the antithesis is based upon and is correlative to the positive idea of the all-comprehensive revelational character of the universe.

The Point of Contact

It is the basically revelational character of all created being that constitutes the foundation of truth for man. Man is inherently enveloped in and by truth. **But truth is not an abstraction.** Truth is truth about God and the universe. Thus, man is naturally confronted by truth. When he speaks untruth, he speaks that which, at bottom, he knows to be untruth. When philosophers think out systems of philosophy that are not based upon the Creator-creature distinction they know, in the depth of their hearts, that they are doing this in order to suppress the truth about themselves. Knowing God to be their Creator they glorify him not as such.

When **Mr. White**, the Reformed apologist, approaches **Mr. Black**, the unbeliever, with the claims of God and of Christ, he knows in advance that the victory is his. He knows that no man can successfully seek for truth if first he has cut himself off from truth. And he knows that those who try to cut themselves off from truth cannot really succeed in doing so. **Accordingly, Mr. Black, the man who starts from himself without owning his own creatureliness is like the man who, standing in the light of the sun, takes out his eyes and then wonders whether the sun exists.**

In talking to Mr. Black, Mr. White will be courteous and kind. But he will not fail to point out that on his assumptions, Mr. Black cannot find the truth because he cannot even seek for it. He cannot on his basis ask a single intelligent question. When Mr. Black hears of this he turns to Mr. Grey for sympathy. He knows that Mr. White is right but, unless the Holy Spirit quickens him, he will continue to suppress the truth.

Negotiated Peace

Mr. Grey, the **evangelical**, hastens to assure Mr. Black that Mr. White is an extremist. "As for myself," says he, "I do not hold to the **determinism** and **rationalism** of Mr. White." He would rather say that God limited himself when he created man. **To give man true freedom**, true personality, God **was willing to forego his absolute control over him.** **[typical Arminian view] God gave man a bit of the same sort of being that he himself possesses. Man's freedom is, like God's freedom, ability to initiate something wholly new in the world.** And so, man is not exclusively revelatory of God, the controller of all things. **Rather God and man are together participant of the same sort of being.** Suppose says Mr. Grey, that you and I need a dollar for a bit of breakfast. You, as the man of means, contribute ninety-eight cents. I, representing the poorer class, contribute two cents. I feel rather dependent on you. Even so, my two cents are worth exactly as much as any two cents that you have contributed. I can, if I wish, buy two cents worth of pretzels and make them do for breakfast. Even if you had given me the two cents that I possess, now that I have them, I have a measure of absolute independence over against you.

In thus asserting **his idea of "freedom" Mr. Grey has compromised the revelational character of the constitution of man.** He has approved of Mr. Black's basic assumption to the effect that man must begin by thinking of himself **as knowing himself apart from God.** Mr. Grey has sided with the Romanist

idea of the analogy of being as over against the Protestant principle of the exhaustively revelational character of all created being.

Having thus taken over - in part at least - Mr. Black's conception of man, Mr. Grey, naturally also takes over - in part at least - Mr. Black's conception of man's environment.

For Mr. Grey history is partly revelational of God and partly revelational of man. God as the father, carries ninety pounds and man, as the child, carries only ten pounds. But the ten pounds carried by man is in no wise carried by God. Mr. Grey feels that if one says with Mr. White, the "whatsoever come to pass" comes to pass by virtue of the ultimate plan of God, **that then one must make God to be the author of sin and kill all human responsibility.** He therefore joins Mr. Black in rejecting the "rationalism" of Mr. White.

Mr. Grey And Non-Christian Irrationalism

The foundation on which Mr. Grey stands when he rejects the "rationalism" of Mr. White is the foundation on which Mr. Black also stands. It is that of **non-Christian irrationalism. It is the assumption that man is not created but is **ultimate** and therefore **autonomous**.**

From this point forward Mr. Grey is at the mercy of Mr. Black. Mr. Grey has now to accept all the false problematics of Mr. Black as though they were genuine. In particular Mr. Grey must assume with Mr. Black that the facts of man's environment are not exclusively revelational of God. When he argues with Mr. Black about the existence of God, **he can only claim that a limited God probably exists.** And he must prove his point by first cutting both himself and Mr. Black loose from the truth of the revelational character of all created being.

It should be noted that Mr. Grey's attitude toward general revelation is the same as that of Mr. Pieper, the Lutheran, toward Scriptural revelation. Mr. Pieper also argued in effect that the God of the Bible must be limited in order to make room for the freedom of man. In both cases the attitude toward the revelation of God is determined by the assumption of **human freedom** as a measure of independence **from God.** In both cases there is no real ground for saying that the revelation of God is really ultimately the revelation of God, the self-contained and self-sufficient God of which the Bible speaks.

Calvinistic Irrationalism

So far, we have dealt with the Reformed conception of general revelation from the point of view of its supposed rationalism. To this we must now add a few words about the Reformed conception of general revelation from the point of view of its **supposed rationalism.** To this we must now add a few words about the Reformed conception of general revelation from the point of view of its **supposed "irrationalism."**

Here too the point is very simple and taken directly from Scripture. It is to the effect that from the beginning of history, even before the entrance of sin, supernatural thought-communication on the part

of God to man was added to God's revelation to man in his own constitution and in the universe about him. The two forms of revelation, revelation in the facts of the created universe whether within or about man, and revelation by way of God's directly speaking to man, are mutually involved in one another. Just as two rafters of a house need to support one another, so these two forms of revelation need to support one another.

Mr. Grey's Rationalism

The significance of this basically simple point cannot well be overestimated. The entire Reformed philosophy of history is colored by it. Think for a moment of some one living where the gospel call has not penetrated. What are the responsibilities of such a person? Is he responsible only for the revelation that speaks to him through his own constitution and through his environment? Mr. Grey would answer yes but Mr. White would answer no. Mr. Grey has no eye for the supplemental character of the two forms of revelation. And that too was the fault of Adam and Eve when they sinned against God. **Adam and Eve thought that they could interpret themselves and nature about them independently of the supernatural thought-communication of God.** And Mr. Grey does not see that this was a grievous sin. He still thinks that Mr. Black, the non-believer, is not wrong when he interprets at least some areas of life without reference to the supernatural thought-communication of God to man in Scripture. When Paul says that "from the creation of the world" God has clearly manifested himself to man (Rom 1:20) and that at the beginning of the history of the world every man in Adam sinned against God, (Rom 5:12) Mr. Grey rejects all this as so much **irrationalism**. **How could men in far off Africa be held responsible for what happened in paradise thousands of years ago?** When Mr. Black ridicules this simple biblical teaching, Mr. Grey joins in with him in saying that surely Mr. White is being an extremist again. **This time Mr. White is said to be an irrationalist as before he was said to be a rationalist!**

In doing so Mr. Grey again does not realize that he has accepted the basic assumption of Mr. Black about **man's independence of God**. Little does he realize that he has again accepted the basically false problematics of Mr. Black as though they were sound. And little does he realize that after this he can, if consistent, only ask Mr. Black to accept a God who is a supplement to nature and to man, a finite god who probably exists - and probably does not exist!

In particular it should be noted that this form of argument which fails to see the interdependence of supernatural and natural revelation springs from the non-Christian rationalism of Mr. Black. It is the sort of position maintained by Carnell when he says that Mr. Black must not be asked to accept any sort of authority which he as a "rational man" is not able to approve by a standard that he used prior to his meeting of the demands of the revelation in question.

The Sum of The Matter

In conclusion we may sum up the matter as follows: there is a distinctly Reformed doctrine of Scripture. This is for Mr. White always "the first book." This distinctly Reformed doctrine of Scripture is rejected by Mr. Grey, the **evangelical**, **because he thinks that it is both rationalistic and irrationalistic**. It is **rationalistic** he says, because it insists that whatsoever happens, happens in accord with the plan of God. It is **irrationalistic**, he says, because it holds that human reason itself in all its cultural effort must be made subservient to the self-authenticating authority of God.

Similarly, there is a distinctly Reformed doctrine of general revelation. This is the "second book" of Mr. White. This distinctly Reformed doctrine of general revelation is implied in the distinctly Reformed doctrine of Scripture. One must, to be consistent, either take both or neither. One cannot read the book of nature aright without the book of Scripture. This Reformed doctrine of general revelation is again rejected by Mr. Grey, the evangelical, because he thinks it is both rationalistic and irrationalistic. **He says this doctrine is rationalistic in that it holds that all the facts of the universe, including those done by the will of man, whether good or bad, are revelational of the plan and therefore of the nature of God. He says this doctrine is irrationalistic because it asserts that all men everywhere are responsible for what happened at the beginning of history when Adam disobeyed the supernatural revelation of God.**

Yet in making the double charge of rationalism and irrationalism against the only consistently Reformed doctrine of revelation, inclusive of the two "books" of Scripture and nature, the evangelical is basing himself upon the assumption of Mr. Black. It is to be expected that Mr. Black would call the biblical position rationalistic. **It goes against his idea of "freedom" to say that whatever he does is within the plan of God.**

It is also to be expected that he will call the biblical position **irrationalistic**. **It goes against his idea of the ultimacy of his reason** to say that reason itself, from the beginning of history, was meant to function in self-conscious subordination to the authoritative thought-communication of God.

But what shall we say of Mr. Grey? Is not he supposed to be winning Mr. Black over to the truly biblical position? Why then does he join Mr. Black in charging the simple teaching of Scripture with respect to itself and with respect to general revelation with being both rationalistic and irrationalistic? And when will he realize that by his method, he cannot show Mr. Black just how Christianity differs from its opposite and just why Mr. Black should become a Christian? **Only Mr. White can really challenge Mr. Black to forsake his idols and serve the living God.** His witness must be heard throughout the world. Let him then not be high-minded but rather strengthen his heart in the Lord his God.

VI

Proofs for the Existence of God

Torch & Trumpet

1952

Vol. 2, Issue 5 Pgs. 18ff

In preceding articles, we have sought to indicate something of the difference between a Reformed and "evangelical" apologetics. Both **Mr. White**, the Reformed apologete, and **Mr. Grey**, the evangelical apologete, seek to defend the truth of Christianity. Both seek to get **Mr. Black**, the non-believer, to accept the truth about God and his creation. To both this is a matter of the greatest importance; they want to see Mr. Black redeemed from the "wrath of God" that rests upon him.

However, Mr. White and Mr. Grey have their internal disagreement about how best to win Mr. Black. And the reason for this disagreement is the fact that they disagree on the nature of that to

which they would win Mr. Black. Their difference with respect to the method of apologetics is based on their difference with respect to theology. Mr. White holds to an unqualified while Mr. Grey holds to a qualified recognition of the sovereignty of God on condition that his own sovereignty be not altogether abolished.

Naturally there will be a difference between them on the requirement they will place before Mr. Black. Mr. White will require absolute surrender to God; Mr. Grey will be satisfied with a negotiated peace. Mr. White will require that Mr. Black henceforth interpret the whole of his life in terms of God; Mr. Grey will advise Mr. Black to interpret most of his life in terms of God.

1. Authority in Scripture

When Mr. Black objects against Mr. White that unconditional surrender to the authority of Scripture is **irrational**, then Mr. Grey nods approval and says that, of course, the "rational man" has a perfect right to test the credibility of Scripture by logic. When the Bible speaks of God's sovereign election of some men to salvation this must mean something that fits in with his "rational nature." When Mr. Black objects to Mr. White that unconditional surrender to Scripture is rationalistic, then Mr. Grey again nods approval and says that, of course, genuine human personality has a perfect **right to test the content of Scripture by experience**. When the Bible speaks of God by his counsel controlling whatsoever comes to pass, this must mean something that fits in with man's freedom. God created man and gave man a share in his own freedom; men therefore participate in his being.

2. Authority In "General Revelation"

But what of natural or general revelation? Here surely there can be no difference, you say, between the requirements of Mr. White and Mr. Grey. Here there is no law and no promise; here there is only fact. How then can you speak of requirements at all? Here surely Mr. White can forge his "five points of Calvinism" and join Mr. Grey in taking Mr. Black through the picture gallery of this world, pointing out its beauties to him so that with them he will spontaneously exclaim, "The whole chorus of nature raises one hymn to the praises of its Creator."

3. Mr. White's Silence

Let us think of Mr. White as trying hard to forget his "five points." "Surely," he says to himself, "there can be nothing wrong with joining Mr. Grey in showing Mr. Black the wonders of God's creation. We believe in the same God, do we not? Both of us want to show Mr. Black the facts of Creation so that he will believe in God. When Mr. Black says: 'I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and I pass on, quite as I came, confused and dismayed' Mr. Grey and I can together take him by plane to the Mt. Wilson observatory so he may see the starry heavens above. Surely the source of knowledge for the natural sciences is the Book of Nature, which is given to everyone. Do not the Scriptures themselves teach that there is a light in nature, *per se*, which cannot be, and is not, transmitted through the spectacles of the Word? If this were not so, how could the Scriptures say of those who have only the light of nature that they are without excuse?"

4. Mr. Grey's Eloquence

So, the three men, Mr. White, Mr. Grey and Mr. Black, go here and there and everywhere. Mr. White and Mr. Grey agree to pay each half of the expense. Mr. Black is their guest.

They go first to the Mt. Wilson observatory to see the starry skies above. "How wonderful, how grand!" exclaims Mr. Grey. To the marvels of the telescope, they add those of the microscope. They circle the globe to see "the wonders of the world." There is no end to the "exhibits" and Mr. Black shows signs of weariness. So, they sit down on the beach. Will not Mr. Black now sign on the dotted line?

As they wait for the answer, Mr. Grey spies a watch someone has lost. Holding it in his hand he says to Mr. Black: "Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond that which human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human designs, thought, wisdom and intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed."

"Now, Mr. Black, I don't want to put undue pressure on you. You know your own needs in your own business. But I think that as a rational being, you owe it to yourself to join the theistic party. Isn't it highly probable that there is a God?"

"I'm not now asking you to become a Christian. We take things one step at a time. I'm only speaking of the Book of Nature. Of course, if there is a God and if this God should have a Son and if this Son should also reveal himself, it is not likely to be more difficult for you to believe in him than it is now to believe in the Father. But just now I am only asking you to admit that there is a great accumulation of evidence of the sort that any scientists or philosopher must admit being valid for the existence of a God back of and above this world. You see this watch. Isn't it highly probable that a power higher than itself has made it? You know the purpose of a watch. Isn't it highly probable that the wonderful contrivances of nature serve the purpose of a God? Looking back, we are naturally led to a God who is the cause of this world; looking forward we think of a God who has a purpose with this world. So far as we can observe the course and constitution of the universe there is, I think, no difficulty on your own adopted principles, against belief in a God. Why not become a theist? You do want to be on the winning side, don't you? Well, the Gallup poll of the universe indicates a tendency toward the final victory of theism."

5. Mr. Black Politely Declines

When Mr. Grey had finished his obviously serious and eloquent plea, Mr. Black looked very thoughtful. He was clearly a gentleman. He disliked disappointing his two friends after all the generosity they had shown him. **But he could not honestly see any basic difference between his own position and theirs.** So, he declined politely but resolutely to sign on the dotted line. He refused to be "converted" to theism. In substance he spoke as follows: "You speak of evidence of rationality and purpose in the universe. You would trace this rationality or purpose back to a rational being back of the

universe who, you think, is likely to have a purpose with the universe. But who is back of your God to explain him in turn? By your own definition your God is not absolute or self-sufficient. You say that he probably exists, which means that you admit that probably he does not exist. But probability rests upon **possibility**. Now I think that any scientific person should come with an open mind to the observation of the facts of the universe. He ought to begin by assuming that any sort of fact may exist. And I was glad to observe that on this all-important point you agree with me. Hence the only kind of God that either of us can believe in is one who may not exist. In other words, neither of us do or can believe in a God who cannot not exist. And it was just this sort of God, a God who is self-sufficient, and as such necessarily existent, that I thought your Christian theists believed in."

By this time Mr. White was beginning to squirm. He was beginning to realize that he had sold out the God of his theology, the sovereign God of Scripture by his silent consent to the argument of Mr. Grey. Mr. Black was right, he felt at once. **Either one presupposes God back of the ideas of possibility or one presupposes that the idea of possibility is back of God.** Either one says with historic Reformed theology on the **basis of Scripture that what God determines and only what God determines is possible**, or one says with all non-Christian forms of thought that possibility surrounds God. But for the moment Mr. White was stupefied. He could say nothing. So, Mr. Black simply drew the conclusion from what he had said in the following words:

"Since you in your effort to please me have accepted my basic assumption with respect to possibility and probability it follows that your God, granted that he exists, is of no use whatsoever in explaining the universe. He himself needs in turn to be explained. Let us remember the story of the Indian philosopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to the present subject. If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without end. It was better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. In short, gentlemen, much as I dislike not to please you, what you offer is nothing better than what I already possess. Your God is himself surrounded by pure possibility or Chance; in what way can he help me? And how could I be responsible to him? For you, as for me, all things ultimately end in the irrational."

6. Mr. Grey Appeals to Logic

At this point Mr. Grey grew pale. In his desperation he searched his arsenal for another argument that might convince Mr. Black. There was one that he had not used for some time. The arguments for God that he had so far used he labeled a posteriori argument. They ought, he had thought, to appeal to the "empirical" temper of the times. They started from human experience with causation and purpose and by analogy argued to the idea of a cause of and a purpose with the world as a whole. But Mr. Black had pointed out that if you start with the ideas of cause and purpose as intelligible to man without God when these concepts apply to relations within the universe, then you cannot consistently say that you need God for the idea of cause or purpose when these concepts apply to the universe as a whole. So now Mr. Grey drew out the drawer marked *a priori* argument. In public he called this the argument from finite to absolute being. "As finite creatures," he said to Mr. Black, "we have the idea of absolute being. The idea of a finite being involves of necessity the idea of an absolute being. We have the notion of an absolute being surely there must be a reality corresponding to our idea of such a being, if not all our ideas may be false. **Surely, we must hold that reality is ultimately rational and coherent and that our ideas participate in this rationality.** If not, how would science be possible?"

7. Mr. Black Again Declines

When Mr. Grey had thus delivered himself of this appeal to logic rather than to fact then Mr. White for a moment seemed to take courage. Was not this at least to get away from the idea of a God who probably exists? Surely the "incommunicable attributes of God," of which he had been taught in his catechism classes, were all based upon and expressive of the idea of God as necessarily existing. But Mr. Black soon disillusioned him for the second time. Said he in answer to the argument from Mr. Grey, "Again I cannot see any basic difference between your position and mine. Of course, we must believe that reality is ultimately rational. And of course, we must hold that our minds participate in this rationality. But when you thus speak you thereby virtually assert that we must not believe in a God whose existence is independent of our human existence. A God whom we are to know must with us be a part of a rational system that is mutually accessible to and expressive of both. If God is necessary to you then you are also necessary to God. That is the only sort of God that is involved in your argument."

8. Mr. Grey Testifies

"But Mr. Black, this is terrible, this is unbearable! We do want you to believe in God. I bear witness to his existence. I will give you a Bible. Please read it! It tells you of Jesus Christ and how you may be saved by his blood. I am born again, and you can be born again too if you will only believe. Please do believe in God and be saved."

9. Mr. White Hopes for The Best!

Meanwhile Mr. White took new courage. He realized that he had so far made a great mistake in keeping silent during the time that Mr. Grey had presented his arguments. The arguments for the existence of God taken from the ideas of cause and purpose as set forth by **Mr. Grey had led to pure irrationalism and Chance. The argument about an absolute being as set forth by Mr. Grey had led to pure rationalism and determinism.** In both cases, Mr. Black had been quite right in saying that a God whose existence is problematic or a God who exists by the same necessity as does the universe is still an aspect of or simply the whole of the universe. But now he felt that perhaps Mr. Grey was right in simply witnessing to the existence of God. He thought that if the arguments used are not logically coercive, they may at least be used as means with which to witness to unbelievers. And surely witnessing to God's existence was always in order. But poor Mr. White was to be disillusioned again. **For the witness bearing done by Mr. Grey was based on the assumption that the belief in God is a purely non-rational or even irrational matter.**

10. Mr. Black Asks Some Pertinent Questions

Mr. Black's reply to the words of Mr. Grey indicated this fact all too clearly. Said Mr. Black to Mr. Grey: "I greatly appreciate your evident concern for my eternal welfare. But there are two or three questions that I would like to have you answer. In the first place I would ask whether in thus witnessing to me you thereby admit that the arguments for the existence of God have no validity? Or rather do you not thereby admit that these arguments, if they prove anything, **prove that God is finite and correlative to man and therefore that your position is not basically different from mine?**"

Mr. Grey did not answer because he could not answer this question otherwise than by agreeing with Mr. Black.

"In the second place," asked Mr. Black, "you are now witnessing to Christ as well as to God, to Christianity as well as to theism. I suppose your argument for Christianity would be similar in nature to your argument for theism would it not? You would argue that the Jesus of the New Testament is probably the Son of God and he quite probably died for the sins of men. But now you witness to me about your Christ. And by witnessing instead of reasoning you seem to admit that there is no objective claim for the truth of what you hold with respect to Christ. Am I right in all this?"

Again Mr. Grey made no answer. The only answer he could consistently have given would be to agree with Mr. Black.

"In the third place," asked Mr. Black, "you are now witnessing not only to God the Father, to Jesus Christ the Son, but also to the Holy Spirit. You say you are born again, that you know you are saved and that at present I am lost. Now if you have had an experience of some sort, it would be unscientific for me to deny it. But if you want to witness to me about your experience, you must make plain to me the nature of that experience. And to do that you must do so in terms of principles that I understand. Such principles must needs be accessible to all. Now if you make plain your experience to me in terms of principles that are plain to me as unregenerate then wherein is your regeneration unique? On the other hand, if you still maintain that your experience of regeneration is unique then can you say anything about it to me so that I may understand? And does not then your witness bearing appear to be wholly unintelligible and devoid of meaning? Thus, again you cannot make any claim to the objective truth of your position."

"Summing up the whole matter, I would say in the first place that your arguments for the existence of God have rightfully established me in my unbelief. They have shown that nothing can be said for the existence of a God who is actually the Creator and controller of the world. I would say in the second place that using such arguments as you have used for the existence of God commits you to using similar arguments for the truth of Christianity with similar fatal results for your position. In both cases you first use intellectual argument upon principles that **presuppose the justice of my unbelieving position**. Then when it is pointed out to you that such is the case you turn to witnessing. **But then your witnessing is in the nature of the case an activity that you yourself have virtually admitted being wholly irrational and unintelligible.**"

11. Mr. White Sees the Richness of His Faith

When Mr. Black had finished Mr. White was in a great distress. **But it was this very distress that at last he saw the richness of his own faith.** He made no pretense to having greater intellectual power than Mr. Grey. He greatly admired the real faith and courage of Mr. Grey. But he dared keep silence no longer. His silence had been sin, he knew. Mr. Black had completely discomfited Mr. Grey so that he had not another word to say. Mr. Black was about to leave them established rather than challenged in his unbelief. And all of that in spite of the best intentions and efforts of Mr. Grey, speaking for both of them. **A sense of urgent responsibility to make known the claims of the sovereign God pressed upon him.** He now saw clearly first that the arguments for the existence of God as conducted by Mr. Grey, are based on the assumption that the unbeliever is right with respect to the principles in terms of which he explains all things. **These principles** are: (a) **that man is not a creature of God but rather is**

ultimate and as such must properly consider himself instead of God the **final reference point** in explaining all things; (b) that all other things beside himself are **non-created** but controlled by **Chance**; and (c) that the power of logic that he possesses is the means by which he must determine what is possible or impossible in the **universe of Chance**.

At last, it dawned upon Mr. White that first to admit that the principles of Mr. Black, the unbeliever, are right and then to seek to win him to the acceptance of the existence of God the Creator and judge of all men is like first admitting that the United States had historically been a province of the Soviet Union but ought at the same time be recognized as an independent and all-controlling political power.

In the second place, Mr. White now saw clearly that a **false type of reasoning** for the truth of God's existence and for the truth of Christianity involves a false kind of witnessing for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity. If one reasons for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity on the assumption that Mr. Black's principles of explanation are valid, then one must witness on the same assumption. One must then make plain to Mr. Black, in terms of principles which Mr. Black accepts, **what it means to be born again**. Mr. Black will then apply the principles of modern psychology of religion to Mr. Grey's "testimony" with respect to his regeneration and show that it is something that naturally comes in the period of adolescence.

In the third place Mr. White now saw clearly that it was quite "proper" for Mr. Grey to use a method of reasoning and a **method of witness bearing** that **is based upon the truth of the anti-Christian and anti-theistic assumptions**. **Mr. Grey's theology is Arminian or Lutheran. It is therefore based upon the idea that God is not wholly sovereign over man. It assumes that man's responsibility implies a measure of autonomy** of the sort that is the essence and foundation of the whole of Mr. Black's thinking. It is therefore to be expected that Mr. Grey will assume that Mr. Black needs not to be challenged on his basic assumption with respect to his own **assumed** ultimacy **or autonomy**.

From now on Mr. White decided that, much as he enjoyed the company of Mr. Grey and much as he trusted his evident sincerity and basic devotion to the truth of God, yet he must go his own way in apologetics as he had, since the Reformation, gone his own way in theology. He made an appointment with Mr. Black to see him soon. He expressed to Mr. Grey his great love for him as a fellow believer, his great admiration for his fearless and persistent efforts to win men to an acceptance of truth as it is in Jesus. Then he confessed to Mr. Grey that his conscience had troubled him during the entire time of their troubles with Mr. Black. He had started in good faith thinking that Mr. Grey's efforts at argument and witnessing might win Mr. Black. He had therefore been quite willing, especially since Mr. Grey was through his constant efforts much more conversant with such things than he was, to be represented by Mr. Grey. But now he had at last come to realize that not only had the effort been utterly fruitless and self-frustrating but more than that it had been terribly dishonoring to God. How could the eternal I Am be pleased with being presented as being a god and as probably existing, as necessary for the explanation of some things but not of all things, as one who will be glad to recognize the ultimacy of his own creatures. Would the God who had in Paradise required of men implicit obedience now be satisfied with a claims and counter claims arrangement with his creatures? [End of article.](#)

Summary comments from Van Til

From the quotations given above, the reader can for himself discern why I have advocated what seems to me to be a Reformed as over against the traditional method of Apologetics. The traditional method was constructed by Roman Catholics and Arminians. It was, so to speak, made to fit Romanist or Evangelical theology. And since Roman Catholic and Evangelical theology compromises the Protestant doctrines of Scripture, of God, of man, of sin and of redemption so the traditional method of Apologetics compromises Christianity in order to win men to an acceptance of it.

The traditional method compromises the Biblical doctrine of God in not clearly distinguishing his self-existence from his relation to the world. The traditional method compromises the Biblical doctrine of God and his relation to his revelation to man by not clearly insisting that man must not seek to determine the nature of God, otherwise than from revelation.

The traditional method compromises the Biblical doctrine of the counsel of God by not taking it as the only all-inclusive ultimate cause of whatsoever comes to pass.

The traditional method therefore **compromises** the *clarity of God's revelation to man*, whether this revelation comes through general or through special revelation. Created facts are not taken to be clearly revelational of God; all the facts of nature and of man are said to indicate no more than that *a god probably exists*.

The traditional method compromises the Biblical doctrine the necessity of supernatural revelation in relation to natural revelation. It does so in failing to do justice to the fact that even in paradise man had to interpret natural revelation in the light of the covenantal obligations placed upon him by God through supernatural communication. In consequence the traditional method fails to recognize the necessity of redemptive supernatural revelation as concomitant to natural revelation after the fall of man.

The **traditional method compromises** the sufficiency of redemptive supernatural revelation in scripture inasmuch as it **allows for wholly new facts to appear in Reality, new for God as well as for man**.

The **traditional method compromises** the authority of Scripture by not taking it as self-attesting in the full sense of the term.

The **traditional method compromises** the Biblical doctrine of man's creation in the image of God by thinking of him as being "free" or ultimate rather than analogical.

The **traditional method compromises** the Biblical doctrine of the covenant by not making **Adam's representative action determinative** for the future.

The **traditional method compromises** the Biblical doctrine of **sin**, in not thinking of it as an ethical break with God which is **complete in principle even though not in practice**.

In spite of these things, this traditional method has been employed by Reformed theologians and this fact has stood in the way of the development of a distinctly Reformed apologetic.

Comments on Apologetics (cont.)

Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith
 By Cornelius Van Til
 Pgs. 278-279

[An analysis of]
 Floyd E. Hamilton

(On the inadequacy of *neutral reasoning* with unbelievers,
 with solid arguments against Existentialism and Romanism/Arminianism)

In the second Chapter Hamilton invites us to advance with him “over the bridge of cause which we have erected” from ourselves to the external world. In the third he leads us even beyond the world by the same bridge to God. We know “that we must have been caused by someone other than ourselves who must have had sufficient power to produce our souls, which are the observed effect” . This gives us “our first link in the chain of proof for the evidence of God. One by one the other links are forged and soldered to the first. There is order in the universe. There is design. In man himself there is will. Will there not be a *Will* back of the universe? Man has a conscience. It is a “certain characteristic innate in the mind which enables a person who has reached the age of reasoning ability, to make a judgement as to the rightness or wrongness of any course of action which may be presented to the mind.” “Shall we not then conclude with Bordon P. Bowne that man has a moral creator?”

The preceding arguments are so plain that the conclusion is inescapable. There is no alternative for thinking man in the face of such evidence but to all upon his face before the wonderful Being who has created him, and to worship him. Let it be borne in mind that the arguments cited above are cumulative. Each adds proof to the others, and their force is only felt when they are taken together.

Thus, theism is supposed to have been established by a neutral process of reasoning. As has earlier been indicated, such a theism is not the theism of Scripture. Calvin’s procedure is quite the reverse of Hamilton’s. following Descartes and others, Hamilton thinks that man can identify himself in terms of himself. [a strong argument against Existentialism] Calvin says the knowledge of self immediately presupposes the relation of the self to God as its creator. No identification of the human self is possible in the realm of open chance. And not bridge of cause can be made from that which cannot be identified (the self) to something else that cannot be identified (the external world). The idea of causation cannot be taken as intelligible by itself in order by means of it to show that God has created the world. If God has created the world the idea of cause in the world must be determined from this its derivative nature. If it is first assumed to be working without God, it cannot after that be shown to be working only in dependence upon God.

The same point is to be made about the ideas of order, purpose and morality. If any of them can function independently of God at the beginning, why do they need God at all?

Moreover, how shall these several autonomous entities be forged into a chain? How shall there be cumulative force in the series of arguments if each argument is itself without force?

The whole procedure followed is out of line with the basic principle of the Reformed Faith. Only in God's light is there any light. **The Psalmist (Ps. 94) teaches us to begin from above with God instead of from the bottom with man.** If even a creature, who is derivative, knows, how much more shall the original know? That is the method of the Psalmist. Descartes assumes that man as the original knows, and that then God *also* knows. If man's knowledge is not from the outset defined as dependent on God's knowledge it never can be.

It was in line with **Arminian** and **Romanist thinking** to use such a method as **Mr. Hamilton** uses. Wherever **autonomy** is hailed in theology, why should it not also be welcomed in **apologetics**? But when autonomy is over and over regarded as the root of all evil in theology why then should it be welcomed in apologetics? [see notes on free will, [code493](#)]

Notes On What is the Free Will of Man?

[Code493](#)

John Owen, A Display of Arminianism Chapter 12

Yet here observe, that we do not absolutely oppose free-will, as if it were "*nomen inane*," a mere figment, when there is no such thing in the world, but only in that sense the Pelagians and Arminians do assert it. About words we will not contend. We grant man, in the substance of all his actions, as much power, liberty, and freedom as a mere created nature is capable of. We grant him to be free in his choice from all outward coercion, or inward natural necessity, to work according to election and deliberation, spontaneously embracing what seemeth good unto him. **Now, call this power free-will, or what you please, so you make it not supreme, independent, and boundless, we are not at all troubled.** The imposition of names depends upon the discretion of their inventors. Again; **even in spiritual things, we deny that our wills are at all debarred, or deprived of their proper liberty: but here we say, indeed, that we are not properly free until the Son makes us free;** -- no great use of freedom in that wherein we can do nothing at all.

We do not claim such a liberty as should make us despise the grace of God, whereby we may attain true liberty indeed; which addeth to, but taketh nothing from, our original freedom. But of this after I have showed what an **idol** the **Arminians** make of free-will. Only take notice in the entrance that we speak of it now, not as it was at first by God created, **but as it is now by sin corrupted;** yet, being considered in that estate also, **they ascribe more unto it than it was ever capable of.** As it now standeth, according to my formerly-proposed method, I shall show, -- **first, what inbred native virtue they ascribe unto it,** and with how absolute a dominion and sovereignty over all our actions they

endow it; secondly, what power they say it hath in preparing us for the grace of God; thirdly, how effectually operative it is in receiving the said grace, and with how little help thereof it accomplisheth the great work of our conversion; -- all briefly, with so many observations as shall suffice to discover their proud errors in each particular.

"Herein," saith Arminius, "consisteth the liberty of the will, that all things required to **enable it to will any thing being accomplished, it still remains indifferent to will or not**." And all of them at the synod: "There is," say they, "accompanying the will of man an inseparable property, which we call liberty, from whence the will is termed a power, which, when all things pre-required as necessary to operation are fulfilled, **may will anything, or not will it**;" that is, **our free-wills have such an absolute and uncontrollable power in the territory of all human actions, that no influence of God's providence, no certainty of his decree, no unchangeableness of his purpose, can sway it at all in its free determinations, or have any power with his highness to cause him to will or resolve on any such act as God by him intendeth to produce**. Take an instance in the great work of our conversion. All unregenerate men," saith Arminius, "have, by virtue of their free-will, a power of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the offered grace of God, of contemning the counsel of God concerning themselves, of refusing the gospel of grace, of not opening the heart to him that knocketh." What a stout idol is this, whom neither the Holy Spirit, the grace and counsel of God, the calling of the gospel, the knocking at the door of the heart, can move at all, or in the least measure prevail against him! Woe be unto us, then, if when God calls us our free-will be not in good temper, and well disposed to hearken unto him! for it seems there is no dealing with it by any other ways, though powerful and almighty. "For grant," saith Corvinus, "all the operations of grace which God can use in our conversion, **yet conversion remaineth so in our own free power that we can be not converted; that is, we can either turn or not turn ourselves**;" where the idol plainly challengeth the Lord to work his utmost, and tells him that after he hath so done he will do what he please. His infallible prescience, his powerful predetermination, the moral efficacy of the gospel, the infusion of grace, the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, **all are nothing**, not at all available in helping or furthering our **independent wills** in their proceedings. Well, then, in what estate will you have the idol placed? "In such a one wherein he may be suffered to sin, or to do well, at his pleasure," as the same author intimates.

Van Til, *Defending the Faith*, pg 17-18, on how to witness to unbelievers – comments on free will as *derivative*

Here the fundamental difference between Mr. Grey's (the traditional evangelical) and Mr. White's (the Calvinist or Reformed apologetic) approach to Mr. Black (the unbeliever) appears. The difference lies in the different notions of the **free will of man [codefree]**. Or, it may be said, the difference is with respect to the nature of man as such. Mr. White would define man, and therefore his freedom, in terms of Scripture alone. He would therefore begin with the fact that **man is the creature of God**. And this **implies** that **man's freedom is a derivative freedom¹. It is a freedom that is not and can not be wholly ultimate, that is, self-dependent**. Mr. White knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him in this analysis of man and of his freedom. He knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him on this any more than he would agree on the biblical idea of total depravity.

¹**Van Til** states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: Calvin never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general a priori position. His position is as radically apposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, he must regard God as original and himself as derivative. He did not place God and man as correlatives next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: p128-9*: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness *the immediate but wholly derivative* starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the *remote but wholly ultimate starting point* of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the *false ideal of absolute comprehension*. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, **the non-Christian interpretation** of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of *comprehension knowledge*. This was done especially in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of **Leibniz**, a striking manifestation of the pride, "hubris," *of the sinner who wishes to be as God*.³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. They have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father's house. His "hubris" never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz's project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

Mr. Grey, on the other hand, must at all costs have "a point of contact" in the system of thought of Mr. Black, who is typical of the natural man. Just as Mr. Grey is afraid of being charged with circular reasoning, so he is also afraid of being charged with talking about something that is "outside of experience." And so he is driven to talk in general about the free spirit of man." Of course, Mr. Black need have no objections from his point of view in allowing for the "free spirit of man." That is at bottom what he holds even when he is a naturalist. His whole position is based upon the idea of man

as a free spirit, that is, a spirit that is not subject to the law of his Creator God. And Carnell does not distinguish between the biblical doctrine of freedom, as based upon and involved in the fact of man's creation, and the doctrine of freedom, in the sense of autonomy, which makes man a law unto himself. Go to [codefree] for more comments.

Doctrine of Man, Christ and Salvation: Aseity, Unity, Immutability, Simplicity, Transcendent, Infinite.
Man: absolute dependence upon God – derivative. Finite in his being.

Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 9-20

Code494

I

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Naturally in the system of theology and in apologetics the **doctrine of God** is of fundamental importance. We must first ask what kind of a God Christianity believes in before we can really ask with intelligence whether such a God exists. The *what* precedes that *that*; the connotation precedes the denotation; at least the latter cannot be discussed intelligently without at once considering the former.

What do we mean when we use the word God? Systematics answer this question in its discussion of the attributes or properties of God. These attributes are divided into incommunicable and communicable. Under the incommunicable attributes we have:

First, **independence** or **aseity** of God. By this is meant that God is in **no sense correlative** to or **dependent upon anything** beside his own being. [**aseity = God is of himself.**] God is the source of his own being, or rather the term source cannot be applied to God. God is *absolute*. He is sufficient unto himself.

Secondly, we speak of the **immutability of God**. Naturally God does not and cannot change since there is nothing besides his own eternal Being on which he depends (Mal. 3:6, Jas. 1:7).

Thirdly, we speak of the **infinity of God**. In relation to the question of time we speak of the *eternity* of God while with respect to space we speak of the *omnipresence* of God. By the term eternity we mean that there is no beginning or end or **succession of moments** in God's being or consciousness (Ps. 90:2, 2Pet. 3:8). This conception of eternity is of particular importance in Apologetics because it involves the whole question of the meaning of the temporal universe: it involves a definite philosophy of history. By the term omnipresence we mean that God is neither included in space nor absent from it. God is above all space and yet present in every part of it (1Kings 8:27, Acts 17:27).

Notes on immutability and time: the distance between each successive change in the creature is called time. So, when God created things, time was the concomitant (naturally accompanying it); time was unavoidably created along with the creation because all created things are mutable; they cannot be immutable since that is only attributed to God not to creatures; it is one of the incommutable attributes of God; only creatures change from one condition to the next. So, it's impossible for there to be anything changeable where there is no time, hence, God, being in eternity, the *eternal now*, where there is no time, points to his unchangeableness! When Adam was in the garden, he being created, by definition concomitant with time, he was therefore mutable. In this particular case, he did change for the worse when he rebelled against his Creator.

Fourthly, we speak of the **unity of God**. We distinguish between the unity of singularity and the unity of **simplicity**. The unity of singularity has reference to numerical oneness. There is and can be only one God. The unity of **simplicity** signifies that God is in no sense composed of parts or aspects that existed prior to himself. (Jer. 10:10, 1Jn 1:5). [The **doctrine of Simplicity** states that God is not composed of parts; he is one pure divine essence. If he were composed of parts, parts that make up God, then who put them together to make God??? That and other questions the would undermine Christian Theism are raised if God is not *simple*.

The **attributes** of God are not to be thought of otherwise than as aspects of the one simple original being; the whole is identical with the parts. On the other hand, the attributes of God are not characteristics that God has developed gradually; they are fundamental to his being; the parts together form the whole. Of the whole matter we may say that the unity and the diversity in God are equally basic and mutually dependent upon one another. The importance of this doctrine for Apologetics may be seen from the fact that the whole problem of philosophy may be summed up in the question of the relation on unity to diversity; the so-called problem of the one and the many receives a definite answer from the doctrine of the simplicity of God.

Man cannot partake of these incommunicable attributes of God. Man cannot in any sense be the source of his own being; man cannot in any sense be immutable or eternal or omnipresent or simple. These attributes therefore emphasize the **transcendence** of God.

Under God's **communicable attributes** we may speak of God as light, God as the Holy One and God as Sovereign. The first of these pertains to God's knowledge of himself and the world. The second

pertains to his moral nature and its significance for man and the world. The third pertains to God's power and its relation to the world.

God's knowledge of himself is self-contained. It is not dependent upon eternal ideas of truth above him. There are no hidden depths in God's being unknown to him. God's knowledge of himself may therefore be called absolute or self-referential.

God's knowledge of the world is, in the nature of the case, not obtained as the result of an investigation of the facts and the laws of the world. The facts and laws of the world are what they are because of God's plan with respect to them. Therefore, his knowledge of the world is involved in his plan for the world. Thus, his knowledge of the facts and laws of the world precede the existence of the world.

God's holiness refers to his attribute whereby he is internally and eternally perfect. God's holy character is back of his expressed requirement of man that he must be perfect as a creature. What God says is right is right because he says it and he says it because it rests on his holy nature.

God's sovereignty refers to the fact that there is no other ultimate power beside himself and that his holy plan for the world will prevail over all opposition against it.

The incommunicable attributes of God stress his transcendence and the communicable attributes stress his immanence. The two imply one another. A Christian notion of transcendence and a Christian notion of **immanence** go together. [*immanence: pertinent passage: In Him we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28; God is intimately involved with his creatures, they being wholly dependent upon Him for everything. A Deist is opposed to this; God is distant and not involved at all.*]

This is good:

It is not a sufficient description of Christian theism when we say that as Christians we believe in both the **transcendence** and the **immanence** of God and **deistic** systems believe only in the **transcendence** of God. **The transcendence we believe in is not the transcendence of deism and the immanence we believe in is not the immanence of pantheism. In the case of deism, transcendence virtually means separation while in the case of pantheism immanence virtually means identification.** And if we add separation to identification, we do not have theism as a result. As we mean a certain kind of God when as theists we speak of God, so also, we mean a certain kind of transcendence and a certain kind of immanence when we use these terms. The Christian doctrine of God implies a definite conception of the relation of God to the created universe. So also, the Christian doctrine of God implies a definite conception of everything in the created universe.

Notes on *Pantheism* by Van Til

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God too near to him; he has identified the Creator with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

a. The Personality of God

What we have discussed under the attributes of God may also be summed up by saying that God is *absolute personality*. The attributes themselves speak of self-conscious and moral activity. On the part of God. Recognizing that for this intellectual and moral activity God is dependent upon nothing beyond his own being, we see that we have the Reformed doctrine of the *personality* of God. There were no principles of truth, goodness or beauty that were next to or above God according to which he patterned the world. The principles of truth, goodness, and beauty are to be thought of as identical with God's being; they are the attributes of God. Non-Christian systems of philosophy do not deny personality to God, at least some of the do not, but, **in effect, they all agree in denying absolute personality to God**. As Christians we say that we can be like God and must be like God in that we are persons but that we must always be unlike God in that **he is an absolute person while we are finite persons**. Non-theists, on the other hand, maintain that though God may be a greater person than we can ever hope to be, yet we must not maintain this ***distinction between absolute and finite personality*** to be a **qualitative** one.

b. The Trinity

Another point in the Christian doctrine of God that needs to be mentioned here is the trinity. We hold that **God exists as a tri-personality**. "The trinity is the heart of Christianity." The three persons of the trinity are co-substantial; not one is derived in his substance from either or both of the others. Yet there are **three distinct persons** in this unity; the diversity and the identity are equally underived.

We have now before us in bare outline the main points of the Christian doctrine. Christianity offers the triune God, the absolute personality, containing all the attributes enumerated, as the God in whom we believe. This conception of God is the foundation of everything else that we hold dear. Unless we can believe in this sort of God, it does us not good to be told that we may believe in some other sort of God, or in anything else. For us everything depends for its meaning upon this sort of God.

II

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

The whole question with which we deal in Apologetics is one of the relation between God and man. Hence, next to the doctrine of God the doctrine of man is of **fundamental** importance.

a. The Image of God in Man

Man is created in God's image. He is therefore like God in everything in which a creature can be like God. He is like God in that he too is a personality. This is what we mean when we speak of the **image of God** in the **wider or more general sense**. Then when we wish to emphasize the fact that man resembles God especially in the **splendour of his moral attributes**, we say that when man was created, **he had true knowledge, true righteousness and true holiness**. This doctrine is based upon the fact that in the New Testament we are told that Christ came to restore us to true knowledge, righteousness and

holiness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). **We call this the image of God in the narrower sense.** These two cannot be completely separated from one another. It would really be impossible to think of man having been created only with the image of God in the wider sense; every act of man would from the very first have to be a moral act, an act of choice for or against God. Hence man would even in every act of knowledge manifest true righteousness and true holiness.

Then after emphasizing that man was like God and in the nature of the case had to be like God, we must stress the point that man must always be different from God. Man was created in God's image. We have seen that some of God's attributes are incommunicable. Man can never in any sense outgrow his creaturehood. This puts a definite connotation into the expression that man is like God. He is like God, to be sure, **but always on a creaturely scale.** He can never be like God in God's **aseity, immutability, infinity and unity.** For that reason, the church has embedded into the heart of its confessions the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. God's being and knowledge are absolutely comprehensive; such knowledge is too wonderful for man; he cannot attain unto it. **Man was not created with comprehensive knowledge.** Man was **finite** and his finitude was originally no burden to him. Neither could man ever expect to attain to comprehensive knowledge in the future. We cannot expect to have comprehensive knowledge even in heaven. It is true that much will be revealed to us that is now a mystery to us but in the nature of the case God cannot reveal to us that which as creatures we cannot comprehend; we should have to be God ourselves in order to understand God in the depth of his being. **God must always remain mysterious to man.** [key point]

The significance of this point will appear more fully when we contrast this **conception of mystery** with the **non-Christian conception of mystery** that is current today even in Christian circles. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian conception of mystery may be expressed in a word by saying that we hold that **there is mystery for man but not for God while the non-Christian holds that there is either no mystery for God or man or there is mystery for both God and man.**

b. Man's Relation to the Universe

Next to noting that man was created in God's image we must now observe that man was organically related to the universe about him. That is, man was to be prophet, priest and king under God in this created world. The vicissitudes of the world would depend upon the deeds of man. As a prophet, man was to interpret this world, as a priest he was to dedicate this world to God and as a king he was to rule over it for God. In opposition to this, all non-Christian theories hold that the vicissitudes of man and the universe about him are only accidentally and incidentally related to one another.

c. The Fall of Man

The fall of man needs emphasis as much as his creation. As we believe that man was once upon a time, created by God in the image of God, so we also believe that soon thereafter man through disobedience fell into sin. After we have discussed what we mean by God and what we mean by the creation of man in the image of God, we can readily see what the nature of sin must be. As a creature of God man had to live in accordance with the law of God, that is, in accordance with the ordinances that God had placed in his creation. **This law was for the most part not verbally transmitted to man but was created in his being.** Man would act in accord with his own true nature only if he would obey the law of God and, vice versa, if he would live in accord with his own nature, he would obey the law of

God. True, God did communicate to man over and above what was embedded in his very nature the specific commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But this was only to force an immediate and final test as to whether man would really live in accordance with the law of God as everywhere revealed within and about him.

When man fell it was therefore his attempt to do without God in every respect. Man sought his ideals of truth, goodness and beauty somewhere beyond God, either directly within himself or in the universe about him. God had interpreted the universe for him, or we may say man had interpreted the universe under the direction of God, **but now he sought to interpret the universe without reference to God; we mean of course, without reference to the kind of God defined above.** [e.g., evolution tries to explain creation, etc., apart from God. Attributes specie development by chance rather than by design.]

The result for man was that he made for himself a false ideal of knowledge. Man made for himself the ideal of absolute comprehension in knowledge. This he could never have done if he had continued to recognize that he was a creature. **It is totally inconsistent with the idea of creatureliness that man should strive for comprehensive knowledge; if it could be attained, it would wipe God out of existence; man would then be God.** And, as we shall see later, because man sought for this unattainable ideal, he brought upon himself no end of woe. [massively important!]

In conjunction with man's false ideal of knowledge, we may mention here the fact that when man saw he could not attain his own false ideal of knowledge, he blamed this on his finite character. **Man confused finitude with sin.** Thus, he commingled the metaphysical and the ethical aspects of reality. Not willing to take the blame for sin, man laid it to circumstances round about him or within him.

III The Doctrine of Christ

When we have discussed the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man, we have the two points between which the knowledge transaction takes place. Yet since sin has come into the world, we cannot see the whole of the picture of reality from the Christian point of view until we see how God and man are brought together after their separation. **Reconciliation** is possible only if God brings about salvation for man and therewith reunion with himself. **Christ came to bring man back to God.**

To do this he was and had to be truly God. For this reason, the church has emphasized the fact that Christ was "Very God of Very God." Here it appears how important it is that we first think of the ontological trinity before we think of the economical trinity [ontological: the nature of being.] It was the second person of the ontological trinity, who was, in respect of his essence, fully equal with the Father, who therefore existed from all eternity with the Father, who in the incarnation assumed a human nature.

This does not mean that he laid aside his divine nature or that he became a human person. Nor does it mean that he became a divine-human person. Nor does it mean that the divine and human natures were intermingled. Christ was and remained even when he was in the manger in Bethlehem a divine person but this divine person took to itself in close union with its divine nature a human nature. The **Creed of Chalcedon** has expressed all this by saying that in Christ the divine and the human natures are so related as to be “two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” The former two adjectives safeguard against the idea that the divine and the human are in any sense intermingled; the latter two adjectives assert the full reality of the union.

It will be noted at this point that this view of the incarnation is in full accord with the doctrine of God as above set forth. If Christ is really the second person of the ontological trinity, he shares in the incommunicable attributes of the Godhead. Accordingly, this implies that even in the incarnation Christ could not commingle the eternal and the temporal. The eternal must always remain independent of and prior to the temporal.

In addition to this brief statement about the person of Christ we must say a word about his offices.

Christ is true prophet, priest and king. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, “How does Christ execute the office of a Prophet?” The answer is “Christ executeth the office of a Prophet, in revealing to us by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.” Now if we recall that man set for himself a false ideal of knowledge when he became a sinner, that is he lost true wisdom, we may say that in Christ man was re-instated to true knowledge. In Christ man realizes that he is a creature of God and that he must not seek for comprehensive knowledge. Christ is our wisdom. He is our wisdom not only in the sense that he tells us how to get to heaven; he is our wisdom too in teaching us true knowledge about everything concerning which we should have knowledge. [to prophesy means to teach.]

Again, the catechism asks: “How does Christ execute the office of a Priest?” The answer is: “Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.” We need not discuss this point except to indicate that Christ’s work as priest cannot be separated from his work as Prophet. Christ could not give us true knowledge of God and of the universe unless he dies for us as priest. The question of knowledge is an ethical question at the root. It is indeed possible to have theoretically correct knowledge about God without loving God. The devil illustrates this point. Yet what is meant by knowing God in Scripture is knowing and loving God; this is true knowledge of God; the other is false.

In the third place the catechism asks: “How does Christ execute the office of a King?” The answer is: “Christ executeth the office of a **King, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and on conquering all of his and our enemies.**” Again, we observe that this work of Christ as king must be brought into organic connection with his work as prophet and priest. To give us true wisdom or knowledge **Christ must subdue us.** He died for us to subdue us and thus gave us wisdom. It is only by emphasizing this organic connection of the aspects of the work of Christ that we can avoid all mechanical separation of the intellectual and the moral aspects of the question of knowledge.

IV The Doctrine of Salvation

We have laid stress upon the organic relation between the offices of Christ. We must now point out that the same organic relationship exists between what Christ did *for* us and what Christ did and does *within* us. In Soteriology we deal with the application to us of the redemption Christ has wrought for us. Sin being what it is, it would be useless to have salvation lie ready at hand unless it were also applied to us. Inasmuch as we are dead in trespasses and sins, it would do us no good to have a wonderful life-giving potion laid next to us in our coffin. It would do us good only if some one actually administered the potion to us.

This point is already involved in the fact that Christ must subdue us in order to give us knowledge. But this subduing of us by Christ is done through his Spirit. **It is the Spirit who takes the things of Christ and give them unto us**. If Christ is to do his own work the spirit must do his. For this reason, Christ told the disciples it would profit them if he should ascend to heaven. It would only be after his ascent that the Spirit could come and finish the work that Christ had begun to do while on earth. What Christ did while he was on earth is only a beginning of his work.

For this reason, we must observe at this juncture that the Spirit who applies the work of Christ is himself also a member of the **ontological trinity**. He would have to be. Unless he were, the work of salvation would not be the work of God alone. If God was to be maintained in his incommunicable attributes, the Spirit of God, not man, had to effect the salvation of man. **The only alternative to this would be that man could at some point take the initiative in the matter of his own salvation. This would imply that the salvation wrought by Christ could be frustrated by man. Suppose that none should accept the salvation offered to them. In that case the whole of Christ's work would be in vain and the eternal God would be set at naught by temporal man. Even if we say that in the case of any one individual sinner the question of salvation is in the last analysis dependent upon man rather than upon God, that is if we say that man can of himself accept or reject the gospel as he pleases, we have made the eternal God dependent upon man. We have then, in effect, denied the incommunicable attributes of God.** If we refuse to mix the eternal and the temporal at the point of creation and at the point of the incarnation, we must also refuse to mix them at the point of salvation.

It will be noted that the point discussed in the preceding paragraph is the **difference between Arminianism and Calvinism**. It may be asked whether we should not in Apologetics ignore the difference that exists between different theological schools and defend the "common faith."

From what we have said above, however, it ought to appear that we cannot take this attitude. The difference between **Calvinism and Arminianism** is a difference in the conception of the relation of the eternal God and temporal man. Now since we hold that only such a view of theology as holds without compromise at any point to the conception of God as absolutely independent of man can really be said to represent the consistently Christian position, and since the whole debate between the Christian and non-Christian position revolves about the question of the relation of the eternal to the temporal or of God to man, it will be apparent that we must hold that **Arminianism** can offer no effective Apologetic for Christianity. It is up to the Arminian to show, if he can, that this view offers a better Apologetic for

Christianity than that offered by the Calvinist. Certain it is that the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism cannot be ignored. He who tries to ignore it has in effect already taken the Arminian position. We shall not make much progress against the common enemy if we ignore such differences between ourselves. A Calvinist naturally thinks that the Arminian is letting the enemy into the fort in spite of what the things he is doing; on the other hand, an Arminian thinks that the Calvinists is letting the enemy into the fort without knowing it.

V

The Doctrine of the Church

“The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Such is the Westminster Confession’s definition of the church. This definition contains the same conception of the relation of the eternal to the temporal as is manifest in the doctrine of salvation. In the last analysis, it is the eternal that precedes the temporal; it is God who determines the salvation of man; the church, that is, the invisible church, is the “whole number of the elect.” **This does not preclude human responsibility.** The Confession has spoken of man’s responsibility and “free will” in preceding articles. It only brings out clearly that God is absolute, here as elsewhere.

It is this fact of God’s absoluteness as expressed in his election of men that gives us courage in preaching and in reasoning with men. Sin being what it is, we may be certain that all our preaching and all our reasoning with men will be in vain unless God brings men to bay. **Men cannot be brought to bay if they have any place to which they can go. And they do have a place to which they can go if they have the inherent ability to accept or reject the gospel in which case they need not feel uneasy about rejecting it today, because they can accept it tomorrow.**

Man's absolute dependence on God, **knowledge of God is analogical**; our knowledge of God and things cannot be **comprehensive**. The short comings of **Arminianism** and their *theory of contradiction*.

Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith
 By Cornelius Van Til
 Pgs. 41-46
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IV MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD UNIVERSE

What we have said about man's knowledge of God is really determinative for what we have to say about man's knowledge of the universe. By the term universe we now mean the whole of the created world including man himself and his environment.

The first question we must ask with respect to the relation of our knowledge of God to our knowledge of the universe is, which of these two is prior?

Man cannot help but know himself at once in relation to his environment. The subject of knowledge must know itself in relation to and in contrast with the object of knowledge.

This contention that man must know himself in relation to his environment is not merely a general consideration obtained by observation of experience. It is implied in the very bedrock of Christianity. This may be seen by again referring to our idea of God and of God's relation to the created universe. **Man exists by virtue of God's existence**. Man's environment precedes man. **God is man's ultimate environment**, and this environment is completely interpretative of man who is to know himself.

In other words, man's environment is not impersonal. It is, moreover, not merely personal in the sense that simultaneous with his own appearance there are also other finite persons in relation to which he knows himself to be a person. Back of this relationship of finite persons to other finite persons and to other finite but impersonal things is **the absolute personality of God**. Back of the question as to whether man needs other finite persons or needs a finite non-personal environment is the question of the environment of man's immediate environment. **God is man's ultimate environment, and this ultimate environment controls the whole of man's immediate environment as well as man himself**. The whole of man's own immediate environment as well as man himself is already interpreted by God. Even the denotation of the whole universe exists by virtue of the connotation or plan of God. Thus, we have answered our question about temporal priority by answering the question

of logical priority. Because man's knowledge of God is logically more fundamental than man's knowledge of the universe, we may be indifferent to the question of temporal priority. Even if in our psychological experience we know ourselves and the universe about us before we speak self-consciously of God, we have all the while known God if we have truly known anything else.

We have constantly emphasized the concept of God as being basic to everything else which a Christian believes. This is so because God exists, as he exists, necessarily. **For that reason, we cannot know ourselves in any true sense unless we know God.** He is our most ultimate and therefore absolutely indispensable environment. For that reason, if we know him, we know him truly though not comprehensively.

It follows from all this that we know the world truly though not comprehensively.

Our argument for the objectivity of knowledge with respect to the universe can never be complete and satisfactory unless we bring in the relation of both the object and the subject of knowledge to God. We may debate endlessly about psychological problems without fruitage if we refuse to bring in the metaphysical question of the nature of reality.^{85} If the Christian position with respect to creation, that is, with respect to the idea of the origin of both the subject and the object of human knowledge is true, there is and must be objective knowledge. In that case the world of objects was made in order that the subject of knowledge, namely man, should interpret it under God. **Without the interpretation of the universe by man to the glory of God the whole world would be meaningless.** The subject and the object are therefore adapted to one another. On the other hand, if the Christian theory of creation by God is not true then we hold that there cannot be objective knowledge of anything. In that case all things in this universe are unrelated and cannot be in fruitful contact with one another. This we believe to be the simple alternative on the question of the objectivity of knowledge as far as the things of this universe are concerned.

One of the points about which there has been much confusion when we speak of the objectivity of human knowledge is whether human knowledge of the world must be comprehensive to be true. Sometimes it is said that though we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge of God we may hope eventually if not now to have comprehensive knowledge of the things of this universe. But we believe that just for the reason that **we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge** of God we cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge of anything in this world. Not as though anything in this world is infinite as God is infinite and for that reason not fully comprehensible, for it is not the infinity of things in themselves but once more the infinity of God that makes it impossible for us comprehensively to understand things in the created universe. The reason for this is not far to seek. **The things of this universe must be interpreted in relation to God.** The object of knowledge is not interpreted truly if though brought into relation with the human mind, it is not also brought into relation with the divine mind. God is the ultimate category of interpretation. Now we cannot fully understand God's plan for created things and so we cannot fully understand things.

We see then that our knowledge of the universe must be true since we are creatures of God who has made both us and the universe. **Then too our knowledge of the universe cannot be comprehensive because our knowledge of God cannot be comprehensive.**

A word must here be said about the question of antinomies. It will readily be inferred what as Christians we mean by antinomies. {86} They are involved in the fact that human knowledge can never be completely comprehensive knowledge. Every knowledge transaction has in its somewhere a reference point to God. Now since God is not fully comprehensible to us, we are bound to come into what seems to be contradiction in all our knowledge. **Our knowledge is analogical and therefore must be paradoxical.** We say that if there is to be any true knowledge at all there must be in God an absolute system of knowledge. We therefore insist that everything must be related to that absolute system of God. Yet we ourselves cannot fully understand that system.

We may, in order to illustrate our meaning here, take one of the outstanding **paradoxes** of the Christian interpretation of things, namely, that of the relation of the counsel of God to our prayers. To put it pointedly: We say on the one hand that prayer changes things and on the other hand we say that everything happens in accordance with God's plan and God's plan is immutable.

The thing we are concerned about here is to point out that in the nature of the case there would have to be such a paradox or seeming contradiction in human knowledge. God exists as self-complete apart from us; he is all-glorious. Yet he created the universe that it might glorify him. This point lies at the bottom of every paradox or antinomy. We were in the nature of the case completely interpreted before we came into existence; the universal plan of God needed not to be supplemented by historical particulars and could not be supplemented in this way. The historical could not produce anything wholly new. This much we see clearly. God being what he is, it must be his counsel which acts as the indispensable and self-complete unity back of the finite one and many. The only alternative to saying this is to say that the historical produces the wholly new, and this would be to give up the basic idea of the Christian-theistic scheme, namely, the idea of God and of his creation and control of the universe. On the other hand, the historical must have genuine significance. Or else why should God have created it? Prayer must be answered, or God would not be God. The universe must really glorify God; that is the purpose of its existence. **So we seem to have on the one hand a bucket that is full of water and on the other hand we seem to add water to this bucket which we claim to be already full.**

It appears that there must seem to be contradiction in human knowledge. To this we must now add that the contradiction that seems to be there can in the nature of the case be **no more than a seeming contradiction.** If we said that there is real contradiction in our knowledge we would once more be denying the basic concept of Christian-theism, i.e., the concept of the self-complete universal in God. We should then not merely be saying that there is no complete coherence in our thinking, but we should also be saying that there is no complete coherence in God's thinking. And this would be the same as saying that there is no coherence or truth in our thinking at all. If we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of real contradiction, we have destroyed all human and all divine knowledge; **if we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of seeming contradiction, we have saved God's knowledge and therewith also our own.**

We must note here again how impossible it is in an apologetic argument to close one's eyes to differences between various theological schools. That fact comes out here more strikingly than anywhere else. **Arminianism has not been true to its own belief in creation.** With belief in creation, it

stands committed to that view of God and of God's counsel and that view of man's relation to that counsel which we have outlined. Yet it has been untrue to all this in its insistence that the historical does produce the absolutely new. **For that reason, it has to think of the relation of God's counsel to man's activity as one of real contradiction. In order to avoid this "contradiction" it has simply thrown overboard the idea of the counsel of God, as controlling all things. Therewith it has in effect sought to destroy both divine and human knowledge and therewith it has destroyed the very meaning of history which it was so anxious to preserve. God cannot answer our prayers for the salvation of people if those people can reject that salvation when they wish.**

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 208: Add to this the fact that even orthodox Arminians theology has, in its concept of the plenary ability of the sinner to accept or reject the gospel, really taught that the natural man knows what his basic needs are, and it becomes very clear that the danger facing us is indeed very great. Arminianism had made an easy alliance with evolutionism.

Abraham Kuyper's Doctrine of Common Grace

Code496

Excerpt from
Common Grace and the Gospel
 by
 Cornelius Van Til

.....

Chapter Two
 Pg 14
 Abraham Kuyper's Doctrine of
 Common Grace

Bold and **red** for emphasis. Brackets in [\[blue\]](#) are my inserts.

Turning now to an exposition of Kuyper's great work, we regret that we cannot begin with Calvin. (A reference, in passing, must be made, however, to the dissertation of Dr. Herman Kuiper, *Calvin on Common Grace*, 1928) We even pass by the pamphlet of Dr. Herman Bavinck on *Common Grace* with a remark or two. Bavinck wrote his booklet (published in 1894) with the purpose of bolstering up the claim he made for the Protestant Faith in his earlier address on *The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church* (published in 1888). It is Protestantism rather than Romanism, he avows in that earlier lecture, that expresses the truly catholic genius of the Christian Religion. It is in accordance with this that he says in his pamphlet on Common Grace, "Through this doctrine of *gratia communis* the Reformed [theologians] have on the one hand maintained the specific and absolute character of the Christian religion and on the other have been second to none in their appreciation of everything good and beautiful that God has given to sinful men. Thus they have simultaneously maintained the seriousness of sin and the rights of the natural. And thus they were protected against both Pelagianism and Pietism" (p. 29).

A similar purpose has also controlled Kuyper in his work. It was the desire to press the catholic claim of the truth of Christianity that led Kuyper as well as Bavinck to set forth this doctrine of common grace.

We shall first attempt to find the general characteristics of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace. Here a difficulty confronts us. There appears to have been a certain development in his views. In the first of his three volumes entitled *De Gemeene Gratie*, he tends to define common grace in more negative, while in the second he tends to define common grace in more positive, terms. In the first volume he speaks of the essence of common grace as being a certain restraint of God upon the process of the sinful development of history. In the second volume he speaks of the essence of common grace as being a certain positive accomplishment in history that the sinner is enabled to make by God's gifts to him. It looks as though Kuyper's conception of common grace grew gradually in his own mind to

include a positive as well as a negative aspect. We shall look at each of these aspects in turn, in order then as far as we can, to bring them together in to one concept.

When Kuyper speaks of the restraint of the destructive process of sin as being the essence of the doctrine of common grace he makes plain that common grace, like special grace, presupposes the doctrine of the sinner's total depravity. All men are born dead in trespasses and sins. "But", he adds, "upon death follows a process of *disintegration* of the corpse that could be and was restrained, not *wholly* but in part. Not wholly, in order that the fearful results of sin might be apparent to all, but in part, in order that also in this manner the wealth of God's creation and of his recreating power in our sinful race might be glorified. (*De Gemeene Gratie*, Leiden, 1902), I, p. 243. He asserts a little later that the entire doctrine of common grace presupposes the fact of total depravity (I, p. 243).

Both types of grace, special and common, presuppose total depravity. The difference between the two must be indicated by the different effect they accomplish upon the totally depraved. **Regeneration, a gift of the special grace**, Kuyper argues, **removes the cancer of sin by taking out its roots**. In the place of sin it gives the power of eternal life. **But common grace does nothing of the sort**. It keeps down but does not quench. It tames, but does not change the nature. It keeps back and holds in leash, but thus, as soon as the restraint is removed, the evil races forth anew of itself. It trims the wild shoots, but does not heal the root. It leaves the inner impulse of the ego of man to its wickedness, but prevents the full fruition of wickedness. It is a limiting, a restraining, a hindering power, which brakes and brings to a standstill." (I, p. 251). **[in other words, Hitler would have been much worse had not God restrained him; and if there were no common grace in the world, it would literally be hell on earth; no one would be safe anywhere. Common grace allows society to prosper and be livable so that we don't destroy one another.]**

Thus it is the restraint of the destructive force of sin that as sin has affected the whole universe in the course of its historical development, we find, according to Kuyper, that common grace reaches out everywhere. Summing up his discussion on this point, he asserts: "Thus common grace began in *the soul* of man, by keeping the 'small sparks' from dying out. It took its second point of support in the body of man by supporting its physical powers and thus pushing back the coming death. In addition to this, common grace had to produce a third type of activity, namely, in the world of man..." (I, p. 261).

The essence of common grace is the restraint of the process of sin; its scope is man and his world. Its ultimate foundation, we must add, is the mercy of God. Says Kuyper: "Thus common grace is an omnipresent operation of divine mercy, which reveals itself everywhere where human hearts are found to beat and which spreads its blessing upon these human hearts." (I, p. 251).

We cannot set forth in detail what Kuyper further says on the restraint of sin. At the moment we are looking for a broad perspective of the doctrine of common grace as a whole. It is well to hasten on, then, to Kuyper's statement of what we my call the positive aspect of common grace.

Kuyper distinguishes in his second volume between the *constant* and the *progressive* aspects of common grace. By the constant aspect of common grace he means largely what in the first volume he speaks of as the essence of common grace, namely, the restraint of the process of sin. God's purpose

with common grace, he adds in the second volume, is not merely to make human life possible by the restraint of sin, but also to provide for its progress (II p. 600). "There is", he says, "on the one hand the constant operation of common grace which began in Paradise after the Fall, and which has remained till this day precisely what it was in the beginning and this constant common grace itself consists of two parts." (II p. 600). These two parts are God's restraint of the power of destruction in nature and God's restraint "of the power of sin *in the heart* of man, to make possible the appearance of civil righteousness on the earth among sinners and heathen... This is the common grace that leads to the maintenance and control of our human life." (II p. 600).

Continuing from this point Kuyper says: "Yet common grace could not stop at this first and constant operation. Mere maintenance and control affords no answer to the question as to what end the world is to be preserved and why it has passed throughout a history of ages. If things remain the same, why should they remain at all? If life were merely repetition, why should life be continued at all? ...Accordingly, there is added to this first constant operation of common grace ...another, wholly different, operation...calculated to make human life and the life of the whole world pass through a process and develop itself more fully and richly.

The course of history would, argues Kuyper, be wholly unintelligible if we forgot to bear in mind the progressive and well adds the constant operation of common grace. Defining both aspects briefly again, he says: "The *constant* [operation] consists in this **that God, with many differences of degree, restrains the curse of nature and the sin of the human heart**. In contrast with this the progressive [operation] is that other working through which God, with steady progress, equips human life ever more thoroughly against suffering, and internally brings it to richer and fuller development." (II p. 602).

The "deep, incisive difference" between these two operations of common grace Kuyper signals by saying that in the constant operation, God acts independently of man, while in the case of the progressive operation man himself acts as "instrument and **co-laborer** with God." (II p. 600). The history of civilization is here brought in as proof for his contention that man himself is the co-laborer with God. [Here is my view on this as I see in scripture: man's dependence upon God is perfect, universal and absolute since we receive our all from God. God is not dependent at all on the creature for any of His happiness or glory. In one sense we are co-laborers, but in another sense, if you dig deeper here, we are not, in that we are entirely dependent upon God, his working in us, to do anything good, as John notes in John 15:5, *apart from Me you can do nothing* (nothing spiritually good). And so Paul relates this truth Phil. 2:13, ¹³ ***for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure***. Now, the amazing part of this, or the wonderful mystery of it, is that God does this, works in you, without doing violence to your creaturely liberty; God works not by compulsion or making you a puppet on a string. Jonathan Edwards expounds this here regarding *efficacious grace or special grace*, as Van Til points out above, grace that severs the root of sin, but the MO of God is the same with common grace; he works both by his sovereign power over the soul of man:

§ 64. In efficacious [*special*] grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.

In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, "God worketh in you both to will and to do."

Van Til continues:

At a somewhat earlier point in the second volume Kuyper says: "common grace is never something that is added to our nature, but is always something that proceeds from our nature as the result of the constraint of sin and corruption." (*II*, p. 214). Here, though he speaks without limitation, he is evidently thinking only of what he later calls the progressive operation of common grace.

WE must not join the two aspects of common grace of which Kuyper speaks. In a general way we may affirm that, for Kuyper, common grace is primarily a restraining power of God, working either with or without man as an instrument, by which the original creation powers of the universe are given an opportunity for a certain development to the glory of God.

This very broad and qualified definition of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace is perhaps the best we can do under the circumstances. Kuyper's exposition is not fully consistent and clear. Yet, in a well-rounded statement of his view Kuyper would wish us to include (a) the two operations spoken of and (b) the activity of man as the instrument of God at certain points.

Kuyper's statement of the doctrine of common grace has not gone unchallenged. In a number of pamphlets and books, as well as in a monthly magazine, *The Standard Bearer*, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, the Rev. Henry Danhof and others have vigorously denied the existence of common grace.

Hoeksema and Danhof argue that it is inconceivable that God should be in any sense, and at any point, graciously inclined to those who are not His elect. The wicked do, to be sure, receive gifts from God. But rain and sunshine are not, as such, evidences of God's favor.

Moreover, the idea of common grace, Hoeksema and Danhof contend, virtually denies the doctrine of total depravity. Man is inherently a spiritual-moral being. If he is said to do any good, as Kuyper says he does, this good must be a spiritual good. And if man does any spiritual good he is not totally depraved. When Hoeksema and Danhof began to write against the idea of common grace they were ministers of the Christian Reformed Church. In 1924 the Synod of that Church virtually condemned their views. It did so by making a pronouncement on three points of doctrine.

As these "three points" have ever since been at the center of the debate on common grace we include them at this juncture. As given in *The Banner* (June 1, 1939, pp. 308 f) they are:

"Synod, having considered that part of the *Advice of the Committee in General* which is found in point III under the head: *Treatment of the Three Points*, comes to the following conclusions:

“ ‘A. Concerning the first point, touching the favorable attitude of God toward mankind in general, and not alone toward the elect, Synod declares that it is certain, according to Scripture and the Confession, that there is, besides the saving grace of God, shown only to those chosen to eternal life, also a certain favor or grace of God which he shows to his creatures in general. This is evident from the quoted Scripture passages and from the Canons of Dort. II, 5, and III and IV, 8 and 9, where the general offer of the Gospel is discussed; while it is evident from the quoted declarations of Reformed writers of the period of florescence of Reformed theology that our Reformed fathers from of old have championed this view.’

“Note of the editor: The following Scripture passages are given as proof: Ps. 145:9; Matt. 5:44, 45; Luke 6:35, 36; Acts 14:16, 17; 1Tim 4:10; Rom. 2:4; Ezek. 33:11; Ezek. 18:23. We need not print these texts since the readers can easily look them up. They can also find the passages of the Canons of Dort referred to in their copy of the Psalter Hymnal. However, inasmuch as they have no access to the declarations of the Reformed fathers, we should translate these; but since that will take considerable space we shall omit a sentence here and there, where this can be done without obscuring the thought.

“Calvin: Book II, ch. II, 16: ‘Yet let us not forget that these are most excellent gifts of the Divine Spirit, which for the common benefit of mankind he dispenses to whomsoever he pleases.... Nor is there any reason for inquiring what intercourse with the Spirit is enjoyed by the impious who are entirely alienated from God. For when the Spirit of God is said to dwell only in the faithful, that is to be understood of the Spirit of sanctification, by whom we are consecrated as temples to God himself. Yet it is equally by the energy of the same Spirit that God replenishes, actuates, and quickens all creatures, and that according to the property of each species which he has given it by the law of creation...’ Book III, ch. 14:2: ‘We see how he confers many blessings of the present life on those who practice virtue among men. Not that this external resemblance of virtue merits the least favor from him; but he is pleased to discover (reveal – K.) his great esteem of true righteousness by not permitting that which is external and hypocritical to remain without a temporal reward. Whence it follows, as we have just acknowledged, that these virtues, whatever they may be, or rather images of virtue, are the gift of God; since there is nothing in any respect laudable which does not proceed from him.’

“ ‘Van Mastricht, First Part, p. 439: ‘Now from this proceeds a threefold love of God toward the creatures: a *general*, Psalm 104:31 and 145:9, whereby he has created, preserves, and rules all things, Psalm 36:7 and 147:9; a common, directed to human beings in particular, not indeed to all and to each, but nevertheless to *all kinds*, without exception, the reprobate as well as the elect, of what sort or race they may be, to which he communicates his blessings; which are mentioned in Heb. 6:4, 5; 1Cor. 3:1,2.’

“ ‘Concerning the second point, touching the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society, the Synod declares that according to Scripture, and the Confession, there is such a restraint of sin. This is evident from the quoted Scripture passages and from the Belgic Confession, article 13 and 36, where it is taught that God through the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart, restrains sin in its unhindered breaking forth, as a result of which human society has remained possible; while it is evident from the quoted declarations of Reformed writers of the period florescence of Reformed theology that our Reformed fathers from of old have championed this view.’

“Note of the editor: The following Scripture passages are referred to: Gen. 6:3; Ps. 81:11, 12; Acts 7:42; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 2Thes. 2:6, 7.

“The same Reformed writers are quoted as under the first point:

“Calvin, Institutes, Book II, ch. III, 3: ‘For in all ages there have been some persons who, from the mere dictates of nature, have devoted their whole lives to the pursuit of virtue. And though many errors might perhaps be discovered in their conduct, yet by their pursuit of virtue they afforded proof that there was some degree of purity in their nature... These examples, then, seem to teach us that we should not consider human nature to be totally corrupted; since, from its instinctive bias, some men have not only been eminent for noble actions, but have uniformly conducted them selves in the most virtuous manner through the whole course of their lives. But here we ought to remember that *amidst this corruption of nature there is some room for Divine grace, not to purify it but internally to restrain its operations.* (we italicize – K.) For should the Lord permit the minds of all men to give up the reins to every lawless passion, there certainly would not be an individual in the world, whose actions would not evince all the crimes for which Paul condemns human nature in general, to be most truly applicable to him... In his elect the Lord heals these maladies by a method which we shall hereafter describe. In others he restrains them, only to prevent their ebullitions so far as he sees to be necessary for the preservation of the universe.’

“Van Mastricht, II, p. 330: ‘God however moderates the severity of this spiritual death and bondage: (a) internally by means of some remnants of the image of God and of original righteousness....to which things is added an internal restraining grace.... (b) Externally, through all kinds of means (“hulpmiddelen”) of **State, Church, Family, and Schools, by which the freedom and dissoluteness of sin is checked and restrained**, and to which even an **incentive** to practice what is honorable is added.’

“ ‘Concerning the third points, touching *the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate*, the Synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession the unregenerate, though incapable of any saving good (Canons of Dor, III, IV, 3), can perform such

civic good. This is evident from the quoted Scripture passages and from the Canons of Dort, III, IV, 4, and the Belgic Confession, where it is taught that God, without renewing the heart, exercises such influence upon man that he is enabled to perform civic good; while it is evident from the quoted declarations of Reformed writers of the period of florescence of Reformed theology, that our Reformed fathers have from of old championed this view.

Note: The Scripture passages quoted are: 2Kings 10:29, 30; 2Kings 12:2 (compare 2Chron, 24:17-25); 2Kings 14:3 (compare 2Chron. 25:2 and vss. 14-16, 20, 27); Luke 6:33; Rom. 2:14 (compare vs. 13. Also Rom. 10:5 and Gal. 2:12).

Note: Again we translate Synod's quotations from the writings of Reformed fathers:

"Ursinus, Schatboek; on Lord's Day III: 'Concerning an unconverted person it is said that he is so corrupt that he is totally incapable of any good. To understand this one must know what kind of good and what sort of incapability is spoken of there. **There is a threefold good:** (1) Natural (good), as eating drinking, walking, standing, sitting; (2) Civic (good), as buying, selling, doing justice, some knowledge or skill, and more of such, which promote out temporal welfare. (3) **There is also a spiritual and supernatural good, which is absolutely necessary for inheriting eternal life.** It consists in this that one turns to God from the heart and believes in Christ. The last is meant here; in the other an unconverted man can even far excel a regenerated person although he had these (as a common gift) from God. See 2Cor. 3:5; James 1:17; Exod. 31:2; Prov. 16:1.'

'Van Mastricht, I, p. 458: "Reformed (scholars) acknowledge indeed that the unregenerate person, apart from saving grace, is able....but they add to this that even these things **are not done only through the exercise of the free will but through God's common grace working in the unregenerate all the moral good which is in them or which is produced by them.** [hence, see Phil. 2:13 above! *God works in you to will and to do...*] For example, all the natural art which was in Bezalel, Ex. 31:2, 3, and all the moral good in those of whom it is said that they **were enlightened by the Holy Spirit**, tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, Heb. 6:4, 5.'

'Van Mastricht, I, p. 300: '...There is a natural good, for example, eating, drinking, reasoning; there is a civic good as polite and friendly association with the neighbor, and offending no one; there is a moral or ecclesiastical good, as attending worship diligently, saying prayers, refraining from gross misdeeds, Luke 18:11, 12; and a spiritual good, for example, faith, hope, etc....in the state of sin the free will is indeed able to do a thing that is a natural, civic, or moral good, **but not a spiritual good, which accompanies salvation.**' [that is the key distinction! E.g., Jesus said the Jews, *you will not come to me to have life. They will not because they cannot!* See Romans 8:7-8 – *...those who are in the flesh cannot please God. To please God is to obey the gospel*

which is to believe on Christ for eternal life. This is the principle point upon which man's total depravity issues forth.]

We shall not pass in review the various criticisms made upon "the three points" by Hoeksema and his associates. These criticisms, together with their relative validity or invalidity will appear in substance as we turn to a fuller discussion of the latest phase of the debate on common grace.

Notes on the Image of God, Roman Catholicism/Aquinas' Errors on the Depravity of Man & Con-createdness of God's Image, etc., And notes on the Trinity and the Representational Principle

Excerpts from Lane Tipton's book,
The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til
Pgs. 138-151, 161-162
Code497

The Representational Principle, the Image of God And the *Sensus Divinitatis*

This leads Van Til to suggest that the representational principle supplies a Trinitarian frame of reference that anchors Calvin's view of the image of God and the *sensus divinitatis* [footnote: Calvin states that this reciprocal knowledge of God and man obtains after the fall, as well, most clearly in man's inescapable knowledge of his misery.] According to Calvin's view, creatures know God in the same act of knowing themselves, and that knowledge, before the fall for image-bearing Adam consisted of **true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness**.

Calvin argues that Adam was created as the image of God in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge of God with no need for additional grace (such as the *donum superadditum* of Roman Catholicism) in order to address a defect in his psychosomatic union. He says,

In order for us to come to a sure knowledge of ourselves, we must first grasp the fact that Adam, parent of us all, was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). That is, he was endowed with **wisdom, righteousness, holiness**, and was to cling by these gifts of grace to God that he could have lived forever in Him, if he had stood fast in the uprightness God had given him.

Calvin construes **Adam's righteousness and holiness** as **concreated and natural to him**, so that he stood in original righteousness before God as the created image of God. He elaborates: "Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection." In fact, Calvin emphasizes that it is of the highest importance "to know what we were like when we were first created and what our condition became after the fall of Adam." He insists, contrary to the **Roman Catholic doctrine of concupiscence** that "if a defect were proved to inhere in nature, this would bring reproach upon [God]. Calvin gives seminal expression to the deeper Protestant conception of the image of God as developed in chapter 2.

Van Til argues that "Calvin has really made an advance in the direction of a truly Christian theistic epistemology." This is especially so when we join Calvin's understanding of the image of God in his exposition of the *sensus divinitatis*. Van Til says that, in Calvin's view, "man cannot exist and never has existed apart from a **sense of deity**. This is [Calvin's] way of saying that man's knowledge of himself

and of God comes simultaneously.” In other words, Calvin “did not think that he could know himself first and afterward know God...The knowledge of self and the knowledge of God is, according to Calvin, included in **one act of thought.**” On this point, Van Til echoes the language of Warfield:

The knowledge of God is given in the very same act by which we know self. For when we know self, we must know it as it is: and the means...co-knowledge with self of that on which it is dependent...We know God in knowing self.”

This means that “the knowledge of God...is given in the same act of knowledge by which we know ourselves.” The concurrent awareness of self and of God lies at the heart of Calvin’s view of the internal general revelation given to Adam before the fall in the creational endowment of the image of God.

Calvin adds, regarding the knowledge that is native to the image endowment:

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God in whom he “lives and moves.”

This language appeared in the context of the introductory chapter entitled, “The Knowledge of God and That of Ourselves Are Connected. How are They Interrelated.” Calvin wrote later along similar lines that “man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he had first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.” As Edward A Dowey, Jr., remarks, “This co-relation of knowledge between God and man is of course not merely formal. It is shot through on every level with a two-sided personal relationship which expresses itself in religious and moral categories.” It is precisely this religious relationship **concreated in Adam as the image of God** that distinguishes the deeper Protestant conception of man as the natural image of God, together with its corresponding view of general revelation, from the deeper Catholic conception of **Thomas and Bellarmine** and the deeper Modernist conception of **Barth.**”²⁹ [read this footnote!](#)

²⁹ This deeper Protestant conception of man as the image of God offers the strongest and most robust doctrine of the knowledge of God as revealed in nature, especially when compared to the deep Modernist conception of **Karl Barth** and the deeper Catholic conception of **Thomas Aquinas**. As is well known, in his doctrine of Adam as the image of God, **Barth** denies all natural knowledge of God. **Aquinas**, in his doctrine of the image of God, **denies to Adam concreated knowledge of God that consists in natural religious fellowship with God [which is why Rome insists on the *donum superadditum* to make this fellowship possible]** (see chapter 2 above for a fuller discussion.) According to **Aquinas**, while God created Adam as his image with the natural **gifts of intellect and volition**, **knowledge of God was not concreated** (as in Calvin’s view of the *sensus divinitatis*), but rather was inferential and indirect, according to the limits of Adams’ natural reason. Even after the fall, for **Aquinas**, natural knowledge of God has only been gained indirectly by those who prove capable of reasoning successfully from created effects to a supernatural First Cause (see *ST* Ia, q. 1, arts. 1 and 6). **Aquinas’s denial of concreated knowledge of God in man** therefore occupies a halfway house between **Barth’s denial of any knowledge of God through nature**, and **Calvin’s insistence that knowledge of God is concreated in Adam as the image of God**, such that Adam knew God *via* natural revelation in the very act of knowing himself, both before and after the fall. At the same time, **Aquinas attributes far too much to fallen man in the estate**

of sin and misery, since **he supposes him to be capable of utilizing his intellect and will** [when they are really in bondage to sin...] to arrive at and acknowledge true propositions about God from nature. **Aquinas's failure** to begin with concreated knowledge of God (both before and after the fall, **his weakened view of original sin**, and his truncated view of natural theology combine to render his method of natural theology inadequate to express the bible's teaching regarding the image of God and general revelation (see Rom. 1:18-23). In stark contrast, **Van Til** develops Calvin's view of general revelation in light of the **representational principle**, affirms man's inescapable and **concreated knowledge** of God (as his image), acknowledges the **inability of fallen man to generate a true natural theology** (given his depravity), and declares as absolutely necessary the Spirit's regeneration by means of special revelation for sinful man to acknowledge what he inescapably Knowles through God's general revelation (cf Rom. 1:20-21; Ps 19:1-4). In these ways, Van Til's apologetical method distinguishes itself crisply from the Roman Catholic approach exemplified by Aquinas, as well as from Barth's utter rejection of apologetics and general revelation.

According to Calvin, **Adam was created in natural religious fellowship with God** [contrary to Roman Catholicism which required the *donum superadditum* for this fellowship to occur], and every aspect of creation in external and internal general revelation disclosed the glory of God. so that Adam might glorify and enjoy God in true religious worship and fellowship. Thus, Calvin reasons that "God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty." **This natural endowment yields a universal and innate knowledge of God's existence that lies at the heart of the religious essence of the image of God.** Warfield argues that what "flow [s] from this fact [i.e., the *sensus divinitatis*], is that knowledge of God is universal and indelible...It is the precondition of all religion." Therefore, "our native endowment is not merely a *sensus deitatis* but also a *semen religionis*...**For what we call religion is just the reaction of the human soul to what it perceives God to be.**"

Van Til embraces Calvin's conception of a completely revelational environment for Adam when he writes that "Calvins' thought was concrete in the true sense of the word...The knowledge of self and the knowledge of God is...included in one act of thought." This is what Van Til has in mind with he speaks of the "concrete" aspect of Calvin's thought. There is no aspect of human existence or knowledge that is immune from the absolute claims and inescapable revelation of the triune personal God, **whether in the image of God or in the covenant of works.** The triune God, the absolute triune personality, makes himself known to image bearers in every operation of consciousness. For this reason, image bearers inhabit an exhaustively revelational environment.

Van Til's representational principle therefore offers a Trinitarian foundation that organically interfaces with Calvins' understanding of the image of God an the *sensus divinitatis*. Just as the divine persons are exhaustively representational of one another in the relations of subsistence and coinherence, so that there is no residue of impersonality in the intra-Trinitarian relations, so likewise in the "new relation" between God and image-bearing Adam, God reveals himself in an inescapable personal relation of knowledge that expresses itself from the human side in worship and fellowship.

The representational principle is a Reformed Trinitarian category designed to account for the facts that Adam was (1) created in natural religious fellowship with God, (2) endowed with original righteousness as the image of God, (3) enveloped in a created environment that made coincident the knowledge of God and knowledge of self, and (4) constituted as the federal representative of the

human race by an act of **convenantal condescension**. Adam's relation to God as the created image of God and his function as federal head **constituted a creaturely reproduction of the mutually exhaustive and mutually representative relations of the Trinitarian persons of the Godhead.**

The Representational Principle and the Order of Operations in the decree and the Pactum Salutis
(w/ good notes on Pantheism)

The divine processions terminate in the God entirely apart from the creation. The divine missions terminate in time in relation to creation. The divine processions *ad intra* are distinct from and cannot be collapsed into the divine missions *ad extra*. To collapse them would move directly into a species of **pantheism**. With the distinction between the processions and the missions clearly in view, we can understand what Van Til means when he says that “since the internal relationships of the triune God are **convenantal**, God's relation to mankind is also **covenantal**.” The internal relationships of the Trinitarian persons are covenantal, not in the *opera ad intra* (relations of procession, relations of subsistence, relations of coinherence) but in the *opera ad extra* (the eternal decree, the work of creation, the providential act of convenantal condescension). The internal relationships of the triune God are covenantal, not in the relations of personal subsistence (*ad intra*), but only in the relations of personal operation (*ad extra*). The internal relationships of the Trinitarian persons are covenantal insofar as God's acts with reference to creation involve his sovereign commitment to execute the divine plan with reference to the world.

It would amount to a profound misunderstanding of Van Til to fail to distinguish between the internal relationships of the Trinitarian persons in the order of personal subsistence and the relationships in the order of personal operation, as outlined in chapter 5. The internal relationships of the Trinitarian person in the order of personal subsistence are **necessary** [because of the nature of being God, who he is]; the internal relationship of the Trinitarian person in the order of personal operation are **free** [free from outside influence or internal necessity, e.g., *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*]. However, it is absolutely critical to maintain that in this eternal decree God does not freely will to himself new properties by which he undergoes personal change in order to relate to creatures. The divine missions are not the alpha point of change in God, and more than creation is the alpha point of change in God, because God does not change at any point in his determination to relate to creation. Van Til vigorously maintains that

When God created the world by the determination of his will there was no change in himself. When the second person of the Trinity became incarnate there was no change in God. God gave the world existence alongside of himself. He could do so just because he is the self-contained infinite being. Thus, the **doctrine of the infinity** of God, so far from leading us into **pantheism**, **is the best possible safeguard against it**. Any attempt to safe-guard the doctrine of God against **pantheism** by subtracting from the self-contained internal activity of God is foredoomed to failure.

[my reasoning on this: if God is infinite you cannot add to him because you cannot add to infinity nor can you subtract from his infinitude because then God would not be infinite. And since pantheism is

basically theistic mutualism or correlativism in Van Til's understanding (which is correct), that God takes on new properties, etc., in order to relate to his mutable creatures, this contradicts or destroys God's infinitude just mentioned. And hence the doctrine of God's infinity protects against all forms of pantheism.]

Notes on Pantheism by Van Til

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God too near to him; he has identified the Creator with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuiper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and God becomes severely limited. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

Pantheism for Vos and Van Til, as we saw earlier in chapter 2, is any doctrine that teaches directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, that the immutable and living Trinitarian persons of the Godhead change in the sovereignly willed new relations to creation or in the event of the incarnation. Giving a concrete illustration, Van Til says that

Dorner, for instance, sought to harmonize the unchangeability of God with the fact of his active concern for the things of the universe by saying that God is immutable merely in the ethical aspect of his being. God is always love and is always holy. On the other hand, God changed when he actually created the world and when, in the person of the Son, he became flesh. Bavinck insists, and rightly so, that all these efforts are foredoomed to failure. The Scriptures speak **anthropomorphically** of God, and could not do otherwise, but for all this, God, in himself, is immutable. "There is change round about him; the r is change in the relation of things to him; but there is no change in God himself."

The representational principle helps us grasp that neither the works of God *ad intra* nor the works of God *ad extra* introduce any change in God. **Neither the sovereign work of God in the eternal decree, nor the free work of God in creation, nor the condescending work of God in covenant is an event of divine self-alteration.** The nature of the **mystery** expressed in the **representational principle** is that the Trinitarian persons remain immutable and living in God's "new relation" to creation, in the act of **covenantal condescension**, and in the event of the incarnation.

The Representational Principle and the Transcendental

Method of Reasoning by Presupposition

Van Til quite creatively applied the representational principle to his transcendental method of reasoning by presupposition. The representational principle entails that all of creation inescapably reveals the absolute and personal Triune God. In the “new relation” of creation, God made himself known to image-bearing Adam in Eden through general and special revelation. Adam, as the first created image bearer, knew God inescapably **through nature** and **conscience** in a **natural bond of religious fellowship**. In the new relation, Adam began with the knowledge of God that was gifted to him as an aspect of the **image of endowment** itself. Adam was not only created with the capacity to know God, but was also created **in true knowledge of God** and **in natural religious fellowship with him** (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) [**this is contrary to the Roman Catholic view which requires the *donum superadditum* to attain this fellowship**]. Adam was created in an inescapably revelational environment and knew God **in the same act** by which **he knew himself** and the world (see Calvin’s *sensus divinitatis*).

The representational principle also teaches that by virtue of a voluntary act of special providential condescension in covenant, Adam was constituted a federal head of his natural posterity. Adam was not a federal head by virtue of his creation as the image of God *simpliciter*. Rather, by a special act of providence temporally concurrent to Adam’s creation as the image of God – a special act of providence that the WCF terms covenant – Adam came to represent his natural posterity in his natural religious fellowship with “God and in his obedience to God under probation in Eden. The covenantal condescension of God constituted Adam a “public person” and set before him (and his natural posterity in him) the prospect of confirmed and perfected natural fellowship with God and advancement beyond his estate of innocency in Eden. Upon successful probation in covenant with God, Adam and his natural posterity would inherit the immutable and condescended triune God himself as their “blessedness and reward” in the estate of glory (WCF 7.1-2; 9.2, 5). The conception of Adam as a public person grows organically out of **the exhaustive personal representation of the Trinitarian persons in the Godhead that is replicated on the creaturely level in the covenantal condescension that constitutes Adam as federal head of the race.**

Given the logic of the representational principle, the triune God made himself known in one grand scheme of general and special revelation. God’s general revelation to Adam by virtue of creation was immediately joined to God’s special revelation in **covenantal condescension, forging one grand scheme of God’s self-revelation to Adam before the fall**. In Van Til’s language, God supplies “one grand covenantal revelation of himself to man,” so that general and special revelation “must therefore be seen as presupposing and supplementing one another. There are aspects of one general philosophy of history.’

Great summary of man’s total depravity

After the fall, sinners both **suppress the general revelation of God without and within and reason in a rebellious way that does not submit to God’s special revelation in Scripture. Sinners proceed in terms of a totalizing suppression and rejection of God’s one grand scheme of covenantal revelation that, after the fall, has its climactic fulfillment in the person, work, and kingdom of “the self-attesting Christ” of Scripture. Unbelief rests in empty and deceptive presuppositions (Col. 2:8) that proceed from a mind that is darkened (Eph. 4:17), a will that is enslaved (Rom. 6:20; 8:7-8), and affections that are set**

on forbidden earthly things that cannot satisfy (Eph. 4:19). The heart of the unbeliever is turned against God in such rebellion that it “cannot” submit to God or please him (Romans 8:7-8). Unbelief recoils at its core against the glory of the absolute and living Trinitarian persons who are the one living and true God. Unbelief reasons as though there is no absolute God who is absolutely revealed in nature and in Scripture (Gen. 3:1-6).

When employing the **representational principle**, Van Til enlists classical Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism to offer a transcendental critique of all forms of **philosophical correlativism** and **theological mutualism** (i.e., all systems of thought that do not begin with the being and revelation of the self-contained triune God). The **representational principle** provides for Van Til the Trinitarian logic underlying the method of reasoning from the “impossibility of the contrary” to Trinitarian theism.

Van Til argues that an absolute God and a transcendental method go hand in hand. Applying the logic of the representational principle to apologetical method, Van Til reasons,

Any method...that does not maintain that not a single fact can be known unless it be that God gives that fact meaning, is an anti-Christian method...Now the only argument for an absolute God that holds water is the transcendental argument...The transcendental argument seeks to discover what sort of foundations the house of human knowledge must have, in order to be what it is...A truly transcendent God and a transcendental method go hand in hand.

He explains that “if God has any significance for any object of knowledge at all, the relation of God to that object of knowledge must be taken into consideration from the outset. It is this fact that the transcendental method seeks to recognize.” Given **autothean perichoresis** and its implications for the “relation of God” to the “object of knowledge,” Van Til argues for the truth of classical Reformed Trinitarianism from the “impossibility of the contrary.” The transcendental argument that Christianity is true “from the impossibility of the contrary” rests directly on the fact that **“it was impossible for God to create except upon the representational principle plan.”**⁴² The **transcendental method of reasoning by presupposition** grows organically out of Van Til’s confessional Trinitarianism and federalism.

42. Van Til, 79. The entire quote is worth noting, because Van Til reasons directly from the exhaustive personal representation in the Godhead to the representational character of the new relation of creation: “Since the whole being of God, if we may in all reverence say so, is built upon the representational plan, it was impossible for God to create except upon the representational plan.” Van Til seeks to express here the way that the **relations of personal subsistence find expression in the relations of personal operation**. He is not saying that the being of God is covenantal, but rather that the **creational and covenantal acts** of God *ad extra* **express** the **exhaustively personal and representational character of autothean perichoresis within the Godhead *ad intra***. **Religious fellowship with absolute and living Trinitarian persons lies at the heart of the covenant relation.**

Elsewhere, clarifying the nature of the “relation of God” to Adam in the garden of Eden, Van Til relies on **Vos’s** biblical-theological expression of the deeper Protestant conception:

It should also be recognized that man was, from the outset, confronted with positive [i.e., special], as well as with natural, revelation. Dr. Vos speaks of this as pre-redemptive special revelation. God walked and talked with man. **Natural revelation must not be separated from this supernatural revelation.** To separate the two is to deal with two abstractions instead of with one **concrete situation.** That is to say, natural revelation, whether objective or subjective, is in itself a **limiting conception.** It has never existed by itself so far as man is concerned.

This extends the apologetical method to be a comprehensive one that is shaped by the bearing of “one grand covenantal revelation of himself to man,” which Van Til sums up as “the representational principle.”

The **substance** of the **representation principle** constrains van Til to employ a **transcendental method** and argue by way of **presupposition** in his **apologetical approach** to unbelief. He comments in various places in his works:

We have now before us in bare outline the main points of the Christian doctrine of God. Christianity offers the triune God, the absolute personality, containing all the attributes enumerated, as the God in whom we believe. This conception of God is the foundation of everything else that we hold dear. Unless we can believe in this sort of God, it does us no good to be told that we may believe in some other sort of God, or in anything else, For us everything depends for its meaning upon this sort of God. Accordingly, we are not interested to have any one prove to us the existence of any other sort of God but this God. Any other sort of God is not God at all and to prove that some other sort of God exists is, in effect to prove that no God exists.

To argue by presupposition is to indicate what are the epistemological and metaphysical principle which underlie and control one’s method. The Reformed apologist will frankly admit that his own methodology presupposes the truth of Christian Theism. Basic to all the doctrines of Christian Theism is that of the self-contained God.

The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct...The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method for merely argument’s sake, in order to show him that on such a position the “facts” are not facts, and the “laws” are not laws. He also must ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument’s sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do “facts” and “laws” appear intelligible.

These three quotations help us realize that Van Til’s method of reasoning **by presupposition** represents the direct outworking of his classically Reformed **conception of the Trinity** applied to unbelief. The representation principle helps us understand the framework that integrates his distinctive conception of the Trinity and his apologetical method.

Van Til provides concrete example of how the representational principle applies to ancient and contemporary philosophical and theological alternatives to classical Reformed Trinitarianism and covenant theology, including Plato, Absolute Idealism and Karl Barth.

Pgs. 161-162 [More on the *donum superadditum*](#)

Barth's conception of grace that enables human participation in God's own essence bears a striking resemblance to Rome's conception of the *donum superadditum*. For Barth, humanity as created stands intrinsically in need of grace. Nature, for Barth, has no being, purpose, or continuance except through the grace of God in the event of Jesus Christ. Nature, for Rome, is intrinsically underproportioned to participate in the divine essence and therefore **requires reportioning and elevating grace**. What unites the two, despite their differences, is the belief that grace is necessary to overcome either a defect in nature (Thomas) or an inherently fallen nature (Barth). [\[Just thought of this: and I would say that there is also a striking resemblance behind this rationale of the superadded gift, the *donum superadditum*, to the practice in many evangelical churches especially charismatic/Pentecostal churches, of praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit after you are converted as though you needed that additional spiritual boost to be more spiritual, when conversion actually includes the indwelling of the Spirit! – same principle.\]](#) [\[see code498 on Barth's theology\]](#)

Another point unites the two theologians. For Barth, as just quoted, created human nature through the covenant of grace in the Christ-event participates in the being of God. The humanity of Jesus Christ participates in the **actualized being of God** in the 'third time' of God's time for us in the **supertemporal Christ-event**. [That is fundamentally the same point that Roman Catholics make about the function of grace in the *donum superadditum*.](#) Creation on Roman Catholic terms is an *exitus* [\[everything comes from God\]](#) that places human nature "outside of God," and the grace of the ***donum superadditum* inaugurates a supernatural *reditus* (return to God) as ontologically and ethically reportioned to participate in the divine essence**. While Thomas does not conceive of the essence of God in actualistic and mutualistic terms, as does Barth, he nonetheless holds that [creation inaugurates](#) and [grace perfects the creatures' participation in the essence of God](#). It should therefore no come as a surprise that Johnson has published a work entitled *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis*, asserting that Barth's theology has its own species of the Thomistic *analogia entis* – what James Cassidy has incisively termed "a temporally qualified *analogia entis*."

Van Til saw this point of convergence well before either McCormack or Johnson and observed that "the idea of [identifying man's being with his participation in the act of God's saving him](#) **is really only the modern equivalent of the Greek notion of identifying man with his participation in the changeless being of God.**" With an astonishing rasp of the profound issues before him, Van Til opposed both front-door (e.g., Barth) and back-door (e.g., Thomas) expressions of **correlativism and mutualism**.

Van Til set forth his own grand narrative of the whole that, unlike Aquinas and Barth, advance classical Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism. Vo's deeper Protestant conception, enriched by Van Til's representational principle, begins with the Trinitarian processions and ends with the beatific vision, and so offers a comprehensive confessionally Reformed alternative to the deeper Catholic conception of Thomas Aquinas and the deeper Modernist conception of Karl Barth. Further Van Til scholarship ought to pursue these profound yet relatively unexplored vistas.

The Theology of Karl Barth

An Interview with Dr. Lane Tipton

Code498

*Classical Theism and Theistic in the Reformed Tradition
with Lane Tipton 8/4/20*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBaGNTrn1V4>

See also pgs. 209-212 Intro to Sys Theology by Van Til

min. 17...

“Let’s just call him just one of the chief architects [of theistic mutualism] ... And what Barth affirms is that in primal history, God wills himself to be submerged into the interiority of space-time contingency [future events that can’t be predicted with certainty] in what he calls the *Christ-event*. And that *interiority of contingency*, Barth calls God’s time for us, a *third time* distinct from God’s time, distinct from Adam’s fallen time. In this third time God and man come together to participate mutually in an event of *becoming* which Karl Barth calls Jesus Christ or the *Christ-event*. And what that means is that both God and man come together and participate in a *tershum quid*, a *third-thing*, something that is neither God in himself, nor something that is purely man in himself; but man comes to participate in God’s becoming and God participates in man’s becoming as the two are mutually constituted in an event by which they are enveloped in common, uniting time; they participate in it. And....not only in the Reformed tradition but also in the Lutheran tradition, this Barthian influence is just about ubiquitous! So the bottom line: Barth’s contribution is that both God and man are subsumed in and are made mutual participants in *common* or *third-time*, God’s time for us in Jesus Christ. And if that’s the case, God, once he relates primordially to the creature in this *third-time*, he’s no longer self-contained, he’s no longer *a se*, he’s no longer unconditioned and all conditioning, immutable and impassible but the same qualities that characterize the creature, characterize God [univocal as opposed to analogical] as the two are enveloped in this common process. It’s then which few greater have been conceived, I think.

And what is so difficult and pernicious about that way of speaking is that God comes to need space-time factuality! – God comes to need the historical process in order to actualize unactualized potential

in himself. [[undermining divine simplicity and immutability - since there is no potential actuality in God to become/change the state of his being; he is pure act, unbounded.](#)] And so this really is Vos and Van Til, and I know there are Lutheran dogmatists that would say this as well...that really can become and I think is perhaps THE chief or cardinal theological sin, uh, because what it does is... it takes, if we talk about biblical theology, it takes the predicates of history that is progressive, organic and developmental – and it ascribes the predicates of history to the mode of God’s being which is in becoming, so that it’s no longer a discussion about the history of special revelation, it’s about the historical constitution about God himself in time and through time and in need of time. And is just as far as I can see, from any historically creedal and Reformed confessional perspective, that is fundamentally subversion of the basic religion of the Creator-creature distinction, and the Creator-creature relation. It’s the fundamental recasting of theology proper as far as I can see.”

[Good insights into the triune God and the subsequent triune pattern seen in the image of God implanted in man to replicate the *perichoresis*. Good comments on the *beatitude*.](#)

Autothean Perichoresis and God’s “New Relation” to Creation

With notes on the **Trinity**

Excerpts from Lane Tipton’s book,
The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 126-129, 132-135

Code499

*Autothean Perichoresis and God’s
“New Relation” to Creation*

Autothean perichoresis sets before us the conception of absolute and living Trinitarian persons in an **exhaustively interior personal embrace** that constitutes the **beatitude** of the Godhead. Autothean *perichoresis* also furnishes the **archetypal relation** after which the triune God patterns the “new relation” to image-bearing Adam in the work of creation and the special providential act of **covenantal condescension**.

Autothean persons in *perichoresis* forge the Trinitarian archetype replicated in the new relation of **creational image endowment** and in the special providential act of covenantal condescension (see WCF 7:1). *Autotheos* forbids the communication of origin and participation in the essence to created persons in the new relation of creation [[contrary to theistic mutualism/pantheism](#)]. *Perichoresis* entails that the archetypal personal communion of coinherent Trinitarian persons grounds the natural religious fellowship of image-bearing Adam in covenant with God. These Trinitarian insights deepen our understanding of God’s “new relation” to image-bearing Adam outlined in chapter 2.

From the divine side of God's "new relation" to creation, autothean persons in perichoresis remains immutable in relation to image-bearing Adam in the work of creation. [again, contrary to mutualist thinking] **Trinitarian persons relate authentically to the contingent creature without participating in the contingency** that characterizes the creature. [contingency: future events or circumstances which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty, that is, from a human view. God is omniscient; man is not, nor is he immutable but always changing – so mutualist think that in order for God to relate to changing and emotional image-bearing creatures, God must change, even evolve with them in a give & take relationship, e.g., John Frame, Barth, etc.] They do so precisely because Trinitarian persons are **absolute** and **living** in creation. **Hence, there is no need for the persons of the Godhead to generate or assume created properties of dynamic change in order to become relatable to creation.** [God is not a metaphysical iceberg. It is only from a misunderstanding of the nature of God, his pure actuality and unboundedness, etc., that mutualist think so. See Dolezal's work on this.] Trinitarian persons are intrinsically absolute and living and as such are inherently relatable to the contingent order of creation.

From the human side, the creational endowment of the image of God **replicates on the creaturely level the relations of personal coinherence in the Godhead.** As the created image of God, Adam is not merely like God as endowed with **intellect and will** (the deeper Catholic conception). Adam is instead endowed with **reason and will in natural religious fellowship with the tripersonal God.** His personal fellowship with autothean Trinitarian persons is the **replication on the creaturely level** of **Trinitarian perichoresis** – the eternal union and communion of the Trinitarian persons in beatitude as described above.

This is the distinctive Trinitarian conception set forth by Van Til that undergirds and enriches the deeper Protestant conception of the image of God and the covenant of works. The union, communion, and inhabitation of the Trinitarian persons in the beatitude of perichoresis provide the concrete Trinitarian referent that is replicated at the creaturely level in Adam as the image of God in covenant with God.

Perichoresis and Endoxation

Autothean perichoresis also enables us to perceive the Trinitarian foundation of what Meredith G. Kline creatively terms the "endoxation" of the Spirit in the heaven-temple in Genesis 1:1-2 (see also Num. 9:6; Isa. 6:1-7). The concept of endoxation involves the triune Creator filling the heaven-temple with the indwelling glory of the Holy Spirit (see Isa. 6:1-7; 66:1; Ps. 10:4; Col. 1:16). Just as Trinitarian person indwells Trinitarian person in the mutual bliss of *perichoresis*, so likewise Trinitarian persons indwell the heaven-temple of God in the absolute beginning (Gen. 1:1) and enter into it in royal Sabbath rest at the end of the creation week (Gen. 2:2). **The Spirit's inhabitation of the holy space of heaven is a creational replica of the personal indwelling of the Trinitarian persons in perichoresis.**

Good comments on the beatitude of God [codeB]

Kline applies the concept of endoxation not only to the invisible heaven-temple created in the absolute beginning, but also to the visible holy realms of Eden, to the tabernacle and the temple, and ultimately to the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ in his assumed and glorified humanity. The

reality of **Trinitarian person indwelling** or **inhabiting a created holy space in history** is itself a **replica of the ineffable relations of Trinitarian person indwelling Trinitarian person in the beatitude of perichoresis**.

Properly conceived in terms of the deeper Protestant conception, Trinitarian *perichoresis* finds **replication** when the triune God creates a holy heavenly place where his glory may dwell forever as the **beatitude** of elect image bearers and angels. The interior embrace and mutual permeation of holy Trinitarian persons who **subsist distinctly** as the **undivided divine essence of God** **constitute the beatitude of God himself**. The **endowment of the image of God**, the **act of covenantal condescension**, and the prospect of seeing the glory of the triune persons in the glory-realm of the heaven-temple in the never-ending joy of covenantal fellowship – **each of these is a replication on the creaturely level of the *perichoresis* of the Trinitarian persons.**

Conclusion

Autotheos and *perichoresis* enable Van Til to conceive of Trinitarian persons who are absolute and immutable, yet living and active, as they indwell one another in relations of coinherence. Together they enrich our understanding of the intra-Trinitarian relations that are foundational to the deeper Protestant conception. These insights lead further to the development of what Van Til terms the **representational principle** – a theological conception that lies at the heart of his Trinitarian theology and apologetics. The representational principle is Van Til's constructive appropriation of Reformed Trinitarianism and federalism in polemical engagement with all forms of **philosophical correlativism** and **theological mutualism**. We will examine the meaning and implications of the representational principle in the following chapter.

Pgs 132-135 [[codeTrin](#)]

*The Representational Principle ad Intra: Exhaustive Personal Representation in the **Ontological Trinity***

The representational principle seeks to unpack the bearing of autothean perichoresis on God's sovereignly willed new relation to Adam in the work of creation and in covenantal condescension. The exhaustively personal processional relations within the Godhead shape the Reformed conception of the created image of God and undergird the conception of representation of inherent in Adam's federal headship under the covenant of works. Adam's personal fellowship with God and its representational significance under the covenant of works **replicated on the creaturely level** the **exhaustively personal relations within the Godhead**.

In summary terms, **each Trinitarian person represents the whole of the divine essence** (in the relations of subsistence) and the other Trinitarian persons (in the relations of **coinherence**) in the Godhead. Growing organically from this conception of the Trinity, all of created reality by general and special revelation **represents in revelation the absolute and living triune God** and suggests a **definite conception of image-bearing Adam in covenant with God**.

Pg 134

Each Trinitarian person distinctly subsists as the entire and undivided essence of God. Each individual subsistent is distinctly the entire essence of God. Each person also exhaustively indwells the other Trinitarian persons. They “permeate” one another in their mutual personal embrace characterized by pure interiority, while each retains his [incommunicable personal property](#).

Tipton describes these personal properties: “The [personal properties](#) that distinguish the Trinitarian persons are as follows: The Father is personally unbegotten (paternity) in distinction from both the Son and the Spirit. The Son is personally begotten of the Father (filiation) in distinction from the Father and the Spirit. And the Spirit personally proceeds from the Father and the Son (spiration) in distinction from both the Father and the Son. These incommunicable properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration are the concrete personal relations within the Godhead, and they anchor conceptually the distinctions among the Trinitarian persons. From these properties we are warranted to infer bona fide personal distinctions within the undivided essence of God. pg 66

The Trinitarian persons are distinctly the undivided essence in relations of subsistence and exhaustively permeate one another in relations of coinherence. These relations forge together in Van Til’s estimation the notion of the mutual representation of the Trinitarian persons.

The conception of exhaustive mutual representation of the Trinitarian persons means that as each person is “exhaustive of God’s nature” and “exhaustive of the other persons,” each person in those senses exhaustively represents the others.

[Good comments on man’s derivative nature with respect to God, mans’ knowledge of God, regenerate man’s ability to reason verses the unregenerate and its proper place for the regenerate, man’s suppressing the knowledge of God, and comments on the genuineness of 2nd causes and free will.](#)

More Notes on the Total Depravity of Man

The Use of Reason, Knowledge of God, 2nd Causes

Pgs. 65-70

[code500](#) [codeHD](#)

My comments in [blue](#)

The Subject of Knowledge

The difficulty with respect to the [natural man’s knowledge of God](#) may be somewhat alleviated if we remember that there are two senses in which we may speak of this having knowledge. The natural man has knowledge, true knowledge of God, in the sense that God through nature and man’s own consciousness impresses his presence on man’s attention. So definitely and inescapably has he done this and that, try as he may, man cannot escape knowing God. It is this point that Paul stresses in the

first two chapters of Romans. Man has the **sense of deity** indelibly engraved upon him. He knows God and he knows himself and the world as God's creation. This is objective revelation to him. Even to the extent that this revelation is in man, in his own constitution, and as such may be called "subjective," it is nonetheless objective to him as an ethically responsible creature, and he is bound to react as an ethical person to this objective revelation.

But it is this objective revelation both about and within him that the natural man seeks to suppress. **Having made alliance with Satan, man makes a grand monistic assumption^A**. Not merely in his conclusion but, as well, **in his method and starting point he takes for granted his own ultimacy**. [in other words, fallen man thinks he is ultimate, putting himself in the room of God] To the extent that he works according to this monistic assumption, he misinterprets all things, flowers no less than God. Fortunately, **the natural man** is never fully consistent while in this life. As the Christian sins against his will, so the natural man "sins against" his own essentially **Satanic principle**. As the Christian has the incubus of his "**old man**" weighting him down and therefore keeping him from realizing the "life of Christ" within him, so the natural man has the incubus of the sense of deity weighing him down and keeping him from realizing the life of Satan within him.

^A See if you can see the connection between pantheism and monism. Man, assuming a monistic view, is playing God in a sense, that he, in practice, thinks he is God or partakes of the essence of God to some degree, fulfilling Satan's promise that *you will be like God*, that you are the ultimate arbiter of truth, that you are ultimate and autonomous, independent of God. Comments from the internet on monism: Pantheists are "monists" ... they believe that there is only one Being, and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it **or identical with it**. Pantheism is closely related to monism, as pantheists too believe all of reality is one substance, called Universe, God or Nature.

Note: "The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms." Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til's book, Christian Apologetics, pg 31, footnote 3 [Van Til refers to this as "scale of being" in his writings.]

Side note on pantheism:

Van Til's mentor, **Abraham Kuyper** was particularly concerned about the intrusion of **pantheism** into the church and the West. His principle concern was that by identifying God with ideals like progress, the boundaries between God and the world are blurred, and **God becomes severely limited**. See his "Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries," in *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 520-37; 762-78. – An Introduction to Systematic Theology, Van Til, pg 320 note 4

The actual situation is therefore always a mixture of truth with error. Being "without God in the world" **the natural man yet knows God**, and, **in spite of himself**, to some extent recognizes God. By virtue of their creation in God's image, by virtue of the ineradicable sense of deity within them, and by virtue of God's restraining general grace, those who hate God, yet in a restricted sense know God and do good.¹⁸

¹⁸ The distinction between the true knowledge and the suppression of truth by an unbeliever, following Rom. 1, is at the heart of Van Til's view of epistemology, and has crucial implications for apologetics.

What we should remember in this connection is that though we can do no more than hem in the territory in which the solution must be found, this is really all that we can do with respect to any problem that pertains to the relation between God and man. We cannot understand in the sense of comprehend how human action, which must by virtue of man's creation in the image of God be **analogical** action, **can nevertheless have genuine significance**. Similarly, we can not understand, in the sense of comprehend, how human reasoning which must be **analogical reasoning**, i.e., reinterpretation of God's interpretation, **can nevertheless be genuine and significant interpretation**. In fine, the temptation that constantly besets us is that **we wish to comprehend how any activity on the part of man can have meaning**. This we can never expect to do because God, by virtue of whom man must exist and by virtue of whom man must therefore be interpreted, is **incomprehensible to man**.

Human reason is not a simple linear extension of divine reasoning. The human activity or interpretation **always runs alongside of and is subordinate to the main plan of God**. If this is kept in mind, it will be seen that if, as Reformed theology has contended, **both** the doctrines of the absolute ethical antithesis of the natural man to God and of his relatively true knowledge and relatively good deeds must be maintained, **we are not led into any inconsistency or self-contradiction**. It is our contention all along the line **that deeds and interpretations of wholly derivative creatures have genuine choice, though we know that back of their choice is the plan of God**.¹ The rejection of Christ on the part of unbelievers has genuine significance so that men are punished for their unbelief even though they were born dead in trespasses and sins and therefore unable to discern and to do spiritual good. Surely then, it cannot be thought to be inconsistent if we also hold that he who is reprobate on account of some relative acts, that is, through the sin of Adam and the sin of himself, as well as on account of the counsel of God or an absolute act back of all relative acts, shall yet be considered relatively good while he is on earth.¹⁹

¹⁹ Van Til presumably prefers terms such as *genuine choice*, *genuine significance*, and *meaning*, over *free will*, not because he denies the reality of the latter, properly understood, but because so much confusion has arisen over the idea of freedom.

¹**Van Til** states on page 157 of his book *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 157: **Calvin** never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an ultimate starting point. Calvin did not start with a general *a priori* position. His position is as radically apposed to that of **Descartes** as it is to that of **Hume**. Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, **he must regard God as original and himself as derivative**. He did not place God and man as correlatives next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal. To him it is perfectly obvious that the

endowments that we possess are not of ourselves, but of God. Hence he says that “not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause. [Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.2)

Cornelius Van Til again states from his book, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: p128-9*: In Paradise, man made his self-consciousness *the immediate but wholly derivative* starting point while he made the self-consciousness of God the *remote but wholly ultimate starting point* of all his knowledge. Hence he saw that his knowledge was, though finite, yet true. Hence he did not set before himself the **false ideal of absolute comprehension**. Hence, too, he did not despair and conclude to irrationalism simply because he himself could not fully comprehend the whole of reality.

In opposition to this, **the non-Christian interpretation** of the human mind is based upon the presupposition that **it is the ultimate and not merely the derivative starting point for man**. Hence it has set before itself the ideal of **comprehension knowledge**. This was done especially in the earlier stages of human thought. The Greek thinkers were as children who thought they could do everything. Even in modern times we have, in such systems as that of **Leibniz**, a striking manifestation of the pride, “hubris,” **of the sinner who wishes to be as God**.³⁵ In more recent times, however, men have become more sophisticated. There have given up the quest of certainty and the quest for comprehension, except as a limiting concept. In modern irrationalism, the prodigal has recognized that he is at the swine trough, but still refuses to return to the father’s house. His “hubris” never forsakes him.

³⁵ Van Til uses the strong language of hubris here about Leibniz’s project. Leibniz had hoped to unify many disciplines and churches through his system, which is ultimately built on a very few general principles.

3. After we have begun with the Adamic consciousness, and then turned to the unregenerate consciousness, we must next consider the *regenerate consciousness*. The regenerate consciousness is the Adamic Consciousness *restored and supplemented*, but restored and supplemented **in principle or standing only**.²⁰

²⁰ There is an echo of Abraham Kuyper here, but also of Geerhardus Vos. His use of the expression “in principle of standing only” is not meant to deny sanctification, but to avoid perfectionism, especially as it relates to knowledge.

In the first place, the regenerated consciousness is the Adamic consciousness restored. **It recognizes afresh its own derivative character. It is able to do so only because God has regenerated it and thus made it confess its ethical depravity.** God has quickened what was the natural man so that he now lives. The regenerate man can discern and do spiritually good because it is God who works in him both to will and to do. [Phil. 2:13] In the second place, the regenerated consciousness is the Adamic consciousness supplemented. Adam was in the position of *posse peccare*, while the restored are in the position of *non posse peccare*.²¹ “Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God” (1 John 3:9).

²¹ This distinction, which translates “able to sin” (Adam before the fall) and “not able to sin” (the state of glorification), along with *non posse non peccare*, “not able not to sin” (the unregenerate), and *posse non peccare*, (able not to sin) (the regenerate), is attributed to Augustine.

The regenerate consciousness is restored in principle but not in degree. The struggle of Romans 7 remains the struggle of every Christian till the day of his death. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8).²²

²² For Van Til’s purposes, “in principle” means a real change has occurred at conversion. It is a change in basic orientation. People are not converted to different levels, but in the Christian life there are ups and downs. No one is sinless until heaven.

If we keep all these distinctions between the Adamic, the non-regenerate, and the regenerate consciousness in mind, we can approach the question as to the place of reason in theology.

In the first place, we can no longer figure with the Adamic consciousness as actually existing at the present time. We deal only with the non-regenerate and the regenerate consciousness. But the true meaning of the fallen and the regenerate consciousness cannot be maintained unless back of both lies the history of Adam and his fall. This does not therefore mean that it is a matter of indifference whether or not we take the Genesis narrative with respect to Adam as historical. It is only if we do take this narrative as historical that a sound theology can be maintained. Adam’s sin was the willful transgression of man to the known revelation of God. If we deny the historicity of the Genesis narrative, we shall be compelled to reduce man’s responsibility for sin so drastically that in reality nothing remains of it. Man’s “sinfulness” is then virtually identical with “fate.” Accordingly, such theologians as Otto Piper (*God in history*, NY 1939) and Nels F.S. Gerre (*The Christian Faith: An Inquiry into Its Adequacy as Man’s Ultimate Religion*, NY 1942) *Evil and the Christian Faith* NY, 1947), who reduce the Genesis narrative to the status of myth, find themselves compelled to deny also the historic Christian views of sin, of Christ, and of the atonement.

In the second place, we cannot speak of human reason in general, or of the human consciousness in general, except in the objective sense explained above. And as such we may call it a limiting concept in the Christian sense of the term.²⁵ In other words, it is a concept that should never be employed to do duty by itself. All men have a sense of deity, but there is no man who has not at the same time something else that also colors his sense of deity. All men are either in covenant with Satan or in covenant with God. The former invariably seek to suppress and therefore always misinterpret the general sense of deity within them. The latter invariably seek to relate that general sense of deity to the revelation of God in Christ.

²⁵ Originally the phrase limiting concept is from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the founder of critical philosophy. Van Til constantly interacts with him, as he is a watershed figure in defining modern thought. For Kant, a limiting concept means a barrier beyond which human reason cannot go. God, as a concept, limits human thought, whether or not he exists. For Van Til, a *Christian* limiting concept means that one doctrine defined another so that no one doctrine can stand alone and govern the entire system. Thus, predestination cannot be defined without free agency, and vice versa, Here, he is saying there is no such thing as consciousness in itself, but only regenerate or unregenerate consciousness. The one is limited by the other.

While therefore it is of the utmost consequence to recognize the fact of a “common consciousness” of God as the relational pressure of God on man, it is of no less importance that, **insofar as men are aware of their most basic alliances, they are wholly for or wholly against God at every point of interest to man.**

In the third place, when we do definitely deal with the non-regenerate consciousness, we must think of it as it is according to its adopted monistic assumption. Hence we cannot grant that it has any right to judge in matters of theology, or, for that matter, in anything else. The Scriptures nowhere appeal to the unregenerated reason as to qualified to judge. On the contrary, Scripture says over and over that the unregenerate reason is entirely unqualified to judge. When Scripture says, “**Come, let us reason together,**” it usually speaks to the people of God, and, if it does speak to others, it never regards them as equal with God or as really competent to judge. **The unregenerate man has knowledge of God, that is, of the revelation of God within him, the sense of deity which he seeks to suppress.** Scripture does appeal to this sense of deity in man, but it does so and can do so only by denying that man, when acting on his adopted monistic assumption, has any ability or right to judge of what is true or false, right or wrong.²⁶

²⁶ **Therefore**, while everyone has a sense of deity (Rom. 1:18-25), that in itself does not justify their views or decisions. The tension of knowledge and ignorance, understanding and folly, is fundamental to Van Til’s epistemology.

In the fourth place, though Scripture does not appeal to the natural man as to a competent judge and though **it considers the natural man as blind to spiritual things, the Scripture continue to hold man responsible for his blindness.**²⁷

²⁷ Thus, competency and responsibility are not the same thing. Inability does not always imply innocence.

In the fifth place, Scripture teaches us to speak and preach to, as well as to reason with, blind men because God, in whose we speak and reason, can cause the blind to see. Jesus told Lazarus while dead to arise and come forth from the grave. The prophet preached to the dead bones in the valley till they

took on flesh. **So our reasoning and our preaching are not in vain inasmuch as God in Christ reasons with us, perhaps through some human agency, and we saw.**²⁸

²⁸ Van Til's apologetics affirms the antithesis between an unbeliever's platform and the truth, yet the reality is that God can change that platform. It is as mistaken to try and build on the unbeliever's ground as it is to refuse to preach to an unbeliever at all.

In the sixth place, when God has reasoned with us and **changed our minds till our every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**, we must use our minds, our intellect, our reason, our consciousness in order to receive and reinterpret the revelation God has given of himself in Scripture. **That is the proper place of reason in theology. There is no conflict between this reason and faith since faith is the impelling power that urges reason to interpret aright.**²⁹

²⁹ Van Til will speak more about reason in the next chapter. However, he rarely speaks elaborately about the problem of faith and reason, though he constantly defends against *fideism*, the notion of blind, unreasonable faith. See, for example, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg NJ) *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* 1967

Note. Dr. **Herman Bavinck** and Professor **Luis Berkhof** discuss the question taken up in this chapter under the heading "Principia of Dogmatics." Under this heading they discuss such questions as the essence of religion, the seat of religion, the origin of religion, etc. In this discussion they bring out carefully and fully that God on his part must reveal himself to man, and that man must be created in the **image of God** in order to be able to receive this revelation. All this is admirable and highly necessary in itself. However, our limited time does not permit us to go into these questions fully. We have sought to give the main points of these extensive discussions by seeking to reduce them to the basic question of Christian epistemology.

Moreover, since we use **Hodge** as a reference work and seek to cover the ground in his first volume, we must pay particular attention to the manner in which Hodge has discussed various questions. Accordingly, we now turn to a consideration of what Hodge says with respect to human reason.

[Good article that exposes Aquinas as being anti-reformed](#)

Important Comments on Thomas Aquinas

Code501

Min 29:30 James White podcast Nov. 1:

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/solo/aominorg/sermons/111222219161766/>

Article on the Vatican Files website: <https://vaticanfiles.org/>

by Leonardo De Chirico

POSTED ON NOVEMBER 1, 2022

207. "Go to Thomas!" Who Will Follow the Pope's Invitation?

Nothing could be more explicit: "Go to Thomas!" This warm invitation was issued by Pope Francis to participants of the [International Thomistic Congress](#) (Sept. 21-24) during an audience at the Vatican. In his [address](#), the pope extolled the thought of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) as a sure guide for Roman Catholic faith and a fruitful relationship with culture. Citing Paul VI (*Lumen ecclesiae*, 1974) John Paul II (*Fides et ratio*, 1998), who had magnified the importance of Thomas' thought for the contemporary Roman church, Francis stood in the wake of recent popes in emphasizing superlative appreciation for the figure of Thomas while adding his own.

This is nothing new. For centuries, **Roman Catholicism has regarded Thomas Aquinas as its champion**. His voice is often considered the highest, deepest, and most complete of Roman Catholic thought and belief. Canonized by John XXII as early as 1323, **he was proclaimed a doctor of the church by Pius V in 1567 to be the premier Roman Catholic theologian whose thinking would defeat the Protestant Reformation**. During the Council of Trent, the *Summa theologiae* was symbolically placed next to the Bible as a testament to its primary importance in formulating the Tridentine decrees and canons **against justification by faith alone and other Protestant doctrines**. In the seventeenth century, he was considered the defender of the Roman Catholic theological system by [Robert Bellarmine](#) (1542-1621), the greatest anti-Protestant controversialist who influenced many generations of Catholic apologists over the centuries. In 1879 Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in which he pointed to Thomas as the highest expression of philosophical and theological science. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) stipulated that the formation of priests should have Thomas as the supreme guide in their studies: "The students should learn to penetrate them (i.e. the mysteries of salvation) more deeply **with the help of speculation**, under the guidance of St. Thomas, and to perceive their interconnections" (*Optatam Totius* [1965] n. 17). Of recent popes, this has already been mentioned. Considering this, what could Pope Francis say but, "Go to Thomas!"

Francis indicated not only the need to study Thomas, but also to "contemplate" the **Master** before approaching his thought. Thus, to the cognitive and intellectual dimension, he added a mystical one. In this way, he caused Thomas, already a theologian imbued with wisdom and asceticism, to be seen as even more Roman Catholic. This mix best represents the interweaving of the intellectual and contemplative traditions proper to Roman Catholicism.

The International Congress had the exploration of the resources of Thomist thought in today's context as its theme. Thomism is not just a medieval stream of thought, but a system that is both **solid**

and **elastic** at the same time. All seasons of Roman Catholicism have found it inspiring for the diverse challenges facing the Church of Rome, including the Reformation first, the Enlightenment project second, and now post-modernity. As a result of the Congress, we will continue to hear more about Thomas and Thomism, not only in historical theology and philosophy, but also in other fields of knowledge that were once far from previous interpretative traditions of Thomas.

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing fascination with Thomas Aquinas and Thomism by evangelical theologians, especially coming from the North American context. They seem to be attracted to the “great tradition” he represents. This phenomenon should be studied because it signals the existence of internal movements within evangelical theological circles. **Protestant theology of the 16th and 17th centuries had a critical view of Thomas.** In a sense, Thomas could not be avoided, given his stature and importance for theology, but he was read with selective and theologically adult eyes. Then, for various reasons, there has been a certain neglect not only of Thomas but with pre-Reformation historical theology as a whole. Today, in the face of the pressures coming from **secularization** and the identity crisis felt in some evangelical quarters, **Thomas is perceived as a bulwark of “traditional” theology that needs to be urgently recovered.** It is often overlooked that Roman Catholicism has considered Thomas as its champion **in its anti-Reformation stance and also in its subsequent anti-biblical developments**, such as the 1950 Marian dogma of the bodily ascension of Mary. **Rome** considers **Thomas** as the quintessentially Roman Catholic theologian and thinker.

“Go to Thomas!” is an invitation that even a growing number of practitioners of evangelical theology would take up. The point is not to uncritically study or absolutely avoid Thomas, but rather to provide the theological map with which one approaches him. It is necessary to develop an evangelical map of Thomas Aquinas. **If Rome considers Thomas its chief architect, can evangelical theology approach him without understanding that Thomas stands behind everything Roman Catholicism believes and practices?**

The Use of Reason

Empiricism, Intellectualism, *a priori* Reasoning, Man’s Assumed Ultimacy

Code502

Excerpts from

An Introduction to Systematic Theology

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 86-87 & 123-125

Reason as Judge of the Evidences of a Revelation

The third and final legitimate use of reason, according to Hodge, is that it must judge of the evidences of any revelation that come to us. Faith, he argues, is “an intelligent reception of the truth on adequate grounds,” [Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:53] and Scripture never demands faith “except on the ground of adequate evidence.”

On the surface, at least, this manner of statement again seems to assume that all men, regenerate and non-regenerate, agree on the nature of reason and evidence. But this is contrary to fact. The average philosopher and scientist today holds to a nontheistic conception of reason and therefore also to a nontheistic conception of evidence. Assuming the ultimacy of the human mind and of impersonal laws of logic, he must and does reject that which is, objectively, the best of evidence for what revelation teaches, for example with respect to the existence of the transcendent God and his creation of the universe. Following Kant, he simply asserts that evidence, to be intelligible, must not go beyond experience, and that to assert that a God exists who is not subject to the categories of space and time, is to assert that which is without meaning. If therefore we say to him that revelation does not expect him to accept anything that is not credible according to his rules of evidence, this is, in effect, to ask him to reject the gospel.⁵²

⁵²Kant relegated religious truth, such as God’s existence, to the *noumenal* realm, making hard evidence for such truth not verifiable, since empirical evidence belongs to the *phenomenal* realm.

It is accordingly necessary in our day, if we wish to bring out the truth for which Hodge is contending, to argue that only in theism can we find a true theory of reason and of evidence, and therefore true harmony between reason and revelation. To this must then be added that deep down in his heart even the natural man knows that theism is true and that he has concocted a false theory of reason and of evidence, which he should reject.⁵³

⁵³Here, Van Til matches his presuppositional method, which requires examining preconditions for knowledge, with the point of contact, which accuses the natural man of the guilt of knowing God while rejecting him.

At many points seeming to agree with the position just stated, Canell nonetheless falls back instantly upon the idea that reason, whether used by Christians or by the non-Christian, is authorized “to canvass the evidence of a given authority.”⁵⁴ “Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man’s assent.” Similarly, Wilbur M. Smith says he is greatly impressed by the fact

that the very kind of evidence which modern science, and even psychologists, are so insistent upon for determining the reality of any object under consideration is the kind of evidence that we have presented to us in the Gospels regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, namely, the things that are seen with the human eye, touched with the human hand, and heard by the human ear.⁵⁶ [Smith, *Therefore Stand*, 388]

But on the monistic assumption of the non-Christian, it would be contradictory to believe in the resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God.⁵⁷ **The whole idea of God as transcendent is contradictory of the monism that underlies the unbeliever's views.** Hence also he can allow no evidence to be genuine that pretends to prove the activity of the transcendent God of Christianity in human history.

⁵⁷**Without the context of a proper presupposition, revelations will not translate into evidence for the truth.**

Note: "The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms." Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til's book, *Christian Apologetics*, pg 31, footnote 3 [Van Til refers to this as "scale of being" in his writings.]

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Pg 91-98

Bavinck Criticizes Rationalism and Empiricism

Bavinck has himself not been fully consistent in the application of the principle here laid before us. This appears particularly in the section in which he deals with the principles of science. [GD, 180-207; RD, 208-33] In this section he develops what he thinks is an adequate epistemology for Christian dogmatics. Here it appears that he has not entirely escaped the influence of Thomas Aquinas in formulating what he calls a "moderate realism."¹³ He criticizes Hodge when the latter attempts to identify the method of systematics with the inductive method of "science."¹⁴ He points out that in

Scripture we do not deal with **brute facts**, but with facts plus their interpretation. Yet he himself appeals to facts as though they were **brute facts** when it comes to the formulation of a theory of metaphysics. He does this in setting off rationalism and empiricism against one another.¹⁵

Against rationalism and idealism Bavinck argues that all men are naturally realists and that all men are dependent on nature about them.¹⁶ He goes on to point out that idealism leads to an impersonal abstraction, and then adds that the rock on which all idealism stands is plurality.¹⁷ These criticisms of idealism are true as far as they go. Our only complaint is that Bavinck did not go far enough. The criticism he makes might have been made by a non-Christian realist. Bavinck does not tell us that the basis of his criticism is the presupposition of the self-existent God.

Against empiricism he argues that all science must begin with a set of unproved a priori assumptions that have not been derived from experience.¹⁸ To this he adds that science is, in the nature of the case, interested in "the general, the necessary, and the eternal, the logical, the idea."¹⁹ Still further he quotes with approval the words of Thomas Aquinas, which the latter in turn took from Aristotle: "*Minimum quod potest haberi de cognitione rerum altissimarum, desiderabilius est quam certissima cognitio, quae habetur de minimis rebus.*"

¹³ **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-74), the greatest of the medieval theologians achieved as synthesis between Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. He is called a "realist," or a "modified realist," because he held that the created world was real and could be divided into divine categories God rather than the view that sees the world as only a reflection or imitation of the divine. God himself can be known only by analogy. Theology for Thomas is a science, much in the way Aristotle described *scientia subalterna*, subalternate science, that is, knowledge that relates concepts to a universal.

¹⁴ **Bavinck**, GD, 1:191; RD, 1:219.

¹⁵ He does so rather than beginning frankly with the authority of a self-authenticating God.

¹⁶ **Bavinck**, GD, 1:195; RD, 1:223

¹⁷ GD, 218; RD, 246. "Materially, in terms of content, idealism puts the [mental] representation [of reality] on a level with an image from a dream and consequently makes all a kinds of futile attempts to move by reasonings and proofs from the subject to the object." Perception is thus confused for the real world, according to Bavinck (RD, 223). Van Til agrees but pleads for a foundation for such a judgment.

("The slenderest acquaintance we can form with heavenly things is more desirable than a thorough grasp of mundane matters.")²⁰

The question that arises when we read this is, on what does Bavinck think the *a priori* principles of science rest? A non-Christian idealist might readily say what Bavinck said on this point. It is not enough for a Christian to point to the mere fact of the necessity of an a priori element in science. He must also show that unless that a priori be given the Christian-theistic basis, it is no true a priori.²¹

Bavinck quotes with approval, as noted above, the words of Aquinas to the effect that the slightest knowledge of higher things is worth more than certain knowledge with respect to lower things. Again we ask, is there no need of pointing out the difference between a Christian and an Aristotelian notion of gradation in the created universe? Surely the Christian, who believes in the doctrine of creation, cannot share the Greek depreciation of the things of the sense world.²² Depreciation of that sense world inevitably leads to a depreciation of many of the important facts of historic Christianity that took place in the sense world. The Bible does not rule out every form of empiricism any more than it rules out every form of *a priori* reasoning. To be sure, in effect, it rules out the empiricism of **Locke**, but it also, in effect, rules out the rationalism of **Leibniz**.²³

Bavinck's Realism

After criticizing rationalism and empiricism, Bavinck goes on to construct a realism that he thinks is acceptable as a foundation for

²⁰ GD, 222; RD, 221, See also, Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologica 1a.1.1.5

²¹ Thus even an a priori (from that which is before) approach must have a reason for being. It cannot simply be a general deductive method. To be helpful, that which is before should be the full Christian-theistic (Trinitarian presupposition).

²² A biblical view does not regard "higher things" versus "lower things," but evaluates all created thing in light of revelation.

²³ Empiricism looks at measurable data. If it is grounded in a theistic worldview, then it is legitimate. Locke's empiricism has no such ground, If a priori reasoning is based on a theistic worldview, then It too is legitimate. **Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz** (1646-1716), a philosopher, statesman, and expert in jurisprudence, devised a highly rationalist system in which each component is the reflection of a complete notion, known to God, so that one may derive all the properties of one component by knowing how it fits into the whole. Accordingly, for everything there is a reason (the principle of sufficient reason) to which God himself is bound. **This led Leibniz to assert that although there is evil, it is necessary in a world that God has created, which is the "best of all possible worlds."** **Leibniz's apriorism is rationalistic, based on a certain autonomy of human reason,** which ultimately fails to make sense of the reality of the created world.

science.²⁴ He argues that all science must begin with the common sense assumption of the real existence of the outer world and of the objectivity and truth of knowledge.²⁵ To this he then adds that man has within him the natural a priori principles spoken of above,²⁶ Bavinck refers with apparent approval to Leibniz's statement that nothing is in the intellect that was not previously found in sensation except the intellect itself, but turns again to St. Thomas, and then from St. Thomas to Voetius.²⁷ The last named, says Bavinck, shows that the intellect of man can find the universals in nature, by which he means that the intellect can find God in nature.²⁸

We note again the failure to distinguish carefully a **Christian epistemology** from the **non-Christian epistemology**. When he gives the distinguishing marks of the realism he is setting forth, he says, no

more than that against empiricism it maintains certain independence of the intellect, while over against rationalism it maintains that the intellect depends to an extent on sensation.²⁹ Bavinck does to an extent wish to correct scholasticism, but this correction does not involve a rejection of its principle of commingling Aristotelianism with Christian principles.³⁰ "The fault of Scholasticism," says Bavinck, "both Protestant and Catholic, lay only in this, that it had done too quickly with observation, and that it thought almost exclusively of the confession as taken up into the books of Euclid, Aristotle, and the Church fathers."³¹ Against this position

²⁴ Realism holds that the world exists independently of ourselves, and that statements we make about it can be true, because our mind represents reality as it is. Antirealists of various sorts deny this connection. Idealists, for example, hold that our mind constructs reality at some level. They cannot accept that the mind simply represents what is real. Van Til faults Bavinck for his naïve realism, which does not sufficiently recognize the need to begin, not with reality as represented in the mind, but with God, who determines how and what we may know. once again reiterates the doctrine that all

²⁵ Bavinck, GD, 1:224; RD, 1:223

²⁶ GD, 200; RD, 227.

²⁷ GD, 203; RD, 230

²⁸ GD, 227; RD, 224-25. Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) was a Dutch Protestant orthodox theologian and expert in Semitic languages. A strong defender of Calvinism, he is the author of the 5-volume *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum* (Utrecht, 1648-69).

²⁹ Bavinck, GD, 1:229; RD, 1:228. In reality, empiricism and rationalism involve far deeper (negative) philosophical commitments.

³⁰ **Scholasticism** is the shorthand term (used negatively by its coiners) for dominant philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages. Influenced by Aristotle, it developed a dialectical manner of rendering the truth, often using questions and answers, moving from plausible surface affirmations to deeper final conclusions. The method was best exemplified by scholars such as Boethius, Abelard, and Thomas Aquinas. Its great danger is rationalism, which Bavinck counters by an appeal to sense perception (observation). Van Til is concerned that his critique only leads to realism, not a fully developed Christian epistemology, one that truly begins with God (the *principium* as he claims.)

Bavinck' once again reiterates the doctrine that all knowledge must begin from observation.³² The net result of Bavinck's investigation is a moderate realism that seeks on the one hand to avoid the extremes of realism, but on the other hand to avoid the extremes of idealism. It is not a specifically Christian position based upon the presupposition of the existence of the God of Scripture that we have before us in the moderate realism of Bavinck. Yet he himself has told us again and again that dogmatics must live by one principium only. It is difficult to see how dogmatics is to live by one principle if it is not the same principle that is to guide our thinking both in theology and in other science. If we are to be true to Bavinck's requirement that there shall be only one principle of interpretation for us, then we shall have to apply that principle when we work out an **epistemology** no less than when we are engaged in dogmatics proper.

Bavinck's Failure to Distinguish Christian Certainty from Non-Christian Certainty

Perhaps the weakest point in the argument of Bavinck lies in his failure to distinguish clearly the **Christian basis of the certainty of human knowledge** from the **non-Christian**. Bavinck himself gives the clue as to where this certainty ought to be found for Christians. In a remarkable passage he declares that the only reason we have for thinking that our universal laws fit actual experience lies in the Logos, "who created reality beyond us and the laws of thought within us."³³ But if this is true, Bavinck should have distinguished clearly between the Christian ground for certainty in knowledge and the non-Christian ground. No non-Christian epistemology has ever offered the Creator Logos as the source of certainty of human knowledge.³⁴ **The idea of creation in the Christian sense of the term is not found in Greek speculation.** Accordingly, the Greeks sought a foundation for the certainty of knowledge in uncritically assuming a priori principles resting upon nowhere in particular.³⁵ And they

³¹ Bavinck, GD, 1:230; RD, 1:229.

³² GD, 230; RD, 229.

³³ GD, 237; RD, 235. Bavinck goes on to explain that the being of things remains outside of us, but that their logicity is based on thought, and is thus conceivable by the human mind. Van Til has sharp criticisms of universalizing logic in this way, because of the Creator-creature difference.

³⁴ Van Til well knows the Logos tradition in Greek philosophy. But, as the following indicates, it had nothing to do with the Creator Logos of Scripture. He is critical of Justin Martyr for attributing too much commonality to the Greek and the biblical ideas of Logos. Here he faults Bavinck for failing to see the difference.

maintained that true certainty in knowledge consisted in seeing these so-called "eternal principles." Yet Bavinck constantly speaks as though the Greeks were essentially correct in what they said with respect to the universals of human knowledge. We quote one passage:

"The object of science is not the particular, but the universal, the logical, the idea. Greek philosophy saw this correctly."³⁶ The question is as to what the Greeks meant by universals. They meant self-existing, eternal, impersonal laws, The universals of Greek thought were not created by God and did not rest upon the nature of the Creator God. They existed in themselves. Accordingly, no amount of trimming can bring them into shape for Christian use.³⁷ Thomas Aquinas trimmed Aristotle's principles down **but did not reject the foundation on which they were built**, and Bavinck has too largely followed Thomas in this respect. Accordingly, he tells us at one moment that our certainty lies in the Logos of creation, but then forgets about this Logos in the course of his argumentation and makes certainty to exist merely in the fact **that there are a priori principles regardless of the foundation of these principles.**

Bavinck's Notion of Natural Reason

Under the same influence of St. Thomas, Bavinck offers what seems to us to be an inadequate notion of the so-called natural reason. He begins his discussion of this point by calling attention to Plato's illustration of the sun as symbolizing God as the true source of human knowledge. He tells us that we do not see things by looking directly into the sun, but by seeing them in the light of the sun. So our reason is not itself divine, but participates in the divine. God alone can know per essentiam (in respect of his being); we know per participationem (in respect of participation). This figure of the sun," says Bavinck,

led men to speak in a healthy fashion of the natural light of reason, by which nothing more was meant than the permanent capacity or power of the human spirit, by which man was enabled from the beginning of his observations to form the basic concepts and basic principles which should later lead him in all his observation and thought. The light of reason therefore, in the first place, resembles the intellectus *intellectus agens* [active intellect] the power of abstraction that shines on objects and draws from them their intelligibility; and secondly, the fund of *koina ennoia* [general concepts] which our spirits, by virtue of their powers of abstraction, make their own. But in both senses we owe this light to God, and more particularly to the Logos.³⁸

³⁵ Thus, not grounded in God, they have no source. Van Til sometimes alludes to a "turnpike in the sky."

³⁶ Bavinck, GD, 1:232; RD, 1:229

³⁷ As Van Til notes in the last paragraph of this section, Bavinck does attack the **myth neutrality**. (He even makes an appeal for the alliance of science with Christian faith, RD, 298ff., GD, 270.) **But here Van Til finds Bavinck too close to the Greeks.**

In all this we meet again with the same ambiguity noted before Bavinck is far from wishing to attribute to the natural reason any ability to devise its own principles of interpretation. He wishes our knowledge to rest in God.³⁹ Why then, we ask, did he jeopardize what is most precious to him by reasoning as though what Thomas meant was essentially what he means? Thomas's notion of man's participation of man's knowledge in God's knowledge has not cut itself free from its monistic origin in Platonic Aristotelian thought.⁴⁰ Either man is created by God, or he is not. If he is, then man's knowledge must be clearly distinguished from the Platonic notion of participation. For Plato, the human soul was really a part of the divine being and, because of that fact, he thought of the *a priori* principles of knowledge as being directly found in the human mind. For a Christian position, the *a priori* of knowledge can be found in man only **analogically**.⁴¹ **Thomas** uses the idea of analogy, but has not with any adequacy escaped the **Greek participation** idea. The proof of this lies in the fact that he gives to the natural reason, even of sinful man, **plenary ability to prove the existence of God**. To be able to do this, man should, even when a sinner, be willing to recognize the true source of reasoning within himself.

³⁸ Bavinck, GD, 1:236; RD, 1:232.

³⁹ Indeed, seeing light in God's light is one of Van Til's favorite figures (Ps. 36:9). But

Bavinck does not carry the illustration of the sun sufficiently away from Plato's metaphor.

⁴⁰ Monism is the view that being is only of one kind, as opposed to Van Til's view that there are two kinds of being, the Creator and the creature, Human knowledge, according to monism, would be by participation in a higher echelon of the same being, not an obedient submission to God. Aristotle and Plato Join company as monists, though they differ on much else.

⁴¹ Van Til's concept of analogy is alluded to throughout his writings. Because God is the Creator, we cannot know univocally (as he does), yet neither do we know equivocally (never the truth). Instead, we know analogically, by thinking God's thoughts after him. This is quite different from Thomas's use of analogy which amounts to a middle way between univocal and equivocal knowledge, whereby we may climb up closer to God's being without ever knowing his essence.

But it is exactly this that no Protestant and, in particular, no Reformed theologian can allow. **Owing to man's ethical depravity**, is unwilling to recognize himself as a creature.⁴² Accordingly, he assumes that the foundation of the validity of human reasoning **lies in himself. It is due to Rome's low view of sin** that it is able to make an easy compromise with Aristotle on the question of the foundation of reasoning.⁴³

In contrast to this, we would agree with Bavinck himself when he says that all depends upon the presuppositions from which science begins and the purpose with which it is pursued.⁴⁴ If this is true, Bavinck himself should have cut himself loose completely from Thomistic speculation. He should have begun boldly by setting off the consistent Christian position over against **Greek speculation** and over against the **half-Christian, half-Greek speculation of Thomas**.

⁴²The key problem of the fall for Van Til is that it **is ethical, not metaphysical**. We have rebelled morally, not slipped lower down the scale of being.

⁴³The noetic effects of sin" is a constant refrain for VanTil. It means that sin has affected the mind as much as the rest of our lives.

Apriorism

Pg123

Now since we think of nothing as having existence and meaning independently of God, it is impossible to think of the object and the subject standing in the fruitful relation to one another that they actually do **unless God is back of them both**. Hence, the knowledge that we have of the simplest objects of the physical universe is still based upon the revelational activity of God.

It is customary on the part of some orthodox theologians to depreciate the objects of sensation as a source of knowledge. They have become deeply convinced of the skepticism involved in historical empiricism. There would therefore substitute an *a priori* approach for that of the empiricist, thinking that thus they represent biblical thought.¹⁷

¹⁷This would amount to deism, which holds that God started the whole process but is not necessarily currently involved in it. The consequences of such deism are (1) **empiricism**, which claims that the sense, not God, are a faithful measure of reality (a view that Van Til calls a false cure for skepticism), and (2) **intellectualism**, the title of this section, which holds that the senses deceive us, but that the mind does not. Of course, the mind does deceive us. But if we begin with God's full involvement, then both senses and intellect report truth.

Two points may be mentioned with respect to this. In the first place, to flee to the arms of an apriorism from those of empiricism is in itself no help at all.¹⁸ It is only if an *a priori* is self-consciously based upon the conception of the ontological Trinity rather than upon the work of Plato or some other non-Christian philosopher that it can safeguard against skepticism. The *a priori* of any non-Christian thinker will eventually lead to empiricism. It can keep from doing so only if it keeps within the field of purely formal predication. In this second place, if we do place the ontological Trinity at the foundation of all our predication, then there is no need to fear any skepticism **through the avenue of sense**. **Sensation does "deceive us," but so does ratiocination**. We have the means for their corruption in both cases. The one without the other is meaningless. Both give us true knowledge on the right **presupposition**; both lead to skepticism on the wrong presupposition.

¹⁸Recall that *apriorism*, referring to *a priori* thinking, means simply beginning from a particular view, following a deductive method, which may not mean anything particularly Christian. Van Til chided Bavinck for attacking empiricism merely with the need for an *a priori*, regardless of whether or not it is the full, Christian-theistic basis.

Revelation About Nature from Self – Psycho-Physics

Here again the importance of distinguishing a Christian *a priori* from a non-Christian *a priori* is of basic importance. Suppose we took a non-Christian *a priori* such as that of Descartes.²¹ In such an *a priori* the human self takes itself to be an ultimate starting point. And suppose further that we should then seek to know the facts of nature in terms of man. The result would be anthropomorphism in the evil, skeptical sense of the term. **Each man could and would, of necessity, wind the facts of "nature" in a ball about himself as a core**, and the balls thus made would have as little contact with one another as we can observe between the particles of an exploded atom bomb. On the other hand, if we start, as **Calvin** started, by thinking of the mind of man and its *a priori* laws **as created and controlled by God**, then the facts of "nature" have intelligence written in them.²² They are exclusively revelational of God and his plan. **Then Anthropomorphism, always unavoidably, leads to insight into greater truth instead of to the blind alley of skepticism.**

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¹⁸According to Van Til, an **apriorist** is one who places human autonomous propositions above revelation. He readily associates James O. Buswell, Gordon H. Clark, and Edward Carnall with this approach. William Edgar, editor to Van Til's book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*.

Your Worldview Matters

Code503

Excerpt from

The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til

Edited by William Edgar

Pgs. 36-39

Van Til is talking about the proper way to witness to unbelievers. We should not relegate our approach to a method of thinking that accommodates his fallen understanding or world view. This is like trying to build a house with a faulty foundation. You cannot trick people into the Kingdom of God by accommodating their world view of God, self, etc., and then later tell them the truth about these things, man's true condition, the biblical world view and so on. Their false presuppositions must be addressed at the get-go; you should hit them with the truth and the whole truth (in love) so as to smash their false presuppositions, because eventually, if you don't do this, somewhere down the line you're going to have to, which at that point will be extremely difficult if not impossible for them to turn around. In this section of Van Til's book, *The Theological Method*, he explains this approach, even mentioning some proponents of the wrong approach, namely, that of **C.S. Lewis**.

The Theological Method

All analogical knowledge may be called theological knowledge. We can even, if we wish, identify the concept of analogical knowledge with the concept of theological knowledge. We cannot do without God anymore when we wish to know about physics or psychology than when we wish to know about your soul's salvation. Not one single fact in this universe can be known truly by man without the existence of God. Even if man will not recognize God's existence, the fact of God's existence nonetheless accounts for whatever measure of knowledge man has about God. We can readily see that this must be so. The idea of creation is implied in the idea of the self-sufficient God. Now if every

fact in this universe is created by God, and if the mind of man and whatever the mind of man knows are created by God, it goes without saying that the whole fabric of human knowledge would dash to pieces if God did not exist and if all finite existence were not revelational of God.

We emphasize this point inasmuch as a quite common way of distinguishing between theology and the other sciences is to say that in the case of theology we must allow God to teach us, while in the case of other sciences we need only to open our eyes and look around. What needs to be done, therefore, is to point out that the difference between theology and other sciences does not lie in the notion that God is any less necessary for the one than for the other, but the difference lies only in the *degree of directness* with which God is brought into the knowledge situation.

What is meant by saying that in the theological method we are more directly concerned with God than in the analogical method in general, cannot be expressed with sufficient exactness by saying that in the case of theology we go to the Bible while in the case of other sciences we go elsewhere. It is true that we are more directly concerned with the Bible when we deal with theology than when we deal with the other sciences, but it is not true that in the other sciences we are not at all concerned with the Bible. Even in the study of zoology or botany the Bible is involved. The Bible sheds its indispensable light on everything we as Christians study. There is a philosophy of fact in the Bible that we use for the interpretation of every fact of our lives. A Christian can never go on an expedition with archaeologists who are sincerely looking for the body of Jesus. A Christian cannot go on an expedition with evolutionists expecting that he may possibly find the "missing link" between man and animal. Yet it is true that in the study of matters of the laboratories and the field, the Bible is only indirectly concerned. We do not go to the Bible itself for the facts with which we deal. On the other hand, it is true of theology that it gets its facts about God almost exclusively from the Bible. We say almost exclusively, because we also learn about God from nature. Hence, we must say that it is only a matter of emphasis. We do not limit ourselves entirely to the Bible when we study anything else.

Another way by which we sometimes try to bring out the difference between the method of theology and the method of the other sciences is by saying that in theology we deal with redemption, while in the other sciences we do not. But this is true, also, only as a matter of emphasis. In theology, we deal not only with the matter of redemption, we deal with the whole question of the universe as existing for the glory of God. And this is also the interest that we have in our study of anything else if we are really led by the Christian motif. Yet it is true that in theology we give more attention to the question of redemption and the question of man's direct relationship to God than we do in other sciences.

Failing to make clear the point just made, that for the Christian all interpretation of any fact of "nature" even by "reason" should be performed self-consciously as an act of reinterpretation of God's revelation, leads to a serious weakening of the Christian testimony. A typical example of such a weakening of the Christian testimony is found in Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*. Though unabridged, this work has no discussion on Christian methodology as it relates to modern thought. Instead of making clear that "reason" in the case of the non-Christian is employed by such as assume themselves to be self-sufficient, while "reason" in the case of the Christian is employed by those who through regeneration have learned to think of themselves as creatures of God [i.e., dependent creatures] and of their task in life as keeping covenant with God. Chafer talks about theology drawing

its material “from both revelation and reason.” “Reason, as here considered,” he then adds, “indicates the intellectual and moral faculties of man exercise in the pursuit of truth and apart from supernatural aid.” But “reason” thus described is in practice the reason of the natural man. And the natural man suppresses the revelation round about and within him. His fundamental conclusions with respect to the universe and himself are those of a covenant breaker instead of those of a covenant keeper. These conclusions need not and cannot be supplemented by revelation; **they must be reversed**. Owing to the fact that man cannot wholly suppress the truth, and to the fact that God’s long-suffering would lead him to repentance, the natural man brings to light some truths. It remains true, even so, that his “system” of interpretation needs reversal. Instead of indicting this fact, Chafer follows a position infected with the weaknesses of Rome [**Romanism has a man centered view very similar to Arminianism**].

Another form of the weakening of the Christian testimony spoken of is found when men virtually concede that an argument about facts of history, such as archaeology or miracles, between Christians and nonbelievers, can be satisfactorily brought to a conclusion without bringing in the basic presuppositions of the Christian religion. From the Christian point of view, every fact of the space-time universe is created by God and is what it is by virtue of its place in the plan of God. It is therefore God’s revelation of this plan that comes to partial expression in every fact of “nature” and history. **Hence the Christian ought to make the claim that every fact positively reveals itself for what it is in relation to this plan.**

On its basis Romanism cannot do this. Its *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) idea assumes that it is possible to speak of being and of rationality in general prior to the distinction of God’s being and man’s being or original thought and derivative thought. On such a basis it is consistent for Christians to speak with non-Christians about “facts” and a “rational universe” in general before bringing in the distinction of God the Creator and man the creature. But then on such a basis, too, the sort of Christianity that is defended by the Christian is something that lives to some extent by the sufferance of the non-Christian.

The Arminian position is similar to that of the Romanist. Assuming with Romanism that many facts come to pass in history as the result of the **decisions of man independently of the plan of God**, it is **consistent for the Arminian to argue with the nonbeliever about archaeology or miracles without bringing in the plan of God.**

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) argued against Calvinist orthodoxy, that predestination is not unconditional, but based on divine foreknowledge of human decision about grace, which can be resisted. His followers, known as the Remonstrants (from the term for a type of manifesto) were eventually condemned by the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. After that, a wide variety of theologies known generally as Arminianism penetrated the Protestant church. This view implied a less-than-total depravity and thus some degree of human cooperation with divine grace. In apologetics, according to Van Til, Arminians will give credit to the reasoning process of unbelievers, **and thus not challenge them sufficiently to lay bare their presuppositions**. He interchangeably labels this apologetics “Arminian” or “empiricist,” **because it trusts in an autonomous human activity to reason** and measure the world. Van Til often cites Joseph Butler

as the exemplar of this approach, but indicts numerous other, including James O. Buswell, Gordon Clark, and C.S. Lewis. Occasionally he includes “Romanists,” presumably because there are commonalities in apologetic method between Roman Catholics, particularly Thomists and Arminians.

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 208: Add to this the fact that even orthodox Arminians theology has, in its concept of the plenary ability of the sinner to accept or reject the gospel, really taught that the natural man knows what his basic needs are, and it becomes very clear that the danger facing us is indeed very great. Arminianism had made an easy alliance with evolutionism.

A recent example of the Arminian type of discussion on historical fact is found in C. S. Lewis’s book, *Miracles* (New York, 1947). Lewis argues that “the grand miracle” is but the outstanding example of that which happens in the world of historical being in general. “What we can understand, if the Christian doctrine is true, is that our own composite existence is not the sheer anomaly it might seem to be, but a faint image of the Divine Incarnation itself – the same theme in a very minor key.” This is the sort of argument the natural man [the unbeliever] can accept on his own assumptions. The discussion is again about being in general. But the sad result is again that the Christianity thus supposedly proves true is one in which God is included with man in a universe whose laws of being and rationality both must obey.³¹

³¹Reader familiar with C. S. Lewis’s apologetics may plead for a more nuanced rendering of his approach. To put the best light on it, Lewis, like G. K. Chesterton, is pointing out in an informal way that miracles, while extraordinary, are not completely isolated from other divine interventions or even human acts. Thus, although obviously they are unique, they belong to the universe describe in the Bible, with God as Creator, and the world subject to his government.

We have said that the Romanist and the Arminian are consistent with their own positions if they debate the questions of historical fact with nonbelievers without bringing in the Christian presuppositions of God and his plan. [that is the key problem with most evangelicals] It is, however, quite inconsistent for those professing the Reformed faith to do so. Yet this is frequently done. A recent example is the word of Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Grand Rapids, 1946). Speaking of archaeology in general, Clark says, “Archaeology is extremely valuable and deserves support, but it does not prove that the Bible is true, much less does it prove the existence of God.” The reason why archaeology is said not to prove the bible to be true seems to be that, in the nature of the case, *not in every instance* in which the Bible speaks of facts that might come into the purview of archaeology can the Bible be shown to be true. “Because the Bible has been shown to be true in these hundred and one cases, as some unwary Christians like to state the general argument, it follows that the Bible is therefore true in a thousand other cases not yet tested. Obviously this does not follow.” But surely the Reformed believer should stress with Calvin that every fact of history, here and now actually is a revelation of God. Hence *any* fact and *every* fact proves the existence of God and therefore the truth of Scriptures. If this is not the case, *no fact ever* will. **Every fact proves the existence of God because without the presupposition of God and his counsel no fact has any distinguishable character at all.** But to press this point – the point which Reformed thinking should be most concerned to stress – is

to give up reasoning about facts of archaeology or of history in general on presuppositions supposedly common to both, but in reality exclusive of the Christian faith. Reformed systematics and apologetics differ from Romanist and Arminian systematics and apologetics precisely because of the former's claim that every fact is expressive of the plan of God and no fact proves or disproves anything except upon the presupposition of that plan.³⁴ [that is key!]

³⁴ As he does elsewhere, Van Til here states in the strongest terms that every fact actually proves the Christian faith. If some facts of archeology have not been correlated with the Bible, they are no less proofs of the Christian worldview. **Even facts about evil and injustice prove Christianity true.**

Romans 1

Man Suppressing the Knowledge of God & Manifestation of the Wrath of God

The Point of Contact in Evangelism

Man is derivative in nature, not autonomous

Pgs. 156 - 169

Code504

Excerpt from An Introduction to Systematic Theology

By Cornelius Van Til

Revelation about Man from Man – Psychology Proper

On the question as to what the sinner should and does know about himself from a study of himself, we can do no better than to state first what Calvin has said on this matter, in order then to add some further remarks.⁵ Calvin's first book of the *Institutes* is the church's great classic on this question, as it is on the question of the knowledge of God that man should obtain from a study of nature.

⁵In the second in the series about man, on the human source, Van Til relies chiefly on Calvin's *Institutes* to make his points.

The first point of importance to note is that Calvin, in the first chapter of his first book, begins the whole discussion of his Institutes by bringing forward the conception of the close connection between man's knowledge of himself and his knowledge of God. We quote the first lines of his book:

Our wisdom in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: God and ourselves. But as those are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and give birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts toward God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves, nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God along.⁶

⁶See John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.1.1. ...These first sentences are among the most remarkable in theological literature, because they begin, not with proofs for God's existence, nor with questions about being and essence, but with the issue of human understanding in relation to the gift of God. This relation is presupposed, not argued.

From this quotation, certain things are clear. Calvin never did start a chain of reasoning about man's nature and destiny by taking man by himself. He did not start with man as with an **ultimate starting point**. Calvin did not start with a general *a priori* position. His position is as radically opposed to that of Descartes as it is to that of Hume.⁷ Most apologetic writers who have come after Calvin have allowed themselves to be influenced unduly by Cartesian philosophy on this matter. Calvin recognized fully that if man is to have true knowledge of himself, **he must regard God as original and himself as derivative**. He did not place God and man as **correlatives** next to one another, but he recognized from the outset two levels of existence and two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, the divine and eternal and, on the other hand, the human or temporal.⁸ **To him it is perfectly obvious that the endowments that we possess are not our own, but of God. Hence he says that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him: and of which he is not the cause."**⁹ [All key points!]

⁷Rene Descartes, the French founder of modern philosophy, author of *Discourse on Method* (1637), concluded his quest for certainty with his famous "rock of indubitability," *cognito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"). He was a dualist, separating mind from matter. Although he admitted to needing revelation to ensure the connection, skeptics struggled with making any connection between the two. Descartes remains one of the greatest rationalists of all time. David Hume (1711–76), the Scottish skeptical philosopher, thought that events in nature, as well as events in the mind, such as ideas or impressions, were separate and unconnected. But neither experiment nor human reason is capable of harmonizing our perceptions and the real world. One easily sees how these two thinkers are polar opposites of Calvin.

It is this thought of Calvin, rooted as it is in the scriptural doctrines of creation and providence, that we tried to express in the previous chapter by saying that originally man was able to see the true state of affairs with respect to his own thought. He saw himself as a reinterpreter of God's interpretation.

But now the question is as to what remained of all this after the entrance of sin into the world. Of this Calvin speaks in the third chapter of his first book. We quote the first paragraph of this chapter:

That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all men being aware that there is a God, and that he is there Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service.¹⁰

¹⁰As he does throughout his work, Van Til strongly echoes Calvin's view on the reality of the sense of deity despite the fall. He notes further metaphors in Calvin, such as the "seed of religion" sown in every heart. In Van Til's apologetics, this becomes the main point of contact between the believer and the unbeliever.

A little later he adds:

All men of sound judgment will therefore hold, that a sense of Deity is indelibly engraven on the human heart. And that this belief is naturally engendered in all, and thoroughly fixed as it were in our very bones, is strikingly attested by the contumacy of the wicked, who, though they struggle furiously, are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God. Though Diagoras, and others of like stamp. Make themselves merry with whatever has been believed in all ages concerning religion, and Dionysius scoffs at the judgment of heaven, it is but a Sardonian grin; for the worm of conscience, keener than burning steel, is gnawing with them.¹¹

Still a little further, he adds: "Moreover, if all are born and live for the express purpose of learning to know God, and if the knowledge of God, in so far as it fails to produce this effect, is fleeting and vain, it is clear that all those who do not direct the whole thoughts and actions of their lives to this end fail to fulfil the law of their being."

In the fourth chapter he speaks of the seed of religion (*semen religionis*) that is *divinely sown in all*. Again in the fifth chapter he brings the **seed of religion** that is sown in man into contact with the revelation of God in nature and then says with respect to them both, "His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works this glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as his excuse."

The question Calvin is here asking himself is not, first of all what use men have actually made of the material that was within their reach. His primary purpose is to show what was available of the revelation of God to sinful man. He tells us what they should have known and should have done because of the revelation that God had given them. To quote again:

But herein appears the shameful ingratitude of man. Though they have in their own persons a factory where innumerable operations of God are carried on, and a magazine stored with

treasures of inestimable value...instead of bursting forth into praise, as they are bound to do, they, on the contrary, are the more inflated and swelled with pride. They feel how wonderfully God is working in them, and their own experience tells them of the vast variety of his gifts which they owe to his liberality. Whether they will or not, they cannot but know that these are proofs of his God head, and yet they inwardly suppress them.

And because of this great and beautiful display of the Creator in his created universe, Calvin holds it to be the basest ingratitude when men suppress within themselves the knowledge that they should have of God, if they would only look within themselves.¹⁶ He says:

At this day, however, the earth sustains on her bosom many monster minds...minds which are not afraid to employ the seed of Deity deposited in human nature as a means of suppressing the name of God. Can anything be more detestable than this madness in man, who, finding God a hundred times both in his body and in his soul, makes his excellence in this respect a pretext for denying that there is a God.

¹⁶ Calvin, following Rom. 1, sets forth a fulsome revelation of God. Humans do not merely know about God or acknowledge some ultimate Creator being, **but they know God himself in his power and divinity. Yet they continually process that knowledge such that it renders them ungrateful.**

We have then, so far, the following: There is actually displayed in man, as well as round about man, and even more definitely in man than round about man (a) the fact of God's creation of this world, (b) the fact of the providence of God over this world, and (c) the glory and munificence of God displayed in this world. All this was originally displayed in the world and is still, even after sin's entrance, displayed to the world. Scripture on which this teaching is based in particular as it pertains to man in distinction from nature is found in such passages as John 1:9: "There was the true light, even the light which lightheth every man, coming into the world." Similarly, Romans 1:19: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them." Man is and remains God's self-conscious creature. It was in the activity of the mind of man that God's revelation in the created universe originally found its high-manifestation of the personality of God.¹⁸ Hence, in the very activity of his own personality, man is placed before the clearest manifestation of the truth with respect to himself, apart from redemptive revelation.

¹⁸In *The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd Ed., 12, 42, Van Til defines God as "absolute personality." He often states that covenant theology is the only "personalistic interpretation of reality," meaning that because God is a person, the whole of the creation, including humanity as representative of God, is personal. See John Frame's insightful comments in *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* 58-61

Moreover, in the activity of man's consciousness, man's mind is brought into the most immediate contact with the truth about himself. It is this which Calvin seeks to bring out by saying that man has a **sense of deity**, and that there is within his very make-up the seed of religion. Calvin wants to say that before man has drawn any self-conscious conclusion, he has in himself an intuition of the truth.

Theologians have spoken of this as **innate** (*insita*) **knowledge** in distinction from acquired knowledge. To be sure, the distinction is usually introduced in connection with the question as to what man can know about God by analysis of himself, that is, in the discussion of rational theology; but it holds equally well with respect to man's first consciousness of himself.

Dr. Hepp has worked out the thought of Calvin by saying that in respect to the question in hand we must first think of the work of the **Logos**. It is through the Logos that God has created the world. Then we must think of the work of the Spirit as the active agent in displaying the work of the Logos. After that, we must introduce the general testimony of the **Spirit**, which testifies to the spirit of man with respect to the truth of the general revelation. It is only after this that we arrive at the question of **man's reaction to the revelation** about and within him. [Valantine Hepp]

In the *sensus deitatis* (sense of deity), then, we find welling up within the consciousness of man an immediate awareness of the fact that God is the Creator and sustainer of this world. The question is as to whether it is also indicative of man's attitude with respect to revelation. We believe it to be in line with Calvin's best thought to say that he things of it as primarily revelatory. But there is no temporal precedence of the revelational over the reaction to revelation. As soon as man is conscious, he is also self-conscious; and as soon as he is self-conscious, he is a covenant breaker. Sinful man does all he can to keep down this thing which he so utterly dislikes. The recognition of its presence is, to be sure, involved. Man can never be confronted with the revelation of God without reacting to it. But his own reaction is here contemplated from the point that it too is revelatory of God to man. Using the terms **subjective** and **objective** instead of revelatory and reaction, we have the following: All of God's revelation to man through the human mind is psychologically **subjective**. But this fact does not reduce the objective character of the revelation of God to man. Besides, man's reaction to this psychologically subjective but nonetheless objective revelation is ethically subjective. Even so, there is no reduction of the objectivity of God's revelation to man.²⁰

²⁰In this discussion Van Til wants to say that the sense of deity is objective revelation because it comes from God, while at the same time it is subjective because it manifests itself in our consciousness. **Even when we rebel against it, that (subjective) rebellion is revelatory.**

If we make clear that the *sensus deitatis* is primarily revelatory, we can approach a biblical evaluation of the question of intuitions. We may identify these intuitions with the sense of deity and consider them as merely revelatory of God. If we regard them thus, we can rightfully think of them as an **involuntary welling up of truth** within man in spite of his sinful nature. On the other hand, we may think of these intuitions as the **first spontaneous moral and intellectual reactions of man to the revelation within and about him**.²¹ If we regard them thus, then we cannot regard them as inherently any less sinful than man's reasoning processes. In both cases, we deal with a psychological activity on the part of man, but this psychological activity, insofar as it is the activity of a creature of God, cannot help but display the Creator; while insofar as it is the activity of a sinner, it cannot help but display man's hatred of the Creator.

²¹By “intuitions” Van Til means those unconscious responses to revelation which eventually become conscious. Reasoning, for Van Til, its intuition become self-conscious. Though unconscious, intuitions are nevertheless sinful because of the fall.

We should, however, be on our guard not to make too much of the distinction between unconscious or preconscious and self-conscious action. Scottish realism (as also Hepp) and the theology based upon it has made too much of this distinction.²²

²²Scottish common sense realism is a school of thought founded by Thomas Reid (1710-96), which argued for the connection of common consciousness to self evident truths, and opposed the theory of John Locke, which led to subjectivism and skepticism. Van Til’s concern is not to exaggerate the importance of intuition, which he believes this school, as well as Hepp, has done. Reasoning may be more elaborate than intuition, and thus it may make more room for sin, but both reason and intuition are valid in themselves.

It has often spoken as though intuition were something quite different from and something more elemental than ratiocination. This, we believe, is not the case. There is a sense in which intuition is more to be trusted than reasoning inasmuch as it is more immediate and therefore does not offer as large an area for the encroachment of error as does ratiocination. In itself, however, **reasoning is nothing but self-conscious intuition, and intuition is nothing but unconscious reasoning**. Therefore, the one is not inherently more or less valid than the other. That this is true can best be seen if we realize that before man had sinned there could not possibly be any distinction as to relative validity between intuition and reasoning. Both intuition and reasoning were then equally valid. On the other hand, we cannot say that reason was perverted by sin, while **intuition** was not. **Reason**, to be sure, because of its greater extensiveness, errs more often and more violently than does intuition. Yet, inherently, reason has not been affected by sin any worse than has intuition. **There is not one spot in the personality of man that has not been vitiated by sin.**

Just as in the case of nature, the revelation of God in man has been made more complex because of the wrath of God displayed against the sin of man. For, just as the personality of man is in itself the highest peak of the revelation of God in the created universe, **so also the wrath of God reveals itself most intensely upon that which was highest**. *Corruptio optima pessimal est* (Corruption of the best is the worst). We are told particularly by Paul that the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. If the wrath of God came down like a shower upon the whole of creation, we may say that it poured down with a particular violence upon the soul of man that had sinned. The point at which there is the most **glorious display of the evidence of God as Creator** and bountiful benefactor is, at the same time, the point at which there is the most intensified concentration of the wrath of God. **All of the wrath of God upon the whole creation is focused at this point. There where the water was deepest, it has also been troubled most deeply by the lash of the wrath of God.**²³

²³Many think of nature as the most glorious theater of God’s revelation, but in fact the human soul is. And what was the most glorious is not the most accursed. In what follows, Van Til enumerates several implications of this corruption, including a sobering analogy with Satan.

It is impossible to say with exactitude and in detail in what ways the wrath of God appears on man himself. We can only suggest a few matters. In the first place, the fact that the body of man was weakened made of it a poor tool for the service of the soul of man. Man's knowledge of nature depends to a large extent upon the keenness of his sensations. Though we marvel that in his non-saving grace God has left to man such a large measure of ability in this respect, it is all too apparent that man is constantly making mistakes in his observations of the universe around him. Man's eye and ear and all his sense have been greatly weakened through the effects of sin. When absence of the same power in the many. Even the great in this field have great weaknesses too.

As to the result of sin with respect to the soul proper, we may see something of this by comparing the knowledge of man with the knowledge of evil spirits. Scripture tells us that Satan and his hosts were created perfect. Satan originally tried to dethrone God and has tried this throughout the ages. Yet, in the nature of the case, he can never succeed in doing this. God would not be God if he could be dethroned. Accordingly, Satan's knowledge appears as false. He has made and continues to make logical deductions about reality that are untrue to reality. Satan managed to have Christ crucified in order to destroy him. Did he not know that by the crucifixion of Christ his own kingdom would be destroyed? *So we see though, on the one hand, Satan's power of ingenuity is great, he constantly frustrates himself in his purposes; he is constantly mistaken in the knowledge of reality.*

In a similar way, the mind of man has been under the curse of God since the entrance of sin. The entrance of sin involved a false interpretation of reality. Man thought that he, though a creature, could actually become as God the Creator. This was a serious miscalculation. *It was but to be expected that when man once fell into sin, his power of true interpretation would, from an absolute point of view, disappear altogether. No sinner can interpret reality aright.* This is the first point to keep in mind in this connection. It will not do to separate the logical powers of man from his moral powers and say that though man is morally unwilling to serve God, he can intellectually know God aright. It is true, of course, that when Cain left the face of the Lord, he in a sense knew God just as well as he knew him just before. It is true also that there is a sense in which Satan knows God now as well as he knew God before he fell. In a sense, Satan knows God better now than before. Did not God prove the truth of his statements to Satan thousands of times? But herein exactly lies the contradiction of Satan's personality: that though he knows God, *he yet does not really know God. His very intellect is constantly devising schemes by which he thinks he may overthrow God, while he knows all too well that God cannot be overthrown. What else can this be but a manifestation of the wrath of God?* Yes, it was the natural consequence of sin, **but this is itself the wrath of God, that sin should be allowed to run its course.**²⁴

In like manner, too, man's thought since the entrance of sin has been characterized by *self-frustration*. It is quite true that the sinner was able to accumulate a great deal of knowledge, after a fashion. Though his body, as a tool with which he had to obtain much of his knowledge, was weakened, and though his logical powers themselves were weakened, as he sees with his own eyes constantly when he makes false conclusions about matters of fact in the physical world, yet, in spite of all this, man has been able to know a great deal. The laws of logic as God had created them in the universe were not broken by sin, but man's ability to use them rightly was weakened, and still it is true that in

his logical interpretation man has, *in the form of the matter*, come very close to the truth. This is the first point to note when we say that man's knowledge has been characterized by self-frustration.²⁵

²⁴The curse we experience is from both the natural result of sin and the manifestation of God's wrath.

²⁵This argument for the self-frustration of attempts to reach God is part of this double curse. Here, as elsewhere, Van Til affirms the validity of the laws of logic (not necessarily Aristotle's laws, but absolute laws, nevertheless, imprinted upon the creation). Because of this we may know a great deal, at least in "the form of the matter." However, sin has corrupted our ability to use those laws rightly, so that our conclusions are often erroneous.

It has often been pointed out that the systems of interpretation of reality made by non-Christian philosophers are very similar in form to the system of truth as Christianity believes in it. We have no desire to obscure this fact. It is exactly what we should expect. As Satan himself must have become increasingly convinced that God is God in the sense that he is absolute and therefore can never be dethroned, so also many philosophers who have, like Plato, "lost themselves in their round globe," have increasingly felt that, unless there is an absolute God, there can be no interpretation of life. [this expression is Calvin's] As a result of this negative conviction, their form of the natural man's interpretation of reality has often been very similar to the truth. Of this the idealist tradition in philosophy is the best proof. It is necessary indeed to point out constantly that the idealist system of philosophy is formally much better than is the pragmatist system. Just as it is not at all a matter of indifference whether a man be a murderer or a respectable citizen, even though from the point of view of Christianity both will be lost forever unless brought to Christ, so it is not a matter of indifference whether a man have a high or a low form of non-Christian interpretation. It is true that a man who misses a train by a minute has missed it as well as the one who has missed it by an hour, yet we give a great deal more credit to the man who missed it only by a minute than to the man who missed it by an hour. We rejoice when men are "not far from the kingdom of heaven" even though they are not in the kingdom. But all this only brings out the more strikingly the fact that the sinner's knowledge frustrates itself. Knowing God as well as he does, that is, coming in the form of his interpretation so near to the truth, he yet refuses to accept the truth in its full significance.²⁷ It is on this self-frustration that Paul speaks particularly in romans 1:18-21:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who [hold down] the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.

²⁷In Reformed theology both the genuineness of common grace and the overall context of depravity are stressed. One may speak of a relative good within an evil context.

We shall not attempt to give an exegesis of this most difficult passage. It may suffice to call attention to the following matters. In the first place, we observe that Paul says that men do actually in some sense see the truth. We do not do justice to this passage by merely saying that all men or most men believe in a god or believe that God probably exists. **Paul says that the revelation of the only existing God is so clearly imprinted upon man himself and upon his environment that no matter how hard he tries, he cannot suppress this fact.** As psychologically active self-conscious creatures they must see something of the truth. They hold down the truth, to be sure, but it is truth that they hold down. Nor is it that truth is objectively placed before them only in nature and in the make-up of man. It is, to be sure, on this that Paul does lay the emphasis. **But knowledge is also in man in the sense that his subjective reaction to that which he sees shows some acquaintance with the truth.** [Key point! mentioned again later in the next paragraph.] The invisible things of God are perceived (*kathoratai*). Knowing God (*gnontes ton theon*), have not glorified God. In the second place, **it is primarily in this fact, that men know and do not live up to what they know, that Paul sees the greatest folly.** Though they knew God, yet they glorified him not. They hold down the *truth* that is in them as well as round about them. It is in this immediate connection that Paul speaks of the revelation of God's wrath. He says that God's wrath is displayed on men just because they hold down the truth in unrighteousness. It is true that God's wrath is displayed on whatever form unrighteousness may take, but it is specifically mentioned here that God displays his wrath because men hold down the truth.²⁸

²⁸While Van Til avows this is a difficult passage that he will not exegete, this paragraph shows how much his views depend on Rom. 1. It allows him to stress both the knowledge and folly of our reaction to God's revelation. The concern of this lengthy section is humanity as a source for understanding humanity.

If we keep these things in mind, we shall be the better able to see what Scripture teaches with respect to the knowledge that man should find by the study of himself. As far as the intellectual aspect of the matter is concerned, we have now the following factors. In the first place, the body of man is, since the entrance of sin, in a weakened condition. In the second place, the functions of the soul are weakened. In the third place, and in spite of this, **the invisible things of God, that is the nature of God, his power and divinity, are still displayed in man as well as round about him,** in the fact of the self-conscious activity of his person, **in his own negative moral reaction to the revelation about and within him,** in his sense of dissatisfaction with all nontheistic interpretations, and in a measure of involuntary recognition of the truth of the theistic interpretation as the true interpretation of the origin of the world. In this respect man's knowledge is characterized by the same folly that marks **Satan's** knowledge of God. The first act of man's antitheistic interpretation consisted in the attempt on his part to be something that he knew he could not be. **It is this folly that man has carried on through the ages, and it is this that still makes sin so foolish. And it is upon this foolishness that Paul says that the wrath of God is revealed.**

This revelation is (a) partly objective to man in the narrow sense of being outside his person, as it the case with revelation in nature, (be) partly subjective to man in the narrow sense of the consisting of his psychological constitution, and (c) partly subjective in the sense of consisting of his own involuntary ethical approval or disapproval (conscience). Over against that which is thus **objective** – (1) outside man, (2) within man psychologically, (3) within man as involuntary ethical relation – we call that **“subjective”** which gives expression self-consciously, even if not with full consistency, to what that

sinner as sinner does with that which comes to him objectively. **As sinner, he seeks to suppress the objective revelation of God within him.**

It is difficult to know just what Paul means by this revelation of God's wrath on the folly of man. We may sense something of his meaning, it would seem, if we think again of a man far removed in time from Adam. He would have before him the endless repetition of the folly of man's interpretations.²⁹

²⁹The difficulty described here is that of relating the historical act of Adam to the present state of the world. Romans 1 describes a repetition of that foolish act, with two added ingredients: (1) the making of false though plausible claims, and (2) God's patience, which keeps us from utter depravity.

He would have before him those things of which Calvin speaks when he says that the Epicureans concluded from the diversity of interpretations given by philosophers that no interpretation could be true.³⁰ **The folly of man has devised all manner of seemingly plausible interpretations.** This fact in itself would complicate matters for anyone who came long after Adam. And this would constitute a **manifestation of God's wrath.**

³⁰ See Calvin, *Institutes...*, he says, "And this very confused diversity emboldened the Epicureans and other crass despisers of piety to cast out all awareness of God." Most references derive from Cicero, *Nature of the Gods*.

Here we should again bring in the fact of the non-saving grace of God. In the case of Satan, the folly of his interpretation appears very clear. In the case of the sinner, however, we have a mixed situation. Through God's non-saving grace, the wrath of God on the sinner had been mitigated in this life. This appears along the whole line of man's interests. It appears along the line of man's physical life. Man is given an abundance of food and drink. It is shown in the fact that man's body, though weakened, is even so, particularly in some instances, a usable tool for the soul of man. It is shown in the fact that man's mind is not fully and exclusively bent upon evil. **Though basically man is at enmity against God so that he is prone to hate God and his neighbor, this enmity against God does not come to full expression in this life. He is not a finished product.**

We can readily see that all these matters, taken together, produce a very complex situation. There are three main things to be taken into consideration. In the first place, we must think of what was the original situation in Paradise and what remained of this after the fall of man. In the second place, we must think of the wrath of God and the great complexity that this introduced into the situation. In the third place, we must think of non-saving grace and, especially, of the great civilization that has flourished by it as means.³¹

³¹Here Van Til summarizes the situation in three categories, which he explains below. They make the world "complicated."

Under the first head, we have the fact that man's rationality is, as a matter of fact, a creation of God. When man tries to make of himself an ultimate starting point in knowledge instead of a proximate

starting point, **he somehow feels that he is doing something that he can not do and then he ought not to try to do**. Under the second head, we have the fact that man's mind is, as a matter of fact, now that sin has entered into it, abnormal. **When man acts as though his mind were normal, he frustrates himself, and he senses something of this self-frustration**. He somehow feels that his ideal of absolute comprehension is knowledge is a false ideal. Under the third head, we have the fact that, in spite of the fact that man has tried to set himself up as metaphysically ultimate starting point, **and in spite of this fact that he considers his mind to be normal**, he has been able to so as much as he has. **He ought to recognize the fact, says Calvin, that he lives by grace**.

The highest point of revelation outside of Scripture as it is found after the entrance of sin is just this point, that, together with the objective clarity of all these matters comes the fact that men, in some sense, at bottom recognize them to be true. **The truth, as it were, penetrates into men's minds against their will and in spite of themselves**. The whole matter is admirably summed up in the statement of Ovid: "*Video Meliora probaque, deteriora sequor*" (I see the better and approve, the worse I follow).³²

³²In other words, in some cases we know and approve the good, but we live according to the bad. Calvin quotes this in the Institutes. The quote is from Medea's speech in the *Metamorphoses* (7.20). In the context, Calvin is discussing the different types of sinfulness.

That this is the case appears even more clearly if we consider for a moment what man ought to learn from the study of his own moral consciousness. Here too the first fact is that his consciousness is as a matter of fact a derivative moral standard and not an ultimate moral standard. And the sinner somehow feels that if he sets himself up as God, judging good and evil, there is something wrong. **He feels that he needs a moral absolute outside himself**. The second fact is that man is abnormal in his moral judgments. Of this fact, too, the sinner has some consciousness. He admits that wrong moral action is common among men. He feels something of the fact that if moral evil is thought of as being ultimate in the universe, there is no morality possible at all. In the third place, he feels something of the fact that all the morality there is in this world must somehow exist by virtue of the ultimate victory of the good, which exists in metaphysical priority to evil. He senses something of the fact that if he is to have life, he must somehow participate in the nature of the "ideal world." All these things he sees and thus knows the truth after a fashion. In spite of all this, man sins, and thus **sins against better knowledge**. Paul says on this point, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Rom. 1:32).

Note here that what Paul speaks of in Romans as the revelation of God in nature and man, both as to his intellectual aspects and as to his moral aspects, is fully corroborated in other portions of Scripture. We mention only a few passages especially in connection with the results of sin on the mind of man.

We are not here concerned with the blindness of the natural man as such, but only with that blindness as it illustrates **the nature of the light against which it had sinned**. If a man is only to be pitied, we suppose that he has not had any great opportunities, **but if a man is condemned and is called a fool, it must be that he has had great opportunities**. Hence the fact itself that Scripture speaks of man as a fool shows that Scripture considers the **light** that he had as being very great.

According to the psalmist, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). Jeremiah says that everyman is brutish in his knowledge (Jer. 10:14). In the New Testament, Jesus says to the scribes and Pharisees, who had sinned against the revelation that they had, that they were fools and blind, Paul says to the Ephesians: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (Eph. 5:15). Peter speaks of silencing the ignorance of foolish men (1Pet 2:15).

Man, reasoning from himself as *ultimate*, to God, is **univocal** reasoning – he’s equating his thinking equal with God’s thinking (which is impossible), as opposed to reasoning from God to man which is *analogical* reasoning...what God is like not how he actually is. Finitude cannot comprehend infinitude. Van Til fleshes this out and how this relates to many philosophies including pantheism and immanentistic thinking. Lastly, the self-frustration of Satan and fallen man’s thinking when out of God’s will.

Notes on Pantheism

Univocal vs Analogical Reasoning (see [code488](#))

The Immanentistic Principle of Interpretation &

Romans 2:14-15 - the law written on the Gentiles’ hearts explained,
& self-frustration (see [code504](#) too) of the Devil and man’s thoughts and actions– the wrath of God revealed.

Excerpt from *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*

By Cornelius Van Til

Pg 177, 178, 181-186

[Code505](#)

Notes on Pantheism by Van Til

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* p 204: In Paradise God walked and talked with man. Man needs God near to him. Even in the state of sin man has realized something of the need of a God who is near him. In fact, the sinner has brought God too near to him; he has identified the Creator with the creature. In idolatry we have an expression on the part of the sinner that points to his need of a God who is near.

Revelation about God from Nature – Natural Theology

Pg 177

In thinking of the revelation about God from nature, we do well to think first of the fact that man did originally think analogically about nature and, in thinking analogically, was able to know God truly, as far as God had revealed himself to man.⁴ When he thought thus about

⁴The First source for the knowledge of Gd is nature. Van Til further develops the idea of analogy here. One reason he does it is the need to respond to various deficient views of analogy, as he does below. Characteristically, he begins with pre-fallen revelation and then moves to revelation after the fall.

nature, he thought about God as he is, that is as the self-sufficient and self-consistent rational being. It is as such that God really revealed himself to man, and it is as such that man really thought of God. God continued to reveal himself in nature as the self-sufficient and self-subsistent rational God even after man became a sinner. If therefore men would only reason analogically, they should be able to reason from nature to nature's God.⁵ But sinners, until

⁵Recall earlier discussions of analogy, e.g., chapter 2, under the heading "Human Knowledge Analogical."

saved by grace, do not reason analogically. The reason univocally.⁶ And because they reason

⁶As indicated at the outset of this work, we speak of all forms of reasoning in which man is assumed to be the final or ultimate reference point of predication as univocal reasoning. In contrast to this we speak of the form of reasoning employed by the Christian who recognizes that God is the ultimate reference point of predication as analogical reasoning. **Univocal** here describes thinking that is exactly the same as God's thinking, a clear impossibility.

univocally about nature, they conclude that no god exists or that a god exists, but never that the true God exists. It has been a basic misunderstanding of Scripture and of Calvin's interpretation of Scripture to say that even by **reasoning univocally** with respect to nature, man should be able to come to the knowledge of God's existence. It is true that men have claimed to be able to know the existence of God, and not his essence by "**natural theology.**" But even this was saying too much. By univocal reasoning, one can never find the truth about God, either as to his existence or as to his being. *By univocal reasoning, one can, in the nature of the case, find an immanent God only.*⁷ [codeproofs] Hepp overlooks this when he says that the "**theistic proofs**" have a certain validity. [see Hepp's view in chapter 5] By **univocal reasoning**, one can, at most, find a God that

⁷If **human understanding** were the only standard, then it would follow that we could never find a God who is qualitatively greater than ourselves. Even "existence" turns out to be a human concept. **Therein lies the error of univocal thinking.** See note 6 above.

is and extension of the universe. **Univocal reasoning starts with the assumption that man and the universe are entities from which, as the ultimate starting point, we can reason to God.** We believe, however, that not even Adam in Paradise could do this. He could only do what Calvin speaks of in the

first paragraph of the *Institutes*, namely, (a) think of God and himself simultaneously, and (b) think of God as ultimate and of himself as derivative.

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Again, because men ought to conclude that the sin of man is the source of the curse of God upon nature, they ought also to conclude that it is by the grace of God that they live at all, and that nature is not fallen into complete disorder. That winter and summer follow one another is actually a matter of God's grace to man, as the covenant with Noah shows. This, men ought to see. The facts are there before them, and they ought to see the facts. Hence they ought to glorify the Creator.

As a matter of fact, men have not reasoned and interpreted as they ought to have reasoned and interpreted. They have reasoned univocally instead of analogically. They have used an immanentistic principle of interpretation for the universe as a whole. They have not been willing to admit that it is by the human mind that disorder and misinterpretation have come into the world. They have not negated themselves as normal. Hence, they have also not negated themselves as ultimate. Yet they have sensed through it all that they have, with their exclusively immanentistic principle, not been able to interpret reality satisfactorily. They have shown, therefore, a desire for something different. They have recognized that if no interpretation on the part of a self-sufficient God is given to them, there is no rest for the mind of man.¹⁶

¹⁶We desire eternity, according to Eccl. 3:11, yet we cannot find it (Eccl. 8:17). The result is a restlessness of mind, as Van Til suggests, echoing Augustine's phrase from the Confessions 1.1, "Our heart is restless until it rests in you."

On the other hand, in the interpretations that they have actually given, they have shown great similarity of form to the truth. In the idealistic tradition, philosophy has verbally recognized the need of a timeless absolute. In the higher religions of the world, outside Christianity, men have also glimpsed something of the fact that it is in something above this world that the soul of man must find its peace. So modernism is today constantly seeking that which is above the mechanical and the material. And though this is in itself misinterpretation, it nevertheless shows that men are constantly seeking something or someone beyond the universe. It is remarkable how many scientists have said that they discovered God in nature. It is, to be sure, not the true God that they discover, because they, generally speaking, use the univocal method of reasoning: but the fact remains that men seek a god. All of this is eloquent testimony that God is, as matter of fact, revealed in nature and in the mind of men, and that, therefore, men ought to know him.¹⁷

¹⁷Whether in philosophy, religion, or science, there are enunciations of remarkable parallels to the truth of theism. They too echo the truth, while at the same time failing to do full justice to it.

Revelation about God from Man – Rational Theology

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Moreover, all men everywhere, deep down in their hearts know that the world is created by God.¹⁸ At bottom they know that y all their attempts at explanation of nature they are suppressing within themselves the testimony of the real Creator of the universe. The more self-conscious men become with respect to the real meaning of their own position, the more clearly do they realize that their systems are escape-mechanisms by which sinners seek to hide the truth rom themselves.¹⁹

¹⁸The second source for revelation about God is man, in the process of Van Til calls “rational theology.”

¹⁹Using the term suppression, from Rom. 1:18 Van Til concludes that humans know God “deep down.” In a thoughtful treatment of the unbeliever’s knowledge of God, John Frame comments that while a surface impression would convey that Van Til is using the psychological language of repression, an examination of the broad sweep of his writings shows that he sets for the much more complex, indeed mysterious, relation of truth to error in the unbelieving consciousness.

What we have just said with respect to the revelation about God from nature applies also, *mutatis mutandis* (with respective differences having been considered), to the revelation about God from man.

Here in particular the point that Calvin stresses, namely, that man must think of himself as derivative and as in contact with God, is of importance. The knowledge of God and of ourselves is most important to us. All other knowledge centers on our knowledge of God and of ourselves. If we are correct in our interpretation of knowledge here, we shall be correct everywhere; if we are mistaken here, we shall be mistaken everywhere.

At this point, then, we may say that men ought to reason analogically about themselves. They ought to reason analogically about their being (ontological argument), about the cause of their being (cosmological argument), and about the purpose of their being (teleological argument),²¹ Men ought to see themselves concretely for what they are. They cannot in any true sense define or describe themselves except in terms of their derivation from and responsibility to God. They ought to see that the words *being*, *cause*, and *purpose* have no possible meaning when applied to themselves, except in relation to God as their Creator and Judge.

²¹Again, Van Til is ambiguous about the **theistic proofs**. Here he uses three of them only as example of the problems needing to be solved: the nature of being, its origins and purpose. The solution is **analogy**, in his sense of the term, that is, **thinking God’s thoughts after him**.

Accordingly, they ought also to attribute disorder to man, not to God. If error were as fundamental as the truth, if negation were as fundamental as affirmation, it would mean that there would be no truth at all. The least bit of rationality anywhere presupposes absolute rationality in God. To this we may add also that the least bit of irrationality anywhere presupposes absolute rationality in God. No irrationality could have meaning except in contrast to rationality. Yet if irrationality were contrasted merely to finite rationality, it would not be really contrasted to rationality at all. **Finite irrationality, as well as finite rationality, needs absolute rationality as its presupposition.**²²

²²In Van Til's apologetic, irrationality is impossible. Even to call the world irrational presupposes a higher standard of rationality.

Thus we see that the very least bit of rational interpretation, as well as the possibility of error, presupposes God. This applies both to the intellectual and to the moral realm. That man can to any extent interpret the universe aright, and that he does by nature the "things of the law" are equally significant as evidences of the existence of God. The second point, pertaining to morality, Paul speaks of in Romans 2:14-15 as follows: "For when the Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."

As inners, these Gentiles seek to keep down the testimony of the Spirit of God within and about them. Even so, as in the case of knowledge (Rom. 1:20), so in the case of morality (Rom. 2:14-15), **he cannot wholly keep the Spirit's testimony from being effective**. There is an **incidental** and **involuntary** conformity to some of the requirements of the law in their moral reactions.²³

²³What is true of understanding, that we know the truth but suppress it in unrighteousness, is also true of morality: we know what we ought to do but will not do it.

Here to we should carefully distinguish between what is merely revelatory and what is indicative of the sinner's self-conscious ethical reaction. **Paul does not here say that the law is written in the hearts of men**. It is true that they have the law written in their hearts. Their own makeup as image-bearers of God tells them, as it were, in the imperative voice, that they must act as such. All of God's revelation to man is law to man. But here we deal with man's response as an ethical being to this revelation of God. All men, says Paul, to some extent, do the *works* of the law. He says that they have the *works* of the law written in their hearts. Without true motive, without a true purpose, they may still do that which externally appears to be acts of obedience to God's law. God continues to press his demands upon man, and man is good "after a fashion" just as he "knows after a fashion."²⁴ [good comments of the law here](#):

²⁴The unbelieving **Gentiles** do have the law, just as do the Jews, albeit through a different mode of revelation. The contrast between the law and the work of the law is meant to guard us from thinking that **Gentiles** without grace (any more than Jews) can fully live by it. It is true that the law is engraved on the heart in the sense that every human is God's image-bearer. But here Paul is reflecting on the response to the law. **If the law were truly engraved on the Gentiles' hearts in a new covenant sense (Jer. 31:33), they would presumably conform to it**. Yet they do have the work of the law written on their hearts, that is, inscribed on their deepest consciousness (by general revelation, as opposed to tablets, which are by special revelation). This is evidenced by the portions of God's law that are practiced by the Gentiles, including various virtues, and by the witness of the conscience. The point is that they are not without revelation, yet their response **is to be good only in a relative sort of way, not in a redeemed way**.

Order, when viewed from the point of view of the passage of time, is purpose. Men should therefore also have used the teleological argument **analogically**. It is in connection with the rational and moral activity of the mind of man that the concept of purpose comes out most strikingly. So then man should see that all things in this universe, and, in particular, all things in the mind and moral activity of man, would be at loose ends if it were not for God and his purposes with respect to them. Here we may note again the difference between a **univocal** and an **analogical argument**. Suppose we begin with man as a moral being, taking for granted that we know to a large extent, if not fully, what purpose means in his case, in order then to conclude that there must be a God to conserve the purposes or values of man. That would be **univocal instead of analogical reason**.²⁵ [²⁵Again, that is because the starting point is defective.] **It would be to make God the derivative of man instead of man the derivative of God.** We would be thinking of a god who is but an extension of man, with the result that all things would still be at loose ends. Thus we would defeat the very purpose we had in mind, that is, of showing the necessity of thinking of God when we think of human purpose. It is true, of course, that there is a sense in which we know what purpose means in the case of man, when we do not so plainly know it in the case of God. When we purpose to go to a certain city, we mean that we intend to exert ourselves physically in order to get there. But this only indicates that in this sense we are more immediate to ourselves than to God. Yet, from an ultimate point of view, God is nearer than breathing, and nearer than hand and feet. [see Ps. 139; Acts 17:28]

Thus we are led on to the idea of a judgment. **Calvin** speaks of this in particular. He says that men ought not to conclude from the fact that some men are not immediately punished for their unrighteousness, that there is no God who judges, They ought rather to conclude, he says, that God will punish in the future the wrong that he leaves unpunished now. Translating this in the terminology we have employed, we may say that there must be a comprehensive purpose with history if there is purpose anywhere in history. Without a *comprehensive purpose*, every act of purpose on the part of man would be set in a void. And if there must be absolute purpose, it goes without saying that all the evil must one day be abolished. All unrighteousness will one day have to be punished. God will accomplish his purpose with the universe, or he would not be God. **Even the devil must be subordinate to the purpose of God.** The devil's actions are therefore actions that carry in them their own **frustrations**. Satan must, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, serve the glory of God. Just as his thoughts are **self-frustrative**, so his actions are self-frustrative. So also, man's actions, if they are not in accordance with the will of God, will be like the devil's actions in this character of self-frustration. **Thus men are a law unto themselves.** They condemn themselves, and, to an extent, they excuse themselves. God has shown the wisdom of man to be foolishness and will finally condemn all purposive thought and action not centered on him at the time of the judgment day.²⁷

²⁷Acts 17:21 supports the idea that we know by general revelation (in this case, ratified by Christ's resurrection) that judgment is coming.

Thus we see that, both with respect to nature and with respect to man himself, men should have known God as Creator, as preserver and as Judge. They should have known his divinity. They should have known him as the absolute one. They should have known him as the one through whom along all human predication, applied either to nature or to man, has meaning. They should have known him as

the presupposition of the intelligibility of the universe. They should have known him as such in his self-testimony, the self-testimony of the Spirit with respect to nature and man.

Instead of knowing him as such, men sought to interpret the universe by an exclusively immanentistic principle. Paul says: “For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen.” (Romans 1:25). Both **deistic** and **pantheistic** types of philosophy are **immanentistic**.²⁸ Both try to worship the creature rather than the Creator. Yet, as we have seen before, men have recognized something of the insufficiency of the **immanentistic principle**. They have demanded a *beyond*. The nations have been incorrigibly religious. The *sensus deitatis* (sense of deity) has been deeply ingrained in men, says Calvin, and the seed of religion has been so fixed in their being that they have tried in vain to remove the knowledge of God from their hearts.²⁹

²⁸According to **deism**, all that needs to be known of God is understood from nature. It is **immanentistic** because there is no need for supernatural revelation. According to **pantheism**, **God is in everything**. Again, **there is no need for a transcendent Creator**.

²⁹Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.3; 1.4.1, 4.

On the other hand, the nature of the god whom they have formed for themselves, though often brought down to the level of four-footed beasts and creeping things, has, in the higher instances, been similar in form to the conception of the true God. Plato does, to be sure, “lose himself in this globe” so that his idea of god is, from the Christian point of view utterly false: yet, on the other hand, it is most remarkable that his god is as noble as he is. But the basic differences and the formal similarities between the gods of the nations and the God of truth are evidence of the truth that God revealed himself so men. Both are given that men might be without excuse.

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Side note:

Univocal is explained by Greg Bahnsen in his book, *Van Til's Apologetic*:

As explained later, Van Til means here that unbelievers think **autonomously** (as though the **Creator-creature distinction were irrelevant**, i.e., “**univocally**”), whereas believers reason in terms of the light and guidance provided by God's revelation (reinterpreting experience by thinking God's thoughts after Him, i.e., “**analogously**”).

Notes on Arminianism & The Necessity of Special Revelation

By Cornelius Van Til

An Introduction to Systematic Theology

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The Necessity of Special Revelation

This necessity does not lie in any defect in the general revelation that God have to man when he created him. When we speak of the insufficiency of general revelation, we do not wish to suggest that this revelation is as such insufficient for its purpose. It has been noted how all creation, including man's own psychological constitution, is inherently revelatory of God. This revelation was so clear and unavoidable that man was always confronted with the face of God. **But in sinning, man, as it were, took out his own eyes, so that he could no longer see God in his general revelation.** Moreover, through this act of self-immolation, man made himself **not only helpless but also guilty and polluted before God!** It is therefore to the condition of man as a sinner, not to man as finite, that the idea of the necessity of a special or saving revelation must be attached.²

²Crucial to these affirmations is the purpose of general and special revelation. General revelation is sufficient for its purpose, which, of course, is not to speak of judgment or of atonement.

Arminian theologians do not do justice to the distinction between the sinfulness and the finitude of man when they speak of special revelation in distinction from general revelation.³ In discussing general revelation they do not include man's own reaction as part of that revelation. They tend to think of man as originally standing in a state of equilibrium before the revelation of God that was around but not within him. On this position man might reject the revelation of God without sinning against and ruining his own nature. Man would have some excuse for thinking that God might possibly not exist. Even if the revelation surrounding him were calculated to make him think that in all probability God does exist, yet the intelligibility of his own nature to himself apart from the idea of revelation would logically justify him in holding that God might not exist.

³On **Arminian apologetics**, see Chap 2 note 29. Here, the point is made that **Arminians** are uncritical of human inability to assess revelation correctly because **they do not believe in total depravity. For them, special revelation remedies an inadequacy in general revelation, not in human sinfulness.**

Van Til states from his book, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pg 208: Add to this the fact that even **orthodox Arminians theology** has, in its concept of the plenary ability of the sinner to accept or reject the gospel, really taught that the natural man knows what his basic needs are, and it becomes very clear that the danger facing us is indeed very great. Arminianism had made an easy alliance with evolutionism.

Thus, there is on the basis of the **Arminian view** of man an inherent and original lack of clarity or insufficiency in general revelation. On this basis, general revelation was not even historically sufficient, i.e., wholly adequate for the purpose for which it was given. God did not do this work well at the outset of his dealing with man.⁴

⁴Again, the **Arminian view** results in a **general revelation that is insufficient and unclear**. Because the view trusts unaided reason to assess the situation, there is no guarantee of finding God. Even though the existence may have a high probability, God may or may not exist, because human judgment deems the evidence to be mixed.

On this view God was really morally obliged to give man a saving revelation of himself. Since man had fallen into the ravine of sin at least partly because God's warning signals had not been clear, it was naturally to be expected that he should later make good. On the other hand, if we include the **original subjective condition** of man in the very concept of revelation, **we see that man was originally in possession of the truth and of a true reaction to the truth**. It is this that is the basis for a proper concept of a point of contact for the gospel in the mind of the natural man. Man's condition after the entrance of sin is, therefore, not that of a poor innocent man, but that of a criminal who has committed high treason. Thus, the necessity for a special revelation lies primarily in the subjective rebellion of man. The special revelation that must be given to man, if he is to be saved, must not only consist of the "objective" work of Christ in his death and resurrection, but also, result in a subjective change from the state of rebellion to a state of obedience. The **work of the Holy Spirit** in granting a **regeneration** to God's people is therefore implied in the work of Christ. The presentation of an **objective revelation**, that is, a **revelation outside of man alone**, would in itself be worse than useless. [because an inward change of heart needs to happen, John 3, Titus 3:5, you must be born again, regeneration] Arminianism again fails to realize this fact. And the Butler type of apologetics as advocated by J. Oliver Buswell also fails to realize this fact.⁵

⁵If the evidence is mixed, or unclear, then God really should make himself more clear, and so he **owes it to us to bring us special revelation**. On the **Calvinist view, the problem is not lack of clarity but inward moral rebellion**. Accordingly, God may reveal grace, but only because he is merciful, not under obligation.

It is indeed true that nature does not reveal God's grace to man. This objective insufficiency of present general revelation is plainly taught by Paul. The whole argument of the first few chapters of Romans establishes this fact that all "righteousness" that is of men whether among Jews or among Gentiles, places all under the condemnation of God and **that in general revelation there is no remedy** for this condition. Men are lost without Christ – and he is not revealed in nature. The whole point may be summed up in the words of Peter when he says: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), But we should remember that the objective insufficiency of present general revelation is due to the sin of man. It is true that nature does not reveal grace to us, but it is also true that man, as he was originally created, did not need grace. Even if the water supply in a city is quite sufficient for the normal needs of its citizens, it may not be sufficient if all those citizens take to burning their houses down simultaneously. The original revelation of God to man was quite sufficient for his creatures who loved him, but it was not enough for creatures who became sinners, and who, therefore, burned beneath his wrath.⁶

⁶To repeat: the insufficiency of general revelation to present grace is not because it fails in its purpose, **but because human sinfulness requires a particular, special, kind of revelation that**

tells of judgment and atonement. **Arminians** blame our finitude rather than our sinful distortion for our not recognizing the truth.

In consequence of this in, then, man needs both new or additional revelation – a revelation of grace – and renewed power by which to perceive that new revelation and to understand and accept the revelation of God in nature for what it really is. He needs, as Warfield has put it, both new light and new power of sight.

Note It will be observed that the reason for the distinction between sin and finitude made above is more apparent in our day than ever before. Modernism, largely following the **philosophical principle** of **Kant**, thinks that all the revelation that is mediated in and through history, whether round about man or within him, is of necessity something less than the voice of a self-sufficient God. Man's finitude is therefore his chief excuse for his sin.⁸

⁸**Kant's philosophical principle** would include the filtering of external reality through a human grid, including history, **such that there is no objective data from revelation**. On **modernism** see Chap 1 note 22.

Similarly, the new form of modernism of the dialectical theologians, still patterning its thought after the critical principle of Kant, finds that natural revelation is, as such, a mere "chaos of voices." In this theology too man's finitude and his sinfulness are virtually identified.⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher from whom the dialectical theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner received their chief inspiration, says, "Nothing is more readily evident than that the greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an approximation."¹⁰ Basing this approach on Kantian principle of knowledge, he argues that no knowledge of an such object as the self-existent God of orthodox Christianity is available for man. He takes away the foundation not only of biblical revelation but also of general or natural revelation. He rejects the very presuppositions on which any orthodox view must be based, namely, the temporal creation of the universe, God's providential control over the universe and man's creation in the image of God.¹¹

⁹Dialectical theology is the broad term referring to a method that shows a struggle between the capability of reason and the reality of freedom above the rations. Thus, propositional truth is considered limited and held in a "dialectical" tension with its opposite. In its modern form, it was developed by Kant and Hegel. It was brought into theology by **Kierkegaard**, according to some, and it was then strongly developed in neo orthodox theology by **Karl Barth**, Emil Brunner, C.H. Dodd, and others, including the Niebuhrs, **who stressed that one must recognize the basic paradox, then rise above it by a step of faith.** . [fideism - faith without knowledge. See note below]

Martin Luther's Table Talk, 353. Luther's position on faith is closely aligned with **fideism**, which claims reason is not necessary for faith. Faith accepts that which reason alone is unable to believe. "For reason" Luther taught, reason "is the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but—more frequently than not- struggles against the Divine Word" Ibid., 353.

¹⁰Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript ...* Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was an enigmatic theologian and philosopher, whose life works involve a sharp critique of rationalism, and a study of action and ethical choices made before a God who calls upon us to exercise faith even when it does not make sense.

¹¹Scholars of dialectical theology may find this lineage a bit hasty. Van Til paints with broad strokes here. His point is that if one accepts the Kantian dichotomy of **noumenal** versus **phenomenal**, then God must struggle to get through to us by revelation, and we therefore have a certain excuse for not recognizing him. See Chap 7, note 35

It follows that both on the basis of modernism and on that of dialecticism, God really owes man a saving revelation of himself. And the compromising position of the Arminian easily carries him away by this confusion. [see chapter 2, note 29]

The necessity of special revelation appears not only with respect to man's failure to know and react to spiritual things right, but also with respect to his inability to interpret "natural" things aright. Calvin brings out this point fully when, after laboring to show that God is marvelously revealed in his creation, he inserts a chapter on "The Need of Scripture, as a Guide and Teacher, In Coming to God as a Creator." He begins this chapter by saying,

Therefore, though the effulgence which is presented to every eye, both in the heavens and on the earth, leaves the ingratitude of man without excuse, since God, in order to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation, holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of his Deity in his works, another and better help must be given to guide us properly to God as a Creator. [John Calvin's *Institutes*, 1.6.1.]

No one, on the basis of present general revelation alone, actually knows God aright as the Creator. It is not a thought man by himself and on the basis of natural revelation alone can truly know God as the Creator, but that he cannot truly know God as Savior. Man ought, to be sure, from nature to know God as Creator, seeing that nature clearly displays the Creator. But since man has become a sinner, he has become a willing slave to sin (*ethelodoulos*).¹⁴ He therefore never reads the "book of nature" aright even with respect to "natural" things. He may, to be sure, by virtue of the sense of deity within him, give involuntary, adventitious interpretations of natural revelation that are, so far forth, correct. In this sense every man knows God and knows himself to be a creature of God (Rom. 1:19). But to the extent that he interprets nature according to **his own adopted principles**, he does not speak the truth on any subject.

¹⁴The Greek word for slave or bond-servant. Here, it is negative, as in "slave to sin." See John 8:34 and Calvin's *Institutes*, 2.2

Romanism, Arminianism, and traditional apologetics, whether of the **empiricist** school of Butler and Buswell, or of the *a priori* type,¹⁵ fail to do justice to this point so greatly stressed by Calvin. They attribute to the natural man the ability not only to make formally correct statements about "nature" or themselves, but also mean by these statements what the Christian means by them.

¹⁵On *a priori* apologetics, see Chap 2, note 3. According to Van Til, an **apriorist** is one who places human autonomous propositions above revelation. He readily associates James Buswell, Gordon H. Clark, and Edward Carnell with this approach.

Yet the willing disobedience on the part of man is itself the greatest damage done to god's creation; it is this that must be repaired. This cannot be done unless creation is really seen as God's creation and man is really seen as the creature of God. It is only in Man is the creature of God that he can be saved by God. Salvation means that man, the sinner, must be brought back to the knowledge of himself as the creature of God and therefore, to the knowledge of God as the Creator. Being a sinner, man will not read nature aright unless he does it in the light of Scripture. "If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture." [Calvin, Institutes 1.6.2]

Note We should accordingly avoid the error of separating too sharply between science and religion as is often done. The world of natural and historical fact with which science deals cannot be truly interpreted by anyone who is not a Christian, any more than can the world of spiritual things. Every statement about the physical universe implies, in the last analysis, some view about the "spiritual" realm. Scientists frequently say that in their statements they will limit themselves to the phenomenal world. But every assertion they make about the "**phenomenal**" world [the seen world] involves an attitude toward the "**noumenal**" world. [the unseen, spiritual world] Even the mere assumption that anything can intelligently be asserted about the phenomenal world by itself presupposes its independence of God, and as such is in effect a denial of him.¹⁷

¹⁷As seen previously, Van Til argues vehemently against dichotomizing the spiritual (**noumenal**) and the scientific (**phenomenal**). Herman Dooyeweerd likewise spoke against a **dualistic ground** motive (freedom versus nature," or "personality versus science." Francis A Schaeffer warns against an "upper story" versus a "lower story."

Van Til speaks on chance, *a priori*, Rationalism, Irrationalism, Existentialism, Exhaustive Knowledge, and the Dialecticism of Kant

An Introduction to Systematic Theology, pg 197-199

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Now it is this basically and exclusively revelatory character of all the facts of the universe that is either openly or covertly denied by both rationalist and irrationalist forms of heresy. Both hold to a non-Christian view of *possibility*. Both hold that it is at least *possible* that the facts of the universe can be something other than revelatory of God. And this is, in effect, **to posit chance as equally ultimate with God**. And positing chance as equally ultimate with God is virtually the same as denying the existence of God. To say that the evidence, when fully and fairly considered, merely shows that God probably exists is tantamount to saying that he does not at all exist. **The God of Christianity is the God whose counsel or plan is the source of possibility**. The word *possibility* has no possible meaning except upon the presupposition of the existence of the self-contained ontological Trinity as the source of it.

It should be noted, too, that in presupposing chance, rationalism is as irrationalistic as is irrationalism. **Rationalism is secretly, while irrationalism is frankly and openly, addicted to a philosophy of chance**. Both rationalism and irrationalism are therefore committed to a form of empiricism that is utterly out of accord with **Christian theism [the orthodox study of God]**. Though both are committed to a **supposedly neutral attitude**, an attitude that is willing to find in the facts whatsoever there is to be found, it is a foregone conclusion that they will never find Christian theism there. Having presupposed chance back of the facts, they can find chance and nothing but chance in the facts.²¹

²¹Rationalism is irrationalist because it claims chance. Irrationalism is rationalist because it is committed to neutrality.

And this leads to the obvious observation that irrationalists no less than rationalists are rationalistic; both have adopted their ultimate positions not after but before they have investigated the facts. No human being can escape making an assumption about the nature of possibility at the outset of his investigation. All men have *a priori* assumptions in terms of which they approach the facts that confront them. The Christian frankly admits that his *a priori* is the assumption of the existence of the ontological Trinity, the temporal fiat creation of the universe, and man's creation in the image of God. The non-Christian has a different sort of *a priori*. Every non-Christian has an *a priori*. And the *a priori* of every non-Christian is different, radically different from that of the Christian.²²

²²Here Van Till uses the term *a priori* to mean "presupposition." This is not always the case.

It is not now our purpose to work out the significance of this fact of the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian *a priori* for Christian apologetics. (That significance is obviously fundamental. Failure on the part of Christian apologists to make the distinction between the two kinds of *a priori* spells failure to make contact with the nonbeliever. It spells failure to set forth the difference between the two positions clearly and therefore spells failure to challenge the unbeliever with the truth of the Christian position.)

Our purpose here is to show that it is quite impossible to maintain the biblical doctrine of the necessity of special revelation as being due to sin rather than to finitude on either a **Romanist** or a **dialectical** view of general revelation. Both of these views hold to the irrationalist position that the facts of the created universe only probably reveal the existence of God. Both hold to this irrationalist position because both have also assumed the non-Christian *a priori* position that man can determine the nature of the possible in the realm of being by means of the **law of noncontradiction**. The reason why both hold to **probabilism** is that they cannot **exhaustively** square the biblical view of revelation with the principle of logical consistency. That is to say, both hold to the non-Christian view that unless man **can understand God exhaustively by means of logical relations, one cannot really be sure of having the truth about God in any sense.**²³

²³In the diagnosis of non-Reformed views, as with unbelief, **rationalism** (or logical consistency) can take you only so far. It cannot accord with all to the data of revelation. Instead of avoiding irrationalism, it adds **irrationalism** to the mix, in the form of chance or possibility – **"possibilism."** On this view, understanding must be exhaustive or skeptical.

There is, of course, a great difference between **Romanism** and **dialecticism**. Immanuel Kant marks the dividing line between them. Building upon a Kantian type of epistemology, dialecticism had done away with every type of traditional transcendence.²⁴ For it the very essence of God is exhausted in "his" relationship to man, just as the very essence of man is exhausted in this relationship to God. On this basis there is really no justification for speaking of even the probable existence of God. For on this basis the very idea of knowledge presupposes that no intelligible proposition can be made about an "antecedent being."

Accordingly, if the idea of a transcendent God is to be maintained at all, it must be done in the form of a “practical” idea, in the form of a “limiting concept” *a la* Kant. And this implies pure mysticism.²⁵ The “**existentialism**” of **Kierkegaard** that lies at the basis of **dialecticism** in theology makes a complete contrast between knowledge by way of logical and propositional statement and knowledge by “indirect communication.”²⁶ The former pertains to the relative and the latter to the absolute. The absolute or eternal cannot communicate itself to man in propositional form.

²⁵ As seen in chapter 3, note 25, a limiting concept for Kant marks the limits of reason. Kant’s true world, including God, is such a limit. According to Kant, however, God did not have to exist in the true world. As Nietzsche would point out, Kant’s true world is “indemonstrable” and “unattainable” for now. Kant was merely protecting an ideal from refutation. It is “practical” because in his *Critique of Practical Reason* he amalgamates religion with the search for a supreme principle of morality, a “categorical imperative,” which is, again, beyond verification.

²⁶ Historians debate whether it be proper to label Kierkegaard an **existentialist**, which is presumably why Van Til puts the term in quotes. Here, he points to the **dialectic** (discussed in note 9), the tension between logic and mystery (“indirect communication”) emerging from Kierkegaard’s vehement criticism of rationalism. As with **Kant**, truth is beyond verification in this scheme. It is as though a thick wall stands between the absolute and the rational, such that revelation can only occur by “identification,” as is argued in what follows.

This is an outstanding analysis of God’s incomprehensibility, the problem associated with seeking exhaustive knowledge, and assumed ultimacy and autonomy - Romanism/Arminianism, first & second causes, etc. This work by Van Til connects many things together so you can see more clearly the hole that opponents of Christianity dig themselves into (Rationalism-Irrationalism, Chance vs. God’s Sovereign control, etc.) and

hence you as a Christian apologist can confront unbelievers intelligently, from Reformed/biblical presuppositions. My comments in [blue].

The Incomprehensibility of God

And many of its Logical Consequents

Excerpts from
An Introduction to Systematic Theology
 by Cornelius Van Til
 pgs. 260-270; 282-298
 code508

pgs. 260-270

The subject of discussion in what has preceded has been what is usually spoken of as the prolegomena of theology.¹ There follows now a consideration of theology proper, that is, of the doctrine of God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism's definition of God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism's definition of God is very familiar. "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."² The remaining chapters may be said to be in the nature of an effort to ascertain as clearly as possible the meaning of this definition and its present-day significance.

But the question will at once be asked how it is possible that man should say anything at all about a God who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all his perfections. This question becomes all the more pressing if the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith are added to those quoted from the catechism.

There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty. [Westminster Confession of Faith 2.1]

The modern man, brought up on the phenomenal-noumenal distinction of Immanuel Kant, will at once assert that it is quite meaningless to speak of such a God. Such a God, he says, is beyond human experience. He is unknowable. No predication whatsoever can be made about him in terms that the human mind can fathom.

Modern theology, beginning with Schleiermacher and including Karl Barth, has allowed the legitimacy of Kant's criticism of the traditional doctrine of God. In order therefore to save anything at all of the idea of a transcendent God, it speaks of the idea of such a god as being a practical rather than a theoretical concept. The modern idea of God is a limiting or border concept, rather than a constitutive one. It holds that man can know nothing of a "most absolute" God. He can only posit such a god as moral necessity. **Modern theology is irrationalist. When it speaks of the primacy of faith, it means by faith the irrational acceptance of that which nothing can be known rationally.**⁵

Orthodox theology is, in consequence, obliged to give itself a clear account of its doctrine of God. For one thing is certain, namely, that all orthodox or traditional theology does claim to be able to have theoretical knowledge of God. Roman Catholic and Protestant theology are in agreement in maintaining that the idea of God is not merely a limiting concept but rather a constitutive concept.⁶

⁶That is, God is not simply the opposite of what we may understand, but is self-defined. Thus, he is eternal, which means more than just not temporal.

In defense of their view, both the Romanist and the Protestant appeal to the ideal of revelation. The reason why God can be known and is known by man, says the traditional theologian, is because God has revealed himself. But the modern theologian replies that this does not help matters in the least. For any revelation that came from God would have to come to man in such forms as man would understand. Any revelation from an **absolute God**, one who is **infinite in his self-contained perfections**, would have to come to man mediated through the categories of the human mind. If God told man that he was eternal, this would mean no more to man than that he is of very long endurance in the process of time. **And a god who is very old is not the eternal God of orthodox theology at all.**

At this point Thomas Aquinas and his modern followers, such as Przywara, Gilson, Maritain, Sheen, and others, step back.⁷

⁷Four of the most prominent neo-Thomists of Van Til's day. Erich Przywara (1889-1972), a prolific writer, was a Jesuit influenced by Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler. Etienne Gilson, (1884-1978) was professor at the College de France and wrote on Thomas and metaphysics, as well as medieval philosophy. Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) taught at the Institut Catholique de Paris and was a leading philosopher and political thinker, specializing in human rights and democracy. Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) became archbishop and wrote about psychology and the soul, the philosophy of science, and moral theory.

There is nothing they can say by way of effective reply to the modern view of God. And why? **Because of the defective nature of their concept of revelation.** The Romanist view of revelation is defective primarily in that it does not include the human mind itself within its purview. It is only if the Creator-creature distinction is taken seriously that the human mind can be seen as inherently revelational of God. But Romanism does not take the creation doctrine seriously. **It detracts from this doctrine by its**

idea of the freedom of man. **This idea of freedom amounts to a measure of independence over against God.** And to the extent that man is independent of God, he is no longer revelatory of God. **Moreover, if man is made to some extent independent of God, to that extent God is made dependent upon man.** Or rather, to that extent both God and man are dependent upon one another and upon the universe. If man is made partly independent of God, his ultimate reference point is no longer exclusively found in God.⁸

⁸As elsewhere, Van Til here argues that only with a full Creator-creature concept, whereby the two realms are distinct yet connected by God's sovereignty, can the human mind be given real significance as a recipient of divine revelation. In Thomist thought, *being* is universal, so that God and man are defined by it. **Thus, human free will is partly independent, and so partly sovereign even over God, with the result that revelation cannot truly originate in God and be received by man.**

It will not be apparent why the Romanist has no effective answer to the modern theologian. The modern theologian, with the modern philosopher and the modern scientist, makes the universe or reality as a whole his final or ultimate subject of predication. **He includes his god and himself within a common universe.** Then he makes assertions about the nature of this universe. He does so by means of the laws of logic that he finds operative in this mind. Without the least bit of justification, he assumes that reality must answer to the nature of these laws. With **Parmenides** of old he assumes that what man can intelligently say about reality is true, and only that is true.⁹ That is to say, **only that is real which man can reduce to a network of logical relations.**

⁹**Parmenides** taught that reality is static, in contrast to appearances, such that we need reason to link appearance to the unseen ultimate. The effect of this is to **deny the reality of the created world**. See Chap. 2 note 16.

With Parmenides this led to the denial of the reality of creation out of nothing and of the reality of time. In this he was consistent. In distinction from Parmenides and ancient philosophy in general, the modern philosopher does assert the reality of time and change. But in asserting the reality of time and change he also asserts or assumes the ultimacy of time and change. And so the creation idea is again excluded. The rationalism of Parmenides is merely supplemented by the irrationalism of the idea of chance. **The idea of chance is merely the recognition of the failure of man to reduce all things to logical relations.** In other words, the irrationalism of modern thought is not radically opposed to the rationalism of ancient thought. On the contrary, modern irrationalism is its natural outgrowth.¹⁰

¹⁰Van Til often alludes to the dialectical tension that governs unbelief between rationalism and irrationalism. Rationalism can never succeed because it requires an irrational step to believe, and irrationalism can never succeed because it needs a rational world in which to hold it. He is critical of those who think the modern condition is purely irrational, because both sides of the

dialectic are required, yet here he states that no good critique of irrationalism can succeed if it comes from a rationalist (which is the case for Roman Catholicism).

It is modern irrationalism that the traditional theologian was trying to answer. But he cannot answer this if he himself is something of a rationalist. And this is the case with the Roman theologian. He has allowed that the human mind is right in maintaining **that it cannot be said to know unless it can understand exhaustively**. **Aquinas** takes the method of **Aristotle** as being essentially right in the field of philosophy. Now, while Aristotle may be said to be more **empiricist** than was **Plato**, it remains true that he held to essentially the same ideal of knowledge that Plato had. He says specifically and repeatedly that **knowledge is of universals and of universals only**. That is to say only such knowledge can be said to be scientific knowledge as enables man **to reduce facts to logical relations**. Therefore knowledge, properly speaking, is only of species.¹¹

¹¹See chapter 4, note 19. Although **Aristotle** was fascinated by the complexities of our world and sought to categorize everything into rational divisions, his views were not, as is often thought, a reaction to Plato, but were in many ways close to him. The difference is often said to be that for **Plato** universals exist independently of things (*ante rem*) and **for Aristotle universals exist in things (*in re*) but not independently of them**. So one does not know things in themselves, but only categories, like species, which are logically related groups.

Working with this Aristotelian idea of knowledge, Aquinas asserts that man cannot know what God is, but can know only what he is not. As far as knowledge of God is concerned, the primary relation according to Thomas is that of negation.¹² When he says that reason (by an Aristotelian method) can prove that God exists, this is pointless inasmuch as he adds that it cannot say what God is.¹³ And if he tones this contrast down sometimes by saying that man by reason can know something of the general characteristics of God, this is merely inconsistency. Every man must and does say something about the nature of God. He is clearly consistent with his starting point in **Aristotelian logic** only when he asserts that man can say nothing of the nature of God. **Aristotle** himself was not illogical when he concluded that such a God as he could allow for in his system was one who had not created the world and knew nothing of the world. His **conception of cause** was basically as **immanentistic** as is that of Kant.¹⁴ And it is therefore logically as little possible to reach the transcendent God of Christianity by means of the **logic of Aristotle** as it is to reach this God by the **logic of Kant**. (It is this that Wilber

¹²God is not finite, he is not temporal, etc. Saying God is infinite or eternal is merely another way of expressing the negative contrast. We may only know God analogically, never as he is.

¹³God cannot be known in his **quiddity**, or in his essence, according to Thomas. What God reveals of himself is not himself.

¹⁴The **“unmoved mover”** is not caused to move because of any need to actualize potential. So for Aristotle (not for Thomas, who was inconsistent at this point), nature may be drawn to this

god, but it cannot be created by him. Although the higher spheres of the heavens closely imitate this god, he is entirely self-contained, and so cannot act in the world or even be aware of it. That is why this part of the doctrine was condemned by the church in 1277. In this, Aristotle resembles Kant with his noumenal-phenomenal distinction. See Chap 7, note 35 quoted here:

³⁵The Kantian term *noumenon* refers to a thing in itself, which is unknowable. A *phenomenon* is something knowable, as manifest in human experience. Though unknowable according to Kant, a noumenal reality must be presupposed in order to ensure the reality of the phenomenal, particularly for **free will** and for **ethics** (which is the center of religion for Kant). Van Til constantly faults this while idea as both irrationalist and rationalist.

Smith has overlooked in his book *Therefore Stand*. It is this that is overlooked by the traditional method of apologetics in general. It is this that Gordon H. Clark overlooks in this article “The Primacy of the Intellect.” In *The Westminster Theological Journal*.¹⁵ Failing to make the distinction between a primacy of the intellect that is based upon the Creator-creature distinction and a primacy of the intellect that is not based upon the Creator-creature distinction, as is the case with the Greeks, Clark argues that it is the primacy of the intellect that saves one from skepticism. But the primacy of the intellect as the Greeks held it has historically and logically led to the **skepticism** of the **modern irrationalists**.¹⁶ **It is Christianity alone that saves anyone from skepticism.**

¹⁵Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand: A plea for a Vigorous Apologetic in te Present Crisis of Evangelical Christianity* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1945); Gordon H. Clark, “The Primacy of the Intellect,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 5 (1943); For a discussion of the primacy of the intellect, see chap 4, “The *Usus Instrumentalis* of Reason.”

¹⁶“Historically” because, after realizing that rationalism cannot hope to connect with the phenomena, modern philosophers like Pierre Bayle and David Hume gave up on the power of reason to yield very much. “Logically” because rationalism must make exhaustive claims, which are never born out, and so must result in doubt about any certainty at all.

As the result of holding to what is essentially a rationalist view of human reason, **Aquinas held to what is virtually an irrationalist view of revelation**. If it is said that man by reason can say nothing positive about God, his view of revelation will be that of an **irrational assertion** that can make no connection with the system of thought that man knows by reason. In other words, the relation between reason and faith as the **Romanist** holds it has so far catered to the **rationalist-irrationalist** scheme of **non-Christian thought** that it cannot meet its claim that there is no knowledge possible of an **absolute** God.¹⁷

¹⁷In other words, following Thomist thinking, if you begin with human reason, you will make claims about God that are not necessarily revealed by him, since we cannot know him in his essence. The only way out is to begin with God, whose revelation is rational, and who does make known his essence.

What is true of the Romanist is also true of the Arminian. **He too has attributed to man a measure of ultimacy. He too has thereby reduced the doctrine of the internal, self-contained infinity of the perfections of God.** He too has to an extent enveloped his god with himself in a universe of logic and of fact that is above both. He too, therefore, has not answer to give the modern theologian.¹⁸

¹⁸Recall the earlier discussion of the Arminian view of the mind (see chp 2, note 29)

²⁹Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) argued against Calvinist orthodoxy, that predestination is not unconditional, but based on divine foreknowledge of human decision about grace, which can be resisted. His followers, known as the Remonstrants (from the term for a type of manifesto) were eventually condemned by the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. After that, a wide variety of theologies known generally as Arminianism penetrated the Protestant church. This view implied a less-than-total depravity and thus some degree of human cooperation with divine grace. In apologetics, according to Van Til, Arminians will give credit to the reasoning process of unbelievers, **and thus not challenge them sufficiently to lay bare their presuppositions.** He interchangeably labels this apologetics “Arminian” or “empiricist,” **because it trusts in an autonomous human activity to reason** and measure the world. Van Til often cites Joseph Butler as the exemplar of this approach, but indicts numerous other, including James O. Buswell, Gordon Clark, and **C.S. Lewis**. Occasionally he includes “Romanists,” presumably because there are commonalities in apologetic method between Roman Catholics, particularly Thomists and Arminians.

It is only in **Reformed theology**, then, that the **doctrine of revelation** is held in all the depth and breath of its significance. This is done because the doctrine of God, as quoted from the confession and catechism is held uncompromisingly. Holding this doctrine without qualification implies taking the creation doctrine seriously. And taking the creation doctrine seriously involves thinking of man in his whole constitutional makeup as himself revelational of God.¹⁹ [See chap 3] **Being himself exhaustively revelational of God, he is in all his activities dependent upon God**. The constitution of his mind therefore interposes no obstruction to any form of revelation that might come to it. Being itself revelational, the mind of man is made for the reception of revelation. [See Jonathan Edwards on this - regarding God’s communication of his glory to *created understandings*, etc. Fascinating. God made the soul of man a finite replica of himself, having understanding, will, etc. to be able to receive this communication from God.] If Human reason in all of its manipulations is itself in the first place wholly dependent upon a prior revelational activity of God and upon a constant, sustained revelational activity of God, then a supernatural revelational activity will not come to it as something strange. On

the contrary, it is only on the assumption that even from the outset of history the human mind never operated except in conjunction with the supernatural positive revelation of God that the original creative revelational character of the human mind is maintained. The Genesis narrative informs us that from the outset God walked and talked with man in the garden. **The human reason therefore never functioned properly and could not function properly except in self-conscious relationship to this supernatural revelation.** All things about man and within him were creationally revelational of God. **Every fact** was what it was by virtue of the place that it would occupy in the plan of God for the whole course of history. So then, the mind of man could not presume with Parmenides to legislate **by means of logic** about the nature of reality. The **human mind** by its **gift of logic** was merely supposed to order the facts of reality, both with respect to God and with respect to the created universe, including himself, in self-conscious subordination to the supernatural positive word revelation.

The only change that the fact of **sin** brought into the picture was therefore the fact that it made man unwilling to be thus obedient to God as manifested to him. This disobedient attitude is exhibited in the case of Parmenides and in the case of every man. Only by the work of Christ in history and by the work of the Spirit in regeneration can men take again the attitude that Adam took in the beginning.²⁰

²⁰As seen before, especially in chap 3, sin charges the covenant relationship of humans with God ethically, but it cannot redefine the conditions for a proper Creator-creature relation.

Thus the Reformed Christian has an effective answer for the modern man. His answer is that the capacities of the human mind would have no opportunity for their exercise except upon the presupposition that **the most absolute God does exist and that all things in this world are revelational of him**. We grant that it is only by the frank acceptance of the Scriptures as the infallible revelation of God that man can know this. **But this only shows that unless one thus accepts the Scripture, there is no place for the exercise of reason.** The most absolute God of the confession can only be presupposed. He cannot be proved to exist in the way that the idea of proof is taken by the Romanist-Arminian apologetics. But so far from this fact being unfortunate, it is the one thing that saves the idea of the reasonableness of the Christian religion.²¹

²¹This is the heart of Van Til's apologetics. Beginning with God does not mean denying reason, but affirming it. The error of the **classical proofs** is that they hold God to the conditions of human rationality, not that any proof is wrong in itself. [codeproofs]

The significance of what has been said for the concept of incomprehensibility may now be intimated. In the first place what is meant by the idea that God is incomprehensible can be noted with any clarity only if it is seen to be involved in the doctrine of the self-contained perfections of God. And it is only in Reformed theology that this doctrine is held without compromise. While then it is true that the incomprehensibility of God is taught by Romanist and Arminian theologians, it is not true that it is taught by them with consistency and with any true recognition of its full significance. In particular, it is

only in Reformed theology that this doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God can be set off sharply over against the modern idea of the incomprehensibility of reality.²²

²²Although these considerations were set forth in chap 3, they are now more directly connected to the doctrine of God.

This modern view is based on the assumption that man is the **ultimate reference point in his own predication**. Then, therefore, man cannot know everything, it follows that nothing can be known. All things being related, all things must be exhaustively known or nothing can be known. And only Reformed theology clearly sets off the Christian position over against all forms of the non-Christian view because it alone makes God the ultimate reference point in all predication.

Such being the case, it is only **Reformed theology** that does full justice to the idea of revelation in all its comprehensiveness and depth of meaning. It is only if the doctrine of revelation is taken thus seriously that the knowledge of God is assured. Man may be certain that he knows God. More than that, man cannot help but know God. Man's predicament is not, as Henry at one point with the Romanist concedes to the "the fool," that he cannot be certain whether God exists and can be known.²³ Man's predicament is not, as Carnell grants to modern theologians, as to whether man is immortal.²⁴ It is only too surely fixed (*in visceribus* – in the gut or heart) in the mind of man that God does exist and that man is to meet him in judgment. The sinner's problem from his point of view is to cast doubt upon this evidence, to **make it appear as though the evidence were not clear**. With the rich man who lifted up his eyes in torment, it is the effort of every man to put the blame for his failure to serve God upon the elusive character of the evidence for God's existence.²⁵ If he could rightly say that God has to be diligently searched for, that he might possibly be hidden in some remote corner of the earth, or the moon, or Jupiter, then he would have an excuse for his ignorance. Following Paul, the Reformed theologian, and he alone, will stress the inescapable character of the revelation of God.

²³A reference to Carl F. H. Henry, *Notes on the Doctrine of God*.

²⁴A reference to Edward J. Carnell, *An introduction to Christian Apologetics*

²⁵A reference to the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), in which the rich man, speaking from his flames, asks Abraham to send a man back from the dead to impress his brother, to which Abraham replies that they already have the Scriptures, and "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (v. 31 ESV) Van Til's point is that God is so pervasively present, we have no excuse for ignoring him.

Thus it is clear that the incomprehensibility of God presupposes the revelation of God in all its comprehensiveness. One could not talk about God at all except in terms of his revelation to man. Without the presupposition of God's revelation to man there could be no predication of God at all. God would be not incomprehensible, but inapprehensible. That is, no predication could be made of him or of anything else. Failure to make the presupposition of the self-contained character of God and the

doctrines of creation and revelation fundamental in their thinking, the Romanist and Arminian are unable to distinguish clearly between the Christian notion of the incomprehensibility of God and the not-Christian notion of the incomprehensibility of reality. Pg 268

On fully Christian presuppositions, then, the apprehensibility or know ability of God is assumed in any discussion about the comprehensibility or incomprehensibility of God. This is so much the case that it is not even possible to speak of any area of existence as totally inapprehensible. This had been pointed out in the "Report of the Committee Elected by the Fourteenth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the Study of the Incomprehensibility of God, Etc."²⁶ This report shows that when Calvin speaks of the essence or of the secret counsel of god as being incomprehensible, this not to be taken as though no predication whatsoever can be made about it.²⁷ Even when Calvin uses the word inapprehensible with respect to the essence of God, this cannot imply the idea of complete ignorance. For when God tells us about his attributes, he is telling us about himself. Every bit of his revelation shows man something of the nature of the essence of God, this cannot imply the idea of complete ignorance. For when God tells us about his attributes, he is telling us about himself. Every bit of this revelation shows man something of the nature of the **essence of God**. If we speak therefore of the **incomprehensibility of God**, what is meant is that God's revelation to man **is never exhaustively understood** by man. As by his revelation to man God says something about himself, so that man knows something about everything that exists, **so it is equally true that there is nothing that man knows exhaustively**.²⁸

²⁶"Report of the Committee Elected...to the Study of the Incomprehensibility of God." May 22-28, 1947, 10-11. The full report was published a year later as an appendix to the Minutes of the fifteenth General assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, May 13-18, 1947=8, This a principal document in the controversy between Gordon Clark and twelve members of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, including Van Til, who issued a complaint against his views...

²⁸This point seems simple enough, but the heart of the matter was a comparison between God's knowledge and human knowledge, specifically in reference to the content of knowledge.

It is as impossible for man to know himself or any of the objects of the universe about him exhaustively as it is impossible for man to know God exhaustively. For man must know himself or anything else in the created universe in relation to the self-contained God. **Unless he can know God exhaustively, he cannot know anything else exhaustively.**

It is only if these two points are taken together – **the fact that man knows something about everything, including the very essence of God and on the other hand the fact that he does not know anything exhaustively** – that the **doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God** can be seen for what it is.

In the first place, it is possible in this way to see that the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man coincide at *every* point in the sense that always and **everywhere man confronts that which is**

already fully known or interpreted by God.²⁹ *The point of reference cannot but be the same for man as for God.* There is not fact that man meets in any of his investigation where the face of God does not confront him. On the other hand, in this way it is possible to see that the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man coincide at no point in the sense that, in this awareness of meaning of anything, in his mental grasp or understanding of anything, man is at each point dependent upon a prior act of unchangeable understanding and revelation on the part of God. The form of the revelation of God to man **must come to man in accordance with his creaturely limitations**. God's thought with respect to anything is a unit. Yet it pertains to a multiplicity of objects. But man can think of that unit as involving a number of items only in the form of succession. So Scripture speaks of God as though he were thinking his thoughts **step by step**. All revelation is **anthropomorphic**. When God reveals himself to man, he reveals something of the fullness of his being. In God's mind any bit of information that he gives to man is set in the fullness of his one supreme act of self affirmation.

²⁹That divine and human knowledge could find "coincidence at a single point" was affirmed by the "Report of the committee," because the same objects, beliefs, and meanings are in common, even though the mode of the knowledge of them is different. Van Til agrees. But because God knows as the Creator, **whereas humans know only re-creatively**, humans may now something about everything, in principle.

This is true with respect to every bit of revelation that God gives to man. Accordingly, the fact that man is given more and ever more revelation of God does not tend to reduce the incomprehensibility of God. **For man any new revelational proposition will enrich in meaning any previously given revelational proposition.** [I've experienced that!] But even this enrichment does not imply that there is any coincidence, that is, identity of content between what God has in his mind and what man has in his mind. [I think he's alluding to *equivocal vs analogical* knowledge] If there is no identity of content in the first proposition that God gives to man, there can be no identity of content attained by means of any number of additional propositions of revelation that God gives to man. [I think he's alluding to *univocal vs analogical* knowledge] And there could be identity of content on the first proposition only if there were no first proposition. That is to say, if there could be an identity of content, there would be an always has been an identity of content. There could and would be an identity of content only if the mind of man were identical with the mind of God. It is only on the assumption that the human mind is not the mind of a creature but is itself the mind of the Creator that one can talk consistently of identity of content between the mind of man and the mind of God.³⁰

³⁰So "identity of content" is acceptable, but only if the difference between the Creator' mode and the creature's mode of knowledge is fully admitted.

In the second place, it is only if we keep the presupposition of the self-contained God and therefore of the all-comprehensiveness of revelation with the consequence that man knows something about everything but know nothing comprehensively, that we can see the importance of the doctrine of the

incomprehensibility of God for covenant theology. **Covenant theology is Reformed theology**. As such it implies the exhaustively personal relationship of man to God. Man never deals with the essence of God as such. He always deals with God. God has self-consciously placed himself before man. It is only in the Reformed faith that one can speak of the divine-human confrontation as over against impersonal views of reality. Emil Brunner speaks as though it is orthodox or traditional theology that is largely impersonalist in its views of the relation of God to man. He speaks of orthodox theology as having turned God into an **object of knowledge and of having therewith depersonalized God**. This is also the position of **Barth** and of the so-called **existential theology** now taught by George Hendry and others. Yet it is only in the traditional conception of Reformed Theology that a full **personalistic relationship** is maintained. If one does not hold to the traditional doctrine of creation, it is not possible to maintain personalism in the full sense of the term. It is taken for granted by such men as Barth, Brunner, Hendry, Piper, Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr, Ferre, and Homrighausen that the nonpersonalist procedure of modern science is quite correct in its handling of nature and history.³¹ **In this they follow the assumption of Kant that man is his own ultimate reference point**. But on a truly Christian basis anything whatsoever is revelatory of the personal revelational activity of God. It is only on such a basis that false **staticism** can be destroyed.³² There is false **staticism** involved in all non-Christian forms of thought. If one allows that anywhere at all man deals with facts or laws that are not based upon the self-conscious, everlasting self-affirmation of God, one is to that extent bound to a static or **fatalistic view of reality**. There can be nothing new on a non-Christian basis. On the other hand, all things are new on a non-Christian basis. And **dialectical theology**, based on an **existential philosophy** for all its emphasis on the **once-for-all-ness of Christianity**, is bound to a **meaningless staticism** at the same time that it is joined to a **meaningless flux**.

³¹See the earlier references to these theologians, especially in chap 3. Elmer Homrighausen was professor of Christian ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary. His theology was dialectical, similar to that of Karl Barth. He was critical of traditional views on biblical inerrancy. Among his books are *Let the Church Be the Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1940)

³²A worldview is "static" when purely **rationalist** (in the manner of **Parmenides**), and "fluid" when purely **irrationalist** (in the manner of **Heraclitus**). As was noted earlier, neither is a stable philosophy.

If theology is to escape false staticism involved in rationalism and false flux theology involved in irrationalism, it will have to affirm with the Reformed faith that God's personal activity confronts man everywhere. Therefore, obedience to God's revelation is the proper attitude for man where he is active in the laboratory or in the house of prayer.

In the third place, the same stress on the revelation of God understood, but never understood exhaustively, by man will save us from making the false distinction between the essence and the content of God's knowledge as being incomprehensible bit by bit, and the mode of God's knowing as

always being incomprehensible. Whatever knowledge man has of the being and the secret counsel of God, or of anything else that we may distinguish with respect to God and his works, comes to man as the result of the self-conscious revelational activity of God. God's mode of knowing himself is what it is because God's being is what it is. More than that, there can be no knowledge of anything about God unless there is knowledge of the mode of the knowledge of God. **For it is God's knowing himself that is God. And God is God's eternal self-affirmation. God is pure act.** It is in the pure act of his **eternal self-affirmation** that **God stands before man in every bit of revelation** that he vouchsafes to give to man. Therefore the only way that knowledge of God's mode of knowledge can be denied is by denying knowledge of God. The only way the incomprehensibility of God's mode of knowledge can be affirmed is by affirming also the incomprehensibility of God's being and of anything that God reveals to man.³⁴

In the fourth place, it may be observed that it is only by stressing the **comprehensiveness** and the **inexhaustible character of the idea of revelation** that the **process of learning can have meaning and history have genuine significance**. If man is made the final reference point in predication, knowledge cannot get underway; and if it could get under way, it could not move forward. That is to say, in all non-Christian forms of **epistemology** there is first the idea that to be understood a fact must be understood exhaustively. It must be reducible to a part of a system of timeless logic. But man himself and the facts of his experience are subject to change. How is he ever to find within himself an *a priori* resting point? He himself is on the move. The futile effort of Descartes stands out from the efforts of other non-Christian thinkers not because it is essentially different, but only because it is more consistent.³⁵ Every effort of man to find one spot that he can **exhaustively understand**, either in the world of fact about him or in the world of experience within, is doomed to failure. If we do not with **Calvin presuppose the self-contained God back of the self-conscious act of the knowing mind of man**, we are doomed to be lost in an endless and bottomless flux.

But granted that man could get started on the way to learning by experience on a non-Christina basis, he could add nothing new to what he already knows. There would be nothing new. If it were known, it would be no longer new. As long as it were new, it would be unknown. Thus the old dilemma – that either man must know everything and he need ask no questions or he know nothing and therefore cannot ask question – remains unsolved except on the basis of the Reformed faith. To affirm **the incomprehensibility of God** is in the interest of saving men from **skepticism**. By presupposing the God of eternal self-affirmation man can get on the way to learning because he knows God when he first appears upon the scene. He has knowledge of self for what he really is. He also can add to his knowledge since the new facts of which he learns are already known and not new to God. Therefore they are related to what man already knows in true coherence. In setting out a series of propositions about the revelation of God, as the church has done in its confessions, the Christian may rest assured that he has "the system of the truth" while yet he may add to his knowledge of that system. **All his knowledge is analogical of God. God is the original knower, and man is the derivative re-knower.** Man knows in subordination to God; he knows as the covenant keeper. If he is not a covenant keeper,

he will set the **false ideal of knowing** even as God knows, by complete coincidence with the contents of the mind of God, and end up by knowing that **what he calls knowledge is no true knowledge at all, and that what he calls false submission to authority is the true knowledge of God and of man.**

Excerpts (cont.) from
An Introduction to Systematic Theology
 by Cornelius Van Til
 pgs. 282-298

The Incomprehensibility of God

The Apologetic Import of the Incomprehensibility of God

In addition to what has been said in the previous chapter, some further attention must be given to the presentation of the **doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God** to “**the modern man.**”¹

¹In this chapter, Van Til pursues the ontological and epistemological issues. While he announces at the outset that he is considering an apologetic to “modern man,” this takes the form of polemics with erring Reformed theologians, especially Buswell, neo-Thomists, Barthians, and new evangelicals, once again.

The **modern man** is, in the first place, a **rationalist**. All non-Christians are rationalists. As descendants of Adam, their covenant-breaking representative (Rom. 5:12), **every man refuses to submit his mind in the way of obedience to the mind of God. He undertakes to interpret the nature of reality in terms of himself as the final reference point.** But to be a rationalist, man must also be an irrationalist.²

²Van Til often alludes to the dialectical tension **that governs unbelief** between rationalism and irrationalism. **Rationalism** can never succeed because **it requires an irrational step to believe**, and irrationalism can never succeed because it needs a rational world in which to hold it. He is critical of those who think the modern condition is purely irrational, because both sides of the dialectic are required, yet here he states that no good critique of irrationalism can succeed if it comes from a rationalist (which is the case for Roman Catholicism).

Man obviously cannot legislate reality by logic. Unwilling to admit that God has determined the laws of reality, man, by implication, **attributes all power to chance**. As a rationalist he says that only that is possible which he can logically grasp in **exhaustive** fashion. **As an irrationalist** he says that since he **cannot logically grasp the whole of reality**, and really cannot legislate existence by logic at all, **it is chance that rules supreme**. [This is the reason why man sees evolution as the governing principle behind things, trying to explain things of the world apart from the true knowledge of the true God.]

It is to this rationalist-irrationalist man that the gospel comes with its doctrine of creation and **revelation**, its doctrine of redemption through grace in Christ. It is quite impossible to challenge the modern man with the gospel of Christ unless this gospel of Christ is set in its widest possible setting. **It is that which the Reformed faith tries to do.**

As it tries to do this it must not make compromise with **Romanism** and **Arminianism**. **To the extent that it does so it loses its power.** For Romanism and Arminianism are partly rationalist-irrationalist themselves. Is well then that we set off the full Reformed view of the incomprehensibility of God against the modern rationalist-irrationalist view that has obtained since the time of Kant.

In the Christian doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, the Creator-creature distinction is made fundamental. In the non-Christian view this is not the case. The non-Christian view is monistic.

Note: "The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms." Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til's book, Christian Apologetics, pg 31, footnote 3 [Van Til refers to this as "scale of being" in his writings.]

The mere form of words by which we assert the ultimacy of the Creator-creature distinction is insufficient to distinguish clearly between the Christian and the non-Christian forms of the incomprehensibility of God. There are more than enough of non-Christian systems of philosophy, notably the idealist, that also speak of making this distinction basic. **But none of these systems mean by this distinction that which the orthodox Christian means by it.** for the latter this distinction implies that the triune God, as he has from all eternity existed apart from any relationship to the universe of space and time, is **wholly sufficient to himself in his being and knowledge**. It implies therefore that God is wholly knowable and wholly known to himself. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.³

³This statement implies a completely dependent creation, as Van Til explains below.

The orthodox idea of the Creator-creature distinction involves further the idea that the world of space and time has been brought into existence by the forth-putting of God's power, by creation out of nothing, by the mere exercise of his will, and not as a necessity of his being. Thus there is no power of any sort operative in the course of history of the world as man knows it that is not, without any qualification, under the control and direction of God. Even that which man accomplishes through his **created freedom**, through the exercise of his will, is accomplished **in subordination to and in accordance with the ultimate will of God**. In particular, the evil done by man in thwarting the revealed will of God for his behavior is not done against the all-controlling will or decree of God. We may, if we wish, in connection with the entrance of sin and evil into the world, speak of the **permissive will of God** in order to stress man's undoubted responsibility for sin, but this distinction may never lead to subversion of the clear teaching of Scripture on the all-controlling, if ultimate and mysterious, power of God.⁴

⁴Van Til concedes to traditional language that distinguishes **God's permissive will** from his **decretive will**. The distinction can help clarify God's relation to evil and to human freedom. But ultimately, both are grounded in God's ordination of whatsoever comes to pass.

The moment a Christian theologian admits that anything happens in the whole course of history, whether by devil or man or power of nature, without the will of God, that moment the foundations of a Christian theology are shaken. For to admit that **any thing happens outside the will of God** is to admit the pagan notion of **chance**. God by his plan controls whatsoever comes to pass.

It is this assertion of the knowledge of God as naturally and inherently comprehensive of his own being and as all comprehensive of all created being by virtue of his **omnipotence** over it that the modern man charges with being rationalistic. He who on the basis of the Scripture dares to assert the omnipotence and therefore the omniscience of God without any qualification, **is certain to meet with this charge of determinism and rationalism is that of destroying the foundation of human freedom and responsibility, of making God the author sin, etc.** The average reader of the *New York Times* or the *Evening Bulletin* knows little of Calvinism, except its doctrine of election, by which, it is said, Calvinism designs men to everlasting perdition no matter what they do.⁵

⁵At the popular level, one often hears that divine sovereignty, God's full control means determinism.

Good points here!

What is the Christian theologian to do about this charge? Is he to tone down the all-determining character of God's plan in order at least part way to meet the critics? Is he to preserve so much of it as is necessary for the idea of order in the universe and then counterbalance it with a measure of indeterminism in order to save face the defender of human freedom and morality? **This is the policy of the Romanist and of the Arminian**. It is also the policy of some Reformed theologians. So, for instance, J. Oliver Buswell Jr., in dealing with the relation of God to the morality of man, speaks of the "free, undetermined acts of moral agents." And of the moral choices of human beings as those "in which we are ourselves the **ultimate cause**." In flat contradistinction from **Calvin**, **Buswell** refuses to speak of God as the ultimate cause of all things. In answering to **Pighius** and other critics who said that to speak of God as the ultimate cause of all things is to reduce both human rationality and morality to nonsense, Calvin replied that the exact reverse was true.⁸

⁸Albert Pighius was the subject of Calvin's polemics, especially in the matter of **predestination and responsibility**. See *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.21.5-17.

He argued in effect that unless God is thought of as the ultimate cause of all things, there is no significance or meaning to the thoughts and acts of man. Unless there is back of the thoughts and deeds of man the all-inclusive and therefore also all-controlling plan of God, **human thought and human action happens in a void**.

Rejecting this approach Buswell follows the policy of the Romanist and the Arminian. When called upon to meet the charge of **determinism**, he does what **Thomas Aquinas** and the **Arminian** theologians did, namely, steer a middle course between determinism and **indeterminism**, between **realism** and

nominalism.⁹ “I do not think that every act of the will of God is determined by the nature of God, nor that everything in the nature of God is controlled by the will of God.” [Buswell, *What is God?* 46]

⁹**Determinism** holds that every event is directly caused. **Indeterminism** holds that some events are without a cause. **Realism** maintains that a thing exists. **Nominalism** states that the name or category in which things are grouped is only a name; universals are not truly real. Thomas **Aquinas** was called a “**modified realist**” because he could not accept either realism or nominalism in its extreme form. (See chap 5, note 13). Van Til rejects the propriety of these distinctions altogether, believing that God causes all things, **but not in such a way as to violate the significance of the creature**, and that particulars and universals, rightly understood, are equally valid in the created world.

What is the reason for thus holding that some things are not determined by the nature of God and that others are not determined by the will of God? The answer is given as follow:

If, on the one hand, the will of God is completely determined by the nature of God, then God is not free in his saving work and God’s redemptive program is not a matter of grace, but a matter of necessity. If, on the other hand, all wisdom, holiness, righteousness, goodness, and truth in the nature of God are completely determined by the will of God, then the moral law in every aspect is a matter of mere power, then God’s redemptive program is purely arbitrary, and there is no ontological reason for the sacrifice of the Son of God. God might just as well have arbitrarily accepted the offering of Cain as the offering of Abel, and God might just as well have arbitrarily decreed redemptive value through the robbery of Barabbas as through the sacrificial death of his Son. [Buswell]

With respect to this approach, the following observations are in order:

1. A sharp antithesis is made between the **nature of God and the will of God**. To be “completely determined by the nature of God” is for **Buswell** identical in meaning with the idea of impersonal fate. To be free, God’s own will must be relieved from complete determination by the nature of God. And since the redemptive program of God for man is sovereign and gracious, this program must not be “completely controlled by the nature of God.” We are to think of God’s will and of his work of grace in redemption as *partially* rather than *completely* controlled by the nature of God. To be completely controlled by God’s nature, God’s will and its acts in saving grace would not be “free”; but to be partially controlled, God’s will and its acts would be free and gracious. But until an answer is forthcoming regarding to *what extent* the will of God may be controlled by the nature of God without losing its freedom, the distinction is meaningless. And the answer to this question of the extent of the relation of **freedom** and **necessity** cannot be answered till the one who replies has reached omniscience.¹²

¹²Van Til ties Buswell’s idea of limited sovereignty to the need for human omniscience, in order to know where to draw the line between what God ordains and what he does not.

2. It may be replied that Buswell does not partially separate, but at some points *wholly* separates the freedom of the will of God from the necessity of the nature of God. Does he not say that “not every act of the will of God is determined by the nature of God”? That seems to indicate that he thinks of some

acts of the will of God as having no relation whatever to the nature of God. The question in this quotation seems to be one not of complete or *partial* determination, but of *any* or no determination.

But if the will of God is free in some of its actions because these actions are not at all determined by the nature of God, what then of the other actions of the will of God? Are they not at all free because they are determined by the nature of God? If so, how can man know which actions of God's will are and which are not free? And is the will of God then a unity because it is the expression of the personality of God? It is such questions as these that one must answer if one interprets the nature of God in terms of determinism and realism and the will of God in terms of indeterminism and nominalism. [See not 9 above] This can be done consistently only by one who does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic to his thought.

The initial and basic error of Buswell lies in seeking the freedom of the will of God at any point either partially or wholly by way of contrast with the nature of God. The freedom of God is the freedom of God. And what is God apart from his nature? God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. God as the Spirit is the self-contained personal God. His personality is nothing apart from his nature. God is free not in spite of but because of the necessity of his nature. God's necessary self-existence constitutes his freedom. It is only by emphasizing this fact that we can escape being thrown back and forth upon the horns of the realist-nominalist or determinist-indeterminist dilemma. [see note 9 above]

3. It may be asked further whether in asserting that some acts of the will of God are not determined by the nature of God, Buswell has met the charge of determinism as made by the non-Christian who believes in chance. If everything happens because God wills that it should happen, says the reader of the *New York Times* or the *Evening Bulletin*, then if I am saved, I am saved, and if I am not saved there is nothing that I can do about it. To him it makes no difference whether it is said that it is God's will, rather than his nature, that determines man and his universe.

Buswell seeks to protect the freedom of the will of man from determination of it by the will of God. [the classic mantra of Arminianism and all unbelievers.] The method he follows is naturally the same in the case of defending the freedom of the will of man against the all-determining power of the will of God as that employed in defending the freedom of the will of God against the all-determining power of the nature of God. It is again a matter of making them partially though not wholly dependent on the will of God. [Man always want to get his will in there, again, defending his assumed autonomy.] Note the following words:

This is good!

God of his mere good pleasure chose to endow man with freedom of actions so that, as created by God, man's actions are not entirely determined from without, but in some respects (though not in all respects) God has given to man the privilege of being an ultimate cause somewhat similar to a creative cause. There are many things in human life, of course, which are not subject to human volition. We might even admit that ninety-nine percent of all our actions are determined by forces outside of ourselves. Nevertheless, our moral choices are choices in which we are ourselves the ultimate cause. [Buswell, *What is God*, 50]

[This is man putting himself into the room of God, who alone is the true fountain and first (or ultimate) cause! We are, however, in a proper sense, genuine or second causes - we do what seems best to us, that is, we are not puppets or block of wood.]

Key points following:

In the first part of this passage **Buswell** speaks of “man’s actions” in general. In the latter part of the passage, he speaks of man’s moral actions as a separate group of actions. Presumably the first phrase includes the latter. Human actions in general would seem to include the narrower class of moral actions. Of all human actions, including moral actions, it is said that they are “not entirely determined from without.” [A textbook Arminian view.] They are therefore partially determined from without. In the latter part of the quotation, it is said that we might even admit that in 99 percent of all our actions we are determined by forces outside of ourselves. **And it is added that in the remaining 1 percent of our actions “we are ourselves the ultimate cause.”** In the first part of the quotation mans’ actions without distinction are said to be partially determined from without and **partially by ourselves**. In the last part of the quotation some actions (99 percent) are determined from the outside, and some actions (1 percent) are **determined exclusively by ourselves**.

Would the indeterminist reader of the *Evening Bulletin* now be satisfied? He might catch at the brief sentence in which it is said without qualification that our moral choices are choices in which we are ourselves the ultimate cause. He would say that this does away with the Calvinist notion of election, of God’s determining whether I shall “will” or not “will” to be saved. If it does not mean this, then what is meant by my being the ultimate cause of my actions? And he will be comforted by the worlds of Buswell pertaining to human faith in its relation to election in the immediate context of the passage already quoted. **Buswell** says:

The ground of our salvation is the mere good pleasure of our gracious Lord. He is under no compulsion whatever to save any of the rebellious race of Adam, but of his mere good pleasure and sovereign grace **he has elected to save those who, he foreknew, would put their faith and trust in the crucified and risen Savior**. All who will believe will be save because God in his sovereign grace elects to save them. All who will not believe will be lost because they will not believe. [Buswell, *What is God?* 52] [This is the classic error of Arminianism.]

Here election seems to be made dependent upon foreseen faith. God elects only those who he knew would put their faith in Christ. The reader of the *Bulletin* will not be able to distinguish this from the ordinary Arminian with of stating the matter. And he will rejoice in the concession to indeterminism.¹⁷

¹⁷In traditional Reformed theology, **predestination** and **foreknowledge** imply one another. Biblically they are virtually identical.

The indeterminist may seek further comfort from the fact that, according to Buswell, God’s foreknowledge is made independent of his predestination of all things in the universe. He speaks of the foreknowledge of God as including the ‘undetermined, free acts of moral creatures.’ [Buswell, *What is God?* 39]

The **indeterminist**, however, will not be satisfied. **Nothing can satisfy him that does not ascribe to man the sort of freedom that consistent orthodox Christian theology ascribes to God.** Even to **ascribe so much freedom to man** as **Romanism** or **Arminianism** ascribes to God is not sufficient in his eyes. For the God of Romanism and of Arminianism is partly (perhaps 1 percent) determined in his choices. **And the indeterminist wants to be free without any limitations.**

It is true, of course, that there are many inconsistent non-Christian **indeterminists** and irrationalists. But those who wish to hold to indeterminism consistently must reject every type of control over man. **Modern existentialism comes near to holding such a consistent indeterminism.** When Heidegger speaks of reality as exhaustively temporal, as being reality unto the end or unto death, he is aiming to suggest the idea of utter interminacy.¹⁹

¹⁹Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is the author of *Being and Time* (originally published in 1927), In it he argues that freedom is not rational, but can be found in connection with non-metaphysical being. See Van Til, "The Later Heidegger and Theology," which appears to be an extended review of Robinson and Cobb....

So, then, all the concessions Buswell is willing to make, when he contrasts the will of God with the nature of God and again **ascribes ultimacy to the will of man as over against the will of God**, will not help in the least to remove the charge of determinism.

And what is true with respect to the charge of determinism is therefore also true with respect to the charge of rationalism. The indeterminist will point out that Buswell would have to be omniscient in order to make his position intelligible, and that we all should have to be omniscient in order to understand him. We are said to be free in our moral choices. Which are these moral choices? How do we distinguish between them and the nonmoral choices? Where is the borderline? Surely our moral choices are influenced by things that happen about us without our control There is the whole question of 'natural evil' and its influence on our choices. Heredity and environment have great influence on our moral choices, and there is no possibility of pointing to one choice in which we are not influenced at all. If Buswell wants to fall back on his own distinction to the effect that all our choices are partially determined and partially free, then the question of degree comes up that can never be settled without benefit of omniscience.²⁰

²⁰At this point Van Til opens a lengthy parenthesis, which allows him to explore Kierkegaard, Hegel and Calvin.

It is to me be noted that on his presuppositions the indeterminist and irrationalist is right in pressing his point. He is not merely pointing out the internal inconsistencies in a position that seeks to build up its structures partly in terms of the God of Christianity and partly in terms of **would-be ultimate man.** **He is after the destruction of the Christian position itself.** Working on his **monistic** assumption, he must hold that unless man can exhaustively reduce all factual historical existence to changeless logical relations, there is that which is utterly undetermined and unknowable. **[a theory or doctrine that denies the existence of a distinction of duality in some sphere, such as that between matter and mind or God and the world. For example, monism is the belief that the mind and the brain are the same**

thing. – Google definitions.] This argument has been stated in great detail by Kierkegaard against Hegel. Kierkegaard speaks of Hegel's "System" and ridicules it. By seeking to show by logical manipulation how all reality must be what it is, argues Kierkegaard, Hegel kills all uniqueness and all genuine newness in history. Genuine historical uniqueness, argue Kierkegaard, is unpredictable. It cannot be systematized by logic.²¹

²¹Kierkegaard's principal critique of Hegel is his *Either/Or*; a standard English version is 2 vols. In a famous passage, "the Judge" criticizes the "young seducer" for being aesthetic, remaining outside the arena of active life (2:175) Hegel's system was purely intellectual according to Kierkegaard, never engaging in ethics and moral choices. See chap 10, note. 1

The assumption back of Kierkegaard's position is the common monistic one. He takes for granted that unless man can himself place all factual existence into logical categories, there is no **existential** system at all. To be sure, Kierkegaard says that there is an **existential** system in "God," but this is a meaningless assertion on his part, since on this basis man can know nothing of such a God. Such a "God" is for him an article of faith in the Kantian sense of faith, namely, as a practical rather than a theoretical notion.²²

²²Van Til sides with Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel as a rationalist, yet faults Kierkegaard for his own irrationalism. Ultimately, though, both Kierkegaard and Hegel fall into a kind of irrationalism because they have a **monistic** view of reality, which knows only of universals or particulars. Below, he opposes both of them to Calvin, whose God is fully rational.

But if, from Kierkegaard's point of view, Hegel is to be called a rationalist, how much the more the orthodox Christian. It is the orthodox Christian, to the extent that he is consistent with his own principles, and he alone, that holds to the idea of all reality being **exhaustively determined by the will of God** and therefore exhaustively known by the mind of God. Hegel does not believe in such a God at all. He does not believe in the idea of God as a **constitutive concept**. For him the idea of a god is a limiting concept. And this makes all the world of difference. The **modern** idea of the limiting concept is based on the **monist** assumptions that unless man can himself logicize reality, that is, **show how all factual existence is reducible to loci in a network of logical relations**, to that extent reality is irrational. And so the very rationalism of Hegel is the expression of utter skepticism and irrationalism.

Kierkegaard should have directed his shafts at Calvin rather than at Hegel. It is Calvin rather than Hegel who believes that there actually is a system of reality and knowledge. Calvin does and Hegel does not believe that there is a self-contained ontological Trinity who exhaustively knows himself by virtue of the nature of his existence and who **exhaustively knows** the universe by virtue of the fact that he **determines all that happens in it**.

We may therefore imagine Hegel and Kierkegaard as standing together as irrationalists and indeterminists against Calvin the rationalist and determinist.²³ They will say to Calvin that since it is

²³The following imaginary reply of Calvin to Kierkegaard and Hegel is one of the most succinct and eloquent statements of Van Til's apologetic in his writings.

impossible for him to know the mind of God exhaustively by his own admission and assertion, therefore he ought with them to become an irrationalist. Calvin would reply: "I can understand why you should say so. You are on your assumptions quite consistent in saying so. **For if all reality is on one piece, as you assume, then the human mind and the divine mind are also of one piece.** [*One piece - The monistic view as opposed to a dualistic view, that God is distinct from his creatures, the Creator-creature distinction. Also, the equivocal (our thoughts the same as God's thoughts but of different degree) vs. the analogical interpretation of the things of God - if I'm interpreting Van Til right. Now you can see how pantheistic the monistic view is, that God is in everything since there is one ultimate substance in the universe...it's all one piece.]* The **divine mind** does not then know anything more, and the divine will does not then control anything more, than does the human mind and the human will. There is then no point in appealing to the divine mind as knowing that which the human mind does not know, and there is then no sense to speaking of the divine mind as revealing anything to the human mind. There is then either no **mystery** at all, either to the divine mind or to the human mind, or there is mystery to both the divine mind and the human mind. And since there obviously is **mystery** to the human mind, I conclude that there is mystery also to the divine mind. I conclude, in short, that reality is ultimately mysterious. But then, you see, I work on **the presupposition of God as being the Creator and controller of man.**

"I begin with making this distinction. I have frankly accepted the distinction on the authority of Scripture. And it will seem reasonable to you that on my assumption it is reasonable that I should do so. If man is to know about this divine mind which stands above him as his Creator and therefore as his lawgiver, he will be dependent on the divine mind for a voluntary revelation of itself. The voluntary character of this revelation appears not only if and when this God speaks to man in directly personal way; it appears no less in every fact of the created universe. For the created universe itself owes its existence to a voluntary act of God. It is intelligible only if seen as such.

"If then every fact that confronts me is revelational of the personal and voluntary activity of the self-contained God, it follows that when I try to think God's thoughts after him, that is to say, when by means of the gifts of logical manipulation that this Creator has given to me, I try to make a 'system' of my own, my system will be at no point a direct replica of the divine system [equivocally], but will at every point be **analogical [analogically]** of the system of God. It can at no point be a direct replica, because to say so would be to wipe out the very foundation on which I am working. To say so would also mean **that man is after all not the creature of God but has in his mind just what God has in his mind.** [*again, seeing God, etc., equivocally as opposed to analogically*] Man could then reduce all factual existence to logical relations. He could then predict all future eventuation in history. [*This is the foundation of technical analysis of stock prices!*] On the other hand, since the human mind is created by God and is therefore in itself naturally revelational of God, the mind may be sure that its system is true and corresponds on a finite scale to the system of God. This is what we mean by saying that it is **analogical to God's system**. It is *dependent* upon God's system, and by being dependent upon God's system it is on necessity a true system. I hold therefore that it is possible for the human being to have what you call and **existential system**. But I also hold that the human mind, in all the propositions that it makes by means of its logical facilities, is confronted with facts that are what they are in the last analysis because of the **existential system that is God's**. Therefore when God tells me something that pertains directly to his own being apart from the world, I may repeat on the level of my experience the

words that he has spoken. When he, for instance, tells me that he has existed from all eternity before the foundation of the world, I may repeat his words and say, 'God is eternal,' but it is evident that God has, and **I have not, grasped fully what God means**. God knows himself **exhaustively**, and I know him truly but **not exhaustively**. [Key point! Hence, we know what He is like (analogically), not what he actually is (equivocally). The bible was written, God speaking to us, analogically - God lowering himself to our level of imbecility as Owen puts it.] Moreover, what holds true of things that God tells me about himself holds true of everything God tells me about myself or the world. Even of the things that I observe with my senses, with respect to the things that you are accustomed to speaking of as belonging to the realm of science or to the realm of the phenomenal world, **it remains true on my presuppositions that I do not comprehend them exhaustively**. All the facts of the phenomenal world are incomprehensible to me precisely because **they are what they are by virtue of the voluntary action of the will of God with respect to them**. They are what they are, they occupy a place in the scheme of things spatio-temporal, **because God by his plan and by the execution of his plan in the works of creation and providence makes them what they are**. They are in the last analysis as incomprehensible to me as is God himself. My idea of the incomprehensibility of God therefore presupposes his true knowability. And his true knowability is based on the fact that I am his creature and that all things created are made by him. I could therefore not even assert the incomprehensibility of God unless I presupposed the knowability of God. It is therefore upon the idea that all phenomenal reality, whether within the mind of man or surrounding it, **is what it is because of the result of the activity of the will of God as revelational of his character** - upon this I base the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God.

"In my doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God I am, therefore, not siding with you, Mr. Kierkegaard, as over against Hegel. On the contrary, from my point of view you are both irrationalists. Both of you deny the knowability of God, and both of you should, if you were consistent, deny the knowability of anything. You cannot make intelligible to me how anything can be known unless you presuppose my God, **who knows all because he controls all**. My notion of the incomprehensibility of God is, therefore, as the poles apart from what is today called **modern irrationalism**. And from your points of view, my doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God must be hopelessly determinist and rationalist. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God as I hold it presupposes that God is wholly known to himself and that he wholly knows his created world. It presupposes further that man, as created by God in his image, does know and cannot help but know God. Even you, Mr. Hegel, will have to admit that you are as averse to such rationalism, so such *alte Metaphysik*, as is Mr. Kierkegaard.

"I do not therefore intend to make any concessions to either of you. I can make no concessions that would satisfy you unless I were willing to sacrifice my entire position on the knowability of God. If I made any concessions to you, they would have to be to the effect that in my system I do not have a genuine though finite or analogical replica of the existential system of God. That is to say, I should have to renounce the genuine knowability of anything at all. I should have to be utterly skeptical. I submit that unless you interpret reality in terms of the God of the Scripture **by whom all things consist and are what they are**, you cannot even make intelligible to yourself your own position. So I am really asserting the incomprehensibility of God in order to avoid the destruction of the possibility of predication in any field whatsoever [the parenthesis ends here.]

Returning now to Buswell's position, it is plain that, together with the positions of **Romanism** and **Arminianism**, it makes the fatal mistake of trying to appease the foes of the Christian faith by making such concessions as shake the foundation of the Christian faith, the foundation of knowledge – without any prospect of winning its opponents. It is not reasonable to expect to win the opponents to the Christian position if we do not carefully set off the Christian position from that of its opponents.

The following is an excellent teaching on what **Arminians** believe, how they see God and man, etc.: this will give you a more in depth understanding of our fallen nature, our mind, etc. represented by Arminianism, that God is transforming into His image. See Romans 12:2, Phil. 2:13. Van Til nails it here. Mull this heretical concept of man's **autonomy** or **ultimacy**. This is what God is weaning us off of day by day, year by year. And the only way it progresses meaningfully, is by a diligent study and meditation of the Scriptures. Otherwise, we subject ourselves to routine self-frustration, no peace, restlessness, etc.

In what has been said so far, stress was laid upon the **idea that God controls and therefore knows all things**. It is because of this claim that Christianity is frequently charged with rationalism. To this must be added that man does not know and cannot ever expect to know God or anything else exhaustively. He never has and never can expect to have in his mind exactly the same thought content that God has in his mind. As a creature of God man never knows God “adequately.” He knows *pro mensura humana* (according to human measure). This contention is not contrary to but rather involved in the first contention with respect to the all-comprehensiveness of God's knowledge. If we hold to the first, we must also hold to the second. For if we hold to the first, then and then only have we thought of the human mind as really **derivative** and **wholly dependent at every point on the mind of God** and its prior activity. **Romanists** and **Arminians** do not hold to the first, and therefore they do not hold to the second. **The do not hold to the first because to hold to the first would be to deny that the human mind has ultimacy, and this not Romanist or Arminian is willing to do.** Holding to the ultimacy of the human mind in some respect, the Romanist and the Arminians can then also maintain – and even must, to be consistent – **that the relation between the divine and the human mind is similar to that of a teacher to a pupil.** The teacher knows many things that the pupil does not know. Yet the teacher tells the pupil what he knows, and there is no reason at all why the pupil should not eventually know as much as the teacher. Nor is there any reason why the pupil should not understand a single proposition made by the teacher as well as the teacher himself. The teacher may understand some of the implications of a proposition that he has made to the pupil, while the pupil does not understand these implications at a certain time. But when the teacher adds new propositions to the first one, these implications will gradually become clear to the pupil as well as to the teacher. There is only a **gradational difference** between the two. The teacher and what the teacher knows are incomprehensible to the pupil until the teacher reveals what he knows to the pupil. The possibility of the pupil's understanding the teacher in what he says rests upon the fact that both are operating under the same conditions and limitations. The teacher does not know everything because **he does not control everything**. Particularly, he does not control the pupil's mind. The teacher therefore cannot predict the future because the future is not wholly under his control. He cannot be sure that the laws of logic by means of which he makes predictions fit wholly into the facts of the universe about which he is making assertions. So there is **mystery** for him in the same way that there is **mystery** for the pupil. Both the teacher and the pupil

look up to **the impersonal laws of logic** that are **independent** of them both, as neither of them controls the facts of reality by means of his power.

It is true that **Romanism and Arminians** will not put the matter as plainly as this. They want to maintain the Creator-creature relationship, but, in the last analysis, their teaching with respect to the **ultimacy or autonomy of the human mind** accounts for their compromise with the non-Christian view of the relation between God and man as illustrated by the teacher-pupil relationship. According to all non-Christian thought, man is potentially divine. **Man is not really dependent upon God. Man is not created by God. The world is not under the providential control of God. So the mind of man may eventually know all things.**

Even if, with modern idealism, the knowledge of all things by man is held to be a mere limiting concept so that man may never at any given time expect to know all things, **it remains true that God and man are on this view essentially subject to the same limitations.** The reason why according to modern idealism man can never expect to know all things at any given time is that God cannot either. The reason lies in the fact that the **rationalistic** ideal of comprehensive knowledge is counterbalanced with the **irrationalistic** assumptions that reality is never exhaustively knowable to any mind.

Thus the two positions, the Christian and the non-Christian, stand squarely over against one another. Affirming the primacy of the Creator-creature relationship, the Christian position, consistently expressed in the **Reformed faith**, maintains that man does not at any point have in his mind exactly the same thought content that God has in his mind. When his God makes a revelational proposition to him, such as that he, God, is eternal, man in repeating this proposition says the God is eternal. The reference point is the same but the content is not. Being subject to no conditions, himself the source of all conditions of man,²⁵ God at once sees the significance of such a proposition in all the depth of its meaning. God knows the meaning of this proposition in all the fullness of its significance because he knows it in relationship to all other propositions that he will make or will not make to man. If God had made all the revelational propositions that he will ever make to man about himself, even then man could not have the same thought content in his mind that God has in his mind unless he were himself divine.

²⁵Recall the earlier discussion of Gordon Clark's views, where Van Til insisted on a common reference point between divine and human knowledge, on condition that the Creator-creature relationship be properly respected.

Man can never experience the experience of God. An endless number of added propositions does not change the matter in the least. Added revelation has in the past enriched and no doubt will hereafter enrich the fullness of meaning that man possesses when he responds to this revelation in his **confession and adoration**, but added revelation cannot wipe out the difference between the experience of the self-contained ontological Trinity and the experience of the created man. [Finitude cannot comprehend infinitude.] When man says the God is eternal, he can, because of his own limitations, think of God only as being very old. **He can think of eternity only in terms of endless years.**²⁶

²⁶Recall earlier discussions of **Thomas Aquinas's** way of negation.

In saying this we are not for a moment slipping into **modern irrationalism**. We do not speak vaguely of the oceanic depths of God, that is reality, and of the impossibility of emptying out this depth by means of teacups of our understanding. Nor do we with **Thomas Aquinas** assert that our knowledge of God is by remotion only.²⁷

²⁷That is, a regress from contingency, for example, cause and effect, to ultimacy, for example a first cause.

Key points on rationalism and irrationalism:

To speak of the infinity of reality and of its unfathomability by the understanding – in short, to be an **irrationalist** – is quite consistent with being a **rationalist**. For the **essence of rationalism springs from the idea of the ultimacy or autonomy of the mind of man**. And on this basis irrationalism is in agreement with rationalism. The only difference between the two is the **irrationalism is sophisticated or worn-out rationalism**: it is rationalism that knows it is lost in the forests of irrationalism. But irrationalism, though knowing that enlarging ever so much the clearing it has made in the woods of the “bad infinite,” will always find more wilds to conquer, is not a rejection of the principle of rationalism.

In contrast with this the Christian position with respect to man’s not knowing at any point just what God knows is based upon the **presupposition of the self-contained God of Scripture**. And this presupposition is the death of both rationalism and irrationalism. It is the death of both because it alone maintains the **full dependence of the mind of man upon the mind of God**.²⁸

²⁸This is the heart of the antithesis: rationalism and irrationalism, versus the fully rational, self-contained God of the Bible.

So then when man says that God is eternal, he is saying something positive about the being of God even though, as far as his own conceptualization is concerned, he cannot think of this eternity otherwise than in terms of the passage of years. He is saying something positive because of the fact that all the facts of the universe, and especially the facts of his own experience, are a positive revelation of the nature or character of God. **It is this fact of the priority of the positive relation of God to the world in the way of creation and providence, in the way of man’s creation in the image of God, that saves from skepticism**. The Christian idea of human knowledge as **analogical of God’s knowledge** is therefore the only position in which man, **who cannot control or know anything in the ultimate comprehensive sense of the term, can nevertheless be assured that his knowledge is true**.

Great summary here:

To say therefore that the human mind can know even one proposition in its minimal significance with the **same depth of meaning with which God knows that proposition** is an attack of the Creator-creature relationship and therewith an attack on the heart of Christianity. And unless we maintain the **incomprehensibility of God** as involved in and correlative to the idea of the **all-controlling power and knowledge of God**, we shall fall into the **Romanist and Arminian heresy** of making the mind of man at some points as **ultimate as is the mind of God**.

The Doctrine of the Trinity and Related Heresies

(Good comments on pantheism and deism)

Excerpts from

An Introduction to Systematic Theology

by Cornelius Van Til

pgs. 352-368

code509

The History of the Doctrine

The full statement of biblical truth on the doctrine of the Trinity is the fruit of a long and laborious process of Scripture interpretation. A knowledge of this history is particularly helpful in order for us to note the types of heresy against which the doctrine has been formulated.

The Trinity is of the utmost practical significance to us. After discussing various attributes of God, **Calvin** says: “But there is another special mark by which he designates himself, for the purpose of giving a more intimate knowledge of his nature. While he proclaims his unity, he distinctly sets it before us as existing in three persons. These, we must hold, unless the bare and empty name of Deity merely is to flutter in our brain without any genuine knowledge.” Calvin does not merely mean that God has, as a matter of fact, revealed himself as Trinity. This true, but he also seems to say that God cannot exist otherwise than in trinitarian fashion. To quote **Warfield**, “According to Calvin, then, it would seem, there can be no such thing as a monadistic God; the idea of multiformity enters into the very notion of God.” By saying that God’s essence is simple and that the three persons are equal to one another as to their divinity, the Church has set itself in opposition to all forms of non-Christian thought. The Trinity is not a speculative doctrine of little significance. Every type of heresy is, in the last analysis, an attack upon the Trinity. Bavinck says, “The essence of Christianity, the absolute self-revelation of God in the person of Christ, and the absolute self-communication of God in the Holy Spirit, could only be maintained if they have their foundation and principle in the **ontological trinity.**” [It is likely that this favorite expression of Van Til’s, the “ontological Trinity,” derives from Bavinck.] Bavinck speaks of the ontological Trinity. This is important. **All non-Christian thought would have us think of God as one aspect of the universe as a whole. In one way or another, all heresies bring in the space-time existence as the other aspect of the universe as a whole.** This is clearly characteristic of present-day heresies. Here, in fact, lies the bond of connection between ancient and modern heresies. For this reason, the church has emphasized the fact that the ontological Trinity, that is, the Trinity as it exists in itself, apart from its relation to the created universe, is **self-complete**, involving as it does the equal ultimacy of unity and plurality.¹³ [13On the equal ultimacy of the one and the many, see chap 2 note 15.]

¹⁵This view stands in strong contrast to the so-called classical apologetics, which absolutizes the law of contradiction (despite claims to ground it in the deity). Thus, Van Til here and throughout is fond of saying that there is “equal ultimacy” of the one and the many, derived from the Trinity. Strictly according to Aristotle’s absolute laws of logic, this would be impossible.

But it was a long and arduous road by which the church reached its high doctrine of the Trinity.

The first period of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, A.D. 1-325, was characterized by the effort to show that the Christ of history is the second person of the Godhead. When Christians worshiped Christ as God, they were charged with polytheism. Men were willing to identify Christ with the Logos of the **Gnostics**.¹⁵

¹⁵**Gnosticism** was a complex set of teachings widespread in the ancient world, and with repercussions to our own day. It generally held that salvation was through knowledge (*gnosis*), which could take one away from the material world of evil to the spiritual realm of the good. Often, it believed in some sort of mediator, such as a demiurge, a Logos, or even a docetic Christ (one who was neither truly incarnate nor could suffer). It was consistently attacked both in the New Testament and the church fathers.

They were willing to think of Christ as a sort of being midway between God and man. It was only in this way, they thought, that they could find the unity between the eternal and the temporal that they needed. Greek thought spoke of God as the **absolutely other** than this world, as the silent abyss, and of the Logos as the means of self-expression for God in the universe. Naturally, this type of speculation was opposed to the idea of the **self-contained being of God**.

The apostolic fathers of the first and second centuries had already begun the fight against Ebionitism and Docetism.¹⁶ They did not go far beyond direct Scripture statements in their discussion of the Trinity. Little equipped were they to show that with this self-revelation of God they possessed the only defensible philosophical system of truth.

¹⁶These are heresies from the early church. The Ebionites took a vow of poverty (*ebyonim*) and on the whole espoused much of the Jewish ceremonial law. Jesus, for them, was a human prophet whose father was Joseph and who did not preexist. The Docetics taught that Christ could not really have suffered if he truly were divine. Close to Gnostics, they held that Jesus was a messenger from outside the present evil world who came to guide the enlightened out of it. Van Til points out that before the doctrinal definitions laid down in the creeds and councils, the fathers simply appealed to Scripture in order to respond to these heresies.

In the second century, the apologists, especially **Justin Martyr**, brought out the divinity of Christ more clearly. “But,” Bavinck says, “the immanent relation between Father and Son is not yet clear in the case of Justin Martyr.” “It still seems as though the Son was generated in the interest of the creation of the world. It is still presented as though God in himself is the hidden God, in contrast to the Son as the revealed God. Similarly, there is very little in Justin Martyr about the divine nature of the Spirit and his ontological relation to the Son and the Father.

Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen

Irenaeus made a great advance by opposing the Gnostic concept of God and of the Logos. Bavinck says, "The Logos was as it were relieved of his twofold nature and place on the divine side."¹⁹ Though not always consistent with himself, Irenaeus opposed the idea of the hidden God (*buthos*) as contrasted to the Son. This was a great advance. It showed that God did not in any wise need the universe as a medium of self-expression; he was self-expressed in the Trinity.

¹⁹*GD*, 287; *RD*, 282. **Irenaeus** (ca. 130-200) was a Greek church father whose *Against Heresies* is the major source for our understanding of Gnosticism in the second century. In his refutation of that view he points out that, as second Adam, the fully divine and fully human Christ successfully recapitulated humanity's failed calling.

Tertullian supplements Irenaeus by insisting that, though the Son and the Spirit are a unit with the Father, the Godhead is not only unity, but also Trinity.²⁰ Irenaeus had not emphasized this side of the matter sufficiently. With respect to Tertullian, Bavinck says:

In spite of the fact that he does not always fully transcend subordinationism, and does not sufficiently distinguish between the ontological, the cosmological and the soteriological in the doctrine of the Trinity, he has furnished the concepts and the words which the doctrine of the Trinity required for its formulation. He has substituted filiation for the Logos-speculation, and in this way separated the ontological Trinity from cosmological speculation. And he has been the first who has tried to derive the Trinity of persons, not from the person of the Father, but from the essence of God. [*Bavinck, GD*, 2:228; *RD*, 2:284]

²⁰**Tertullian** (ca. 155-220) was a Latin church father who taught that God was "one substance consisting in three persons." Following Bavinck, Van Til finds him not quite overcoming subordinationism, the view that the Son is ontologically below the Father. Nor did he adequately distinguish God's being (the ontological Trinity) from his creative and redemptive functions (the economical Trinity).

Origen also fell into the error of **subordinationism**.²² He stressed the unity of the Son with the Father, but in order to maintain the diversity that he knew was needed, he made a distinction between the essence of the Father and the essence of the Son. The Father was once more, in the Greek fashion, thought of as the most ultimate being, as much higher than the Son as the Son is higher than the world.

²²Origen (ca. 185-254) was one of the greatest of the Greek church fathers. His *Against Celsus* responds to a pagan attack on the Christian faith. In it he argues that God the Father is the Creator, God the Son is the eternal Logos, and God the Holy Spirit brings the gift of salvation to men and women. This trinitarian view lies at the basis for the orthodox expressions of **Athanasius** and the Cappadocian Fathers. At the same time, Origen taught that though the

three are equal, the Son and the Spirit are subordinate to the Father. **Subordinationism** at its extreme was taught by the Arians.

Arianism

Charles Hodge points out that many followers of Origen, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, and especially Arius, taught a doctrine much lower than that of Origen. According to Arius, Christ was created not from the substance of the God, “but *ek ouk ontoon* [not truly from], and therefore was not *homoousios* [of one substance] with the Father.”²³

²³Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, 3 vols....* Arius taught in the early fourth century. His views were eventually rejected by the church. He asserted that because God was immutable, he could never truly impart his substance to another being. Thus, Christ was not preexistent, but begotten as a creature, and thus subordinate; and although given the title of Son of God, he was not *homoousios* (of one substance) with the Father.

Sabellianism

Another unsatisfactory form of statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is that which usually is spoken of as Sabellianism.²⁴

²⁴Also known as **Monarchianism** and **patripassionism**, **Sabellianism** (named after Sabellius) held that God is one person, a “monarch,” who could not be divided into three persons. Thus, Jesus is the Logos, yet a mere man endowed by the Spirit. This view was rejected in the third century. Arianism claimed to avoid the error of **Sabellianism** by dignifying Christ as the first of God’s creation. Van Til makes the point that **Arianism and Sabellianism** are flip sides of the same coin because **both define plurality as not essential to the Godhead.**

Sabellianism is commonly contrasted with Arianism by saying that **Arianism** taught the diversity of persons in the Trinity without sufficiently stressing the **unity of essence**, while **Sabellianism** taught the unity of the essence without sufficiently stressing the **diversity of the persons**. This is true, but does not clearly strike at the root of the matter. It is a distinction similar to that which says that while **pantheism** stresses the immanence of God and **deism** stresses the transcendence of God, **theism** stresses both. The point is that the church could not merely unite **Arianism** and **Sabellianism** in order to get at the truth. It had to reject both because **they were at bottom reducible to the same heresy, that of uniting the temporal in a correlative union with the eternal.** This is the case with all the subordinationist speculation that is summed up in the name “Arianism.” But **Sabellianism**, too, seeks to have the temporal world furnish the plurality as a supplement to the eternal world, which furnished the unity of reality as a whole.

The Nicene Creed

When the Nicene Council met to state and defend the true doctrine of the Trinity, it rejected Arianism by stating that Christ is *homoousion to patri* (of one substance with the Father), and

Sabellianism by stating that the persons were persons in the ontological Trinity, and not merely economical manifestations with respect to the world.²⁵ They differ not as *allo kai allo* (one thing or the other), but as *allos hai allos* (one person or the other). In rejecting these two heresies the council rejected two forms of one heresy, the one basic heresy with respect to the Trinity, i.e., **the mixing of the temporal with the eternal in ultimate union**. In order to oppose these two forms of the one heresy it was necessary not only to maintain the two points mentioned against the Arians and the Sabellians but also to emphasize that the internal relation of the persons in the Godhead is prior to and independent of the relation of the Godhead to the created universe. Charles Hodge says:

As the essence of the Godhead is common to the several persons, they have a common intelligence, will and power. There are not in God three intelligences, three wills, three efficiencies. **The three are one God, and, therefore, have one mind and will.**²⁶ This intimate union was expressed in the Greek Church by the word "*perchooresis*," which the Latin words "*inexistentia*," "*inhabitation*" and "*intercommunion*" ["coexistence," cohabitation," and "intercommunion"], were used to explain.²⁷

²⁵The Council of Nicaea is the first great ecumenical council of the church. It met in 325 primarily to deal with Arianism, while avoiding Sabellianism. The Nicene Creed, a defining confession of the early church that resulted from the council, declares that Christ is *homoousios* ("of one substance") with the Father, but also "**begotten – not made.**"

²⁶Below Van Til asserts that God is one person.

²⁷Athanasius (ca. 296-373), Bishop of Alexandria, was a major contributor to the Council of Nicaea. A fierce opponent of Arianism, he taught that the Word, or Logos, is equal to God, and that only a Savior who is God can save humanity from sin. The Council of Constantinople (381) was the second great ecumenical council of the early church. It ratified Nicene orthodoxy and disqualified several heresies. It further established the full deity of the Holy Spirit. For example, it added that the Spirit is the "Lord and giver of life, who with the Father and the Son is together to be worshiped and glorified." In it we find the first indication of the "**filioque clause**," which says that the Spirit proceeded not only from the Father but also from the Son (*filio*, Son; *que*, also), a phrase officially accepted only in 589. Van Til argues succinctly here that the Spirit's generation from both Father and son is a **clear expression of the coordination of the three persons**, better understood in the West than in the East. Although the official expression of its statement of doctrine has been lost, its essence is found in both Nicaea and Constantinople. Tradition ties them together, so that we may speak of the Council of Nicaea-Constantinople.

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Constantinople, 381

In the Nicene Creed all the elements of the true Scripture doctrine are present. What has taken place since that is not without importance, however. If the true doctrine was to be maintained, it had to be continually restated and refined. So it had to be made plainer than it had been made that the Holy

Spirit as well as the son is a person co-substantial with the Father and the Son. **Athanasius** and **Augustine** did much to make clearer that all three of the persons are co-ordinate.²⁸ And an important point in this connection was to show that the **Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son (filioque)**. It is only if the Spirit proceeds from both that the inter-communion of the persons of the Trinity is eternally complete. The **Western church** more clearly than the **Eastern** saw that the co-ordination of the persons and their exclusively internal inter-communication could not be expressed without the *filioque* clause. As the generation of the Son by the Father had to be an eternal generation, so the proceeding of the Spirit had to be an eternal proceeding from both the Father and the Son. Hodge says, "The most obvious deficiency in the Nicene Creed is the omission of any definite statement concerning the Holy Spirit; the **Constantinople Council** added the words: 'We believe in the Holy Ghost' of the Nicene Creed, the words: 'Who is the Lord and giver of life, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.'" (The filioque clause was finally adopted by the Synod of Toledo in 589.)

Chalcedon, 451

All the heresies with respect to the Trinity may be reduced to the one great heresy of mixing the eternal and the temporal. Therefore the heresies of Nestorianism and Eutychianism, which were set aside at the council of Chalcedon, were no more than modified forms of opposition to the church's doctrine of the Trinity.²⁹ Of the Chalcedon Creed, **Dr. Schaff** says:

While the first Council of Nicea had established the eternal, preexistent Godhead of Christ, the Symbol of the fourth ecumenical council relates to the incarnate Logos, as he walked upon earth, and sits on the right hand of the Father. It is directed against the errors of Nestorius and Eutychas, who agreed with the Nicene Creed as opposed to Arianism, but put the Godhead of Christ in a false relation to his humanity.³⁰

As to the form of statement of the Chalcedon doctrine, the words of Schaff may be quoted:

The orthodox doctrine maintains, against Eutychianism, the distinction of nature even after the act of incarnation, without confusion or conversion (*asygchytoos, inconfuse, and atreptoos, immutabiliter*), yet, on the other hand, without division or separation (*adiarivetoos, indivise, and achoristoos, inseparabiliter*), so that the divine will ever remain divine, and the human ever human, and yet the two have continually one common life, and interpenetrate each other, like the person of the Trinity.³¹

²⁹**Nestorius** became Patriarch of Constantinople in 428. His views may have been misunderstood. Nestorianism was perceived to teach that Christ is two persons, one human, the other divine. **Eutyches** (d. 454) taught **monophysitism**, the view that Christ has only one, divine nature, mingled with human flesh. The **Council of Chalcedon** (451) was the fourth great ecumenical council of the early church. The **Chalcedonian Creed**, known also as the **Definition**, stated that Christ has two natures, divine (consubstantial with the Father, born of Mary *Theotokos*, the God-bearer), and human (consubstantial with us in manhood). **The two are united in the one person, in which they coexist "without confusion, change, division or**

separation.” This became known as the **hypostatic union**, meaning a perennial union of two natures. Van Til sees in Chalcedon the answer to any confusion of Creator and creature.

³⁰Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1:30

³¹*Ibid.*, 31

The Westminster Confession

Here we may also add the words of the Westminster Confession:

The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood were inseparably foined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

From these statements it appears that the one main concern of the church has been to keep God and man in the proper relation to one another **without confusing them**. God exists as triune. He is therefore **self-complete**. Yet he created the world. This world has meaning *not in spite of*, but *because of*, the **self-completeness of the ontological Trinity**. Thus God is the foundation of the created universe and therefore is far above it. If he were defined only as the negation of the universe, without first being thought of as its foundation, we would have an absolute otherness of God. But this absolute otherness would in the end become an aspect of reality as a whole when brought into relation with the temporal universe at all. **Any doctrine that denies God's providence (as deism does) or his providence and creation (as Greek thought did) must in the end become a confusion of the eternal and the temporal. Deism and pantheism are no more than two forms of the one basic error of confusion of the eternal and the temporal.** ³³

³³Van Til earlier compared **pantheism** with **intellectualism**. Here, he compares it to **deism**. **In deism God is unrelated to creation, whereas in pantheism he is identical with it. Both are cases of denial of a true Creator-creature relationship. In the test case of the incarnation, Nestorians resemble deism because the divine is removed from the human, while Eutychians resemble pantheism by commingling the divine and human, according to Van Til. See note 29, above.**

So also when sin came into the world, and the second person of the Trinity assumed a human nature, the **eternal** and the **temporal were not confused**. **Nestorianism** was again the **deistic form** of opposition to the true doctrine, and **Eutychianism** was the directly pantheistic form.

Modern Antitrinitarianism

We cannot do more than indicate in a word that the modern heresies in theology have their origin in, or can be traced back to, a false conception of the Trinity, the self-contained God of Scripture. In modern times as in ancient times, men have mixed the ternal and the temporal.

One striking instance of this is seen in the opposition to Calvin's formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Calvin was strongly interested in asserting the consubstantiality of the three persons of the Godhead. To quote **Warfield**:

In his assertion of the "*autotheotes*" [deity of himself] of the Son, Calvin, then was so far from supposing that he was enunciating a novelty, that he was able to quote the Nicene Fathers themselves as asserting it "in so many words." And yet, in his assertion of it, he marks an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. Not that men had not before believed in the self-existence of the Son as He is God: but that the current modes of stating the doctrine of the Trinity left a door open for the entrance of defective modes of conceiving the deity of the Son, to close which there was needed some such sharp assertion of His "*autotheotes*."

Warfield adds:

Tertullian, Augustine, and Calvin are the three men to whom the Church owes most for the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. It was no wonder that Calvin's statements were hotly opposed. Not to mention the Roman Catholics, who debated among themselves about Calvin's doctrines, or the Lutherans whose objections were to points of detail, we briefly note the **Arminian** objections. In contrast to the Lutherans, the **Arminians** had "distinct tendency to the proper subordinationism of the **Origenists**."³⁵

³⁵On Arminius, see chap 2, note 29. On Origen, see note 22, above.

Arminius himself, thought he denies the "*autotheotes*" of the Son, "fairly saves this orthodoxy."

The gravitation of Arminianism was, however, downward; and we find already taught by **Episcopius**, no longer a certain subordination in order among the persons of the Trinity in the interests of the Nicene doctrine of "eternal generation" and "procession," but rather a generation and procession in the interests a subordination in nature among the persons of the Trinity.³⁶

³⁶Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 264. **Simon Episcopius** was an ally of the Arminians in the 17th century.

"**Curcellaeus** taught no more than a 'Specific unity' of the divine Person."³⁷ George Bull himself was less extreme than Curcellaeus. But after Bull came **Samuel Clarke**, who was willing to admit that the Son may have been begotten of the essence of the Father "though he wished to be allowed that it was equally possible that He may have been made out of nothing."³⁸

³⁷Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 270. **Stephanus Curcellaeus**, or Etienne de Courcelle (1586-1659) was an Arminian theologian and the author of *Opera Theologica*, 2 vols. **George Bull** (1634-1710), who was more moderate than **Curcellaeus**, and who became the bishop of St. David's, wrote on the Trinity...Samuel Clark (1675-1729) was a well-known defender of Isaac Newton and correspondent with Leibniz...

³⁸Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 270

The **Arminian** opposition to the true doctrine only prepared to soil for more radical departures. The idealist philosophers have identified the **Trinity** with the principle of **thesis**, **antithesis**, and **synthesis** in reality as a whole.³⁹ Influenced by these philosophers, many theologians have gone far astray from the faith. Unitarianism is nothing but a new form of the old error of mixing the ternal and the temporal. **Modernism is the happy heir of all heresies, and basic to all its heresies is the denial of the consubstantiality of the Son and the Sprit with the Father**; or rather, its error is ever deeper than that, since the Father himself is for **modernism** no more than as aspect of reality. If ever there was need for reaffirming and teaching the true doctrine of the Trinity, it is now.

³⁹This threefold dynamic of history is attributed to **Hegel**. It belongs to his **dialectical materialism**, the theory that a **necessary** process leads toward progress in both the world and in reason (which Hegel considered identical). One event/idea is overcome by another until resolution occurs. Thus, the contradiction of thesis and antithesis is overcome in a synthesis, which itself is contradicted and overcome, until final perfection arrives.

There is as much misunderstanding about **Barth's view of the Trinity** as there is with respect of his notion of transcendence of God.⁴⁰ Barth's Kantian principle of the "freedom of God" does not allow any room whatsoever for anything like the traditional doctrine of the **self-contained ontological Trinity**. In this case, as in others, **he uses the words of orthodoxy but rejects their meaning. All of the incommunicable attributes of God are correlativized by Barth**. His activism requires him to do so. So also the **ontological Trinity** is correlativized.

⁴⁰It is fitting to mention **Karl Barth** here, in that he is credited with bringing the doctrine of the Trinity back into the prominence it deserves...Van Til here is sharply critical of Barth, understanding him to teach **correlativization**, that is, making each attribute an aspect of each other so that God may be fully free and thus fully active.

It appears, then, that in setting forth its doctrine of this Trinity the church prepared itself for its life and death struggle with the world. In stating its doctrine of the Trinity, the church affirmed its unswerving faith in a self-contained, mysterious God. It is this self-contained, mysterious being who has deigned to reveal himself to man. He has revealed himself as necessarily existing as he exists. **Therefore we may say that God exists necessarily as a trinitarian God**. When Scripture ascribes certain works specifically to the Father, others specifically to the Son, and still others specifically to the Holy Spirit, we are compelled to presuppose a genuine distinction within the Godhead back of that ascription. **On the other hand, the work ascribed to any of the persons is the work of one absolute person**.⁴¹ [⁴¹Van Til reasserts this more forcefully five paragraphs below] **Bavinck** has pointed out that, in the doctrine of the Trinity, we have the heart of the Christian religion. We are always in danger, he

says of turning in the direction of **Sabellianism** by allowing the absolute unity of the being of God to do despite to the genuine personal distinctions in the Godhead, or of turning to Arianism by allowing the distinctions of the persons in the Godhead to do despite to the absolute unity of the being of God.

How shall we avoid this danger? The answer would seem to be that we can best avoid this danger if we (a) clearly set forth the doctrine and see that in it we have a doctrine of God that is the diametrical opposite from that of **modern philosophy** and theology and (b) offer this triune God without apology as the only possible presupposition for the possibility of predication.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Reasoning analogically, rather than either **univocally** or **equivocally**, is basic to Van Til's epistemology. See chap 5, note 41. Univocal reason can never arrive at the Trinity, since God is neither the equivalent of human reason nor its mysterious opposite.

⁴¹Van Til's concept of analogy is alluded to throughout his writings. Because God is the Creator, we cannot know *univocally* (as he does), yet neither do we know *equivocally* (never the truth). In stead, we know analogically, but thinking God's thoughts after him. This is quite different from **Thomas's** use of analogy, which amounts to a middle way between univocal and equivocal knowledge, whereby we may climb up close to God's being without ever knowing his essence.

If we reason thus **univocally**, we cannot help falling into either of two errors. **We either maintain that the Trinity can be shown to the non-Christian man to be a rational doctrine upon his own assumption, or we maintain that the Trinity is a mystery in the sense that it is irrational.** Let us look for a moment at these errors.

It is sometimes asserted that we can prove to men that we are not asserting anything that they ought to consider irrational, inasmuch as we say that God is one in essence and three in person. We therefore claim that we have not asserted unity and trinity of exactly the same thing.

Yet this is not the whole truth of the matter. We do assert that God, that is, the whole Godhead, is one person.⁴⁵ We have noted how **each attribute is coextensive with the being of God**. We are compelled to maintain this in order to avoid the notion of an uninterpreted being of some sort. In other words, **we are bound to maintain the identity of the attributes of God with the being of God** in order to avoid the specter of **brute fact**. **[isolated uninterpreted facts arguments or data in a void; fact should not be isolated from the framework in which they come. Search codeBF, brutefactdef, and code524]** In a similar manner we have noted how theologians insist that **each of the persons of the Godhead is coterminous with the being of the Godhead**. But all this is not to say that the distinctions of the attributes are merely nominal. Nor is it to say that the distinctions of the persons are merely nominal. We need both the absolute coterminousness of each attribute and each person with the whole being of God, and the genuine significance of the distinctions of the attributes and the persons. **"Each person,"** says Bavinck, **"is equal to the whole essence of God and coterminous with both other persons and with all three."** Over against all other beings, that is, over against created beings, we must therefore hold that **God's being presents an absolute numerical identity**. And even within the ontological Trinity **we must maintain that God is numerically one. He is one person**. When we say that

we believe in a personal God, we do not merely mean that we believe in a God to whom the adjective “personality” may be attached. **God is not an essence that has personality; he is absolute personality.** Yet, within the being of the one person we are permitted and compelled by Scripture to make the distinction between a specific or generic type of being and three personal subsistences. [see note 45 above]

⁴⁵This is one of Van Til’s most original contributions to theology proper. As he said at the beginning of the chapter, to speak of God as one is to speak of God as a person. This fits our ordinary experience, as, for instance, when we pray, we pray to one person. It also fits biblical data that constantly refers to God as a person. **By this reminder Van Til avoids two errors.** The first is the tendency, found mostly in Western theology, of separating God’s essence, which becomes a remote inaccessible being, from the persons. The other is the neo-orthodox error of reducing personality to relationship, rather than regarding it as the foundation of **ontological consciousness.**

As Christians we say that this is a mystery that is beyond our comprehension. It surely is. God himself in the totality of his existence, is above our comprehension. At the same time, this mysterious God is mysterious because he is, within himself, wholly rational. It is not as though we can first, apart from Scripture, determine the fact that there must be a triune God if there is to be rationality. **If we are Christians, all our interpretation is in terms of this God of whom we speak.** It is he who has first revealed himself in his creation before we could know anything of him. But if there is one thing that seems clear from Scripture, **it is that there are no brute uninterpreted facts.** [isolated self-evident arguments or data in a void; fact should not be isolated from the framework in which they come.] If God is being considered apart from his relation to the world, **being and consciousness are coterminous.** And because this is so, the facts of the world are created facts, facts brought into existence as the result of a fully self-conscious act on the part of God. So then, though we cannot tell why the Godhead should exist tri-personally, we can understand something of the fact, after we are told that God exists as a triune being, that the unity and the plurality of this world has back of it a God in whom unity and the plurality are equally ultimate. **Thus we may say that this world, in some of its aspects at least, shows analogy to the Trinity. This world is made by God and, therefore, to the extent that it is capable of doing so, it may be thought of as revealing God as he exists. And God exists as a triune being.**⁴⁸

⁴⁸This paragraph contains in a nutshell the fundamentals of Van Til’s worldview. The nature of the creation is derived from the determination of the fully rational, triune God to create. Only if we begin from this presupposition can reality make sense. Only if we start from the God whose attributes and being are conterminous, rather than with men, can our predications have meaning. See Chap 10, not 30.

This is good here:

To the non-Christian, however, all this must seem irrational. He has begun his process of thought by assuming that man is ultimate. On this assumption he can at best allow for a species of personality that is higher than himself. **He can never allow for absolute personality. If he did, he would himself no longer be ultimate.** [He would then see himself as derivative of God, dependent upon him and not independent. Man loves his independence, i.e., he loves his sin!] When he speculates on the question

of being, it must appear to him as a universal that stands in contrast to every form of personality. For him, the essence of God can be nothing but an empty *buthos* (depth, or foundation) that is a counterpart to personality. In this sense, the non-Christian thinker will frequently be ready to admit mystery and the super-rational. **This type of irrationality does no injury his pride. It does not assault his assumed independence.** Therefore it is this type of irrationality that the non-Christian calls the "super-rational." It is the **not-yet**, though possibly-to-be-rationalized. On the other hand, what the Christian calls the **super-rational**, or **that which is above reason to man but quite acceptable** and even indispensable to man, the non-Christian must call and does call "irrational" in the objectionable sense of the term. The notion of a personality that is at the same time absolute, the notion of a consciousness that is not set over against but is conterminous with absolute being, is, to the non-Christian, contradictory. He says that such a notion claims to say something while it says nothing. To say that God is one person and at the same time to say that he exists as three persons, he will say, is not merely to contradict yourself verbally, but also to say that all predication is analytic. **It is to assert that being is already fully complete** [that is, **He needs no further becoming via correlativeness with creation, coming into his own via creation, the pantheistic view; his being is already complete! I think that's what he's concluding here.**]; that it cannot be added to. All the difficulties that Parmenides faced are thus said to face the Christian believer.⁴⁹

⁴⁹In much of this Van Til is contrasting the **Trinity, as one person and three persons**, comforting in the end. **And only the Trinity furnishes a basis for human predication.** We have here a dilemma because unbelievers claim the opposite, that predication is impossible if we begin with the Trinity.

Thus we are face to face with a dilemma. The Christian maintains that only on the basis of the God of the Bible, whom we surely cannot fathom in his being, but who has told us that in him unity and diversity are equally ultimate, is there any possibility of predication. On the other hand, the non-Christian says that with belief in such a God there is no possibility of predication. There is no possible way of softening this dilemma. Nor should we wish to tone it down. If we say that we can explain the doctrine of the Trinity to the satisfaction of the natural man by reducing the objectionable irrational element to his own non-objectionable irrational element, we are in fact setting up an irrational that is objectionable from the Christian point of view. Christians and non-Christians cannot pool or trade their mysteries as long as they are true to their positions. It remains therefore to argue as to whose super-rational is really objectionable. To do this, we must place ourselves upon one another's positions for argument's sake. And if this is done, the Christian must hold that the non-Christian worships **brute fact, while he himself, though gladly admitting that he cannot exhaustively interpret facts, may turn to God because for God there are no brute facts.**⁵⁰ [isolated uninterpreted arguments or data in a void; fact should not be isolated from the framework in which they come. See **codeBF** and **code524**]

⁵⁰The approach here outlined is sometimes known as the transcendental method. Beginning with the true God, we may challenge the unbeliever's claims by arguing from his own grounds that predication is impossible. **In the Roman Catholic type of apologetics, one must actually abandon the authority of the true God in order to accommodate the unbeliever's system.** For further development of this see Van Til's *The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed....chap 6.

The **Roman Catholic Church** at first blush seems to avoid the error of seeking to reduce the doctrine of the Trinity to such proportions as to make it unobjectionable to the natural man. It is very insistent that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery totally beyond the reach of human reason. Yet, if we look more closely, we observe that Rome has pooled the Christian and then non-Christian conceptions of rationality. It claims that in the **phenomenal world** there is not difference between the Christian and the non-Christian principles of interpretation. It holds that by reason (that is, non-regenerated reason), man may interpret correctly many aspects of the created world. And it then adds that there is an area beyond the reach of reason. **And that it is this area, called the area of faith, in which we are told to believe in the Trinity.** But this is to identify **the Christian and the non-Christian notions of mystery.** And, as for the charge of contradiction involved in the belief in the Trinity, **Rome** resorts to a non-Christian notion of the union of unity and plurality in order to remove that charge. We have noted before that Roman Catholic theology begins its thinking with the abstract notion of being. And non-Christian thinkers do not object to this abstract notion of being. If therefore Rome **identifies the essence of God with this abstract notion of being and adds the personality of God to this abstract being, there is very little to which any non-Christian thinker could object.**

We do not say that Rome does not often present a better doctrine of the Trinity than we have here outlined. Our only contention is that, according to the genius of its method, it is not entitled to a better doctrine. **Rome has made a compromise with non-Christian thought at the essential point of methodology, and it is fatal to the development of sound doctrine so to do.**

Summing up what has been said about the Trinity and setting it into relation to what was said in the previous chapter about the incommunicable attributes of God, we may assert that for a consistent Christian theology the **principle of individuation** lies within the Godhead.⁵¹ God has, from all eternity, **completely identified himself as the only self-existent fact. He identified himself without the need of other facts from which he needed to be distinguished.** There was not universal being of which he was a particular instance. There was no mind independent of **absolute being** that could exercise itself within God himself. There is a deep and rich differentiation in the personal relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. **The persons of the Godhead are mutually exhaustive of one another, and, therefore, of the divine essence.**

⁵¹By **individuation** is meant the possibility of identifying the true significance of individual facts. This can be done only if God himself is fully rational, both one and many, not an individual instance of an abstract universal principle.

For all non-Christian speculation, on the other hand, the **principle of individuation** lies somewhere else than in the self-contained deity. **Rationalisms** may find this principle of individuation in some eternal impersonal reason, and **empiricists** may find it in the "space-time continuum," but both agree in finding it somewhere else than where Christianity finds it. Only Christianity finds it in the absolute personality of God.

It is with this background that we may now turn to a consideration of the **communicable attributes of God.** **If the principle of individuation is really to be found in the absolute personality of God, man is the created image-bearer of God. God communicates to man a being similar to his own.** [see

Edwards's similar comments (in bold red) of God's communications to man.¹] That communication is then not a participation in the eternal being of God but **is the finite replication of the divine being**. It is only before the background of the fullness of the being of God as so far discussed that we can do justice to the communicable attributes.

¹God's internal glory is partly in his understanding, and partly in his will. And this internal glory, as seated in the will of God, implies both his holiness and his happiness: both are evidently God's glory, according to the use of the phrase. So that as God's external glory is only the emanation of his internal, this variety necessarily follows. And again, it hence appears that here is no other variety or distinction, **but what necessarily arises from the distinct faculties of the creature, to which the communication is made, as created in the image of God: even as having these two faculties of understanding and will**. God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God. Edwards, *God's Chief End in Creation*

Notes on Common Grace, the Fully Self-conscious God and Self-contained, Wholly Absolute God, Barthianism, and Arminianism

Excerpt from
 An Introduction to Systematic Theology
 By Cornelius Van Til
 Pgs. 378-380
 Code510

In the second place, we should observe that God, who is good in himself, does good to his creatures. It is not as though his being would naturally overflow into other being. God's creation of the world was a self-conscious act.¹³ It was a self-conscious act of himself as the one who is altogether good. There can therefore be no good in any creature except it have its source in God. "God is the cause *efficiens, exemplaris et finalis* [the efficient cause, the standard and the goal.] of all good,

¹³Bartlett holds that to become self-conscious, God created the world.

howsoever diversified this good may be." [Bavinck] God saw that his creation was good when first he made it. Scripture calls upon us to praise the goodness of God continually. In a world of suffering, this goodness of God manifests itself as mercy and pity.³³

³³Bavinck discusses God's mercy, grace, and love, successively under his goodness.

Good reasoning here:

When God's goodness manifests itself to the utterly undeserving, it is called **grace**. We cannot speak of the question of grace fully. That is a matter to be discussed in soteriology. **We merely speak of it here as a manifestation of the goodness of God.** Only he who believes in the God of the Scriptures, the fully **self-conscious God**, the God whom being and idea are coterminous, can really do justice to the biblical notion of grace. If one does not believe in the God of the Bible, one must hold that not all goodness is ultimately dependent upon him. Then not all evil is an offense against the goodness of God. And if sin is not exclusively an offense against the goodness of God, then grace can, at best, be a sort of fellow-sympathy on the part of God for beings that are somehow not as fortunately situated as he.³⁴

³⁴Although Van Til will critique Barth's theology in this regard, he anticipates the contemporary movement known as "open theism."

Modern theology, therefore, based as it is upon idealist philosophy, had no right to speak of the grace of God to sinners. And Barthian theology, which pretends to be vigorously opposed to modernism at every turn, cannot do justice to the notion of grace because it too holds to the existence of an evil that is not the result of a willful act of disobedience on the part of man. Barthianism does not believe that God originally created man perfect, and that sin came into the world by the fall of a historical Adam who lived in Paradise. For a Barthian, the whole story of Paradise is not to be taken as an account of historical events, but is rather to be taken as symbolical of spiritual truths. **It is thus that dialectical theology takes away the foundation for a true doctrine of the grace of God to man.** And as for Arminian theology it, too, cannot consistently preach the full scriptural doctrine of the grace of God, inasmuch as it too thinks of man as independent of the council of God at some point of his activity. [See chap 2, note 29] **Man's offense in breaking god's law in Paradise was, for Arminianism, not wholly and exclusively an offense against the absolute God. 'Arminianism does not hold to a wholly absolute God. It could not hold to a wholly absolute God unless it were willing to give up its teaching with respect to man's ultimate independence at some point. And sin not being wholly and exclusively an act of hostility against the absolute God, grace cannot be wholly and exclusively the sovereign act of the removal of sin as an offense against the absolute God.**

Thus it appears that, in the full proclamation of the **absolute unmerited grace of God to man**, the Reformed faith, with its fully biblical notion of God as self-contained in all his virtues and therefore in goodness, stands alone. No doubt others do, in a measure, preach the grace of God. Yet, it remains true that it is the mission of the Reformed faith to recall man to the full scriptural teaching on this subject. It is **Calvinism's doctrine of God** that enable it to do justice to the gospel of the **free grace** of God.

Common Grace

It is only if we think concretely of God that we can also think concretely of the things of the created world. And therefore we can think scripturally about the much-disputed doctrine of common grace. If we think concretely of the question, we see at once that the term *common* is really applicable only in a very loose sense to the idea of grace. God's attitude toward the saved and the unsaved can at no point be strictly common. It is well that we begin at this point. God always regards the reprobate as reprobate. When, therefore, he gives to the reprobate certain gifts in this life, of which they are undeserving, and these same gifts (as, for instance, rain and sunshine) also come to the saved, we cannot conclude that, with respect to rain and sunshine, God has the same attitude toward the believer and the unbeliever. When we speak of the attitude of God toward unbeliever's, we must take into consideration the total picture of the unbeliever's relationship to God. Thus the gifts of rain and sunshine to the believer are the gifts of a covenant God who has forgiven the sins of his people, and who knows that his people need these gifts. In a similar way, the gifts of rain and sunshine to unbelievers are gifts to these whom God hates, and are given because they too have a need of those things to fulfill the **purpose that God has with them**. God gave **Pharaoh** life and ability to rule, that he might be able to do that for which God has raised him up.

Both the **wheat and the tares** receive rain and sunshine so that both may reach the day of judgment for the revelation of the glory of God. In all this, God gave a witness to his presence (Acts 14:16). Men are, through this witness, without excuse. Thus God gave men and nations everywhere what they needed for a natural life and civilization, that they might accomplish the purposes of God. He restrained them in their natural tendency to do only evil continually, so that they, in spite of their own inherent evil nature, do that which externally resemble the requirement of the law of God (Rom. 2:14-15). It was thus by the gifts of God to sinners that the full demoniacal character of sin appeared and shall appear. When the world by its wisdom shows itself to be ignorant of God, God by his grace saves sinners unto himself. When the righteousness of men is shown to be but as filthy rags, God reveals his righteousness from heaven among men.

We conclude then, that “**common grace**” is not strictly common. The “common” grace that comes to believers comes in conjunction with their forgiven status before God; the “common” grace that comes to unbelievers comes in conjunction with their unforgiven status. Externally considered, the facts may be the same, but the framework in the two cases is radically different.

Notes on God's Knowledge, Pantheism, Arminianism, etc.

Excerpts from
An Introduction to Systematic Theology
 by Cornelius Van Til
 pgs. 371-375
 code511

Attributes of the Understanding

We are told in Scripture that God is light and that there is not darkness in him at all (1John1:5).¹⁰

¹⁰Van Til continues to follow Bavinck's order rather closely, although succinctly. Bavinck subdivides the intellectual attributes into knowledge, foreknowledge, the problem of middle knowledge, wisdom and trustworthiness.

He dwells in light that no man can approach unto (1Tim.6:16). Bavinck says, "In this appellation there is included the idea that God is fully conscious of himself, that He sees through the whole of His being and that there is nothing in His Being that is hid to His consciousness." Or again, "There is and can be in God no darkness, He is altogether light, He dwells in light and is the source of light." Or yet again: "God is eternal and pure being. And His eternal knowledge has nothing less than that full eternal essence for its object. **Being and knowledge are coterminous in God.**"¹³

¹³Here Bavinck argues that being and knowledge are coterminous in God. see chap 10 note 30.

³⁰The insistence that God's being and knowledge are coterminous is crucial to Van Til's understanding of God, and to his entire apologetic system. If his knowledge is only a subset of his being, or even supplementary to it, then God's being is a generalized, abstract concept, not the fully personal deity. Indeed, every attribute must be coterminous with his being.

In contrast to this an **Arminian** theologian, C. Norman Bartlett, says, "His subconscious perfections flower out into conscious self-recognition through the activities involved in the shaping of more or less refractory material into an ever closer resemblance to the divine original."

It is only if we thus insist on the **coterminity of the self-knowledge** with the being of God that we can escape all forms of **pantheistic thought**. If God's knowledge is not coterminous with his being, his knowledge can, at best, be a **correlative** to being. This being is then given a **potentiality of its own**. God's knowledge can then no longer be an internally complete knowledge. It becomes instead a knowledge that **he must obtain by a process of investigation of a being that exists independently of himself**. Such is actually Bartlett's view.¹⁵

¹⁵Van Til has made this point several times before. It is foundational for his whole apologetic. See Chap 10, note 30 (above). Here, coterminity is applied to God's knowledge of himself and of the world, which makes him utterly different from the creature.

By the idea of **coterminity of the Knowledge and the being of God**, **we can avoid the identification of the self-consciousness and the world-consciousness of God**. If being and knowledge are not coterminous in God, then being stands over against the knowledge of God as a complement. There is then no possibility of distinguishing between non-created and created being. There can then be no creation except in the attenuated **Platonic** sense of formation of preexisting material. God's consciousness of self is then interwoven with his consciousness of the world. That too is Bartlett's view. It is, of course, true that **we must distinguish between God's knowledge and his being**. This is as true as that we must distinguish between the various attributes of God. But if these distinctions are really to be maintained in their full significance, they must be maintained as correlative to a principle of identity that is as basic as they are themselves. To avoid the blank identity of **pantheism**, we must insist on an identity that is exhaustively correlative to the differentiations and equivocations of **deism**, we need a differentiation that is exhaustively correlative to the principle of identity in the Godhead.

William Edgar states: In deism, God is merely a sort of original designer of the universe, an absentee landlord. The theory is abstract and least logically to the point of evaporation. Diderot famously remarked that a deist was someone who had not lived long enough to become an atheist. In pantheism God is in everything, which in a different way results in his vanishing from definition. Sys. Theol. Van Til pg 336 note 36

God's knowledge of himself may further be spoken of as **necessary knowledge**. He himself exists as a necessary being. His knowledge of himself is therefore necessary in the sense that it is knowledge of himself as a necessarily existing being. And it is because God has this full and extensive knowledge of himself necessarily, and therefore exhaustively, that he also has a comprehensive knowledge of all possibility beside himself. That possibility itself depends upon God's plan with respect to it. God is free to create with he pleases. This knowledge that God has of all possibility beyond himself may therefore be called the **free knowledge of God**. It is in this way that we may keep a rigid and clear distinction between God's knowledge and his power.¹⁶ Bavinck points out that of the necessary knowledge of God, man can have no more than a finite replica.

¹⁶See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols... Van Til's point is that for God there is no outside possibility, but only what is possible within his plan, which is determined by his necessary knowledge. Thus, he is free to create or not to create because his knowledge is absolute. In idealism and Arminianism, as he will point out, creation becomes necessary because possibility exists only in abstraction from his plan.

Idealistic philosophy cannot make this distinction. For it there is no real difference between the possible and the actual. **God did not freely create the universe, but necessarily expressed himself in it.** Thus God cannot have a free knowledge of the possible. Neither can he have a necessary knowledge of the possible. In fact he cannot have knowledge of anything. He cannot exist as an absolute personality.

Arminianism does not base God's knowledge of the universe upon God's control of the universe. If we keep clearly in our minds the point that God's knowledge of himself is an absolute and necessary knowledge, and that he can therefore freely create and freely know reality beyond himself, we are safeguarded against the false notions that speak of God's foreknowledge as though it were something that depended upon the prior existence of something beside God. Strictly speaking, there is no foreknowledge in God. But we may speak of foreknowledge if only we realize that we speak analogically. **God knows all things beyond himself with one act of vision of his own plan with respect to those things.** It is this that we signify when we say the God's knowledge is *analytical*. We take this word in its modern philosophical sense of "**self-dependent**."¹⁸

¹⁸Arminianism so separates foreknowledge from present knowledge and from the plan of God that it posits a power outside of God's control. But according to Scripture, **God's knowledge is analytical, that is, immediate and logically necessary, as opposed to synthetic**, or after the fact.

Because God's knowledge is to be thought of as *analytical*, we reject what is usually spoken of as the **mediate knowledge of God**.¹⁹ It is contended that in the case of certain circumstances, God's

¹⁹Van Til continues to follow Bavinck here, who has the subcategory, "The Problem of Middle Knowledge." **Middle**, or "**mediate**," knowledge was a solution to the problem of predestination and significance introduced by **Molina** and the Jesuits. It holds to a category between the decree and the created event, which is the knowledge of possible outcomes. **God knows what may happen and how he will react to events without determining them in advance.** Van Til rejects this flatly.

knowledge depends upon certain conditions that are to be fulfilled by man. So, for instance, in 1Samuel 23:11, when David inquires of the Lord whether the men of Keilah would deliver him to his enemies if he remained among them, it seems that the Lord's answer depends upon a condition over which he has not control. Or, again, when Jesus said that, if the mighty works that he did elsewhere had been done in Tyre and Sidon, these cities would not have been destroyed, it seems as though there is a condition over which he had no control. Against this notion of mediate knowledge, **Hodge** rightly

contends that there is no other category beside that of the possible and the actual and that God controls both completely. God's foreordination controls whatsoever comes to pass. If God had to wait for events to happen independently of himself before he could now then, he would be a finite God. His knowledge would then be inferential.

If we keep this biblical notion of the knowledge of God before us, we shall think of human knowledge as **analogical** of God's knowledge. And only if we do this, can we have a truly Christian apologetic knowledge. And only if we do this, can we have a truly Christian apologetic. **Arminianism**, with its salvation of the basis of foreseen faith, and **Roman Catholicism**, with its semi-Pelagian doctrine of human freedom, rest their thinking upon a false notion of divine knowledge. Accordingly, they are not able to offer an effective argument against **idealist** philosophy when it reduces the personal God to an **abstract a priori principle** that needs as its complement an equally ultimate *a posteriori* principle. This has become newly apparent in the writings of C. S. Lewis, C. Norman Bartlett, and John Thomas.²¹

²¹That is, these views defend the significance of human choice only because *a posteriori* (after the fact) knowledge determines *a priori* (before the fact) knowledge. This means human knowledge, rather than being analytical, is autonomous. The effect of this is to reduce God to an abstract principle, not the predestinating God of revelation. In his reference to the writing of three authors named, Van Til is no doubt thinking of C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947)...

As for **Karl Barth** and his school, they too destroy the biblical notion of the knowledge of God.²² **They do not wish to speak of a foreordination of all things in this world.** They do not wish, therefore, to speak of the knowledge of God with respect to his world as vouchsafed to man in any systematic way. They deny the validity of the **analogical knowledge** that man has of God, even when this knowledge is confessedly based upon the self-revelation of God. It is difficult to see how one, in doing this, can avoid doing injustice to the sovereignly free knowledge of God with respect to the world. If God has such a knowledge, there is no reason why man, created in God's image, may not have a finite and therefore systematic replica of that knowledge. And if **Barth**, by implication at least, denies the free knowledge of God with respect to the world, he also by implication denies the absolute and necessary knowledge that God has of himself. The former is based upon the latter. We should begin with the **absolutely necessary self-knowledge of God**. From it we conclude to the **free knowledge of God** with respect to the world. And from it in turn we may conclude that man may have an **analogical constructed** and therefore **systematic, though not comprehensive, knowledge of God and of his will.**

Medieval Man's Idea of Free Will

Man's Assumed Autonomy

An excerpt from *Who Do You Say That I Am*

By Cornelius Van Til

Page 58-65

Code513

Van Til does a good job in explaining this; the effects of the fall of Adam which led to man turning inward, selfish wickedness (**Socratic inwardness**, the **spirit of apostasy** code512), declaring their independence from God...hence man's **assumed autonomy**. That is the problem that the philosophers cannot see and that is why philosophy is dangerous and leads eventually to skepticism and apostasy. So, read this and anything by Van Til or Greg Bahnsen and you'll see this thread of corruption, all kinds of philosophical inventions of man. Van Til is a hard read, but it's very good.

H. The Substantial Unity of Man

It is of particular importance to observe that, by the principle of plenitude, or scale of being, the medieval synthesis described by **Gilson** (Etienne Gilson, 1884-1978, a French philosopher, influence by Descartes and Aquinas) expected to attain to a true definition of man. More especially, the substantial unity of man is said to have been both source and product of the principle of plenitude.

Those theologians who, like Augustine, followed Plato, could not justify their own faith in the unity of man, but those who championed Aristotle found indeed the "integral man" (p. 175). It would seem that, if man were to be saved by grace, it must be known who needs to be saved, and why. If, then, we would adopt the Aristotelian position, "we shall no longer be troubled with any difficulty about the substantial unity of man..." (p. 176)

But is it not through the metaphysics of Exodus that God is Being, and through the Johannine assurance that God is likewise Love, that we are to find the integral man? Is not the "unity of the human composite" to be found in the fact that it participates in God within the plenitude of His love?

Yes, indeed, responds Gilson, even as we build on Aristotle at this point, so we must, as Christians, always go beyond him, which invariably involves correcting him. For Aristotle, "the relation of the soul to the body was a particular case of the general relationship between form and matter" (p. 175), yet, if we should follow Aristotle in imagining the soul as being merely the form of the body, are we not in danger of losing the soul's substantiality, and with it its mortality? (p. 176)

Have we, then by patronizing Aristotle rather than Plato, escaped the “accidental juxtaposition imagined by Plato?” (p. 175). This Gilson cannot answer. Aristotle was, in the last analysis, no more able than Plato, to furnish us with the integral man, because in both, and basically for the same reason, man was torn apart by the necessity of always taking off in the opposite directions simultaneously. As participant in divine knowledge and love, man must move upward and backward toward identification with God as the absolute negation of everything which he is as an individual: he is not truly real unless his individuality be absorbed into pure abstract universality. On the other hand, in order to escape absorption into God as the pure negation of all individuality and change, man must rush toward absorption into absolute change.

This dilemma face Aristotle and Plotinus no less than Plato. When Gilson constructs his view of man, at least initially, upon Aristotelian rather than Platonic principle, he has to see that, only on the Christian principles over against both Plato and Aristotle, can man in his integrality be discovered, or identify himself, since then he becomes revealed as creature, covenant breaker, and freedman of Christ; and only then can “tending toward God” mean love toward God without absorption into Him. Thus the idea of sin become that of ethical alienation from God, without being reduced to a metaphysical tendency to lapse into non-being.

For **Gilson**, the integrity of the medieval approach, both of theology and of philosophy, stands or falls on his doctrine of “**and indestructible free will**” (p. 322). The significance of this fact appears only upon remembrance that the nature of free will is conceived as participated autonomy. In the medieval view, it was precisely as autonomous as God’s own, with the sole difference being that God had more, and man less. Neither the will of God nor that of man was counted as really absolute and sovereign, since both had non-being facing them as an inhibitive.

In particular, God was not sovereign in the dispensing of His grace to men. Men partook even more deeply in non-being than did God, and this gave them independence from and toward God’s will. If God ever approached man in terms of His own intellect’s being higher than man’s, then this was, in part, the approach of man to himself. Was not man’s intellect what it was a participant in God’s? Yet, again, it was the intellect of himself as wholly different from God’s because participant in non-being. If God ever succeeded in persuading the “**free will**” of man, then He succeeded in persuading Himself as nationally present within man as analogue. Therefore, man had ideal identity of intellect with God, for which reason God was obliged to persuade man to accept of His grace. Yet all this pre-supposed, as Gilson has stressed so definitely, that God was beforehand with man, having saved Himself from all eternity, and thus all men as well, as participant in Himself.

Conversely, however, in the medieval view of reality and knowledge, man could never be saved. As far as he was real as an individual, he was real by being non-real, i.e., by partaking of **non-being**. What, then, became of the assurance that, as distinguished from that of the Reformers, it is the medieval position which supports nature so that it is real, actual, and therefore can be saved? On the medieval basis, there is, in fact, not free will at all. This is true for the twofold reason already suggested. Thus, man, to be real, must be essentially or ideally identical with **pure Being**; but otherwise, to be real, he must be essentially identical with **non-being**. More fully, man’s supposed reality and substantiality

consist in this being the point where abstract rationality and abstract irrationality are self-supplementary in thus seeking to assassinate each other.

Needless to add, **such a view of man's unity is inherently destructive of the doctrine of God** as the **sovereign Lord of men**, as the **free dispenser of grace to His chosen people** through Christ his Son and through the Holy Spirit.

Each of these biblical teachings, and all together, were compromised by medieval teacher who, although "Christians," refused to send out their very thought as captive to the Word of Christ.

I. Conclusion

What, then, did medieval man answer when Jesus confronted him with the question: "Who do you say that I am?" It was this: that He, together with all other men, climbs upward on the **scale of being**, from pure non-being to pure being. "You have," he told Jesus, "more being, knowledge, and love within you than any of the rest of us men have. Metaphorically speaking, you have 'come down' to us, having even travelled more deeply into the realm of utter non-being., non-rationality, and hatred than any of the rest of us have. Once down, you are preparing, again metaphorically speaking, to take all the rest of us up with you toward absorption into pure being." **Such was medieval man's response**, signifying, of course, **a rejection of Jesus and His claim that of Him, through Him, and to Him were all things**. Controlled ultimately by the **form-matter** scheme of **pagan Greek thought**, and like the **Pharisees**, **medieval man sought, first of all, himself and his own righteousness; and then, afterward, he "accepted" the righteousness of Christ.**

"Who do you say I am?" asked Jesus. Came the answer: "You are not what you claim to be. We cannot but interpret you in terms of a principle of unity and of diversity which excludes the appearance in history of any such thing as you claim, namely, to be One with the eternal Father. To the extent that this claim of yours is true, so are we all one with the eternal Father, the eternal principle of rationality. You claim also, however, to die for sinners. To the same extent similarly, we are all likewise dying for sinners, **since we participate with you in both eternal rationality and temporal irrationality.**

Accordingly, we reject every claim you lay to absolute uniqueness, either in your being or your work. In particular we reject your claim to have died on the cross for us, in our place, so as to have satisfied God's justice and thereby to have brought men to God.

III Modern Man Replies

In the first of this tripartite series, we have seen how apostate man began to develop for himself a culture through which he could suppress the truth about himself, the world, and God. Deep in his heart, Paul said, all men knew that they were created beings who had rebelled against their Creator (Romans 1:19); but all, as sinners, had developed interpretative principle on the assumption **that man was not God's creature or a sinner, but self-sufficient and autonomous.**

Upon exactly this assumption the **Greeks** had insinuated to Paul that if he would speak to them on Christ and the Resurrection, he must do so in terms agreeing with the human autonomy idea. However, Christ had already appeared to him and revealed that truth and life came to men only if they forsook this vaunted autonomy and knelt before Him as their Creator-Redeemer-King. Some of the Greeks, by the power of the Holy Spirit, had repented and accepted the Christ Paul preached, but many had not, reasoning, as indeed from their premises they *had* to, and as the Pharisees had, that Jesus a mere man, blasphemed in exalting himself to a God.

In the second lecture we revealed how, during the late Roman empire, Plotinus carried through the Greek mode of thinking, but Augustine, that of Paul the apostle.

We learned how **Plotinus** developed a comprehensive explanation of religious and theoretical experience in terms friendly toward human autonomy, the result being a massive, all-comprehensive view of being, knowledge, and behavior in which all entities were gradationally interrelated. [i.e., the Creator/creature distinction is blurred.] There was, he argued, a scale or ladder of being, upon which man as man was forever climbing, making use of the energy of being latent within him. [a deistic notion, that God is not immanent with his creatures, and that they are not absolutely dependent upon God for everything. Man is not self-sufficient as he thinks.] Opposed to **Plotinus, Augustine** represented the Pauline conviction that man, as God's creature, had in Adam, become a sinner, a fugitive from God, and that, as such, lay forevermore under God's wrath unless Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of man, bore this wrath in his place, thus freeing him to develop his Christian *paideia* unto God.

Note on what *paideia* is: The term *paideia* refers to the fundamentals of education set forth by thought leaders in Ancient Greek society. **Paideia** principles set a pedagogical standard for creating well-rounded citizens of society, addressing areas of a person's mental, physical, social, and moral improvement starting in youth. [I think this refers to our day-to-day sanctification, our being transformed into his image from glory to glory...]

Medieval man, we saw, attempted to synthesize the Plotinian and Augustinian, i.e., Christian points of view and thus, practically speaking, rejected Christ's claim that in Him alone were truth and life. In effect, he considered Christ to be a man-God, a monstrosity.

In the present lecture, we shall inquire finally into modern man's notion of who Christ was and is. Does he really accept Christ's claim? Does he interpret all of life in Christ's name? In fact, what is the name he gives Christ?

To obtain an answer, we shall trace briefly his view of man, cosmos, and God, with emphasis on his view of man as – of course – **autonomous**.

A. Renaissance Man Replies

We naturally start at the Renaissance. What did Renaissance man believe of himself and his culture?

He thought, first of all, that he was *free*. He had escaped the burden of all authority, especially that of the church, whereby, having shaken it off his back, he imagined himself as having not only shrugged off the authority of Aristotle, **but especially, of Christ**. **Now he would be himself at last**, and thus act on that principle of **inwardness** which had impelled **Socrates** to live in his own life so graciously and imperturbably.

In other words, a true, **man-centered culture** was about to be born. The treasured idea of the ultimately self-explanatory nature of human personality had underlain the cultural endeavors of **apostate man** at every stage of his development, but its full significance in respect to the struggle between the kingdom of God and that of man was not to appear clearly till modern times, in the cultural ideals of Renaissance man.

1. Renaissance Man vs. Reformation Man

To grasp this, we may at once undertake a singularly large leap and set the **Renaissance view** of man and **his freedom** in contrast to that of the **Reformation**. **Renaissance man sought his freedom in the idea of absolute independence from Christ and found it where the Greeks had found it, namely, in the construction of a *paideia* which excluded and opposed Him**; and **Reformation man** found his freedom where Paul had found it, i.e., in his final, definitive escape from the sin of persecuting Christ to the joy of constructing culture in His name. **Erasmus** of Rotterdam thus pled with **Socrates** to pray for progress in building the city of man, while Luther prayed to Christ and the triune God for progress in constructing that of God.

a. Modern Science

The question of the place and significance of science emerged during the time of the Renaissance and Reformation as perhaps the main bone of contention between them, expressing as it did in modern form the old *Meno*-problem of Plato, namely, "How was learning by experience possible?" Man possessed a cultural mandate, with Renaissance man declaring that it had been given him by his own self-sufficient consciousness, and Reformation man, that I had been endowed by Christ, his Creator-Redeemer. The two views excluded each other entirely, with every fact between them in dispute. **Renaissance man began with himself** as self-referential, presuming that no method of research was tolerable or intelligible **unless it served him in his capacity as *ultimate interpreter of reality***, and that no conclusion *could* be true unless proceeding from the premise of **himself as the *ultimate, central reference point of all experience***. **Reformation man began with Christ** as self-referential, and only thereafter, from himself, as the meek servant of the Christ.

2. Renaissance Man's Idea of Himself

The development of Renaissance man may be appreciated best if note be first taken of his relationship to his predecessor, medieval man.

We begin with **Abelard**, who was a typically “obedient son of the church.” Yet according to Windelband, “he is first of all a **rationalist; thought is for him the norm of truth.**” (Willhelm Windelband, *A history of Philosophy*, tr. By James H. Tufts, 1895, pl 299). Thus, he believed in divine revelation “only because it’s reasonable;” regarded Christianity “as the philosophy of the Greeks made democratic;” and was, therefore, “the spokesman of free science, the prophet on the newly awakened impulse toward real and independent knowledge” (p. 300).

A second medieval figure worth mentioning is William of Occam, whose very name recalls the nominalism of the late Middle Ages, by which Occam had enabled infant science work free from Scholasticism (p. 315). Thus the idea of the **independence of human personality** began to assert itself on every side: the individual mind **knew only what was within itself.** [looking into self...the **Socratic spirit of inwardness**, all about self, etc.]

The Spirit of Apostasy

Excerpt from *Who Do You Say That I Am*

By Cornelius Van Til

pg 50-51

code512

Van Til writes on this subject of apostasy - fascinating. The philosophies of the world (man's wisdom) is this spirit of apostasy. This is an excerpt from his book *Who Do You Say That I Am*. He gives a good explanation of sinful man, too. So, you wonder why Paul, when arguing on Mars Hill with the local philosophers, why he said that the true God is the Creator of all things including man. This is why: there are important inferences with this statement that conflict with the world's wisdom, that deny God as the Creator and elevate man and his will far above what he is capable of. In this effort, man declares his independence from God and establishes his ultimacy and, hence, his assumed autonomy. The language of the heart of fallen man is this: I will decide what is good or evil (not God.)

The Christian man is, of course, yet the sinner, unconsciously emulating Satan’s example of rebellion against the gracious manifestation of God’s love, suppressing God’s revelation to him in the world about him and within own constitution, establishing himself as the final point of reference in his rationalist principle of unity which either reduces his God to his own level or exalts himself to God’s, or in his irrational principle of individuation which envelopes his God with himself into a bottomless, shoreless ocean of irrationality.

Aristotle’s philosophy, or Plato’s, or Plotinus’, were only particular forms of the apostate conspiracy. Should one Christian theologian prefer Plato’s, or Plotinus’, to that of Aristotle, and another prefer the opposite, this evinces the fact that they have not recognized the common wellspring of these and similar ideologies as expressions of the **spirit of apostasy**.

Sermon on Mars Hill - Acts 17

²² So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. ²³ For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything that is in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might feel around for Him and find *Him*, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His descendants.’ ²⁹ Therefore, since we are the descendants of God, we ought not to think that the Divine *Nature* is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human skill and thought. ³⁰ So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, ³¹ because He has set a day on which He will judge ^[c]the world in righteousness ^[d]through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people ^[e]by raising Him from the dead.”

Topics: The rationale behind the **Arminian** view of man’s assumed independence, comments on the image of God in man, original sin, Calvin on man’s false independence in the work of salvation and doctrines of grace.

Comments on Arminianism

Man’s attack against God’s Sovereignty

from

Van Til and

The Limits of Reason

By R.J. Rushdoony

Pgs. 27-29 on Kindle ver.

Code514

According to Van Til, evidence of this weakness in Lutheranism is further seen in the Lutheran conception of the Person of Christ. The two natures of Christ are seen as blending entirely and both natures as present in the elements of the Lord’s supper. According to Krauth, **“To say that the nature of Christ is personally present without his humanity is to deny that his humanity is part of his personality**

and the doctrine of the incarnation, falls to the dust.” The orthodox formula of Chalcedon is thus virtually rejected, as is its declaration, directed against the **Eutychian heresy of a single nature, which asserted the two natures “without confusion, without conversion, or change.”**

Lutheranism, in seeking, to some extent, its principle of unity in an **intermingling of the eternal and temporal**, set forth in dramatic fashion in its concept of the Lord’s supper, is refusing to accept the **determinative character of the eternal and insisting that man’s freedom is endangered if the temporal is not fused into the eternal**. [see code515 and code518] Such a view tends to deny reality to anything in eternity which does not at the same time exist in time, whereas the consistently **theistic view** holds that the only solution to time lies in eternity. The natural outcome of this **intermingling** is an insistence on the **independence of man** because **time is determinative of both the temporal and the eternal**. The incarnate Christ becomes determinative of not only the Second Person of the Godhead but the trinity as a whole because He works in time and the trinity in eternity. **God must therefore limit Himself out of respect for His creatures; He cannot infringe on their independence because time is the arena of ultimate reality, not eternity**. Accordingly, **the sinner determines his own salvation. God’s grace starts or assists him to that end; it cannot determine him without destroying the meaning of time and its centrality**. To grant the sinner this capability has far-reaching implications, as Van Til discerningly points out:

If one maintains that he can approach Christ of his own accord even though he is a sinner, he may as well say that he can approach the Father too. And if one can say that he knows what the fact of sin means without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, he may as well say that he can know other facts without reference to God. In fact he may as well say that he can know any and every fact without reference to God. If one fact can be known without reference to God, there is no good reason to hold that not all facts can be known without reference to God. When the elephant of naturalism once has his nose in the door, he will not be satisfied till he is altogether in.

Thus Lutheranism veers from an impersonal and mechanical determinism to an insistence on the **independence of man. In neither extreme is the personal God fully determinative of time; the determination lies within the universe or within man**. Despite its great beginnings, **Lutheranism** has been unwilling to follow the Reformation faith to its philosophical conclusions. In **Arminianism**, as Van Til analyzes it, the unwillingness to face the full implications of **original sin** carried Protestantism further along on the road of concessions. **In Watson, sin is ascribed to finitude rather than to moral revolt against God**. Evil and finitude of necessity go together in this view, and man needs a savior not because of a moral condition but because he is a human being. In other words, the implication is that man needs to be delivered not so much from sin as from creaturehood—from his finitude into infinitude. Moreover, from the **Arminian point of view**, man’s rationality and freedom involve and include his ability to change the history God has planned or to do things God has not planned. In short, man’s life is outside the plan of God and constitutes a fact beyond God’s control, one to which God can offer assistance but cannot govern. We are here on the road to the **modern philosophic point of view** which sees the **space-time continuum as the matrix of all reality**. God exists, and is in the picture, but increasingly as a spectator; on the sidelines, **ready to cheer man on but unable to determine the course and outcome of the race**. **Arminianism** allows God and Christ onto the scene only to start the race,

remove certain obstacles, and to award a prize. **The final determination of events belongs to man.** **Arminianism** further holds that, to be truly ethical, the will of man must be exclusively responsible for what is done.

But the measure of **self-determination** demanded for man is an impossibility (and a significant impossibility) **in that such self-determination is possible for God alone.** Since man is a creature, living in a created world, in time governed by God, his act cannot suddenly break context with its entire world. **The act of a creature, in a created world and in created time, can be only a created act.** It is not only a personal act and a responsible act but also a **created act.** Thus, in its concept of the ethical act, **Arminianism claims for man what is possible only with God and thereby robs God to honor man.** Moreover, God is further robbed by making evil virtually mean finiteness. If evil is finiteness, and finitude is the inherent condition of man, then the Greek dilemma is again with us, namely, that evil is as ultimate as the good, that evil is a part of the ultimate reality. **Primacy is given to the temporal realm, which is the determinative one in this view, and evil is made basic to the temporal realm because finitude is inherent in it.** **The moral evil of Christian thought is eliminated; man is too independent** for a concept of transmitted original sin to be credible. **Theology thus gives way to an anthropology, God to man, and eternity to time.**

In **Calvinism**, the Greek element was eliminated from Christian-theistic thought and a consistent epistemology formulated. **The false independence of man was shown for what it is, and the noetic influence of sin fully recognized.** Scripture was made central to thinking and the work of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of man to the true knowledge of God emphasized. [code514b] Calvin's conception distinguished between the **narrower and wider sense or understanding of the image.** In the narrower sense, it applies to the true knowledge, true righteousness, and true holiness which man possessed when created by God. **The fall destroyed this image,** whereas the image in its broader sense, man's rationality and morality, his intellectual and emotional life, **remain still in God's image but with limitations.** Man retains these aspects of his nature but in a blinded sense. He is rational but his rationality is spiritually blind, emotionally distorted, and out of kilter in terms of its created purpose, i.e., to function **analogically, to think God's thoughts after Him, and to interpret and experience life in terms of the will of God.**

Man, while spiritually blind, is still a person, and therefore the **synergism** of Luther is no necessity for Calvin. Synergism faced an either-or situation: either God acted or man acted. It did not dare face the ultimate question: either God is a person or man is a person. **For Calvin, man is a personality because God is a person. The sinner, a created person, cannot know God aright unless new light is given him by the Scripture and the power of sight restored by the Holy Spirit working in his heart.** Salvation is not the eternalization of man but rather his **restoration** to his original perfection and a **development** thereof. **The incarnation is therefore not made necessary by man's finitude but by his sin.** Since man's finitude is not the problem, Christ's human nature, in the Lutheran sense, is not needed in the sacrament. The eternal order is the determinative one, and God saves man in time, not because of time. God saves man through the incarnation, by means of the appearance of the Second Person of the trinity in history and his incarnation, whereby human nature was united without intermingling with the divine nature. The incarnation was the means of salvation, but the cause of salvation was to be found only in the foreordained and predestined eternal counsel of God—only in the ontological trinity.

To emphasize the incarnation, especially the human nature of Christ, as against the ontological trinity, is to insist on **mixing the temporal and eternal and shifting the area of reality away from the eternal and from God**. As Van Til has stated: "It is upon the development of these teachings of Calvin that we must depend for a **consistent Christian epistemology**. **Calvin did not mix the categories of the temporal and eternal**. He did not succumb to the temptation of giving man a false independence in the work of salvation. Hence, he alone of all the Reformers could rid himself of the last remnants of **Platonic reasoning**."

The Mixing of Eternal and Temporal - What is Ultimate?

Greek Epistemology

From *Van Til and The Limits of Reason*

By R.J. Rushdoony

Pgs. 20-22

Code515

Van Til's analyses of the history of philosophy are significant in their development of the epistemological presuppositions of the various schools. Greek philosophy he finds particularly important in that it represented the development of the antitheistic mind without any intermixture of Christian elements. **Greek thinking** lacked any true theistic elements and, despite many references to God, believed basically in the self-contained and ultimate character of nature. God and man, form and content, spirit and matter, were essentially **aspects of nature** or **identifiable with nature**. It was not only possible to study the objective world without any reference to a God beyond the universe but possible to study God in the same manner also.

Basically, **man defined God, not God man**. The human mind was capable of knowing any and all finite facts without any reference to God. **The universe was ultimate and the mind, in a sense, ultimate as part of that universe**. Greek speculation assumed, first, that "**all things are at bottom one**." Second, the world of becoming is ultimate, whereas, for Christian thought, "**being is before becoming and independent of becoming**." Third, for **Greek thought**, "**not only is change taken for granted as ultimate but the many generated from the one is always identical with the one**." **Greek thought**, moreover, assumed the possibility of **neutrality**, whereas, for Van Til, the existence of an **absolute God**, from whom every creature has derived existence and to whom all are responsible, rules out all possibility of neutrality. **The Greek mind is the end result of Eve's course**.

Before Eve could listen to the tempter she had to take for granted that the devil was perhaps a person who knew as much about reality as God knew about it ... That is, Eve was obliged to postulate an **ultimate epistemological pluralism** before she could even proceed to consider the proposition made to her by the devil. Or, otherwise expressed, Eve was compelled to assume the **equal ultimacy of the mind of God, the devil, and herself**. **And this surely excludes the exclusive ultimacy of God. This therefore was a denial of God's absoluteness epistemologically**. Thus **neutrality** was based upon negation. {negation: e.g., **what God is not, etc., as opposed to what He is.**} Or we may as well say that neutrality is negation ... In connection with this we may remark in passing that when Eve listened to the tempter, she not only had to posit an original epistemological pluralism, but also an original metaphysical pluralism. She had to take for granted that a time created being could reasonably consider herself to be sufficiently ultimate in her being, as to warrant an action that was contrary to the will of an **eternal being**. That is, she had to **equalize time and eternity** not only, but she had to put time above eternity. It was in time that Satan told her the issue was to be settled. He said that it still remained to be seen whether God's threats would come true. The experimental method was to be employed. Only time could tell. Now this attitude implied that God was no more than a finite God. If He were thought of as absolute, it would be worse than folly for a creature of time to try out the interpretation of God in the test-tube of time. **If He were thought of as eternal, such an undertaking was doomed to failure, because in that case history could be nothing but the expression of God's will.**[21]

Greek epistemology was Eve's thinking hardened into certainty. In **Greek thinking**, as in **Plato's**, for example, **time and eternity are very nearly identified**, though at first they seem to be radically opposed to one another. Time is "the moving image of eternity"; the **temporal and eternal are alike aspects of one general reality**. Man is the temporal appearance of the eternal.

As such, **mankind** and not the **Second Person of the Trinity**, Jesus Christ, is the mediator and interpreter. **Time and eternity**, moreover, are intermixed in mankind, whereas, in Christ, the two natures are without intermixture. For **Platonism**, philosophy ends in final mystery, whereas, in Christianity, the absolutely self-conscious God knows no mystery.

Plato's final mystery comes close to destroying all knowledge. Plato tried unsuccessfully with Heraclitus to find a basis for knowledge in the Sense world alone. He tried unsuccessfully with **Parmenides** to find knowledge in the Ideal world alone.

Epistemology in Philosophy – Man's Wisdom

Comments on **Leibniz**, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza & Calvin

from
Van Til and The Limits of Reason

By R.J. Rushdoony
 Pgs. 32-33 Kindle Ed.
 Code516

In the modern era, the question of **epistemology** has come to the foreground in philosophy. Ostensibly, this is a by-passing of metaphysics and an elimination of God from philosophy as irrelevant. Actually, the full significance of the **Christian-theistic** position is most clearly seen in the extent to which **modern philosophy goes to eliminate an independent and sovereign God**. The issues are more sharply drawn therefore between the consciousness of man and the consciousness of God as the frame of reference. In **Descartes**, the ground of all certainty is the human consciousness in independence not only from the universe around **him but especially from God**. For **Calvin**, the personality of man cannot be known nor can it exist without the personality of God. For Descartes, nothing can be known without man's self-consciousness and **personality in itself**. The universe is a mechanistic one and God merely the creator of the machine, now functioning in independence of Him. **The machine has its own laws and workings, and the inventor need not be known in order to understand the machine.** The lives of the Wright brothers are of great interest to any student of the history of aviation but utterly irrelevant to any understanding of the principles of flight or to the piloting of aircraft today. The Wright brothers created the first successful plane, but they did not create the principles of flight which made that plane possible. They merely used them. The God of Descartes is ultimately in the same position. **More than that, man rather than God is made the ultimate source of universal laws and interpretation.** As a result of Descartes' point of departure, two lines of thought developed in philosophy: **empiricism** and **rationalism**. **Empiricism holds that the individual man is the standard of truth and holds to the ultimacy of the sense world.** The universals are purely subjective. The climax of such thought was the **skepticism** of **Hume**, for whom no knowledge was possible. **Rationalism sought to interpret reality in terms of certain *a priori* principles.** These *a priori* principles, however, **were not anchored in the ontological trinity or in eternity but in the human mind as ultimate.** In **Spinoza** and **Leibniz** rationalism reached its climax.

For **Spinoza**, God, man, and the universe are but individuations and aspects of the general idea of substance. But, as Van Til has pointed out, to say that all is God is no different than saying nothing is God. **"Univocal reasoning** must always lead to negation. Univocal reasoning is based upon negation. **The very presupposition of univocal reasoning is that there is no absolute God.** If there were an absolute God it is *ipso facto* out of the question to apply the categories of thought to Him in the same way that they are applied to man." **Leibniz** sought individuation on the basis of complete description and by reduction to mathematical formulae. Revelation was thus an impossibility. **The interpreter is the mind of man, not the mind of God, and the mind of man can wholly comprehend all reality.** The

equal ultimacy of the one and many is sought without success in the universe, and the old theory of the gradation of being espoused. **None of these devices enabled Leibniz to escape the dilemma of Spinoza or to rescue religion as he sought to do; having begun with the ultimacy of the universe, he could do no more than attempt to analyze it into both God and man.** “As **Leibniz** sought to be wholly univocal, so **Hume** sought to be wholly equivocal in his reasoning. As in the philosophy of Leibniz God lost his individuality in order to become wholly known, so in the philosophy of **Hume** God maintained his individuality but remained wholly unknown.”

Modern Man’s Autonomous Endeavors

Man Proclaiming His Ultimacy

References to Spinoza, Leibniz, Calvin and Descartes

An excerpt from *Who Do You Say That I Am*

By Cornelius Van Til

Page 71-72, 75-80

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Indeed, **apostate man**, were he to be consistent with his own principles, ought always boldly to maintain that he has, not merely in thought, but also in reality, completely reversed the relationship between **God and man** as defined in the Genesis account, since it is not until man not only *asserts*, but *proves*, to himself, to all the world and the heavens as well, **that he, instead of God, is the manipulator and source of all possibility and reality – viz., the anti-Christ** – that his **autonomous endeavor** throughout history will assume their most logical meaning.

Renaissance man was truly “modern” in this bearing the ark of God toward the temple of Dagon, the god of the philistines, and his reference to Christ as the *superfluous* man. He was, like a small boy, telling his father that he had been, was, and ever would be superfluous. “I control the world, Dad. I know I need food, but, you see, I’ll grow my own, in fact, I’ll buy up all the chain stores, then the whole country, the whole world. I’ll be the master of my fate and the captain of my soul.” Then, the boy discovered that he had nothing with which to buy his next breakfast, finding that, like the prodigal of the parable, he was soon at the swine trough, having denied his own manhood. So also, the Renaissance man in his denying Christ as the way to the Father’s house.

Summing up, Renaissance man in the first place had renewed the pagan principle of inwardness, following Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, demonstrating the willy-nilly that his victory spelt his defeat.

But in the second place, Renaissance man went *beyond* his medieval associates in his effort to synthesize the **Socratic** preoccupation with his own ultimacy with Christ’s insistence on His divine ultimacy. To Renaissance man, the natural teleology of man was higher than it was to medieval man. **He accordingly invited Christ to join him in building the city of man, behaving exactly the same as Satan the Prince of the World, when he offered Christ the world’s kingdoms if only He would prostrate Himself before the Prince.**

You may object to such a “harsh” evaluation of Renaissance man by interjecting that he was simply “doing without” Christ rather than actually opposing Him. The answer, however, has long ago been given: all human beings not for Christ are against Him! The world is one grand estate whose proprietor is, indeed, the Christ, because He is its Creator-Redeemer. Renaissance man was fully justified to repudiate the Roman Church’s authority, which was largely that of an artificial, man-made Christ. However, a false authority cannot rightly be rejected without kneeling to the true one. Whose claims were indeed heard by Renaissance man, and then, no less, rejected by him, as **Erasmus** of Rotterdam did in asserting man’s freedom independently of Christ, and above his having achieved liberation as a sinner through Christ’s blood. Such was the issue between Erasmus and Luther. And was Socrates indeed, with Mary the mother of God, to become an equal spokesman for the human race? If Erasmus meant this by his request to Socrates to pray for him, it was virtually claiming Socrates no to have been a sinner, in need of forgiveness for his declaration of independence from God. Should it be furthermore objected that one need not adopt Luther’s theology to accept Christ, the reply is again clear: the Bible as Christ’s Word was quite available to Renaissance man, yet he chose to ignore its doctrine of man the sinner in need of redemption so as to build thereafter the city of God. This was clearly to imply that Christ erred in His insistence against the powers of Satan that unless men were saved by His destiny of suffering in their place, they and their total cultural effort rested under God’s wrath.

b. Descartes vs. Calvin (pg 75)

The absolute contrast of principle between the City of Man [[man’s Babylonish temple to heaven](#)] and the one of God appeared with particular clarity in the instance of Rene Descartes vs. John Calvin. Descartes, of course, was the typical Renaissance man, whereas Calvin had developed and extended

the biblical approach to God rediscovered by **Luther**. The former stood for the Socratic-Plotinian, the latter, the Augustinian, Pauline principle of inwardness.

The issue (at stake) was that of human certainty. In this book, *New Paths of Philosophy*, Fritz Heinemann states that ancient man concerned himself with the cosmos, medieval man with God, and modern man with man himself. Superficially, then, it may be said that both Descartes and Calvin were modern. However, both were finally, also, concerned with man in respect to his environment, thus his relationship to God. Both sought for the actual inwardness of man by ascertaining this peculiar relationship, in other words, not merely the **Socratic** question of how man may know himself, but also the Platonic one of his “true” culture, thus ultimately his “salvation.” It was a matter of “cultural” philosophy, as well as “humanistic.”

Renaissance man aimed at “controlling” nature so as to **erect his earthly kingdom**, and Descartes in questing for self-knowledge exemplified this splendidly. Also, **Bacon** and **Galileo Galilei** had developed a “method” which **projected human control over nature**. Many others, notably Descartes, **constructed a mathematically oriented method**, based on the Parmenidean assumption that reality was fully expressible by human conceptualization. But Kroner has emphasized that Galileo, for one, warned that mathematics would “never disclose anything about the true nature of the universe, or even of a stone,” although his metaphysically-minded successors generally disregard the warning and proceeded **to hatch their farfetched speculative systems**. In a sense, one might say that **they resorted to ancient cosmology in claiming to have discovered the true nature of existence**.

Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, the three outstanding examples of such **cosmology**, were, nevertheless, modern thinkers indeed, in that they centered their final efforts, not upon nature or the world, but upon man, his niche in the world and also his relationship to God. **Descartes** launched his from his famous *Cogito*, a fully **anthropocentric [man-centered]** principle. **Spinoza** was basically a mystic for whom knowledge of God was of importance, and yet he was not theocentric [**God-centered**], but embraced rather the belief that speculation could bring about man’s harmony with the divine being, thus the “end” of all his aspirations and personal longings. **Leibniz’s** whole system was at heart **anthropocentric, with man to be the pattern and model of all things, even of the world, and God**. Any “naturalism” of these three “scientific” metaphysicians was therefore an illusion. In so far as it figured into their systems, it was a tribute to the prevailing fashion of thought during their time, not to the intrinsic or esoteric doctrine of their systems (*Speculation and Revelation in the Age of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 256-257, The Westminster Press.)

To the latter observations from Kroner’s work on medieval speculation, we add a quotation from his work on modern speculation and revelation. **Descartes**, says Kroner, opposed the Roman Catholic Aristotelian doctrine of man as consisting of soul and body. **“The Aristotelian” doctrine treats the person as it treats other ‘substances.’ My soul is then conceived in the same manner as the forms of other things**; indeed, it is only a special form which is characteristic of man. Descartes is too much of a Christian to accept this theory. I am not a special substantial form; I am, rather, a thinking being and only a thinking thing (*res cogitans*), that is, a mind or soul (*mens sive animus*), understanding or reason, terms whose significance was before unknown to me.”

Kroner remarks as follows about these works of **Descartes**: “What is completely new in this definition is the **emphasis laid upon the self** as not belonging to the world, in so far as I think of the world and thereby of **myself as the subject of thinking**, whereas the physical things (including my body) are objects of my thinking.”

Finally, of the utmost importance is this further observation by Kroner: “The Christian **inwardness** is here interpreted as the unique position of the thinking subject in contrast to the objects thought. No thinker before Descartes brought the principle of modern philosophy, its epistemological subjectivism, so emphatically and definitely to light. In that respect he was the true initiator of philosophy in the modern world.”

What Kroner says of Descartes is most enlightening. **Descartes** has not fully worked out or even been fully true to his basic **principle of inwardness**. For one thing, it rejects the scholastic notion of form, and it points forward to **Kant**. Man is thus not a thing, but a person. In this respect, he was followed by **Spinoza** and **Leibniz**, upon which **principle of inwardness** they too cast their thoughts.

Unfortunately, argues Kroner, Descartes was not faithful, ultimately, to his own principle. He sacrificed is true epistemological inwardness in favor of a metaphysics that would understand ultimate reality. “The modern anthropocentric position was abandoned; instead, the pre-Christian cosmocentric principle was revived. **Spinoza** and **Leibniz** followed Descartes’ lead. Renaissance naturalism marred thus the foundation of modern epistemology. The terms mind, intellect, reason, even self or ego were now understood as parallels to extension, as if they lay on the same plane. The superiority and primacy of the thinking subject in contrast to the objects thought was surrendered” (p. 97). Kant alone was able to clarify these misunderstanding, and to dissolve the falsity of metaphysical solutions: (p. 98).

Basically, the problem was against that of **human freedom**, which the metaphysical systems of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz denied. In Descartes’ philosophy, “**the idea of the individual ego is swallowed up by that of mathematical reason.** The desire to justify the validity of science is stronger than the wish to understand the self, as the center of the person” (p. 100). It was Kant who at last recognized the full significance of **man’s inwardness**, not allowing any desire for a metaphysical foundation of science to overshadow the fact that man was a free personality. Says Kroner: “The critical position that Kant finally took originated in part from his protest against the doctrine that man was an automaton. Only thus could Kant save moral responsibility.

The final contest was thus between **Kant** and **Calvin**. Man’s true freedom and inwardness were expounded first by Reformation man, whom **Calvin** represented the best. It was he who, more cogently than **Luther**, isolated **man’s true inwardness and freedom** in terms of the free, self-sufficient act of God in His creation and redemption. Calvin, not Luther, confronted Renaissance man with the **call to repentance** in the authentic manner of **Paul**, who had similarly summoned ancient man.

The struggle between the **Renaissance city of man** of **Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant**, and the **Reformation city of God** is an all-out one, **using the weapons of theology, philosophy, and science.** Since the Renaissance and Reformation, it has become even more intensive and extensive than before,

In his mindfulness of man's cultural task, Calvin diametrically opposed Descartes, a fact which Kroner senses somewhat. Kroner says that Calvin spoke merely for those who would make an automaton of man. Yet, while admitting that Luther, as well as Calvin, believed in election, Kroner ignores this fact, and imagines Luther's aim thrust to have been rather a type of inwardness akin to that of the mystics and ultimately of Kant. This is consistent with his believing Augustine to form the connecting link between **Socratic** and **Cartesian** inwardness.

For Calvin, man was himself free, i.e., free to undertake his cultural task **in the name of Christ**, which was, basically, whether in theology, philosophy, or science, **to challenge apostate man to repentance at every point in the universe**. This fact has, of course, been more fully elaborated by his followers than by Calvin himself. For instance, **Abraham Kuyper** wrote a three-volume work under the title *Pro Rege*, according to which every square inch of ground had to be claimed for Christ as mans' Redeemer-King. Thus also D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, Herman Dooyeweerd and Hendrik Stoker have presented a methodology of philosophy and science **which is calculated to challenge, at every step of the way, all man-centered cultural efforts**. [aka, a Babylonish temple to heaven!]

Yet, from Kroner's point of view, all such endeavor must be discarded in the name of that inwardness of man represented by **Socrates, Descartes, and Kant**. Considering once again their **contrast with Calvin**, the following elements come to mind.

Organic is the question of the *primum notum*, viz., the most basic thing that one may know. **Calvin** agreed with **Descartes** that man must start from himself as the object of thought, but with the proviso that no one really contemplated himself properly unless as a creature of God became sinner against God, and redeemed from such rebellion through the historical work of Jesus Christ and the regenerating action within him of the Holy Spirit. [this is the proper lens though which a person must view things to have a right knowledge of those things as Van Til routinely point out. This must be the case if *for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things*. Romans 11:36]

The Greeks of course had rejected this thought of themselves as a **slur on their self-sufficiency**, preferring their old belief that **they were ultimate, not created**, and the "God" whose existence they "proved" or "disproved," **not Him whose creatures they, in fact, were**. [a massively key point! Man's natural desire in rebellion against his Creator, is to build a kingdom for himself, to exalt himself into the room of God, Satan's original temptation, *You can be like God...to be independent from God, self-sufficient, autonomous, etc. This is the sin that fallen man loves from which proceed all manner of rebellion - thoughts and acts of sin.*] **Greek autonomous speculation** was what **Calvin** and **Luther**, like **Augustine**, had spurned after Christ had appeared to them in Scripture, at which time they would have it no more, nor the **Roman Catholicism sprung falsely from it**.

Key paragraph here:

Every man, argued Calvin, after Paul, knew inherently that such speculation was an effort to suppress the truth within him, that God was his Creator and that, in all speculation, he seeks by very nature to suppress such knowledge (Romans 1). Surely also, Descartes' view of man consisted basically of this effort to suppress what, deep down in his heart, he knew was really true. No human being can

doubt this. Knowledge of God as Creator-Redeemer travels with knowledge of oneself, the two being mutually, immediately involved. **Human doubt itself presupposes awareness of the truthful claim of God in Scripture** affirming the creatureliness and sinfulness of man against Him. Descartes' own doubt is, therefore, irrefutable evidence of his confirmed desire to exclude the true God from his world of knowledge. He was like the boy described earlier who, having left his father's house, paused and asked himself and others whether, *perhaps*, he even had a father. Christ was, for him, the superfluous man, whom he requested, so to speak, to remove himself kindly so that he might proceed to unfold his world-view without obstruction. Descartes' metaphysics is not, as Kroner contends, inconsistent with his epistemological view [how and why what he knows what he knows] of the freedom of man, but rather, it is perfectly consistent. [Fallen man believes that he has a free will as though he were not under God's control because man has a falsely assumed autonomy, declaring independence from God. Now, man has a free will in the creaturely sense, that he does what seems good to him - we are not puppets or blocks of wood. So, though God controls all things for his glory, and it can't be otherwise, or God would not be God, yet in God being sovereign over man's will, moving it wherever He pleases (e.g., Prov. 21:1), he does no violence to it - He does not rule by compulsion or force. For as Jonathan Edwards said, "For him to promise, who has it not in his hand to dispose and determine, is a great absurdity; and yet God oftentimes in promising, speaks of himself as the sovereign disposer of the matter, using such expressions as abundantly imply it." This is an amazing mystery; though we may understand this truth, we do not comprehend it! Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it, the Psalmist says in Ps. 139:6] Freedom is self-sufficiency, on which basis he postulated a culture controlled by an abstract principle of continuity according with mathematical law, and an abstract view of discontinuity according to pure contingency.

Descartes is, then, a later **Renaissance man** who continued **his apostate predecessor's endeavor** of attempted to build the "city of man," [a Babylonish tower, man trying to make a name for himself, e.g., Nimrod in Gen 10 to:8 to Gen. 11] thus repudiating that of God. If Paul had come to earth and met the **Renaissance Descartes**, he might well have repeated: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world, for after that the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1Cor. 1:9). Even Kroner points out that Descartes' universal swallowed up this individual, thus that he deliberately isolated himself from all relationships in terms of which he alone could identify himself. **Man is what he is by virtue of the place and task that God his Creator-Redeemer assigns to him**, but Descartes imagined he could reject all this as so much tree bark so as to discover his own "essence"; and yet, by his own admission, he found nothing further identifiable after having accomplished his removal of God, creation, and providence. Really, how could he have expected to find anything, having thus destroyed himself? **He knew only that he was, not what he was. To groan that I know that I am without knowing anything about what I am is to assert nothing**, but rather, to demonstrate the folly, confusion, and guilt of denying the God who has created me, died so as to redeem me, and thus set me truly free.

Notes on the Assumed Autonomous Will of Man
and the Truly Autonomous Will of God
& Comments on *being in general,*
things in general, knowledge in general, the “expert,”
scale of being, ethical and metaphysical distinctions
& *Thomas Aquinas’s views*

Excerpts from *Christian Apologetics*
by Cornelius Van Til
pg 36-456
code518

If obedient to the will of God, man would be accomplishing genuine results. The controlling and directing power of his will would be the will of God. It would be by his own will, however, that he would reach the goal that God has set for him. If disobedient to the will of God he would be going counter to the expressed will of God for him. Yet he would not be able to frustrate the plan of God either as a whole or in any detail. **Man as a creature cannot will anything either by way of obedience or by way of disobedience except in a relation of subordination to the plan of God. It is the ultimate will or plan of the self-determinate God that gives determinate character to anything that is done by the human will.** [doctrine of compatibility, e.g., God says he will harden Pharaoh’s heart, yet Pharaoh hardens his own heart. God’s sovereign control over the wills of men is consistent with their creaturely liberty (or creaturely free will) and their responsibility.]

Over against this Christian view of the will of God as ultimate is the non-Christian view of the will of man as ultimate. **Morality is assumed to be autonomous. Man is virtually said to be a law unto himself.** He may, and in many cases, does, speak of God as his law-giver. **But then this God is a projection of his own ultimate moral consciousness; God is but man’s would-be ultimate and autonomous moral consciousness writ large.** Socrates wanted to know what “the holy” was, apart from what any man or God might say about it. This might seem to point to an objective holiness quite apart from the consciousness of man. But such a holiness apart from the consciousness of man is devoid of meaning. There is no alternative to the Christian view of the will of God as ultimate but the idea of man’s moral consciousness itself as being ultimate. In modern times the categorical imperative of **Kant**

is a good illustration of the **would-be autonomous nature of the non-Christian ethics**.¹⁰ It is therefore the business of Christian apologetics to challenge the non-Christian view of morality and to show that unless the will of God be taken as ultimate, there is no meaning to moral distinctions.

The Roman Catholic view of ethics is unable to do this. It has been noted that Romanism virtually speaks of **being in general** and of **knowledge in general** before it speaks of the being and knowledge of God as distinct from the being and knowledge of man. It is natural, then, that God's will cannot be made primary in ethics. **Roman Catholic theology ascribes to the will of man such a measure of autonomy and ultimacy is to enable it to determine man's own final destiny, whether for good or for evil, requiring only the assistance of God. For Romanism man is himself the ultimate source of his own determinateness.** To be sure, Romanism tones down this teaching of man's autonomy by also teaching the almighty character of God's will. For all that, Romanism is jealous for the ultimacy of the will of man.

The consequences of this position for systematic theology and apologetics are again far-reaching. For systematic theology it means that **the initiative is taken out of God's hand at every point of doctrine. The doctrine of creation becomes a cross between the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing and the pagan doctrine of the chain of being. [e.g., evolution] The doctrine of salvation becomes a matter of give and take between God and man [theistic mutualism], man is saved partially by grace and partially by works [synergism, provisionalism, etc.]**. For apologetics it means that the natural man is not challenged to forsake his disobedience to God in order to find rest for his soul and significance in his moral distinctions.

Roman Catholic ethics seeks to by-pass the will of God in order to appeal to his nature. But this in effect amounts to an appeal to the fitness of things in general. Such a notion of the fitness of things in general is in accord with the idea of being and knowledge in general. One who seeks to make intelligent predication about being in general allows in effect that one who **does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic in his thought** can yet make true assertions about reality. Accordingly, **Romanism** admits that non-Christian ethicists can truly determine the nature of the so-called cardinal virtues. Romanism allows that the natural man who makes himself the final reference point of moral distinctions can say what is true about man's proper behavior with respect to many things in this world.

Thus, **Romanism** grants in effect that those who do not handle all things in this world in obedience to the will of God and for the glory of God are yet doing what is right. Nor does it merely admit that the natural man can do what is right as far as the matter of the thing apart from its motivation is concerned. **Romanism** admits that the natural man who makes himself the goal of his efforts, who uses his own **experience** instead of the will of God as the criterion of his undertakings, and who has not faith as the motivation of all that he does, is yet able to do what is right without qualification in certain areas of

life. And this fact disqualifies Romanism from either stating of defending a true Christian doctrine of human behavior.

For our present purposes the doctrine of God need not be set forth more fully. It has appeared that in the Christian doctrine of the self-contained ontological Trinity we have the foundational concept of a **Christian theory of being**, of **knowledge**, and of **action**. Christians are interested in showing to those who believe in *no* god or in a god, *a* beyond, *some* ultimate or absolute, that it is *this* God in whom they must believe lest all meaning should disappear from human words. Christians are interested in showing to those who hold that “God” possibly (or probably) exists but possibly (or probably) does not exist, that the words *possibility* and *probability* have no meaning unless the God of Christianity actually exists. It is their conviction that the actuality of the existence of *this* God is the presuppositions of all possible predication.¹¹

¹¹Predication is a central concern for Van Til. Technically, it means a true affirmation, or assigning meaning. In lay terms it means being able to make sense of something.

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The Fall of Man

When man fell, it was therefore an attempt to do without God in every respect. Man sought his ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty somewhere beyond God, either directly within himself or indirectly within the universe about him. Originally man had interpreted the universe under the direction of God, but now he sought to interpret the universe without reference to God. We mean, of course, without reference to the kind of God defined above.

Man made for himself a false ideal of knowledge, the ideal of **absolute inderivative** comprehension.¹³

¹³In Van Til’s terminology, “comprehensive knowledge” means **exhaustive** recognition of creaturely dependence upon the Creator.

This he could never have done if he had continued to recognize that he was a creature. It is totally inconsistent with the idea of **creatureliness** that man should strive for comprehensive knowledge; if it could be attained, it would wipe God out of existence; man would then be God. And, as we shall see later, because man sought this unattainable ideal, he brought upon himself no end of woe.

In conjunction with man’s false ideal of knowledge we may mention here the fact that when man saw he could not attain his own false ideal of knowledge, he blamed this on his finite character. Man confused finitude with sin. Thus he commingled the metaphysical and the ethical aspects of reality.¹⁴

¹⁴The distinction between the ethical and the metaphysical is fundamental to Van Til’s understanding. **An ethical fall means moral revolt against God, while a metaphysical fall would somehow mean humans are not entirely to blame for evil since they were victims of finitude, or**

the way things are. The following critique of Roman Catholicism depends on this point because of the view that we are on a **scale of being.**

Not willing to take the blame for sin, man laid it to circumstances round about him or within him. **Over against this biblical view of man, the non-Christian view assumes or asserts that man is neither created nor sinful in the sense described.** Even though much stress is laid upon the fact that man is finite and evil (cf. Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr), yet man is taken to be his own ultimate reference point. Man virtually occupies the place that the ontological Trinity occupies in orthodox theology. He is self-sufficient and autonomous.

It is only when this point is carefully noted that the Christian and the non-Christian points of view are seen in their right relationship to one another. **The two positions have mutually exclusive views of the ultimate reference point in predication.**

Roman Catholic apologetic is unable to make this point clear. **As already noted, it does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic in its thought. It has therefore a half-Christian and half-non-Christian view of God. Similarly, it has a half-Christian and half-non-Christian view of man. [Key point!]** According to Romanism, man's being is not exclusively describe in terms of the general concept of the **chain of being.** Man is said to have less being than God. He is said to hover near the edge of non-being. Hovering near the edge of non-being and therefore having but little being, he is said to tend to slip into non-being. Thus man's "sinfulness" is described in part in terms of the law status he occupies in the **scale of being.** Because of the attenuated character of his being he tends to evil.

Is then God responsible for creating man with so thin a stream of being? The answer is in the negative. **But the reason why God is excused from making man evil is that man's being is not exclusively derived from God.** The nature of "being in general" controls and limits God in the creation of man. God cannot give man stable being because being is already defined as unstable at the point where man is to be placed. The nature of "being in general" is first defined in **indeterminist** terms, and then God is made to fit into the picture. If man is to exist at all, he must be placed at the lower end of the scale of being. Then, being placed there at the same time constitutes his "freedom." For his "freedom" consists in the fact of the unstable nature of his being.¹⁵

¹⁵In **Thomas Aquinas** one finds a **hierarchy of being, with God as ultimate, pure existence. Human beings are lower than God, though naturally capable of God's blessedness.** Grace is a superadded gift, [*see donum superadditum at code490*] lost at the fall, given again at redemption. While Thomas Aquinas jealously guards against blaming God for evil, he does make him the author of *forms* that can become corrupt. Van Til's point is that **being and its gradations**, rather than a holy Creator and morally culpable creature, is the backdrop for **Thomism**, and thus much of Roman Catholic theology. This holds for the subsequent sections on knowledge and ethics.

In the field of knowledge the Romanist view of man involves both **rationalism** and **irrationalism**. These correspond to **determinism** and **indeterminism** in the realm of being. The Roman Catholic apologist will make his final appeal to “**knowledge in general**” instead of to the **self-conscious ontological Trinity**. He will try to prove the existence of God by the method of **Aristotle**, i.e., by showing that God’s existence is in accord with “**logic in general**.” So doing, he does not prove the existence of the ontological Trinity; he “proves” the existence of a god, a god that fits into the pattern of “being in general.” And he will “prove” that this God “probably” exists; for man has no experience of any sort of being except such as lies at the edge of **non-being**. Thus Romanism cannot challenge the interpretations of the non-Christian. Seeking to appeal to the “reason” of the natural man, as the natural man himself interprets his reason, the **Roman Catholic** apologist falls victim both to the rationalism and irrationalism inherent in the non-Christian view of life.

In the field of ethics the Romanist view involves both dictatorship and autonomy. These correspond to **determinism** and **indeterminism** in the field of being and to **rationalism** and **irrationalism** in the field of knowledge. The average man is virtually said to be properly subject in an absolute sense (papal authority) to such of his fellow men as have attained to a **higher position than he in the scale of being**. The relationship between those in authority and those under authority is not exclusively or even primarily **ethical** but **metaphysical**. The pope, to be sure, speaks for Christ, on Christ’s authority, but the only Christ he knows is one who, though God as well as man, yet fits into a certain position in the scale of being. Thus even the pope deals not exclusively or primarily with the Creator-Redeemer but with “**being in general**” and “**knowledge in general**.” He derives his authority not primarily from revelation given him by Christ but from his supposedly superior insight into the proper proportions within the scale of being. He is an “**expert**” in realm of religion. The average man must listen to him as to a dictator.

On the other hand, the average man cannot through the pope hear the imperative voice of God at all. “Being in general” and “knowledge in general” have in them an element of **ultimate contingency**. God himself has no control over the lower reaches of being. These lower reaches of being, though very attenuated, yet have in them a potentiality of their own. God could therefore not make man perfect. There was a sort of “matter” with a refractory power that made it impossible for God to make man perfect. **True, Romanism asserts that God made man perfect. But its notion of “being in general” prevents its putting truly Christian meaning into these words.** Thus the idea of **autonomy, which constitutes the heart of non-Christian ethics**, cannot be challenged in Romanist views.

Notes on the Bible

Excerpts from
Christian Apologetics
 By Cornelius Van Til
 Code519

(My words in blue)

The wretched well from where Arminianism (Romanism, evangelicalism, etc.) flows – and the proper response to sinners in evangelism, Satan’s deception to Adam and Eve, Man’s assumed ultimacy as opposed to man’s absolute dependence on God and the Reformed Position, Romanism’s view of being in general, scale of being, man’s finiteness vs. man’s sinfulness, the effects of the fall, regeneration, what consists in the image of God, Romanism vs. Protestantism, theistic proofs, etc.

Pg 42-43

Man’s Assumed Autonomy

The Fall of Man

When man fell, it was therefore an attempt to do without God in every respect. Man sought his ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty somewhere beyond God, either directly within himself or indirectly within the universe about him. Originally man had interpreted the universe under the direction of God, but now he sought to interpret the universe without reference to God. We mean, of course, without reference to the kind of God defined above. [i.e., not a God of man’s imagination.]

Man made for himself a false ideal of knowledge, the ideal of absolute inderivative comprehension.¹³ This he could never have done if he had continued to recognize that he was

¹³In Van Til’s terminology, “comprehensive knowledge” means exhaustive knowledge. “Absolute” and “inderivative” means autonomous, without any recognition of creaturely dependence upon the Creator.

a creature. **It is totally inconsistent with the idea of creatureliness** that man should strive for comprehensive knowledge; if it could be attained, it would wipe God out of existence; and would then be God. And, as we shall see later, because man sought this unattainable ideal, he brought upon himself no end of woe.

In conjunction with man’s false ideal of knowledge we may mention here the fact that when man saw he could not attain his own false ideal of knowledge, **he blamed this on his finite character. Man confused finitude with sin.** Thus he commingled the metaphysical and the etherical aspects of reality.¹⁴ Not willing to take the blame for sin, man laid it to circumstances round about him or within him. Over against the biblical view of man, the non-Christian view

¹⁴The distinction between the ethical and the metaphysical is fundamental to Van Til’s understanding. **An ethical fall means moral revolt against God, while a metaphysical fall would somehow mean humans are not entirely to blame for evil since they were victims of finitude, or the way things are.** The following critique of **Roman Catholicism** depends on this point because of the view that we are on a **scale of being.**

assumes or asserts that man is neither created or sinful in the sense described. Even though much stress is laid upon the fact that man is finite and evil (cf. Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr), yet man is taken to be his own ultimate reference point. **Man virtually occupies the place that the ontological Trinity occupies in orthodox theology. He is self-sufficient and autonomous.**

Roman Catholic apologetics is unable to make this point clear. As already noted, it does not make the Creator-creature distinction basic in its thought. **It has therefore a half-Christian and half-non-Christian view of God. Similarly, it has a half-Christian and half-non-Christian view of man.** According to Romanism, man's being is not exclusively described in terms of the general concept of the **chain of being**. Man is said to have less being than God. He is said to hover near the edge of non-being. Hovering near the edge of non-being and therefore having but little being, he is said to tend to slip into non-being. Thus man's "sinfulness" is described in part in terms of the law of status he occupies in the **scale of being**. Because of the attenuated character of his being, he tends to evil.

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¹⁵In **Thomas Aquinas** one finds a **hierarchy of being**, with God as ultimate, pure existence. Human beings are lower than God, though naturally capable of God's blessedness. **Grace is a superadded gift, lost at the fall, given again at redemption.** While **Thomas Aquinas** jealously guards against blaming God for evil, he does make him the author of *forms* that can become corrupt. Van Til's point is that **being and its gradations**, rather than a holy Creator and a morally culpable creature, is the backdrop for **Thomism**, and thus much of Roman Catholic theology. This holds for the subsequent sections on knowledge and ethics.

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On the other hand, the average man cannot, through the pope, hear the imperative voice of God at all. "Being in general" and "knowledge in general" have in them an element of **ultimate contingency**. God himself has no control over the lower reaches of being. These lower reaches of being, though very attenuated, yet have in them a potentiality of their own. God could therefore not make man perfect. There was a sort of "matter" with a refractory power that made it impossible for God to make man perfect. **True, Romanism asserts that God made man perfect. But its notion of "being in general" prevents its putting truly Christian meaning into these words.** Thus, the idea of **autonomy, which constitutes the heart of non-Christian ethics**, cannot be challenged in Romanist views.

Pg 52-53

Ecclesiology

"The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." This is the Westminster Confession's definition of the church (25.1). We need not say much about it for our purposes. It can readily be seen that it is in accord with the preceding statement on soteriology. It contains the same conception of the relation of the eternal to the temporal as is manifest in the doctrine of salvation. **In the last analysis it is the eternal that precedes the temporal; it is God who determines the salvation of man; the church, that is, the universal church, is the "whole number of the elect."** **This does not preclude human responsibility and "free will"** in preceding articles. It only brings out clearly that God is absolute, here as elsewhere.

It is this fact of God's absoluteness as expressed in his election of man that gives us courage in preaching and in reasoning with men. Sin being what it is we may be certain that all our preaching and all our reasoning with men will be in vain unless God brings men through it to himself. **Men cannot be brought to bay if they have any place to which they can go.** Now they do have a place to which they can go **if they have the inherent ability to accept or reject the gospel.** [which in the case of the *effectual call of God, they do not, thank God!*] In that case they need not feel uneasy about rejecting it today because they can accept it tomorrow.

Eschatology

When we come to the Christian conception of the “last things” we see once more how diametrically the Christian position is set over against that of its opponents. If anywhere, it becomes plain here that in the Christian conception of things God’s interpretation of facts precedes the facts. Every Christian who commits his future to God believes that God controls the future. He believes that God had interpreted the future; he believes that the future will come to pass as God has planned it. Prophecy illustrates this point. **Belief in the promises of God with respect to our eternal salvation is meaningless unless God controls all things.**

Analogical thinking about God

The Perspicuity of Natural Revelation pg 76

...This God naturally has an all-comprehensive plan for the created universe. He has planned all the relationships between all the aspects of created being. He has planned the end from the beginning. All created reality therefore actually displays this plan. It is, in consequence, inherently rational.

It is quite true, of course, that created man is unable to penetrate to the very bottom of this inherently clear revelation. But this does not mean that on this account the revelation of God is not clear, even for him. Created man may see clearly what is revealed clearly even if he cannot see exhaustively. **Man does not need to know exhaustively in order to know truly and certainly.** When on the created level of existence man thinks God’s thoughts after him, that is, when man thinks in self-conscious submission to the voluntary revelation of the self-sufficient God, he has therewith the only possible ground of certainty for his knowledge. When man thinks thus, he thinks as a covenant creature would wish to think. **That is to say, man normally thinks in analogical fashion.** [What is God like, not what he actually is.] He realizes that God’s thoughts are **self-contained**. He knows that his own interpretation of nature must therefore be a reinterpretation of what is already fully interpreted by God.

The concept of analogical thinking is of especial significance here. Soon we shall meet with a notion of analogy that is based upon the very denial of the concept of the incomprehensible God. It is therefore of the utmost import that the confession’s concept of analogical thinking be seen to be the direct implication of its doctrine of God.¹⁹

¹⁹Though he does not develop it here; the concept of analogy is central to Van Til’s epistemology. It means “thinking God’s thoughts after him,” or knowing according to a creaturely mode. In *A Christian Theory of Knowledge, 1969*... he distinguishes his view from **Thomas Aquinas’s** doctrine of **analogy of being**, by which the cosmos moves from the full being of God, who is self-governing, to the being of humanity, which is partly self-governing, to the lower beings, or even non-being, undifferentiated matter, incapable of any essence. In **Thomas’s** view we can never speak **univocally** about God, yet we do not have to limit ourselves to **equivocal** or purely **metaphorical knowledge**. Analogy is a middle way. (See chap. 4, note 17 above) For Van Til, analogy is quite different. It refers to the only way to know a God who is both Creator, and thus transcendent, and Redeemer, and thus imminent. For him, **univocal** knowledge is simply knowing the way God knows, or **autonomously**, and **equivocal** knowledge means skepticism.

One further point must be noted here. We have seen that since the fall of man God's curse rests on nature. This has brought great complexity into the picture. All this, however, in no wise detracts from the historical and objective perspicuity of nature. Nature can and does reveal nothing but the one comprehensive plan of God. The psalmist does not say that the heavens possible or probably declare the glory of God. Nor does the apostle assert that the wrath of God is probably revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Scripture takes the clarity of God's revelation for granted at every stage of human history. Even when man, as it were, takes out his own eyes, this act itself turns revelational in his wicked hands, testifying to him that his sin is a sin against the light that lighteth every man coming into the world. Even to the very bottom of the most complex historical situations, involving sin and all its consequences, God's revelation shines with unmistakable clarity. "If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." (Ps. 139:8). **Creatures have no private chambers.** ...The central unifying concept of this entire confession is the doctrine of God and his one unified comprehensive plan for the world. The contention consequently is that at no point is there any excuse for man's not seeing all things as happening according to this plan.

Jump to pg 79 - 82

When man fell, he denied the naturally revelatory character of every fact, including that of his own consciousness. He assumed that he was autonomous; he assumed that his consciousness was not revelational of God but only himself. He assumed himself to be non-created. He assumed that the world of interpretation, as by the force of his natural powers he was engaged in it, was an original instead of a derivative procedure. He would not think God's thoughts after him; he would instead think only his own original thoughts. [that all originates from himself which Arminians hold to. This is man's declaration of his own self-containedness, that he is independent; that he is God. For example, if I love God, it is because it originated within me, my self-determined will, not from God's determining/saving grace. They see God's determining grace as God doing violence to man's liberty.]

Now if anything is obvious from Scripture, it is that man is not regarded as a proper judge of God's revelation to him. Man is said or assumed from the first page to the last to be a creature of God. God's consciousness is therefore taken to be naturally original as man's is naturally derivative. Man's natural attitude in all self-conscious activities was therefore meant to be that of obedience. It is to this deeper depth, deeper than the sinner's consciousness can ever reach by itself, that Scripture appeals when it says: "Come let us reason together." It appeals to covenant breakers and argues with them about the unreasonableness of covenant breaking. And it is only when the Holy Spirit gives man a new heart that he will accept the evidence of Scripture about itself and about nature for what it really is. The Holy Spirit's regenerating power enables man to place all things in true perspective.

Man the sinner, as Calvin puts it, through the testimony of the Spirit receives a new power of sight by which he can appreciate the new light that has been given in Scripture. This new light and the new power of sight imply one another. The one is fruitless for salvation without the other. It is by grace, then, by the gift of the Holy Spirit alone, that sinners are able to observe the fact that all nature, including even their own negative attitude toward God, is revelational of God, the God of Scripture. The wrath of God is revealed, Paul says, on all those who keep down the truth. Man's sinful nature has become his second nature. This sinful nature of man must now be included in nature as a whole. And through it God is revealed. He is revealed as the just one, as the one who hates iniquity and punishes it.

Yet he must also be seen as the one who does not yet punish to the full degree of their ill desert the wicked deeds of sinful men.

All this is simple so say that one must be a believing Christian to study nature in the proper frame of mind and with the proper procedure. It is only the Christian consciousness that is ready and willing to regard all nature, **including man's own interpretative reactions, as revelational of God**. But this very fact requires that the Christian consciousness make a sharp distinction between what is revelational in this broad and basic sense and what is revelational in the restricted sense. When man had not sinned, he was naturally anxious constantly to seek contact with the supernatural positive revelation of God. But it is a quite different matter when we think of the redeemed sinner. He is restored to the right relationship. **But he is restored in principle only**. There is a drag upon him. His "**old man**" wants him to interpret nature apart from the supernatural revelation in which he operates. The only safeguard he has against this historical drag is to test his interpretations constantly by the principles of the written Word. And if theology succeeds in **bringing forth ever more clearly the depth of the riches of the biblical revelation of God in Scripture**, the Christian philosopher or scientist will be glad to make use of this clearer and fuller interpretation in order that his own interpretation of nature may be all the fuller and clearer too, and thus more truly revelational of God. No subordination of philosophy or science to theology is intended here. The theologian is simply a specialist in the field of biblical interpretations taken in the more restricted sense. The philosopher is directly subject to the Bible and must in the last analysis rest upon his own interpretation of the Word. But he may accept the help of those who are more constantly and more exclusively engaged in biblical study than he himself can be.²¹

²¹Here, as in his *Note 2*, at the beginning of the chapter, Van Til interacts with the Amsterdam philosophy. Its claim is that no discipline should be "subjected" to theology because each intellectual sphere has its own sovereignty. Hermon Dooyeweerd, the most articulate exponent of this view, restricted the work of theology to a rather narrow "pistic" sphere, a technical study of dogma. While Van Til agrees with the general principle that theology should not dictate terms to another discipline, he nevertheless establishes theology as something more than narrowly dogmatic studies. Theology draws, in a specialized way, directly from the Bible and as such has authority to guide other specialists in understanding the written Word of God.

Roman Catholicism on the Starting Point

It is of the utmost importance to stress the point just made. If a Protestant finds it necessary to dispute with the Roman Catholic on the nature of Christianity itself, he will find it equally necessary to dispute with him on the problem of the point of contact. A Protestant theology requires a Protestant apologetic.

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Rome's Doctrine

The difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic conception of the **point of contact** will naturally have to be formulated in a way similar to that in which we state the difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic theology. There are two ways of stating this difference. One very common way is to indicate first an area of doctrine that the two types of theology have in common, in order afterwards to enumerate the differences between them. This is the course followed in B. B. Warfield's justly famous little book, *The Plan of Salvation*. Between those holding to a plan of salvation, says Warfield, there are those who think of this plan along **naturalist** and there are others who think of this plan along **supernaturalist** lines. As against the Pelagians, who hold to a naturalist view "the entire organized Church - Orthodox Greek, Roman Catholic, Latin, and Protestantism in all its great historical forms, Lutheran and Reformed, Calvinistic and Wesleyan - bears its consentient, firm and emphatic testimony to the **supernaturalistic conception** of salvation."4

Continuing from this point Warfield then divides the supernaturalists into sacerdotalists and evangelicals. The issue between them concerns "the immediacy of the saving operations of God." The Church of Rome, holding the sacerdotal point of view, teaches that "grace is communicated by and through the ministrations of the church, otherwise not" On the other hand, evangelicalism, "seeking to conserve what it conceives to be the only consistent supernaturalism, sweeps away every intermediary between the soul and its God, and leaves the soul dependent for its salvation on God alone, operating upon it by his immediate grace." Now Protestantism and evangelicalism are "coterminous, if not exactly synonymous designations."

At this point Warfield goes on to mark the main variations within Protestantism.

Among Protestants or evangelicals there are those who hold to a universalistic and there are those who hold to a particularistic conception of the plan of salvation. All evangelicals agree that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God and that this saving power is exerted immediately upon the soul. But they differ as to whether God exerts this saving power equally, or at least indiscriminately, upon all men, be they actually saved or not, or rather only upon particular men namely upon those who are actually saved (22)

Signalizing the difference between universalistic and particularistic evangelicals again, Warfield uses these words: "The precise issue which divides the **universalists** and the **particularists** is, accordingly, just whether the saving grace of God, in which alone is salvation, **actually saves**."

It is not germane to our purpose to follow Warfield further as he differentiates once more between various forms of particularists. The "differences of large moment" are now before us. Warfield defends **particularism** or **Calvinism**. And it has become customary to use the term **evangelical** with reference to non-Calvinistic Protestants.

What interests us now is the fact that though beginning from the common denominator point of view. Warfield is compelled, each time he signalizes a new difference, to indicate that it is made in the interest of consistency. Protestants are Protestants in the interest of being more consistently supernaturalist than are the Roman Catholics Calvinists are particularists in the interest of being more consistently evangelical than are the other Protestants Calvinists aim at holding a position, according to

Warfield that shall be "uncolored by intruding elements from without." Accordingly, the several conceptions of salvation "do not stand simply side by side as varying conceptions of that plan, each making its appeal in apposition to all the rest. They are related to one another rather as a progressive series of corrections of a primal error attaining ever more and more consistency in the embodiment of the one fundamental idea of salvation."

It appears, then, that Warfield himself really suggests a better way of expressing such differences as obtain between Romanism and Protestantism, or between universalistic and particularistic Protestantism than he has himself employed." That better way is pointed out by Professor John Murray when he says,

It would appear, therefore, that the truer, more effective and, on all accounts, more secure defense of Christianity and exposition of its essential content is not to take our starting point from those terms that will express the essential creedal confession of some of its most widely known historical deformations but rather from those terms that most fully express and give character to that redemptive religion which Christianity is.

In other words, Christianity cannot receive proper understanding or its exposition proper orientation unless it is viewed as that which issues from, and is consummated in the accomplishment of the **covenantal counsel** and **purpose** of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are not to define the essence of Christianity in terms of its lowest but rather in terms of its highest forms. **Calvinism is "Christianity come to its own."** Beginning from Calvinism we should descend to universalistic Protestantism and thence to **Romanism** as deviations from the true view of Christianity.

It is Romanism with which we are now primarily concerned. Accordingly, **Romanism should be regarded as a deformation of Christianity, in fact as its lowest deformation.** And this deformation expresses itself not merely at some but at every point of doctrine. The differences between Protestantism and Romanism are not adequately indicated if we say that Luther restored to the church the true doctrines of the Bible, of justification by faith, and of the priesthood of all believers. **The difference is rather that Protestantism is more consistently and Rome is less consistently Christian at every point of doctrine.** It could not well be otherwise. Having inconsistency at one point of doctrine is bound to result in inconsistency at all points of doctrine. **Rome has been consistently inconsistent in the confusion teaching along of non-Christian with Christian elements of the entire gamut of doctrinal expression.**

The bearing of all this on the question of starting point may now be briefly suggested. In the question of starting point it is all-important that we have a truly Christian doctrine of man. But this Rome does not have. Without going into details, it may be asserted that Rome has a defective doctrine (1) with respect to the **nature of man** as he was created and (2) with respect to the **effect of the entrance of sin upon the nature of man.** "The important point of difference is," says Charles Hodge,

"that Protestants hold that original righteousness, so far as it consisted in the moral excellence of Adam, was natural, while the Romanists maintain that it was supernatural. According to their theory, God created man soul and body. These two constituents of his nature are naturally in conflict. To preserve the harmony between them, and the due subjection of the flesh to the spirit, God gave man the **supernatural gift of original righteousness**. It was this gift that man lost by his fall; so that since the apostasy he is in the state in which Adam was before he was invested with this supernatural endowment. In opposition to this doctrine, Protestants maintain that original righteousness was concreated and natural."

The objections to this view [[Rome's view of man's creation](#)], as **Hodge** enumerates them, are these: (1) "It supposes a degrading view of the original constitution of our nature. According to this doctrine the seeds of evil were implanted in the nature of man as it came from the hands of God. It was disordered or diseased, there was about it what Bellarmine calls a *morbus* (sickness of soul) or *languor* (weakness, exhaustion), which needed a remedy." (2) "This doctrine as to original righteousness arose out of the **Semi-Pelagianism** of the **Church of Rome**, and was designed to sustain it."⁸

⁸Ibid, 105. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) was the ablest of all defenders of Trent and of the papacy against Protestant views. "**Semi-Pelagianism**" is a modern term (16th century) referring to a monastic group from 427 to 529 that rejected both **Augustine** and **Pelagius** on the issue of **divine grace and human responsibility**. John Cassian, for example, taught that Adam's descendants inherit a sickness from him, but do not entirely lose their free will. A certain cooperation with grace is admissible. More recent forms of semi-Pelagianism were held by Luis Molina (1535-1600) and have made their way into the church right up to the present.

Next, a textbook example of an apologetic experience.

Suppose then that a Romanist approaches an unbeliever and asks him to accept Christianity. The unbeliever, in his eyes, is merely such an one as has lost original righteousness. The image of God in him, which according to Romanism consists, as Hodge says, "only of the rational, and especially the voluntary nature of man, or the **freedom of the will**," **is thought of as still intact. That is to say, the unbeliever is, perhaps barring extremes, correct in what he himself thinks of the powers of his intellect and will.** There is not necessarily any sin involved in what the unbeliever, or natural man, does by way of exercising his capacities for knowledge and action. On this view **the natural man does not need the light of Christianity to enable him to understand the world and himself aright. He does not need the revelation of Scripture or the illumination of the Holy Spirit in order that by means of them he may learn what his own true nature is.**

Christianity therefore needs, on this basis, to be presented to the natural man as something that is **merely information additional to what he already possesses.** The knowledge of Christianity is to be related to the knowledge derived from the exercise of man's powers of reason and observation in a way similar to that in which at the beginning **original righteousness** was added to the image of God in man.

But without the light of Christianity it is as little possible for man to have the correct view about himself and the world as it is to have the true view about God. **On account of the fact of sin, man is blind with respect to the truth wherever the truth appears.** And truth is one. Man cannot truly know

himself unless he truly knows God. Not recognizing the fact of the fall, the **philosophers**, says **Calvin**, throw everything into confusion. They do not reckon with the fact that “**at first every part of the soul was formed to rectitude.**” But that after the fall man is equally corrupt in all aspects of his being.” “They tell us,” says Calvin,

there is great repugnance between the organic movements and the ratiocinatory part of the soul. As if reason also were not at variance with herself, and her counsels sometimes conflicting with each other like hostile armies. But since this disorder results from the deprivation of nature, it is erroneous to infer that there are two souls, because the faculties do not accord harmoniously as they ought. [Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.5.7]

The next several paragraphs are great discussion on original sin and its effects on man:

It appears, then, that there is a fundamental difference of opinion between Romanism and Calvin on the origin and nature of “disturbance” in human nature. The view of Rome is essentially the same as that of the Greek philosophers: in particular, that of **Aristotle**. According to this view the disturbance is endemic to human nature because man is made up, in part, of nonrational elements. **To the extent that man consists of intellect he does not and cannot sin. The “disturbance” in man’s make-up is not due primarily to any fault of his own. It is basically due to “God” who made him.** **On the other hand**, according to **Calvin**, there is no “disturbance” in the nature of man as he comes forth from the hands of God. **The “disturbance” has come in as the result of sin.** Accordingly, every one of fallen man’s functions operates wrongly. The set of the whole human personality has changed. The intellect of fallen man may, as such, be keen enough. It can therefore formally understand the Christian position. It may be compared to a buzz-saw that is sharp and shining, ready to cut the boards that come to it.

Let us say that a carpenter wishes to cut fifty boards for the purpose of the floor of a house. He has marked his boards. He has set his saw. He begins at one end of the mark on the board. But he does not know that his seven-year-old son has tampered with the saw and changed its set. The result is that every board he saws is cut slantwise and thus unusable because too short except at the point where the saw first made its contact with wood. As long as the set of the saw is not changed, the result will always be the same.

So also whenever the teachings of Christianity are presented to the natural man, they will be cut according to the set of sinful human personality. The keener the intellect, the more consistently will the truths of Christianity be cut according to an exclusively **immanentistic** pattern.¹² The result is that however much they may formally understand the truth of Christianity, men still worship “the dream and figment of their own heart. [Calvin, *The Institutes*...] They have what Hodge calls “mere cognition,” but no true knowledge of God.

¹²That is, **earthly, naturalistic, or in the human mind**, as opposed to *transcendental*. Van Til’s illustration is meant to convey that though the mechanical ability to perform functions such as reasoning is working fine, sin disturbs its motive, its standard, and its goals, and so “disturbs,” or distorts those functions.

Still further, as the “philosophers” and Calvin differ on the source and nature of the “disturbance” in human nature, so they also differ on the remedy to be employed for the removal of that disturbance. According to the philosophers man does not need supernatural help for the removal of the disturbance within his being. According to the Greek view, so largely followed by Rome, man’s intellect has within

itself the proper set. **The fall has not disturbed the set of the saw, and therefore there is no need of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to reset it.** The nature of the intellect and its activity is almost unaffected by what happens to man in the course of history.

In opposition to this view, Hodge, following the lead of Calvin, stresses the fact that the whole set of sinful man needs to be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The natural man must be “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10). “New man (*neon*), “says Hodge in exposition of St. Paul,

agreeable to the ordinary distinction between *neon* and *kainos* means recent newly made as opposed to (*paloios*) old. The moral quality of excellence of this recently formed man is expressed in the word *anakainoumenon* as in Scriptural usage what is *kainos* is pure. This renovation is said to be *eis epignosin* **not in knowledge, much less by knowledge, but unto knowledge, so that he knows. Knowledge is the effect of the renovation spoken of.** [see 1 John 5:20... *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*]

A little further Hodge adds: “The knowledge here intended it no mere cognition. It is **full, accurate, living, or practical knowledge; such knowledge as is eternal life,** [see 1 John 5:20 above!] so that this word here includes what in Ephesians 4:24 is expressed by righteousness and holiness.” [which is the restoring of the chief part of the image of God that was lost at the fall, holiness (love for God) righteousness and the knowledge of God]

Hodge also exegetes Ephesians 4:24, “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” “These words,” says Hodge,

When used in combination are intended to be exhaustive, i.e., to include all moral excellence. Either term may be used in this comprehensive sense, but, when distinguished, *dikaiousune* means rectitude., the being and doing right, what justice demands; *osiotes* purity, holiness, the state of mind produced when the soul is full of God. Instead of true holiness, the words of the Apostle should be rendered “righteousness and holiness of the truth”; that is, the righteousness and holiness which are the effects of manifestations of the truth. By truth here as opposed to the deceit (*apate*) mentioned in the twenty-second verse, **is meant what in Colossians 3:10 is called knowledge.** It is the **divine light in the understanding, of which the Spirit of truth is the author, and from which, as their proximate cause, all right affections and holy acts proceed.**

Repeatedly Hodge stresses the fact that according to Scripture the natural man is incapable of himself to understand and accept the truth of Christianity.

The natural man, man as he is by nature, **is destitute of the life of God,** i.e., of spiritual life. His understanding is darkness, so that he does not know or receive the things of God. [see 1Cor. 2:14] He is not susceptible of impression from the realities of the spiritual world. He is as insensible to them as a dead man to the things of this world.

In discussing regeneration Hodge asserts,

The Bible makes eternal life to consist in **knowledge**; sinfulness is blindness; or darkness; the transition from a state of sin to a state of holiness is a translation from **darkness into light**; men are said to be **renewed unto knowledge**, i.e., **knowledge is the effect of regeneration**, conversion is said to be effected by the revelation of Christ; the rejection of Him as the Son of God and Saviour of men is referred to the fact that the eyes of those who believe not are blinded by the god of this world.

Or again,

The **heart** in Scripture is that which thinks, feels, wills, and acts. **It is the soul, the self**. A new heart is, therefore, a new self, a new man. It implies a change of the whole character. It is a new nature. Out of the heart proceed all conscious, voluntary, moral exercises. A change of heart, therefore, is a change which precedes these exercises and determines their character. ...According to the evangelical doctrine the whole soul is the subject of regeneration. It is neither the intellect to the exclusion of the feelings, nor the feelings to the exclusion of the intellect; nor is it the will alone, either in its wider or in its more limited sense, that is the subject of the change in question.... **Regeneration** secures right knowledge as well as right feeling; and right feeling is not the effect of right knowledge, nor is right knowledge the effect of right feeling. The two are the inseparable effects of a work which affects the whole soul.

We conclude, then, that it is natural and consistent for Roman Catholic apologetics to seek its point of contact with the unbeliever in a “common area” of knowledge. Roman Catholic theology agrees with the essential contention of those it seeks to win to the Christiana faith that man’s consciousness of himself and of the objects of the world is intelligible without reference to God.

But herein precisely lies the fundamental point of difference between Romanism and Protestantism. According to the principle of Protestantism, man’s consciousness of self and of objects presupposes for their intelligibility the consciousness of God. In asserting this we are not thinking of psychological and temporal priority. We are thinking only of the question as to what is the **final reference point in interpretation**. The Protestant principle finds this in the self-contained ontological Trinity. By his counsel the triune God controls whatsoever comes to pass. If then the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting point, it remains true that God is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate or final reference point in human predication.²⁰

²⁰What is at stake here is the framework in which meaningful predication is possible. Ultimately, it must be God, the “ontological Trinity.” It is true, besides this, that in a secondary sense we begin with ourselves, meaning that self-consciousness is where we live. But this secondary starting point can never be ultimate, without sacrificing the need for God in epistemology.

This is, in the last analysis, the question as to what are one’s ultimate presuppositions. **When man became a sinner, he made of himself instead of God the ultimate or final reference point**. And it is precisely this presupposition, as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy, that must be brought into question. If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field, all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him according to his pattern. **The sinner has cemented colored glasses to his eyes, which he cannot remove. And all is yellow to the jaundiced eye**. There can be no intelligible reasoning unless those who reason together understand what they mean by their words.

In not challenging this basic presupposition with respect to himself as the final reference point in predication the natural man may accept the “**theistic proofs**” as fully valid.²¹ He may construct such proofs. He has constructed such proofs. But the God whose existence he proves to himself in this way is always a God who is something other than the self-contained ontological Trinity of Scripture. But the Roman Catholic apologete does not want to prove the existence of this sort of God. He wants to prove the existence of such a god as will leave intact the **autonomy of man to at least some extent**. Rome’s theology does not want a God whose counsel controls whatever comes to pass.

[codeproofs]

²¹Such **proofs** were developed in the Medieval period, **Anselm** of Canterbury’s ontological proof and **Thomas Aquinas’s** cosmological proof were the two best-known. Anselm’s demonstrates God’s existence from the (platonic) argument that if God is “that than which no greater can be conceived,” he must exist in reality, which is greater than in the mind. **Thomas** argues (from **Aristotle**) that from the contingency of the world, there must be a first cause, an **unmoved mover**. It should be noted that Van Til does not reject these altogether, but faults them as self-contained arguments, because without presupposing the larger framework of God’s revelation, unbelievers may accept them as “fully valid,” and thus arrive at a god who is only a human construct.

It is natural then the Rome’s view of the **point of contact** with the unbeliever is what it is.

Pg99-118

Non-Calvinistic Protestantism

We have spoken of the basic difference between Romanism and Protestantism on this question of the point of contact. But not all Protestantism has been fully true to the Protestant principle. Warfield has pointed this out admirably in the book discussed. It was only in Calvinism that the Protestant principle that salvation is of God alone has come to its consistent expression. Non-Calvinistic Protestants, frequently spoken of as evangelicals, have conceived of “the operations of God looking to **salvation universalistically**” in order to leave room for an **ultimate decision the part of the individual human being**. [Warfield, *Plan of Salvation*] God, as it were, through Christ deposits a large sum of money in a bank and announces this fact in the daily papers, offering to each one who comes sufficient for all his needs. It is then, in the last analysis, up to the individual whether he want to be and remain in the class of those who live by the generosity of this bank. God approaches man by means of universals.

There are differences among evangelicals, but, in the last analysis, these differences are merely as to whether God approaches the individuals by means of a wider or narrower species. The final issue is always left up to the individual. “Particularism in the process of salvation becomes thus the mark of Calvinism.” [Warfield] Warfield speaks therefore of Calvinism as being the only form of Protestantism “uncolored by intruding elements from without.” **God’s action is the ultimate source of all determinate being.**

For our purposes, then, the point of importance is that evangelicalism has retained something of Roman Catholicism **both in its view of man and in its view of God**. Like Romanism, evangelicalism thinks of human self-consciousness and consciousness of objects as to some extent intelligible without

the consciousness of God. It is to be expected that evangelicalism will be in agreement with Tomé on the question of the point of contact. **Both forms of theology are colored by elements of an underlying naturalism. Both are therefore unwilling to challenge the natural man's basic presupposition with respect to himself as the ultimate reference point in interpretation. Both are unwilling to prove the existence of such a God as controls whatsoever comes to pass.**

The great textbook of evangelical apologetics is **Bishop Butler's** famous *Analogy*.²⁴ It is not our purpose here to deal with its argument fully. Suffice it to point out that its argument is closely similar to that which is found, for instance, in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* of **Thomas Aquinas**.²⁵ Butler holds to an Arminian view in theology.²⁶ **He therefore assumes that the natural man, by "a reasonable use of reason," can interpret aright "the course and constitution of nature."** If only the natural man will continue to employ the same "reasonable use of reason" with respect to the facts presented to him in Scripture about Christ and this work, there is every likelihood that he will become a Christian.

²⁴Mentioned earlier (chap. 2, note 9), **Bishop Joseph Butler** (1692-1752) was an influential Anglican moral philosopher. He attempted to refute deism, which taught that traditional dogma and clerical rule were antagonistic to human reason, and that natural religion is incompatible with miracles, Christ's atonement, etc. Butler's defense against **deists** centers on an analogy between revealed religion and the natural realm, hence the title of his most important book, *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736). Van Til regularly refers to Butler as the principal exponent of classical apologetics, which appeals to a neutral ground as understood by the criteria of unaided human reason.

²⁵**Thomas Aquinas** (1225-74) wrote the *Summa contra Gentiles* as a textbook for missionaries. He argued that to reach Muslims one cannot begin with the Bible, so one must use natural reason, by which we can demonstrate God's existence, his simplicity, etc., though not such items as the incarnation, the Trinity, etc. Van Til is consistently critical of **Thomas** because of his **nature-verses-grace dualism**, which led to a downgrading of creation, as well as a less radical view of sinfulness, permitting an overconfidence in reason.

²⁶**Jacobus Arminius** (1560-1609) **objected to unconditional predestination and asserted that human will is free to believe, not bound because of sin; though we need grace, it is resistible.** His followers were called semi-pelagian (see note 8, on pg 91 above, ref. Bellarmine).

Less Consistent Calvinism

The question of starting point, then, is largely determined by one's theology. In the first chapters it has been our aim to set forth the salient features of Christianity according to the principle of the Reformed faith. In particular it has been the aim to indicate the main features of Christianity after the fashion indicated by the great Reformed theologians of recent time. It is on the basis of the work of such men as Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, to mention no others, that we have formulated the broad outline of the Reformed life-and-world view. It is only by the help of such men that we have been enabled to attain to anything like a consistent Protestantism.

It is only to follow out their suggestion, then, if we follow their principles in apologetics as well as in theology proper. We are to defend, as Warfield himself so well expresses it, not some minimal essence of Christianity, nor every detail included in the doctrines of Christianity, but “just Christianity itself, including all its “details” and involving its ‘essence’ in its unexplicated and uncompressed entirety.”

And this is Christianity we must bring to those who are dead in trespasses and sin. “it is,” says Warfield,

Upon a field of the dead that the Son of righteousness has risen, and the shouts that announce His advent fill on deaf ears; yea, even though the morning stars should again sing for joy and the air be palpitant with the echo of the great proclamation, their voice could not penetrate the ears of the dead. As we seep our eyes over the world lying in its wickedness it is the valley of the prophet’s vision which we see before us; a valley that is filled with bones, and lo! They are very dry. What benefit is there in proclaiming to dry bones even the greatest of redemptions? How shall we stand and cry, “O, ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord.” In vain the redemption, in vain its proclamation, **unless there come a breath from heaven to breathe upon these slain that they may live.**

“The Christian lives by virtue of the life that has been given to him, and prior to the inception of that life, of course, he has no power of action; and it is of the utmost importance that as Christian men we should not lower our testimony to this supernaturalness of our salvation.” [Warfield] **Regeneration, we have seen Hodge argue, is unto knowledge, righteousness and holiness.**

It would seem that we have dropped from this high plane to the level of evangelicalism when **Hodge** speaks of the office of reason in matters of religion.³⁰ Under this heading he takes up three points. First he shows that reason is necessary as a tool for the reception of revelation. About this point there can be little cause for dispute. “Revelations cannot be made to brutes or to idiots”³¹ Second, Hodge argues that “reason must judge of the credibility of a revelation.” And “the credible is that which can be believed. Nothing is incredible but the impossible. What may be, may be rationally (i.e., on adequate grounds) believed.” What then is impossible? **Hodge** replies:

(1) That is impossible which involves a contradiction; as, that a thing is and is not; that right is wrong, and wrong right. (2) It is impossible that God should do, approve, or command what is morally wrong. (3) It is impossible that He should require of us to believe what contradicts any of the laws of belief which He has impressed upon our nature. (4) It is impossible that one truth should contradict another. It is impossible, therefore, that God should reveal anything as true which contradicts any well authenticated truth, whether of intuition, experience, or previous revelation.

³⁰Evangelicalism for Van Til is a general Protestant faith, which does not have the consistency of Calvinism. He finds Hodge’s treatment of reason not sufficiently free from Arminian theology. Accordingly, Hodge cannot fully recognize the sinful use of reason, based on its supposed ultimacy, by those outside of Christ. He does not fully distinguish between upright, created mankind, and the sinful consciousness of fallen mankind. Van Til is still discussing the point of contact, but widens the discussion to the issue of the ability of reason. It is evident that he remains a great admirer of Hodge, despite these polemics in one area.

Third, **Hodge** continues, “Reason must judge of the evidences of a revelation.” As “faith involves assent, and assent is conviction produced by evidence, it follows that faith without evidence is either **irrational** or impossible.” The second and third prerogatives of reason, say Hodge, are approved by Scripture itself. Paulo “recognized the paramount authority of the intuitive judgments of the mind” and “Jesus appealed to his works as evidence of the truth of this claims.”

It is not our purpose here to deal fully with the question of reason and revelation. Suffice it to note the ambiguity that underlies this approach to the question of the point of contact. When Hodge speaks of reason, he means “those laws of belief which God has implanted in our nature.” Now it is true that, of course, that God has planted such laws of belief into our very being. It is this point on which Calvin lays such great stress when he says that all men have a sense of deity. But the unbeliever does not accept the doctrine of his creation in the image of god. It is therefore impossible so appeal to the intellectual and moral nature of men, as men themselves interpret this nature, and say that it must judge of the credibility and evidence of revelation. **For if this is done, we are virtually telling the natural man to accept just so much and no more of Christianity as, with his perverted concept of human nature, he cares to accept.**

To use once again the illustration of the saw: The saw is in itself but a tool. Whether it will move at all and whether it will cut in the right direction depend upon the man operating it. So also reason, or intellect, is always the instrument of a person. And the person employing it is always either a believer or an unbeliever. If he is a believer, his reason has already been changed in its set, as Hodge has told us, **by regeneration**. It cannot then be the judge; it is now a part of the regenerated person, gladly subject to the authority of God. **It has by God’s grace permitted itself to be interpreted by God’s revelation**. If, on the other hand, the person using his reason is an **unbeliever**, then this person, **using his reason**, will certainly assume the position of judge with respect to the credibility and evidence of revelation, but he will also certainly find the Christian religion **incredible** because **impossible** and the **evidence for it always inadequate**.

Hodge’s own teaching on the blindness and hardness of the natural man corroborates this fact. To attribute to the natural man the right to judge by means of his reason what is possible or impossible, or to judge by means of this moral nature what is good or evil, is virtually to deny the “particularism” [unconditional election/limited atonement] that Hodge, no less than Warfield, believes to be the very hallmark of a truly biblical theology. In such a case Christianity would not claim to interpret the reasoner himself. **That reasoner would be taken as already having within himself, previous to his acceptance of Christianity, the ability rightly to interpret and rightly to employ the powers of his own nature. And this is the exact equivalent of the Arminian position when it claims that God made salvation objectively possible but did not actually save individual men.**

The main difficulty with the position of Hodge on this matter of the point of contact, then, **is that it does not clearly distinguish between the original and the fallen nature of man**. Basically, of course, it is Hodge’s intention to appeal to the original nature of man as it came forth from the hands of its Creator. But he frequently argues as though that original nature can still be found as active in the “common consciousness” of men. Now there is a large element of truth in the contention that the common sense of man has not strayed so far from the truth as have the sophistications of the

philosophers. Outspoken, blasphemous atheism is not usually found among the masses of men. But his does not take away the fact that all men are sinful in all the manifestations of their personality.

A comparison may tend to clarify this point. In the **seventh chapter of Romans**, Paul speaks of himself, though a believer, as having a law of sin within his members, which often controls him against his will. His **“new man” is the real man, the man in Christ Jesus**. But his **“old man” is the remnant of his sinful nature**, which has not been fully destroyed. Applying this analogy to the natural man we have the following. The sinner is the one whose “new man” is the man in alliance with Satan. But his “old man” is that which wars within his members against his will; it is his nature as he came forth from the hands of his Creator. When the prodigal has left his father’s house, he is on the way to the swine-trough. But while on his way he has his misgivings. He seeks to make himself believe that his true nature consists in his self-assertion away from the father’s house. **But he kicks against the pricks.** [Acts 9:5 NKJV] **He sins against better knowledge.**

Now it is quite in accord with the genius of Hodge’s theology to appeal to the “old man” in the sinner and altogether out of accord with his theology to appeal to the “new man” in the sinner as though he would form a basically proper judgment on any question. Yet Hodge has failed to distinguish clearly between these two. Yet Hodge has failed to distinguish clearly between these two. Accordingly he does not clearly distinguish the Reformed from the Evangelical and Roman Catholic views of the point of contact. Accordingly he also speaks about “reason” as something that seems to operate rightly wherever it is found. **But the “reason” of sinful men will invariably act wrongly.** Particularly is this true when they are confronted with the specific contents of Scripture. **The natural man will invariably employ the tool of his reason to reduce these contents to a naturalistic level.** He must do so even in the interest of the principle of contradiction. **For his own ultimacy is the most basic presupposition of his entire philosophy.** It is upon this presupposition as its fulcrum that he uses the **law of contradiction.** **If he is asked to use his reason as the judge of the credibility of the Christian revelation without at the same time being asked to renounce his view of himself as ultimate, then he is virtually asked to believe and to disbelieve in his own ultimacy at the same time and in the same sense.** [Wow!]

Moreover, this same man, in addition to rejecting Christianity in the name of the law of contradiction, will also reject it in the name of what he calls his intuition of freedom. By this he means virtually the same thing as his ultimacy. Speaking of the “philosophers” Calvin says, “The principle they set out with was that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil... They also imagined that that distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life.” [Textbook Arminianism] If such a one is asked to accept the position of Christianity, according to which his destiny is ultimately determined by the counsel of God, he is asked to accept what to him makes right wrong and wrong right. [hence the darkness that is in unregenerate men.]

It is only to follow out the lead which Hodge in his theology, following Calvin, has given, if we seek our point of contact not in any abstraction whatsoever, whether it be reason or intuition. No such abstraction exists in the universe of men. We always deal with concrete individual men. These men are sinners. They have “an axe to grind.” They want to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They will employ their reason for that purpose. And they are not formally illogical if, granted the assumption of

man's ultimacy, they reject the teachings of Christianity. On the contrary, to be logically consistent they are bound to do so. This point will engage us more fully in the sequel. For the moment it must suffice to have shown how the apologist is not only untrue to his own doctrine of man as the creature of God, but also defeats his own purpose if he appeals to some form of the "common consciousness of man."

Before going on to discuss what appears to us to be a more truly Biblical view of the problem of the point of contact, we would call attention to one other form of inconsistent Calvinism on this matter. In his book, *Het Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, **D. Valentine Hepp** speaks about prima principia with respect to God, man and the world which, he says, men in general accept.³³

With respect to the central truths which speak to us from creation as such, there is little doubt among men. A few mistaken scientists, who insist on maintaining their mistaken starting-point, insist that they doubt whether God or man or world exist. They owe such statements, not to experience, but to their systems. But their number, though we hear much of them, is very small. Taken as a whole mankind does not deny the central truths. The great majority of men recognize a higher power above them, and do not hesitate to accept the reality of the world and of man.

³³**Valentine Hepp** (1879-1950) was a minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the editor of *Die Reformatie*, an influential periodical sponsored by that denomination. He had a vivid interest in the American expressions of Reformed theology and tried to foster good relations between the Dutch and American churches. Like his heroes Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, Hepp delivered the Stone Lectures at Princeton, in 1930. He disapproved of the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary, where **Van Til** had just begun to teach. He thought the decision to separate was hasty and that there was still much life in Princeton. He met with J. Gresham Machen and others but could not sympathize with them. Ironically, Van Til became a regular contributor to *De Reformatie*, but only after Hepp had ceased being the editor. Van Til faults him having too wide a view of common grace, one that includes some neutral common ground, similarly to Hodge.

The position of Hepp, as appears even from this one quotation, is similar to that of Hodge. Like Hodge, Hepp wants to appeal to a general faith in "central truths" that all men, when not too sophisticated, accept. **There seems to be for Hepp, as for Hodge, something in the way of a commonsense philosophy which the natural man has and which, because intuitive or spontaneous, is, so far forth, not tainted by sin.** It appears, however, even from the brief quotation given, that the "common notions" of men are sinful notions. For man to reflect on this own awareness of meaning and then merely to say that a higher power, a God, exists, is in effect to say that God does not exist. It is as though a child, reflecting upon his home environment would conclude that a father or a mother exist. And to "recognize the reality of the world and of man" is in itself not even to recognize the elemental truths of creation and providence. It is not enough to appeal from the more highly articulated systems of non-Christian thinkers to the philosophy of the common consciousness, of common sense, of intuition, that is to something that is more immediately related to the revelational pressure that rest upon men.

Both Hepp and Hodge seem to be desirous of doing no more than Calvin does when he appeals to the sense of deity present in all men. But this notion, seeking to set froth as it does the teaching of Paul, that God's revelation is present to every man, must be carefully distinguished from the reaction that sinful men make to this revelation. The revelation of God, not of a god, is so immediately present to every man, that, as Warfield, following Calvin, says: "The conviction of the existence of God bears the marks of an intuitive truth in so far as it is the universal and unavoidable belief of men, and is given in the very same act with the idea of self, which is known at once as **dependent** and **responsible** and thus implies one on whom it depends and to whom it is responsible." **It is to this sense of deity, even this knowledge of God, which, Paul tells us (tom 1:19-20) every man has, but which, as Paul also tells us, every sinner seeks to suppress, that the Christian apologetic must appeal.**

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Comments on Thomas Aquinas, Plato - relating to Arminianism, etc.

The Dilemma of the Roman Catholic View

Plato's famous allegory of the **cave** may illustrate the Roman Catholic position. The dwellers of this cave had chains about their necks and on their legs. They saw nothing but shadows and attributed echoes to these shadows. Yet they supposed that "they were naming what was actually before them." If one of them should be released, says Plato, he would need to get accustomed to the light of the sun. But he would pity those who were still in the cave. And "if he had to compete in the measuring the shadows with the prisoners who have never moved out of the den would he not be ridiculous" in their view? "Men would say of him that up he went and down he comes without his eyes; and that there is no use in even thinking of ascending" and if anyone tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender in the act, and they would put him to death." [Plato, *The Republic*, bk 7]

Plato himself interprets this allegory in relation to man's capacity for and knowledge of the truth. The prisoners have eyes with which to see the truth; all they need is to have their heads turned about so they may face the truth. [typical evangelical view of man's capacity for truth]

It is in some such fashion that Rome thinks of the natural man. [the unsaved man or unregenerate man.] Following **Aristotle's** general method of reasoning, **Thomas Aquinas** argues that the natural man can, **by the ordinary use of his reason, do justice to the natural revelation that surrounds him.** He merely needs some assistance in order that he may also see and react properly to the supernatural revelation that is found in Christianity. [of course, man's depravity prevents this, Romans 8:7-8]

According to the **Roman view** then, the **natural man** is already in possession of the truth. To be sure, he is said to be in possession of the truth only with respect to natural revelation. But if the natural man can and does interpret natural revelation in a way that is essentially correct, **there is no reason why he should need supernatural aid in order to interpret Christianity truly.** [that's the key assumption Rome and Arminianism makes] At most he would need the information that Christ and his Spirit have come into the world. Hearing this news, he would not fail, as a rational being, to make the proper reaction to it. If the natural man's eyes (reason) enable him to see correctly in one dimension, **there is no good**

reason to think that these same eyes will not enable him, without further assistance from without, to see correctly in all dimensions. There would be no reason why all of the prisoners of the cave could not break their chains and walk in the light of day. In fact, **Plato** gives no reason why those who did not escape could not have escaped as well as the one who did.

On the other hand, it may be said that according to the Roman Catholic view the natural man does not give a fully correct interpretation of natural revelation. Does not **Thomas Aquinas** correct the interpretations that “the philosopher” has given of the things of nature? And does not the Roman Catholic view of the image of God in man itself imply that even originally, before the fall, man was unable, without the *bonum superadditum* (super-added good) to know anything in a perfect way?³⁸

³⁸In traditional Roman Catholic theology, mankind before the fall was partly earthy, but with an added gift of goodness from God. At the fall, the gift was removed, though the earthly qualities remained. [that is, not wholly corrupted by sin.] Recall Van Til’s arguments against this view, which places humans somewhere along a **scale of being**, with higher and lower tendencies, rather than fully as image-bearers [righteousness being natural to Adam, concreated, not *superadded*], whether in pre-fallen integrity or fallen corruption of the whole self.

Note: “The **monistic** view makes no basic difference between Creator and creature, but rather presents being as uniform, though with gradations between lower and higher forms.” Wm Edgar, editor of Van Til’s book, *Christian Apologetics*, pg 31, footnote 3 [Van Til refers to this as “**scale of being**” in his writings.]

We reply that though **Aquinas** does correct some of the conclusions of Aristotle, **he accepts the method of Aristotle as essentially sound**. But, ignoring this, and granting for the sake of the argument that according to Rome the natural man’s view of natural revelation is not fully correct, it should be noted that **the only reason Rome can adduce for this fact is a defect in revelation itself**. The prisoners of Plato’s cave are not to be blamed for the fact that they see shadows only. They are doing full justice by the position in which they find themselves. If their heads are bound so that they see shadow only, this is due to no fault of theirs. It is due to the constitution and course of nature. According to this view the human mind is not originally and naturally in contact with truth. The idea of freedom, as entertained by Roman theology, is base upon man’s being metaphysically distinct from “god.” And this is tantamount to saying that man is free to the extent that he has no “being.” There is on this basis no genuine point of contact with the mind of the natural man at all.

We do not object to the idea that the mind of man is said to be always in need of supernatural revelation. On the contrary we would stress the fact that even in paradise the mind of man needed and enjoyed a supernatural revelation. What we object to is the reason given for the need that man had of supernatural revelation even in paradise. The reason for this need, according to the **Roman Catholic** view, **is virtually a defect in the original constitution of man**. This implies that man is naturally, according to his original constitution, **prone to error as well as to truth**. The reason for this is that the god of Roman Catholicism does not control “whatsoever comes to pass.” Man is, accordingly, not exclusively confronted with that which reveals God. Man is also confronted with the ultimately non-rational. On such a conception of reality in general it is natural that man’s constitution should be thought of, on the one hand, as of itself possessing the truth and, on the other hand, as never able, by its natural actions, to come into possession of the truth.

On such a basis too, the addition of the supernatural to natural revelation would not remedy matters. It would be as true of supernatural as of natural revelation that either it would not reach man or else if it did reach man, he would not be in need of it.

If natural revelation does not so envelop man as to make it impossible for him to look at anything that does not speak of God, then supernatural revelation will not do this either. If natural revelation does not speak of such a God who by his counsel surrounds man completely, then neither can supernatural revelation speak of such a god. But if it did, *per impossible* (though this is impossible), speak of such a God, it could mean nothing to the mind of man as Rome conceives of it. **The revelation of a self-sufficient God can have no meaning for a mind that thinks of itself as ultimately autonomous.** The possibility of a **point of contact** has disappeared. The whole idea of the revelation of the self-sufficient God of Scripture drops to the ground if man himself is autonomous or self-sufficient. If man is not himself revelational in the internal structure of his being, he can receive no revelation that comes to him from without.³⁹

³⁹For Van Til, **self-awareness** is not outside of revelation, but operates precisely because of revelation. As image-bearers, any self-knowledge leads to knowledge of God, as well as the other way around. Van Til is arguing against a **neutral**, or **autonomous**, reasoning process that must somehow grope to find God.

On the other hand, if man is in any sense **autonomous**, he is not in need of revelation. If he is, then, said to possess the truth, he possesses it as the product of the ultimately legislative power of his intellect. It is only if he can virtually control by means of the application of the **law of non-contradiction** all the facts of reality that surround him, that he can know any truth at all. And thus, if he knows any truth in this way, he in effect knows all truth.

On the **Roman Catholic position**, then, man is, with the cave-dwellers of **Plato**, by virtue of his own constitution [not his sinfulness], adapted to semi-darkness. Revelation would not do him any good, even though we might think of him as in need of it. If revelation is to come to him, it must come to him as the truth came to one of Plato's cave-dwellers, in an accidental fashion. Or else man is, with the accidentally liberated cave-dwellers of Plato, not in need of supernatural revelation; potentially he has all truth within his reach.

The Reformed Position

The fully biblical conception of the **point of contact**, it ought now to be clear, is the only one that can escape the dilemma of absolute ignorance of absolute omniscience. **The one great defect of the Roman Catholic view and the Arminian view is, as noted, that it ascribes ultimacy or self-sufficiency to the mind of man.** Romanism and Arminianism do this in their view of man as stated in their works on systematic theology. It is consistent for them, therefore, not to challenge the **assumption of ultimacy** as this is made by the non-believer. But Reformed theology, as worked out by Calvin and his recent exponents, such as Hodge, Warfield, Kuyper, and Bavinck, holds that **man's mind is derivative**. As such it is naturally in contact with God's revelation. It is surrounded by nothing but revelation. It is itself

inherently revelational. It cannot naturally be conscious of itself without being conscious of its creatureliness. For man, self-consciousness presupposes God-consciousness. Calvin speaks of this as man's inescapable sense of deity.

The Reformed Position

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Of course, when we thus stress Paul's teaching that all men do not merely have a capacity for but are in actual possession of the knowledge of God, we have at one to add Paul's further instruction to the effect that all men, due to the sin within them, always and in all relationships seek to "suppress" this knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18 NASB). The natural man is such a one as constantly throws water on a fire he cannot quench. He has yielded to the temptation of Satan and has become this bondservant. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve in paradise, **he sought to make them believe that man's self-consciousness was ultimate rather than derivative and God-dependent.** He argued, as it were, that it was of the nature of self-consciousness to make itself the **final reference point of all predication.** He argued, as it were, that God had not control over all that might come forth in the process of time. That is to say, he argued, in effect, that as any form of self-consciousness must assume its own ultimacy, so it must also admit its own limitation in the fact that much that happens is under no control at all. Thus, Satan argued, as it were, that man's consciousness of time and of time's products in history is, if intelligible at all, intelligible in some measure **independently of God.**

Romanism and evangelicalism, however **do not attribute to sin this assumption of autonomy or ultimacy on the part of man.** They hold that man should quite properly think of himself and of his relation to objects in time in this way. Hence, they do injustice to Paul's teaching with respect to the effect of sin on the interpretative activity of man. As they virtually deny that originally man not merely had a capacity for the truth but was in actual possession of the truth, so also they virtually deny that the natural man suppresses the truth.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that neither Rome nor evangelicalism is little interested in challenging the "philosophers" when these, as **Calvin** says, interpret man's consciousness without being aware of the tremendous difference in man's attitude toward the truth before and after the fall. Accordingly, **they do not distinguish carefully between the natural man's own conception of himself and the biblical conception of him.** Yet for the question of the **point of contact** this is all-important. If we make our appeal to the natural man without being aware of this distinction, we virtually admit that the natural man's estimate of himself is correct. We may, to be sure, even then maintain that he is in need of information. We may even admit that he is morally corrupt. But the one thing that, on this basis, we cannot admit is that his claim to be able to interpret at least some area of experience in a way that is essentially correct, is mistaken. We cannot then challenge his most basic **epistemological assumption** to the effect that his self-consciousness and time-consciousness are self-explanatory. **We cannot challenge his right to interpret all his experience in exclusively immanentistic categories [as opposed to transcendent categories].** And on this everything hinges. **For if we first allow the legitimacy of the natural man's assumption of himself as the ultimate reference point in interpretation of himself**

as the ultimate reference point in interpretation in any dimension, we cannot deny his right to interpret Christianity itself in naturalistic terms.

The **point of contact** for the gospel, then, but be sought within the natural man. Deep down in his mind every man knows that he is the creature of God and responsible to God. Every man, at bottom, knows that he is a covenant breaker. But every man acts and talks as though this were not so. It is this one point that cannot bear mentioning in his presence. A man may have internal cancer. Yet it may be the one point he will not have one speak of in his presence. He will grant that he is not feeling well. He will accept any sort of medication so long as it does not pretend to be given in answer to a cancer diagnosis. Will a good doctor cater to him on this matter? Certainly no. He will tell his patient that he has promise of life, but promise of life on one condition, that is, of an immediate internal operation.

So it is with the sinner. He is alive but alive as a covenant breaker. But his own interpretative activity with respect to all things proceeds on the assumption that such is not the case. **Romanism and evangelicalism** but failing to appeal exclusively to that which is within man but is also **suppressed by every man, virtually allow the legitimacy of the natural man's view of himself.** **They do not seek to explode the last stronghold to which the natural man always flees and where he always makes his final stand.** They cut off the weeds at the surface but do not dig up the roots of these weeds for fear that crops will not grow.

The truly biblical view, on the other hand, applies atomic power and flame-throwers to the very presupposition of the natural man's ideas with respect to himself. It does not fear to lose a point of contact by uprooting the weeds rather than by cutting them off at the very surface. It is assured of a point of contact in the fact that every man is made in the image of God and has impressed upon him the law of God. In that fact alone he may rest secure with respect to the **point of contact** problem. For that fact makes men always accessible to God. That fact assures us that everyman, to be a man at all, must already be in contact with the truth. He is so much in contact with the truth that much of his energy is spent in the vain effort to hide this fact from himself. His efforts to hide this fact from himself are bound to be **self-frustrative.**

Only by thus finding the **point of contact** in man's **sense of deity** that lies underneath his own conception of self-consciousness as ultimate can we be both true to Scripture and effective in reasoning with the natural man. end pg 121

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Our concern throughout is to indicate the nature of a truly Protestant, that is, a Reformed, apologetic. **A Reformed method of apologetics must seek to vindicate the Reformed life-and-world view as Christianity come to its own.** It has already become plain that this implies a refusal to grant that any area or aspect of reality, any fact or any law of nature or of history, **can be correctly interpreted except it be seen in the light of the main doctrines of Christianity.** But if this is true, it becomes quite impossible for the apologist to do what Roman Catholics and Arminians can and must do on the basis of their view of Christianity, namely, agree with the non-Christian in his principles of methodology to see whether or not Christian theism is true. **From the Roman Catholic and the Arminian point of view the question of methodology, like that of starting point, is a neutral matter.** According to these

positions the Christian apologist can legitimately join the non-Christian scientist or philosopher as he, by his recognized methods, investigate certain dimensions of reality. Neither the follower of **Thomas Aquinas** nor the follower of “judicious Butler” world *need*, on his principles, to object when, for instance A. E. Taylor says:

Natural science, let me say again, is exclusively concerned with the detection of “laws of nature,” uniformities of sequence in the course of events. The typical form of such a law is the statement that whenever certain definitely measurable events occur some other measurable event will also be found to occur. Any query thus delimited obviously can throw no light on the question whether God exists or not, the question whether the whole course of events among which the man of science discovers these uniformities of sequence is or is not guided by a supreme intelligence to the production of an intrinsically good result.

The Reformed Apologist, on the other hand, would compromise what he holds to be of the essence of Christianity if he agreed with Taylor. For him the whole of created reality, including therefore the fields of research with which the various sciences deal, reveals the same God of which Scripture speaks. **The very essence of created reality is its revelational character.** Scientists deal with that which has the imprint of God’s face upon it. Created reality may be compared to a great estate. The owner has his name plainly and indelibly written at unavoidable places. How then would it be possible for some stranger to enter this estate, make researches in it, and then fairly say that in these researches he need not and cannot be confronted with the question of ownership? To change the figure, compare the facts of nature and history, the facts with which the sciences are concerned, to a linoleum that has its figure indelibly imprinted in it. The pattern of such as linoleum cannot be effaced to the linoleum itself is won away. Thus inescapably does the scientist meet the pattern of christian theism in each fact with which he deals.

The apostle Paul lays great stress upon the fact that man is without excuse **if he does not discover God in nature.** Following Paul’s example, **Calvin argues that men ought to see God, not a god, not some supernatural power, but the only God in nature.** They have not done justice by the facts they see displayed before and within them if they say that a god exists or that God *probably* exists. The **Calvinist** holds to essential **perspicuity of natural as well as biblical revelation.** This does not mean that no non-Christian and a non-theistic interpretation of reality cannot be made to appear plausible. **But it does mean that no non-Christian position can be made to appear more than merely plausible.**

Roman Catholic apologists can, therefore, to the extent that their own theology does not teach the perspicuity of natural revelation, with consistency use the method of the natural man. Just as Rome, having a semi-pagan conception of the nature of man, can agree with the natural man’s conception of the starting point in knowledge, so also, having a semi-pagan concept of the nature of the objects man must know, he can to a large extent agree with the natural man’s conception of the method of knowledge.

Arminian apologists also, to the extent that their theology is faulty, can consistently agree with the non-believer on the question of methodology. Believing to some extent in the **autonomy and ultimacy of human personality, Arminianism** can, in a measure, agree on the question of starting point with those **who make men the final reference point in all human predication.** So also, believing to some extent in the existence of facts that are not wholly under the control and direction of the counsel of

God, **Arminianism can agree on the question of method with those for whom the object of knowledge has nothing at all to do with the plan of God.**

In contradistinction from both Roman Catholics and Arminians, however, the Reformed Apologists cannot agree at all with the methodology of the natural man. Disagreeing with the natural man's interpretation of himself as the **ultimate reference point**, the Reformed apologist must seek his point of contact with the natural man in that which is **beneath the threshold of his working consciousness, in the sense of deity that he seeks to suppress**. And to do this the Reformed apologist must also seek a point of contact **with the systems constructed by the natural man**. **But this point of contact must be in the nature of a head-on collision**. If there is not head-on collision with the systems of the natural man, there will be no point of contact with the sense of deity in the natural man.

Notes on Arminianism

Excerpt from

Van Til and the Limits of Reason

Pgs. 28-31

My comments in [blue]

In **Arminianism**, as Van Til analyzes it, the unwillingness to face the full implication of original sin carried Protestantism further along on the road of concessions. In Watson, sin is ascribed to **finitude rather than to moral revolt against God**. **Evil and finitude of necessity go together in this view, and man needs a savior not because of a moral condition but because his is a human being**. **In other words, the implication is that man needs to be delivered not so much from sin as from creaturehood – from his finitude into infinitude**. Moreover, from the Arminian point of view, man's rationality and freedom involve and include his ability to change the history of God has planned or to do things God has not planned. **In short, man's life is outside the plan of God and constitutes a fact beyond God's control, one to which God can offer assistance but cannot govern**. We are here on the road to the **modern philosophic point of view** which sees the space-time continuum as the matrix of all reality. God exists, and is in the picture, but increasingly as a spectator, on the sidelines, ready to cheer man on but unable to determine the course and outcome of the race. **Arminianism** allows God and Christ onto the scene only to start the race, remove certain obstacles, and to award a prize. **The final determination of events belongs to man**. **Arminianism** further holds that, **to be truly ethical, the will of man must be exclusively responsible for what is done**. [That is, man in his *assumed autonomousness* thinks he is self-determinative in all he does - his will is self-determined, he is the 'first cause' in his actions, etc., which excludes God as the first cause. This perverted mindset is the result of man's declaration of

independence from God. Man is a genuine second cause, but back of that is God as the first cause. See also the doctrine of compatibility.]

But the measure of **self-determination** demanded for man is an impossibility (and a significant impossibility) in that such **self-determination is possible for God alone**. **Since man is a creature**, living in a created world, in time governed by God, his act cannot suddenly break context with its entire world. **The act of a creature**, in a created world and in created time, **can be only a created act**. It is not only a personal act and a responsible act **but also a created act**. **Thus, in its concept of the ethical act, Arminianism claims for man what is possible only with God and thereby robs God to honor man**. Moreover, God is further robbed by making evil virtually mean finiteness. If evil is finiteness, and **finitude** is the inherent condition of man, then the Greek dilemma is again with us, namely, that evil is as ultimate as the good, that evil is a part of the ultimate reality. **Primacy is given to the temporal realm, which is the determinative one in this view**, and evil is made basic to the temporal realm because finitude is inherent in it. **The moral evil of Christian thought is eliminated, man is too independent for a concept of transmitted original sin to be credible**. Theology thus gives way to an anthropology, God to man, and eternity to time.

In **Calvinism**, the Greek element was eliminated from Christian-theistic thought and a consistent epistemology formulated. **The false independence of man was shown for what it is and the noetic influence of sin fully recognized**. Scripture was made central to thinking and the work of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of man to the true knowledge of God emphasized. Calvin's conception distinguished between the **narrower and wider sense** or understanding of the **image**. In the **narrower sense**, it applies to the true **knowledge, true righteousness, and true holiness** which man possessed when created by God. **The fall destroyed this image**, whereas the image in its **broader sense**, **man's rationality and morality**, his **intellectual** and **emotional** life, **remain still in God's image but with limitations**. Man retains these aspects of his nature but in a **blinded sense**. He is rational but his rationality is spiritually blind, emotionally distorted and out of kilter in terms of its created purpose, i.e., to function analogically, to think God's thoughts after Him, and to interpret and experience life in terms of the will of God.

Man, while spiritually blind, is still a person, and therefore the **synergism** of Luther is no necessity for Calvin. Synergism faced an either-or situation: either God acted or man acted. It did not dare face the ultimate question: either God is a person or man is a person. For Calvin, man is a personality because God is a person. The sinner, a created person, cannot know God aright unless **new light** is given him by the **Scripture** and the **power of sight** restored **by the Holy Spirit working in his heart**. **Salvation is not the externalization of man but rather his restoration to his original perfection and a development thereof**. The incarnation is therefore not made necessary by man's finitude **but by his sin**. Since man's finitude is not the problem, Christ's human nature, in the Lutheran sense, is not needed in the sacrament. **The eternal order is the determinative one**, and God saves man in time, not because of time. God saves man *through* the incarnation, by means of the appearance of the Second person of the Trinity in history and his incarnation, whereby human nature was united without intermingling with the divine nature. The incarnation was the means of salvation, but the *cause* of salvation was to be found only in the **foreordained and predestined eternal counsel of God** – only in the ontological trinity.

The Errors of Human Philosophy

Notes on Reality and the 'god' of Philosophers: Immanentistic Philosophy, from **Calvin vs. Aquinas** on Man's Depravity and Man Suppressing the Knowledge of God, Calvin on Regeneration Necessary, Fallen Man's Understandings and Reasonings

Excerpts from
The Defense of Christianity and My Credo

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs. 15-21

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What then of the generality of men that are not taught of God through Christ and his Spirit? Must it be said, since they have not this "saving knowledge" of God which comes through Christ, that they have no knowledge of God at all? Must it first be shown to them in terms of a **theory of knowledge and reality which they have devised to their own principles, to come to the knowledge of God**? If so, then why must men be taught by the Christ who has revealed God? Must it be shown to them that in terms of their own principles it is *possible* for them to learn about the Christ? If so, then must not men *first* teach the Christ of God and the world before they Christ can teach them? Must they be told that in terms of their own principle they can see the need for the regenerating power of the Spirit as a prerequisite to understanding the Scriptures, knowing the Christ and thus coming to God? If so, then why is the Holy Spirit necessary to convict men of sin, of righteousness and of judgement?

All these questions must , therefore, be answered in the negative. For to answer them in the affirmative would mean that though man as a finite being is not in contact with the truth, that though he be floating in an infinity of **Chance**, yet he *might* find the truth. If on this basis he would find the truth, it would be because he, by accident, had "hit upon it." When thus hitting upon it, he would "hit

upon" a god who is himself afloat in the bottomless ocean of Chance. It would not be the God of the Scriptures at all.

Accordingly Calvin argues that though mankind generally does not have the knowledge that comes from being "taught of God," **men do have a knowledge that is created with them and inherited from Adam.** It is the knowledge which they have as image bearers of God. **Men generally seek to suppress this knowledge of God.** They would gladly live where the searchlight of God's revelation does not constantly expose them to themselves. But there is no such place. This searchlight never ceases to shine. It shines particularly within them. There is no hiding from it. The knowledge of God is infixed in their being. Hence,

If for these there is any respite from anxiety of conscience, it is not much different from the sleep of drunken or frenzied persons, who do not rest peacefully even while sleeping because they are continually troubled with dire and dreadful dreams. The impious themselves therefore exemplify the fact that some conception of God ever alive in all men's minds. (Calvin, I. 3, 2)

Although Diagoras and his like may jest at whatever has been believed in every age concerning religion, and Dionysius may mock the heavenly judgment, this is sardonic laughter, for the worm of conscience sharper than any cauterizing iron, gnaws away within them (I. 3, 3).

Men in general are, therefore, truth *suppressors*. They are not those who are first of all *without* knowledge of the truth. They are indeed such, if one thinks of the knowledge that must come from Scripture. **But they are first of all truth *possessors*, or truth-knowers, who have, by sinning, become truth *suppressors*.** Having taken to themselves the right to define the nature of God and of themselves, they have mingled the idea of their new god with that of the God they know by virtue of their creation. In their natural theology, that is, in what, as sinful men, they set forth as their view about God, they never state the truth without adulteration. They do not completely succeed in suppressing the truth, but they never assert the truth without an overwhelming admixture of error. **The god of the philosophers is never their Creator and the Creator of the universe. He is always of necessity bound up with his creation. Hence sinful unregenerate men never worship the true God as they ought. In practice they do not know him because when they think of him, they, of necessity, think falsely of him; they always degrade him to the level of the creature.**

But now, says Calvin, God does not allow this process of degradation to go on to its full expression. The Holy Spirit continues to appeal to men to return to God, And though God may, in punishment for their in, allow men to fall into every deeper sin, he never utterly ignores them. He keeps calling men back to himself. Accordingly, the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him (I. 1, 1). God does not allow men wholly to suppress "that which nature, itself permits no one to forget, although many strive with every nerve to this end" (I, 3,). God sees to it that it is more difficult to obliterate his impression from the mind of man than to alter our "natural disposition" (I. 3, 1). **Though the world "tries as far as it is able to cast away all knowledge of God" and though of all things they most wish to extinguish the sense of deity with them, they never fully succeed in doing so.** (I. 3, 3).

This maintenance of the sense of deity within men in spite of their most desperate acts of suppression is coupled with the idea that they continue to receive from God his bountiful gifts. God is not man's Creator without as such also being his bountiful benefactor.

Let us remember, whenever each of us contemplates his own nature, that there is one God who so governs all natures that he would have us look unto him, direct our faith to him, and worship and call upon him. For nothing is more preposterous than to enjoy the very remarkable gifts that attest the divine nature within us, yet to overlook the Author who gives them to us at our asking. With what clear manifestation his might draws us to contemplate him! (I. 5, 6)
...the prophet shows that what are thought to be chance occurrences are just so many proofs of heavenly providence, especially of fatherly kindness. (I. 5, 8).

Consequently, we know that most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of this essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself....(I. 5,9).

...Sometime we are driven by the leading and direction of these things to contemplate God; this of necessity happens to all men. Yet after we rashly grasp a conception of some sort of divinity. Straightway we fall back into the **ravings or evil imaginings of our flesh**, and corrupt by our vanity the pure truth of God. In one respect we are indeed unlike, because each one of us privately forges his own particular error; **yet we are very much alike in that, one and all, we forsake the one truth God for prodigious trifles**. Not only the common folk and dull-witted men, but also the most excellent and those otherwise endowed with keen discernment, are infected with this disease. (I. 5. 11).

It is therefore in vain that so many burning lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author. Although they bathe us wholly in their radiance, yet they can of themselves in no way lead us into the right path... For this reason, the apostle, in that very passage where he calls the worlds the images of things invisible, adds that through faith we understand that they have been fashioned by God's word (Heb. 11:3). He means by this that the invisible divinity is made manifest in such spectacles, but that we have not the eyes to see this **unless they be illumined by the inner revelation of God through faith.... Therefore,** although the Lord does not want for testimony while he sweetly attracts men to the knowledge of himself with many and varied kindnesses, **they do not cease on this account to follow their own ways, that is, their fatal error** (I. 5, 14).

Now, those not "taught of Christ," sometimes in spite of themselves, speak "from a real feeling of nature," as if content with a single God (I. 10, 3). When they thus speak, they "simply use the name God as if they had thought one God sufficient." It is not their "natural theology" – the interpretations usually given by men of the revelation of God – which has in it any particle of truth.

But all the heathen, to a man, by their own vanity either were dragged or slipped back into **false inventions**, and thus their perceptions so vanished that whatever they had naturally sensed concerning the sole God had no value beyond making them inexcusable... As we have already said elsewhere, all the evasions the **philosophers have skillfully contrived to not refute the charge of defection**; rather, **the truth of God has been corrupted by them all**. For this reason, Habakkuk, when he condemned all idols, bade men seek God “in his temple” (Hab. 2:20) lest believers admit someone other than him who revealed himself by his Word (I. 10, 3).

The “**light of nature**,” and the “**law of their being**,” speak to men of God, as the bountiful benefactor of mankind calling them back to himself. In the face of this inescapable wooing of God to forsake their rebellion against God,

Man’s mind, full as it is of pride and boldness, dares to imagine a god according to its own capacity; as it sluggishly plods, indeed is overwhelmed with the crassest ignorance, it conceives an un-reality and an empty appearance as God (I. 11,8).

Naturally then, **Calvin** could not do what **Aquinas** had done with respect to the knowledge of unbelievers. He could not think of taking the **Aristotelian** view of the **analogy of being** as an essentially true interpretation of reality. **The philosophy of Aristotle, like the philosopher of any of those not “taught by Christ,” offers no concepts that are essentially sound. All the concepts of such a philosophy are based upon the assumption that God and the cosmos are aspects of one reality subject to the same laws. The god of Aristotle as well as the god of Plato, in fact, the god of any non-christian philosopher, is a god constructed by the rebellious mind of man in the interest of suppressing the truth.**

This does not mean that no use whatsoever can be made of the interpretations given by non-Christian men of the facts of God’s revelation to them. Although not according to their **innate principle of rebellion against God** but *in spite of it*, when the “**light of nature**,” revelation of God, shines through to them in spite of themselves, they have been able to speak much truth.

The “idea that God is the sould of the world” is “the most tolerable that philosophers have suggested” (Calvin: 1, 14, 1 -) However, such a basic interpretation of the world given by fallen man is **immanentistic**. [*immanentistic is pantheistic...God is in all, is all, working himself out through all things, etc., as opposed to transcendent. Philosophers do not distinguish between Creator and creature. Tree huggers are pantheistic in their world view*]

In spite of this fact, we may freely learn from “secular writers” about many things (I. 15, 2) Though what remains in man of the image of God after the fall into sin is a “frightful deformity” ((I. 15, 4), “though nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease ridden’ (I. 14, 4), though philosophers, since they do not distinguish between man as he was before and as he is after the fall, “mistakenly confuse two very diverse states of man” ((I. 15, 7); we may profitably listen tot hem, especially when they turn their “attention to things below” (II. 2, 13). For all men are sunder the power of God “whether their minds ar to be conciliated, or their malice to be restrained that it may not do harm (I. 17, 7).

...soundness of mind and uprightness of heart were withdrawn at the same time. This is the corruption of the natural gifts. For even though something of understanding and judgment remains as a residue along with the will, yet we shall not call a mind whole and sound that is both weak and plunged into deep darkness. And depravity of the will is too well known.

Since **reason**, therefore, by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and by which he understand and judges, is a natural gift, **it could not be completely wiped out; but is was partly weakened and partly corrupted, so that its misshapen ruins appear.**

Similarly the **will**, **because it is inseparable from man's nature, did not perish, but was so bound to wicked desires that it cannot strive after the right.** This is, indeed, a complete definition, but one needing a fuller explanation.

...When we so condemn **human understanding** for its perpetual blindness as to leave it no perception of any object whatever, we not only go against God's Word, but also run counter to the experience of common sense. For we see implanted in human nature some sort of desire to search out the truth to which man would not at all spire if he had not already savored it. Human understanding then possesses some power of perception, since it is by nature captivated by love of truth... Yet this longing for truth, such as it is, languishes before it enters upon its race because it soon falls into vanity. **Indeed, man's mind, because of its dullness, cannot hold to the right path, but wanders through darkness,** until it strays away and finally disappears. Thus it betrays how incapable it is of seeking and finding truth (II. 2, 12).

Good summary: good insight here by John Calvin (1550s). He is one of the best theologians of all time. Edwards is the other one.

He is talking about how God gives gifts to men, even if they are reprobates. I mean, there are many good scientists, athletes, etc., many moral people, that are hell-bound. Heavy. But this fact makes the world livable for the elect. Heavy, too!

...pg 23, Let us, accordingly, learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good (II. 2, 15).

Meanwhile, we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the divine Spirit, which he distributes to whomever he will, for the common good of mankind... It is no wonder, then, that the knowledge of all that is most excellent in human life is said to be communicated to us through the Spirit of God. Nor is there reason for anyone to ask, What have the impious, who are utterly estranged from God, to do with this Spirit? We ought to understand the statement that the Spirit of God dwells only in believers (Rom. 8:9) as referring to the Spirit of sanctification through whom we are consecrated as temples to God (1Cor. 3:16). **Nonetheless he fills, moves, and quickens all things by the power of the same Spirit, and does so according to the character that he bestowed upon each kind by the laws of creation.** But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the

work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance. For if we neglect God's gift freely offered in these arts, we ought to suffer just punishment for our sloths. But lest anyone think a man truly blessed when he is credited with possessing great power to comprehend truth under the elements of this world [cf. Col. 2:8], we should at once add that all this capacity to understand, with the understanding that follows upon it, is an unstable and transitory thing in God's sight, when a solid foundation of truth does not underlie it. For with the greatest truth Augustine teaches that as the free gifts were withdrawn from man after the Fall, so the natural ones remaining were corrupted (II. 2, 16).

Romanism/Arminianism vs. Calvinism

Pg 24 to 28

Implications of Calvinism for Apologetics

From the four points which our pastor saw clearly in Calvin's *Institutes*, it is apparent that:

1. Calvin makes a sharp distinction between the revelation of God to man and **man's response to that revelation**. This implies the rejection of natural theology such as Aquinas taught.

2. He makes a sharp distinction between the responses to God's revelation made by:

(a.) man in his original condition, i.e., Adam before the Fall;

(b.) mankind, whose "understanding is subjected to blindness and the heart to depravity: (II. 1,9).

(c.) those that are "taught of Christ' through the Scripture and **whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit**.

3. These points together indicate an approach to apologetics on the part of **Calvin** distinct from that of **Aquinas**. From Calvin's point of view the Romanist position does not do justice to the Christian doctrine of creation.

(a.) This indicates, as noted, first: a measure of **irrationalism** in Romanist thought.

(1) Romanism does not place all the facts of man's environment exclusively under the categories of creation and providence. This implies sympathy for the idea of "**brute facts**," **facts that are not now, or are not yet, interpreted by God**. Search [codeBF](#), [brutefactdef](#), and [code524](#). In toning down the biblical doctrines of creation and providence by seeking to combine them with Aristotelian notion of the analogy of being (that the world is both somehow participant in Being, and participant in non-

being), Romanism takes away from the clarity of the revelation of God so far as this revelation surrounds man.

(2) Romanism does not think of the image of God in through Christ. It thinks of man, in part at least, in terms of Aristotle's notion of the analogy of being. Accordingly, man is thought of as having an inherent weakness – a bias towards sin. Man, as created, lives on the verge of non-being. On an Aristotelian basis, non-being is evil. Thus the biblical idea of sin, as exclusively ethical in its import, is confused, to some extent, with the idea of sin as inherent in man because of his finitude.

(b.) This indicates, secondly, a measure of rationalism in Romanist thought.

(1) In not interpreting man's environment exclusively in terms of creation and providence, Romanism tends to think of **facts** of this environment as part of a **chain of being which includes God as well as the universe**. As the **Aristotelian** notion of the **analogy of being** tends on the one hand to the idea of **brute fact** and therefore to **irrationalism**, so this same notion tends on the other hand to conceive the difference between **eternal and temporal being** as merely a **gradational** one. This again indicates the presence of a measure of **rationalism** in Romanist thought.

(2) In Romanist thinking, the image of God in man is partly based upon **the idea of man's participation in the being of God**. Thus man's own constitution is not exclusively revelational of God on a created plane. **The idea of participation in the nature of God in part cancels out the idea of God's revealing himself to man within man**.

In consequence, too, man's ideal of **knowledge** would not exclusively be that of re-interpreting God's revelation within and about man. His ideal of knowledge would become, in part, a joint enterprise with God of interpreting reality. Thus revelation and response to revelation tend to merge into one process of rational inquiry. Thus **rationalism** appears in the apologetic of Thomas.

Turning these things over in his mind, our pastor realized in a general way that his sympathies lay with Calvin. He began to realize that the **difference between Roman Catholic theology and the Reformed faith is an all-pervasive one**. He began to realize too that this all-pervasive difference in theology implies a difference in the method of defending Christianity. He sensed in particular that on the Romanist basis he would still be the victim of the battle between **experts**. There would be no finished revelation available to him. The revelation he would deal with would not be fully clear. And such would be true even for the experts themselves. The Pope himself, though the vicar of Christ, would still be facing the same impenetrable mystery that is inherent in Reality which he, as pastor, faces. The revelation of God would tend to merge with the theology of man. Man would have to shift for himself; he would have no **absolute authority** speaking to him. The Pope, though the vicar of Christ, would tend to be no more than a wise man than other men.

In particular it appeared to our pastor that on the Romanist position man cannot be thought of as a **covenant being**. Since man is not directly and exclusively dependent upon God in all this knowledge and action, his sin would not be essentially sin against God. Sin would not be the self-conscious breaking of the law of God. It would be in part a failure to live up to the law of his being which participates in the law of the being of God.

There could, on this basis, be no genuine responsibility on the part of man in the course of history. Even the plan of God is, on the Romanist view, not **all-determinative of the course of history**. This plan of God is not **all-determinative**, because man participates in the being of God. **The will of man participates in the nature of the will of God**. Hence God could not and did not confront the will of man in Adam with a choice that would bring all men under the condemnation of God. The condemnation of men by God could not depend upon an act of their human will, because the human will is not exclusively a creation of the will of God, and the will of God is not in a position to issue an absolute command to man. Man's will is, on this view, not exclusively the will of a creature of God, and therefore **it is not, at the beginning of history, a perfect will. Its finitude implies a measure of imperfection**.

Furthermore, on the **Romanist** view, when **Adam** fell into sin his intellect did not become blinded, and his will did not become wholly perverse in its intent. Being already partly blind by virtue of its finitude, man's fall could not result in intellectual blinding. So also, being partly immersed in non-being, the will could not be wholly perverted by the fall. On the other hand, being partly participant in the *intellect* of God, the *intellect* of man could not lose its inherent measure of divinity. So also the *will* of man, being participant in the will of God, could not lose this inherent measure of divinity. **In short**, to the extent that **Romanist thought** is patterned after the idea of the **analogy of being**, **man was originally never placed high enough to fall very low and never fell low enough to need the reaching down of the grace of God for this restoration before he could think or will that which is true and right**.

Our pastor could now see that on the view of Calvin the difference between believer and unbeliever as they confront one another may be summarized as follows.

Christian and Non-Christian Views

1. Reality

Both Christians and non-Christians make presuppositions about the *nature of reality*.

a. The Christian presupposes the self-contained God and his plan for the universe as back of all things and therewith the absolute distinction between Creator and creature.

b. The non-Christian presupposes "Chaos and the Old Night," or the self-existence of matter in some sense.

2. Epistemology

Neither Christian nor non-Christian can, as finite beings, by means of logic, legislate what reality *should* be.

a. Knowing this, the Christian observes facts and arranges them logically in self-conscious subjection to the plan of God revealed in Scripture, i.e., he listens to God's explanation of this relation to the world and man, both in Adam and in Christ, before he "listens" to, and during his observation of, the "facts." He knows that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Assuming the plan of God, the Christian knows that the facts have a divine order. The Christians' task in science is to uncover the God-ordained structure of the world. For the Christian, man and the world are made for one another so that the rational abilities of man are applicable to the world as man seeks to "subdue the earth."

b. Knowing this, the non-Christian, nonetheless, constantly attempts to impossible by demanding a coherence that originate with himself.

(1) Negatively, he must assume that reality is not divinely created and controlled in accordance with God's plan at all, and that the Christian story therefore cannot be true. The world of "facts" springs from "**Chaos and Old Night**" – ultimate Chance.

(2) Positively, he must assume that reality is after all rationally constituted and answers exhaustively to his logical manipulations. If the world were not rational or "uniform," then there could be no science. Any "cosmic mind," or God, must therefore be able to be manipulated by man-made categories. Any God not reducible to logical or empirical categories, [hence view of **Leibniz** I think] and therefore completely understandable, is a false God.

Excerpts from
*Christian Apologetics and
The Defense of Christianity & My Credo*

By Cornelius Van Til

DCM: Aquinas/Calvin 8-14; 32,33; 47, 52-60; Barth & Law of Contradiction 56.

An Illustration – Mr. White, Mr. Black and Mr. Grey, 36-84.

Van Til's conclusion in apologetics: 86-93

CA 134 & 136

code522

Modern Philosophy and Philosophers in particular,

The concept of the “expert”, man’s assumed autonomy and ultimacy,
the concept of authority of reason or God, etc.

DCM 8-14

Calvin/Aquinas

B. *The Place of Scripture*

The second very obvious feature of Calvin’s *Institutes* noted by our pastor is the place assigned to Scripture. On the basis of present general revelation alone, no one actually knows God truly as Creator. Hence the need of Scripture.

Now, in order that the true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture. Hence, there also emerges the beginning of true understanding when we reverently embrace what it pleases God thereto witness of himself (I. 6, 2).

Even the world of natural and historical fact with which science deals cannot be truly interpreted by anyone who is not a Christian.

Combining these two points, the **clear revelation of God is in the universe, both in man’s environment and in man himself**, and God’s revelation in Scripture produces a remarkable result. According to the first point, which is based on Paul’s letter to the Romans, every man knows God. No one can help but know God. **Self-consciousness immediately involves God-consciousness**. According to the second point, no one knows God except through Scripture. **No one even knows any fact of nature for what it is, as created, directed and controlled by God, except through Scripture**. No one knows how to combine “logic” and “fact” aright in the universe except through revelation.

Both points set Calvin’s position over against that of Aquinas. The first does so by stressing the fact that wherever he looks man is **naturally and unavoidably confronted with the face of God**. It is only by **suppressing** the truth that man can be said “not to know” the truth. Man cannot be a sinner against God unless he knows God in the sense of Romans 1. On the other hand, man cannot be rescued from sin, i.e., unless he knows God in a saving sense through the death and resurrection of Christ applied to him by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

According to **Aquinas**, the creation of man in the **image of God** does not mean that man unavoidably knows God. The revelation of God round about and within man is **not so clear** as to make it impossible for man not to know God, and himself as the creature of God. Man does full justice to the evidence within and about him if he merely concludes that God probably exists. **Aquinas** argued that man’s knowledge begins with sensation. **There is in this knowledge of God derived from sensation an inherent uncertainty**. We can only be certain of what God *is not*. Any positive statement about God on the basis of natural revelation must, in the nature of the case, be a subjective projection and as such must be uncertain. **Finite man cannot be expected to have, through natural revelation, any certain knowledge of God. Ignorance of God is not blameworthy**. Why should man be accountable for knowing God and God’s requirement for man, if God has not clearly revealed himself to man?

Calvin's point concerning the absolute necessity of Scripture also sets off his position from that of Aquinas. Since man's ignorance of God is blameworthy, this ignorance can be removed by nothing else than the redeeming work of Christ. Only Scripture as the word of Christ reports God's work of redemption in Christ. Only through the mirror of Scripture, therefore, can general revelation be seen for what it is.

For Aquinas, on the other hand, Scripture occupies no such important place. It is not indispensable for the right interpretation of nature. Ignorance of God is not necessarily, at least not exclusively, the result of a misinterpretation of nature. Ignorance of God is inherent in human nature as finite. Hence this ignorance is not exclusively culpable ignorance. The Bible as the message of redemption is not necessary for man's proper interpretation of natural revelation.

C. *The Necessity of the Testimony of the Holy Spirit* (pg 9)

The third obvious feature about Calvin's *Institutes* noted by our pastor is its stress on the necessity of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man if he is to receive the Scripture as the Word of God.

Special revelation, or Scripture in its documented form, provides in point of fact in the view of Calvin, only the objective side of the cure he finds has been provided by God. The subjective side is provided by the Scriptures: the eyes are opened that they may see even through these spectacles, only by the witness of the Spirit in the heart.

It is not that the Scriptures, in Calvin's view, do not clearly manifest themselves to be the Word of God. On the contrary, "Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste" (I. 7,2; I. 7, 5). The heavenly nature of its doctrine, the consent of its parts, the majesty of its style, the antiquity of its teaching, the sincerity of its narrative, its miraculous accompaniment, circumstantially confirmed, its continuous use through many ages, its sealing by martyr's blood, clearly indicate the divinity of Scripture. Even so the words of Scripture "will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded" (I. 7,4).

Some good folks are annoyed that a clear proof is not ready at hand when the impious, unpunished, murmur against God's Word. As if the Spirit were not called both "seal" and "guarantee" (2Cor. 1:22) for confirming the faith of the godly; because until he illumines their minds, they ever waver among many doubts! (I. 7,4).

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly test upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no

marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! (I. 7,5).

If now this third point be added to the first two, the following result is obtained: **Natural revelation is perfectly clear. Men ought from it to know God and ought through it to see all other things as dependent on God. But only he who looks at nature through the mirror of Scripture does understand natural revelation for what it is.** Furthermore, no one can see Scripture for what it is unless he is given the ability to do so by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Only those who are taught of God see the Scriptures for what they are and therefore see the revelation of God in nature for what it is. To be taught of God is a “singular privilege” which God bestows on his “elect whom he distinguishes from the human race as a whole.” As taught of God, the elect both understand the Bible as the Word of God, and interpret natural revelation through the Bible. **[All key points!]** The rest of mankind, not taking Scripture as the Word of God, in consequence also misinterpret the natural revelation of God.

If God has willed this treasure of understanding to be hidden from his children, it is no wonder or absurdity that the multitude of men are so ignorant and stupid! Among the “multitude” I include even certain distinguished folk, until they become engrafted into the body of the church. Besides, Isaiah, warning that the prophetic teaching would be beyond belief, not only to foreigners but also to the Jews who wanted to be reckoned as members of the Lord’s household, at the same time adds the reason: “The arm of God will not be revealed” to all (Isa. 53:1) Whenever, then, the fewness of believers disturbs us, let the converse come to mind, that only to those to whom it is given can comprehend the mysteries of God [cf. Matt. 13:11] (I. 7, 5)

By this time our pastor has become aware of a radical difference between the approach of **Calvin** and that of **Aquinas!**

In the first place there is a basic difference concerning the nature of revelation. For Calvin, revelation is always and everywhere clear. The facts of natural revelation, both within and about man, are so clearly revelatory of God that he who runs may read. The *indicia divinitatis* (marks of divinity) of Scripture are equally clear. **In fact, the revelation of God to man is so clear that no man can help but to know God.** Thus, man is *from the beginning* in contact with the truth. Moreover, he cannot separate the *existence* of God from the *character* of God. The intelligibility of anything, for man, presupposes the existence of God – the God whose nature and character are delineated in God’s revelation, found both in nature and in Scripture. **It is this God – the only God – whom all men, of necessity, “know.”**

Over against this idea of revelation, as clearly and exclusively based upon, and expressive of the idea of the **Creator-creature distinction**, stands that of **Aquinas. According to Aquinas the revelation of God to man is not inherently clear.** As finite man lives on the verge of non-being,³ and as such a mixture, man’s knowledge is derived from the senses. Man is also, therefore enmeshed in an environment which **is not exclusively determined by the plan of God, but rather a combination of the forces of God and of chaos.**⁴ Accordingly, Aquinas thinks that man can intelligently discuss the question of the existence of God without at the same time presupposing the nature of God as revealed in Scripture. **Thus the attitude of doubt with respect to the existence of God is assumed to be legitimate. Ignorance is not basically culpable.**

In volved in this original separation of the existence and the nature of God is the idea that for man, **the nature of God is not exclusively determined by the revelation of God.** The nature of God is, in part, **determined by man himself.**

It is thus that the scholastic notion of **natural theology** is born. If man, without special revelation, partly determines the nature of God, then this nature of God is, to an extent, defined by the supposed demands of logic and fact, as man knows these independently of revelation of God. **Thus, the distinction between the revelation of God to man and the interpretation of this revelation by man is obscured.** **Natural revelation** then tends to be identified with **natural theology.** **This idea of natural theology assumes that without Scripture and the testimony of the Spirit men generally can have a measure of morally and spiritually acceptable knowledge of God.** It assumes that there can be an interpretation of the natural revelation of God with which both believers and unbelievers are in basic agreement.

The difference between the knowledge of the Christian and the knowledge of the non-Christian consists, then, primarily by former being more comprehensive than the latter. The Christian adds to his knowledge of facts obtained by his own empirical research without reference to scripture, the information about these facts that he gets from supernatural revelation. On the **Thomistic basis the difference between the knowledge of the Christian and the knowledge of the non-Christian is primarily qualitative.** To be sure, according to Thomas, sin has wounded the natural capacities of man. Accordingly, the supernatural must, to some extent, be *remedial* as well as *supplementative*. This fact, however, does not change the fact that for **Thomas** supernatural revelation is *primarily* *supplementative*.

Aquinas thinks of the position of Calvin as being **rationalistic** because he holds that man unavoidably, by virtue of his innate knowledge of God, is in contact with the truth. If all men do of necessity know God, **Aquinas** would reason, then how could they be responsible for seeking God in the world? How could they be responsible creatures in the sight of God? **Aquinas therefore insists that man is only potentially, and not necessarily, in contact with the truth about God.**

On the other hand, Aquinas thinks of Calvin's position as being **irrationalistic** because he says that none but the elect, after the entrance of sin, can be said to have any morally or spiritually acceptable knowledge of God. **Aquinas would say that all men have this knowledge.** Aquinas is concerned, therefore, about *cultivation*, while Calvin is concerned about *implantation* of the grace and knowledge of God, and only after that about its implementation.

Calvin thinks of the position of Aquinas as being **irrationalistic**, because it is not clearly and exclusively from the outset based upon the distinction between God as Creator and man as creature. Any position that is clearly based upon this distinction, Calvin would say, **must regard the image of God in man as implying the idea of inherent knowledge of God.** **It is only this inherent and unavoidable content of human knowledge that makes it possible to avoid skepticism and to hold man responsible for sin.** Without this idea of the unavoidability of the knowledge of God on the part of man, it is always possible for man to make an excuse for not knowing God. **Herein is the irrationalism of Aquinas.**

Secondly, Calvin thinks of Aquinas' position as being *rationalistic* because it assigns to the mind of man the ability to determine to some extent the nature of God apart for the contents of divine revelation. If the knowledge of God's nature is not from the outset given with the knowledge of man's nature as the creation of God, then it is up to man to determine the nature of both God and man for himself apart from revelation. Man is therefore left to his own devices and determines a "way which seems right unto man."

In the third place, man is also responsible, to some extent, for determining the nature of sin. Thus sin cannot, on Aquinas' position, be "want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God" which God has, on the basis of his nature, given to man, but is rather the transgression of that which is "right in his own eyes." The only revelation of himself and his laws which God may give man, therefore, must be in terms of what man has by his own logic and experience already said about God, religion, and morality. God must listen to man before man listens to God.

To be sure, Aquinas does not carry out this point of view with such consistency. But, since he assigns to the mind of man, some measure of ability to determine the nature of both God and man, apart from being taught of God through Scripture and the testimony of the Spirit, his God is no longer the sovereign God of mankind.

DCM pgs 31-35

Arminian Apologetics

Having contemplated these matters, our pastor realized that he could not engage in the propagation and defense of Christian faith conjointly with those who are committed to the **Roman Catholic** point of view. The reason for this now appeared to be obvious to him. One's theology and one's apologetics go together. A Roman Catholic theologian will, naturally, also be a Roman Catholic apologist, and will, therefore, encourage the non-Christian to hold onto his covenant-breaking viewpoint. The Roman Catholic apologist is unable to challenge the wisdom of the world.

But how about the differences among Protestants? The basic difference in historic Protestantism is that of **Arminianism** and **Calvinism**.

What about **Arminian** evangelicals? Perhaps they can offer our pastor an apologetic less drastic and therefore more acceptable to the natural man than that of Calvin. But can one, who has seen with Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield that Calvinism is Christianity come to its own, cooperate with Arminian Christians in an effort to defend the faith?

Arminianism holds, as Warfield says, to a defective theology. Arminianism is inconsistent Protestantism. In its view of the "freedom" of the will of man, Arminianism resembles Romanism. Like the Romanist theologian, though to a lesser extent, the Arminian theologian holds to some measure of self-salvation. Warfield therefore says that "Calvinism is just Christianity." Must we then not also say that Reformed apologetics is just Christian apologetics?

If this should be the case then we must, perhaps, speak of a Romanist-Arminian method and, in contrast with it, of a Reformed method of apologetics.

Suppose now that our young pastor meets his close friend, the young minister from the “**evangelical**” church down the street. Certainly, on more than one occasion they have agreed that they together have far more in common than they do with the Roman Catholic priest. This Arminian evangelical gives our pastor a copy of Bishop Butler’s *Analogy*. Let us look with him into this work and see what we find.

We soon find that the Butler type of argument also assumes that there is an area of “fact” on the interpretation of which Christians and non-Christians agree. It assumes a non-rational principle of individuation, which means that a “fact” may be discovered, analyzed, and “known” in isolation from all other facts. It therefore concedes to the unbeliever that since historical facts are “unique” nothing certain can be said of them by way of significance or meaning. But this assumption, always untrue, has never appeared so clearly false as in our own day.

To be sure, there is a sense in which it must be said that all men have all facts “in common.” Saint and sinner alike are face to face with God and the universe of God. But the sinner is like the man with colored glasses on his nose. The Scriptures tell us that **the facts speak plainly of God** (Rom. 1:20; 2:14, 15). But all is yellow to the jaundiced eye. As the sinner speaks of the facts, he reports them to himself and others as “yellow.” There are no exceptions to this. It is the facts as reported to himself by himself, as distorted by his own subjective condition, which he assumes to be *the facts as they really are*.

Failing to keep these things in mind, Butler appealed to the sinner as though there were in his repertoire of “facts” some that he did not see as “yellow,” such as the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, or miracles in general. Butler actually placed himself on a common position with his opponents on certain “questions of fact,” i.e., “Did Christ rise from the dead?”

The compromising character of this position is obvious. It is compromising, in the first place, with respect to the objective **clarity of the evidence** for the truth of Christian theism. The psalmist does not say that the heavens probably declare the glory of God; they infallibly and clearly do. Probability is not, or at least should not be, the guide of life. Men ought, says Calvin following Paul, to believe in God, for each one is surrounded with a superabundance of evidence with respect to him. The whole universe is lit up by God. Scripture requires men to accept its interpretation of history as true without doubt. Doubt of this is as unreasonable as doubt with respect to the primacy of the light of the sun in relation to the light of bulbs in our homes. It is as unreasonable as a child asking whether he has parents and, after looking at the evidence, concluding that he probably has!

But according to **Butler**, men have done full justice by the evidence if they conclude that God *probably* exists. Worse than that, according to this position, men are assumed to have done full justice by the evidence if they conclude that a God exists. But *a* god is a *finite* god, which is no god, but an idol. How can they then identify this probable God with the God of the Bible on whom all things depend for their existence?

In presupposing a non-Christian philosophy of fact, the Butler type of argument naturally also presupposes a non-Christian principle of coherence, or rationality. The two go hand in hand. The **law of non-contradiction** employed positively or negatively by man assuming his own ultimacy⁷, is made the standard of what is possible or impossible, both for men and for whatever “gods” may be. But on this basis the Bible cannot speak to man of any God whose revelation and whose very nature is not essentially penetrable to the natural intellect of man.

In the second place, the **Butler** type of argument is compromising on the *subjective* side. **It allows that the natural man has the plenary ability to interpret certain facts correctly even though he wears the colored**

spectacles of the covenant-breaker. As though covenant-breakers had no axe to grind! As though they were not anxious to avoid seeing the facts for what they really are!

The **traditional argument of Butler** is, moreover, not only compromising but also self-destructive. Today, more than ever before, men frankly assert that facts are *taken* as much as *given*. Thus, they admit that they wear glasses. **But these glasses are said to help rather than to hinder vision. Modern man assumes that, seeing facts through the glasses of his own ultimacy, he can really see these facts for what they are. For him it is the orthodox believer who wears the colored glasses of prejudice.** Thus the Christian walks in the valley of those who more than ever before, identify their false *interpretations* about themselves and about the facts, with the facts themselves.

However, the argument of **Butler** does not challenge men to repentance for their sin of misrepresentation. It virtually grants that they are right. But then, if men are virtually told that they are right in thus identifying their false interpretations of the facts, with the facts themselves, in certain instances, why should such men accept the Christian interpretation of other facts? Are not all facts within one universe? If men are virtually told that they are quite right in interpreting certain facts without God, they have every logical right to continue their interpretation of all other facts without God.

From the side of the believer in the infallible Word of God, the claim should be made that there are not, **because there cannot be, other facts than God-interpreted facts, i.e., facts which are what they are because of their place in the plan of God.** In practice, this means that since sin has come into the world, God's interpretation of the facts must come in finished, written form and be comprehensive in character. God continues to reveal himself in the facts of the created world, **but the sinner needs to interpret every one of them in the clearer light of Scripture. Every thought on every subject must become obedient to the requirement of God as he speaks in his Word, every thought must be brought into subjection to Christ.** But Butler's argument fails to make this requirement and thus fatally compromises the claims of Scripture.

It has frequently been argued that this view of Scripture is impracticable. Christians differ among themselves, after all, in their interpretation of Scripture.

This objection, however, is not to the point. **No one denies a subjective element in the restricted sense.** The real issue is whether God exists as self-contained, whether therefore the world runs according to his plan, and whether God has confronted those who would frustrate the realization of that plan, with a self-contained interpretation of that plan (the Bible). The fact that Christians individually and collectively can never do more than restate the given self-contained interpretation of that plan *approximately* neither implies the *non-existence* of that plan itself nor the impossibility of the self-revelation of that plan given by Christ in the Scriptures.

The self-contained circle of the ontological trinity (the trinity considered apart from the economic relations) is not broken up by the fact that there is an *economical* relation of this triune God to man. No more is the self-contained character of Scripture broken up by the fact that there is diversity of transmission and acceptance of that word of God. Such as least is, or ought to be, the contention of Christians if they would really challenge the modern principle. The Christian principle must present the full force and breadth of its claim. It is compelled to engage in an all-out war against the misinterpretation of the universe by the natural man.

In contrast, therefore, with both **Catholic** and **Arminian** types of apologetics, the **Reformed** apologist insists that the **natural man is quite mistaken in starting from his own sense of freedom as an ultimate given of experience.** It is this which both Catholic and Arminian apologetics cannot do. **They allow the natural man to continue to assume the ultimate freedom of himself and the facts about himself.** In defending Christianity, our

Reformed pastor then realized that he must challenge the non-Christian to see himself in the light that Christ gives to men in Scripture. Our pastor knew, to be sure, **that even this the natural man cannot do, for he cannot, himself, remove his colored glasses. [KEY POINT!!] He needs, therefore, the operation of the Holy Spirit to regenerate him, to open his eyes so that he may see. He must be born again.**

The natural man, says Warfield, needs new light – the Bible, and new power of sight, regeneration.

When the sinner has by God's grace in Christ received this new light and this new power of sight then he sees all things in their proper relationships. **Formerly he stood on this head while now he stands on his feet. Formerly he referred all things to himself as the final point of reference. Now he refers all things to God his Creator, and to Christ his redeemer as the final point of reference.** His conversion was a Copernican revolution. **It was not accomplished by steps or stages, it was an about-face. Before his conversion he can't see a fact in the world that he does not wish to deal with to the glory of God.** The words of Paul, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or do *anything* else, do all to the glory of God," **are now his motto. Deeply conscious of this continued sinfulness he is, nonetheless, now, in the core of his being, a lover instead of a hater of God.**

With great urgency he now seeks to go back to his erstwhile partners whose goal continues to be to glorify man in all that they do.

We have now, with our young pastor, looked into the various methods of defending Christianity. Our young pastor has seen that cooperation efforts in presenting and defending Christianity are impossible for there is only one consistent Christianity and only one consistent defense of it, He has also noted the radical difference which exists between the world-views of Christians and non-Christians. In the following section, we shall attempt to illustrate these points in the form of a dialogue among two Christians – one Reformed and the other Arminian – and a non-Christian.

V. Dialogue with Mr. Black, Mr. White, Mr. Grey pgs. 36-81

V. A Dialogue – Mr. Black, Mr. White, Mr. Grey

We have first the non-Christian, who worships the creature rather than the Creator. We shall call him Mr. Black. Mr. Black may be a very "decent" sort of man. By God's common grace he may do much that is "good." Even so he is, as long as he remains in his unconverted state, black in the sight of God.

On the other hand, we have a representative of those who have, by the grace of God, become worshipers of the Creator-Redeemer, called Mr. White. Mrs. White is far from what, judging him by his name, we should expect him to be. But he is washed in the blood of the Lamb. *In Christ* he is whiter than snow. Mr. White is the Reformed Christian.

But, strangely enough, there is a third party, an Arminian, called Mr. Grey. Of course, *in Christ* Mr. Grey is as white as is Mr. White. Mr. Grey thinks that Mr. White is too severe in his evaluation of Mr. Black. Mr. Black is not all *that black*. It is not pedagogically wise [\[teaching wise - my insert\]](#) to require of Mr. Black that he make a complete about-face. Surely no such complete revolution is necessary in the field of science and in the field of philosophy. Many of Mr. Black's followers have valiantly defended the existence of God against materialism, atheism, and positivism. Even in theology many of these disciples of Mr. Black have sprung to the defense of God when he was attacked by the God-is-dead theologians. Mr. Grey, therefore, typifies the **Aquinas-Butler** method of defending Christianity.

Let us now note the difference between the way Mr. White and the way Mr. Grey approach the unbeliever, Mr. Black, with the gospel of Christ.

Let us say that Mr. Black has toothache. Both Mr. White and Mr. Grey are dentists. Mr. White believes in a radical methodology. He believes that Mr. Black should have all the decayed matter removed from his tooth before the filling is put in. Mr. Grey is a very kind-hearted man. He does not want to hurt Mr. Black. Accordingly, he does not want to drill too deeply. He will, therefore, take only a part of the decayed matter out of the tooth and then fill it.

Naturally Mr. Black thinks this is marvelous. Unfortunately, Mr. Black's tooth soon begins to decay again. He goes back to Mr. Grey. But Mr. Grey can never bring himself to do anything radical. As a consequence, he is never able to resolve Mr. Black's toothache problem.

Let us now suppose that instead of coming to Mr. Grey, Mr. Black had gone to the office of Mr. White. Mr. White is radical, very radical. He uses the X-ray machine to diagnose Mr. Black's condition. He drills deeply. All of the tooth decay is removed. The tooth is filled. Mr. Black never need return. This simple illustration points out a basic truth.

The Bible says that man is **spiritually dead in sin**. The Reformed creeds speak of man's total depravity. The only cure for this spiritual deadness is his **regeneration by the Holy Spirit on the basis of the atoning death of Christ**. It is therefore by means of the light that Scripture sheds in the natural man's condition that Mr. White examines all his patients. Mr. White may also, to be sure, turn on the light of experience, but he always insists that this light of experience derives, in the first place, **from the light of Scripture**. So he may appeal to reason or to history, but, again, only as they are to be seen in the light of the Bible. He does not even look for corroboration of the teachings of Scripture in experience, reason, or history, **except insofar as these are themselves first seen in the light of the Bible**. For him, the Bible, and therefore the God of the Bible, is like the sun from which the light that is given by oil lamps, gas lamps, and electric lights is derived.

Quite different is the attitude of the Arminian. Mr. Grey uses the Bible, experience, reason, or logic as **equally independent sources of information** about his own and therefore about Mr. Black's predicament. I did not say that for Mr. Grey the Bible, experience, and reason are equally important. Indeed, they are not. He knows that the Bible is by far the most important. But he none the less constantly appeals to "the facts of experience" and to "logic" without first dealing with the very idea of fact and with the idea of logic in terms of Scripture.

The difference is basic. When Mr. White diagnoses Mr. Black's case he takes as his X-ray machine, the Bible only. When Mr. Grey diagnoses Mr. Black's case he first takes the X-ray machine of experience, then the X-ray machine of logic, and finally his biggest X-ray machine, the Bible. In fact, he may take these in any order. Each of them is, for him, an independent source of information.

Let us first look briefly at a typical procedure generally followed in evangelical circles today. Let us, in other words, note how Mr. Grey proceeds with an analysis of Mr. Black, and at the same time see

how Mr. Grey would win Mr. Black to an acceptance of Christianity. We take for this purpose a series of articles which appeared in the January, February, and March, 1950, issues of *Moody Monthly*, published by the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. The late Edward John Carnell, author of *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics and Professor of Apologetics* at Fuller Theological Seminary, was the writer of this series. Carnell's writings were among the best that appeared in evangelical circles. In fact, in his book on apologetics Carnell frequently argues as we would expect a Reformed apologist to argue. By and large, however, he represents the Arminian rather than the Reformed method of apologetics.

When Carnell instructs his readers "How Every Christian Can Defend His Faith," he first appeals to facts and to logic as independent sources of information about the truth of Christianity. Of course, he must bring in the Bible even at this point. But the Bible is brought in only as a book of information about the facts of what has historically been called Christianity. It is not from the beginning brought in as God's Word. It must be shown to Mr. Black that it is the Word of God by means of "facts" and "logic." **Carnell would thus avoid at all costs the charge of reasoning in a circle.** He does not want Mr. Black to point the finger at him and say: "You prove that the bible is true by an appeal to the Bible itself." That is circular reasoning. How can any person with any respect for logic accept such a method of proof?"

Carnell would escape such a charge by showing that the facts of experience, such as all men recognize, and logic, such as all men must use, point to the truth of Scripture. This is what he says: "If you are of a philosophic turn, you can point to the remarkable way in which Christianity fits in with the moral sense inherent in every human being, or the influence of Christ on our ethics, customs, literature, art, and music. Finally, you can draw upon your own experience in speaking of the reality of answered prayer and the witness of the Spirit in your own heart.... If the person is impressed with this evidence, turn at once to the gospel. Read crucial passages and permit the Spirit to work on the inner recesses of his heart. Remember that apologetics is merely a preparation. After the ground has been broken, proceed immediately with sowing and watering."

It is assumed in this argument that Mr. Black agrees with the evangelical, Mr. Grey, on the character of the "moral sense" of man. This may be true, but then it is true because Mr. Grey has himself not taken his information about the "moral sense" of man exclusively from Scripture. If, with Mr. White, Mr. Grey had taken his conception of the moral nature of man from the Bible, then he would hold that Mr. Black will, as totally depraved, misinterpret his own moral nature. Thru, Christianity is in accord with the moral nature of man. but this is so only because the moral nature of man is first in accord with what the Bible says it is, i.e., originally created perfect, it is now wholly corrupted in its desires through the fall of man.

If you are reasoning with a naturalist, Carnell advises his readers, ask him why, when a child throws a rock through his window, he chases the child and not the rock. Presumably even a naturalist knows that the child, not the rock, is free and therefore responsible. "A bottle of water cannot ought; it must. When once the free spirit of man is proved, the moral argument – the existence of a God who imposes moral obligations – can form the bridge from man to God."

Here the fundamental difference between Mr. Grey's and Mr. White's approaches to Mr. Black appears. **The difference lies, as before noted, in the different notions of the free will of man.** Or, it may be said, the difference is with respect to the nature of man as man. Mr. White should define man, and therefore his freedom, in terms of Scripture alone. He would therefore begin with the fact that man is a creature of God. **This implies that man's freedom is a derivative freedom. It is a freedom that is not and cannot be wholly ultimate, that is, self-dependent.** Mr. White knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him in this analysis of man and of his freedom. **He knows that Mr. Black would not agree with him on this anymore than he would agree on the biblical idea of total depravity.**

Mr. Grey, on the other hand, must at all costs have **"a point of contact"** in the system of thought of Mr. Black, who is typical of the natural man. Just as Mr. Grey is afraid of being charged with circular reasoning, **so he is also afraid of being charged with talking about something that is "outside of experience".** So he is driven to talk in general about the "free spirit of man." Of course, Mr. Black need have no objections from this point of view in allowing for the "free spirit of man." That is at bottom what he holds even when he is a naturalist [**an unsaved man**]. His whole position is based upon the idea of man as a free spirit, that is, a spirit that is not subject to the will of his Creator God. Carnell **does not distinguish between the biblical doctrine of freedom, in the sense of autonomy, which makes man a law unto himself.**

Note on this subject of the "point of contact" from Van Til later in this book, pg 89:

"To look for a point of contact with the unbeliever in the unbeliever's notions of himself and his world is to encourage him in his wicked rebellion and to establish him in his self-frustration. We have already seen that the natural man is under the self-imposed delusion that he is "free," i.e., independent of the control and counsel of God, and that the "facts" about him are also "free" in this way. He may pretend to be "open-minded" and ready to consider whether God exists. But in being so "neutral" he commits the same sin as Adam and Eve.

Why seek truth where only a lie is to be found? Can the non-Christian tell us and therefore the Christian himself, what the facts are and how they are related to each other, in what way they cohere, while yet excluding creation and providence. If he can, and if he can tell us truly, then the Christian story simple is not true! **Because the natural man cannot do this, because the Christian message is true, I have sought and will seek to reap the benefit of a theology in which the true God of Scripture has the initiative in salvation.**

The Calvinist's idea of an *actual* as opposed to an imagined point of contact is not just some useless notion. It is the only intelligible point of contact possible. The non-Christian holds that pure chance or absolute fate are equally ultimate [**not dependent upon the Creator**] and **mutually correlative limiting concepts** or **heuristic** principles which man uses to explain the fact that we have learned much about the world, that there is order in the world, a uniformity, while there is also continual change and development. But the non-Christian's "explanation" is no explanation at all. To say, "it just happens" as an explanation of an event is really to say, "There is no explanation that I know of."

The Calvinist, therefore, using his point of contact, observes to the non-Christian that if the world were not what Scripture says it is, if the natural man's knowledge were not actually rooted in the

creation and providence of God, then there could be no knowledge whatsoever. The Christian claims that non-Christians have made and now make many discoveries about the true state of affairs of the universe simply because the universe is what Christ says it is. **The unbelieving scientist borrows or steals the Christian principles of creation and providence every time he says that an “explanation” is possible**, for he knows he cannot account for “explanation” on his own. As the image-bearer of God, operating in a universe controlled by God, the unbeliever contributes indirectly and adventitiously to the development of human knowledge and culture.

Of course, Mr. Black will be greatly impressed with such an argument as Mr. Grey has presented to him for the truth of Christianity. In fact, if Christianity is thus shown to be in accord with the moral nature of man, as Mr. Black himself sees that moral nature, then Mr. Black does not need to be radically converted to accept Christianity. He only needs to accept something *additional* to what he has always believed. He has been shown how nice, even how important, it would be to have a second story built on top of the house which he has already built according to his own plan.

To be sure, the evangelical intends no such thing. Least of all does Canell intend such a thing. But why then does the “evangelical” not see that by presenting the non-Christian with Arminianism rather than with the Reformed faith he compromises the Christian religion? Why does Carnell not see that in doing what he does, the non-Christina is not really challenged either by fact or by logic? For facts and logic which are not themselves first seen in the light of Christianity have, in the nature of the case, **no power in them to challenge the unbeliever to change his position**. Facts and logic, not based upon the creation doctrine and not placed in the context of the doctrine of God’s all-embracing Providence, which culminates in the redemption through Christ, are without significant relation to one another and therefore wholly meaningless.

It is this truth which must be shown to Mr. Black. The folly of holding to any view of life except that which is frankly based upon the Bible as the absolute authority for man must be pointed out to him. Ony then are we doing what Paul did when he said: “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? Sherries the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1Cor. 1:20).

As a Reformed Christian, Mr. White therefore cannot cooperate with Mr. grey in his analysis of Mr. Black. This fact may appear more clearly if we turn to see how Mr. Black appears when he is analyzed by Mr. White in terms of the Bible alone.

According to Mr. White’s analysis, Mr. Black is not a murderer. He is not a drunkard or a dope addict. He lives in one of the suburbs. He is every whit a gentleman. He gives to the Red Cross and to the United Fund campaigns. He was a Boy Scout; he is a member of a lodge; he is very civic minded; now and then his name is mentioned in the papers as an asset to the community. But he is spiritually dead. He is filled with the spirit of error. Perhaps he is a member of a “fine church” in the community, but nevertheless he is one of those “people that do err in their heart” (Ps. 95:10). **He lives in a stupor** (Rom. 11:8). To him the wisdom of God is foolishness. The truth about God, and about himself in relation to God, **is obnoxious to him. He does not want to hear of it. He seeks to close his eyes and ears to those who give witness to the truth. He is, in short, utterly self-deceived.**

On the other hand, Mr. Black is certain that he looks at life in the only proper way. Even if he has doubts as to the truth of what he believes, he does not see how any sensible or rational man could believe or do otherwise. If he has doubts, it is because no one can be fully sure of himself. If he has fears, it is because he has to be expected in the hazardous and ambiguous situation in which modern man lives. If he sees men's minds break down, he thinks this is to be expected under current conditions of stress and strain. If he sees grown men act like children, he says that they once were beasts. Everything, including the "abnormal" is to him "normal."

In all this, Mr. Black has obviously taken for granted that what the Bible says about the world and himself is not true. He has taken *this for granted*. He may never have argued the point. **He has cemented yellow spectacles to his own eyes. He cannot remove them because he will not remove them. He is blind and loves to be blind.**

But do not think that Mr. Black has an easy time of it. He is the man who always "**kicks against the pricks.**" His Conscience troubles him all the time. Deep down in his heart he knows that what the Bible says about him and about the world is true. Even if he has never heard of the Bible, **he knows** that he is a creature of God and that he has broken the law of God (Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:14, 15). When the prodigal son left his father's house, he could not immediately efface from his memory the look and voice of his father. That look and that voice came back to him even when he was at the swine trough! How hard he had tried to live as though the money with which he so freely entertained his "friends" had not come from his father! When asked where he came from, he would answer that he came "from the other side." He did not want to be reminded of his past. Yet he could not forget it. It required a constant act of suppression to forget his past. But that very act of suppression itself keeps alive the memory of the past.

Mr. Black daily changes the truth of God into a lie. He daily holds the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). But what a time he has with himself! He may try to sear his conscience as with a hot iron. He may seek to escape the influence of all those who witness to the truth. But he can never escape himself as witness bearer to the truth.

His conscience keeps telling him: "Mr. Black, you are a fugitive from justice. You have run away from home, from your father's bountiful love. You are an ingrate, a sneak, a rascal! You shall not escape meeting justice at last. The father still feeds you. Yet you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not recognizing that the goodness of God is calculated to lead you to repentance (Rom. 2:4). **Why do you kick against the pricks?** Why do you stifle the voice of your conscience? Why do you use the wonderful intellect that God has given you as a tool for the suppression of the voice of God which speaks to you through yourself and your environment? Why do you build your house on sand instead of on rock? Can you be sure that no storm is ever coming? Are you omniscient? Are you omnipotent? You say that nobody knows whether God exists or whether Christianity is true. You say that nobody knows this because man is finite. Yet you assume that God *cannot* exist, and that Christianity *cannot* be true. You assume that no judgment will ever come. You must be omniscient to know that. Yet you have just said that all man declares about 'the beyond' must be based upon his brief span of existence in this world of **time and chance**. How, then, if you have taken for granted that **chance** is one of the basic ingredients of human experience, can you at the same

time say what can or cannot be in all time to come? You certainly have made a fool of yourself, Mr. Black,” says Mr. Black to himself. “You reject the claims of truth which you know to be the truth, and you do that in terms of the lie which really you know to be the lie. It is you, not Mr. White, who engages in circular reasoning. It is you, not Mr. White, who refuses **to face the facts as they are**. It is you, not Mr. White, who crucifies Logic.”

It is not always that Mr. Black is thus aware of the fact that he lives like the prodigal who would have eaten of the things the swine did eat, but who knew he could not because he was a human being. Mr. Black is not always thus aware of his folly. This is, in part at least, because of the failure of evangelicals and particularly Reformed Christians to stir him up to a realization of this basic depth of his folly. The Reformed Christian should, on his basis, want to stir up Mr. Black to an appreciation of the folly of his ways.

However, when the Reformed Christian, Mr. White, is to any extent aware of the richness of his own position and actually has the courage to challenge Mr. Black by presenting to him the picture of himself as taken through the X-ray machine called the Bible, he faces the charge of “circular reasoning” and of finding no “point of contact” with experience. He will also be subject to the criticism of the Arminian for speaking as if Christianity were **irrational** and for failing to reach the man in the street.

Thus we seem to be in a bad predicament. There is a basic difference of policy between Mr. White and Mr. Grey as to how to deal with Mr. Black. Mr. Grey thinks that Mr. Black is not really such a bad fellow, it is possible, he thinks, to live with Mr. Black in the same world. Mr. Black is pretty strong. It is best to make a compromise peace with him. That seems to be the way of the wise and practical politician. On the other hand, Mr. White thinks that it is impossible to live permanently in the same world with Mr. Black. Mr. Black, he says, must therefore be placed before the requirement of absolute and **unconditional surrender to Christ**. Surely it would be out of the question for Mr. White first to make a compromise of peace with Mr. Black and then, after all, to require unconditional surrender to Christ! But what, then, about the charge of **circular reasoning** and about the charge of having no **point of contact** with the unbeliever?

A. A Consistent Witness

The one main question to which we are to address ourselves now is whether Christians holding to the **Reformed Faith** must also hold to a specifically Reformed method of reasoning when they are engaged in the defenses of the faith.

This broad question does not pertain merely to the “**five points of Calvinism**.” When **Arminians** attack these great doctrines (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints) we, as Calvinists, are quick to defend them. We believe that these five points are directly drawn from Scripture. But the question now under discussion is whether, in the defense of any Christian doctrine, Reformed Christian should use a method all their own.

People easily give a negative reply to this question. Do we not have many doctrines in common with all evangelicals? Do not all orthodox Protestants hold to the substitutionary atonement of Christ? More particularly, what about the simple statements of fact recorded in Scripture? How could anyone, if he

believes such statements at all, take them otherwise than as simple statements of fact? How could anyone have a specifically Reformed doctrine of such a fact as the resurrection of Christ? If together with evangelicals we accept certain simple truths and facts of Scripture at face value, how then can we be said to have a separate method of defense of such doctrines?

Yet it can readily be shown that a negative answer to these questions cannot be maintained. Take, for example, the doctrine of the atonement. The **Arminian** doctrine of the atonement is not the same as the **Reformed** doctrine of atonement. Both the Arminian and the Calvinist assert that they believe in the substitutionary atonement is colored, and as Calvinists we believe discolored, by the view of “**free will**.” According to the **Arminian view**, man has **absolute or ultimate power to accept or to reject the salvation offered him**. This implies that the salvation offered to man is merely the **possibility of salvation**.

To illustrate: suppose I deposit one million dollars to your account in your bank. It is still altogether up to you to believe that such wealth is yours, and to use it to cover the floor of your house with Persian rugs in place of the old threadbare rugs now there. Thus, in the Arminian scheme, the very possibility of things no longer depends exclusively upon God, but, in some areas at least, upon man. What Christ did *for us* is made to depend for its effectiveness upon what is done *by us*. It is no longer right to say that with God *all* things are possible.

It is obvious, therefore, that Arminians have taken into their Protestantism a good bit of the leaven of Roman Catholicism. Arminianism is less radical, less consistent in its Protestantism than it should be.

Now Mr. Grey, the evangelical, seems to have a relatively easy time of it when he seeks to win Mr. Black, the unbeliever, to an acceptance of “the substitutionary atonement.” He can stand on “**common ground**” [\[a point of contact as Van Til notes\]](#) with Mr. Black on this matter of what is possible and what is impossible. Listen to Mr. Grey as he talks with Mr. Black.

“Mr. Black, have you accepted Christ as your personal Savior? Do you believe that he died on the cross as your substitute? If you do not, you will surely be lost forever.”

“Well now,” replies Mr. Black, “I’ve just had a visit from Mr. White on the same subject. You two seem to have a ‘common witness’ on this matter. Both of you believe that God exists, that he has created the world, that the first man, Adam, sinned, and that we are all to be sent to hell because of what that first man did, and so forth. All this is too fatalistic for me. If I am a creature, as you say I am, then I have no ultimate power of my own and therefore am not free. And if I am not free, then I am not responsible. So, if I am going to hell, it will be simply because you ‘God’ has determined that I should. You orthodox Christians kill morality and all humanitarian progress. I will have none of it. Goodbye!”

“But wait a second,” says Mr. Grey, in great haste. “I do not have a **common witness** at this point with the Calvinist. I have a **common witness** [\[a point of contact\]](#) with you against the Calvinist when it comes to all that determinism that you mention. Of course you are free. **You are absolutely free to accept or reject the atonement that is offered to you. I offer the atonement through Christ only as a possibility. You yourself must make it an actuality for yourself**. I agree with you over against the

Calvinist in saying that ‘possibility’ is wider than the will of God. **I would not for a moment say with the Calvinist that God’s counsel determines ‘whatsoever comes to pass’.**”

“Besides, even less extreme Calvinists like Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., virtually agree with both of us. Listen to what Buswell says: ‘Nevertheless, our moral choices are choices in which we are ourselves **ultimate causes.**’ Dr. Buswell himself wants to go beyond the ‘merely arbitrary answer’ in Romans 9:20, 21, which speaks of the potter and the clay, to the ‘much more profound analysis of God’s plan of redemption’ in romans 9:22-24, in which Paul pictures Pharaoh as ‘...one who, according to the foreknowledge of God, would rebel against God.’

My note on ultimate causes: Man is a genuine second cause, but not an *ultimate* or *first cause*. Only God is the first cause. Arminians believe that our choices to believe or love God must originate within us or else they are not genuine; they see God as doing violence to the assumed autonomous will of man by God influencing their will one way or the other. Of course this view of Arminianism robs God of his glory, attributing it to man.

“I understand then,” replies Mr. Black, “that you Arminians and more moderate Calvinists are opposed to the determinism of regular, old-style Calvinists of the historic Reformed Confessions? I am glad to hear that. To say that all things have been fixed from all eternity by God is terrible! **[Arminians hate the idea of God’s decrees because it strips man of his independence or assumed autonomy]** It makes me shudder! What would happen to all morality and decency if all men believed such teaching? But now you Arminians have joined us in holding that ‘possibility’ is independent of the will of God. You have thus with all good people and with all liberal and new-orthodox theologians, like **Barth, made possible** the salvation of men.” **[Karl Barth, 1886-1968. He had some radical unorthodox views.]**

“That means, of course, that salvation is also possible for those too who have never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Salvation is therefore possible without an acceptance of your substitutionary atonement through this Jesus of whom you speak. You certainly would not want to say with the Calvinists that God has determined the bounds of all nations and individuals and has thus, after all, determined that some men, millions of them, in fact, should never hear this gospel.”

“Besides, if possibility is independent of God, as you evangelicals and moderate Calvinists teach, then I need not be afraid of hell. It is then quite possible that there is no hell. Hell, you will then agree, is that torture of man’s conscience which he experiences when he fails to live up to his own moral ideals. So, I do not think that I shall bother just yet about accepting Christ as my personal Savior. There is plenty of time.”

Poor Mr. Grey. He really wanted to say something about having a common testimony with the Calvinists after all. At the bottom of his heart, he knew that Mr. White, the Calvinist, and not Mr. Black, the unbeliever, was his real friend. But he had made a common witness with Mr. Black against the supposed determinism of Mr. White, the Calvinist, so it was difficult for him, after that, to turn about face and also make a common testimony with Mr. White against defending his faith had force him to admit that Mr. Black was basically right. He had not given Mr. Black an opportunity of knowing what he

was supposed to accept, but his testimony had confirmed Mr. Black in his belief that there was no need of his accepting Christ at all.

It is true, of course, that in practice Mr. Grey is much better in his theology and in his method of representing the gospel than he is here said to be. **But that is because in practice every evangelical who really loves his Lord is a Calvinist at heart.** *How could he really pray to God for help if he believed that there was a possibility that God could not help?* In their hearts all true Christians believe that God controls “whatsoever comes to pass.” But the Calvinists cannot have a **common witness** for the substitutionary atonement with Arminians who first make a **common witness** with the unbeliever against him on the all-important question whether God controls all things that happen.

It must always be remembered that the first requirement for effective witnessing is that the position defended be intelligible. **Arminianism, when consistently carried out, destroys this intelligibility.**

The second requirement for effective witnessing is that he to whom the witness is given must be shown **why he should forsake his own position** and accept that which is offered him. **Arminianism, when consistently carried out,** destroys the reason why the unbeliever should accept the gospel. Why should the unbeliever change his position if he is not shown that it is wrong? Why should he exchange his position for that of Christianity if the one who asks him to change is actually encouraging him in thinking that he is right? The Calvinist will need to have a better method of defending the doctrine of the atonement therefore than that of the Arminian.

We have dealt with the doctrine of the atonement. That led us into the involved question whether God is the source of possibility, or whether possibility is the source of God. It has been shown that the Arminian holds to a position which requires him to make both of these contradictory assertions at once. But how about the realm of **fact**? Do you also hold, I am asked, that we need to seek for a specifically Reformed method of defending the “facts” of Christianity? Take the resurrection of Christ as an example – why can there be no common witness on the part of the Arminian and the Calvinist so such a fact as that?

Once more Mr. Grey, the Arminian, pushes the doorbell at Mr. Black’s home. Mr. Black answers and admits him.

“I am here again, Mr. Black,” begins Grey, because I am still anxious to have you accept Christ as your personal Savior. When I spoke to you the other time about the atonement you got me into deep water. We got all tangled up on the question of ‘possibility.’”

“But now I have something simpler. I want to deal with simple facts. I want to show you that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is as truly a fact as any fact that you can mention. To use the words of Dr. Wilbur Smith, himself a ‘moderate’ Calvinist but opposed to the idea of the distinctively Reformed method for the defense of the faith: ‘The meaning of the resurrection is a theological matter, but the fact of the resurrection is a historical matter; the nature of the resurrection of body of Jesus may be a mystery, but the fact that the body disappeared from the tomb is a matter to be

decided upon by historical evidence.’ The historical evidence for the resurrection is the kind of evidence that you as a scientist would desire.”

“Smith writes in the same book: ‘About a year ago, after studying over a long period of time the entire problem of our Lord’s resurrection, and having written some hundreds of pages upon it at different times, I was suddenly arrested by the thought that the very kind of evidence which modern science, and even psychologists, are so insistent upon for determining the reality any object under consideration is the kind of evidence that we have presented to us in the regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, namely, that things that are seen with the human eye, touched with human hand, and heard by the human ear. This is what we call **empirical evidence**. It would almost seem as if parts of the gospel records of the resurrection were actually written for such a day as ours when empiricism so dominates our thinking.”

“Now I think that Smith is quite right in thus distinguishing sharply between the fact and the meaning of the resurrection. I am now only asking you to accept the fact of the resurrection. There is the clearest possible empirical evidence for this fact. The living Jesus was touched with human hands and seen with human eyes of sensible men after he had been crucified and put into the tomb. Surely you ought to believe in the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact. And to believe in the resurrected Christ is to be saved.”

“But hold on a second,” says Mr. Black. “Your friend the Calvinist, Mr. White, has been ahead of you again. He was here last night and spoke of the same thing that you are not speaking about. However, he did not thus distinguish between the fact and the meaning of the resurrection. At least, he did not for a moment want to separate the fact of the resurrection from the system of Christianity in terms of which it gets its meaning. He spoke of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as rising from the dead. He spoke of the Son of God through whom the world was made and through whom the world is sustained, as having risen from the dead. When I asked him how this God could die and rise again from the dead, he said that God did not die and rise from the dead but that the second person of the Trinity had taken to himself a human nature, and that it was in this human nature that he died and rose again. In short, in accepting the fact of the resurrection he wanted me also to accept all this abracadabra about the trinitarian God. I have a suspicion that you are secretly trying to have me do something similar.”

“No, no,” replies Mr. Grey. “I am in complete agreement with you here against the Calvinist. I have a common witness with you against him. I, too, would separate fact from system. Did I not agree with you against the Calvinist, in holding that possibility is independent of God? Well then, by the same token I hold that all kinds of facts happen apart from the plan of God. We Arminians are in a position, as the Calvinists are not, of speaking with you **on neutral ground**. [aka, a point of contact] With you, we could simply talk about the “facts” of Christianity without immediately bringing into the picture anything **about the meaning or the significance of those facts.**”

“It makes me smile,” continues Mr. Grey, “when I think of Mr. White coming over here trying to convert you. That poor fellow is always reasoning in circles! I suppose that such reasoning in circles goes with determinism. He is always talking about his self-contained God. He says that all facts are what they are because of the plan of God. Then each fact would of necessity, to be a fact at all, prove

the truth of the Christian system of things and, in turn, would be proved as existing by virtue of this self-same Christian system of things. I realize full well that you, as a modern scientist and philosopher, can have no truck with such horrible, circular reasoning as that.”

It is for this reason that, as Arminian evangelicals, we have now separated sharply between the resurrection as a historical *fact* and the *meaning* of the resurrection. I’m merely asking you to accept the *fact* of the resurrection. I am not asking you to do anything that you cannot do in full consistency with your freedom and with the ‘scientific method.’”

“Well, this is delightful,” replies Mr. Black. “I always felt that the Calvinists were our real foes. But I read something in the paper the other day to the effect that some Calvinist churches or individuals were proposing to make a common witness with Arminian evangelicals for the gospel. Now I was under the impression that the gospel had something to do with being saved from hell and going to heaven. I knew that the modernist and the ‘new modernist,’ like **Barth**, do not believe in tying up the facts of history with such wild speculations. It was my opinion that ‘fundamentalists’ did tie up belief in historical facts, such as the death and resurrection of Jesus, with going to heaven or to hell. So I am delighted that you, though a **fundamentalist**, are willing to join with the **liberal** and the **neo-liberal** in separating historical facts from such a rationalistic system as I thought Christianity was.

“Now as for accepting the resurrection of Jesus,” continued Mr. Black, “as thus properly separated from the traditional system of theology, I do not in the least mind doing that. To tell you the truth, I have accepted the resurrection as a fact now for some time. The evidence for it is overwhelming. This is a strange universe. All kinds of ‘miracles’ happen in it. The universe is ‘open.’ So why should there not be some resurrections here and there? The resurrection of Jesus would be a fine item for *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*. Why not send it in?”

Mr. Grey wanted to continue at this point. He wanted to speak of the common witness that he had, after all, with the Calvinist for the gospel. But it was too late. He had no “common” witness left of any sort. He had again tried to gallop off in opposite directions at the same time. He had again taken away all credibility from the witness that he meant to bring. **He had again established Mr. Black in thinking that his own unbelieving reason was right.** For it was as clear as crystal to Mr. Black, as it should have been to Mr. Grey, that belief in the fact of the resurrection, **apart from the system of Christianity, amounts to belief that the Christian system** is not true, to believe in the universe as run by Chance, and to believe that it was not Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who rose from the dead.

To be sure, in practice the Arminian is much better in his witness for the resurrection of Christ than he has been presented here. But that is, as noted already, because every evangelical, **as a sincere Christian, is at heart a Calvinist.** But witnessing is a matter of the head as well as of the heart. If the world is to hear a consistent testimony for the Christian faith, it is the Calvinist who must give it. If there is not a **distinctively Reformed method for the defense of every article of the Christian faith, then there is no way of clearly telling an unbeliever just how Christianity differs from his own position and why he should accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.** We are happy and thankful, of course, for the work of witnessing done by Arminians. We are happy because of the fact that, in spite of their

inconsistency in presenting the Christian testimony, something, often much, of the truth of the gospel shines through unto men, and they are saved.

B. *The Authority of Scripture*

“But how can anyone know anything about the ‘beyond’?” asks Mr. Black.

“Well, of course,” replies Mr. Grey, “if you want absolute certainty, such as one gets in geometry, Christianity does not offer it. We offer you only ‘rational probability.’ ‘Christianity,’ as I said in effect a moment ago when I spoke of the death of Christ, ‘is founded on historical facts, which, by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty. All judgments of historical particulars are at the mercy of the complexity of the time-space universe.... If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?’ And what is true of the death of Christ,” adds Mr. Grey, “is, of course, also true of his resurrection. But this only shows that ‘the Christian is in possession of a world-view which is making a sincere effort to come to grips with actual history.’”

By speaking thus, Mr. Grey again seeks for a **neutral point of contact** with Mr. Black. For Mr. Black, history is something that floats on an infinitely extended and bottomless ocean of **Chance**. Therefore he can say that *anything* may happen. Who knows but the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God might issue from this womb of Chance? Such events would have an equal chance of happening with “snarks, boojums, splinth, and gobble-de-gook.” God himself may live in this realm of Chance. He is then “wholly other” than ourselves, and his revelation in history would then be wholly unique.

The Arminian does not challenge this underlying philosophy of Chance as it controls the unbeliever’s conception of history. He is so anxious to have the unbeliever accept the possibility of God’s existence and the fact of the resurrection of Christ that, if necessary, he will exchange his own philosophy of the facts for that of the unbeliever. Anxious to be genuinely “empirical” like the unbeliever, he will throw all the facts of Christianity into the bottomless pit of Chance. Or, rather, he will throw all these facts at the unbeliever, and the unbeliever throws them over his back into the bottomless pit of Chance.

Of course, this is the last thing that such men as Wilbur Smith, Edward J. Carnell, and J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., want to do. But in failing to challenge the philosophy of **Chance** that underlies the unbeliever’s notion of “fact,” they are, in effect, doing it.

This approach of Mr. Grey’s is unavoidable if one hold to an Arminian Theology. **The Arminian view of man’s free will implies the “possibility” is about God. But a “possibility” that is above God is the same thing as Chance. A God surrounded by Chance cannot speak with authority. He would be speaking into a vacuum.** His voice could not be heard. If God were surrounded by Chance, then human beings would be too. They would live in a vacuum, unable to hear either their own voices or those of others. Thus the whole of history, including all of its facts, would be without meaning.

It is this that the Reformed Christian, Mr. White, would tell Mr. Black. In the very act of presenting the resurrection of Christ or in the very act of presenting any other fact of historic Christianity, Mr.

White would be presenting it as authoritatively interpreted in the Bible. He would argue that unless Mr. Black is willing to set the facts of history in the framework of the meaning authoritatively ascribed to them in the Bible, he will make “gobble-de-gook” of history.

If history were what Mr. Black assumes that it is, then anything might happen, and then nobody would know what may happen. **No one thing would then be more likely to happen than any other thing.** [The door is open to Open Theism] David Hume, the great skeptic, has effectively argued that, if you allow any room for Chance in your thought, then you no longer have the right to speak of probabilities. Whirl would then be king. No hypothesis would then have any more relevance to facts than any other hypothesis. Did God raise Christ from the dead? Perchance he did. Did Jupiter do it? Perchance he did. What is Truth? Nobody knows. Such would be the picture of the universe if Mr. Black were right.

No comfort can be taken from the assurance of the Arminian that, since Christianity makes no higher claim than that of rational probability, “the system of Christianity can be refuted only by probability. Perhaps our loss is gain.” How could one ever argue that there is a greater probability for the truth of Christianity than for the truth of its opposite, if the very meaning of the word “probability” rests upon the idea of Chance? On this basis, nature and history would be no more than a series of pointer readings pointing into the blank.

In assuming this philosophy of **Chance** and thus virtually saying that *nobody knows* what is back of the common objects of daily observation, Mr. Black also virtually says that the Christian view of this is wrong.

If I assert that there is a black cat in the closet, and you assert that nobody knows what is in the closet, you have virtually told me that I am wrong in my hypothesis. So when I tell Mr. Black that God exists, and he responds very graciously by saying that perhaps I am right since nobody knows what is in the “Beyond,” he is virtually saying that I am wrong in my hypothesis. He is obviously thinking of such a god as could comfortably live in a closet. But the God of Scripture cannot live in a closet.

When confronted with the claims of God and his Christ, Mr. Black’s response is essentially this: *Nobody knows* – nevertheless your hypothesis is certainly *wrong* and mine is certainly *right!* Nobody knows whether God exists, but God certainly does not exist and Chance certainly does exist.

When Mr. Black thus virtually makes his universal negative assertion, saying in effect that God cannot possibly exist and that Christianity cannot possibly be true, he must surely be standing on something very solid. Is it on solid rock that he stands/ No, he stands on water! **He stands on his own “experience.”** But this experience, by his own assumption, rests again on Chance. Thus standing on Chance, he swings the “logician’s postulate” and modestly asserts what cannot be in the “Beyond,” of which he said before that nothing can be said.

Of course, what Mr. Black is doing appears very reasonable to himself. “Surely,” he says, if questioned at all on the subject, “a rational man must have systematic coherence in his experience. Therefore, he cannot accept as true anything that is not in accord with the **law of non-contradiction.**”

So long as you leave your god in the realm of the 'Beyond,' in the realm of the indeterminate, you may worship him by yourself alone. But as soon as you claim that your God has revealed himself in creation, in providence, or in your Scripture, at once I shall put that revelation to the test by the principle of rational coherence.

"And by that test none of your doctrines are acceptable. **All of them are contradictory.** No rational man can accept any of them. If your God is eternal, then he falls outside of my experience and lives in the realm of the 'Beyond,' of the unknowable. But if he is to have anything to do with the world, then he must himself be wholly within the world. I must understand you God throughout if I am to speak intelligently of any relationship that he sustains to my world and to myself. Your idea that God is both eternal and unchangeable and yet sustains such relationships to the world as are involved in your doctrine of creation and providence, **is flatly contradictory.** Pg 56

"For me to accept your God," continues Mr. Black, "you must do to him what **Karl Barth** has done to him, namely, **strip him of all the attributes that orthodox theology has assigned to him, and thus enable him to turn into the opposite of himself.** With that sort of I have a principle of unity that brings all my experience into harmony. **And that God is wholly within the universe.** If you offer me such a God and offer him as the simplest hypothesis with which I may seek to order by experience as it comes to me from the womb of Chance, then the law of non-contradiction will be satisfied. As a rational man I can settle for nothing less."

All this amounts to saying that Mr. Black, the lover of a **Chance philosophy, the indeterminist,** is at the same time an out-and-out determinist or **fatalist.** It is to say that Mr. Black, the irrationalist, who says that nobody knows what is in the "Beyond" is at the same time a flaming rationalist. For him only that *can be*, which he thinks he can exhaustively determine by logic *must be.* **He may at first grant that anything may exist, but when he says this, he at the same time says, in effect, that nothing can exist and have meaning for man but that which man himself can exhaustively know.** Therefore, for Mr. Black, the God of Christianity *cannot* exist. For him the doctrine of creation *cannot* be true. There *can* be no revelation of God to man through nature and history. There *can* be no such thing as the resurrection of Christ.

Strangely enough, when thus says, in effect that the resurrection of Christ *cannot* be a fact, and when he also says that God may very well exist and that the resurrection of Christ may very well be a fact, he is not inconsistent with himself. For he must, to be true to his method, contradict himself in every statement that he makes about any fact whatsoever. If he does not, then he would deny either his philosophy of Chance or his philosophy of Fate. According to him, every fact that he meets has in it the two ingredients: that of **Chance** and that of **Fate,** that of the **wholly unknown** and that of the **wholly known.** Thus man turns the tools of thought, which the Creator has given him in order therewith to think God's thoughts after him on a created level, **into the means by which he makes sure that God cannot exist, and therefore certainly cannot reveal himself.**

When **Mr. White** meets Mr. Black, he will make this issue plain. He will tell Mr. Black that his methodology cannot make any fact or any group of facts intelligible to himself. Hear him as he speaks to the unbeliever:

“On your basis, Mr. Black, no fact can be identified by distinguishing it from any other fact. For all facts would be changing into their opposite all the time. All would be ‘gobble-de-gook.’ At the same time, nothing could change at all. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? He clearly has. I know you cannot see this even though it is perfectly clear. **I know that you have taken out your own eyes. Hence your inability to see is at the same time unwillingness to see.** Pray God for forgiveness and repent.”

But what will be the of the approach of the Arminian, Mr. Grey, on this question of logic? He will do the same sort of thing that we saw him do with respect to the question of facts. Mr. Grey will again try to please Mr. Black by saying that, of course, he will justify his appeal to the authority of the Bible by showing that the very idea of such an appeal, as well as the content of the Bible, are fully in accord with the demands of logic. Listen to him as he speaks to the unbeliever:

“You are quite right in holding that nothing meaningful can be said without presupposing the validity of the law of non-contradiction,” says Mr. Grey. “ ‘the conservative ardently defends a system of authority.’ But ‘without reason to canvass the evidence of a given authority, how can one segregate a right authority from a wrong one?... Without systematic consistency to aid us, it appears that all we can do is to draw straws, count noses, flip coins to choose an authority. Once we do apply the **law of contradiction**, we are no longer appealing to *ipse dixit* authority [*ipse dixit is an unproven statement*], but to coherent truth; ‘The Scripture tells us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1). This can be done only by applying the cannons of truth. God cannot lie. His authority, therefore, and coherent truth are coincident at every point. **Truth, not blind authority, save us from being blind followers of the blind.**’

“ ‘Bring on your revelations!’ ” continues Mr. Grey. “ ‘Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man’s assent.’ ‘Any theology which rejects Aristotle’s fourth book of the *Metaphysics* is big with the elements of its own destruction.’ ‘If Paul were teaching that the crucified Christ were objectively foolish, in the sense that he cannot be rationally categorized, then he would have pointed to the insane and the demented as incarnations of truth.’ ”

“Well,” says Mr. Black, “this is great news indeed. I knew that the modernists were willing with us to start from human experience as the final reference point in all research. I knew that they were willing with us to start from Chance as the source of facts, in order then to manufacture such facts of nature and of history as the law of non-contradiction, based on Chance, will allow. I also knew that the famous new-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth, is willing to re-make the God of historic Christianity to that he can change into the opposite of himself, in order that thus he may satisfy both our irrationalist philosophy of Chance and our rationalist philosophy of logic. But I did not know that there were any orthodox people who were willing to do such a thing. But you have surprised me before. You were willing to throw your resurrection into the realm of Chance in order to have me accept it. So I really should have expected that you would also be willing to make the law of non-contradiction rest upon man himself instead of upon God.

“I am extremely happy, too, that not only Arminian fundamentalists but also less extreme or moderate Calvinists, like Buswell, Carnell, and Smith, are not willing to test revelation by a principle

that is wholly independent of that revelation. It is now only a matter of time until they will see that they have to come over on our side altogether.

“I do not like the regular Calvinists. But they are certainly quite right from their own point of view. Mr. White claims that I am a creature of God. He says that all facts are made by God and controlled by the providence of God. He says that all men have sinned against God in Adam their representative. He adds that therefore I am spiritually blind and morally perverse. He says all this and more on the basis of the absolute authority of Scripture. He would interpret me, my facts, and my logic in terms of the authority of that Scripture. He says I need this authority. He says I need nothing but his authority. His Scripture, he claims, is sufficient and final. The whole thing, he claims, is clear in the light of Scripture.

“Now all this looks like plain historic Protestantism to me. I can intellectually understand the Calvinist on this matter of authority. I cannot understand you. You seem to me to want to have your cake and eat it. If you believe in scriptural authority, then why not explain all things, man, fact, and logic, in terms of it? If you want with us to live by your own authority, by the experience of the human race, then why not have done with the Bible as absolute authority? It, at best, gives you the authority of the **expert**.

“In your idea of the **rational man** who tests all things by the facts of history and by the **law of non-contradiction**, you have certainly made a **point of contact** with us. If you carry this through, you will indeed succeed in achieving complete coincidence between your ideas and ours. With us, you will have achieved complete coincidence between the ideas of man and the ideas of God. The reason for this coincidence of your ideas with ours, and for coincidence of man’s ideas with God’s, **is that you, like we, then have a God and a Christ who are virtually identical with man**.

“Do you not think, Mr. Grey, that this is too great a price for you to pay? I am sure that you do not thus mean to drag down your God into the universe. I am sure that you do not thus mean to crucify your Christ afresh. But why then halt between two opinions? I do not believe Christianity, but, if I did, I would stand with Mr. White.”

C. Proofs for the Existence of God

When Mr. Black objects against Mr. White that unconditional surrender to the authority of Scripture is irrational, then Mr. Grey nods approval and says that, of course, the “rational man” has a perfect right to test the credibility of Scripture by logic. When the Bible speaks of God’s sovereign election of some men to salvation this must mean something that fits in with his “rational nature.” When Mr. Black objects to Mr. White that unconditional surrender to Scripture is rationalistic, then Mr. Grey again nods approval and says that, of course, genuine human personality has a perfect right to **test the content of Scripture by experience**. When the Bible speaks of God controlling by his counsel whatsoever comes to pass, this must mean something that fits in with **man’s “freedom.”** God created man and gave man a share in his own freedom; mean therefore participate in his being.

But what of natural or general revelation? Here surely there can be no difference, you say, between the requirements of Mr. White and Mr. Grey. Here there is no law and no promise; here there are only

the facts of nature. How can you speak of any requirement at all with respect to them? Herer surely Mr. White can forget the “**five points of Calvinism**” and join Mr. Grey in taking Mr. Black through the picture gallery of his world, pointing out its beauties to him so that with them he will spontaneously exclaim, “The whole chorus of nature raises one hymn to the praise of its Creator.”

Let us think of Mr. White as trying to hard to forget his “five points.” “Surely,” he says to himself, “there can be nothing wrong with joining Mr. Grey in showing Mr. Black the wonders of God’s creation. We believe in the same God, do we not? Both of us want to show Mr. Black the facts of creation so that he, too, will believe in God. When Mr. Black says, ‘I see no meaning in all I have seen, and I continue, just as I was, confused and dismayed,’ Mr. Grey and I can together take him to the Mr. Wilson observatory so he may see the starry heavens above. Surely the source of knowledge of the natural sciences is the Book of Nature which is given to everyone. Do not the Scriptures themselves teach that there is a light in nature which cannot be, and is not, transmitted through the spectacles of the Word? If this were not so, how could the Scriptures say of those who have only the light of nature that they are without excuse?”

So the three men, Mr. White, Mr. Grey, and Mr. Black, go here and there and everywhere. Mr. White and Mr. Grey agree to share the expense. Mr. Black is their guest.

They go first to the Mt. Wilson observatory to see the starry skies above. “How wonderful, how grand!” exclaims Mr. Grey. Then to the marvels of the telescope they add those of the microscope. They circle the globe to see “the wonders of the world.” They listen to the astronauts speaking down to the earth from the vicinity of the moon. There is no end to eh “exhibits” and Mr. Black shows signs of weariness. So, they sint down on the beach. Will not Mr. Black now sign on the dotted line?

As they wait for the answer, Mr. Grey spies a watch someone has lost. Holding it in his hand he says to Mr. Black: “Look around the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to benothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond that which human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which forces admiration from all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the production of human contrivance, of human designs, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other, we ar led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble one another. The Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the word, which he has executed. [\[Van Til is describing Rome’s idea that man is much lower than God on the *scale of being* as opposed to God being separate from Man as his creator as well as God being transcendent.\]](#)

“Now, Mr. Black, I don’t want to put undue pressure on you. You know your own needs n your own business. But I think that as a rational being you owe it to yourself to join the theistic party. Isn’t it highly probable that there is a God?

“I’m not now asking you to become a Christian. We take things one step at a time. I’m only speaking of the book of Nature. Of course, if there is a God and if this God should have a son, and if this Son should also reveal himself, it is not likely to be more difficult for you to believe in him than it is now to believe in the Father. But just now I am only asking you to admit that there is a great accumulation of evidence of the sort that any scientist or philosopher must admit to be valid for the existence of a God back of and above this world. You see this watch. Isn’t it highly probable that a power higher than itself has made it? You know the purpose of a watch. Isn’t it highly probable that the wonderful contrivances of nature serve the purpose of a god? Looking back we are naturally led to a god who is the cause of this world; looking forward we think of a god who has a purpose with this world. So far as we can observe the course and constitution of the universe there is, I think, no difficulty on your own adopted principles, against belief in a god. Why not become a theist? You do want to be on the winning side, don’t you? Well, the Gallop poll of the universe indicates a tendency toward the final victory of theism?”

When Mr. Grey had finished his obviously serious and eloquent plea, Mr. Black looked very thoughtful. He was clearly a gentleman. He disliked disappointing his two friends after all the generosity they had shown him. but he could not honestly see any basic difference between his own position and theirs. So he declined politely but resolutely to sign on the dotted line. He refused to be “converted” to theism. In substance he spoke as follows: “You speak of evidence of rationality and purpose in the universe. You would trace this rationality or purpose back to a rational being who is back of the universe who, you think, is likely to have a purpose with the universe. **But who is back of your God to explain him in turn? By your own definition your god is not absolute or self-sufficient.** You say that he *probably* exists; which means that you admit that he may not exist. Probability rests upon possibility. I think that any scientific person should come with an open mind to the observation of the facts of the universe. He ought to begin by assuming that any sort of fact may exist. I was glad to observe that on this all-important point you agree with me. Hence the only kind of god that either of us can believe in is one who may or may not exist. In other words, *neither* of us does or can believe in a *God who cannot not exist*. It was just this sort of God, a God who is self-sufficient, and as such *necessarily* existent, that I thought you Christian theists believed in.”

By this time Mr. White was beginning to squirm. He was beginning to realize that he had sold out the God of his theology, the Sovereign God of Scripture, by his silent consent to the argument of Mr. Grey. Mr. Black was right, he felt at once. **Either one presupposes God back of the ideas of possibility or one presupposes that the idea of possibility is back of God.** Either one says with historic Reformed theology on this basis of Scripture that what **God determines** and only what God determines is possible, or one says with all non-Christian forms of thought that possibility surrounds God. But for the moment Mr. White was stupefied. He could say nothing. So Mr. Black simply drew that conclusion from what he had said in the following words:

“Since, in your effort to please me, you have accepted my basic assumption with respect to the possibility, it follows that your God, granted he exists, is of no use whatsoever in explaining the universe. He himself needs in turn to be explained. Let us remember the story of the Indian philosopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to the present subject. If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without

end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. In short, gentleness, much as I dislike not to please you, what you offer is nothing better than what I already possess. Your God is himself surrounded by **pure possibility or Chance**. In what way can he help me? How could I be responsible to him? For you, as for me, all things ultimately end in the irrational.”

At this point Mr. Grey grew pale. In desperation he searched his arsenal for another argument that might convince Mr. Black. There was one that he had not used for some time. The argument for God that he had so far use, he had labeled *a posteriori* arguments. They ought, he had thought, to appeal to the “empirical” temper of the times. They started from human experience with causation and purpose and by analogy argued to the idea of a cause of and a purpose with the world as a whole. But Mr. Black had pointed out that if you start with the ideas of cause and purpose as intelligible to man *without* God, when these concepts apply to relations within the universe, then you *cannot* consistently say that you need God for the idea of cause or purpose when these concepts apply to the universe *as a whole*. So now Mr. Grey drew out the drawer marked *a priori* argument. In public he called this the argument from finite to absolute being. “As finite creature,” he said to Mr. Black, “we have the idea of absolute being. The idea of a finite being involves of necessity the idea of an absolute being. We have the notion of an absolute being; surely there must be a reality corresponding to our idea of such a being; if not, all our ideas may be false. Surely we must hold that reality is ultimately rational and coherent and that our ideas participate in this rationality. If not, how could science be possible?”

When Mr. Grey had thus delivered himself of this appeal to logic rather than to fact, then Mr. White for a moment seemed to take courage. Was not this at least to get away from the idea of a God who probably exists? Surely the “incommunicable attributes of God,” of which hee had been taught in his catechism classes, were all based upon, and expressive of, the idea of God as necessarily existing. But Mr. Black soon disillusioned him for the second time. Said he in answer to the argument from Mr. Grey, “Again I cannot see any basic difference between your position and mine. Of course, we must believe that reality is ultimately rational. And of course, we must hold that our minds participate in this rationality. **But when you speak thus you thereby virtually assert that we must not believe in a God whose existence is independent of our human existence.** A God whom we are to know must, with us, be a part of a rational system that is mutually accessible to, and expressive of, both. If God is necessary to you, then you are also necessary to God. That is the only sort of God that is involved in your argument.”

“But Mr. Back, this is terrible, this is unbearable! I will give you a Bible. Please read it! It tells you of Jesus Christ and how you may be saved by his blood. I am born again, and you can be born again too if you will only believe. Please do believe in God and be save!”

Meanwhile, Mr. white took new courage. He realized that he had so far made a great mistake in keeping silent during the time that Mr. Grey had presented his arguments. **The arguments for the existence of God taken from the ideas of cause and purpose as set forth by Mr. Grey had led to pure irrationalism and Chance.** The argument about an absolute being as set forth by Mr. Grey had led to pure rationalism and determinism. In both cases, Mr. Black had been quite right in saying that a God whose existence is problematic, or a God who exists by the same necessity as does the universe, is still an aspect of, or simply the whole of, the universe. But now he felt that perhaps Mr. Grey was right in

simply witnessing to the existence of God. HE thought that, if the arguments used are not logically coercive, they may at least be used as a means with which to witness to unbelievers. And surely witnessing to God's existence was always in order. But poor Mr. White was to be disillusioned again. **For the witness-bearing done by Mr. Grey was based on the assumption that the believe in God is a purely non-rational or even irrational matter.**

Mr. Black's reply to the words of Mr. Grey indicated this fact all too clearly. Said Mr. black to Mr. Grey: "I greatly appreciate your evident concern for my 'eternal welfare.' But there are two or three questions that I would like to have you answer. In the first place, I would ask whether in thus simply *witnessing* to me of God's existence you thereby admit that the *arguments* for the existence of God have no validity? Or rather do you not thereby admit that these arguments, if they prove anything, prove that God is finite and correlative to man and therefore that your position is not basically different from mine?"

Mr. Grey did not answer because he could not answer this question otherwise than by agreeing with Mr. Black.

"In the second place," said Mr. Black, "you are now witnessing to Christ as well as to God, to Christianity as well as to theism. I suppose your argument for Christianity would be similar in nature to your argument for theism, would it not? You would argue that the Jesus of the New Testament is probably the Son of God and that he quite probably died for the sins of men. But now you witness to me about your Christ. And by witnessing instead of reasoning you seem to admit that there is no objective claim for the truth of what you hold with respect to Christ. Am I right in all this?"

Again Mr. Grey made no answer. The only answer he could consistently have given would be to agree with Mr. Black.

"In the third place," said Mr. Black, "you are now witnessing not only to God the Father, to Jesus Christ the Son, but also to the Holy Spirit. You say you are born again, that you know you are saved and that at present I am lost. Now, if you have had a special experience of some sort, it would be unscientific for me to deny it. But, if you want to witness to me *about* your experience, you must make plain to me the *nature* of that experience. To do that you must do so in terms of principle that I understand. Such principles must needs be accessible to all. **Now if you make plain your experience to me in terms of principles that are plain to me as unregenerate, then how is your regeneration unique?** On the other hand, if you still maintain that your experience of regeneration is unique, then can you say anything about it to me so that I may understand? Does not then our witness-bearing appear to be wholly unintelligible and devoid of meaning? Thus again you cannot make any claim to the objective truth of your position.

"Summing up the whole matter, I would say in the first place, that your arguments for the existence of God **have rightfully established me in my unbelief.** They have shown that nothing can be said for the existence of a God **who is actually** the Creator and controller of the world. I would say in the second place that using such arguments as you have used for the existence of God commits you to using similar arguments for the truth of Christianity with similar fatal results for your position. In both cases

you first use intellectual arguments upon principles that presuppose the justice of my unbelieving position. Then, when it is pointed out to you that such is the case, you turn to witnessing. But then your witnessing is in the nature of the case an activity that you yourself have virtually admitted to be wholly irrational and unintelligible.

When Mr. Black had finished, Mr. White was in great distress. **But it was through this very distress that he at last saw the richness of his own faith.** He made no pretense to having greater intellectual power than Mr. Grey. He greatly admired the real faith and courage of Mr. Grey. But he dared keep silence no longer. His silence had been sin, he now realized. Mr. Black had completely discomfited Mr. Grey, so that he had not another word to say. Mr. Black was about to leave them established rather than challenged in his unbelief. And all of that in spite of the best intentions and efforts of Mr. Grey, speaking for both of them. A sense of urgent responsibility to make known the claims of the sovereign God pressed upon him. He now saw clearly, first, that the arguments for the existence of God, as conducted by Mr. Grey, are based on the assumption that the unbeliever is right with respect to the principle in terms of which he explains all things. These principles are: (a) **that man is not a creature of God but rather is ultimate and as such must properly consider himself instead of God the final reference point in explaining all things**; (b) that all other things beside himself are non-created but controlled by **Chance**; and (c) that the power of logic that he possesses is the means by which he must determine what is possible or impossible in the universe of Chance.

At last, it dawned upon Mr. White that first to admit that the principles of Mr. Black, the unbeliever, are right and then to seek to win him to the acceptance of the existence of God the Creator and judge of all men is like first admitting that the United States had historically been a province of the Soviet Union but ought at the same time to be recognized as an independent and all-controlling political power.

In the second place, Mr. White now saw clearly that a **false type of reasoning** for the truth of God's existence and for the truth of Christianity involves a false kind of witnessing for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity. **If one reasons for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity, on the assumption that Mr. Black's principles of explanation are valid, then one must witness on the same assumption.** One must then make plain to Mr. Black, **in terms of principles which Mr. Black accepts, what it means to be born again**. Mr. Black will then apply the principles of modern psychology of religion to Mr. Grey's "testimony" with respect to his regeneration and show that it is something that naturally comes in the period of adolescence.

In the third place, Mr. White now saw clearly that it was quite "proper," for Mr. Grey, **to use a method of reasoning and a method of witness-bearing that is based upon the truth of anti-Christian and anti-theistic assumptions. Mr. Greys' theology is not Reformed. It is therefore based upon the idea that God is not wholly sovereign over man.** It assumes that man's responsibility implies a measure of **autonomy** of the sort that is the essence and foundation of the whole of Mr. Black's thinking. **It is therefore to be expected that Mr. Grey will assume that Mr. Black needs not to be challenged on his basic assumption with respect to his own assumed ultimacy or autonomy.**

From now on Mr. White decided that, much as he enjoyed the company of Mr. Grey and much as he admired his evident sincerity and basic devotion to the truth of God, they he must go his own way in apologetics as he had, since the Reformation, gone his own way in theology. He tried to make an appointment with Mr. Black then to see him soon. Meanwhile he expressed to Mr. Grey his great love for him as a fellow believer, his great admiration for his fearless and persistent efforts to win men to an acceptance of truth as it is in Jesus. Then he confessed to Mr. Grey that **his conscience had troubled him** during the entire time of their travels with Mr. Black. He had started in good faith, thinking that Mr. Grey's efforts at argument and witnessing might win Mr. Black. He had therefore been quite willing, especially since Mr. Grey was through his constant study much more conversant with such things than he himself was, to be represented by Mr. Grey. But now he had a last come to realize that not only had the effort been utterly fruitless and self-frustrating but, **more than that, it had been terribly dishonoring to God**. How could the eternal I AM be pleased with being presented as being a god and as *probably* existing, as probably necessary for the explanation of *some* things but not all things, as on who will be glad to recognize the ultimacy of his own creatures? Would the God who had in paradise required of men implicit obedience now be satisfied with a claims-and-counter-claims arrangement with his creatures?

From the dialogue given above, the reader can for himself discern why we have advocated what seems to us to be a Reformed as over against the traditional method of apologetics. The traditional method, the method practiced by various Christians for centuries, was constructed by Roman Catholics and Arminians. It was, so to speak, derived from Romanist or Arminian theology. Just as Roman Catholic and Arminian theology compromises the Christian doctrines of Scripture, of God, of man, of sin, and of redemption, so the traditional method of apologetics compromises Christianity in order to win men to an acceptance of it.

The **traditional method of compromises** the biblical doctrine of God in not clearly distinguishing his self-existence from his relation to the world. The **traditional method** compromises the biblical doctrine of God and his relation to his revelation to man by not clearly insisting that man, as a creature and as a sinner, **must not seek to determine the nature of God**, otherwise than from his revelation.

The **traditional method compromises** the **biblical doctrine of the counsel of God** by not taking it as the only all-inclusive ultimate "cause" of whatsoever comes to pass.

The **traditional method therefore compromises** the **clarity of God's revelation to man**, whether this revelation comes through general or through special revelation. Created facts are not taken to be clearly revelational of God; all the facts of nature and of man are said to indicated no more than that a god probably exists.

The **traditional method compromises** the **necessity of supernatural revelation** in relation to natural revelation. It does so in failing to do justice to the fact that even in paradise man had to interpret natural revelation in the light of the covenantal obligations placed upon him by God through **supernatural communication**. In consequence, the **traditional method fails to recognize** the necessity of redemptive supernatural, as concomitant to natural, revelation after the fall of man.

The **traditional method compromises** the **sufficiency of Scripture** by not taking it as self-attesting in the full sense of the term.

The **traditional method compromises** the biblical doctrine of man's creation in the image of God by thinking of him as being "free" or ultimate rather than analogical. [I think he means *dependent upon God or derivative* in nature to God. We are not wholly free creatures; our freedom of our will is derivative. Jer. 10:23, *O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*]

The **traditional method compromises** the biblical doctrine of *sin*, in not thinking of it as an **ethical** break with God which is complete in principle even though not in practice.

In spite of these things, this **traditional method** has been employed by Reformed theologians, and this fact has stood in the way of the development of a distinctly Reformed apologetic.

VI. **Conclusion**

It has become even more apparent now that our Reformed pastor cannot, as he defends the Christian faith, cooperate with the Arminian any more than he could cooperate with the Roman Catholic.

The Arminian as well as the Roman Catholic fails to present to the believer a challenge to the effect that **he needs a radical conversion. Neither the Arminians or the Roman Catholic so much as gives the unbeliever the opportunity of seeing what the gospel really is.** They do not direct the all-revealing searchlight of the Scripture toward him. **They do not even show him the face of the Great Physician** lest this Great Physician should say that the heart of the natural man is desperately wicked and that no man knows **the depth of that wickedness** except the Great Physician, who would heal all his diseases.

Of course, we are speaking primarily of systems rather than men. **Many roman Catholics, and especially many Arminians are much more biblical than are their systems.** Therein must all rejoice. But the Reformed Christian must be true to his Lord. He must love sinners with a deep compassion. But he must not love sinners more than he loves Christ. The more truly he loves sinners the more uncompromisingly **will he require of them that they must be saved on God's terms, not their own.** It is Christ, through his Word in Scripture, who must diagnose their disease even as it is Christ who heals only those who confess **that their disease is what the Great Physician says it is.** Pg 71

NOTES

3. Man is a mixture of form (Being) and matter (non-being). Except for his participation in God (Being), a participation which God himself sustains, man would be wholly absorbed into matter or pure Chaos (non-being), which is the polar opposite of God and therefore evil. It is, however, *equally ultimate* with God. (By "equally ultimate" we mean that neither in any way is **dependent** on the other for existence.)

4. Since both man and nature are in some sense combinations of the finite (Chaos) and infinite (Rationality), the witness of both man and nature is *unclear*. Therefore, the existence of God, for

Aquinas, is a matter of *question* and can be answered only in terms of rational and empirical argumentation. Of course, Aquina thought that his arguments for the existence of God were completely valid. Many modern orthodox apologists, however, recognizing the inadequacies of the “**theistic proofs**,” generally maintain that, when all of the arguments are taken together, God’s existence is seen to be highly probable. **However, they still hold to Aquinas’ belief in (1) the lack of clarity in God’s revelation; and (2) the ability of man’s intellect to reason about God correctly prior to, and independently of, the revelation of God.**

Pg 77-83

II. Christ Writes Me a Letter

I have never met Christ in the flesh. No matter, he has written me a letter. Not he, himself. He chose helpers. By his Spirit, the Spirit of truth, these helpers wrote what he wanted me to know. From heaven my Lord then sent his Holy Spirit on Pentecost to dwell in the hearts of all these whom he came into the worlds to redeem. I am, by his grace, one of them. Together we form the church, his people. In us and through us he establishes his kingdom. As a soldier of the cross, strengthened by his power in the inward man, I fight daily against Satan, who seeks at every point to establish is own kingdom in the hearts and to the hurt of men.

In his letter Jesus tells me that all men are made of one bold because all are created by God. As such all men are God’s children; they all bear his image. But the first pair, from whom all later generations of men cam “by ordinary generation,” sinned against God. God set before them the ideal of joy which he would give them if they led their lives in the direction he indicated to them. That direction was to be marked by love and obedience to their Maker and benefactor. But our first parents had a person-to-person confrontation with Satan. Satan told them **how free he had become since declaring his independence of God**. To be **self-determining man must surely be able to decide** the “nature of the good” – **regardless of what God says about it**.

Adam saw Satan’s point. “You are right, Satan, I must first decide whether such a God as often speaks to us (1) knows what the ‘good’ for us is, (2) controls history so that he can determine what will happen if we disobey him, and (3) has the right to demand obedience from us. After I decide these issues, and if the answer is ‘yes,’ then I shall obey him. Certainly not before.”

But by taking to himself the right to decide these issues, Adam had already decided them 0 in the negative. If God is such a one as knows the “good” for us, controls whatsoever comes to pass, and has the right of unquestioned obedience, then man obeys his word because it is his word. Adam, in disobedience, became a “free” man.

But Satan miscalculated. Refusing to believe that God controls the courses of history, Satan began his attempt to take over the whole of mankind to himself. Having succeeded with the first Adam, he tried his trick on the Second Adam. But the Second Adam replied to Satan’s scheme, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” and, “It is written”! The Second Adam both knew and received the Word of God, for he

was God, the Word. He lived his life according to what he, in his program, had written down in advance. Even the words, "I thirst," spoken on the cross, were spoken in accord with what was written.

Now what was written consisted chiefly in his promise to his people that he would, in the face of Satan and his hosts, redeem them from their sin. He would be their *Great High Priest* by giving himself as their substitute. "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." He would be their *Prophet*, like unto Moses, proclaiming the final word of deliverance to his people, establishing them in the truth in the face of Satan's effort to make them believe the lie. He would be their *King*, establishing his elect nation of "holy ones" against the effort of Satan to establish a kingdom based upon the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.

He came, he saw, he conquered: there was a **transition** from **wrath to grace** in history. The new age had come, **the age of grace and glory**. In his letter Jesus tells us of this new age. Much of this letter comes to us through his servant Paul. Much of the early growth of Christ's kingdom came through the work of his servant Paul. How did Paul tell the story of the Christ?

In Romans Paul tells us of the wayward path of mankind. Both Jews and Greeks, being from the beginning of the world confronted with the truth of God, have nevertheless exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. Since they chose not to have God in their knowledge, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against these men who hold back the revelation of God as if it were some awful, destructive flood. Such a flood it will be for men who refuse to turn back to God through his Son.

As children of Adam, they have always made and continue to make the effort required to cover-up the truth about themselves and God. **They see every fact as other than it really is**. By means of their literature – **drama, poetry, and philosophy** – **they try to prove to themselves that the world is not the estate of God and that they are not made in this image**. **Both Jew and Gentile have blinded themselves to the true state of affairs about themselves and their world** – about their past, their present and their future. Not being creatures of God, **they could not have sinned against such a one**. **They do not need, therefore, the atoning death of Christ for the remission of their sins**. As Stephen said of the Jews, so also it must be said of the Gentiles, that they have always resisted the Holy Spirit – to their own damnation.

In his address on the Areopagus Paul proclaims the name of the resurrected Christ to the Gentile covenant-breakers, would-be-fugitives from divine judgment. **Paul does not place himself on their level in order with them to investigate the nature of being and knowledge in general**, to discover whether the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might possibly exist. He tells them straight out that what they claim not to know, he knows. **He tells them that their so-called ignorance is culpable, for God is as near to them as their own selves**. He tells them, therefore, to repent of their worship of idols, to turn to the living God, lest they stand without the robes of righteousness before the resurrected Lord Christ on the day of judgment.

Paul's preaching to the Greeks was similar to Noah's preaching to the men of his time. When at first Noah claimed that God had given him a world of warning which men reject only to their own peril, they

were nevertheless sure what they could dispose of such claims in terms of their own wisdom. There were, they said, no “facts” or “valid reasons” to support Noah’s claim, unless one accepts the “fact” that God spoke to Noah. But there was only Noah’s word for this and who was Noah? But when the last men were drowning, they saw themselves and their wisdom for what they really were, namely, foolishness. It was then too late. Even so at the end of time, in the face of the wrath of the Lamb, men will again see themselves and their wisdom for what it is and will call upon the hills to cover them lest they fall into the hands of an angry God.

Paul knew that the Greeks could not identify themselves truly in terms of their philosophy. “Chaos” and “old Night” [Chance] were their only substitutes for what Paul told them of the origin and destiny of the world. They tried various combinations of **ultimate rationality** (unity) and **ultimate chance** (diversity) in terms such as **“form” and “matter”** to take the place of **creation and providence**, but to no satisfaction. Even so, Paul could not prove to the Greeks in their sense of the word “prove,” that what they believed was foolishness and what he believed was “good sense,” Paul could not adopt the principles of the “free” first Adam to “prove” the principles of the Second Adam. **Paul recognized, as did his Greek audience, that his ideas were, all of them, foolishness to the non-Christian mind.** The Greeks would not believe any single one of them, much less all of them in their proper relation to each other, **unless by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit they were given eyes with which to see the whole truth of God in Christ.** Paul knew that the natural man, like Xantippe who is said to have kept on clipping her fingers even though these fingers were all that was left of the above the water, will keep on saying that Christ is wrong and that Satan is right so long as he has breath except the Spirit in mercy give him light and life.

This, then, is the message of the letter written to me and to the whole Church by Christ himself. Ever since I can remember it was of this letter of Christ which my father read to me and to the family. It was also this letter which I heard in church, spoken by the minister of Christ. Every minister in those days had a VDM degree: *Verbum Die Minister*. When, therefore, I became a teacher of apologetics it was natural for me to think, not only of my Th.M. and my PhD., but above all of my VDM. The former degrees were but means whereby I might be true to the latter degree.

How else, I thought, can anyone be a follower of the Reformation? Calvin and Luther: they expounded the Scriptures for the edification of the church of Christ. They rescued the Bible as the Word of God for the people of God from the **apostate church of Rome**. **When they insisted on the necessity, authority, sufficiency, and the perspicuity of the Scriptures**, they rejected in principle the entire Roman theological structure as it was **largely based upon the very Greek thought** against which Paul so vigorously preached.

Wanting to follow the Reformers, it was natural that I read and appreciated the works of those who before me likewise attempted to do so. I first used the words of **Abraham Kuyper** and **Herman Bavinck**. How basic and how broad was their view! The idea of Scripture, they said, must never be separated from its message.

The Roman Catholics, for example, in separating the two, distort the biblical views of sin and salvation. **According to the position of Rome**, the transition from sinner to saint is a **metaphysical**

process of elevation on the “**scale of being.**” This **Greek-Christian metaphysics of salvation** brings with it a **false view of the nature of Scripture**. Scripture, on this view, cannot be “sufficient.” The Roman church adds itself as the continuing organ of revelation to written revelation, therewith achieving the sufficiency which Scripture, of itself, lacks. As Bavinck truly said, the nature of the message of salvation and the nature of Scripture are always involved in one another.

Just so, from the Reformed point of view, all so-called “evangelical” non-Reformed theologies “all those which, although non-Reformed, hold to what J.I. Packer calls the “evangelical equation” of Scripture with the Word of God, such as orthodox Lutheranism, traditional **Arminian-Wesleyanism**, and **synergistic fundamentalism**), **which have an inadequate view of sovereign grace, have also an inadequate view of Scripture. A God who cannot control history because of countless men with wills not fully dependent of his own can only make salvation a bare “possibility.”** Christ might have died in vain. Being “free,” all men might refuse to exercise their supposedly “God-given freedom” to “draw their check for ‘eternal life’ put in the Band of Heaven for all men.” God’s plan, to call out a people for himself, might never have been realized. Needless to say, every major teaching of Scripture excludes such a “scheme.” God *is* God. Christ finished the work of salvation for his own. Only those “in Christ” from the foundation of the world died with Christ on the cross. **Christ saved his sheep; he did not just make their salvation “possible.”** The emphasis, therefore, **on human autonomy** in non-Reformed **evangelical theology** **not only play havoc with the scriptural message of salvation by grace alone**, but distorts the doctrine of Scripture itself by **finding the ultimate exegetical tool in the subjective experience of human freedom** and **by denying to Scripture and the Holy Spirit the power, authority and necessity of invading the souls of men. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God do not change men, men first must agree to be changed!** [the Arminian view] For this reason no non-Reformed theology can properly be called a “theology of the Holy Spirit.” A theology which loses the right to be called a “theology of the Holy Spirit loses also the right to be called “a theology of the Word of God.” It is no wonder, therefore, that G.C. Berkouwer speaks of the “isolation of the Reformed view of Scripture.”

This point receives even stronger confirmation in the case of existential theology.

If non-Reformed evangelical theologies [e.g., **Arminian**] tend toward **subjectivism**, modern non-evangelical theology stands on it flat-footed. Take the theology of **Karl Barth**, for example. The free grace of God, Barth maintained, could not be communicated through a stabilized, objectivized revelation. Orthodox theology, he argues, has reduce the living, active revelation of God that of a lifeless form. When Barth spoke agreeable, therefore, of verbal inspiration he “actualized” it and therewith fitted it ‘into his system.” In bringing down the Bible to the dimension of “causal relations,” orthodoxy brings down the entire religious relation between God and man to the level of **impersonal concepts and ideas**. Orthodoxy is the theology of the “blessed possessors,” the theology of those who **control the freedom of God**. The God of orthodoxy, indeed the God of Calvinism, is not sovereign! The God of Calvin is not the God of sovereign, universal grace.

We may say, therefore, that the Barthian soteriology of “sovereign, free grace” which comes to us only in our **subjectivity** entails a **radically new view of Scripture itself. The Bible may now be called the Word of God only in so far as it brings this message of subjectivity to us.** To say, “the Bible is the Word of God,” for Barth, does not imply a directly discernible revelation of God in history as we know it.

From these example of Roman Catholic, Arminian-Wesleyan-Lutheran, and finally modern theology, it is clear (1) that the idea of Scripture can never be separated from the message of Scripture, and (2) that none of these non-Reformed evangelical and modern theologies have a view of Scripture such that the Lord Christ speaks to man with an **absolute authority**. **The self-attesting Christ of Scripture is not absolutely central to these theologies.** Just so, he will not be central in any apologetic form to defend them.

III. Toward a Christ-Centered Apologetic

Deciding, therefore, to follow the Reformers in theology, it was natural that I attempt also to do so in apologetics. I turned to such Reformed apologists as Warfield, Greene, and others. What did I find? I found the theologians of the “self-attesting Christ,” defending their faith with a method which denied precisely that point! That this was that this was the case may be shown by a brief survey of what I call the “traditional” method of Christian apologetics.

The traditional method, offered first in detail by **Thomas Aquinas** in its Catholic form and my **Joseph Butler** in its Protestant form (but being in principle that offered by the very earliest of apologists), is based upon **the assumption that man has some measure of autonomy**, that the space-time world is in some measure “contingent” [by chance] and that **man must create for himself his own epistemology in an ultimate sense.** [e.g., existentialism! Man creates his own meaning in life completely independent of any outside influence, including God’s.]

The traditional method was concessive on these basic points on which it should have demanded surrender! As such, it was always self-frustrating. **The traditional method had explicitly built into it the right and ability of the natural man, apart from the work of the Spirit of God, to be the judge of the claim of the authoritative Word of God.** It is man who, by means of his **self-established intellectual tools**. Puts is “stamp of approval” on the Word of God and then, only after that grand act, does he listen to it. God’s Word must first pass man’s tests of good and evil, truth and falsity. But once you tell a non-Christian this, why should he be worried by anything else that you say? You have already told him he is quite alright just the way he is! Then the Scripture is not correct when it talks of “darkened minds,” “willful ignorance,” “dead men,” and “blind people”! With this method the correctness of the natural man’s problematics is endorsed. That is all he needs to reject the Christian faith.

Seeing therefore, the failure of even Reformed theologians and apologists in their efforts to defend consistently the self-attesting Christ of Scripture, it became clear to me that new groundwork needed to be done. I did not, however, undertake this task *de novo*. I learned much from other men, just as I did in theology from Kuyper and Bavinck. Since I conceived of Christian apologetics as focusing on the self-attesting Christ of Scripture, it was natural that I should learn most of the development and defense of the doctrine of the person of Christ in the historical, theological development of the church. There are three eras in history in which Christian apologetics was help forward in the right direction.

The Council of Nicea. _ Herer, in A.D. 325, the church concluded that the only adequate expression of the teaching of Christ concerning himself and of the apostles concerning God, was in a formulation

cush that all three persons of the Trinity were **equally ultimate**. The church rejected the subordination of the Son to the Father in any “ontological” sense. Herman Bavinck points out that herewith was rejected any attempt to unite God with man in terms of some change wherein God ceased to be himself as God.

The Chalcedon Creed. – This formulation of the church deals particularly with the difficult question of the relation of the divine to the human “natures” of Christ. Adopted in A.D. 451, it says that the divine and human “natures” of Christ are related unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably. The first two adjective were directed against the Eutychians, the sconed tow against the Nestorians. Pg 84

Pg 86-90 (duplicate on: *Van Til - A Lesson in Apologetics - Mr. White, Grey, Black - DCM 36-81.docx*)

I have said that the development of the church’s doctrine of Christ took place in three basic steps and that these three steps were necessary prerequisites for a truly biblical apologetics. L Further I observed that Tertullian was a man ahead of his time, both in Christology and in apologetic method. The third step, the Reformed creeds, was basically an expression of the theology of **John Calvin**. We shall understand the third step more fully, therefore, if we look in detail at the Christology of Calvin. In doing so we shall also see a development and application of the method of Tertullian and therewith the beginnings of a Christ-centered apologetics.

For Calvin speculation about God, independently of Scripture, is excluded. Natural theology, therefore, is also excluded. **Natural theology starts with man as autonomous and with the world as “given.” Natural theologians assume that “reason” and “logic” and “fact” are “religiously neutral.”** They are but “tools” by which man may and must determine what is and what is not possible.

Now if there is anything which is basic to the ideas of the Reformation it is that which Calvin expresses at the very outset of his *Institutes*: man is what God in Christ through Scripture says he is. This is God triune. “The tripersonality of God is conceived by Calvin, ...not as something added to the complete idea of God, or as something into which God develops in the process of his existence, but as something which enters into the very idea of God, without which he cannot be conceived in the truth of his being.” For Calvin the doctrine of the Trinity was involved in his experience of salvation “in the Christian’s certainty that the Redeeming Christ and Sanctifying Spirit are each Devine persons.” “The main thing was, he insisted, that men should heartily believe that there is but one God, whom only they should serve; but also that Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier is each no less this one God than God the Father to whom we owe our being; while yet these three ar distinct personal objects of our live and adoration.” It was because of this deep religious interest in making the triune God of Scripture the stating point of all his theology that Calvin found it necessary to exclude every last vestige of subordinationism which might even be said to be sanctioned by the language of Nicea. He therefore used the word $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ with respect to the Son of God.

The significance of this for Christian apologetics should be clear at one. “All those who were for any reason or in any degree unable or unwilling to allow Christ a deity in every respect equal to that of the Father were necessarily offended by the vindication to him of the ultimate divine quality of self-existence.” Calvin explicated the person of Christ solely in scriptural terms, i.e., his method is exegetical

rather than speculative. As such his method is simple: who Christ is, depends on Christ's self-identification. If Christ is who he says he is, then all speculation is excluded, for God can swear only by himself. To find out what man is and who God is, one can only go to Scripture. Faith in the self-attesting Christ of the Scriptures is the beginning, not the conclusion, of wisdom! It was, therefore, not until the fully developed trinitarian theology of Calvin, which says that Christ is authoritative because *αὐτόθεος*, that there was therewith developed a truly Christian *methodology* of theology and of apologetics. The method by which a Christian develops the content of his faith must not be denied by the method he uses to defend that content. **Calvin, seeing this, denied all speculation and natural theology as "avenues" to faith. Rather, faith and understanding are pure gifts of free grace.** pg 87

The apologetic method thus far outlined will be made clearer if we consider as objection, indeed the "stock" objection, to such an approach as Calvin's. It comes from Stuart Cornelius Hackett in his *The Resurrection of Theism* We must, says Hackett, have "a rational justification for the metaphysical ultimate" which we believe in. Calvinism denies this. The Calvinists say that God has "created rational men as mere puppets of his sovereignty. But if it seems to be the case that man is under obligation to believe the gospel and that he must accept Christ as Savior **before the Spirit of God regenerates the heart** – if, I say, man is a moral and rational agent confronted with a revelation or the acceptance of which he is morally and rationally responsible – then let the presuppositionalist framework be consigned to the irrationalism that is written so plainly through its structure... With here opponents thus languishing in defeat, reason pushes on to consider **experience itself** to determine whether God is real.

With these words Hackett sums up the issue between himself as an Arminian and myself as a Calvinist very well. It goes without saying that we two have radically different beliefs as to what the Bible says about man and his sinfulness and about the Holy Spirit and his sovereignty. Indeed, **the issues between us are total**. There are not "fundamentals" in common between us: we will necessarily understand creation-providence, the fall of man, the atonement of Christ, his sinlessness and his resurrection, his second coming and his ultimate triumph, the doctrine of Scripture, the nature of saving faith – we will necessarily understand, I say, these doctrines in different ways. Hackett's Christian faith and my Christian faith, which we both desire non-Christians to accept, are radically different. They are different not only in their content but also in the very method of their construction.

I make two broad points in reference to this. First, any non-Christian epistemology, i.e., any theory of knowledge based upon principle acceptable *per se* to the "mind of the flesh," (and therefore those of Hackett's own method) is doomed to failure; not only failure as an avenue to Christian faith, but as an avenue to any form of knowledge whatsoever. This I think can be, and has been repeatedly, shown by myself and many others. Second, Hackett's basic charge that Calvinism is determinist and irrational is simply not true. First, as to the charge that it is determinist **and that men are but "puppets,"** not need only read Calvin himself to be persuaded that such an understanding of Calvinism is false. The Calvinist notion of divine sovereignty has nothing to do with the philosopher's notion of physical, causal determinism. I have developed at length in other places the covenantal, exhaustively personalist view of providence which is clearly part of Calvin's thought.

As to the charge that the Calvinist position is “irrational,” I assume that Hackett cannot mean that it is inconsistent. After all, one of the so-called “sins” of Calvin was that he was too deductive, too logical, in drawing implications from this and that in Scripture, that in “logicizing” theology he destroyed its heart. I assume that what Hackett means is that on the Calvinist position man is called upon to repent of his sins and accept Christ *without having reasons* for doing so. The Calvinist cannot give reason because he has no *point of contact* [no common ground] with the non-Christian. There are, for the Calvinist, no *reasons* to which he might appeal in an effort to get his friend to accept Christ.

In response to this I observe that this also is not the case. Hackett assumes that unless one finds a point of contact with the natural man by way of agreeing with him on his false views of man and the world then one has no point of contact with him at all. *Against this position, I maintain, with Calvin following Paul, that my point of contact lies in the actual state of affairs between men as the Bible tells us of it.* It is Hackett who has no real point of contact, for he lies in what men *imagine* (and, to be sure, “agree”) to be the case. **The Calvinist’s point of contact is rooted in the actual state of affairs [i.e., man is what God says he is not what unregenerate man thinks he is.]. All things are what they are because of their relation to the world of the triune God as rooted in Scripture.** Hackett’s “point of contact” as an *evangelical Arminian* is an essentially **Kantian** epistemology, an epistemology in terms of which men stand utterly unrelated to one another and are, at the same time, reduced to relations of one another.

[Excellent summary here:](#)

To look for a point of contact with the unbeliever in the unbeliever’s notions of himself and his world is to encourage him in his wicked rebellion and to establish him in his self-frustration. We have already seen that the natural man is under the self-imposed delusion that he is “free,” i.e., independent of the control and counsel of God, and that the “facts” about him are also “free” in this way. He may pretend to be “open-minded” and ready to consider whether God exists. But in being so “neutral” he commits the same sin as Adam and Eve.

Why seek truth where only a lie is to be found? Can the non-Christian tell us and therefore the Christ himself, what the facts are and how they are related to each other, in what way they cohere, while yet excluding creation and providence. If he can, and if he can tell us truly, then the Christian story simple is not true! **Because the natural man cannot do this, because the Christian message is true, I have sought and will seek to reap the benefit of a theology in which the true God of Scripture has the initiative in salvation.**

The Calvinist’s idea of an *actual* as opposed to an imagined point of contact is not just some useless notion. It is the only intelligible point of contact possible. The non-Christian holds that pure chance or absolute fate are equally ultimate [not dependent upon the Creator] and **mutually correlative limiting concepts** or **heuristic** principles which man uses to explain the fact that we have learned much about the world, that there is order in the world, a uniformity, while there is also continual change and development. But the non-Christian’s “explanation” is no explanation at all. To say, “it just happens” as an explanation of an event is really to say, “There is no explanation that I know of.”

The Calvinist, therefore, using his point of contact, observes to the non-Christian that if the world were not what Scripture says it is, if the natural man’s knowledge were not actually rooted in the

creation and providence of God, then there could be no knowledge whatsoever. The Christian claims that non-Christians have made and now make many discoveries about the true state of affairs of the universe simply because the universe is what Christ says it is. **The unbelieving scientist borrows or steals the Christian principles of creation and providence every time he says that an “explanation” is possible**, for he knows he cannot account for “explanation” on his own. As the image-bearer of God, operating in a universe controlled by God, the unbeliever contributes indirectly and adventitiously to the development of human knowledge and culture.

When Hackett maintains that the Calvinist position is **irrational** because it cannot give “reasons” for believing, he must mean that on a position such as mine the Christian does not accept the non-Christian scheme wherein the non-Christian determines what are “good reasons” and “valid proofs.” This is perfectly true, but this is not irrational. Rather the Christian offers the **self-attesting Christ to the world as the only foundation upon which a man must stand in order to give any “reasons” for anything at all**. The whole notion of “giving reasons” is completely destroyed by any ontology other than the Christian one. The Christian claims that only after accepting the biblical scheme of things will any man be able to understand and account for his rationality. Pg 90

IV. The Total Picture

A. My problems with the “traditional method.”

1. This method compromises God himself by maintaining that his existence is only “possible” albeit “highly probable,” rather than ontologically and “rationally” necessary.
2. It compromises the counsel of God by not understanding it as the only all-conclusive, ultimate “cause” of whatsoever comes to pass.
3. It compromises the revelation of God by:
 - a. Compromising its **necessity**. It does so by not recognizing that even in Paradise man had to interpret the general (natural) revelation of God in terms of the covenantal obligations place upon him by God through special revelation. Natural revelation, on the traditional view, can be understood “on its own.”
 - b. Compromising its **clarity**. Both the general and special revelation of God are said to be unclear to the point that man may say only that God’s existence is “probable.”
 - c. Compromising its **sufficiency**. It does this by allowing for an ultimate realm of “chance” out of which might come “facts” such as are wholly new for God and for man. Such “facts” would be uninterpreted and unexplainable in terms of the general or special revelation of God.
 - d. Compromising its **authority**. On the traditional position the Word of God’s self-attesting characteristic, and therewith its authority, is secondary to the authority of reason and experience. **The Scriptures do not identify themselves, man identifies them and recognizes their “authority” only in terms of his own authority.**
4. It compromises man’s creation as the image of God by thinking of man’s creation and knowledge as independent of the Being and knowledge of God. On the traditional approach man need not “think God’s thoughts after him.”

5. It compromises man's covenantal relationship with God by not understanding Adam's representative action as absolutely determinative of the future.

6. It compromises the sinfulness of mankind resulting from the sin of Adam by not understanding **man's ethical depravity** as extending to the whole of his life, even to his thoughts and attitudes.

7. It compromises the grace of God by not understanding it as the necessary prerequisite for "renewal unto knowledge." On the traditional view **man can and must renew himself** unto knowledge by the "right use of reason."

B. My understanding of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian, philosophically speaking.

1. Both have presuppositions about the nature of reality:

a. The Christian presupposes the triune God and his redemptive plan for the universe as set forth once for all in Scripture.

b. The non-Christian presupposes a dialectic between "chance" and "regularity," the former accounting for the origin of matter and life, the latter accounting for the current success of the scientific enterprise.

2. Neither can, as finite beings, by means of *logic* as such, say what reality *must* be or *cannot* be.

a. The Christian, therefore, attempts to understand his world through the observation and logical ordering of facts in self-conscious subjection to the plan of the self-attesting Christ of Scripture.

b. The non-Christian, while attempting an enterprise similar to the Christian's, attempts nevertheless to us "**logic to destroy the Christian position**. [**he borrows principles from God to destroy God!**] On the one hand, appealing to the non-rationality of "matter," he says that the chance-character of "facts" is conclusive evidence against the Christian position. Then, on the other hand, he maintains like Parmenides that the Christian story cannot possibly be true. Man must be autonomous, "logic" must be legislative as to the field of "**possibility**" and possibility must be above God.

3. Both claim that their position is "in accordance with the facts."

a. The Christian claims this because he interprets the facts and his experience **in the light of the revelation** of the **self-attesting Christ** in Scripture. Both the **uniformity** and the **diversity** of facts have at their foundation the all-embracing plan of God.

b. The non-Christian claims this because he interprets the facts and **his experience** in the **light of the autonomy of human personality**, the **ultimate** "givenness" of the world and the amenability of matter to mind. There can be no fact that denies man's autonomy or attest to the world's and man's divine origin.

4. Both claim that their position is "rational."

a. The Christian does so by claiming not only that his position is self-consistent but that he can explain both the seemingly "inexplicable" amenability of fact to logic and the necessity and usefulness of rationality itself in terms of Scripture.

b. The non-Christian may or may not make this same claim. If he does, the Christian maintains that he cannot make it good. If the non-Christian attempts to account for the amenability of facts to logic in terms of the ultimate rationality of the cosmos, then he will be crippled when it comes to explaining the "**evolution**" of men and things. If he attempts to do so in terms of pure "chance" and ultimate "irrationality" as being the well out of which both rational man and a rationally amenable world sprang,

then we shall point out that such an explanation is in fact not explanation at all and that it destroys predication.

C. **My proposal**, therefore, for a consistently Christian methodology of apologetics is this:

1. That we use the same principle in apologetics that we use in theology: the self-attesting self-explanatory Christ of Scripture.
2. That we no longer make an appeal to “common notions” which Christians and non-Christians agree on, but to the “common ground” which they actually have because man and his world are what Scripture says they are.
3. That we appeal to man as man, God’s image. We do so only if we set the non-Christian principle of the rational **autonomy** of man against the Christian principle of the **dependence** of man’s knowledge on God’s knowledge as revealed in the person and by the Spirit of Christ.
4. That we claim, therefore, that Christianity alone is reasonable for men to hold. It is wholly irrational to hold any other position than that of Christianity. Christianity alone does not slay reason on the altar of “**chance**.”
5. That we argue, therefore, by “presupposition,” The Christian, as did Tertullian, must contest the very principle of his opponent’s position. The only “proof” of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of “proving” anything at all. The actual state of affairs as preached by Christianity is the necessary foundation of “proof” itself.
6. That we preach with the understanding that the acceptance of the Christ of Scripture by sinners who, being alienated from God, seek to flee his face, comes about when the Holy Spirit, in the presence of inescapably clear evidence, opens their eyes so that they see things as they truly are. [That is what saving faith does.]
7. That we present the message and evidence for the Christian position as clearly as possible, knowing that because man is what the Christian says he is, the non-Christian will be able to understand in an intellectual sense the issues involved. In so doing, we shall, to a large extent, be telling him what he “already knows” but seeks to suppress. This “reminding” process provides a fertile ground for the Holy Spirit, who in **sovereign grace** may grant the non-Christian repentance so that he may know him who is life eternal.

I hope that by this, “My Credo,” I have been able in a small way sincerely to thank all those who took the time to write for this birthday-book. – C.V.T.

Regarding the Roman Catholic doctrine man’s assumed autonomy.

CA pg 179

In the second place we may discover the nature of the compromise if we go back to the Roman Catholic conception of the nature of man, and especially of **man's freedom** in relation to God. According to Roman Catholic theology man has a **measure of autonomy over against the plan of God.** God has to await man's decisions on many points. Thus, God does not really control whatsoever comes to pass.

Describe the expert idea here:

Insert **162-172** re **expert**

Authority and Reason (excerpt from pgs 161-172)

The general principles of methodology that have been discussed in the preceding chapter must now be applied to the problem of authority. Here, if anywhere, the difference between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic methodology becomes clearly apparent. For Rome the authority of the church, in particular that of the **pope, speaking ex cathedra** (from the bishop's Seat, thus, **infallibly**) is **ultimate**; for Protestantism the Scripture stands above every statement of the church and its teachers.

The question that now confronts us is as to how the Roman Catholic and how the Protestant approach the non-believer on the question of authority. To answer this question, it is well that we begin by asking what place the non-believer himself attributes to authority. And in order to discover the place allowed to authority by the **natural man, it is imperative to note what he means by authority.**

There are those, of course, who deny that they need any form of authority. They are the popular atheists and agnostics. Such men say that they must be shown by "reason" what ever they are to accept as true. But the great thinkers among non-Christian men have taken no such position. They know that they cannot cover the whole area of reality with their knowledge. They are therefore willing to admit that there may be others who have information that they themselves do not possess. In everyday life this sort of thing is illustrated in the idea of the **expert**. A medical doctor knows much about the human body that the rest of us do not know. Then among medical men there are those who, because of natural ability, industry, and opportunity, make such discoveries as their fellows so not make, So everywhere and in all respects the lesser minds are bound to submit to the authority of greater minds. [that's the key idea here regarding the **expert**.]

In putting the matter in this way, the nature of the authority that can be allowed by the natural man is already indicated. The **natural man will gladly allow for the idea of authority if only it is **the authority of the expert in the use of reason.**** **Such a conception of authority is quite consistent with the assumption of the sinner's autonomy.**

On the other hand, the conception of authority as something that stand "above reason" is unacceptable to the natural man. But it is not easy to distinguish in every instance when authority is considered to be "above reason." There are some forms of authority that might seem, at first sight, to be "above reason" while in reality they are not. Some discussion of this matter must therefore precede our analysis of the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant methods of presenting the authority of Christianity to the natural man.¹

¹In the receding chapter Van Til characterized unbelief as needing to hold to **rationalism** and **irrationalism** at the same time. Here he puts it in terms of reason and authority. Such dualistic approaches are the necessary consequence of rejecting God's ultimate rational authority. Dooyeweerd frequently described unbelief as "dialectical," flowing from the "**pretended autonomy** of theoretical thought." Note how in what follows, Van Til describes both rationalism (as in **Descartes**) and irrationalism (attributed to **Kant** and taking various popular forms) as having the same kind of "acceptable" authority for unbelievers. They are two different sides of the same coin.

Side notes on rationalism by **Dr. Greg Bahnsen** from his lecture on Worldview Issues part 2 (part 14) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRhLqQARUfM> Min. mark 42. **Bahnsen** was a student of Van Til

Rationalism sometimes is used for that attitude of autonomy that says I don't need supernatural revelation. In essence, rationalism is secularism: we don't need revelation.

Sometimes rationalism is that school of thought totally apart from the question of whether we need revelation that says that man's reason should dominate in his personality. That we should be rational in what we are doing. That we're subject to the laws of rationality. That we shouldn't despise intellect and submit to emotion or pure will.

Now just in those first two definitions, you see the difference in that the Christian is not a rationalist if you mean somebody who rejects revelation. A Christian is a rationalist if you mean somebody who believes the intellect is subject to the laws of logic and so forth. That we should use our intellect in a proper way. But then as a specific school of philosophy in the history of western thought, rationalism is the view that it's possible to know certain things apart from observation. A good example is the laws of mathematics. There are certain things that we know that we did not learn from observation. And that third sense of the world rationalism is what I'm referring to here in my little outline. The idealist approach: it says there are ideas, and they are the fundamental reality in all of our thinking and is to be governed by the law of ideas or rationality, is a form of rationalism.

Forms of Authority

Let us note then some of the forms of authority that are quite acceptable to the natural man because, to his mind, they do not violate the principle of autonomy.

First there is the need for authority that grows out of the existence of the endless multiplicity of factual materia. Time rolls its ceaseless course. It pours upon us an endless stream of facts. And the stream is really endless on the non-Christian basis. **For those who do not believe that all that happens in time happens because of the plan of God, the activity of time is like to that, or rather is identical with that, of chance.** Thus, the ocean of facts has no bottom and no shore. It is this conception of the **ultimacy of time** and of **pure factuality** on which **modern philosophy**, particularly since the days of **Kant**, has laid such great stress. And it is because of the general recognition of the **ultimacy of chance** that rationalism of the sort of **Descartes**, **Spinoza** and **Leibniz** represented, is out of date. It has become customary to speak of **post-Kantian philosophy** as irrationalistic.

It has been said that **Kant** limited reason so as to make room for faith. Hence there are those who are willing to grant that man's emotions or his will can get in touch with such aspects of reality as are not accessible to the intellect. The intellect, it is said, is not the only, and in religious matters, not even the

primary, instrument with which men come into contact with what is ultimate in human experience. There is the world of the moral imperative, of aesthetic appreciation, of the religious *a priori* (prior: self-evident assumption, deductive beginning point) as well as the world of science. There is in short, the world of “mystery” into which the prophet or genius of feeling or of will may lead us.

It is of the greatest import to note that the natural man need not in the least object to the kind of authority that is involved in the idea of irrationalism. And that chiefly for two reasons. In the first place the irrationalism of our day is the direct lineal descendent of the rationalism of previous days. The idea of **pure chance** has been inherent in every form of non-Christian thought in the past. It is the only logical alternative to the position of Christianity, according to which the plan of God is back of all. Both **Plato** and **Aristotle** were compelled to make room for it in their maturest thought. The pure “not-being” of the earliest rationalism of Greece was but the suppressed “otherness” of the final philosophy of Plato. So too the idea of **pure factuality** or **pure chance** as **ultimate** is but the idea of “otherness” made explicit. Given the non-Christian assumption with respect to man’s autonomy, the idea of chance has equal rights with the idea of logic. If **Parmenides** was first upon the scene to press the claims of the intellect by saying that to be and to know ought for man to be conterminous, it was natural that chance would not fail at some time in the future to assert its independence.²

²Reason was ultimate for Parmenides. As we say, this means experience was potentially illusory, because irrational. Thinking and being are the same for him. Thus, according to Van Til, the irrational would want eventually to claim its rights. It did so first with Heraclitus (d. 480 B.C.) and his doctrine of “flux.”

In the second place **modern irrationalism** has not in the least encroached upon the domain of the intellect as natural man things of it. Irrationalism has merely taken possession of that which the intellect, by its own admission, cannot in any case control. Irrationalism has a secret treaty with rationalism by which the former cedes to the latter so much of its territory as the latter can at any given time fine forces to control. **Kants’** realm of the **noumenal** has, as it were, agreed to yield so much of its area to the phenomenal as the intellect by its newest weapons can manage to keep in control.

Side note: The phenomenal world is the world we are aware of; this is the world we construct out of the sensations that are present to our consciousness. The noumenal world consists of things we seem compelled to believe in, but which we can never know (because we lack sense-evidence of it). (Google)

In philosophy, a noumenon is knowledge posited as an object that exists independently of human sense. The term noumenon is generally used in contrast with, or in relation to, the term phenomenon, which refers to any object of the senses. [Wikipedia](#)

Moreover, by the same treaty irrationalism has promised to keep out of its own territory any form of authority that might be objectionable to the autonomous intellect. Ther very idea of **pure factuality** or **chance** is the best guarantee that no true authority, such as that of God as the Creator and Judge of men, will ever confront man.

If we compared the realm of the phenomenal as it has been ordered by the autonomous intellect to a clearing in a large forest, we may compare the realm of the noumenal to that part of the same forest

which has not yet been laid under contribution by the intellect.³ The realm of mystery is on the basis simply the realm of that which is not yet known. And the service of irrationalism to rationalism may be compared to that of some bold huntsman in the woods who keeps all lions and tigers away from the clearing. This bold huntsman covers the whole of the infinitely extended forest, ever keeping away all danger from the clearing. This irrationalistic Robin Hood is so much of a rationalist that he virtually makes a universal negative statement about what can happen in all future time. **In the secret treaty spoken of he has assured the intellect of the autonomous man that the God of Christianity cannot possibly exist and that no man therefore need to fear the coming judgment.** If the whole course of history is, at least in part, **controlled by chance**, then there is no danger that the autonomous man will **ver meet with the claims of authority ads the Protestant believes in it.** For the notion of authority is but the expression of the idea that God by his counsel controls all things that happen in the course of history.

³Van Til is using the forest, some of it cleared and some of it virgin, as parallel to what is rationally accessible (the phenomenal) and what is mystery (the noumenal). His point is that this **dualism**, which has many guises, keeps God and his judgment out of the bargain as a matter of prior assumption. [a wicked presumption!]

There is a second kind of authority that the natural man is quite ready to accept. It does not spring, as did the first, from the fact that the intellect can by definition not control the whole realm of chance. It springs from the fact that even that which the intellect does assert about the objects of knowledge is, of necessity, involved in **contradiction**. F. H. Bradley's great book, *Appearance and Reality*, has brought out this point with the greatest possible detail. The point is not that the many philosophers who have speculated on the nature of reality have actually contradicted each other and themselves. The point is rather that in the nature of the case all logical assertion with respect to the world of temporal existence must needs be self-contradictory in character.⁴

⁴This is the point about unbelief being dualistic of necessity.

On the assumptions of the natural man, **logic** is a timeless impersonal principle, as **factuality** is controlled by **chance**. It is by means of universal timeless principles of logic that the natural man must, on his assumptions, seek to make intelligible assertions about the world of reality or chance. But this cannot be done without the world of reality or chance. About **chance**, no manner of assertion can be made. In its very idea it is the **irrational**. And how are rational assertions to be made about the irrational? If they are to be made, then it must be because the irrational is itself wholly reduced to the rational. That is to say, if the natural man is to make any intelligible assertions about the world of 'reality' or 'fact,' which according to him is what it is for no rational reason at all, then he must make the virtual claim of rationalizing the irrational.

To be able to distinguish one fact from another fact he must reduce all time existence, all factuality, to immovable timeless being. But when he has don so, he has killed all individuality and factuality as conceived of on his basis. Thus the natural man must on the one hand assert that all reality is non-structural in nature. He must even assert on the one hand that all reality is non-structurable in nature and on the other hand that he himself has virtually structured all of it. Thus all this predication is in the nature of the case self-contradictory.

Realizing this dilemma, many modern philosophers have argued that any intellectual system of interpretation is therefore no more than a **perspective**. No system, these men asset, should pretend to be more than a system “for us.” We have to deal with reality as if it will always behave as we have found it behaving in the past. The world of appearance formed by means of the exercise of the intellect must be taken as “somehow” similar to the world of reality. And thus we seem to have come again upon the idea of **mystery**, the world of ‘faith” and of “authority” where prophets and seers may suggest to us the visions they have seen in the night.

Modern Philosophy

CA pg 181-182

Regarding the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition, the concept of the “**expert**,” cont.

To be sure, this tradition may, to some extent at least, be itself reduced to writing. Yet there is no body of writings that the church officially accepts as containing the written statement of what it accepts as tradition. It is the living voice of the church speaking in its official ministers, and especially through the pope, that is the final guardian of this tradition. Tradition is therefore finally that which the church propounds from time to time.

The bearing of this conception of tradition on the questions of authority and its relation to reason must now be drawn. The hierarchy of the church in general, and of the **pope** in particular, **is not to be thought of as itself subject to the final and comprehensive revelation of God**. There is no place anywhere in the whole being should be wholly subject to God. **On the contrary, the position of Rome requires the rejection of the council of God as all-determinative**. Hence the **pope** himself, as he makes up his mind with respect to the infallible pronouncement that his office requires or permits him to make from time to time, must seek as an **expert** to interpret the meaning of **brute fact**, of being in general. **[Brute facts are uninterpreted facts that one may use to support their suppositions - Bahnsen]** What the Bible teaches him he will be required to relate to what his **autonomous reason** teaches him with respect to being in general. The result is that the voice of God as the controller and governor of man and the universe can never speak through the voice of the pope. Those who listen to the voice of the pope are listening to the voice of an **expert** who is supposed, for some wholly non-rational reason, to be able to peer more deeply into the realm of “being” than other men are able to.

How can we begin with human reason and still respect authority? Unbelief accepts a sort of limited authority, that of the **expert**. But it cannot accept the final, unlimited authority of the biblical God. (Footnote 22 pg 179).

Theistic proofs: pg 178 (Kant)

Kant criticized the theistic proofs because he could not see how beginning with autonomous reason would lead to anything else but a “god” who is in the image of the human being, rather than the true God of revealed from heaven. (Footnote 19 pg 178)

Aquinas/Aristotle

For these Roman Catholic thinkers, the problem is how to arrive at certain truths about God by reason, and thus justify Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas’ use of Aristotle, without denying the role of faith in revelation. Gilson

distinguishes between essences and existence, the form being accessible through reason, the latter through faith. Van Til will oppose this whole scheme because it makes reason autonomous. (Footnote 17, pg 176)

brutefactdef

Here is a good explanation of **brute facts** by Dr. Alan Strange who was a friend Dr. Greg Bahnsen:

A quote from a sermon by Alan Strange

The Continued Need for and Usefulness of Bahnsen's Apologetic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mH7zuxhbSU>

Min 25:22: So back to the point of Greg's [Bahnsen] clear apologetic exposition: for unbelievers, some combination of empiricism/rationalism, supposedly explains how we know what we know. Sadly, also, for those who are evidentialist or classicists apologetically; they're falling into the existent..., the empiricism or the rationalism trap.

Unbelievers reject that we know what we know by revelation. We understand that. In fact, though, according to 1Cor. 2:14, *the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God*. Now Greg, when you would say that, when Greg would say that, he pressed this point a lot: "natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God" – and Greg was used to this objection coming even from Christians, from evidentialists and classicists, "But Dr. Bahnsen, this refers only to spiritual things and not natural things; they can't know spiritual things; they can know natural things." But there are no **brute facts**, which means there are no merely natural things, unconnected to the supernatural. **Nothing in this world is autonomous from God**. All of autonomy and neutrality is pretended!! It's pretended; it's not real. Every created fact witnesses to its creator. This is God's world; and all "natural things" (Psalm 19, Romans 1 - externally, Romans 2 – internally, witness in conscience) **points to the supernatural and finds their true meaning as being part of the world made by God (and for God, my insert)**. Taken by themselves, they just don't make any sense because you're back to the empiricism/rationalism trap. Again, notice that the Spirit then, verse 10, [1Cor. 2:10] searches everything, *panta, πάντα*. I'll use a little Greek there, since Roger didn't. Everything in the world relates to its maker. We only know what we know (and here we differ from the unbeliever in our conscious and joyful confession as such (and sadly some Christians who aren't up to snuff on this), we know what we know only because God has revealed it to us. Believers believe the **ultimate** source of knowledge is neither our senses! - notice what I'm saying! **Ultimate!** - neither our senses nor our mind, **but external to us!** – a revelation of the God who is there. (quoting Francis Schaffer there at the end, his book, *The God Who Is There*)

Dr. Alan Strange, professor of apologetics and church history at Mid-American Reformed Seminary, Dryer, IN.

Leibniz and Others

Rationalism/Empiricism vs Revelation

From Van Til's book,
Christian Apologetics and
 Pgs. 148-155, 163; and
Who Do You Say That I Am?
 Pgs. 75-76; 62-86
 And from
An Introduction to Systematic Theology
 pgs. 92-93
 Code523

Block-House Methodology¹²

¹²The term refers to a type of apologetics Van Til rejects: building an argument one step at a time, block upon block. For example, defending theism in general, and then the Trinitarian God later, is blockhouse methodology. Instead, the Christian worldview should be argued as a whole, with each part systematically joined to the others.

A final point must be made before concluding this chapter. We have seen that the proper method for Protestant apologetics is that of presupposition instead of the direct approach. But the theology of Rome and the theology of Arminianism do not permit such an argument. Roman Catholic and Arminians must of necessity argue by way of direct approach. As deformations of Christian **theism**, they contain no challenge to the position of the natural man till it is too late. [*Theism is the belief that there is one God, creator of the universe and its sustainer who is sovereign over all that comes to pass; a subject that has to do with the God of Scripture, not a god of man's imaginations.*]

We have also seen that the method of presupposition requires the presentation of Christian theism **as a unit**. But the theology of Roman Catholics compels them to deal with theism first and with Christianity afterwards. Assigning to reason the task of interpreting nature without dependence upon Scripture, this theology is bound to prove the truths of theism first. The theism that is proved in this way cannot be the only theism that any Christian should want to prove, namely, Christian theism. Yet having proved some sort of **theism** by "**reason**," the Roman Catholic is bound by virtue of his theology to prove a type of Christianity that will fit onto the deformation of theism it has "established." And what holds true of Roman Catholicism holds true fundamentally also of Arminianism.

It remains now to indicate more fully than has been done that the Roman Catholic and Arminian method of reasoning is bound, not merely to cut the unity of Christian theism in two, but even to prove its theism piece by piece. Romanism and Arminianism lead not merely to **dualism** but to **atomism** in methodology.

A truly Protestant method of reasoning involves a stress upon the fact that the meaning of every aspect or part of Christian theism depends upon Christian theism as a unit. When Protestants speak of the resurrection of Christ, they speak of the resurrection of him who is the Son of God, the eternal Word through whom the world was made. The truth of theism is involved in this claim that Christians make with respect to the domain of history. And what is true of the resurrection of Christ is true with respect to all the propositions about historical fact is presented for what it really is till it is presented as a

part of the system of Christian theism that is contained in Scripture. To say this is involved in the consideration that all facts of the created universe are what they are by virtue of the plan of God with respect to them. Any **fact** in any realm confronted by man is what it is as revelational through and through of the God and of the Christ of Christian theism.

But if this is true – and it would seem to be of the very essence of the biblical point of view to say that it is true – then it follows that the whole claim of Christian theism is in question in any debate about any fact. Christian theism must be presented as that light in terms of which any proposition about any fact receives meaning. Without the presupposition of the truth of Christian theism, no fact can be distinguished from any other fact. To say this is but to apply the method of idealist logicians in a way that these idealist logicians, because of their own anti-Christian theistic assumptions, cannot apply it.

The point made by these logicians is that even the mere counting of **particular** things presupposes a system of truth of which these **particulars form a part**. Without such a system of truth there would be no distinguishable difference between one particular and another. They would be as impossible to distinguish from one another as the millions of drops of water in the ocean would be indistinguishable from one another by the naked eye. “The main point is this, that all counting presupposes and depends upon a qualitative whole, and that the Collective Judgment asserts a generic connection within its group. Hence no more particulars can be counted.”²²

²²F. H. Bradley, *The Principle of Logic*, 2d ed., rev., 2 vols 1928. Van Til often uses the terms of idealist philosophy. Occasionally, he endorses one of its conclusions, though without endorsing its system. Here, the point made by idealism is that facts can have no value without a framework within which to place them. That point is true in ways the system cannot itself justify.

It may be objected that one fact differs from other facts precisely because none of them are rationally controlled. Is it not the insertion of individual facts into a logically concatenated system that makes these facts lose their individuality? Has not Kant taught us that, if we are to have logical concatenation between the individual facts of our experience at all, we can have it just to the extent that we give up the impossible ideal of knowing individual things in themselves?²³

²³ In Kant’s philosophy we can know things through the filter of the forms of sense, but only on condition that we renounce any knowledge of the *Ding an sich*, or the *noumenon*. In the **Reformed**, biblical approach, **because God is fully rational**, there is no dilemma between knowing individual facts and knowing the whole. **God knows both perfectly, and we know them derivatively, by knowing God.**

In reply we need only to observe that this way of escape is not open to the Reformed apologist. The Reformed apologist must, if he is at the same time a Reformed theologian, hold to what the average scientist and philosopher today will look upon as the most hopeless form of rationalism he has ever met. The historical forms of rationalism have done either of two things. If they were reasonably consistent, then they were ready to deny the existence and meaning of individuality in history altogether. Parmenides claimed that the “great question, *Is it or is it not?*” was to be determined by what man can consistently say about it.²⁴

²⁴ John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part 1, Thales to Plato* 1928. Parmenides (born c. 515 B.C.) was a Presocratic who argued that ultimate reality is static, whereas things around us are illusory. This was consistent rationalism. Parmenides was therefore ready to assert the non-existence and meaninglessness of individual historical factuality.

On the other hand, if **rationalists** were consistent, they held to the same ideal of individuation by means of complete logical description on the part of man, but they realized that such a description cannot be accomplished. **Leibniz** was not less a rationalist in his hopes and ambitions than was **Parmenides**. He did not hesitate to make the “possibility of knowledge to depend upon a knowledge of possibility.” Yet, Leibniz questioned whether man can ever attain to the perfect analysis, which would carry him back, without finding any contradiction, to the absolute attributes of God.²⁵ Thus, in spite of himself, Leibniz had to allow for the actual existence of individual, ultimately changing things. But then to do so he had to sacrifice his

²⁵ Seymore G. Martin, Gordon H. Clark, Francis P. Clark, Chester T. Ruddick, *A History of Philosophy* (New York, 1941), 396. **G. W. Leibniz** (1646-1716) **taught that God actualizes all possibility, based on sufficient reason.** To each individual there corresponds a complete notion that only God could know. **So possibility rules all things.** Yet to allow for human knowledge, he posited the notion of monads, individual unities that function as “windows” onto external reality.

system of logic. He recognized temporal individuality but could do so only at the expense of logical system. And the idealist logicians, such as F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet were no exceptions to this rule.²⁶

²⁶ F. H. Bradley (1846-1924) and B. Bosanquet (1848-1923) were British absolute idealists. In slightly different ways they both attacked utilitarian and liberal thinking. Bradley argued that universals, and the whole, were more basic than any empirical particulars, or than the inadequacies of language. Bosanquet argued that the social whole was more basic than single individuals.

But in contradistinction from the rationalist and the irrationalist, and in contradistinction from the forms of thought that seek some sort of combination between these two, the Reformed apologist must hold both to the idea of absolute system and to that of genuine historic fact and individuality. He does not hold to “truths of fact” at the expense of “truths of reason.” **He holds to truths of fact only because to him they are truths of reason.** But then it is obvious that he is not himself, as a human being, able to show the exhaustive logical relationships between the facts of history and nature, which are in debate as between believers and disbelievers in Christian theism. In consequence, **he must maintain that the truths of fact presented in Scripture must be what Scripture says they are or else they are irrational and meaningless altogether.**

The **true Christian apologist** has his principle of discontinuity; it is expressed in his appeal to the mind of God as **all-comprehensive in knowledge** because **all-controlling in power.** He holds his principle of discontinuity, then, not at the expense of all logical relationship between facts, but because of the recognition of this creaturehood. His principle of discontinuity is therefore the opposite of that of

irrationalism, without being that of rationalism. The Christian also has his principle of continuity. It is that of the self-contained God and his plan for history. His principle of continuity is therefore the opposite of that of rationalism without being that of irrationalism.

Conjoining the Christian principle of continuity and the Christian principle of discontinuity we obtain the Christian principle of **reasoning by presupposition**. It is the actual existence of the God of Christian theism and the **infallible authority of the Scripture**, which speaks to sinners of this God, that must be taken as the presupposition of the intelligibility of any fact in the world.

This does not imply that it will be possible to bring the whole debate about Christian theism to full expression in every discussion of individual historical fact. Nor does it imply that the debate about historical detail is unimportant. It means that no **Christian apologist can afford to forget the claim of his system with respect to any particular fact**. He must always maintain that the **“fact”** under discussion with his opponent **must be what Scripture says it is**, if it is to be intelligible as a fact at all. He must maintain that there can be no facts in any realm **but such as actually do exhibit the truth of the system of which they are a part**. If **facts** are what they are **as parts of the Christian theistic system of truth, then what else can facts do but reveal that system to the limit of their abilities as parts of that system?** It is only as manifestations of that system that they are what they are. If the apologist does not present them as such, he does not present them for what they are.²⁷

²⁷ This passage clearly states Van Til's commitment to evidences. In ways some of his critics would ignore, he stresses that facts matter; indeed, they are required by our worldview. For strategic purposes the entire system does not need to be laid out in each conversation. But it does matter that such a system be true, and so the apologist should always presuppose it, whether or not it is discussed each time.

Over against this Christian theistic position, any non-Christian philosophy virtually denies the unity of truth. It may speak much of it and even seem to contend for it, as idealistic philosophers do, but in the last analysis non-Christian philosophy is atomistic. This follows from the absolute separation between truth and reality that was introduced when Adam and Eve fell away from God. When Satan tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, he tried to persuade her that God's announcement of the consequences of such an act would not come true. That was tantamount to saying that no assertion about a rational scheme could predict the course of movement of time-controlled reality. Reality, Satan practically urged man, was to be conceived of as something that is not under rational control. Every non-Christian philosophy makes the assumption made by Adam and Eve, and is therefore irrationalistic. This **irrationalism** comes to most consistent expression in various forms of **empiricism** and **pragmatism**. In them predication is frankly conceived of in **atomistic** fashion.

On the other hand, when Satan tempted Eve, he virtually asked her to become a rationalist. He asked her to take the position **that she needed not to obtain any information about the course of factual eventuation from any source but her own mind**. Prior to any tendency that had developed in the course of historical events, she, following Satan's advice, made what was tantamount to a universal negative judgment about time reality. She took for granted that punishment could not come in consequence upon her eating of the forbidden fruit. This **rationalism** appears most consistently in such men as **Parmenides**. But even the inconsistent rationalists are really *a priorists*; they make concessions

only because they cannot realize their ideal. “The **rationalists** (Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz) argued that all knowledge comes from reason alone.”²⁸ [as opposed from revelation] Yet Leibniz was forced to
²⁸ Gordon H. Clark, “Philosophy and the Scriptures,” 1945. These represent the three great rationalist systems of the seventeenth century.

speak of truths of fact as well as of truths of reason.

In modern times Kant has combined the principle of rationalism and empiricism. “He described the contribution of reason to knowledge as exactly so and so and the contribution of sense as exactly such and such.” This position of Kant is the dominating position that confronts us today. [1970s - Van Til: 1895-1987] It is usually spoken of as phenomenistic.³⁰ It is characteristic by an attempt to bridge the

³⁰ Van Til is using this term in a general way to describe the view that one can move from sense experience to rational, free thought. There was a school known as phenomenism, associated with **Bertrand Russell**, which attempted to translate talk of physical objects into talk of possible experiences. But the broader idea is simply to safeguard the phenomenal aspect of a subject matter, rather than making the concrete facts too easily dependent upon prior theories.

gulf between **fact and mind** that was brought into the world as the consequence of the sin of Adam. But it cannot be a remedy for this **dualism**. Phenomenalism is still basically atomistic inasmuch as it still maintains that factuality in itself is non-rational in character. At the same time phenomenism is still rationalistic in that whatever unity it thinks it finds in this atomistically conceived reality virtually proceeds from the human soul. At least this rationality is not taken as proceeding from the mind of God.

Leibniz

An Introduction to Systematic Theology

by Cornelius Van Til pg 92-93

Against **rationalism** and **idealism** Bavinck argues that all men are naturally realists and that all men are dependent on nature about them. He goes on to point out that idealism leads to an impersonal abstraction, and then adds that the rock on which all idealism stands is plurality.¹⁷ These criticisms of idealism are true as far as they go. Our only complaint is that Bavinck did not go far enough. The criticism he makes might have been made by a non-Christian realist. Bavinck does not tell us that the basis of his criticism is the presupposition of the self-existent God.

¹⁷ *GD*, 218, *RD*, 246. “Materially, in terms of content, idealism puts the [mental] representation [of reality] on a level with an image from a dream and consequently makes all kinds of futile attempts to move by reasoning and proofs from the subject to the object.” Perception is thus confused for the real world, according to Bavinck (*RD*, 223). Van Til agrees, but pleads for a foundation for such a judgment.

Against **empiricism** he argues that all science must begin with a set of unproved *a priori* assumptions that have not been derived from experience. [Bavinck] To this he adds that science is, in the nature of

the case, interested in “the general, the necessary, and the eternal, the logical, the idea.” Still further he quotes with approval the words of Thomas Aquinas, which the latter in turn took from Aristotle: “*minimum quod potest haberi de cognitione rerum altissimarum, desiderabilius est quam certissima cognitio, quae habetur de minimis rebus.*” (The slenderest acquaintance we can form with heavenly things is more desirable than a thorough grasp of mundane matters.)

The question that arises when we read this is, On what does Bavinck think *a priori* principles of science rest? A non-Christian idealist might readily say what Bavinck said on this point. It is not enough for Christians to point to the mere fact of the necessity of an *a priori* element in science. He must also show that unless that *a priori* element in science. He must also show that unless that *a priori* be given the Christian-theistic basis, it is no true *a priori*.²¹

²¹ Thus, even an *a priori* (from that which is before) approach must have a reason for being. It cannot simply be a general deductive method. To be helpful, that which is before should be the full Christian-theistic (Trinitarian) presupposition.

Bavinck quotes with approval, as noted above, the words of Aquinas to the effect that the slightest knowledge of higher things is worth more than certain knowledge with respect to lower things. Again we ask, is there no need of pointing out the difference between a Christian and an Aristotelian notion of gradation in the created universe? Surely the Christian, who believes in the doctrine of creation, cannot share the Greek depreciation of the things of the sense world.²²

²² A biblical view does not regard “higher things” versus “lower things,” but evaluates all created things in light of revelation.

Depreciation of that sense world inevitably leads to a depreciation of many of the important facts of historic Christianity that took place in the sense world. The Bible does not rule out every form of empiricism anymore than it rules out every form of *a priori* reasoning. To be sure, in effect, it rules out the empiricism of Locke, but it also, in effect rules out the rationalism of Leibniz.²³

²³ **Empiricism looks at measurable data.** If it is grounded in a theistic worldview, then it is legitimate. Locke's empiricism has no such ground. If *a priori* reasoning is based on a theistic worldview, then it too is legitimate. **Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz** (1646-1716), a philosopher, statesman, and expert in jurisprudence, devised a highly rationalist system in which each component is the reflection of a complete notion, known to God, so that one may derive all the properties of one component by knowing how it fits into the whole. Accordingly, for everything there is a reason (the principle of sufficient reason) to which God himself is bound. This led Leibniz to assert that although there is evil, it is necessary in a world that God has created, which is the “best of all possible worlds.” Leibniz's apriorism is rationalistic, based on a certain **autonomy of human reason**, which ultimately fails to make sense of the reality of the created world.

Comments on Plato and Utopias

Van Til

pages 172-173

For this reason, too, speculations of Plato about the future of the human soul **do not bring the soul before the judgment seat of an absolute God**. There is, to be sure, a difference made – in the literature not only of Plato, but of other non-Christian writers – between the more wicked and the less wicked. This difference is, however, one that pertains to the distance that one can get away from certain circumstances that are inevitable in the universe. And what is most significant is the fact that the **utopias of man do not center on the personal God, but are descriptive of improved conditions that may, in the last analysis, be quite independent of God**.

The Platonic myth further points to the fact that, though relegated to a lower place, the idea of a revelation from above is not altogether cast aside. **It shows once more that man has not been able to solve his problems when he has bound up his soul with the universe, and, in particular, with the universe as it has fallen into sin**. So also in the Egyptian literature we have a considerable emphasis upon the fact of a future judgment. In this future judgment the gods play an important part. Men have felt something of the fact that righteousness and justice must in the end prevail. As far as their immanentistic principles are concerned, they have not made provision for the ultimate triumph of righteousness. They have made evil as original and therefore as ultimate as the good. On this basis, there is logically no reason to expect that the good will be ultimately victorious over the evil. In spite of this, men have dreamed dreams in which all unrighteousness should be put down. The fact that they still dream such dreams is in itself significant. The evolutionary optimism, the socialistic dreams of pragmatic philosophers, indicate what the books of the dead did in the case of the Egyptians with equal logical validity, but also with equal significance from the point of view of the meaning of human life. Even in modern times when the immanentistic principle has been more fearlessly and more consistently applied than in ancient times, **men cannot find final rest within the universe alone. Unless man may study himself in the light of God, there is no hope for him**.

More on Leibniz, pg 375-377

Wisdom

In connection with the knowledge of God, we should mention the wisdom of God. It is much praised in Scripture. God is set forth as the one who uses the most effective means for the accomplishment of his one inclusive purpose. We may contrast the Christian and the non-Christian notions of the idea of wisdom. The Christian notion of wisdom depends upon the notion of the self-contained God. Because of his self-contained and necessary knowledge he can, when he chooses, create a universe, and create this universe just as he wasn't to create it. This is, therefore, "the best of possible worlds." God's wisdom is displayed in it. Man can understand something of it if only he will **think God's thoughts after him**.²⁴

²⁴ Somewhat ironically, **Van Til** uses the phrase touted by **Leibniz**, but in a very different sense. Leibniz considers possibility as an abstract set, from which God chooses the best. For Van Til the best does not come from a set of possibilities, but is simply the characteristic of every choice God makes, owing to his nature.

But exactly here lies the difficulty. Idealistic thought has sought to think out an order and plan for this world by positing certain eternal principles of truth, goodness, and beauty. **And then it has made the**

mind of man the standard by which to judge the effectiveness by which these principles seem to be realized in this world. The **idealists** were kind enough to find that this is perhaps the best world that God could make, in view of the limitations he was under. In this way “the best possible world” of **Leibniz’s** theodicy is really nothing more than a great apology for a finite God.²⁵

²⁵ See G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God*, Trans. E. M. Huggard (LaSalle: Open Court, 1985) The original publication of *Theodicy* was 1710, *Theodicy* literally means the justification of God and treats the relationship of a good and powerful God to the reality of evil. See note chapter 5, note 23 [above]

A Christian theodicy will have to start its defense from quite different principle. It will need to start frankly from the presupposition of the self-sufficient God. It goes without saying that this self-sufficient God, who controls all things and knows all things because he controls them, can use the best means to attain his end. But what are the best means? They are those which God sees fit to use. And since they are those which God sees fit to use, they may be wholly beyond the reach of human understanding. It was wholly beyond Job’s understanding to know why he should suffer. His friends could advise him that it was for the purpose of cultivating his personality. And this was no doubt true as a formal principle. But why did God have to make him suffer so much more than others who were certainly, in their deeds, no better than he? Job found the solution only when finally **he surrendered himself fully into the hands of the sovereign God**. To be sure, the wisdom of God appears in the world, and man can see something of it. Yet it remains true that God is a God that hides himself, and no man should essay to approve or condemn the deeds of the Holy One by standards **of his own devising**. The Reformed theodicy is therefore quite different from the Romanist and Arminian. The latter finds that God needed obstacles in the universe in order fully to realize himself.

Excerpt from
Who Do You Say That I Am
 By Cornelius Van Til
 Pgs 75-76

More on Leibniz

b. Descartes vs. Calvin pg 75

The absolute contrast of principle between the City of Man and the one of God appeared with particular clarity in the instance of **Rene Descartes** vs. **John Calvin**. Descartes, of course, was the typical Renaissance man, whereas Calvin had developed and extended the biblical approach to God rediscovered by **Luther**. The former stood for the Socratic-Plotinian, the latter, the Augustinian, Pauline principle of inwardness.

The issue (at stake) was that of human certainty. In his book, *New Paths of Philosophy (New Wege der Philosophie)*, Fritz Heinemann states that ancient man concerned himself with the cosmos, medieval man with God, and modern man with man himself. Superficially, then, it may be said that

both Descartes and Calvin were modern. However, both were finally, also, concerned with man in respect to his environment, thus his relationship to God. Both sought for the actual inwardness of man by ascertaining this peculiar relationship, in other words, not merely the Socratic question of how man may know himself, but also the Platonic one of his “true” culture, thus ultimately his “salvation.” It was matter of “cultural” philosophy, as well as “humanistic.”

Renaissance man aimed at “controlling” nature so as to erect his earthly kingdom, and Descartes in question for self-knowledge exemplified this splendidly. Also, Bacon and Galileo Galilei had developed a “method” which projected human *control* over nature. Many others, notably **Descartes**., **constructed a mathematically oriented method**, based on Parmenidean assumption that reality **was fully expressible by human conceptualization**. But **Kroner** has emphasized that **Galileo**, for one, warned that mathematics would “never disclose anything about the true nature of the universe, or even of a stone,” although his **metaphysically-minded** successors generally disregarded the warning and proceeded to hatch their farfetched speculative systems. In a sense, one might say that they resorted to ancient cosmology in claiming to have discovered the true nature of existence.

Descartes, **Spinoza**, and **Leibniz**, the three outstanding example of such cosmology, were, nevertheless, modern thinkers indeed, in that they centered their final efforts, not upon nature or the world, **but upon man**, [that’s the problem! Not on God, but on man.] his niche in the world and also his relationship to God. Descartes launched his from his famous *Cogito*, a fully anthropocentric [man centered] principle. **Spinoza** was basically a mystic for whom knowledge of God was on importance, and yet he was not theocentric, but embraced rather the belief that **speculation** could bring about man’s harmony with the divine being thus the “end” of all his aspirations and personal longings. Leibniz’s whole system was at heart anthropocentric, with man to be the pattern and model of all things, even of the world and God. Any “naturalism” of these three “scientific” metaphysicians was therefore an illusion. In so far as it figured into their systems, it was as tribute to the **prevailing fashion** of thought during their time, not to the intrinsic or esoteric doctrine of their systems.

Excerpts from
Van Til and the Limits of Reason

As a result of **Descartes’** point of departure, two lines of thought developed in philosophy: **empiricism** and **rationalism**. Empiricism holds that the individual man is the standard for truth and holds to the ultimacy of the sense world. The universals are purely subjective. The climax of such thought was the skepticism of Hume, for whom no knowledge was possible. **Rationalism** sought to interpret reality in terms of certain *a priori* principles. These *a priori* principle, however, were not anchored in the ontological trinity or in eternity **but in the human mind as ultimate**. [Adam and Eve’s sin!] In **Spinoza** and **Leibniz** rationalism reached its climax.

For **Spinoza**, God, man, and the universe are but individuations and aspects of the general idea of substance. But, as Van Til has pointed out, to say that all is God is no different that saying nothing is God. “Univocal reasoning must always lead to negation. Univocal reasoning is based upon negation. There very presupposition of univocal reasoning is that there is no absolute God. If there were an

absolute God, it is ipso facto out of the question to apply the categories of thought to Him in the same way that they are applied to man.

Leibniz sought individuation on the basis of complete description and **by reduction to mathematical formulae**. **Revelation was thus an impossibility. The interpreter is the mind of man, not the mind of God, and the mind of man can wholly comprehend all reality.** The equal ultimacy of the one and many is sought without success in the universe, and the old theory of the gradation of being espoused. None of these devices enabled Leibniz to escape the dilemma of Spinoza or to rescue religion as he sought to do; having begun with the ultimacy of the universe, he could do no more than attempt to analyze it into both God and man. "As Leibniz sought to be wholly univocal, so Hume sought to be wholly equivocal in his reasoning. As in the philosophy of Leibniz God lost his individuality in order to become wholly known, so in the philosophy of Hume God maintained his individuality but remained wholly unknown.

Man's Epistemology In His declaration of Independence From God

More on Leibniz, Kant, Descartes etc.

Excerpt from

Who Do You Say That I Am

Pgs 62-86

By Cornelius Van Til

Excellent comments on some famous philosophers:
rationalism, empiricism vs revelation. Also comments on man's
assumed autonomy and authority.

Added to [code523](#)

III. Modern Man Replies

In the first of this tripartite series, we have seen how apostate man began to develop for himself a culture through which he could suppress the truth about himself, the world, and God. Deep in his heart, Paul said, all men knew that they were created beings who had rebelled against their Creator (Romans 1:19); but all, as sinners, had developed interpretative principles on the assumption that man was not God's creature or a sinner, but **self-sufficient** and **autonomous**.

Upon exactly this assumption the Greeks had insinuated to Paul that if he would speak to them on Christ and the Resurrection, he must do so in terms agreeing with the human autonomy idea. [\[the approach of Arminians, Roman Catholic and Evangelicals\]](#) However, Christ had already appeared to him and revealed that truth and life came to men only if they forsook this vaunted autonomy and knelt before Him as their Creator-Redeemer-King. Some of the Greeks, by the power of the Holy Spirit, had repented and accepted the Christ Paul preached, but many had not, reasoning, as indeed from their

premises they had to, and as the Pharisees had, that Jesus, a mere man, blasphemed in exalting himself to a God.

In the second lecture we revealed how, during the late Roman empire, Plotinus carried through the Greek mode of thinking, but Augustine, that of Paul the apostle.

We learned how Plotinus developed a comprehensive explanation of religious and theoretical experience in terms friendly toward human autonomy, the result being a massive, all-comprehensive view of being, knowledge, and behavior **in which all entities were gradationally interrelated**. There was, he argued, **a scale or ladder of being**, upon which man as man was forever climbing, making use of the **energy of being latent within him**. Opposed to Plotinus, Augustine represented the Pauline conviction that man, a God's creature, had, in Adam, become a sinner, a fugitive from God, and that, as such, lay forevermore under God's wrath unless Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of man, bore this wrath in his place, thus freeing him to develop his Christian *paideia* unto God. [*paideia*, (Greek: "education," or "learning"), system of education and training in classical Greek and Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) cultures.]

Medieval man, we saw, attempted to synthesize the Plotinian and Augustinian, i.e., Christian points of view and thus, practically speaking, rejected Christ's claim that in Him alone were truth and life. In effect, he considered Christ to be a man-God, a monstrosity.

In the present lecture, we shall inquire finally into modern man's notion of who Christ was, and is. Does he really accept Christ's claim? Does he interpret all of life in Christ's name? In fact, what is the name he gives Christ?

To obtain an answer, we shall trace briefly his view of man, cosmos, and God, **with emphasis on his view of man as - of course! - autonomous**.

A. Renaissance Man Replies

We naturally start at the Renaissance. What did **Renaissance man** believe of himself and his culture? He thought, **first of all, that he was free**. He had **escaped the burden of all authority**, especially that of the church, whereby, having shaken it off his back, he imagined himself as having not only shrugged off the authority of Aristotle, but especially, of Christ. Now he could be himself at last, and thus act on that **principle of inwardness** which had impelled **Socrates** to live his own life so graciously and unperturbedly.

In other words, a true, **man-centered** culture was about to be born. The treasured idea of the **ultimately self-explanatory nature** of human personality had underlain the cultural endeavors of apostate man at every stage of his development, but its full significance in respect to the struggle between the kingdom of God and that of man was not to appear clearly till modern times, in the cultural ideals of Renaissance man.

1. Renaissance Man vs. Reformation Man

To grasp this, we may at once undertake a singularly large leap and set the Renaissance view of man and his **freedom** in contrast to that of the Reformation. Renaissance man sought his freedom in the idea of **absolute independence from Christ** and found it where the Greeks had found it, namely, in the construction of a *paideia* **which excluded and opposed Him**; and **Reformation-man** **found his freedom where Paul had found it**, i.e., in his final, definitive escape from the sin of persecuting Christ to the joy of constructing culture in His name. Erasmus of Rotterdam thus pled with Socrates to pray for progress in **64** building the **city of man**, while **Luther** prayed to Christ and the triune God for progress in **constructing that of God**.

a. Modern Science

The question of the place and significance of science emerged during the time of the Renaissance and Reformation as perhaps the main bone of contention between them, expressing as it did in modern form the old *Meno*-problem of Plato, namely, "How was learning by experience possible?" Man possessed a cultural mandate with Renaissance man declaring that it had been given him by his **own self-sufficient consciousness**, and Reformation man, that it had been endowed by Christ, his Creator-Redeemer. **The two views excluded each other entirely**, with every fact between them in dispute. Renaissance man began with himself as self-referential, presuming that no method of research was tolerable or intelligible **unless it served him in his capacity as ultimate interpreter of reality**, and that no conclusion could be true unless proceeding from the premise **of himself as the ultimate, central reference point** of all experience. **Reformation man** **began with Christ** as self-referential, and only thereafter, from himself, as the meek servant of the Christ

2. Renaissance Man's Idea of Himself

The development of Renaissance man may be appreciated best if note be first taken of his relationship to his predecessor, **medieval man**.

We begin with Abelard who was a typically "obedient son of the church." Yet, according to Windelband, "he is first of all a **rationalist**: thought is for him the norm of truth" (Willhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, tr. by James H. Tufts, 1895, p. 299). Thus, he believed in divine revelation **"only because it is reasonable"**; regarded Christianity "as the philosophy of the Greeks made democratic", and was, therefore, "the spokesman of free science, the prophet of the newly awakened impulse toward **real and independent knowledge**" (p. 300).

A second medieval figure worth mentioning is William of Occam whose very name recalls the nominalism of the late Middle Ages, by which Occam had enabled infant science to work free from Scholasticism (p. 315). Thus the idea of **the independence of human 65 personality** began to **assert** itself on every side: **the individual mind knew only what was within itself**.

a. Nicolas Cusanus [Nicolas of Cusa]

It was along nominalistic lines that Nicolas Cusanus contended that human thought "possesses only conjectures, that is, only modes of representation which correspond to its own nature and the

knowledge of the relativities of all positive predicates," the knowledge of this non-knowledge, the *docta ignorantia*, being the only way "to go beyond rational science and attain to the inexpressible, signless, immediate community of knowledge with true Being, the deity" (p. 343).

When Occam had "declared the individual being to be the alone truly Real, he was thereby pointing out to 'real science' the way to the immediate apprehension of the actual world" (p. 344).

Thus the way was prepared, exclaims Windelband, for a "richer more living and more inward' writing of history" (p. 345).

Still, the old framework occasionally hampered men in their research, as one may detect strikingly in the person of **Nicolas Cusanus**. "Seized in every fibre of his being by the fresh impulse of his time, he nevertheless could not give up the purpose of arranging his new thoughts in the system of the old conception of the world" (p. 345).

Renaissance man carried forth the motif of Plotinus, who had gathered together all the elements of ancient philosophy into his concept of the One which was above all temporal things, yet present within them. **Cusanus** thus gathered together all the elements of medieval philosophy into his own concept of the *deus implicitus* who was, at the same time, the *deus explicitus*. "God is the greatest (*maximum*) and, at the same time, also the smallest (minimum)." "All is in all *omnia ubique*. In this way every individual contains within itself the universe, though in a limited form peculiar to this individual alone and differing from all others. In *omnibus partibus relucet fotum*" (p. 347). "Thus the finite also is given with and in the infinite, the individual with and in the universal. At the same time, the infinite is necessary in itself, the finite, however, (following Duns Scotus), is absolutely contingent, i.e., mere fact" (p. 347).

We note that Windelband sums up the whole situation of **medieval philosophy** with the idea that, as Plotinus had demonstrated the 66 failure of ancient philosophy, so had **Cusanus** that of the medieval. "Cusanus aims to bring every aspect of infinite and finite reality into intelligible relation to every other aspect. He could be successful in this attempt only if he would deny the reality of the distinctness of all aspects from one another. But this must not be. **Pure contingency** must have a place in the system.

Thus it was that in early modern philosophy, says Richard Kroner, "man discovered that he was in the center of the world, and that he had to seek truth and guidance **within himself**. **No outer authority can assume ultimate responsibility for the individual character of the person or for the faith that a man may accept as the ultimate source of all his decisions and norms of conduct**" (Richard Kroner, *Speculation and Revelation in Modern Philosophy*, p. 25).

He adds: "All modern philosophy is based upon these presuppositions. Man had never before felt his freedom so strongly. In his famous oration on *The Dignity of Man* (written about 1486), Pico della Mirandola, the Italian, glorified the autonomy of man in general and of the individual person in particular" (p. 27).

The Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) said, "I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics, that is my physics" (cf. Kroner, p. 29).

Thus, it is clear that Renaissance man carried out the **Socratic spirit of inwardness** more consistently than Socrates himself had done. Having heard somewhat of Christ's claims to be the way, the truth and the life, **he would still have none of it**. Whereas Socrates rebelled against the revelation of God speaking to him through nature and consciousness, **Renaissance man rebelled** against the same God as He had revealed Himself in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the challenge to repentance of Paul and the other apostles. Renaissance man had therefore to assure himself conclusively of his **new found "freedom"** in that the triune God did not speak to him anywhere. **Especially, he had to interpret nature as being properly his own domain, not God's.**

b. Francis Bacon

The Englishman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) performed a great service among his fellow denizens of the **city of man** when he wrote that "knowledge is power (*Scientia est potentia*). He was, says Kroner, "the prophet of the conquest of nature by means of investigation and inductive thinking." True, he had not entirely "medieval forms of thought, but he did anticipate the outgrown possibility of knowing and using the natural forces for the sake of **aggrandizing man's power and self-dependence**" (p. 28).

Bacon announced that it was his purpose "to try out whether the foundation of the power and grandeur of man can be established" (cf. Kroner, p. 28). In his essay on *New Atlantis*, he had the fictitious president of a learned society of scholars say, "The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible" (p. 29).

When we read this, we must naturally think of Plato, who sought to develop a culture, an ideal state, on the basis of the **Socratic principle of inwardness**, thus of philosophy *pur sang*, with mythology and theology relegated to the realm of second best (*deuteros plous*). Similarly, although Bacon prayed initially to the triune God for success, to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he then proceeded to draw up a blueprint for the **city of man** in which the trinitarian doctrine had only an emotive significance. [*emotive: to arouse intense feeling*] (cf. Francis Bacon, "The Great Instauration" in Edwin A. Burt, The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill, The Modern Library, 1939).

He has offered to us an illustration of how, as he imagined, a proper methodology in science ought to proceed. It was thus through induction that he would have discovered "the simple elements of reality, from the 'nature' of which, in their regular relation and connection, the whole compass of what we perceive is to be explained. Induction, he thought, will find the **Forms** by which Nature must be interpreted."

Bacon's inductive method was all-inclusive, aiming "to understand man and all the activities of his life as a **product of the same elements of reality** which also lie at the **basis** of external Nature." Moreover, by the comprehensive application of his method, **he would have enabled man to realize his dream of making himself the king of the universe.** [*The classic 'Babylonish' attempt to make name for man!*]

With reliance on "divine assistance," he undertook not merely to "cast a glance or two upon facts and examples and experience," but also to dwell "purely and constantly among the facts of nature..." He sought to lead men "to things themselves and the concordance of things, and, if he had committed an error anywhere, he at least presented to others the means of correcting him: "and by these means 68 I suppose that I have established forever a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty, the unkind and ill-starred divorce and separation of which has thrown into confusion all the affairs of the human family."

In this manner, Bacon believed to have set aside "the mischievous authority of systems, which are founded either on common notions or on a few experiments, or on superstition, declaring, in effect, that he had solved the *Meno problem*. Having renounced all classes of idols, he promised to lead us into "the kingdom of man. . . ." Thus the prophecy of Daniel would now, apparently, be fulfilled, that in the latter days "knowledge shall be increased..."

Some comments from the web that may shed light on this 'Meno Problem':

Plato's *Meno* introduces aspects of Socratic ethics and Platonic epistemology in a fictional dialogue that is set among important political events and cultural concerns in the last years of Socrates' life. It begins as an abrupt, prepackaged debater's challenge from Meno about whether virtue can be taught, and quickly becomes an open and inconclusive search for the essence of this elusive "virtue," or human goodness in general. This inquiry exhibits typical features of the Socratic method of *elenchus*, or refutation by cross-examination, and it employs typical criteria for the notoriously difficult goal of Socratic definitions. But then a distinctive objection to the possibility of learning anything at all by such inquiry prompts the introduction of characteristically Platonic themes of immortality, mathematics, and a "recollection" of knowledge not learned by experience in this life. A model geometry lesson with an uneducated slave is supposed to illustrate the importance of being aware of our own ignorance, the nature of proper education, the difference between knowledge and true belief, and the possibility of learning things without being taught. When the conversation returns to Meno's initial question of whether virtue can be taught, Socrates introduces another manner of investigation, a method of "hypotheses," by which he argues that virtue must be some kind of knowledge, and so it must be something that's taught. But then Socrates also argues to the contrary that since virtue is never actually taught, it seems not to be knowledge after all.

This dialogue portrays aspects of Socratic ignorance and Socratic irony while it enacts his twofold mission of exposing common arrogant pretensions and pursuing a philosophical knowledge of virtue that no one ever seems to have. It is pervaded with typical Socratic and Platonic criticisms of how, in spite of people's constant talk of virtue, they value things like wealth and power more than wisdom and justice. And it includes a tense confrontation with one of the men who will bring Socrates to trial on charges of corrupting young minds with dangerous teachings about morality and religion. The dialogue closes with the surprising suggestion that virtue as practiced in our world both depends on true belief rather than knowledge and is received as some kind of divine gift. Source: <https://iep.utm.edu/meno-2/>

We might now, he asserted, pray with confidence "to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost" that he would lead us on toward and into that kingdom of man. "They will vouchsafe through my hands to endow the human family with new mercies."

Other scientists besides Bacon had contributions to make to the building of the city of man. One thing that needed attention badly was the demonstration that the "facts" to be discovered by **empirical** research must necessarily fit together into a blueprint constructed by **Renaissance man** himself, who had to be certain that the Parmenidean principle of the identity of thought and being would remain in control of the situation.

Man in the present world had to apply this principle to the material which **chance** presented to him. He was therefore compelled to **interpret** all reality, himself and the world alike, in terms of the idea of the correlativity of his abstract principles of identity and diversity respectively.

But now, a new form of an old threat loomed for him on the horizon: namely, the danger of the absorption of his own newly acquired, **free individuality** into the moment-by-moment, grinding interaction of pure staticism and pure flux.

When **Parmenides** had asserted that all reality was one changeless block of being, he had committed his individuality to a similar complete fusion with fate, and when Heraclitus had alleged all to be flux, he had consigned his **individuality** to a similarly total blending with **chance**.

Their successors faced the same problem, but had, in general sought to save man from absorption in either direction by asserting that neither the Parmenidean nor the Heraclitean principles **69** possessed any validity within itself; rather, it was only through possessed *interaction* that they might become fruitful for the interpretation of human experience. Still, the problem remained. Aristotle's idea that all being was inherently analogical remained a perfect example of the futility of bearing into the direction of ever-increasing correlativity between pure **determinism** and pure **indeterminism**. And the end was not yet. Actually, there was no other way to go but down the path of further such correlativity unless, of course, one would listen to Paul's preaching of the resurrection of Christ. **But what "free" man wished to head that way? [no one, because all have gone astray; all are corrupt, blind, etc.]**

In fact, Renaissance man found that, with his bold assertion of freedom from all authority, he was obliged to stress the correlativity of **absolute contingency** and **absolute determinism** still further than Greek philosophy had ever done. The "stuff" of his experience must, in no sense, have for its source the **activity of the Creator-Redeemer God of Christianity** for, if it did, then man would find himself - dreadful thought! - **dependent upon God**. Similarly, the "form" of experience ought not have made him reflect upon the Divine directing activity, or he would thus once again have become dependent upon the Creator. **[Again, see here that fallen man's heart is at enmity with God, etc.]**

Renaissance man sensed that this necessity of declaring both **absolute rationality** and **absolute irrationality** to be correlative to one another posed even a new and different threat to him: it was, namely, that he seemed to himself as "condemned to be free." Having left the Father's house because its order was too confining for him, he now found himself afloat on a desert island, in a shoreless,

bottomless ocean whose water was salty as the Dead Sea, unsuited for irrigating the sterile sand that trickled between his fingers as he stooped to inspect it, with no minerals underneath, and no greenage atop the lifeless ground. How, then, could he erect the **city of man** and fortify it with walls, so as to keep out Prince Emanuel who would come to claim and renew His own?

But to speak thusly of Renaissance man, as one who lived on desert island, was, even so, not to describe him adequately, as natural man. For the notion of the barren island would only apply, had apostate man ever been successful in his attempt to overthrow the claims of Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that is, it illustrates the **devastating nature** of the **principle of apostate (hence, Renaissance) man**, had he, in fact, been successful in his claims and **70** his **autonomous principles** so as to have brought his "city of man" to complete, actual realization. [Remember God frustrated the building of Babylon! a kind of 'city of man' where man strived to make a name for himself.] And that this result could not have been, had been proven long before by the complete failure of Greek philosophy.

On the basis of the **Socratic principle of inwardness**, then, with its unending conflict between contingency/ irrationalism and determinism/rationalism, man could not identify himself, could not say "I am" and make it stick, in distinction from anyone or anything else, and could not say anything definite about himself as distinct from anything said by and about anyone else. As in the old adage, there was nothing else that anyone else said about anything else that could not as well be said about "Socrates."

As "Socrates" not able to use the law of identity with respect to himself, even so he could not apply the **law of non-contradiction** to the world of facts, and thus had **Parmenides** been quite "brave" when he asserted that the world of being had to answer perfectly to the laws of thought, Plato braver still when he worked with this Parmenidean principle (especially after he had been forced to admit of pure contingency as existing behind the world of reality and logic, and of non-being as possessing a measure of being!), and **Aristotle** the bravest of the three when he continued to insist that knowledge was of **universals** only, although criticizing Socrates for not having allowed for an irrational element in the soul, and Plato for not having been sufficiently inductive in his reasoning. But now there came **Renaissance man**, the first "modern," who was bravest of all when he (as, for instance, in the person of **Francis Bacon**) asserted that all previous methods were defective in not having assigned due place to the observation of **contingent facts**. The particular form of the bravery of Renaissance man appeared still further in the fact that (as again with Bacon) he promised a sure foundation for the **city of man** by his appeal to facts themselves, but then blandly announced that he would find the *forms* of things in the facts. Thus did Bacon imagine that he had escaped the Aristotelian idea of substantial forms, yet, of course, his own forms emerged as made of the same stuff as Aristotle's since both were composed ultimately of Parmenidean to absolute indeterminism and absolute irrationalism. Bacon had merely walked a bit further down the *via dolorosa* that was to lead to **Immanuel Kant**, in whose thinking forms were to have their very source in man. And, as will be seen, even Kant himself had not gone **71** all the way. Indeed, **apostate man**, were he to be consistent with his own principles, ought always boldly to maintain that he has, not merely in thought, but also in reality, completely reversed the relationship between God and man as defined in the Genesis account, since it is not until man not only *asserts*, but *proves*, to himself, to all the world and the heavens as well, that he, instead of God, is the manipulator

and source of all possibility and reality viz., the anti-Christ- that his autonomous endeavors throughout history will assume their most logical meaning.

Renaissance man was truly "modern" in his bearing the ark of God toward the temple of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and his reference to Christ as the *superfluous man*. He was, like a small boy, telling his father that he had been, was, and ever would be superfluous. "I control the world, Dad. I know I need food, but, you see, I'll grow my own. In fact, I'll buy up all the chain stores, then the whole country, the whole world. I'll be the master of my fate and the captain of my soul." Then, the boy discovered that he had nothing with which to buy his next breakfast, finding that, like the prodigal of the parable, he was soon at the swine trough, having denied his own manhood. **So also the Renaissance man in his denying Christ as the way to the Father's house**

Summing up, Renaissance man in the first place had *renewed* the pagan principle of inwardness, following Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, demonstrating willy-nilly that his victory spelt his defeat. [same with Satan!]

But in the second place, Renaissance man went *beyond* his medieval associates in his effort to synthesize the Socratic preoccupation with his own ultimacy with Christ's insistence on His divine ultimacy. To Renaissance man, the natural teleology of man was higher than it was to medieval man. He accordingly invited Christ to join him in building the city of man, behaving exactly the same as Satan the Prince of the World, when he offered Christ the world's kingdoms if only He would prostrate Himself before the Prince. [Wow!]

The teleological argument is an attempt to prove the existence of God that begins with the observation of the purposiveness of nature. The teleological argument moves to the conclusion that there must exist a designer.

You may object to such a "harsh" evaluation of Renaissance man by interjecting that he was simply "doing without" Christ rather than actually opposing Him. The answer, however, has long ago been given; all human beings not for Christ are against him! The world is one grand estate whose proprietor is, indeed, the Christ, because He is its Creator-Redeemer. Renaissance man was fully justified to 72 repudiate the Roman Church's authority, which was largely that of an artificial, man-made Christ. However, a false authority cannot rightly be rejected without kneeling to the true one, Whose claims were indeed heard by Renaissance man, and then, no less, rejected by him, as Erasmus of Rotterdam did in asserting man's freedom independently of Christ, and above his having achieved liberation as a sinner through Christ's blood. Such was the issue between Erasmus and Luther. And was Socrates indeed, with Mary the mother of God, to become an equal spokesman for the human race? If Erasmus meant this by his request to Socrates to pray for him, it was virtually claiming Socrates not to have been a sinner, in need of forgiveness for his declaration of independence from God. Should it be furthermore objected that one need not adopt Luther's theology to accept Christ the reply is again clear: the Bible as Christ's Word was quite available to Renaissance man, yet he chose to ignore its doctrine of man the sinner in need of redemption so as to build thereafter the city of God. This was clearly to imply that Christ erred in His insistence against the powers of Satan that unless men were

saved by His destiny of suffering in their place, they and their total cultural effort rested under God's wrath.

3. Reformation Man's Idea of Himself

We already indicated the fact that **Renaissance man** found his greatest opponent in Reformation, not medieval man. To amplify clearly the views expressed concerning this contrast, we turn first to Richard Kroner's evaluation of it.

Reformation and Renaissance man, says Kroner, were both opposed to the Church's external authority. Proceeding from that point, their opposition to Romanism's externality was united on the ground of man's spiritual inwardness. Kroner mentions that "the Biblical word remained the authority to which Luther and other Reformers referred," yet, he minimizes the profound and basic significance of this fact by adding that "the Protestant conscience, rather than the Bible, was, for Luther, the basic point of reference. It was this "Protestant conscience," Kroner argues, which led eventually to "modern religiosity, as based upon the individual conscience" (Kroner, *Speculation*, p. 26).

a. Martin Luther vs. Boehme

Consistent with this same line of thinking, Kroner associates and identifies the spirit of mysticism with that of the Reformation. He says: "Like the mystics, Luther was convinced that the redemptive atonement of Christ has to be understood as an inner truth that must be experienced by the soul, that God is not an object of doctrine, but the supreme goal of the will and the heart; not a 'form' in the **Aristotelian** sense, **but a living power**, and that **man cannot unite with God by theoretical knowledge, but only by inward regeneration**" (p. 64).

Kroner's complete misinterpretation of the relation of Lutheran theology to mysticism is similar to the one so often made with respect to Augustine's theology and Plotinus' mysticism. The basic theological convictions expressed best in Augustine's later writings are, of course, diametrically opposite to those of Plotinus, as Luther's basic convictions squarely oppose those of the Medieval mystics; and Luther, of course, continued Augustine's theology as the mystics of Renaissance times perpetuated Plotinus. Kroner's views are the exact reverse of historical reality.

Particularly difficult to grasp is how he can speak of Jakob Boehme's (1575-1624) beliefs as a "Protestant faith" (p. 68). Describing them, Kroner says: "The *Ungrund*, the abysmal arche of all things, is the divine will. This will is absolutely independent, unmotivated not impelled by any desire. The primordial will wills nothing; as compared with all definite things, things, it is itself Nothing" (p. 72). But after all, "the will must will something in order to be a will. Boehme knows the solution of this riddle. . . . The eternal, every joyful will longs for its own self-revelation, self-manifestation, or self-contemplation. As pure Will, God does not know Himself, he does not confront Himself, He is not conscious of Himself. In this respect God is indeed lacking something. Being infinite He is also indefinite. The abundance of His will is curtailed is by the poverty of His knowledge; the power of His

freedom is restricted by the impotency of awareness. Only by revealing Himself to Himself, by articulating Himself does the impersonal *Ungrund* become the personal author of the Creation" (p. 63)

In all his thinking, Kroner concludes, Boehme was concerned with the problem of selfhood. "If God is personal, then He is a self; but the human self is finite, so how can we conceive of an infinite self? This question occupied all his thinking" (p. 73).

It is obvious from this display of Boehme's views that he was a thinker along Plotinian rather than Augustinian, lines of reasoning, his position resting upon **the assumption of human autonomy**, thus he "found the key to the riddle" of God's self-hood "within himself." And thus he could also say, "the source of the Creation of this world is much easier to understand in the will of God by the inner man than the visible things by the outer one." Again, "if thou wilt to behold God and eternity, turn thy will around **into thy inner self, then thou art like God himself**, for so thou art created in the beginning and so thou livest in accordance with the inner will of God and in God." Having excerpted this from Boehme, Kroner then adds: "Augustine and Luther said the same" (p. 74). **It is impossible to agree with this evaluation.**

To be sure, Kroner can appeal to Windelband, and to that great historian of doctrine, Adolf von Harnack, for support of the claim that Augustine "said the same." But then, these men have overlooked the fact that Augustine gradually outgrew his early Platonic Plotinian education, coming later to believe what the apostle Paul had taught about the **sovereign, electing Christ**.

Boehme's religious conviction was, basically, that man was not a creature of God, a sinner before God, in the way that Luther, through Augustine, through Paul had believed. **Boehme was of the Renaissance, not the Reformation.**

Our animadversion on Boehme has been primarily to understand the nature of the **principle of inwardness** of **post-Kantian**, viz. **natural man**. Kroner is himself a brilliant and profound exponent of it, in his amazing belief that the "line" of true inwardness began with Socrates, and was best expressed by Jesus Christ, who was later and appropriately emulated by Augustine, Luther and Kant.

In fact, the genuine **Socratic principle** of inwardness was, properly speaking, carried on by Plotinus, **Renaissance man**, and finally, in its climactic form by **Kant**. **It clashes, we posit, with Christ's claim to be the Way, the Truth and the Life**. After conversion, Paul challenged it as Jesus had done among the Pharisees, whereafter Augustine again was-to confront it directly as expressed in the "**salvation by self-elevation**" concept of the Plotinian **scale of being**. And **Luther**, after conversion, challenged it once more in its mildly Christianized Plotinian form within the Roman Catholic church. For **Luther**, the **free man of Erasmus was actually a slave to sin, and only in the case of him for whose sins Christ paid the penalty on the cross did there exist true freedom** (Luther, On the Bondage of the Will).

b. Descartes vs. Calvin

The absolute contrast of principle between the City of Man and the one of God appeared with particular clarity in the instance of Rene Descartes vs. John Calvin. Descartes, of course, was the typical Renaissance man, whereas Calvin had developed and extended the biblical approach to God rediscovered by Luther. The former stood for the **Socratic-Plotinian**, the latter, the **Augustinian, Pauline** principle of inwardness.

The issue (at stake) was that of human certainty. In his book, *New Paths of Philosophy* (Neue Wege der Philosophie), Fritz Heinemann states that ancient man concerned himself with the cosmos, medieval man with God, and modern man with man himself. Superficially, then, it may be said that both Descartes and Calvin were modern. However, both were finally, also, concerned with man in respect to his environment, thus his relationship to God. Both sought for the actual inwardness of man by ascertaining this peculiar relationship, in other words, not merely the Socratic question of how man may know himself, but also the Platonic one of his true culture, thus ultimately his "salvation." It was a matter of "cultural" philosophy, as well as "humanistic."

Renaissance man aimed at "controlling" nature so as to erect his earthly kingdom [like the Tower of Babel], and Descartes in questing for self-knowledge exemplified this splendidly. Also, Bacon and Galileo Galilei had developed a "method" which projected human control over nature. Many others, notably Descartes constructed a **mathematically oriented method**, based on the Parmenidean assumption that reality was fully expressible by human conceptualization. But Kroner has emphasized that Galileo, for one, warned that mathematics would "never disclose anything about the true nature of the universe, or even of a stone," although his metaphysically-minded successors generally disregarded the warning and proceeded to hatch their farfetched speculative systems. [e.g., LaRouche] In a sense, one might say that they resorted to ancient cosmology in claiming to have discovered the true nature of existence.

Descartes, Spinoza, and **Leibniz**, the three outstanding examples of such cosmology, were, nevertheless, modern thinkers indeed, in that they centered their final efforts, not upon nature or the world, but upon man, his niche in the world and also his relationship to God. Descartes launched his from his famous *Cogito*, a fully **anthropocentric principle**. **Spinoza** was basically a mystic for whom knowledge of God was of importance, and yet he was not theocentric, but embraced rather the belief that speculation could bring about man's harmony with the divine being, thus the "end" of all his aspirations and personal longings. **Leibniz's** whole system was at heart **anthropocentric, with man to be the pattern and model of all things, even of the world and God**. Any "naturalism" of these three "scientific" metaphysicians was therefore an illusion. In so far as it figured into their systems, it was a tribute to the prevailing fashion of thought during their time, not to the intrinsic or esoteric doctrine of their systems (Speculation and Revelation in the Age of Christian Philosophy, pp. 256-257, The Westminster Press)

To the latter observation from Kroner's work on medieval speculation, we add a quotation from his work on modern speculation and revelation. **Descartes**, says Kroner, opposed the Roman Catholic Aristotelian doctrine of man as consisting of soul and body. "The Aristotelian doctrine treats the person as it treats other 'substances.' My soul is then conceived in the same manner as the forms of other things; indeed, it is only a special form which is characteristic of man. Descartes is too much of a

Christian to accept this theory. I am not a special substantial form; I am, rather, a thinking being and only as such am I in contrast to the whole world of substances and forms. Only thus am I a self and know myself to be myself. I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thinking thing (*res cogitans*), that is, a mind or soul (*mens sive animus*), understanding or reason, terms whose significance was before unknown to me."

Kroner remarks as follows about these words of Descartes: "What is completely new in this definition is the emphasis laid upon the self as not belonging to the world, in so far as I think of the world and thereby of myself as the subject of thinking, whereas the physical things (including my body) are objects of my thinking.

Finally of the utmost importance is this further observation by Kroner: "The Christian inwardness is here interpreted as the unique position of the thinking subject in contrast to the objects thought. No thinker before **Descartes** brought the principle of modern philosophy, is **epistemological subjectivism**, so emphatically and definitely to light. In that respect he was the true initiator of philosophy in the modern world."

What Kroner says of Descartes is most enlightening. **Descartes has not fully worked out or even been fully true to his basic principle of inwardness**. For one thing, it rejects the scholastic notion of form and it points forward to Kant. Man is thus not a thing, but a person. In this respect, he was followed by Spinoza and **Leibniz**, upon which principle of inwardness they too cast their thoughts.

Unfortunately, argues Kroner, **Descartes was not faithful ultimately, to his own principle**. He sacrificed his true epistemological inwardness in favor of a metaphysics that would understand ultimate reality. "The modern anthropocentric position was abandoned; instead the pre-Christian cosmocentric principle was revived. **Spinoza and Leibniz followed Descartes' lead**. Renaissance naturalism marred thus the foundation of modern epistemology. The terms mind, intellect, reason, even self or ego were now understood as parallels to extension, as if they lay on the same plane. The superiority and primacy of the thinking subject in contrast to the objects thought was surrendered" (p. 97). "Kant alone was able to clarify these misunderstandings, and to dissolve the falsity of metaphysical solutions" (p. 98).

Basically, the problem was again that of **human freedom**, which the metaphysical systems of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz denied. In Descartes' philosophy, "the idea of the individual ego is swallowed up by that of mathematical reason. The desire to justify the validity of science is stronger than the wish to understand the self, as the center of the person" (p. 100). It was Kant who at last recognized the full significance of man's inwardness, not allowing any desire for a metaphysical foundation of science to overshadow the fact that man was a free personality. Says Kroner: "**The critical position that Kant finally took originated in part from his protest against the doctrine that man was an automaton**, Only thus could Kant save moral responsibility and, indeed, the whole sphere of moral life" (p. 165).

The final contest was thus between **Kant** and **Calvin**. Man's true freedom and inwardness were expounded first by Reformation man, whom Calvin represented the best. It was he who, more cogently

than Luther isolated man's true inwardness and freedom in terms of the **free, self-sufficient act of God in His creation and redemption**. Calvin, not Luther, confronted Renaissance man with the call to repentance in the authentic manner of Paul, who had similarly summoned ancient man.

The struggle between the **Renaissance city of man of Descartes Spinoza, Leibniz**, and Kant, and the **Reformation city of God** is an all-out one, using the weapons of theology, philosophy, and science. Since the Renaissance and Reformation, it has become even more intensive and extensive than before.

In his mindfulness of man's cultural task, Calvin diametrically opposed Descartes, a fact which Kroner senses somewhat. **Kroner says that Calvin spoke merely for those who would make an automaton of man**. Yet, while admitting that Luther, as well as Calvin, believed in election, Kroner ignores this fact, and imagines Luther's main thrust to have been rather a type of inwardness akin to that of the mystics and ultimately of Kant. This is consistent with his believing Augustine to form the connecting link between Socratic and Cartesian inwardness.

For **Calvin**, man was himself free, i.e., **free to undertake his cultural task in the name of Christ**, which was, basically, whether in theology, philosophy, or science, **to challenge apostate man to repentance** at every point in the universe. This fact has, of course, been more fully elaborated by his followers than by Calvin himself. For instance Abraham Kuyper wrote a three-volume work under the title *Pra Rege*, according to which every square inch of ground had to be claimed for Christ as man's Redeemer-King. Thus also D. H. Th Vollenhoven, Herman Dooyeweerd and Hendrik Stoker have presented a methodology of philosophy and of science which is calculated **to challenge, at every step of the way, all man-centered cultural efforts**.

Yet, from Kroner's point of view, all such endeavor must be discarded in the name of that inwardness of man represented by Socrates, Descartes, and Kant, Considering once again their contrast with Calvin, the following elements come to mind.

Organic is the question of the *primum notum*, viz., the most basic thing that one may know. Calvin agreed with Descartes that man must start from himself as the object of thought, but with the proviso that no one really contemplated himself properly unless as a creature of God become sinner against God, and redeemed from such rebellion through the historical work of Jesus Christ and the regenerating action within him of the Holy Spirit.

The Greeks of course, had rejected this thought of themselves as a slur on their self-sufficiency, preferring their older belief that **they were ultimate not created**, and the "God" whose existence they "proved" or "disproved," **not Him whose creatures they, in fact, were**. Greek **autonomous** speculation was what Calvin and Luther, like Augustine, had spurned after Christ had appeared to them in Scripture, **at which time they world have it no more**, nor the Roman Catholicism sprung falsely from it.

Every man, argued Calvin, after Paul, knew inherently that such speculation **was an effort to suppress the truth within him, that God was his Creator and that, in all speculation, he seeks by very nature to suppress such knowledge** (Romans 1). Surely also, Descartes' view of man consisted basically of this effort to suppress what, deep down in his heart, he knew was really true. No human being can

doubt this. Knowledge of God as Creator-Redeemer travels with knowledge of oneself, the two being mutually, immediately involved. **Human doubt** itself presupposes awareness of the truthful claim of God in Scripture affirming the creatureliness and sinfulness of man against Him. Descartes' own doubt is, therefore, irrefutable evidence of his confirmed desire to exclude the true God from his world of knowledge. He was like the boy described earlier who, having left his father's house, paused and asked himself and others whether perhaps, he even had a father. Christ was, for him, the superfluous man, whom he requested, so to speak, to remove himself kindly so that he might proceed to unfold his world-view without obstruction

Descartes' metaphysics is not, as Kroner contends, inconsistent with his epistemological view of the freedom of man, but rather, it is perfectly consistent. Freedom is self-sufficiency, on which basis he postulated a culture controlled by an abstract principle of continuity according with mathematical law, and an abstract view of discontinuity according with pure contingency. [chance]

Descartes is, then, a later Renaissance man who continued his apostate predecessors' endeavor of attempting to build the "city of man," thus repudiating that of God. If Paul had come to earth and met the Renaissance Descartes, he might well have repeated: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world, for after that the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:9). Even Kroner points out that Descartes' universal swallowed up his individual, thus that he deliberately isolated himself from all relationships in terms of which he alone could identify himself. Man is what he is by virtue of the place and task that God his Creator- Redeemer assigns to him, but Descartes imagined he could reject all this as so much tree bark so as to discover his own "essence" and yet, by his own admission, he found nothing further identifiable after having accomplished his removal of God, creation, and providence. Really, how could he have expected to find anything, having thus destroyed himself? He knew only that he was, not what he was. To groan that I know that I am without knowing anything about what I am is to assert nothing, but rather, to demonstrate the folly, confusion, and guilt of denying the God who has created me, died so as to redeem me, and thus set me truly free.

B. Immanuel Kant and the Principle of Inwardness

Next, in order is a consideration of Immanuel Kant and his own expression of the principle of inwardness, Kroner's own description of Kant's principle shall be presented in the main and, therewith, the present writer's evaluation. Kroner believes that Kant, for the first time, rendered anything like full justice to the aforementioned Socratic principle. The Greek, Socrates, had begun well enough confessing that, having read the natural philosophers, he became discouraged because none had a principle of unity such as would have enabled him to adopt a totality view of life, or do justice to the higher aspects of himself. But then, he had learned from Anaxagoras to explain all of what the natural philosophers had spoken of in terms of a higher unity, that of *nous*. Thereafter, said Socrates, "I worshipped him as though he had been a God." Yet, one could not discover *nous* by a study of any of the individual natural elements, viz., start from the bottom to reach the top, but rather, one had to begin with *nous* and learn to regard natural objects in its light. *Nous* was that single presupposition by

whose light all things of-nature were revealed in their true unity, which was not natural, but, rather, teleological. The objects of nature all pointed toward *nous*, being in fact unintelligible without it.

nous, (Greek: "mind" or "intellect") in philosophy, the faculty of intellectual apprehension and of intuitive thought. Used in a narrower sense, it is distinguished from discursive thought and applies to the apprehension of eternal intelligible substances and first principles.

Having acknowledged the primacy of the *nous*, Socrates thus inspired Plato and Aristotle to elaborate a teleological view of all reality. But, when Socrates spoke of attaining to objective reality by knowledge, he was really retiring to that naturalist conceptual position which he had attempted all along to overcome. Plato and Aristotle thus conceived that they were conforming to Socrates' doctrine in offering conceptual, i.e., speculative knowledge, of all of reality, and, in particular, of timeless ultimate reality, but the result was that the individual man found himself swallowed up in the universal realm of changeless being

Christianity, particularly the "Protestant consciousness," developed superbly the idea of true inwardness. Luther's final appeal against the speculation of the Romanist doctrinal system was "directed to the internal consciousness of man." He simply did not believe in any system of speculative doctrine, but rather, in **revelation**, having been influenced in this realm in part by **Meister Eckhart**, the medieval mystic (*Speculation and Revelation in Christian Philosophy*, (p. 236). And here lies the connecting link between modern philosophy and Protestant theology (p. 23). **Eckhart** was, namely, the first **outspoken subjectivistic**, or existential mystic in the history of philosophy. In his sermons, he overtly presented his **individual experience as that which mattered most in the search for truth**, as in the practice of religious devotion. ... Only since the time of Eckhart have the terms "mystic" and "mysticism." in fact assumed the meaning of an individual inner experience which needs no logical demonstration, but, rather, withstands it, being convincing and infectious imply because it is not logically demonstrable, but immediately **impressive** and **emotionally persuasive**. ... "Eckhart was convinced that God can be experienced **only if the soul abandons all outer support, be it that of historical narrative or of scientific theory**, although Biblical imagery and metaphysical terminology may be used in order to express what is truly inexpressible. He went even farther. He believed that this **inward experience is superior in rank, certainty, and truth to any merely learned content of faith or any cognitive principle of thought**. Again and again he warns his hearers that they must turn into their innermost center, into the 'castle' of their soul, into the 'darkness' of the **inner light**, to see God and to be united with him. He speaks often about his '**discoveries**' which reveal the secret meaning of things divine. **Only by an intense inner concentration upon the voices that sound within the soul can man find the source of his, and of all, life**: being as such, the absolute mind, the ultimate goodness, the divine simplicity. **This inner treasure** gives to the soul its nobility, its power, its uniqueness. Here faith should rest. Eckhart uses metaphysical concepts or religious images only to awake this sense of utter urgency and need in the believer. If he succeeds in this inner concentration, the believer may finally experience the birth of Christ in his own breast" (p. 228).

Was it then, we muse, in the spirit of Meister Eckhart that perchance, Montaigne had written: "I have my own laws and court to judge me, and I go to them more than anywhere else"? Probably it

was, but Kroner disagrees. Speaking of this same statement of Montaigne's, he says: "A stronger contrast to the Christian conscience and also to that of the ancients can hardly be imagined. Since he felt himself the center of the world, he did not know repentance." (p. 31). "Montaigne has no God to pray to," says Kroner. And yet, did Meister Eckhart? Why was not Montaigne's inwardness, as well as Meister Eckhart's, a forerunner of Kantian inwardness?

Already noted has been Kroner's view of **Descartes** as a true "initiator of philosophy in the modern world," because he set himself up, in distinction from the world, as the **starting point** of any intelligible interpretation of human experience (p. 88). Finally, Kroner speaks of **Blaise Pascal**, as of one who prefigured Kant even more so than had Descartes. Namely, after asserting his spirit of inwardness, Descartes had fallen back upon speculative metaphysics but **Pascal** did not. Therefore, "he directly anticipated Kant" (p. 105).

It is apparent from the evidence that, in Kroner's estimation Kant did greater justice to the idea of inwardness than had any man before him, **namely those highest spiritual ideas that man senses within himself as a member of the human race. True inwardness requires the rejection of every form of externalism, which Socrates had understood most clearly. The idea of revelation itself was not wrong if taken to mean that the higher aspect of human personality must enlighten and quicken the lower. Nature cannot be revelational of God as its creator since, if we regard it in that fashion, it will be unintelligible to us. The Bible cannot contain an absolute authoritative revelation of Christ as the Son of God and of man who died in the place of "sinful" men and wrought righteousness for them and within them at a particular time in history.**

Kant envisioned all this better than any one before him. **Socrates** had relapsed into speculation, and Augustine also, although claiming to follow revelation: he interpreted his revelation conceptually, which was, to all intents, the same as speculation. In fact, any intellectually stated system of doctrine, says Kroner, is, in effect, the same as speculation.

Thus, even Luther fell back upon it when he accepted the Bible as containing conceptually stable, reliable truths.

But Kant caused us to overcome all this, to perceive the message of Christianity for what it was, namely, the message of Jesus Christ as the *Nous*, which is within all, above all, and going before all as we construct our city of man.

In describing Kant's life and world view (*Weltanschauung*), Kroner speaks of his **ethical dualism**, **ethical subjectivism**, **ethical voluntarism**, and **ethical phenomenalism**. His ethical dualism, Kroner says, indicated the fact that man's relation to his fellow man and to his God cannot be expressed conceptually, because God has no essence intellectually stable by either God or man. Neither is man's nature intellectually stable by either God or man. God's nature is will, as is also man's. When we say this, then we are, to be sure, using concepts. There is no escape! Are we then, after all, back to the level of intellectualism? Not at all. We must use concepts for purposes of personal communication, but we think of the systems of truth that we construct by means of them as being indicators of what is

wholly beyond them. The ethical relationships among men and the relationship between God and man is primary and the intellectual one is secondary, thus subordinate to the ethical.

By saying this, Kant restricts science and, in so doing, founds it. Science is the result of the conceptualizing activity of man with respect to the material presented to him in the realm of space and time, and therefore involves no ethical relationships. There is an absolute antithesis between the ethical relationships among persons and the quite impersonal ones of persons to things.

The trouble with all philosophies before him had been, Kant claimed, that they made not this contrast, therefore, they did not place the realm of ethics, of personal relationships, above that of science, viz., impersonal relationships.

Therefore, he introduced his "Copernican Revolution," which involved subject rather than object as primary in man's interpreting himself and the world. Kroner calls this "ethical subjectivism," and it was of course immediately involved in his ethical dualism. The subject knew itself not as product of a process of intellection, but as the presupposition of the very possibility of such intellection and moreover, since the subject was will and not intellect, the ethical and the ethical subjective involved ethical voluntarism. Then, finally, all three involved ethical phenomenalism. When the ethical and voluntaristic subject had been properly distinguished from, and set above, the world of nature, then it could reveal itself in nature, viz., after the *nous* had first been set over against terms of which nature acquired real significance.

It was thus that Kant both restricted and founded science, and thereby at the same time "made room for religion." But the religion for which he "made room" was not the historic Christian one, **there being no room in it for Jesus Christ as the One from whom and to whom are all things**. To be sure, there was room in it for a Christ from whom, through whom, and to whom were all things, and this was the *Christ-Event* of more recent theology for which Kant "made room," namely, "the projection into the realm of the unknown" which has united many currents of modern theology. **Kant's man was utterly independent of the Creator-Redeemer man of Scripture**. If there was anything central to the historic Christian, viz., the historic Protestant religion, it was that it leaned entirely on the Christ who, as eternal Son of God, died for sinners on the cross and thereby made atonement for them at a specific date in history. But to have held such an idea was, according to Kant, to embrace the intolerable, both intellectually and morally, to fall back upon naturalism, upon speculation rather than revelation, to reduce persons to things, to interpret higher spiritual realities of the human person in terms of the impersonal, to seek the living among the dead, to reduce Christ Himself to a conglomeration of mutually contradictory concepts, to undermine science and petrify religion; in short, to find the absolute in the relative, topple God, the "wholly-other" who dwells in the realm of the ineffable, and force him to "live" in the realm of science where soon he will expire.

How might we, then, ask people to repent of sin and turn unto Christ if our Christ, if our Christ is measurable by the concepts of finite man? In Kant's thought, it was therefore not only the fundamentalist, but also the one who expressed his faith in the worlds and concepts of any of Protestant Confessions who had to be called to conversion to a higher, more spiritual view of things.

Here it is again to be surmised what **Paul** would now say if he could read Kant's works and or Kroner's exposition of them. No doubt he'd repeat what he once said to the Corinthians. **Kant was trying to save human predication**, under such conditions that, on the one hand, there could have been none on the basis of the empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, since, as Hume affirmed, human concepts were but faint replicas of his percepts, thus implying all to be pure contingency; and, that, on the other hand, there could have been none on the basis of the rationalism of **Spinoza** or **Leibniz** either, **since the order and connection of facts are all to be static**. One could not individuate by complete description, thus neither empiricism nor rationalism could explain how learning by experience was possible.

Therefore, how was synthetic knowledge *a priori* possible, and the *Meno* problem to be solved? **Parmenides** and **Heraclitus** could not, neither had any one since their day by an intermingling of methods.

So, now how could Kant expect to do it? Did he imagine that his "Copernican Revolution" would help? How could it? It wasn't Copernican at all. No one could really have gone farther in declaring **ultimacy** and **originality** than Socrates himself did, such that absolutely nothing specifically enunciated by God could possibly have interested him.

True, Kant did articulate more fully than any predecessor how God could be kept from oppressively directing man's attention to Himself by striving to assure his own comfort and security as well as his fellow man's in his redoubt of hypothetical **self-sufficiency** by asserting God's voice to be but an echo of men's. Did they formerly believe nature conversed with them of God? Were there such things as laws, natural or moral, which they must obey, since in doing so they were obeying God? Kant assured them that all was mythology and metaphor, the "laws" of nature being what they were **because man's own mind had intruded its categories on the stuff of experience**. Did Moses God's servant, once receive the moral law from the Sovereign Himself? No, said **Kant**, do not fear, **that law is what it is because, in your own sovereign freedom and wisdom, you have subjected yourself to it.**

However, Kant's total effort was meaningless or worse unless he could prove the inherent intelligibility of his **inwardness principle**, and this he could not do until he was able to show that man was **what Christianity had already affirmed God to be**, namely, the internally self-complete, self-referential being whose beneficent omnipotence controls, and omniscient wisdom directs, the world of men and things. [Man's assumed independence from God is always at odds with the truly sovereign God.]

As it is, Kant's supposedly self-sufficient man was torn asunder moment by moment by the interaction of the **impersonal forces of pure contingency** and **fate**. **Kantian freedom was freedom from God, the Creator-Redeemer of men**. But it is his conscience, autonomous man then will insist, which requires him to be free in this sense of the term. Yet, I ask, where is this freedom to be found? **Certainly not in pure contingency by itself**, although Kant says so; neither in **abstract rationality**, although he again says so. Is it, then, to be found by contemplating these as correlative to each other? But many before him had already imagined it there. Thus, all that was left was to make abstract

rationality more formal, and abstract contingency more contingent, than had his rationalist and irrationalist predecessors; but, of course, all this to none effect also. He did not, he could not, solve his predecessors' problem **because apostate man's problematics is invariably false and insoluble.**

Since the advent of Christ, apostate man has indeed tried untiringly, and always in vain, **to find a foundation for preventing Christ's call to repentance and salvation from reaching his ears.** A man may rebel against the rules of conduct issued by the captain of an ocean steamer, and he may even jump off and attempt deflecting the steamer's course, to prevent it from reaching its destination. But who will fail, he or the captain? Or, again, he may set fire to the waste-basket in his room, hopefully to incinerate the captain, and if successful, both he and the captain would burn to death or drown. Who is the captain in this case? It is the self-attesting Christ of Scripture, he it is who has set before him, set in motion, the forces that will lead the steamer to his own chosen destination.

He offers mutineers aboard his over ship the chance to repent and to join him in his inevitable victory over evil, and, if they refuse, doing all in their power to keep the captain from reaching this destination, they will reap only eternal death for their folly.

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Thus, human predication has been saved by Christ, not by Kant. **87**

C. Post-Kantian Man Replies

Finally, the answer must be presented, which post-Kantian man returns to Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?" Of course, there will be always those who seem to have nothing at all to reply; they simply "have never heard of him." Christ is, to them, the unknown one. However, we have learned from what has preceded that even to say absolutely nothing is to confess, in effect, that Christ is not the Way, the Truth and the Life. **As the One from Whom through Whom, and to Whom all things exist,** He is present to all men, calling them to repentance from their sin of breaking God's covenant made with them through Adam.

Then, there are many who have heard of Him and what He claims to have done for men in Palestine, but who reply simply that they do not need Him, being quite able to understand themselves and their cultural efforts at best without Him. To them, Christ is the superfluous man.

Again, there are those who will insist that He is a **hindrance to their self-expression** and their **cultural aims.** Christ is, to them, the unwanted man.

1. The Post-Kantian Theologian Karl Barth Replies

It is at the doorstep of such men as have never heard of, have no need of, and do not want Christ that post-Kantian Christianity arrives with its message of salvation through its own Christ. Whether or not you have *heard* of Him, or think you need or want Him, He is the one in whom you actually live, move, and have your being. [Acts 17:28] **You are able to know yourself only because you participate in His knowledge**. The older Cartesian *Faux pas* was that Descartes presumed to know himself apart from Christ, whereas Calvin was correct to say that knowledge of God and of Christ was presupposed in self-knowledge, and to desire no speculation on God's essence apart from His revelation to men in Christ. But of course, Calvin, and Luther too, were mistaken to "make" the salvation of men depend on what they alleged to have been a once-and-for-all finished work of atonement within the space-time world on their behalf. A Christ who had done that would not be the genuine item any more than the God who had sent Him. The actual Christ is, in fact, the *Event* of salvation of all men, for Kant has shown us how correctly to state and apply the Parmenidean principle of the adequacy of thought and being in our own day, that "thinking" is "acting," and "being" is "Event." Accordingly acting is Event.

Paul realized all of this when he said that, knowing God, men had yet not kept Him in remembrance. But no one can help but know the Christ-Event, since to know at all is to know in Christ; all of reality, in fact, is the Christ-Event.

By extension, Christ is the real Man, all other men being His fellow men (*Mitmenschen Jesu*).

The Christian Worldview in Speaking to Unbelievers

[the Synecdoche in 1Cor2:2]

By Dr. Alan Strange

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mH7zuxhbSU>

and except from his lecture: minute mark 43:13 to 48:11

code526

1Cor2:1-15

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Wisdom from the Spirit

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which

God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him” —

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.** ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Proverbs 26:4-5

⁴ Answer not a fool according to his folly,
lest you be like him yourself.

⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly,
lest he be wise in his own eyes.

The excerpt from his lecture starting at minute 43:13 to 48.11

So how are we to speak to them if there's no neutrality, no place where our ultimate commitments don't come into play as they always do both for believers and unbelievers. We do have common ground but at the level of *being*, not at knowing. Our common ground is *ontological*, which is to say, everywhere. This is our Father's world for all alike. Everybody lives in this world that God has made. For believers, we have the mind of Christ; **and that conditions how we see everything in the world** – verses 12 and 13, especially 15. And this sheds light on the meaning of verse 2. Notice back in verse 2, Paul says, *I have decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*. That can sound like a very odd sort of statement – like uh, some kind of gnostic super-spiritual, platonic statement. If you come up to him and say you know, My Aunt Sadie has cancer, Uncle cousin Bill just had stroke OH!!!! I don't want to hear about that!!! Is that what that means? You gotta come to passages and wrestle...well, what, what does this mean? What does this mean? And the resolve to know nothing but Christ and him crucified is a determination...it is a kind of narrowing here. It a narrowing, it's a narrowing...it's almost like a single lens focus, single lens focus. And your gonna say, I know nothing but Christ and him crucified and **it's a determination to know everything through that lens through which you view all reality**. You see everything through the lens of Christ and him crucified. That's a *synecdoche*, not the city in New York, but a part of speech, a part for the whole. So, **Christ and him**

crucified is speaking about the person and work of Christ. And you're determined – Paul is resolved to see everything through that lens. Everything will be seen through that lens. Which is a proper spiritual, a not merely natural lens.

Well, how do you talk to an unbeliever since they are lacking such a spiritual lens? And Greg [Bahnsen] offered great insight here – and I wish I had more time on this – but his comments on Proverbs 26:4 & 5 are really helpful. Because you have that strange thing there – cheek to jowl, you know, uh, *Answer a fool according to his folly. Answer not a fool according to his folly*. And you have to, and it's conditioned, ah, on the one hand, lest he be wise in his own eyes, lest you be like him. And Greg applies this, ah, verse 4, *Answer not a fool according to his folly lest you be like him* – **this means don't answer a fool according to his naturalistic methods of empiricism or rationalism**. You don't try to prove the resurrection or anything to him on naturalistic terms. Rather you furnish him with a biblical answer to his objections. You could say something like this: I know that you don't see things as I do as a Christian, but this is how we as Christians see things. And we believe what we do, not based on naturalistic assumptions that can't account for themselves, **but the revelation of God**, the God who is there; we see according to truth. So come let us reason together **on such biblical grounds**. Again, I know you're saying, I don't believe that and so forth, ah, but you're saying for the sake of argument, let me tell you what the Christian answer is. Because, then I'll come over to your world, verse 5, and look and see and make sure I understand where you're really coming from and I'll stand in your worldview and say, uh, wait a minute, this doesn't seem consistent; this doesn't seem coherent. This doesn't seem to quite make sense. And here's what's not happening. I'm not saying there's a neutral zone; I really need a chalkboard, white board for this... there's not a neutral zone here into which I'm saying, You give up your presuppositions, unbelieving friend, and I'll give up my presuppositions and will go into the neutral zone. That sounds like an episode of Star Trek or something, to me...you know the good Kirk and the bad Kirk... But we'll both go into the neutral zone all of which is just a fantasy; this thing doesn't exist. Nobody's giving up their presuppositions. I'm not asking you to give up your presuppositions, because you would be **converted** if you did!!! If you're really giving up your presuppositions, if you're adopting Christian ones, it because God's spirit has worked in you and you're converted! I can't do that in you. But I am saying, listen; this is how I reason on this as a Christian. And let me come over and figure out how you would...and so we're not playing a game and we're not sprinting to a finish line to get them to pray a prayer and say, You're ok now. You prayed the sinner's prayer; go out there and, you know, go to church sometime maybe – uh, something like that. Ya know, that's not what we're doing here. We're really seriously engaging people. Paul says, I plant, another waters, God gives the increase. It's always only and ever God who gives the increase. That's what this whole approach recognizes, the utter need for the work of the Spirit of God.

A Dissertation on Arminianism and Their Idea of Man's Free Will
 Arminian's Irrational Idea In What Man's Freedom of His Will Consists
 Code527

An Excerpt From
 On Freedom of the Will
 Vol. 1
 Part IV

By Jonathan Edwards

Calvinism Not Against Common Sense
 SECT. III.

The reasons why some think it contrary to common Sense, to suppose those things which are necessary to be worthy of either Praise or Blame.

It is abundantly affirmed and urged by Arminian writers, that it is contrary to *common Sense*, and the natural notions and apprehensions of mankind, to suppose otherwise than that **necessity** (making no distinction between natural and moral necessity) **is inconsistent, with Virtue and Vice, Praise and Blame, Reward and Punishment**. And their arguments from hence have been greatly triumphed in; and have been not a little perplexing to many, who have been friendly to the truth, as clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures: it has seemed to them indeed difficult, to reconcile *Calvinistic* doctrines with the notions men commonly have of justice and equity. And the true reasons of it seem to be the following:

I. It is indeed a very plain dictate of common Sense, that *natural* necessity is wholly inconsistent with just Praise or Blame. If men do things which in themselves are very good, fit to be brought to pass, and attended with very happy effects, properly *against* their Wills; or do them from a necessity that is *without* their Wills, or with which their Wills have no concern or connexion; then it is a plain dictate of common Sense, that such doings are none of their virtue, nor have they any moral good in them; and that the persons are not worthy to be rewarded or praised; or at all esteemed, honoured, or loved on that account. And, on the other hand, that if, from like necessity, they do those things which in themselves are very unhappy and pernicious, and do them because they cannot help it; the necessity is such, that it is all one whether they will them, or no; and the reason why they are done, is from

necessity only, and not from their Wills; it is a very plain dictate of common Sense, that they are not at all to blame; there is no vice, fault, or moral evil at all in the effect done; nor are they, who are thus necessitated, in any wise worthy to be punished, hated, or in the least disrespected, on that account.

In like manner, if things in themselves good and desirable are absolutely impossible, with a *natural* impossibility, the universal reason of mankind teaches, that this *wholly and perfectly* excuses persons in their not doing them.

And it is also a plain dictate of common Sense, that if the doing things, in themselves good, or avoiding things in themselves evil, is not *absolutely impossible*, with such a natural impossibility, but very *difficult*, with a natural difficulty; that is, a difficulty prior *to*, and not at all consisting *in*, Will and inclination itself, and which would remain the same, let the inclination be what it will; then a person's neglect or omission is excused *in some measure*, though not wholly; his sin is less aggravated, than if the thing to be done were easy. And if instead of difficulty and hindrance, there be a contrary natural propensity in the state of things, to the thing to be done, or effect to be brought to pass, abstracted from any consideration of the inclination of the heart; though the propensity be not so great as to amount to a natural necessity; yet being some approach to it, so that the doing of the good thing be very much from this natural tendency in the state of things, and but little from a good inclination; then it is a dictate of common Sense, that there is so much the less virtue in what is done; and so it is less praiseworthy and rewardable. The reason is easy, *viz.* because such a natural propensity or tendency is an approach to natural necessity; and the greater the propensity, still so much the nearer is the approach to necessity. And, therefore, as natural necessity takes away or shuts out *all* virtue, so this propensity approaches to an abolition of virtue; that is, it *diminishes* it. And, on the other hand, natural difficulty, in the state of things, is an approach to natural impossibility. And as the latter, when it is complete and absolute, *wholly* takes away Blame; so such difficulty takes away *some* Blame, or diminishes Blame; and makes the thing done to be less worthy of punishment.

II. Men, in their first use of such phrases as these, *must, cannot, cannot help it, cannot avoid it, necessary, unable, impossible, unavoidable, irresistible, &c.*, use them to signify a necessity of constraint or restraint, a natural necessity or impossibility; or some necessity that the Will has nothing to do in; which may be, whether men will or no; and which may be supposed to be just the same, let men's inclinations and desires be what they will. Such kind of terms, in their original use, I suppose among all nations, are relative; carrying in their signification (as was before observed) a reference or respect to some contrary Will, desire, or endeavour, which, it is supposed, is, or may be, in the case. All men find, and begin to find in early childhood, that there are innumerable things that cannot be done, which they desire to do; and innumerable things, which they are averse to, that must be, they cannot avoid them, they will be, whether they choose them or no. It is to express this necessity, which men so soon and so often find, and which so greatly and early affects them in innumerable cases, that such terms and phrases are first formed; and it is to signify such a necessity, that they are first used, and that they are most constantly used, in the common affairs of life; and not to signify any such metaphysical, speculative, and abstract notion, as that connexion in the nature or course of things, which is between the subject and predicative of a proposition, and which is the foundation of the certain truth of that proposition; to signify which, they who employ themselves in philosophical inquiries into the first origin and metaphysical relations and dependencies of things, have borrowed these terms, for want of others. But we grow up from our cradles in a use of such terms and phrases entirely different from this, and carrying a sense exceeding diverse from that in which they are commonly used in the controversy between *Arminians* and *Calvinists*. And it being, as was said before,

a dictate of the universal sense of mankind, evident to us as soon as we begin to think, that the necessity signified by these terms, in the sense in which we first learn them, does excuse persons, and free them from all Fault or Blame; hence our idea of excusableness or faultlessness is tied to these terms and phrases by a strong habit, which is begun in childhood, as soon as we begin to speak, and grows up with us, and is strengthened by constant use and custom, the connexion growing stronger and stronger.

The habitual connexion, which is in men's minds between Blamelessness and those forementioned terms, *must, cannot, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable, &c.* becomes very strong, because, as soon as ever men begin to use reason and speech, they have occasion to excuse themselves, from the natural necessity signified by these terms, in numerous instances.—*I cannot do it—I could not help it.*—And all mankind have constant and daily occasion to use such phrases in this sense, to excuse themselves and others, in almost all the concerns of life, with respect to disappointments, and things that happen, which concern and affect ourselves and others, that are hurtful, or disagreeable to us or them, or things desirable, that we or others fail to obtain.

That our being accustomed to a union of different ideas, from early childhood, makes the habitual connexion exceeding strong, as though such connexion were owing to *nature*, is manifest in innumerable instances. It is altogether by such an habitual connexion of ideas, that men judge of the bigness or distance of the objects of sight, from their appearance. Thus it is owing to such a connexion early established, and growing up with a person, that he judges a mountain, which he sees at ten miles distance, to be bigger than his nose, or further off than the end of it. Having been used so long to join a considerable distance and magnitude with such an appearance, men imagine it is by a dictate of natural sense: whereas, it would be quite otherwise with one that had his eyes newly opened, who had been born blind: he would have the same visible appearance, but natural sense would dictate no such thing, concerning the magnitude or distance of what appeared.

III. When men, after they had been so habituated to connect ideas of Innocency or Blamelessness with such terms, that the union seems to be the effect of mere nature, come to hear the same terms used, and learn to use them in the forementioned new and metaphysical sense, to signify quite another sort of necessity, which has no such kind of relation to a contrary supposable Will and endeavour; the notation of plain and manifest Blamelessness, by this means, is, **by a strong prejudice**, insensibly and unwarily transferred to a case to which it by no means belongs: the change of the use of the terms, to a signification which is very diverse, not being taken notice of, or adverted to. And there are several reasons why it is not.

I. The terms, as used by **philosophers**, **are not very distinct and clear in their meaning**: few use them in a fixed determined sense. **On the contrary, their meaning is very vague and confused**. Which commonly happens to the words used to signify things intellectual and moral, and to express what Mr. Locke calls *mixt modes*. If men had a clear and distinct understanding of what is intended by these metaphysical terms, they would be able more easily to compare them with their original and common sense; and so would not be so **easily led into delusion** by words of this sort.

2. The change of the signification of the terms is the more insensible, because the things signified, though indeed very different, yet do in some generals agree. **In necessity**, that which is *vulgarly* so called, there is a strong connexion between the thing said to be necessary, and some thing antecedent to it, in the order of nature; so there is also a *philosophical necessity*. And though in both kinds of necessity, the connexion cannot be called by that name, with relation to an opposite will or endeavour, to which it is *superior*; which is the case in vulgar necessity; yet in both, the connexion is *prior* to Will

and endeavour, and so, in some respect, *superior*. In both kinds of necessity, there is a foundation for some certainty of the proposition, that affirms the event.—The terms used being the same, and the things signified agreeing in these and some other general circumstances; **and the expressions as used by philosophers being not well defined, and so of obscure and loose signification;** hence persons are not aware of the great difference; and the notions of innocence or faultiness, which were so strongly associated with them, and were strictly united in their minds, ever since they can remember, remain united with them still, as if the union were altogether natural and necessary; and they that go about to make a separation, seem to them to do great violence even to nature itself.

IV. Another reason why it appears difficult to reconcile it with reason, that men should be blamed for that which is necessary, with a moral necessity, (which, as was observed before, is a species of philosophical necessity) is, that for want of due consideration, men inwardly entertain that apprehension, that this necessity may be against men's Wills and sincere endeavors. They go away with that notion, that men may truly will, and wish, and strive, that it may be otherwise; but that invincible necessity stands in the way. And many think thus concerning themselves: some wicked men think they wish that they were good, that they love God and holiness; but yet do not find that their wishes produce the effect.—The reasons why men think so, are as follow:

1. They find what may be called an *indirect willingness* to have a better Will, in the manner before observed. For it is impossible, and a contradiction to suppose the Will to be directly and properly against itself. And they do not consider that this indirect willingness is entirely a different thing from properly willing what is the duty and virtue required; and that there is no virtue in that sort of willingness which they have. They do not consider, that the volitions, which a wicked man may have that he loved God, are no acts of the Will at all against the moral evil of not loving God; but only some disagreeable consequences. But the making of the requisite distinction requires more care of reflection and thought, than most men are used to. And men, through a prejudice in their own favour, are disposed to think well of their own desires and dispositions, and to account them good and virtuous, though their respect to virtue be only *indirect* and *remote*, and it is nothing at all that is virtuous that truly excites or terminates their inclinations.

2. Another thing that **insensibly leads and beguiles men** into a supposition that this moral necessity or impossibility is, or may be, against men's Wills and true endeavors, is the derivation of the terms often used to express it. Such words for instance, as *unable, unavoidable, impossible, irresistible;* which carry a plain reference to a supposable power exerted, endeavors used, resistance made, in opposition to the necessity: and the persons that hear them, not considering, nor suspecting, but that they are used in their proper sense; that sense being therefore understood, there does naturally, and as it were necessarily, arise in their minds a supposition, that it may be so indeed, that true desires and endeavors may take place, but that invincible necessity stands in the way, and renders them vain and to no effect.

V. Another thing which makes persons more ready to suppose it to be contrary to reason, that men should be exposed to the punishments threatened to sin, **for doing those things which are morally necessary, or not doing those things morally impossible, is, that imagination strengthens the argument, and adds greatly to the power and influence of the seeming reasons against it,** from the greatness of that punishment. To allow that they may be justly exposed to a small punishment, would not be so difficult. Whereas, if there were any good reason in the case, if it were truly a dictate of reason, that such necessity was inconsistent with faultiness, or just punishment, the demonstration would be equally certain with respect to a small punishment, or any punishment at all, as a very great one: but it

is not equally easy to the imagination. They that argue against the justice of *damning* men for those things that are thus necessary, seem to make their argument the stronger, by setting forth the greatness of the punishment in strong expressions:—“That a man should be cast into eternal burnings, that he should be made to fry in hell to all eternity, for those things which he had no power to avoid, and was under a **fatal, unfrustrable, invincible necessity** of doing,” &c.

Sect. IV

*It is agreeable to common sense, and the natural notions of mankind, to suppose moral Necessity
In be consistent with Praise and Blame, Reward and Punishment.*

Whether the reasons, that have been given, why it appears difficult to some persons, to reconcile with common sense the praising or blaming, rewarding or punishing, those things which are morally necessary, are thought satisfactory, or not; yet it most evidently appears, by the following things, that if this matter be rightly understood, setting aside all delusion arising from the impropriety and ambiguity of terms, this is not at all inconsistent with the natural apprehensions of mankind, and that sense of things which is found every where in the common people; who are furthest from having their thoughts perverted from their natural channel, by metaphysical and philosophical subtleties; but, on the contrary, altogether agreeable to, and the very voice and dictate of, this natural and vulgar sense.

I. This will appear, if we consider what the vulgar notion of blameworthiness is. The idea which the common people, through all ages and nations, have of faultiness, I suppose to be plainly this; a person being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure; containing these two things: 1. *His doing wrong, when he does as he pleases.* 2. *His pleasure being wrong.* Or, in other words, perhaps more intelligibly expressing their notion; *a person having his heart wrong, and doing wrong from his heart.* And this is the sum total of the matter.

The common people do not ascend up in their reflections and abstractions to the metaphysical sources, relations, and dependences of things, in order to form their notion of faultiness or blameworthiness. They do not wait till they have decided by their refinings, what first determines the Will; whether it be determined by something extrinsic, or intrinsic; whether volition determines volition, or whether the understanding determines the Will; whether there be any such tiling as metaphysicians mean by contingency (if they have any meaning); whether there be a sort of a strange **unaccountable sovereignty in the Will**, in the exercise of which, by its own sovereign acts, it brings to pass all its **own sovereign acts**. They do not take any part of their notion of Fault or Blame from the resolution of any such questions. If this were the case, there are multitudes, yea the far greater part of mankind, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand, would live and die, without having any such notion, as that of Fault, ever entering into their heads, or without so much as once having any conception that any body was to be either blamed or commended for any thing. If this were the case, it would be a long time before men came to have such notions. Whereas it is manifest, they are in fact some of the first notions that appear in children; who discover, as soon as they can think, or speak, or act at all as rational creatures, a sense of desert. And, certainly, in forming their notion of it, they make no use of metaphysics. All the ground they go upon, consists in these two things: *experience* and a Natural sensation of a certain fitness or agreeableness, which there is in uniting such moral evil as is above described, viz. a being or doing wrong with the Will, and resentment in others, and pain inflicted

on the person in whom this moral evil is. Which natural sense is what we call by the name of *conscience*.

It is true, the **common people** and children, in their notion of any faulty act or deed, of any person, do suppose that it is the person's own act and deed. But this is all that belongs to what they understand by a thing being a person's own deed or action; even that it is something done by him of choice. **That some exercise or motion should begin of itself, does not belong to their notion of an action, or doing.** If so, it would belong to their notion of it, that it is the cause of its own beginning: and that is as much as to say, that it is before it begins to be. Nor is their notion of an action some motion or exercise, that begins accidentally, without any cause or reason; for that is contrary to one of the prime dictates of common sense, namely, that every thing that begins to be, has some cause or reason why it is.

The common people, in their notion of a faulty or praiseworthy work done by any one, do suppose, that the man does it in the exercise of *liberty*. But then their notion of liberty is only a person having opportunity of doing as he pleases. **They have no notion of liberty consisting in the Will first acting, and so causing its own acts; determining, and so causing its own determinations; or choosing, and so causing its own choice.** **Such a notion of liberty is what none have, but those that have darkened their own minds with confused metaphysical speculation, and abstruse and ambiguous terms.** If a man is not restrained from acting as his Will determines, or constrained to act otherwise; then he has liberty, according to common notions of liberty, without taking into the idea that grand contradiction of all, the determinations of a man's free Will being the effects of the determinations of his free Will.—Nor have men commonly any notion of freedom consisting in indifference. For if so, then it would be agreeable to their notion, that the greater indifference men act with, the more freedom they act with; whereas, the reverse is true. **He that in acting proceeds with the fullest inclination, does what he does with the greatest freedom, according to common sense.** And so far is it from being agreeable to common sense, that such liberty as consists in indifference is requisite to Praise or Blame, that, on the contrary, the dictate of every man's natural sense through the world is, that the further he is from being indifferent in his acting good or evil, and the more he does either with full and strong inclination, the more is he esteemed or abhorred, commended or condemned.

II. If it were inconsistent with the common sense of mankind, that men should be either blamed or commended in any volitions, in case of moral Necessity or impossibility; then it would surely also be agreeable to the same sense and reason of mankind, that the nearer the case approaches to such a moral Necessity or impossibility—either through a strong antecedent moral propensity, on the one hand, ¹⁴⁰ or a great antecedent opposition and difficulty, on the other—the nearer does it approach to a person being neither blamable nor commendable: so that acts exerted with such preceding propensity, would be worthy of proportionably less Praise; and when omitted, the act being attended with such difficulty, the omission would be worthy of the less Blame. It is so, as was observed before, with natural Necessity and impossibility, propensity and difficulty: as it is a plain dictate of the sense of all mankind, that natural Necessity and impossibility take away all Blame and Praise; and therefore, that the nearer the approach is to these, through previous propensity or difficulty, so Praise and Blame are proportionally diminished. And if it were as much a dictate of common sense, that moral Necessity of doing, or impossibility of avoiding, takes away all Praise and Blame, as that natural Necessity or impossibility does; then, by a perfect parity of reason, it would be as much the dictate of common sense, that an approach of moral Necessity of doing, or impossibility of avoiding, diminishes Praise and Blame, as that an approach to natural Necessity and impossibility does so. It is equally the voice of

common sense, that persons are excusable in part, in neglecting things difficult against their Wills, as that they are excusable wholly in neglecting things impossible against their Wills. And if it made no difference, whether the impossibility were natural and against the Will, or moral, lying in the Will, with regard to excusableness; so neither would it make any difference, whether the difficulty, or approach to Necessity, be natural, against the Will, or moral, lying in the propensity of the Will.

But it is apparent, that the reverse of these things is true. If there be an approach to a moral Necessity in a man's exertion of good acts of Will, they being the exercise of a strong propensity to good, and a very powerful love to virtue; it is so far from being the dictate of common sense, that he is less virtuous, and the less to be esteemed, loved, and praised; that it is agreeable to the natural notions of all mankind, that he is so much the better man, worthy of greater respect, and higher commendation. And the stronger the inclination is, and the nearer it approaches to Necessity in that respect; or to impossibility of neglecting the virtuous act, or of doing a vicious one; still the more virtuous, and worthy of higher commendation. And, on the other hand, if a man exerts evil acts of mind; as, for instance, acts of pride or malice from a rooted and strong habit or principle of haughtiness and maliciousness, and a violent propensity of heart to such acts; according to the natural sense of men, he is so far from being the less hateful and blamable on that account, that he is so much the more worthy to be detested and condemned, by all that observe him.

Moreover, it is manifest that it is no part of the notion, which mankind commonly have of a blamable or praiseworthy act of the Will, that it is an act which is not determined by an antecedent bias or motive, but by the sovereign power of the Will itself; because, if so, the greater hand such causes have in determining any acts of the Will, so much the less virtuous or vicious would they be accounted; and the less hand, the more virtuous or vicious. Whereas, the reverse is true; men do not think a good act to be the less praiseworthy, for the agent being much determined in it by a good inclination or a good motive, but the more. And if good inclination, or motive, has but little influence in determining the agent, they do not think his act so much the more virtuous, but the less. And so concerning evil acts, which are determined by evil motives or inclinations.

Yea, if it be supposed, that good or evil dispositions are implanted in the hearts of men, by nature itself, (which, it is certain, is vulgarly supposed in innumerable cases,) yet it is not commonly supposed, that men are worthy of no Praise or Dispraise for such dispositions; although what is natural, is undoubtedly necessary, nature being prior to all acts of the Will whatsoever. Thus, for instance, if a man appears to be of a very haughty or malicious disposition, and is supposed to be so by his natural temper, it is no vulgar notion, no dictate of the common sense and apprehension of men, that such dispositions are no vices or moral evils, or that such persons are not worthy of disesteem, or odium and dishonour; or that the proud or malicious acts which flow from such natural dispositions, are worthy of no resentment. Yea, such vile natural dispositions, and the strength of them, will commonly be mentioned rather as an aggravation of the wicked acts, that come from such a fountain, than an extenuation of them. It being natural for men to act thus, is often observed by men in the height of their indignation: they will say, "It is his very nature: he is of a vile natural temper; it is as natural to him to act so, as it is to breathe; he cannot help serving the devil," &c. But it is not thus with regard to hurtful mischievous things, that any are the subjects or occasions of, by natural necessity, against their inclinations. In such a case, the necessity, by the common voice of mankind, will be spoken of as a full excuse.—Thus it is very plain, that common sense makes a vast difference between these two kinds of necessity, as to the judgment it makes of their influence on the moral quality and desert of men's actions.

And these dictates are so natural and necessary, that it may be very much doubted whether the Arminians themselves have ever got rid of them; yea, their greatest doctors, that have gone furthest in defence of their metaphysical notions of liberty, and have brought their arguments to their greatest strength, and as they suppose, to a demonstration, against the consistence of virtue and vice with any necessity: it is to be questioned, whether there is so much as one of them, but that, if he suffered very much from the injurious acts of a man, under the power of an invincible haughtiness and malignancy of temper, would not, from the forementioned natural sense of mind, resent it far otherwise, than if as great sufferings came upon him from the wind that blows and the fire that burns by natural necessity; and otherwise than he would, if he suffered as much from the conduct of a man perfectly delirious; yea, though he first brought his distraction upon him some way by his own fault.

Some seem to disdain the distinction that we make between natural and moral Necessity, as though it were altogether impertinent in this controversy; "that which is necessary, say they, is necessary; it is that which must be, and cannot be prevented. And that which is impossible, is impossible, and cannot be done; and, therefore, none can be to blame for not doing it." And such comparisons are made use of, as the commanding of a man to walk, who has lost his legs, and condemning him and punishing him for not obeying; inviting and calling upon a man, who is shut up in a strong prison, to come forth, &c. But in these things Arminians are very unreasonable. Let common sense determine whether there be not a great difference between these two cases: the one, that of a man who has offended his prince, and is cast into prison; and after he has lain there a while, the king comes to him, calls him to come forth; and tells him, that if he will do so, and will fall down before him and humbly beg his pardon, he shall be forgiven, and set at liberty, and also be greatly enriched, and advanced to honour: the prisoner heartily repents of the folly and wickedness of his offence against his prince, is thoroughly disposed to abase himself, and accept of the king's offer; but is confined by strong walls, with gates of brass, and bars of iron. The other case is, that of a man who is of a very unreasonable spirit, of a haughty, ungrateful, wilful disposition; and moreover, has been brought up in traitorous principles; and has his heart possessed with an extreme and inveterate enmity to his lawful sovereign; and for his rebellion is cast into prison, and lies long there, loaded with heavy chains, and in miserable circumstances. At length the compassionate prince comes to the prison, orders his chains to be knocked off, and his prison-doors to be set wide open; calls to him, and tells him, if he will come forth to him, and fall down before him, acknowledge that he has treated him unworthily, and ask his forgiveness; he shall be forgiven, set at liberty, and set in a place of great dignity and profit in his court. But he is so stout, and full of haughty malignity, that he cannot be willing to accept the offer; his rooted strong pride and malice have perfect power over him, and as it were bind him, by binding his heart: the opposition of his heart has the mastery over him, having an influence on his mind far superior to the king's grace and condescension, and to all his kind offers and promises. Now, is it agreeable to common sense, to assert and stand to it, that there is no difference between these two cases, as to any worthiness of blame in the prisoners; because, forsooth, there is a necessity in both, and the required act in each case is impossible? It is true, a man's evil dispositions may be as strong and immovable as the bars of a castle. But who cannot see, that when a man, in the latter case, is said to be unable to obey the command, the expression is used improperly, and not in the sense it has originally and in common speech? and that it may properly be said to be in the rebel's power to come out of prison, seeing he can easily do it if he pleases; though by reason of his vile temper of heart, which is fixed and rooted, it is impossible that it should please him?

Upon the whole, I presume there is no person of good understanding, who impartially considers these things, but will allow, that it is not evident, from the dictates of common sense, or natural notions, that moral Necessity is inconsistent with Praise and Blame. And, therefore, if the Arminians would prove any such inconsistency, it must be by some philosophical and metaphysical arguments, and not common sense.

There is a grand illusion in the pretended demonstration of Arminians from common sense. The main strength of all these demonstrations lies in that prejudice, that arises through the insensible change of the use and meaning of such terms as liberty, able, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable, invincible, action, &c. from their original and ⁶⁷vulgar sense, to a metaphysical sense, entirely diverse; and the strong connexion of the ideas of blamelessness, &c. with some of these terms, by a habit contracted and established, while these terms were used in their first meaning. This prejudice and delusion, is the foundation of all those positions they lay down as maxims, by which most of the scriptures they allege in this controversy, are interpreted, and on which all their pompous demonstrations from Scripture and reason depend. From this secret delusion and prejudice they have almost all their advantages: it is the strength of their bulwarks, and the edge of their weapons. And this is the main ground of all the right they have to treat their neighbours in so assuming a manner, and to insult others, perhaps as wise and good as themselves, as “weak bigots, men that dwell in the dark caves of superstition, perversely set, obstinately shutting their eyes against the noon-day light, enemies to common sense, maintaining the first-born of absurdities,” &c. &c. But perhaps, an impartial consideration of the things which have been observed in the preceding parts of this inquiry, may enable the lovers of truth better to judge, whose doctrine is indeed absurd, abstruse, self-contradictory, and inconsistent with common sense, and many ways repugnant to the universal dictates of the reason of mankind.

Corol. From the things which have been observed, it will follow, **that it is agreeable to common sense to suppose, that the glorified saints have not their freedom at all diminished**, in any respect; and that **God himself has the highest possible freedom**, according to the true and proper meaning of the term; and that he is, in the highest possible respect, an agent, and active in the exercise of his infinite holiness; though he acts therein, in the highest degree, **necessarily: and his actions of this kind are in the highest, most absolutely perfect, manner virtuous and praiseworthy**; and are so, for that very reason, because they are most perfectly necessary.

SECT. V.

Objections, that this scheme of Necessity renders all Means and Endeavours for avoiding Sin, or obtaining Virtue and Holiness, vain, and to no purpose; and that it makes men no more than mere machines, in affairs of morality and religion, answered.

Arminians say, If sin and virtue come to pass by a Necessity consisting in a sure connexion of causes and effects, antecedents and consequents, it can never be worth while to use any Means or Endeavours to obtain the one, and avoid the other; seeing no Endeavours can alter the futurity of the event, which is become necessary by a connexion already established.

But I desire, that this matter may be fully considered; and that it may be examined with a thorough strictness, whether it will follow that Endeavours and Means, in order to avoid or obtain any

future thing, must be more in vain, on the supposition of such a connexion of antecedents and consequents, than if the contrary be supposed.

For Endeavours to be in vain, is for them not to be successful; that is to say, for them not eventually to be the Means of the thing aimed at, which cannot be, but in one of these two ways; either, first, That although the Means are used, yet the event aimed at does not follow; or, secondly, If the event does follow, it is not because of the Means, or from any connexion or dependence of the event on the Means, the event would have come to pass as well without the Means as with them. If either of these two things are the case, then the Means are not properly successful, and are truly in vain. The success or non-success of Means, in order to an effect, or their being in vain or not in vain, consists in those Means being connected, or not connected, with the effect, in such a manner as this, viz. That the effect is with the Means, and not without them; or. that the being of the effect is, on the one hand, connected with Means, and the want of the effect, on the other hand, is connected with the want of the Means. If there be such a connexion as this between Means and end, the Means are not in vain: the more there is of such a connexion, the further they are from being in vain; and the less of such a connexion, the more they are in vain.

Now, therefore, the question to be answered—in order to determine, whether it follows from this doctrine of the necessary connexion between foregoing things, and consequent ones, that Means used in order to any effect, are more in vain than they would be otherwise—is, whether it follows from it, that there is less of the forementioned connexion between Means and effect; that is, whether on the supposition of there being a real and true connexion between antecedent things and consequent ones, there must be less of a connexion between Means and effect, than on the supposition of there being no fixed connexion between antecedent things and consequent ones: and the very stating of this question is sufficient to answer it. It must appear to every one that will open his eyes, that this question cannot be affirmed, without the grossest absurdity and inconsistency. Means are foregoing things, and effects are following things: And if there were no connexion between foregoing things and following ones, there could be no connexion between Means and end; and so all Means would be wholly vain and fruitless. For it is only by virtue of some connexion, that they become successful: It is some connexion observed, or revealed, or otherwise known, between antecedent things and following ones, that directs in the choice of Means. And if there were no such thing as an established connexion, there could be no choice, as to Means; one thing would have no more tendency to an effect, than another; there would be no such thing as tendency in the case. All those things, which are successful Means of other things, do therein prove connected antecedents of them: and therefore to assert, that a fixed connexion between antecedents and consequents makes Means vain and useless, or stands in the way to hinder the connexion between Means and end, is just so ridiculous, as to say, that a connexion between antecedents and consequents stands in the way to hinder a connexion between antecedents and consequents.

Nor can any supposed connexion of the succession or train of antecedents and consequents, from the very beginning of all things, the connexion being made already sure and necessary, either by established laws of nature, or by these together with a decree of sovereign immediate interpositions of divine power, on such and such occasions, or any other way (if any other there be); I say, no such necessary connexion of a series of antecedents and consequents can in the least tend to hinder, but that the Means we use may belong to the series; and so may be some of those antecedents which are connected with the consequents we aim at, in the established course of things. Endeavours which we use, are things that exist; and, therefore, they belong to the general chain of events; all the parts of

which chain are supposed to be connected: and so Endeavours are supposed to be connected with some effects, or some consequent things or other. And certainly this does not hinder but that the events they are connected with, may be those which we aim at, and which we choose, because we judge them most likely to have a connexion with those events, from the established order and course of things which we observe, or from something in divine revelation.

Let us suppose a real and sure connexion between a man having his eyes open in the clear daylight, with good organs of sight, and seeing; so that seeing is connected with his opening his eyes, and not seeing with his not opening his eyes; and also the like connexion between such a man attempting to open his eyes, and his actually doing it: the supposed established connexion between these antecedents and consequents, let the connexion be never so sure and necessary, certainly does not prove that it is in vain, for a man in such circumstances to attempt to open his eyes, in order to seeing: his aiming at that event, and the use of the Means, being the effect of his Will, does not break the connexion, or hinder the success.

So that the objection we are upon does not lie against the doctrine of the Necessity of events by a certainty of connexion and consequence: On the contrary, it is truly forcible against the Arminian doctrine of contingency and self-determination; which is inconsistent with such a connexion. If there be no connexion between those events, **wherein virtue and vice consist**, and any thing antecedent; then, there is no connexion between these events and any Means or Endeavours used in order to them: and if so, then those means must be in vain. The less there is of connexion between foregoing things and following ones, so much the less there is between Means and end, Endeavours and success; and in the same proportion are Means and Endeavours ineffectual and in vain.

It will follow from *Arminian* principles, that there is no degree of connexion between virtue or vice, and any foregoing event or thing: or, in other words, that the determination of the existence of virtue or vice does not in the least depend on the influence of any thing that comes to pass antecedently, as its cause, Means, or ground; because, so far as it is so, **it is not from self-determination: and, therefore, so far there is nothing of the nature of virtue or vice**. And so it follows, that virtue and vice are not at all, in any degree, dependent upon, or connected with, as, any foregoing event or existence, its cause, ground, or Means. And if so, then all foregoing Means must be totally in vain.

Hence it follows, that there cannot, in any consistence with the Arminian scheme, be any reasonable ground of so much as a conjecture concerning the consequence of any Means and Endeavours, in order to escaping vice or obtaining virtue, or any choice or preference of Means, as having a greater probability of success by some than others; either from any natural connexion or dependence of the end on the Means, or through any divine constitution, or revealed way of God, bestowing or bringing to pass these things, in consequence of any Means, Endeavours, Prayers, or Deeds. Conjectures, in this latter case, depend on a supposition, that God himself is the Giver or determining Cause of the events sought: **but if they depend on self-determination, then God is not the determining or disposing Author of them:** and if these things are not of his disposal, then no conjecture can be made, from any revelation he has given, concerning any method of his disposal of them.

Yea, on these principles, it will not only follow, that men cannot have any reasonable ground of judgment or conjecture, that their Means and Endeavours to obtain virtue or avoid vice will be successful, but they may be sure, they will not; they may be certain, that they will be in vain; and that if ever the thing, which they seek, comes to pass, **it will not be at all owing to the Means they use. For**

Means and Endeavours can have no effect at all, in order to obtain the end, but in one of these two ways: either, (1.) Through a natural tendency and influence, to prepare and dispose the mind more to virtuous acts, either by causing the disposition of the heart to be more in favour of such acts, or by bringing the mind more into the view of powerful motives and inducements; or, (2.) By putting persons more in the way of God's bestowment of the benefit. But neither of these can be the case. Not the latter; for, as has been just now observed, it does not consist with the Arminian notion of self-determination, which they suppose essential to virtue, that God should be the bestower, or (which is the same thing) the determining, disposing author of virtue. Not the former; for natural influence and tendency suppose causality, connexion, and necessity of event, which are inconsistent with Arminian liberty. A tendency of Means, by biassing the heart in favour of virtue, or by bringing the Will under the influence and power of motives in its determinations, **are both inconsistent with Arminian liberty of Will, consisting in indifference, and sovereign self-determination, as has been largely demonstrated.**

But for the more full removal of this prejudice against the doctrine of necessity, which has been maintained, as though it tended to encourage a total neglect of all Endeavours as vain, the following things may be considered.

The question is not, Whether men may not thus improve this doctrine: we know that many true and wholesome doctrines are abused: but, whether the doctrine gives any just occasion for such an improvement; or whether, on the supposition of the truth of the doctrine, such a use of it would not be unreasonable? If any shall affirm, that it would not, but that the very nature of the doctrine is such as gives just occasion for it, it must be on this supposition; namely, that such an invariable necessity of all things already settled, must render the interposition of all Means, Endeavours, Conclusions or Actions, of ours, in order to the obtaining any future end whatsoever, perfectly insignificant; because they cannot in the least alter or vary the course and series of things, in any event or circumstance; **all being already fixed unalterably by necessity: and that therefore it is folly, for men to use any Means for any end; but their wisdom, to save themselves the trouble of Endeavours, and take their ease. No person can draw such an inference from this doctrine, and come to such a conclusion, without contradicting himself, and going counter to the very principles he pretends to act upon:** for he comes to a conclusion, and takes a course, in order to an end, even his ease, or saving himself from trouble; he seeks something future, and uses Means in order to a future thing, even in his drawing up that conclusion, that he will seek nothing, and use no Means in order to any thing in future; he seeks his future ease, and the benefit and comfort of indolence. If prior necessity, that determines all things, makes vain all actions or conclusions of ours, in order to any thing future; then it makes vain all conclusions and conduct of ours, in order to our future ease. The measure of our ease, with the time, manner, and every circumstance of it, is already fixed, by all-determining necessity, as much as any thing else. If he says within himself, "What future happiness or misery I shall have, is already, in effect, determined by the necessary course and connexion of things; therefore, I will save myself the trouble of labour and diligence, which cannot add to my determined degree of happiness, or diminish my misery; but will take my ease, and will enjoy the comfort of sloth and negligence." **Such a man contradicts himself: he says, the measure of his future happiness and misery is already fixed, and he will not try to diminish the one, nor add to the other: but yet, in his very conclusion, he contradicts this; for, he takes up this conclusion, to add to his future happiness, by the ease and comfort of his negligence; and to diminish his future trouble and misery, by saving himself the trouble of using Means and taking Pains.**

Therefore persons cannot reasonably make this improvement of the doctrine of necessity, that they will go into a voluntary negligence of Means for their own happiness. For the principles they must go upon, in order to this, are inconsistent with their making any improvement at all of the doctrine: for to make some improvement of it, is to be influenced by it, to come to some voluntary conclusion, in regard to their own conduct, with some view or aim: but this, as has been shown, is inconsistent with the principles they pretend to act upon. In short, the principles are such as cannot be acted upon at all, or, in any respect, consistently. And, therefore, in every pretence of acting upon them, or making any improvement at all of them, there is a self-contradiction.

As to that objection against the doctrine, which I have endeavoured to prove, that it makes men no more than mere machines; I would say, that notwithstanding this doctrine, man is entirely, perfectly, and unspeakably different from a mere machine, **in that he has reason and understanding, with a faculty of Will,** and so is capable of volition and choice; **in that his Will is guided by the dictates or views of his understanding;** and in that his external actions and behaviour, and in many respects also his thoughts, and the exercises of his mind, are subject to his Will; so that he has liberty to act according to his choice, and do what he pleases; and by means of these things, is capable of moral habits and moral acts, such inclinations and actions as, **according to the common sense of mankind, are worthy of praise, esteem, love, and reward; or, on the contrary, of disesteem, detestation, indignation, and punishment.**

In these things is all the difference from mere machines, as to liberty and agency, that would be any perfection, dignity, or privilege, in any respect: all the difference that can be desired, and all that can be conceived of; and indeed all that the pretensions of the *Arminians* themselves come to, as they are forced often to explain themselves; though their explications overthrow and abolish the things asserted, and pretended to be explained. **For they are forced to explain a self-determining power of Will, by a power in the soul, to determine as it chooses or wills; which comes to no more than this, that a man has a power of choosing, and, in many instances, can do as he chooses. Which is quite a different thing from that contradiction, his having power of choosing his first act of choice in the case.**

Or, if their scheme make any other difference than this, between men and machines, it is for the worse: it is so far from supposing men to have a dignity and privilege above machines, that it makes the manner of their being determined still more unhappy. Whereas, machines are guided by an intelligent cause, by the skillful hand of the workman or owner; **the will of man is left to the guidance of nothing, but absolute blind contingency!**

SECT. VI.

Concerning that objection against the doctrine which has been maintained, that it agrees with the Stoical doctrine of Fate, and the opinions of Mr. Hobbes.

When Calvinists oppose the *Arminian* notion of the freedom of Will, and contingency of volition, and insist that there are no acts of the Will, nor any other events whatsoever, but what are attended with some kind of necessity; their opposers exclaim against them, as agreeing with the ancient Stoics in their doctrine of Fate, and with Mr. Hobbes in his opinion of **Necessity.**

It would not be worth while to take notice of so impertinent an objection, had it not been urged by some of the chief *Arminian* writers.—There were many important truths maintained by the ancient *Greek* and *Roman* philosophers, and especially the *Stoics*, that are never the worse for being

held by them. The Stoic philosophers, by the general agreement of Christian divines, and even *Arminian* divines, were the greatest, wisest, and most virtuous of all the heathen philosophers; and, in their doctrine and practice, came the nearest to Christianity of any of their sects. How frequently are the sayings of these philosophers, in many of the writings and sermons, even of *Arminian* divines, produced, not as arguments for the falseness of the doctrines which they delivered, but as a confirmation of some of the greatest truths of the christian religion, relating to the unity and perfections of the Godhead, a future state, the duty and happiness of mankind, &c. and how the light of nature and reason, in the wisest and best of the heathen, harmonized with and confirms the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And it is very remarkable, concerning Dr. Whitby, that although he alleges the agreement of the Stoics with us, wherein he supposes they maintained the like doctrine, as an argument against the truth of ours; yet, this very Dr. Whitby alleges the agreement of the Stoics with the *Arminian*, wherein he supposes they taught the same doctrine with them, as an argument for the truth of their doctrine. ¹⁴¹ So that, when the Stoics agree with them, it is a confirmation of their doctrine, and a confutation of ours, as showing that our opinions are contrary to the natural sense and common reason of mankind: nevertheless, when the Stoics agree with us, it argues no such thing in our favour; but, on the contrary, is a great argument against us, and shows our doctrine to be heathenish!

It is observed by some Calvinistic writers, that the *Arminians* symbolize with the Stoics, in some of those doctrines wherein they are opposed by the Calvinists; particularly in their denying an original, innate, total corruption and depravity of heart; and in what they held of man's ability to make himself truly virtuous and conformed to God, and in some other doctrines.

It may be further observed, that certainly it is no better objection against our doctrine, that it agrees, in some respects, with the doctrine of the ancient Stoic philosophers; than it is against theirs, wherein they differ from us, that it agrees, in some respects, with the opinion of the very worst of the heathen philosophers, the followers of Epicurus, the father of atheism and licentiousness, and with the doctrine of the Sadduces and Jesuits.

I am not much concerned to know precisely, what the ancient Stoic philosophers held concerning Fate, in order to determine what is truth; as though it were a sure way to be in the right, to take good heed to differ from them. It seems, that they differed among themselves; and probably the doctrine of Fate, as maintained by most of them, was, in some respects, erroneous. But whatever their doctrine was, if any of them held such a Fate, as is repugnant to any liberty, consisting in our doing as we please, I utterly deny such a Fate. If they held any such Fate, as is not consistent with the common and universal notions that mankind have of liberty, activity, moral agency, virtue and vice; I disclaim any such thing, and think I have demonstrated, that the scheme I maintain is no such scheme. If the Stoics, by Fate, meant any thing of such a nature, as can be supposed to stand in the way of advantage and benefit of in use of means and endeavours, or would make it less worth while for men to desire and seek after any thing wherein their virtue and happiness consists; I hold no doctrine that is clogged with any such inconvenience, any more than any other scheme whatsoever; and by no means so much as the *Arminian* scheme of contingency; as has been shown. If they held any such doctrine of universal fatality, as is inconsistent with any kind of liberty, that is or can be any perfection, dignity, privilege, or benefit, or any thing desirable, in any respect, for any intelligent creature, or indeed with any liberty that is possible or conceivable; I embrace no such doctrine. If they held any such doctrine of Fate, as is inconsistent with the world being in all things subject to the disposal of an intelligent, wise agent, that presides—not as the soul of the world, but—as the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, governing all things

by proper will, choice, and design, in the exercise of the most perfect liberty conceivable, without subjection to any constraint, or being properly under the power or influence of any thing before, above, or without himself; I wholly renounce any such doctrine.

As to Mr. Hobbes maintaining the same doctrine concerning necessity; I confess, it happens I never read Mr. Hobbes. Let his opinion be what it will, we need not reject all truth which is demonstrated by clear evidence, merely because it was once held by some bad man. This great truth, "that Jesus is the Son of God," was not spoiled because it was once and again proclaimed with a loud voice by the devil. If truth is so defiled, because it is spoken by the mouth, or written by the pen, of some ill minded, mischievous man, that it must never be received, we shall never know, when we hold any of the most precious and evident truths by a sure tenure. And if Mr. Hobbes has made a bad use of this truth, that is to be lamented; but the truth is not to be thought worthy of rejection on that account. It is common for the corrupt hearts of evil men to abuse the best things to vile purposes.

I might also take notice of its having been observed, that the *Arminians* agree with Mr. Hobbes ¹⁴² in many more things than the Calvinists. As, in what he is said to hold concerning original sin, in denying the necessity of supernatural illumination, in denying infused grace, in denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and other things.

SECT. VII.

Concerning the Necessity of the Divine Will.

Some may, possibly, object against what has been supposed of the **absurdity and inconsistency of a self-determining power in the Will, and the impossibility of its being otherwise**, than that the Will should be determined in every case by some motive, and by a motive which (as it stands in the view of the understanding) is of superior strength to any appearing on the other side; that if these things are true, it will follow, that not only the Will of created minds, but the Will of *God himself*, **is necessary in all its determinations**. Concerning which the author of the *Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in the Creature*, (page. 85, 86.) says: "What strange doctrine is this, contrary to all our ideas of the dominion of God? does it not destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the Creator and Governor and Benefactor of the world, that most free and Sovereign Agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom? does it not seem to make him a kind of mechanical medium of fate, and introduce Mr. Hobbes's doctrine of fatality and Necessity, into all things that God hath to do with! Does it not seem to represent the blessed God, as a Being of vast understanding, as well as power, and efficiency, but still to leave him without a Will to choose among all the objects within his view? In short, it seems to make the blessed God a sort of Almighty Minister of Fate, under its universal and supreme influence; as it was the professed sentiment of some of the ancients, that Fate was above the gods.

This is declaiming, rather than arguing; and an application to men's imaginations and prejudices, rather than to mere reason. I would now calmly endeavour to consider, whether there be any reason in this frightful representation. But, before I enter upon a particular consideration of the matter, I would observe; that it is reasonable to suppose, it should be much more difficult to express or conceive things according to exact metaphysical truth, relating to the nature and manner of the existence of things in the Divine Understanding and Will, and the operation of these faculties (if I may so call them) of the Divine Mind, than in the human mind; which is infinitely more within our view, more proportionate to the measure of our comprehension, and more commensurate to the use and import

of human speech. Language is indeed very deficient, in regard of terms to express precise truth concerning our own minds, and their faculties and operations. Words were first formed to express external things; and those that are applied to express things internal and spiritual, are almost all borrowed, and used in a sort of figurative sense. Whence they are, most of them, attended with a great deal of ambiguity and unfixeness in their signification, occasioning innumerable doubts, difficulties, and confusions, in inquiries and controversies about things of this nature. But language is much less adapted to express things existing in the mind of the incomprehensible Deity, precisely as they are.

We find a great deal of difficulty in conceiving exactly of the nature of our own souls. And notwithstanding all the progress which has been made, in past ages, and the present, in this kind of knowledge, whereby our metaphysics, as it relates to these things, is brought to greater perfection than once it was; yet, here is still work enough left for future inquiries and researches, and room for progress still to be made, for many ages and generations. But we had need to be infinitely able metaphysicians, to conceive with clearness, according to strict, proper, and perfect truth, concerning the nature of the Divine Essence, and the modes of action and operation in the powers of the Divine Mind

And it may be noted particularly, that though we are obliged to conceive of some things in God as consequent and dependent on others, and of some things pertaining to the Divine Nature and Will as the foundation of others, and so before others in the order of nature: as, we must conceive of the knowledge and holiness of God as prior, in the order of nature, to his happiness; the perfection of his understanding, as the foundation of his wise purposes and decrees; the holiness of his nature, as the cause and reason of his holy determinations. And yet, when we speak of cause and effect, antecedent and consequent, fundamental and dependent, determining and determined, in the first Being, who is self-existent, independent, of perfect and absolute simplicity and immutability, and the first cause of all things: doubtless there must be less propriety in such representations, than when we speak of derived dependent beings, who are compounded, and liable to perpetual mutation and succession.

Having premised this, I proceed to observe concerning the forementioned author's exclamation, about the *necessary determination of God's Will, in all things*, by what he sees to be fittest and best;

That all the seeming force of such objections and exclamations **must arise from an imagination**, that there is some sort of privilege or dignity in being without such a moral Necessity, as will make it impossible to do any other, **than always choose what is wisest and best**; as though there were some disadvantage, meanness, and subjection, in such a Necessity; a thing by which the Will was confined, kept under, and held in servitude by something, which, as it were, maintained a strong and invincible power and dominion over it, by bonds that held him fast, and from which he could, by no means, deliver himself. **Whereas, this must be all mere imagination and delusion.** It is no disadvantage or dishonour to a being, necessarily to act in the most excellent and happy manner, from the necessary perfection of his own nature. This argues no imperfection, inferiority, or dependence, nor any want of dignity, privilege, or ascendancy. ¹⁴³ It is not inconsistent with the absolute and most perfect sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is his ability and authority to do whatever pleases him; whereby "he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?—The following things belong to the sovereignty of God; viz. (1.) Supreme, universal, and infinite Power; whereby he is able to do what he pleases, without control, without any confinement of that power, without any subjection, in the least measure, to any other power; and so without any hinderance or restraint, that it should be either

impossible, or at all difficult, for him to accomplish his Will; and without any dependence of his power on any other power, from whence it should be derived, or of which it should stand in any need: so far from this, that all other power is derived from him, and is absolutely dependent on him. (2.) That he has supreme authority; absolute and most perfect right to do what he wills, without subjection to any superior authority, or any derivation of authority from any other, or limitation by any distinct independent authority, either superior, equal, or inferior; he being the head of all dominion, and fountain of all authority; and also without restraint by any obligation, implying either subjection, derivation, or dependence, or proper limitation. (3.) **That his Will is supreme, underived, and independent on any thing without himself; being in every thing determined by his own counsel, having no other rule but his own wisdom;** his Will not being subject to or restrained by the Will of any other, and other Wills being perfectly subject to his. (4.) That his Wisdom, which determines his Will, is supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient, and independent; so that it may be said, as in [Isa. xl. 14](#). “With whom took he counsel? And who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” There is no other Divine Sovereignty but this; and this is properly absolute sovereignty: no other is desirable; nor would any other be honourable, or happy: and indeed, there is no other conceivable or possible. It is the glory and greatness of the Divine Sovereign, that his Will is determined by his own infinite, all-sufficient wisdom in every thing; and is in nothing at all directed either by inferior wisdom, or by no wisdom; whereby it would become senseless arbitrariness, determining and acting without reason, design, or end.

If God’s Will is steadily and surely determined in every thing by supreme wisdom, then it is in every thing necessarily determined to that which is most wise. And, certainly, it would be a disadvantage and indignity, to be otherwise. For if the Divine Will was not necessarily determined to what in every case is wisest and best, it must be subject to some degree of undesigned contingency; and so in the same degree liable to evil. To suppose the Divine Will liable to be carried hither and thither at random, by the uncertain wind of blind contingency, which is guided by no wisdom, no motive, no intelligent dictate whatsoever, (if any such thing were possible,) **would certainly argue a great degree of imperfection and meanness, infinitely unworthy of the Deity.** If it be a disadvantage, for the Divine Will to be attended with this moral Necessity, **then the more free from it, and the more left at random, the greater dignity and advantage. And, consequently, to be perfectly free from the direction of understanding, and universally and entirely left to senseless unmeaning continence, to act absolutely at random, would be the supreme glory!**

It no more argues any dependence of God’s Will, that his supremely wise volition is necessary, than it argues a dependence of his being, that his existence is necessary. If it be something too low, for the Supreme Being to have his Will determined by moral Necessity, so as necessarily, in every case, to Will in the highest degree holily and happily; then why is it not also something too low, for him to have his existence, and the infinite perfection of his nature, and his infinite happiness, determined by Necessity? It is no more to God’s dishonour, to be necessarily wise, than to be necessarily holy. And, if neither of them be is the beauty of this Necessity, that it is strong as faith itself, with all the advantage of reason and goodness.—It is strange, to see men contend, that the Deity is not free, because he is necessarily rational, immutably good to his dishonour, then it is not to his dishonour necessarily to act holily and wisely. And if it be not dishonourable to be necessarily holy and wise, in the highest possible degree, no more is it mean and dishonourable, necessarily to act holily and wisely in the highest

possible degree; or which is the same thing, to do that, in every case, which, above all other things, is wisest and best.

The reason why it is not dishonourable to be necessarily most holy is, because holiness in itself is an excellent and honourable thing. For the same reason, it is no dishonour to be necessarily most wise, and, in every case, to act most wisely, or do the thing which is the wisest of all; for wisdom is also in itself excellent and honourable.

The forementioned author of the Essay on the Freedom of Will, &c. as has been observed, represents that doctrine of the Divine Will being in every thing necessarily determined by superior fitness, as making the blessed God a kind of Almighty Minister and mechanical medium of fate: he insists, (p. 93, 94.) that this moral Necessity and impossibility is, in effect, the same thing with physical and natural Necessity, and impossibility: and says, (p. 54, 55.) "The scheme which determines the Will always and certainly by the understanding, and the understanding by the appearance of things, seems to take away the true nature of vice and virtue. For the sublimest of virtues, and the vilest of vices, seem rather to be matters of fate and Necessity, flowing naturally and necessarily from the existence, the circumstances, and present situation of persons and things; for this existence and situation necessarily makes such an appearance to the mind; from this appearance flows a necessary perception and judgment, concerning these things; this judgment necessarily determines the Will; and thus, by this chain of necessary causes, virtue and vice would lose their nature, and become natural ideas, and necessary things, instead of moral and free actions."

And yet this same author allows, (p. 30, 31.) That a perfectly wise being will constantly and certainly choose what is most fit; and says, (p. 102, 103.) "I grant, and always have granted, that wheresoever there is such antecedent superior fitness of things, God acts according to it, so as never to contradict it; and, particularly, in all his judicial proceedings as a Governor and Distributer of rewards and punishments." Yea, he says expressly, (p. 42.) "That it is not possible for God to act otherwise, than according to this fitness and goodness in things."

So that, according to this author, putting these several passages of his Essay together, there is no virtue, nor any thing of a moral nature, in the most sublime and glorious acts and exercises of God's holiness, justice, and faithfulness; and he never does any thing which is in itself supremely worthy, and, above all other things, fit and excellent, but only as a kind of mechanical medium of fate; and in what he does as the Judge, and moral Governor of the world, he exercises no moral excellency; exercising no freedom in these things, because he acts by moral **Necessity**, which is, in effect, the same with physical or natural Necessity; and therefore, he only acts by an Hobbistical fatality; "as a Being indeed of vast understanding, as well as power and efficiency, (as he said before,) but without a will to choose, being a kind of Almighty Minister of fate, acting under its supreme influence. "For he allows, that in all these things, God's Will is determined constantly and certainly by a superior fitness, and that it is not possible for him to act otherwise. And if these things are so, what glory or praise belongs to God for doing holily and justly, or taking the most fit, holy, wise, and excellent course, in any one instance? Whereas, according to the Scriptures, and also the common sense of mankind, it does not, in the least, derogate from the honour of any being, that through the moral perfection of his nature, he necessarily acts with supreme wisdom and holiness; but on the contrary, his praise is the greater: herein consists the height of his glory.

The same author (p. 56.) supposes, that herein appears the excellent "character of a wise and good man, that though he can choose contrary to the fitness of things, yet he does not; but suffers himself to be directed by fitness;" and that, in this conduct, "he imitates the blessed God." And yet, he

supposes it is contrary wise with the blessed God; not that he suffers himself to be directed by fitness, when “he can choose, contrary to the .fitness of things;” but that “he cannot choose contrary to the fitness of things;” as he says, p. 42. “That it is not possible for God to act otherwise than according to this fitness, where there is any fitness or goodness in things:” Yea, he supposes, (p. 31.) That if a man “were perfectly wise and good, he could not do otherwise than be constantly and certainly determined by the fitness of things.”

One thing more I would observe, before I conclude this section; and that is, that if it derogate nothing from the glory of God, to be necessarily determined by superior fitness in some things, then neither does it to he thus determined in all things; from any thing in the nature of such Necessity, as at all detracting from (God’s freedom, independence, absolute supremacy, or any dignity or glory of his nature, state, or manner of acting; or as implying any infirmity, restraint, or subjection. And it the thing be such as well consists with God’s glory, and has nothing tending at all to detract from it; then we need not be afraid of ascribing it to God in too many things, lest thereby we should detract from God’s glory too much.

Excellent footnote!

¹⁴³ “It might have been objected, with more plausibleness, that the Supreme Cause cannot be free, because he must needs do always what is best in the whole. But this would not at all serve Spinoza’s purpose; **for this is a necessity, not of nature and of fate, but of fitness and wisdom:** a necessity consistent with the greatest freedom, and most perfect choice. **For the only foundation of this necessity is such an unalterable rectitude of will, and perfection of wisdom, as makes it impossible for a wise being to act foolishly.**” dark’s Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God. Edit. 6. p. 64. “Though God is a most perfect free Agent, yet he cannot but do always what is best and wisest in the whole. The reason is evident; because perfect wisdom and goodness are as steady and certain principles of action, as necessity itself; and an infinitely wise and good Being, indued with the most perfect liberty, can no more choose to act in contradiction to wisdom and goodness, than a necessary agent can act contrary to the necessity by which it is acted; It being as great an absurdity and impossibility in choice, for Infinite Wisdom to choose to act unwisely, or Infinite Goodness to choose what is not good, as it would be in nature, for absolute necessity to fail of producing its necessary effect. There was, indeed, no necessity in nature, that God should at first create such beings as he has created, or indeed any being at all; because he is. in himself, infinitely happy and all-sufficient. There was, also, no necessity in nature, that he should preserve and continue things in being, after they were created; because he would be self-sufficient without their continuance, as he was before their creation. **But it was fit and wise and good, that Infinite Wisdom should manifest, and Infinite Goodness communicate itself: and therefore it was necessary, in the sense of necessity I am now speaking of, that things should be made at such a time, and continued to long, and indeed with various perfections in such degrees, as Infinite Wisdom and Goodness saw it wisest and best that they should.**” Ibid. p. 112, 113.

“It is not a fault, but a perfection of our nature, to desire, will, and act, according to the last result of a fair examination.—This is so far from being a restraint or diminution of freedom, that it

is the very improvement and benefit of it: it is not an abridgment, it is the end and use of our liberty; and the further we are removed from such a determination, the nearer we are to misery and slavery. A perfect indifference in the mind, not determinable by its last judgment, of the good or evil that is thought to attend its choice, would be so far from being an advantage and excellency of any intellectual nature, that it would be as great an imperfection, as the want of indifferency to act, or not to act, till determined by the will, would be an imperfection on the other side.—It is as much a perfection, that desire or the power of preferring should be determined by good, as that the power of acting should be determined by the will: and the certainer such determination is, the greater the perfection. Nay, were we determined by any thing but the last result of our own minds, judging of the good or evil of any action, we were not free. This very end of our freedom being, that we might attain the good we choose; and, therefore, every man is brought under a necessity by his constitution, as an intelligent being, to be determined in willing by his own thought and judgment, what is best for him to do; **else he would be under the determination of some other than himself, which is want of liberty. And to deny that a man's will, in every determination, follows his own judgment, is to say, that a man wills and acts for an end that he would not have, at the same time that he wills and acts for it.** For if he prefers it in his present thoughts, before any other, it is plain he then thinks better of it, and would have it before any other; unless he can have and not have it, will and not will it, at the same time; a contradiction too manifest to be admitted.—**If we look upon those superior beings above us, who enjoy perfect happiness, we shall have reason to judge, that they are more steadily determined in their choice of good than we; and yet we have no reason to think they are less happy, or less free, than we are.** And if it were fit for such poor finite creatures as we are, to pronounce what Infinite Wisdom and Goodness could do, I think we might say, that God himself cannot choose what is not good. The freedom of the Almighty hinders not his being determined by what is best.—But to give a right view of this mistaken part of liberty, let me ask. Would any one be a changeling, because he is less determined by wise determination, than a wise man? Is it worth the name of freedom, to be at liberty to play the fool, and draw shame and misery upon a man's self? If to break loose from the conduct of reason, and to want that restraint of examination and judgment, that keeps us from doing or choosing the worse, be liberty, true liberty, mad men and fools are the only free men. Yet, I think, nobody would choose to be mad, for the sake of such liberty, but he that is mad already.” Locke Hum. Und. Vol. I. Edit 7. p. 215. 216.

“This Being, having all things always necessarily in view, must always and eternally will, according to his infinite comprehension of things; that is, must will all things that are wisest and best to be done. **There is no getting free of this consequence. If it can will at all, it must will this way.** To be capable of knowing, and not capable of willing, is not to be understood. **And to be capable of willing otherwise than what is wisest and best, contradicts that knowledge which is infinite. Infinite Knowledge must direct the will without error. Here, then, is the *origin of moral Necessity; and that is, really, of freedom.***—Perhaps it may be said, when the Divine Will is

determined, from the consideration of the eternal aptitudes of things, **it is as necessarily determined, as if it were physically impelled, if that were possible.** But it is unskilfulness, to suppose this an objection. The great principle is once established, viz. **That the Divine Will is determined by the eternal reason and aptitudes of things, instead of being physically impelled;** and after that, **the more strong and necessary this determination is, the more perfect the Deity must be allowed to be:** it is this that makes him an amiable and adorable Being, whose will and power are constantly, immutably determined, **by the consideration of what is wisest and best; instead of a surd [irrational] Being, with power, but without discerning and reason.** It is the beauty of this Necessity, that it is strong as fate itself, with all the advantage of reason and goodness.—It is strange, to see men contend, that the Deity is not free, because he is necessarily rational, immutably good and wise; when a man is allowed still the perfecter being, the more fixedly and constantly his Will is determined by reason and truth.” Inquiry into the Nature of the Hum. Soul Edit. 3. Vol. II. p. 408, 404.

A Consistent Arminian Must Be An Open Theist

Code528

*Comment by Van Til on Arminianism:
The Defence of the Faith, pg 69*

We must note here again how impossible it is in an apologetic argument to close one's eyes to differences between various theological schools. That fact comes out here more strikingly than anywhere else. **Arminianism has not been true to its own belief in creation.** With belief in creation it stands committed to that view of God and of God's counsel and that view of man's relation to that counsel, which we have outlined. **Yet it has been untrue to all this in its insistence that the historical does produce the absolutely new.** For that reason it has to think of the relation of God's counsel to man's activity as one of real contradiction.⁴² In order to avoid this "contradiction" **it has simply thrown overboard the idea of the counsel of God as controlling all things.** Therewith it has in effect sought to destroy both divine and human knowledge, and therewith it has destroyed the very meaning of history which it was so anxious to preserve. God cannot answer our prayers for the salvation of people if those people can reject that salvation when they wish.

⁴² That is in my Arminianism attempts to release the points of tension between God's counsel and man's activity by arguing that man's choices, or at least many of them, are "new" for man and for God such that God can only know about and respond to those choices once man has decided something. **[in other words, a consistent Arminian has to be an open theist; that the future is *open* – i.e., unknown to God. God just responds to man's choices when they occur. Of course, this undermines sovereignty of God's disposal of events as Van Til notes. God is not dependent upon the creature, but the creature upon God.]**

Sin and It's Curse

An excerpt from Cornelius Van Til's book
The Defence of the Faith, Chapter 3
 The Christian Philosophy of Knowledge
 Pgs. 69-73
 Code529

5. SIN AND ITS CURSE

What we have said thus far in this chapter about man's knowledge has not taken sin into consideration. We have spoken only of the normal situation as it existed when man was first created perfect by God. We must now ask what happened to the knowledge situation when sin entered into the heart of man.

We know that sin is an attempt on the part of man to cut himself loose from God. But this breaking loose from God could, in the nature of the case, **not be metaphysical**; if it were, man himself would be destroyed, and God's purpose with man would be frustrated. Sin is therefore a breaking loose from God **ethically and not metaphysically**.⁴³ Sin is the creature's enmity and rebellion against God but is not an escape from creaturehood.

⁴³That is, even as sinful, we are, and forever will be, creatures of God

When we say that sin is ethical, we do not mean, however, that sin involved only the will of man and not also his intellect. Sin involved every aspect of man's personality. All of man's reactions in every relation in which God had set him were **ethical** and not merely intellectual; the intellectual itself is ethical.

What then was the result as far as the question of knowledge is concerned of man's rebellion against God? **The result was that man tried to interpret everything with which he came into contact without reference to God.** The assumption of all his future interpretation was the **self-sufficiency** of intra-cosmical relationships. This does not signify that man would immediately and openly deny that there is a God. Nor does it mean that man would always and everywhere deny that God is in some sense transcendent. **What he would always deny, by implication at least, would be that God is self-sufficient or self-complete.** At best he would allow that God is a **correlative to man**. He might say that we need God to interpret man, but he would at the same time say that in the same sense we need man to interpret God. He might say that the temporal cannot be interpreted without reference to the eternal, but he would at the same time say that the eternal cannot be interpreted without reference to the temporal. He might say that we need God in order to obtain unity in our experience, but he would at the same time say that God needs the historical many in order to get diversity into his experience. All these **forms of correlativity** amount in the end to the same thing as saying that the **finite categories are**

self-sufficient. For that reason we can make a very simple and all-comprehensive antithesis between the knowledge concept of all non-Christian philosophies and the Christian view. Scripture says that some men worship and serve the Creator; they are the Christians. All other men worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

Christian-theism says that there are two levels of thought, the **absolute** and the **derivative**. Christian theism says that there are two levels of interpreters, **God who interprets absolutely** and man who must be **the re-interpreter of God's interpretation**. Christian-theism says that human thought is therefore **analogical** of God's thought. In opposition to all this non-Christian thought holds in effect that the **distinction between absolute and derivative thought must be wiped out**. To be sure, God's thoughts may be more comprehensive than ours, **but it is not self-complete without ours**. This means that as **all being was thought of as equally ultimate**, so **now all thought is thought of as equally ultimate**. There is only one level of interpreters; **if God comes into the picture at all, it is as a collaborator with man**. We do not think God's thoughts after him, but together with God we think out thoughts **that have never been thought either by God or by man**. Non-Christian philosophies hold that human thought is **univocal** instead of **analogical**.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Univocal thinking is thinking between two (or more) persons that is "connected" by some point of epistemological identity.

Thus the Christian concept of analogical thought and the non-Christian concept of univocal thought stand over against one another as **diametrical opposites**.

Non-Christian thought holds to the ultimacy of the created universe. It holds therefore to **the ultimacy of the mind of man itself** and must in consequence deny the necessity of analogical thought. It holds to the **normalcy of the human mind as well as to its ultimacy**. It holds to the **normalcy** of the human mind as it holds to the **normalcy** of everything else in the world.

Naturally this conception of the normalcy of the human mind does not imply that the human mind never makes mistakes. It only means that mistakes are thought of as **natural and to be expected and have nothing to do with sin**.

We can readily see from this that the nontheistic mind must set for itself the ideal of absolutely comprehensive knowledge as long as **as it has not become fully conscious of the implications of its own thought**.⁴⁵ However it will maintain that it is unnecessary for man to have any **comprehensive universal** in order to live. As long as nontheistic thought still thinks it necessary for man to have an **absolute universal**, it naturally has to set for itself the task of finding this universal, **inasmuch as God has been put out of the picture**. Then when it appears impossible for man ever to find a universal, inasmuch as the particulars of the time are by definition always ahead of any time-generated universal, man says that he does not need any absolute universal anyway except as a limiting concept.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ In idealist philosophy, the notion of comprehensive knowledge was determinative. Again, for example, in Hegel, the absolute is such because of its absolute self-consciousness.

⁴⁶ "Limiting concept" is another notion borrowed from philosophy, specifically from Immanuel Kant. Though for Kant a limiting concept presupposed his agnosticism with respect to our knowledge of the noumenal, for Van Til a limiting concept is that which is, at one and the same time determined and defined by another, limiting concept. Thus, the doctrine of election is a limiting concept with respect to our choices. It should be remembered that limiting concepts are not necessarily on a par with each other. God's election precedes our choices. Given creation, however, one (freedom) is defined and determined by the other (election).

It may be useful in this connection to point out that in the whole situation we have therefore to deal with three types of consciousness.

In the first place there is the **Adamic consciousness**. When man was first created, he was perfect. He recognized the fact that he was a creature; he was actually normal. He wanted to be nothing but a **re-interpretor of the interpretation of God**. He was receptive to God's revelation within him and round about him; he would reconstruct this revelation. He was **receptively reconstructive**. For that reason he had real though not comprehensive unity in his experience.⁴⁷

In the second place we deal with the fallen or non-regenerate consciousness. It builds upon the nontheistic assumption. **It in effect denies its creaturehood. It claims to be normal.**⁴⁸ **It will not be receptive of God's interpretation; it wants to create its own interpretation without reference to God. It will not reconstruct God's interpretation. It will construct only its own interpretation. It seeks to be creatively constructive.** It thus tries to do the impossible with the result that self-frustration is written over all its efforts. There is no unity and never will be unity in nontheistic thought; it has cut itself loose from the only existing source of unity. Yet since it could not cut itself loose from God metaphysically and since God, for the purpose of realizing his plan of redemption, has given all men common grace, even this non-regenerate consciousness has *rudera* or *scintilla*⁴⁹ of the knowledge of God and of the universe. **Non-Christians know after a fashion, as Paul tells us in Romans.** Thus also there is a relative good in those who are ethically totally evil. The unity that they have in experience is a shadow unity, a unity that prevents them from falling into complete disintegration in this world. Hereafter complete disintegration will follow, though even hereafter the disintegration can only be **ethical and not metaphysical**; there must be a kingdom or mock-unity even in hell.⁵⁰

In the third place there is the **regenerate consciousness**. This regenerate consciousness has in principle been restored to the position of the Adamic consciousness.⁵¹ It **recognizes** anew that man is God's creature and that he has fallen into sin, **recognizes** the fact that it has been saved by grace. It therefore wants to be receptively reconstructive once more. It wants to interpret reality in terms of the eternal one-and-many.

⁴⁷ The reader may observe again how basically important Adam's place in history is said to be.

⁴⁸ Van Til follows Abraham Kuyper here. Kuyper insisted that though sin is inevitable after the fall, it is nevertheless not the normal situation; the normal situation is the one initially created.

⁴⁹ Literally, "pieces or sparks." All men know God, even if that knowledge is scant compared to that given in special revelation.

⁵⁰ That in part, because man will remain the image of God even in hell.

⁵¹ It is important – so important that it bears repeating here – that Van Til is thinking of the *principles* in place, regardless of the practice, which is inconsistent in every case.

It therefore does have unity in its experience, though not comprehensive unity.

Yet this regenerate consciousness **is restored in principle only. It does not and cannot, because of the remnants of sin that remain in man even after regeneration, live up to its own principle fully. For this reason there is the relatively evil in those who are absolutely good in principle.** This relative evil in the absolutely good has a very great detrimental effect on the consistency of presentation of the theistic position on the part of the Christian. And this inconsistency appears both in word and in deed, in the compromising presentation of the intellectual argument for Christianity and in the un-Christian life that Christians live. **Hence non-Christians frequently do not have the full Christian position placed before them.**

All this makes the matter of apologetical argument very complicated. Only a clear recognition of the three types of consciousness, of the total inability of the non-regenerate consciousness of itself⁵² to accept the truth of Christianity, and of the necessity of a consistent presentation of the Christian position together with firm reliance on the grace of God, can help us to reason fruitfully with men.

⁵²The "of itself" here is crucial. The non-regenerate consciousness can be regenerated and thus accept the truth of Christianity when the Holy Spirit applies that truth to an otherwise dead heart.

Rationalism, Irrationalism and Revelation

Man's Assumed Ultimacy

Comments by Philip Schaff, Rushdoony and Cornelius Van Til

and James L Cassidy

In a letter to my brother, Don

Code531

Philip Schaff wrote this in 1888. He is a highly regarded church historian. It took me two years to go through all eight volumes (see attachment) and after 5 years of reading, I need to re-read it!

This excerpt is from **Volume 7, The German Reformation**. There is so much information here, it is mind boggling. He is talking about **rationalism vs revelation**, that man due to sin, has exalted his reason over scripture - what the bible says. In other words, man has assumed **ultimacy** in his thinking, in his opinions on life, morality, God, etc., as well as an assumed autonomusness, that he is independent of God. (i.e., all summed up by the word *rationalism*) With that in mind read this excerpt. I highlighted, emboldened and underlined some key points.

My comments in blue in brackets. Also, comments on **Leibniz** and the meaning of rationalism and irrationalism near the bottom in an article by James L Cassidy. Vitally important.

§ 9. *The Reformation and Rationalism.*

The Roman Catholic Church makes Scripture and **tradition** the supreme rule of faith, laying the chief stress on tradition, that is, the teaching of an infallible church headed by an **infallible Pope**, as the **judge of the meaning of both**.¹⁵

Evangelical, **Protestantism** makes the **Scripture alone the supreme rule**, but uses tradition and reason as means in ascertaining its true sense.

Rationalism raises human reason above Scripture and tradition, and accepts them only as far as they come within the limits of its comprehension. It makes rationality or intelligibility the measure of credibility. We take the word Rationalism here in the technical sense of a theological system and tendency in distinction from rational theology. The **legitimate use of reason** in religion is allowed by the Catholic and still more by the Protestant church, and both have produced scholastic systems in full harmony with orthodoxy. Christianity is above reason, but not against reason.

The **Reformation** is represented as the mother of Rationalism both by Rationalistic and by Roman Catholic historians and controversialists, but from an opposite point of view, by the former to the credit, by the latter to the disparagement of both.

The **Reformation**, it is said, took the first step in the emancipation of reason: it freed us from the tyranny of the church. [I think he's referring to the Roman Catholic church which was very corrupt and wrong on almost all key protestant doctrines.] **Rationalism took the second step: it freed us from the tyranny of the Bible.** "Luther," says Lessing, the champion of criticism against Lutheran orthodoxy, "thou great, misjudged man! Thou hast redeemed us from the yoke of tradition: who will redeem us from the unbearable yoke of the letter! Who will at last bring us a Christianity such as thou would teach us now, such as Christ himself would teach!"

Roman Catholics go still further and hold Protestantism responsible for all modern revolutions and for infidelity itself, and predict its ultimate dismemberment and dissolution.¹⁶ But this charge is

sufficiently set aside by the undeniable fact that modern infidelity and revolution in their worst forms have appeared chiefly in Roman Catholic countries, as desperate reactions against hierarchical and political despotism. The violent suppression of the Reformation in France ended at last in a radical overthrow of the social order of the church. In Roman Catholic countries, like Spain and Mexico, revolution has become a chronic disease. **Romanism** provokes infidelity among cultivated minds by its excessive supernaturalism.

The **Reformation** checked the **skepticism of the renaissance**, and the anarchical tendencies of the Peasants' War in Germany and of the Libertines in Geneva. **An intelligent faith is the best protection against infidelity**; and a liberal government is a safeguard against revolution. [I pretty sure the word 'liberal' does not mean what it means today. It had a better meaning back then. probably meant 'charitable,' the fruit of a love for God leading to a love for your neighbor, etc. Also, *intelligent faith* is in contrast to a *blind faith* or fideism. Christians need to know why they believe what they believe; not just a blind faith which actually is a dead or ineffectual faith. They need to know the doctrine!]

The connection of the Reformation with Rationalism is a historical fact, but they are related to each other as the rightful use of intellectual freedom to the excess and abuse of it. **Rationalism asserts reason against revelation**, and freedom against divine as well as human authority. It is a one-sided development of the negative, protesting, antipapal and antitraditional factor of the Reformation to the **exclusion of its positive, evangelical faith in the revealed will and word of God. It denies the supernatural and miraculous.** It has a **superficial sense of sin and guilt**, and is essentially **Pelagian** [Pelagianism is very heretical]; while the Reformation took the opposite **Augustinian ground and proceeded from the deepest conviction of sin and the necessity of redeeming grace. The two systems are thus theoretically and practically opposed to each other.** And yet there is an intellectual and critical affinity between them, and **Rationalism** is inseparable from the history of Protestantism. **It is in the modern era of Christianity what Gnosticism was in the ancient church—a revolt of private judgment against the popular faith and church orthodoxy, an overestimate of theoretic knowledge**, but also a wholesome stimulus to inquiry and progress. It is not a church or sect (unless we choose to include Socinianism and Unitarianism), but a school in the church, or rather a number of schools which differ very considerably from each other.

Rationalism appeared first in the seventeenth century in the Church of England, though without much effect upon the people, as Deism, which asserted natural religion versus revealed religion; it was matured in its various phases after the middle of the eighteenth century on the Continent, especially in Protestant Germany since Lessing (d. 1781) and Semler (d. 1791), and gradually obtained the mastery of the chairs and pulpits of Lutheran and Reformed churches, till about 1817, when a revival of the positive faith of the Reformation spread over Germany and a serious conflict began between positive and negative Protestantism, which continues to this day.

1. Let us first consider the relation of the Reformation to the **use of reason** as a general principle.

The **Reformation** was a protest against human authority, asserted the right of private conscience and judgment, and roused a spirit of criticism and free inquiry in all departments of knowledge. It allows, therefore, a much wider scope for the exercise of reason in religion than the **Roman church**, which requires an unconditional submission to her infallible authority. It marks real

progress, but this progress is perfectly consistent with a belief in revelation on subjects which lie beyond the boundary of time and sense. What do we know of the creation, and the world of the future, except what God has chosen to reveal to us? **Human reason can prove the possibility and probability of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but not the certainty and necessity.** It is reasonable, therefore, to believe in the supernatural on divine testimony, and it is unreasonable to reject it.

The Reformers used their reason and judgment very freely in their contest with church authority. **Luther** refused to recant in the crisis at Worms, unless convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures and "cogent arguments."¹⁷ For a while he was disposed to avail himself of the humanistic movement which was skeptical and rationalistic in its tendency, **but his strong religious nature always retained the mastery.** He felt as keenly as any modern **Rationalist, the conflict between natural reason and the transcending mysteries of revelation.** He was often tormented by doubts and even temptations to blasphemy, especially when suffering from physical infirmity. A comforter of others, he needed comfort himself and asked the prayers of friends to fortify him against the assaults of the evil spirit, with whom he had, as he thought, many a personal encounter. He confessed, in 1524, how glad he would have been five years before in his war with papal superstition, if Carlstadt could have convinced him that the Eucharist was nothing but bread and wine, and how strongly he was then inclined to that rationalistic view which would have given a death blow to transubstantiation and the mass. He felt that every article of his creed—the trinity, in unity, the incarnation, the transmission of Adam's sin, the atonement by the blood of Christ, baptismal regeneration, the real presence, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the body—transcended human comprehension. In Aug. 2, 1527, during the raging of the pestilence at Wittenberg, he wrote to Melancthon, who was absent at Jena: "For more than a week I have been tossed about in death and hell; so that, hurt in all my body, I still tremble in every limb. For having almost wholly lost Christ, I was driven about by storms and tempests of despair and blasphemy against God. But God, moved by the prayers of the saints, begins to have pity upon me, and has drawn my soul out of the lowest hell. Do not cease to pray for me, as I do for you. I believe that this agony of mine pertains to others also."¹⁸

In such trials and temptations he **clung** all the more mightily **to the Scriptures and to faith which believes against reason and hopes against hope.** "It is a quality of faith," he says in the explanation of his favorite Epistle to the Galatians, "that it wrings the neck of reason and strangles the beast, which else the whole world, with all creatures, could not strangle. But how? It holds to God's Word, and lets it be right and true, no matter how foolish and impossible it sounds. [due to the fall, our reason is riddled with corrupt reasonings and knowledge that war against God's word. Remember what the bible says, the heart is corrupt, *deceitful, who can know it...* so Christians must be on guard for anything that *exalts itself against the knowledge of God*, 2Cor.10:5] So did Abraham take his reason captive and slay it, inasmuch as he believed God's Word, wherein was promised him that from his unfruitful and as it were dead wife, Sarah, God would give him seed."

This and many similar passages clearly show the bent of Luther's mind. He knew the enemy, but overcame it; his faith triumphed over doubt. In his later years he became more and more a conservative churchman. He repudiated the mystic doctrine of the inner word and spirit, insisted on submission to the written letter of the Scriptures, even when it flatly contradicted reason. He traced the errors of the Zwickau prophets, the rebellious peasants, the Anabaptists, and the radical views of Carlstadt and Zwingli, without proper discrimination, to presumptuous inroads of the human reason into the domain of faith, and feared from them the overthrow of religion. He so far forgot his

obligations to Erasmus as to call him an Epicurus, a Lucian, a doubter, and an atheist. Much as he valued reason as a precious gift of God in matters of this world, he abused it with unreasonable violence, when it dared to sit in judgment over matters of faith.¹⁹

Certainly, Luther must first be utterly divested of his faith, and the authorship of his sermons, catechisms and hymns must be called in question, before he can be appealed to as the father of Rationalism. He would have sacrificed his reason ten times rather than his faith.

Zwingli was the most clear-headed and rationalizing among the Reformers.²⁰ He did not pass through the discipline of monasticism and mysticism, like Luther, but through the liberal culture of Erasmus. He had no mystic vein, but sound, sober, practical common sense. He always preferred the plainest sense of the Bible. He rejected the Catholic views on original sin, infant damnation and the corporeal presence in the eucharist, and held advanced opinions which shocked Luther and even Calvin. But he nevertheless reverently bowed before the divine authority of the inspired Word of God, and had no idea of setting reason over it. His dispute with Luther was simply a question of interpretation, and he had strong arguments for his exegesis, as even the best Lutheran commentators must confess.

Calvin was the best theologian and exegete among the Reformers. He never abused reason, like Luther, but assigned it the office of an indispensable handmaid of revelation. He constructed with his logical genius the severest system of Protestant orthodoxy which shaped French, Dutch, English and American theology, **and fortified it against Rationalism as well as against Romanism.** His orthodoxy and discipline could not keep his own church in Geneva from becoming Socinian in the eighteenth century, but he is no more responsible for that than Luther for the Rationalism of Germany, or Rome for the infidelity of Voltaire. Upon the whole, the Reformed churches in England, Scotland and North America, have been far less invaded by Rationalism than Germany. *end of excerpt*

Notes on **Gottfried Leibniz**

Van Til notes that he was a rationalist among many others like Descartes, etc. during the 1700s. **R. J. Rushdoony** wrote about Leibniz in his book, *Van Til And The Limits of Reason* pg 32:

In Descartes, the ground of all certainty is the human consciousness in independence not only from the universe around him but especially from God. [this is key! and is the result of man's rebellion against God, his declaration of independence, due to the fall of Adam] For **Calvin**, the personality of man cannot be known nor can it exist without the personality of God. For **Descartes**, nothing can be known without man's self-consciousness and personality in itself. **The universe is a mechanistic one and God merely the creator of the machine, now functioning in independence of Him.** The machine has its own laws and workings, and the inventor need not be known in order to understand the machine. The lives of the Wright brothers are of great interest to any student of the history of aviation but utterly irrelevant to any understanding of the principles of flight or to the piloting of aircraft today. The Wright brothers created the first successful plane, but they did not create the principles of flight which made that plane possible. They merely used them. **The God of Descartes is ultimately in the same position.** More than that, **man rather than God is made the ultimate source of universal laws and interpretation.** [The sinful effects of the fall; man's assumed ultimacy – not God, his law or will, as ultimate!. The language of Adam and Eve's heart was, I will decide what is good and evil, not God! Is

not this how we think coming into this world??? Yes! This is the putrid fountain from where all sin and misery proceeds in this world.]

The subject of man's assumed ultimacy

As a result of Descartes' point of departure, two lines of thought developed in philosophy: **empiricism** and **rationalism**. **Empiricism holds that the individual man is the standard of truth and holds to the ultimacy of the sense world.** The universals are purely subjective. [hence, relativism; everyone does what is right in their own eyes.] The climax of such thought was the skepticism of **Hume**, for whom no knowledge was possible. **Rationalism** sought to interpret reality in terms of certain *a priori* principles. These *a priori* principles, however, were not anchored in the ontological trinity [God] or in eternity but in **the human mind as ultimate.** In Spinoza and Leibniz rationalism reached its climax.

For Spinoza, God, man, and the universe are but individuations and aspects of the general idea of substance. [gradation of being mentioned above] But, as Van Til has pointed out, to say that all is God is no different than saying nothing is God. "Univocal reasoning must always lead to negation. Univocal reasoning is based upon negation. The very presupposition of univocal reasoning is **that there is no absolute God.** [there is not distinction between God as creator and man as his creature.] If there were an absolute God it is *ipso facto* out of the question to apply the categories of thought to Him in the same way that they are applied to man. [i.e., univocal reasoning. This is what corrupt reasoning amounts to when man does not account for the distinction between man as *created* and God as the creator. This idea of God relative to man is the effect of the fall. Man thinks that God is just higher up in the order of being (see the comment on gradation of being below). This is a result of man's blindness in this key distinction, the denial of God's self-contained existence and sovereignty, and man's absolute dependence upon Him for everything.]

1. **Leibniz sought individuation on the basis of complete description and by reduction to mathematical formula.** **Revelation was thus an impossibility.** [a huge red flag!! This amounts to a denial of God and the Christian faith since all saving knowledge of God, of the Son of God, is by revelation! See Matt. 16:17," And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." God does reveal himself to his creatures, especially his elect, in this case, Peter. God is transcendent and immanent, not just transcendent which is Deism.] **The interpreter is the mind of man, not the mind of God, and the mind of man can wholly comprehend all reality.** The **equal ultimacy** of the one and the many is sought without success in the universe, and the old theory of the gradation of being espoused. None of these devices enabled **Leibniz** to escape the dilemma of **Spinoza** or to rescue religion as he sought to do; having begun with the ultimacy of the universe, he could do no more than attempt to analyze it into both God and man. "As **Leibniz** sought to be wholly **univocal**, so **Hume** sought to be wholly **equivocal** in his reasoning. As in the philosophy of **Leibniz** God lost his individuality in order to become wholly known [trying to bring God down to man, which the world's wisdom/philosophy tries to do], so in the philosophy of **Hume** God maintained his individuality but remained wholly

unknown." [Rushdoony and Van Til use a lot of terms that you may not understand; I learn them eventually.]

Don, you gotta read this to further see what this **rationalism** is about. It is anti-Christ. Read it twice. I copied the text below the link, excellently stated.

<https://reformedforum.org/the-essential-van-til-how-irrationalism-is-rationalism/>

The Essential Van Til – How Irrationalism is Rationalism

- [James J. Cassidy](#)
- .
- [September 25, 2017](#)

For Van Til no form of **unbelief** escapes the charge of rationalism. Irrationalism is only a disguised form of rationalism. But before getting to that, it might help to explain what he means by irrationalism.

Irrationalism is modern critical thinking in the tradition of Kant. **Irrationalism rejects any form of ultimate authority and therefore must have chance as its ultimate basis.** If there is no God back of time and history whose plan is absolutely necessary **then chance must rule.** This is the logical descendant of the pre-Kantian (rationalistic) philosophy. Van Til explains:

It is this conception of the ultimacy of time and of pure factuality on which modern philosophy, particularly since the days of Kant, has laid such great stress. And it is because of the general recognition of the ultimacy of chance that rationalism of the sort that Descartes, Spinoza and **Leibniz** represented, is out of date. It has become customary to speak of post-Kantian philosophy as irrationalistic. It has been said that Kant limited reason so as to make room for faith. ... In the first place the irrationalism of our day is the direct lineal descendent of the rationalism of previous days. The idea of **pure chance** has been inherent in every form of non-Christian thought in the past. It is the only logical alternative to the position of Christianity according to which the plan of God is back of all. (*Christian Apologetics*, 163-64).

It is often assumed that Kant provides a kind of Copernican revolution in the history of philosophy, overturning every Scholastic table that came before him. But Van Til does not see it that way. Kantian irrationalism is just another form of rationalism. Kant and Descartes are not enemies, but rather twins struggling in the womb of mother rationalism.

So, how then is irrationalism actually rationalism? Before we answer that, we first need to say more about what Van Til means by irrationalism understood in the tradition of Kant. [1] Another phrase we can use for this tradition is “critical thought” (hereafter CT). CT begins with a basic dualism between the noumenal and phenomenal realms. The phenomenal realm is everything we can perceive with the senses. We can only know this realm through the categories of the mind. Therefore, there is a “contribution” that man makes to knowing objective reality. What he can know is only that which is phenomenal. The noumenal realm is, however, directly unknowable by man. It contains things which cannot be perceived – the things of faith (God, being, etc.). In his critique of pure reason Kant, as Van

Til says above, limited reason to make room for faith. Man can reason only according to what he can know in the phenomenal realm. **Faith** then is for those things in the noumenal realm **which cannot be known**.

It is with regard to the noumenal realm that **Van Til** speaks about irrationalism. Irrationalism does not mean that man does not use reason. Rather, irrationalism is the idea that there is a place (the noumenal realm) that reason cannot go. It is the realm of ineffable mystery. It is the realm of the unknown. The noumenal realm cannot be known, at least not directly. [2] This means that no source of **ultimate authority** can be accessed by us living in the here and now. **The final arbiter of all truth is inaccessible to us.**

Now we can begin to see how irrationalism is really just rationalism. **If there is no access to the transcendent realm, then there is no direct knowledge of God or his revelation. That means that man along with his reason is completely on his own. He can speak about facts without any reference to an ultimate and final authority. In this way man is autonomous and is able to interpret reality quite apart from or without reference to God.** Irrationalism “boxes out” the noumenal realm where transcendent truth is found. **This allows fallen man to interpret reality according to his own sinful reason.** Van Til gives a great illustration of this situation which is worth quoting at length here:

In the second place modern irrationalism has not in the least encroached upon the domain of the intellect as the natural man thinks of it. Irrationalism has merely taken possession of that which the intellect, by its own admission, cannot in any case control. **Irrationalism** has a secret treaty with rationalism by which the former cedes to the latter so much of its territory as the latter can at any given time find the forces to control. Kant’s realm of the noumenal has, as it were, agreed to yield so much of its area to the phenomenal, as the intellect by its newest weapons can manage to keep in control. Moreover, by the same treaty irrationalism has promised to keep out of its own territory any form of authority that might be objectionable to the autonomous intellect. **The very idea of pure factuality or chance is the best guarantee that no true authority, such as that of God as the Creator and Judge of men, will ever confront man.** If we compare the realm of the phenomenal as it has been ordered by the autonomous intellect to a clearing in a large forest we may compare the realm of the noumenal to that part of the same forest which has not yet been laid under contribution by the intellect. The realm of mystery is on this basis simply the realm of that which is not yet known. And the service of irrationalism to rationalism may be compared to that of some bold huntsman in the woods who keeps all lions and tigers away from the clearing. This bold huntsman covers the whole of the infinitely extended forest ever keeping away all danger from the clearing. This irrationalistic Robin Hood is so much of a rationalist that he virtually makes a universal negative statement about what can happen in all future time. In the secret treaty spoken of he has assured the intellect of the **autonomous man that the God of Christianity cannot possibly exist and that no man therefore need to fear the coming of a judgment.** If the whole course of history is, at least in part, controlled by chance, then there is no danger that the autonomous man will ever meet with the claims of authority as the Protestant believes in it. For the **notion of authority** is but the expression of the idea that God by his counsel controls all things that happen in the course of history. (*Christian Apologetics*, 164-65).

In short, **irrationalism** (or pushing all forms of ultimate authority, i.e., God, into an unknowable realm) **serves rationalism by pleading ignorance** (“makes a universal negative statement”) about time. It knows nothing about the meaning of history (because it does not know God whose plan stands back of history) nor does it know what the future holds (because it knows no God and his plan back of the future). [Hence Romans 1:18-23, man suppresses the truth...the knowledge of God, in and around him!!!!] The true meaning and significance of time (whether past or future) is inaccessible to man. Therefore time (whether past or future) **only has the meaning that autonomous man would assign to it. That is to give to man’s mind a quasi-divine status, thus breaking down the distinction between the Creator and creature. And that is the heart and soul of rationalism.**

[1] Before we get to that, it is necessary to briefly acknowledge that the interpretation of Kant is quite variegated. I am no Kant scholar, and neither was Van Til. So, here I recognize that what I am about to say can legitimately be quibbled with by Kant scholars who would argue on the lines of a different school of interpretation. Our purpose here, however, is *not* to enter those debates but simply to explain what Van Til understood by modern thought after Kant.

[2] The noumenal realm if it is to be known can be known only indirectly. That is, by way of deduction from what can be known.

The *Donum Superadditum* of Romanism

The Defense of the Faith, pg 177

Code530

This response may be, and often is, unfavorable. Men will reject the claims of God, but, nonetheless, they will own them as legitimate. That is, they will in their hearts, when they cannot suppress them, own these claims. There are no atheists, least of all in the hereafter. Metaphysically¹⁶ speaking then, both parties, believers and unbelievers, have all things in common; they have God in common, they have every fact in the universe in common. And they know they have them in common. All men know God, the true God, the only God. They do not merely have a capacity for knowing him, but actually do know him.

Thus there is not and can never be an absolute separation between God and man. Man is always accessible to God. There can be no absolute antithesis in this sense of the term. In this respect Protestant theology, and in particular Reformed theology, stands over against the *analogia entis*¹⁷ idea of Romanist theology. On a Romanist basis man might, as it were, escape from the face of God. He might fall entirely into the realm of nonbeing. He is so near to it to begin with [as his creation] that he is always in danger of falling into it. From the outset of his existence it took supernatural grace to keep him from falling into it.¹⁸ There is therefore on the basis of Romanism no inescapable revelation of God- within the constitution of man.

And what is true of God's revelation mediated through man is true also with respect to God's revelation to man mediated through the facts of the universe about him. According to Romanism these too do not clearly and inescapably reveal God to man. They too are too near the realm of nonbeing to reveal God clearly. Thus the Romanist principle of discontinuity is out of accord with the teaching of the apostle Paul with respect to the inescapable knowledge that all men have of God. There is no true commonness of knowledge on this basis between men. For each man may individually slip into nonbeing. Thus no believer can approach an unbeliever knowing that the unbeliever must respond to him in terms of a common relationship that both sustain to God.

¹⁶ By 'metaphysically,' Van Til means the essential nature of things whether we know it or not. We have God in common really and truly, even though those apart from him will not acknowledge it.

¹⁷ "Analogy of being.

¹⁸ Van Til's reasoning here, though complex includes at least the following. Because, on a Romanist scheme, man was not "perfect and complete" at creation, there was need of a *donum superadditum* in order for him to will the good. Evil, according to Romanism (following early Augustine) is nothing, it is a privation. To the extent that man wills evil he is closer to no-thing, to nonbeing, and has rejected that which is *supernatural*, i.e., the *donum superadditum*. So, man is "so near" to nonbeing "to begin with." Hence the need for the superadded gift. And, "there is...no inescapable revelation of God within the constitution of man" because he could, if he chooses only evil, slip into nonbeing itself. Combined with the notion of evil is the **Greek notion of the inherent resistance, or imperfection, of matter itself.**

Man Suppresses the Knowledge of God By His Assumed Autonomy and Ultimacy

All Sin and Misery Flows From That

Code532

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. Romans 1:18 ESV

This is what man's sin boils down to: man has declared his independence from God. This is what Adam and Eve did and it is the curse upon all man coming into this world - we have assumed the same thing, we have assumed a degree of autonomy (independence from God) and assumed the ultimacy of our own mind or understanding and reasoning of things, a hostility to God's law, his will. **Van Til** explains this in his book, *The Defense of the Faith*, pg 190-193

A word must now be said about the idea of "common notions" referred to in the quotation given above. The present writer made a distinction between notions that are psychologically⁴⁰ and metaphysically, that is revelationally, common to all men, and common notions that are ethically and epistemologically common. The reason for this distinction lies in the difference between a view that is based upon the concept of the creation of man in the image of God, who thus has within him the ineradicable knowledge of God, and a view that is based upon man as participant with God in one general being. All men have common notions about God; all men naturally have knowledge of God, In this sense there is, as Calvin points out on the basis of Paul's letter to the Romans, a natural knowledge of God and with it of truth and morality.

It is this actual possession of the knowledge of God that is the indispensable presupposition of man's ethical opposition to God. There could be no absolute ethical antithesis to God on the part of Satan and fallen man unless they are self-consciously setting their own common notions, derived from the folly of sin, against the common notions that are concreated with them. Paul speaks of sinful man as suppressing within him the knowledge of God that he has. How does he do this? **He does this by assuming his own ultimacy.** For with this idea of his own ultimacy goes the idea that God and man are aspects of the same reality. They are then a part of a reality that is on the one hand utterly discontinuous with itself, a reality in which chance is king, and on the other hand a reality that is, in principle exhaustively determined by its own internal relations and is in principle exhaustively known to man and God alike. It is these notions of human autonomy, of irrational discontinuity, and of rationalistic continuity that are the *common notions* of sinful or apostate mankind.

Or else what does the doctrine of total depravity mean? If these common notions were

⁴⁰ One should not think of the word "psychological" as it is commonly used or understood. By "psychologically" here Van Til means that which, in part, constitutes man as the image of God; it is for this reason that he couples it with the word "metaphysically." That which is "psychological" is, literally, "of the soul" of man. It is embedded in his very existence.

allowed to come to fruition, the mandate given to man by God at the beginning of history could not and would not be fulfilled. There would be no possibility even of finding a single fact in a universe of chance. Individual men would have no common notions with other men; they would not even be able to distinguish themselves from other men. Observation of facts would be impossible because the idea of a fact is, on this basis, unintelligible. And if facts were found they could not be brought into a pattern. **How could logic ever be said to have any bearing upon reality in a universe of chance?**⁴¹ But if it were granted to have a bearing, this logic would be inherently destructive of the facts of reality and of their individuality. **For their identity would be lost in one abstract blank, in some such way as Parmenides said that they would be. There would be no God distinct from man. There would be no creation out of nothing. There would be no fall. There would be no historic Christianity. There would be one common blur.**

Kuyper has well brought out the fact that the natural man, working on the principles of his adoption, must, to be logical, deny all that Christianity stands for

It is this fact-that the **natural man**, using his principles and working on his assumptions, must be hostile in principle⁴² at every point to the Christian philosophy of life - that was stressed in the writer's little book, *Common Grace*. That all men have all things in common metaphysically and psychologically was definitely asserted, and further, **that the natural man has epistemologically nothing in common with the Christian.** And this latter assertion was qualified by saying **that this is so only in principle. For it is not till after the consummation of history that men are left wholly left to themselves.** Till then the Spirit of God continues to strive with men that they might forsake their evil ways. Till then God in his common grace, in his long-suffering forbearance, gives men rain and sunshine and all the good things of life that they might repent, The primary attitude of God to men as men is that of goodness. **It is against this goodness expressing itself in the abundance of good gifts that man sins. And even then God prevents the principle of sin from coming to full fruition. He restrains the wrath of man.** He enables him by his restraint to cooperate with the redeemed of God in the development of the work he gave man to do.

⁴¹ The reason for this is that logic, assumed to be static, could not be applied to anything that is subject, by chance, to constant change. Thus, as Van Til says elsewhere logic would be a "turnpike in the sky"; i.e., it would not be able to "come down" to the world.

⁴² Notice that the hostility at every point is *in principle* Van Til is not saying that man's ethical hostility to God is always and everywhere practiced. Whether practiced or not, it is the case in principle.

But all this does not in the least reduce the fact that as far as the principle of the natural man is concerned, it is absolutely or utterly, not partly, opposed to God.⁴³ **That principle is Satanic.** It is exclusively hostile to God. If it could it would destroy the work and plan of God. **So far then as men self-consciously work from this principle, they have no notion in common with the believer.** Their epistemology is informed by their ethical hostility to God.

But in the course of history the natural man is not fully self-conscious of his own position. The prodigal cannot altogether stifle his father's voice. There is a conflict of notions within him. But he himself is not fully and self consciously aware of this conflict within him. He has within him the knowledge of God by virtue of his creation in the image of God. But his idea of God is suppressed by his false principle, the principle of autonomy. This principle of autonomy is, in turn, suppressed by the restraining power of God's common grace. Thus the ideas with which he daily works do not proceed consistently either from the one principle or from the other.⁴⁴

⁴³ See, for example, John 8:42-45:

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

⁴⁴ Herein lies the difficulty in precisely defining what man's ethical hostility will always look like. Because of the entrance of sin in the world, and because God restrains that sin so that we are not as bad as we could be, or even as we might want to be, there is no clear, universal line that precisely demarcates the situation of the unbeliever over against the situation of the believer. Some unbelievers live on one level, ethically purer lives than some believers. This, however, does not change the principle itself. It may help to think of "ethical" as synonymous with "covenantal." All people are either in Adam, thus under God's wrath, or in Christ, thus under God's grace. f

Ridderbos [a Dutch reformed theologian who Van Til is criticizing on a particular point] also says that the natural man's ideas of God and of morality are vague. But for him this vagueness is not due to the fact of the conflict just now discussed. He has no interest in distinguishing clearly between the knowledge of the natural man that comes from his creation and his knowledge as it is implied in the idea of autonomy. He thinks it is a mistake to distinguish between common notions derived from the image of God in man and common notions that proceed from the idea of autonomy. Thus he cannot take the principle of autonomy in its full seriousness of opposition to the truth. Thus too he cannot account for the unity of science upon clearly Christian principles alone.

That such is the case may be briefly indicated with respect to two matters mentioned by Ridderbos himself.

In the first place there is the question of the non-Christian's contribution to the progress of science. In the second place there is the question of the theistic proofs. Is it not obviously true that non-Christian scientists have contributed largely to the progress of science? Can they not weigh? Can they not count? Can they not see? Do they not have logical powers as good as those of the believer? Did not Abraham Kuyper, the great protagonist of the idea of a twofold science, the science of regenerate and the science of nonregenerate men, himself maintain that in the field of externals and in the field of

formal thought the subjective element of regeneration need not and should not be taken into account? How then can one say that epistemologically the believer and the nonbeliever have nothing in common?

In reply it may be said that only if sin and salvation are thought of along metaphysical rather than along ethical lines is it possible that such questions can arise. **If sin is seen to be ethical alienation only, and salvation as ethical restoration only, then the question of weighing and measuring or that of logical reasoning is, of course, equal on both sides.** All men, whatever their ethical relation to God, can equally use the natural gifts of God. How could men abuse the gift of God if they could not even use it? And what an easy way of escape for sinners it would be if the result of their folly were nothing more serious than the loss of their natural powers, and with it the loss of responsibility. The presupposition of a modern war is that both parties to it shall be equally able to use the weapons of such a war.

Some Notes on “facts” as Van Til Describes As God Gives Them Meaning, As Opposed to Brute Facts By G. Clark Code533

This subject of “facts” and their meaning as Van Til explained is fascinating to me. Think on this a lot. It’s totally scriptural. If God made all things for his glory, Rm. 11:36, Col. 1:16, etc., then it’s clear that all that God made must have the purpose and meaning associated with each fact whether it’s scientific facts, ideas, historical, you name it. Nothing just happens apart from God’s sovereign decree. And so the **1689 London Confession of Faith** so states:

1. **God hath decreed in himself**, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree. (Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15, 18; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Acts 4:27, 28; Jn 19:11; Num. 23:19; Eph.. 1:3-5)
2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, **yet hath he not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future**, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. (Acts 15:18; Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18)
3. **By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory**, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, **to the praise of his glorious grace**; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, **to the praise of his glorious justice**. (1 Tim. 5:21; Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:5, 6; Rom. 9:22, 23; Jude 4)

A classic example is marriage. If you ask someone why does marriage exist? Why do you get married? You'll get a worldly worldview from most (even Christians! due to ignorance) And you'll get a radically different answer from an orthodox Reformed Protestant. One will say I got married out of tradition, and all that goes with that, and because I love her/him (the common affection) and want to be together, etc. The Protestant sees marriage as a type or shadow of the marriage of Christ and his bride (the Church), **and his gospel** – that it's all about that, a *covenantal love*, **which is an act of the will to keep covenant** – aka, **a *divine love***, that covers (overlooks) a multitude of sin, **all of which points to the gospel where Christ overlooks the sins of his bride**, the church, the elect. Marriage shadows forth the gospel...to the rest of the world, a testimony!

These are two radically different views. **Ruminate on this whole “fact” thing. The facts are what they are and mean what they mean as God meant them to mean.** This is really heavy. This separates all the philosophies of the world (the wisdom of this world that God makes foolish) from true/orthodox Christianity. Go to all those passages above. Ok. Good. Excellent. D's alright! ☺

Some quotes by Van Til that will help paint this picture:

Not only do all facts reveal God but they, in revealing him, manifest his attitude toward men.

For us, the facts are what they are, and the universals are what they are, because of **their common dependence upon the ontological trinity.**

If there are no **brute facts**, if brute facts are mute facts, it must be maintained that all facts are revelational of the true God. If facts may not be separated from faith, neither may faith be separated from facts. **Every created fact must therefore be held to express, to some degree, the attitude of God to man.** Not to maintain this is to fall back once again into a **natural theology of a Roman Catholic sort.** **For it is to hold to the idea of brute fact after all.** [People want to keep God out of the picture! They do not want to look into the face of their judge! This is why they're taking God out of the schools, out of everything.] And with the idea of brute fact goes that of **neutral reason**. A fact not revelational of God is revelational only of itself. [*neutral reason infers that man has no enmity towards God; he's neutral, sitting on the fence; he can choose to believe or not upon his own assumed spiritual strength, which of course is against scripture, Rom. 8:6-8.*

That is to say, it then appears that all the **facts of this world**, including the facts of man's own consciousness as well as the facts of his environment, must be seen in the **covenantal perspective** in which, as was pointed out, **the Scriptures put them in order to exist at all.** All the **facts** therefore speak to all men everywhere of the fact that God once spoke to mankind in general about their common creation and confrontation by God. All the facts speak of the one event that took place at the beginning of history and therefore of the fact that God was favorably disposed toward mankind and that He offered them eternal life on condition of love and obedience to Him with their whole hearts.”

Col. 1:16

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

Van Til notes in Defense of the Faith pg 229-230

b. The God of Idealism

The charge that my view of God resembles that of idealistic philosophy has no more foundation in evidence than does the charge that I think of the ontological Trinity as an abstract principle of one and many. The basic distinction between the works of God *ad intra* and the works of God *ad extra* is constantly employed in what I have written **in order to distinguish between the Christian and all forms of non-Christian thought**. **Vriend** expressed this point well when he says in description of my views:

Christianity stands or falls, epistemologically and otherwise, with the doctrine of temporal creation. Any tampering with this doctrine is damaging to the whole system. **Pantheism** or **Pancosmism** is the ultimate heresy.

The doctrine means, roughly, that God chose to give **temporal embodiment to a pre-interpreted pattern of things which would publish, each in its own key, the magnificence of his attributes**. Man, “his masterpiece of self-portraiture,” was appointed vice regent of this created realm. But he was never to forget that his was a **derived** and **not an original authority**. In the realm of thought, conformably to this status, he was to be a **re-interpreter of the patterns** God had laid down – a task for which he was equipped to perfection. [Vriend, *How Do We Know?* 35.]

Vriend has done no more than summarize what I have stated over and over again when he says that temporal creation is as important for me as is the doctrine of God's self-contained existence.⁷⁴ And there is no one school of non-Christian thought against which I have argued more frequently for the necessity of holding to temporal creation than against idealist philosophy.

As documentation of this, I shall take first a few passages from the syllabus on *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Chapter 2 deals with the question of methodology. How does the Christian method of theology differ from other methods?

We may speak of the method of **Christian theism** as being the method of implication. By that we bring out that there is both an ***a priori*** and an ***a posteriori*** aspect to the method of Christian theism. The ***a posteriori*** aspect element is represented in what Hodge speaks of as the gathering and arranging the facts of Scripture. The ***a priori*** aspect appears in the fact that it is the facts of Scripture that we gather and not facts in general. Or, we may say that the ***a priori*** element lies in the fact that we interpret **all the facts** with which we deal ***in the light of Scripture***.⁷⁵

Christian Metaphysics Objections Considered

By Cornelius Van Til

An excerpt from *The Defense of the Faith*

Pgs 264-276

Code 534

A Good teaching on the “facts” of creation relative to the plan of God, the error of all non-Christian Philosophy in suppressing the knowledge of God, and the following subjects

Chance vs. God’s controlling hand, genuine second causes, ultimate cause, Arminian/Romanism, brute facts, creation and providence, Kant, determinism, man’s assumed autonomy and ultimacy

2. SECOND CAUSES

Cecil De Boer suggests that I do not do justice to “second causes.”

Incidentally, this practice of ignoring the actuality of secondary causes involves the danger of what has been called “suffocating supernaturalism,” a habit of mind in which everything is referred to God in such a way as virtually to identify both natural events and human actions with God’s action. . . . Of course, indeed God’s grace in order to believe, but it is I and not God who does the believing – or the doubting, the repenting and the suffering. In other words, if a human being, being believer or unbeliever, wishes to gain true knowledge of a tree or a bar of iron in terms of secondary causes, he must submit his thinking to the objective existence of these things and their qualities as God has established them.²¹

²¹ Cecil De Boer, “The New Apologetic,” *The Calvin Forum* 19, nos. 1-2 (August-Sept. 1953); 5.

On this point the following remarks seem to be in order: In constantly setting the Christian position **in terms of God’s plan, as realized in creation and providence**, I have argued the existence of “**secondary causes**” **as established by God!** And I have done this over against the various forms of non-Christian thought, whether “**classic realism**” or **modern idealism**, in which there is no place for God’s plan, his creation, and his providence.

In their view “second causes” become “first” or ultimate causes; there is then no ultimate cause back of them. **As ultimate, these second causes then rest on nothing better than chance.** Thus all of human experience is meaningless. It is quite true that “conversion did not make a Euclid out of the Philippian jailor,”²² but this is beside the point under discussion. **My interest is only to show that it takes an ultimate cause, God, if there are to be genuine second causes. In other words, it is only on the presupposition of the truth of Christianity that science is to be explained.** I do not think the

“objectivity” of “classic realism” or of any form of modern realism such as we find represented by John Wild and his friends, allows for the **ideas of creation and providence** in the biblical sense of the term. It is not “suffocating supernaturalism” to aver that secondary causes are meaningless without God the Creator as primary or remote cause. **Suffocation of science and of all human experience would take place if either “classic realism” or modern idealism were true.** For then there would be no causes at all. **All reality would be composed of irrational particulars.** All would then be “chaos and old night.”²³

²¹ Cecil De Boer, “The New Apologetic,” *The Calvin Forum* 19, nos. 1-2 (August-September 1953): 5.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ This a reference to ancient Greek cosmogony probably Hesiod’s (ca. eighth century B.C.) in which **chaos** gives birth to all that is, and **old night** comes out of the void. In this cosmogony, **chance reigns supreme**, and thus whatever comes forth from it comes forth “from the void.”

3. Contingency

A point similar to that of second causes is that of contingency. Jesse De Boer claims that I mistake Morris R. Cohen’s²⁴ “description of natural science for a theological compendium. Cohen said only that natural science is not concerned about origins. “And on this question Cohen is right.”

Obviously Van Til and Cohen are talking about quite different matters, so that Van Til is mistaken if he supposes that he contradicts Cohen. It might be useful to make a careful comparison of Van Til’s formulations of certain Christian doctrines with the formulations in the *Westminster Confession*. I quote Article II of Chapter V. “Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. There is no talk of “presuppositions” here, and there is no hint that **second causes** have not a nature of their own which is open to understanding and which expresses itself, in some cases, contingently.”²⁵

In reflecting on this I shall concentrate on the question of contingency Will the Christian deny that there is such a thing as contingency? In particular will those Christians who subscribe to the Reformed Faith reject any position that makes room for contingency? Is it a sign of Romanism or Arminianism, if not of paganism if one employs the word?

The answer is clearly given in the section of the Westminster Confession quoted by De Boer. The idea of contingency is clearly taught in it.

²⁴ Van Til is referring to De Boer’s reference to Morris P. Cohen (1880-1947). Cohen was a Russian-born philosopher who taught at City College of New York (1912- 38) and the University of Chicago (1938-42). He was a proponent of naturalism and **thought that all knowledge of facts is at best probable.** De Boer references Cohen, *Reason and Nature*.

²⁵ Jesse De Boer, “Professor Van Til’s Apologetics Part II: God and Human Knowledge,” *The Calvin Forum* 19, no. 3 (October 1953): 33

Then we turn to Cohen's description of contingency in his chapter on "The Metaphysics of Reason and Scientific Method."²⁶ We find him using the idea of contingency. Obviously we cannot reject what he says because he uses the term. We shall have to inquire into the meaning of the term; what does he mean by contingency? Does it mean something similar to what the confession means by the same word? When the confession speaks of contingency, it means something that takes place in accord with God's immutable decree. The confession defends the Reformed Christian against of determinism. Unbelievers, and Christians of the **Romanist** or **evangelical persuasion** are ready to charge that in **making God's counsel the ultimate ground of whatever comes to pass, Reformed Christians really make God the author of sin and do injustice to the will of man, as well as to the genuine significance of contingency.**

This sort of objection was raised by Pighius against Calvin, and the confession speaks the language of Calvin. It insists that God by his counsel controls whatsoever comes to pass. Accordingly, "in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent. or uncertain."²⁷ Does this signify determinism? Says the confession, "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established,"²⁸

There is, to be sure, "no talk of 'presuppositions' here." The confession is not a philosophical treatise. But-the confession does make plain that by the **will of man**, by second causes - and their contingency, it means something that is within the **ultimately determinative plan of God.**

On the other hand, **all non-Christian thought thinks of the freedom of man, of "second causes" and of "contingency," as quite independent of God's counsel, his creation, and his providence.**

²⁶ Chapter 4 in Morris, R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature* (New York: Harcourt Brace, & Co., 1931)

²⁷ Westminster Confession of Faith, 2.2.

²⁸ Westminster Confession of Faith, 3.1

This marks its ultimate indeterminism. **One of the ingredients in a non-Christian philosophy of science is ultimate indeterminism.** What a non-Christian can do adventitiously, in spite of his principle, is not now in question. But when a non-Christian scientist gives himself an account of his method, he finds that there is a **theory of being presupposed** in it and that this theory of being involves the idea of the open universe, **a universe not under God's control.**

To be sure, if you ask him about his method he will insist that he is open-minded, that he will follow the facts wherever they may lead him, even if they should lead him to the position of the Christian. But to begin with, he must be allowed to make any hypothesis he pleases. And this assumption of the theoretical relevancy of any hypothesis already excludes the Christian position. The Christian believes

on the **authority of Scripture** that "**there is no contingency for God**" because he controls all things. The relevancy of scientific hypotheses for man therefore falls within the idea of God's providence.

But Cohen, quite consistently from his point of view, finds that the idea of providence must be ruled out if science is to be free in the making of hypotheses. He posits a **metaphysics of chance** as the **foundation of the scientific method**: "Contrary to the usual views of it, the principle of sufficient reason as actually relied on in scientific procedure is not only compatible with a **domain of chance**, contingency or indetermination, but positively demands it as the correlative of the universality of law."²⁹

Now in a universe of chance it might seem that anything might Christian position be true, by chance? Cohen replies that though in scientific procedure we need the idea of chance or indeterminism we also need, as its correlative the idea of determinism. Otherwise we could not exclude the absurd.

It is frequently asserted that the principle of scientific method cannot rule out in advance the possibility of any fact, no matter how strange or miraculous. . . . Actually, however certain types of explanation cannot be admitted within the body of scientific knowledge. Any attempt, for instance, to explain physical phenomenon as directly due to providence or disembodied spirits, is incompatible with the principle of rational determinism. For the nature of these entities is not sufficiently determinate to enable us to deduce definite experimental consequences from them. The Will of Providence, for instance, will explain everything whether it happens one way or another. Hence, no experiment can possibly overthrow it. A hypothesis, however, which we cannot possibly refute cannot possibly be experimentally verified. Thus ruling out ghostly, magical, and other supernatural influences, it would seem that scientific method impoverishes our view of the world. It is well, however, to remember that a world where no possibility is excluded is a world of chaos, about which no definite assertion can be made. Any world containing some order necessarily involves the elimination of certain abstract or ungrounded possibilities such as fill the minds of the insane.³⁰

²⁹ Cohen, *Reason and Nature*, 151

³⁰ *Ibid.* 159.

Now all this is, to be sure, not metaphysics in the **pre-Kantian** sense of the term. **Cohen**, like many other modern thinkers, disavows man's ability to know ultimate reality. **In this they follow Kant in limiting human knowledge to the realm of the phenomenal**. But for all its disavowal of having anything to do with the *alte metaphysik*,³¹ **this modern phenomenalism does rest upon an assumed metaphysics**. It could not well be otherwise. **Cohen's exposition is itself a clear indication that phenomenalism requires the exclusion of the idea of the supernatural and even of providence**. Cohen seeks to make sure that **his island of reality is safe from any possible attack by the supernatural, in short, by God as Christianity thinks of him**. Involved in his phenomenalism is a universal negative judgment to the effect that the God of Christianity cannot exist. The facts and laws of the universe are the resultant of a **combination of pure chance** and pure determinism kept in balance with one another as limiting concepts. The "old metaphysic" assumed that there is something above or beyond the phenomenal realm. Kant's position claimed that, while something is beyond the phenomenal (namely, God the self, and things-in-themselves), they could not be known.

³¹The "old metaphysic" assumed that there is something above or beyond the phenomenal realm. **Kant's** position claimed that, while something is beyond the **phenomenal** (namely, God, the self, and things-in-themselves), **they could not be known**.

A completed rational system having nothing outside of it or any possible alternative to it, is both presupposed and beyond the actual attainment of any one moment. It coincides in part with the Bradleyan Absolute, but it is an ideal limit rather than an actual experience. Unrealized possibilities are within it precisely to the extent that it contains endless time.³² **The idea of God with incommunicable attributes is reduced to the notion of a limit or idea**. Eternity is not an attribute of God in distinction from man; it is, as is the whole idea of God, no more than an ideal. "Eternity may thus also be viewed as the limit or ordering principle of a series of expanding vistas."³⁸

In one form or another, **modern phenomenalism** is widely prevalent. In the syllabus on *Christian Evidences* I have dealt with a number of scientists who hold a position similar to that of Cohen. And in the syllabus on *Christianity and Psychology* I have tried to show how the supposedly **neutral method of science actually involves the negation of Christianity**. The importance of the subject warrants a remark or two about the latter point.

In applying the scientific method to the question of religion here is first the assertion of **open-mindedness**. We are told that the question whether or not religion has an objective reference does not concern the psychologist of religion. He is merely seeking to describe, not explain, the religious consciousness. He wants the native witness of that consciousness. So he asks the Christian, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, and various others what religion means to them. The assumption back of this first point is to the effect that no one knows in advance that there is a true as opposed to a false religion. **Christianity**, with its concept of supernatural, infallible revelation, is put on a par with other religions. **Abstract possibility is placed higher than God**.

Second, the question of criterion or standard is introduced. Which religion, if any, is *better* than other religions? Thus Christianity could never appear as the true religion; it can, and does in the case of many psychologists of religion appear as *better* than other religions.

³² Cohen, *Reason and Nature*, 158.

³³ *Ibid.*, 156

Third, the definitions of religion that come out of this process of mere "description" invariably speaks of the objective reference of religion as indeterminate. **The God of the average psychologists of religion is either a force within the universe or some sort of something beyond the universe. It is anything but the self contained and self-determinate God of Christianity**. Robert Millikan³⁴ says, "In three words, I conceived the essential task of religion to be 'to develop the consciences, the ideals and the aspirations of mankind.'"³⁵ Similar definitions of religion have advanced by Heber D. Curtis,³⁶ Albert Einstein," and many others; Sir James Jeans³⁸ tells us that some millions of years ago certain stars wandered blindly through space. "In course of time, we know not how, when, or why, son of these

cooling fragments gave birth to life." Thus in the same breath we have an assertion of agnosticism, a denial of Christianity, and the assurance that chance rules the world.³⁹

³⁴ Robert A. Millikan (1886-1953) was an accomplished scientist and physicist who was also interested in the intersection of religion and science.

³⁵ Robert A. Millikan "Christianity and Science," in *Has Science Discovered God?* ed. E. H. Cotton (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1931), 24. 1942)- was known primarily as an astronomer.

³⁶ Heber D. Curtis (1872-1

³⁷ Albert Einstein (1859-1955).

³⁸ James H. Jeans (1877-1946). Jeans was appointed a lecturer in mathematics at Cambridge in 1904, then he lectured from 1905 until 1909 at Princeton, where he was professor of applied mathematics. In 1909 Jeans returned to England and was thereafter appointed Stocks Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Cambridge. He held this post 1912 when he retired Guildford to devote himself completely to mathematical research and writing books.

³⁹ James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (New York: Macmillan 1932), 3.

Here, then, is the picture as I am convinced ministers of the gospel should see it. **Modern scientific methodology pretends to be that of a neutral, non-metaphysical descriptive procedure.** As such it is in accord with **modern post-Kantian philosophy**, which is also, by and large, **phenomenalistic**- [man believes only in what is perceived by the senses; the *noumenal* realm is unknowable.]

The **modernist** and **neo-modernist** minister feels that he is in accord with both modern science and modern philosophy if he **talks vaguely** about a "wholly beyond" and of "eternal values." And the modern minister is quite right. He is permitted to use the terms "God," "Christ," and "the Holy Spirit" all he wants as long as they are no more than idealizations and projections of the natural man who does not want to meet his Creator and Judge. accomplished scientist and physicist who

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It is the orthodox Christian who allows himself to be deceived if he embraces the **current form of dimensionalism**⁴⁰ in which the supposedly neutral scientist describes the lower aspect of reality. If the orthodox Christian accepts the "description" of the "**neutral**" scientist in the realm of the **phenomenal**, he should, to be consistent, also accept the vague indeterminate deity of the modernist minister. We noted before that orthodox Christianity does not comport with the "classic realism" Jesse De Boer praises so highly. Still less does it fit on to the descriptive phenomenalism of post-Kantian science and philosophy. For the latter is basically similar to the position of idealism, and idealism is no friend of Christianity.

Even so Romanism and evangelicalism may be expected to think of classic realism" as a fine theistic foundation for Christianity and of phenomenalism as an innocent and neutral description of the lower dimension of reality. For Romanism and evangelicalism do not believe that whatsoever comes to pass comes to pass by virtue of the counsel of God.

They need not therefore object to the idea of contingency of "**brute fact**," and therefore to an utterly indeterminist and indeterminate principle of individuation. When modern scientific methodology

needs the idea of the "open universe" of facts that are what they are for no reason at all, the Romanist and Arminian need not, from their point of view, too greatly object. They would make the Bible itself teach the indeterminate.

On the other hand, when modern scientific methodology needs the ideal of comprehensive description as a correlative to its notion of **brute fact**, Romanism and evangelicalism need not too greatly object. **For their own rejection of the idea of the Reformed Faith is due to the fact that it is not, in their view, possible that there should be an all-determinative ultimate Cause and at the same time genuinely significant second cause.**

Romanism and Arminianism have **toned down the doctrines of creation and providence so as to make them consistent with their "experience" of free will**. Their thinking is therefore in some measure vitiated by the **indeterminist-determinist, irrational-rationalistic** methodology of **non-Christian thinking**.

⁴⁰ **Dimensionalism**, as Van Til uses it, is any philosophy that seeks to bifurcate the structure of reality. Upper story/lower story, real/ideal (Plato), phenomenal/noumenal (Kant) are all examples of dimensionalism.

Accordingly, they can, from their point of view, legitimately have common notions, as common interpretations of the universe with the unbeliever.

In particular, they can join with "classic realism" in the formulation of a natural theology. They can allow, that is, that the unbeliever can and does, together with him, **interpret God's natural revelation aright**.

This point will engage us further in the next chapter. For the moment we refer to it in order to indicate that it is only those who are committed to the Reformed Faith who hold the Christian doctrine of reality with full seriousness. They alone are concerned to maintain and press the significance of the **doctrines of creation and providence** at the point even of identification and ordering of space-time **facts**. They alone realize that once it is admitted that space-time factuality can be identified_ that one fact can be assumed to have any determinate character so that it may be differentiated from other facts apart from the creative and providential activity of God, indeterminism will creep in everywhere. Admit indeterminism in the lowest dimension, that of arithmetic, and you are forced, in principle, to admit it everywhere. Only if God is the ultimate self-determinate fact, and therefore the Creator and sovereign providential determiner of all the facts of the world, do any of these have anything about them that marks them as distinct, as individual, and therefore as countable. For that reason only the **Calvinist** is as much opposed to the "**brute facts**" as they are presupposed in scientific methodology as when they appear in theology.

And as alone the **Calvinist** is concerned to oppose **indeterminism** at the lowest level of existence, so also he alone is concerned to oppose determinism. Cohen and many others exclude the idea of providence or miracle on the ground that if they were admitted, the idea of testing hypotheses by **brute facts** as demanded by scientific methodology would be done for; it is again only the Calvinist who

demurs. The Calvinist will not allow space-time facts to derive their determinate character from the ordering activity of the human mind as though it were ultimate. The doctrines of creation and providence, when seen in their bearing, both on the facts to be known and on the human mind that seeks to know them, require that man think of himself as the finite re-interpreter of a reality that is what it is, ultimately because of the determinative activity of God with respect to it. Allow the principle that man is the ultimate source, the only source that needs to be mentioned of the determinate character of any of the facts of the universe, and one has, in principle, dethroned the sovereign God everywhere.

Jesse De Boer says that I am

“unduly concerned about establishing the certainty of natural science. Scientists do not need to be encouraged to defend themselves or to screw up their confidence in their business. General talk about the certainty of natural uniformity is no aid to the search for fruitful hypotheses and for means of testing them. There is no good reason for recommending the Christian faith on the ground of its playing a role *visa a vis* natural science like that of the indulgent uncle who picks up the gambling checks of his erring nephew. In strict language, the most important and distinctive components of Christian faith are matters of belief, not of knowledge or proof.”⁴¹

A little earlier, when discussing the idea of the uniformity of nature, he says, "At any rate, natural uniformity signifies a type of order among natural events and things, not a relation of creatures to God."⁴² Again: "Naturally, physics does not exhaust man's knowledge about natural things; besides attending to those features of things which physics investigates, man can also attend to the creatureliness of creatures and understand that the ground of their existence is in God."⁴³ Once more: "But the important question is, What can the Christian do to defend himself? I have suggested that he can do something by offering a careful definition of the limitations and hierarchical interrelation of the sciences, and by doing science without indulging in philosophical heresies."⁴⁴

⁴¹ J. De Boer, "Professor Van Til's Apologetics: Part II," 28, 29.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

The reader will note, from our former discussion, from these quotations, and especially if he rereads the articles of Jesse De Boer, that there is a considerable difference between us.

De Boer apparently holds that one is not “indulging in philosophical heresies” if only one holds to “classic realism” rather than to modern idealism.

De Boer apparently holds that one can first interpret the order of nature scientifically in conjunction with non-Christians and *afterward* attend to the creatureliness of created things. In consonance with this he holds that the “distinctive components of Christian faith are matters of belief, not of knowledge or proof.”

I hold that one cannot attend to the creatureliness of things at all unless one does so at the beginning. It is *when* as a physicist I investigate what is proper to my field that I attend to the creatureliness of things. This is not to engage in worship while handling my laboratory equipment. I am thinking only of Kuyper's famous slogan, *Pro Rege*.⁴⁵ [For the King] How could I afterward attend to the creatureliness of things if first I have allowed, in effect, that they are not creatures and that there is nothing created about them? Here as a Christian, I first allow that the ideas of creation and providence are irrelevant as hypotheses since they cannot be tested by **brute facts**. If I allow this then I am doing what neither Kuyper nor Calvin would have thought of doing, namely, thinking of the uniformity of nature as not signifying **"a relation of creatures to God."** In fact, I have then excluded the creatureliness of things from my field of investigation.

If then I afterward attend to this creatureliness and therefore to the idea of God as Creator, this becomes a matter of "belief instead of a matter of knowledge. My religion then becomes a "faith-construct," a practical rather than a theoretical idea.

A sad example of such **dimensionalism**, which shares theoretical knowledge of the phenomenal realm with unbelievers and then reduces the Christ of the Scriptures to a projection, is found in the theology of President John A. Mackay of Princeton Seminary. Once a great stronghold of the Reformed Faith Princeton now teaches modern dimensional philosophy instead of Christianity.

If then Christianity as interpreted in the Reformed creeds, as championed by Kuyper, Bavinck, Hodge, Warfield, and Machen, is to be presented to men today, **ministers must learn to understand the riches of their own position**. Christianity is the *sine qua non* of the intelligibility of anything. Why am I so much interested in the foundations of science? It is (a) because with Kuyper I believe that God requires of us that we claim every realm of being for him, and (b) because with Kuyper I believe **that unless we press the crown rights of our King in every realm, we shall not long retain them in any realm**.

Insights on the Meaning of Scholasticism

By Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*

Pg. 286

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The scholastic idea is based on the conviction that the method of finding truth advocated by **Aristotle** and the method of finding truth advocated by Christianity **can be brought into a synthesis**.²⁴

But the method of Aristotle is based upon the assumption that the world, including man, is not created by God. It is based on the assumption that man is not, as created in God's image, an analogue of God. In other words, the Christian idea that human knowledge is analogous to God, as set forth in the first part, cannot be combined with the Aristotelian idea that man is **ultimate**.

The synthesis of Aristotle and Christ is as monstrous as is the synthesis of Kant and Christ. The main thrust of Kuyper's theology, and of that of Bavinck and Warfield as well, is against this **scholastic synthesis**. In Reformed theology the ideas of Scripture, of the self-contained God of Scripture, of temporal creation, of man's being made in the image of God, of the fall of man as involving the setting of the creature in the place of the Creator, together form as well as express an idea of analogy that is opposed to the idea of analogy advocated by scholasticism.

The scholastic idea is that all being is, as being, good. Hence if there were to be an absolutely evil will in man, he would have no more being at all.

This virtually constitutes a denial of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity. According to this doctrine a creature, given existence or being by God, does not lose any of its being, does not "tend to nonbeing," when it sets itself in ethical opposition to God. Satan has as much being now as he had when he was an angel. But he has an absolutely evil will. And the sinner has as much being as has the saint. But **in principle**, so the Reformed confessions repeat as it were in unison, **the natural man hates God and his neighbor**. And this is a perfect hatred in principle even though it never expresses itself fully in the course of human history.

²⁴ Note that, for Van Til, the "**scholastics**" are any who attempt **to meld the Greek notion of reason with Christianity**, and "scholasticism" is represented most clearly in **Thomas Aquinas's** apologetic method. It seems reasonably certain that Van Til does not have in mind the **Protestant scholastics** of the post-Reformation era.

Notes on Apologetics - Objections to Van Til Answered

Subject of neutrality in apologetics – Old Princeton Method

Excerpt from

The Defense of the Faith

By Cornelius Van Til

Pgs 350-352

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My critics might well concern themselves with this absolutistic position of Kuyper's. This head-on collision between **the principle of the natural man** and the **principle of the regenerate man**, can it do anything but destroy science? Warfield thought it would. He therefore reduced Kuyper's distinction between two kinds of science to **one of degree**. Otherwise "there would be no science attainable at all." [Cf. B.B. Warfield, "Introduction" to Francis R. Beatie, *Apologetics*, 1903]

Warfield accordingly attributes to "right reason" the ability to interpret natural revelation with essential correctness. This "right reason" is not the reason of the Christian. It is the reason that is confronted with Christianity and possesses some criterion apart from Christianity with which to judge of the truth of Christianity. [Cf. B.B. Warfield, "Apologetics," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* 1908]

Appealing to "right reason" in the sense defined, Warfield asks it to judge in its own terms that Christianity is true.

We found the whole Christian system on the doctrine of plenary inspiration as little as we found it upon the doctrine of angelic existences. Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord. . . . Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. [B.B. Warfield, "The Real Problem of Inspiration," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 1948]

The result of this method of appealing to "right reason" is that theism and Christianity are shown to be only probably true. [Ibid. 218]

It is not, of course, that Warfield himself entertains any doubts about the plenary inspiration of Scripture. He was one of its greatest advocates. Nor is it that he disagrees with Calvin in maintaining the clarity of natural revelation or in holding that all men have the sense of deity. It is only that, in apologetics, Warfield wanted to operate in **neutral territory with the nonbeliever**. He thought that this was the only way to show to the unbeliever that theism and Christianity are objectively true. He sought for an objectivity that bridged the gulf between Kuyper's "natural" and special principles.

In seeking to reduce the difference between Kuyper and Warfield to one of emphasis, Masselink, in effect, chooses for Warfield. It is impossible to hold with Kuyper that the Christian and the non-Christian principles are destructive of one another and to hold with Warfield that they differ only in degree.

In maintaining that the positions of classic realism" and of scholasticism are an essentially true interpretation of reality, Cecil and Jesse De Boer have also in effect, chosen their part with Warfield against Kuyper.

For myself I have chosen the position of Kuyper But I am unable to follow him when, from the fact of the mutually destructive character of the two principles, he concludes to the uselessness of reasoning with the natural man.

The **Arminian** holds that on the Reformed conception of man there is no sense to preaching. There would, the Arminian argues, be no approach to an identity of meanings between the preacher and the

man "dead in trespasses and sins" to whom he preaches. The dead man cannot even count and weigh and measure. There is an absolute severance of all connection between him and the living.

For this absolute deadness of the natural man, **the Arminian substitutes the notion of degrees of deadness, in order thus to establish degrees of contact with the truth**. There can be no absolutely evil deed because then the will itself would be destroyed. It is ambiguous or meaningless, says the **Arminian, to talk about the natural man as knowing God and yet not truly knowing God**.²⁵ Knowing is knowing. A man either knows or he does not know. He may know less or more but if he does not truly know, he knows not at all. The Calvinist, he argues, is an absolutist who destroys the light of day.

In reply to this the **Calvinist insists that there are no degrees in deadness**. The natural man does not know God. But to be thus without knowledge, without living, loving, true knowledge of God, **he must be one who knows God in the sense of having the sense of deity (Rom. 1)**. For the spiritual deadness of the natural man is what it is as suppression of the knowledge of God given by man virtue of creation in God's image.²⁶

Hence Warfield was quite right in maintaining that Christianity is objectively defensible.²⁷ And the natural man has the ability to understand intellectually though not spiritually, the challenge presented to him. And no challenge is presented to him unless it is shown him that on his principle he would destroy all truth and meaning. Then, **if the Holy Spirit enlightens him spiritually**, he will be born again **"unto knowledge"** and adopt with love the principle he was previously anxious to destroy.

²⁵ Note that God himself speaks this way; compare Romans 1:19 with 1 Thessalonians 4:5.

²⁶ In other words, spiritual deadness is not inactivity with respect to God; it is opposition to him.

²⁷ This is a most important point To put the matter more succinctly, it is not the case that Van Til has chosen Kuyper over Warfield. Rather, Van Til has retained much of Kuyper's notion of the antithesis and yet, because of the sense of deity in all men, has also retained the idea, supported by Warfield, that apologetics is a central and necessary theological discipline. Thus, Van Til stands on the shoulders of both men in this case.

skip to page 360: Van Til makes a good summary of this idea of neutrality in apologetics that Warfield and most evangelicals and even some of the Reformed support.

Only a very brief survey of Greene's position has been given. His method is clearly similar to that of **Warfield**. There is the same concept of reason apart from the question of its regeneration, **as able to interpret general revelation with essential correctness**. And there is the same ability and function ascribed to this reason with respect to determining the factuality of special revelation. When Greene begins from the abstract possibility of the existence of the Supernatural and goes on to the probability and after that to the actuality of its appearance, **he employs the categories of the natural man without challenging them**. He seeks to prepare men for an acceptance of the gospel by showing them that the

gospel is **possible, probable, and actual** in terms of the principles of continuity and discontinuity of the natural man.

It is this avowed insistence that apologetics must deal **neutrally** with such questions as the existence of God and the facts on Christianity that marks the **Old Princeton apologetics. And it is this type of apologetics that is definitely rejected as being out of accord with the principles of the Reformed Faith in Kuyper's Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology.** It is difficult to see how Masselink can reduce the difference between "Princeton" and "Amsterdam" to one of emphasis and speak of one historic method of apologetics used by both.

The Old Princeton Method of Apologetics Explained
The Neutrality Approach, Arminian, Man's Assumed Autonomy,
The Ultimacy of Man's Reason
Excerpt from
The Defense of the Faith
by Cornelius Van Til,
pg 360-368
code537

3. FLOYD E. HAMILTON³³

The old Princeton approach in apologetics may be seen in easy survey in the first edition of the Reverend Floyd E. Hamilton's book, *The Basis of the Christian Faith* (New York, 1927). In his preface Hamilton says: "Special thanks are due to Dr. William Brenton Greene, Jr., former professor of Apologetics in Princeton Theological Seminary, for his assistance in revising and criticizing the whole book" (p. ix).

In the first Chapter Hamilton deals with The Human Reason.

Before we can attempt to prove the existence of God or discuss the truth of Christianity, we must show that the soul exists as something distinct from the body. We must show that our reasoning processes can be trusted, and that we have a valid right to reason from our sensations to the real world back of these sensations. And we must also show that when we attempt to deal with questions such as the existence of God and the possibility of his giving a revelation to man in a Book, **we are dealing with questions which properly lie within the scope of the human reason**. First of all, then, we must discuss the question of the existence of the soul (op. cit., p. 15).

³³Floyd Hamilton (1890-1969) was a theologian and missionary. Though critical of evolutionary theory, he was likely one of the first in the **Princeton tradition** to advocate a notion of "progressive creation," which was a kind of theistic evolution.

The human mind is shown not to be a mere stream of consciousness (p. 18). "It is an active agent and not a passive substance" (p.19).

So here we take our start. We have found and identified ourselves. "Here at any rate we have reality" (ibid). Having identified our real selves we examine our reasoning process. We receive sensations, In receiving them our mind is not a blank.

In addition to these space and time forms which the mind uses in the thinking process there are certain other "mind born" or **innate ideas** which the mind originates upon the occasion of receiving sensations. We will mention only two ideas of this class which particularly concern us in our discussion. They are the ideas of "**being**" and "**cause**." We cannot think without unconsciously assuming the existence of something. When we receive a sensation our mind assumes the reality of the sensation and the reality of the fact that receiving it. When we think, we assume the reality of at least the mind that is doing the thinking. This idea of existence is thus seen to underlie all thought, and to be a presupposition of thought. We call it by the name of "being." It is an idea not received through the senses, but originating in the mind itself upon the occasion of sensation.

When the brain receives a sensation it assumes that there is a cause of the sensation. It may not be able to tell what the cause is, but it never doubts that there is a cause. It is not an idea which comes into the mind through the senses, but is originated upon the occasion of sensation (pp. 21, 22)

Thus **we have ourselves as the real starting point, and we have the idea of cause which serves us as a bridge between ourselves and the external world.** We are now ready to express judgments about the world. "But when is a judgment trustworthy?" (p. 25.) **When it is made in accordance with the laws of reasoning.** Our minds and the facts they deal with must be normal. Our minds must possess the necessary facts. Our minds must not fall into logical fallacies (p. 25). If care is exercised "in checking the process of reasoning it is possible to trust the reasoning process in all ordinary circumstances" (p. 26).

Reasoning must not proceed regardless of facts. And "there are some things which are beyond the realm of reason" (p. 27). Then too our emotions must be kept in control.

However with these limitations and imperfections guarded against there remains a wide scope of activity for the mind. The mind can take all the evidence which comes to us through the senses and reason about it, building up a splendid structure of logical truth. **It has a right to take these facts which come to us through the senses and use them as stepping stones into the realm of cause lying back of them. The mind becomes the judge of evidence presented to the mind in support of the giving to man from God of a supernatural revelation.** If the mind, however, after weighing this evidence decides that such a revelation has been given to man, there it has no right to set itself up as a judge to decide what things embodied in this revelation are reasonable, for in the nature of things, if there has been revelation from God, it will concern those things which cannot be discovered by the unaided human reason. Since the mind has no actual experience with things which do not come to it through the senses, it has no right to deny truth which comes through revelation from a realm where sense perception is impossible.

In regard to revelation, the legitimate sphere of the human reason is to investigate the evidence in support of such revelation and then to decide as to the meaning of that revelation. (p. 28).

In the second chapter Hamilton invites us to advance with him "over the bridge of cause which we have erected" from ourselves to the external world. In the third he leads us even beyond the world by the same bridge to God. We know "that we must have been caused by someone other than ourselves who must have had sufficient power to produce our souls, which are the observed effect" (p.44). This gives us "our first link in the chain of **proof for the existence of God**" (p. 46). **One by one the other links are forged and soldered to the first.** There is order in the universe (p 47). There is design (p. 48). In man himself there is will. Will there not be a Will back of the universe? (p. 50). Man has a conscience. It is a "certain characteristic innate in the mind which enables a person who has reached the age of reasoning ability, to make a judgment as to the rightness or wrongness of any course of action which may be presented to the mind" (p. 53). "Shall we not then conclude with Bordon P. Bowne³⁴ that man has a moral creator?" (p. 54.)

The preceding arguments are so plain that the conclusion is inescapable. There is no alternative for thinking man in the face of such evidence but to fall upon his face before the wonderful Being who has created him, and to worship him. Let it be borne in mind that the arguments cited above are cumulative. Each adds proof to the others, and their force is only felt when they are taken together (p. 54).

Thus theism is supposed to have been established by a **neutral process of reasoning.** As has earlier been indicated, **such a theism is not the theism of Scripture.** Calvin's procedure is quite the reverse of Hamilton's. Following **Descartes** and others, **Hamilton thinks that man can identify himself in terms of himself.** Calvin says the knowledge of self immediately presupposes the relation of the self to God as its creator. **No identification of the human self is possible in the realm of open chance.** And no bridge of cause can be made from that which cannot be identified (the self) to something else that cannot be identified (the external world).³⁵ **The idea of causation cannot be taken as intelligible by itself in order by means of it to show that God has created the world.** If God has created the world the idea of cause in the world must be determined from this its **derivative nature.** **If it is first assumed to be working without God it cannot after that be shown to be working only in dependence upon God.** [the problem with natural theology or Aristotelian method of proving God's existence]

³⁴B. P. Bown (1847-1910) was of the school of Boston personalists who taught at BU in the late 19th century.

³⁵ Van Til is here summarizing the history of epistemology, which has failed to justify the notion that the mind can know the external world, since it cannot justify the existence of the self or of the external world.

The same point is to be made about the ideas of order, purpose and morality. If any of them can **function independently of God at the beginning** **why do they need God at all?**³⁶

³⁶ The reader should keep in mind here that Van Til's criticism has to do with the **principles** involved in a defense of the faith, **and not specifically the practice**. One may, as Van Til himself says elsewhere, start anywhere in an apologetic discussion. One may start with causality, for example, and show how it must be the case that God is the cause of the universe. But this practical starting point must never be a principal one, lest we think causality within itself has its own explanation, which only later needs supplementation by referring to God. **Causality itself is understood properly only within the context of God's sovereign plan in and for the universe.**

Moreover, how shall these several **autonomous** entities be forged into a chain? How shall there be cumulative force in the series of arguments if each argument is itself without force?

The whole procedure followed is out of line with the basic principle of the Reformed Faith. **Only in God's light is there any light.** The Psalmist (Psalm 94) teaches us to begin from above with God instead of from the bottom with man. If even a creature, who is derivative, knows, how much more shall the original know? That is the method of the Psalmist. **Descartes** assumes that man as the original knows, and that then God also knows. **If man's knowledge is not from the outset defined as dependent on God's knowledge it never can be.**

It was in line with **Arminian** and with **Romanist** thinking to use such a method as Mr. Hamilton uses. Wherever **autonomy** is hailed in theology why should it not also be welcomed in apologetics? But when autonomy is over and over regarded as the root of all evil in theology why then should it be welcomed in apologetics?

In chapter five of his book Hamilton deals with the Reasonableness of Supernaturalism. God is shown to exist; therefore it is possible for him to intervene in the universe (p. 87). He goes on to show the probability of such intervention.

1. In the first place, it seems strongly probable that God would not create man and leave him alone. A personal God, if he is at all like men in his fundamental characteristics, as the Bible says he is, having created a personal being, would most naturally want to have communion and fellowship with the being he had created.
2. It also seems unlikely that man should be left in ignorance of the ultimate destiny of the human soul. If it is true that there is a Heaven and a Hell, to one of which places every soul will go, then it seems unlikely that God would leave man in ignorance of these momentous facts. Especially is this true, if the corollary is true that man's ultimate destiny is decided by his actions upon the earth during a short lifetime, and that he will have no further chance after death to redeem his mistakes made during life on the earth. Most of all, if God intended as the Bible teaches, to have this redemption applied to a man's life through faith in a risen Lord, there he would most certainly tell men about this fact in some way or other. We thus see that there is a very great probability, if the God represented in the Bible exists, that he would reveal certain vital facts to man (pp. 93, 94).

From the question of **probability** we go on to that of actuality:

Now a little reflection on the subject will be sufficient to convince one that the only way we can decide whether or not such a revelation has been given to us by God is by an examination of the evidence tending to show that such a revelation has been given. Since the matter is one purely of fact, and of fact alone, it can be decided only by the evidence. We may have a theory that it is impossible for the earth to revolve upon its axis, but no matter how plausible our theory may sound, our having the theory will not prevent the earth from turning on its axis once every twenty-four hours! In the same way, if God has given a revelation, no amount of theorizing to the contrary can change the fact. The only way those who do not believe God has given a revelation to man can prove their case, is for them to show that the evidence for such a revelation is worthless (pp. 98, 99).

When we deal with the witnesses to supernatural revelation we ask: "Is the witness competent?" "Is the witness reliable?" "Was the witness in a position to know the facts?" (p. 99.) So we are ready as **neutral** observers to take up "the evidence for the Bible as the Word of God and decide for ourselves whether or not it contains such a revelation" (p. 100). In particular we are prepared to deal with the Bible and its claim to be the Word of God.

To be sure we must not make unreasonable claims for ourselves.

If God teaches that a certain doctrine is true, then it is not man's place to decide whether or not it is reasonable! It is man's duty to accept it, even though he may not be able to understand all about it or to prove its truth by the human reason! If God has taught it, then all man has a right to do is to accept it. The whole question resolves itself into a question as to whether God has or has not taught it. In deciding this question man has a perfect right to use his reason to the fullest extent in judging the evidence on this point. It is purely a matter of fact, and as such must be judged according to the laws of evidence. But if the intellect is convinced that God actually did teach these doctrines in the Bible through inspired prophets and inspired writers of the various books of the Bible, then the intellect has no right to set itself up as a judge of the reasonableness of the doctrines which God teaches. The intellect can reason about the meaning of the doctrines taught, but it has no right to reason about the truth or falsity of the doctrines themselves after their meaning has been decided upon. To do so would be to put oneself above God himself and to question his own wisdom. Some men apparently do not hesitate even to do this, but to the man who has at least average intelligence, such a course is nothing less than blasphemy (p. 133).

It is our rightful business as men then to seek to identify this body of literature as being the Word of God. We do not take it to be self-attesting from the outset. We do not accept it as the Word of God on its own assertion. On the contrary, by means of criteria not taken from the Scripture as self-attesting we test the Bible as to its claim to be the Word of God.

We must "approach the Bible as we would approach any other book" (p. 134). Then we find, step by step, link by link, that it meets all the demands which we legitimately make of any book claiming to be the Word of God. So on the question of Biblical ethics Mr. Hamilton says: "We now wish to show that

Christianity fulfils all the demands which must be made of any system which will work, and that the ethical system taught in the Bible is superior to any other system of ethics (p. 147).

In Chapter 10 Mr. Hamilton deals particularly with "the historic trustworthiness of the Bible." He tests the Bible by well established philosophical knowledge obtained independently of the Bible.

The Bible is not a textbook of philosophy, but the Bible in no wise contradicts the theories which are most accepted by philosophers of the present day (p. 167).

He finds that the historicity of the Bible is not contradicted by "the clearly discovered and well proved facts of modern science..." (p. 168).

In chapter 16 there is a discussion of the resurrection of Christ and in chapter 17 of the fulfilment of prophecy.

We have reserved until last the two strongest proofs that the Bible is the Word of God and that Christianity is true. We believe that in fulfilled prophecy and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have positive proof that our claims are true. We believe that these two lines of proof are so strong that they will convince anyone whose mind is open to evidence, that we have as much positive proof of 54 mins left in book just as strong a character that the Bible and its contents are true and in very truth the Word of God, as we have that the Declaration of Independence was a genuine document produced in 1776 in Philadelphia, by the representatives of the thirteen colonies (pp. 283, 284).

In the resurrection of Christ we have a miracle that differs from all other miracles. Had there been no resurrection there would have been no Christian Church. The Christian Church as we know it was founded absolutely on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that it implied (p. 284). So we turn to the New Testament as containing the only historical documents attempting to explain the origin of Christianity or the belief in the resurrection (p. 286).

And when we are through we conclude:

We have examined all possibilities and find that the only conclusion possible is that Christ actually rose from the dead. If he did rise, that fact carries with it, as was said at the beginning of the chapter, all the implications of supernatural Christianity. It is fact that carries clouds of glory trailing through our Christianity. Nothing but a supernatural Savior is possible after he has risen from the dead. The fact of Christ's resurrection establishes beyond a doubt the truth of Christianity. But not only does it prove that Christianity is the one true religion. It also proves that all that Christ said and did was true, and this in turn proves that the Bible is the Word of God (p. 295).

The argument from fulfilment of prophecy again points to the truth of Christianity.

God alone knows the future, and the future can be revealed only by God. When, therefore, we find a book unquestionably written hundreds of years before the prophecies recorded in it were fulfilled, can there be any question but that those prophecies were revealed by God himself? The prophecies which we shall cite will be those so detailed that there will be no question but that they were actual prophecies, and we shall show that no man unless he were speaking as the mouthpiece of God, could possibly have known or even guessed that the events prophesied would take place, both because of the unlikelihood of such events taking place at all, and because of the impossibility of a human being foretelling the events in such detail (pp. 297, 298).

So then after we have identified ourselves then built a bridge of cause, order, purpose and morality to God, we approach the Biblical writings as we do any other book. The foundation fact to which they testify is the resurrection of Christ. Thus we have reached the risen Christ by neutral approach. After that we stand on his authority. He witnessed to the Old Testament as the Word of God. He promised the Spirit to his apostles so they might write the New Testament as the completion of the Word of God.

After that we bow before the Word of the sovereign God and require men to subject their reason to its verdict.

It was the after this that Kuyper so vigorously opposed in the sort of apologetics we have before us. If reason is not challenged at the outset it cannot fairly be challenged at all. **Why should not "reason" be as anxious to suppress the evidence for the fact that the Bible is God's Word as to deny the system of truth of that Word?** No one can recognize the *fact* of Christ's resurrection and the fact of the divinity of Scripture except in terms of the *meaning* of the resurrection and the *content* of the system Scripture presents. In all the stress on the fact that true faith is not blind but is faith in response to the presentation of evidence, this indissoluble unity of the *that* and the *what* of Christianity is overlooked.

It is impossible to discuss the works of Charles Hodge Casper Wistar Hodge Francis Patton and others. Suffice it to have dealt briefly with Warfield, with the sainted William Brenton Greene, Jr., and with his pupil, Floyd E. Hamilton.

Even in what has been adduced it is evidenced that the basic loyalty of these men is the full-orbed Reformed Faith. None the less it remains true that in their **avowed apologetical procedure** they **embraced a method that resembled that of Bishop Butler, rather than that of Calvin.**

To have a balanced view of the relation of the "**old Princeton**" and the "**Amsterdam**" apologetics, it is imperative that we turn to the question of "**inconsistency**" in the views of Kuyper and Bavinck. We have stressed the fact that in his main contention Kuyper strongly opposed the idea of a **neutral** area of interpretation between believers and unbelievers. And we have shown that Warfield was strongly insistent on the necessity of proceeding with unbelievers on a neutral basis with respect to the problem of theism and even with respect to the claims of Scripture to be the Word of God, But we

have also indicated that **Kuyper** too some times reasons as though he were on neutral grounds with unbelievers. Even in his *Encyclopedia*, in which he so valiantly defends the idea of a twofold science, even in this work which Warfield so vigorously criticized Kuyper sometimes does the same thing that Warfield does. Indeed Warfield has pointed out this very inconsistency in Kuyper.

We shall deal briefly with the evidence that indicates the presence of this inconsistency in Kuyper. We shall also deal briefly with Bavinck. As this inconsistency has to some extent been pointed out in *Common Grace* and in the syllabus *Introduction to Systematic Theology* we shall here deal with the matter chiefly in relation to the question of Scripture.

Both Kuyper and Bavinck have greatly stressed the fact that Scripture is *the* objective principle of knowledge for the Christian. The Christian must regard all the knowledge that he obtains from a study of nature and history in the light of the doctrines of creation and providence and of the work of redemption through Christ. **Only thus is the Romanist doctrine of natural theology to be avoided.** Apologetically this means that the **Scriptures** must be taken as self-attesting and the system of truth they contain as the light in which all the facts of experience are seen for what are. [Ps 36:9]

Therefore, no corroboration is to be sought for the truth of the idea of Scripture, or for the truth of the system of doctrine it contains, by an appeal to the natural man as he interprets life in terms of his own principles. In fact it cannot be allowed that the natural man can in terms of his principles interpret any aspect of experience correctly. He does, to be sure, contribute to the edifice of true interpretation, but he does this because his principle is false and the Christian principle is true

Yet while showing that the natural man is bound to seek to destroy the truth of God that speaks to him, Kuyper and Bavinck at times seek comfort in the fact that the **natural man** will approve their sayings even when he is not asked to change **his assumption of autonomy.**

Excellent insights by Dr. Lane Tipton on Van Til

A Critique on Kierkegaard's and Kant's Philosophy

an Excerpt from Cornelius Van Til's book

The Defense of the Faith p 209-215

Excellent comments by Lane Tipton (Kant)

Code538

My intro: Van Til is a philosopher and a theologian; probably the best in the 20th century. I have found his teaching invaluable in understanding all the Christian doctrines. He has an amazing talent for stripping off the facades of modern evangelicalism, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and the modern

philosophies of the world such as Kierkegaard's existentialism, Karl Barth's views, etc. He's a hard read until you get used to the philosophical terminology (which he assumes you know, ha ha). It is Dr. Oliphant, who edited the 4th edition of Van Til's book, *The Defense of the Faith*, who clarifies what Van Til means by them in footnotes.

From what I can see so far, **Existentialism** is anti-Christian philosophy. Take your time on this. It has taken me about 9 months of reading Van Til to comprehend all the terminologies in their contexts to understand his explanations...to understand the importance of Total Depravity and man's *assumed autonomy* and *ultimacy* in his reasoning in an overall effort to distant him from God's authority. After you do get used to it, you'll understand more clearly why Paul, when arguing against the Greeks, emphasized the fact that the God who they should be worshipping is the Creator of man, who is not like man at all (not like the Greek gods who are like man but on a higher scale of being which the Roman Catholics hold to!!). Paul magnifies the *Creator/creature* distinction most apparent and for very good reason. Van Til brings this out more so than any other theologian I've studied. (Read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* - Van Til refers to him a lot.)

a. Daane's Objections

Now Daane chooses against the historic Reformed position on this matter. In *Common Grace* I was speaking of Calvin's argument against Pighius.¹³ (This will engage us again when we come to the question of the reality of second causes.) I was defending Calvin's view that **second causes have genuine significance** not in spite of, but just because of, the fact that they act in accord with the one ultimate cause or plan of God.¹⁴ **Pighius argued that unless the human will is ultimate, it is not free and therefore not responsible**. Calvin argues that man's choice is free and responsible just because it is within and therefore subject to the ultimate will of God.

¹³ Albert Pighius (ca. 1490-1542) was a Dutch Roman Catholic theologian, mathematician, and astronomer. His primary work against Luther and Calvin was *De liberis hominis arbitrio et divina gratia libri X* (*The Free Will of Man and Divine Grace*) (1542).

¹⁴ Note in this regard the Westminster Confession of Faith, 3.1: "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and **holy counsel of His own will freely**, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, *no is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established*" (*emphasis added*).

Yet Daane calls this **determinism**. I argued against ultimate possibilities outside the plan of God. Daane concludes that therefore I deny "genuine possibilities that do not become actualities in history." As was the case with Pighius so with Daane, a genuine possibility may and must be outside the plan of God. As Pighius called Calvin's position deterministic, so Daane calls my position simple restatement of **Calvin's**, deterministic.

It is no marvel then that my views should appear to him also to be rationalistic. The Calvinist holds that God controls whatsoever comes to pass. **For him the ultimately possible is only that which God has planned shall actually take place.** The Reformed idea of Scripture, as already noted, presupposes and is presupposed by this idea. But the evangelical speaks of determinism and rationalism when he hears such things. Daane does likewise.

But Daane does more than side with the Arminian against the Calvinist position on the question of human choice. In his dissertation, *Kierkegaard's Concept of the Moment*, he expressed admiration for this **existentialist** philosopher's conception of history. **Kierkegaard¹⁶ does not believe in the God of Scripture.** **He does not think of God as having incommunicable attributes, as being self contained. He does not believe in temporal creation or the historical fall. In fact, he is violently opposed to all these truths.** For him they form part of a *system* of truth. **And truth, according to Kierkegaard, is not a system.** He does not distinguish between the non-Christian, Hegelian idea of system, which envelops God, and the Christian idea of God's internal, self-consistent existence. For him any system, Christian or non-Christian, is anathema. **In short, Kierkegaard replaced the non-Christian "rationalism" of Hegel with an equally non-Christian "irrationalism" of his own.**¹⁷ In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* he argues at great length against the possibility of there being any such thing as **absolute truth** identifiable anywhere in history. His thinking is obviously controlled by the basic principles of Imanuel **Kant, for whom everything that man knows is relative to the human mind.** Kierkegaard's views are as definitely opposed to historic Christianity as are those of Hegel.

¹⁶ **Søren Kierkegaard** (1813-55) was a philosopher and theologian who is often thought to be the father of modern existentialism. Among his many works is *Either/Or* (1843) which is an attack on Hegel's notion of truth. In *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), Kierkegaard assailed all attempts at philosophical system building. Other influential works include *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), and *Stages on Life's Way* (1845).

¹⁷ I put these terms in quotation marks because I think that Hegel's "**rationalism**" involves **irrationalism**, these and Kierkegaard's irrationalism involves rationalism. The contrast between these two is within the scheme of rationalism/irrationalism **that marks all non-Christian thought.**

Yet Daane speaks with deep sympathy of this modern existential irrationalism of Kierkegaard. "It was to the task of smashing Hegel's system and re-introducing Christianity into Christendom and thereby teach[ing] men what it means to exist, that Kierkegaard devoted a frail body but a penetrating intellect, a withering and a brilliance of humor."¹⁸ To be sure, Daane has his criticism of Kierkegaard, but he speaks of Kierkegaard's concept of "the Moment" as being "orientated in the direction of the Christian Faith."¹⁹

I shall quote Daane at length in this connection.

Becoming for Hegel, was a conceptual becoming. We shall now discover that for Kierkegaard, Becoming is paradoxical and "*qua*" paradoxical defies all rational comprehension. In the belief

that Hegelianism not only destroyed Ethics and Christianity, but existence itself, and defining existence as the conjunction of the temporal and the eternal, in his most fundamental book, *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard formulates his whole approach to Rationalism in terms of the Finite and the Eternal, and attacks Hegel on his concept of Time.²¹ To a direct revelation there is no possible faith-response. Whether Kierkegaard is correct in his analysis of the divine motif for the form of the "incognito," is a question that need not detain us, since it is not germane to our discussion, but he is undoubtedly correct in his assertion **that God does not desire to overwhelm us by a direct revelation of himself, but effects the type of relationship which necessitates that the believer be related to God by faith alone;** i.e. precisely as one who *believes*. That this One, in the form of a servant, is God is surely not immediately apprehensible to any human faculty. The mere human perception can merely say that this is "flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." Any more adequate comprehension must admit

the relevancy of the statement that "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee"; i.e., not the flesh and blood of Christ, nor your flesh and blood, Peter, "but my Father which is in heaven." Even the miracles of Jesus are not direct revelations of God in immediacy, for their recognition as miracles is contingent upon the prior belief that this One is God. Moreover the very revelatory purpose of the miracle lies beyond itself, for which reason the New Testament never speaks of miracles except in conjunction with the idea of a "sign, and since a sign always points beyond itself, [it] indicates that even the revelational significance of the miracle does not lie in immediacy. Nor were the miracles of Jesus intended to be an unambiguous proof of his divinity. Such a method of proof would have been inept in an age when miracles were not regarded as something extraordinary for, according to Matthew 12:27, popular belief conceded the ability of working miracles even to the sons of the Pharisees.

Nor is there a "direct recognition" of God in Nature. Nature is indeed the work of God, but only the handiwork of God is directly present; God is not. This is the divine elusiveness that God has absolutely nothing obvious about him. It cannot immediately occur to anyone that God exists, yet his very invisibility corresponds to his omnipresence. . . . If God were given in Nature in immediacy, then a *direct* and *external* relationship would obtain. Immediacy corresponds to aestheticism, and a direct God-relationship is the essence of paganism; but God in Nature qua "incognito" destroys the immediacy and thus compels faith to take pains to find God through self activity, which involves an irruption of inwardness.²² The essential Paradox is that God became in individual Man; that the Eternal became that which is against its very nature; i.e., temporal. As such it is the Paradox, and in such a Paradox lies the possibility of offense.²³

From this standpoint one can understand the motif that underlies Kierkegaard's strong disavowal of the value of apologetics and his insistence on the necessity of contemporaneousness with the Paradox. No proofs, speculative or historical, may stand between the individual and Christ so as to make the vision of Christ a glorious one and thus keep the individual from seeing only the Christ of the Humiliation Paradox, Offense, which is the only Christ in which one can believe, for an aesthetic or rational glorification of Christ is to render Christ into something men can know or admire, but by that very token to render him into something that cannot be believed.²⁴ It is the writer's contention that Kierkegaard's

deepest criticism of the above three interpretations of Reality is a criticism of their Moment, and it is further the writer's contention that Kierkegaard's most basic and determinative category is his concept of the Moment, which determines the peculiar characteristics and motifs of his thought and writings. It is at this point that Kierkegaard makes his most effective critique of non-Christian thought and makes his greatest contribution to Christian thought. We turn then in our next chapter to a closer examination of **Kierkegaard's** concept of the Moment.²⁵

¹⁸ James Daane, "Kierkegaard's Concept of the Moment" (diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1947), 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²² *Ibid.*, 73, 74

²³ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

So far then it appears that Daane (a) espouses the idea that there is such a thing as genuine historical possibility **independent of the plan of God** and (b) expresses sympathy with, if not complete agreement with, **Kierkegaard's concept of the Moment according to which there is no plan of God back of history and no will of God directly and plainly expressed in history**. Consonant with both of these points Daane charges me with holding to a **rationalistic position because I defend the idea that there is a God who has a plan for history and who makes this plan directly and clearly known to man in Scripture**

In *The New Modernism* I had defended the idea that though Christianity is surely not a **deductive** system, or an aspect of the coherence of the reality of which idealists speak, yet it is directly identifiable intelligently defensible. I argued, as I have done constantly and that **unless we may presuppose the God of the Bible, then there is no rationality in human experience. God's revelation in nature and in Scripture is inherently clear.**²⁶ **Men have no excuse for not worshipping God.**²⁷

All this is flatly contrary to Kierkegaard's views. For Kierkegaard there is no clear, not even a direct, **revelation of God either in nature or in Scripture.** And so there can be no intellectual defense of Christianity. And Daane agrees at both points with Kierkegaard.

In the first place Daane rejects the view, so greatly stressed by **Calvin**, that God speaks clearly to man in nature and history. When men see sin go unpunished, says **Calvin**, they ought to conclude that there is a final judgment coming.²⁸ **All men were from the beginning represented in Adam.** And to Adam God gave supernatural revelation about his purpose with history. For this revelation conjoined as it was in paradise with natural revelation, all men are responsible. They have no excuse.

But Daane argues as though men do have an excuse since revelation in history is "incomplete and always inconclusive." Daane speaks of **Kierkegaard's view of Christ** and **its relation to history** and says:

This is not necessarily to deny that history contains a revelation of Christ. The writer, Kierkegaard notwithstanding, believes that it does, but it is a denial that any part of history gives **conclusive** demonstration of God in Christ. History surely reveals God, **but history is ever an incomplete process, and there the revelation is incomplete and always inconclusive.** When the historical process shall be complete then only will the revelation be conclusive, but since this is the "*telos*" of history it will also be the "*finis*" of history. Until then the just must live by faith. Thus Kierkegaard's Moment, through its insistence upon contemporaneity, **prevents Christian Faith from becoming sheer knowledge whether of an intellectual or historical kind.**

The Moment becomes a denial "*intelligam ut credo.*"²⁹

²⁶ Romans 1:18.

²⁷ Romans 1:20.

²⁸ See, for example, Institutes, 1.5.10.

²⁹ Daane, "Kierkegaard's Concept of the Moment," 150.

In the second place Daane maintains that the Kierkegaard conception of the Moment safeguards the Christian religion against all would-be intellectual defenders. He says: "Kierkegaard's Moment is also a safeguard against the ever present temptation in Christian Theology to define faith as a 'credo ut intelligam.' [I believe in order that I may understand.] The Moment not only insists that Christ can only be known through faith, but that faith ever remains faith and does not undergo a transformation into knowledge."³¹

In *The New Modernism* I argued that such a position as that of **Kierkegaard, in denying that there is any direct and clear revelation of God to be found anywhere, is irrationalist.** I further argued that **taking the God of Scripture as the presupposition of our thought gives us a sound, and the only sound, argument for the existence of God,** since with such a God there is an **intelligible basis for human experience, and without such a God there is no such ground.** But with Kierkegaard, Daane throws Hegelianism and historic Christianity into one basket and labels them as "rationalist." The only conception of system that comes into his discussion is the non-Christian one, in which ". . . reason, in the act of comprehending the particular, arrives at its universal by abstraction, thereby leaving **particularity** behind, and as a consequence arrives at an **abstract universal.**"³²

This is Kierkegaard's view of the function of reason. But Daane apparently knows no other. When I criticize Kierkegaard from the point of view that God controls history by his plan, my criticism is said to be "launched by one standing outside of existence."³³

At this point Kierkegaard gives a strong warning against the danger of abstractionism in theology, which Dutch theology has not always avoided, and as a consequence has sometimes moved in a direction that tended to deny the validity of existence and history. . . . When the

plan of God is so employed that God's relationship to the world and the world's relationship to God is rationalized and fixed, so that the plan of God becomes a norm for thought and life *prior* to existence, life is rendered meaningless, and God's relationship to the world becomes an eternal-static, rather than a temporal-dynamic relationship. To those who employ this type of theological method, **Kierkegaard** cries, "Away from speculation."³⁴

³¹ Daane, "Kierkegaard's Concept of the Moment," 150

³² Ibid., 151.

³³ Ibid., 154.

³⁴ Ibid., 156

Before heeding this warning we should recall that for Kierkegaard "speculation" includes the idea of direct and finished revelation in history. "Away from speculation," as **Kierkegaard** thinks of speculation, involves "away with the Bible!" as historic Christianity thinks of the Bible. To hold to the idea that the loci of theology as set forth by Reformed theologians keep us from facing the Christ person to person, is to listen to **Kierkegaard's** warning. The Christ of Kierkegaard can nowhere be found. And faith in this Christ is faith in a blank.

It is not thus that Reformed theologians are wont to speak. When **Daane** so largely defends Kierkegaard's views, one cannot help but wonder whether the structure of his thought is taken from the Scripture or from **existentialism** as it has been taught at Princeton Seminary since its reorganization in 1929.

The structure of my thought is simply biblical in the orthodox sense of the term. **Daane** has not produced and can produce no evidence to the contrary. But there is much evidence that his objection to my position as being rationalist and determinist springs from sympathy with **the irrationalism of Kierkegaard**.

Underlying Daane's charge that the structure of my thought is not biblical but speculative lies a **different conception of Scripture than that historically entertained by Reformed theology**. Reformed theology thinks of Scripture as a directly discernible expression of the will of God for man. **Modern existentialism**, on the other hand is based on the idea that human experience makes its norms and deals as it moves. For it "to exist" involves knowing nothing in the way of **absolute truth**. **Daane** has apparently been deeply influenced in his thinking by this modern form of **non-Christian thought**.

How the World's Philosophies Have Left the True and Living God

A short summary

by Dr. Lane Tipton

on Van Til's Critique of Kant / Van Til and Idealism (Lesson 3)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YehR9DyWd8>

A Critique of Kant's *constructivist transcendental idealism*

My summary first: Kant, basically, says that the objects of man's experience conform to the inherent categories in the mind of man that he has *invented*¹ – this idealism - the objects/experiences of life **conform** to the categories of the mind in order to assign meaning to them. Realism is the other way around - the mind of man conforming to the objects. The effect of Kant's philosophy is that man will, independently of God's true knowledge of all the facts of the universe, come up with different meanings for things; a vastly different worldview. This is what it means when we say that man has forsaken God, taken God out of the classroom, has kept God out of his thinking, etc. It's the classic example of man declaring his independence from God. Just what Adam and Eve did – I will declare what is good or evil, not God's revelation of truth as it really is. Man has established himself as absolute and ultimate authority! not the absolute and ultimate authority of God. This is the danger of all worldly philosophies. All of them have in effect ignored God, suppressed the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18) and have put themselves into the room of God.

¹**Eccles 7:29** See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

Dr. Lane Tipton, Minute 25:03-30:45: "Now Van Til brings Kant directly into view in the *Survey of Christian Epistemology* pg 174, and so, especially when we're thinking here, pg 174, about Van Til, ah, in his critique of Kant, we need to hear this. This is important. He says quote, "If man is given any original interpretive power to begin with, that is, if man can, IN ANY SENSE, come into contact with any object of knowledge apart from God, that power can never be taken from him. And if any special revelation should later come to man, it could never be absolute! [key point!!!] because the interpretive element that man himself would contribute, would **always** introduce the independently contingent."

Now here, Van Til speaks of Adam as created and posits two things by way of critique. First, if by virtue of creation, Adam were given any original interpretive power to begin with, that can never be taken from him, then it would be an enduring and inalienable gift. Adam would have *original interpretive power*, and what does he mean by that? He means Kant! He means if Adam had the categories that Kant claims he has – the *transcendental aesthetic* and the *transcendental analytic* – and he had them independently of his knowledge of God, then he would always be testing the revelation of God to see to what degree it comports with those original interpretive categories inherent to him. Van Til is saying, please hear this, that is NOT a Christian view of reason as created by God. Why? Well, *secondly* – On the assumption that Adam were given this legislative, constructive, original reason, Van Til says that would not comport with Covenant Theology. [see how you have to really know other doctrines to see the fallacies of worldly philosophy?!] If it were the case he says, that Adam has original interpretive power to begin with, then special revelation, the revealed terms of the covenant of works **could never have absolute authority!** Kant's notion of reason as having original interpretive power is inconsistent with the **self-authenticating authority** of *natural* and *special* revelation. The moment you conceive of Adam with this constructive original interpretive power, you've gutted the substance of the deeper Protestant conception. Why? Well, if you think back to what Vos taught and what Van Til taught, which we surveyed in the *Doctrine of Revelation*, you remember, that *reason* never at any point existed apart from special revelation. Reason is not only a

revelation from God internal to man, but as a gift from God, it is properly subject to the authority of his word. Gerhardus Vos in the RD 2 [RD is Reformed Dogmatics], 43 thru 44, says this about Adam's relation to God. He says, "Since Adam was perfect in every respect along with his natural relationship to God, belonged a completely clear awareness of this relationship. Now let's pause. Given Adam's nature as the image of God, along with his natural relationship to God, there was a completely clear awareness of that relationship – he knew from nature by innate knowledge what God could demand of him, that he stood under God's authority, under the moral opposition between good and evil, that upon breaking the natural relationship, punishment would follow – all of this and still more, he was assured the favor of God and life, provided that he persevered in the good. Point 1 here, under our 3rd point about reason, is that by virtue of creation¹, Adam naturally knew God, naturally knew the obligations of God, naturally had a relation to God by which he was under authority. And so, in the nature of the case, reason is **not** an independent constructive authority. It's naturally subordinate to the authority of God by virtue of the image endowment." End of the video excerpt.

¹My comment: Another thing that the world's philosophers discard, blur, or completely disregard because they don't believe in it, is the Creator/creature distinction. This has vital and important implications which Dr. Tipton goes into in another video. If we are truly created by God, then by nature, by our creation, we are *derivative* or wholly dependent upon God; we cannot have any original knowledge that did not come from God by way of natural or special revelation.

Now, here are some related quotes from Van Til in *The Defense of the Faith* p 397, 401- 402, on Kierkegaard's worldview. And you'll see how similar it is in principle to Kant's view of man's assumed independence from God or his assumed ultimacy and autonomy. Van Til's critics are arguing against God's ultimate control, his sovereignty in everything that comes to pass.

Pg 397: ***Van Til's defense against his critic, James Daane:***

I define the meaning of existence in history in terms of this counsel [God's eternal decree]. And I am aware of the fact that Kierkegaard and his followers define "the moving stream of time," existence **without reference to that counsel**. I also know that **Barth [Karl Barth]**, like Kierkegaard, **rejects the idea of God's counsel or decrees as back of history** for the same reason that Daane offers us. Barth argues that the idea of the ontological Trinity as God in himself apart from the world, and the idea of a **counsel of such a God as controlling the events of history**, would impose a timeless logic on history. It would, he says, do injustice to the uniqueness and therewith to the reality of time. It would, most of all, do injustice to the Christ-Event. My reply to this is that Barth's theology is a philosophical construction destructive of historic Christianity. If the reality and significance of the "moving stream of time" is to be maintained at the expense of the **self-contained God and his eternal plan for history** then the Christ of the Scriptures disappears. He sinks into the abyss of **unrelated irrationalism**.

Here again Daane assumes, with **Kierkegaard**, that finite existence is a concept that must be defined **independently of God. It must not be defined in terms of the plan of God**. God's revelation as Daane, in agreement with Kierkegaard, says in his dissertation *must* not be a "norm for thought and life prior to existence." **Possibility itself must be made independent of the plan of God and finite existence is existence apart from this plan.**

Pg 407-408

He [Daane] wants the **independence of man apart from the counsel of God**. For him one does not do justice to history unless the events that compose it are **existences apart from the plan of God**. In other words, it is impossible to satisfy him on the significance of the historical unless this historical is taken in the **irrationalist** sense of **modern existentialism**.

A good summary of Van Til's critics:

In conclusion, the picture as a whole may be placed before us. **Masselink** criticizes me from the point of view of Hepp's "common notions" and from the point of view of the "Old Princeton Apologetics" [**basically, Arminian**] with its natural theology. **Cecil De Boer** criticizes me from the point of view of the scholastic [**Greek mixed with Christianity**] notion of degrees of being and knowledge. He agrees with the Romanists, who say there can be no absolutely evil deed because then the will would have slipped into nonbeing. Jesse De Boer criticizes me from the point of view of a Christianity that is erected on "classic realism" and modern phenomenism [**knowledge only thru the senses, denying divine revelation**]. **Daane** criticizes me from the point of view of a sympathy toward the "New Princeton" with its dialectical theology based upon **existential philosophy**.

In every instance, though with varying degrees, it is the autonomous man that peeps through these criticisms. Knowingly or unknowingly, these men are **unwilling to make their stand on the principle of the self-identification of God in the Scriptures**.⁶⁴ They seek to satisfy the **illegitimate demands of the natural man who sets himself up as his own ultimate interpreter**. I do not rejoice in this. I do not report it as a victory; God forbid. But I signalize it in the hope that with me they may rather seek to serve the witness of the Spirit in convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

⁶⁴ We can see here how important the beginning of this book is, with its outline of a Reformed doctrine of God.

My Letters

Letter to SM Oct 5 2023

You and I were, for awhile, until we got it cleared up, were talking about two different things; we were in two different categories regarding what philosophy is, etc. Next time I'll need a long, long, long, long time (lol) of me describing what I was trying to say because it involves a thorough understanding of the key doctrines of Christianity such as the true nature of man (man's total depravity, original sin, man's assumed ultimacy and autonomy), then, God's redemptive plan, the nature of God (his aseity,

simplicity, sovereignty, immutability, his self-completeness), divine revelation, the Creator/creature distinction, all of which for the most part, philosophers and many evangelicals (sad to say) deny or tone down considerably in order to accommodate man's carnal thinking. They compromise these things in an effort to reach common ground to win them to Christ. But it doesn't work. It backfires.

Here is the main issue and it's seen in **Ps 36:9** and **1Cor1:18-20**

*For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light*

[“your light” is **revelation** which non-Christian philosophers deny: so by *revelation* we see or perceive light, i.e., true knowledge; (light is knowledge) of the facts God has created, facts about God and about ourselves.]

And regarding all non-Christian worldviews (ie philosophers of all types...Kant, Hume, Descartes, Plato, Leibniz, etc.) **1Cor1:20** addresses them:

*¹⁸ For the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written:*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”*

*²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?***

In short, all non-Christian worldviews cannot discern the true or ultimate meaning of all the facts of the universe. Why? Because they are blind. That's the essence of it. **Van Til** touches on this in this excerpt I found:

“According to the principle of Protestantism, man's consciousness of self and of objects presuppose **for their intelligibility** the **self-consciousness of God**. In asserting this we are not thinking of psychological and temporal priority. We are thinking only of the question as to **what is the final reference point in interpretation**. **The Protestant principle finds this in the self-contained ontological trinity**. **By his counsel** the triune God **controls whatsoever comes to pass**. If then the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting point, it remains true that God is always the most basic and therefore the **ultimate** or **final reference point in human interpretation**.

This is, in the last analysis, the question as to what are one's ultimate presuppositions. **When man became a sinner he made of himself instead of God the ultimate or final reference point**. And it is precisely this presupposition, **as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy**, that must be brought into question. **If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him according to his pattern**. The sinner has cemented colored glasses to his eyes which he cannot remove. **And all is yellow to the jaundiced eye**. **There can be no intelligible reasoning unless those who reason together understand what they mean by their words.**”

The best thing to do, timewise, is to listen to Dr. Tipton (on the Reformed Forum), and Dr. Bahnsen on YouTube over and over and over as you walk around; and along with that, continue to learn all the doctrines; you can't do one without the other. And then you see what riches we Christians really have! I sent you a whole slew of videos that are good, but all you have to do is to search for those things on YouTube; they're everywhere. There's a whole thing on Existentialism that I think Tipton did; might have been Bahnsen.

Letter to SM Oct 7

When I say that worldly philosophy such as that of Kant or Kierkegaard or Descartes, does not take into account God (as Creator, Controller, etc.), the next question is, what do you mean by God? Your idea, or the extent of your doctrinal understanding of God's nature, covenant relationship, Adam's fall, man's depravity, and man's derivativeness in relation to God, the Creator/creature distinction, etc., will determine this. A dynamic and extensive working knowledge of God (the more the better), his ultimate plan, for example, is key to understanding what Dr. Tipton is saying, and what Van Til is saying in distinction to what Kant and ALL the other philosophies are saying. I remember a long time ago that I would say that schools are taking God out or evolution is not in accord with the bible; all this is true, but that's all I knew; my depth of understanding of what it meant to say "the schools are without God" was very shallow and basically had little 'wow' effect. It was a "little faith."

All these things having to do with orthodox Protestantism (the Reformed doctrines; Christianity come to it own) are required in order to understand. in living color, Kant's error and all philosophy's error, without which you could not. Van Til and people like him will take you to the next level of understanding yourself and God into the right application phase of your life, the result of *growing in faith or knowledge*. So make your prayer this: "Teach me your word; show me how to live it!" or Ps 119:18...*Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things out of your law*. Guys like Kant, Kierkegaard, et al, don't want to hear it or do this.

Whoa! I this just came to me: now you can see what Jesus meant when he said this in John 5:43

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. **43** I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. **44** How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Kant and all worldly philosophy starts with man as the ultimate starting point in intelligibility as opposed to starting with God (as ultimate) who gives intelligibility to all the facts of the universe (since he created all facts in the universe in the first place.}. They have cut God out of the picture entirely; the same reason they take God out of the schools, etc., believe in evolution, etc.

I'm listening to this one now: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YehR9DyWd8>

At first it seems complicated, but now I'm getting used to the terminology and manner of thinking.

Letter to several Oct 12 The Creator/creature distinction

I had to think about this for a while. Here is a huge reason why Paul makes this distinction in Acts (which I glossed over in the past not knowing its importance) when arguing with the Greek philosophers, and why the bible in other places makes this point as well. If man is created by God, a creature of God, then this clear inference stated by Tipton is true which the unregenerate reject, despise and is irksome to them. Why is this important, in fact, vital? Dr. Lane Tipton describes this:

Dr. Lane Tipton quotes: that by virtue of creation, Adam naturally knew God, naturally knew the obligations of God, naturally had a relation to God by which he was under authority. And so, in the nature of the case, reason is **not an independent constructive authority** [as Kant, et al believes it is - my insert]. It's **naturally subordinate to the authority of God** by virtue of the image endowment." end of comment

Now read roman 1:18-21 with greater understanding!

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, **who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,** **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, **for God has shown it to them.** **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible **attributes are clearly seen,** being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, **so that they are without excuse,** **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, **but became futile in their thoughts,** and their **foolish hearts** were darkened.

This wicked presumption is the hallmark of all sin; **a rejection of God's authority over man; man's assumed autonomy and ultimacy.**

By denying *creaturehood*, they are guilty of presuming that they are their own authority! **a law unto themselves, independent of God.** This is the typical MO of the unsaved, to assume themselves as the ultimate authority and not God. It is this leftover corruption that is still in believers that God has us go through all manner of afflictions and disciplines in order to purge it out of us.

[Roman Catholicism believes (in error) that upon creation, Adam did not have a natural inbred knowledge of God (knowledge concreated or communicated to Adam upon his creation). He was capable of it, but did not have it; it had to be learned over time.]

Kant believed that our reason was independently constructive; that it would take all facts and experience and form them, assign meaning to them, via the categories already established in our minds independent of God (man having original knowledge! ...all of which is Kant's *absolute idealism*) In this way he thought we had original knowledge as opposed to clear revelation from God, true knowledge from God. But we are derivative in nature, wholly dependent upon God; Kant doesn't believe this nor do unbelievers and many other philosophers.

And so, Van Til states!

“As I have followed Calvin closely in stressing the fact that men ought to believe in God inasmuch as the evidence for his existence is abundantly plain, so I have also closely followed Calvin in saying that

no sinner reacts properly to God's revelation. Is this too sweeping a statement? It is simply the doctrine of total depravity. All sinners are covenant breakers. They have an axe to grind. They do not want to keep God in remembrance. They keep under the knowledge of God that is within them. That is, they try as best they can to keep under this knowledge for fear they should look into the face of their judge."

Van Til's Objections to Hegelian Idealism Or Correlativism (a form of pantheism) & The importance of knowing the attributes of God Code539

Subjects: Pantheism, theistic mutualism or correlativism... Why it's important to know the attributes of God! omniscience, immutable, simple, *a se*, self-complete, self-sufficient, wholly self-conscious of himself, etc. and the doctrine of the Trinity.

By Lane Tipton

commenting on Van Til's Critique of Hegelian Idealism or
any other kind of correlativism

Van Til's Critique of Helel – Van Til and Idealism lesson 10

<https://youtu.be/R-abgpCnEk4?si=liC-Km1sE2raDJom>

Min 12:47: So, Van Til's response here is that when he speaks as God's thoughts, he means by that, **God's plan realized in creation and providence**. Why does he use God's thoughts? To set it in antithetical contrast to Kantian *constructivist* epistemology, **where the thoughts or understanding of man constitute the intelligibility of facts**. The last thing Van Til wants to do is state or imply that God and the facts are **correlative – that God's knowledge enters into the being of facts or that God and the facts that he knows are mutually constitutive of one another**. Van Til makes it explicit that the entire

argument of the syllabus for which there will be quotes, is against every form of **correlativism**. This includes Plato, Kant, Spinoza, Hegel, Bradley, Bosanquet, Bowman, or any other advocate of any other species of correlativism. Van Til's most basic and profound critique of idealism is that correlativism is the internal ground for construing thought as constitutive of objects in a mutual process of development over time. These two responses, then, have helped us see that Van Til opposed Hegelian idealism, absolute idealism as militantly and relentlessly as he opposed Kantian transcendental idealism.

What I want us to do now as a kind of capstone observation, is to review a summary of Van Til's doctrinal dissertation, *God and the Absolute*; and the capstone expression of the argument is that all forms of idealism in Van Til's estimate, reduce to pragmatism, so that both idealism and pragmatism are foes of Christianity.

Hegel's Pantheistic Doctrine of Christ O Van Til and Idealism (Lesson 8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-r2O4q42yg>

Min 19:46: Now what do we say to Hegel as Reformed theologians? How do we apply Reformed theology to Hegel's philosophy as a whole and his view of Jesus as the speculative middle point in the process of development within *Giest*? [spirit] **Gerhardus Vos** who taught Van Til at Van Til's time at Princeton Seminary, has an incisive response to what he terms **pantheism** inherent in the Absolute Idealism that Hegel produces. By way of a single sentence summary, let me say this. Please note this well. **Vos** locates the **mystery of the incarnation** in the **ineffable union between the immutable divine person of the Son and his mutable human nature and insists that any other view of mystery is pantheistic**. **Vos** describes **pantheism** as describing any essential or personal change to God in the work of creation or in the act of the incarnation.

Let me give you a few quotes that shore this up. Vos says that in Reformed Dogmatics 342, the following, quote, "In the Logos, a divine person who is immutable! is present from eternity. If now there can be but one person in the mediator and the divine person cannot be irradiated or changed, then it is self-evident that this one person is the divine person of the Logos. One can only maintain the immutability of God if one holds to the personal deity of the mediator, to the deity of the person in the mediator. The choice lies between two persons and one divine person. Now, please note this well. Vos explicitly begins his understanding of the incarnate mediator with an affirmation of an eternal and immutable divine person. Notice the divine person in the mediator cannot be irradiated or changed. Vos conceives of the eternal person of the Son as the incarnate mediator and says that the divine person not only does not change but cannot change. And I've said this in different module, but I do want to repeat it here, the person is not divine and human - two persons (**Nestorian**), the person is not human (**Arianism**), and the person is not divine human (**Eutychianism**). The person of the incarnate mediator is the immutable Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. And Vos says, then, explicitly, that "you can only affirm the immutability of God if you affirm the deity of the person which is immutable." The two are to be taken in this sentence from Vos in an appositional relation, "the immutability of God simply is the deity of the person. The person of the Son subsists as the immutable and *simple* divine essence, and as such cannot change. The definition of trinitarian persons is that they subsist distinctly as the whole, simple, immutable, essence of God. Now Vos says additionally, "Because already in the Logos there was a divine person who could not change 'cause humanity had to be impersonal or there would be two subjects in existence." Just note this one more time. Vos says, "In the

Logos there is a divine person who could not change. It's not that he can't; it's not that he doesn't want to change; it's that he cannot change because he is essentially and personally *fully actual*.

Van Til's Critique of Helel – Van Til and Idealism lesson 9

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5GAmEoPVM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-r2O4q42yg>

Min 21:31 But secondly, building on this, Van Til insists in all of his writings, that **God remains omniscient in relation to creation**, a tenet, Hegel, in the nature of the case, cannot maintain with his doctrine of *developmental consciousness*, the developmental consciousness of the Absolute, being his central metaphysical concept. Van Til says this, quote – “we are told in scripture that God is light and there is no darkness in him at all; he dwells in light and no man can approach unto. Bavinck says, “in that appellation, there's included the idea that God is fully conscious of himself; that he sees through the whole of his being and there is nothing in his being that is his in darkness or hidden from his consciousness.” Or again, “there is and can be no darkness; he is altogether light. He dwells in light and is the source of light.” Or yet again, “God is eternal and pure being and his eternal knowledge has nothing less than the full eternal essence for his object. **Being and knowledge are coterminous in God.**” Do you see what is being said here, end of quote, IST pg 234? “God's knowledge comports with God's being” – in fact that's being too weak – God's knowledge is coterminous with God's being. “Just because God's being is self-sufficient and self-complete, so God's knowledge of himself and the world is self-sufficient and self-complete.” If I turn the board over on the back, this is a second anathema to Hegel. The first anathema - the equal ultimacy of eternal unity and diversity in relation to subsistence and coinherence and procession. The second, is that this God, this God, **this concrete universal is omniscient in relation to creation**. Van Til is saying this concrete universal, listen, **is not developing self-consciousness! He is self-sufficient in his being and his knowledge**. Listen to this! Van Til, IST 234-235, “It is only if we thus insist on the **coterminity** of the self-knowledge with the being of God that we can escape all forms of pantheizing thought. If God's knowledge is not coterminous with his being, his knowledge can, at least, be a correlative to his being. This being is then being given a *potentiality* of its own. God's knowledge can no longer be an internally complete knowledge; **it becomes instead a knowledge that he must obtain by a process of investigation of a being that exists independently of himself**. And I know I've said this enough in previous modules, I know we've said it enough in our discussion of Hegel, we said it enough in our discussion of Barth and contemporary evangelical mutualists, **pantheism expresses itself in knowledge by denying the coterminity of being and knowledge in the self-contained God**. **Pantheism** insists that knowledge, God's knowledge, the Absolute's knowledge, **develops through time**. **Pantheism** advocates a *divine ignorance* theory. Pantheist take Genesis 3:9 to teach that when God calls out to Adam, he does not know where he is hiding in the garden. And Van Til says that on such a view, on such a pantheizing view, God is learning new things and doesn't know future contingents until, quote, “it obtains by a process of investigation.” 26:11

Pantheism, process theology, etc. Van Til's Critique of Hegel's Absolute Idealism

Video presentation by Dr. Lane Tipton

Christianity and Idealism:

The Basic Argument | Van Til and Idealism (Lesson 11) – Dr. Lane Tipton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX5e1Pcs1X4>

Min. 17:14 – 21:42

We've already show cased this in Hegel; this is a little higher level view, we're not as deep. Van Til says that if the *Absolute* develops over time then so does its understanding or consciousness. Both God, the single subject of interpretation and humanity, the corporate subjects of interpretation, require one another, and are both subject to what? **Process**, epistemological process. Van Til claims quite directly that the central problem with *absolute idealism* **is the ignorance of the Absolute**. He says, quote – "idealism has not complete actuality at the basis of possibility, and he says especially about the Absolute, page 25, *Christianity and Idealism*, the end is not known to the Absolute from the beginning since the Absolute himself has to wait for the facts to come in. The Absolute must remain ignorant of features, both present and future since its knowledge is developmental." I'll use two examples that might be familiar – they appear in Scott Oliphint's *God With Us*. In Gen. 22, on the *God With Us* proposal, when God asks or says to Abraham, "Now I know that you believe me." **his thesis is that God has now come to know what he didn't know before**. Genesis 3:9, God has now, has to call out to Adam and Eve where they are hiding. Oliphint, page 195 *God With Us*, "The lack of knowledge that God has as given to us in Genesis 22:12, is a covenantal lack; it's a lack in which God's relationship to his people includes his real and literal interaction." That is a contemporary illustration of the **divine ignorance theory** that Van Til says, lies at the heart of Idealism. You have to appreciate this. That if the being of the Absolute is in process, then the knowledge of the Absolute is in process; and when this is applied hermeneutically to the teaching of the bible, every instance where God says *Now I know*, is taken univocally, taken literally, taken developmentally. Van Til would call such a view pantheistic. He says in the *Survey of Christian Epistemology* about **Idealism** and other **forms of correlativism**, quote, The all-important question is what kind of a God reveals himself. Pantheistic thinkers also speak of God revealing himself, therefore also speak of a revelational epistemology if they desired, but for the sake of clearness, the term *revelation* should really be reserved for biblical thought. According to this view, God has been and is eternally self-conscious; there is no fringe of ignorance or darkness in Him. It is this concept of a completely self-conscious God that is all-important in epistemology – end of quote. **And view of an ignorant of developing deity is pantheism**. Divine Ignorance theories are pantheistic no matter what nomenclature is applied to them. And Van Til would call an ignorant deity a foe of theism.

Apparent Contradictions in the Bible

God's Counsel vs. Man's Responsibility

By Cornelius Van Til

Code540

No Christian can answer this full-bucket difficulty in such a way as to satisfy the demands of a non-Christian epistemology. We can and must maintain that the Christian position is the only position that does not destroy reason itself. But this is not to say that the relation between human responsibility and the counsel of God is not apparently contradictory. **That all things in history are determined by God**

must always seem, at first sight, to contradict the genuineness of my choice. That the elect are certainly saved for eternity must always seem to make the threat of eternal punishment unreal with respect to them. That the reprobate are certainly to be lost must always seem to make the presentation of eternal life unreal with respect to them. Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*

See [code475](#) on the genuineness of man's choices though back of those choices is God sovereignty over the will of man. Also search for the words *genuineness* or *significance* with regard to man's choices; man is not a puppet, yet God controls all things according to his counsel, an apparent contradiction. Also search for the [genuineness of second causes](#).

An excerpt from [code485](#): A word must here be said about the question of antinomies. It will readily be inferred what as Christians we mean by antinomies. {86} They are involved in the fact that human knowledge can never be completely comprehensive knowledge. Every knowledge transaction has in its somewhere a reference point to God. Now since God is not fully comprehensible to us we are bound to come into what seems to be contradiction in all our knowledge. **Our knowledge is analogical and therefore must be paradoxical.** We say that if there is to be any true knowledge at all there must be in God an absolute system of knowledge. We therefore insist that everything must be related to that absolute system of God. Yet we ourselves cannot fully understand that system.

We may, in order to illustrate our meaning here, take one of the outstanding **paradoxes** of the Christian interpretation of things, namely, that of the relation of the counsel of God to our prayers. To put it pointedly: We say on the one hand that prayer changes things and on the other hand we say that everything happens in accordance with God's plan and God's plan is immutable.

The thing we are concerned about here is to point out that in the nature of the case there would have to be such a paradox or seeming contradiction in human knowledge. God exists as self-complete apart from us; he is all-glorious. Yet he created the universe that it might glorify him. This point lies at the bottom of every paradox or antinomy. We were in the nature of the case completely interpreted before we came into existence; the universal plan of God needed not to be supplemented by historical particulars and could not be supplemented in this way. The historical could not produce anything wholly new. This much we see clearly. God being what he is, it must be his counsel which acts as the indispensable and self-complete unity back of the finite one and many. The only alternative to saying this is to say that the historical produces the wholly new, and this would be to give up the basic idea of the Christian-theistic scheme, namely, the idea of God and of his creation and control of the universe. On the other hand, the historical must have **genuine significance**. Or else why should God have created it? Prayer must be answered, or God would not be God. The universe must really glorify God; that is the purpose of its existence. **So we seem to have on the one hand a bucket that is full of water and on the other hand we seem to add water to this bucket which we claim to be already full.**

It appears that there must seem to be contradiction in human knowledge. To this we must now add that the contradiction that seems to be there can in the nature of the case be **no more than a seeming**

contradiction. If we said that there is real contradiction in our knowledge we would once more be denying the basic concept of Christian-theism, i.e., the concept of the self-complete universal in God. We should then not merely be saying that there is no complete coherence in our thinking, but we should also be saying that there is no complete coherence in God's thinking. And this would be the same as saying that there is no coherence or truth in our thinking at all. If we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of real contradiction, we have destroyed all human and all divine knowledge; **if we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of seeming contradiction, we have saved God's knowledge and therewith also our own.**

We must note here again how impossible it is in an apologetic argument to close one's eyes to differences between various theological schools. {87} That fact comes out here more strikingly than anywhere else. **Arminianism has not been true to its own belief in creation.** With belief in creation, it stands committed to that view of God and of God's counsel and that view of man's relation to that counsel which we have outlined. Yet it has been untrue to all this in its insistence that the historical does produce the absolutely new. **For that reason, it has to think of the relation of God's counsel to man's activity as one of real contradiction. In order to avoid this "contradiction" it has simply thrown overboard the idea of the counsel of God, as controlling all things. Therewith it has in effect sought to destroy both divine and human knowledge and therewith it has destroyed the very meaning of history which it was so anxious to preserve. God cannot answer our prayers for the salvation of people if those people can reject that salvation when they wish.**

An excerpt from code482

The reply of the Reformed apologist is as follows. Good preaching, he will say, will recognize the truth of Scripture that man has been blinded by sin, and that his will is perverted toward **seeking self instead of God**. But how can deaf ears hear, and blind eyes see? That is to say preaching is confronted with the same dilemma as is apologetical reasoning.⁴² In both cases the Roman Catholic and the Arminian tone down the facts of the gospel in order to gain acceptance for them on the part of the natural man. [very common] In neither case will the Reformed apologist do so. In both cases he will challenge the natural man at the outset. Both in preaching and in reasoning – and every approach to the natural man should be both – **the Reformed theologian will ask the sinner to do what he knows the sinner of himself cannot do.** The **Reformed Christian** is often Reformed in preaching and Arminian in reasoning. But when he is at all self-conscious in his reasoning, he will seek to do in apologetics what he does in preaching. He knows that man is responsible not in spite of but just because he is **not autonomous but created.** [A vital distinction: In other words, because we are created, i.e., creatures, we are wholly dependent upon God for all, i.e., we are not autonomous beings, self-sufficient, etc! See Edwards on this absolute dependence on God] He knows that the idea of **analogical or covenant personality** is that which alone preserves **genuine significance** for the thoughts and deeds of man. [as opposed to existentialism where significance is sought through self seeking.] **So he also knows that he who is dead in trespasses and sins is none the less responsible for his deadness.** He knows also that the sinner in the depth of his heart knows that what is thus held before him is true. He knows he is a creature of God; he has been simply seeking to cover up this fact to himself. He knows that he has broken the law of God; he has again covered up this fact to himself. He knows that he is therefore guilty and is subject to punishment forever; this fact too he will not look in the face.

An excerpt from code534

In their view “second causes” become “first” or ultimate causes; there is then no ultimate cause back of them. **As ultimate, these second causes then rest on nothing better than chance.** Thus all of human experience is meaningless. It is quite true that “conversion did not make a Euclid out of the Philippian jailor,”²² but this is beside the point under discussion. **My interest is only to show that it takes an ultimate cause, God, if there are to be genuine second causes. In other words, it is only on the presupposition of the truth of Christianity that science is to be explained.** I do not think the “objectivity” of “classic realism” or of any form of modern realism such as we find represented by John Wild and his friends, allows for the **ideas of creation and providence** in the biblical sense of the term. It is not “suffocating supernaturalism” to aver that secondary causes are meaningless without God the Creator as primary or remote cause. **Suffocation of science and of all human experience would take place if either “classic realism” or modern idealism were true.** For then there would be no causes at all. **All reality would be composed of irrational particulars.** All would then be “chaos and old night.”²³

An excerpt from Van Til in *The Defense of the Faith*, pg 386

When Arminians say that these doctrines reduce history to a puppet-dance, we reply that the contrary is true. The choices of men in history have genuine meaning because of, not in spite of the counsel of God which controls whatsoever comes to pass.

Notes on Existentialism

by Greg Bahnsen

(with my comments)

from his lecture series

The Certainty of Christianity

code541

I was listening to this lecture by Dr. Bahnsen, and he mentioned a short thing on existentialism; very interesting. By the way, these things are deep and take a long time to assimilate into your thinking. You are juggling many things in your brain on this, other doctrines, etc., to be able to see what Bahnsen is saying. So do that. I like what Jonathan Edwards said...*upon sedate and calm reflection*... That’s when your mind seems to be relaxed the most, where data points on scripture conjoin in your mind. One other thing: every doctrine in Christianity plays a role in our thinking on all these things. That’s why it’s good to study it all, Original Sin, Election, God’s Sovereignty, Christian theism, etc.

Min 17 – by the way, this whole lecture exposes selfishness, skepticism, etc. Listen to this whole series.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4MaZ-u10bg>

“And then on the other hand you’ll people who will say, “Hey, we’re free, ya know! We’re human beings. We have dignity; we make up our own lives,” a school of thought known as Existentialism - you put that at the very center of philosophy. It’s that human reality chooses its own essence; chooses what it will be. Whether you’re an existentialist or not, you know, that uh, your unbelieving neighbor – he’ll insist that human beings have free will.”

Ok. Upon sedate and calm reflection, think about that. If one thinks Existentialism is Christian, he is wrong. It’s the opposite of Christianity. What the existentialist believes is that man is independent of God – he is a law unto himself; the existentialist defines himself by himself, by his own assumed authority or assumed autonomy and ultimacy of his own reasoning, not by God’s plan. His intellect, his reasoning is ultimate, not God’s. This is the hallmark ID of all earthly or worldly philosophies. Man exalting himself against his maker, his creator. This is why worldly philosophies cloud or completely do away with the Creator/creature distinction. This is how man suppresses the knowledge of God within and around him as Paul notes in Romans 1:18. If we are not created in God’s image, then, hey, we are independent beings accountable to no one! Chance rules. This is, more than likely, the thinking that is in a person who gives license to his worldview of living his own independent self-determined life, doing what he wants to do, etc., deciding the purpose of his own existence apart from God’s plan, regardless of what scripture says. (to a degree, we are all guilty of this worldly mindset, the flesh, until God routs it out of us.)

Application: it is upon this area that you can confront him (with meekness and humility, see 2Tim2 below). All things are yellow to the jaundiced eye. He’s looking through the wrong glasses. These glasses need to be removed, to which you can help in guiding him, but this removing of the yellow glasses, ultimately, can only be done by the Holy Spirit. This is true with all of us to one degree or another and is why God has us go through trials and **afflictions**...to wean us off our self-dependence, our assumed autonomy and the ultimacy of our own opinions. One other thing; look for inconsistencies in his argumentation; this is common in false ideas about ourselves and God; Bahnsen points this out in that lecture.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. Ps 119:67

So one key reason why he thinks existentialism is Christian is because it accommodates the carnal mind, self-exalted thinking and notions that appeal to the flesh, self, me, me, me, to the *self-important*. Here’s a key passage on combating this: 2Cor10:5

⁴For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

The word of God is self-attesting. Any deviancy from this is basically asserting one's own opinion over and against God's word, his law, his will.

So when you bring this up to someone, be uplifting in your words, say only what is encouraging and uplifting. This he'll receive, all things being equal. So, when you want to bring out your sword and slice him into little pieces, quickly bring these passages into remembrance. Trust in these, which is to say, trust in God! This will quiet your soul.

Here some great passages on this:

1Pet3:15

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

2Tim 2

²³ But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord **must not quarrel but be gentle to all**, able to teach, **patient**, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and *that* they may **come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

1Thes. 5:11

¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Eph 4:29 this is excellent!

²⁹ **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart **grace** to the hearers.** ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ **Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.** ³² **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

Phil. 2:3-4

³ *Let* nothing *be done* through **selfish ambition or conceit**, but in **lowliness of mind** let each **esteem others better than himself.** ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

A lecture on Faith and Reason

Worldviews & Rationalism

Man's Assumed Autonomy and

Ultimacy of His Reasoning

Code542

A Series by Greg Bahnsen: *Transcendental Arguments*

Min. 21:55 -30:28 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQ8oQsSVLrY>

If we can get worked out this notion of an objective proof of God's existence along the lines of transcendental reasoning, which is the subject of our seminar, I think it will really open things up – will enlighten your minds with regard to the relationship of faith and reason. This old conundrum, this chestnut that has been there in the history of the church, I think all of a sudden gets resolved, and very easily; in fact, so easily you look at it and say, How could we have missed this? It's really quite obvious.

I think it's mistaken and indeed it's misleading to think that Christian faith takes over where reason leaves off. Many people have the idea that we can reason about things, such as, oh, science, medicine, industry, economics, history, or whatever it may be, and reasoning will take you really, really far, but at some point reasoning stops and then faith begins. So that for us as Christians we agree with everybody else in the world when it comes to natural matters; matters of this life, temporal existence, nature. We agree with everybody else and their reasoning about those things, but then what we do is we add another story to the house of knowledge or at least personal living, and that's the story of faith, right? So, everybody around here thinks in a natural way and uses reason, and then we add faith to that. And I think that's misleading, I think it is mistaken. Faith is not without reason; faith is not above reason; faith is not contrary to reason in the outlook I'll be trying to teach you in our seminar.

To put it very simply, I do not in any sense endorse what is called **fideism**. If that's a new term for you, F I D E I S M; literally **faithism**. **Fideism** says that Christian faith is independent of considerations of reason or reasoning. Christian faith is a personal commitment; Christian faith is a voluntary or a voluntarist leap, but it has nothing to do with reasoning, with argumentation. And I don't believe that for a moment. I believe Christian faith is not only reasonable – there's plenty of people who say that – you can't show that it violates anything that a reasonable man would say, but I maintain that Christian faith is demanded by reason. Reason can be affirmed without endorsing what's known as **rationalism**. **Rationalism**, however, is the term that's subject to so many different definitions, since a specific school of epistemology, but is also a broad attitude toward how we live our lives and conduct ourselves intellectually.

Rationalism in the broad sense says that man's mind is the highest authority, or at least man's mind is autonomous. It never bows to any outside authority. The **autonomous** man might grant that there's a god. The man who says, *I'm intellectually self sufficient; I'm the final authority* – such person might

grant that there is a god. Usually he doesn't to be sure. But you need to recognize to understand the **character of autonomy**, he could grant that there is a god, **but it could never be the Christian God**, right? Why's that? **Because the Christian God doesn't bow to the authority of the servant; the servant is to bow to the authority of the Lord.**

Now, there are people who want to promote autonomous reasoning to get people to believe in the Christian God. **I think that is so fundamentally wrong headed.** You know, to try to say to somebody, you know, you need to have faith in this God and I'm gonna prove to you to your own satisfaction, with you being the ultimate authority, that God is the ultimate authority. Should I say that again? I'm gonna prove to you, to your ultimate authority and your reasoning, that God is the ultimate authority. Well, you can't do that. Rationalism in that sense affirms that man's mind is the highest authority. And that it operates independently of God and self-sufficiently. And, I've been in university training in the past, that I continue to pay attention to higher education and to our culture as well, and it just boggles my mind that anybody could believe in the autonomy of man's mind - the self-sufficiency and independence of man's mind. If that were true, why is there such massive disagreement in the universities still? What's wrong with man's mind? How does man's self-sufficient mind not get things worked out? And it's not just that the psychologists differ with the political scientists. Political scientists can't agree among themselves and the psychologists can't agree among themselves. And say, ya, well when into other things which are not quite such soft issues like math or physics; then they all agree. Well, no they don't! They're huge disagreements in schools of philosophies of math; huge disagreements among physicists and so forth. So, the self-sufficiency of man's mind, just on the face of it, is a silly doctrine. That isn't to say it is the reigning dogma or prejudice of people.

Nevertheless, Rationalism is the idea that man's mind is self-sufficient; it's the highest authority. **That's different from rationality.** **Rationality** refers to man's intellectual capability. And with all my heart and soul I confirm rationality. And I affirm it because God made us; he made us to think. He expects us to think. Indeed, since we're made in the image of God and He is supremely rational and coherent, He is the truth itself as Jesus said, that we ought to be concerned about the truth and about reasoning and using our minds to glorify God. Paul put it this way: We are to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We're supposed to be using our minds and using them in a **subservient way**, as a tool to glorify God. Some people use their minds as a tool to argue against God; we use our minds as a tool to argue for God, but we certainly affirm rationality. We're not fideists. **We affirm reason; we do not affirm rationalism.** In fact, this seminar, if you, when you get to the end, if you get back over it, I hope you'll see, in a sense, the whole seminar is an attempt to show the Christian use of rationality refutes rationalism. That if we're gonna use our minds in the best way, you can't be a rationalist. And against autonomy, I'm going to be arguing in our seminar, that all reasoning rests upon faith. My first consideration was, faith doesn't go beyond reason. Now I'm gonna turn the tables and say to the unbelieving rationalist's argument is, as a matter of fact, your rationality rests upon faith; you can't justify reasoning **without a worldview** – broader considerations that analytical philosophers like to think

about today; but you can't justify rationality without a broader consideration of the worldview that you have; and the only worldview that will allow for rationality or make intelligible the use of rational procedures is Christianity. And so, this is pretty heavy stuff as you can see. We're arguing that if anybody reasons at all, ultimately, they are borrowing from or actually working in terms of the Christian outlook on life...that faith is foundational to all rationality, to all reasoning. [So the *faith* of the unbeliever as Bahnsen notes here, is an unconscious acknowledgement that they are in God's universe (the knowledge of which they are suppressing, Rom. 1:18) in which God has established design, logic, etc., and thus are trusting in his deterministic or predictable environment or systems, so that we can reason (exercise logic), learn science, build things, etc., as opposed to an environment that is founded upon **chance**, which if one was consistent with that worldview, could not know anything, trust in anything so as to build, reason, live, etc. Every fact would be a *brute fact*, having no relation to anything, especially God. So, their faith, their *subconscious* faith is a *faith* in the true nature of God's universe. And as a side note, is not a saving faith, but merely a common faith. See [code543](#)]

Notes on Arminianism, the Knowledge of God,
 Interpretation of Facts in One's Worldview, Brute Facts,
 Universals vs Particulars
 & Transcendental Challenge in Apologetics for
 the Meaning of Facts
[code543](#)
 From *Van Til's Apologetic*
 by Greg Bahnsen

Pg37-38

Thus, we face the question of God's providence. And providence, in turn, presupposes creation. We may say, then, that we seek to defend the fact of miracle, the fact of providence, the fact of creation, and therefore, the fact of God, in relation to modern non-Christian science.

But if the matter is put this way we may as well say that we are seeking to defend Christian theism as a **fact**. And this is really the same thing as to say that we believe the facts of the universe are unaccounted for except upon the Christian-theistic basis. **In other words, facts and interpretation of facts cannot be separated.** It is impossible even to discuss any particular fact except in relation to some principle of interpretation. The real question about facts is, therefore, **what kind of universal¹⁰ can give the best account of the facts. Or rather, the real question is which universal can state or give meaning to any fact.**

Are there, then, several universals that may possibly give meaning or statement to facts? We believe there are not. We hold that there is only one such **universal**, namely, **the God of Christianity**. Consequently, we hold that without the **presupposition** of the God of Christianity we cannot even

interpret one fact correctly. **Facts without God would be brute facts.** They would have no intelligible relation to one another. As such they could not be known by man.

¹⁰ In this context, Van Til uses the term "universal" for any truth of a general or abstract nature - whether it be a broad concept, law, principle, or categorical statement. Such **general truths** are used to understand, organize, and interpret **particular truths** encountered in concrete experience. As Van Til goes on to say, if one does not begin with some such general truths (**universals**) with which to understand the particular observations in one's experience, those factual particulars would be unrelated and uninterpretable, i.e., "**brute.**" In a **chance universe**, all particular facts would be random, have no classifiable identity, bear no predetermined order or relation, and thus be unintelligible to man's mind.

Pg 42 -*Arminian's view of man's depravity*

The **Arminian** holds that on the Reformed conception of man there is no sense to preaching. There would, the Arminian argues, be no approach to an identity of meanings between the preacher and the man "dead in trespasses and sins" to whom he preaches. The dead man cannot even count and weigh and measure.¹⁸ There is an **absolute** severance of all connection between him and the living.

For this absolute deadness of the natural man, the Arminian substitutes the notion of degrees of deadness, in order thus to establish degrees of contact with the truth. **There can be no absolutely evil deed because then the will itself would be destroyed.** It is ambiguous or meaningless, says the Arminian, to talk about the natural man as knowing God and yet not truly knowing God. Knowing is knowing. A man either knows or he does not know. He may know less or more, but if he does not "truly" know, he knows not at all. The **Calvinist**, he argues, is an absolutist who destroys the light of day.

In reply to this the Calvinist insists that there are no degrees of deadness. The natural man does not know God. But to be thus without knowledge, without living, loving, true knowledge of God, he must be one who knows God in the sense of having the **sense of deity** (Romans 1).¹⁹ For the spiritual deadness of the natural man is what it is as suppression of the knowledge of God given man by virtue of creation in God's image.

¹⁸ By this, Van Til means that, in terms of the Calvinist's **transcendental** challenge, the **unbeliever's espoused worldview** or **philosophy** cannot make counting and measuring intelligible. (Counting involves an **abstract** concept of law, universals, or order - which contradicts the unbeliever's view of the universe as a **random or chance realm of material particulars**. By rejecting God's word, the unbeliever **would not in principle** be able to count and measure things. As it is, unbelievers do engage in counting and measuring but they cannot give a philosophical accounting of that fact.

¹⁹ Van Til here indicates that "knowing God" is not the same thing in every case where God is known. There is a knowledge of God in faith and blessing (which the unbeliever wholly lacks), as well as a knowledge of God in unbelief and curse (which the unbeliever cannot avoid). The latter is truly knowledge, and in terms of it the unbeliever can gain limited knowledge about the

world and arrive at intelligible interpretations of experience. The unbeliever denies this latter kind of knowledge because he does not have the former kind of knowledge.

Two Worldviews in Conflict

Below is an exceptionally good teaching on the two different worldviews between a believer and an unbeliever. What is truth? For the unbeliever, his ultimate authority in determining what is truth is himself, his own opinions, his own *a priori* reasoning. For the believer, the final authority is the word of God, divine revelation. From a regenerated heart, he desires to take all his thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Greg Bahnsen explains all this very well. [my comments in blue brackets like this]

Excerpt from *Van Til's Apologetic*

by Greg Bahnsen

pgs 90-94, 109-115

Code544

3.1 Apologetics as a Conflict Between Final Authorities

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of philosophy or academic debate in terms of intellectual detachment from the living of daily life. (Disputes over the nature of "substance" or about the analytic/synthetic distinction do not, after all, seem terribly relevant to grocery shopping, getting the kids dressed, or fixing the plumbing). Questions about the way we reason and think may be important, but they are ethically indifferent or "neutral" matters for scholarly investigation and debate. The moral quality of our lives is not an issue here for ethics is thought to pertain to our conduct (daily affairs), along with the motives for our concrete behavior and inner attitudes (especially toward other persons). This general outlook is so widespread that it hardly rises to the level of conscious consideration and choice; we just take it for granted. Reasoning is one thing, and ethics is another. That is why Van Til's insights have such a revolutionary effect on most people. He insists (as does Scripture) that the way in which we use our minds-the way in which we reason, how we evaluate claims to the truth, the standards we adopt for knowing, etc., - is itself an ethical matter. This part of human behavior called "reasoning" is as much subject to moral obligations and assessments as anything else we do in the world. The "greatest" commandment teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our minds, too (Matt. 22:37) - to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). [If we don't, it's because we love ourselves more than God if at all.]

Thus, apologetical dialogue between the believer and the unbeliever exhibits not only two conflicting points of view (as to whether God exists, Jesus rose from the dead, etc.), but also two different moral stances. The believer and the unbeliever recognize two different final standards for living - including that aspect of living known as thinking, reasoning, and arguing. They are divided by their ultimate commitments, either to Christ or to some other authority (usually themselves). Van Til pointed out

that sin comes to expression in the unbeliever's intellectual conduct and standards: "When man has become a sinner, his intuitive powers are as sinful as his reasoning powers. **Every man by his sinful nature seeks violently to suppress the voice of God.**" "Thus, the scientist in the laboratory and the philosopher in his study are both dealing with their materials either **as a covenant-keeper or as a covenant-breaker**. All of man's acts, all of man's questionings, all of man's affirmations, indeed all of his denials in any dimension of his interests, are covenantally conditioned." [Van Til]

Christians must not fall into a false intellectualism here. "Intellectualism in the church has often made an easy compromise with the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue. Men often speak as though the only thing that the sinner needs is true information. This . . . is not the case. **Man needs true interpretation, but he also needs to be made a new creature.** . . Sin is not only misinformation; it is also a power of perversion in the soul." [Van Til] The non-Christian's opposition to the truth about God or the gospel does arise from legitimate intellectual problems with the faith, **but from a rebellious and rationalizing heart**. "The sinner's problem from his point of view is to cast doubt upon this evidence, to make it appear as though the evidence were not clear. . . **It is the effort of every man to put the blame for his failure to serve God upon the elusive character of the evidence for God's existence.**" [Van Til]

The two opponents in an apologetical encounter are thus intellectually living by two different ethical standards, but they are also arguing according to conflicting **final standards for knowledge itself**. **They disagree on the ultimate authority** that should be used to warrant or justify what a person believes as true. Suppose that a certain statue at Piccadilly Circus in London were described in a tour book as a depiction of Eros with his bow drawn, but that, because you have actually been there to see the statue, you assert that the tour book is in error. If your friend replies that those who write tour books are more likely to have the facts straight than you, **your friend has attributed more authority to the tour book than to you on this matter**. What he would claim to "know" about the statue of Eros is determined by the **authority** he has chosen to follow. Now, in the far more important dispute between the Christian and the unbeliever, they too have **conflicting final authorities for knowledge**. As Van Til put it, they disagree on the "reference point" to be used in assessing truth-claims and interpreting experience. (In our illustration, one person gained his perspective from the "point of reference" given in the tour book, while the other's ultimate point of reference was his memory of an eyewitness experience.) Believers and unbelievers have different presuppositions that give them their orientation to the world, to reasoning, and to living. "Either one thinks in terms of the authority of Scripture, making reason and all its activities subject to this authority, or else one acts and thinks on one's own **ultimate authority**." [Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*] Or, as Van Til wrote elsewhere: believers should **"agree that human experience and human logic must be interpreted in terms of God and Christ rather than that God and Christ must be interpreted in terms of human experience and logic."** [Van Til, *Common Grace* p104]

A person cannot have it both ways regarding his final standard or ultimate reference point. He presupposes and reasons either according to the authority of God or according to some other authority.⁸ **Attempting to be neutral about God's ultimate authority in determining what we know is a result of a bad attitude toward God's ultimate authority.** It is a way of saying that one does not really need the work of who...shows us that in all our efforts as ultimate self-authenticating Christ who...shows us that in all our efforts as **ultimate self-interpreters** we are actually opposing the salvation

that he offers. Every bit of supposedly impersonal and neutral investigation, even in the field of science, is the product of an attitude of **spiritual hostility to the Christ** through whom alone there is truth in any dimension. [Van Til, *the Case for Calvinism* 1963]

⁸ The complaint will be heard that, if we are arguing over whether God exists and has final authority, we may not take that authority for granted while we are arguing about it. But the complaint is reversible, is it not? The Christian can reply: "If we are arguing over whether God exists and has final authority, we may not take for granted that He is not the final authority; the attempt to authorize (substantiate) His authority by some other standard would amount to the ruling that whatever authority He has cannot be final." A person's presuppositions are (as such) presupposed even when someone is discussing or arguing about them. For example, philosophers who argue for the truth or validity of the laws of logic do not put aside logic while arguing for it.

This is a critical point for apologetics. Van Til's approach recognizes and points out that **religious conversion entails a change in a person's point of reference or ultimate standard for knowing and interpreting anything at all**. Hence, **apologetics [defending the faith]** is at base an intellectual **conflict over ultimate authorities for knowing and living**. "When the sinner has by God's grace in Christ received this new light and this new power of sight then he sees all things in their proper relationships. Formerly he stood on his head while now he stands on his feet. Formerly he referred all things to himself as the final point of reference. Now he refers all things to God his Creator, and to Christ his redeemer as the final point of reference. His conversion was a Copernican revolution. It was not accomplished by steps or stages. It was an about-face. **Before his conversion he looked away from the God and the Christ of Scripture. After his conversion he can't see a fact in the world that he does not wish to deal with to the glory of God.** The words of Paul, 'Whether ye eat, or drink, or do anything else, do all to the glory of God,' are now his motto. **Deeply conscious of his continued sinfulness he is, none the less, now, in the core of his being, a lover instead of a hater of God.**" [Van Til, *The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought*, 35-36.

It is now fairly easy to answer the age-old question of the relationship between faith and reason. Van Til affirmed the importance of reasoning and using our intellect as a tool, but he also understood that this tool would be utilized according to the direction, standard or "reference point" **of some ultimate authority** (for ethics as well as for knowing). **The unbeliever uses his reason (reasoning) in the service of his own personal authority, desires, and rebellion against God.** The **believer has been brought to a change of final authorities**: "When God has reasoned with us and changed our minds till our every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, we must use our minds, our intellect, our reason, our consciousness, in order to receive and re-interpret the revelation God has given of himself in Scripture. **That is the proper place of reason in theology.** There is no conflict between this reason and faith, **since faith is the impelling power which urges reason to interpret aright.**"¹¹

Of course the unbeliever finds this utterly unacceptable. But by what standard is it judged unacceptable? The unbeliever as much as he believer follows **some ultimate standard**, although he may be reluctant to admit it. **For the unbeliever, the tool of reason (reasoning) would be transformed into the final judge for knowing anything** (as though there could be some abstract thing¹² that might be

venerated as "Reason"), thus replacing the final authority or standard of God's revelation.¹³ Van Til was keenly aware that "we cannot speak of human reason in general, or of the human consciousness in general. 'Reason' in the case of the non-Christian is employed by such as assume themselves to be self-sufficient, while 'reason' in the case of the Christian is employed by those who through regeneration have learned to think of themselves as creatures of God and of their task in life as keeping covenant with God."¹⁴ This is the focal point of the argument between him and the believer. The Christian does not have two ultimate authorities for interpreting life and directing his thinking, one that he shares with the unbeliever and one that is unique to his religious stance. "The Christian knows that he would interpret nature wrongly, due to the sin that is within him, unless he be enlightened by Scripture and guided by the Holy Spirit. Strictly speaking he should therefore not refer to two sources with respect to his general interpretation of life. If he says, 'Scripture and reason convince me that this or that is true, he should mean by this that his reason, as it looks at everything in the light of Scripture, has convinced him. [Ps 36:9b, in your light do we see light] If, therefore, he appeals to the unbeliever on the ground that nature itself reveals God, he should do this in such a manner as to make it appear in the end that he is interpreting nature in the light of Scripture."¹⁵

Apologetics involves a conflict over ultimate authorities- that is, a conflict over our presuppositions or final standard. What should be the source of a person's presuppositions? For the unbeliever, it will be some authority for reasoning other than the word of God, while for the believer it is God's revelation. "For science and philosophy, as well as for theology, we frankly take our basic presuppositions from Scripture... There are no central truths on which all [believer and unbeliever] agree."¹⁶ The disagreement is fundamental and goes to the heart of the matter."¹⁷

¹¹ *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 30

¹² Cf. the logical fallacy of reification (or hypostatization): treating as a concrete or specific entity a series of events ("the winds of change") or an abstraction ("the federal government," "Mother nature.).

¹³ Reason - in the sense of the tool of intellectual analysis (reasoning) - must indeed be used to read, understand, and believe what God's revelation says, and yet the final authority that directs this reasoning process is God's revelation itself; moreover, the tool of reasoning is only intelligible in terms of what God's revelation teaches in the first place.

¹⁴ *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 197

¹⁶ Van Til held that even where there was the appearance of agreement on fundamental points in the reasoning, science, or philosophy of believer and unbeliever, there was nonetheless and ultimately a difference between them in both the broader understanding and the more specific application of those points.

¹⁶ *Common Grace*, 63.

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The Incoherence of the natural man's worldview [my title]

Pgs 109-115

We can rehearse briefly why this is the case. The thing that is most of the philosophy of the unbeliever is its presumption characteristic of moral and intellectual autonomy from God, The non-Christian is not philosophically self-sufficient and cannot make sense out of experience apart from God, but he still desires (and claims) to be independent of his Creator. Van Til pointed out: "Man has declared his independence from God. We may therefore call him the would-be autonomous man. This would-be autonomous man. This would-be-autonomous man assumes that he is ultimate and properly the final reference point in predication, i.e., reality must be interpreted by man in terms of man."⁶⁰ Van Til said of the natural man, who is dead in trespasses and sin, that he "wants to be something that he cannot be. He wants to be 'as God,' himself the judge of good and evil, himself the standard of truth. . . The non-regenerate man takes for granted that the meaning of the space-time world is immanent⁶¹ in itself, and that man is the ultimate interpreter of this world" [Introduction to Systematic Theology] - instead of receiving God's revelation as the ultimate point of reference for his thinking, reasoning, and interpretation of the world or experience. While perhaps not explicitly declaring it to be so, the would-be autonomous man conducts his reasoning and living as though he were not a creature of God and under obligation to the word of His Creator. Van Til said: "I have frequently explained that by the term 'autonomous man' I mean the idea of a man who **virtually denies his createdness**. . . . With the entrance of sin man was no longer willing to obey the law of his maker. He became a **covenant breaker**. **He sought to be a law unto himself** that is, he sought to be autonomous. . . . Men virtually assume or presuppose that they are non-created.... Is this too broad and sweeping a statement to make about all sinners? The daily newspaper is unintelligible on any other basis. There are those who worship and serve the creature and there are those who worship

⁶⁰ *Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*, 125, Cf. the position espoused by the ancient Sophists that "man is the measure of all things."

⁶¹ Something is "immanent" if it is near at hand or inherent in human experience (as experience) opposed to being "transcendent"- originating beyond or exceeding human experience.

and serve the Creator. This is the simple differentiation with which I am concerned. I try to call men back to the recognition of the fact that they are creatures of God by challenging their false assumption of their non-createdness their autonomy or ultimacy." [*Defense of the Faith*, 247-48]

The Christian worldview maintains the indelibly revelational character of every fact of the created universe and the all-controlling providence of God in governing every event of history. The non-Christian's autonomous philosophy is not "neutral" on such crucial points, but obviously works on assumptions that are quite contrary to them. "Why live in a dream world deceiving ourselves and making false pretense before the world? The non-Christian view of science: (a) presupposes the autonomy of man; (b) presupposes the non-created character, i.e., the chance-controlled character, of facts;⁶⁴ and (c) presupposes that laws rest not in God⁶⁵ but somewhere in the universe." [*Common Grace*

and the Gospel, p195] In defending the faith, the Christian cannot allow the suitability or legitimacy of using such autonomous presuppositions with respect to any aspect of knowledge, as though they can make sense of the natural world but must then be set aside when one thinks about the supernatural aspects of God's revelation in Scripture. As Van Til noted, "If we claim that we are independent in our knowledge and think we can do without God at any point, we may as well assert that we are ready to do without him at every point." [*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 199.]

How can the apologist refute the presuppositions of autonomous reasoning? Van Til taught that it could certainly not be by adopting them as our own! "How can we call unbelieving man to repentance

⁶⁴ If the mind of God does not sovereignly determine the relationship of every event to every other event according to His wise plan, then the way things are in the world and what happens there are random and indeterminate. **In that case, there is no intelligible basis for holding that any experience is like any other experience**, there is nothing objectively common to the two of them, and there is no causal connection between any two events - **and thus they are meaningless and indescribable**.

⁶⁵ **If the laws of science, the laws of logic, and the laws of morality are not seen as expressions of the unchanging mind of God, then the notion of universal and absolute "laws" or the concept of order in the contingent, changing world of matter makes no sense whatsoever**. In what way could anything truly be universal and law-abiding, when every event is isolated and random? If universality is supposed to be objective, then there is no justification for holding to it on the basis of man's limited experience, whereas if universality is subjective (internal to man's thinking), then it is arbitrarily imposed by man's mind on his experience without warrant.

by belief in what Jesus Christ the Son of God and Son of man suffered on the cross of Calvary and through his resurrection from the dead, if we ourselves have first so largely emasculated our thinking by adopting the very humanism⁶⁸ from which we are seeking to save them?"⁶⁹ Van Til cautioned that the defender of the faith "all too frequently employs uncritically the conceptions of 'reason' and 'fact'" as these are understood by those who make no profession of Christianity. The result is that there is no teaching of Christianity as a challenge to unbelief." [*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 7.]

Rather than accepting the deceptive invitation of the unbeliever to approach the apologetical dialogue in a neutral fashion- which in fact is to approach it in an autonomous fashion-the Christian must argue that the unbeliever's outlook renders such philosophically crucial and critical notions as fact, reason, experience, science, necessity, meaning, and morality unintelligible, due to the incoherence of the unbeliever's professed worldview. "If then a non-Christian should urge our pastor to take off his 'rose-colored glasses' and look at the cosmos with the naked eye of reason,' or should appeal to conscience to refute the interpretation of human experience as given in Scripture, our pastor knows that to do so would be to take the ground from under his own feet. Reason would then be truly 'naked' or formal; its assertions would be as meaningless as the gyrations of a propeller of an airplane engine without the airplane. If the facts could be said to exist at all, they would be utterly interchangeable with one another. . . . It is only in Reformed theology that we have a method of apologetics that meets the requirements of the hour. It alone challenges the natural man in the very

citadel of his being. It alone is able to show how he who will not accept God's interpretation of life has no coherence in his experience." [*Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought*, 30-31.]

So in **presuppositional apologetics** we seek to "remove the enemy's foundation" by reducing his worldview to absurdity thereby rendering the claims that constitute his case against the gospel unintelligible demonstrating the necessity of the Christian worldview if we are and to make sense of argumentation about, reasoning about, and interpretation of, any element of human experience. Without the assumption of **Christian theism** [the study of God's nature, etc.], there would be no basis for believing that there is order, connection, predictability, or necessity anywhere in the human

⁶⁸ "**Humanism**" is a term susceptible to a variety of definitions. Van Til uses it to refer to the view that man is the highest value and authority in ethics and knowledge, which makes it functionally equivalent to "autonomy."

experience. Van Til put it this way: "The scientist who is a Christian therefore has the task of pointing out to his friend and colleague, who is not a Christian, that unless he is willing to stand upon the Christian story with respect to the world which has been redeemed through Christ, there is nothing but failure for him. Scientific effort is utterly unintelligible unless it is frankly **based upon the order placed in the universe of created facts by Christ the Redeemer**. . . To those who are committed to the position which interprets man in terms of a supposedly intelligent procedure not based on biblical principles ... the answer to this must be that the procedure of science and the procedure of philosophy cannot be shown to be intelligible unless they are carried on, on the presupposition of the God who speaks to man in Scripture." [*Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*, 6,39.]

Given the presuppositions of autonomous reasoning, it is not hard to see why this is the case. In the first place, the "knower" is no different than anything else in his environment; he is not distinguished by a "mind" that has the self-consciousness and freedom to search for the truth, evaluate options, and make intellectual commitments, for man has nothing more than a physical brain, which- like every other natural object is determined by chemistry, biology, and physics. The "thinking" of this product of chance cannot warrant the notion of universals, necessity, causal connections, or moral prescriptions. In the second place, the "**facts**" that man encounters are likewise random and unconnected in any way that would justify categorization, laws or predictability. The "standards" of logic or reasoning cannot be taken as objective or justified as to their universality - or even applicability to the world of contingent material facts which is so different from them in character. **The apologist must be honest in pointing out how philosophically pathetic this "total picture" really is, rather than flattering it by adopting such assumptions as a springboard for proving the completely contrary viewpoint of Christianity.** Van Til delighted in describing the absurdity of what autonomous philosophy ends up with; for instance: "If you have a **bottomless sea of Chance**, and if you, as an individual, are but a bit of chance, by chance distinguished from other bits of chance, and if the **law of contradiction** has by chance grown within you, the imposition of this law on your environment is, granted it could take place, a perfectly futile activity." [*Case for Calvinism*, 141-42]

The would-be autonomous man begins by taking for granted that he and God would have to be on a par when it comes to interpreting the world knowing anything or making moral judgments but this

"monistic assumption" (which denies the significance of the Creator/creature distinction for epistemology and ethics) results in the destruction of the intelligibility of reasoning, science, and ethics. Therefore, as Van Til maintained, Scripture does not grant that the unregenerate man has any right to judge anything whatsoever, consistently "*denying that man, when acting on his adopted monistic assumption, has any ability or right to judge of what is true or false, right or wrong.*" [Introduction to Systematic Theology, 29]

How can any sense, then, be made of the claims and argumentation to which the unbeliever has appealed in his case against God or the gospel? His reasoning against Christianity could only be intelligible if what he were trying to disprove were instead true. **This is the strongest form of argument in favor of the Christian worldview: it must be secretly presupposed even in the attempt to argue against it.** The most compact and dramatic way of summarizing Van Til's apologetic that I have seen (or can imagine) is simply these three words: "**Antitheism presupposes theism.**" Van Til immediately explained: "One must stand upon the solid ground of theism to be an effective antitheist. This demonstrates the Christian worldview to be true from the impossibility of the contrary. Or, as Van Til succinctly expressed it elsewhere: "The only 'proof' of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of 'proving' anything at all," [My Credo, 1971, pg 21.]

Does this mean that for Van Til unbelievers know nothing whatsoever and cannot make any useful contribution to culture? Not at all. **It means that the would-be autonomous man can never give an intelligible, coherent, or meaningful account** of how he is able to know anything or accomplish anything culturally. The unbeliever's failure is a rational or philosophical failure to make sense out of knowledge, morality, beauty, etc. But because the unbeliever is not actually what he thinks he is - and the world is not what he takes it to be - he can within God's world, as a creature made in God's image, make intellectual and cultural progress. Van Til held that "as for the cultural products of those who are not Christians, we would follow Calvin in ascribing this to the common grace of God that works in them **True, the natural man is not blind in every sense.** True, he is not as bad as he could be and as he will one day be. Modern science, so far as it has been carried on by those who are not Christians, has made marvelous discoveries of the true state of affairs in the phenomenal world. But the whole point is that unless it were for the common grace of God there would be **no discovery of any truth and no practice of any goodness among those who are not born again.**" Even the achievements of the non-Christian contribute to the Christian's apologetic, therefore, since such things would be unintelligible apart from the explanation of them which the Christian worldview can offer.

This indicates that the unbeliever has actually been working and thinking in terms of two conflicting worldviews - one which he openly professes and which is **autonomous** in character, and another which he does not wish to acknowledge, **but which makes it possible to make sense out of language, math, science, history, logic, and everything else in his experience and reasoning.** Accordingly, Van Til taught that when we defend the faith, **our appeal is made to the unbeliever's suppressed knowledge of God, not to the professed presupposition or point of reference that the unbeliever advocates.** The apologist must recognize, as Scripture teaches, that the natural man sins "against his better knowledge." In his heart of hearts, he is aware that what the Christian proclaims and defends is the truth of God. Why is it that we as believers acknowledge this truth and submit to the authority of the Savior, while others resist admitting the truth and giving their lives over to Him? It cannot be

because we are better or wiser than others, according to Van Til; rather, "we shall, of course, remember that all that we have received has been by grace..., [in which case we] ought to be the humblest of all men." [*Common Grace and the Gospel*, 129.] Van Til's approach to defending the faith was, therefore, an intriguing combination of the strongest and most aggressive attack upon the intellectual foundations of the unbeliever's reasoning and at the same time an exhibition and gracious acknowledgment of the believer's own grateful dependence upon God for everything he enjoys from the hope of eternal life to the philosophical ability to make sense out of human experience. "Christians can bear witness of this God only if they humbly but boldly make the claim that only on the presupposition of the existence of this God and of the universe in all its aspects interpretive as the revelation of this God, is there any footing and verge for the interpretive efforts of man."

Confronting the Worldview of Unbelievers

Greg Bahnsen commenting on

Van Til's book,

Why I Believe in God

Pgs 138-143 of Bahnsen's book, *Van Til's Apologetic*

Code545

"Proofs of God and evidences for Christianity can always be countered by the unbeliever's controlling presuppositions or worldview. That is why the presuppositional approach to apologetics teaches us to be prepared to argue with and refute the underlying philosophy that the unbeliever uses to evade the force of the evidences and proofs." Footnote 127, Greg Bahnsen, p136

If I have offended you it has been because I dare not, even in the interest of winning you, offend my God. And if I have not offended you I have not spoken of my God.¹²⁹ For what you have really done in your handling of the evidence for belief in God, **is to set yourself up as God**. You have made the reach of your intellect, the standard of what is possible or not possible. You have thereby virtually determined that you intend never to meet a fact that points to God. Facts, to be facts at all - facts, that is, with decent scientific and philosophic standing - **must have your stamp instead of that of God** upon them as their virtual creator.

Of course I realize full well that you do not pretend to create redwood trees and elephants. But you do virtually assert that redwood trees and elephants cannot be created by God. You have heard of the man who never wanted to see or be a purple cow. Well, you have virtually determined that you never will see or be a created fact. With Sir Arthur Eddington you say as it were, "What my net can't catch isn't fish."

Nor do I pretend, of course, that once you have been brought face to face with this condition, you can change your attitude. **No more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots can you change your attitude You have cemented your colored glasses to your face so firmly that you cannot even take them off when you sleep.**¹³⁰ Freud has not even had a glimpse of the sinfulness of sin as it controls the human heart. Only the great Physician through His blood atonement on the Cross and by

the gift of His Spirit can take those colored glasses off and make you see facts as they are, facts as evidence, as inherently compelling evidence, for the existence of God.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Many apologetical strategies fostered today make it a point to tone down the demands of the gospel and avoid the rough edges of true theology. The Christian message is made more and more like the natural thinking of men so that natural men will not resist it so much, Van Til taught, rather, that the Christian worldview must be seen and presented as the antithesis of the unbeliever's thinking and living. That means that the apologist should expect his position to seem outlandish, demanding, and unreasonable to the unregenerate; the message, if faithfully portrayed, cannot help but "offend" the sinner's pride and self-sufficiency. (This does not mean, of course, that the demeanor or manner of the apologist is permitted to be offensive on a personal level.)

¹³⁰ Van Til constantly reminded unbelievers that they were not at all religiously neutral, as they may have thought of themselves. However, the "prejudice" that the unbeliever brings to all experience is so pervasive that he never sees anything differently enough to recognize that he is actually prejudging everything about the facts and reasoning.

¹³¹ The worldview that the Christian sets before the unbeliever cannot be reduced (in something like a deistic manner) to those aspects which make an understanding- of natural experience possible. Because of man's sin and suppression of God's revelation (which is necessary to making experience intelligible), there must be within an adequate worldview some provision of his salvation from guilt and pollution. The redemptive features of the Christian worldview are thus – in man's current fallen situation – not simply an appendix to the rational, scientific, and moral necessity of the Christian's outlook but at its very heart. Man needs to be "saved," according to Van Til, to make an intelligible use of reason.

It ought to be pretty plain now what sort of God I believe in.¹³² It is God, the All-Conditioner. It is the God who created all things, who by His providence conditioned my youth, making me believe in Him, and who in my later life by His grace still makes me want to believe in Him. It is the God who also controlled your youth and so far has apparently not given you His grace that you might believe in Him,

You may reply to this: "Then what's the use of arguing and reasoning with me?" Well, there is a great deal of use in it. You see, if you are really a creature of God, you are always accessible to Him. When Lazarus was in the tomb he was still accessible to Christ who called him back to life. It is this on which true preachers depend. The prodigal thought he had clean escaped from the father's influence. In reality the father controlled the "far country" to which the prodigal had gone. So it is in reasoning.

True reasoning about God is such as stands upon God as upon the emplacement that alone gives meaning to any sort of human argument.¹³³ And such reasoning, we have a right to expect, will be used of God to break down the one-horse chaise of **human autonomy**.

But now I see you want to go home. And I do not blame you; the last bus leaves at twelve. I should like to talk again another time. I invite you to come to dinner next Sunday. But I have pricked your

bubble, so perhaps you will not come back. And yet perhaps you will. That depends upon the Father's pleasure.

Deep down in your heart you know very well that what I have said about you is true.¹³⁴ You know there is no unity in your life. You want no God who by His counsel provides for the unity you need.

¹³² It is vital to presuppositional apologetics to keep pointing out the larger picture in terms of which the Christian challenge is advanced. It is not simply an abstract god, "devoid of content, with which the unbeliever must contend. Given the kind of God for whom the Christian contends, it is perfectly reasonable that He speaks with ultimate and unchallengeable authority, that He sovereignly controls all things (including responses to His revelation), and that the unbeliever cannot rationally escape Him.

¹³³ This is the heart of Van Til's transcendental argument for God's existence. All argumentation involves presuppositions but only the presupposition of the Christian God renders any kind of argument meaningful. In that case, the unbeliever's argument against God or the gospel, if it can make any sense whatsoever, already "stands upon the emplacement" of belief in God's existence. **Rational argumentation already assumes the Christian position to be true**, even when unbelievers argue against that truth.

¹³⁴ Presuppositional apologetics does not hesitate to point to the unbeliever's inward recognition of the truth of the Christian claims, **even though the unbeliever may not be willing to admit to that conviction. He does, after all suppress the truth in unrighteousness**. In particular at this point, Van Til presses upon the unbeliever that he is quite cognizant that his professed presuppositions do not provide an intelligible basis for unity in his experience (causal connections between events, conceptual continuity, logical necessity, moral absolutes, etc.). On the other hand, the unbeliever knows that his rejection of the Christian outlook is a matter of personal choice and desire (he does not "want" the God who can provide the order he needs), not intellectual necessity. **The apologist should continue to appeal to the unbeliever's inward awareness of such truths (as well as showing that his reasoning and behavior betray this awareness)**

Such a God, you say, would allow for nothing new. So you provide your own unity. But this unity must be by your own definition, not that which is **wholly new**. Therefore it must stand over against the wholly new and never touch it at all. Thus by your logic you talk about possibles and impossibles, but all this talk is in the air. By your own standards it can never have anything to do with reality. Your logic claims to deal with eternal and changeless matters; and your facts are wholly changing things; and "never the twain shall meet." So you have made nonsense of your own experience.¹³⁵ With the prodigal you are at the swine trough, but it may be that, unlike the prodigal, you will refuse to return to the father's house.

On the other hand, by my belief in God I do have unity in my experience. Not of course the sort of unity that you want.¹³⁶ Not a unity that is the result of my own **autonomous determination** of what is possible. But a unity that is higher than mine and prior to mine. On the basis of God's counsel I can look

for facts and find them without destroying them in advance. On the basis of God's counsel I can be a good physicist, a good biologist, a good psychologist, or a good philosopher. In all these fields I use my powers of logical arrangement in order to see as much order in God's universe as it may be given a creature to see. The unities, or systems that I make are true because genuine pointers toward the basic or original unity that is found in the counsel of God.

¹³⁵ It should be noticed that this is an internal critique of the unbeliever's worldview, one made from within the context of his assumptions and aims - rather than an external criticism of the unbeliever's position simply for disagreeing with the Christian position. Van Til points out that the unbeliever has, in terms of his own presuppositions, "made nonsense" of his experience. By refusing to think in terms of the truth revealed by God, **he undermines his own rational efforts.** He is refuted from within his own philosophy of life.

¹³⁶ The believer's attempt to organize and interpret his experience is successful when it reflects the original order of God's mind, by which all things are defined and all events work together; he seeks to "**think God's thoughts after Him.**" The unbeliever, by contrast, either imposes the unifying ideas of his own mind on an external reality not controlled his mind (**subjectivism**) or respects the particularity and novelty of every fact in the world, in which case nothing can be said about it using unifying concepts or uniform principles (**irrationality**). Imposing a "system" in advance discards the need for scientific research; respecting the individuality and novelty of experience destroys the **intelligibility of facts** in advance.

Looking about me I see both order and disorder in every dimension of life.¹³⁷ But I look at both of them in the light of the Great Orderer who is back of them.¹³⁸ I need not deny either of them in the interest of optimism or in the interest of pessimism. I see the strong men of biology searching diligently through hill and dale to prove that the creation doctrine is not true with respect to the human body, only to return and admit that the missing link is missing still. I see the strong men of psychology search deep and far into the sub-consciousness, child and animal consciousness, in order to prove that the creation and providence doctrines are not true with respect to the human soul only to return and admit that the gulf between human and animal intelligence is as great as ever. I see the strong men of logic and scientific methodology search deep into the transcendental for a validity that will not be swept away by the ever-changing tide of the wholly new, only to return and say that they can find no bridge from logic to reality, or from reality to logic. And yet I find all these, though standing on their heads, reporting much that is true.¹³⁹ I need only to turn their reports right side up, making God instead of man the center of it all, and I have a marvellous display of the facts as God has intended me to see them.

¹³⁷ Those aspects of experience which afford "order" are those characterized by unity, connections, sameness, generalization, universality, lack of change, or continuity. Those aspects of experience which display "disorder" are those that have diversity, particularity, individuality, novelty, uniqueness, change, or discontinuity.

¹³⁸ By contrast, all unbelieving worldviews look at unity and diversity in terms of **a fundamental "disorder" behind everything: there is no plan, purpose, or sovereign control that orders events, provides universality for laws, or coordinates mind (logic) and its objects (reality).**

¹³⁹ Van Til consistently held that unbelievers are not mindless, ignorant, and useless in understanding the world that God has made. However, their professed "point of reference" (their **presuppositions or perspective**) is skewed. They need to be "turned around" (converted).

And if my unity¹⁴⁰ is comprehensive enough to include the efforts of those who reject it, it is large enough even to include that which those who have been set upright by regeneration cannot see. My unity is that of a child who walks with its father through the woods. The child is not afraid because its father knows it all and is capable of handling every situation. So I readily grant that there are some "difficulties" with respect to belief in God and His revelation in nature and Scripture that I cannot solve. In fact there is mystery in every relationship with respect to every fact that faces me, for the reason that **all facts have their final explanation in God, whose thoughts are higher than my thoughts, and whose ways are higher than my ways.** And it is exactly that sort of God that I need. Without such a God, without the God of the Bible the God of authority, the God who is self-contained and therefore incomprehensible to men, there would be no reason in anything.¹⁴¹ No human being can explain in the sense of seeing through all things, but only he who believes in God has the right to hold that there is an explanation at all.¹⁴²

So you see when I was young I was conditioned on every side; I could not help believing in God. Now that I am older I still cannot help believing in God I believe in God now because unless I have Him as the **All-Conditioner**, life is chaos.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ By "my unity" Van Til meant his Christian conception of what gives unity to life and reasoning. It is important to see that the Christian worldview does not simply claim to explain its own perspective (seeing things in a Christian way), but also accounts for the non-Christian's perspective (why he sees things the way he claims to see them). We do not end up with a plurality of "unities" (worldviews that unify experience) competing with each other, as though there were a number of equally self-satisfactory presuppositions. There is one worldview that truly provides unity (and includes an explanation of the competing claims of unbelievers) and a variety of professed worldviews that reduce to disunity (**disorder, chance, chaos**, etc.).

¹⁴¹ Thus, everyone must choose between two kinds of mystery at the center of their reasoning endeavors. The Christian accepts what is mysterious to him as a man, a revelation that transcends his reasoning, but knows that it is not mysterious to his Creator, whereas the non-Christian accepts an ultimate mystery that is devoid of explanation or meaning.

¹⁴² As the apologetical argument begins, it might appear that the question has to do with which "side" can offer a better explanation of the way things are. In reality, said Van Til, it comes down to whether unbelieving worldviews can, in terms of what they maintain, offer any genuine explanation at all. Using logic and inductive reasoning in order to explain things is futile

if there is no explanation for the uniformity of nature (induction) or universal validity of reasoning (logic) themselves.

¹⁴³ Van Til has turned the unbeliever's criticism (namely, that Christians simply cannot help believing) into a commendation of the Christian worldview. Of course, the reason we "cannot help" believing is no longer, if it ever was, due (as the unbeliever thought) to psychological and social conditions, but due to the sovereignty of God, who "gives order" to everything by His controlling plan and purpose. This too might seem to be a basis for objection from the unbeliever (confusing it with fatalism and the denial of human responsibility). Instead, Van Til shows that **this worldview alone - where God conditions all things - rescues life and reasoning from chaos** (meaninglessness). **Because God orders every detail of life and history, there is an objective basis for people to reason about causes, logical necessity, moral absolutes, etc.** As a child, perhaps, the believer like Van Til could not help believing, but now, as a grown-up, and from the standpoint of what is necessary to reason about anything, the believer still "cannot help" believing.

I shall not convert you at the end of my argument. I think the argument is sound. I hold that belief in God is not merely as reasonable as other belief, or even a little or infinitely more probably true than other belief; **I hold rather that unless you believe in God you can logically believe in nothing else**. But since believe in such a God, a God who has conditioned you as well as me, know that you can to your own satisfaction, by the help of the biologists, the psychologists, the logicians, and the Bible critics reduce everything I have said this afternoon and evening to the circular meanderings of a hopeless authoritarian. Well, my meanderings have, to be sure, been circular; they have made everything turn on God. So now I shall leave you with Him, and with His mercy.¹⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This excellent closing paragraph sets forth salient points in Van Til's presuppositional apologetic. (1) The Christian worldview is not presented simply as a viewpoint that explains the facts somewhat better than others; rather, it is - objectively speaking - the only perspective that makes reasonable sense of believing or judging anything. (2) Nevertheless, the unbeliever will follow any number of lines of thought in order to rationalize - **to his own subjective satisfaction - his refusal to submit to the Christian God**. (3) In the end, everyone must choose an ultimate authority and then regiment his reasoning in terms of it ("circularly"): **the Christian looks to God to make sense of things (cf. #1), while the non-Christian looks to himself (cf. #2)**. (4) Apologists must recognize that the subjective change of the unbeliever, his conversion, cannot be achieved by the power of our argument alone, but depends on the sovereign mercy of God. [all key points!] (5) At the end of our discussions with them, unbelievers should be left with a clear picture of the true nature of the disagreement and with a sense that they must deal with God over it, not merely with their human opponent. **This is objectively true, whether they wish subjectively to acknowledge it or not**. If God is merciful, they will be saved not only for eternal life, but also in their reasoning.